



2026

SPRING

THE LATEST NEWS FROM URRAS
OIGHREACHD GHABHSAINN
(GALSON ESTATE TRUST)



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URRAS OIGHREACHD GHABHSAINN
GALSON ESTATE TRUST



Agnes Rennie
UOG CHAIRPERSON

WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER AND AS I WRITE WE ARE ENJOYING A LOVELY SPELL OF SUMMER WEATHER. TRAVELLING THROUGH THE COMMUNITY IT'S CLEAR THAT CROFTS AND GARDENS ARE STARTING TO TAKE ON THEIR SUMMER COLOURS AND GORSE BUSHES ARE PLEASING TO THE EYE AND INTOXICATING TO THE NOSE. WE DO FEEL DISAPPOINTED BY THE RAIN, BUT ITS THE MAGIC COMBINATION OF RAIN AND SUN THAT ENCOURAGES EVERYTHING TO FLOURISH.

VISITORS TO THE AREA ARE ENTRANCED BY THE LANDSCAPE AND SURPRISED BY LONG DAYLIGHT HOURS. AS RESIDENTS THE LONG DAYS ARE A TIME TO CATCH UP ON CROFT WORK AND OTHER OUTSIDE WORK, BUT ITS ALSO AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG AND NOT SO YOUNG TO ENJOY A SEASON OF SPORTS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES.

THE URRAS IS VERY PLEASED TO SEE THAT THE NEW MINIBUS IS BEING WELL USED BY SPORTS TEAMS AND OTHER COMMUNITY GROUPS. BOOKING IS AN EASY PROCESS AND THE BUS IS NOW BECOMING A FAMILIAR SIGHT ON THE ROAD.

I HOPE THAT ALL OUR READERS CAN LOOK FORWARD TO A SAFE AND SUNNY SUMMER.

FÀILTE OIRBH AIG ÀM FAR A BHEIL DREACH AN T-SAMHRAIDH TIGHINN AIR LOTAICHEAN AGUS AIR LEASAN. THA GACH CUID UISGE IS GRIAN AIR A BHITH AGAINN AM PAILTEAS NA LÀITHEAN SEO, AGUS GED A BHIOS SINN UAIREANNAN A GEARAIN AIR CUS TEAS AGUS CUS UISGE, CHA TIG FÀS ÀS AN AONAS.

THA LUCHD-TURAS AIR AM BEÒ GHLACADH LE BÒIDHCHEAD NA TÌRE AGUS LÀITHEAN FADA SOILLEIR, ACH SINNE THA FUIREACH ANN AN SEO CHAN EIL IAD SIN NAN ANNAS DHUINN. GU DEARBHA 'S ANN A THA SINN TOILICHT AN COTHROM A GHABHAIL AIR ÙINE BHARRACHD A BHITH AGAINN AIRSON COILEANADH NA THA RI DHÈANAMH A-MUIGH. THA AN ÀM-SA NA THLACHD EADAR GUR ANN AIRSON OBAIR FEARAINN, GÀIRNEALAIREACHD NO CUR-SEACHADAN.

AN CO-CHEANGAL RI CUR-SEACHADAN THA AN URRAS GU MATH TOILICHT GU BHEIL UIMHIR DE BHUIDHNEAN SAN SGÌRE A' DÈANAMH FEUM DHAN BHUS ÙR AGAINN. THATHAR GA CHLEACHDADH AIRSON SEAN IS ÒG A THOIRT GU TACHARTASAN DE GACH SEÒRSA AIR FEADH AN EILEIN AGUS GABHAIDH SIN A CHUR AIR DÒIGH GU MATH FURAST.

THA MI 'N DÒCHAS A NISE GUM BI SAMHRADH, SÀBHAILT, SONA AGAIBH UILE.



SIUTHAD 2026

Over three unforgettable days, Primary 7 pupils from Sgoil an Taobh Siar, Lionel, Shawbost and Breasclete Primary Schools came together for Siuthad 2026, a transition programme lead by three community land trusts: Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn, Urras Oighreachd Chàrlabhaigh and Urras Sgire Oighreachd Bharabhais filled with adventure, culture, outdoor learning, and connection to community. From the very first day, pupils immersed themselves in hands-on experiences designed to build confidence, friendships, and a deeper understanding of island life and heritage before beginning their Nicolson journey after the summer.

Day 1 got off to a brilliant start with woodland survival skills, outdoor exploration, and a visit to the historic site of Steinacleit. Pupils also enjoyed pond dipping, discovering the fascinating minibeasts and aquatic life hidden beneath the water's surface. In the afternoon, the group visited na Dorsan, where they learned more about community land ownership and even tried peat-cutting for themselves, gaining a real insight into traditional island practices and the strong relationship between people and place.



Day 2 focused on crofting, culture, and connection to the land. At Arnol Blackhouse, pupils stepped back in time to experience what life was like for generations past, exploring the traditions and resilience that shaped island communities. Later at the fank, they learned more about sheep handling and the importance of crofting today. The day also included a walk around Loch na Muilne, taking in the surrounding wildlife and landscape, before ending with discussions around sasine, ownership, heritage, and belonging.

The final day brought even more adventure, beginning with canoeing on Loch Mòr Bharabhais, where pupils worked together to learn paddling skills and explore the loch from the water. Mountain biking across the machair followed, with pupils embracing the challenge and excitement of the trails. The group also took part in a beach clean-up, helping care for the coastline while creating beach art along the way. In the afternoon at Barvas Hall, pupils heard from those involved in local land trusts and learned more about community land ownership and the important role it continues to play across the islands. The programme finished with a prize giving celebrating the enthusiasm, teamwork, and resilience shown by all involved throughout the week.

Siuthad is about far more than outdoor activities. It gives young people the opportunity to connect with their heritage, environment, language, and community, while building friendships and confidence ahead of an important new chapter in their education.

We are incredibly proud of every pupil who took part, especially for stepping outside their comfort zones, trying new things, and supporting one another throughout the week.

Mòran taing to everyone who helped make Siuthad 2026 such a special experience.



CIF Awards February - May 2026

Development Grant

Comunn Dualchas
Innse Gall £3,750

Cross Free Church £6,407

Small Grant

Ness FC Social Club £2,000

Ness & Shader
Community First
Responders £1,500

Sgoil an Taobh Siar £1,000

West Side Football
& Recreation Club £500

Investing in our Community

The Community Investment Fund (CIF) continues to support a growing range of projects that benefit estate residents, both locally and beyond.

Grants range from essential equipment for the Ness and Shader First Responders to helping schools cover transport costs for trips. The transport grant has enabled local children to attend cultural, sporting and educational events, including the Mòd, sports competitions, camping trips and the pantomime. Smaller grants have supported community initiatives such as upgrading kitchen and heating facilities at the Social Café and helping Western Thistle cover astro-turf hire costs, allowing children to train year-round. The fund has also contributed to the publication of a new book on the life and poetry of Christina Macdonald, a former teacher at Skigersta Primary School, preserving an important part of Ness's heritage. Two development grants were awarded to Comann Dualchas Innse Gall (CDIG) for an Economic Impact Assessment of the heritage sector in the Outer Hebrides, and to Cross Free Church for infrastructure improvements, including solar panels. In addition, the Urras provides ongoing support through its maintenance fund, helping to maintain war memorials and cemeteries, work made possible by dedicated local volunteers.

If you have an idea for a project, please get in touch to discuss how we can make it happen: www.galsontrust.com/funding



Community Minibus

The community minibus has been in use since November 2025 and has already become a fantastic asset for the area. Local groups and organisations have been making great use of the bus, with over 50 bookings so far for football matches, community events, outings, and trips away.

It has been brilliant to see the bus being used so regularly and supporting so many different activities across the community.

To hire the Community Minibus, please visit: galsontrust.com/about-5



Transport Grants

Throughout 2024 and 2025, Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn (UOG) provided funding of up to 80% towards transport costs for schools and youth groups within the Galson Estate. This support enabled participation in a wide range of activities, including competitions and educational school trips. UOG remains committed to ensuring that children living on the estate have equal access to the same activities and opportunities as pupils at other island schools. In the current year, community groups and schools are able to make use of the UOG minibus; however, a small amount of funding remains available to support transport costs for whole school trips where a coach is required.

If you would like to find out more, or to complete a claim form, [please get in touch](#).

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[WWW.GALSONTRUST.COM](https://www.galsontrust.com)



Sunnd is now over for another year, bringing to a close three fantastic months of activity, connection and wellbeing across the Estate. A huge thank you to everyone who helped make this year's programme possible, from organisers and instructors to volunteers, participants, partners and contributors. Your support created a varied and welcoming programme for all.

This year combined well-loved favourites with new activities. Gentle Movement continued to attract a loyal following, while Baby Massage sessions in Borve were complemented by Infant and Child CPR training. One attendee shared: "We wanted to be up to date with infant CPR, as it is different to adult CPR."

Wellbeing remained central throughout, with Long Term Conditions Hebrides (LTCH) sessions offering space for relaxation and connection. One participant noted: "It helped me relax and forget the stresses and strains of life by focusing on being present in the moment."

Spòrsnis classes, Walk Wednesday, Crochet at the Wobbly Dog, Hoop sessions, Cofaidh agus Cabadaich, Weaving workshops and Knitting groups all brought people together and added variety to the programme. Due to the success and continued demand, services aimed at keeping our over-60s residents active and healthy will continue to be subsidised all year round, such as: Gentle Movement at Clan MacQuarrie Community Centre and Day Club at Comunn Eachdraidh Nis.

Thank you again to everyone involved. We look forward to next year.



Plòigh



Plòigh's Easter programme ran from 30 March to 3 April 2026 and was once again a great success, with a high attendance rate across the week. The timetable offered a wide range of activities for children and young people, including Spòrsnis play sessions, swimming and games, mountain biking, drama, dance, arts and crafts, Lego club, football and bowling.

The programme provided something for all ages, from pre-school creative dance sessions with Catriona Hill to activities for older children such as Cuach na Cloinne and mountain biking at Lews Castle. Popular sessions including swimming, Kids Club Barvas and the An Lanntair workshops at Clan MacQuarrie Community Centre were especially well attended.

Since the programme was handed over to Spòrsnis, it has continued to go from strength to strength. Spòrsnis are managing the programme extremely well, delivering a varied, engaging and well organised timetable that supports children and families across the community during the school holidays.

The dates for the summer programme are 27th June - 10th July.



Tourism Accommodation Packs

Visit North Lewis was established by Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn to provide support for local tourism providers within the Galson Estate Trust area to attract more visitors to North Lewis. It also provides visitors to the area with insights into must-see landmarks and areas of significant interest, along with the places to eat, stay and shop.

Visit North Lewis (VNL) has created tourism packs for all accommodation providers on the estate to showcase what the area has to offer. Included in the packs are: leaflets from local businesses and organisations, information about VNL, a map created by VNL showcasing businesses and organisations and things to do on the estate, and Gaelic cards to support the use of the language with visitors. The packs have been sent out to providers but if you didn't receive one and would like one, please get in touch and we can send them to you.

The Visit North Lewis website is also available for accommodation providers to add their listings onto, so please get in touch if you would like to be added to it.

Email – info@visitnorthlewis.com Phone: 01851 850 411



Cruise Bookings

Visit North Lewis is working with organisations on the estate to support them in creating sustainable income through tour excursions for groups. This started with cruise ship excursions and moving to the travel trade market in the future. There are 4 main excursion packages with some other options included:

From Hooves to History – a joint excursion with Air an Lot and Comunn Eachdraidh Nis, visiting the Highland cows and then heading to the museum for a browse through history. These two options can also be provided separately.

Taste of North Lewis – Clan Macquarrie Community Centre and the Niseach Chef team up to bring you a 6-course tasting menu with stories along the way. Other chefs are being sourced for when Allan is away. Clan MacQuarrie are also offering a toilet and refreshment stop.

The Ness Ceilidh Experience – Ness Social Club and Taigh Dhonnachaidh are putting on a ceilidh with a band and highland dancers from Claire Wilson's School of dance, along with a Gaelic singer, a dram and some shortbread. What more would you want?

The Land and its stories – Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn created an excursion to teach visitors about community land ownership and its stories and take them to see the award-winning na Dorsan monument.

This years' cruise ships have now started coming into Stornoway with passengers visiting North Lewis on their coaches. The first excursion visited Comunn Eachdraidh Nis and Air an Lot on the 26th of May and we are looking forward to welcoming another 14 coaches to the estate this season.

Peat Cutting Course

A peat cutting course was introduced last year, giving participants the opportunity to learn how to cut peats sustainably while helping to preserve the traditional skills of turfing, cutting, and lifting. The course proved so successful that it returned this year, with three sessions held throughout May. The course was led by Donald “Ba” MacDonald and Roddy “Rodigan” Martin, whose wealth of knowledge and experience was enthusiastically shared with those taking part. Participants gained hands-on experience and practical skills, ensuring these important traditions can continue to be passed down and practised sustainably for years to come.



Deer Management

UOG has appointed consultants to undertake a feasibility study to determine whether a deer processing larder would be a suitable asset for the estate. During the last season, 134 deer were culled, resulting in a significant amount of venison that requires processing and storage. With an appropriate facility in place, there may be greater opportunities for more of this meat to be consumed by residents on the estate. To help assess demand, we will shortly be issuing a survey to residents to gauge interest in consuming venison. The results of this survey will inform the feasibility study and help determine whether a larder facility would be a viable option for the estate.

Gunnera

Our 2026 Gunnera control season is now underway. This year we have six newly trained sprayers, all certified in January, who will be working across the Estate from May through to September. Early surveying has begun, and Gunnera has already been recorded in 18 of the 22 villages. To help us manage the spread effectively, we need residents to let us know if they have Gunnera growing in their gardens, crofts, or on any land they manage and would like it treated.

You can report Gunnera in two ways:

- Contact us directly to request spraying on your property.
- Record sightings using the [INNS-Mapper](#) app or website ([INNS Mapper](#)), where you can log Gunnera or any other invasive plant species found on the Estate.

Your reports make a real difference in helping us protect the landscape and stay ahead of invasive species.

Goose Management

We recognise that geese are causing a significant nuisance for crofters both on the estate and across the island. We are members of the Lewis and Harris Goose Scheme and work closely with a group of shooters to help manage goose numbers on the estate through co-ordinated culling.

This year, we contributed £500 towards ammunition costs for the scheme, and also introduced a £6 bounty per goose for all shooters registered with the scheme. Although we have not yet received the final figures from Carloway Estate, who administer the scheme, early feedback indicates that the bounty initiative has led to a significant increase in the number of geese culled on Galson Estate this season.

Renewables

The UK Parliament's Scottish Affairs Committee has published its report Clean Power by 2030: A fair deal for Scotland. UOG's Development Manager gave evidence to the Committee in January which contributed towards the report's findings. UOG has also been in direct discussions with GB Energy following the launch of the Local Power Plan earlier in the year. It is welcoming to see that a number of the requests put to GB Energy by community generators in the islands are now being taken forward by the organisation.



Housing

A planning application was submitted to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar for 8 semi-detached houses at Upper Barvas. The application will be referred to the Planning Board later in June for a decision. Meanwhile, investigation works are continuing into proposed housing initiatives at Knockaird for two homes with croft tenancies, and a fully serviced self-build plot in Borve.

Become a member

Do you live within the Galson Estate for more than nine months of the year and want to get involved with the community, support local development, and keep up-to-date with your local community land trust?

Membership of the trust costs just £1 and is available to all those over 16 years of age who are:

- resident within the Galson area, or
- resident within the Isle of Lewis and registered with the Crofters Commission as the tenant of a croft within the Galson Estate area, or
- resident elsewhere and registered with the Crofters Commission as the tenant of a croft within the Galson area and actively working that croft.



Stay in touch



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Become a
member online or pop
into the office to
complete a form

Habost Household Waste & Recycling Centre

Managed by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, operated by Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn.

The opening hours change twice a year, please visit the website to check current opening hours.

We have a list of accepted and prohibited waste items on [our website](#).

You will find the access road to Habost Amenity Site next to the garage at 55 Cross Skigersta Road, HS2 0TQ.

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