

Eilidh Carr

Age: 27
Location: Berneray, Isle of North Uist
[Coralbox Gift Shop](#)

 @EilidhCarr

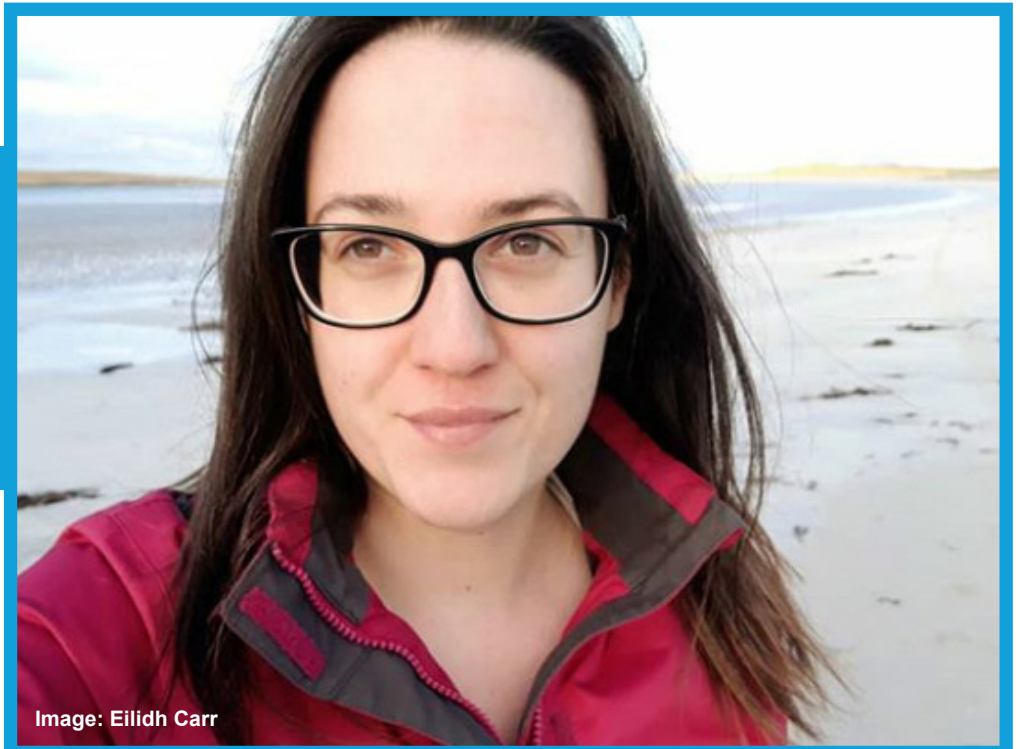


Image: Eilidh Carr

Main Challenges



Enterprise support for young people



Housing



Transport

Background

Photographer and business owner Eilidh, moved home at the age of 23 to the small and remote island of Berneray, where she grew up. Here, she launched her business Coralbox Gift Shop – a small independent craft shop where she sells her own photography products, as well as other local makers' creations.

Over a five-year period, her business has evolved from selling at craft fairs, to trading through her first shop in a self-converted caravan, to its current site in her beautiful purpose built wooden gift shop that sits upon the shore of Bays Loch, with stunning views out to sea. As the only gift shop on the island, it has provided a key platform to celebrate local makers and attract more visitors to the island.

Considered a National Scenic Area, Berneray has some of the best flora and fauna in Scotland which Eilidh captures and transfers onto mugs and coasters using specialist printing equipment. She also uses these photographs to produce calendars, cards and tea towels.

It is her love and appreciation of nature, the slower pace and the beaches that drew her back to the island; "I missed the way of island life". Yet it was her time away from home, studying photography in Aberdeen, that helped Eilidh gain the confidence, skills, and ideas to make her business possible.

Her idea for using her own photographs for products first hatched whilst Eilidh worked for nightclubs and made keyrings with photographs of groups of friends on nights out.

Amazingly, Eilidh recalls, "there were the same number of people in my university halls as there were on the entire island of Berneray!"

"I would love to see more funding opportunities and enterprise support to encourage young people to get their businesses off the ground."

- Eilidh Carr



Image: Eilidh Carr

“I’ve actually made lots of friends on Twitter. I’ve had people on Twitter follow me for years and then call into the shop to say ‘hello’! It is nice to have that connection.”

- Eilidh Carr

Background

One challenge Eilidh had to overcome to establish her business was enterprise support

Eilidh found that funding was not available to her. Fortunately, she was able to find the money to invest but recognises others may not have this opportunity:

“I would love to see more funding opportunities and enterprise support to encourage young people to get their businesses off the ground”

Another challenge for her business is transport which - for islanders – is inextricably linked to the weather:

“Weather can play a tricky role! When the ferries or planes aren’t running, not only do they not bring visitors, they don’t bring the mail in either or my parcels being sent out to customers are delayed in leaving the islands.”

Eilidh also highlights the issue of housing. Many young people moving back to the island struggle to find adequate housing. Having moved home intending to live with her parents for a year, five years later Eilidh is still unable to find long term affordable housing. Many of her friends are in similar positions. Eilidh says, “Houses don’t come up often as people tend to stay put for a long time and I don’t think there has been any new housing built over the past 20 years.”

At present, the universal challenge for small business owners- especially those reliant on tourism - is the Covid virus. Whilst Eilidh continues to sell products online, it is undoubtedly an uncertain time. Meeting this with positivity, during lockdown, Eilidh has been streaming live footage of the bay on her website and sharing this on social media. She says, “it has been a good way of virtually ‘bringing’ people to the island”.

Social media has been very important for Eilidh in launching her business and she has a supportive and loyal community of followers; “I’ve actually made lots of friends on Twitter. I’ve had people on Twitter follow me for years and then call into the shop to say ‘hello’! It is nice to have that connection”.

Solutions

- 1. Use social media positively:** “Social media has been so important for my business in creating an online community and has helped generate business and I’ve also made good friends.”
- 2. Work with your community to support one another:** “By working together, you can bring more trade to the community”.
- 3. Self-belief:** “Take a chance and give it a go, you never know unless you try!”



Image: Eilidh Carr



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