Berneray Community Council

Minutes of Meeting 25th May 2026

Berneray Community Hall, 7.30pm

Present: Margaret MacAskill (Chair), Eilidh Carr (Clerk), Lorna MacKillop (Clerk), Willie Fraser, Councillor Uisdean Robertson and Councillor Mustapha Hocine.

Members of Public: Anne Hellman, Loriana Pauli, Donald Angie MacAskill, Bob Steedman, Iain MacKillop, Simone Dick, Derek Dick, Neil Cameron and Andrew Rodger.

Apologies: Donald MacLean (Vice Chair), Sharon MacPherson (Treasurer), Keith McIntyre, Pat Haskell. Cassandra MacLean and Andrew Ross, Bays of Harris, Berneray Representatives.

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

Minutes of meeting 13th April 2026 read and adopted.

Proposed by Bob Steedman and seconded by Derek Dick.

1. **Matters Arising**
   a) **Sound of Harris Fixed Link Feasibility Study**
   There was a 1 item Agenda Meeting set but was postponed due to bereavement.
   A meeting is to take place on 1st June hosted by the UK Parliaments' Scottish Affairs Committee as part of their inquiry into Connectivity in Scotland: Fixed Links and Digital Connectivity. This is to be a fact gathering committee as consultation has not taken place yet. Berneray Community Council are sending 2 representatives to attend this meeting. The 2nd stage will be open public consultation. This is a Scottish matter, but it is led by UK Government. There will be consultation with CNES and Transport Scotland, no dates have been agreed yet. Meeting was due to be in Daliburgh but changed to Dark Island and forms given out for responses to be given back to Coralbox by Friday 29th May 2026.

   b) **Bank of Scotland, Balivanich/Link – branch closure**
   Letter from Donald MacKinnon MSP in reply to a resident enquiring about the branch closure. He would look into the matter further and there may be some movement as Torcuil Crichton has been following this matter up. Concerns were expressed regarding this closure and the disadvantages to local residents.

   c) **Bays of Harris Buyout/Questionnaire – update**
   An email was read out from Andrew Ross, Berneray representative updating the committee. Good position to apply to next Land Fund with a decision by November. There is £5M for capital plus £2M for operational spend. The Council are still willing to provide a loan of £100K.
   Questionnaire – A draft copy has been collated. The responses are going to be printed and sent out to each household. There was concern expressed about the length of time this has taken. The steering group representatives of Andrew Ross and Cassandra MacLean will send the results as soon as possible. Questions were asked if the Fixed Link debate would affect the result of the questionnaire. There will be consultation when questions can be asked. The Fixed Link was also discussed in the Harris Forum and discussion of tunnels. Also, the small ferry replacement and discussion of ferry going to Tarbet from Lochmaddy.

   d) **Seagrass Project – update**
   Andrew Rodger gave an update on the project. Funding has been approved and now applying for a Marine Licence. There will be a public meeting on 25th June to discuss project and consult all the various bodies. To get licences by September for project to start next year. Discussion of the importance of seagrass to the environment and the amount of money that will be given back to the community is high. On the 1st three Thursdays in July

trips to the seagrass to be organised, booking system with 30 minutes trips from 4-6pm guided by Andrew Rodger.

2. **Councillors' Reports**

Councillor Uisdean Robertson

a) **Ferries –** Councillor Robertson reported on the problems with the Lochportain and Hebrides especially on the Sound of Harris. Technical issues and weather. There are problems with the Lochmaddy link span and berthing. The new ferry maybe Spring of next year with the Lochmor end of 2026.
b) **Small Vessel replacement Programme –** 2 vessels for Barra and 1 for Berneray. 2 would be better for Berneray. No decision has been made yet.
c) **Loganair –** concerns raised regarding the cost of fares and cutting of flights.
d) **Resiliency Fund –** John Swinney had promised £10M and hopefully this is still on the table.

Councillor Mustapha Hocine

a) **North Uist and Berneray Forum –** received a good number of applications for the post of Development Officer and a short leet will be issued soon
b) **Community Renewal Partnership –** The UK Government to provide money to have work done on Causeways and roads. Completed in this financial year.
c) **Feasibility Study for establishing Gaelic Secondary School in Western Isles –** consultations to be had to see what parents want. The Scottish Government is supporting this. Public Consultation is the way ahead.
d) **Playpark in Lochmaddy –** this is near completion.
e) **Nursery Places –** There are a lot of spaces available this summer.

Discussion on Fixed Link – questions were raised by the meeting regarding the fixed link. There was a study done in 1971 to a link from Strond to Cheesebay and a double road to Lochmaddy. Why is this not on the table anymore. Concerns raised to the use of turbines, and they are mentioned in the last Feasibility Study. The Scottish Government sold licences for turbines without proper consultations. Discussion followed with the pros and cons and the effect on Berneray. A bill is being put through government to protect communities against big corporations. Discussion of benefits – up to community to decide. Disadvantages of companies coming in and bringing workers etc and then place/area to be affected by this.

3. **Treasurer's Repot**

Apologies received from Sharon MacPherson (Treasurer)

The report was given to the meeting for viewing. The shower block in the toilets has been completed and waiting to have this painted. The machair carpark will also be started in the near future. The closing balance which includes Crown Estate Funding, 30th April is £16,757.63. The Community council balance after Crown Estate deductions is £2,742.61.

4. **Correspondence**

a) **Ferry user public events** – A drop in on 3rd July – Poster distributed.
b) **Atlantic 58 Ltd** – Invitation local biodiversity action plan survey – one for individuals and groups, councils review of local biodiversity action plan surveys.

c) **Shaping the future of Scotland's forests** – community survey information shared with meeting.
d) **Access to Cash request** – ongoing with email from Donald MacKinnon.
e) **Scottish Affairs Committee** – Fixed Links and Digital inquiry – 2 representatives to attend.

5. A.O.C.B

a) **Skip** – Questions regarding what can go into skip and what cannot. Worry that skip is being abused with rubbish dumped that should not be there. Signs to be made for skip area.
b) **Community Clean Up** – Nature project working in collaboration with the hall on Saturday 20th June 2026. Dance on 3rd July 2026, wildlife costume.
c) **Harbour Waste** – discussion of how to clean up harbour, creels etc. New harbour master Iain MacNeil contacted regarding money for clean-up. New ladder required at north harbour.
d) **12th-20th June 2026** – Refugee week – Stornoway festival.
e) **Loriana Pauli** brought up what can be done and what is not being done to promote the importance of the environment, for example the planting of trees and conservation of the birds, insects etc. Suggested having an event related to this topic regularly.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday, 6th July 2026, Berneray Community Hall at 7.30pm