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• FULL STORY PAGES 28 & 29

'U-turn' on Oban Bay

by Sandy Neil
sneil@obantimes.co.uk

Argyll and Bute Council is to become the harbour authority for Oban Bay and its approaches over a bid by CalMac's national owner CMAL, and says it will

'keep the door wide open' for a trust port.

A council officers' report had recommended the authority engaged with Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL) to determine which of the two parties would be best to apply for

a harbour revision order. But Argyll and Bute Harbour Board chairman, Councillor Rory Colville, moved an amendment saying the council's preferred option would be the council taking over the bay as a unitary municipal port. He also said the council should be

prepared to be the harbour authority for unmanaged sections of the bay.

The motion was unanimously agreed at the board's virtual meeting on Thursday December 2.

Council officials said a move towards

Continued on page 2.

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OT

Gallanach Road reopens after loose rock removed from cliff

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk

Gallanach Road in Oban is open to through traffic again.

Ballachulish-based Geo-Rope completed removal of unstable rocks from the cliff on Wednesday December 1 and the giant boulder and debris left on the road after last month's rockfall was cleared the next day.

Project manager and Geo-Rope company director Niall McLean told The Oban Times it took five days to set up the specialist equipment to bring down the loose rock but just six seconds for it to hit the ground.

Remote-controlled jacks were used to lever 70 tonnes of rock away from the cliff face, with a cable and nets wrapped round the rocks to guide them down and avoid the cottage below where Jennifer Shaw has lived for 23 years. She had to move out until the area was made safe enough for her to return. Three huge boulders



Geo-Rope specialists at work above Gallanach Road.

crashed down from the cliff on Friday November 5 with one blocking the road, another landing in Ms Shaw's garden and one near the foreshore.

Noone was hurt in the early morning incident but a school bus and a works van were nearby at the time.

The road had to be shut because of fears more loose rock could fall and, until last week, access to Kerrera ferry had to be via the roundabout

at the fire station to Glengallan Road, McKelvie Road and Glenshellach Road.

Mr McLean said: 'It's as safe as it was before the initial rockfall. It's not to say nothing else will come down but we have removed the loose bits off from area. That whole coastal area all the way through Oban is prone to falls.'

View Geo-Rope's footage of the rock removal at youtube/BwYhAPtYuw

U-turn on Oban Bay

Continued from page 1.

a 'trust port' model could be possible in the future.

Executive director Kirsty Flanagan said: 'We are not suggesting ruling out a trust port option. It is about taking the fairest approach to Oban Bay. There is an element of consensus in the correspondence. People want a clear and safe operation, and phase one will deliver that. The second point is that people want a harbour fit for purpose and a significant asset. Phase one will also deliver that.'

'People also want a trust option to be further examined, and phase two will address that, but the recommendations today are designed to allow these things all to happen in a managed way.'

Councillor Colville said: 'It seems to me that there is more preference for the council to take things forward as a harbour authority. There does seem to be a real concern that the council favours the CMAL approach. That is not the case.'

The volunteer group pro-

gressing the trust port option, the Oban Community Harbour Development Association (OCHDA), expressed 'surprise' and 'disappointment' at the council's 'u-turn', which 'failed to recognise the trust port option is not only the safest but also the most advanced in preparation'.

'No discussion of the consequences or the timescale was possible'

OCHDA's chairman John MacAlister said the report did not consider the options' impacts on Oban, nor recognised OCHDA's preparatory work 'totalling 36,000 words', he said, including a draft Harbour Order and supporting documents.

'The board was told that the quickest way to get a new harbour authority was by either CMAL or A&BC taking control, but no evidence was presented to support this.'

'Then, despite repeated

public statements by officers that the council lacked the skills and had no plan to run a municipal port, the council report to the board was changed during the meeting, without any warning, to recommending the municipal port as the preferred option.'

'Though superficially welcome, no discussion of the consequences or the timescale was possible.'

'Council officers have not started work at all on the council's 'preferred option' and do not plan to do so until after the next meeting of the Oban Bay Management Group in January, losing another month unnecessarily.'

'If this is as urgent as they said why haven't they started on the work?'

'OCHDA will not give up the argument: Oban Harbour should be run as a trust port. It will be best for Oban, its hinterland and the island communities served from here, best for all the water users and other stakeholders and, in the end, best for the council.'

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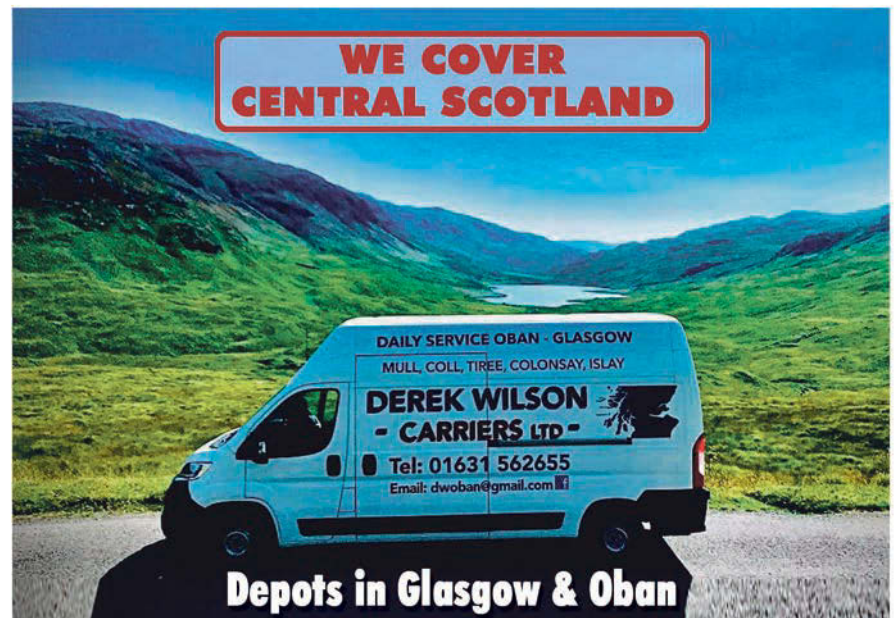
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Royal Mail lets down hospice

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk

Anyone who missed making dedications for this year's Light Up A Life Remembrance Book can still have their loved ones added.

Friends of Oban Hospice were greatly let down and disappointed by Royal Mail this year after dedication form leaflets failed to make it through everyone's letterboxes in time – despite the charity, with support from the town's Rotary Club, paying £800 for the delivery service.

Every year Friends of Oban Hospice sends out the leaflets via the post in time for a light-up ceremony of a tree outside the Corran Halls. The names of loved ones missed, especially at this poignant time of year, along with special dedications are recorded in a special book.

Now in its 16th year, Light Up A Life is one of the hospice's biggest fundraisers on the calendar and was needed as a boost more than ever in 2021 to fill the gaping financial



The 2021 Light Up A Life service was held at the Corran Halls on Tuesday evening. Photograph: Peter Darling

hole left by Covid. An official complaint to Royal Mail is being made but the complaints procedure requires being provided with all the addresses and postcodes that have been missed.

After being contacted by The Oban Times, a Royal Mail spokesperson said: 'The vast majority of mail is delivered safely and on time. We aim to deliver to all addresses we have mail for, six days a week.'

'In the Oban area, we have been experiencing some delays

to service due to resourcing issues and high levels of sickness absence. We are working hard to get our levels of service back to normal as soon as possible.

'We would like to apologise to this customer if they did not receive the high quality service our customers expect and deserve. We will be getting in touch with them directly to discuss the matter further.'

Speaking before Tuesday evening's event, Anne May from Friends of Oban Hospice said: 'It's a great disappoint-

ment we have been let down by Royal Mail after paying £800 to get the dedication leaflets delivered.

'It's one of our biggest fundraisers of the year. I feel we have let people down. The reactions of people when they see the book and their loved ones in it, is very emotional. It is special to so many people, it means so much.'

'I have not had my form through the post and know of lots of others who have said the same. We have regular entries with dedications every year and I'm very much aware many of these are missing. One woman stopped me in the street to ask when Light Up A Life was happening. We have done everything possible to let people know.'

'I've complained twice [to Royal Mail] so far but the complaints procedure requires

from me every address and postcode that has been missed. They make it very difficult.'

Royal Mail asked The Oban Times to provide more details so it could fully investigate.

Representatives from the hospice were in Tesco earlier this week handing out dedication forms to shoppers in a bid to reach some of those who have not had them in the post.

Even though the book was printed, ready for this week's ceremony – it will be updated with late dedications, said Mrs May.

'Anyone who has not received their leaflet in the post can get in touch with us and we will update the book.'

'We know it means so much to people.'

'People can pick up the forms from The Dove Centre in Stevenson Street or I will personally go and hand-deliver the leaflets to anyone who cannot make it themselves, some people are quite elderly,' she added.

The Dove Centre can be contacted on 01631 561315.

Twins charged with murder of cyclist Tony

Twin brothers from Argyll and Bute have been charged with the murder of charity cyclist Tony Parsons.

Alexander and Robert McKellar, aged 30, were also charged with attempting to defeat the ends of justice when they appeared at Dumbarton Sheriff Court on Thursday December 2.

Mr Parsons, from Tillicoultry, was last seen during a bike ride in September 2017 outside the Bridge of Orchy Hotel in Argyll and Bute. His body was discovered in a remote area of ground close to a farm near the A82 at Bridge of Orchy on Tuesday January 12, 2021.

The brothers were further charged with conspiracy to murder Mr Parsons.

Alexander McKellar was also individually charged with causing serious injury by dangerous driving.

The two men made no plea and were committed for further examination and remanded in custody.



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<p>Deal 2 Any 2 9" Pizzas, 5 Peri Peri Wings or Strips, 1 Peri Peri Chicken Rice Box, 2 Fries, 2 Cans of Pepsi £19.99</p>	<p>Party Deal for 2 Any 2 Chicken Meals £9.99</p>	<p>Curry Deal for 2 Mixed Pakora, Any 2 Chicken Curries, 1 Rice, 1 Plain or Garlic Nan £16.99 (Lamb +£1 per dish)</p>
<p>Deal 3 1 Full Peri Peri Chicken, Any 12" Pizza, 5 Fried Strips or Wings, 4 Peri Peri Chicken Thigh, Peri Chips, Mozzarella Sticks and 2 x 2L Pepsi £19.99</p>	<p>Party Deal for 3 Any 9" Pizza + Any 2 Chicken Meals £14.99</p>	<p>Curry Deal for 3 Large Mixed Pakora, Any 3 Chicken Curries, 3 Rice and 1 Plain or Garlic Nan £26.99 (Lamb +£1 per dish)</p>
<p>Deal 4 Any 2 12" Pizzas, 1 Peri Peri infused Donner Kebab, 3 Fried Drumsticks, 2 x Potato Wedges and 2 Cans of Pepsi £21.99</p>	<p>Party Deal for 4 Any 2 9" Pizzas + Any 2 Chicken Meals £19.99</p>	<p>Curry Deal for 4 Large Mixed Starter Plate, Any 4 Chicken Curries, 2 Rice & 2 Plain or Garlic Nan, and 4 Chocolate Fudge Cake Slices £39.99</p>
<p>Deal 5 9" Pizza, 5 Peri Peri Strips and 5 Wings, Peri Chicken Quesadilla, 2 x Onion Rings, 2 x Fries, 2 x Chicken Nuggets, 2 x 500ml Pepsi £23.99</p>	<p>Party Deal for 6 Any 2 12" Pizzas, Any 2 Chicken Meals + 2 Peri Fries £26.99</p>	<p>KIDS DEALS Kids Party Deal 1 Chips, Chicken Nuggets, Onion Rings & Mozzarella Sticks with a Small Ice Cream Shake £5.99</p>
<p>Deal 6 Peri Peri Chicken Burger, Fried Chicken Burger, 5 Peri Peri Wings or Strips, 1 Chicken Quesadilla or Burrito, 1 Peri Chicken Rice Box, 2 Fries, 2 Peri Chips, 2 Spicy Rice, 2 x 2L Pepsi £23.99</p>	<p>Party Deal for 8 Full Peri Peri Chicken, Any 2 12" Pizzas, Any 2 Chicken Meals + Any 2 Sides £34.99</p>	<p>Kids Party Deal 2 Any Chicken, Beef or Cheese Burger with Chips and Onion Rings with a Small Ice Cream Shake £5.99</p>

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OT



Hamish Isaac receives his charcuterie board from Victory Hall committee member Maimie Cattanach.

Last night at the Palladium for Hamish

Victory Hall president Hamish Isaac is retiring from his hectic Highland life to take up a more tranquil position among the rolling hills of the Borders, writes Fiona Scott.

But before he escapes, his friends at the Benderloch Palladium wanted to mark his tenure at the venue and have presented him with an Argyll Oak charcuterie board made by local wood crafter Dirk Campbell.

A retired dentist, Hamish has been on the Hall committee for around 10 years, seven of which he has served as president. He and his wife Jane also ran the Argyll Carriage

Driving branch of the Riding for the Disabled Association.

The presentation was made by Maimie Cattanach and the committee joined Joy Cameron in thanking Hamish for his steady hand on the hall tiller over the past decade.

'Hamish and Jane will both be greatly missed,' said Joy.

'In his time as president, Hamish has steered us through challenging times, as well as his hard work in creating the opportunities for the future refurbishment and longevity of the Victory Hall, all the while having a smile on his face and an easy manner.'

Collective leadership is new name for cluster school plan

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk

Argyll and Bute Council has launched a new website explaining its proposals for cluster schools – now calling it 'collective leadership'.

The website at www.EmpoweringOurEducators.co.uk invites parents, carers and residents across Argyll and Bute to take a look, take it all in and have a say.

Scotland's largest teaching union EIS calculates that under the proposed changes around 80 current headteacher posts could become just 14.

The website includes a short film and gives details to download as part of a consultation giving people the chance to influence the proposals as they are developed, says the council.

According to the council, toolkits to run consultations

have been sent to all community councils and parent councils in Argyll and Bute so they can hold their own feedback sessions and report back – the deadline for responses is Friday February 4.

But lobbying group WISE4ALL says it is not a true consultation.

'This is assertions to which we are asked to agree or disagree.'

'This is a series of assertions to which we are asked to agree or disagree,' said a spokesperson.

The group says it has been made aware that many teachers have not received the toolkit pack, some parent councils have also indicated problems in receiving it – an issue hopefully now resolved.

A WISE4ALL spokesperson told Mull Community Council during a recent Zoom presentation: 'What we

want is fair, open, inclusive, evidence-based consultation. Consultation that records and respects all views, does not harm and is risk assessed.'

Argyll and Bute Council has engaged marketing agency Stand to help with the consultation on education changes – the contract value is £23,180 excluding VAT. That information was revealed after Kintyre and Islands councillor Alastair Redman asked the question on behalf of constituents.

He said he does not support proposed executive headships, saying it would be a 'negative' change. He continued: 'There are huge worries about how schools will operate effectively in the delivery, quality, and equity of education in Argyll and Bute if these changes are enacted.'

'Argyll and Bute Council are currently employing an outside marketing agency to consult teachers, school staff and the communities they serve on this proposal. However, many who I have spoken to feel that

this is something that's already done and this exercise is about selling this proposal to the communities rather than genuinely seeking views.

'It has been said by many people that at the root of this is a cost-cutting exercise which will create a difficult and unequal education service across the varied geography of Argyll and Bute.'

Speaking about the current consultation, the council's policy lead for education Councillor Yvonne McNeilly said the best outcomes for young people are at the heart of all the council's work.

She said: 'We are a council that listens to our communities and this proactive engagement programme is at the core of our decision-making.'

The council says falling pupil numbers and challenges in recruiting staff are behind proposals for the new 'collective' model for school leadership which would empower schools to work more effectively together and share resources.

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Work starts to return the passage between Luing and Torsa to how it was before a causeway was built on an existing ford without permission.

Work starts to remove causeway

Work has started on totally removing a causeway built without permission between Luing and Torsa, writes Kathie Griffiths.

Rock has been removed from the top of the causeway following an instruction by Marine Scotland to reinstate the passageway flowing between the two islands to what it was.

A spokesperson for the Scottish Government said: 'Work is continuing on the Luing Torsa causeway. The person responsible is carrying out remediation works which are monitored by the Scottish Government's Marine Scotland directorate officials, to ensure the site is restored to the condition in which it was before the activity occurred.'

Marine Scotland visited the

site after receiving objections from boating and island communities who complained the 1.4m structure was blocking a well-used route, popular and well-known with water-users including kayakers – the sheltered route features in Argyll's Sea Kayak Trail.

There were also concerns the new causeway could change tidal times, silt up the passage area and affect seaweed growth and wildlife in Ardinamir Bay and Cuan Cove, as well as force kayakers and boats out into rougher waters in bad weather on the outer side of Torsa.

Campaigners lobbying for its removal said work carried out recently had made only a 'nominal change'.

Calls from some island residents and water-users who

regularly navigate the passage repeated demands for Marine Scotland to use its powers to call for immediate complete restoration of the natural seabed by removing the newly quarried stone obstruction before a serious incident occurred.

Some stone was removed from the top of the causeway last month and deposited on the Luing bank towards Ardinamir below the high water mark but at that time had made no significant difference to navigation over the obstruction, except narrowed the passage at high water, said campaigners.

Archie Cadzow from the landowning Cadzow family on Luing said: 'Everything is being done with Marine Scotland and NatScot approval.'

Oban makes city bid

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk

Oban's bid to become Scotland's eighth city is in.

Over the past couple of months Argyll and Bute Council has been running a campaign to rally support for the bid and boost its chances of success.

Yesterday (Wednesday December 8) was the deadline to submit the bid as part of an initiative marking The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022.

If the bid wins, an application will also be prepared to consider Oban as a City of Culture in 2029.

Fergus Murray, head of development and economic growth, said: 'Oban can be proud of the loyalty, affection and ambition so many people have for it.'

'This has been clear in the support we've received for bidding to bring city status to Oban.'

'From young people at Oban High School, to members of



the public generally, and from businesses to local politicians – people have taken steps to show their support in different ways.

'Our bid application highlights that Oban in effect acts already as a city for surrounding island and rural mainland communities, for example

by providing services - from health to education and retail - or transport connections to and from the area.

'Bidding for city status is in part about securing support for Oban in this role by opening up new routes for funding. It's also about creating new opportunities for economic growth

that will benefit everyone. We have some stiff competition, in Scotland and across the UK, for city status. We'll find out the result in February.

'Thanks to everyone who played a part in trying to win this for Oban. Given its important role in Argyll and Bute, and the wider area, Oban must

Bonny Oban Bay is city-worthy.

be a strong contender.'

Argyll & Bute MP Brendan O'Hara also gave his backing for the city status bid in parliament.

The MP put forward a parliamentary motion saying he believed it would bring greater investment into the town and the surrounding area.

'Not only does Oban act as an important transit point for tens of thousands of visitors every year, it's also an important seat of learning for more than 1,000 students at the Scottish Association for Marine Science and the University of the Highlands and Islands, as well as being at the forefront of pioneering aquaculture innovation including the new Seaweed Academy,' he said.

The MP said he wished Oban well in its bid and hoped city status may also help reverse the area's declining population as people realise the town has so much to offer.

POLICE FILES

Between 8.40am and 10.15am on Thursday November 25 at George Street, Oban, a man allegedly acted in a threatening and abusive manner towards a man and a woman. The 41-year-old man was subsequently charged and was due to appear at Oban Sheriff Court.

At 2pm on Sunday November 28 at an address in Lora View, North Connel, a man allegedly assaulted a woman. When police attended the 28-year-old allegedly resisted arrested. He was charged and was due to appear at Oban Sheriff Court.

At 2.30pm on Tuesday November 30 at Jane Road, Dunbeg, a man allegedly acted in a threatening manner towards a woman, placing her in a state of fear and alarm. The 48-year-old was charged and a report sent to the Procurator Fiscal.

At 11pm on Friday December 3 at Oban Railway Station, Oban, a man allegedly behaved in a threatening manner and assaulted a woman. The 25-year-old was charged and is due to appear at Oban Sheriff Court.

An advertisement for COVID-19 testing. It features a photograph of a brown doormat with the words 'DO THE TEST' written on it in black capital letters. The doormat is placed on a white tiled floor with a grey geometric pattern. To the right of the doormat, the text 'A wee reminder.' is written in a large, bold, black font. Below this, the text 'Let's stop the spike.' is written in a slightly smaller, bold, black font. At the bottom right, the website 'NHSinform.scot/testing' is written in a smaller, black font. The background of the advertisement is a light, neutral color.

OT

Around Oban

KAY MCDONALD

editor@obantimes.co.uk



WHERE IS THIS?



Another hectic weekend is over and I'm in full-on Christmas mode now thanks to Spotlight's pantomime, Treasure Island, which I saw on Saturday. It was fantastic and I can't praise everyone involved in the production highly enough.

My weekend was then topped off by a visit to the Christmas Tree Festival at St Conan's Kirk in Lochawe. Fifty groups had entered trees and the work and imagination which had gone into their entries was incredible, as was the church itself. I came away singing Christmas carols full of Christmas spirit (the non-alcoholic kind).

It's now time to fully immerse myself in Christmas preparation, starting with my shopping which as usual I'll be doing locally. I always manage to find what I need in Oban's shops and really enjoy the whole experience of being able to wander round and get help where I need it, and if I'm really lucky what I've selected will even be gift wrapped for me.

Call me old fashioned but I really enjoy seeing, smelling and feeling the gifts I'm shopping for. I know exactly what I'm getting and don't have to worry about when it will arrive or whether it will even resemble what I ordered.

This year it's even more important that we support our local businesses if we can - they're here for us all year round and if we want that to continue then now is the time to show them some love.

If you struggle to fit in time to go shopping, then Thursday night is your lucky night, with many shops staying open later than usual to help you and make the experience a bit less stressful.

Last week's photograph was of the corner between M&Co and Semichem. This week it might be a bit harder as it is an interior shot.

Lifeline bridge needs repaired

Bulges appearing in a lifeline bridge could cut off island communities, writes Kathie Griffiths.

Concerns are increasing that the state of Kilninver bridge is getting worse.

A long-time bulge on the left of the bridge in the Oban direction is getting bigger, and more stones are now missing from it.

Easdale and Seil Community Council are getting more complaints and have flagged it up to Argyll and Bute Council both in the past and now.

Council engineers who have checked the bridge have said there is no problem.

Zim Knight, convener of Easdale and Seil Community Council, said: 'There's been a bulge there for ages but it is getting worse. We have had a number of people contact us worried about it. 'Recently they've been dig-



Kilninver bridge has bulges appearing and stones missing.

Government announced that a £32 million Local Bridge Maintenance Fund would be shared by 19 councils, over this year and next, to rebuild or maintain 74 local road bridges - Argyll and Bute Council is one of them.

Kilninver's bridge on the B844 is on the authority's list, with £1,194,000 allocated to it.

Mr Knight said: 'If they've got the money to make good the bridge, they might as well get on with it.'

Other bridges allocated funding across Argyll include B840-140 Ardchonnell Bridge, £40,000; A846-270 Glenegedale (2), Islay, £59,700; A816-120 Oude, £1,194,000; A849-280 Pennyghael Bridge, Ross of Mull, £1,193,000.

ging up that part of the road putting cables in and the bulge has got bigger, stones and bits are falling out.

'We have been told the council has checked it out and it is fine but we are wanting to know when it was last checked.

'We understand they are going to go back and have another look.'

Mr Knight said if the bridge

closed communities on the Seil side would be temporarily 'stuck'.

He added: 'There is an emergency plan in place to put another crossing in over a field and the river but if the bridge does go, the only other way out would be over Ardmaddy and down to the Melfort road, only do-able in a 4x4 though.'

Last month the Scottish

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Council buys lots of loos to relieve 2022 staycation rush

A programme of measures worth £135,000 to support 'staycationing' in Argyll during the 2022 tourist season has been agreed by councillors.

Twelve portaloos will be purchased by Argyll and Bute Council for use by visitors from Easter to mid-October next year, costing £30,000.

Four wardens will also be employed during the season, with a staycation officer recruited on a 12-month basis.

Funding will come from money allocated as part of the council's 2021/22 budget.

A report detailing preparations for the 2022 summer visitor season was unanimously agreed by councillors on the environment, development and infrastructure committee on Thursday December 2.

Executive director Kirsty Flanagan said in the report: 'Community consultation highlighted hotspot locations and associated issues such as littering, lack of toilet facilities, need for waste disposal points,

and signage to manage parking. The consultation allowed an identification of potential private waste water disposal sites and sites for temporary toilets.'

Ms Flanagan also said recruitment of wardens for the 2021 season took longer than anticipated. Where wardens were not in place, existing staff worked additional hours.

'It has also been acknowledged that this fund is a one-off,' she said.

At Thursday's meeting, councillors asked if the 'staycation wardens' this summer could be made permanent and full-time – but officials warned the authority may not be able to afford the costs involved.

Councillor Jean Moffat (Isle of Bute) said: 'It was quite a struggle to engage, so I was wondering if there is still budget unspent. It was mostly local people doing the work of a community warden.'

'I think staycations are going to be ongoing for some time

and people are more likely to be attracted to a full-time position than to a part-time one.

'It is not possible for one person to do all the work we need, and I would like to suggest that these warden posts are permanent and full-time.'

Head of economic development Fergus Murray replied: 'That is a separate matter to be raised during budget time.'

Other councillors agreed with the full-time proposal, with councillor Alan Reid (Cowal) saying: 'If we provide full-time wardens, we are more likely to get applicants.'

Ms Flanagan said: 'The wardens are full-time, but are not employed all year round. It's not something we can decide here as it would put an additional burden on council funding. We have a budget gap increase, slightly bigger than last time. We don't have options at the moment to fill that gap, so if you want to put new wardens into that budget, that will increase the gap.'

Joint effort needed to keep lights twinkling

Community groups across Oban are being called on to team up and take shared responsibility ready for 2022's Christmas lights, writes Kathie Griffiths.

Thousands of pounds were needed to be raised at short notice to light up the town with new displays for this year, replacing existing lights past their best and decommissioned.

The last of funding for Christmas lights from Argyll and Bute Council was used up in 2020.

Donations from Oban Common Good Fund, Oban Community Council, West Highland Housing Association and BID4Oban meant a late order for more snowflakes and festive swirls could be placed but they did not arrive in time for last



One of the small Christmas trees outside Lidl.

month's switch-on.

They are now on their way, with Oban Electricals primed to put them up as soon as they arrive, said BID4Oban's Kay MacDonald last week.

Oban Community Council convener Marri Malloy told members at their November Zoom meeting: 'We really need to find out who is going

to claim ownership of these lights. The community council can't do it on their own. We need to set up a group.'

Councillor Elaine Robertson said input from other groups would be key.

'It's a community approach we need to take on this,' she said. 'I think Covid put it out of people's minds this year but I have great belief in the people of Oban. We need to set up a group of whoever we can to bring this together.'

Mrs Malloy said it was November before the community council knew there was no money for new lights.

Councillor Robertson said: 'Lessons have been learned and we have to move forward from here.'

A search is also on for a safe space to store the lights and keep them in good condition.



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OT



Oban's lifeboat station is one of the busiest in Scotland.

Pop along to support RNLi Christmas stall

'Tis pop-up season at McCaig's Warehouse for the next two Saturdays in the run-up to Christmas, helping give the RNLi lifesaving charity a festive boost.

The usual stocking fillers from the RNLi will be availa-

ble from a pop-up stall run by volunteers in the shop from 10am to 4pm on Saturday December 11 and Saturday December 18. RNLi Christmas cards, calendars and diaries are on sale everyday from McCaig's Warehouse.

Hollow Mountain expansion discussed

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk

Plans to more than double power capacity from Cruachan's Hollow Mountain station have met 'agreement in principle' so far.

Renewable power company Drax launched the second stage of its public consultation last week by hosting two community sessions in Dalmally and Taynuilt. The plans are for a second underground power station to be built adjacent to the existing one.

Turnout was good at both of the sessions, although in Dalmally Drax officials had to clear up some misconceptions, stating there is no link with SSEN's proposals to construct a new overhead line from Creag Dhubbh to land east of Dalmally. Members of the project team were on hand to answer



Taynuilt community councillor Murray Sim and villager Marlyn Turbitt at Drax's latest public consultation. There will be another in early 2022.

company was responding to what the communities wanted, while Marlyn Turbitt, who lives in the village, said she was hearing positive feelings about the plans and she 'couldn't see it being disruptive' with a lot of the infrastructure now in place.

The size of Cruachan Dam will not change. Drax says hundreds of jobs will be created during the construction, giving communities around Loch Awe and across Argyll a huge boost.

If planning is approved, work to build the new capacity at Cruachan could get under way in 2024 and be up and running in 2030.

people's questions, but in Taynuilt the general mood was 'approval in principle' said Taynuilt Community Council convener David Sloss. He said there was a lot of interest in the plans and, as the company was an important employer in the area, plenty of people were curious to find out more.

'Approval in principle seems

to be the mood,' he said, adding that changes made to plans from previous community feedback such as the potential rerouting of the A85 and Drax's consideration to impact on the local environment gave 'a degree of reassurance'.

Taynuilt community councillor Murray Sim also said Drax's plans had shown the

Returners programme enables aquaculture expert to spawn new career

Advertorial

After taking a break from work to start a family, Bridie Grant, an expert in aquaculture reproduction and genetics, has been inspired through the Women Returners Programme to embark on a new career with the Sustainable Aquaculture Innovation Centre (SAIC).

Thanks to the confidence-building and skills development work of the inaugural coaching programme, which was delivered earlier this year, Bridie said her career had received a much-needed reboot after she found herself struggling to pick up where she had left off.

Bridie said: "My interest in biology and fish started at a young age so it was a natural career choice. I studied aquaculture at the University of Stirling, then returned to the USA and worked in a number of research and breeding-focused roles, before completing a PhD in aquaculture reproduction and genetics and going on to work at Mowi.

"My plans changed significantly when my husband and I decided to start a family and I was extremely fortunate to be able to put work on hold to be a stay-at-home parent. At the start of this year, I decided the time was right to head back to work but, like many, I found it challenging to kickstart my career again.

"I then came across the returners programme which seemed like it had been designed just for me – or at least for people in the same situation. The



Bridie Grant

course was a fantastic opportunity to get back into the swing of things and connect with like-minded people and those currently working in the sector. It was a welcome reminder that my skills and knowledge remain relevant and that I am still very much part of aquaculture.

"After completing the programme, I had a newfound sense of enthusiasm for the sector and the confidence to take the next steps towards finding a new role. As a result, I've recently secured a position with SAIC and will be starting as an aquaculture innovation officer in early 2022. I'm also hopeful that in the near future I can support women in a similar position

to return to work, and it's great to see that the returners programme will be running once again in January."

The Women Returners Programme, run by SAIC in partnership with the Women in Scottish Aquaculture (WiSA) network, is now open to applications for the next intake starting on 17 January.

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Eight weeks of sessions will be led by delivery partner Skillfluence, aiming to highlight the range of exciting career options that aquaculture can offer. SAIC emphasised that the course isn't just for those who have worked in the sector before, and there will be workshops offering a comprehensive overview of aquaculture in Scotland, from shellfish and seaweed farming to salmon and the wider supply chain.

The Women Returners Programme is funded by the Scottish Government and administered by Skills Development Scotland.

For more information and to book a place on the programme, visit: <https://wisa.sustainableaquaculture.com/opportunities/women-returners-programme/>

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The Women Returners Programme is funded by the Scottish Government and administered by Skills Development Scotland.



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Causes of Covid booster chaos revealed by NHS Highland bosses

by Sandy Neil
sneil@obantimes.co.uk

The causes of the problems that plagued Argyll's Covid booster rollout have been revealed by Highland health chiefs.

Fiona Davies, the interim chief officer of the area's Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), has apologised for 'a considerable number of errors'.

The HSCP has been in charge of the rollout for the booster jags, with GP practices having overseen the process for the initial two vaccines.

The problems were caused by this move from a GP-led model to a board-led one, NHS Highland's director of

public health and policy Dr Tim Allison told the HSCP's integration joint board on Wednesday November 24.

NHS Highland non-executive board member Graham Bell asked: 'Can you tell us why it has been such a difficult administrative task, and what is being done about it?'

Dr Allison responded: 'There are several reasons. One is the move from GP administration to board administration, which is part of the national direction of travel.'

'The whole of NHS Highland is behind the curve in that. The arrangements we have had are for vaccines to be delivered in general practice through board

clinics on the mainland and islands.

'Things do also happen fairly quickly and get changed fairly quickly, and it can be difficult to accommodate some of those changes. By and large, it is

'Clearly the situation is not good, but it has improved...'

really adapting to new systems and getting a whole new system set up.

'Clearly the situation is not good, but it has improved and once people get to clinics, it is not universally great, but by

and large things are OK. Many of the problems are with the scheduling of appointments.'

Ms Davies added: 'What became obvious weeks ago was that appointing people by letter was not having an effect. Letters were not getting to people promptly enough.'

'So we tried to bring in a system of phone appointments in the local area, and that seems to have improved communication on who needs to go to which clinics.'

'That is quite a challenge for us to organise at short notice, and to have the number of people making calls so we need to learn how to build in the capacity for this.'

The next day's meeting of Argyll and Bute Council heard residents in the region were offered booster Covid vaccine appointments over 150 miles away in Inverness and Elgin.

Ms Davies said: 'We are now in the seventh position with the route of delivery in Argyll and Bute and I want to thank our vaccination teams for delivering such a large amount. Many people have had their vaccine ahead of schedule.'

'Hopefully, when we get into the further tranches of delivery, we will move on to the portal system which is being trialled.'

NHS Highland gave guidance on use of the electronic portal system, which was launched

on Monday November 15. It said: 'Due to the unique geography across NHS Highland and our blended model of vaccinations, we are recommending you only use the portal if your GP is not participating in the Covid-19 vaccination programme.'

'If you live in Argyll and Bute, your GP Practice will invite you for your flu vaccine and the Health and Social Care Partnership will invite you for your Covid-19 booster/third dose.'

'If you are registered with a practice in Bute, Coll, Colonsay, Islay, Jura or Tiree your GP Practice will contact you for both vaccines.'

Counselling in schools service is launched

Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) Child Health Team have launched school-based counselling services for young people aged 10 years and over.

The service is being delivered by nine qualified counsellors in school premises, and in local community settings across Argyll and Bute and the Islands. It is a confidential and non-judgemental service for

children and young people to be referred to by someone in their own circle of care, and also accepts self-referrals from children and young people.

Counselling services is the most common form of talking therapy to help with issues such as stress, anxiety and depression.

To contact the school counsellors directly email nhs.counsellingschools@nhs.scot.



Oban Winter Festival mascot Coolio hands over first prize to George Street jeweller Fiona Fraser for winning the best dressed shop window contest this year. KG_T50_shopfront02

Fiona's festive window shines out

Jewellery maker Fiona Fraser's Christmas is sparkling more than ever, thanks to winning top prize for her shop window display in George Street, writes Kathie Griffiths.

Winter Festival mascot Coolio dropped in this week to present Fiona, who also specialises in crystals, reiki and nutrition, with her certificate and a big bottle of fizz.

This year's theme for the

competition was Winter Christmas and Fiona's shimmering snowy tree and snowflakes fit the bill perfectly.

'We'd like to thank everyone who decorated their shop windows this year. Everyone was so supportive. Cheering up these grey wintry days and bringing extra sparkle to our town streets is very much appreciated,' said a spokesperson for Oban Winter Festival.

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OT

Argyll councillors agree to Lochaber expansion

Councillors have agreed with proposals to expand Argyll and Bute's parliamentary constituency north into Morvern, Ardnamurchan and Moidart, but have rejected changing its name to just 'Argyll'.

The proposals, which make Argyll and Bute Scotland's second biggest constituency, are set out in a consultation by the Boundary Commission for Scotland. By 2023, it must cut the number of Westminster seats in Scotland by two, down from 59 to 57.

In the review, the Argyll and Bute constituency creeps northwards into Ross, Skye and Lochaber. A report before Argyll and Bute Council explained: 'The current Argyll and Bute Constituency boundary will be spread north to incorporate part of ward 21, Fort William and Ardnamurchan, within Highland Council, including Ballachullish, Kinlochleven, Morvern, Ardnamurchan, Moidart and Ardgour.'

'The new constituency will be called Argyll, will have 71,422 electors and cover an approx-

imate area of 9,294 square kilometres. It is clear there is no established link, other than an historical one, between the communities of the Lochaber ward and the rest of Argyll and Bute but it is fair to assess that the communities share similar issues around 'island proofing', remoteness, rurality, sparsity and economic challenges arising therefrom.'

Argyll and Bute Council met on Thursday November 25 to consider the report, and decide their response to the consultation which closed yesterday (Wednesday December 8).

A motion agreed with the proposal to extend the Argyll and Bute constituency boundary northwards, incorporating part of the current Highland Council Ward 21, but rejected the plan to rename the new constituency 'Argyll', instead requesting the existing name, 'Argyll and Bute', is retained.

In early 2022, the Boundary Commission will hold a secondary six-week consultation where all the comments from the initial proposals will be published.

Pioneer project to make Lyme disease diagnosis easier

A collaboration between NHS Highland and Pfizer Inc is aiming to make the diagnosis of Lyme disease easier and improve consistency in the way the disease is managed, writes Sandy Neil.

The Lyme Disease General Practice Sentinel Scheme, which is being funded by Pfizer Inc, is a pilot project which will deliver a Lyme specific training package to 15 GP practices across Highland who have agreed to support the initiative.

These practices will be provided with a digital tool, specially developed by local informatics experts Albasoft Ltd, that will help guide clinicians through a consultation when Lyme disease is suspected or has been confirmed via a blood test.

Dr James Douglas, GP with NHS Highland and the Sentinel Scheme Project lead clinician, said: 'Lyme disease



Lyme disease can develop if someone is bitten by a tick infected with the Lyme-causing bacteria.

It is also hoped the project may also help lead to better understanding of the epidemiology of Lyme disease by giving information on groups of people who are at increased risk of acquiring it and would benefit from Lyme prevention education.

A training package and digital tool will also be evaluated to see if it can help doctors diagnose Lyme disease earlier.

Dr Douglas added: 'It is important that we have a clear understanding of the scale of the problem and that we can identify risk factors associated with Lyme disease.'

'This will help direct public education in the prevention of Lyme disease and aid early diagnosis so that people can enjoy and gain health benefits from outdoor activity while minimising the risk of Lyme.'

It is hoped the project will be rolled out across Scotland and parts of England in 2022.

can develop if someone is bitten by a tick infected with the Lyme-causing bacteria. While it can be difficult to diagnose it can be easily cured with antibiotics if diagnosed early.

However, patients with Lyme disease often visit their GP with a rash that can vary widely in its presentation, or with a range of vague and seemingly unrelated symptoms.

'Patients also often have no

recall of a tick bite. Although we know Lyme disease is relatively common in Scotland, information on exactly how many patients are getting early stage Lyme each year is unclear.

'It is our expectation that this project will give the most accurate estimate to date of the number of new cases of early Lyme disease in our region.'

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Shoppers across the area are being urged to choose local this Christmas and celebrate the very best that our wonderful region has to offer.

The Scotland Loves Local campaign is calling on everyone to show their support for businesses close to home - a festive shift that they hope will hand a lasting gift towards building a better future for the north.

Employers are also being urged to play their part in supporting other enterprises in the community by using the new Scotland Loves Local Gift Card as staff rewards this Christmas.

"Whether you're looking for the finest food or the perfect presents for your family, we know this can all be sourced from businesses in your community," said Phil Prentice, chief officer of Scotland's Towns Partnership (STP).

"Christmas is always a critical time for local businesses, but perhaps never more so than this festive season after so many have weathered another year of disruption because of the steps which have had to be taken to manage the risks caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

"People who run and work in businesses which are at the heart of our communities - many of which have been there for generations - need our support. Their survival depends upon it."

STP is the organisation spearheading Scotland Loves Local with the support of the Scottish Government and others.

Its message is clear: To think, choose and spend local.

The call to action is one that has already been supported across the region, with organisations including BID4Oban among those championing their area.

Mr Prentice also met with Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch MSP



Kate Forbes MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch and The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy with Phil Prentice, Chief Officer of Scotland Towns Partnership, both in Fort William high street.

Kate Forbes - Scotland's Finance Secretary - in Fort William to brief her on the campaign, including the new Scotland Loves Local Gift Card.

These are being rolled out to lock money into local economies and provide another way in which people can show their support for businesses of all kinds in their area. Each card can only be spent in a specific local authority area.

Mr Prentice added: "The best Christmas is undoubtedly a local



Scotland Loves Local Gift Card

Christmas. Whether shopping, or looking for somewhere to meet friends or enjoy time with family, we hope that everyone will choose local - and then make a resolution to continue putting their local businesses first, doing so will create a better future."

For more information about the Scotland Loves Local campaign - and the Scotland Loves Local Gift Card - go to www.lovelocal.scot

Show your local businesses that you care



Think,
choose and
spend local



lovelocal.scot

OT

St Conan's Christmas Tree

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk

St Conan's Christmas Tree Festival was welcomed back by 1,500 visitors over the weekend.

Organisers making a comeback after the pandemic struck gold with 50 trees going on display, decorated by community groups, schools, businesses and creative types going solo.

It was pals Pat McLeod from Lochawe and Betty Jamieson from Dalmally whose Twelve Knits of Christmas won the most votes as the festival's favourite tree.

In second place was the Argyll Wellbeing Hub's WellBeing Tree and in third place was Christmas Magic by Rosie Campbell-Preston who conjured up a shimmering display of gold and silver baubles seemingly suspended in mid-air between two of the kirk's stone columns.

Liz Mackay, from Friends of St Conan's Kirk, said: 'The



Best of the festival as voted for by the public was Twelve Knits of Christmas by friends Pat McLeod and Betty Jamieson.

general feeling was that everyone was pretty glad that the festival was back. They missed it last year.

'A lot of visitors told us it has become part of their festive tradition now, which was nice to hear, and others said for them it marked the start of Christmas locally.

'It was very well received and all our hard work making sure we could keep visitors and volunteers safe with our layout and one-way system worked well. We had a constant flow of people coming in over the three days but it never felt crowded or too busy. We had about 1,500 visitors, numbers were down a bit on 2019 but we expected that.'

Mrs Mackay also praised the support from contributors, saying: 'The quality of the trees was outstanding, people put a

huge amount of imagination into their designs. There were a lot of unusual concepts - very inventive and clever, and made with great skill. Some were funny and made you laugh, others were made with great skill and there were those that were thought-provoking and a sign of the times, with some of their trees concentrating on environmental matters and the importance of mental health and well-being. It was a lovely mixture,' she said.

Generous donations of homebaking and prizes for

the raffle were also gratefully received.

Organisers are still totting up the donations from the three-day festival but some of the funds will go towards lighting up the path from the top of the garden down to the kirk.

To watch a video from the festival visit www.obantimes.co.uk

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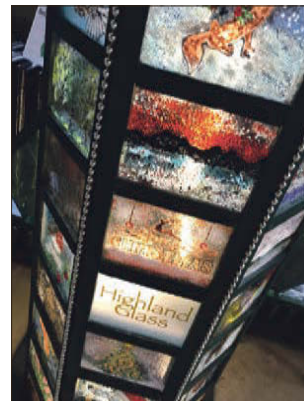
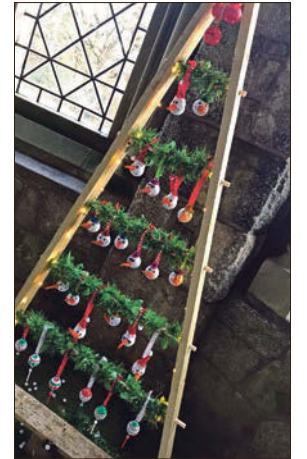
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Festival brings back sparkle



Friends of St Conan's Kirk Rosie Campbell-Preston, Liz Mackay and Kathleen Hanningan at the opening of this year's three-day Christmas Tree Festival.



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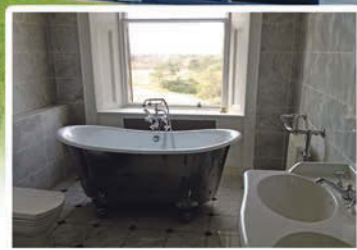
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"I thoroughly enjoyed NPA Bakery and will recommend to everyone. Best thing about it was my baking skills have improved a lot and I have made new friends in the friendly environment. It will help me whenever I decide to do my own business and in my present employment as we do fresh baking."



LAUREN STEWART

"The focus of Countryside Skills with Ranger Training was preparing for real life jobs with training and industry links. We covered so much ground and learned with experienced practitioners. I would recommend the course to anyone interested in wildlife and the conservation sector. I have recently accepted a permanent job as an Assistant Warden on the Rhinns of Islay RSPB reserves. To say this is a dream job is an understatement!"



GINTARE ALEXANDER

"I've had quite a journey with fashion, textiles and art courses at college. I've learned to sew, create patterns, dye, pleat and decorate textiles to create final pieces. The part time art classes have taught me drawing skills, working with colour and mixed media. I have found my place and I'll play with ink and watercolour and in the end I will bring in textiles with hand stitching and decoration. I have taken something from each course I have done. It's brilliant."



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£3.7m gap predicted for next year's budget

by Sandy Neil
sneil@obantimes.co.uk

Argyll and Bute Council is facing a predicted budget gap of £3.7million in the 2022/23 financial year, a report has revealed.

One of the authority's executive directors has identified that figure as a mid-range scenario. The best-case scenario is reckoned to be a £2.5m gap, with the worst-case scenario being a £5.9m gap.

A three per cent rise in council tax has already been proposed to balance the budget, while a raft of potential savings options have also been published.

Two posts are on the line among those options, one of which is a part-time customer service centre (CSC) role at Helensburgh and Lomond Civic Centre.

The other, as manager of community learning and development (CLD), has been vacant since July. If all the published options are taken, it will save the council £2.5m.

The budget outlook and savings options are on the



Kirsty Flanagan

agenda for the council's policy and resources committee at its virtual meeting today (Thursday December 9).

The Scottish Government is also due to announce its budget the same day, with council settlements being finalised on Monday December 20. The council's budget for 2022/23 is due to be agreed on Thursday February 24.

Executive director Kirsty Flanagan said: 'For all options it cannot be assumed

that they will not have an impact on service delivery; however, the council has a duty to balance its budget.

'The savings options identified to date propose a potential reduction to the council's staffing [by] 1.9 FTE (full-time equivalent) within 2022/23 should they all be accepted by members.

'The head of customer support services will take forward a statutory consultation process with the trade unions

for those savings options that could have an impact on jobs.

'In addition to the saving options set out, officers are progressing a business process review of the revenues and benefits service to review current processes and identify efficiencies for the council whilst minimising any negative impact on customers by putting their needs front and centre.

'It is anticipated this will generate savings; however, it is most likely these will be in 2023/24 rather than 2022/23.

'The mid-range budget gap is based on a one per cent reduction in Scottish Government funding. However, the council will not be certain of its funding for 2022/23 until the Scottish Government budget is announced on December 9 and we have been notified of the individual council settlements on December 20.'

GETINTOUCH
email us at editor@obantimes.co.uk
telephone 01631 568000



An appeal has gone out about where best to site the bench.

Take a seat on Seil – but where?

Community councillors on Seil are looking for ideas on where to put a memorial bench, writes Kathie Griffiths.

An appeal has gone out to find the best spot for the bench that will be donated by Mark Steiner of Atlantic House on the island in memory of his wife Eleanor.

There are already seats in Ellenabeich square and one by the beach near the community hall.

One suggestion so far is for

the seat to go at the front of the council-run 90-space car park in the heritage village looking across to Mull.

The search is also on for a new editor of the Seileachan newsletter.

If you have ideas for the new seat's location or are interested in taking on the newsletter which receives contributions of articles from the community council and other groups across the community, you can email seilandeadalecc@gklawcosts.co.uk

Have your say on Argyll's health plan covering the next three years

Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) has launched a digital online community consultation on its next three year Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan outlines the HSCP's vision, values and details how health and social care resources are governed, allocated and operationally managed.

Kristin Gillies, senior planning manager for the HSCP, said: 'As we are all in unprecedented times with Covid-19, this Strategic Plan, which will cover 2022-2025, will possibly be the most challenging one that we have ever produced.

'The remote and rural nature of the HSCP, coupled with our demographics, also means that we have our own specific

challenges in delivering health and social care services.

'The recent significant increase in the use of technology because of Covid-19 has provided us with an opportunity to learn and develop how we deliver services to ensure that our patients receive the care they need at the time they need it.

'The HSCP has set out four

new priority areas that we want all our services, whether internally provided or purchased externally, to work towards. These are: Prevention, Early Intervention and Enablement; Choice and Control and Innovation; Healthy Living and Active Citizenship; and Community Co-production (working with communities to produce

local community services). We can't do all of this on our own. So we really want to hear from our local communities.

'We will also be launching a digital community listening tool where members of the public will be able to submit their own questions, vote on questions shared by others and share their ideas and thinking to help shape our

planning for the next three years.

'Further information on all of the above can be accessed at www.bit.ly/ABStrategicPlan. If anyone does not have online access or wishes a hard copy of the community consultation survey then we would ask them to call 01586 865886 and we will arrange for one to be posted out.'

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Contract awarded for piers upgrade on Islay

A £1.5 million contract for upgrading four CalMac piers at Port Ellen and Port Askaig in Islay, Kennacraig and Colonsay has been awarded to UK engineering firm Mott MacDonald.

The contract, awarded by Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited (CMAL), supports the detailed design of pier infrastructure upgrade works.

Mott MacDonald, working closely with CMAL's harbours engineers and project managers, will secure and manage the required planning consents and licences, support stakeholder and community engagement, conduct and commission site surveys and investigations, create detailed design of works required at all four sites, and help prepare tender documents to appoint construction contractors.

The design and planning stage is expected to last around a year, with construction estimated to begin in 2023.

Nasir Uddin, senior civil engineer at CMAL, said: 'A shipyard will be appointed next year to build the two new

vessels for Islay and Jura and, in preparation for their arrival, we have identified that the ports where they will operate will benefit from investment to upgrade infrastructure and facilities.'

The project is one of three CMAL projects planned for Port Ellen. The other two projects will deliver improvements to traffic management arrangements, scheduled to get under way in 2022, and increase space with a bigger vehicle marshalling area, new terminal building and improvements to passenger access to and from vessels.

CMAL has a significant plan of vessel and harbour investment underway, backed by a £580 million commitment from the Scottish Government for an initial five-year period from 2021 to 2026. Plans will deliver 21 new vessels for the fleet and multi-million-pound upgrade of harbour infrastructure over the next 10 years. Further multi-million-pound investment will be needed to fund plans from 2026 onwards.

CalMac launches cut-price bus trips for local schools

by Sandy Neil
sneil@obantimes.co.uk

Discounted ferry fares for schools taking pupils to extra-curricular activities were launched last week.

A 50 per cent discount for school minibuses on board CalMac vessels was introduced across the Clyde and Hebrides network on Wednesday December 1.

The decision by Transport Scotland to reduce this cost follows campaigning by the Ferries Community Board, which has been calling for a fare reduction so that young people can benefit.

Robbie Drummond, managing director of CalMac, said: 'We are delighted that school groups will benefit from this new initiative, which will help them access educational, sporting and cultural activi-



Pupils from Back Primary School on Lewis marking the half-price coach travel on CalMac ferries.

ties. CalMac are dedicated to supporting our island communities and we look forward to welcoming even more school groups on board our vessels.'

Minister for Transport Graeme Dey said: 'I'm really pleased to announce this discount, which will make it more affordable for school groups to travel to and from the islands for educational, cultural and

sporting activities. In the longer term, we'll review making the discount permanent as part of the ongoing fares review being carried out in the Islands Connectivity Plan.'

Welcoming the announcement, Angus Campbell from the Ferries Community Board, said: 'We have long campaigned for such a change and are confident it will make

a real difference to the equality of access to these types of activities for our island young people.

'We will continue to engage with government to ensure cost of travel is not a barrier to young people living, working and learning on our islands.'

For details about eligibility, please visit the CalMac website.

The discount will be reviewed after the initial year to establish how it has been taken up and how it is funded. In the longer term, the discount will be considered as part of the fares policy review in the Islands Connectivity Plan.

WIN £200 WORTH OF SHOPPING

TROLLEY

DASH

COURTESY OF TESCO OBAN

We all spend far too much money over Christmas and New Year, so how great would it be able to fill your shopping trolley COMPLETELY FREE OF CHARGE in January?! Courtesy of our friends at Tesco in Oban, one lucky reader will win the chance to fill their trolley with up to £200 worth of goods (see T&C's for exclusions). All you have to do is collect 4 tokens over four weeks starting on 9th December, get them to us by 10am Tuesday 11th January and you will be entered into a prize draw to win this fantastic trolley dash. What are you waiting for, banish those post-Christmas blues and start collecting your tokens!

All 4 tokens must be sent in a single envelope to Oban Times Trolley Dash Competition Crannog Lane, Lochavullin Industrial Estate Oban, PA34 4HB.

One token from each week is required, multiple entries are allowed, but must be submitted in separate envelopes. Photocopied tokens will not be accepted. Winners must agree to take part in publicity, Employees of Wyvex Media Ltd and their immediate family are not eligible to enter. The editor's decision is final.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS
Winner must be at Tesco, Lochside, Oban, PA34 4HP for 10.30am January 17th. Excludes tobacco, lottery, baby food, non-food items and alcohol. Quantity limited to two per item. The winner will be given a hand held scanner to monitor spend to the value of £200. We will protect your personal data. We only gather what we need for the requirements of this competition. Entry data will be deleted/disposed immediately upon the competition entry deadline and in a manner appropriate to GDPR regulations. Entrant's details will not be used for any other activity'.

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Digital subscribers who have an active subscription covering the period from December 2021, to February 2022, can enter the competition by sending their name, address and email address that they subscribe with to Oban Times Trolley Dash Competition, Crannog Lane, Lochavullin Industrial Estate, Oban PA34 4HB by 10am Tuesday January 11. Only one entry per subscription permitted. Entrant must be able to attend the trolley dash in Oban on the January 17, 2022.

Islanders launch 'community-first alternative to AirBnB'

Isle Develop CIC, the social enterprise behind the popular isle20.com shopping site in the Scottish islands, has launched their latest project - isleHoliday.com, a community-focused holiday lettings website.

The project aims to ensure that more of the revenue generated by tourism in the islands stays in island communities.

Profits from the commission-based structure will be reinvested in small businesses, community and housing projects throughout the islands.

Rhoda Meek, founder of Isle Develop CIC said: 'The housing problems caused by the short-term letting market in the islands are well documented. It will take time to change that situation and involve action at a local and national Government level.'

'But, in the meantime, the letting market exists. Our goal is to use it to generate revenue which can be used to the benefit of our communities - particularly in relation to affordable housing and long term rental options for residents.'

The isleHoliday will list holiday lets from across the Scottish islands, allowing



Rhoda Meek, founder of Isle Develop CIC.

visitors to book and make payments, but that's where the similarity with other platforms ends.

Rhoda continued: 'When you book your holiday house through isleHoliday, 100 per cent of the profit will go back into our island communities.'

'At Isle Develop, all of our directors and staff are islanders - we know our Bernerays from our Burras! By working together with accommodation providers and local organisations we can offer rich information about island life before visitors arrive; from driving on single track roads to public facilities, events and great local businesses to visit during their stay.'

'Visitors will have a better experience if we correctly set their expectations. Our islands are not empty wildernesses waiting to be discovered. They are full of heritage and history, present and we hope, future. Those are gems well worth discovering.'

'We want to put faces to places and start to change the narrative from destination first, to community first.'

Oban access guide moving forward

Plans to create an access-for-all guide to Oban businesses are being picked up on again.

Talks are ongoing between Oban and Area District Access Panel and Oban High School to progress the idea.

Students from the school had started to collecting information for the guide before the pandemic struck and now there are proposals to make a concerted effort to progress the initiative, starting in the very near future says Panel chairman Jim Tolmie.

'The long-term goal is to take the survey information and have it stored electronically so that it will be available to visitors and locals who wish to research what possible issues



Oban High School pupils Cameron Allen and George Croft started checklisting businesses and facilities around the town for the new access guide back in 2018.

work of the access panel to make living with a disability easier in Oban, Lorn and the Islands.

The registered Scottish charity is made up of people with varying disabilities and supporters with the aim of improving getting around, in and on streets, paths, businesses, buildings and transport.

From promoting social inclusion to encouraging businesses to better position advertising

boards and street furniture, such as al-fresco tables and chairs, and advising on shop layouts and builds before they even begin, the access panel is on hand to help.

It also has a trained auditor who can carry out access checks for community organisations and businesses. There is also the opportunity to take up the offer of organised awareness sessions and training to help people understand disability requirements.

The new leaflets, in semi-large and large print, plus some in braille, was funded by BID4Oban.

Interested in finding out more? You can email obanaccesspanel@aol.com

they may encounter when in this area,' added Mr Tolmie.

Two thousand fliers were printed last November to spread the word about the

Playtime boost for Oban toddlers

Customers and staff at The Original Factory Shop in Oban have raised hundreds of pounds to make play time more fun for the area's babies and tots, writes Kathie Griffiths.

Oban Toy Cupboard's Rachel Stroud, with son Ronan Tierney, met with The Original Factory Shop manager Christopher Taylor last week to pick up the cheque after being selected as the store's chosen charity.

The Toy Cupboard is a community-led toy lending library based at Glencruitten Church Centre that also provides year-



The Original Factory Shop manager Christopher Taylor presents the cheque to Rachel Stroud from Oban Toy Cupboard.

round stay-and-play sessions for under-fives.

The Original Factory Shop manager Mr Taylor said: 'We're really excited that we and our customers have helped to raise £335.58 for The Toy Cupboard. What they do is invaluable for the local area and we'd like to think that this effort will go some way to supporting their work in the community.'

'As a company, this year we have decided to support local charities in our towns, and in March we asked our customers

through Facebook which charity they'd like us to support.'

And Toy Cupboard chairperson Annie Anderson added: 'This generous cheque has come at just the right time and is enough to subsidise both our Christmas party and four extra Christmas-themed stay-and-plays where babies and tots can come for a sing along, some Christmas stories and craft activities, including hand and footprint calendars and salt dough keepsakes to model and paint.'

Interested in joining the fun? Booking details for Toy Cupboard sessions can be found on the TeamReach App under TCoban or by emailing toycupboardoban@gmail.com

Struggling with rising energy bills? Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureau can help

These are difficult times, but help is at hand for householders worried about the soaring price of energy.

This week, Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureau launches its Big Energy Winter Savings Campaign in partnership with Home Energy Scotland to provide help and advice to anyone worried about paying their energy bills.

The past few months have seen extraordinary changes in the energy market. A huge rise in energy costs has seen some suppliers going out of business and switching suppliers is no longer the way to get a better deal. Quite the opposite, with government advice no longer including switching energy supplier.

Electricity and gas price hikes haven't filtered through to households who are still on fixed price deals. And households using oil and solid fuels have also seen their heating costs go up.

SO WHAT CAN PEOPLE DO?

Jen Broadhurst, Argyll and Bute Citizen's Advice Bureau manager said: 'Everyone's situation is different and the bureau always offers free, confidential and impartial help and advice tailored to individual circumstances.'

Advisers at the bureau can:

- check your entitlement to benefits and grants
- check what you're paying and make sure it's the right tariff for you
- re-structure debt and check what's affordable for you
- help you to understand pre-payment meters
- advise you what to do if your supplier goes out of business
- share energy savings advice for your home

Over the winter, the bureau and Home Energy Scotland will do everything it can to help people stay warm.

Jen added: 'We have lots of tips and hints on our bureau website and Facebook page to help you save on bills. The little changes all add up.'

'Don't wait and worry about rising debts. Get in touch with the bureau and let an adviser help you find out what help is available.'

Asked about energy suppliers going bust, Jen said: 'If your energy supplier goes out of business, don't panic. The supply of energy to your home is protected by Ofgem's safety net and the industry regulator will appoint a replacement supplier for you.'

'But it's a good idea to take a meter reading and take a photograph of your meter showing the reading, if you can.'

'If you have a credit balance on your account this should be protected.'

'If you have a pre-payment meter, the failed supplier should help you to top up until the new supplier takes over. The new supplier should then contact you and take action to ensure you can continue to stay on supply.'

'If you're struggling to afford to top up, get in touch with Argyll and Bute Citizen's Advice Bureau.'



Contact your local bureau on 01546 605550
email info@abcab.org.uk

Visit www.abcab.org.uk

Follow Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureau - Home - Facebook



Meeting customers needs at The Sports Shop Oban

For more than 10 years The Sports Shop in Oban has been kitting out the West Highlands and islands, not to mention all the tourists who visit them.

In a world of on-line shopping and massive high street chains what is the secret of their success?

Experience, product knowledge, awareness of what customers want and need to get the most out of their sporting and leisure activities, and a very keen purchasing ability to make sure they are selling a wide range of goods at competitive prices.

It is a recipe for success that keeps The Sports Shop at the top of its game.

'Between us we have more than 60 years' experience,' said

owner Billy Thomson. With Jonathan MacMillan as buyer and Malcolm Croarkin in front of shop, they have built up a loyal band of customers which is growing steadily.

And this formula has served them well; when neighbouring premises became available, as David Finlayson of the Jeans Shop, retired they expanded The Sports Shop.

Today they sell a wide range of leading brand, Adidas, Under Armour, Weird Fish, Canterbury and Speedo to name a few.

You could click a mouse and wait days, then get into all the hassle of returns, or you could go and talk to The Sports Shop team about what you are looking for, get their advice and try

on their recommendations.

'Finding a shoe that suits your needs can be tricky; the differences between brands can be immense. We understand the brands and can offer a selection,' said Billy.

During the pandemic people have been upping their sports and fitness activities and become more health conscious.

'The last 18 months are a good example of how the market has changed,' said Billy. 'A lot more people are going outdoors, exercising more and are more aware of their health.'

So as well as all the traditional sporting kit The Sports Shop is offering more outdoor leisure wear, including It's a Dog's Life, a range of clothing designed for dog walkers.



Jonathan, Malcolm and Billy have a wide experience of different sports

Swimming continues to be a favourite activity and they are stocking a wide range of swimwear and wetsuits for wild swimming.

'A lot more people are swimming,' said Bill, 'both outdoors and in swimming pools.'

The Sports Shop sells everything from toddlers' clothing through to a loyal band of customers now in their 80s. It is also the shop of choice for parents buying school PE kit, trainers and backpacks for schoolchildren.

The shop also supplies shinty kit. Yoga, and indoor exercise clothing equipment are also proving very popular.

'And we find that people have become more individualistic; they are not so likely to follow a brand or fashion colour, they want to buy what suits them and their needs,' Billy said.

Between them, Billy, Jonathan and Malcolm have a wide experience of different sports through either playing, coaching or as administrators - Sometimes all three!

The Sports Shop also supports local charities and the Argyll Wellbeing Hub, sponsoring a three-man invitational charity scramble at Glencruitten Golf Club.

The business continues to draw customers from across Argyll, the islands and as far away as Lochaber and Fort William; customers value the warm and friendly welcome, the sound advice based on product knowledge and wide selection of goods on sale.

In the last 10 years sports



The Sports shop has an extensive stock of clothing and sports equipment for all ages



As well as most major sports brands The Sports Shop also stocks ranges from the likes of Slipfree, Weirdfish and Starling

clothing and equipment has expanded massively.

'Looking back you can see how noticeable the changes are in the technology and design and fabrics and materials used,' said Billy, 'it really is quite remarkable.'

Ten years ago he would have been surprised to see a range of clothes designed for dog

walkers; a fragrance and body care range especially for the outdoors and bags designed to help improve body posture, yet today the shop sells all three: It's a Dog's Life, Inis body care and The Healthy Bag Company.

Pay them a visit and find out how much more they have in the shop.

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Tsuchigumo Daiko put on an energetic show at Seil Island Hall; and right, drumming workshops for adults getting hands-on at Seil Island hall as part of the winter festival.

Drum roll please for Seil Winter Festival

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk

Seil Island Winter Festival has been drumming up excitement.

Funding from Corra Foundation meant the community hall could stage a day of Taiko Drumming as part of the island's first-ever winter festival programme.

Japanese-style drumming group Tsuchigumo Daiko joined the community to run workshops for seven children and eight adults before giving an energetic performance of their own in the evening.

It was a return visit for the drumming group, back on Seil by public demand after appearing at a family fun day earlier this year.

Organisers behind the winter festival are using grant money to bring the community together to fend off growing



Left, showtime on Seil for Japanese style drumming group Tsuchigumo Daiko.

rural isolation and loneliness exacerbated by the pandemic.

Other workshops will feature crafting, storytelling and pottery making. And a new community cinema, run by volunteers, is being set up, with its first screenings due this month.



Dunbeg gets new defib just in time for two call-outs

Dunbeg Community Council is the proud owner of a Public Access Defibrillator, and has now put up a plaque thanking the main funders, Scottish Sea Farms and St John Scotland.

Dunbeg Community Council recognised the need and was inspired to make it happen after hearing about the lady in Bonawe whose life was saved because there was a defibrillator in the village.

St John Scotland sourced and supplied the equipment with a 25 per cent discount.

A spokesperson said: 'Too many people in Scotland lose their lives to cardiac arrest, and we know that by starting CPR as soon as possible, and using a defibrillator where one is available, lives can and will

be saved.

'It's great to see the community in Dunbeg working together to provide this vital piece of equipment and we're delighted we've been able to support them through our Community Defibrillator Scheme, so residents and visitors will have easy access should they need it.'

Scottish Sea Farms are very generous to the communities in which they operate and where their staff live and work.

They kindly stepped in to cover the rest of the funds resulting in the life-saving apparatus being installed in a much shorter time.

In fact, since its installation, it has twice been taken to an emergency, but thankfully not been required as the patients recovered before it was needed.

Dunbeg Community

Council is also grateful to Willie and Murray of Dunbeg Stores who provided the outside space, electricity for the cabinet and CCTV coverage.

Supporting Communities Fund opens for applications

Community projects across Argyll and Bute are being invited to apply for help from the council's Supporting Communities Fund.

From youth groups to community woodlands, swimming clubs to community transport, the council is helping a range of initiatives provide vital lifelines and services in the area.

The 2022/2023 Supporting Communities Fund is now open for applications that

could see not-for-profit organisations get up to £2,500 to help projects happening in their community.

Go to the council's website at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/council-and-government/third-sector-grants. The closing date is Monday January 10 next year.

Councillor Mary Jean Devon, policy lead for support services, said: 'We have dedicated active communities in Argyll and Bute who help bring people together, look after each other and improve the place where they live.

'We know the pandemic has been challenging for lots of community projects, many are in need of a financial boost.

'We hope that by opening up the fund, we can continue to help some of the fantastic work happening across our communities.'

Organisations eligible to apply include voluntary, community, charities and social enterprises involved in sports and leisure, arts and culture, social welfare or education. This includes community councils and parent councils.

Advice and support on funding is available from the Community Development Team on 01436 657647 or via email address communitydevelopment@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Clarification

We have been asked to point out that contrary to our headline (Oban councillor cleared after 'malicious' complaint, November 25), the councillor was not cleared as no decision was taken.

The summing up from The Ethical Standards states: 'It should be noted that this means no decision has been taken or is to be taken on whether the Respondent's conduct amounts to a breach of the code. The Standards Commission would nevertheless remind councillors of the need to comply with the code when using social media. They should be careful to ensure, when posting comments, that they could not reasonably be perceived to be endorsing the opinions or views of others when they do not intend to do so.'

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Gathering for the crake

RSPB Scotland held a corncrake conservation event on Islay, hosted by Derek and Joanne Middleton on their croft in Portnahaven.

The Middletons contacted RSPB 10 months ago to investigate how they could integrate more corncrake-friendly management on their croft. This has resulted in the RSPB and the Middletons working together to improve habitat for the birds.

They highlighted the creation of vegetation cover which ensures protection for the birds when they arrive in April and the delaying of grazing in some areas until September 1 to allow the birds to successfully rear two broods of chicks.

A wander around the croft prompted discussions about the intricacies of managing habitat for wildlife and how small changes can make a big difference.

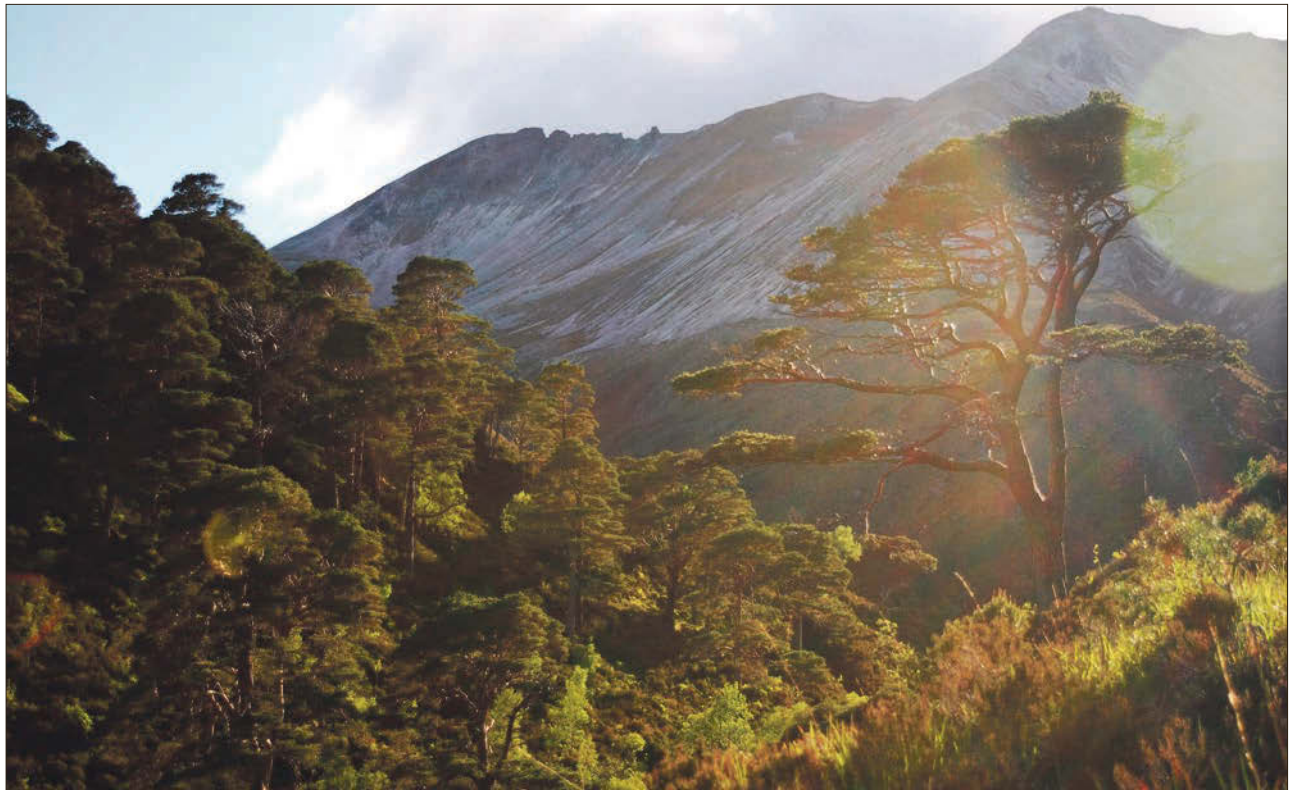
Wider conversations on sustainability and efficiency savings on farms and crofts also took place and all who attended enjoyed it and considered it a valuable event for sharing knowledge and opportunities within the farming and crofting community on Islay.

Corncrakes were once found in every county in the UK but modern farming methods, in particular earlier and more efficient and faster methods of cutting grass crops have led to a substantial decline in their breeding success. The Hebridean islands are still a stronghold for corncrake but even in these places they still are at risk and in some areas their numbers continue to decline.

Corncrake Calling is a project supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and it aims to ensure the future of this iconic and secretive species in Scotland.

RSPB Scotland would like to run similar farmer/crofter-led sessions throughout the Argyll Islands and across north and west Scotland. Land management advice is available to crofters and farmers wishing to work with nature and grants are available to carry out habitat management for corncrakes. If you would like to learn more about this project, get involved as a volunteer or implement land management for corncrakes please contact corncrakecalling@rspb.org.uk or go to www.rspb.org.uk/corncrakecalling

Winner of the 70th anniversary photo competition - Allt a Chuirn and Beinn Eighe ridge - taken by Ben Catchpole.



UK's first national nature reserve is 70

The UK's first and oldest National Nature Reserve, the beautiful Beinn Eighe NNR, is celebrating its 70th year.

There are currently 229 National Nature Reserves (NNR) in England, 76 in Wales, 47 in Northern Ireland, and 43 NNRs in Scotland, which cover 154,250 hectares (1,542.5 km²), or less than 1.5 per cent of the land area of Scotland.

They range in size from Corrieshalloch Gorge at seven hectares to Mar Lodge Estate, which covers 29,324 hectares.

Nearby for a visit, Argyll and Lochaber's NNRs include Tainish, Glasdrum Wood, Glen Nant, Moine Mhor, Ariundle Oakwood, and one of Scotland's newest, Glencoe, designated in 2017.

By contrast, in 1951 Beinn Eighe was

designated as the UK's first NNR to protect its precious ancient pinewood, the largest fragment in north-west Scotland.

Covering a huge 48sq km, the nature reserve is home to wildlife including deer, pine martens and golden eagles.

As part of the 70th anniversary celebrations, NatureScot held a photography competition to showcase the dramatic landscape, species and habitats on Beinn Eighe.

The winner was Ben Catchpole of Norwich, who spent time at Beinn Eighe as a volunteer, with second place going to Rachel Drummond of Wester Ross. NatureScot staff have also created a story map to vividly show the vital work which has taken place on Beinn Eighe over the last 70 years.



Left: Second place in the 70th anniversary photographic competition, Pony Path Pools on Beinn Eighe NNR, by Rachel Drummond.

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Campaign launched to repair Crinan Canal's 'unique' Dunardry Bridge

by Sandy Neil
sneil@obantimes.co.uk

The Inland Waterways Association (IWA) has launched a campaign asking people to help uncover hidden heritage on their local waterways in need of protection or restoration.

One such heritage feature is Dunardry Bridge at Lock 11 on the Crinan Canal. 'This is a truly unique feature as it is the only hand-operated rolling bridge that goes across a lock chamber anywhere on the UK's inland waterways network,' explained the IWA. 'Sadly, the bridge has been out of operation for many years and is now in real need of repair.'

The IWA is encouraging local people to get out and about on the nine-mile long Crinan Canal to not only visit Dunardry Bridge but also to see if they can find other examples of hidden heritage on this picturesque canal.

These might include larger features such as the 15 locks and seven bridges on the canal or smaller features such as rope marks on the bridges and locks, mason's marks on the lock walls, canal company signs or balance beam spikes on the lock gates.

Any feature, no matter what size it might be, adds to the overall heritage of the waterway setting and tells the story of how the waterways were built and used in the past.

Alison Smedley, the IWA's campaigns and public affairs manager, said: 'IWA believes that waterways heritage needs to be protected. As part of our campaign to call for local authorities and navigation authorities to better protect waterways heritage, we are asking people to investigate their local canal or river in more detail than perhaps they ever have before and find items of interest. We want to make sure the quirky features of the waterways such as Dunardry Bridge are retained, ideally in working order and are not forgotten in the future.'

Jonathan Mosse, one of IWA's representatives in Scotland added: 'Whilst there are other moveable bridges across lock chambers and



Water waster building, Ardrishaig, in 1996.
Photograph: Alison Smedley.

other rolling bridges, Dunardry Bridge is the only example of both. As such, we are working with Scottish Canals to explore options for how to repair it. We understand that Scottish Canals needs to concentrate its expenditure on improvements to navigation but IWA will fully support any heritage funding bid undertaken by Scottish Canals to reinstate the bridge.'

If you spot something of interest on the Crinan Canal or any of the other canals in the region, IWA would like you to snap a photo of it on your phone and then send it to hiddenheritage@waterways.org.uk.

Once received, one of IWA's resident Heritage experts will try to identify the feature and upload it into the IWA Hidden Heritage Gallery which can be found on the charity's website www.waterways.org.uk

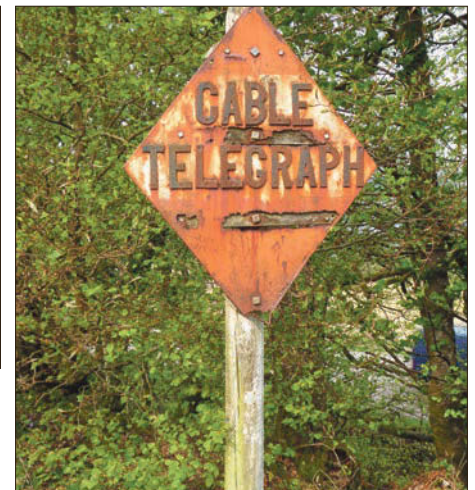
The aim is to record as many important historical features as possible as a resource for future generations. Please include the exact location, ideally using the 'what3words' app. If you could take a close-up picture of the feature and also a photo of the overall setting, that will help with the identification. Please also grant permission for IWA to use your photographs.



The Crinan Canal's unique Dunardry Bridge: 'Whilst there are other moveable bridges across lock chambers and other rolling bridges, Dunardry Bridge is the only example of both,' said the Inland Waterways Association's Jonathan Mosse.



Water supply entering the canal via a culvert at Cairnbaan; and right, a sign indicating a telegraph cable under the canal, near Ardrishaig, Crinan Canal. Photographs: Alison Smedley.



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OT

DISTRICT NEWS

ARDCHATTAN



Business was brisk at the Ardchattan Centre Craft Fair.

Craft fair is a crowd catcher

Ardchattan Centre Craft Fair drew in a crowd on Sunday November 21.

Chris Lavis-Jones took these photographs of the event in the new community hub that used to be the disused Bonawe School before a successful community buy-out.



Above, below: crowds flocked to the Ardchattan Centre Craft Fair.



Helen's silence is golden

Oban Link Club volunteer Helen Pearson kept silent for four hours and raised more than £1,300.

Helen was overwhelmed by the support she received which came from as far away as Australia, Canada and Switzerland.

Money raised will go to club funds.

The group meets on a Wednesday from 2pm to 4pm at the Baptist Church Hall and in the Perle Hotel on a Friday from 11am to 2pm. New members are always welcome.

Right: Helen Pearson at the end of her four-hour sponsored silence with members of Oban Link Club.



LISMORE

Lismore Primary School pupils fly fifth eco-flag

Headteacher Debbie Harris says youngsters have been working hard over the past year to earn another eco-flag.

The island school sent off its bid in October showcasing its work and have just had news of their success. 'The award celebrates our commitment to looking after the environment. Over the past year we have been doing this by growing, harvesting and composting in our school garden; re-cycling, reducing and re-using materials where we can and sustaining little-to-no litter pollution in our environment by putting all litter in the bin and introducing a bin to our outdoor area,' said Ms Harris.

She added: 'This is Lismore Primary School's fifth eco-flag award and we are very proud to be



Proud Lismore Primary School pupils with their fifth eco-flag.

able to sustain our commitment to looking after the environment with this year's cohort.'

The Eco-Schools Green Flag scheme is an

international accreditation that has recognised and rewarded young people's environmental actions for more than 25 years.

KILMELFORD

Kilmelford remembers

This year's Remembrance at Kilmelford Church started with a gathering around the war memorial, led by Mary Sandilands.

After the two-minute silence, wreaths were laid by Donald Smith, crew manager of Kilmelford Community Fire Station, and Major Donald Campbell-Baldwin, late A&SH. Jim Robb was the piper and also present were representatives of Kilmelford Fire Station.

There followed a service inside the church, taken by Georgina Dalton. She read the prayers written by her father, in the absence of the Regimental Chaplain, while serving in the Royal Artillery early in 1943, for a service on a clifftop overlooking the Mediterranean at Messina.



The service at Kilmelford war memorial on Sunday November 14.

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At random

MARTIN LAING

editor@obantimes.co.uk



Bold ambition

Confession time: I found myself somewhat peeved initially when I heard of the campaign to make Oban a must-visit, year-round tourist destination.

I was peeved because, much as I love all the visitors during the traditional season, I also like it when the numbers diminish and the town returns to mostly residents only.

The joint initiative between Wild About Argyll and BID4Oban, the business improvement organisation for the town, plans to launch a number of itineraries and activities to draw people to the seafood capital of Scotland on a year-round basis.

However, after some contemplation, I then found myself reversing that original opposition. After all, tourism is vital to the town and surrounding area, and I am good friends with a number of local entrepreneurs and business people who absolutely rely on the visitor pound for their existence.

And let's not overlook the fact that these pillars of the community have had a brutally tough time over the past couple of years as a result of Covid and various lockdowns. Anything which makes their enterprises more sustainable is to be applauded.

Also, it has to be said, I almost always enjoy (there have been occasions when I have not!) meeting the hugely diverse array of people from around the world when they stop in our town. Countless are the conversations I have had in various licensed premises with some fascinating and interesting individuals and groups. And almost always, they are enormously positive about their experience here.

Central to the campaign is a website aiming to be a hub to help visitors plan their break, with information relating to all the town has to offer and when. It is www.oban.org.uk.

The year-round campaign has much to commend it, and will be driven by the ever enthusiastic Andy Spence, boss banana at the aforementioned BID4Oban. If Andy and the others behind the bold programme are successful, it will mean a substantial boost to the local economy, and that is ultimately good for all of us.

What do you think?

Send your comments to editor@obantimes.co.uk



Right: Sorcha bakery was at Kilmore's festive fair.

Lots of treats on sale at Kilmore and Kilbride's craft and produce festive fair.

KILMORE AND KILBRIDE

Craft fair raises hundreds of pounds for hall funds

Kilmore and Kilbride Christmas craft and produce fair raised £500 for hall funds.

The event, on Saturday November 27, was the second successful market held at the community hall this year.

All stall places were booked well in advance and included fresh fish, baked goods and many crafts helping to promote the Shop Local aspect of Christmas. It was an opportunity for the hall's new kitchen extension to be used to provide homemade soups for sale along with teas, coffee and cakes. 'It is hoped to hold at least one community event each month next year,' said Sue Burden from the Kilmore and Kilbride community.



The craft fair was a good opportunity to put the new kitchen extension at Kilmore Community Hall to use.



Plenty of crafts and produce on sale at Kilmore Community Hall

Consultation planned on electric vehicle charging sites

People are being asked for views on where to put a potential 55 electric vehicle chargers across Argyll and Bute.

The Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee approved the proposed list on Thursday December 2. It had been developed after a seminar with elected members in September.

Smaller towns and tourist hotspots will be the main priority for fast-charging units to fill gaps in provision, then the focus will turn to larger towns, as they have some provision already.

The new plans show 55 potential Electric Vehicle Charging (EVC) sites across the region

that could be installed when funding becomes available from external sources.

The full list can be found on the council website.

In addition, HITRANS will install eight chargers across Argyll and Bute, as part of its European-funded FASTER programme, at a cost of around £372,000. These chargers are additional to the 55 listed in the council's proposals and include the Corran Halls in Oban.

The others are: Rothesay Harbour; Port Askaig, Islay; Pier Car Park, Dunoon; Lorne Street Car Park, Lochgilphead; New Quay, Campbeltown; Ledaig, Tobermory and the Ferry Terminal, Tarbert.

The council is also taking full advantage of available funding to install EVCs at offices and depots to support the ever-growing number of hybrid and fully electric vehicles used as part of the council fleet. There are currently 70 of these vehicles in use.

Policy lead for roads and infrastructure services Councillor Rory Colville said: 'We've looked at where EVCs need to be to make it easier for people with electric vehicles to travel around Argyll and Bute. However, we'll be asking people what they think and taking that into account before we make a final decision. Then, once funding becomes available, we have a programme to work to.'

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OT

LETTERS

Royal Mail failure

It really is not good enough that Royal Mail can take £800 for a service and then just not deliver – literally.

Over the last few weeks they have failed people waiting for Covid booster jags, people waiting on hospital appointments, and the rest of us just wanting the service we have paid for.

But now they are letting down the bereaved and it is just not good enough.

So come on Royal Mail bosses, no more excuses. Sort out this issue in Oban once and for all. Your customers and your loyal hard-working staff deserve better.

Gallanach Road reopens

It was good news this week when we heard that Gallanach Road had finally reopened.

And all hats off to the team at Geo-Rope who had the tricky job of ensuring the cliff face was stable, by removing all the loose rock.

Seventy tonnes were removed from the hillside – with it taking five days to set up the specialist equipment and just six seconds to bring the loose rock down.

You can watch the video at www.oban-times.co.uk. It's just incredible!

The editor welcomes letters of approximately 300 words in length for publication on this page.



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Being mean and miserable helps no one

If Mr Cross (Oban Times, November 25) had any idea of the history and economics of the UK he would probably be aware that the majority of imports that we enjoy and rely on are grown and produced in much poorer countries almost exclusively by non-white, poorly paid people.

Tea, coffee, chocolate, bananas, sugar to start with, historically produced by slave labour. Then the must-have gadgets like mobile phones, laptops, TVs etc – there is only room on the letters page for a few of them.

Just look at any item bought from abroad, how much did you pay for it, where did the components come from, who mined them (lithium), manufactured them, packaged them?

People, of course, often earning pence per hour and often not able to clothe, feed or educate their children – who are likely to be working long hours for even less.

So what is he talking about? £36 million? That's a few grains of sand out of a bucket in comparison to the tax money in many offshore accounts, squirrelled away by British multinationals and wealthy individuals. Those developing nations are the ones that suffer the most by the effects of climate change and poverty due to our consumption and unfair trading practices, so the UK's £100 billion is a shamefully small sum.

If the developed nations of the world had helped to vaccinate everyone worldwide, it is highly likely Omicron might not have spread, just one example of money not being squandered.

Being mean and miserable helps no one.

Arthur, from the Isle of Lismore.

Frustration over last week's Harbour Board meeting

I am writing on behalf of the Oban Community Harbour Development Association (OCHDA) and the community of Oban to express my frustration at the conduct of council officers at last week's Harbour Board meeting.

The report to the board did not take into consideration the impact on Oban of the options being considered and did not recognise the preparatory work that has already been done by OCHDA – many of the fundamental documents that will be necessary totalling 36,000 words.

The board were told the quickest way to get a new Harbour Authority was by either CMAL or Argyll and Bute Council taking control but no

YOUR PICTURES



This beautiful photograph of Ballachulish Harbour was taken and sent in by reader Colin Malcolm of Kentallan who told us it was taken on a recent chilly Sunday morning. If you have a photograph you'd like to share with us, please email a jpeg of no more than 2MB to editor@obantimes.co.uk

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evidence was presented to support this. Then, despite repeated public statements by officers that the council lacked the skills and had no plan to run a Municipal Port, the council report to the board was changed during the meeting, without any warning, recommending the Municipal Port as the preferred option. Though superficially welcome, no discussion of the consequences or the timescale was possible. Council members representing Oban were not informed of the plan to change the recommendation (they were also not consulted in the options appraisal process) and could not question what officers told them, despite the obvious implications, including financial and risk.

Since the meeting OCHDA has been told officers have not started work on the council's 'preferred option' and do not plan to do so until after the next meeting of the Oban Bay Management Group (OBMG) in January, losing another month unnecessarily. If this is as urgent as they said – too urgent to think about a Trust Port – why haven't

they started on the work? How long will it take to set it up? What will it cost to set it up?

Perhaps the reason is they don't want to run the harbour as a Municipal Port and, if they say they haven't started work on it in January, perhaps the OBMG will decide to hand the responsibility to CMAL instead?

What price democracy? OCHDA will not give up the argument: Oban Harbour should be run as a Trust Port. It will be best for Oban, its hinterland and the island communities served from here, best for all the water users and other stakeholders and, in the end, best for the council.

John MacAlister, Chairman OCHDA.

Flawed decision-making

I fear Argyll and Bute Harbour Board was, at best, misinformed on key items relating to timescale, deliverability and finances, all of which should have been key elements when determining their preferred option for the future management of Oban Bay last week.



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Council officers were aware that the Trust Port proposal is by far the most advanced of the three options effectively under consideration.

Unfortunately, despite having agreed that this could be delivered by the end of the 2021 season, it appears that officers did not convey this information to our elected members.

Just 24 hours after the Harbour Board made its decision, OCHDA was advised that the council does not yet have a plan as to how it will progress the project, and that it will be shutting down communication with OCHDA, somewhat at odds with the long-term prospects for a Trust Port.

A second concern relates to the lack of financial material presented to members. Despite the significant increase in vessels using the facility in recent years, the North Pier maritime assets are currently operated at a loss by the council. This is the agreed financial situation, as signed off by the Council Executive Director. OCHDA's financial projections had included a figure of £120,000 to be set against the same assets each year – approximately equal parts for lease payments, maintenance and the creation of a Capital Fund which would only be spent on upgrading the facilities which would still be owned by the council. Again, officers did not inform members of this, despite the obvious benefits to the council. All this information is in the public domain.

Finally, there is the matter of risk to the council – both reputational and financial. In expanding its area of responsibility the council is only able to levy a Conservancy Charge on some of the additional costs which it will incur. It is therefore proposing to significantly expand an operation which already struggles to pay for itself by taking on additional responsibilities from which the legislation prevents it from generating an operating surplus.

Readers may be aware of the 2020 Audit Scotland 'Best Value' report relating to the performance of Argyll and Bute Council. The report recommendations included the following: 'we urge significantly increased pace and depth of improvement and in doing so making greater use of the potential for engaging, enabling and empowering the communities of Argyll and Bute', and that Options Appraisals should include robust financial evaluation.

It is clear that, so far as Oban Bay is concerned, the council does not consider either of these recommendations to be appropriate. Again, further source for concern.

Chairman, Oban Bay Stakeholder Group.

Hydro scheme not the positive change some believe

Nothing remains the same these days, however we have to hope any change is for the better.

Reading the account of the opening of Morvern's latest hydro scheme in the Lochaber Times of December 2, the feeling of a large number of indigenous residents suggests that this isn't the case, not least because of the colossal amount of borrowed money required to build it during a global pandemic and the lack of transparency showing how the local community will actually benefit. Power is being sold to the national grid which residents will soon be compelled to pay back at twice the cost. What gain or fairness to this small, fragile community on the edge?

Due to its remoteness, Barr was one of the last places in the Morvern peninsula which could be termed a wilderness, making it a haven and special place for fur, feather and flora.

Top of the list was a large and obviously healthy population of the now universally rare wildcat, which the Scottish Government makes a priority species worthy of its protection.

This was drawn to the attention of NatureScot and the developer in the early stages. They went into denial about their existence and nothing was done to minimise disturbing them, no doubt to hasten Holyrood's renewables policy.

Hopefully they have not fled the scene altogether or perished in the attempt – but what loss will a few moggies make to the developer anyway, even although they are among the rarest animals in Europe?

Iain Thornber, Morvern.

Beachd Ailein

ALLAN CAMPBELL

ailean@obantimes.co.uk



Le dìreach dà latha deug chun na Nollaige bidh sibh mar a' mhòr-chuid, a' smaoinneachadh air tiodhlacan na ràithe agus 's dòcha nas cudromaiche buileach cò tha airidh air an seòrsa aithne a tha tiodhlac a' comharrachadh. Gun teagamh thèid mòran thiodhlacan a libhrigeadh air sgàth càirdeis is eòlais, seach 's dòcha aithne air coibhneas neo seirbheis shònraichte a thugadh tron bhliadhna. Chan eil mi air chor sam bith ag ràdh nach eil tiodhlacan uile ceart is iomchaidh mar a' ruinicheas sibh, ach saoilidh mi gum bheil e inntinneach da-rìribh beachdachadh air a' bhliadhna a dh'fhalbh agus air feadhainn a rinn rudeigin àraid. 'S dòcha nach robh ann ach cuideigin a' coileanadh dreuchd, ach gun d' rinn e neo i sin ann an dòigh a bha càirdeil, taiceil, blàth.

Neo theagamh gur e coigreach nach fhaca sibh riamh roimhe is nach fhaic tuilleadh a bh' ann, cuideigin air nach eil ainm neo aithne agaibh, ach a nochd coibhneas dhuibh san dol seachad. Nach mòr an togail ann an saoghal a tha cho dorcha aig amannan, gum bheil gnìomhan coibhneil ann an nàdar uimhir den t-sluagh. Chunnaic mi litir ann am pàipear ionadail bho chionn latha neo dhà bho chàraid a tha ciorramach is iad a' toirt taing dha dithis chaileag-sgoile a ghiùlain am biadh a bha iad seo air a cheannach ann an taigh-bidh chun a' bhùird dhaibh. 'S math gu dearbh a rinn na h-ighnean, ach an robh an litir air dhòigh ag ràdh gum robh

an gnìomh na annas ann an aithne nam feadhna a fhuair cuideachadh?

Ach, a bharrachd air mo theaghlach, co dha bheirinn fhìn an seòrsa aithne àraid air an bheil mi a' bruidhinn? Uill gun teagamh sam bith bhiodh luchd-obrach sheirbheis na slàinte uile glè àrd air an liosta agam. 'S dòcha gun canadh cuid nach eil iad ach a' dèanamh an cuid obrach mar a tha sin na dhleastanas orra, ach saoilidh mise gum bheil fianais gu leòr feadh na Rìoghachd gum bheil na sgiobaidhean sin a' libhrigeadh an dleastanas, agus a' chòrr, agus gum bheil a' bhuil air mòran aca a th' air an claidh le mòr-sgiths gu ìre a tha a' cur an slàinte fhèin an cunnart. Ach tha iad a' cumail a' dol, mo mhìle beannachd orra! 'S tric a chluinnear an abairt gum bheil mòran eòlaich aig a' mhòr-chuid againn, ach àireamh glè bheag de shàr charaidean. Tha mi den bheachd gum bheil sin fìor agus tha mi 'n dòchas gum bheil sibhse uile a tha a' leughadh seo cho fortanach 's gum bheil sàr charaid(ean) agaibh. Chan iarradh mo shàr charaid fhìn a bhith ga ainmeachadh ann an suidheachadh den t-seòrsa seo, ach abair gum bheil mi gam mheas fhèin beannaichte gum bheil a leithid ann, agus bidh mi cinnteach sin innse dha aig an àm seo, agus tron bhliadhna air fad!

Nuair a thig e gu tiodhlacan chan eil dad as luachmhoire, neo a bheir bàrr air càirdeas agus coibhneas!

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

It's hard to believe that Christmas is only a few weeks away. And what a strange Christmas it will be – with the challenge of Covid still very much with us, we know that we may well face restrictions not unlike those of last year, even as we celebrate.

As we see the Christmas trees decorated, tinsel in the shops, and festive lighting in the streets, we perhaps need the gentle reminder that we are not there yet. For Christians this is the season of Advent. Advent is a not-so-festive season when we prepare ourselves for the great events we celebrate at Christmas – the coming of God to dwell amongst us in the child Jesus, the Son of God. But for all of us, whether we're Christian or

not, it is well worth dwelling on the preparation.

For Jews the week-long festival of light, Hanukkah, has just concluded. For Hindus and Sikhs, their day festival of light was at the beginning of November. It is striking that for many of the world's faiths, there comes a festival in winter to celebrate the coming (or the return) of light and of hope in the midst of darkness. The getting-ready for all these events was and is as crucial as the thing itself.

Whatever your religious tradition, and however you celebrate in this season, I wish you a good preparation, as well as a happy Christmas.

**The Rt Revd Dr Keith Riglin,
Bishop of Argyll and The Isles**



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LEISURE & ENTERTAINMENT

YOUR GUIDE TO WHAT'S ON IN ARGYLL AND LOCHABER

Local author wins prize in national environmental essay competition

Glen Lonan author Leonie Charlton has been celebrating after picking up second prize in a prestigious essay and poetry competition.

The author attended the prize-giving event at Kendal Mountain Festival late last month for Lancaster University's Future Places Environmental Essay and Poetry Competition.

In her opening speech, Dr Karen Lloyd, from the university's department of English and Creative Writing, said the winning essays and poems consider anew the ways in which humans both help and harm their local environments, and find new forms of language that enable us to tell stories about the ways we live now, and about the reckoning that must occur between how we once lived, and how we will inhabit our future places.

Dr Lloyd went on to say that



The author Leonie Charlton at her home in Glen Lonan; and right, Lucy Gray's sculpture 'Recovering Ground', image by Alex Ramsay.

they had been overwhelmed not only by the quality of essays and poems submitted, but also by the breadth of subject matter and the experimental nature of form: from the rescue of amorous toads from certain death on a country lane: an urban woodland 'loved to death' by locked-down ramblers: a meadow pipit's nest clutched in the talons of a golden eagle: drops of water refracting and bending the landscape in a thousand rich and subtle ways: a love affair with a neighbours' birch tree: from Darwin's garden worms to the eel, 'legless with a foot in two worlds': the oddness of song, voice and memory contained within ice: a Welsh quarry as the post-Capitalist landscape: a poet who needs to find new language.

In her judge's comments Professor Jenn Ashworth described Leonie's essay as 'a direct and urgent explo-

ration of responsibility, care and connection.' Woven through the essay is the narrative poem Leonie wrote for the collaborative exhibition with local sculptor Lucy Gray, 'Recovering Ground', currently showing at the Resipole Studios on Ardnamurchan.

The prizewinning essays and poems will shortly be available to read online at www.lancaster.ac.uk/future-places/activities/the-future-places-environmental-essay-and-poetry-prize, and Leonie's essay will also be on her website www.leoniecharlton.co.uk

■ Leonie is showing slides and giving a talk on her book, *Marram*, signing books and reading from her poetry pamphlet at A Scone and a Scribe, at The Rockfield Centre on Saturday December 11, at 10am.



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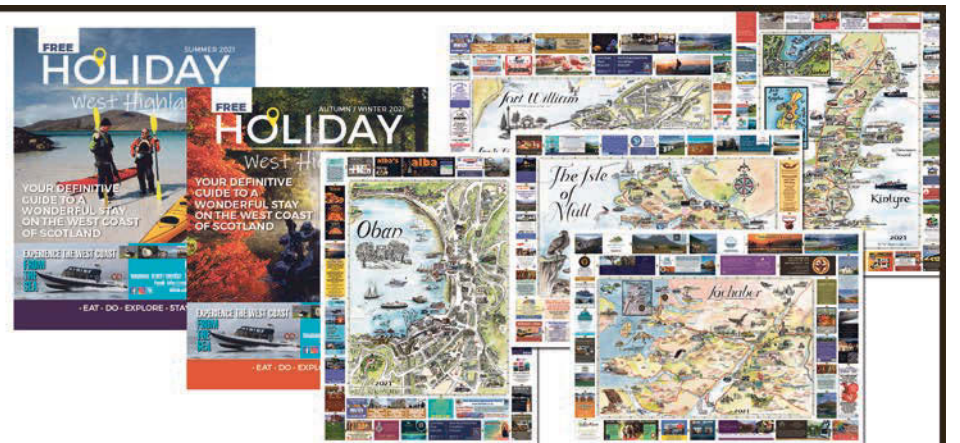
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Glasgow Letter

ROBERT ROBERTSON

robert.d.robertson@hotmail.co.uk



Trail West on stage at Darvel Music Festival, which Robert missed – along with the rest of the band – due to him having tested positive for Covid.



The annual Park Bar quiz, Quiz in the Park, which I previewed recently, was cancelled this week due to Storm Barra – an ironic name for a storm that caused the cancellation of such a West Coast event.

Unfortunately, it is not the only event that will not be happening this December in Glasgow. There have been no association dances, no annual Vatersay Boys projection into insanity in the Barrowlands, and no George Square Christmas market this year.

Although there are numerous different reasons for all of this, it is perhaps just as well that Glasgow will be having a slightly quieter Christmas period this year, given the emergence of the new Omicron variant.

I, for one, will certainly be having a quiet few days. I have been in isolation since last Thursday having tested positive for coronavirus.

I was just about to leave the flat for Elfingrove – Scotland's biggest ice rink by the Kelvingrove museum – when a lateral flow test came back

positive. I immediately got a PCR which soon confirmed I have the virus and I have been locked up ever since.

Thankfully, the symptoms have been very mild. My only real complaint is the loss of taste, but I am trying a few interesting tactics to recover it. I have bit into a lemon (couldn't taste anything), chewed on a chilli pepper (didn't flinch) and, if my taste has not returned by Friday evening, my plan is to pour myself a Laphroaig or something similarly peaty.

Surely the virus will be no match for that unique flavour! I will keep you updated.

In seriousness, the most gut-wrenching part of the whole experience was having to postpone our Tide Lines show on Friday night in Darvel Town Hall, Ayrshire, which is a gig we have always enjoyed over the years. That gig will now happen in March next year and thankfully Horo, who were also on the bill, were on hand to put on a gig of their own for those who had travelled for the

weekend to Darvel Music Festival. The following night, revellers enjoyed Trail West and Skerryvore – so I dare say, with that fantastic line-up of bands, my absence was not felt too keenly!

If all those postponements and cancellations are getting you down, and you are in search of alternative ways to spend the winter nights, then never fear, there will soon be a new album to listen to from a Uist band who are really one of the most sought after on the scene at the moment.

Beinn Lee announced last week that their second album, Deò, will be released on Friday December 17. Pre-orders are available from the band's website and will be shipped first class the week starting Monday December 13 to hopefully guarantee delivery before Christmas.

I will certainly be reviewing that record when it comes out, as I did their excellent first album, Osgarra. If only it was out a little bit earlier and it might help me through this isolation.

Virtual wardrobe at the Highland Folk Museum

For those who have always wanted to wear a real piece of history, help is at hand from the Highland Folk Museum.

The open air museum has created two new Instagram and Facebook filters, allowing people to try on two historic bonnets – a classic white cotton mutch, and a green woollen tam o'shanter.

The bonnets are real objects from the museum's collection that date from around the end of the 19th century.

Project Officer Helen Pickles said: 'We wanted to create a fun and engaging way to experience textile objects from our collection, and see what can be achieved with augmented reality (AR) technology.'



The tam o'shanter can be virtually tried on via the museum's social media apps

'The tam o'shanter is a classic Scottish bonnet and the one from our collection was occasionally worn by former curator Ross Noble, and we have some photos of him wearing it at previous events held at the museum.'

'The white cotton mutch with

ribbon ties is another quintessential Scottish bonnet, worn to keep a woman's hair clean and tidy whilst she went about her jobs on the croft.

'Although we now don't physically try on the objects in the collection, this new filter will let anyone try on the hats.'

To celebrate these very Scottish bonnets, the filters were launched on St Andrew's Day. The two filters need to be accessed through the Instagram and Facebook phone apps and the museum is encouraging people to share their snaps through social media.

The digital dress-up is part of the Folk and Fabric project at the Newtonmore museum, aiming to showcase items from the collections online and offer 360-degree tours of five of the historic buildings. It is due to launch early next year.

What's on at Oban Cinema



EYE OF THE STORM (12A)

DOCUMENTARY

James Morrison is widely recognised as one of Britain's finest landscape artists. His work hangs in the homes of JK Rowling and the Royal Family, as well as in museums, and private collections around the world. As the documentary opens, Morrison faces his greatest challenge: his eyesight is fading fast, and he has one more major painting to complete. From his studio just outside Montrose, Morrison can hear the crashing North Sea. On the wall is a drawing of Mickey Mouse he completed when he was 8 years old, at the outset of World War II.

Eye of the Storm is a fascinating exploration of what it means to be a landscape painter. It is also the poignant and universal story of a creative mind dealing with his own mortality, and the physical frailties that catch up with all of us.



Friday 10 December

Ghostbusters: Afterlife 12A	12:30
Clifford The Big Red Dog PG	16:15
A Boy Called Christmas PG	17:00
House Of Gucci 15	19:00
Eye Of The Storm 12A	19:30

Saturday 11 December

Clifford The Big Red Dog PG	12:00/15:00
Encanto PG	12:30
A Boy Called Christmas PG	14:30/17:15
Ghostbusters: Afterlife 12A	16:45
Eye Of The Storm 12A	19:15
House Of Gucci 15	19:30

Sunday 12 December

Clifford The Big Red Dog PG	12:00/15:00
A Boy Called Christmas PG	14:30/17:15
Ghostbusters: Afterlife 12A	16:45
Eye Of The Storm 12A	19:15
House Of Gucci 15	19:30

Wednesday 15 December (subtitled screenings day)

Clifford The Big Red Dog PG	16:30 ★
Encanto PG	17:00 ★
House Of Gucci 15	19:00 ★
A Boy Called Christmas PG	19:30 ★

Thursday 16 December

Clifford The Big Red Dog PG	16:30
Encanto PG	17:00
House Of Gucci 15	19:00
A Boy Called Christmas PG	19:30

★Key: HOH - Subtitles for the hard of hearing.

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Face coverings must be worn when moving within the building. Once seated you can remove your face covering. All showtimes are subject to availability and change. Updates can be found on our Facebook page.

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MONDAY:	8am-12pm 12-3pm 5pm-7pm 7pm-8pm 8pm-9pm 9pm	Breakfast show with Stephen Lunch with Bob G Drive Times with Marcus Highland Fling with Rosemary Calum McLuckies Show David Cullen Show
TUESDAY:	8am-10am 10am-12.30pm 1pm-3pm 5pm-7pm 7pm-8pm 8pm-9pm 9pm	Breakfast Show with Stephen Ken Hunter Macky on FM Drive Times with Archie Darling Highest Praise with Stuart Chalmers Scottish Sounds with Archie Cameron Oban Pride on the Waves with Jay & Crystal
WEDNESDAY:	8am-11am 11am-1pm 1pm-3pm 4pm-7pm 7pm-9pm 9pm	Breakfast Show with Stephen Comfort Zone with Lesley Doug in the afternoon Drive Times with Campbell Country meets Rock N Roll with Len Gordon's Grooves
THURSDAY:	8am-11am 11am-2pm 3pm-7pm 7pm-9pm 9pm-10pm 10pm	Breakfast Show with Andy & Sarah Lunch Show with Steve Drive Time with Stephen Christine's Collections Ann's Ceilidh Margo Till Midnight
FRIDAY:	8am-10am 10am-1pm 1pm-4pm 4pm-6:45pm 6:45pm-7pm 7pm-8pm 8pm-10pm	Breakfast Show with Anna & Phil The Brunch Show With The One Bob G Country, Rhythm & Blues show Teeny & Tiny Show with Harry & Janet Sports View with the Dream Team Country Meets Country with Jackie Craig
SATURDAY:	8am-10am 10am-1pm 2pm-4pm 6pm-7pm 7pm-8pm 8pm-10pm	Evening Show with Peter Rainnie Breakfast Show with Andy Saturday Morning Live with Linda Jukebox Jamboree with Ken Mc Sports View with the Dream Team Sounds Scottish with Archie Darling Evening Show with Dave Hobbs
SUNDAY:	9am-11am 11am-2pm 3pm-5pm 7pm-9pm 9pm	Sunday Morning with Breege Sunday Brunch with Stephen Mental Musings with Mer New Country Show with Dave & Murdoch Drum & Bass with Graham.

Spotlight's swashbuc

by Janet Kinghorn
editor@obantimes.co.uk

Outside the wind might have been howling and the rain lashing down, but inside Oban Corran Halls we were transported to the Caribbean for a fun-filled fantastic adventure from the Spotlight Musical Theatre Group's panto treasure island.

After not being able to get together for so long, it was fantastic to see the young and young at heart enter into the panto spirit as buckles were swashed, timbers were shivered and we all shouted out the familiar chorus of: 'He's behind you', as ghostly figures and ghouls guarded the island treasure our heroes had come to find.

The talented ensemble brimmed with energy as they sang and danced the night away. There were classic panto performances from Andrew Baxter's Mrs Hawkins, wearing ever extravagant outfits, Long John Silver, played by Ian Henry, plus his dastardly sidekicks Peter MacArthur, Kevin Baker and Jack Anderson. All had us boo-ing at the baddies and cheering for the goodies.

Highlights in the performance came from Megan Day (Jenny Trelawney) and Aisling Duncan (Jim Hawkins) who both dazzled in their roles, while Ellie Cooper was a cracker as Polly the Parrot. I could not



fail to shine a light on Jessica McCann and Lachie D'Arcy as Seadog Sam and Seaweed Willy who are sure to be future stars as they effortlessly owned the stage.

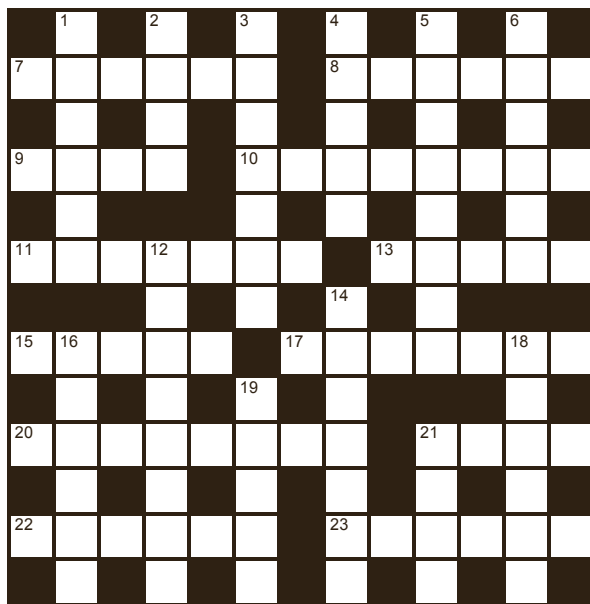
Special mention must also go to the Women's Institute led by the fantastic, matron-like, Fran Melville as Mrs Henderson, while Susan Baker's Mrs Normington transformed into a terrific pirate!

The company triumphed – both those on stage and off – in a brilliant night of music, dance, frocks and frolics, warming people's hearts and bringing a smile to every face that left the Caribbean and headed out into the cold Oban night.

More photographs at www.obantimes.co.uk

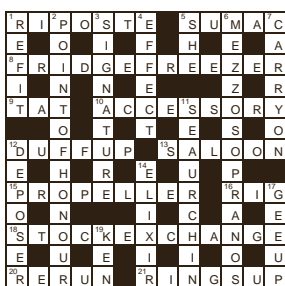


CROSSWORD



- Across
- 7 Pass on (6)
 - 8 Turmoil (6)
 - 9 Rise and fall of water (4)
 - 10 Going to bed (8)
 - 11 Loser (4-3)
 - 13 Moor (5)
 - 15 Dot on a computer screen (5)
 - 17 Part (7)
 - 20 Roosting place (8)
 - 21 Lay back and enjoy the situation (4)
 - 22 Yellow drink (6)
 - 23 Needed to board (6)
- Down
- 1 Of lowly status (6)
 - 2 Whereabouts (4)
 - 3 Although (7)
 - 4 Zest (5)
 - 5 Having a restless longing (8)
 - 6 Online newsgroup system (6)
 - 12 It sticks out (8)
 - 14 Maximum speed limit in the UK (7)
 - 16 Cooling-off period (3,3)
 - 18 Eviction (6)
 - 19 Move (5)
 - 21 Composer of Air on the G string (4)

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION



Scots and Irish share Columba's story in T

Warrior, poet, holy man: the revealing life story of one of Ireland and Scotland's most important saints is told in a new documentary celebrating 1,500 years since the birth of Calum Cille: An Naomh Dàna | Columba: The Bold Saint.

The documentary is available on BBC iPlayer for 30 days, after its broadcast on BBC ALBA and TG4 on Tuesday December 7 to celebrate the 1500th anniversary of the Irish and Scottish saint's birth.

Though known by many as the Dove of Peace, he was at the centre of bloody battles, before founding a monastery on Iona, laying the foundations for the island to become a beacon of civilisation in the Early Middle Ages - he's even said to have taken on the Loch Ness Monster.

Viewers will journey from Donegal to Iona, uncovering the truths behind the myths surrounding the troublemaker, copyright infringer, warrior and exile, who came to be one of the most revered individuals in Scottish and Irish history, as well as gaining international renown over the centuries.

Dramatic reconstruction is interwoven with expert accounts as we rediscover the achievements of this most uncompromising of saints.

Dr Duncan Sneddon, from the University of Edinburgh, spoke of Columba's legacy: 'There's a difference between Columba the man who lived on Earth and the historical figure who was recreated in the generations after his death - and they all create their own Columba. But they all tell us

something important. They all put together a Columba who was powerful, brave and important in different ways.'

Dr Niamh Wycherley, of Maynooth University, said in the programme: 'Arguably Colmcille's most important and lasting legacy is the great swathe of ecclesiastical foundations that he established across Ireland and parts of western Scotland. Iona of course was his primary foundation, the one he's most rightly famous for.

However he also founded other major ecclesiastical institutions - Kells and Durrow. These primary foundations of Colm Cille produced some of our most precious and famous historical artefacts - the Book of Kells, The Book of Durrow, early collections of the Irish

Annals. These are incredibly important texts in their own right, but also physical objects.'

Alan Esslemont, Director General of TG4, said: 'Addressing the Scottish Parliament in 2016, President Michael D. Higgins reflected on the relationship between Ireland and Scotland, "given our shared and complex history, it has often been difficult to say where the Irish ends and where what is Scottish begins. Or the other way round."

'Colm Cille, warrior-cleric-politician, was in the vanguard of what was consciously the Irish colonisation and plantation of Scotland, spreading Irish Christianity throughout Scotland and using the names for Ireland, Éire, Fódhla, Banbha, Ealga to symbolically stake out

ckling sensation



V show on his 1,500th birthday

Irish ownership of key places in Scotland, Strathearn (the Valley of Ireland), Glenelg (the Glen of Ireland), Atholl (New Ireland), Banff (Ireland) and Elgin (Little Ireland).

'I am delighted to mark the 1,500th anniversary of his birth, that TG4 and our Scottish sister channel, BBC ALBA, are bringing a fresh and compelling documentary to screens in both of our countries on the life of this most obstinate, avant-gardist, bold and influential Gael who permanently changed both Ireland and Scotland.'

The story of St Columba is brought to life in a new documentary.



M'ALBA

MY ALBA

DIARDAOIN 9 An Dùbhlachd THURSDAY 9 December

- 17.00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming
- 19.00 Beartas nan Daoine/The Peoples Riches
- 19.25 Dàn
- 19.30 SpeakGaelic S1 Ep7 Obair/Work
- 20.00 An Là – NEWS
- 20.30 Eòrpa/European Current Affairs
- 21.00 An Taistealaiche/The Far Traveller
- 22.00 Mach a Seo!
- 22.30 Sealgairean Mara/Genius Sea Hunters
- 23.25 Transatlantic Sessions: Dluh an Daimh

DIHAIONE 10 An Dùbhlachd / FRIDAY 10 December

- 17.00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming
- 19.00 An Là – NEWS
- 19.25 Dàn
- 19.30 Machair
- 19.55 Fraochy Bay
- 20.00 Fianais-Mary Ward
- 20.30 An Cuan Sgìth /The Minch with Anne Lunden
- 21.00 Na Trads 2021
- 23.00 DNA S1
- 23.45 Binneas-Na Trads

DISATHAIRNE 11 An Dùbhlachd SATURDAY 11 December

- 16.00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming
- 17.45 An Là
- 18.00 Scottish Premiership-St. Johnstone v Aberdeen
- 19.45 Port-Druthag Bheag Eile

- 20.00 Fianais- Mary Ward
- 20.30 An Lot/The Croft
- 21.00 ALT
- 22.00 Sealgairean Mara/Genius Sea Hunters
- 22.50 Celtic Connections Shorts
- 23.00 Scottish Premiership-St Johnstone v Aberdeen
- 00.40 Binneas-Na Trads

DIDÒMHAICH 12 An Dùbhlachd SUNDAY 12 December

- 16.00 SWPL- Spartans v Rangers
- 18.05 Celtic Connections
- 18.15 An Là
- 18.30 Seachd Là / News Review
- 19.30 Alleluia/Spiritual praise
- 20.00 Eòrpa/European Current Affairs
- 20.30 Miann na Maighdinn-mara/Mermaid Tales
- 21.00 Calum Cille-An Naomh Dana/ Columba-The Bold Saint
- 22.00 Bannan (S6 Ep5)
- 22.40 Bannan (S7 Ep1)
- 23.00 DNA /Danish Drama
- 23.45 Binneas-Na Trads

DILUAIN 13 An Dùbhlachd MONDAY 13 December

- 17.00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming
- 19.00 Dileas-Working Horses
- 19.30 SpeakGaelic (S1 Ep9) Biadh agus Deoch/ Food and Drink
- 20.00 An Là – NEWS
- 20.30 Dreach Ùr Na Nollaig
- 21.00 Trusach- Seudraidh Cheilteach/Celtic Jewellery

- 22.00 Bannan (S7 Ep2)
- 22.30 Piper Alpha-An Sgail/Piper Alpha-Under the Shadow
- 23.30 Mach a Seo!

DIMÀIRT 14 An Dùbhlachd TUESDAY 14 December

- 17.00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming
- 19.00 Beartas nan Daoine/The People's Riches
- 19.25 Dàn
- 19.30 SpeakGaelic S1 Ep8 Tide dheth/Time off
- 20.00 An Là – NEWS
- 20.30 Wild Atlantic Way-With Anne Lunden
- 21.00 Mach a Seo-Na Fir-chlis
- 22.00 Trusadh-Seudraidh Cheilteach/Celtic Jewellery
- 23.00 Machair
- 23.25 Binneas-Bard Mhealboist
- 23.30 Alleluia!

DICIADAIN 15 An Dùbhlachd WEDNESDAY 15 December

- 17.00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming
- 19.00 Dileas-Working Horses
- 19.30 SpeakGaelic S1 Ep9 Biadh agus Deoch/ Food and Drink
- 20.00 An Là
- 20.30 An Lot/The Croft
- 21.00 Seòid a' Christmas/Christmas Kitchen Coves
- 22.00 Bannan S7 Ep3
- 22.30 Transatlantic Sessions: Dluh an Daimh
- 23.00 An Taistealaiche/The Far Traveller



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OLDS ROTARY CHRISTMAS LUNCH



The Rotary Club of Oban are really sorry that the OLDS Christmas Lunch can't go ahead again this year due to Covid-19, however we want you to know that we are thinking of you at Christmas even if we can't meet in person.

We would invite you to enter our free Christmas Draw to receive your own Rotary Christmas Card and small gift, sponsored by Ee-usk and supported by Bid4Oban, along with entry into our Christmas Hamper Raffle.

We have six hampers ready to be delivered by our Super Special Socially Distanced Secret Santa.

Please contact MacQueen Brothers on 01631 564848 between 9am and 4pm to take part.

The Draw will be open till 4pm on Wednesday 15th December Don't delay, apply today and **GOOD LUCK** in the Raffle.



EVEN SANTA KNOWS WHERE TO GO FOR ALL OUR GIFTS IDEAS

There's no need to fight the internet and deliveries this year, Oban has everything you need from fluffy socks to handmade works of art. Come and explore and don't forget some shops are open late for shopping every Thursday, starts November 26th till December 24th.

This month fantastic sma

After an incredibly challenging near-two years of lockdowns, closures, restrictions and damage to trade caused by coronavirus and other factors, they need our backing like never before.

That's why BID4Oban is urging everyone to shop local as much as possible this Christmas.

Chief executive Andrew Spence said: 'For us, supporting local is all about the future. We have an extremely vibrant town and many shops and businesses do not stay vacant for long. In a time when other high streets see stores closing due to the pandemic, Oban sees new businesses spring up and prosper.'

'Christmas is one of the most important seasons in retail, where 60% of a retailer's sales are made, a vital part of their cash flow to cover the cost of local staff, rents, and rates through the shoulder season. If we don't use our local shops during this period, we really do risk losing the heart of our communities.'

To help local shoppers experience all Oban has to offer, BID4Oban has teamed up with some retailers and extended late night shopping throughout December. Every Thursday sees some businesses stay open later and help

shoppers get those Christmas gifts right up till December 23.

When asked what it means for her, Kay at Bid4Oban is very excited, saying: 'Christmas is always a magical time and our town has it all. Shoppers can now relax and forget beating the Christmas rush. You can pick up quality gifts while also supporting local independent businesses.'

Fancy That, Cancer Research, Bay Bath & Body, Regatta, Trespass, Alba, Oban Whisky & Fine Wine, The Wee Gallery, Highland Soap Co., MacIntyres of Oban, The Sports Shop, Made in Argyll, Alba Kitchen Garden, Oban Tweed Centre, Oban Woollen & Crafts, and Taste of Argyll will all be open until late for all your festive needs.

Billy Thomson, of The Sports Shop, Oban, said: 'By showing loyalty to local businesses, local people could help support local jobs, the Oban economy as well as local groups and charities.'

'If they are going to buy something sporty and they think we might possibly do it, come in the shop or give us a call, that's all we ask. Why not come in and support us.'

So get out there and buy, shop & support local this Christmas!



SUPPORT LOCAL THIS CHRISTMAS WITH LOVE OBAN YOU

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COLOUR • DESIGN • INSPIRE • CREATE

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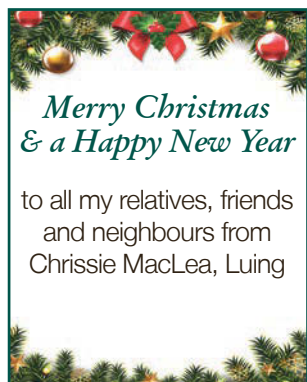
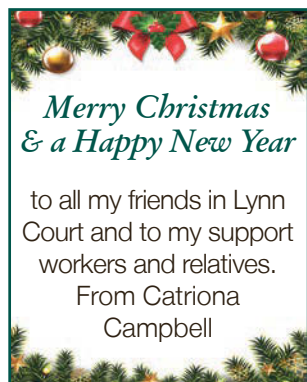
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Around the markets

United Auctions, Dalmally, December 4: sold 501 store cattle and 50 breeding cattle. Bullocks sold to £1340 for an AAx from I R Morrison, 13 Eoligarry, Barra to average £703.22 and heifers sold to £1070 for a CharX from Escart Farm to average £610.46. Bullocks sold to 314.8p/kg for a LimX from A & J Anderson, Tullochcan Farm to average 235.2p and heifers sold to 305.9p for a LimX from I R Morrison, 13 Eoligarry to average 219.99p. Breeding cattle sold to £1400 for a LimX, incalf heifer from K Taylor & Sons, Dall. This annual event attracted a large following of buyers from near and far which resulted in a buoyant trade with averages levelling out at similar values to last year. At the show prior to the sale, Mr Tony Miller, of High Gameshill, judged the

various classes and his awards are as follows: Bullock Calf. 1st & Champion; – Tombuie; 2nd – 13 Eoligarry; 3rd – Lephinchapel. Heifer Class. 1st & Reserve Champion – Kildavaig; 2nd – 13 Eoligarry; 3rd – Kildavaig.

LEADING LOTS & PRICES PER HEAD

BULLOCKS – AAx – £1340, £1090, 13 Eoligarry; £990(2), Achnacree more; £820, 2 Eoligarry. BSHx – £850, Ashgrove; £800(2), Keppoch Farms (Roybridge); £800, Ashgrove. BRBx – £1005(4), £950, Lephinchapel. BAX – £1085, £890, Lochphuill, Tiree. CHARx – £1030(2), £980, £940(3), £925(3), Kildavaig; £920(4), Fernoch; £890(2), Escart; £890, Couston Farm; £880, Musdale Farm. LIMx – £1290, 10 Eoligarry, Barra; £1270, £1265, 13 Eoligarry; £1210, £1060, 10

Eoligarry; £1030, 13 Eoligarry; £1020, Tombuie, £1000, Ardchatten; £960, Tullochcan; £920, 13 Eoligarry; £900, Keppoch Farms, Roy Bridge. SALx – £840(2), Kildavaig. SIMx – £1085, Lochphuill, Tiree; £935, Eurach; £910(2), £890, Lochphuill; £875, Eurach; £850, Cairnbaan.

HEIFERS – AAx – £750, Achnacree more. BSHx – £670(2), Tiretigan. BRBx – £810, £790, Lephinchapel. BAX – £720, Lochphuill, Tiree. CHARx – £1070, Escart; £1000, £960(3), £935(4), £930, Kildavaig; £845(2), £835, Couston; £830(5), Fearnoch. LIMx – £995, Tullochcan; £930, 13 Eoligarry; £850, Stonefield Farm; £840, Kildavaig. SIMx – £810(3), Dalmore; £780, Eurach.

PRICES PER KILO
BULLOCKS – AAx – 246p, 240p, Achnacree more; 240p,

Scotstown; 240p, 2 Eoligarry; 223p (3), Aldersyde. BSHx – 245p (2), Keppoch Farms; 245p (2), Homefield Croft; 236p, Dalmore; 236p, Otter Estate; 233p (5), Brenchoille; 226p (3), Keppoch Farms. BRBx – 302p, 293p, 291p, 274p, 266p, Lephinchapel. BAX – 268p, 258p, 247p, Lochphuill. CHARx – 292p(3), 292p, Kildavaig; 291p, Fernoch; 284p(3), Kildavaig; 282p, 275p, Musdale; 261p(5), 260p(6), 258p(6), Laggan Farms; 253p(2), Kildavaig; 252p(4), Fernoch; 248p(6), Laggan Farms; 248p(2), 242p, Couston Farm; 237p(2), Laggan Farms; 231p(2), Escart. LIMx – 315p, Tullochcan; 307p, 13 Eoligarry; 305p, Tombuie; 301p(3), Craignafeoch; 295p, 13 Eoligarry; 287p(7), Keppoch Farms; 287p, 13 Eoligarry; 276p(6), 265p(7), Keppoch Farms; 264p(2), Craigmor;

262p, Tombuie; 262p(4), Tigh Airigh; 257p(2), Succothmore; 257p, Tullochcan; 254p(2), 10 Eoligarry; 254p(3), Craignafeoch; 254p(3), 10 Eoligarry; 253p(2), Keppoch Farms; 251p(8), Ellary Farms; 250p(3), Stonefield. SALx – 247p (2), Kildavaig. SIMx – 268p(2), Lochphuill; 263p, Tigh Airidh; 258p, Lochphuill; 254p(3), 2 Keil Crofts; 247p, Lochphuill; 242p, Couston Farm; 242p, 2 Keil Crofts; 236p, Dalmore; 234p, Lochphuill; 233p(5), Dalmore; 231p, Lochphuill. HEIFERS – AAx – 210p, Achnacree more. BSHx – 223p, 218p, Tiretigan. BRBx – 277p, 250p, 245p, Lephinchapel. BAX – 254p, Lochphuill. CHARx – 300p (3), 296p, 295p (4), 289p, Kildavaig; 256p (5), Fernoch; 251p (2), Couston Farm; 248p, Musdale Farm; 248p, Couston Farm; 234p (2), Fernoch. LIMx – 306p, 13

Eoligarry; 259p, Stonefield; 255p, 253p, 250p (2), Tullochcan; 250p, 13 Eoligarry; 250p, Tombuie; 249p (8), 10 Eoligarry; 247p, Kildavaig; 246p (4), 10 Eoligarry; 243p (6), Keppoch Farms; 236p (2), 13 Eoligarry; 234p, Keppoch Farm; 231p, Stonefield Farm. SIMx – 255p (2), Dalmore; 254p (2), Lochphuill; 254p (3), Dalmore; 231p, Lochphuill; 227p, Couston Farm. BG – 280p, 273p (2), Balliemeanoch. BREEDING CATTLE COWS WITH CALVES – £1250, £1150(2), £1100, £1020, £1000, Craig Farm. INCALF HEIFERS – £1400, £1380, Dall Farm; £1350, £1150, 2 Eoligarry, Barra; £1100, £1000, Succoth Ardeonaig. INCALF COWS – £1120, £1100, £1050, £1020, Craig Farm.



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UK farming unions highlight need to build new relationship with EU

The four UK farming unions have highlighted the importance of building a new relationship with the EU and working together on areas such as trade, food standards, and science and innovation.

The British Agriculture Bureau (BAB), which collectively represents the NFU Scotland, NFU, NFU Cymru, and the Ulster Farmers Union in Brussels, has relaunched BAB with a new logo and the publication of a new report 'Building our new relationship with Europe', which reaffirms its commitment to representing more than 70,000 UK farmers on the European stage.

In the report, the four UK farming union presidents said: 'Whilst the UK has left the European Union, it has never been more important for farmers across Europe to work together as we collectively face challenges on a global scale.'

'The UK farming unions prioritised remaining part of the Copa-Cogeca family to share experience and knowledge. Whilst the approaches taken



by our policy-makers may differ, the ambitions and needs of farmers remain aligned and we continue to support and learn from one another.

'World-leading food production must continue to be at the heart of everything we do. We have a huge amount of work ahead of us, and the nature of that work is evolving. UK farmers are committed to working together, at both a national and international level, to embrace and follow the latest science and innovation, to seek new trading opportunities and defend our high standards.'

'Through our BAB office we are committed to supporting British farmers to do this in Europe and to building our new relationship with the EU.'

The report sets out four key priorities for BAB:

■ Trade and standards – UK trade policy must respect domestic production standards and support a strong, competitive agricultural industry.

■ Science and innovation – policy must be science and evidence led with proportionate, risk-based approaches to encourage innovation and improve competitiveness.

■ Environment – improvements in productivity through more efficient and careful use of natural resources can reduce farming's emissions and environmental footprint, but this will only happen if farm businesses are given the policy framework they need to adapt and thrive.

■ Animal health and welfare – research and evidence must be central to animal health and welfare policy.

Showcasing agricultural climate action with peer-to-peer network

A new network for farmers and crofters to highlight and share climate change mitigation actions is to be established.

The Agriculture, Biodiversity and Climate Change Network (ABCCN) aims to inspire farmers and crofters to take greater action by highlighting their peers' activities in one location online. Once set up, it will be hosted on the Farming for a Better Climate website.

Farmers will be able to share a wide range of information, including videos and photographs, to detail the measures they have undertaken and the results.

It will be a joint government and industry initiative made up of partner organisations who will offer their expertise on agriculture, climate and the wider environment.

Rural Affairs Secretary Mairi Gougeon said: 'We need to work together to reach our climate and environment goals. In the Climate Change Plan update, we committed to launching a new and expanded peer-to-peer knowledge

transfer initiative based on the success of our Young Farming Climate Champions work.'

'We know there are farmers and crofters who are already doing some fantastic work to help reach these goals. We wanted to create something that would allow them to share their work so that others can take action to mitigate and adapt to climate change, as well as increasing biodiversity.'

'One of the benefits of this network will be that we're making it inclusive by allowing anyone who is taking action on climate and environment to take part. This will allow us to get advice and support from farmers and crofters in every area of Scotland and help inspire others to take action now.'

NFU Scotland's climate change policy manager Kate Hopper said: 'NFU Scotland are delighted to be part of the Agriculture, Biodiversity and Climate Change Network.'

'Scottish farmers and crofters across the country are working hard to adopt new and exciting

innovations on farm to provide consumers with sustainably produced, tasty and nutritious food with concern for the environment at the forefront.'

'Peer-to-peer knowledge sharing is a powerful tool and we believe that this new network will help drive change by being a source of inspiration, where farmers and crofters can support one another by exchanging ideas as well as showcasing good practice.'

QMS director of market intelligence and external affairs Sarah Millar said: 'QMS are delighted to be supporting the network and the opportunity to showcase the positive actions Scotland's red meat producers have been making to tackle both the climate and biodiversity emergencies.'

Soil Association Scotland's senior farming programmes manager Colleen McCulloch said: 'In times when the amount of information on how to do it can be overwhelming, learning from peers is one of the most powerful ways to inspire and drive change.'



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Experienced full time car mechanic required to work within a busy workshop obtaining a high standard of work on a wide range of vehicles.

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We offer competitive hourly rates for both positions.

Please email kilmartinautos@yahoo.co.uk
Or call William on 01546 510 373

SCOTTISH FIELD

January



Happy New Year...
So that was 2021... Stephen Jardine's Credo...
The Hebridean Baker recipes... Quiz of the Year...
Stunning aerial photography... Seafront interiors...
Artist Mouse Macpherson... A Perth garden...
Rule, Britannia! writer... Book reviews...



AHFA Labourer/Handyman Vacancy's x 2

One position based in Kintyre area
One position based in Oban/Lorn area
£19,315 to £22,723 37.5 hours per week
Mon - Fri 8.30 - 16:30 Permanent

Argyll Homes for All is seeking to recruit two full time Labourers. Predominantly working in our void property's carrying out full clearances, property cleaning, inside and out, and basic repairs depending on skill set. We are looking for a can do attitude and a willingness to "muck in" whatever the task.

Good salary plus additional on call premium and call out payments, overtime, and excellent package including holidays, sick pay, insurance and other benefits

This post requires:

- Basic Disclosure Scotland check
- Full UK Driving Licence

For more information regarding the above positions, please contact Lee Holness on 01546605815 or email Lee.holness@ahfa.co.uk.

AHFA Service Administrator Vacancy's x 2

Based in our offices in Oban but other locations considered
£18,027 - £21,207 35 hours per week
Mon - Fri 9am - 5pm Temporary

Argyll Homes for All are seeking to recruit two Service Administrators to provide Administrative Support to our Planned Maintenance Team.

Applicants must have experience of general office administration, including dealing with customers and/or contractors in person and by telephone. Working knowledge of Microsoft Excel, Word and Outlook are essential for this role. This is a fast-paced working environment and applicants must be hard-working, dedicated, flexible and able to multi-task.

An understanding of the housing repairs sector would be beneficial as would any working knowledge of scheduling software.

For more information regarding the above positions, please contact Margaret Cullen on 01546605825 or email Margaret.Cullen@ahfa.co.uk
To apply for any of the above vacancies, visit the recruitment section of our website at www.acha.co.uk

If you cannot access the website, please contact the recruitment team: 01546 605817 or email recruitment@acha.co.uk

The full job description, person specification and closing dates for the above positions can be found on the ACHA website at www.acha.co.uk

Student Registry Support Administrator



Location: On site, SAMS, Oban
Part Time Post (18.5 hrs per week)
Fixed term appointment for 24 months
Salary range: £20,130 - £21,814 pro rata per annum

Supporting a small registry team, you will primarily carry out administrative duties related to application, admissions and enrolment and support administration of our student information system. You will assist in delivery of key Education events. You may also be required to provide general support for the wider Education team.

You will work closely with students, Education team, SAMS and UHI colleagues.

Ideally, we are looking for someone who has excellent communication and ICT skills, who is an organised, pro-active and flexible to the needs of the role.

If you have any queries before proceeding to the application process, please feel free to contact Shona.Magill@sams.ac.uk

Further information and to apply, please go to www.sams.ac.uk.
The closing date for receipt of applications is **14th December 2021**
Interviews will be held by mid-January 2022.

SAMS is a registered Scottish charity (SC 009206), has an equal opportunities policy and welcomes applications from all sections of the community.

PUBLIC NOTICES

MARINE (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010 TELECOMMUNICATION CABLE INSTALLATION Various Locations in Inner Hebrides

Notice is hereby given that BT (per OceanIQ) has applied to the Scottish Ministers of the Scottish Government, under Part 4 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, in respect of telecommunication cable installation at the following locations:

Cost	£ 3.91 million		Location	Latitude	Longitude
			Eigg to Mainland (Route 2.13)	56° 56.527' N	05° 52.881' W
				56° 56.745' N	05° 54.396' W
				56° 56.745' N	05° 55.702' W
				56° 56.540' N	06° 01.051' W
				56° 56.177' N	06° 04.142' W
				56° 57.240' N	06° 07.687' W
				56° 56.620' N	06° 10.990' W
				56° 55.980' N	06° 11.617' W
				56° 55.552' N	06° 10.784' W
				56° 54.975' N	06° 09.422' W
				56° 54.786' N	06° 09.779' W
				56° 55.321' N	06° 11.039' W
				56° 55.750' N	06° 11.999' W
				56° 56.276' N	06° 12.004' W
				56° 56.786' N	06° 11.395' W
				56° 57.502' N	06° 08.598' W
				56° 57.506' N	06° 07.606' W
				56° 56.447' N	06° 04.137' W
				56° 56.808' N	06° 01.111' W
				56° 57.012' N	05° 55.783' W
				56° 57.015' N	05° 54.370' W
				56° 56.798' N	05° 52.872' W
				56° 56.870' N	05° 51.291' W
				56° 56.614' N	05° 51.189' W
				56° 56.603' N	05° 51.247' W
			Mainland to Lismore (Route 2.14)	56° 33.141' N	05° 26.049' W
				56° 33.397' N	05° 25.876' W
				56° 33.335' N	05° 25.294' W
				56° 33.273' N	05° 24.725' W
				56° 33.037' N	05° 25.078' W
				56° 33.070' N	05° 25.387' W
			Iona to Mull (Route 2.15)	56° 19.282' N	06° 24.111' W
				56° 19.503' N	06° 23.826' W
				56° 19.352' N	06° 23.546' W
				56° 19.144' N	06° 22.771' W
				56° 18.984' N	06° 22.359' W
				56° 18.973' N	06° 22.288' W
				56° 18.717' N	06° 22.440' W
				56° 18.721' N	06° 22.468' W
				56° 18.742' N	06° 22.457' W
				56° 18.753' N	06° 22.513' W
				56° 18.730' N	06° 22.524' W
				56° 18.913' N	06° 23.023' W
				56° 19.130' N	06° 23.826' W
			Colonsay to Mull (Route 2.16)	56° 17.383' N	06° 11.551' W
				56° 17.198' N	06° 11.190' W
				56° 17.051' N	06° 11.340' W
				56° 16.597' N	06° 11.072' W
				56° 15.570' N	06° 09.678' W
				56° 15.034' N	06° 09.327' W
				56° 13.486' N	06° 09.424' W
				56° 12.732' N	06° 09.242' W
				56° 08.240' N	06° 12.216' W
				56° 07.617' N	06° 12.082' W
				56° 06.683' N	06° 11.119' W
				56° 06.241' N	06° 10.767' W
				56° 06.191' N	06° 11.293' W
				56° 06.723' N	06° 11.566' W
				56° 07.556' N	06° 12.560' W
				56° 08.307' N	06° 12.684' W
				56° 12.737' N	06° 09.737' W
				56° 13.447' N	06° 09.905' W
				56° 15.308' N	06° 09.930' W
				56° 16.449' N	06° 11.447' W
				56° 17.031' N	06° 11.827' W

Plans showing the position of the works may be inspected at <https://bit.ly/31rkfjq>.

Objections relating to safety of navigation or environmental issues in respect of the application should be made in writing to:

Licensing Operations Team, Marine Scotland, Marine Laboratory, 375 Victoria Road, Aberdeen, AB11 9DB within 28 days of the date of this notice or by email to: MS.MarineLicensing@gov.scot, quoting reference: Inner Hebrides Telecommunications Cable Installation and BT (per OceanIQ).

Fair Processing Notice

The Scottish Government's Marine Scotland Licensing Operations Team (MS-LOT) determine applications for marine licences under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. During the consultation process any person having an interest in the outcome of the application may make representation to MS-LOT. The representation may contain personal information, for example a name or address. This representation will only be used for the purpose of determining an application and will be stored securely in the Scottish Government's official corporate record. Representations will be shared with the applicant and/or agent acting on behalf of the applicant, any people or organisations that we consult in relation to the application and, where necessary, be published online, however personal information will be removed before sharing or publishing.

A full privacy notice can be found at: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/marine-and-fisheries-licensing/marine-licensing-operations-team-privacy-notice/>. If you are unable to access this, or you have any queries or concerns about how your personal information will be handled, contact MS-LOT at: ms.marinelicensing@gov.scot or Marine Scotland - Licensing Operations Team, Marine Laboratory, 375 Victoria Road, Aberdeen, AB11 9DB.

PROPOSED Sound of Lunga SEAWEED FARM:

Seaweed Generation Ltd and Ossian Integrated Aquaculture Systems are looking to apply to the Scottish Government for a marine licence to establish a seaweed farm in the waters of the Sound of Lunga, off Lunga Island (Firth of Lorn, Argyll).

Prior to applying for the licence, and in line with legislation, Seaweed Generation will host a Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) event to seek the views of people living in the area near the proposed farm and other stakeholders on the proposed development. As part of this process a public meeting will take place on the 19th of January 2022 from 19:00 hrs (GMT). Due to the on-going Covid-19 pandemic, it has been considered safer to hold the event on-line. If you wish to attend this meeting please email info@seaweedgeneration.com by 5pm GMT 16th of January 2022 for an invite with a link to the meeting.

The proposed site is within the area: WGS-84 Decimal (DMS)
N 56.217266, W 5.687106 (N 56° 13' 2.1576", W 5° 41' 13.5816")
N 56.217224 W5.684843 (N 56° 13' 2.0064", W 5° 41' 5.4348")
N 56.207400, W5.687300 (N 56° 12' 26.64", W 5° 41' 14.28")
N 56.206842, W5.684843 (56° 12' 24.6312", W 5° 41' 5.4348")

For further details, any comments or questions please contact info@seaweedgeneration.com by 16th of January 2022 and please do not contact MS-LOT

www.highland.gov.uk



TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997 PLANNING (LISTED BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997

The applications listed below, along with plans and other documents submitted with them, may be examined online at <http://wam.highland.gov.uk>;

Written comments should be made to the EPC at the contact details below within the time period indicated from the date of this notice. Anyone making a representation about this proposal should note that their letter or email will be disclosed to any individual or body who requests sight of representations in respect of this proposal.

Reference Number	Development Address	Proposal Description
21/02033/FUL	Land 285M SW of The Strath, Glencoe	Change of use from agricultural to equestrian menage
21/05450/LBC	Glencoe Museum, Glencoe	Re-thatching of roof
21/05464/FUL	The Old Inn, Letterfinlay, Spean Bridge, PH34 4DZ	Erection of staff accommodation
21/05469/FUL	Land 75M NE of The Anchorage, Ormsaigmore, Kilchoan	Erection of house
21/05522/FUL	Plot 1, Rear of The Former Filling Station, Onich	Erection of a house
21/05541/FUL	Belmont, Acharacle, PH36 4JL	Change of use of house (Class 9) to guesthouse(Class 7)

Time period for comments is 14 days from the date of this notice with the exception of 21/05450/LBC & 21/05464/FUL which is 21 days

ePlanning Centre, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, INVERNESS IV3 5NX
Email: eplanning@highland.gov.uk



THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

NOTICE OF THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL MODIFIED AMENDED WEST HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS CORE PATHS PLAN

LAND REFORM (SCOTLAND) ACT 2003 as amended

Notice is hereby given under Section 20A of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, as amended by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016, that on the 21ST January 2021 The Highland Council by virtue of Section 20(1) of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, as amended, has reviewed the amended core paths plan and consider that the plan should be modified and has drawn up a modified amended plan. The modified amended plan shall be known as The Highland Council Modified Amended West Highlands & Islands Core Paths Plan.

The modified amended plan may be viewed online through the Council's consultation portal here <http://consult.highland.gov.uk>. Objections or representations in relation to the proposed amendments should be received no later than 17.00hrs on Monday 31 January 2022.

The existing Highland Council Core Paths Plan can be found online here www.highland.gov.uk/corepathplans (click on Paths in the Highlands). There is also an interactive map which can be found here. If you wish to see paper copies of the relevant section of the plan then please contact the Access Officers at access@highland.gov.uk

The Modified Amended West Highlands & Islands Core Paths Plan will also be available for public inspection to 31st January 2022 at the following locations on the stated days and hours.

Council Offices, Dingwall IV15 9QN
Monday to Friday 1.30pm to 4.30pm
Charles Kennedy Building, Fort William
Monday to Friday 1.30pm to 4.30pm
Kingussie Service Point, Kingussie PH21 1HR
Monday to Wednesday 1.30pm to 4.30pm

Malcolm MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer of Infrastructure, Environment and Economy, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX

Argyll and Bute Council

PLANNING

The applications listed below together with the plans and other documents submitted with them may be viewed electronically through Argyll and Bute Council website at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk. Having regard to Schedule 6, Part 3, s10 of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020, documents are only available to inspect electronically at this time. Customers requiring assistance can contact us by e-mail: planning.hq@argyll-bute.gov.uk or tel. 01546 605518.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2013 REGULATION 20(1) ADVERT STATEMENT
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997 (AS AMENDED), RELATED PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997

Ref. No.	Proposal	Site Address
21/01958/LIB	Removal of victorian canopy from front of hotel (retrospective)	Perle Oban Hotel, Station Road, Oban, Argyll And Bute, PA34 5RT
21/02293/PP	Variation of condition 5 relative to planning permission 08/00132/DET (occupancy restriction). Amend use from holiday let to private residential	Corry Meadows, Craignure, Isle Of Mull, Argyll And Bute, PA65 6BA
21/02291/PPP	Site for the erection of two dwellinghouses	Land Adjacent To The Old Schoolhouse, Barcaldine, Oban, Argyll And Bute
21/01847/PP	Formation of 3 new window openings and french doors to gable elevation, installation of enlarged patio doors to rear elevation and installation of decking	62 Easdale Island, Oban, Argyll And Bute, PA34 4TB
21/01744/PP	Erection of dwellinghouse and outbuilding, installation of private sewage treatment system and formation of vehicular access	Land South Of Uisken Croft (Plot 1), Bunessan, Isle Of Mull, Argyll And Bute
21/02049/PP	Erection of 12 affordable dwellinghouses, formation of vehicular access and associated works	Land West Of Baliscate Industrial Estate, Tobermory, Isle Of Mull, Argyll And Bute
21/01969/PP	Erection of 2 holiday letting dwellinghouses with associated access and landscaping works	Plot 36, Shore Street, Bowmore, Isle Of Islay, Argyll And Bute
20/02149/PP	Erection of decking (retrospective)	53 Main Street, Port Wemyss, Isle Of Islay, Argyll And Bute, PA47 7SR

Written comments can be submitted online <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/find-and-comment-planning-applications> or to Argyll and Bute Council, Development Management, Kilmory Castle, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT within 21 days of this advert. Please quote the reference number in any correspondence. Any letter of representation the Council receives is considered a public document and will be published on our website. Anonymous or marked confidential correspondence will not be considered. A weekly list of all applications can be viewed on the Councils website. Customers are requested to use electronic communication where possible during the coronavirus pandemic as our ability to process postal mail is restricted.

To find out more about living and working in Argyll & Bute visit us at:
www.argyll-bute.gov.uk
Comhairle Earra – Ghàidheal agus Bhòid



THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL (LOCHABER) (DISABLED PERSONS' PARKING PLACES) ORDER 2011 AMENDMENT ORDER 2021

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that The Highland Council propose to make an Order entitled as above in terms of Sections 32(1) and 45(2) and Part IV of Schedule 9 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984

When the Order comes into effect the Order will create parking places for the use of disabled persons' vehicles only on the areas of road detailed in the Schedule 1 hereto and delete parking places for the use of disabled persons' vehicles on the areas of road detailed in the Schedule 2 hereto

Copies of the proposed Order, as drafted, together with a copy of the relevant plans, a copy of the Authority's Statement of Reasons for proposing to make the Order and a copy of the Orders to be amended, can be inspected via this link https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20006/parking_and_car_parks/711/decriminalised_parking_enforcement/4

All objections to the proposal must specify the Order to which objection is being made and the grounds of objection and must be made in writing and posted, delivered or emailed to reach Richard Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, The Highland Council, Carr's Corner Industrial Estate, Fort William PH33 6TL or email communityservices.lochaber@highland.gov.uk by no later than 31st December, 2021

This is the Schedule 1

PROVISION OF DISABLED PARKING PLACES

Town	Street	Area of road designated as a disabled persons' parking place	No. of places	Manner of standing in Parking Place
Caol Fort William	Ardgour Road	On the west side of the street, outside No. 40 Ardgour Road, Caol, Fort William extending in a southerly direction for a distance of 6.0 metres or thereby as shown outlined in red on the Plan No.01	1	Parallel to the kerb line
Fort William	Kennedy Road	On the east side of the road, 26 metres from the junction of Young Place, extending in a southerly direction for 6.0 metres or thereby as shown outlined in red on the Pan No.02	1	Parallel to the kerb line
Inverlochty Fort William	Treig Road	On the east side of the road, outside No.7 Treig Road, Inverlochty, Fort William, extending in a southerly direction for a distance of 6 metres or thereby as shown outlined in red on the Plan No 03	1	Parallel to the kerb line
Fort William	Bruce Place	On the north side of the road, outside No. 10 Bruce Place, Fort William for a distance of 2.5 metres or thereby as shown outlined in red on the Plan No.04	1	Perpendicular to the road
Caol Fort William	Torlundy Road	On the east side of the street, outside No.36 Torlundy Road, Caol, Fort William, extending in a northerly direction for a distance of 6 metres or thereby, as shown outlined in red on Plan No. 05	1	Parallel to the kerb line
Spean Bridge	Altour Road	On the north side of the street, commencing at a point 9 metres west from the east gable of No.2 Altour Road, Spean Bridge, extending in a westerly direction for a distance of 6 metres or thereby as shown outlined in red on the Plan No.06	1	Parallel to the kerb line
Fort William	Alma Road	On the north side of the street, outside No.46 Alma Road, Fort William, extending in an easterly direction for a distance of 6 metres or thereby, as shown outlined in red on the Plan No. 07	1	Parallel to the kerb line
Fort William	Young Place	On the north side of the road outside No.2-4 Young Place, extending in a westerly direction for a distance of 6 metres or thereby, as shown outlined in red on the Plan No.08	1	Parallel to the kerb line
Inverlochty Fort William	Treig Road	On the east side of the road, outside No.11 Treig Road, Inverlochty, Fort William, extending in a southerly direction for a distance of 6 metres or thereby as shown outlined in red on the Plan No 09	1	Parallel to kerb line

This is the Schedule 2

REVOKE/REMOVAL OF DISABLED PARKING PLACES

Town	Street	Area of road designated as a disabled persons' parking place	No. of places	Manner of standing in Parking Place
Caol Fort William	Birch Road	On the north-west side of the road, outside number 1 Birch Road, for a distance of 6.6 metres or thereby as referred to in the Schedule of the Principal Order and as shown on the Plan No..7 annexed and signed as relative to the Principal Order and which area of road with its parking place is hereby delete from the said Principal Order	1	Parallel to the kerb line

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CROFTING COMMISSION COIMISEAN NA CROITEARACHD DECROFTING APPLICATION

1. C Ross, Poldhu, Whole Croft – site for a dwelling house for holiday accommodation (109531)

Comments from any member of the crofting community within the locality of the croft and any expressions of demand for the croft (which may be made public), may be sent to the Crofting Commission by 06/01/22 at info@crofting.gov.scot / Crofting Commission, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness IV3 8NW.



Source: Business Choice II, The Newspaper Society

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Oban Times PUBLIC NOTICES

MARGARET ELIZABETH HUNTER Deceased

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 anyone having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the deceased, late of Belle Vue Care Home Paignton, Sundial Lodge, Torquay and Oban, Scotland, who died on 31/08/2021, must send written particulars to the address below by 10/02/2022, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to claims and interests notified.

Somerville & Savage Solicitors
Aldbourn, Greenway Road, St. Marychurch, Torquay TQ1 4NJ
Ref: Carol Bollard

FIRST REGISTRATION OF A CROFT

Peter Donald Kennedy has registered his crofts 1,2&3 Blarmachfoldach Kilmallie and 4,5,6,7&10 Blarmachfoldach Kilmallie on the Crofting Register held by the Registers of Scotland. Any person who wishes to challenge the registrations may apply to the Scottish Land Court by 9/8/22. Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration numbers are C8025 & C8031

FIRST REGISTRATION OF A CROFT

Mr Duncan MacSparran MacLean has registered the croft known as 210 Acharacle Hillfoot, Acharacle, Ardnamurchan & Sunart, on the Crofting Register held by the Registers of Scotland. Any person who wishes to challenge the registration may apply to the Scottish Land Court by the 25th July 2022. Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C8075.

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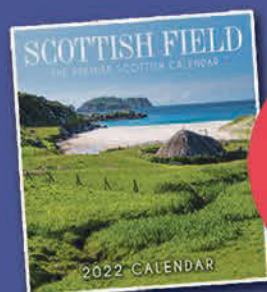
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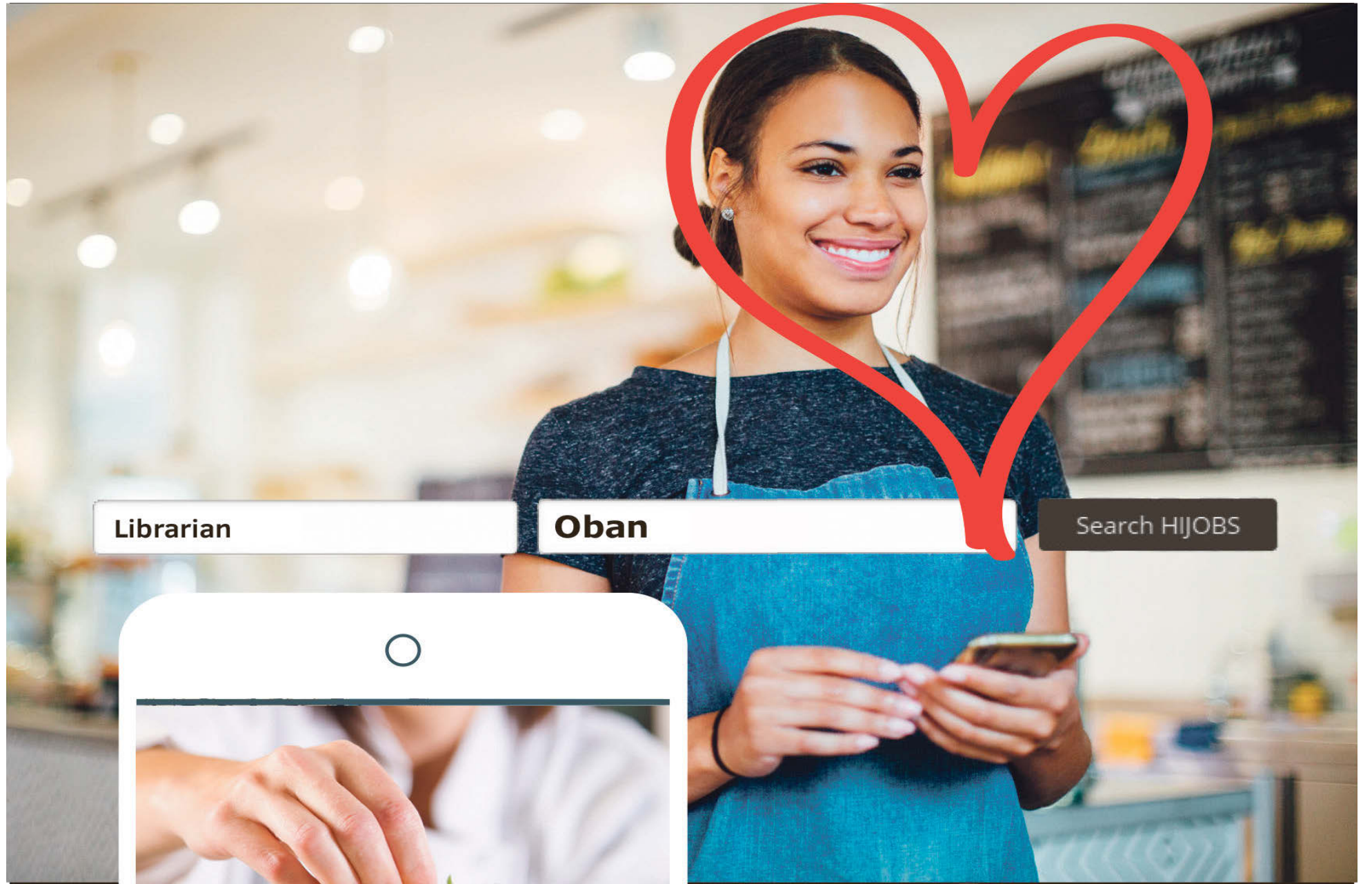
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ENGAGEMENT

McFADYEN - HILL - Both families are delighted to announce the engagement of Nicola, only daughter of Hector and Anne, Oban to Jack, youngest son of Duncan and the late Anne, Oban.

DEATHS

DAIRON - Gillian Iona, aged 44, at Royal Alexandra Hospital, Paisley on December 2, 2021, darling wife to Paul, dearest daughter of Rev D and Mrs L Campbell, amazing sister, daughter-in-law, auntie and friend to many. Iona will remain forever in our hearts.

FLEMING - Thomas. Peacefully, at home in (Helensburgh) on December 4, 2021. Tom, dearly loved husband of Janette (Jan's Salon), loving father of Andrew and Craig much loved grandfather of Rhiannon, Scátha, Isabelle and Alice. Funeral service at Cardross Crematorium on Saturday, December 11 at 10.30am. Family Flowers only please but donations to Cancer Research UK would be appreciated.

MACDIARMID - Peacefully on Thursday, December 2, 2021, Capt. Alasdair Samuel, aged 65 years. Beloved and devoted husband of Karen, much loved dad of David and a loving brother and uncle of the family. Funeral service will take place at Clyde Coast and Garnock Valley Crematorium on Thursday, December 16 at 1.00pm, to which all friends are respectfully invited. Family flowers only please but donations, if desired, to Myeloma U.K.

MACFADYEN - Peacefully in the end at Raigmore Hospital on Sunday, November 28, 2021, Colin Malcolm MacFadyen, Stoneholme, School Road, Conon Bridge, aged 76 years. Former manager Craigmorie Hotel and licensee Innes Bar. Much loved husband of the late Sheena, loving father to Paul, Grant, Alistair and Catrina, grandfather, dear brother, a true and great friend of many. Funeral service on Monday, December 13 at 2.00 pm in the funeral home of William T Fraser and Son, Culduthel Road, Inverness, thereafter interment on Tuesday, December 14 at 12.30 pm in Blarouk Cemetery, Spean Bridge. All welcome.

McGREGOR - Helen (Nellie), formerly of Scone, Perth passed away peacefully at Holmesview Care Home, Broxburn on Tuesday, November 30, 2021, aged 93. Beloved wife of the late Bill, dearly loved mum of Brian and Fiona and a much loved Grandma, Great-Grandma and mother-in-law. Funeral service at Perth Crematorium on Wednesday, December 15 at 2pm to which all relatives and friends are respectfully invited. Family flowers only please but donations if desired may be given to Alzheimer Scotland.

REID - Passed away at the Lorn and Islands hospital in Oban on Sunday, December 5, 2021, after a long illness, Jessie, daughter of Cathy (née Bell) and Doug Reid and sister of the late John Reid. A very special auntie and cousin she will be sorely missed by family and friends. Funeral will take place on Wednesday, December 15 at 1pm at the Parish Church, Oban. Thereafter to Pennyfuir Cemetery.

RODGERS - Eddie passed away very peacefully surrounded by his family at hospital in Tasmania on November 28, 2021 after a long illness. Much loved husband of Judy and proud and loving father of Peter, Euan and Hamish. Brother of Maggie, Ian and Sheena, Isle of Seil.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MAIN - Irene, Albert and family would like to thank everyone for the many expressions of sympathy and support received following the sudden loss of our dear son Christopher. Thanking Very Rev. Canon Margi Campbell and Rev. Beki Cansdale for an uplifting service and Cathedral organist and choir for excellent music. Thanks to all who attended the funeral service and thereafter at the graveside. Thanks to Petals for the beautiful flowers and to Colin, Joan and staff at the Olive Garden for excellent catering. A special thanks to Catriona of Hamish Hoey & Son who has been exceptional throughout.

MACKENZIE - In memory of Fiona Gray Mackenzie, aged 67 years, who died peacefully in her sleep with her partner, Terry Just and sister, Margaret Mackenzie Bell by her side, in her beloved home at Dunmar Court, as morning broke on Wednesday, November 17, 2021, after a long illness which Fiona bore with courage, dignity and a keen sense of humour. Terry, Margaret and all Fiona's family wish to express their deep appreciation to all those who have offered such kindness, support and messages of sympathy and comfort in their time of loss

and sorrow. We especially wish to thank the following wonderful, exemplary people: all Fiona's carers from Care Plus, the multidisciplinary group at Argyll and Bute Social Services, the staff of Lorn and Islands Hospital, the Medical Centre and Oban Hospice, and the wardens at Dunmar Court who all greatly helped Fiona throughout her long illness. Alyson Stewart, the humanist celebrant, Ian MacInnes and Shiralene Cave of Munns' Funeral Services and Lynette MacArthur of Petals of Oban who assisted us with professionalism, attention to detail and compassion in our time of grief. Fiona will be deeply and sorely missed by all of us. Farewell! But not farewell to all my fondest thoughts of thee. For in my heart they still shall dwell and they shall cheer and comfort me, (Anne Bronte).

MEMORIALS

CAMERON - In loving memory of my father Lachie Cameron, Balevullin, Tiree, who passed away December 14, 1994.

A special person, a special face
Someone I loved and can never replace
Never selfish, always kind
These are the memories you left behind.
And remembering loved ones gone before and after.
- Margaret.

CAPEWELL - In loving memory of Annie, who died December 11, 2020, also her daughter Irene Anne (Graham), who died September 10, 2021, a very dear aunt and cousin. Always remembered.
- Anne, Carine and family.

HAY - Remembering Robert, our brother and uncle. Never more than a thought away
- Kate, Elaine and families.

MACDONALD - In loving memory of my darling daughter Mary, who passed away November 30, 2017. RIP. The family tree was broken and nothing seems the same But when God calls us one by one the chain will link again.
- From loving mother and family at home and away.

MACLEAN - Precious memories of Ian, a much loved husband, father and Gen to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who died December 10, 2020. Loved beyond words, missed beyond measure. Caidil gu Sámhach a M'eudail
- Margaret and family.

MORRISON - In loving memory of Hector, died December 7, 2013 and Mary, died May 17, 2004. Much loved parents and grandparents. Forever missed.
- From your girls and their families.

YOUNG - Remembering with much love Wallace, who passed away on December 14, 2020, devoted husband of Eilidh, his children and grandchildren. Also Iain James, dearly beloved son and brother who tragically died December 27, 1997. Both so sorely missed and remembered every day.
- Inserted by Eilidh and family.

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Mountain Bike World Cup to return to Fort William

Early bird tickets are on sale for the Fort William leg of the 2022 Mercedes-Benz UCI Mountain Bike World Cup, as the event gears up for its much-anticipated return to the famous Nevis Range track on Aonach Mor.

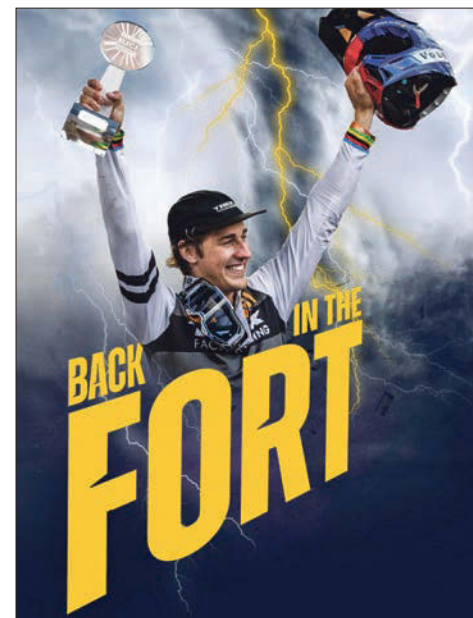
The exhilarating event is 'Back in the Fort' and will attract thousands of spectators to witness more than 250 of the world's top riders battle it out for the Downhill World Cup and 4X Pro Tour titles on Saturday May 21 and Sunday May 22 next year.

The event has a new main partner for 2022. Online bike retailer Freewheel.co.uk is sponsoring the event as well as being part of the Elite Madison Saracen Team.

After two years of Covid-induced cancellation, the Fort William World Cup will be back with a bang and will feature homegrown champion Reece Wilson, who won the 2020 Downhill World Championships - the first Scot to take the title.

Early-bird tickets went on sale on Tuesday November 30, allowing fans to save around 20 per cent on full price tickets.

Mike Jardine, of organisers Rare Management, said: 'The challenge of Covid has meant we've missed out on two years of thrilling action but we're delighted we'll all be back in the Fort next year.'



2020 UCI Downhill World Champion Reece Wilson.

Photograph: Ross Bell.

'Once again fans will be able to welcome the world's best riders to Scotland.'

'We can't wait to welcome the crowds back to the legendary spectacle that is Fort William.'

'What's even more exciting is that the crowds will be able to cheer on our Scottish champion, Reece Wilson, and for the first time, truly acknowledge his amazing achievement in

2020. An Early Bird ticket is a perfect Christmas gift and we'd encourage fans to snap them up now.

'We can't wait to welcome the crowds back to the legendary spectacle that is Fort William.'

Endura, the World Cup's official cycling clothing company, will give ticket purchasers the chance to plant a tree as part of its drive to become CO2 negative by 2024.

Early Bird tickets are available until 5pm on Friday December 31. For more information visit www.nevisrange.skiperformance.com/en/store#en/buy.

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LORN HEALTHY OPTIONS HEALTH TIP

Learning how to be in pain

The next stage in our look at long-term pain is how these pathways become rapidly embedded within the human body.

A good way to explain this is to consider the way we learn skills through repetition.

Let's consider the repetition required to become a world-class gymnast. This requires years of consistent, specific, rigorous and prolonged daily practice to develop the necessary skills to compete and perform at the highest level and remain there.

With a small decrease in practice frequency or time, the level of performance will diminish. This type of skill is known as 'muscle memory' but the muscles of the gymnast don't actually learn anything. Instead they reinforce neurological pathways which



allow an efficient performance. Many believe our most proficient performers in any field are born and although there is no doubt inherited genes can help a lot, in reality they develop through many thousands of hours of repetition. This constant repetition also thickens the coating of myelin on the nerve cells which acts like insulation on electric wire. The thicker the myelin, the faster the nerve impulses.

Unfortunately, long-term pain follows the same profile. The pain impulses are constant, specific and come rapidly, meaning the pain is likely to get worse over time as the body becomes more skilled


at processing it. The double whammy is that these pain pathways become embedded much faster than the gymnast learning a new vault as they are fired so rapidly, much like a machine gun.

It is obviously easy to become demoralised as the months go by and we all know about the current waiting times for diagnostic scans and treatment in the current climate which can lead to further negative thoughts. As we have explored already, this frustration and anger will only worsen the situation and pain perception.

Next week we will look at common ways those in pain deal with these negative thoughts and how their coping strategies can be ineffective in the long term. For the full message go to the free resource section on the lornhealthyoptions.co.uk website.

Rob Graham, Lead Exercise Professional, Healthy Options.

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OT

SHINTY ROUND-UP

Gareth Evans is the new Oban Camanachd manager

Gareth Evans was voted in as Oban Camanachd manager at last week's annual general meeting.

'Some folk have mentioned this has been a long time in the making,' said the new boss. 'I've always had my eye on managing Oban Camanachd one day but the truth is I was very happy looking after Lochside Rovers and I thoroughly enjoyed doing that.'

Certainly, no-one can accuse Gareth Evans of not serving his apprenticeship. After breaking into the Oban Camanachd first team in 1994, he played in a side which reached six Camanachd Cup finals in nine years, lifting the famous trophy in 1996 after beating Kingussie 3-2 in the final in Inverness.

He hung up his caman at the end of the 2014 season and immediately took charge of a Lochside Rovers side which had notched fourth, then fifth place finishes after winning South 1 in 2012.

Gareth comes into the Oban Camanachd role on the back of two spells managing Lochside Rovers; 2015 to 2018 and 2020 to 2021. One league title - and twice losing out by the finest of margins - a Sutherland Cup and a Bullough Cup were won during that time. Evans was also involved towards the end of Brian MacCallum's 2019 reign when Lochside did the Sutherland and Bullough double.

His efforts were recognised when he was named Mowi South Division 1 Manager of the Year in 2015 and 2017.

It is of equal importance that a number of young players were guided on their way from youth shinty to first team shinty at Oban Camanachd during his tenure, with one or two even turning out for Oban Celtic.

Gareth Evans takes over from Stephen Sloss who stood down at the end of the abridged 2021 season and he recognises the magnitude of the job.

He said: 'It's a big step up from managing Lochside and it will be strange to an extent given I'm friends with a few of the boys but I will put my all into this and I'm sure all the players will too.'

Gareth Evans now turns his attention to planning for the 2022 shinty season and he added: 'We have a good squad and the aim is to push on and win some of the national competitions. Oban Camanachd will always be in with a shout of winning the Celtic Society Cup but we really want to strive for national success and we have the players to do it.'

There will be continuity at Lochside Rovers where Andrew Pearson, Iain MacMillan and Duncan MacMillan, who were all involved last season, now take on the running of the side.

Don't miss next week's Oban Times for Gareth Evans' thoughts on Lochside Rovers' 2021 campaign.

Artemis Macaulay Cup Draw

One of the pre-season highlights saw the 2022 Artemis Macaulay Cup draw take place live on Oban FM on Saturday December 4.

The Macaulay Cup, first presented in 1947 by then Oban Times editor Flora Macaulay, is the only cup format in senior shinty to be played on a regional basis so guaranteeing a final between a south and north side. Eligibility is mainly based on the previous year's league placing and there was just one change from the south teams who competed last season as Col Glen returned to the competition, replacing Ballachulish. The north half of the draw remained unchanged.

The Macaulay Association was well represented as Gerry Kilmurray drew the home sides, with Les Kinvig picking the away sides. Davie

Hamilton was also in attendance. Just like last year, Oban Celtic and Oban Camanachd were both given home draws but both face tough ties. Oban Celtic play Scottish Sea Farms Glasgow Celtic Society Cup winners Kyles Athletic, whilst Oban Camanachd welcome fellow Mowi Premiership side Glasgow Mid Argyll.

Fort William have a tricky trip to the Dell to play Kingussie, whilst Kilmallie will test Lovat at Canal Parks.

The tie of the round is the meeting between Newtonmore and Kinlochshiel at the Eilan.

The draw in full is:

Artemis Macaulay Cup first round - Aberdour v Bute; Inveraray v Col Glen; Oban Celtic v Kyles Athletic; Oban Camanachd v Glasgow Mid Argyll; Kingussie v Fort William; Kilmallie v Lovat; Newtonmore v Kinlochshiel; Lochaber v Caberfeidh.

Artemis Macaulay Cup quarter finals - Oban Celtic/Kyles Athletic v Aberdour/Bute; Oban Camanachd/Glasgow Mid Argyll v Inveraray/Col Glen; Lochaber/Caberfeidh v Kingussie/Fort William; Newtonmore/Kinlochshiel v Kilmallie/Lovat.

Artemis Macaulay Cup semi finals - Oban Celtic/Kyles Athletic/Aberdour/Bute v Oban Camanachd/Glasgow Mid Argyll/Inveraray/Col Glen; Lochaber/Caberfeidh/Kingussie/Fort William v Newtonmore/Kinlochshiel/Kilmallie/Lovat.

The South Artemis Macaulay Cup semi-final takes place at Mossfield with the North last four tie at Braeview Park, Beaulieu.

The Artemis Macaulay Cup Final takes place at Mossfield with the dates for all ties still to be confirmed. Kingussie are the current holders, having beaten Kyles Athletic 4-1 in last season's final.

Oban Camanachd Under 17s win MacQuisten Cup

Oban Camanachd U17 12 Glasgow Mid Argyll U17 0
Oban Camanachd Under 17s lifted the MacQuisten



The victorious Beaulieu Under 17 team with the MacTavish Juvenile Cup. Photograph: Neil Paterson.

Cup, defeating Glasgow Mid Argyll Under 17s 12-0 in the final at Mossfield on Saturday December 4.

This was the final opportunity to contest this trophy and Iain Hay and his ground staff deserve credit for ensuring the pitch was playable for this noon throw-up.

GMA lost out to Aberdour in the semi-finals but were asked to step in when the Fife side were unable to field a team for the final. GMA were the younger side and they gave it their all, especially in the second half.

Oban Camanachd were too strong though, running up a 9-0 interval lead but some great goalkeeping restricted them to only three more goals in the second half. Ewen Campbell was top scorer with five goals and Louis MacFarlane scored four times. Two-goal Coll MacKay and Pearce Mcbeth made up the Oban Camanachd tally. Oban Camanachd captain Hannah MacDonald stepped forward to raise the 94-year-old MacQuisten Cup in front of her delighted teammates and a noisy support.

MacTavish Juvenile Cup

Elsewhere, Beaulieu Under 17s won the MacTavish Juvenile Cup, beating Kingussie Under 17s 4-0 in the final at Braeview Park. Kieran Rennie and Finlay 'Stork' MacLennan scored in



Beaulieu captain Euan MacCormick with the MacTavish Juvenile Cup. Photograph: Neil Paterson.

the first half, with MacLennan getting his second after the restart and Finlay MacLennan adding a fourth late on.

The WJ Cameron Under 17 Development Cup Final between Aberdour Under 17s and Inverness Under 17s was postponed, as was the Camanachd Association Under 14 Development Cup Final between Bute Under 14s and Strathspey Camanachd Under 14s.

Macmillan Nurses collection

A collection at the inaugural Alasdair Morrison Memorial Cup match between Skye Camanachd and Lochcarron raised £1,017 for Macmillan Nurses.

The Morrison family are overwhelmed by the support, kindness and generosity shown to them and extend their heart-felt thanks to everyone who contributed.

Mowi National Awards

The 2021 Mowi Awards will be a 'virtual' celebration of achievements, replacing the usual annual ceremony, to respect and celebrate the achievements of shinty's sportsmen and women and their impact on their community during the unique years of 2020 and 2021.

These unique Mowi Awards aim to recognise the extraordinary efforts and incredible

endeavour that was required to deliver a shinty season in 2021.

This year's awards will be based on the important values on which shinty and its communities are built and upon which Mowi, shinty sponsors for the past 35 years, and the Camanachd Association operate. Nominations can be made at the Camanachd Association website www.shinty.com

Mabel Sloggie

The Women's Camanachd Association (WCA) was amongst the many clubs and associations to express their sadness at the passing of Mabel Sloggie on Friday December 3.

Mabel Sloggie was the wife of the late John Sloggie and shinty played a huge part in both their lives. A WCA statement said: 'Mabel followed her husband and her sons in the sport but she also broke down barriers in her own right as an official, goal judging at many games. She always proudly carried and showed off her Macaulay Final medal. She also put in countless hours alongside John making Munro Camans and the WCA were grateful when the couple supplied beautiful black camans for the winning captain of the Valerie Fraser Women's Camanachd Cup. A formidable lady, Mabel will be sorely missed by the shinty community.'

The deepest sympathies from the shinty world go to Mabel's sons Eddie, Matthew, Mark and Peter and their respective families.

Oban Camanachd holds annual general meeting

Oban Camanachd held their annual general meeting at the Rockfield Centre on Friday December 3.

Vice president Gareth Evans opened the meeting as president Pat Steeman was unable to attend because of work commitments.

Gareth Evans thanked sponsors TSL for their support. He said: 'TSL have been terrific, even honouring their sponsorship to back the club when we weren't able to play shinty in 2020 and early 2021. We have not been able to give them

much in return over that period but we will make it up to them next season.'

Stephen Sloss was thanked for his hard work and commitment during his three-year term as Oban Camanachd manager. Election of office bearers: Iain MacIntyre continues as chieftain and Pat Steeman, who attended to the many Covid-related matters last season, stays on as president.

With Gareth Evans becoming Oban Camanachd manager, Alastair Crowe is the club's new vice president.

Iain MacIntyre becomes secretary, with Katy Cameron remaining as treasurer.

Donald MacLellan continues as superbball convener, with Amanda Sloss having responsibility for social media and Nigel Evans continuing to attend to transport. Oban Camanachd are always on the lookout for new volunteers and anyone interested in helping out, even for a small time, should contact any of the office bearers. The Oban Camanachd and Lochside Rovers player of the year awards will take place in the New Year.



Oban and Wigtonshire players pay tribute to Scottish international Siobhan Cattigan who died last week at the age of 26.

Rugby round-up

Oban Lorne ladies and men's teams were in action at Glencruitten on Saturday in an entertaining day's rugby.

With the tragic death of Scotland international player Siobhan Cattigan, her home club Stirling County had asked all clubs to take part in a minute's applause prior to their games and Oban and visitors Wigtonshire stood side-by-side to honour the memory of a great player.

Oban Lorne Ladies 12 Wigtonshire Ladies 40

The ladies kicked off first, with the new Game On scheme in place in which teams match each other on the park and play uncontested scrums. Oban started the game with 12 players, with Alenei Simmonds and Lee Gallagher playing their first game for the Green Army.

The home girls played well with good ball handling and great runs down the park, but Wigtonshire found gaps in the Oban defence. Team captain Kirsty Sinclair led by example, scoring two brilliant,

well-organised tries, with great support from her teammates. Kayleigh Roche easily converted one.

Head coach Corrie Lowe was delighted with the attitude and the passion of that the Green Army showed and was proud of everyone. Final score 12-40.

The Green Army now take a festive break and will return in January. They have three games to play in the remainder of the season.

Oban Lorne RFC 7 Wigtonshire 10

Oban's men started strongly, using their big forwards to make ground and some big hits during the game.

The backs were led by captain for the day Callum Hamilton and showed great spirit and great ball handling down the centre of the park.

First points on the board came from the opposition when they slipped through Oban's defence to score.

Fifteen minutes before half-time, Bates and Anderson found gaps in the visiting defence and the ball went out wide where Blair Macfarlane scored an excellent try which

was converted by Hamilton. Half time 7-5.

The second half was just as exciting as the first, with both teams playing hard rugby in the middle of the park.

Oban kept the pressure on the opposing side, but with 15 minutes left, Wigtonshire broke down the field and the forwards scored the second try of the game. Next week the boys are away to Strathaven.

East Kilbride U16s 33 Oban Lorne U16s 7

Oban Lorne Under-16s travelled to East Kilbride on Sunday for their last league game of the year after rearranging pitches due to the home side's being frozen.

Oban started brightly and were camped in the 22 when skipper Finlay Brown looked to have crossed over for the team's first try, but number 8 was caught out due to a mix-up of lines.

The visitors still looked dominant and kept the pressure on the opposing side before EK broke down the field and rumbled on through the forwards to score the first try of the game after 25 minutes.

A determined Oban side hit back with a powerful run from flanker Reece Lawrie crossing the line to level the scores.

Oban then suffered two shoulder injuries to wing James Campbell and full back Zach Alexander. East Kilbride took full advantage and scored just before halftime. Oban kept their heads up but more injuries led to more tries being conceded and with the pitch beginning to freeze over, the coaches agreed to end the game early.

Man of the match was second rower Kuba Kolodziejczyk.

Oban now look forward to the new year ahead of their cup fixtures where they will look to build on this successful league season.

The Under-16s thank Zach Alexander and JJ Blackley who will return to Lochaber Rugby Football Club for the cup competition.

Girls Under-14s/Under-16s

Oban Girls Under-14s and Under-16s teams attended the regional festival in Ravenscraig. The 14s played Cartha, Lenzie/Strathaven, Strathendrick and Biggar. The

girls played fast rugby and were rewarded with a flurry of tries for Abby Macqueen, Cairistiona MacAloon and Rowan Gemmell. There were debut tries for Lilly Hutchison.

The girls' structure was much improved with excellent defence from Anna Logan, Ellen Hutchison and S1 player Ruby Blainey putting in a try-saving tackle.

The final game against Biggar was a close-fought affair ending in a draw. The S1 players Hayleigh Ward, Ruth Joss and Ruby Blainey should be commended on stepping up and playing these competitive matches.

The Under-16s travelled with reduced numbers but were able to join up with Cartha Queen's Park. They played four, fast-paced matches on the indoor surface and the contact was hard.

Aimee Clark, Ainead Burns, Jess Jevons, Lauren Gibson and Nicola Duncan all got on the score sheet, linking up well to find space.

The Under-16s are looking forward to entering the National Shield after Christmas.

Ruaridh Buchanan replaced Anderson after 77 minutes joining brother Lewis in attack with Aaron McKay moving to left wing back.

Hearts were in mouths on the Saints touchline when Sam Webb's speculative 81 minute effort from wide on the left looped high over Murdo MacKenzie before landing on top of the crossbar and bouncing behind.

The Buchanan brothers strike partnership was brought to an end in the 86-minute when Lewis made way for Saints youth product Lewis Campbell.

The home side kept pressing but Saints defended well and just as it looked as though Saints had done enough to secure the victory, two valuable points were snatched from them right



Magnus Bradbury, left, was presented with his 100th cap by Grant Gilchrist. Photograph: Ross Parker/SNS Group).

Century celebration

Magnus Bradbury made his 100th Edinburgh Rugby appearance on Friday night when the capital club hosted Benetton at the DAM Health Stadium in Round 7 of the United Rugby Championship.

As Edinburgh Rugby celebrated 'club appreciation night' – which saw the squad pull on the socks of their boyhood clubs to recognise the importance of the wider grassroots game – Bradbury represented his hometown team, Oban Lorne, while reaching the landmark appearance seven years on from making his professional debut at the age of 19.

After producing a typically physical performance, carrying dominantly for the full 80 minutes the 26-year-old back row also secured the Player of the Match award following his team's 24-10 victory.

Speaking after the game, Magnus said: 'Oban Lorne is where it all started for me. They pushed me and coached me and they got me to where I am today. I will always be thankful for that.'

The 14-times capped Scotland international became Edinburgh Rugby's 36th club centurion and joined former capital back-row greats Simon Taylor, Ally Hogg and Roddy Grant in reaching the historic milestone.

at the death. Martin Bonar got back to help out his defence and concede a 92-minute corner kick. The delivery from the left was headed back in the direction it came from, however a second delivery looped over the Saints defence and was met perfectly at the back post by Giffnock skipper Callum Brook whose header from two yards arrowed back across Murdo MacKenzie and into the net.

There was barely enough time left on the clock to restart the match and Mr Fox brought proceedings to a close.

Oban Saints GG have no fixture this coming Saturday while the first team return to Central Scottish Amateur Football League Premier Division action with a visit from Gartcosh United.

Saints denied victory after last-minute goal

Giffnock SCAR	1
Oban Saints GG	1
GG Premier Amateur Football League Div 3	

Oban Saints second string travelled to Thornliebank last Saturday (December 4) to face bottom of the table Giffnock Soccer Centre Amateurs Reds.

Three points separated the pair at the foot of the Greater Glasgow Premier Amateur Football League Division 3A table at the start of play and a goal-a-piece ensured the

positions remained unchanged after 90 evenly contested minutes. There was an early set-back for Saints when Cammy Clark went over his ankle in the centre circle after eight minutes signalling the introduction from the bench of Kieran Hendry.

Hendry's 19th minute cross-field pass picked out the run of Craig Livingstone whose right foot shot was well saved at his near post by Giffnock keeper Scott MacLennan. Opposite number Murdo MacKenzie was called into action imme-

diately thereafter when the home side swiftly counter-attacked. Andrew McKerlie's long ball up to Schwan Nuri saw the Giffnock striker get the better of Saints Skipper Kenneth Black but not Murdo MacKenzie who saved well to his right. MacLennan needed two attempts to hold Lewis Buchanan's 20th minute shot as the heavy morning rain which forced a number of fixture cancellations finally abated.

Kieran Hendry robbed Stuart Lemay as he tried to usher the ball over the bye-line for a 30th minute goal kick. Hendry then beat Scott MacLennan at his near post, but referee Michael Fox disallowed the goal for a Hendry foul on Lemay.

Sixty seconds later Saints had the ball in the net again when

Aaron McKay tucked away a Lewis Buchanan cut-back from the left. But referee Michael Fox made it two disallowed goals in as many minutes when he ruled Buchanan offside.

Saints started the second half well with Craig Livingstone heading a Dylan Anderson cross wide and Kieran Hendry sending a decent effort dipping inches over the crossbar after cutting in from the left. Aaron McKay's low 65-minute shot across Scott MacLennan beat the Giffnock keeper's right hand but also the far post as the breakthrough continued to elude Saints.

The deadlock was broken in the 68th-minute when Hendry beat the Giffnock offside trap to get on the end of a Dylan Anderson through ball.

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Otters back with a splash as captain breaks record



Club captain Andrew Boyle broke the 50m butterfly record held by Saul Ormiston since 2003.

Oban Otters held their annual gala at the town's Atlantis Leisure centre on Saturday following two years of patchy training due to Covid-related pool closures.

Lack of practice didn't appear to affect the young competitors, however, with the standard high across the board.

Club captain Andrew Boyle, 16, broke the 50m butterfly record by almost one second, setting a new time of 30.11 seconds.

New head coach Shannon McCuish said: 'It was a fantastic day with great results achieved by all swimmers. I'm proud that after a rough couple of years with limited training we managed to break a record that hasn't been broken since 2003. I'm looking forward to the next annual gala.'

Otters president Moira Logan agreed that it had been an exciting afternoon watching the return of competitive swimming at Atlantis.



Abby MacQueen.

'Many youngsters were getting their first taste of competitive swimming and some of our more experienced swimmers, who have shown such commitment over the past year, smashed their personal bests,' she added.

Moira thanked Atlantis staff for their efforts at the gala and at weekly training and all the volunteers who helped the gala run smoothly. Oban Otters has been run by volunteers since

1975. There are currently nine coaches running four swimming squads of more than 50 swimmers supported by a committee and teen poolside helpers.

Contact Oban Otters on their Facebook page for more information on how you can help support the club through sponsorship, volunteering or expertise.

More photographs at www.obantimes.co.uk



Juliette Main.



Cameron Craik.



Edie Elliot.

2021 club gala results

Development squad cups

Spence Shield, girls age 9/10: Jaime MacIntyre; runner-up, Rosie Campbell. Achnacreebeag trophy, girls age 11+: Rose MacInnes; runner-up, Isla Muir; 3 Aly MacDonald; 4 Mara Breslin. Larchfield trophy, boys age 11-13: Alfie MacIntyre; runner-up, Riley Anderson; 3 Sean Summers;

4= Alasdair Bruce and Daniel MacInnes. ABCD cup, boys aged 14: Thomas Thomson; runner-up, Noah Soares Domingues.

Junior Squad cups

Iona Shop cup, boys aged 12: Finn MacKechnie; 2 Cameron Craik; 3 Owen Stevenson. Individual Medley (IM) 100m: Cameron Craik; 2 Owen Stevenson. JS

Shield, boys aged 13: Marco MacGregor; 2 Rufus Hughes; 3 Daniel Campbell. IM 100m: Marco MacGregor; 2 Rufus Hughes. JS Shield, girls aged 13: Rebecca Bruce. IM 100m: Rebecca Bruce.

Performance squad cups

Intermediate trophy, girls aged 12: Lily Robinson. IM 100m: Lily

Robinson. Hannah's shield, boys aged 13: Joel Robinson. IM 100m: Joel Robinson. Gateway cup, girls aged 13: Abby MacQueen; 2 Megan Carre; 3 Juliette Main; 4 Anna Logan. IM 100m: Abby MacQueen; 2 Juliette Main. Hunter cup, boys aged 14+: Kai MacKechnie; 2 Andrew Boyle; 3 Ewan Dowd. Andrew Boyle

broke the 50m fly record held by Saul Ormiston since 2003 with a new time of 30.11. IM 200m: Kai MacKechnie; 2 Ewan Dowd.

Forteith cup, girls aged 14+: Rachel Carre; 2 Edie Elliott; 3 Alex Elliott; 4 Kay Logan; 5 Abby Docherty. IM 200m: Rachel Carre; 2 Alex Elliott; 3 Kay Logan.



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10	0400 1.3 1009 3.4 F 1648 1.6 2229 2.9	12	0013 2.8 0613 1.6 SU 1307 3.3 1910 1.8	14	0230 3.0 0837 1.6 TU 1457 3.4 2107 1.7	16	0343 3.4 1017 1.5 TH 1609 3.6 2222 1.5

OBAN WEATHER

Thursday

Light rain and a gentle breeze
Temperatures 4°C to 7°C.

Friday

Light rain showers and a moderate breeze
Temperatures 4°C to 7°C.

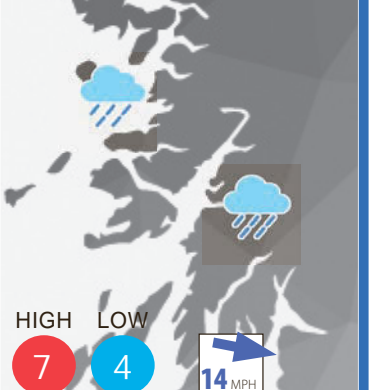
Saturday

Light rain and a moderate breeze
Temperatures 6°C to 9°C.

Sunday

Light rain and a moderate breeze
Temperatures 6°C to 9°C.

FRIDAY FORECAST



Ardrishaig -5.35
Campbeltown -5.30
Crinan -0.47
Islay Port Ellen 2.00
Lochboisdale +0.30
Mallaig +0.25
Portree +0.55
Tobermory +0.16
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• See pages 22 & 23 for more

Wizards & trains



Ingrid Henderson narrates new BBC Radio 4 show

• See page 4 for more

WHEELS UP FOR CHRISTMAS



• FULL STORY PAGE 2

Photograph: Iain Ferguson

'Get your own house in order'

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@lochabertimes.co.uk

Highland Council has been told it needs to get its own house in order before making demands of others.

The comments came from Councillor Andrew Baxter, chairman of Lochaber Area Committee, commenting after the Inverness-headquartered local authority issued a press statement in which its

three most senior elected members, including leader Margaret Davidson, called on Scottish Government Finance Secretary Kate Forbes to increase budget allocations for local authorities when she publishes the 2022-23 Scottish Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy today (Thursday).

Councillor Davidson said: 'We are looking to the Scottish Government to give us a good positive increase

in budget and a decent settlement of at least plus three per cent to help us support our service delivery.

'We echo and support COSLA's Live Well Locally budget campaign which highlights that without adequate funding for local government, recovery will stall and a lot of good progress made will be wasted, as the pandemic hit our poorest communities hardest.'

The two other senior councillors -

depute leader Alasdair Christie and Jimmy Gray, corporate resources committee chairman - were also quoted.

Councillor Gray said all Scottish local authorities will be looking to the Finance Secretary for what he called a 'just settlement'.

And he added: 'With strong positive financial planning in place, this will enable us to invest in essential infra-

Continued on page 2.



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LT

Inverlochy pupils demonstrate their recycling skills for Christmas

Pupils from Inverlochy Primary School have proven themselves to be very enterprising young elves this Christmas, by manufacturing everything from Christmas decorations, to coasters, keyrings and wallets by recycling bicycle parts, writes Mark Entwistle.

It is part of a Young Enterprise scheme looking at a 'circular economy' with every class creating a product using only recycled materials, forming a business to market them. The older pupils came up with the business name 'Bike from the Dead', with the catchy slogan 'Don't retyre - recycle' and company members giving a presentation on how it had been achieved.

The products, made from discarded gears, chains and inner tubes supplied by local



Hamish Cameron and Isla Bryce of Primary Three present their product of colourful recycled crayons. Looking on is Richard Corrigan from Young Enterprise Scotland.

Photographs: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos

business, Off Beat Bikes, are now available online at lochaberhigh.org.uk/bike-from-the-dead

MOREPHOTOS
www.lochabertimes.co.uk



Above left, recycling pallets into useful household objects was the Primary Six project presented by Phoebe Judge and Jacob Garwood; above, Rocco MacMillan, Charlie Johnstone and Joshua Crighton spoke of their Primary Five class project of re-using old technology; and left, Primary Five pupils Tai McEachern, Finn Laggan, Erin MacPherson and Oliver Zal talk about their recycling plans to turn a range of old products into new ones.

Get in touch.

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Fort William man admits attacking former boss

A 22-year-old Fort William man attacked his former boss with a sledgehammer resulting in surgery for the victim.

At Inverness Sheriff Court, right, on Tuesday, Samuel Nixon, of St John's Road, Fort William, admitted assaulting James O'Donnell to his severe injury and permanent impairment at his home in Old Banavie Road, Banavie, on May 16 this year.

Sentence was deferred by Sheriff Sara Matheson until January 10 for a background report and a restriction of liberty order assessment.

Nixon's bail was continued and defence solicitor advocate Neil Wilson reserved his comments until then.

Fiscal depute David Morton told the court that Nixon used to work for Mr O'Donnell some time ago.

He said: 'He was at home when he heard his door being struck. He opened it to see Nixon there.'

'He used a pack of threaded steel bars which were at the door to defend himself and



managed to deflect the blows.

'But Nixon swung the weapon two or three times and it caught his thumb. Nixon then threw it at him, striking him on the thigh.'

Mr Morton said Mr O'Donnell sustained an open fracture and dislocation to his thumb and a severed tendon which required surgery at Raigmore Hospital in Inverness.

'He can't bend his thumb fully and has lost feeling in most of it, apart from pain at the top of the thumb.'

'He had three sessions of physiotherapy but it only worked to a degree,' Mr Morton went on.

'Get own house in order' before demanding more cash, Baxter tells council

Continued from page 1.

structure, such as schools and roads while supporting and delivering vital community services.'

Councillor Baxter (Fort William and Ardnamurchan), told the Lochaber Times he would always support extra funds coming to the Highlands, but criticised the council's call for more money as 'a bit rich' when it came from an administration he accused of repeatedly failing to implement its own budget measures or wasting money on expensive vanity projects.

'Too often Lochaber residents pay for these incompetent mistakes. For example, we are paying extra car park charges and to use public toilets, when other areas many years later have failed to introduce these changes agreed at budget time,'

Councillor Baxter added. 'We've seen taxpayers' money wasted on so-called public artwork in Inverness. And now they are desperate to appoint a Lord Provost for Inverness with all the expensive flummery that entails.'

'Highland Council needs to get its own house in order before making demands from others.'

Councillor Baxter has also lodged a number of questions for today's meeting of the full local authority. It includes quizzing Mrs Davidson on whether, as leader of the council, she believes the £360,000 spent on the Gathering Place public artwork in Inverness represents good use of public funds.

In her written reply, Councillor Davidson says her view was 'not relevant' as this was a decision taken by the City

of Inverness Area Committee.

The meeting will also see a motion, counter-signed by Councillor Baxter, calling on the council to acknowledge the belief that the regionalisation of local authorities has been a failed experiment and a singular unitary authority for the Highland region does not, and has not, served the people of the region effectively and fairly. The motion further calls on the council to ask the Scottish Government and the minister for Local Government to review the existing Highland Council area, with the view to returning local authorities to 'their most localised form possible'.

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Twins charged with murder of cyclist, Tony

Twin brothers from Argyll and Bute have been charged with the murder of charity cyclist Tony Parsons.

Alexander and Robert McKellar, aged 30, were also charged with attempting to defeat the ends of justice when they appeared at Dumbarton Sheriff Court on Thursday December 2.

Mr Parsons, from Tillicoultry, was last seen during a bike ride in September 2017 outside the Bridge of Orchy Hotel in Argyll and Bute. His body was discovered in a remote area of ground close to a farm near the A82 at Bridge of Orchy on Tuesday January 12, 2021.

The brothers were further charged with conspiracy to murder Mr Parsons.

Alexander McKellar was also individually charged with causing serious injury by dangerous driving.

The two men made no plea and were committed for further examination and remanded in custody.



CHRISTMAS DEALS FROM US TO THE PEOPLE OF OBAN

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<p>Deal 2 Any 2 9" Pizzas, 5 Peri Peri Wings or Strips, 1 Peri Peri Chicken Rice Box, 2 Fries, 2 Cans of Pepsi £19.99</p>	<p>Party Deal for 2 Any 2 Chicken Meals £9.99</p>	<p>Curry Deal for 2 Mixed Pakora, Any 2 Chicken Curries, 1 Rice, 1 Plain or Garlic Nan £16.99 (Lamb +£1 per dish)</p>
<p>Deal 3 1 Full Peri Peri Chicken, Any 12" Pizza, 5 Fried Strips or Wings, 4 Peri Peri Chicken Thigh, Peri Chips, Mozzarella Sticks and 2 x 2L Pepsi £19.99</p>	<p>Party Deal for 3 Any 9" Pizza + Any 2 Chicken Meals £14.99</p>	<p>Curry Deal for 3 Large Mixed Pakora, Any 3 Chicken Curries, 3 Rice and 1 Plain or Garlic Nan £26.99 (Lamb +£1 per dish)</p>
<p>Deal 4 Any 2 12" Pizzas, 1 Peri Peri infused Donner Kebab, 3 Fried Drumsticks, 2 x Potato Wedges and 2 Cans of Pepsi £21.99</p>	<p>Party Deal for 4 Any 2 9" Pizzas + Any 2 Chicken Meals £19.99</p>	<p>Curry Deal for 4 Large Mixed Starter Plate, Any 4 Chicken Curries, 2 Rice & 2 Plain or Garlic Nan, and 4 Chocolate Fudge Cake Slices £39.99</p>
<p>Deal 5 9" Pizza, 5 Peri Peri Strips and 5 Wings, Peri Chicken Quesadilla, 2 x Onion Rings, 2 x Fries, 2 x Chicken Nuggets, 2 x 500ml Pepsi £23.99</p>	<p>Party Deal for 6 Any 2 12" Pizzas, Any 2 Chicken Meals + 2 Peri Fries £26.99</p>	<p>KIDS DEALS Kids Party Deal 1 Chips, Chicken Nuggets, Onion Rings & Mozzarella Sticks with a Small Ice Cream Shake £5.99</p>
<p>Deal 6 Peri Peri Chicken Burger, Fried Chicken Burger, 5 Peri Peri Wings or Strips, 1 Chicken Quesadilla or Burrito, 1 Peri Chicken Rice Box, 2 Fries, 2 Peri Chips, 2 Spicy Rice, 2 x 2L Pepsi £23.99</p>	<p>Party Deal for 8 Full Peri Peri Chicken, Any 2 12" Pizzas, Any 2 Chicken Meals + Any 2 Sides £34.99</p>	<p>Kids Party Deal 2 Any Chicken, Beef or Cheese Burger with Chips and Onion Rings with a Small Ice Cream Shake £5.99</p>

LT

Glenfinnan's Ingrid narrates show on wizards and trains

The West Highland Line and its association with a famous boy wizard features in a BBC Radio 4 programme this week presented by Glenfinnan's Ingrid Henderson, writes Mark Entwistle.

The edition of Open Country, BBC Radio 4's long-running outdoors series, will be broadcast today (Thursday) at 3pm and repeated on Saturday (December 11) at 06.07am.

It's called Wizards and Steam Trains on the West Highland Line and listeners will hear folk musician Ingrid Henderson explore the communities and landscapes which influence her life and work.

She lives in Glenfinnan, on the shores of Loch Shiel, where Bonnie Prince Charlie raised his standard before setting off on his much-romanticised, doomed mission to reclaim the British crown for the Stuarts.

But in recent years Charlie has been almost supplanted by a fictional rival – young wizard Harry Potter.

Thousands of tourists are drawn to the area, eager to see the Jacobite steam train

– aka the Hogwarts Express as it crosses the magnificent Glenfinnan viaduct – an iconic scene in the Potter films.

Ingrid talks to Jacobite historian Charlie MacFarlane about this clash of cultures and – up at the viaduct – chats with Harry Potter fans who have travelled from as far afield as China, Brazil and the USA to see the Hogwarts Express.

She also finds out about the history of the West Highland Railway Line with museum curator Hege Hernaes as it celebrates its 120th anniversary and takes the train to the fishing port of Mallaig, at the end of the line. It's her home town, where her musical career started.

Former schoolteacher Denis Rixson recalls the heyday of the town's fishing industry and Ingrid describes how the coast and waters of this part of Scotland have inspired some of her work.

The programme production side of things also has a Lochaber involvement as it has been produced by Mingarry-based radio producers Kathleen Carragher and John Deering.

Fort Tesco set to be hit by strike

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@lochabertimes.co.uk

The vote to strike over a pay dispute by Unite union members employed by Tesco could well see the Fort William branch of the famous retailer facing shortages along with every other branch in Scotland.

The workers who balloted for strikes, including warehouse workers and HGV drivers, are based at Tesco's Livingston Distribution Depot which provides stock to all Tesco stores across Scotland.

The strike action is a result of what Unite slammed as Tesco's 'derisory' four per cent pay offer which it said is well below the current retail price index (RPI) inflation rate of six per cent.

Unite members will walk



The Tesco Express in Fort William could be hit by staff shortages if the planned strike by Unite workers goes ahead.

they fully deserve a significant pay rise.

'Tesco needs to put its customers and workforce first, settle this dispute or risk shortages over the festive period.'

'Tesco says "This Christmas nothing is stopping us". Well, with the full support of Unite nothing is going to stop our members in their fight for a fair wage deal.'

Asked if the Tesco Express store in Fort William High Street would also be affected, a Unite spokesperson told us this week: 'It will be if the strikes go ahead.'

out on Monday December 20 and will not return before Christmas.

The workforce is particularly angry that Tesco is offering a real terms pay cut while the supermarket giant is projecting an operating profit of £2.6 billion for the current financial

year. Unite Regional Officer Willie Thomson said: 'It's time Tesco rewarded its exceptionally hard-working and loyal workforce in distribution. The workers have kept us fed throughout this pandemic and after contributing to the exceptional profits of Tesco

Councillors give thumbs-up to Visitor Management Plan

The Highland Council's Tourism Committee has agreed a proposed Visitor Management Plan for 2022 to support the growth in visitors to the region, writes Mark Entwistle.

Chairman of the Tourism Committee Councillor Gordon Adam said members were supportive of the delivery of the council's draft Visitor Management Plan 2022 and the rollout of the projects across the region.

'Tourism is vital to the economic recovery of the Highlands,' he said.

'Tourism-related jobs can represent up to 43 per cent of the workforce in some areas across Highland and it is really important that we continue to strive to improve infrastructure and how we manage the growth in visitor numbers in Highland communities,' he added.

'Significant data gathering has been collated throughout the busy 2021 season, the useful information has been carefully considered by members and officers in order to learn from last year and to prioritise the key improvements for the 2022 Visitor Management

Plan.' To assist in defining the range of activities and the financial allocations that might be required, a workshop involving both members and relevant officers was held on Friday November 5.

This workshop allowed members to consider the feedback and the evidence gathered and

'Tourism is vital to the economic recovery of the Highlands... it is important we continue to improve infrastructure...'

give their views on what the priorities might be for a 2022 Visitor Management Plan.

The Visitor Management planning officer group subsequently met and considered the feedback and have produced a draft plan.

The council will work with other agencies involved in tourism and visitor management to deliver the plan.

A number of actions included in the plan which councillors have approved include:

£240,000 on road management and improvements; £160,000 investment in parking management; £350,000 for seasonal access rangers; £190,000 spend on public toilets; £220,000 on waste management and £55,000 improved provision for motorhomes and waste disposal points.

Councillors also welcomed the wide range of additional projects across the region that are under way or which are soon to start and which will complement the activities in the plan.

These are expected to be ready by spring / summer 2022 and include Fort Augustus waste disposal unit; Uig Fairy Glen parking; Staffin Kilt Rock parking extension; Dunvegan Coral Beach parking; Elgol toilets parking and waste disposal unit; Isle of Eigg public toilets; Ardnamurchan Point parking and visitor facilities; and Glen Nevis parking improvements.

In tandem with the Visitor Management Plan, the council is developing a Tourism Infrastructure Plan which aims to identify the longer-term tourism infrastructure requirements of the region.



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Victorious Sarah ready to roll out welcome mat

SNP candidate Sarah Fanet, pictured right, has vowed to continue her fight for the rights and dignity of EU nationals living in Lochaber after being elected as councillor for the Fort William and Ardnamurchan ward.

Ms Fanet was one of seven candidates who contested the Ward 21 vacancy. The by-election count was held in Lochaber High School.

Speaking after the results were announced, Ms Fanet said: 'I am very honoured to have been elected by the people of the ward of Fort William and Ardnamurchan. Our message which focused on electing a councillor who will engage with people, listen and respond to what matters to them in every community has been heard.'

'On a personal note, I am delighted the people of Lochaber have elected a new councillor who came to the Highlands



three decades ago as an EU student and was able to stay thanks to free movement.

'I want all EU nationals living in Lochaber to know that with my party, I will continue to fight for their rights and dignity, so they know that Lochaber is their home, that we want them to stay and feel welcome to vote.'

Ms Fanet also pledged to continue to travel around the ward and 'hear residents'.

She added: 'I want to thank my campaign team for their outstanding support, as well as the staff and volunteers who worked hard.'

'In addition to being elected on Friday, my highlight was to see students involved in the counting procedure.'

'Thank you Lochaber High School for giving those young people such a valuable opportunity.'

The by-election results are at www.highland.gov.uk/byelection.

Lochaber Greens' Kate delighted with third place

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@lochabertimes.co.uk

The local branch of the Scottish Green Party says it is very happy with its candidate's third place in last week's Ward 21 by-election.

The voter turn-out was 25 per cent and Greens candidate Dr Kate Willis' share of the vote was 14.3 per cent.

Highlands and Islands Greens welcomed the share of the vote for Dr Willis, a marine ecologist and campaigner, who came third in the ballot for the Fort William and Ardnamurchan seat left vacant by the death of Conservative Ian Ramon in the autumn.

Dr Willis collected 328 votes in what was the first time a Scottish Green candidate had stood in council elections in Lochaber.

Dr Willis told the Lochaber

Dr Kate Willis, pictured, intends standing for election again when voters across Scotland go to the polls for council elections.



Times that she intends to stand for election again when the nationwide Scottish local authority elections are held in May.

'We are at a time of crisis on so many fronts and I'm delighted that so many people

voted for me. I am hoping they will do the same when I stand in May when four councillors will be elected.'

'The result shows that more and more people are concerned about the environment and want to see strong action to

tackle the climate and nature crisis and to make Scotland a fairer place to live.

'If so many people voted for a Green vision after just one month of campaigning, imagine how many will vote Green after five months. I'm ready to work harder and, with this people-power, get elected in May.'

Dr Willis is well known from the work she is doing to deliver HIBIKE, the Fort William ebike share scheme as part of her work for Lochaber Environmental Group.

She was also a wildlife tour guide and has been campaigning for many years for action at every level to address the climate and ecological crisis, particularly by active travel, rewilding and local food production.

She has lived in the Highlands for nearly 20 years.

A wee reminder.

Let's stop the spike.

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LT

VIEW FROM THE CHAMBER

As a Chamber, we have always urged members and communities to support local businesses who count on local patronage in order to stay afloat; every transaction is precious, and our purchasing power makes a real difference.

So, when deciding where to spend your hard-earned cash on tonight's dinner or when picking out a Christmas gift for a friend, we encourage everyone to consider the benefits of choosing local, independently owned businesses within our community.

I think we all agree that there are far-reaching advantages to deciding to 'shop local'.

By supporting local businesses, you are in turn supporting your local economy; significantly more money stays in a community when purchases are made at locally owned – rather than nationally owned – businesses.

Buying local isn't just about what you do at the shops, it also applies to those bigger business decisions. As well as buying local food, local produce and products from local shops, it's also important



for businesses to give local service providers an opportunity when they are investing in their business.

There is a wealth of skills across all sectors right here in Lochaber. Using local architects, contractors, suppliers, service engineers and more, all helps to support and sustain our local employment market and our wider community.

We've got a diverse, supportive business community here in Lochaber and part of what makes it strong and can make it even stronger is if we all consider our fellow businesses, both big and small, when making those investment decisions.

Let's support each other to make investment in Lochaber benefit as many businesses as possible.

Whether big or small, individual or big business, it's time to say: "Thank you for buying local!"

Fort locals urged to report damage after toilets trashed

A significant rise in malicious damage at public toilets across The Highland Council area, which includes damage in Fort William, has prompted the local authority to urge people to report vandals to police, writes Mark Entwistle.

Over the past two months there has been a significant rise in the amount of vandalism, particularly fire-raising, at numerous public toilets, including at Viewforth Car Park, in Fort William.

The council says such facilities offer a vital service to many people (delivery drivers, key workers in the NHS and care services, and council staff) and having to close them to deal with vandalism impacts on many people including locals and visitors to the region.

The council said it has been working hard to maintain and keep open as many public conveniences as possible and to retain or expand facilities in



Viewforth toilets.
Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos

partnership with communities where possible.

Debbie Sutton, Highland Council's amenity services manager, said: 'We ask people to be respectful of the facilities and report any concerns over misuse. Some facilities are locally-run by the community so the vandals are simply damaging the efforts of their own families, friends and neigh-

bours. Graffiti and fire-raising, while not only criminal, is a total waste of taxpayers' money and diverts resources from council works and services. It's vital that our public toilets are safeguarded and no more are lost before the 2022 tourism season begins.

'We urge anyone with information to contact police on 101 or to phone Crimestoppers

on 0800 555 111.'

Police Superintendent Maggie Pettigrew added: 'We are acutely aware of the disruptive impact antisocial behaviour and associated issues such as vandalism has on a community. We would urge anyone with information about vandalism or fire-raising to contact us by calling 101.'

Area Commander Derek Wilson is the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's local senior officer for Highland. He said: 'Deliberate fires have the potential to cause injury and even death or cause devastating damage. We ask parents, guardians, and carers to help by making sure that children and young people are aware of the risks and consequences of deliberate fire setting.

'We welcome the ongoing support of our local communities and by following all of our safety guidance, everyone can help to reduce the risk of fire.'



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The Sgillean nan Coille woodland shelter has been well used in the years since it first opened.

Forestry agency working with community to save wood school

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@lochabertimes.co.uk

Forestry Land Scotland says it is working with a community group in the hope that the latter can take over ownership of Sgillean nan Coille, the popular wood school at Salen, close to the shores of Loch Sunart.

The Lochaber Times recently reported on the disappointment expressed at a recent meeting of Ardgour Community Council that the Sgillean nan Coille wood school structures seemed destined for demolition.

It was earlier this year, that Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) informed Acharacle Community Company (ACC) – which had managed the site for a considerable number of years but had since withdrawn from the lease – that, in the longer term, it was unlikely FLS would be able to commit to the continued and sole maintenance of the remaining structures.

FLS said in such circumstances it would therefore, regrettably, be looking to decommission the project

and dismantle the buildings early next year unless it could identify a group interested in taking on the management of the buildings.

However, responding to criticism of FLS which was aired at the meeting, the forestry agency has told the Lochaber Times its local staff are very

'A local community group is looking into ways that it could take ownership of the structure...'

much invested in the community and that their hard work has been greatly appreciated by local residents and visitors alike.

FLS Regional Visitor Services Manager Robbie Layden said it had been disappointing to read the recent article in the Lochaber Times.

He told us: 'Local staff are actively working with the local community on this issue and have conveyed the results of civil engineering surveys indicating that the 15-year-old

structure is deteriorating and coming to the end of its life.

'This structure was originally secured via the Sunart Oakwoods initiative alongside a wider benefit of around £4 million pounds worth of investment in the area – the project made no provision for the long-term maintenance of legacy infrastructure.

'A local community group, which is aware that remedial work will need to be done, is looking into ways that it could take ownership of the structure and we are doing what we reasonably can to work with them to achieve that goal.'

Mr Layden went on to say that FLS has to focus its limited resources on maintaining the day-to-day infrastructure that communities and visitors to local rural landscapes use every day, such as the hide and trails at Garbh Eilean, and the trails and land around Sgillean nan Coille.

'These sites are freely available to the public and, with permission, can be used for other activities such as outdoor courses or events that support the wider tourist economy in Lochaber,' he explained.



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LT

Fort GP takes lead in Lyme disease training for medics

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@lochabertimes.co.uk

A Fort William-based GP is the lead clinician in a collaboration between NHS Highland and pharmaceutical giant, Pfizer Inc to make the diagnosis of Lyme disease easier and improve consistency in the way the disease is managed.

The 'Lyme Disease General Practice Sentinel Scheme', which is being funded by Pfizer, is a pilot project which will deliver a Lyme-specific training package to 15 GP practices across Highland which have agreed to support the initiative.

These practices will be provided with a digital tool, specially developed by local informatics experts, Albasoft Ltd, that will help guide clinicians through a consultation



Dr Jim Douglas, a GP at Fort William Health Centre, is the Sentinel Scheme lead clinician. Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos

Lyme disease can develop if someone is bitten by a tick infected with the Lyme-causing bacteria, below.



when Lyme disease is suspected or has been confirmed via a blood test.

Dr Jim Douglas, a GP

with NHS Highland at Fort William Health Centre, and the Sentinel Scheme Project lead clinician, explained that

Lyme disease can develop if someone is bitten by a tick infected with the Lyme-causing bacteria. While it can be

difficult to diagnose, it can be easily cured with antibiotics if diagnosed early.

But he warned: 'However, patients with Lyme disease often visit their GP with a rash that can vary widely in its presentation, or with a range of vague and seemingly unrelated symptoms. Patients also often have no recall of a tick bite.'

'Although we know Lyme disease is relatively common in Scotland, information on exactly how many patients are getting early stage Lyme each year is unclear. It is our expectation that this project will give the most accurate estimate to date of the number of new cases of early Lyme disease in our region.'

It is also hoped the project may lead to better understanding of the epidemiology

of Lyme disease by giving information on groups of people who are at increased risk of acquiring it and would benefit from Lyme prevention education. A training package and digital tool will also be evaluated to see if it can help doctors diagnose Lyme disease earlier.

Dr Douglas added: 'It is important that we have a clear understanding of the scale of the problem and that we can identify risk factors associated with Lyme disease.'

'This will help direct public education in the prevention of Lyme disease and aid early diagnosis so that people can enjoy and gain health benefits from outdoor activity while minimising the risk of Lyme.'

It is hoped the project will be rolled out across Scotland and parts of England in 2022.

Returners programme enables aquaculture expert to spawn new career

Advertorial

After taking a break from work to start a family, Bridie Grant, an expert in aquaculture reproduction and genetics, has been inspired through the Women Returners Programme to embark on a new career with the Sustainable Aquaculture Innovation Centre (SAIC).

Thanks to the confidence-building and skills development work of the inaugural coaching programme, which was delivered earlier this year, Bridie said her career had received a much-needed reboot after she found herself struggling to pick up where she had left off.

Bridie said: "My interest in biology and fish started at a young age so it was a natural career choice. I studied aquaculture at the University of Stirling, then returned to the USA and worked in a number of research and breeding-focused roles, before completing a PhD in aquaculture reproduction and genetics and going on to work at Mowi.

"My plans changed significantly when my husband and I decided to start a family and I was extremely fortunate to be able to put work on hold to be a stay-at-home parent. At the start of this year, I decided the time was right to head back to work but, like many, I found it challenging to kickstart my career again.

"I then came across the returners programme which seemed like it had been designed just for me – or at least for people in the same situation. The



Bridie Grant

course was a fantastic opportunity to get back into the swing of things and connect with like-minded people and those currently working in the sector. It was a welcome reminder that my skills and knowledge remain relevant and that I am still very much part of aquaculture.

"After completing the programme, I had a newfound sense of enthusiasm for the sector and the confidence to take the next steps towards finding a new role. As a result, I've recently secured a position with SAIC and will be starting as an aquaculture innovation officer in early 2022. I'm also hopeful that in the near future I can support women in a similar position

to return to work, and it's great to see that the returners programme will be running once again in January."

The Women Returners Programme, run by SAIC in partnership with the Women in Scottish Aquaculture (WiSA) network, is now open to applications for the next intake starting on 17 January.

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Up to 40 free places are on offer to support women to get back into the workplace, whatever their reason for taking a career break, with the course focusing on confidence-building and personal branding with additional one-to-one support available to meet any specific needs.

Eight weeks of sessions will be led by delivery partner Skillfluence, aiming to highlight the range of exciting career options that aquaculture can offer. SAIC emphasised that the course isn't just for those who have worked in the sector before, and there will be workshops offering a comprehensive overview of aquaculture in Scotland, from shellfish and seaweed farming to salmon and the wider supply chain.

The Women Returners Programme is funded by the Scottish Government and administered by Skills Development Scotland.

For more information and to book a place on the programme, visit: <https://wisa.sustainableaquaculture.com/opportunities/women-returners-programme/>

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Fort barbers 'blown away' by award nomination

A Fort William barber shop has been nominated for a prestigious national award for the third time in its short history, writes Fiona Scott.

Co-founded by friends Sharon Sweeney and Terri Nicolson in March 2017, the outfit scooped the honour in 2018 and were nominated again in 2019.

Terri won Best Men's Stylist at the event, also in 2019.

Having started out as a duo, the Stag and Buck team have grown over the years. Joined firstly by Nina and then by Cerys, Stag and Buck's very first apprentice who became the first barber in Fort William to gain her SVQ2 in over 20 years.

The outfit has hosted training events with The Great British Barber Bash alongside Hard Grind and Leah Hayden



Cassidy for other barbers and hairdressers locally and further afield to attend.

As well as working hard for the business, the Star and Buck team are very active within the

community and have sponsored the local jujitsu team, boxing, rugby and football clubs.

On hearing that her business had been nominated again

Terri Nicolson, foreground, and Sharon Sweeney took the Stag and Buck up Ben Nevis earlier this year.

Sharon said: 'We are blown away. It's been a hard few years with the pandemic and like every business we have had to change and adapt to different times.'

Stag and Buck have also supported - and support - a number of charities in the area such as Lochaber Autism Group, Love in a box Lochaber, Men's Shed and local schools.

The team are also ambassadors of both Barbers Autism Assemble - offering a one-to-one appointment after hours to

people who struggle within a busy shop - and also for men's mental health through The Lions Barber Collective.

This year they hosted Barbersride 2021 to raise funds for The Make-a-wish Foundation in collaboration with Ruezal. Prior to the event Sharon and Terri decided to take their shop to the top of Ben Nevis and cut hair. They raised more than £1,600 for Make-a-Wish but also raised awareness as their story was picked up by national newspapers.

'We feel we are not just a barber shop, we are part of a community, our clients have become friends and our staff are family,' said Sharon.

'We're really excited to have been nominated for this national award again and can't thank our customers enough for the support they have given

us both in the business and our charity efforts.'

Hosted by Creative Oceanic, the Scottish Hair and Beauty Awards has become the leading celebration of hair and beauty professionals operating in Scotland.

'Our aim is to highlight the strong presence and profitability of the country's hair and beauty industry and recognise the professionals whose talent, ethos and excellence have put them forward to receive the recognition they deserve,' said the Awards campaign manager.

Winners will be announced on Sunday December 19.

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Popular Glenfinnan river boardwalk 'deteriorated faster than expected'

Repair works to the currently closed Dragonfly Trail boardwalk and bridge overlooking the Callop River and Loch Shiel at Glenfinnan are going to take some time, writes Mark Entwistle.

That wooden walkway and bridge have been closed to the public since July. In October, Glenfinnan Community Council discussed a report from Forestry and Land Scotland design engineer Graeme White.

The Callop footbridge is near the Glenfinnan monument giving access over the Callop River to the east side of Loch Shiel and beyond. The bridge consists of two spans, with a short ramp on the north side and a much longer ramp to the south which continues as a timber boardwalk for 250m. This infrastructure was built around 2006.

Mr White's report outlined problems with the structures

which had been considered serious enough to warrant immediate closure of the bridge.

The main defects were found in the south ramp, including rot in the timber elements, missing cross-bearers and insufficient fixings between the cross-bearers and the posts.

On the bridge proper, the handrails have rotted in small areas and these need replaced.

Mr White stated in his report that each of these defects in

their own right would be serious enough for the bridge to have been closed, as all represented a risk of a sudden failure of a joint, post or decking leading to potentially a serious injury.

Mr White has recommended the affected ramp should be rebuilt, with much of the boardwalk on the approach to the bridge removed. He adds that, since both ramps, the bridge and the first section of boardwalk sit within the Loch

Shiel flood plain, it would be a benefit to remove structures from inside this zone.

Mr White has proposed rerouting the ramp onto the edge of the rocky bluff next to the bridge. It can then continue as a whin dust path outside the flood plain for 40m before descending back onto the line of the boardwalk for 25m.

Asked for an update, an FLS spokesperson told us this week: 'Unfortunately, the structure

deteriorated faster than we expected so we did not have any plans - or available budget - for its replacement.

'We intend to carry out planning, design, and costing work early in the New Year and we will have to discuss with NatureScot plans for work in this designated area, and also submit for planning.

It's likely to take some time to resolve but we hope to do so as soon as possible.

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LT

Unique collection of weather data from Ardnamurchan is 'invaluable'

by Nic Goddard
editor@lochabertimes.co.uk

The subject of climate change is high on the agenda for governments across the world, just weeks after COP26 and the weather has long been a topic of conversation for all of us, with comments on what's happening today and what's forecast for tomorrow often discussed, writes Nic Goddard.

The difference between idle chit chat and real knowledge and understanding, though, comes from scientists recording and studying weather over a long period of time.

Strontian-based Professor Eric McVicar, who lectures international audiences on the effects of climate change on the people and ecology of the Arctic, was recently



Professor Eric McVicar, right, with John Sidebottom, whose unique weather recordings offer important insight for scientists.

gifted a unique database of weather recordings from the Ardnamurchan peninsula going back more than 30 years.

The recordings are the work of retired woodsman, John Sidebottom, who lives in Salen, near Acharacle.

Mr Sidebottom has taken daily readings of rainfall and temperature as well as noting wind direction and other weather features since the 1980s.

What makes these unique records so invaluable for scientific purposes is that all of the measurements were taken with the same thermometer

and rain gauge, giving a constant degree of accuracy only achieved by using the same instruments.

These meticulously maintained meteorological measurements were previously simply for Mr Sidebottom's own records but a period of recent ill health prompted him to consider what would become of his treasured archives and he contacted his long-time friend, Professor McVicar, to give them to him.

Professor McVicar explained: 'I have known John since the 1990s but was totally unaware of these beautifully hand-written records.'

'Data like this is invaluable to scientists and for this reason I have contacted colleagues at the University of the Highlands and Islands who are now seeking funding for

a PhD student to analyse the data. Hopefully, we will soon be able to use John's work to graphically chart the changes in both temperature and rainfall to illustrate the climatic changes since the 1980s here on the Ardnamurchan Peninsula.'

He added: 'One cannot over emphasise the importance of such data. John Sidebottom is what can only be described as a 'true citizen scientist' and an inspiration to us all.'

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LT

Confusion reigns over school buses

by Fiona Scott
fscott@lochabertimes.co.uk

A report on school bus travel had Highland councillors scratching their heads at last week's economy and infrastructure committee.

Opposition councillors asked why Highland Council is looking at service cuts just as the Scottish Government is funding free bus travel for under-22s.

The council brought in external consultants to look at its school bus service. Their report included a number of ideas for improvement as well as cost-cutting measures.

Some of the headline proposals include paying parents to take their own children to school, offering cycling as alternative transport and training inhouse and community bus drivers.

However, money saving was also a strong theme throughout.

The school buses report suggested a review of dual catchment areas for Highland schools. It also flagged up the high cost of school bus

'If people under 22 can travel for free from February 1, 2022... it's potentially a very useful source of savings'

transport for children with additional support needs. The consultants suggest a review of service for these children, as well as proposing enhanced vehicle testing and driver training.

Officers stressed that any review of catchment areas or services for children with additional support needs would go through the education service. This report specifically deals with the procurement and running of bus services rather than policy.

Adding to the confusion, a separate paper to the committee outlined the Scottish Government plan to fund free bus travel for under-22s.

Councillor Derek Loudon said: 'If people under 22 can travel for free from February 1, 2022, and the Scottish Government will pay for that, it's potentially a very useful source of savings.'

He questioned then why service cuts are on the table, arguing it should make the case for service improvement.

However, transport officers were cautious. Transport

planner David Summers said COSLA is in talks with Scottish Government but the council is 'not yet sure' if the scheme will be fully funded.

Mr Summers added that: 'A concessionary scheme does not deliver more buses.'

For example, pensioners in Edinburgh can catch a free bus every few minutes, while pensioners in Durness could wait all day.

This prompted Councillor Ken Gowans to ask: 'Are we prepared for this? There's free bus travel but not enough buses or enough bus drivers.'

Members agreed to the request that more information should come forward to the next committee meeting.

HAVE YOUR SAY
email us at fort@obantimes.co.uk

Knoydart climate group is ready for action...

Knoydart Climate Conversations Working Group has been selected as one of seven Scottish communities to participate in the Community Climate Action Programme delivered by environmental charity Keep Scotland Beautiful.

The new programme will support seven communities from the Highlands to the Scottish Borders to produce tailored community climate action plans.

Keep Scotland Beautiful will support Knoydart Climate Conversations Working Group to begin its actions, signpost them to sources of further advice and funding relevant to their plan and help them establish how they will evaluate impact, over the coming months.

Lachie Robinson from Knoydart Climate Conversations Working Group explained: 'We're so excited about being selected to work with Keep Scotland Beautiful over the coming months to develop our own bespoke plan

to help tackle climate change in our community.

'We're looking forward to our first engagement workshop and will be reaching out to encourage everyone to get involved. Thank you so much to Keep Scotland Beautiful for this fantastic opportunity to further realise our aspirations for positive climate and ecological action on Knoydart.'

'We are so excited to see where this project will lead us and are looking forward to putting in our all as a community. Bring it on!'

Net Zero Secretary Michael Matheson said COP26 coming to Scotland was a unique opportunity to advance the society-wide transformation demanded by the climate crisis and that he was determined to make sure it leaves a lasting legacy.

Over the next few months, through a range of workshops, Knoydart Climate Conversations Working Group will be supported to re-imagine its community with a low carbon future in mind.



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Movie magic as Guides take over the Highland Cinema

by Fiona Scott
fscott@lochabertimes.co.uk

It was curtains up for a group of young ladies last Saturday as they launched their very own takeover of Highland Cinema.

More than 60 Rainbows, Brownies and Guides from across the area came together for a special private showing of Disney's Encanto film.

Brownies from Acharacle, Fort Augustus and Fort William, and Rainbows, Brownies and Guides from Kilmallie Church in Caol all enjoyed the special treat.

'Across the country girls are getting special viewings at Odeon Cinemas and we didn't want our girls to miss out just because there is no Odeon near us,' explained guiding volunteer Faith Kernaghan.

'Our district commissioner Laura Macadam-Slater



More than 60 Rainbows, Brownies and Guides enjoyed a private showing of Encanto at Highland Cinema last Saturday; and right, Louise Giles, divisional commissioner, left, presents long-service awards to leaders Debbie Macadam-Slater, left, and Laura Macadam-Slater, right, from Kilmallie Brownies and Marie-Luise MacDonald from Acharacle Brownies. Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos.

organised our viewing at the Highland Cinema and obtained some funding to help with the cost from Lochaber Community Fundraising which helped enormously.

'The girls thoroughly enjoyed the film and it was so lovely to be able to get together as a group after so long.'

To make the occasion even more special, three local

Guiders were presented with their five-year service awards on the day. Laura Macadam-Slater and Debbie MacAdam-Slater from Kilmallie Brownies and Marie-Luise MacDonald

from Acharacle Brownies. 'It's been a hard couple of years keeping units going when we were unable to meet, but it was great to see so many girls there on Saturday,' added Faith.

Anyone interested in joining as a volunteer or as a Rainbow, Brownie or Guide should visit the Become a Volunteer section at www.girlguidingscotland.org.uk

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CITY PLUMBING

Council's Carron calls it a day after 35 years' public service

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@lochabertimes.co.uk

A senior Highland Council executive with a special remit for Lochaber is calling it a day after 35 years' public service and two decades as a senior council official.

Carron McDiarmid, executive chief officer communities and place, was previously the council's head of policy for many years and led the first phase of council redesign.

Ms McDiarmid said it had been a privilege to work with



Carron McDiarmid, pictured, is to leave Highland Council.

Photograph: Ian Arthur Commercial Photography.

so many committed and talented staff and members over the years at the council.

'Establishing and leading the new Communities and Place Service since 2019 alongside a great team has been especially fulfilling,' she added.

'Their response over the past 20 months has been outstanding; adjusting all our frontline public services for waste, environmental health, amenity, registrar, customer services and bereavement services.

'I've been fortunate to have

had a Lochaber focus too. My Lochaber role has mainly been connecting more with council staff in Lochaber through briefings – virtually during Covid – and local visits to Carr's Corner depot; chairing and resetting the FW2040 Partnership Board which, during my time, has grown from five to eight partner members and developed a healthy programme of work to coordinate investment for Fort William, with next steps to reinvigorate community involvement; connecting with

the Small Isles and Knoydart during visits in September, to understand their ambition and issues, with a focus for me on community support and environmental services; and I'll be depute returning officer for the by-election next month.

'All of these experiences show there are many ways to be active in community and public life and I am keen to explore new opportunities.'

Chief executive Donna Manson paid tribute, saying Ms McDiarmid had been a

'high performing' chief officer in the council's executive chief officer team.

'She is a very experienced, talented and able leader, with a huge amount to offer in any walk of life.

'She will be very much missed by her colleagues and I know she will stay connected,' Ms Manson added.

Ms McDiarmid leaves her post early in the new year. Applications have been invited internally for an interim post pending permanent recruitment to be arranged.

Local MSP welcomes Skye and Lochaber youth parliamentarians

Highlands and Islands MSP Jamie Halcro Johnston has welcomed Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch's new members of the Scottish Youth Parliament.

Aimee Ross MSYP and Lochaber High School pupil Rory Young MSYP were elected last month to represent Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch, and Conservative MSP Mr Halcro Johnston said he looked forward to working with them and had written to them to invite them to meet with him.

Mr Halcro Johnston said the Scottish Youth Parliament, established at the same time as the Scottish Parliament, provided an opportunity for its members to discuss matters which are of particular importance to young people, including issues around education and training, and employment opportunities.

'It also has strong links with the Scottish Parliament, and



Along with Aimee Ross, Rory Young, pictured, will represent Skye Lochaber and Badenoch in his new role as Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament.

the joint committee sessions we've held with the Scottish Youth Parliament's Economy Committee have been extremely useful,' he added.

'Given the challenges communities across my region face trying to ensure good local opportunities are available to stem the departure of signif-

icant numbers of our young people, that engagement is vital.

'I look forward to working with Aimee and Rory over the next few years on some of the key issues of concern to them and to the young people in Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch we all represent.'

Council seeks rise in coastal communities admin funding

Highland Council says it needs a three-fold increase in administration funding for its coastal communities fund.

The council is receiving a bumper £3.2m payment from the Scottish Government this year but says the current three per cent set aside for administration is not enough.

Instead, members of the economy and infrastructure committee will tomorrow be asked to consider a 10 per cent administration fee.

The report says the scheme has proved so popular that it demands huge amounts of officer time.

Last year, staff costs for administering the fund topped £207,000 against a budget of £100,000, says the report.

The Coastal Communities Fund is made up of revenues from the Scottish Government's crown estate marine assets. Council leader Margaret Davidson describes

it as a 'game changer' for remote and rural areas.

In 2020, the Highland Coastal Communities Fund received a two-year allocation topping just over £3m.

However, this year's distribution formula also includes an allowance based on assets. This gives Highland a bigger share, with £3.2m available in 2021-22.

The big question is: How will that money be distributed?

Last year, the council administration proposed that every area should receive a minimum payment, regardless of their share of coastline. This effectively reduced the funding available to rural coastal communities.

Councillors in rural wards strongly protested, voting as a block to receive funds based solely on coastline. Area committees took charge of their own allocation, spending it according to their local prior-

ities. The council did, however, agree to keep a central pot for the coastal fund that would benefit the whole of Highland.

This strategic pot opened in June for two weeks. In that timeframe it received a flood of applications, with 28 expressions of interest, totalling £1.9m. Officers say this proves the popularity of the scheme and also the need for more staff time to manage the applications.

In addition to requesting up to £300k for project management, the council paper suggests retaining the strategic pot. This will fund projects that tackle climate change.

Councillors will have a difficult task in juggling local needs against corporate priorities such as the climate emergency.

Members of the economy committee will debate the issue ahead of a report to full council this week.

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Lochaber benefits from return of the great British holiday post lockdown

Lochaber has been voted the 28th most popular UK holiday destination by readers of Which? magazine, writes Savannah Cobb-Thomas.

And, unlike many UK staycation destinations that lost public interest after the 1960s as the jet age began, it continues to attract visitors both domestic - 78 per cent - and from overseas - 22 per cent.

After the recent pandemic, visit numbers have increased further.

A VisitScotland spokesman said: 'Known as the Outdoor Capital of the UK, Lochaber and Fort William have been a favourite for holidaymakers this summer and after spending so much time at home, demand is once again high for destinations that offer physical and mental wellbeing benefits.'

That title of 'Outdoor Capital' has proved highly appealing to



Lochaber offers the perfect outdoor escapist experience with little travel involved.

many who have spent months being stuck inside. Fort William itself offers the perfect outdoor escapist experience with little travel involved.

After the lows of lockdown, people's attitudes are changing. A recent study shows that people are looking to take smaller, more spaced out

breaks throughout the year rather than long vacations, as shorter, more frequent breaks have been shown to reduce stress and be more beneficial for mental health.

This means people will be looking for shorter travel times meaning staycation destinations are set to trend within the next couple of years. With the coming uncertainty of Brexit, domestic holidays have seen a surge in popularity, with 58 per cent of those asked stating concern about the UK's exit from Europe as their reason.

'Scotland's rural destinations, like Fort William, have always been popular with UK visitors and with the pandemic changing attitudes towards travel, making staycations the focus for many, their popularity has only increased during this time,' added the spokesman. A combination of the

recent pandemic and Brexit has altered the attitude of up to 80 per cent of UK adults towards vacations, with eight per cent stating they don't believe they will travel overseas again and 20 per cent saying they are less eager to travel.

There are varying reasons for these decisions, such as an increased respect for the environment. Up to 15 per cent believe overseas travel just won't be the same and 20 per cent are worried about getting ill abroad, despite flight companies offering insurance and refunds.

Thirty one per cent of the British public find using their own transport an attractive reason to opt for a staycation and after the pandemic many say a staycation can allow them to see family too.

Lochaber provides a huge array of activities and ad-

venture and encapsulates a variety of what people seek in a staycation.

Post lockdown, people are realising they have easy access to amazing locations and all they have to do is pack their car.

However, people have highlighted some of the recent unfortunate side-effects tourism has had with a VisitScotland spokesperson adding: 'Tourism is a force for good and if managed responsibly, supports communities in every corner of Scotland and improves the wellbeing of everyone who experiences it.'

Overall, more staycations rather than vacations should be more beneficial to the environment but, as previously mentioned, responsible tourism is necessary so these locations and Lochaber can be continued to be enjoyed by everyone.

WIN £200 WORTH OF SHOPPING

TROLLEY

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We all spend far too much money over Christmas and New Year, so how great would it be able to fill your shopping trolley COMPLETELY FREE OF CHARGE in January?! Courtesy of our friends at Tesco in Oban, one lucky reader will win the chance to fill their trolley with up to £200 worth of goods (see T&C's for exclusions). All you have to do is collect 4 tokens over four weeks starting on 9th December, get them to us by 10am Tuesday 11th January and you will be entered into a prize draw to win this fantastic trolley dash. What are you waiting for, banish those post-Christmas blues and start collecting your tokens!

All 4 tokens must be sent in a single envelope to Oban Times Trolley Dash Competition Crannog Lane, Lochavullin Industrial Estate Oban, PA34 4HB.

One token from each week is required, multiple entries are allowed, but must be submitted in separate envelopes. Photocopied tokens will not be accepted. Winners must agree to take part in publicity, Employees of Wyvex Media Ltd and their immediate family are not eligible to enter. The editor's decision is final.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Winner must be at Tesco, Lochside, Oban, PA34 4HP for 10.30am January 17th. Excludes tobacco, lottery, baby food, non-food items and alcohol. Quantity limited to two per item. The winner will be given a hand held scanner to monitor spend to the value of £200. We will protect your personal data. We only gather what we need for the requirements of this competition. Entry data will be deleted/disposed immediately upon the competition entry deadline and in a manner appropriate to GDPR regulations. Entrant's details will not be used for any other activity.

DIGITAL SUBSCRIBERS

Digital subscribers who have an active subscription covering the period from December 2021, to February 2022, can enter the competition by sending their name, address and email address that they subscribe with to Oban Times Trolley Dash Competition, Crannog Lane, Lochavullin Industrial Estate, Oban PA34 4HB by 10am Tuesday January 11. Only one entry per subscription permitted. Entrant must be able to attend the trolley dash in Oban on the January 17, 2022.

Island families to benefit from child payment increase

News that the Scottish Government's Scottish Child Payment will be doubled from April next year has been welcomed by SNP MSP for Na h-Eileanan an Iar, Alasdair Allan.

The announcement, by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, will see at least 385 eligible families across the Western Isles receiving £20 per week per child from spring next year, with more than 106,000 children across Scotland immediately benefiting from the increased payment.

Since the launch of the payment in February, £94,110 has been issued in payments to families throughout the Western Isles.

It is now expected that more than 400,000 children could be eligible for the doubled payment by the end 2022 when the benefit, which is unique in the UK, will be extended to children under the age of 16.

Mr Allan said he was delighted that eligible children across the islands will have their Scottish Child Payment doubled in four months to £20 per week - four times the amount originally demanded by campaigners.

'The Scottish Government's national mission to tackle child poverty is absolute, with almost £32 million having been provided to families across Scotland since February,' he added.

Skye and Raasay to benefit from place-based funding

by Fiona Scott
fscott@lochabertimes.co.uk

Four projects in Skye and Raasay will benefit from the area's place-based fund, set up to mitigate the harm caused by the Covid pandemic.

The Highland Council agreed at the financial budget meeting in March 2021 a £100,000 Place Based Investment Fund allocation to each ward for the 2021/22 financial year.

At an area committee meeting on August 30, 2021, an allocation of £14,000 was agreed to retain seasonal amenities staff for an additional two months. Members of the Skye and Raasay area committee have now identified four priority areas for spend against the remaining £86,000 Place Based Investment Fund for the ward.

Isle of Skye and Raasay Area Committee chairman Councillor John Gordon said: 'The proposed projects agreed will benefit a wide range of people living on Skye and Raasay.'

'The community spirit has been remarkable during the Covid-19 pandemic and it is vitally important to support community-steered projects



The Old Man of Storr will benefit from investment in site management and income generation.

in every way possible.' Members agreed the proposed allocation as follows:

■ Old Man of Storr - Investment in site management and income generation - £57,000

■ Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations - Investment in Befriender Scheme to help address social

isolation and loneliness - £20,000

■ Braes Village Hall - urgent repairs to the village hall roof - £2,000

■ Community Resilience and Support - Members indicated a reserve should be retained to support any Covid-related response required, due to the uncertainty of any impact over

the winter. This would operate within the existing terms of the Ward Covid Resilience grant fund and be managed by the Ward Manager - £7,000.

YOURPHOTO

email us at editor@lochabertimes.co.uk
telephone 01397 703003

Islands' future takes step forward

Skye and Raasay Future (SARF), a partnership plan developed by the communities together with Highland Council in conjunction with Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE), is taking another step forward.

The shared vision holds a list of projects requiring grant funding to get off the ground. The plan, published in early September and adopted by the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee, aims to maximise the benefits gained from investments to the area.

The council and HIE are now calling on project leaders to steer the next crucial stage of the process - setting up the board. Ward manager for Skye and Raasay Willie Mackinnon said: 'The collective effort could only work with the communities' representation.'

'We have emailed project leaders asking for their input by Friday December 10, with their views fed back to the project team.'

Malcolm MacLeod, the council's executive chief officer for infrastructure, environment and economy, said: 'We know there will be initiatives and funding for economic recovery. The idea behind SARF is that the community has one shared plan which is a credible and robust case for securing future funding.'

For more information visit www.highland.gov.uk/skyeraasay.

Struggling with rising energy bills? Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureau can help

These are difficult times, but help is at hand for householders worried about the soaring price of energy.

This week, Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureau launches its Big Energy Winter Savings Campaign in partnership with Home Energy Scotland to provide help and advice to anyone worried about paying their energy bills.

The past few months have seen extraordinary changes in the energy market. A huge rise in energy costs has seen some suppliers going out of business and switching suppliers is no longer the way to get a better deal. Quite the opposite, with government advice no longer including switching energy supplier.

Electricity and gas price hikes haven't filtered through to households who are still on fixed price deals. And households using oil and solid fuels have also seen their heating costs go up.

SO WHAT CAN PEOPLE DO?

Jen Broadhurst, Argyll and Bute Citizen's Advice Bureau manager said: 'Everyone's situation is different and the bureau always offers free, confidential and impartial help and advice tailored to individual circumstances.'

Advisers at the bureau can:

- check your entitlement to benefits and grants
- check what you're paying and make sure it's the right tariff for you
- re-structure debt and check what's affordable for you
- help you to understand pre-payment meters
- advise you what to do if your supplier goes out of business
- share energy savings advice for your home

Over the winter, the bureau and Home Energy Scotland will do everything it can to help people stay warm.

Jen added: 'We have lots of tips and hints on our bureau website and Facebook page to help you save on bills. The little changes all add up.'

'Don't wait and worry about rising debts. Get in touch with the bureau and let an adviser help you find out what help is available.'

Asked about energy suppliers going bust, Jen said: 'If your energy supplier goes out of business, don't panic. The supply of energy to your home is protected by Ofgem's safety net and the industry regulator will appoint a replacement supplier for you.'

'But it's a good idea to take a meter reading and take a photograph of your meter showing the reading, if you can.'

'If you have a credit balance on your account this should be protected.'

'If you have a pre-payment meter, the failed supplier should help you to top up until the new supplier takes over. The new supplier should then contact you and take action to ensure you can continue to stay on supply.'

'If you're struggling to afford to top up, get in touch with Argyll and Bute Citizen's Advice Bureau.'



Contact your local bureau on 01546 605550
email info@abcab.org.uk

Visit www.abcab.org.uk
Follow Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureau - Home - Facebook



Communities enjoy big switch-on

UPPER ACHINTORE

Despite the rain and the low temperature, a crowd of nearly 80 locals turned up to hear the Lochaber Community Wind Band and watch young Maxi Maxwell perform the switch-on ceremony for this year's festive Christmas Tree lights in Upper Achintore.

Upper Achintore Regeneration Group's 'Christmas Day in Upper Achintore' poetry competition was won by Maxi who is a Primary 7 pupil at Lundavra Primary School.

The winning poem was chosen by local children's author Barry Hutchinson who had a busy weekend reading all 76 entries and choosing a winner and three runners-up.

All four won a gift courtesy of Highland Council's Tenant Participation Officer Karin McKay and Maxi also had the honour of switching on the lights. Kaela (P7), Nicolas (P4) and Brooke (P4) were the runners-up.



Poetry competition winner Maxi Maxwell had the honour of switching on the Christmas tree lights.

Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos.

Mark Linfield, chairman of UARG, said: 'We had a great response to our poetry competition - many thanks to the staff and teachers of Lundavra Primary for their help.'

'We are also grateful to the wind band for performing in such extreme weather and to Barry for reading all the children's poems.'

Barry sent the following message which has been passed on to the school.

'I was very happy to be asked to judge the Upper Achintore

Christmas poem competition, and settled myself down with my Santa hat on, a mug of hot chocolate, and an unhealthy number of biscuits to read them.'

'What I didn't expect was for the decision to be so difficult. The poems were all brilliant and I felt a full 600 per cent more Christmassy by the time I'd finished reading them.'

'They used some fantastic imagery that made me feel everything from excited and happy to shivering with the

cold. I really enjoyed some of the word choices in the P1 entries to describe their brilliant drawings of Christmas trees and I reckon there are a lot of future poets among them.'

'Choosing a winner was a real struggle and I had to read and re-read at least 20 very strong poems until I finally settled on the winners and runners-up.'

'Everyone who entered should be really proud of themselves and their entries. They were all way better than I was doing at that age.'

Mark added: 'Well done to Maxi and all the other entrants. We were very pleased with the turnout despite the adverse weather and hope to see more local people coming to our meetings.'

Read Maxi's poem at www.obantimes.co.uk/lochaber-2



KILMALLIE

Despite inclement weather, the switch-on ceremony of the Corpach Christmas Tree went ahead last Friday evening.

The children nominated to switch on the lights this year were Banavie Primary School pupils Olly Hadfield and Lilia Samler, above, who stood uncomplaining in the rain as they were introduced to the waiting crowd.

As the children pushed the plunger to switch on the Christmas tree, lights on three 'living' trees were simultaneously illuminated which made for a dramatic impact.

Following the switch-on the crowd retired to Kilmallie Community Centre for tea, coffee and homebaking which was kindly provided

by STAR for Harris.

The Kilmallie Christmas Lights committee would like to thank Vicki Horn's talented young dancers who performed in the hall prior to the switch-on.

Thanks are also due also to the Town Centre Fund whose grant made possible the illumination of two further 'living' trees.

These lights were fitted by Robert Skinner of Thistle Access and wired by Michael Fitzsimons who completed the associated work.

Organisers are also grateful to Linda and Duncan Carmichael of Tradewinds who held a very successful fundraising Race Night for the Christmas Lights Group in October.

Anyone wishing to donate to the Kilmallie Christmas Light Fund can do so at <https://gofund.me/7222474f>



LOCHYSIDE

The newly formed Lochside Community Group held their switch-on last Wednesday night, December 1.

The lights were switched on by brothers Fionn and Odhran Turnbull and excited children were delighted to welcome Santa who gave out some early gifts to celebrate the event.

Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos



Top, Banavie Primary School pupils Olly Hadfield and Lilia Samler switched on the Kilmallie Christmas lights; left, refreshments were provided by STAR for Harris. Photographs: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos

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DISTRICT NEWS

WEST LOCHABER

Transport project appeals for more volunteer drivers

West Lochaber Hospital Transport Project is looking for volunteer drivers.

A statement on the project's Facebook page said: 'We are back and expect to be busy so we would really like to hear from anyone who would like to join our team. All we ask is that you enjoy driving and the company of other people.'

To find out more call 07949 216325 or email hospitaltransport@urram.scot

SPEAN BRIDGE/INVERGARRY

Coire Glas group video conference update

A meeting of Coire Glas Community Liaison Group (CLG) will take place by video conference on Wednesday December 15 at 7pm.

CLG gives members of the community the chance to discuss progress on the proposed Coire Glas pumped hydro storage scheme near Loch Lochy.

The Coire Glas project team will provide an update on activity, including the recently completed ground investigation work and set out timescales for work in 2022.

A postal invitation to all residents within five kilometres of the Coire Glas site boundary was issued earlier this month. Any other residents in Spean Bridge and Invergarry who would like to attend the meeting, which will be held on the Microsoft Teams video conferencing platform, can email coireglas@sse.com for an invitation.

More details of the project and updates on Coire Glas CLG meetings can be found at www.coireglas.com.

ACHARACLE

Community company seeks new directors

Acharacle Community Company (ACC) needs new directors.

Posting on its Facebook page, ACC said: 'It would be really good if someone with an interest in developing the community orchard/garden would be happy to join and help develop this project.'



The Jacobite steam train draws tens of thousands of visitors each year to Glenfinnan to see it cross the famous viaduct. Photograph: Iain Ferguson, The Write Image.

2022 Jacobite steam train schedule confirmed

West Coast Railways, operator of the famous Jacobite steam train that carries thousands of visitors from Fort William to Mallaig every year, has confirmed its 2022 schedule.

Travelling along the West Highland Line, on what is often referred to as 'the greatest railway journey in the world', the Jacobite will head out of Fort William station on Monday April 4.

The service will be operating seven days a week and, for the majority of the season, running two trips daily.

SPEAN BRIDGE

New hospital 'good news for whole of Lochaber'

NHS Highland has said the proposed replacement for Fort William's ageing Belford Hospital is good news for health and social care services across Lochaber.

Commenting after its board meeting on Tuesday November 30 - too late to make last week's print edition of the Lochaber Times - it confirmed the board had approved an initial agreement in relation to the re-design of health and social care services in Lochaber.

One key elements of the programme is the development of a new rural general hospital in Fort William.

NHS Highland told the Lochaber Times: 'This will allow NHS Highland to provide a wider range of health and social care services in a modern site that will be much more accessible than the current facility.'

'This is really good news for communities across Lochaber and we would like to thank the wide range of stakeholders [including service users, carers and staff] who have been involved in developing this proposal.'

'NHS Highland is now awaiting approval from the Scottish Government Capital Investment Group to develop an Outline Business Case so that we can take this project forward.'

'We will also ensure there will be ongoing engagement with the community following Health Improvement Scotland guidance and there will also be opportunities for the public to have their input into the project as it develops.'



LOCH ARKAIG

Culvert collapse closes C1153 road at Loch Arkaig

A collapsed culvert has led to the closure of the C1153 road at Archabi, Loch Arkaig.

Highland Council has issued an emergency closure notice and contractors Fion Construction were due to be on site all this week from 8am on Monday until tomorrow (Friday December 10) to carry out essential repairs.

Their working hours will be from 8am to 4pm each day with amnesties every four hours to allow vehicles and pedestrians through.

WESTERN ISLES

Regional gift card to support community businesses

Shoppers across the Outer Hebrides can now buy a regional gift card to show their support for businesses in their community and help fuel the financial fightback from Covid.

Scotland Loves Local Gift Cards are available to buy, giving people another way in which to shop within their communities by backing a ground-breaking local loyalty scheme.

Local businesses have already started signing up to accept the regional gift card - with customers being urged to buy the cards, either to spend themselves or as gifts to others.

Councillor Roddie MacKay, Leader of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, said: 'By businesses

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Councillor Roddie MacKay, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar leader, with a Scotland Loves Local Gift Card.

and customers getting behind this initiative, we will not only provide an immediate injection of cash but lay the foundations for a stronger future, while highlighting the brilliant businesses we have across the Outer Hebrides.

Delivered by Scotland's Towns Partnership (STP) - the organisation spearheading the Scotland Loves Local campaign - alongside Perth-based Miconex, the programme is the first scheme of its scale in Scotland. The Scottish Government is funding the rollout of the cards.

To buy a gift Scotland Loves Local Gift Card, go to www.scotlandgiftslocal.com.

To find out how to register your business to accept the card, go to www.lovelocal.scot/giftcard.

Comhairle welcomes early years song collection

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has welcomed the launch of Saoghal na Cloinne Bige.

Comprising 26 songs targeted at the early years stage, they were commissioned by the Comhairle and produced by Fèisean nan Gàidheal.

Many of the songs have been specially written for the resource and take a person through

many of the daily tasks in the life of a child, from waking in the morning, a trip to the shops, a visit to granny's and, eventually, bed time.

Comhairle Gaelic education manager Evelyn Coull MacLeod said: 'We are absolutely delighted with this new resource and are certain they will be received well by a local, national and global audience.'

'The songs are beautifully crafted and we know the role of song in creating a language rich environment in the home and educational settings is hugely important.'

'It's never too early to start singing with your children and these songs will be great for both fluent and learners of the language.'

Eilidh Mackenzie, Fèisgoil manager at Fèisean nan Gàidheal, added: 'Working on such a lovely project with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has been a real joy.'

'The five young Gaelic singers we brought on board all did a fantastic job, ably accompanied by musician engineers Pablo Lafuente and Barry Reid.'

'We were keen to ensure the resource was a mix of traditional, but less well-known, Gaelic songs as well as new material.'

'This included setting some poems written by Mairead Hulse to new melodies, some songs by singer and presenter Linda Macleod, as well as Fèisgoil staff writing completely new songs to cover a full day in the life of a baby/toddler.'

The songs are available to download through Apple, Amazon, Spotify and are also available on You Tube.

You can access them via foghlamgaidhlig.com/gaidhlig-saoghal-na-cloinne-bige/

Animations are to be produced to accompany each song in the coming months. The songs, along with many other resources, will also feature on an app currently under development by the Comhairle. If you would like a CD copy of the songs, contact evelyn@gnes.net.

Garden project takes central role in Rotary celebrations

A special event has been held in the Clisham Garden of the Western Isles Hospital.

Gillian McCannon, chairperson of the NHS Western Isles Health Board, unveiled the Our Hospital Garden plaque commemorating 60 years of Rotary in Stornoway.

Thirteen years ago the Clisham Memory Garden, developed as a safe, therapeutic and friendly space for people with dementia, was



Attendees at the Clisham Garden event.

opened to mark the 60th anniversary of the National Health Service.

For the last three years, the Rotary Club of Stornoway has been rejuvenating the garden to provide a sustainable, low maintenance and eco-friendly green space for patients, staff, visitors and others as part of its Our Hospital Garden project.

The day-to-day work is done by Rotarians but none of the development would have been possible without the generous donations and help from many within the community.

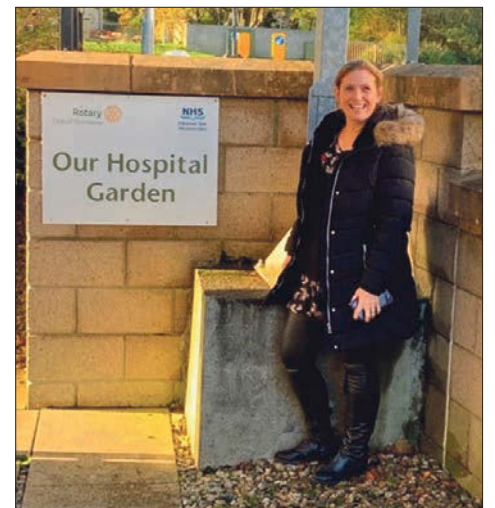
Gordon Jamieson, NHS Western Isles chief executive, said: 'I am extreme grateful we have this long-term project in the hospital grounds that serves our community.'

'Sincere thanks to the Rotary Club, its members, volunteers and those who have donated items, materials and their own time to make this a reality.'

Attending the event were long-standing Rotarian and one-time chairperson of NHS Western Isles Sandy Matheson, president of the Isle of Lewis Probus Club Colin Tucker, many of those who had contributed to the project, health board personnel and Rotarians.

The Rotary district governor for district 1010 Heather Stuart, on her first trip to Stornoway, had visited the garden the day before the unveiling.

Clisham Garden is only part of phase 1 of the Our Hospital Garden project; the creation of a woodland walkway and a wildflower meadow is scheduled for completion by next spring.



Heather Stuart, Rotary District Governor for District 1010.



A colourful corner of the Clisham Garden.

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LETTERS

Well deserved

Congratulations to Sharon Sweeney and Terri Nicolson who have been nominated for a prestigious national hairdressing award – for the third time.

The two opened Stag and Buck in 2017 and have never looked back.

And not only are they first-class hairdressers, they are very community minded too, sponsoring local sports clubs and having supported – and support – a variety of charities and causes in the area.

We wish the team the best of luck in the competition, and look forward to hearing of their success on December 19, when the winners are announced.

Spending over a penny

We cannot believe there is so little entertainment in Fort William that people have to resort to causing damage to public toilets, particularly by setting fire to them.

These facilities offer a vital service to many people, including lorry drivers, and vital NHS and care workers. Not only that, but many are maintained by hard-working community groups. Anyone seeing such mindless vandalism should report the matter to the police.

The editor welcomes letters of approximately 300 words in length for publication on this page.



However we reserve the right to shorten, to amend or to refuse to print them. Names and postal addresses must be supplied, including on emails, to indicate good faith. A daytime phone number is also required for verification. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Please email: editor@obantimes.co.uk or write to: Letters page, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll, PA34 4HB.

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Being mean and miserable helps no one

If Mr Cross (Oban Times, November 25) had any idea of the history and economics of the UK he would probably be aware that the majority of imports that we enjoy and rely on are grown and produced in much poorer countries almost exclusively by non-white, poorly paid people.

Tea, coffee, chocolate, bananas, sugar to start with, historically produced by slave labour. Then the must-have gadgets like mobile phones, laptops, TVs etc – there is only room on the letters page for a few of them.

Just look at any item bought from abroad, how much did you pay for it, where did the components come from, who mined them (lithium), manufactured them, packaged them?

People, of course, often earning pence per hour and often not able to clothe, feed or educate their children – who are likely to be working long hours for even less.

So what is he talking about? £36 million? That's a few grains of sand out of a bucket in comparison to the tax money in many offshore accounts, squirrelled away by British multinationals and wealthy individuals. Those developing nations are the ones that suffer the most by the effects of climate change and poverty due to our consumption and unfair trading practices, so the UK's £100 billion is a shamefully small sum.

If the developed nations of the world had helped to vaccinate everyone worldwide, it is highly likely Omicron might not have spread, just one example of money not being squandered.

Being mean and miserable helps no one.

Arthur, from the Isle of Lismore.

Frustration over last week's Harbour Board meeting

I am writing on behalf of the Oban Community Harbour Development Association (OCHDA) and the community of Oban to express my frustration at the conduct of council officers at last week's Harbour Board meeting.

The report to the board did not take into consideration the impact on Oban of the options being considered and did not recognise the preparatory work that has already been done by OCHDA – many of the fundamental documents that will be necessary totalling 36,000 words.

The board were told the quickest way to get a new Harbour Authority was by either CMAL or Argyll and Bute Council taking control but no

YOUR PICTURES



This beautiful photograph of Ballachulish Harbour was taken and sent in by reader Colin Malcolm of Kentallan who told us it was taken on a recent chilly Sunday morning. If you have a photograph you'd like to share with us, please email a jpeg of no more than 2MB to editor@obantimes.co.uk

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evidence was presented to support this. Then, despite repeated public statements by officers that the council lacked the skills and had no plan to run a Municipal Port, the council report to the board was changed during the meeting, without any warning, recommending the Municipal Port as the preferred option. Though superficially welcome, no discussion of the consequences or the timescale was possible. Council members representing Oban were not informed of the plan to change the recommendation (they were also not consulted in the options appraisal process) and could not question what officers told them, despite the obvious implications, including financial and risk.

Since the meeting OCHDA has been told officers have not started work on the council's 'preferred option' and do not plan to do so until after the next meeting of the Oban Bay Management Group (OBMG) in January, losing another month unnecessarily. If this is as urgent as they said – too urgent to think about a Trust

Port – why haven't they started on the work? How long will it take to set it up? What will it cost to set it up?

Perhaps the reason is they don't want to run the harbour as a Municipal Port and, if they say they haven't started work on it in January, perhaps the OBMG will decide to hand the responsibility to CMAL instead?

What price democracy? OCHDA will not give up the argument: Oban Harbour should be run as a Trust Port. It will be best for Oban, its hinterland and the island communities served from here, best for all the water users and other stakeholders and, in the end, best for the council.

John MacAlister, Chairman OCHDA.

Flawed decision-making

I fear Argyll and Bute Harbour Board was, at best, misinformed on key items relating to timescale, deliverability and finances, all of which should have been key elements when determining their preferred option for the

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future management of Oban Bay last week. Council officers were aware that the Trust Port proposal is by far the most advanced of the three options effectively under consideration.

Unfortunately, despite having agreed that this could be delivered by the end of the 2021 season, it appears that officers did not convey this information to our elected members.

Just 24 hours after the Harbour Board made its decision, OCHDA was advised that the council does not yet have a plan as to how it will progress the project, and that it will be shutting down communication with OCHDA, somewhat at odds with the long-term prospects for a Trust Port.

A second concern relates to the lack of financial material presented to members. Despite the significant increase in vessels using the facility in recent years, the North Pier maritime assets are currently operated at a loss by the council. This is the agreed financial situation, as signed off by the Council Executive Director. OCHDA's financial projections had included a figure of £120,000 to be set against the same assets each year – approximately equal parts for lease payments, maintenance and the creation of a Capital Fund which would only be spent on upgrading the facilities which would still be owned by the council. Again, officers did not inform members of this, despite the obvious benefits to the council. All this information is in the public domain.

Finally, there is the matter of risk to the council – both reputational and financial. In expanding its area of responsibility the council is only able to levy a Conservancy Charge on some of the additional costs which it will incur. It is therefore proposing to significantly expand an operation which already struggles to pay for itself by taking on additional responsibilities from which the legislation prevents it from generating an operating surplus.

Readers may be aware of the 2020 Audit Scotland 'Best Value' report relating to the performance of Argyll and Bute Council. The report recommendations included the following: 'we urge significantly increased pace and depth of improvement and in doing so making greater use of the potential for engaging, enabling and empowering the communities of Argyll and Bute', and that Options Appraisals should include robust financial evaluation.

It is clear that, so far as Oban Bay is concerned, the council does not consider either of these recommendations to be appropriate. Again, further source for concern.

Chairman, Oban Bay Stakeholder Group.

Hydro scheme not the positive change some believe

Nothing remains the same these days, however we have to hope any change is for the better.

Reading the account of the opening of Morvern's latest hydro scheme in the Lochaber Times of December 2, the feeling of a large number of indigenous residents suggests that this isn't the case, not least because of the colossal amount of borrowed money required to build it during a global pandemic and the lack of transparency showing how the local community will actually benefit. Power is being sold to the national grid which residents will soon be compelled to pay back at twice the cost. What gain or fairness to this small, fragile community on the edge?

Due to its remoteness, Barr was one of the last places in the Morvern peninsula which could be termed a wilderness, making it a haven and special place for fur, feather and flora.

Top of the list was a large and obviously healthy population of the now universally rare wildcat, which the Scottish Government makes a priority species worthy of its protection.

This was drawn to the attention of NatureScot and the developer in the early stages. They went into denial about their existence and nothing was done to minimise disturbing them, no doubt to hasten Holyrood's renewables policy.

Hopefully they have not fled the scene altogether or perished in the attempt – but what loss will a few moggies make to the developer anyway, even although they are among the rarest animals in Europe?

Iain Thornber, Morvern.

Beachd Ailein

ALLAN CAMPBELL

ailean@obantimes.co.uk



Le dìreach dà latha deug chun na Nollaige bidh sibh mar a' mhòr-chuid, a' smaoinichadh air tiodhlacan na ràithe agus 's dòcha nas cudromaiche buileach cò tha airidh air an seòrsa aithne a tha tiodhlac a' comharrachadh. Gun teagamh thèid mòran thiodhlacan a libhrigeadh air sgàth càirdeis is eòlais, seach 's dòcha aithne air coibhneas neo seirbheis shònraichte a thugadh tron bhliadhna. Chan eil mi air chor sam bith ag ràdh nach eil tiodhlacan uile ceart is iomchaidh mar a' rùnaicheas sibh, ach saoilidh mi gum bheil e inntinneach da-rìribh beachdachadh air a' bhliadhna a dh'fhalbh agus air feadhainn a rinn rudeigin àraid. 'S dòcha nach robh ann ach cuideigin a' coileanadh dreuchd, ach gun d' rinn e neo i sin ann an dòigh a bha càirdeil, taiceil, blàth.

Neo theagamh gur e coigreach nach fhaca sibh riamh roimhe is nach fhaic tuilleadh a bh' ann, cuideigin air nach eil ainm neo aithne agaibh, ach a nochd coibhneas dhuibh san dol seachad. Nach mòr an togail ann an saoghal a tha cho dorcha aig amannan, gum bheil gnìomhan coibhneil ann an nàdar uimhir den t-sluagh. Chunnac mi litir ann am pàipear ionadail bho chionn latha neo dhà bho chàraid a tha ciormach is iad a' toirt taing dha dithis chaileag-sgoile a ghiùlain am biadh a bha iad seo air a cheannach ann an taigh-bidh chun a' bhùird dhaibh. 'S math gu dearbh a rinn na h-ighnean, ach an robh an litir air dhòigh ag ràdh gun robh

an gnìomh na annas ann an aithne nam feadhna a fhuair cuideachadh?

Ach, a bharrachd air mo theaghlach, co dha bheirinn fhìn an seòrsa aithne àraid air am bheil mi a' bruidhinn? Uill gun teagamh sam bith bhiodh luchd-obrach sheirbheis na slàinte uile glè àrd air an liosta agam. 'S dòcha gun canadh cuid nach eil iad ach a' dèanamh an cuid obrach mar a tha sin na dhleastanas orra, ach saoilidh mise gum bheil fianais gu leòr feadh na Rìoghachd gum bheil na sgiobaidhean sin a' libhrigeadh an dleastanas, agus a' chòrr, agus gum bheil a' bhuil air mòran aca a th' air an claidh le mòr-sgiths gu ìre a tha a' cur an slàinte fhèin an cunnart. Ach tha iad a' cumail a' dol, mo mhìle beannachd orra! 'S tric a chluinnear an abairt gum bheil mòran eòlaich aig a' mhòr-chuid againn, ach àireamh glè bheag de shàr charaidean. Tha mi den bheachd gum bheil sin fìor agus tha mi 'n dòchas gum bheil sibhse uile a tha a' leughadh seo cho fortanach 's gum bheil sàr charaid(ean) agaibh. Chan iarradh mo shàr charaid fhìn a bhith ga ainmeachadh ann an suidheachadh den t-seòrsa seo, ach abair gum bheil mi gam mheas fhèin beannaichte gum bheil a leithid ann, agus bidh mi cinnteach sin innse dha aig an àm seo, agus tron bhliadhna air fad!

Nuair a thig e gu tiodhlacan chan eil dad as luachmhoire, neo a bheir bàrr air càirdeas agus coibhneas!

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

It's hard to believe that Christmas is only a few weeks away. And what a strange Christmas it will be – with the challenge of Covid still very much with us, we know that we may well face restrictions not unlike those of last year, even as we celebrate.

As we see the Christmas trees decorated, tinsel in the shops, and festive lighting in the streets, we perhaps need the gentle reminder that we are not there yet. For Christians this is the season of Advent. Advent is a not-so-festive season when we prepare ourselves for the great events we celebrate at Christmas – the coming of God to dwell amongst us in the child Jesus, the Son of God. But for all of us, whether we're Christian or

not, it is well worth dwelling on the preparation.

For Jews the week-long festival of light, Hanukkah, has just concluded. For Hindus and Sikhs, their day festival of light was at the beginning of November. It is striking that for many of the world's faiths, there comes a festival in winter to celebrate the coming (or the return) of light and of hope in the midst of darkness. The getting-ready for all these events was and is as crucial as the thing itself.

Whatever your religious tradition, and however you celebrate in this season, I wish you a good preparation, as well as a happy Christmas.

**The Rt Revd Dr Keith Riglin,
Bishop of Argyll and The Isles**



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Glasgow Letter

ROBERT ROBERTSON

robert.d.robertson@hotmail.co.uk



Trail West on stage at Darvel Music Festival, which Robert missed – along with the rest of the band – due to him having tested positive for Covid.



The annual Park Bar quiz, Quiz in the Park, which I previewed recently, was cancelled this week due to Storm Barra – an ironic name for a storm that caused the cancellation of such a West Coast event.

Unfortunately, it is not the only event that will not be happening this December in Glasgow. There have been no association dances, no annual Vatersay Boys projection into insanity in the Barrowlands, and no George Square Christmas market this year.

Although there are numerous different reasons for all of this, it is perhaps just as well that Glasgow will be having a slightly quieter Christmas period this year, given the emergence of the new Omicron variant.

I, for one, will certainly be having a quiet few days. I have been in isolation since last Thursday having tested positive for coronavirus.

I was just about to leave the flat for Elfingrove – Scotland's biggest ice rink by the Kelvingrove museum – when a lateral flow test came back

positive. I immediately got a PCR which soon confirmed I have the virus and I have been locked up ever since.

Thankfully, the symptoms have been very mild. My only real complaint is the loss of taste, but I am trying a few interesting tactics to recover it. I have bit into a lemon (couldn't taste anything), chewed on a chilli pepper (didn't flinch) and, if my taste has not returned by Friday evening, my plan is to pour myself a Laphroaig or something similarly peaty.

Surely the virus will be no match for that unique flavour! I will keep you updated.

In seriousness, the most gut-wrenching part of the whole experience was having to postpone our Tide Lines show on Friday night in Darvel Town Hall, Ayrshire, which is a gig we have always enjoyed over the years. That gig will now happen in March next year and thankfully Horo, who were also on the bill, were on hand to put on a gig of their own for those who had travelled for the

weekend to Darvel Music Festival. The following night, revellers enjoyed Trail West and Skerryvore – so I dare say, with that fantastic line-up of bands, my absence was not felt too keenly!

If all those postponements and cancellations are getting you down, and you are in search of alternative ways to spend the winter nights, then never fear, there will soon be a new album to listen to from a Uist band who are really one of the most sought after on the scene at the moment.

Beinn Lee announced last week that their second album, Deò, will be released on Friday December 17. Pre-orders are available from the band's website and will be shipped first class the week starting Monday December 13 to hopefully guarantee delivery before Christmas.

I will certainly be reviewing that record when it comes out, as I did their excellent first album, Osgarra. If only it was out a little bit earlier and it might help me through this isolation.

Virtual wardrobe at the Highland Folk Museum

For those who have always wanted to wear a real piece of history, help is at hand from the Highland Folk Museum.

The open air museum has created two new Instagram and Facebook filters, allowing people to try on two historic bonnets – a classic white cotton mutch, and a green woollen tam o'shanter.

The bonnets are real objects from the museum's collection that date from around the end of the 19th century.

Project Officer Helen Pickles said: 'We wanted to create a fun and engaging way to experience textile objects from our collection, and see what can be achieved with augmented reality (AR) technology.'



The tam o'shanter can be virtually tried on via the museum's social media apps

'The tam o'shanter is a classic Scottish bonnet and the one from our collection was occasionally worn by former curator Ross Noble, and we have some photos of him wearing it at previous events held at the museum.'

'The white cotton mutch with

ribbon ties is another quintessential Scottish bonnet, worn to keep a woman's hair clean and tidy whilst she went about her jobs on the croft.

'Although we now don't physically try on the objects in the collection, this new filter will let anyone try on the hats.'

To celebrate these very Scottish bonnets, the filters were launched on St Andrew's Day. The two filters need to be accessed through the Instagram and Facebook phone apps and the museum is encouraging people to share their snaps through social media.

The digital dress-up is part of the Folk and Fabric project at the Newtonmore museum, aiming to showcase items from the collections online and offer 360-degree tours of five of the historic buildings. It is due to launch early next year.

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WEST SIDE STORY



FRIDAY 10TH DECEMBER

West Side Story (PG) 10:30am, 12:30pm, 4pm + 7:30pm.
Highlands From The Air (U) 11am. A Boy Called Christmas (PG) 2pm.
Ghostbusters: Afterlife (12a) 4:30pm. House Of Gucci (15) 7:15pm.

SATURDAY 11TH DECEMBER

Encanto (PG) 10:30am. West Side Story (PG) 1:15pm, 4pm + 7:30pm.
A Boy Called Christmas (PG) 1:30pm.
Ghostbusters: Afterlife 4:30pm. House Of Gucci (15) 7:15pm.

SUNDAY 12TH DECEMBER

A Boy Called Christmas (PG) 11am. Highlands From The Air (U) 11:15am.
West Side Story (PG) 12:30pm, 4pm + 7:30pm. Encanto (PG) 1:30pm.
Ghostbusters: Afterlife (12a) 4:15pm. House Of Gucci (15) 7:15pm.

MONDAY 13TH DECEMBER - ALL SHOWN WITH SUBTITLES

Highlands From The Air (U) 11am. A Boy Called Christmas (Bairns At The Box Office) 11:15am. West Side Story (PG) 12:15pm, 3:45pm + 7:15pm. Spencer (15a) 1:45pm. Ghostbusters: Afterlife (12a) 4:30pm.
House Of Gucci (15) 7:30pm.

TUESDAY 14TH DECEMBER

House Of Gucci (15) 1pm. West Side Story (PG) 1:30pm, 4:20pm + 7:15pm.
A Boy Called Christmas (PG) 4:45pm.
Ghostbusters: Afterlife (12a) 7:45pm.

WEDNESDAY 15TH DECEMBER

West Side Story (PG) 10:30am, 12:15pm, 3:45pm + 7:45pm.
Highlands From The Air (U) 11am. House Of Gucci (15) 1:45pm. A Boy Called Christmas (PG) 5:10pm. Royal Opera Live: Tosca (12a) 7:15pm.

THURSDAY 16TH DECEMBER

Highlands From The Air (U) 11:15am. West Side Story (PG) 12pm, 3:30pm + 7pm. Spider-Man: No Way Home (12a) 12:30pm, 4pm + 7:30pm.



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Runners set off along the forest track at Erracht, Spean Bridge. Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos.

Athletic Club members out in force for cross country event

Junior and senior Lochaber Athletic Club members were out in numbers for the first time in many years on Saturday at the North District Cross Country Championships.

The course at Gordonstoun School was heavy and muddy but scenic with a small loch and trails through woodland.

The early rainfall did not dampen the spirits of the juniors who were placed in the under 13 girls, with Maddison Macmillan in 12th in the 3k race and Isla Cant 14th.

Angus Davies and Osian Bellshaw were 16th and 17th respectively in the under 13 boys' race.

Fraser Anderson and Dylan Martin ran well in the under 17 age group, taking eighth and 13th places.

All of the Lochaber athletes are in the younger end of their age groups and should progress further next year.

Lochaber women came from under the radar to take bronze in the team race. The counters in the challenging 8km event were Isla Mackay, Lisette Walter, Grianne Shaw, Sam Potter and Zoe Douglas. The race was won by Catriona Fraser of Inverness Harriers in 31:11 mins. Isla was ninth overall in 33:50 and third in the senior woman category.

A team of Lochaber men, largely with experience in hill running, competed in a field of almost 100. Finlay Wild stayed in touch with the leaders on the first lap and pushed winner, Fraserburgh athlete Max Abernethy (25:40) and Scottish international Kenny Wilson of Moray Road Runners (25.57), for much of the race before finishing third in 26:08.

It was a tight competition for the team title with the Lochaber men splitting the pre-race favourites to take the silver medals.

Team placings were Finlay



Lochaber Athletic Club ladies with their bronze medals.



Lochaber Athletic Club members were full of team spirit at Gordonstoun on Saturday.

Wild, with Liam Hutson 11th in 27:47, then Alan Ross 28:50, former under 17 district champion Callum Fraser 29:24, Es Tresidder 29:32, Alfie Bentley 29:58, Simon Drysdale 30:40, Louis Waterman-Evans 30:56, Nick Sedgwick 31:00, Ruairaidh MacKenzie 31:27, Fraser Mackenzie 32:04, Matt Bradley 32:05, Donald Lamont 32:44 and Connor Gamble 33:06. Alan Ross 28:50 and Es Tresidder 29:32 were second and third veterans respectively.

After a difficult two years with few racing opportunities, this was the lift Lochaber needed to kickstart a busy winter league programme and team hill and road races in the coming year.

Thanks to everyone for their support, including club,

coaches, and to the two drivers Alan Ross and Sara Bellshaw.

On Sunday, attention turned back to the local league with a big turnout for the Beinn Bhan Bash over the Erracht course - the hilliest race in the league.

LAC took the top three spots - and nine of the top 10 - with just Javi Cabrera Vaides from Highland Hill Runners interrupting the flow with a fourth place.

George Fisher was the winner with Alan Ross and Ruairaidh Mackenzie in second and third respectively.

HHR's Caroline Marwick won the ladies section with Amanda Blackhall first LAC and first in category, followed by Hannah Ward-Penny, then Edie Moynihan and Eilidh Moynihan.

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SHINTY ROUND-UP

Gareth Evans is the new Oban Camanachd manager

Gareth Evans was voted in as Oban Camanachd manager at last week's annual general meeting.

'Some folk have mentioned this has been a long time in the making,' said the new boss. 'I've always had my eye on managing Oban Camanachd one day but the truth is I was very happy looking after Lochside Rovers and I thoroughly enjoyed doing that.'

Certainly, no-one can accuse Gareth Evans of not serving his apprenticeship. After breaking into the Oban Camanachd first team in 1994, he played in a side which reached six Camanachd Cup finals in nine years, lifting the famous trophy in 1996 after beating Kingussie 3-2 in the final in Inverness.

He hung up his caman at the end of the 2014 season and immediately took charge of a Lochside Rovers side which had notched fourth, then fifth place finishes after winning South 1 in 2012.

Gareth comes into the Oban Camanachd role on the back of two spells managing Lochside Rovers; 2015 to 2018 and 2020 to 2021. One league title - and twice losing out by the finest of margins - a Sutherland Cup and a Bullough Cup were won during that time. Evans was also involved towards the end of Brian MacCallum's 2019 reign when Lochside did the Sutherland and Bullough double. His efforts were recognised when he was named Mowi South Division 1 Manager of the Year in 2015 and 2017.

It is of equal importance that a number of young players

were guided on their way from youth shinty to first team shinty at Oban Camanachd during his tenure, with one or two even turning out for Oban Celtic.

Gareth Evans takes over from Stephen Sloss who stood down at the end of the abridged 2021 season and he recognises the magnitude of the job.

He said: 'It's a big step up from managing Lochside and it will be strange to an extent given I'm friends with a few of the boys but I will put my all into this and I'm sure all the players will too.'

Gareth Evans now turns his attention to planning for the 2022 shinty season and he added: 'We have a good squad and the aim is to push on and win some of the national competitions. Oban Camanachd will always be in with a shout of winning the Celtic Society Cup but we really want to strive for national success and we have the players to do it.'

Artemis Macaulay Cup Draw

One of the pre-season highlights saw the 2022 Artemis Macaulay Cup draw take place live on Oban FM on Saturday December 4.

The Macaulay Cup, first presented in 1947 by then Oban Times editor Flora Macaulay, is the only cup format in senior shinty to be played on a regional basis so guaranteeing a final between a south and north side. Eligibility is mainly based on the previous year's league placing and there was just one change from the south teams who competed last season as Col Glen returned to the competition, replacing Ballachulish. The north half of the draw remained unchanged.

The Macaulay Association was well represented as

Gerry Kilmurray drew the home sides, with Les Kinving picking the away sides. Davie Hamilton was also in attendance. Just like last year, Oban Celtic and Oban Camanachd were both given home draws but both face tough ties. Oban Celtic play Scottish Sea Farms Glasgow Celtic Society Cup winners Kyles Athletic, whilst Oban Camanachd welcome fellow Mowi Premiership side Glasgow Mid Argyll.

Fort William have a tricky trip to the Dell to play Kingussie, whilst Kilmallie will test Lovat at Canal Parks.

The tie of the round is the meeting between Newtonmore and Kinlochshiel at the Eilan.

The draw in full is:

Artemis Macaulay Cup first round - Aberdour v Bute; Inveraray v Col Glen; Oban Celtic v Kyles Athletic; Oban Camanachd v Glasgow Mid Argyll; Kingussie v Fort William; Kilmallie v Lovat; Newtonmore v Kinlochshiel; Lochaber v Caberfeidh.

Artemis Macaulay Cup quarter finals - Oban Celtic/Kyles Athletic v Aberdour/Bute; Oban Camanachd/Glasgow Mid Argyll v Inveraray/Col Glen; Lochaber/Caberfeidh v Kingussie/Fort William; Newtonmore/Kinlochshiel v Kilmallie/Lovat.

Artemis Macaulay Cup semi-finals - Oban Celtic/Kyles Athletic/Aberdour/Bute v Oban Camanachd/Glasgow Mid Argyll/Inveraray/Col Glen; Lochaber/Caberfeidh/Kingussie/Fort William v Newtonmore/Kinlochshiel/Kilmallie/Lovat.

The South Artemis Macaulay Cup semi-final takes place at Mossfield with the North last four tie at Braeview Park, Beaulieu.

The Artemis Macaulay Cup Final takes place at Mossfield with the dates for all ties still to be confirmed. Kingussie are the current holders, having beaten Kyles Athletic 4-1 in last season's final.



The victorious Beaulieu Under 17 team with the MacTavish Juvenile Cup. Photograph: Neil Paterson.

MacTavish Juvenile Cup

Elsewhere, Beaulieu Under 17s won the MacTavish Juvenile Cup, beating Kingussie Under 17s 4-0 in the final at Braeview Park. Kieran Rennie and Finlay 'Stork' MacLennan scored in the first half, with MacLennan getting his second after the restart and Finlay MacLennan adding a fourth late on.

The WJ Cameron Under 17 Development Cup Final between Aberdour Under 17s and Inverness Under 17s was postponed, as was the Camanachd Association Under 14 Development Cup Final between Bute Under 14s and Strathspey Camanachd Under 14s.

Fort William AGM

Fort William Shinty Club will hold their annual general meeting at their An Aid clubhouse on Monday December 13.

Fort William suffered the same Covid-related difficulties as other clubs last season but their first team did well in their regionalised league and reached the cottages.com MacTavish Cup semi-finals. The Fort William second team



Beaulieu captain Euan MacCormick with the MacTavish Juvenile Cup. Photograph: Neil Paterson.

reached the Strathdearn Cup semi-finals.

There is much to be optimistic about with the opening of Fraser's Field next to An Aird, the success of the Shinty Street League and Willie MacDonald's appointment as the club's development officer.

The annual general meeting starts at 7.30pm. All members are requested to attend and encouraged to vote.

Macmillan Nurses collection

A collection at the inaugural Alasdair Morrison Memorial Cup match between Skye Camanachd and Lochcarron raised £1,017 for Macmillan Nurses.

The Morrison family are overwhelmed by the support, kindness and generosity shown to them and extend their heart-felt thanks to everyone who contributed.

Mowi National Awards

The 2021 Mowi Awards will be a 'virtual' celebration of achievements, replacing the usual annual ceremony, to respect and celebrate the achievements of shinty's sportsmen and women and their impact on their community during the unique years of 2020 and 2021.

These unique Mowi Awards aim to recognise the extraordinary efforts and incredible

endeavour that was required to deliver a shinty season in 2021.

This year's awards will be based on the important values on which shinty and its communities are built and upon which Mowi, shinty sponsors for the past 35 years, and the Camanachd Association operate. Nominations can be made at the Camanachd Association website www.shinty.com

Mabel Sloggie

The Women's Camanachd Association (WCA) was amongst the many clubs and associations to express their sadness at the passing of Mabel Sloggie on Friday December 3.

Mabel Sloggie was the wife of the late John Sloggie and shinty played a huge part in both their lives. A WCA statement said: 'Mabel followed her husband and her sons in the sport but she also broke down barriers in her own right as an official, goal judging at many games. She always proudly carried and showed off her Macaulay Final medal. She also put in countless hours alongside John making Munro Camans and the WCA were grateful when the couple supplied beautiful black camans for the winning captain of the Valerie Fraser Women's Camanachd Cup. A formidable lady, Mabel will be sorely missed by the shinty community.'

The deepest sympathies from the shinty world go to Mabel's sons Eddie, Matthew, Mark and Peter and their respective families.

Kinlochshiel boost as manager Gill stays on

Tulloch Homes Camanachd Cup and cottages.com MacTavish Cup double winners Kinlochshiel celebrated their most successful season at their recent annual dinner dance and awards night at Dornie Hall.

And the celebrations were cranked up a notch or two with the news that manager Johnston Gill, who was widely tipped to stand down at the end of the season, is to stay on for one more year along with his trusted assistant Doe MacRae.

Kinlochshiel skipper Keith MacRae said: 'This is a great thing for the club. Johnston gets on well with all the players and knows their strengths and weaknesses and how to get the best out of them.'

'He also knows our second team very

well so knows who will be ready to take the next step. That's important and the need to always look towards our developing players is something we are aware of as a club.'

Albert Smith medal winner Conor Cormack presented Johnston Gill with a specially engraved commemorative caman made by Roddy MacLennan to mark the cup double winning season.

Keith MacRae, who grabbed a hat-trick as his side beat Lovat 3-1 to win the Scottish for the first time, was awarded the Duncan MacRae Cup as first team players' player of the year.

Archie MacRae netted the third goal in a 3-2 victory over Kingussie in the cottages.com MacTavish Cup Final and was voted second team players' player of the year, receiving the Tommy

MacKenzie Cup. The committee's player of the year award went to the whole Kinlochshiel first team for their history making cup double and Paul MacRae, who missed the MacTavish Final after suffering a serious knee injury in a league match against Lochaber, came forward to collect the Kenny Wilson Cup.

The Ian 'Dubh' Memorial Shield for Under 21 player of the year went to the versatile Duncan Matheson who was a top performer in both finals.

The Ray Coghill Memorial Shield goes to the Kinlochshiel Ladies most improved player and Tegan Bruce was given that accolade.

Maree MacKenzie was nominated for the Kinlochshiel Ladies Players' Player of the Year prize.

Referee injury stops Lochaber in their stride

by Fiona Scott

fscott@lochabertimes.co.uk

Lochaber RFC - 7
Cumbernauld 10

West Region League Div 3

Lochaber hosted Cumbernauld on Saturday in a top of the table clash which saw the hosts in third position and their opponents in second.

Before the match both teams paid their respects to Scotland international Siobhan Cattigan who tragically lost her life.

It was a very tight affair in the first half but, much like the previous week, Lochaber made things easy for their opposition by giving away silly penalties resulting in the loss of valuable territory.

Lochaber finally made the breakthrough. After an error at the lineout, Andy Bell managed to catch the ball to retain possession and from the ruck Matt Murray passed the ball out to Ryan Davies who swung the ball long to Henry Luke who handed off his opposite man to run in for the try. Davies converted to make it 7-0.

Bell was then given a team yellow card after a build-up in penalties against Lochaber with eight minutes to go in the first half. Cumbernauld took advantage of the extra man to score out wide just before half time to make it 7-7 at the break.



Referee Gillian Frew had to be lifted from the pitch after sustaining a leg injury during the game. Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos.

Cumbernauld took the lead in the second half with a penalty to make it 7-10.

On the 61st minute Cumbernauld had a lineout in Lochaber's 22 but they knocked it on. The ball was passed out to Jonathan McCook who was breaking away with support outside him, and only two defenders to beat, when referee Gillian Frew collapsed to the ground saying something had gone in her leg. Gillian was lifted off the pitch signalling the end of the game.

Lochaber now travel away to Birkmyre on Saturday. Kick off 2pm at Birkmyre Park, Kilmacolm.



Henry Luke takes down a Cumbernauld player. Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos.



Jonathan McCook ready to take down a Cumbernauld player. Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos.



Ryan Davies passes to Calum Boyd. Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos.

FA Cup run comes to an end for Kinlochleven lads

South Lochaber Thistle's run in the FA Cup came to a halt in the fourth round when the Kinlochleven outfit travelled to Dregghorn to take on New Farm Loch from the Ayrshire Premier League on Saturday, writes Fiona Scott.

Never having made it past the first round of the competition, the Jags were keen to know how far they could take this exceptional run of cup form.

However, two fixtures in a week saw Thistle miss Andrew Mclean who was struggling with a groin strain and then lose Keir Kennedy during the warm-up. Despite these set

backs it was a strong SLT side that took to the field.

New Farm Loch had the best of the opening play, keeping SLT hemmed into their defensive third.

An ill-timed challenge in the box gave the home side the opportunity to score from the spot and with 22 minutes on the clock Alan Parker duly despatched the finish.

SLT couldn't get into their rhythm and struggled to make any clear cut chances with keeper Ryan Boomer having to make a handful of saves to keep NFL at bay until half time

At half time the management

team of Alan Gray and Albie Robertson let the players know in no uncertain terms that they were not living up to their potential or the coaches' expectations.

The team talk seemed have some of effect with the Jags getting onto the ball and looking likely to cause issues for the NFL back line.

It made the next goal conceded even more disappointing. Ten minutes into the second half, a corner kick was driven in the box and the ball was hammered home off the cross bar and into the back of the SLT net by Parker.

This spurred Albie and Gray to make a change. The hard-working Archie Gillies was sacrificed to get the pace of young Lewis Murphy onto the park with the Jags changing to a 4-3-3 formation.

With the fresh legs on the park, the Jags scored next. A tidy lay off from Martin Munro fell for Dave Forbes who slammed home a first time hit from inside the box.

Leighton Stephenson, who had put in a power of work, then made way for Roberto Rodriguez Santos to make his SLT debut.

There was a feeling that SLT

could go and grab an equaliser but unfortunately it wasn't to be with NFL scoring the sucker punch goal as the game opened up.

Ryan Beveridge was the man to put the tie out of contention with eight minutes left on the clock. Final score 3-1.

Reflecting on a week which had seen his team draw with a Highland League side and then get dumped out of the Scottish Cup, manager Alan Gray said: 'It has been a great run in the cup - even with having to win through the second round twice.

'Ultimately, it was disap-

pointing to not get the equaliser today but it's fair to say that we didn't play nearly well enough to deserve the victory.

'We wish New Farm Loch the very best in the next round and for the rest of their season and want to say a huge thanks for their fantastic hospitality as well.'

South Lochaber Thistle return to league action next week with a trip to St Patrick FPs AFC 2s, the team currently sitting atop the Greater Glasgow Premier League, a mere 29 points ahead of SLT, although having played nine games more than the Jags.

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Claggan gets seal of approval from the Jags

by Fiona Scott
fscott@lochabertimes.co.uk

Fort William 2
South Lochaber Thistle 2

FRIENDLY

If this mid-season friendly match proved anything it was that Claggan Park is capable of hosting a football match as Fort William invited neighbours South Lochaber Thistle (SLT) to christen the reopened venue.

Although the Highland League committee had voted to maintain the host side's ban from playing league games at home, the hosts were determined to prove that their newly laid turf was fit to match their evolving squad.

However, in the only other fixture between these two sides the plucky Kinlochleven amateurs had bested the paid players and the Jags were determined to prove they are anything but poor relations.

The game opened in cagey style with SLT having the better of it. Veteran midfielder Dave Forbes, defenders Kieron Lopez and Lewis Campbell having to be strong in the challenge.

As so often is the case, however, it was Thistle's captain Martin Munro, who opened the scoring, the wizard on the wing netting to put the visitors 1-0 up.

Momentum swung, however, and one of Fort William's trialists pulled the game back to level pegging and the scores



Above, Celebrations as SLT take first blood; Fort's second goal hits the net; Fort's Taylor Kelly races Martin Munro as he speeds towards the Fort goal. Photographs: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos.

remained at 1-1 at the break.

In the second half, young striker Archie Gillies came into his own. The busy forward was harrying defenders, forcing errors from the home side and generally making a nuisance of himself.

At the other end of the park, keeper Declan Wilson had to be in fine form himself to stop Fort taking the lead and had several outstanding saves low to his corners to contend with.

It was the home side who took advantage next, however. A short corner routine caught the Jags napping and Robbie Foster bundled in a finish to edge the Highland League strugglers in control at 2-1.

But Munro had been the outstanding player on the park and he was not about to snatch defeat from the jaws of at least a draw. Gillies shot towards

goal and the keeper did well to save the shot, however, Munro reacted quickest, volleying a high flying and unstoppable shot into the net for parity at 2-2.

Chances came and went for both teams. Forbes could have won the game with a snapped volley from the edge of the box which went agonisingly wide.

In the visitors' defence, youngster Marc Maclean stopped Fort going 3-2 up, surging across the turf in a covering run and clearing the ball off the attacker's toe.

Manager Alan Gray said: 'I'm very proud of the way the team performed tonight and I just hope this goes to show that football in Fort William and the surrounding area is strong.'

'It's especially nice to know that we are still undefeated



against Highland League opposition.

'We aim to provide football from cradle to grave and it is great to see so many players who have come through the Fort William youth system getting the chance to show the town that they don't lack

ambition. There is real talent here in this area and they want to play.

'We want to extend our thanks to John Trew for arranging the friendly and wish Fort all the best on their quest to be allowed to play at home again in the league.'



Incoming manager Shadab Iftikhar gives directions from the sidelines.

Photograph: Iain Ferguson

Holyrood welcome for Fort William FC coach Shadab

The appointment of a new manager to Fort William Football Club has been highlighted at Holyrood.

Highlands and Islands MSP Donald Cameron submitted a motion to the Scottish Parliament welcoming the appointment of Shadab Iftikhar, whose footballing career has included posts in the north-west of England, Mongolia and the South Pacific.

Mr Cameron said: 'There can't be many people whose career has taken them from Wigan to Lochaber via Mongolia and Samoa, so Shadab certainly brings unique experience and perspective to Fort William Football Club.'

'I'm sure Shadab will receive a very warm welcome from the team's supporters and I wish him every possible success as he takes over the reins at the club.'

Shadab was present at last week's home game against South Lochaber Thistle at Claggan Park and will begin his tenure at the club on Monday December 27.



The Lochaber Times: 95p

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Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday 9 December, 2021** are listed below with differences for major ports listed alongside. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

9	0305 1.1 0906 3.7 TH 1546 1.4 2123 3.2	11	0502 1.5 1137 3.3 SA 1756 1.7 D	13	0139 2.9 0729 1.6 M 1410 3.3 2017 1.8	15	0307 3.2 0932 1.5 W 1534 3.5 2147 1.6
10	0400 1.3 1009 3.4 F 1648 1.6 2229 2.9	12	0013 2.8 0613 1.6 SU 1307 3.3 1910 1.8	14	0230 3.0 0837 1.6 TU 1457 3.4 2107 1.7	16	0343 3.4 1017 1.5 TH 1609 3.6 2222 1.5

FORT WILLIAM WEATHER

Thursday Light cloud and a gentle breeze Temperatures 3°C to 6°C.	Friday Light rain showers and a gentle breeze Temperatures 2°C to 6°C.	Saturday Light rain and a moderate breeze Temperatures 6°C to 8°C.	Sunday Light rain and a gentle breeze Temperatures 5°C to 7°C.
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FRIDAY FORECAST

Ardrishaig	-5.35
Campbeltown	-5.30
Crinan	-0.47
Islay Port Ellen	2.00
Lochboisdale	+0.30
Mallaig	+0.25
Portree	+0.55
Tobermory	+0.16
Dover	+5.30

HIGH 6 LOW 2

10 MPH