



Harris  
Voluntary  
Service



Annual  
Report  
2023/4



# ABOUT US

**Harris Voluntary Services exists to support community groups and charities based in the Isle of Harris. We are a membership organisation and offer our members the following services:**

- Third Sector support on governance, charity law, and related issues.
- Funding updates, advice, and applications on behalf of voluntary organisations.
- Access to office services e.g. computer, scanner, projector, printer, photocopier and half-price advertising in the Dè tha dol?
- Training, workshops, and events relevant to Third Sector organisations.

**HVS is also committed to the improvement of our local community. Over the years, much of our activity has thus focused on service provision, including:**

- Youth activities, peer-support for people living with long-term conditions and chronic pain, and events targeting social isolation.
- Harris Hardship Fund, available to anyone struggling in Harris.
- Direct Payment support, payroll support for organisation who need it.

# CHAIR'S REPORT

2024 has been a busy year in many ways. Since the Chair's sudden illness, the position of Acting Chair was filled on a temporary basis. Fortunately for HVS and the community, Juliette Desportes (our Development Manager), ably assisted by Judi Dolton (our Finance and Administrator), have ensured that HVS has continued to run smoothly, move forward with projects, and meet and support the needs of the community and local residents. Juliette has continued to build links with various groups and member organisations within our community.

Looking at our activities in a little more detail, the Hardship Fund ("A Hand Up") has continued to confidentially support locals who find themselves in times of hardship. This has been through making one-off grants for up to £500 to support heating costs, essential home items and other similar costs. Since the last AGM we have had 16 applications, of which 15 have been granted and 1 rejected.

In partnership with the Third Sector Interface Western Isles, we have distributed a number of important funds, including the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund which has in Harris has supported important projects such as Musical Memories, and the Local Authority Covid Economic Recovery Fund (LACER). The latter has provided 100 electric blankets to Harris residents, with 68 going to residents over 80. LACER funding has also played a key part in being able to offer financial support for West Harris Trust (the "Growing West Harris" project), Tarbert Day Centre, Obbe Day Centre, Riannagan Og, and Café 34 in Leverburgh.

We also continue to administer the Western Isles Lottery which this year has been instrumental in delivering the many improvements you can see throughout the village thanks to the work of Tarbert in Bloom.

The Summer Playscheme ran again during July this year following a prolonged absence. Running over 6 days, it received over 200 bookings and was ably supported by various partners and local business, resulting in the scheme being an outright success.

This year has also seen us taking on a new “Communication and Project Officer”, and we were very lucky to have Alena Bihan-Gallic apply, and duly be appointed. One of the main duties of this post is to produce the fortnightly Dè tha dol? to which Alena has brought a fresh pair of eyes, building on the excellent work started by Louisa MacDougall. She has subtly changed the format to make it more engaging and inclusive to all audiences, so it is not surprising that its readership continues to increase, that Dè tha dol? is seen as an important part of distributing information, giving entertainment to locals and subscribers, and that it is also being recognised within wider publishing circles.

Regarding engaging with members and the community, we have hosted regular coffee mornings, and one of our own Directors, Lucy Macdonald, has set up Spoon Café, a peer support group for people living with long term conditions and chronic pain.

The monthly HVS Member’s Newsletter continues to provide our Member organisations with Third Sector updates and help identifying funding streams.

We have been delighted to welcome two new Directors to the Board this year, Gemma Campbell and Tania Macleod. They both bring strong links with the local community and local business, and a clear drive to make things better and offer more opportunities within Harris. As a result, the Board exhibits a wide range of experiences and a broad skill set, they give of their time willingly and freely, and this will enable us to continue looking at our systems, our operating procedures and structures to ensure openness and clarity in providing support to our members and all ages of our local community.

Our 60th Anniversary Celebration event was very well supported by members, former Board Directors, and the local community. It celebrated its achievements throughout the last sixty years, and demonstrated the value of HVS to the community.

This year, we are losing some key players from HVS. Four of our Directors, Susan Rasmussen, Gemma Campbell, Paul Munro, and John Mitchell are stepping down having helped guide us through some key appointments and decisions. We have said goodbye to Juliette Desportes our HVS Manager who has been instrumental in liaising with key groups within Harris (and further afield) whilst drawing business and agencies together in the early stage of drawing up the Youth Hub – we wish her well in her new position. Finally, Judi Dolton has decided to retire from HVS and her Administrative Officer role. Over the years she has worked meticulously for us, ensuring that HVS has run smoothly, extremely effectively and efficiently, and these qualities have ensured that HVS has achieved what it has. We would like to thank them all for their service and wish them all the very best for the future.

**DAVE LOOMS**

# DEVELOPMENT MANAGER'S REPORT

It has been a busy year for Harris Voluntary Service. As we adapt to the challenges of post-pandemic life, we also have had to face the realities brought in by the cost of living crisis and its impact on our communities. While funding streams have become scarce, reliance on volunteers to deliver essential services is ever increasing, putting unprecedented pressure on our Third Sector.

We were pleased to be able to support the most vulnerable among us over these winter months by distributing electric blankets to Harris residents over the age of 80, as well as managing our ongoing Hardship Fund. Requests for financial support seem to be increasing, and I am proud to say that HVS contributed, albeit in a small way, to efforts to mitigate the impact of soaring energy prices.

This year has also seen the return of a historic HVS project: the Summer Playscheme, which ran for 6 days in July. I am happy to share that the activities were all a resounding success, and I would particularly like to thank our HVS Communications and Project Officer, Alena, for her help with planning and delivery, as well as all the volunteers, sponsors, and parents who made the project happen.

The highlight of my year as Development Manager has been preparing for, and then delivering, our 60th anniversary celebrations, including a small exhibition reflecting on the achievements of HVS over six decades. It is humbling to be part of an organisation with such a rich history of community support and partnership working, both within the Harris community and as part of Third Sector Interface Western Isles.

Finally, as I prepare to handover to the next Development Manager, I would like to say a big thank you to all my colleagues for their continued support and to the HVS Board for trusting me to lead this historic organisation this past year.

**JULIETTE DESPORTES**



# CELEBRATING 60 YEARS



**On Friday 4 October 2024, Harris Voluntary Service celebrated its 60th anniversary in style at the Tarbert Community Centre.**

The event marked sixty years of community achievements with ceilidh and a small exhibition showcasing some of the biggest projects led by HVS, then Harris Council of Social Service. From the first ever Harris tourist guide published in the late 1960s, to the creation of the *Dè tha dol?* in 1979 and the massive fundraising efforts which led to the construction of the Harris Sports Centre in the 1990s, HVS has been a key figure of the Third Sector landscape in the Western Isles these past six decades.



**Here is to the next sixty years!**



# THIRD SECTOR WESTERN ISLES

**Harris Voluntary Service has been a member of Third Sector Interface (TSI) Western Isles since 2010. TSIs are funded by the Scottish Government to provide a single point of access for support and advice for the Third Sector locally.**

TSI Western Isles is a Partnership TSI, including:

- Harris Voluntary Service (HVS)
- Voluntary Action Barra & Vatersay (VABV)
- Volunteer Centre Western Isles (VCWI)
- Uist Council of Voluntary Organisations (UCVO)
- Volunteering Hebrides (VH)
- Outer Hebrides Social Economy Partnership (OHSEP)

This year, we have continued to deliver the key outcomes set by the Government and support our communities, for example by delivering the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults.



## Our Mission:

To be be **a source of knowledge** for the Third Sector

To ensure **a strong voice for the sector** at a strategic level

**Build capacity** of voluntary organisations, community groups, and social enterprises

**Connect** and co-ordinate the local Third Sector

# TACKLING THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

With energy prices soaring, HVS supported vulnerable Harris residents by distributing free electric blankets to people over 80 years of age. Funding for this project was secured as part of the Government's Local Authority Covid Economic Recovery fund. A total of £11,000 was spent on direct grants to individuals, and £6,880 distributed to local groups seeking to address poverty and social isolation.



HARRIS RELIEF FUND

**A HAND UP**



HVS distributes the HVS Hardship Fund to individuals in need. This year, the fund was distributed both via direct requests and referrals from the Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP). A total of £3,977,35 was distributed this last financial year.



# COMMUNITY SUPPORT

One of HVS' key missions is to support local charities and community groups by providing advice and support regarding funding or governance.

4

organisations supported with running and setting up a community group

5

organisations supported with delivering a project or activity

11

organisations supported with funding or fundraising advice

2023/24

# CASE STUDIES

## TARBERT IN BLOOM

Tarbert in Bloom was set up this year by HVS Director Tania MacLeod and Jocelyn Corduroy. Noticing that the village could use some maintenance and improvements, Tania and Jocelyn sourced funding from Western Isles Lottery, amongst others.



Funding was then used to cut the grass, trim the trees, and plant some flowers for the enjoyment of all around Tarbert. The work achieved in a year's time truly reflects the importance of volunteers in a small community.

## Spoon Café



## SPOON CAFÉ

With support from HVS Director and Chair of the Harris Disability Access Panel Lucy MacDonald, HVS set up 'Spoon Café', a peer-support group for adults living with chronic pain and long term conditions.

The group meets once a month in person, and is providing an inclusive, confidential, and safe space for people to share.

# SUMMER PLAYSCHEME

**This year, the Harris Voluntary Service Summer Playscheme was back! We were thrilled to deliver such a fantastic event again, after years of interruption due to Covid-19.**

Over the course of 6 days in July, we organised 12 activities, provided 110 packed lunches, and received 204 bookings. From scavenger hunts, to surfing, to drawing, and kayaking, local children got to make the most of their school holidays.

The event was a big success thanks to the support of volunteers, sponsors, and funders: it could not have happened without the dedication and generosity of many in this community.



# SCARR-HALL AWARDS



Since 1994, Mr Iain Scarr-Hall has presented an annual award to community members in recognition of voluntary effort, with support from HVS.

This year, recipients were Roddy Ferguson, nominated for his work at the church as well as many other community initiatives, Catherine Macleod for her work organising events for all age groups in Scalpay, Emma Mackinnon for supporting young musicians and setting up a youth shinty club, and Gordon Ness for his tireless contributions to the improvement of Scalpay.

**Congratulations all!**

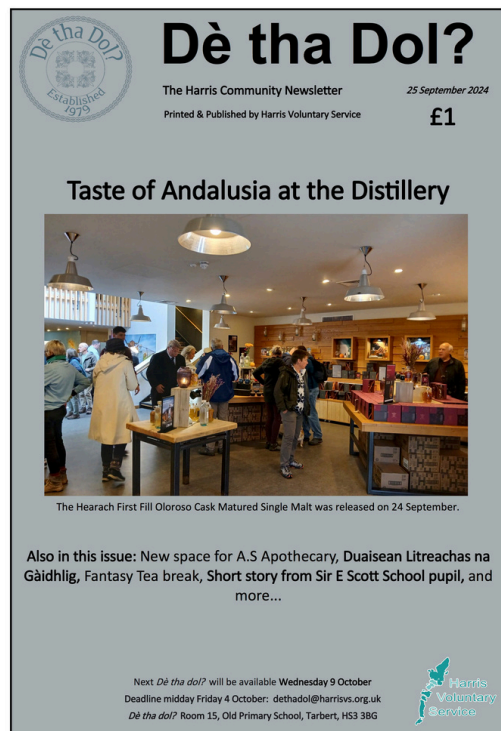


# KEEPING THE COMMUNITY INFORMED

**Harris Voluntary Service has published the Harris community newspaper for the past four decades.**

This year, great strides were taken to improve the content and layout of *Dè tha Dol?* by new editors, first Louisa MacDougall, and then Alena Bihan-Gallic.

***Dè tha dol?* was nominated for Community Newspaper of the Year 2024 at the Highlands and Islands Press Ball Media Awards.**





# GETTING IN TOUCH

Harris Voluntary Service

Room 12

Old Primary School

West Tarbert

[admin@harrisvs.org.uk](mailto:admin@harrisvs.org.uk)

01859 502 171

