

FAIR ISLE TIMES

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Fair Isle Primary School News

It's nearly panto time (oh yes, it is!)

We are so excited to perform our Christmas Panto, "SHEEP ROCKS", to you this coming **Thursday 18th December 2025**. The show will commence at 6:00pm so arrive in plenty of time for a front row seat. This week in our writing, we have been thinking about how to give you a "panto teaser" (give our audience something to look forward to but not the whole plot).

So, here you go...

Luca!

Name: Soon you will find out.

Three words to describe me: cunning, clever and crafty.

My favourite line from the show: "You can't pull the wool over my eyes!"

Why you should come and watch: This could be the best panto ever!

Plot teaser: Someone is cooking up an evil plan this Christmas. It is down to two cheerful children to save the day ... and all the sheep too. 😊



Ander!

Name: It's a mystery...

Three words to describe me: joyful, clever and friendly.

My favourite line from the show: "Do you get it?"

Why you should come and watch: Because of all the hilarious jokes. 😊



Khalicee!

Name: To be revealed.

Three words to describe me: beautiful, kind and caring.

My favourite line from the show: "Give me all the boos!" 😊





Also starring...

Brodie!

Three words to describe me: unpredictable, mischievous and funny.

Musings on *Storm Bram*...

Storm Bram was the name given to our latest assault by the forces of nature.

As it approached it was said to be 'Slow moving and dangerous, with possible devastating results'

Remove two different letters from the storm title, and you will perhaps see some similarity, but also with very different meaning, which hopefully will raise a smile.

Jimmy at Skerryholm

ISLE NOTICES

TONIGHT!!!

Diane and Jonnie invite you to....

A FAIR ISLE FESTIVE FIASCO!

Join us for a community get-together before the holiday departures begin!

We're having an Xmas party from 19:00 til' late in the Committee Room on **Sat 13th December**. All are welcome!

Enjoy nibbles, mulled wine, games and more - donations of homebakes etc. gladly welcomed!

Chapel – We will be gathering at Quoy again on Sunday at 11am, rather than in the Chapel itself, for a few carols, fellowship and coffee and cake. All welcome. (Hope to be back in Chapel next week with more folk home!)

Fair Isle Committee meeting – This Monday at 7.30pm in the Committee Room. Jonathan has shared the agenda to committee members. Any outstanding reports to be submitted to Eileen and Jonathan ASAP please. Thank you, Eileen – Chair, Fair Isle Committee



Congratulations to resident fellow Nick Riddiford who has recently become a real fellow – of The Marine Biological Association of the UK no less! Well done to Nick on this much-deserved recognition for your many years of work in the field (or rock-pool)

“The MBA awards Fellowships to long term members who have made a notable contribution to marine biology. Nick’s extensive experience with community groups was particularly noted and brings the volunteer sector and its contribution to science into the MBA family.”

Fair Isle Demonstration and Research MPA - Fair Isle Times Festive Update

🌟2025 highlights 🌟

- **January:** Shaun Fraser and Tanya Riley from UHI Shetland came into Fair Isle to give a talk on the findings from the 2024 Fair Isle inshore fish and benthic surveys – *Note: Shaun will be coming into Fair Isle again in January 2026 to present the findings of the 2025 sandeel and inshore fish surveys. Date TBC please keep an eye out for updates in the New Year.*
- **January – August:** FIMRO and NatureScot worked with an MSc student from Edinburgh Napier University looking at cetacean monitoring in Fair Isle (*further information below*)
- **March:** FIMRO capacity building workshops in Fair Isle with Peg Shaw from Fauna and Flora
- **May:** The first Fair Isle specific sandeel survey was carried out around Fair Isle by UHI Shetland thanks to funding from Viking Energy and Shetland Community Benefit Fund. *Note: survey report coming early 2026*
- **May:** Fair Isle DR MPA data management sub-committee setup
- **June:** FIMRO welcome new trustee Steven Wilson
- **June:** 2024 Fair Isle Inshore fish survey [report](#) published
- **June – October:** FIMRO seasonal Education Officer pilot project (*further information below*)
- **August:** Benthic habitat distribution [report](#) published
- **August:** Fair Isle DR MPA [Annual Report](#) 2024-2025 published
- **August:** Fair Isle recognised as [Important Shark and Ray Area](#) for flapper skate
- **August:** Fourth Fair Isle inshore fish survey carried out
- **November:** FIMRO receive funding from the Scottish Government’s Nature Restoration Fund, managed by NatureScot to recruit a short-term marine research consultant (*further information below*)
- **November:** FIMRO receive funding from the Scottish Government’s Nature Restoration Fund, managed by NatureScot to purchase equipment for use in passive acoustic monitoring of cetaceans

FIMRO Education Officer Pilot Project

Earlier in the year, FIMRO received funding from the Fauna and Flora Community Support Fund grant to run a pilot project to test whether a part-time, community-based seasonal Education Officer post could support long-term, community-led monitoring within the Fair Isle DR MPA project. The goal was to sub-contract an island resident with

relevant experience to work closely with the DR MPA Research Officer who lives off island to plan and facilitate community and visitor engagement and participation in priority citizen science and marine monitoring activities outlined by FIMRO.

At the start of the project FIMRO advertised this role within the community and confirmed interest in this potential among island residents. David Parnaby an island resident, was selected to fill the role. Across June – September 2025 David delivered 135 hours of work, including training, administration, public events, citizen science coordination, and data processing. Marine monitoring/citizen science activities included WDC Shorewatch surveys, Marine Conservation Society (MCS) beach cleans, marine invasive species checks, and informal outreach.

WDC Shorewatch became the most time-intensive activity, achieving—for the first time—the national target of 20 watches per month at both Fair Isle sites (Buness and South Lighthouse) during the summer. Five Fair Isle residents were recruited and trained as Shorewatch volunteers, which, including the Education Officer, represents 10% of the entire Isle population building a strong community base for future monitoring. As well as two training days, a public event was held with Karen Hall of NatureScot, during which a number of watches were carried out by various participants.

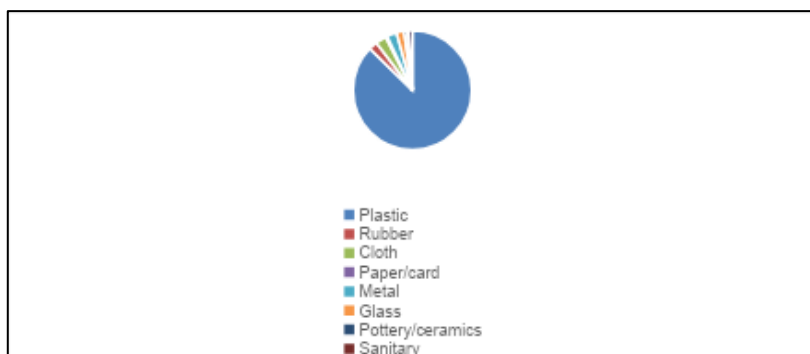


WDC Shorewatch volunteer training

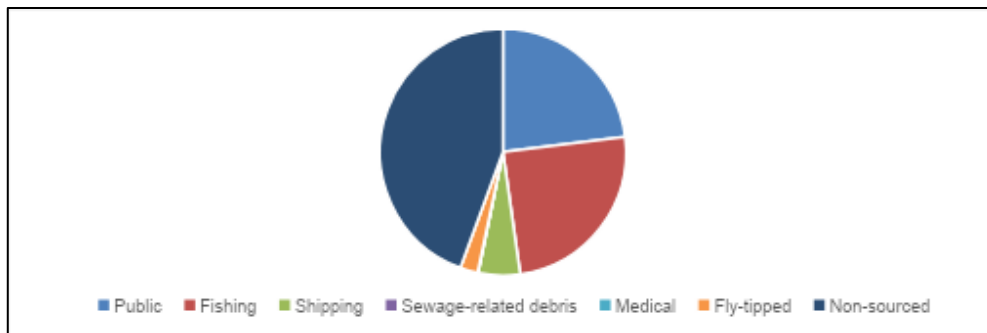
MCS Beach Clean at Leestit

A new monitoring activity trialled during this project was beach cleans following MCS methodology, where a 100m stretch of beach is cleaned, with all items of litter that are removed being identified, categorised and recorded. Over the course of the project seven beach cleans were carried out across three beaches: Noth Haven, Leestit and Muckle Uri Geo. North Haven and Leestit were cleaned again in September as part of the Great British Beach Clean, a week long UK-wide citizen science event with Muckle Uri Geo being cleaned by the Fair Isle Primary School coordinated by the FIBO ranger with support from the Education Officer. This beach has now been adopted by the FIPS for quarterly beach cleans.

Over the course of the project, beach cleans involved an average of 7 participants per event (many returning), with the highest number of participants up to 18 at one beach clean. Across all beach cleans, 70.8 kg of litter was removed consisting of 2519 individual pieces the majority (87%) being plastic. Leestit produced the most litter by a considerable amount.



Types of litter collected over all beach cleans



Origin of litter removed from all beaches (note: categories are applied by MCS)

At the end of the project, David produced a summary report identifying the key successes and challenges of the project, recommendations from which will be reviewed by FIMRO in the New Year to further develop the project for consideration in the future. Overall, the pilot suggests that a seasonal Education Officer is feasible and valuable and can meaningfully strengthen community engagement and contribute useful long-term datasets for Fair Isle's marine environment.

Thank you very much to David for his work and efforts on this project and to everyone who got involved.

FIMRO's ongoing project - Fair Isle DR MPA: A Summary and Analysis of Research Outputs (2020 – 2025) and Implications for Future Directions

FIMRO have recently recruited an independent marine research consultant to review and synthesise Fair Isle DR MPA research and project progress over the last 5-year period (2020-2025). After a substantial number of applications from a strong field of candidates, FIMRO have recruited Paul Whomersley, a Marine Protected Area and Sustainable Management Specialist.

This project will run from September 2025 to March 2026, and Paul will review, summarise and synthesise outputs from the programme of Fair Isle DR MPA research projects which includes benthic, inshore fish, cetacean and seabird research outputs. He will also incorporate insights from existing, longer-term research into Fair Isle's seabird populations led by external organisations. Findings will be extracted to produce a holistic view of our understanding of the marine ecosystem and research progress to date.

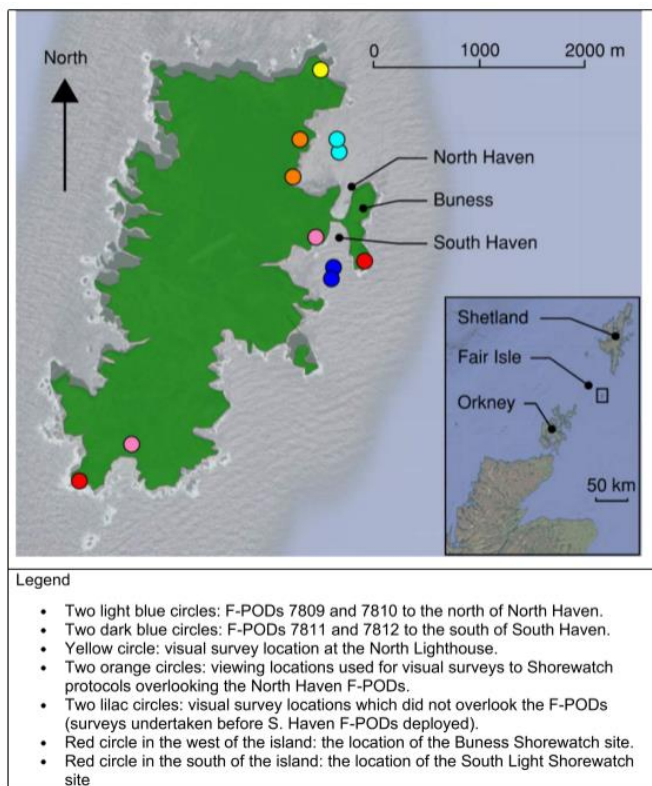
The output from this work will outline the current knowledge base, highlights the growth/change in our understanding of the Fair Isle marine environment, identifies any significant research gaps and considers potential management measures and areas for community contribution. A full report will be produced for review by the Fair Isle DR MPA Executive Steering Committee as well as a shorter summary report suitable for wider dissemination to community members, politicians and other relevant stakeholders. The project and report findings will also be presented to the Fair Isle DR MPA Executive Steering Group in March next year.

This project is supported by the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, managed by NatureScot.

Fair Isle cetacean monitoring MSc project

This project by Fergus McCormick, an MSc student from Edinburgh Napier University working with FIMRO and NatureScot investigated cetacean presence around Fair Isle using a combination of acoustic and visual techniques. Fair Isle has historically relied on community-led visual surveys and ad-hoc observations, which are limited by daylight, weather, and the animals' surfacing behaviour. This study introduces passive acoustic monitoring (PAM) alongside visual surveys to provide a more continuous and objective record of cetacean activity.

Acoustic data were collected using acoustic devices known as FPODs placed at two locations, Wirvie (North Haven) and South Haven. FPODs work by detecting and recording the echolocation clicks of odontocetes (toothed whales e.g. dolphins, whales and porpoises) and use an associated post-processor which classifies the clicks to different cetacean categories (porpoises vs other dolphins). Land-based observations were carried out using visual surveys, some from the Bunness WDC Shorewatch site, following systematic methodology and some from another site using following WDC Shorewatch protocols which directly overlooked the devices at Wirvie (North Haven).



© Fergus McCormick

Results from the acoustic data and visual observer data collected over the period of April – July 2025 were compared. Results show that PAM detects significantly more cetacean activity than visual surveys, especially at night. Harbour porpoises and dolphins produced characteristic click trains distinguishable by frequency, inter-click intervals, and sound pressure levels. Visual and acoustic datasets agreed on general presence/absence patterns but diverged in fine-scale activity, with PAM revealing substantial nocturnal behaviour.

There was one example of a visual sighting of Risso's dolphins which correlated with acoustic detections enabling calibration (with reasonable confidence) of the acoustic record to species level. On the other hand, there was an example of three separate orca sightings observed close to one of the devices deployed at Wirvie with no associated acoustic detections. While the exact reasons for this lack of detection are unknown it is possibly due to a lack of vocalisation at the time (e.g. orcas may have been silent as hunting), or possibly due to the species' lower click rates.

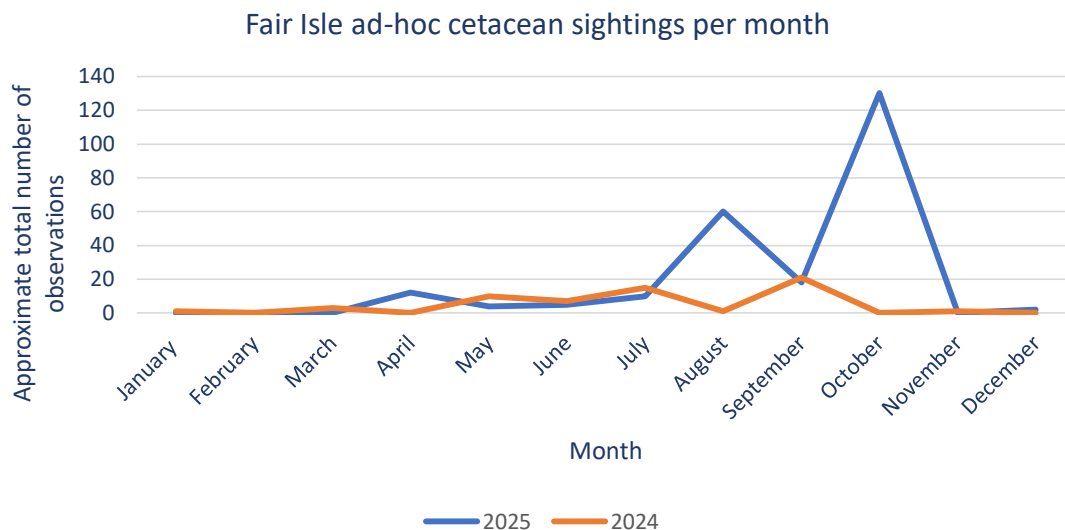
Overall, integrating PAM with visual surveys provides a far more complete understanding of Fair Isle's cetaceans and supports future monitoring within the DR MPA. Due to the limited time frame of this project, it was not possible to establish any longer term or seasonal variation in cetacean presence. Recommendations for future consideration therefore include improving acoustic coverage: more devices, year-round deployments, greater geographic spread, and additional instruments capable of detecting baleen whales. Recommendations from this study will help to guide future cetacean monitoring work in Fair Isle led by the community as part of the Fair Isle DR MPA. A presentation summarising Fergus's MSc project is available [here](#).

Fair Isle Marine WhatsApp records 2025 summary

Since the Fair Isle Marine WhatsApp group began in October 2022, over 330 separate reports of interesting marine finds have been made with ~120 for 2025 alone. Since 2022 the group has grown substantially, with regular contributors and over 50 members. This group was setup to keep a record of the marine species of Fair Isle and to build up a species image library of the wildlife we have on our shores and monitor some of the changes in biodiversity. Below presents a summary of some of the species reported and other interesting marine finds reported over the last year.

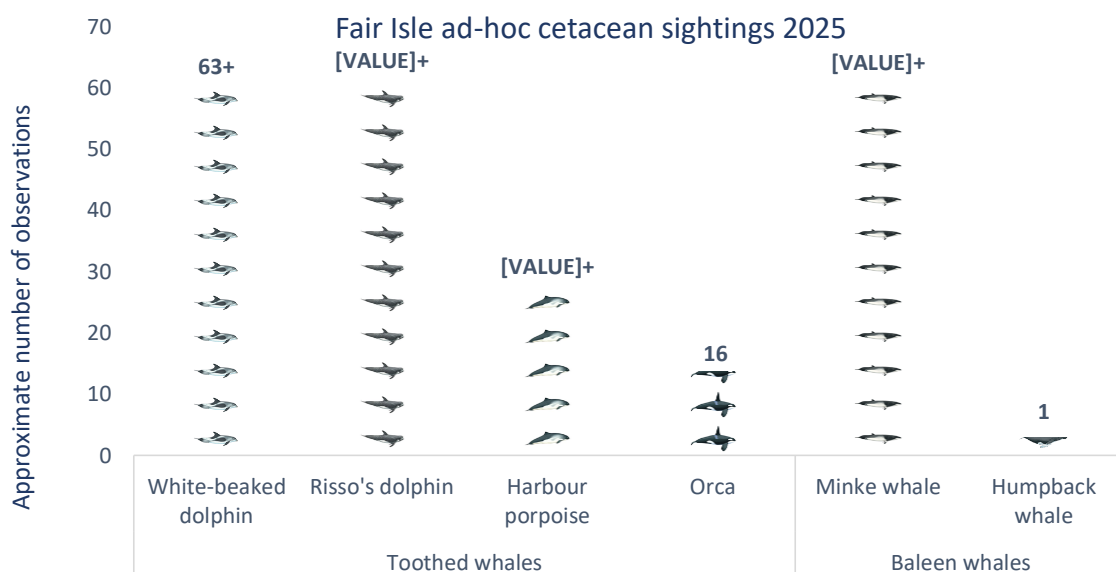
During 2025 over 40 different marine species have been identified and reported via the group. These include approximately 6 species of cetacean (whales and dolphins), 10 species of cnidaria (jellyfish, sea anemones, hydroids etc), 1 species of crustacean (crabs, goose barnacles etc), 3 species of echinoderm (star fish etc), 3 elasmobranch species including egg cases (sharks and skate), 10 fish species, 4 mollusc species (not including nudibranchs), ~5 nudibranch (sea slugs, sea lemons etc) as well as some marine worms, seabirds and seals.

After a quieter summer for cetaceans compared to previous years, the month of October saw a flurry of cetacean activity around the island with a variety of species, including minke whales, Risso's dolphins and white beaked dolphins some in large groups of more than 25 individuals (white beaked dolphins) observed to be feeding off Fair Isle. Orcas are still regular visitors to the isle observed in January, September and December this year.



Fair Isle ad-hoc cetacean sightings during 2024/2025 per month reported via the Fair Isle Marine WhatsApp group.
Note: numbers are approximate values and 2025 records up to 08.12.25

Fair Isle ad-hoc cetacean sightings by species groups reported via the Fair Isle Marine WhatsApp group.



Note: numbers are approximate values

In September, there was a particularly exciting report of an ocean sunfish *Mola mola* spotted off Skervallie, believed to be approximately 1.5m across. Sunfish are rare visitors to the British Isles and Fair Isle. Prior to this there had been two previous records of sunfish in Fair Isle, one in the 1960s and one in circa 2012 spotted off Lerness and the Fair Isle-Shetland channel respectively.



Ocean sunfish *Mola mola* spotted off Skervallie in September 2025 by Alex Penn.

Whilst not reported via the Marine WhatsApp group, another exciting find and first record for Fair Isle was *Phyllodoce groenlandica*, a polychaete worm found in shallow sand at North Haven by Max Casagrande, identified by Nick Riddiford. *P. groenlandica* is widespread throughout the British Isles and is found in shallow sand inshore and offshore.

Another interesting find was this siphonophore (pictured right) *Agalma elegans* found at North Haven by Ruth Holgate, another first record for Fair Isle.

Siphonophore *Agalma elegans* found at North Haven in October by Ruth Holgate (Photo credit: Diane Stout).



Well done to all the group's contributors this year, it's been brilliant looking back through all this year's brilliant records. We encourage anyone who spots something interesting/different/cool/exciting to please take a photo and send an approximate location or grid reference and either email to fairislempa@gmail.com, or send to Fair Isle Marine WhatsApp group.

Newsletter - The Fair Isle DR MPA quarterly newsletter, Autumn edition is now available on FIMRO's website at: <https://www.fair-isle-marine.org.uk/fair-isle-dr-mpa/dr-mpa-newsletter/> Here you can catch up on what's being going on over the last few months, access previous editions of the newsletter and subscribe to the newsletter mailing list if you haven't already. If anyone has any questions they can contact me on katie.cubbon@nature.scot. I would like to wish everyone a very

Merry Christmas and say a huge thanks for all the support for the Fair Isle Demonstration and Research MPA during 2025.
Katie Cubbon – Fair Isle Demonstration and Research MPA Research Officer.

Some examples of marine species reported via the Fair Isle marine WhatsApp group during 2025



12 scaled worm. Sompal.
Eileen Thomson



Garfish. South Haven. David
Parnaby



Blue anemone Secret beach.
Luca and Ander Rotolo



Brittle star. Sompal. Eileen
Thomson



By-the-wind-sailor. Muckle Uri
Geo. Alex Penn.



By-the-wind-sailor. North
Haven. Tommy Hyndman



Common whelk. North Haven
pontoon Luca and Ander
Rotolo.



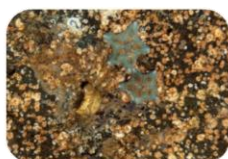
Common whelk. North Haven
pontoon Luca and Ander
Rotolo.



Crystal jellyfish North Haven
pier. David Parnaby.



Cuckoo ray egg case. Muckle
Uri Geo. Alex Penn.



Cushion and brittle stars.
Muckle Uri Geo. Jonnie Fisk



Oaten pipes hydroid. Leestit.
Katie Cubbon



Dahlia anemone. Secret
beach. Luca and Ander Rotolo.



Slender sea slug. North Haven
slipway. Luca Rotolo.



Flapper skate egg case. South
Haven. David Parnaby



Grey sea slug. Muckle Uri Geo.
Tom Wright



Moon jellyfish. South Haven.
Jonnie Fisk.



Greenleaf worm. Mavers Geo.
Luca Rotolo.



Sea lemon. South Lighthouse
Henry Hyndman



Orca. Buiness. Alex Penn.

Da week dat's awa' – this week we hear from one of our newest residents, Alice who, amongst other things, has been busy keeping us fit and strong since she moved here in summer

Friday 5th December

Friday morning at Brecks started the same as every weekday with a big rush to get ready for school, but with the added (complication?) fun of opening Khalicee's advent calendar. This year I bought her a Lego brick countdown calendar which involves opening little boxes containing a small selection of tiny Lego pieces which need to be constructed together to create a Santa sleigh & Christmas tree by the 25th. It's one of those things that seemed like a good idea in theory perhaps...

After school drop off it was time to start preparing for my yoga class and for the post yoga gathering we would be hosting this evening. Coffee and class planning was followed by a trip to the shop to purchase booze and crisps (among other things), then home to start making mulled wine and nibbles. I had a complete panic at 13:45 and messaged Eileen to ask her if she could collect Khalicee from school for me as I was running late, only to realise a few minutes later that I had another hour yet! I may have been tasting the mulled wine as I made a little too much!

At 15:00 we met with Rachel for Christmas carol singing in the committee room. It was really lovely and the kids did great, especially as we sang some of the words in Latin!

After singing I dropped the 3 kiddos to Brecks for Khalid's *Daddy Daycare* whilst us grown-ups went to yoga class. He'd made them some leek and potato soup which went down a storm. Meanwhile at yoga we attempted side crow pose, forearm stands and the full splits. Key word there is attempted! Although, we did have some pretty impressive side crows in the room.

Now it was time to invite everyone from class into Brecks for our first ever hosting experience here on the island, a first for us, a first for Brecks and a first Christmassy social event of the season! Cheers! Thank you Eileen for preparing some delicious mince pies and jam tarts for the occasion :)

Saturday 6th December

After a late night there was no rush to start the day this morning. After a big post-party clean up operation and a leisurely lunch I took Khalicee up to the hall to meet Jonnie & Diane for a wholesome Christmas crafty making session. It was a bit strange and quiet at home without her all afternoon but we're thrilled that she's happy and content to go out without an accompanying parent now, just shows how much she's grown in confidence and how comfortable she feels here.

Sunday 7th December

Sunday morning always starts with pancakes at Brecks. A small argument over who's pancakes are better, Mummy's or Daddy's, which Daddy won... this time. It's not over yet! I hope to take back the title next weekend!

Over to Quoy for Chapel at 11:00 this morning which was lovely and cosy, followed by coffee and more of Eileen's delicious mince pies.

After lunch Khalid and Luca went a-hunting, which ended up in success! (Sorry, goodbye Mr Goose)

The remainder of Sunday was focused on quality family time with board games and a Christmas film (and ice cream!).

Monday 8th December

Boat day today, Khalid was up and away out of the house before 06:00 leaving me and Khalicee fast asleep until a more civilised time. Advent calendar Lego reindeers to make and a thorough hair detangling made us a bit tight for time on the school run this morning, but we made 09:00, just! I returned home to make Khalicee's packed lunch and as it was a lovely morning took the opportunity to walk it up to the school. I'd had plans to do FIEC monthly battery inspections this morning with David Parnaby but he had to rearrange and my circuits class was also postponed until tomorrow leaving me with some spare time to catch up on household chores. A message from Diane derailed those chores though with an invite to swim! I couldn't think of a reason why not so grabbed my swimming stuff, heated up some left over mulled wine (diluted

with cranberry juice I hasten to add!), poured it into a Thermos and headed over to Lower Leogh to meet Diane for our trek to Gunglesund.



It was an awesome experience, the water was freezing but it was totally invigorating and sitting in the rock pool with Diane after our swim sipping hot mulled wine to warm up is probably one of those moments that will stick in my memory forever, it was completely life affirming.

I had time for a brief hot shower and change of clothes before heading to the school to collect Khalicee and then on to visit our lovely neighbours Anne & Barry for a catch up and more (don't judge me!) mulled wine :)

Home at last and time to make a feast for when Khalid gets home from the boat, hungry enough to eat a whole sheep!

Tuesday 9th December

Scheduled for today a visit to Upper Leogh for coffee with Kathy at 10:30. I had such a good time chatting with her that I didn't leave until nearly 13:00! After lunch I prepared my circuit class plan for later that afternoon. Today's session was pretty intense with mountain sliders, lateral bench hops, boat crunches, bunny hops, dumbbell clean & press, push ups, reverse flys and mini trampoline double jumping jacks! I don't know about everyone else but I was absolutely exhausted afterwards! It was great fun though as always, I love planning the classes and coming up and interesting ways to get us moving, and then seeing everyone take the exercises so seriously but also having fun doing them is really such a joy to me.

Wednesday 10th December

A very windy day! School started later at 10:00 today due to the weather. After drop off I was feeling a bit low, so sat on the sofa watching a Christmas film waiting for news on our house sale and/or my job at the

airstrip. No news. Khalid is busy on a Good Shepard paperwork project from Ian, he's really focused on getting all the details right, for which I'm so proud of him.

Thursday 11th December

A busy day planned for today. After dropping Khalicee at school it's those postponed monthly battery inspections to complete, followed by teaching Kids Yoga at 12:00 in the hall. Today I asked them to invent their own yoga poses which was great fun, we also worked on shoulder stands and seeing how far we could roll ourselves up into a ball!

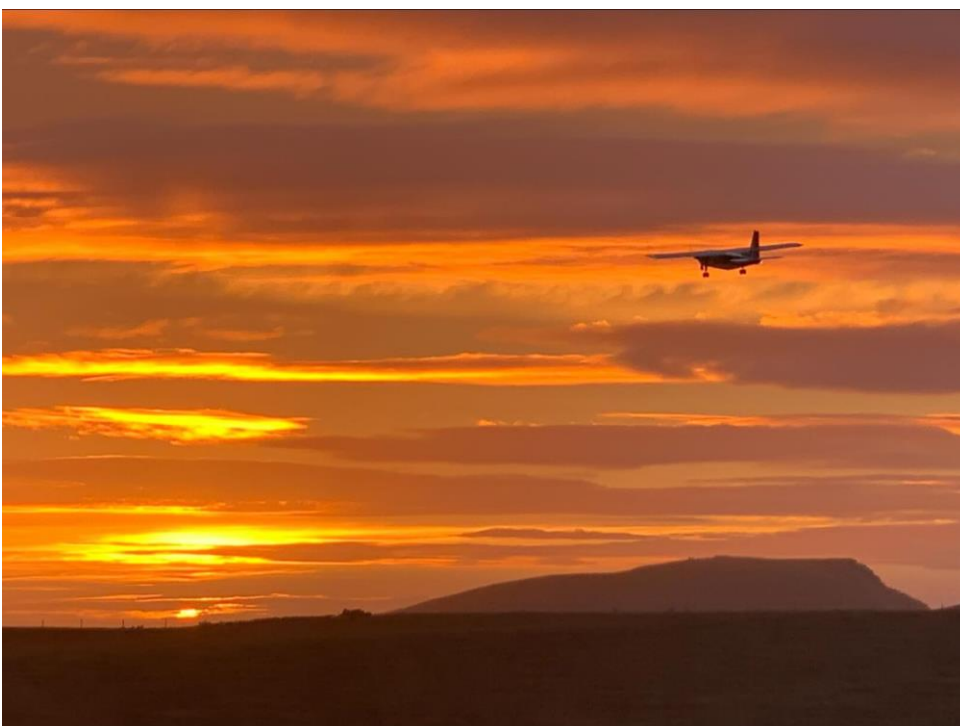


Unfortunately the happy moment turned sour when I received the call which I had been dreading from our solicitor - our buyers had backed out and the house sale had fallen through. Home to discuss our options with Khalid and my parents via video call, any other plans for the day cancelled. We decided to collect the Christmas tree after school to try and salvage the day and ended up having a great family evening hanging up the decorations. Onwards and upwards, we're feeling surprisingly optimistic and cheerful.

Friday 12th December

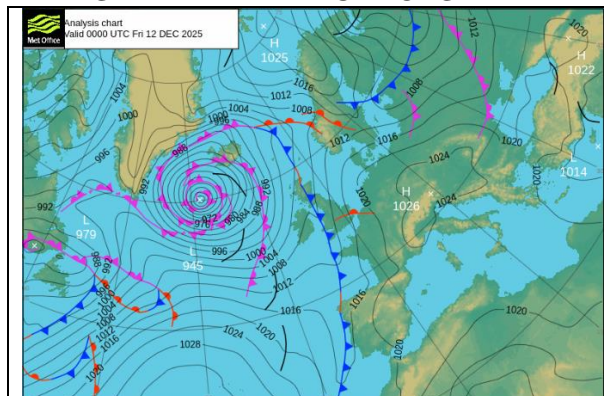
A drizzly start to the day but thankfully our VIP school visitors arrived on the morning flight, I met them at the airstrip and delivered them down to the school. Home for coffee and writing this piece as I watch the sun start to shine through the clouds and the drizzle and fog dissipate. A new idea is forming for our house - we can rent it out instead! Silver lining!

Alice at Brecks

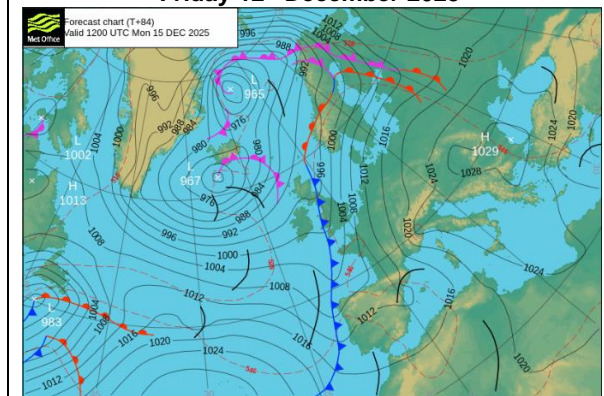


Thanks to Dave Wheeler for this superb photo of the Islander taking off from the airstrip on Thursday – quite literally flying off into the sunset. Quite an emotive scene for sure. Let's hope for a few more boannie flying days to get all the family and friends home for Christmas

FAIR ISLE WEATHER FORECAST



Analysis Chart 0000 UTC
Friday 12th December 2025



Forecast Chart 1200 UTC
Monday 15th December 2025

GENERAL SITUATION Friday 12th December 2025

Pressure remains low from Newfoundland across Iceland and the Norwegian Sea. During the next few days small disturbances are expected to run along trailing fronts bringing showery rain at times. Through much of next week low pressure in the Iceland region maintains a strong and showery south to south-westerly airflow across northern Scotland. Towards the end of the week or following weekend low pressure may track east to the north of Scotland perhaps bringing a cooler west or north-westerly airflow.

OUTLOOK FOR THE WEEKEND

Temperatures 10° to 12° by day, 8° or 9° overnight.

SATURDAY 13th: Cloudy with scattered showers soon merging into a period of occasionally heavy rain. F6-7 SW winds later F7 to gale F8. Showers overnight.

Sea State: Mostly very rough or high at SW 4 to 6 metre. East of Shetland moderate or rough at SW 2 to 3 metre.

SUNDAY 14th: Drier and brighter with clear or sunny spells. F6-7 SW winds. Mainly dry overnight.

Sea State: Mostly very rough or high at SW 4 to 6 metre. East of Shetland moderate or rough at SSW 2 to 3 metre.

FORECAST FOR NEXT WEEK Temperature 10° or 11° by day, 7° to 9° overnight.

MONDAY 15th: Mild and cloudy or partly cloudy with sunny spells and scattered showers. Strong S to SW winds. **Sea State:** Mostly rough at SW 3 to 4 metre. East of Shetland mostly moderate at SSW 2 metre.

TUESDAY 16th: Mainly dry and bright with sunny spells and strong SW winds. **Sea State:** Mostly very rough at WSW 5 metre. East of Shetland moderate at SSW 2 metre.

WEDNESDAY 17th – SUNDAY 21st: Wednesday cloudy with showers and strong to gale S winds. Thursday drier and brighter with strong SSW winds. Friday and the weekend changeable with chance of cooler W or NW winds.. **Sea State Wednesday:** Mostly rough or very rough at SSW 4 to 5 metre.

Dave Wheeler

