

## Tasglann nan Eilean Siar Supporting Local Businesses in the Western Isles

The Outer Hebrides has a vibrant business community, ranging from local independent and community run shops through to haulage, quarrying, renewable energy and the world renowned Harris Tweed industry.

Multinationals have a limited presence in the Western Isles, meaning many of the businesses have a longevity and local connection that has often been eroded in other parts of Scotland.

Tasglann nan Eilean Siar (Hebridean Archives) is funded by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, the European Regional Development Fund and Comunn na Gàidhlig to establish an archive service in the Western Isles. This three year project started in 2010 and a key part of its activities is working with business and industry to advise and assist them in managing their records.

The support offered is wide ranging and reflects the needs of individual businesses. It can range from identifying and surveying archive material through to establishing records management procedures so companies can systematically manage their records from creation through to destruction or archive preservation. Ultimately, the Tasglann are helping businesses to make better use of a key asset: their records, be it for administrative purposes, marketing, or legal defence.

The Tasglann has worked with the Harris Tweed Authority to undertake a full survey of their archive records. The Authority is custodian of the longest continually used trade mark in the UK – the Harris Tweed Orb. This vital industry asset is stamped on every length of Tweed produced in the Outer Hebrides and is a symbol of quality and Island pride. As such, it is fiercely protected.

The survey was an opportunity for a spring clean but also uncovered and listed numerous case files relating to trademark defence. As well as legal papers, these files include examples of historic advertising and evidence of business activity around the world. Following the survey, these files are now accessible and easy to locate allowing the Authority to utilise them more easily in supporting their ongoing work and marketing.

Lorna MacAulay, Chief Executive of the Harris Tweed Authority said “Our heritage is key to our identity and designers often wish to consult the archive for inspiration. Overseas visitors looking to use tweed in their products appreciate seeing archive material and we see a value in making greater use of the archive in this way.”

The survey also uncovered the records of now defunct Tweed mills along with weaver’s books providing information on the crofters who produced the Tweed at home. This is key social and business history for the Islands which the Authority is keen to make accessible to researchers.

Ultimately, the Tasglann project wants to aid businesses not only in managing and utilising their records more effectively, but in ensuring that they are preserved and made accessible to a wide researcher audience both in the islands and further afield.

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

 [www.harristweed.org](http://www.harristweed.org)



**Harris Tweed**