



# Uist Unearthed – developing digital heritage tourism

Dr Emily Gal and Dr Rebecca Rennell

**UHI North, West and Hebrides | UHI Archaeology Institute**

Outer Hebrides Tourism Community Conference

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023

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**A TUATH, AN IAR IS INNSE GALL**



**COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR**



# Uist Unearthed – developing digital heritage tourism

- Challenges, opportunities and audiences
- Uist unearthed – how does it work?
- Feedback and project impact
- Next steps



# Challenges and opportunities



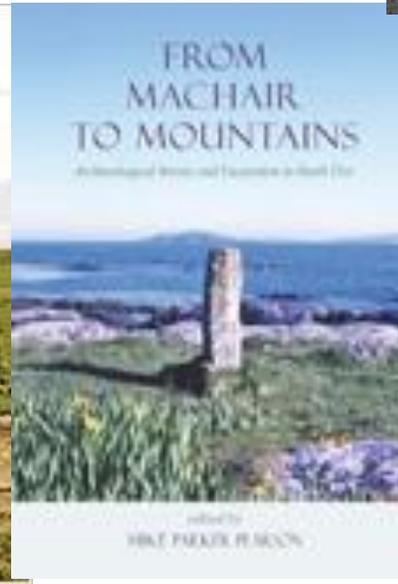
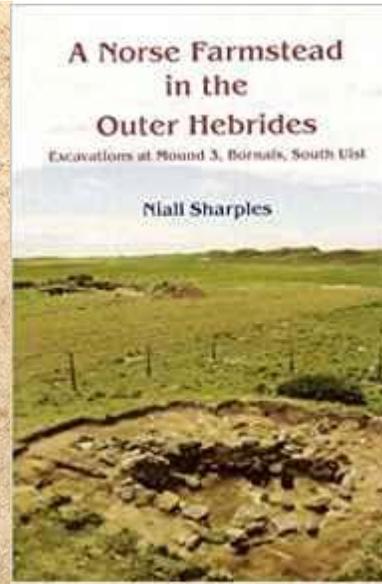
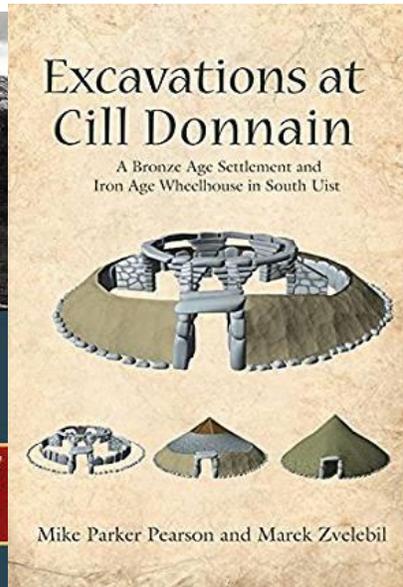
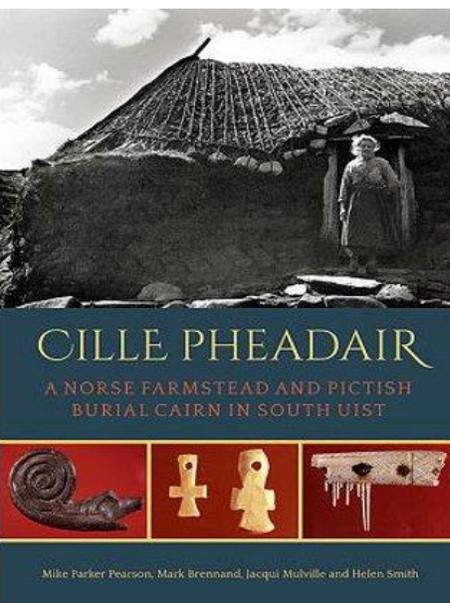
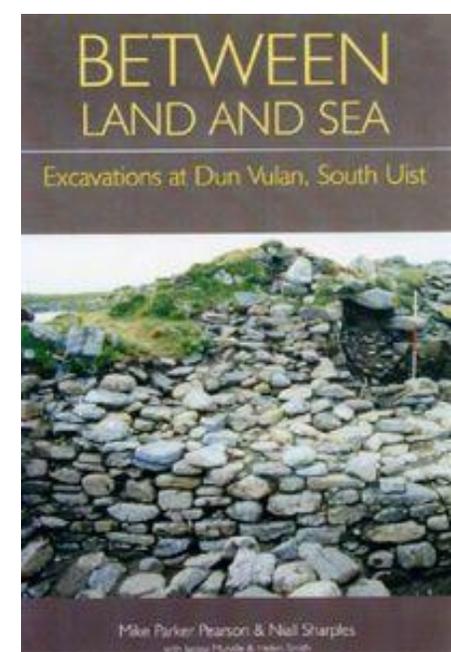
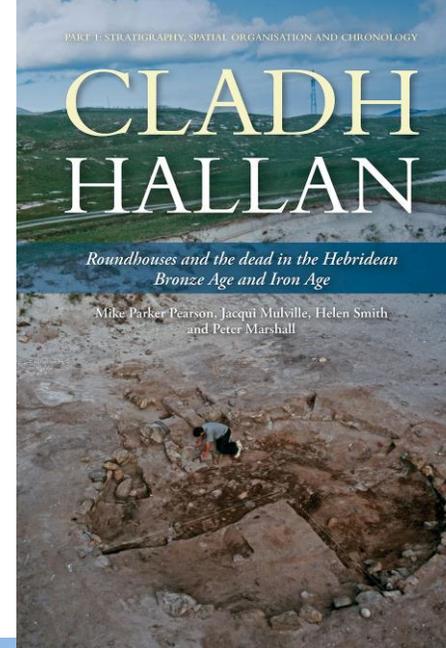
# Opportunity – internationally significant archaeology



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# Opportunity - amazing research resources



## Hebridean Norsemen

Exploring the Norse Period with archaeological artefacts from across the Outer Hebrides

9 June - 2 September 2017  
Closed Sunday & Monday - late opening till 7pm on Friday

Museum nan Eilean  
Sgoil Lionacleit  
Benbecula

[museumU&B@cne-siar.gov.uk](mailto:museumU&B@cne-siar.gov.uk)  
01870 603692

# Challenges – Heritage interpretation & maintenance



Cladh Hallan, South Uist



Dun Torcuill, North Uist

# Challenges - Fragile landscapes

Eroding prehistoric midden, Baile Sear



# Challenges - invisible heritage



# Challenges > Opportunities

- Rich archaeological landscapes
- Incredible preservation
- Buried remains
- Sense of discovery



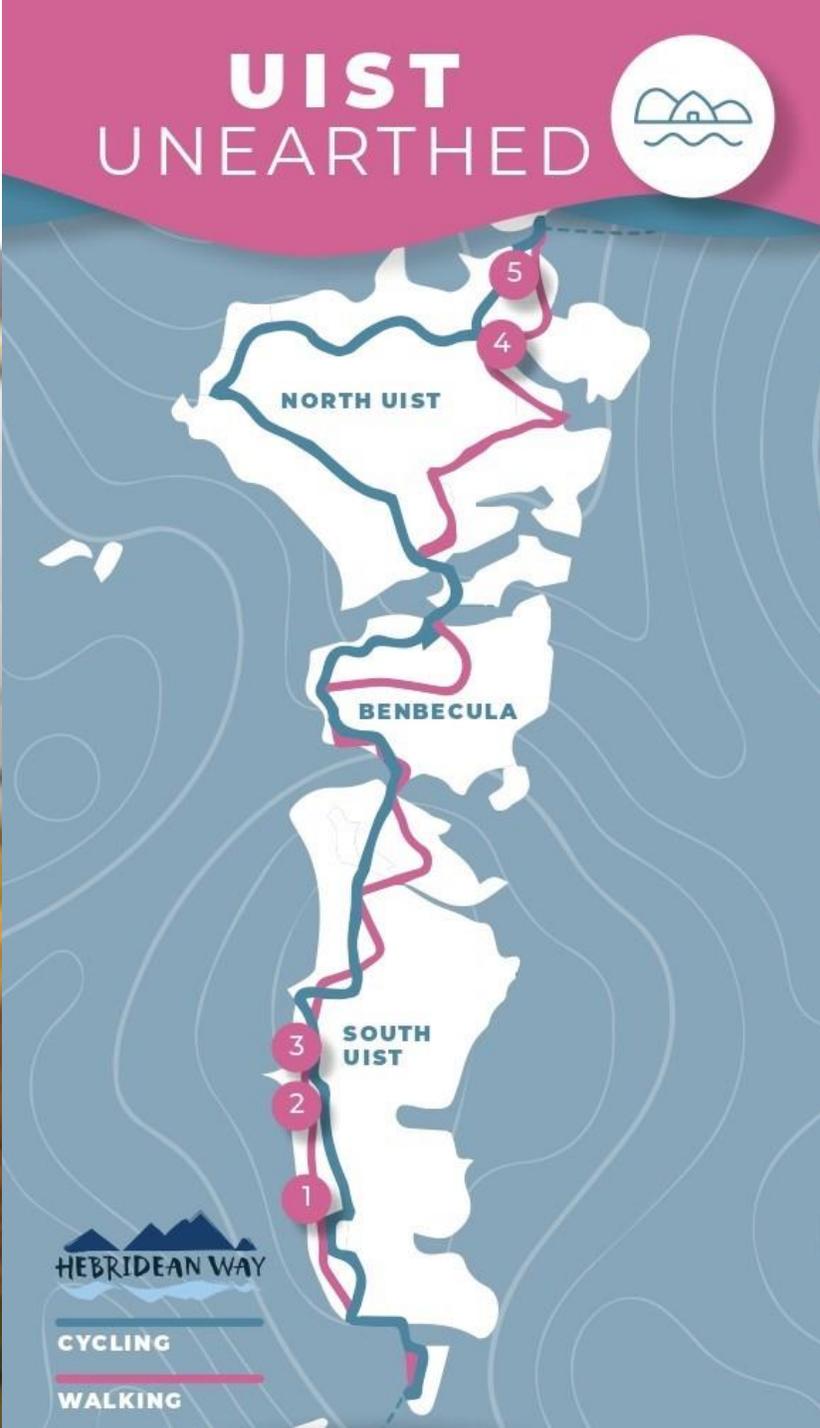
Orkney World Heritage sites © Richard Welsby. Licensor [www.scran.ac.uk](http://www.scran.ac.uk)



**Mobile app:** Uist Unearthed. AR reconstructions of five key archaeological sites along the Hebridean Way in Uist and Benbecula

**Multi-media exhibition:** Interactive screens, printed 3D objects, VR headsets, interactive games.





# Cladh Hallan, South Uist









# Multimedia app content

## CILL DONNAIN

From Gaelic "cill", meaning 'chapel'

Name of a 7th century saint: 'Donnán'

'St Donnán's Church'

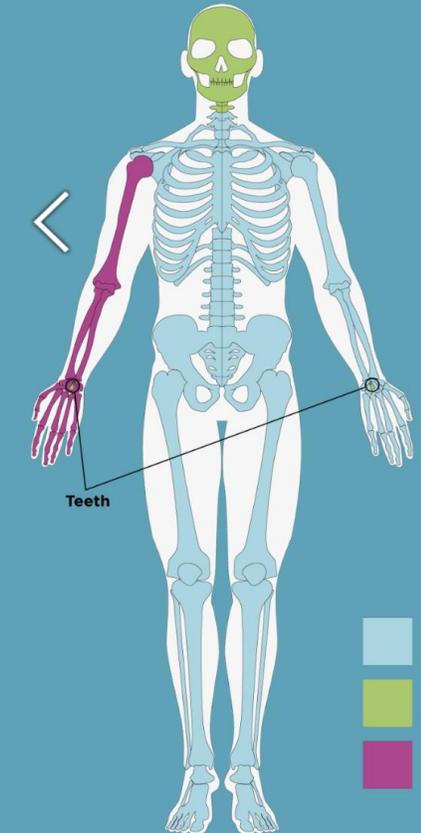


UIST  
UNEARTHED



## COMPOSITE MUMMIES

How many people's remains formed the mummies that were discovered here, and who might they have been?



- ♀ -1210 BC, Adult
- ♂ -1380 BC, Adult
- ? <1100 BC, Age Unknown



## BÒRNAIS

Fàilte gu Bòrnais. 'S e Bòrnais a bh' air aon de na bailtean Lochlannach a bu mhotha ann an Alba. Faodaidh tu an taigh-fada leòmach seo on 11mh linn a rannsachadh le bhith a' fosgladh a' mhic-shamhail Fìorachd Leasaichte gus barrachd ionnsachadh mun làrach agus na daoine a bha a' còmhnaidh ann.



# Gàidhlig

All app content bilingual  
Additional bespoke content

ceòlas



## LORGAN

Chaidh Hàlann a rannsachadh le àrc-eòlaichean à Oilthigh Sheffield eadar 1989 agus 2003. Bha na làraichean ro-eachdraidheil slàn air an lorg ri linn 's gun robh daoine a' cladhach gainmheach air a' mhachaire.

Mar a chìthear san dealbh, chleachd na h-àrc-eòlaichean siostam grid airson



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# Feedback and project Impact



**221**

SCHOOL PUPILS  
ENGAGED DURING  
WORKSHOPS



**273**

COMMUNITY MEMBERS  
INVOLVED IN CO-CREATION  
AND APP TESTING



**2100**

ATTENDEES AT  
ENGAGEMENT  
EVENTS



**5369**

'UIST UNEARTHED'  
APP DOWNLOADS

\*



**4800**

MULTIMEDIA  
EXHIBITION  
VISITORS



\* now over 5300

“works superbly, **brings it to life**, our 9 + 11 year-old children enjoyed it!



“The best bit was the **immersive** nature of the AR experience”

“it is fun and innovative and interesting and well put together....and **it leaves no trace**”



“after we finished the app, we played around the site pretending to be the inhabitants of the roundhouses – **it prompted imaginative play**”



The girls decided this would have been their house because they could keep all their toys in the wee den at the front. #BronzeAgeBairns #UistUnearthed



The #UistUnearthed project is amazing! A real treat to see Cladh Hallan brought back to life with augmented reality wizardry.

[apps.apple.com/gb/app/uist-un...](https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/uist-unearthed)



Loved using the new Uist Unearthed app today with @eimhear\_fitzy 🥰 @ArchaeologyLcc @egalArch



or iPhone

8:30 PM · Aug 17, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

# Wider impacts for tourism



81% said they'd visit another archaeological site

Users spending average 45 minutes on the app

>15k hits on local businesses via app

37% estimated that they had spent between £10-£50

Heritage and Arts > Heritage

# The seven archaeological wonders of Uist drawn back into ancient landscape

Uist is bidding for its share of Scotland's archaeological glory with a new project that visualises its most thrilling ancient sites back in the landscape once again.

By Alison Compain  
Thursday, 22nd July 2021, 4:45 pm



Cladh Hallan, a Bronze Age settlement in South Uist where two mummified bodies were found, visualised in the landscape where it once stood. PIC: UIRL

Seven archaeological wonders of the islands will feature in a new app which allows the ancient landscape to emerge in front of the very eyes of visitors as they tread close to the sites.

The first is Cladh Hallan, a Bronze Age settlement in South Uist, which changed understanding of prehistoric life when two mummified bodies – a male and a female – were found under one of the dwellings.

# This is how visitors to Uist will be able to see amazing archaeological sites as if they were in front of their eyes

By Lauren Robertson July 21, 2021, 10:52 am



Uist Unearthed app

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INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL ADVICE ON MONEY MATTERS AROUND THE HIGHLANDS, ISLANDS & MORAY After more... [Read real story](#)  
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The Uist Virtual Archaeology Project has launched a new app which aims to show Uist's murky historic sites in all their glory.

Uist Unearthed was created by archaeologists from Lewis Castle College at the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

Visitors will be able to open the app at seven sites along the Hebridean Way and delve deeper into the history of each one.

By scanning a QR code at the site, users will have access to stunningly realistic visualisations of what the site may have looked 3,500 years ago, 3D models of artefacts, animations, audio and bilingual text content.

## A new visitor offering

The project aims to encourage both local communities and tourists to learn more about Uist's most impressive archaeological sites.

It is also hoped that this new, more immersive experience will bring a wider range of people to the island.

SAVE 30%

TIARAD TARRAN DRESS

SAVE 30%

FAN WOVEN SUN DRESS

SAVE 30%

SAVE 60%

# New app allows visitors to virtually explore ancient Outer Hebridean sites

The islands of Uist are home to hundreds of spectacular archaeological sites - with the new app allowing people to view them as never before.

By Sean Murphy Tourism Writer  
12:40, 27 JUL 2021 | UPDATED 12:41, 27 JUL 2021

Enter your postcode for local news and info



The augmented reality app shows how Cladh Hallan would have looked (Image: Uist Virtual Archaeology project)

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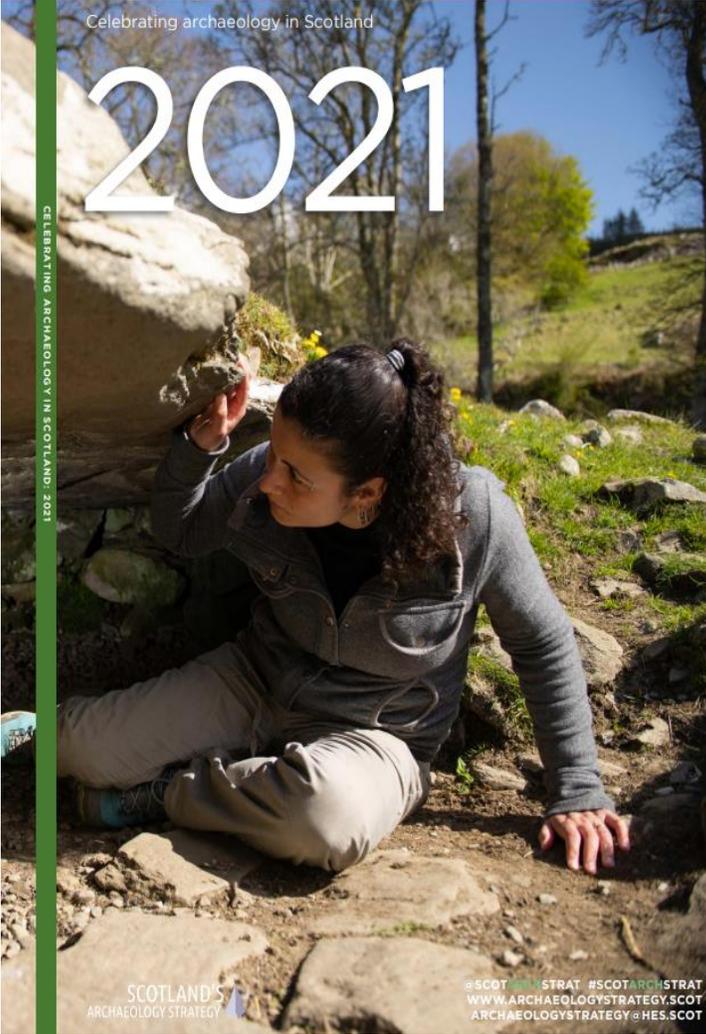
The product contains nicotine which is a highly addictive substance.

# Press coverage

Celebrating archaeology in Scotland

# 2021

CELEBRATING ARCHAEOLOGY IN SCOTLAND: 2021



SCOTLAND'S  
ARCHAEOLOGY STRATEGY

#SCOTARCHSTRAT #SCOTARCHSTRAT  
WWW.ARCHAEOLOGYSTRATEGY.SCOT  
ARCHAEOLOGYSTRATEGY@HES.SCOT

The augmented reality model of the Bronze Age roundhouses at Cladh Hallan overlaid on the modern landscape.



### Uist Virtual Archaeology Project

Uist Virtual Archaeology Project (UVAP) launched its new App "Uist Unearthed" in July. Led by Lewis Castle College UHI and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar the project encourages engagement with Uist's archaeology using innovative Augmented Reality (AR) technology.

For a small archipelago Uist boasts internationally significant archaeological sites, exceptional preservation of remains, and stunning archaeological landscapes. Nevertheless, there are few impressive upstanding remains, fewer still with any form of on-site interpretation and limited material in local museums. This is challenging for communities and visitors wishing to engage with its heritage. Uist has amazing archaeological stories to tell and information from decades of research.

The Uist Unearthed App sets out to tell these stories, as the first of its kind in Scotland - presented, AR experiences of archaeological sites along the Hebridean Way. The first reconstructed site is Cladh Hallan - excavated by the University of Sheffield and known for the discovery of prehistoric mummified bodies.

The app contains stunningly detailed AR reconstructions of Bronze Age roundhouses alongside information from excavations, animations, and 3D artefact models. All content is bilingual, with Gaelic content reflecting on folklore and place-name studies. Over 2021/22, six further sites will be added to the app.

The app is free to download from iOS and Android stores now, and more information available on the project [webpage](#).

Emily Gal,  
Uist Virtual Archaeology Project

A range of media are presented in the app, from life-size 3D models to animations, text, and audio suitable for all ages.



The team works closely with local schoolchildren including the pupils of Spìt Bhàisde Mhàineach, shown testing the App here. The pupils were nominated a Benbecula site to be featured in the App.



# Targeting heritage and archaeology interest groups

# Promoting Uist's archaeology



**90%** of users learnt something new about Uist's archaeology

**40%** said they'd learned something about Gaelic language and culture

**88%** recommended using the app or visiting the exhibition to others

# Wider recognition

**NOMINEE**

**FILMG**

Film Dùthchais as Fheàrr



Ùisdean Mac Ghilleasbaig Chlèirich

Uist Unearthed & Sgoil Uibhist a Tuath

**Bòrd na Gàidhlig** **DUAIS: £1000**  
le taic bho  
Bòrd na Gàidhlig



ARCHAEOLOGICAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS  
Council for British Archaeology

**PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OR PRESENTATION**  
2022 WINNER

**THE UIST VIRTUAL ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT**

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Council for British Archaeology

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INNOVATION**  
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**EAA 2023 RELEASE**  
WEAVING NARRATIVES  
ARCHAEOLOGY & PALAEOECOLOGICAL RESEARCH  
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

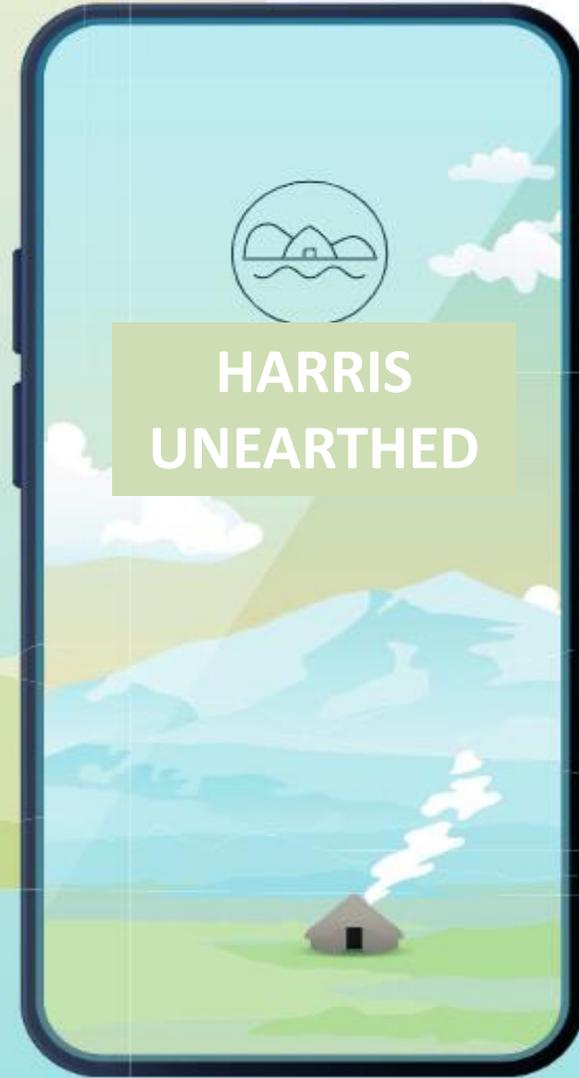
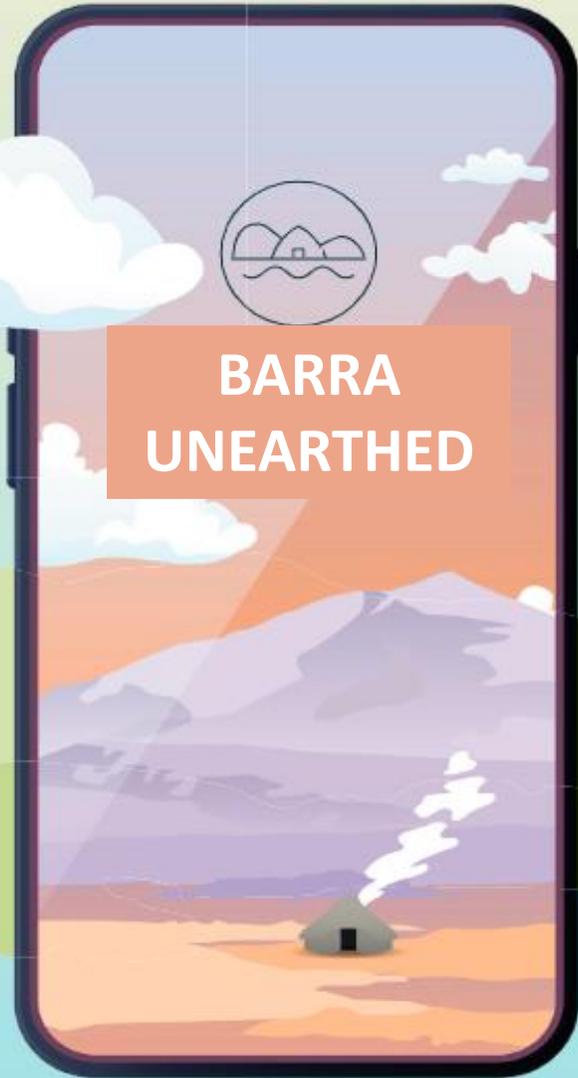
**OUTSTANDING ARCHAEOLOGICAL ACHIEVEMENT**  
2022 WINNER

**THE UIST VIRTUAL ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT**

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# What next?



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**COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR**



**MAOIN**  
**DUALCHAIS**  
**HERITAGE**  
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**NatureScot**  
Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba



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**Eòrpa agus Alba**  
Maoin Leasachaidh Roinnean na h-Eòrpa  
A' tasgadh ann an Àm ri teachd Gleusta, Seasmhach is In-ghabhail



**Highlands and Islands Enterprise**  
**Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean**

*ceòlas*

**Stòras Uibhist**  
*Going forward together*



# UIST UNEARTHED

  @UistUnearthed

 @UHI\_OHARCH

[emily.gal@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:emily.gal@uhi.ac.uk)

[rebecca.rennell@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:rebecca.rennell@uhi.ac.uk)

