

**VOLUNTEERS' WEEK 2026**



**Volunteer**  
Centre Western Isles  
Eilean Siar

 **VOLUNTEERS' WEEK**

**1 – 7 June**

**2026**

**#VolunteersWeek**

## VOLUNTEERS HELP REVEAL ANCIENT SECRETS OF UIST

Volunteers from the **Uist Community Archaeology Group** (pictured) recently joined Archaeology Scotland for an excavation at Leac-na-bana-bhuidseach in South Uist as part of an ongoing project following in the footsteps of renowned archaeologist Audrey Henshall. The site, known locally as The Witches Grave, is believed to form part of a robbed Neolithic chambered cairn.

Local volunteer Catherine described the excavation as "a fantastic opportunity" and "a once in a lifetime chance" to closely examine one of the many Neolithic sites in Uist. She said she learned a great deal from the archaeologists and enjoyed working alongside the other volunteers, adding: "Direach sgoinneil."

The excavation also welcomed Michelle, an artist undertaking a residency from New Zealand, who joined the team as a volunteer.



Dr Eleanor Harrison of Archaeology Scotland praised the enthusiasm and dedication of the volunteers, "Having volunteers from Uist Community Archaeology Group on site was fantastic! The mix of people with archaeological experience and those turning up for the first time was great, and lead to really interesting conversations across the trench. The group were a pleasure to work with and we could not have achieved what we did without them."

Dr Harrison also highlighted the excellent engagement shown by pupils from Sgoil Uibhist a Tuath, who impressed staff with their knowledge of archaeology and enthusiasm for learning about the Neolithic heritage of their local area, adding "It was such a great opportunity to be able to link learning to heritage, and to the work being carried out by volunteers in their community."

For more information contact [uist@volunteercentrewi.org](mailto:uist@volunteercentrewi.org)



## GET INVOLVED WITH EQUI-INNSE GALL

Equi-Innse Gall CIC (Community Interest Company), based on the Westside of the Isle of Lewis, provides Equine Facilitated Learning sessions to support mental health, confidence and personal development.

Founded by Lydia and Sharon, the organisation works with rescued horses and ponies from across Scotland and the North of England. Through guided interaction with the animals, participants are encouraged to build communication skills, emotional awareness and self-confidence.

The sessions provide supportive experiences for individuals, groups and teams in a calm outdoor environment.

Equi-Innse Gall CIC is seeking volunteers to support daily yard duties at its Equine Facilitated Learning Centre on the Isle of Lewis. Tasks include stable cleaning, feeding, paddock maintenance and caring for horses. Volunteers should be reliable, physically fit, caring and comfortable working outdoors in all weather conditions. No previous experience is required, own transport essential.

Interested? Contact: [eilidh@volunteercentrewi.org](mailto:eilidh@volunteercentrewi.org)

I enjoy volunteering because of the feeling of wellbeing from working outside and being around these magnificent beasts. There's job satisfaction knowing you've done a good job to help the horses be comfortable and I also appreciate the barn cuppa and craic!  
*Volunteer, Equi-Innse Gall*



Volunteers become part of the team, integral to the care of the equines and their support helps us to provide vital services to islanders. They learn and gain skills as part of the team as we share knowledge and insight into Equine Facilitated Learning.  
*Sharon Emmerson, Equi-Innse Gall*

## WANT TO VOLUNTEER?

Get in touch with your local Volunteer Centre Western Isles office, where our Development Workers can help you discover opportunities that match your interests and skills.

Volunteering can make a real difference to both your community and your own wellbeing. Here's some feedback from a recent participant about their experience with our service.

"I found the service more than useful and accommodating, the suggestions given were amazing and right up my street. I really appreciated you emailing the organisations beforehand as it felt easier to reach out knowing people were expecting to hear from me."

[www.volunteercentrewi.org](http://www.volunteercentrewi.org)  
[info@volunteercentrewi.org](mailto:info@volunteercentrewi.org)

## BRIGHT NEW CHAPTER FOR BRITISH RED CROSS SHOP STORNOWAY

There was a warm welcome as the newly refurbished British Red Cross Shop officially reopened in Stornoway in May. Staff and volunteers worked hard to prepare the shop in time for the special occasion.

It was an especially proud moment for Steven Michel (right) who received an award recognising his long-term volunteering, along with his mum Agnes, and also had the honour of cutting the ribbon to officially open the shop.

Manager Mairi Munro praised the volunteers whose efforts are vital to the busy shop and the British Red Cross Shop team look forward to welcoming customers back into the bright new space.

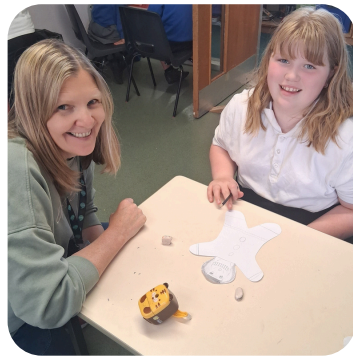


## FROM SCONES TO STORIES: GENERATIONS WORKING TOGETHER

"Bèicearachd, còmhraidh agus a' toirt seachad sgilean agus dualchas chun an ath-ghinealach" ("Baking, chatting and passing on skills and heritage to the next generation")

Bellann O'Brien, VCWI Development Officer (Lewis) and Western Isles Generations Working Together Connector, has been working in partnership with Sgoil Uig to deliver an intergenerational project based on traditional baking skills, *right*.

Pupils learned to make traditional recipes such as pancakes and scones with older community members, gaining both practical skills and learning about island life when the volunteers were growing up.



The Volunteer Centre Western Isles recently welcomed Corinna Bruce, Engagement and Training Officer at Generations Working Together (GWT), *left*, for a busy and inspiring visit focused on intergenerational work across the Western Isles.

**Generations Working Together** is the nationally recognised centre of excellence supporting the development and integration of intergenerational work across Scotland.

During her visit, Corinna visited Sgoil Uig where she led intergenerational activities with pupils and heard about the school's recent project with VCWI. GWT also hosted training and networking sessions for staff and volunteers in both Lewis and Harris, which provided valuable learning and discussion and strengthened connections across the islands.

Intergenerational work continues to show clear benefits, including improved wellbeing, stronger communities and the sharing of skills and knowledge between generations.

For more information on VCWI's intergenerational work contact: [lewis@volunteercentrewi.org](mailto:lewis@volunteercentrewi.org)

## GENERATIONS STITCHING TOGETHER

An intergenerational after-school knitting club, co-ordinated by Katherine MacNeil, VCWI Development Worker (Barra) at Castlebay School, has been bringing together members of the Barra Waulking Group and senior primary pupils.

During the sessions, the children and volunteers knit squares, *right*, which are then sewn into blankets for donation. Supported by funding from the Spagan Community Fund, the project also includes learning and singing Gaelic songs while knitting.

Originally planned to run until Easter, the intergenerational project has been extended until the end of June, due to the enthusiasm of both pupils and volunteers.

[barra@volunteercentrewi.org](mailto:barra@volunteercentrewi.org)



**If your business would like to support the local community through Employer Supported Volunteering, get in touch with the Volunteer Centre Western Isles: [info@volunteercentrewi.org](mailto:info@volunteercentrewi.org)**

## DoE AWARDS POWERED BY VOLUNTEERS

Alice Murray, DoE Operations Manager, really values the input from the volunteers who support young people during their Duke of Edinburgh's Award expeditions.

The volunteers' time, encouragement, patience and commitment make a real difference, helping participants build confidence, resilience and teamwork while taking on new challenges. And we would like to extend our sincere thanks to all of the volunteers across the Western Isles who have supported our young people during their expeditions.

Through the support of volunteers, young people gain skills and create lasting memories that will benefit them for years to come.

Further information on the Duke of Edinburgh's Award can be found at [dofe.org](http://dofe.org)

*Pictured above: DoE Volunteers Malcolm & Joanna setting off on a Bronze Award Expedition, May 2026*



## COMMUNITY SPIRIT SHINES IN TARBERT SPRING CLEAN

Nearly fifty children and young people in Harris joined a community litter pick organised by VCWI Development Worker (Harris), Kathleen Duce, as part of the Keep Scotland Beautiful **#SpringCleanScotland** campaign.

Over two days, volunteers collected over twenty bags of rubbish from around Tarbert, which had a positive impact on the whole village.

Staff from Harris Voluntary Service, *pictured below*, 'downed tools' and supported the effort through

**employer supported volunteering** when the organisation's manager encouraged the team to get involved in the community clean-up.

HVS employees spent two hours helping out in wet conditions and returned to work smiling (although a little damp!).



Thanks go to HVS staff, Sir E Scott School secondary pupils and primary pupils for their contribution.

## VOLUNTEERING PILOT STRENGTHENS COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

A gap in provision identified by VCWI Development Workers in Lewis has led to a partnership with Ark Housing to develop a pilot project introducing service users to volunteering in a supported way.

In collaboration with Laura MacArthur, Care and Support Manager at Ark, Bellann O'Brien and Eilidh Mackay, VCWI Development Workers (Lewis) planned five sessions including volunteering 'tasters' with local organisations in Stornoway.

The design of the pilot project allowed for a range of volunteering, showing participants different opportunities and giving them an idea of the many island organisations which are so well supported by volunteer effort.

As we draw to the end of the pilot project, participants and staff will be evaluating the sessions and celebrating achievements during Volunteers' Week, with the learning taken forward to future volunteering and partnership work.

The project highlights the value of partnership working in widening access to volunteering opportunities across island communities and building stronger community connections together.

With thanks to Fiona at Blythswood Charity Shop, *pictured*, and Joanne at RNLI Stornoway for their time and inputs to the project.

## CELEBRATING VALUABLE VOLUNTEERS

For young people aged 11-25, **Saltire Awards** are a national initiative celebrating, recognising and rewarding the commitment and contribution of young volunteers in Scotland.

Young volunteer, Hannah, has been logging Saltire hours through her volunteering with Blood Cancer UK - Western Isles, helping to raise money for life-saving research and supporting people affected by blood cancer.

I helped at the Walk of Light fundraiser at Coll Beach and I also sold my baking to raise money. I enjoy volunteering because I like helping people and raising awareness of blood cancer.

Well done Hannah!

Saltire Awards are supported by VCWI Development Workers across the Western Isles, and make recording volunteering easy.

Sign up to Saltire at [saltireawards.scot](https://saltireawards.scot)  
[saltire@volunteercentrewi.org](mailto:saltire@volunteercentrewi.org)



Have you worked with a volunteer who has gone the extra mile? Or has your organisation recently delivered an event with the help of a dedicated team you would like to thank?

The Volunteer Centre Western Isles offers awards that help recognise and celebrate volunteer contribution.

The **Kisimul Award** acknowledges sustained commitment from volunteers over 26 years of age and can also be used to mark individual events.

The **Clisham Award** celebrates long term, often unseen support from volunteers who consistently exceed expectations in their voluntary roles.

[info@volunteercentrewi.org](mailto:info@volunteercentrewi.org)

# THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer Centre Western Isles  
LEWIS - HARRIS - UIST - BARRA

*Actively encouraging, supporting and promoting  
volunteering across the Western Isles*

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For volunteering opportunities:



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