

## **HARRIS LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP GETS UNDERWAY, MARCH 2011**

Since the recent approval of £158,000 from LEADER Innse Gall, it's been all systems go for Harris Development Limited, embarking on the delivery of an ambitious programme of heritage projects known as the Landscape Partnership Scheme, involving a £1.2 million funding package.

The 16 projects involved will help to secure the future of some of Harris' most precious heritage assets and will focus on spreading the word about the special qualities of the area and its culture.

Twelve Harris Tweed weavers will be trained in the coming year, tripling the numbers of active weavers in Harris (see feature on page xx/below).

A touring exhibition on Harris Tweed is being developed, intended for launch in a prominent Scottish venue before touring to a range of other UK and overseas venues.

Ultimately, the goal is to have the exhibition housed permanently in a suitable venue in Harris. In the meantime, the exhibition will meet the needs of organisations and businesses keen to have high quality interpretation materials to promote not only Harris Tweed, but the special nature of the landscape, culture and way of life from which the cloth is created.

A sophisticated website is being designed which will showcase the landscape of Harris and provide a one-stop-shop for information on all aspects of Harris life, history, Gaelic culture, archaeology, wildlife, outdoor and leisure activities.

A 'Discover Harris' guide book and weather-proof map, books on Harris song and stories and a CD of Harris Gaelic Songs will also be produced, complementing and expanding on the maps, written information, audio and video available through the website.

Consolidation works will be undertaken on the medieval chapel near Northton this summer to strengthen the structure of a much loved local monument which is currently in danger of collapse.



*The chapel in its current condition, The Scarista Grave Slab, thought to be from the Iona school of carving*

Archaeological fieldwork will also be carried out on the land surrounding the chapel. This will enable better interpretation of the broch which partly underlies the chapel and the several other archaeological features in the nearby area.

This work will take place over three weeks beginning on the 20th of June 2011. Birmingham Archaeology will work with the Harris archaeology group Linn gu Linn, on this project, providing activities and guided tours for local schools along the way. The fieldwork site will also be open to the general public.

A very special hidden monument will soon be accessible to the public through the creation of a replica. Shortly after it was discovered in the 1990's, the intricately carved medieval grave slab in Scarista grave yard was re-covered with turf to protect it from weathering.

To enable people to appreciate the beauty of the monument, the skill of the mason who carved it, and learn what is known of the story behind it, the decision was taken to create a replica of the stone for display and interpretation outside the graveyard, thus maintaining the sanctity of the burial itself.

Work on the new Allt na Creige native woodland, to be established on the hill behind Sir E Scott Secondary School, began in January and has progressed very quickly (see feature on page xx/below).

Further native woodland plantings are proposed as part of the Landscape Partnership Scheme, at Molinginis and at a location elsewhere in Harris as yet to be decided.

Alongside the Discover Harris heritage trail guide, improvements to paths, car parking, signage, interpretation and related amenities are proposed, to

ensure that the sites featured in the guide are as easily accessible as possible.

Two new posts are currently being recruited to help deliver this programme – the Community Participation Officer and the Finance & Admin Assistant (see advert for further details).

Commenting on recent developments with the Landscape Partnership HDL Chair, Mal Hall said, 'Raising the funds has been a long and taxing process, so we are especially delighted to be able to move forward with these exciting projects at last. I would like to thank those who contributed their input in developing the Landscape Partnership projects over the years and we look forward to involving them and many others in the community as we move forward and make these projects a reality.'

The main funding organisation for the Landscape Partnership Scheme is the Heritage Lottery Fund who will be contributing £580,000 over the course of the three-year delivery phase. Other funding bodies, aside from LEADER, include Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Scottish Natural Heritage, Historic Scotland, Harris Tweed Authority, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Harris Tweed Hebrides.

***By Joan Cumming, Landscape Partnership Manager for Harris Development Limited***