

THE PAIRC LANDSCAPE PROJECT

A Journey Through
Nature, Memory
and Community

The Pairc Trust, South Lochs,
Isle of Lewis 2025-2026



What Does This Land Mean to Us?

The Pairc Landscape Project invited our community to pause and consider a simple yet profound question: what does this place truly mean to the people who call it home?

This project was made possible through funding from NatureScot and Climate Hebrides Ideas into Action Fund, whose support enabled our community to explore, document, and celebrate the landscapes that shape our lives.

This was never just a study of mountains, moorland, and lochs. It was an exploration of the emotional, cultural, and historical threads that bind us to the land. Landscape is not only something we look at; it is something we inhabit, remember, and carry within us.

Across 2025 and 2026, we explored Pairc through four interconnected themes:

- Pairc as a **historic** place: exploring the historical features and landmarks of South Lochs.
- Pairc as a **changing** place: how the landscape has changed over time and will continue to change in the future.
- Pairc as an **inspiring** place: how the features and landscapes of Pairc inspire people, and how people connect to nature and the landscape.
- Pairc as a **new** place: tying all of the above together and taking a multifaceted look at Pairc in the present day.

What follows in this booklet is a celebration of that shared journey: the events, the voices, the creativity, and the connections that emerged when we came together to truly see our landscape.



Pairc as a Historic Place

Walking Through Memory: The Kershader Heritage Event

On a bright Saturday afternoon in September 2025, more than twenty of us gathered at Ravenspoint for something truly special: an opportunity to walk through Kershader and experience it not just as it is today, but as generations before us once knew it.

Led by members of the Pairc Historical Society, with the ever-knowledgeable Donnie Morrison guiding the way, we retraced the paths of those who shaped this village long before us. The walk was not simply a tour of buildings, ruins, and boundaries. It was an invitation to step into the lives of the people who lived, worked, raised families, and built community here.

“You can still see where it all was!”

As we wandered through the village, voices rose with recognition and wonder: “Look! That house no longer has a roof,” someone observed.

Others pointed out how the landscape had changed and how it hadn't. Houses had been rebuilt or altered, but they stood on the same foundations. Old croft boundaries remained visible. The land itself seemed to hold its memories, even as time reshaped the details.

“It's incredible,” one participant reflected, “how the passing of time changes everything, but at the same time not everything.”

Moments like these revealed the quiet resilience of the place and the enduring connection between past and present.

Stories Over Tea

Back at the Resource Centre, the atmosphere was full of reminiscence. The highlight of the afternoon was the launch of Pairc Historical Society's new publication, *A Brief History of Kershader* — a beautifully crafted collection of voices, memories, and milestones from the village.

As historical photographs appeared on the screen, everyone was thoroughly engaged. People leaned forward, pointing out familiar buildings, recalling who lived where, and sharing stories that bridged generations. Conversations flowed easily, weaving together personal memories and collective history. People spoke of family ties that still run through the village, of neighbours long gone but not forgotten, and of the gratitude they felt for the chance to gather, remember, and celebrate the heritage of Kershader together.



Then and Now: A Photography Challenge

An exciting element of the Historic Place project was our 'then and now' photography challenge. The idea was simple but powerful: the challenge invited people of all ages to visit key locations across Pairc and recreate photographs taken decades earlier, standing in the exact same spots as previous photographers to capture how Pairc has changed.



With accessibility in mind, we chose locations close to roads and villages, ensuring that everyone, regardless of mobility, could participate. Using a 360-degree camera on short-term loan, videos and photos were captured that will continue to create a visual timeline of our landscape's transformation.





Pairc as a Changing Place

Seaweed, Sustainability and Our Changing Seas

How has the marine landscape of Pairc changed over thousands of years? How will it continue to change in the decades ahead? And what role can we play in looking after it?

These were the guiding questions at the heart of our Changing Place project, a collaboration that brought together the curiosity of Sgoil na Pairc pupils and the expertise of Climate Hebrides. The Pairc Trust received £1,000 from Climate Hebrides through their Ideas into Action Fund which enabled the Trust to commission Zoe Paterson MacInnes to film the pupils for this part of the project.



Young Voices, Big Questions

When the project was introduced at Sgoil na Pairc, the pupils' enthusiasm was immediate. Presented with a range of climate-focused themes, from peatland restoration to changes in roads, travel, and weather patterns, they unanimously gravitated toward seaweed.

Why seaweed? Their reasoning was thoughtful and perceptive. Seaweed is a material that has remained remarkably consistent over centuries, even as the climate around it has shifted. It is abundant, sustainable, and deeply woven into the identity of coastal communities like ours. It has been used for food, fertiliser, fuel, craft, and industry. It is both ancient and modern, familiar yet full of untapped potential.

The pupils did a lot of research, exploring seaweed's environmental benefits, its role in marine ecosystems, and its potential in future sustainable industries. They created vibrant informational posters, each one capturing a different aspect of the seaweed's story.

Inside the Ishga Factory

On a December morning, six pupils from Sgoil na Pairc along with their teachers visited the Ishga factory in Stornoway. Ishga, known for its award-winning organic skincare, transforms four types of locally harvested seaweed into products used around the world. For the pupils, this was a chance to see how something gathered from familiar shores becomes part of a global industry.

The tour was nothing short of eye-opening. As they moved through the production rooms, pupils watched staff carefully blend lotions, oils, and serums, each mixture stirred with precision. They learned how Ishga's scientific extraction process draws out the beneficial compounds of seaweed while removing its strong, distinctive scent, a detail that fascinated many of them.

Then came the sensory part of the tour: smelling the essential oils used to fragrance the products. Small bottles were passed around, each containing a different natural additive. Mandarin was an instant favourite, sparking smiles and enthusiastic nods. Bergamot and frankincense, however, divided opinion.

One pupil wrinkled their nose dramatically.

"I don't like that one; it smells too much!"

Others giggled, comparing reactions and debating which scent suited which product.



As the tour continued, pupils asked thoughtful questions about sustainability, harvesting practices, and how seaweed from local waters becomes part of a thriving business. They saw how science, creativity, and environmental responsibility come together in a modern Hebridean enterprise.

By the time they left, the pupils carried with them not just the memory of unusual smells and bubbling mixtures, but a deeper understanding of how local resources can be used responsibly to create something innovative, sustainable, and proudly rooted in the islands.

Asking the Hard Questions

The pupils did not hold back with their questions. When they asked about sustainability, Ishga explained their commitment to the environment:

- Limiting single-use items and using refillable bottles
- Choosing cardboard packaging over plastic
- Using only local water from a well and the sea
- Harvesting seaweed from just a mile away to reduce vehicle emissions

When asked where their products go, Ishga shared that they ship to spas worldwide from China to across the UK and that some famous celebrities have used their skincare. The pupils' eyes widened with pride at this local-to-global success story.

Hope for the Future

Back at the school, the pupils were filmed on discussions about climate change and seaweed and what they have learnt. While they expressed genuine concern for their local environment, they were remarkably positive:

“Change is natural and unavoidable,” they reflected, “but as long as our community keeps looking towards positive climate action, the environment and ocean should remain safe and steady for the future.”

Their optimism and commitment give us all hope. The film documenting this journey will stand as a testament to the next generation's deep connection to this changing landscape.



Stitching Our Story: The Pairc Community Tapestry

Some stories are told in words. Others are woven into fabric, thread by thread, by the hands of a community.

The Pairc Craft Club took on an ambitious and beautiful task: creating a community tapestry that maps the entire Pairc Estate, with appliqued sections for each village and location. Inspired by other local tapestries, this project brings together creativity, heritage, and shared pride in place.

A Map You Can Touch

The tapestry is a 'relief' map; three-dimensional and tactile, containing handmade embroidered landmarks and other items of interest from across the Pairc Estate. Some members had never embroidered before and soon uncovered hidden talents when creating the masterpieces you can see. Local artist Christine Dodd added another layer of meaning by creating beautifully crafted discs for each village. These discs highlight important landmarks and features unique to each area, helping viewers understand the diversity of the Estate.

There are also mini voice recorders incorporated in the tapestry. Various people across Pairc have shared their memories and insights about the enduring nature of the landscape and what makes it so special. You can access this at the press of a button on the tapestry.

Fabric From the Past

As news of the tapestry spread, the community responded in a way that made the project even more special. One local resident arrived with a gift: genuine Harris Tweed, woven the traditional way, using colours and dyes inspired by the landscape decades ago. This wasn't just fabric, it was history, heritage, and craftsmanship passed down through generations.

These pieces of old tweed will be incorporated into the tapestry, allowing the past to sit alongside the present. The colours, peat-brown, heather-purple, sea-blue, moss-green, echo the land itself. By weaving this historic fabric into a new creation, the tapestry becomes a bridge across time: old fabric, new creation - past and present stitched together.



Pairc as an Inspiring Place

Capturing Emotion Through Art

How does this landscape make you feel? What memories does it stir? What emotions rise when you stand on a hillside overlooking Loch Erisort or watch the light change over the peat moorland?

The Inspiring Place events included a series of workshops hosted by local artist Emma Mackenzie and invited the community to explore these questions through art. Supported by Kathleen Milne, small groups of seven to eight people gathered to express their feeling onto canvas.

Each workshop was two sessions, each two hours long, and every attendee was asked to think about how the landscape of Pairc inspires them. They could express their ideas through a process known as Batik, a traditional wax-resist dyeing technique applied to cloth using Tjanting tools to 'write' with.

This wasn't about technical skill or perfect paintings; it was about being present in the places that move us and recording that experience through creative expression. Whether it's the rush of wind, the stillness of water, or the weight of memory, participants would translate feeling into art. It was a chance to gather, share, and celebrate how this landscape continues to inspire generation after generation.



How does the Pairc landscape inspire you?

- “The Pairc landscape fills me with awe and wonder. It is a landscape of wild beauty and never fails to stop me in my tracks to gaze for a minute or more.”
- “Just to be out in the fresh air, trees, lochs, rocks, animals, everything.”
- “The Pairc landscape inspires me in so many ways, from the micro-landscape to the macro! The colours, the wildlife and the landscape inspire me to paint, draw and create every day. This is now the main way I earn a living. Without it, I would struggle in many ways.”
- “The landscape makes me feel whole, peaceful and as one with nature.”
- The natural beauty. Colours, infinite rainbows and light beams across the landscape - no two days are the same.”
- “It’s a quiet place, where you can walk alone with your own thoughts, not many places like that anymore.”
- “The thin places of beauty that feel like an intersection of spirit world and reality.”
- “Ever changing with the different light during the day.”



What is it about Pairc's landscapes that make it a good place to live?

- "It is unique and special to both the UK and the island. The community and the landscape complement each other, and I feel nurtured by it."
- "Fresh air, nature, room to breathe and take in the scenery."
- "Quiet, peaceful backwater of the Hebrides with this great mix of Harris hills and undulating croft land. The small coastal bays and geos all offering small village life to those who choose to live here. It offers the essence of Hebridean life from a forgotten era."
- "Purity - just moor hill and sky"
- "Serenity, unspoiled. Respected by community. True wilderness."
- "Wild landscape = warm people."
- "Fresh air, clean sweet water, light on hills and lochs."
- "Big skies and rolling hills."
- "Sea and the birds are a part of everyday life."

Monoprinting was also tried by the participants and was met with intrigue and awe. Emma Mackenzie explained that with this technique, spontaneous and expressive prints can be created and that they are one-of-a-kind because you cannot re-create them. Various foliage and flora from the Pairc landscape was used to create these unique monoprints.

Inspiring youth

The local primary school, Sgoil na Pairc, also got involved and pupils were treated to a workshop with Emma Mackenzie to create a tangible product encapsulating the pupils' emotions, feelings and thoughts on the local landscape. They expressed their joy and put together a youthful masterpiece that showcases the inspirational and enduring nature of the landscape on the generations to come.



Pairc as a New Place

Bringing It All Together

Every thread of this project: the historic walk, the seaweed and climate change film, the community tapestry, the art workshops, the photography challenge, weaves together to create something greater than the sum of its parts.

The New Place event, where this booklet is being launched, is the moment where all these strands meet. It is a celebration, a gathering, and a reflection point – a chance to stand together and look at Pairc anew.

At the Pairc Trust Resource Centre, participants and community members come together for:

- The launch of this commemorative booklet, capturing voices, quotes, photographs, and stories from across the project
- The first showing of the Sgoil na Pairc climate-change film, showcasing the pupils' insight, creativity, and hope
- An exhibition of “then and now” photographs, revealing the subtle and dramatic ways our landscape has shifted over time
- The unveiling of the community tapestry and batik artwork, each piece a testament to shared creativity and pride
- A shared meal, offering space for conversation, connection, and the joy of simply being together

This is a chance to see Pairc through fresh eyes while honouring all that it has been and continues to be.

A Record for the Future

This booklet stands as a lasting record of what happens when a community comes together with curiosity, care, and imagination. It captures a moment in time, a moment when we chose to see, remember, and celebrate the land that holds our history and shapes our future.

All artwork, including the tapestry, will remain on display at the Pairc Trust Resource Centre, continuing to inspire conversations, memories, and new stories for years to come.



Final Thoughts

This entire project was made possible through the generous support of NatureScot, whose funding enabled our community to explore, document, and celebrate the landscapes that shape our lives.

This project was brought to life by the generosity, creativity, and commitment of so many people across Pairc and the wider area. Our heartfelt thanks go to Pairc Historical Society, Sgoil na Pairc, Climate Hebrides, Zoe Paterson Macinnes filmmaker, Pairc Craft Club, Christine Dodd, Emma Mackenzie Textiles, Kathleen Milne and Melanie Muir for creating the border of the tapestry.

Throughout this journey, one truth became abundantly clear: landscape is never just geography. It is memory and emotion, history and hope, change and continuity, all woven together into the places we call home. What began as a series of events and activities grew into a shared exploration of who we are, where we come from, and how we understand the land around us.

We learned that the most meaningful way to engage with our landscape is through trusted local voices. Their stories anchor us, reminding us that history lives not only in archives but in the people who carry it.

We learned that young people hold remarkable wisdom about climate and change. Their reflections were grounded, hopeful, and honest. They looked to the future with realism, but also with a belief that communities like ours can make choices that protect what matters most.

We learned that creativity opens doors that facts and figures alone cannot. Through tapestry, film, photography, and art, we found new ways to see our surroundings, ways that invite emotion, imagination, and connection. Creativity helped us notice details we might otherwise overlook and gave us tools to express what the landscape means to us.

And perhaps most importantly, we learned that when we gather to explore what landscape means, we are really exploring what community means. The ties that bind us across generations. The stories we inherit and the stories we create. The shared pride in a place that continues to shape us, even as it changes.

Thank you to everyone who walked, talked, stitched, filmed, photographed, created, remembered, and shared. This is your landscape. These are your stories.



THE PAIRC LANDSCAPE PROJECT:

A Journey Through Nature, Memory and Community

What does this land truly mean to the people who call it home?

That question lies at the heart of the Pairc Landscape Project – a community-led exploration of the landscapes of South Lochs, Isle of Lewis, spanning 2025 and 2026. Funded by NatureScot and the Climate Hebrides Ideas into Action Fund, this project brought together residents of all ages to discover Pairc as a historic, changing, inspiring, and ever-new place.

From a heritage walk through Kershader guided by living memory, to Sgoil na Pairc pupils uncovering the wonders of seaweed and climate change; from a stunning community tapestry woven with historic Harris Tweed, to art workshops capturing the emotion of moorland and loch – this booklet celebrates what happened when a community came together to truly see its landscape.

These pages hold voices, stories, photographs, and creativity drawn from across Pairc. They are a record of shared discovery – and a reminder that landscape is never just geography. It is memory and emotion, history and hope, change and continuity, all woven into the places we call home.

This is your landscape.

These are your stories.