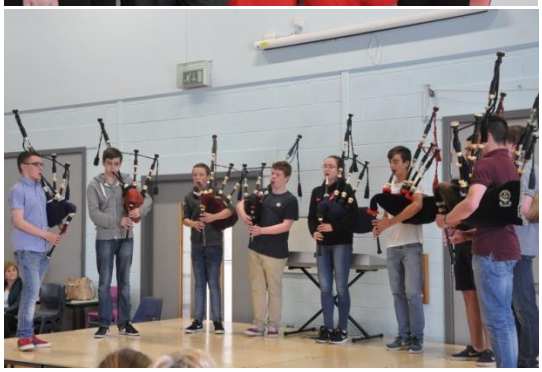

ceòlas

Uibhist Ltd.

Aithisg Bhliadhnail Annual Report

October 2016

Buidheachas / Acknowledgements

BÒRD NA GÀIDHLIG

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

HIE
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Iomairt na Gaidhealtachd 's nan Eilean

money raised by healthKind through The Health Lottery

people's health trust

The Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

CREATIVE SCOTLAND
ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

LOTTERY FUNDED

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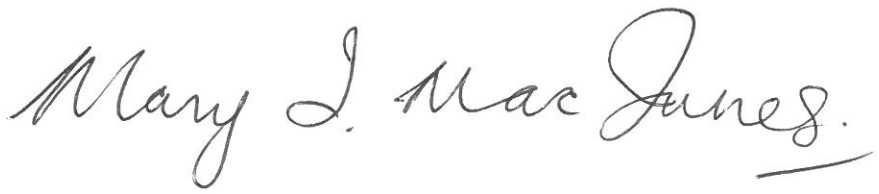
1. Chairperson's Introduction

I am pleased to be presenting the Ceòlas Uibhist Ltd annual report for 2015 – 2016. It is a summary of the main activities in which Ceòlas has engaged in over the last year. Ceòlas has, over time, developed to be one of Scotland's key Gàidhlig and traditional music organisations while remaining rooted in the community in which it belongs – Uist in the Outer Hebrides.

Significant progress has been made on the ambitious project Cnoc Soilleir, building a centre for Gàidhlig arts, traditional music and associated activities in conjunction with Lews Castle College UHI. A project of this magnitude is not undertaken lightly. Although the challenges are great the opportunities are far greater. Moving to firmly establishing the Gàidhlig arts as an economic asset and income generator at the heart of our community is our ambition. I would like to thank our stakeholders and partners in supporting us as we work to make this a reality.

Ceòlas' staff team is small in number however massive in output and the tireless efforts and support of the local community is what has given us such a good reputation across the globe. From our humble beginnings we have developed year-on-year, and we are well aware that although we are living in difficult times, we have confidence that the best is yet to come.



MT MacInnes

Chairperson

2. Ceòlas Summer School 3-8 July 2016.

The Ceòlas Summer School was a very successful event. This year, 107 people attended the daily classes. There was good interest in all subjects offered with Gàidhlig classes being the most popular. This is the first time that Gàidhlig, as a core subject at the Summer School, has attracted the highest numbers. Gàidhlig was delivered at three levels; beginner, intermediate and fluent. All students at the summer school have the opportunity to attend the daily *Gàidhlig for All* classes with six levels of tuition being offered from complete beginner to fluent.

Iain MacDonald, the artistic director, brought in several new tutors to the tuition team and the Scottish and Cape Breton aspect complemented each other very well.

Evaluations were very positive with good comments and remarks on the quality of the tuition, the organisation, and as usual, the high level of hospitality to be found in South Uist. However, several commented on how expensive the week is for those who travel to, and take accommodation on, the Island. Several people also commented on the poor quality of food and service in the local hotels.

The evening programme was centred on the halls and hotels in the south end of South Uist. The Ceòlas team was supported by local people in leading a range of events. A total of 1800 participated in these events with an increase in local participation. Attendance was high, with 44% being local and 56% being visitors. This interest from the local community was welcomed by the Ceòlas board.

A trend is emerging that participants are booking closer to the beginning of the summer school and this year 25 reserved their places on registration day. This creates a challenge for the organising team as tutors are booked well in advance and if class sizes are too small or too large, tutors cannot be easily cancelled or additional quality tutors recruited.

3. Symposium Tìr tha Taitneach: *Howbeg, Snishival & Howmore*

The symposium has become a popular event, based around the north end of South Uist and focuses on local history, traditional activities and heritage. The symposium has become an acclaimed three-day event with local people and visitors. It is run entirely through the medium of Gàidhlig**. Each year a central theme or district is chosen around which talks and activities are delivered** in Iochdar School. The formal programme is comprised of workshops, talks and walks which take participants to places of interest. A lively evening programme complements the event with a community quiz - known to make or break friendships; a piping recital and high quality final concert presented by the popular local broadcaster Morag Dhòmhnallach. This year the theme was Howbeg, Snishival & Howmore; Tìr tha Taitneach. There were opportunities to learn about the Paisley bard, Donald MacIntyre and visit his birthplace. A moving tribute was led by Gillebride MacMillan and Donald John MacDonald.

Tommy MacDonald, Howmore, delivered an informative talk on the research work undertaken by the late Gill MacLean who lived in Howmore. Several people present remembered Gill fondly and how she laboured to record the precious history of the area.

Ailean MacDonald, Glenuig, illustrated the importance of fairies to Gàidhlig culture. This led to lively discussion. At the Piping recital, Stuart Liddell, one of the world's foremost pipers today, was well received by the discerning Uist piping audience. Morag Dhòmhnallach rose to her usual high standards in hosting the mid-week concert at Talla an Iochdair. The whole event was very well supported, with local attendance being at 85%

DiDòmhnaich 24

3pm	**Mass** at St Michael's, Ardkenneth	4pm	**Family Activity Day**, Games – Bouncy Castle
BBQ	Cooking demonstration, Genealogy.		
7:30pm	**Quiz** – Iochdar School		

DiLuain 25

11am	**Gillebride MacMillan** – "Paisley Bard" Talk followed by Singing Circle of Bards songs.
2pm	**Air Chuairt** – Walk around Howbeg and Snishival. Visiting Paisley Bard and French MacDonald home sites.
8pm	**Piping Recital** – Stuart Liddell - Talla an Iochdair

DiMàirt 26

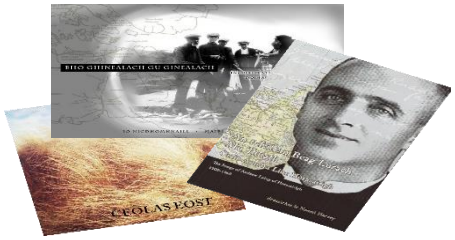
11. am	**Allan MacDonald** Talk 'Sìthichean agus an saoghal eile ann an òrain Ghàidhlig 's ceòl' Discussion re local sites
	Singing Circle, **Songs from the 45** Gillebride MacMillan
2.30pm	Ecumenical Service for Thanksgiving in Howmore Church
	Becky Rennell (Archaeologist) – "Early Ecclesiastical Howmore" / Tommy **MacDonald** "Dileab Jill"
3.30pm	**Air Chuairt** –walk along Howmore River
8pm	**Cèilidh** – Community Cèilidh - Bean an Taighe: Mòrag Dhòmhnallach with Gillebride MacMillan & Ceilidh Trails
	Nan Eilean – Talla an Iochdair

4. Song Conference Dileab EOST

The weekend song conference has become a regular event in the Ceòlas calendar. This is the legacy of the European Oral Singing Tradition (EOST) project which awakened interest across Uist and beyond in unpublished Gàidhlig song. Strong relationships have been developed with the North Uist communities and this year events were held at Taigh Sgìre Sholais, Kildonan Museum, and Lochboisdale Hotel. Song circles and workshops were delivered by Naomi Harvey, Ailean MacDonald, Gillebride MacMillan and Jo MacDonald.

The highlight of the conference was the book launch held in Lochboisdale Hotel, Bho Ghinealach gu Ginealach. This book was created by Jo MacDonald and Mary Ann Campbell to celebrate the enormous contribution of the Campbell family to Uist song. The family over a space of three generations produced eight bards and their work is still well known in the Uist community. The event at Lochboisdale Hotel was attended by over 70 people and captured the original ceilidh with every song from the family and often by the family

Although some of these events attracted only a small number of participants, they are significant for transferring knowledge across generations and for sharing community experiences about local bards and their lives.



5. Winter Festival 2015

Ceòlas is contributing to the Events Scotland programme by extending its programme with a mini-festival in the winter over St Andrews Day, Hogmanay and Burns Night. Unfortunately the severe weather impacted on these plans with the St Andrew's night having to be cancelled.

The Hogmanay Festival ran over four days and was modelled on the Summer School with classes during the day and entertainment in the evenings. Angus Nicholson, Allan Henderson, Sìneag MacIntyre and Alana MacInnes were the artistic team. The main venue, Grogarry Lodge, provided a comfortable and welcoming environment which lent itself well to enjoyment against the harsh winter conditions.

6. Gàidhlig Immersion for Teachers: GIFT

Gàidhlig immersion training for teachers is a developing area for Ceòlas and this year three weeks of tuition were very successfully delivered. This work is undertaken in partnership with Strathclyde University and Bòrd na Gàidhlig. This initiative is tailored to run in tandem with established Ceòlas events, so that teachers in training can have a full 'Uist experience' of the culture and language being used in an authentic setting. The first week was run in late April to coincide with the Song Conference. Eight students and three tutors from Strathclyde University attended. Four teachers attended the subsequent events at the Summer School and Symposium. Feedback from the respective weeks was positive and with the following recommendations.

- Ceòlas should continue to work with the University of Strathclyde's GIFT programme
- Ceòlas should investigate the possibility of obtaining accreditation for the Short Courses
- Ceòlas should improve their marketing of its Gàidhlig courses

7. Buttons & Bows: Fiddle and Accordion Tuition across Uist

People's Health Lottery funded a 20-month project to introduce to children aged eight upwards and adults who wished to develop their skills in fiddle and accordion. A programme of tuition has been established in various venues in North Uist, Benbecula and South Uist for adults and children. The tutors are Allan Henderson and Uilleam Morrison. There are 40 children taking part and ten adults. Performance is a key element of the programme and several opportunities have been made available for everyone who is involved. This has resulted in wide public interest in this initiative.

8. Diaspora Visits

Music on the Machair: Celtic Connections 2016

Ceòlas, in collaboration with Lews Castle College UHI and Taigh Chearsabhagh, presented a showcase event at Celtic Connections in Glasgow named 'Music from the Machair' in 2016. This showcased Ceòlas' tutors and students from Lews Castle College, Benbecula and the strong Gàidhlig tradition demonstrated through music, song and dance. Taigh Chearsabhagh provided the background projections and films which enhanced the performance. The event was held in the Old Fruitmarket with an audience of over 800. An essential part of Ceòlas - the Cape Breton element – was represented by Rodney MacDonnell and Colin MacDonald from the Gàidhlig College

Am Bothan

In May 2016, Ceòlas hosted a ceilidh in Am Bothan as part of Tradfest week in Edinburgh. This was an opportunity for marketing the Ceòlas Summer School, Winter Festival and Symposium and informing those interested in traditional music of the wider ambitions of Ceòlas Uibhist Ltd.

The night was sold out and was a great success. Fin Moore and Helen MacInnes forged relationships with Alasdair MacKay of Am Bothan and plans are in place for a bigger event later this year.

9. Awards 2015-2016

In November 2015, Ceòlas won the International Category in the MG ALBA/Daily Record Gàidhlig Awards. Shona MacKay and Josie Burgess, who are Ceòlas committee members, attended and collected the award. This prestigious award is an indicator of the regard Ceòlas is held in by the Gàidhlig world.

Guthan an Iar won an Epic Award for voluntary organisations by popular vote. Marion Morrison and Gillebride MacMillan travelled to Cardiff to accept the award which is now housed in Kildonan Museum.

Peer Award Winner 2016

Ceòlas was a runner up in the National Lottery Good Causes Awards for 2016. Results came in mid-August after a very busy campaign by Ceòlas attracting local and international support. Great fun was had on South Uist Games Day getting people to vote as it was the final day possible.

10. Social Media

Ceòlas have an active face book page with 1174 likes (on 28 Nov. 16) as well as a Twitter page with 937 followers (on 28 Nov. 16). These are used to advertise our events and keep-in-touch with our supporters and part participants.

11. Cnoc Soilleir

The Cnoc Soilleir project has made substantial progress in 2016 and is on-target to open its doors in summer 2019. Ceòlas is confident that Cnoc Soilleir will support **sustainable economic and population growth in Uist through culture, heritage and education**. The partnership between a Ceòlas and Lews Castle College remains at the core of the project and will be key to the success and deliverability of the Cnoc Soilleir Centre. The project continues to develop with support from stakeholders at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Creative Scotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Scottish Government Languages Directorate and the Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The partnership also has commitment from Stòras Uibhist for a long-term lease for the land at Cnoc Soilleir, and support from the Church of Scotland.

The case for support for the project has been strengthened by an addendum to the original **architect's feasibility study**, prepared by John Renshaw Architects, completion and agreement by the partnership of the **Cnoc Soilleir Business Case**, and an **Economic Impact Assessment (EIA),** prepared by Steve Westbrook and generously funded by the Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The Architect's Addendum Report includes a revised design proposal, costs and project plan, a topographic and peat depth survey and quantity surveyor's report. The revised project plan includes a two phased construction process to accommodate varying grant conditions; Phase 1 covers groundworks and associated preparation, Phase 2 covers building superstructure. The report, and associated surveys, brings the project to RIBA Work Stage 4. The partnership plans to issue invitations to tender for the Phase 1 design team and contractors early in 2017.

Figure 1: Concept design of the building at Cnoc Soilleir © John Renshaw Architects

The Business Case includes details about the proposed core business of the new centre - the activities that will take place there, who will use it, how and when – and explains the proposed ownership, governance and management structures, supported by projected finances, operational income and costs. The EIA highlights the benefits of this project for Uist and the wider Highlands and Islands region. Direct and indirect job creation as a result of the Cnoc Soilleir project will equal c.41.5 fulltime equivalent employees in Uist by Year 5, with predicted annual earnings of £1 million. In addition to these employment benefits, it is expected that activities enabled by Cnoc Soilleir will increase the population in Uist by a further 50.

The project has been received very favourably by UHI, who have ranked Cnoc Soilleir as one of their highest priority projects in a suite of bids submitted to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) for capital grant support earlier his year. We are hopeful that SFC will commit funds to the project in the New Year. A bid made to the Big Lottery earlier this year was unfortunately unsuccessful. However, we are delighted that one of stakeholder organisations, who fully recognises the need and value of this project, has made a grant offer that mitigates this shortfall in the capital investment strategy. This capital grant will be formally announced early in 2017.

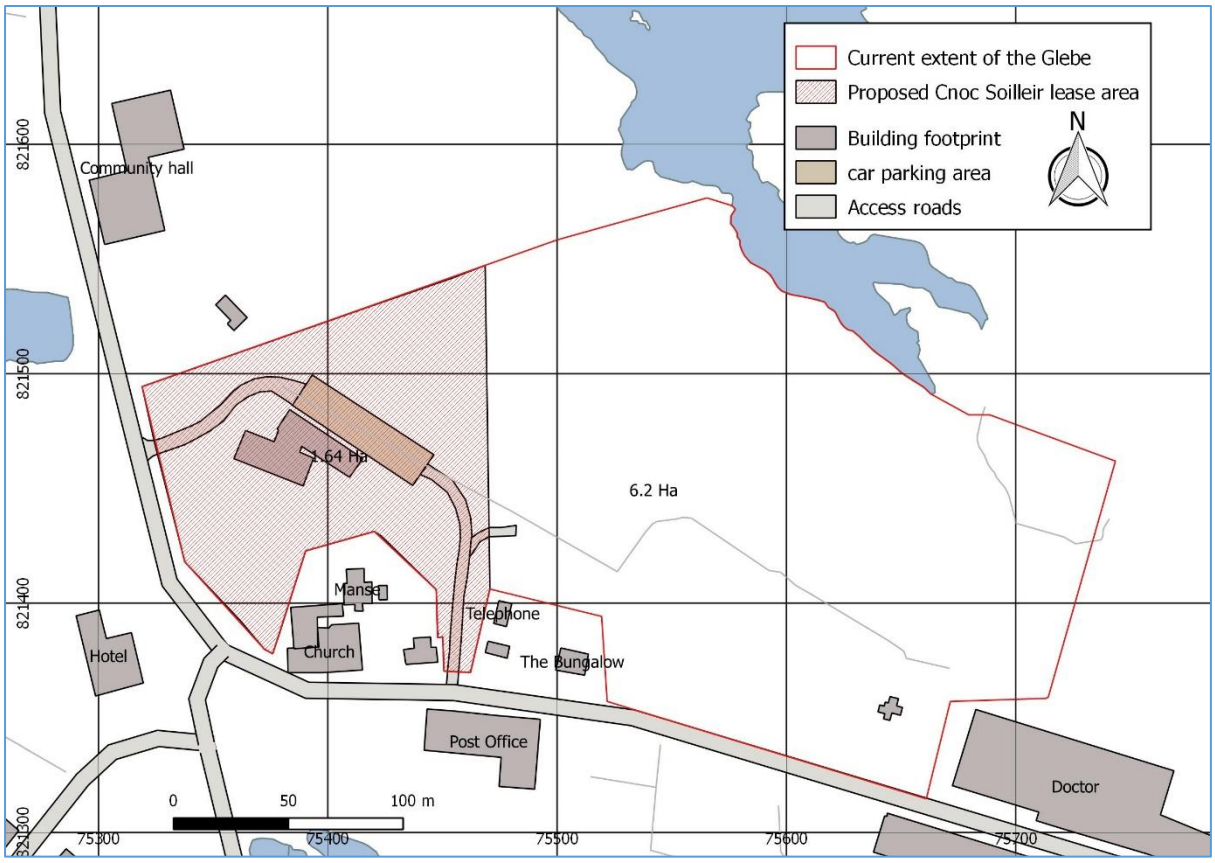
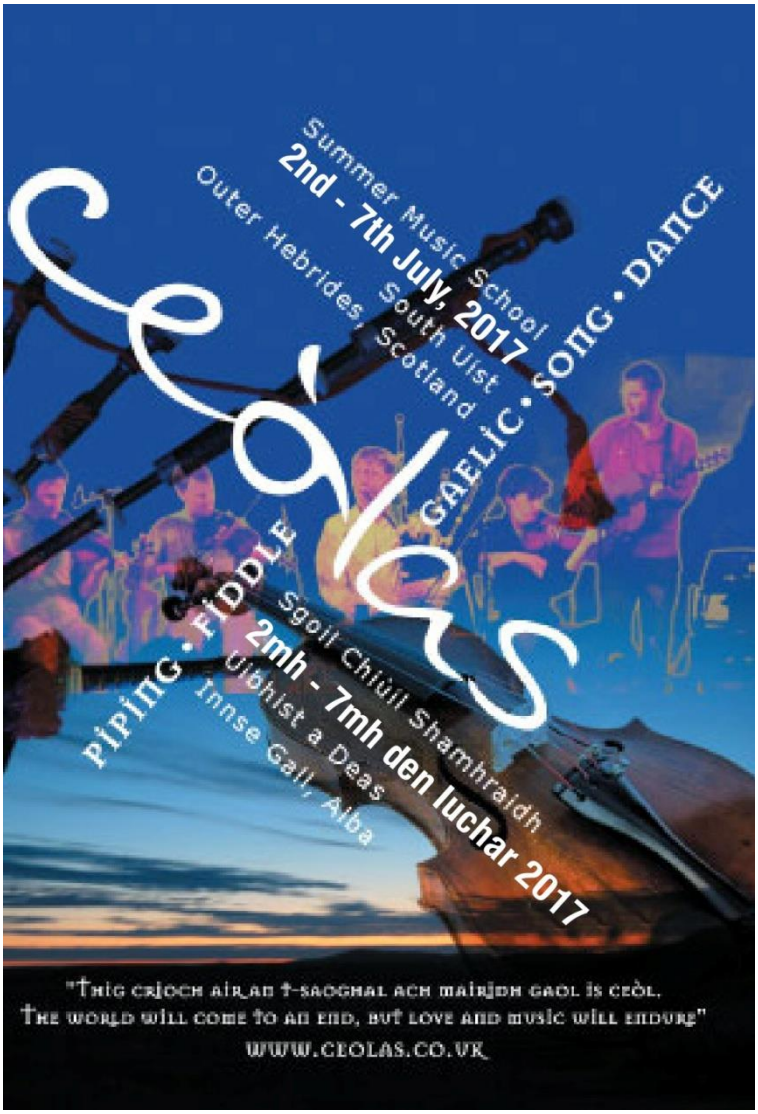


Figure 2: Proposed layout of the building, car-park area and access at Cnoc Soilleir


Summer Music School
2nd - 7th July, 2017
Outer Hebrides, Scotland
South Uist
GAELIC • SONG • DANCE
ceòlas
PIPING • FIDDLE
Sgoil Chiùil Shamhraidh
2mh - 7mh den luchar 2017
Uibhist a Deas
Innse Gall, Alba
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The world will come to an end, but love and music will endure"
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