

BCA AGM 2026: Chair's Report (Kirsty O'Connor)

Berneray Community Association committee continues to be a great team, friendly and co-operative, with everyone contributing their best, as they can. We gained 2 new members at last years AGM - Jinny and Maggie - but Maggie has had to stand down (although she's now a stalwart volunteer) - and Emilie has moved back to France. We definitely need some enthusiastic souls to join us - especially since Viv will be leaving later in the year. She has been a great contributor - way beyond her role as assistant secretary (particularly good at grant applications!) And will be very much missed.

Again we had a successful Berneray Week in 2025 with lots of events - but were very stretched for staffing at times (serving burgers anyone?). Meg took over organising its a Knockout which was brilliant! But we need to get more help this year and hopefully the Volunteer What's App group which has been working well, will go some way towards that. 2026 is the 40th Anniversary and we're hoping to commemorate that - including an anniversary Picnic on Pabbay - but also trying to have less events this year...is that possible?

Table Top sales continued through the summer. Not so many stall holders and sometimes less people coming but the new look soup and scone / tea and cake cafe has gone down well and makes us more money, along with the 2nd hand clothes and bric-a-brac stall. Maybe some more new ideas required?

The hall continues to be an indispensable centre for the community. It is regularly used by the community council, more recently - weekly yoga classes and for one off events including two weddings. There was a brilliant concert by Sian with an organiser saying Berneray Hall is the nicest in Uist! However without the German music summer school, overall usage was probably down on last year. The festive tea was a lovely get-together, as was the Easter Monday one - though less well attended this year than last. The After-Xmas dinner and dance organised by Jinny with the formidable Berneray Ladies was a great event.

A lot of maintenance and repairs have been done in the last year and Bruce has been brilliant at looking after the building and doing some of that work. Roddy MacVicar cut an expansion joint in the floor in May which resolved the vexing issue of the floor getting swollen in damp weather. We then replaced the old heating system - since it had to come out anyway to enable the work. A joint effort of Kirsty's research, Viv's successful grant application and Bruce's last minute interventions meant we had the system paid for and installed in October, and then Cassy figured out the wifi controls! We had the end wall painted - some people love it and other's hate it - and it does go a very bright emerald in some photos! The shed which hadn't been touched for years got cleared in a communal effort and there are ongoing repairs.

We managed (it was a lengthy process!) to invest some of our money in a high interest account for a year. However ongoing financial concerns are - the impact the Bank of Scotland leaving Uist will have on us - AND a massive (£6,000) fuel bill from SSE that we're currently disputing...

Future plans include reviving the option of purchasing a shipping container to store the hall furniture and free up the back room. This would enable us to look at other possibilities in using the building.

I hope I've not left anything or anyone out? So - we've kept the community hall going - you can see that it's a big job! Thanks to everyone (not forgetting Ashleigh who's been great at the advertising) for their hard work through the year - especially -as ever- Chrissie who looks after the money (and everything else!). Thank you!