

Berneray Community Council
Minutes of Meeting 13th January 2025
Berneray Community Hall, 7.30pm

Present: Margaret MacLean (Chair), Donald MacLean (Vice-Chair), Sharon MacPherson (Treasurer), Willie Fraser, Cllr Mustapha Hocine, Cllr Uisdean Robertson.

Members of Public: Cassandra MacLean, Andrew Roger, Antony McCord, Pat Haskell, Lorian Pauli, Christine Ward, Simon Ward.

Apologies: Lorna MacKillop (Clerk), Eilidh Carr.

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

Minutes of 2nd December 2024 meeting read. Proposed by Sharon MacPherson and seconded by Cassandra MacLean.

1. Matters Arising

a) **Loch Brusda** – Ongoing / No further update. Donald MacLean (Chair) gave a brief overview to the group.

b) **Crown Estate Money** (£15,000) – Re-group to discuss how the money is to be distributed.

c) **Sea-Grass Restoration** – Ongoing. Andrew Roger provided the group with an update:

- now through to the 3rd round of the application process.
- Andrew Roger reassured the group the proposed project would not affect / interfere with current fishing or shipping activities.
- It was agreed a letter of support would be provided by the Community Council.

d) **Buy-Out** – Cassandra MacLean shared a brief overview of her role as one of the Berneray representatives for the Bays of Harris Buy-out.

- Awaiting Valuation from Landlord

- A Questionnaire designed to help set out a 'Vision for Berneray' is currently being drawn up. Cassandra and Andrew Ross will email the draft Questionnaire to the Community Council for review/approval before circulation to the Berneray community groups, followed by Berneray residents. An engagement session with the Buy-Out Berneray Representatives to evaluate the 'Vision for Berneray' feedback will be organised once the Questionnaires have been collected.

2. Councillors Report

- 2 Million savings to be made.
- Council tax may be raised by 10%
- Crown Estate Funding – Air and Travel are priority
- Questions have been raised regarding reinstating hospital services which have been lost.

Uisdean Robertson

a) Small Vessel Replacement Program Public Engagement Event:

- Small vessel engagement session is scheduled to take place in Berneray hall on Tuesday 21st January 2025 between 15.30 – 18.30. CMAL are hosting a series of engagement events in partnership with Transport Scotland and Calmac in relation to the proposed small vessel Replacement Programme (SVRP) Phase 2.
- Programme aims to replace three vessels from the existing Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services (CHFS) small vessel fleet with electric / hybrid ferries. Primarily focussing on Berneray – Leverburgh and Barra – Eriskay routes.

b) Little Minch Timetables:

Berneray and Uist are showing a slight favouring towards option 3, whereas Harris appears to be favouring option 1.

c) Community Renewal Fund (Levelling up fund):

Waiting on more information regarding criteria for applying.

Mustapha Hocine

Education:

Early years childcare – service will hopefully improve. Further discussions on budget ongoing.

3. Correspondance – N/A

A.O.C.B

a) Habitat Group

Loriana Pauli shared an update on the proposed 'Berneray Sands' Campsite. She asked the that we all take time to view the new application which now details additional surveys such as:

- archaeology studies (trenches)
- Biodiversity
- Climate change adaption

Loriana and Pat (Habitat Group Members) shared their thoughts and concerns re the proposed application:

- If no other location is available, a smaller campsite would be more suitable. The area of land proposed for the campsite compared to the beach feels excessive.
- Discussion with two island visitors from Gatliff Trust who felt the proposed campsite would destroy the very reason they enjoy / visit Berneray.
- Concerned that many people (community and beyond) are unaware of the magnitude of this project
- Application appears to show no mention of the environment, impact on businesses, air B&B, nature/Biodiversity, calmness, wellbeing etc
- No mention of human numbers / footfall (potentially 100) and its impact on nature, precious ecosystem, noise and light pollution.
- Deep concern the nature of the island will not be the same
- Mental health and wellbeing – grief felt when environment changes
- Questioning where locals and visitors will park / access the beach?
- A project of this scale / with potential for its impacts should have been a community/island response.
- No consideration for the island identity, cultural heritage, ambience of area
- Concern over the impact on endangered species and shoreline birds
- Erosion – decreasing land. Honeycomb matting impact on the growth of machair flowers.

Andrew Roger added:

- Urbanisation has potential to spoil what people come to experience.
- There should be an agreement between all crofters down the Traigh Bheasdaire strip.
- Agrees a campsite is needed, but the question is WHERE.

Sharon confirmed the deadline for sending feedback/objections etc to the Comhairle planning dept is 31st January 2025. The application will be reviewed for consideration by the panel on the 12th February 2025.

b) RSPB

Loriana updated the group that Thomas Churchyard (RSPB) is offering to give a talk at Berneray Community Hall (date tbc)

Date of Next Meeting Monday 24th February 2025, Berneray Community Hall at 7.30pm.