

Berneray Community Council

Minutes of Meeting 12th January 2026

Berneray Community Hall, 7.30pm

Present: Margaret MacAskill, (Chair), Donald MacLean (Vice Chair), Eilidh Carr (Clerk), Lorna MacKillop (Clerk), Sharon MacPherson (Treasurer), Billy Fraser, Councillor Uisdean Robertson and Councillor Mustapha Hocine.

Members of the Public: Lorian Pauli, Pat Haskell, Neil Cameron, Cassandra MacLean Buyout Representative and Keith McIntyre.

Apologies: Andrew Rodger.

Margaret MacAskill (Chair) opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Minutes of meeting – 1st December 2025 read and adopted.

Proposed by Billy Fraser and seconded by Donald MacLean (Vice Chair).

1. Matters Arising

- a) **Seagrass Restoration Project Update** – Andrew sent an email to say that he is planning to hold a public meeting in the Community Hall on Tuesday, 20th January 2026 at 7pm. The meeting would discuss the project background and the current funding application. At this meeting he would hope to establish a list of names/contacts for people interested in being involved or kept updated. Also, a possible Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was suggested between his company and the Berneray Community Council to establish a more formal working relationship that could be discussed at the meeting on the 12th January 2026.
- b) **Ferret Situation, Rushgarry** – Update by Keith McIntyre. The ferret situation is ongoing and ferrets have been shot by Rushgarry Crofters with Keith giving up having hens due to the distress. There needs to be more support as this problem is not going away. They have been spotted in Borge and Beinn Shleibhe. Email to be sent to Nature Scot asking Bob for more help and support.
- c) **Bays of Harris Buyout** – Cassandra MacLean gave an update on the Buyout. There is to be a press release shortly. Our condolences to the family on the passing of Rob Hitchcock and that this is not going to cause any further delay. The group's application to the SLF fund has been deferred till the next financial year. The group is also looking in alternative funding.
The Questionnaire – the questionnaire has been looked at and collated. The responses will be discussed with the Community Council in the future.

2. Councillors' Reports

Councillor Uisdean Robertson

- a) **Graveyard in Berneray** – Archeologist performed a deeper survey and got permission to go ahead with extension of 50 lairs. 1/3 of car park would be used.
- b) **Seagrass Restoration Project** – Councillor Robertson had charts of the Sound of Harris which showed depths for the ferry and which the project would be working in. Andrew is having a meeting with SMEE (the project funders) and will keep up to date. Advice and clarification regarding the MOA are being looked into by Councillor Robertson and the committee can then discuss.
- c) **NHS – Dental Practice Issues**. Discussion took place regarding the lose of the dental practice in the hospital. Councillor Hocine had written to Alasdair Allan to express deep concern that the Uists and Berneray would have no access to dental treatment. The response was not helpful considering that the promise was that 4 dentists would be kept. At the end of February there will only be a locum available. The effect of this decision is appalling where the dental health of all residents, from young to elderly is not being taken care and would lead to further health issues. The meeting with the NHS Chief executive has still not taken place. The effect of this is wide reaching and people will lose jobs, for example the dental technician. Communities need to be more vocal and take action. The islands have lost so much already – NO chemo or dialysis services.
Plan of Action: 1. Community council to email, NHS Chief Executive, MSP etc and copy other groups in. 2. Suggestion of a petition signed by residents

- d) **Loganair** – Making progress. The new plane should be here soon. There is only funding for 3 days at the moment but trying for more funding after the year. Also, trying to get the consultant to come down to Uist.
- e) **Small Vessel Replacement** – Meeting regarding timetable taking place and being worked on.

Councillor Mustapha Hocine

- a) **Local housing** – Councillor Hocine discussed the lack of housing in Uist. HHP housing say there are not enough people and use data that does not show the true picture. Local contractor was interested in Phase 2 but HHP are resistant. There is a diminishing number of students due to lack of housing. Uist and Barra Housing Association are trying to revive group to advocate more housing.
- b) **Scolpaig Spaceport** – Airspace license granted, now in discussion with operator.
- c) **Development Officer** – Margaret Coull appointed beginning January, responsible for setting up body for applications.
- d) **Public Consultation regarding Budget** – Discussion regarding the consultation online looking for thoughts on where money should be spent and cuts. Keith McIntyre spoke of the importance of funding for Artists and Culture.
The deadline for applications is 23rd January 2026. It is vital that funding is not taken away as this is so important to the islands and culture. The number of people involved in the arts and culture is staggering and is part of island life.

20th January 2026 – Strategy Budget Meeting for the Council.

3. Correspondence

- a) Cal Mac – Lochportain away for 8/10 weeks. Loch Bhrusda on run and timetable suggesting travel using Lochmaddy via Tarbet.
- b) Private Water Supply – Lochportain, Cheesebay & Hoebeg – Community sessions.
- c) Comann Dualchas Innse Gall – Funding available for terminal building, inside only. Meet with community on what they would want inside in January.

4. Treasurer's Report

Copies of treasurer's report shared for viewing. Income: £50 from Loch Duart. Expenditure: £375 to Angus MacAskill (verge cut), £500 to Evergreens, £136.41 Berneray Shop and £55.52 for Christmas decorations. Crown Estate Funding – quote for new mower for tractor £3475.00 + VAT total £4170.00. £500 to be matched and donated towards memorial bench for Janet MacDonald. NHS Western Isles invites local voluntary groups to bid for funds – Capital Grant Funding.

5. A.O.C.B

- a) **Brusda Road update** – D.J. MacDonald replied, and a team is being sent for potholes to be filled in.
A resident brought up conditions when **the snow/ice was bad**. Suggested of having someone to clean paths with salt especially elderly residents.
- b) **Library and Sport & Health Community Consultations** - This consultation was extended by a week due to lack of advertising and communities not being aware of meeting therefore a lack of people attending. There was a presentation and then people were asked to write down responses. An issue regarding the mobile library was raised and Councillor Hocine stated there was no decision reached on cutting this service.
- c) **Community Council Christmas Tree** – The tree and lights at Borge road end were enjoyed by the community but the weather was against us.
- d) **Streetlight at Nurses Cottage** - __ not working but it has been reported.
- e) **Harbour toilet lights not working and fan.** -Call Tonty.

Councillor Uisdean Robertson congratulated Eilidh Carr on having won the 'Small but Mighty' category at the Visit Outer Hebrides, Our Community Awards.

6. Date of Next Meeting

Monday, 23rd February 2026, Berneray Community Hall at 7.30pm