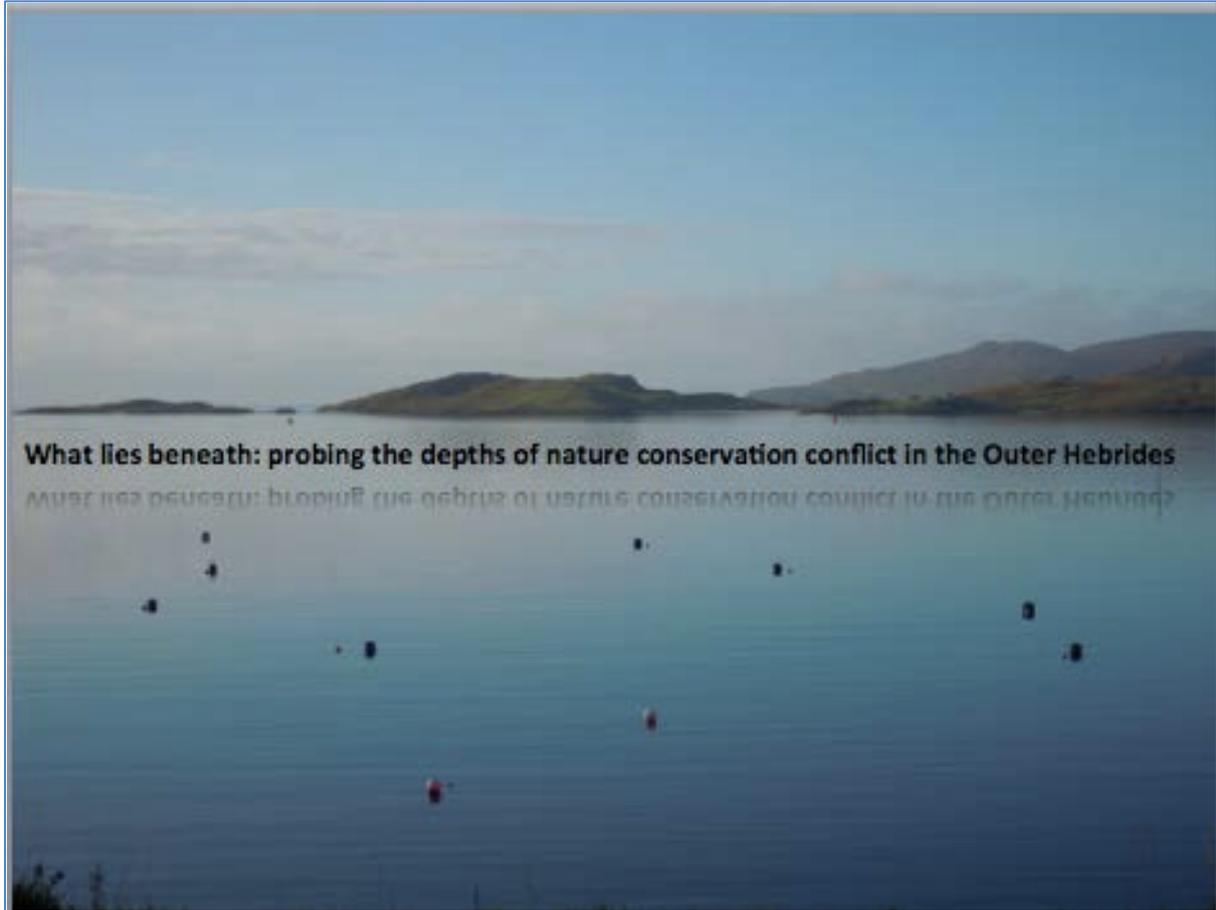


# Fieldwork Report

---



What lies beneath: probing the depths of nature conservation conflict in the Outer Hebrides

Ruth Brennan  
March 2013



## Overview

Since January 2012 (the date of the last Fieldwork Report) the researcher has continued to make frequent trips to Barra to further her understanding of the conflict between Scottish Natural Heritage and the local community over the proposed designation of marine Special Areas of Conservation (mSACs) in the Sound of Barra and East of Mingulay. In the interests of clarity, the timeline in Appendix 2 provides a chronological summary of significant events relating to the research on Barra over the past 14 months.

Ongoing collaboration with human ecologist Iain MacKinnon from the Isle of Skye and Glasgow-based visual artist Stephen Hurrel<sup>1</sup> has led to the formation of a Mapping the Sea Group<sup>2</sup> whose work continues to inform and develop this research through the Connecting Coastal Communities and Sea Stories-Sgeulachdan na Mara projects.

## Connecting Coastal Communities

The Connecting Coastal Communities project (funded by Colmcille<sup>3</sup>) drew on the testimonies of older fishermen on the islands of Barra (Outer Hebrides) and Arranmore (Donegal, Ireland) to begin to gain an understanding of the sea as it is 'known' by local fishermen. While the intention was to generate a dynamic map of the sea (to reflect different layers and forms of intergenerational knowledge employed by the fishermen based on an ancient and evolving relationship with the seas in which they work) as part of the Connecting Coastal Communities project, time and budget constraints meant that this was not possible. The outcome of the project was instead the publication of a short trilingual book, *Duthchas na Mara - Belonging to the Sea* (MacKinnon and Brennan, 2012), which explores the cultural roots of maritime conflict on Barra and Arranmore through describing the sense of belonging to the sea (*duthchas*) and the role this sense of belonging plays in the life of these island communities. Since its publication, *Duthchas na Mara* has been the subject of several positive reviews in the media, including the *Oban Times*, *ForArgyll*, *West Highland Free Press*, *Inshore Ireland*, *COAST*<sup>4</sup> newsletter, and Gaelic magazine *Cothrom* (the latter in the unexpected context of Scottish independence - see Appendix 1).

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hurrelvisualarts.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.mappingthesea.net/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.colmcille.net/>

<sup>4</sup> Community of Arran Seabed Trust

## Sea Stories – Sgeulachdan na Mara

A successful funding application to Creative Scotland is allowing the Mapping the Sea Group to build on the Connecting Coastal Communities project to develop a dynamic, digital cultural map of the seas around Barra. This project is being carried out in partnership with Voluntary Action Barra and Vatersay and, as such, is an art-science-community collaboration.

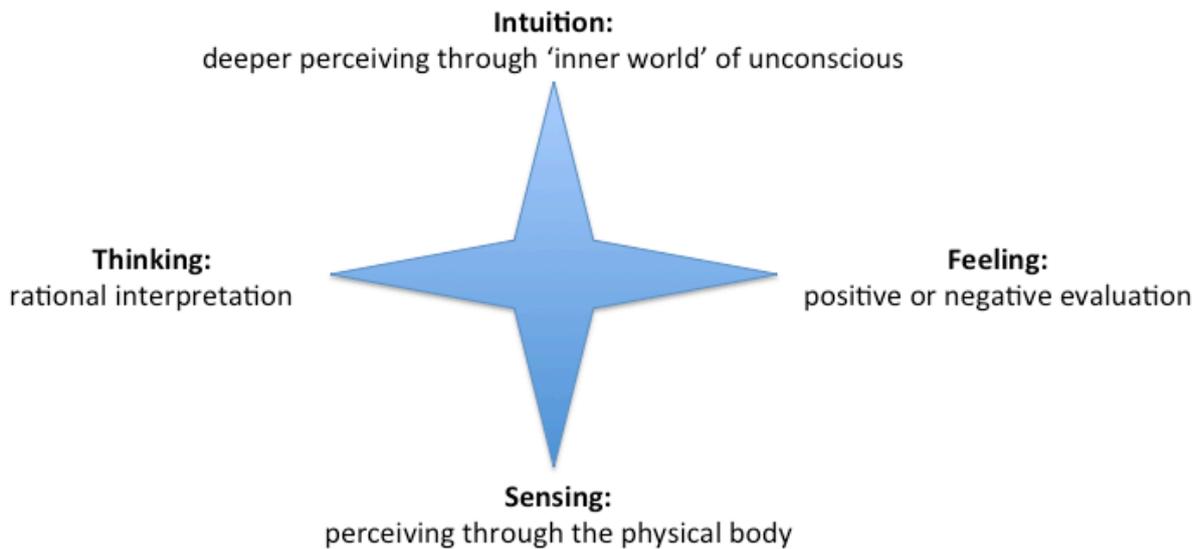
The Sea Stories and Connecting Coastal Communities projects have provided a more focussed case-study on different ways of ‘knowing’ within the broader PhD case-study of the mSAC conflict on Barra. Their relevance and contribution to the PhD research is discussed further below.

### A visual participatory approach to understanding ‘conservation’

Two very different understandings of the meaning of ‘conservation’ were revealed by my 2011 fieldwork on Barra – the perception by the local community of a ‘hands-off’ and ‘keep-out’ message from government agencies applying conservation tools in their locality and, in contrast, a local sense of conservation as one of ‘live with’ and ‘use/develop wisely’, underpinned by a sense of thrift and ingenuity essential to human survival in a remote coastal community (Brennan, 2012a). I wanted to explore more deeply the local understanding of conservation in the hope that this would shed some light on the dynamics of the mSAC dispute on Barra.

In deciding how to explore further the local understanding of ‘conservation’ on Barra, I was influenced by my awareness of the different ‘ways of knowing’ the marine environment which I had experienced during my 2011 fieldwork on Barra. In particular, I had linked the local fishermen’s ways of knowing the marine environment to different ways of knowing in the human psyche as described by Swiss psychologist C.G. Jung (see Figure 1). While out creeling with Barra fishermen, it struck me that they ‘know’ the marine environment rationally (thinking), through feeling (ascribing negative and positive evaluations to situations), in a physically embodied way (sensing) and, undoubtedly, in an intuitive way too. I realised that exploring the local understanding of ‘conservation’ required a method which would go beyond the rational and that meant going beyond words and into the realm of images.

## Different ways of 'knowing' (C.G. Jung – Swiss psychologist)



Adapted from Harding S (2006) Animate Earth

Figure 1 Different ways of 'knowing' (adapted from Harding S., 2006)

Once again I had recourse to the local newsletter (the Guth) to advertise a public meeting in March aimed at gathering research participants who would be interested in exploring with me what I described as their 'unique relationship to the sea' which is 'part of a bigger conservation picture which includes both humans and the natural environment as an intertwined system, working together (see Figure 2). I gathered a group of fifteen research participants (both from this meeting and from subsequent conversations with other interested locals), and provided each with a digital camera and two tasks:

- Take (or provide) some photographs of the Barra and Vatersay you would like your grandchildren to enjoy when they grow up
- Find (or make) an image or object which represents your connections to, or feelings about, the seas around Barra and Vatersay.

During April and May 2012, I carried out in-depth unstructured interviews with eleven of the the research participants, discussing their photographs and/or objects.

### Marine Research and Community Knowledge

My name is Ruth Brennan and I work as a social science researcher and part-time student at the Scottish Association for Marine Science, an independent marine research institute and part of UHI. During September and October of last year, I spent 6 weeks on Barra listening to the views of many of you about the proposed designations of East Mingulay and the Sound of Barra as marine Special Areas of Conservation (mSACs).

*It is clear to me that you (Barra and Vatersay residents) have very strong connections to the sea and that I do not yet fully understand them. I would like to understand more about these connections and your feelings about the sea and for some of you to join me in my research on this.*

I will return to Barra on 25 March for 3 weeks to continue this research. I would like to hear from those of you I have not yet met as well as hearing more from those of you I have already spoken to.

#### What is this research about and why am I doing it?

I think that your unique relationship with the sea is a part of a bigger 'conservation' picture which includes both humans and the natural environment as an intertwined system, working together. However, this unique relationship is not easily visible to outsiders, and I would like to find a way of expressing this so that it can be more easily seen and understood. I think that this could help to create an understanding of conservation which better reflects how humans and nature function together.

#### What will the research be used for?

I would like to use this research in my PhD thesis, in publications in academic journals and reports and in conference presentations. I will also make this material available for research participants to use should you wish to do so. When I write or talk about this research, I won't refer to research participants by name unless the participants have given me permission to do so.

#### If you want to find out more:

I will be talking more about this research at the Heritage Centre on Tuesday 27 March from 7.30pm-9pm. It is an open discussion where I will listen to your thoughts and questions and find out who would like to join me in working on this research. However, you are also very welcome just to come along and listen and not say anything at all.

If I have spoken to you already about the mSAC designations, or about the names and stories associated with the seas around Barra and Vatersay, I would love to hear more from you as the research so far has taken shape from what you have already told me.

If you are simply curious about what I have written above and would like to hear more, then I would encourage you to come along, even if I have never met you before.

**Everybody is welcome.**

If you have any other questions, you can contact me on 07866 973724 or at [ruth.brennan@sams.ac.uk](mailto:ruth.brennan@sams.ac.uk). Website: <http://www.smi.ac.uk/ruth-brennan>



Figure 2 Guth Bharraidh 23 March 2012

## A unique understanding of 'conservation' revealed

While I am still in the process of analysing the images and interview data gathered from research participants in 2012, I gathered an initial selection of these images, accompanied by captions<sup>5</sup> taken from the in-depth interviews, and published them in a short photo-text publication in July 2012 (see Appendix 3). My intention was to start to articulate a more complex understanding of 'conservation' by making visible the relationship of the people of Barra and Vatersay with their marine environment, through their eyes and through their words.

<sup>5</sup> As the content of the interviews is confidential, permission was obtained from each research participant regarding the captions associated with each image.

In compiling the publication, I loosely gathered the images into a series of 5 themes: *Community; A Functional Beauty; Connections to the Sea; Playgrounds; Hidden Stories*. The themes were generated by the words and images of the research participants: I chose them on the basis of what the research participants were talking about when discussing a particular image with me.

### *Community*

The images and text under the theme of *Community* show, perhaps unsurprisingly, the intertwining of humans with the sea 'from time immemorial' and the close-knit nature of the Barra community ('If it's in their power, they'll give you a hand'). More than any other, the seemingly mundane image of the clothes on a washing line underlines in a very poignant way the importance of people being on the island. The sense of freedom enjoyed on Barra communicated to me by many of the research participants is evident in the image of the keys left in the ignition of the car and also in the image entitled 'Freedom – nobody bats an eyelid'. This image, which is not readily discernible to anyone not living on Barra, shows a statue of St Barr holding an Irish flag and (not visible due to the distance from which the photograph was taken) wearing a Celtic football strip. On Barra, when Celtic wins the league, St Barr is adorned, under cover of darkness, with tricolour and Celtic strip and 'nobody bats an eyelid'. According to one of my research participants, the artist who created the sculpture of St Barr (a long-time resident on Barra - she was the art teacher at Castlebay high school before she retired) is pleased with the reinterpretation of her work:

*'...the whole thing about it is, you build something like that and you build it with one thought in mind and then to see somebody using it for something else and it be appropriate, you know it works so well.'*

### *A Functional Beauty*

The images in this theme implicitly raise the question of whether it is justifiable, on Barra, to protect or conserve something which does not also serve a function. Several of the research participants perceived beauty in the functional – for example a boat, a scrap heap at a local garage, oyster trestles. At the same time, the absence of functionality called into question the cost of building a stone wall which does not keep sheep out and the suggestion of renovating a pier which is no longer used as such.

### *Connections to the Sea*

Research participants' connections to the sea ranged from the poetic (the 'hidden treasure' of a pearl in a mussel shell), to the practical (working fishing boats) to the historic (an old boat nail from a previous generation).

## *Playgrounds and Hidden Stories*

All of these images have hidden stories – the playground images hold memories of children at play, past and present. The final image of the stern of a creel boat contains a mostly unknown and forgotten story furling up in the mizzen sail (used to stabilise boats while hauling creels). Apparently this sail was always used during the time of the herring drifters, but then fell out of use until it wasn't seen anymore on Hebridean fishing boats. About 30 years ago, two fishermen (father and son) on Barra reintroduced the mizzen on their creel boat (after the son had spent 3 months in Cornwall fishing with the local fishermen there, where use of a mizzen is common). For Barra creel fishermen, since then, 'it's become kind of normal for everybody to put one on.... Even the ones that tried to resist it eventually went to it'. The irony, according to the storyteller, is that many of the fishermen who now use the mizzen sail (for example those that have started fishing during the last 10 years) have no memory of it ever not being used on Barra creel boats and will be completely unaware that it was re-introduced 30 years ago by two Barra fishermen – a reverse shifting baseline.

## Making Your Voice Count

During my 2011 fieldwork in Barra, another significant theme that cropped up repeatedly was 'we're not being listened to'. To explore this further, I invited an experienced and sensitive facilitator, Verene Nicolas<sup>6</sup>, to run a workshop on Barra (to which I invited my research participants) about how to make our voices heard, the skills needed to do so and how to navigate situations where, despite perceived unequal power dynamics, we want to be fully included in dialogue and negotiations. Eight research participants attended the workshop and expressed a variety of reasons for attending which included:

*1. How to get islanders' voices heard and understanding why these voices are not being heard. Also, if islanders' voices **are** heard, understanding why they are not acted upon.*

There was an interest in my research into the mSAC conflict because of the feeling that collectively the island's voice is not being heard. There was a desire to understand why the voice of the island and/or voices of the islanders are not being heard and how better to navigate situations to increase likelihood of island voice(s) being heard.

*2. How to build a strong ethos of working together*

A small community needs to be skilful at putting its needs across so that its voice has got weight in wider decision-making processes.

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.verenenicolas.org/>

*3. Understanding 'their' language – communicating across differences and recognising that people have different interests*

There was a desire to focus the debate more in order to be able to understand the language of outsiders such as government bodies and to be able to speak to them in a language they can hear so that they can listen.

*4. A desire for the 'human ecology' of a place to be recognised as equally important as its natural ecology (and perhaps a desire for people who make decisions at a higher level to broaden their consciousness)*

My research intrigued some people because they saw it as coming at the science from a different angle, bringing the social side of things back into a policy process where consideration of the social side is not permitted. The environment would not be here without the people. The angle of my research appears to open up the possibility of a way to get human voices heard.

*5. Understanding how to work with people who have more perceived power, what kind of power they have, what kind of power we have and how to reconcile those power differences. Recognising that not being fully included at the negotiating table leads to building resentment.*

There was a desire to understand how, collectively, the islanders on Barra can take responsibility to make management happen. Also expressed was a need to understand how to make the voice of islanders count with both outsiders and within the community.

There was a desire to understand how to express what matters to the islanders in a clear way and how to enable the other party to listen to them and for the islanders to listen to the other party (ie how to foster meaningful dialogue).

*6. Piercing the veil of perceived power and recognising the knowledge that is in the room/within the community itself so that people feel valued for what they have to contribute and so that meetings use people's time effectively and constructively.*

There is a desire for recognition that the knowledge of all parties can be complementary as opposed to using that knowledge to fight each other. This recognition flows from a clear articulation and acknowledgement of the resources and knowledge of the respective parties. Trying to convey a convergent voice (held by the community) when many different individuals voice their own opinion can be frustrating and counter-productive. There is a need to find a way to articulate the community's voice to the outside in a strategic and united way.

Towards the end of the workshop, which lasted two hours, there was a discussion as to what is at the heart of the matter for the Barra community with respect to the mSAC conflict. On the surface, the conflict is about the islanders retaining control over their

resources. When probed as to what it serves to have control over resources, the responses suggested that such control ensures:

- Sustainability and resilience
- Choice (of where and how we and our children can live)
- Choice serves self-respect which is linked to well-being (physical, emotional, spiritual)
- Self-respect serves self-fulfillment and meaningful choices
- This in turn leads to wellbeing and thriving

As to what is at the heart of the matter for SNH, what emerged from the group was:

- Care for the environment
- Sustainability

These insightful comments, along with the reasons expressed above for attending the 'Make Your Voice Count' workshop in May 2012, reflect quite a different rhetoric to the polarised picture of the conflict that has been portrayed in the media up to this point. There is also a marked contrast with the rhetoric of those opposed to the mSAC which, up to March 2012 (see below) had urged islanders not to engage in dialogue with SNH or Marine Scotland about management because engagement in such dialogue would imply acceptance of the legitimacy of a mSAC.

It is clear from the voices at the May 2012 workshop that there now exists a real desire to foster dialogue and to find a way forward in a manner that empowers the local community while respecting and understanding the policy process. This is a major shift within the Barra community (albeit very fragile at present) and should not be underestimated. What is happening, in fact, is what was recommended in the SAMS response to the Sound of Barra mSAC consultation in November 2011 (Brennan et al. 2011):

*'The overall vision of the Directive would stand a better chance of being achieved through harnessing the independent spirit and sense of ingenuity that is inherent in the local community in Barra to find ways of identifying threats to important features in the coastal environment and devising ways of managing such threats in partnership with the regulating authorities. This however can only be done effectively if there is a recognition by the community of the statutory commitment (via the Directive) to deliver conservation outcomes and if there is agreement by the local community to assume responsibility for helping to deliver this commitment. The Directive has introduced a thread from the international policy environment which needs to be incorporated into the local environment in a way which sits comfortably with the dynamic nature of that environment and the needs of the local community. Delivery of this statutory commitment needs to be clearly visible in the UK and EU policy context, not just to the local community, even though they have an inherent understanding of, and interest in, their coastal environment. This means that calls from the local community for policy makers to trust them to manage their coastal environment wisely*

*and sustainably must be mirrored by a willingness on the part of the community to engage with the prevailing policy context which now forms a part of the local environment. Community-led initiatives to co-manage a local SAC need to be documented as responsibilities which are seen to be complied with, thus making the thread of delivery of the statutory commitment visible in the policy world.'*

Another indication of, and catalyst for, this shift appears to have come from a meeting that took place in Stornoway in March 2012 between the Fisheries Joint Consultative Committee, four councillors, fishermen (including Uist and Barra fishermen), SNH and Marine Scotland. The meeting came about on the back of an invitation from the Fishermen's Joint Consultative Committee to Michael MacLeod from Marine Scotland and David MacLennan from SNH to give an update on the Sound of Barra and to discuss where it goes next. An action was agreed at that meeting that Marine Scotland were going to lead on trying to prepare a management plan over the course of the following few months. It was therefore unsurprising that the first discussion meeting on this very subject with a representative of Marine Scotland took place on 3 July 2012 (see Figure 5), and that meetings have been ongoing since then.

### **By the Community, For the Community**

A successful initial meeting took place on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2012, with Donald Manford, Angus MacLeod and Marine Scotland official Michael MacLeod to explore the practicalities of the Barra and Vatersay community leading a process to identify and aim to overcome restrictive practices which thwart inventive sustainable use and management of resources essential to our community's future. Further discussions are expected to take place with Community Councils to consider the future direction, aiming to secure the social cultural and economic needs of our islands.

*Figure 5 Excerpt from 'By the Community, For the Community', Guth Bharraidh 6 July 2012*

## **A Changing Rhetoric?**

Local reports in the Guth Bharraidh over the months which followed showed that despite a 'successful initial meeting' progress was far from smooth. In August 2012, local group SHAMED urged islanders not to participate in the development of a management plan for fear of facilitating a decision to designate the Sound of Barra to be taken (see Figure 6). Late November 2012 saw the new Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Paul Wheelhouse, requesting an independent review to be carried out of the scientific case for the proposed designation of the Sound of Barra (see Figure 7). On a positive note, however, SNH published on their website the report on the 2011 public consultation exercise for the Sound of Barra on the day they submitted this report to Marine Scotland in 2012. This marks a distinct and encouraging change in the process (in terms of transparency and openness) since the initial consultation exercise carried out on the Sound of Barra in 2000. At that time, SNH were not permitted to release their report on the public consultation exercise

since, once submitted to the Minister, it became Ministerial Advice which was not permitted to be released until a Ministerial Decision on the designation had been taken. In 2008, SNH finally obtained permission to release the 2002 Sound of Barra consultation report but the loss of trust by the community in the transparency of the mSAC process was by then well-entrenched and not likely to be reversed by the release of a previously confidential report. It is notable, however, that SNH made a conscious effort to release relevant documents for the most recent (2011) Sound of Barra consultation in August 2008, even though the public consultation exercise did not start until the end of October 2011.

**From SHAMED (Southern Hebrides Against Marine Environmental Designations)  
SHAMED maintains determined stance against Scottish Natural Heritage recommendations to designate  
marine Special Areas of Conservation**

Since February, when the Environment Minister conceded in parliament that "relations between SNH and local people have broken down.." <sup>(1)</sup>, the Scottish Government has relied more on its own officials in dealing with the SAC issue. Staff from Marine Scotland have been trying to win over the disaffected communities by offering local people a greater say in how the SAC might be managed. Discussions have also included the possibility of a Regulatory Order in the area. Whether this would be as an alternative to the SAC or as a structure within the SAC is not clear. Speaking in the Scottish Parliament on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2012, Environment Minister, Stewart Stevenson, explained his intentions towards the Sound of Barra.

"If - for the avoidance of doubt, I said 'if - I designate the Sound of Barra, my objective is to do so when three conditions are fulfilled. **First, I will invite local interests to participate in the development of a management plan that has the objective of protecting those interests...** I am asking my officials to bring forward proposals that address the issue of management.." *(Emphasis added)*. <sup>(2)</sup>

SHAMED now asks how Mr Stevenson can imply, on the one hand, that he has not yet decided to designate the Sound of Barra as an SAC when, on the other hand, he refers to setting up a management plan in order to protect it and deployment of officials to promote such a step.

SHAMED chairman, crofter-fisherman Angus MacLeod from Barra, speaking on the eve of SNH's report to Government said : "There are three aspects of Mr Stevenson's statement that I want to highlight. In the first place, there is no basis in law for the Minister to attach such conditions to his decision to designate the Sound of Barra. This decision must be based on science alone, not on whether local interests agree to participate in a management plan for the site. Pre-designation discussions on management agreements are not new but, as far as I am aware, no Minister has the right to say that the decision to designate is actually dependent on them taking place."  
"Secondly, SHAMED is nevertheless of the view that for the same avoidance of doubt it is **vital** that we do not take up any invitation 'to participate in the development of a management plan'. To do so could allow the Minister to say that he had fulfilled this first and most important condition. He has created the condition. If we can ensure that it remains unfulfilled, the designation cannot go ahead."

*Figure 6 Excerpts from 'SHAMED maintains determined stance...', Guth Bharraidh 31 August 2012*

### Next Steps on Sound of Barra

The Scottish Government has this week announced details for an Independent review, first called for on 14th September through Guth Bharraidh.

Donald Manford commented: *"It is sad but entirely predictable that Scottish Natural Heritage have proposed that the Sound of Barra should be a Special Area of Conservation. They have been trying to every way to do that since before the turn of the century. I welcome that the Minister has acceded to my request for an Independent Review of the Evidence used to justify this proposal. Of the many controversial designations imposed round Scotland over recent decades, this is the first time a Scottish Minister has made such a referral and I complement him on that which is doubtless a reflection of the deep anger this process has aroused. In order for there to be confidence and trust in the outcome, it must be independent, and seen to be independent of the advocates of this process and the evidence review must go back to the early 1990s and the beginning of this dreadful process. It must also address the issue of why SNH considered Freedom of Information requests to be "manifestly unreasonable".*

This review is to be carried out, as part of the decision making process. Scottish Natural Heritage have completed their final advice on whether Sound of Barra in the Outer Hebrides should be designated due to the important marine species it supports. The advice, which recommends designation, has been received by Environment Minister Paul Wheelhouse, alongside a report on the public consultation exercise.

Given the wide range of responses received, including a high number of individual objections, the Environment Minister has decided that an independent expert review of the scientific case for designation is to be conducted. It is expected the review will be completed before the end of 2012.

Mr Wheelhouse said: *"Sound of Barra is home to important colonies of common seals as well as reefs and sandbanks that support many species. That's why we are considering taking steps to designate the area as a Special Area of Conservation. However, the proposed SAC has resulted in a wide range of views, some of which take issue with the scientific assessments carried out. So that I have a complete picture on which to base my decision, I've asked for an independent review of the scientific case to be completed. I would like to thank Scottish Natural Heritage for their comprehensive report and I have asked them to make it available to interested parties. Once the independent expert review of the scientific case has been completed I will consider all the information, including the consultation responses, before coming to a final decision. There are many key considerations in reaching a decision and I'm confident that the final decision will be fully informed and based on sound science. I can assure the communities involved that if I choose to designate we will ensure the right balance will be reached between environmental conservation and their social, economic and cultural requirements."*

*Figure 7 Excerpt from 'Next Steps on Sound of Barra', Guth Bharraidh 23 November 2012*

Two letters from the Chairman for SHAMED in December 2012 reiterated their argument that continuing discussions on a management plan indicated that Minister Wheelhouse had already made the decision to designate the Sound of Barra (see Figure 8) and reiterated the fear that designation of the Sound of Barra as a mSAC could lead to the banning of all fishing activities. This fear was fed by the potential for third party legal actions to be taken by conservation organisations (see Figure 9).

**From SHAMED  
(Southern Hebrides Against Marine Environmental Designations)**

Dear Sir,

Environment Minister, Paul Wheelhouse, has announced a review of the scientific case for the Sound of Barra pSAC. This is a step in the right direction. I hope that SHAMED's call in Jan 2012 for an independent enquiry when we replied to the Sound of Barra consultation played a part in the Minister's decision. He certainly seems to be acknowledging the many serious questions that have arisen over the last four long years.

I am concerned, however, that the review is confined to science. There are many examples in the FOI material we got from SNH and the JNCC showing inappropriate collusion between SNH and government officials. Often it was government rather than SNH who wrote the text for SNH's so-called independent scientific advice.

There are SNH comments as far back as March 2008 saying that Sound of Barra and East Mingulay would go to consultation. Would they have said this unless they already had agreement from the Scottish Government? Were Ministers aware or misled? Only a full review, of science and process, will reveal the truth and satisfy the public.

Every previous Environment Minister kept assuring us that no decisions had been made. Mr Wheelhouse is beginning to sing the same tune. He says "if I decide to designate..." I hope he is sincere in saying he wants an independent review because if he really is looking at it with an open mind he will call a complete halt to all work on any management plan for the site.

The Environment Minister cannot say he is undecided if, during the same week he announced his review, one of his officials sent a proposal for managing a Sound of Barra SAC to our community.

Angus MacLeod  
Chairman for SHAMED

Figure 8 Guth Bharraidh 7 December 2012

Dear Angus,

**Sound of Barra pSAC & East Mingulay cSAC**

I would like to congratulate you on your Radio nan Gaidheal interview last week, when you questioned claims by Scottish Environment LINK as to the economic benefits of Marine Protection Areas.

You may know that LINK's spokesman on this matter, Calum Duncan, is the Scottish Conservation Manager for the Marine Conservation Society. It was the MCS that joined with ClientEarth last year to threaten legal action against the Marine Maritime Organisation in England over inadequate protection of MPA's. They also demanded that a condition of UK fishing vessel licences that no fishing activities take place within Marine Protected Areas. I believe such threats are a warning of what is to come in all UK marine conservation areas.

Figure 9 Excerpt from 'Open Letter to: Angus B. MacNeil, MP for Western Isles', Guth Bharraidh 14 December 2012

In January 2013, the Scottish Crofting Federation called for Government to reject the proposal to designate the Sound of Barra as a mSAC (see Figure 10), the Chairman of SHAMED requested that the independent review of the scientific case for the proposed designation of the Sound of Barra be extended to include an independent review of the Sound of Barra mSAC selection and designation process (see Figure 11) and two fishermen's associations called for a moratorium on the Sound of Barra mSAC designation process pending investigation (See Figures 12 and 13).

### **Crofters Urge Rejection of Sound of Barra Marine Designation**

The Scottish Crofting Federation is urging the Scottish Government to turn down the proposal that the Sound of Barra should become a marine Special Area of Conservation.

The SCF is also asking the Government to radically revise the way it enacts European environmental legislation, arguing that the Sound of Barra case is only the latest in a long list of disputes between communities and environmental administrators which waste time and resources on both sides of the argument.

*Figure 10 Excerpt from 'Crofters Urge Rejection of Sound of Barra Marine Designation', Guth Bharraidh 18 January 2013*

The Environment Minister took a step in the right direction with his independent review of the science underpinning SNH's proposals. But, this will leave questions unanswered.

I am therefore requesting that you ask the Minister to consider broadening the scope of his scientific review.

SHAMED asked that the Sound of Barra selection and designation process used by SNH and Scottish governmental officials from 2000 should be independently reviewed. We feel that processes were breached and - as put so well by the SCF - that the way designations have been imposed by successive administrations in Scotland requires a serious shake-up.

SNH have already stated their willingness to take part in a broad review in their official Consultation Report on the Sound of Barra pSAC (25th Oct 2012) to the Scottish Government.

"We are content that we have followed our agreed procedures...We would be happy to engage in any review of the process adopted for this site". (p.15)

*Figure 11 Excerpt from 'Open Letter to Alasdair Allan MSP', Guth Bharraidh 25 January 2013*

### **Sound of Barra SAC Designation**

Mallaig & North West Fishermen's Association (MNWFA) have added their unreserved condemnation to SNH's pSAC plans to severely curtail and disrupt the traditional fishing aspirations of local boats earning their livelihoods' within the Sound of Barra. Thus adding to the growing outrage felt within Barra's community groups, The Scottish Crofting Federation and indeed within the wider Western Isles communities generally against SNH's "unwarranted and intrusive meddling in the Islands economic future".

There is no doubt that if the pSAC becomes a permanent designation, then the wishes of the local communities and indigenous industries will be secondary to the nefarious claims on environmental site necessity, made by SNH. Such designations stifle investment and prevent progress within the surrounding Communities.

*Figure 12 Excerpt from 'Sound of Barra SAC Designation', Guth Bharraidh 25 January 2013*

### **SFF Throws It's Support Behind Mallaig and North West Fishermen's Association in Sound Of Barra SAC Designation**

The Scottish Fishermen's Federation (SFF) is supporting its constituent member, the Mallaig and North-West Fishermen's Association, in its call for a moratorium of the proposal for a Special Area of Conservation (pSAC) in the Sound of Barra until a proper enquiry is held.

The SFF says that given the weight of opposition and misgivings over the pSAC, and the way the decision was reached, the logical step is for the Scottish Government to mount a full investigation into the proposal. The SFF adds that this review process should be done carefully and not be rushed, given that the fishing industry and a flourishing natural marine environment have always co-existed in the area together.

*Figure 13 Excerpt from 'SFF Throws Its Support Behind MNWFA...', Guth Bharraidh 25 January 2013*

Since February 2013, however, the rhetoric of opposition appears to be distinctly changing (although it has not disappeared completely) and the Government is now clearly articulating a desire for the local community to drive any management plan (see Figures 14 and 15).

### SHAMED Fully Supports New Definition of Scottish Natural Heritage Powers Within Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's)

SHAMED's chairman, Angus MacLeod, a crofter-fisherman from Eoligarry in Barra explains why the campaign group is feeling optimistic for the first time in four years.

"SNH responded to one of our recent press releases in a way that made us feel somebody is at last listening. Either the Scottish Government or SNH itself has finally taken on board what we and others have been saying from the very beginning about SNH's control freakery of conservation sites."

*Figure 14 Excerpt from 'SHAMED Fully Supports New Definition of SNH Powers...', Guth Bharraidh 1 February 2013*

The SNH response referred to by the Chairman of SHAMED is as follows:

**'Barra** - We are confident that the scientific case for the Sound of Barra SAC is robust. We don't manage SACs. They are managed by those who live and work in and around them, with us providing advice and information.'<sup>7</sup>

While it is encouraging that the campaign group SHAMED has expressed that it now feels listened to as this will hopefully open up more avenues for constructive dialogue to find a way forward it is debatable whether there has in fact been a redefinition of SNH powers as regards SACs. In a document entitled 'Some questions you may have'<sup>8</sup>, posted on the SNH website along with the Sound of Barra consultation documents in 2011, SNH clearly describes its role in the management of SACs as follows:

*'SNH is the advisor to the government on the Habitats Directive generally and specifically on the science underpinning the identification of SACs and their management. **SNH does not, and will not, own or manage these areas.** However, **regulating authorities** (for example the Planning Authority with regard to a fish-farming development) need to consult SNH over any proposals that could affect an SAC and **take SNH's advice into account when they decide whether a proposal can go ahead.**' [emphasis added]*

The SHAMED Chairman highlighted a phrase in the preamble of the management plan for the Lochmaddy mSAC in North Uist in support of his contention that relevant authorities were previously 'obliged' to follow SNH advice as follows:

*'Relevant authorities who are responsible for managing these activities are **obliged** to take this advice into consideration'*

<sup>7</sup> SNH 7 January 2013. Personal communication to various newspapers in response to SHAMED press release

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/B922054.pdf>

<http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/protected-areas/notices-and-consultations/sound-of-barra/>

I don't see any difference between taking advice into consideration and taking advice into account – in neither case were the relevant authorities obliged to adopt or follow SNH's advice, but simply to consider it. The confusion may have arisen over the use of the word 'obliged' in the Lochmaddy management plan. The obligation is, however, an obligation to consider rather than an obligation to adopt and follow. Similarly, it is not a change of position or a redefinition of SNH power to say that SNH does not manage SACs as the 2011 document cited above clearly states that it is the relevant regulating authorities, rather than SNH, who manage SACs. The significant shift which has occurred is not related to SNH's powers, but in relation to acceptance by SNH, Marine Scotland and the Minister for Environment and Climate Change that management of the Sound of Barra mSAC should be community-led as opposed to simply involving the community through a consultation exercise (see Figure 15).

### Minister for Environment Visits Barra

On Thursday morning a wide cross section of the local fishing community from Barra and Vatersay met with the Minister at the Barra Learning Centre along with Alasdair Allen, MSP and Michael MacLeod of Marine Scotland. Discussions focused mostly on the proposed SAC designation. In a meeting that lasted over 2 hours, proposals and opportunities for the local management of the Marine environment was discussed at a very open and frank round table discussion chaired by Mr Wheelhouse along with the fishermen and representatives of the SHAMED group. The Minister stated that no immediate decision had been made to designate, and he was determined to consider all the local and economic implications if such a decision was to be made in the future.



The Minister considered that any future plan must be wholly democratic and developed by the community themselves. The Minister also acknowledged that the breakdown of trust between the community and SNH was regrettable however he hoped that in time relations between both would improve.

Michael MacLeod from Marine Scotland stated that in the event of a designation becoming a reality, he considered that Marine Scotland and SNH would be viewed as "experts on tap rather than on top".

*Figure 15 Excerpts from 'Minister for Environment Visits Barra', Guth Bharraidh 15 February 2013*

## Chokepoints

Recent research applies the concept of choke points to properties of social-ecological systems constraining progress towards an environmental objective. In this context, choke points are defined as "properties of the social/ecological systems constraining progress towards an environmental objective. Choke points are the social, cultural, political, institutional or psychological obstructions, congestions or blockages which decrease the power of society to reach its stated objectives" (Potts et al., 2013). Figure 16 shows a 'model' developed (Brennan, 2012a) to explore the chokepoints within the Barra conflict using Soft Systems Methodology (Checkland and Poulter, 2006).

CHOKE POINTS

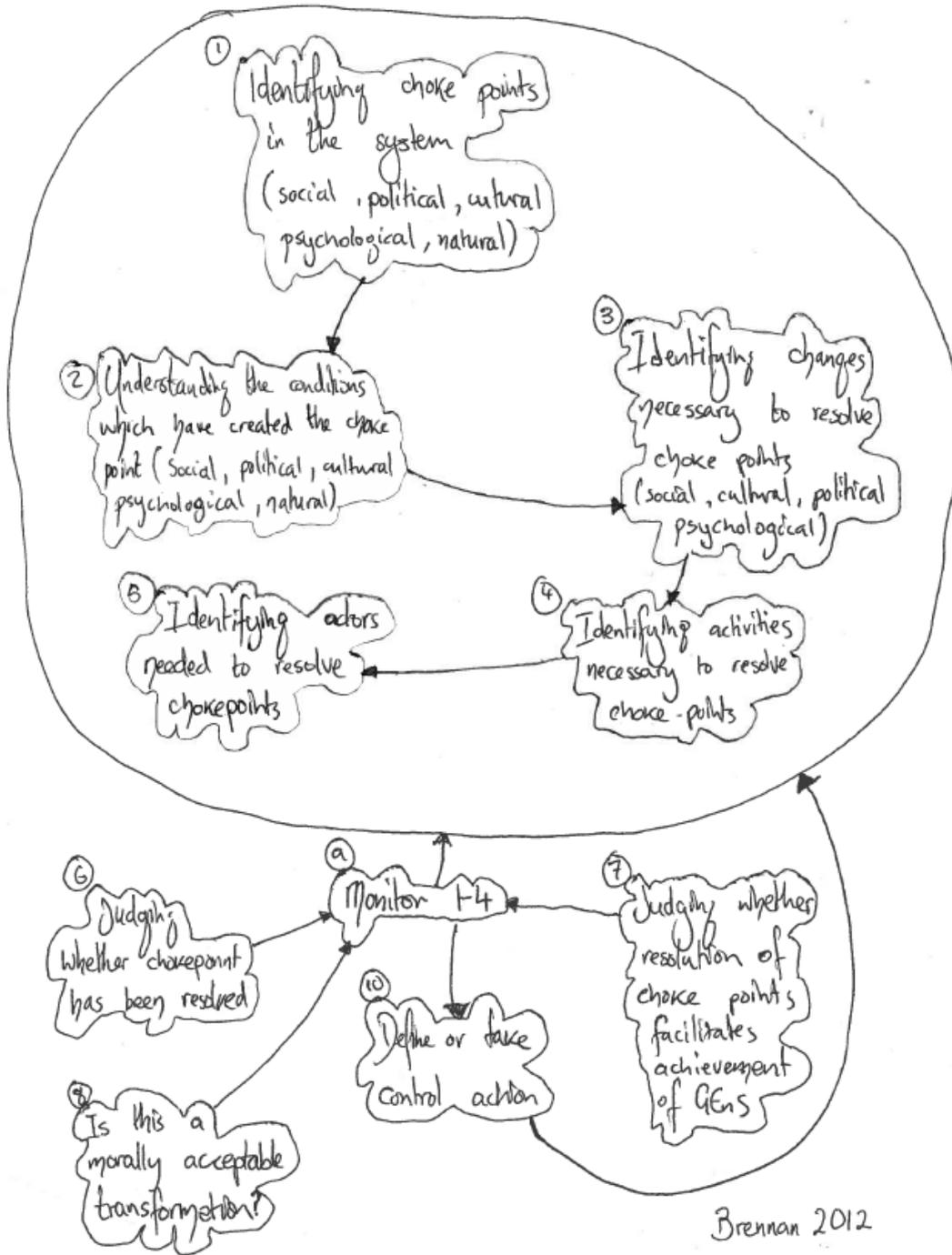


Figure 16 Chokepoints

In the context of the mSAC dispute on Barra, the expressed fear of loss of control over their natural resources masks an underlying cultural and psychological chokepoint rooted in a deep suspicion of ‘outsiders’ imposing changes on local waters. The cultural research carried out on Barra suggests that the sense of belonging to a home place (including the waters around the homeland), and of responsibility for that place is key to understanding this chokepoint (MacKinnon and Brennan, 2012).

Many elements have created or exacerbated the conditions leading to this suspicion of 'outsiders' imposing changes. To name a few:

- There is a history of the local community being 'told' what to do without being involved in the process, both in the conservation arena and further back in history to the nineteenth century Clearances, where smallholder tenants were 'cleared' off the land in order to make way for large sheep-farms.
- While the designation of a marine SAC involves consulting with the local community and other interested parties, the Habitats Directive (as interpreted by the European courts) only permits consultation on the scientific case for designation. SNH and the Scottish Government are not permitted to take social, economic or cultural circumstances into account. This renders the consultation exercise ineffective at best and counter-productive at worst, as it alienates the local community whose support is essential to the implementation of any conservation management tool.
- Institutional and political rules, such as the prohibition on releasing Ministerial advice before the Minister has made a decision, resulted in SNH not being permitted to release their East Mingulay consultation report to the local community, which deepened the suspicion that the consultation exercise was a sham and that views had not been properly recorded. When the report was eventually released (after the Minister's decision to designate had been taken) and showed that local opposition had been captured and reflected, the breakdown in communication was irreversible.
- As fear and suspicion increased, locals became less willing to engage productively with the policy process, preferring to push it away as not being a valid or necessary part of their environment and viewing it increasingly as a danger to the fabric of the Barra community – obstacles posed to future development by the designation (eg renewable energy) would block jobs which could be created to retain the young people in Barra's population.
- An inability on the part of the local community to articulate their understanding of conservation and their relationship with their marine environment increased the sense of not being listened to by SNH and the Scottish Government.

Resolving a chokepoint that is deeply embedded culturally and psychologically takes delicate and sensitive work, part of which needs to come from within the community itself. In Barra, leaders need to emerge who are willing to engage with the policy environment without being undermined by perceptions of betrayal from within the community. The different worldviews of all parties need to be articulated and understood within the context of a bigger conservation picture (MacKinnon and Brennan 2012). Part of this articulation involves allowing and bringing a more complex human language into science as scientists and policy makers struggle with the complex task of dealing with the social, economic and ecological parts of an ecosystem in an integrated manner (Brennan and Valcic, 2012).

## Finding a way forward that embraces different ways of knowing

The change in rhetoric on the part of both community and government bodies around the Sound of Barra mSAC conflict signals hope that a way forward is being crafted, albeit very slowly, with the local community taking more of a leadership role in the process. It is important, however, that a collaboratively drafted and locally administered management plan is not touted as ‘the solution’ to the conflict, even though this might seem to be a logical assumption to make. This conflict poses a ‘wicked’ problem<sup>9</sup> and ‘wicked’ problems are not amenable to ‘a solution’, in particular a rational solution.

The voices from the May 2012 workshop highlighted the existence of real fears, which although not necessarily rational, need to be acknowledged and articulated nonetheless. This work needs to be done, initially at least, within the community itself. This is not to say that SNH and Marine Scotland have no work to do. But, for the people of Barra to get to where they want to be (assuming a leadership role in management of their natural resources), they need to start by looking at their own community and how people within their own community are perhaps not listened to because of fear of speaking out against the stronger voices. This intra-community groundwork would place the people of Barra in a much stronger and more informed position to assume their leadership role.

The rational tool of a management plan is not the right tool to do this delicate and sensitive work. This is partly because the very existence of a management plan may in fact feed the expressed fear of losing control of resources, if the management plan is perceived as a means of imposing more stringent controls on the Sound of Barra than currently exist. It is important for all parties understand this, even if to outsiders a management plan seems to simply reflect the status quo rather than to bring about any change or impose restrictions. It is also entirely possible for islanders to genuinely engage with the drafting of the management plan and at the same time to be grappling with the underlying fear of losing control of their resources (along with the deeper fears (conscious or unconscious) of jeopardising underlying values of sustainability, resilience, choice, self-respect, self-fulfilment and well-being identified above).

The ongoing Sea Stories project, an art-science-community collaboration, which builds on the Connecting Coastal Communities project, is creating a dynamic, digital cultural map of the seas around Barra and may provide some a-rational insight into the source of these fears. The process of gathering the material to populate this cultural map (eg stories, names, marks, tows) is quite a reflective process that brings people within to their inner world, the place where their memories reside. What can happen when people visit that inner territory

---

<sup>9</sup> ‘Wicked’ problems are difficult to define and delineate from other problems, they have no right or wrong solution which can be determined scientifically, it is not clear when they are solved, and they need to be dealt with by a collective process which is experiential, interactive and deliberative (Jentoft and Chuenpagdee, 2009)

is never predictable. Sometimes it causes us to question where certain views are coming from, or brings us face to face with influences in the psyche which may have shaped those views, and this in turn brings us closer to our underlying values, which gives us clues as to what is really driving our responses in the 'outer' world. It is very easy to always be looking out and pointing the finger and saying 'it's their fault, they're not doing this', but once we bring it back in and ask 'well where is that view coming from', that opens up completely different horizons for unexpected possibilities to emerge, which is exactly what a 'wicked' problem requires. As my research is trying to understand more about the connections that people on Barra have with the sea and their feelings about the sea, on a very symbolic level, and as this approach is external to the threatening conflict-laden space, I am hoping that this approach will open up that more reflective space.

What is happening then (perhaps) on a deeper level is beautifully captured by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche (In Chodron, 2012, p.63):

*'Taking the...[decision] to help others implies that instead of holding to our own individual territory and defending it tooth and nail, we become open to the world that we are living in. It also means we are willing to take on greater responsibility, immense responsibility. In fact, it means taking a big chance.'*

## References

Brennan R., Mee L. and Potts T. 2011. Sound of Barra pSAC consultation: Response of the Scottish Association for Marine Science. November 2011.

Brennan R 2012a. Fieldwork Report. What lies beneath: probing the depths of nature conservation conflict in the Outer Hebrides. January 2012.

Brennan R 2012b. Ruth Brennan. Scottish Association for Marine Science. Personal communication. Oban, 24 November 2012.

Brennan RE. and Valcic B. 2012. Feature Article. Shifting Perspectives – How the masks we wear can facilitate and inhibit channels of communication in the social-environmental policy context. *Ocean & Coastal Management* 62: 1-8

Chodron P. 2012. Living Beautifully with Uncertainty and Change. Shambala Publications Inc., Boston MA.

Harding S., 2006. Animate Earth: Science, Intuition and Gaia. Green Books Ltd, Devon.

Jentoft S. and Chuenpagdee R., 2009. Fisheries and coastal governance as a wicked problem. *Marine Policy* 33: 553-560

MacKinnon I. and Brennan RE. 2012. Dùthchas na Mara/Belonging to the Sea. Exploring the cultural roots of maritime conflict on Gaelic speaking islands in Ireland and Scotland. Available online at <http://www.sams.ac.uk/ruth-brennan/belonging-to-the-sea>

Potts T., O'Higgins T., Cinirella S., Brennan RE., Brandt U., Suarez de Vivero, JL., van Beusekom J., Troost T., Paltriguera L. and Gunduz Hosgor A. (submitted). How can we detect and address critical choke points for achieving Good Environmental Status? *Ecology and Society*

## Appendix 1

### 'Cothrom' review of Duthchas na Mara

# EÒLAS NAN GÀIDHEAL AIR A' MHUIR

*Dùthchas na Mara / Dúchas na Mara / Belonging to the Sea: Exploring the cultural roots of maritime conflict on Gaelic speaking islands in Scotland and Ireland* le Iain MacKinnon & Ruth Brennan, dealbhan le Stephen Hurrell, 48 dd, pàipear, Scottish Association for Marine Science, 2012, Gàidhlig, Gaeilge & Beurla, ISBN 978 0 952089 8 2, ri fhaighinn mar faidhle air an eadar-lìon aig [www.sams.ac.uk/ruth-brennan/belonging-to-the-sea](http://www.sams.ac.uk/ruth-brennan/belonging-to-the-sea).

Tha an leabhar seo gar ruigsinn aig àm iomchaidh, nuair a tha na Gàidheil a' tòiseachadh air beachdachadh air cùisean ann an Alba neo-eisimeileach. A bheil na Goill is eile, a tha an ìre mhath a' smachdachadh bhuidhnean nàiseanta na h-Alba, a' ruigsinn sealladh nan Gàidheal air an àrainneachd againn càil nas fheàrr na na Sasannaich/ Òreatannaich? An toireadh seo-eisimeileachd piseach air ceatha ar coimhearsnachdan Gàidhealach, gu h-àraidh anns na h-eileanan?

Chan eil ùghdaran *Dùthchas na Mara* a' freagairt na ceist sin. Gu dearbh, chan eil iad eadhon ga cur. Ach tha iad ag ràdh gu bheil an t-àm do na h-ùghdarrasan nàiseanta a bhith a' gabhail a-steach *dùthchas* nuair a chruthaicheas ad poileasaidhean airson dìon ar n-àrainneachd. Thug Iain MacFhionghain agus Ruth Ní Bhraonáin sùil air dà eilean Ghàidhealach – Árainn Mhór far costa Thìr Chonaill ann an Èirinn agus Barraigh ann an Alba. Fhuair iad a-mach gu bheil an fheadhainn a chleachdas an àrainneachd anns gach àite dileas don t-seann tuigse dhen dùthaich aca mar dhùthchasaich. A bharrachd air tìr, tha na h-ùghdaran ag ràdh gu bheil dùthchas a' buntainn ris a' mhuir cuideachd. B' iad iasgairean anns gach eilean a bhruidhinn riutha.

Sgrìobh MacFhionghain agus Ní Bhraonáin an cunntas ann am Beurla ach tha Rody Gorman air an teacseadar-theangachadh gu Gàidhlig is Gaeilge. Ann an Gaeilge tha an aon tiotal air – *Dúchas na Mara* – a' sealltainn gu bheil *dùthchas* fhathast beò am measg ar co-Ghàidheal air taobh thall Sruth na Maoile. 'S e an tiotal Beurla, nach eil cho cumhachdach, *Belonging to the Sea*. 'S iad na buidhnean nàiseanta, ris an do sheas na h-eileanaich gu làidir, Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba, a tha ag iarraidh riaghailtean a theannachadh air iasgach ann an uisgeachan Barraigh, ann an co-cheangal ri dà thèarmann nàdair mara, agus Riaghaltas na h-Èireann, a chuir dàil air iasgach le lìn-siabaidh timcheall Árainn Mhór.

This book reaches us at an apposite time, when the Gaels might be starting to wonder what life would be like in an independent Scotland. Do the Goill and others, who effectively control our country's institutions, understand the Gaelic view of our native environment any more than the English/British do? Would independence improve the life of our Gaelic communities, particularly in the islands?

The authors of *Dùthchas na Mara* don't answer that question. In fact, they don't even ask it. But they do point out that it is high time that national authorities took the Gaelic concept of *dùthchas* into account when working out policies for the protection of our environment. Iain MacKinnon and Ruth Brennan looked at two Gaelic islands – Aranmore off the Donegal coast in Ireland and Barra in Scotland. They found that the users of the environment in both places remained loyal, to a considerable degree, to a view of their homeland that is *dùthchasaich*. In addition to the traditional sense of *dùthchas* as referring to land the authors insist that it applies also to the sea. Their informants were fishermen on both islands.

MacKinnon and Brennan wrote their account in English but Rody Gorman has done a sterling job in providing parallel texts in Scottish and Irish Gaelic. In Irish, the title is the same – *Dúchas na Mara* – demonstrating that the concept of *dùthchas* lives on among our Gaelic brothers and sisters across Sruth na Maoile. The English equivalent, which is inevitably less powerful, is *Belonging to the Sea*. The national institutions, to whom the islanders have stated their vociferous opposition are Scottish Natural Heritage who want to restrict some fishing in waters around Barra by designating two conservation zones, and the Irish Government who have placed a moratorium on drift-net fishing around Aranmore.



Ag iasgach le clèibh – Dòmhnall Uilleam MacLeòid, Barraigh

***Dùthchas is a difficult concept to translate into English. It encompasses belonging, homeland, heredity, the right to use one's native land and the sense that the environment is not just a physical backdrop to activities but a living phenomenon which nurtures a people and its language and culture, and which in turn is cherished and nurtured by that people. The land of our dùthchas contains place names, stories and legends. Heroic characters 'populate' it still, even in the wildest places and even if they're long dead, or perhaps never truly existed. Is there a word in English for that?!***

Tha an leabhar a' toirt sùil air ainmeachadh àiteachan co-cheangailte ri iasgach, comharran a thathar a' cleachdadh airson sgheirean iasgaich a lorg agus eadhon gnàthasan-cainnt a tha sa chumantas eadar Gàidhlig Àrainn Mhór agus Bharraigh, leithid 'sìos gu tuath' agus 'suas gu deas'. Tha na h-ùghdaran a' crìochnachadh le iarrtas co-cheangailte ris an strì mhara a tha a' dol air gach eilean, ag ràdh gu bheil freumhan domhainn cultarail ann a tha gam mineachadh. A' gabhail 'saoghal' air na diofar bheachdan bunaiteach, tha iad ag ràdh mar cho-dhùnadh 'ma lorgar àite airson a h-uile gin de na "saoghail" seo gum faodte dòigh nas saidhbhre gus eòlas is tuigse fhaighinn air a' mhuir dham buin sinn a chruthachadh.'

Neo-eisimeileachd ann no às, feumaidh gum bi spèis a bharrachd airson eòlas tràidiseanta agus dùthchas mar phàirt de phlana airson Alba ùr-nodha.

The book explores the naming of places connecting with fishing, landmarks which are used to locate fishing grounds and even linguistic expressions common to Aranmore and Barra Gaelic such as going 'down north' and 'up south'. The authors end with a plea regarding the ongoing maritime conflicts on both islands, noting that there are deep cultural roots that can help to explain them. Referring to fundamentally different viewpoints as 'worlds', they say in conclusion 'that finding a place for each of these "worlds" within the other could give rise to a richer way of knowing and understanding the seas to which we belong.'

Independent or not, an invigorated respect for traditional knowledge and *dùthchas* must surely be part of a blueprint for a new and better Scotland.

## BHO THAIGH-DHILLEACHDAN GU EILEAN IOMALLACH

*More Full of Weeping* le Susan Delaney, 293 dd, pàipear, MHB Publishing, 2012, Beurla, ISBN978 1 43885 58 6

'S e ùghdar *More Full of Weeping* (tha an tiotal à Yeats) ban-Ameireaganach le eòlas eu-domhain air eileanan Gàidhealach na h-Alba, agus tha ìre a h-eòlais rudeigin follaiseach air feadh na nobhail seo, gu h-àraidh anns na h-ainmean a thagh i agus na criomagan de Ghàidhlig a th' aice nach eil an-còmhnaidh air an libhrigeadh gu ceart. Bhiodh eòlas na bu doimhne air coimhearsnachdan Gàidhealach nan eilean air an stòiridh a dhèanamh na bu teinne is na bu sho-chreidmiche. Ach tha fhios nach bi a' chuid as motha de na leughadairean aice càil nas fiosraiche na tha i fhèin mu na h-àiteachan a bh' air an riochdachadh mar eilean macmeanmnoch Hulderay. Agus tha Susan Delaney gu cinnteach air stòiridh mhath a chruthachadh a bhios a' toirt buaidh air an leughadair, gu h-àraidh faisg air an deireadh nuair thig caochladh eileamaidean còmhla ann an dòigh laghach.

Rùgadh Ùisdean MacSoirbheas (tha an leabhar a' mineachadh mar a fhuair e ainm) ann an suidheachadh duilich am measg bochdainn nam ficheadan, far am b' e taigh-dhilleachdan ann an Glaschu a dhachaigh, agus bunait a bheatha. 'S i a' Ghàidhlig bunait eile a bheatha - tha i aige, 's dòcha gu h-annasach. Ach chan eil cùisean rèidh dha. Tha cuid fialaidh dha, a' toirt gràdh dha; bidh feadhainn eile a' dèanamh dimeas air agus eadhon a' cleachdadh fòirneart na aghaidh.

Eadhon nuair a thèid a thoirt gu ruige Hulderay (a tha gu deas air Uibhist a Deas), chan eil e a' lorg coimhearsnachd gun lotan. Tha e air a thoirt a-steach le càraid phòsta nach eil idir a' sealltainn coibhneas traidiseanta nan eileanach dha. Agus, air an eilean seo, far a bheil a' mhòr-chuid nan Caitligich, tha a' bhana-mhaighstir sgoile - tè a bhuineas don Eaglais Shaoir agus aig a bheil modhan a tha caol is ceannsaichte (seach, tha an cliché sin air àite a lorg san leabhar) - a' gabhail gràin mhòr air Ùisdean. Tha a bheatha air a dèanamh doirbh.

Ach tha cuid de characteran blàth is coibhneil, leithid an 'Caipitean', an dotair Sasannach agus bana-charaid òige,

[www.cll.org.uk](http://www.cll.org.uk)

The author of *More Full of Weeping* (the title is taken from a work of Yeats) is an American with a passing knowledge of the Gaelic Hebrides, and the latter fact is fairly obvious throughout most of this novel, particularly in the choice of names and the sometimes inaccurate rendition of snippets of the language. A more intimate understanding of the Gaelic communities of the islands would have led to a tighter and more believable narrative. But, then, her main readership will probably be no more familiar with the places that served as models for the imaginary island of Hulderay than she is herself. And Susan Delaney has certainly produced a good story that will move the reader, particularly towards the conclusion where seemingly disparate threads are brought together in a pleasing and positive manner.

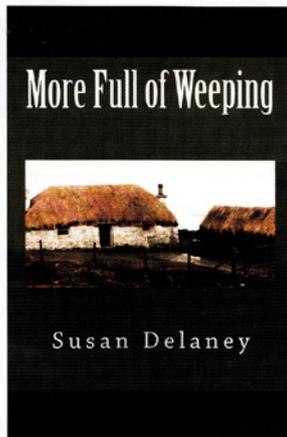
Ùisdean MacSoirbheas (the book explains how he got the name) is born into a life of abandonment in the poverty-stricken twenties, where a Glasgow orphanage becomes, not only his home, but the rock on which he anchors himself. Another anchor is the Gaelic language, which he, somewhat unexpectedly, grows up speaking. But life is to deal him a mixed hand. Some people give him love and fellowship, others treat him with

disdain, disrespect, and sometimes violence.

Even his removal to the remote Hulderay (somewhere south of South Uist) does not introduce him to an unblemished paradise. He is fostered by a couple who lack the traditional island hospitality, to put it mildly. And, on this largely Catholic island, the female schoolteacher, an emotionally repressed adherent of the Free Church (yes, that cliché almost inevitably found its way into the book), takes an extreme dislike to Ùisdean. He is given a pretty hard time.

But there are some warm characters in the book, such as the 'Captain', the English doctor and childhood

Cll Gàidhlig

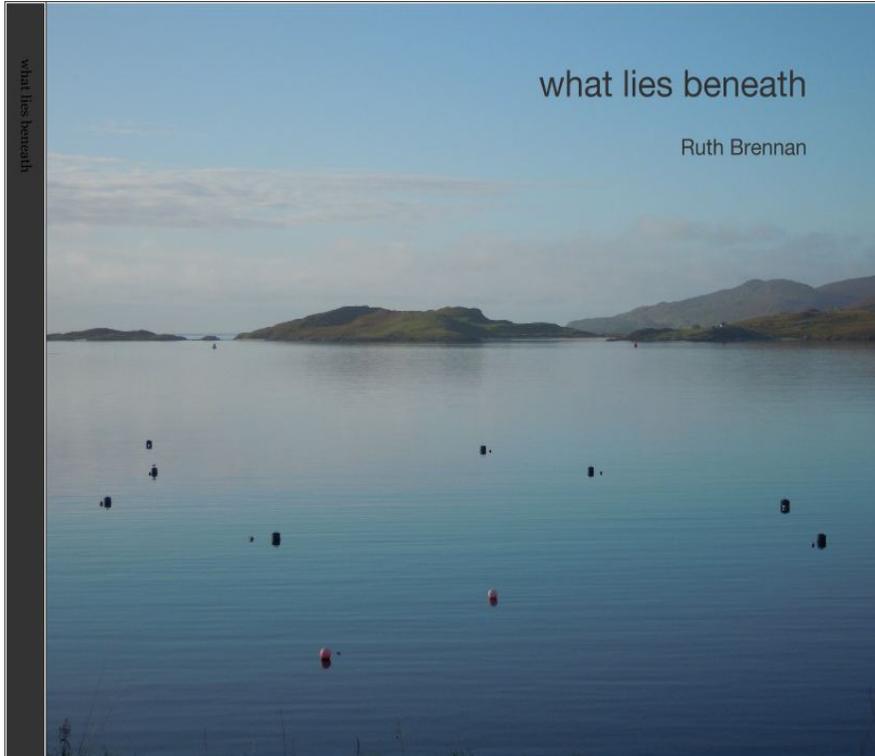


## Appendix 2

### Significant events relating to research on Barra from January 2012 to April 2013

January 2012	<b>1 week fieldwork</b> on Barra to gather testimonies of older fishermen for Connecting Coastal Communities project
March-April 2012	<b>3 weeks fieldwork</b> on Barra: Held public research meeting to establish research group; provided participants with visual tasks as part of a visual participatory methodology; carried out in-depth interviews with several research participants.
April-May 2012	<b>1 week fieldwork</b> on Barra: Held a communications workshop (8 research participants attended) run by external facilitator Verene Nicolas entitled 'Making your voice heard'; carried out in-depth interviews with several research participants.
July 2012	<b>1 week fieldwork</b> on Barra: attended Fisherman's Mass (annual blessing of the boats on Barra); carried out in-depth interviews with remaining research participants. Published a trilingual short book – Belonging to the Sea/Duthchas na Mara/Duchas na Mara – as a result of the Connecting Coastal Communities project, which explores the mSAC conflict on Barra from a cultural angle. This book was co-authored with Iain MacKinnon. Visual artist Stephen Hurrel provided photography and cover design. Published an initial selection of photographs with text from drawing research participants' photographs and interviews.
August 2012	<b>1 week fieldwork</b> on Barra coinciding with Clan MacNeil Gathering: Launched Duthchas na Mara publication and photo-text publication on Barra (in collaboration with Stephen Hurrel and Iain MacKinnon) with an audio visual presentation in the community hall; introduced to the Barra community the Sea Stories project – mapping the sea Barra (in collaboration with Stephen Hurrel) in August 2012 – this is a continuation of the Connecting Coastal Communities project for which £46k funding was awarded by Creative Scotland (to Hurrel Visual Arts in partnership with Voluntary Action Barra and Vatersay).
September 2012	Presentation of PhD research (including photo-text publication) at MASTS Annual Science Meeting in Edinburgh Mapping the Sea Group presentation at SAMS on the interrelation between PhD research, Connecting Coastal Communities project and Sea Stories project.
October 2012	<b>1 week fieldwork</b> on Barra: With visual artist Stephen Hurrel, I ran a day workshop with the S2s in Castlebay high school to train them in the use of dictaphone, video camera and interview techniques. We also presented the Connecting Coastal Communities and Sea Stories projects to the elderly folk of Barra in the local care centre Cobhair Barraigh to create the links with the school children needed for the cross-generational Sea Stories project.
November 2012	Presentation at James Hutton Institute of PhD research, Connecting Coastal Communities project and Sea Stories project
January 2013-	Carrying out systematic analysis of interviews and photographs using soft systems analysis methodology (ongoing)
March 2013	<b>1 week fieldwork</b> on Barra: Presentation of prototype digital map of the sea and liaising with student 'collecting'
April 2013	Presentation on PhD research at the American Association of Geographers (AAG) Annual Conference on the Ecologies of Well-Being in Los Angeles

**Appendix 3**  
**Photo-text publication - July 2012**



what lies beneath:

*probing the cultural depths of nature conservation conflict in the outer hebrides*

Contributors (of images and accompanying text)

5	William Douglas
6	Hugh Douglas
7	Amanda MacQuarrie
8	Domhnall Uilleam MacLeod
9	Anonymous
10	William Douglas
11	Gerard MacDonald (image); Domhnall Uilleam MacLeod (text)
12	William Douglas
13	William Douglas
15	William Douglas
16	Donald Manford
17	Donald Manford
18	Gerard MacDonald
19	Donald Manford
21	Amanda MacQuarrie
22	Domhnall Uilleam MacLeod
23	Michael MacLeod
24	William Douglas
25	Hugh Douglas
27	William Douglas
28	Donald Manford
29	Domhnall Uilleam MacLeod
31	Domhnall Uilleam MacLeod

Cover image: Ruth Brennan



© 2012 Ruth Brennan (Scottish Association for Marine Science) and contributors

This publication forms part of my PhD research. It aims to gain insights into the roots of conflicts around environmental designations to protect the marine environment by exploring the local cultural and historical context of the affected community. It focuses on the ongoing conflict around two proposed marine Special Areas of Conservation off the island of Barra in the Outer Hebrides.

In carrying out this particular part of my research, I wanted to understand better the islanders' connections to the sea and what 'conservation' means for them.

The images and captions contained within this publication are a selection of responses from some of the research participants to the following tasks:

- Take some photographs of the Barra and Vatersay you would like your grandchildren to enjoy when they grow up.
- Find (or make) an image or object which represents your connections to, or feelings about, the seas around Barra and Vatersay.

My initial conversations (in 2011) with people on Barra and Vatersay suggested that they have a strong and unique relationship with the sea which is a part of a bigger 'conservation' picture which includes both humans and the natural environment as an intertwined system, working together. However, this unique relationship is not easily seen or understood by outsiders. I hope that this publication goes some way towards making this relationship more visible and that it helps to create an understanding of conservation that better reflects how humans and nature function together.

I am grateful to all of the research participants for their contributions, and to everyone I have listened to in Barra and Vatersay for their time and interest in this ongoing research. I also thank Stephen Hurrell, Niall Griffin and James Brennan for artistic advice and technical assistance on this publication and the National Trust for Scotland for their funding support.

Ruth Brennan, August 2012

Community



People have been here from time immemorial, watching the sea  
(Norse broch, Scurrial)

5



If it's in their power, they'll give you a hand

6



I want my grandchildren to see community on Barra

7



Safety. Complacency. Security

8



Nice to see a full washing line, isn't it?

9



Community spirit  
(Fisherman's Mass)

10



Freedom - nobody bats an eyelid

11



Building for the future  
(Northbay pier)

12



Home to the harbour

13

A functional beauty?



Boats are objects of beauty - almost sculptural

15



Nice to look at. Does it serve a function?

16



Raw elements  
(Eoligarry garage)

17



People still working



What it was, is gone

Connections to the sea



21



22



23



24



25

Playgrounds





28



29

Hidden stories



31



probing the cultural depths of nature conservation conflict in the outer hebrides