



NEWSLETTER

THE PLACE TO BE FOR VOLUNTEERING

The Volunteer Centre Western Isles actively supports, encourages and promotes volunteering across the Western Isles. We work with individuals, organisations and groups (locally and nationally), employers and schools to highlight the importance of volunteering in our island communities.

To get in touch email: info@volunteercentrewi.org

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BARRA'S COMMUNITY SPIRIT

The VCWI Barra office welcomed a range of local organisations to its Volunteer Network gathering in the Barra Learning Centre in October. The meeting offered an opportunity to hear updates from across the community and to share perspectives on current priorities. Representatives from Barra Thrift Shop, Castlebay School, Barra Running Club, Carbon Neutral Islands, Buth Bharraigh and the Barra Ranger Service took part, each outlining recent activities and future plans.



VCWI staff met with community reps in Barra

Participants discussed the decline in volunteer numbers and considered ways to encourage wider involvement in local projects. Particular attention was given to the development of youth volunteering on the island, with several attendees noting the value of engaging young people in community initiatives. The group also examined the latest guidance on PVG regulations.

The conversation continued over lunch, which allowed further informal discussion and the chance to strengthen connections. The Volunteer Centre Western Isles extends thanks to everyone who attended and looks forward to future collaboration in Barra and Vatersay.

To contact Katherine Macneil, Development Officer (Barra) email: barra@volunteercentrewi.org

A SNAPSHOT OF YOUTH VOLUNTEERING

Volunteer Centre Western Isles staff have been out and about over recent months promoting youth volunteering and the Saltire Awards at island events including Careers Week events, Youth Work Week celebrations, Guidance classes and parent's nights.

Having a presence at these events gives a great opportunity to talk with young people, teachers, parents and other partners to highlight the value of volunteering.

At the Careers Week event in Stornoway, organised by Developing the Young Workforce, staff carried out a short survey on volunteering, asking young people where they volunteer or would like to volunteer and what they thought were the best aspects of volunteering. The results have given VCWI a snapshot of youth volunteering locally and ideas for future opportunities.



HOME VOLUNTEERS SPREAD WARMTH

This year's VCWI home volunteering Knitting Appeal was a great success. Supporting The Leanne Fund, the Blythswood Appeal and the Knit A Square Project, people of all skill levels joined in, from experienced knitters to those trying their first squares. Patterns for seasoned knitters and instructions for beginners were available, helping everyone take part.

The response to the appeal was fantastic. The squares knitted in the Western Isles will go to the Knit A Square Project in South Africa where they will be sorted and lovingly sewn into blankets by local grandmothers. These blankets will bring warmth and comfort to vulnerable children, showing the real difference that home-based volunteers can make.



Closer to home, beautiful baby knits and toys are passed on to island charity The Leanne Fund for use in their 'Hello Little One' Baby Boxes supporting families affected by cystic fibrosis.

The Knitting Appeal highlights the benefits of home volunteering. Knitters are able to contribute in their own time and from the comfort of their homes, while feeling connected to a wider community. Volunteering in this way allows people to share their skills and make a real impact.

VCWI are sincerely grateful to everyone who contributed to this worthwhile project and look forward to future opportunities for home volunteering across the islands.



**Uist knitter
Sharyon
(above);
wonderful
knits
(left/right)**



Pupils from Sgoil Uig in Lewis give a thumbs up for volunteering!

VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES TAKE SHAPE

In September, Development Worker (Lewis), Bellann, visited Sgoil Uig to speak with pupils about volunteering. Her talk covered who can get involved, the personal and community benefits and the ways in which volunteering helps people to develop useful skills while contributing to local life. The session encouraged pupils to consider how they might support activities within their area.

VCWI plans to work with Sgoil Uig to establish intergenerational projects in the future and invites any community groups or individuals who are interested in learning more or taking part to contact Bellann at lewis@volunteercentrewi.org for further information.

GENERATIONS WORKING TOGETHER CONFERENCE INSPIRES LOCAL INITIATIVES

Development Worker Bellann O'Brien attended the annual **Generations Working Together** (GWT) conference in Inverness at the beginning of October. The event provided an opportunity to meet colleagues from across Scotland and to share updates on projects currently running and being developed in the Western Isles. Keynote presentations were delivered by Alison Clyde, Chief Executive of Generations Working Together, Lorraine George from GWT and Fraser Clark from Youth VIP/Volunteer Matters. Bellann took part in workshops focusing on intergenerational approaches to climate change and the development of intergenerational volunteering initiatives. She first became involved with GWT after meeting Bella Kerr, former Engagement and Training Officer, and expressed her gratitude for Bella's support over the years. Bella has now retired and Corrina Bruce has taken over the role. Corrina visited Uist in October to meet local organisations and assist with planning further GWT projects. For more information, please contact Bellann, Western Isles GWT Co-ordinator, at lewis@volunteercentre.wi.org or see generationsworkingtogether.org





**Speakers at OH-COP2 (top);
Tuning in from Uist (bottom)**

SHAPING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE AT OH-COP2

In September, VCWI staff attended the second island Climate Conference, OH-COP2, organised by Climate Hebrides. The full-day event took place at An Lanntair in Stornoway and was streamed to venues across the islands, including by Uist Council of Voluntary Organisations (UCVO). The conference united communities, local organisations and decision-makers to explore the distinctive climate issues our islands face.

OH-COP2 encouraged dialogue and discussed practical responses to rising sea levels, habitat loss and severe weather. Inspiring speakers, interactive discussions and networking opportunities were crammed into the day, with scope for project collaboration amongst members of the Climate Hub.

The conference concluded with a commitment to reconvene in 2026, with participants emphasising the importance of youth involvement, traditional knowledge and community-led conservation efforts as central to a sustainable future for the Outer Hebrides. For more information visit climatehebrides.com

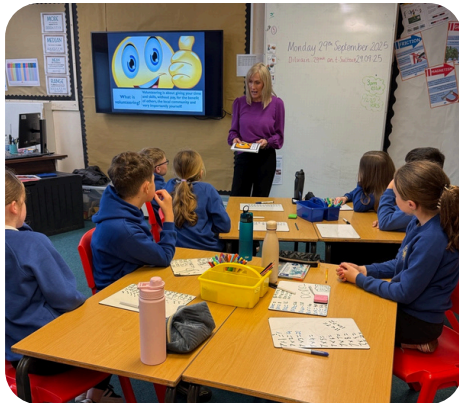
VOLUNTEERING VALUES SHINE AT TONG PRIMARY

It has been a busy time at Tong Primary School. Pupils marked Climate Action Week with a litter clean up that showed real care for the local area. Their effort helped raise awareness of how small actions can support a healthier environment.

VCWI Development Worker (Lewis), Bellann O'Brien, also visited the new Primary 6 class to speak about the value of volunteering. The talk highlighted the successful intergenerational work completed by last year's Primary 6 pupils, who are now in Primary 7. Their contribution continues to inspire younger classes.

And while Primary 6 learned about community involvement, Primary 7 worked on word jigsaws about volunteering, creating a clear reminder that every effort helps and that working toward shared goals can bring people together.

VCWI would like to thank class teacher Shona MacDowall for consistent support of the **intergenerational projects** in Tong. It has been encouraging to see the strong relationships formed between pupils and the ladies who assist with these activities.



Tong Primary pupils take part in a community clean-up (above); Learning about volunteering with VCWI (left)

YOUTH AND PHILANTHROPY INITIATIVE LAUNCH

This year's Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI), run nationally by the Wood Foundation, was launched at the Nicolson Institute at the end of August.

Gayle Duffus, Education Director at the Wood Foundation, joined the winning YPI team from last year for the event and the pupils spoke about their experiences of YPI, where they secured a £3000 grant for local charity, Crossroads.

Supported by VCWI staff, pupils across the Western Isles are preparing to research and collaborate with a wide range of island charities, learning about their vital role in our communities and the intrinsic value of volunteers in their work.



Last year's winners launch YPI at the Nicolson Institute, with Gayle Duffus from The Wood Foundation

For more information on YPI see: thewoodfoundation.org.uk

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Carol and Ada (right) are two of the volunteers who help make **Pre-Loved at CKC**, the charity thrift shop at Claddach Kirkibost Centre in North Uist, such a lovely place to visit and browse for bargains.

Follow Pre-Loved at CKC on Facebook for more information.



After seeing a call for volunteers on social media, **Lindsay** (below) spoke to Donald at **The Failte Centre** in Stornoway to find out more.

She has now been volunteering for four months and has enjoyed every minute. Lindsay helps set tables, serve food to diners and ensure everyone feels welcome.

"I really enjoy volunteering," Lindsay says. "It can be hard work, but everyone is so supportive and it is great fun." Donald, Failte Centre manager, adds that Lindsay has become a valued member of the team and her confidence has grown.

Lindsay has previously achieved a **Saltire Award** for completing over 100 hours of volunteering.



EMPLOYER SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING

Employer Supported Volunteering, often called ESV, is a simple idea. It describes the ways employers help their staff take part in volunteering.

Many people know it by different names, such as corporate, employee or workplace volunteering, but the aim is the same. It encourages staff to give some time to support local groups and community activities.

There is not just one way for employers to offer ESV. Some give paid or unpaid time off so staff can volunteer during the working day. Others share information about local opportunities or include volunteering within training and development programmes. Some employers organise group volunteering days, while others help match staff with roles that suit their interests and skills.

Whatever form it takes, ESV helps employees try something new, meet people and learn useful skills, while also giving valuable support to local organisations. It is a practical way for workplaces to contribute to their communities.

If your company is interested in developing ESV opportunities in the Western Isles, contact VCWI: info@volunteercentrewi.org

Derek (right) is one of a number of valued volunteers who give their time to look after the **War Memorial at Griminish**, Benbecula.



CHRISTMAS APPEAL

This year, VCWI Harris is supporting an appeal for the new **Harris Foodbank**.

Help us build a Harris Foodbank

HARRIS FORUM
Programme / Project / Event
Referral / Booking / Date
Please complete: through community services

Shopping list

- *tinned meat & fish
- *tinned fruit and vegetables
- *jars of curry & pasta sauces
- *packets of rice & pasta
- *dried goods - cereal, teabags, coffee, sugar
- *household cleaning materials
- *longlife milk
- *toiletries - soap, shampoo, deodorant

Drop items off at
Room 12, Old Primary school
Mon 24th Nov - Fri 12th Dec

Keep an eye on social media and local venues for more information on this worthwhile project in the coming weeks.

At this time, any donations can be dropped off to **Room 12** in the **Old Primary School, Tarbert**.

Did you know that annual food price inflation reached 19.2% in March 2023, the highest rate of increase in food price since 1977? (source: *Scottish Island Survey 2023*)

This Christmas, sharing a little can really help a lot!

FOLLOW VOLUNTEER CENTRE WESTERN ISLES ON SOCIALS



FOR VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES:
volunteercentrewi.org

