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& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

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# Jobs and services face axe

## Former leader forecasts financial misery over 'black hole' in budget

LOUISE LEE  
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A FAILURE to implement austerity budget savings has created a 'black hole' of between £27 - £37 million in the council's finances for 2016.

That's the stark forecast from Helensburgh councillor James Robb, a former leader of Argyll and Bute council.

Councillor Robb has argued the staggering predicted deficit has been caused by the council's reluctance to make 'any substantial savings to date'.

And at a budget meeting last week, the council's head of finance Bruce West told councillors that this year's one per cent budget reduction 'is the lowest saving the council has made to my knowledge'.

However, council leader Dick Walsh said the council was faced with a 'very difficult' financial position and wanted to gain stability with this year's budget.

The council has made £40 million worth of savings since a council tax freeze was introduced by the Scottish government in 2006.

Councillor James Robb, the opposition finance spokesman, said he was 'seriously concerned about the black hole in the council's finances'.

He said: 'The council will need to find ongoing savings from a



Councillor Ellen Morton

lump sum in future years - that is going to be almost impossible to do and maintain our current staff levels.

'Staffing is the biggest bill; and teachers' salaries are protected, so it will come down to removing positions that the council does

not need to keep. Jobs such as music tuition, nursing homes, care at home, libraries and youth services or closing schools. As councillor Walsh suggested last time, substantial savings had to be made.'

Councillor Robb continued: 'The council has not made appropriate savings to smooth the way.'

'We can cut back on what we already provide - but it is time to start making the real decisions. I am very concerned about implications on next year's budget. It will get to a point where it just cannot be balanced under these terms. The biggest question is, where is the money going to come from to protect staff?'

'Why are we not talking about the real problems yet to come? Why are we making painless choices?'

But council deputy leader Ellen Morton defended the council's record: 'Mr Robb is not correct if he thinks that finding one per cent of budget savings this year has not been painless.'

'So many things within departmental budgets are fixed in our agreements with the Scottish government, which gives us very little scope for making savings.'

'Seventy, eighty, ninety per cent of budgets are set and cannot be changed. The savings can't come from teacher numbers, or from school meals or from various projects as laid down by the council and the government.'

'There is no denying we are going to have to make on-going difficult choices. We are managing budgets with the minimum pain.'

'Our staff are our biggest asset and without them we will not be able to grow the economy.'

'We have no plans to review our school estate within the term of this council.'

The council has an annual budget of £237 million and has 4581 members of staff. The council's wages bill is £134 million, a rise of £4 million from last year.



Councillor James Robb



WRITE ON: Euan Paterson, right, receives his award from Diageo's Keith Miller

## Euan's tactics are just right as he scoops the top prize

OBAN Times journalist Euan Paterson has won the title of Sports Writer of the Year at the annual Highlands and Islands Media Awards.

Euan caught the eye of judges with his portfolio of three articles, including last season's shinty match report on the abandoned National Division decider between Oban Camanachd and Fort William.

Euan said: 'It was a surprise

and a thrill to receive the sports writer award and I would like to thank the organisers and sponsors for putting on a great event.'

'The West Highlands is a fantastic area for sports stories and I am extremely grateful to those who help me every week by submitting reports and leads.'

'The Oban Times strives to support the area's top sporting individuals, teams and clubs, allowing them to receive the

recognition and acclaim they deserve.'

Euan was among 270 guests at the annual Diageo-sponsored Highlands and Islands Press Ball, held at the New Drumossie Hotel, Inverness, last Friday.

The Oban Times was shortlisted for Newspaper of the Year and Euan's colleague, Emma Crichton, was shortlisted in the Young Journalist of the Year category.

## Town retailers lift awards

BUSINESS is booming for five Oban retailers as, at the weekend, they were named winners at the Scottish Independent Retail Awards.

Oban's eateries were well-represented, scooping three of the five regional awards won by businesses in the town, along with winners in the hair and beauty and florist categories in the north west region.

Councillor for Oban North and Lorn Iain Stewart MacLean said: 'I heartily congratulate all the businesses in winning these awards.'

'This is a great example of the hard work of these businesses, and is an indication of what is on offer for people both living in the town, and visitors here.'

For a full report and pictures, turn to page 11.

## Wards to close for a short time as safety work begins

WARDS are set to close in Oban's hospital while the building undergoes safety improvements.

Work to meet current fire safety legislation at Lorn and Islands hospital will lead to a temporary reduction in the number of beds available between March and April.

A spokesman for NHS Highland explained: 'Due to the extent of work required and the need to meet all infection control procedures, the number of operational beds will be temporarily

reduced. This is only for the duration of the building works and the hospital will return to its full bed capacity when the works are completed.'

'All health and social care staff will be working closely together to minimise any disruption to hospital services and additional support measures will be implemented to meet the individual needs of patients and carers during this time.'

The work is planned to start on Monday, March 2 and it is anticipated that it will be completed

by the end of May. Marie Law, interim locality manager for Oban, Lorn and Isles, said: 'These building works are essential to ensure that the Lorn and Islands hospital continues to meet fire safety legislation.'

'We will obviously keep any disruption to a minimum and would ask the public for their patience over the next few months until the works are completed.'

The accident and emergency department will continue to be fully operational during the building works.

## Opera buffs' headline act

EVERYONE knows The Oban Times is at the forefront of the local community.

But last Saturday the newspaper took centre stage at the Victory hall in Benderloch.

One of Scottish Opera's star singers avidly read the latest edition of The Oban Times as part of her act during a stunning performance of an operatic masterpiece.

For a full review of Scottish Opera's 'Highlights' tour, turn to page 13.



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**Slight rise in the cases of superbug**

EIGHT patients contracted the superbug *Clostridium difficile* (C.difficile) in Argyll and Bute over a nine-month period last year.

In a report to board members, NHS Highland revealed it had failed narrowly to meet its target on controlling the highly contagious infection.

From January to September last year, eight patients had contracted the bug: one caught the infection while in hospital in Oban, and seven others developed C. difficile in the community.

The figures disclosed a small spike in people infected by the bug at the beginning of the year, but that was soon brought under control with no recorded cases since February 2014.

**Westminster call for TV producer**

THE SCOTTISH National Party has named television producer Brendan O'Hara as its Argyll and Bute candidate for the UK general election in May.

Mr O'Hara, 51, defeated Antony Harrison and Simon Kemp in a ballot of party members in the constituency.

The married father-of-two from Helensburgh joins Mary Galbraith (Labour), Alistair Redman (Conservative) and Caroline Santos (UKIP) as challengers to sitting Liberal Democrat MP, Alan Reid.

Mr O'Hara has lived in the constituency for more than 10 years and has produced television programmes for both the BBC and STV.

**Interest in band hits a high note**

OBAN Pipe band has received a £500 donation towards new equipment, through a charitable initiative run by Clydesdale Bank.

The Clydesdale Bank Employee Volunteer Grant Programme allows its staff to give cash to causes of their choice, if the employee has been involved personally with the charity for more than 12 months.

Piper Iain MacIsaac, who plays with the Oban band but now lives in Glasgow, pledged the cash through the scheme.

Euan Dewar, pipe major for Oban Pipe Band, said: 'On behalf of the band, I would like to thank the Clydesdale Bank for its generous contribution.'

**National mòd live online for Oban**

EIGHT months until the Royal National Mòd returns to its birthplace of Oban, the website for this year's festival has now gone live.

The site includes information on accommodation, the town and surrounding area, Mòd information, contact details and pictures ahead of the event to be held between October 9 - 17.

The website can be accessed at [modanobain2015.com](http://modanobain2015.com)

**Adults queue up to try out best play park in Scotland**

**EUAN PATERSON**  
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DEATH wires, wobble boards, climbing towers and a fireman's pole will soon make up the 'best play park' in Scotland.

With more than £175,000 in the bank, or promised, to Friends of Oban Community Play Park the group is all ready to dig the first turf in the spring with the build completed by August this year.

The first area to be tackled will focus on young people between the ages of five and 15 with high towers, swing seats and activities for children of all abilities.

By the positive sounds at the group's annual general meeting (AGM), many adults on the committee are keen to 'test out' the equipment.

Showing images of the type of kit to be sited in the park, chairwoman Lyndsay Elliot said the tender to provide the play park was now almost ready to go.

Lyndsay, who has been at the helm of the group for more than three years, said: 'We have had an exceptional response from the local and business community.'

'We've had more than 700 likes on Facebook and many people and businesses have been behind our plans to get the best play park in Scotland right here in Oban.'

'We have now settled into a working relationship with Argyll and Bute council after a freedom of information request showed it had supported 16 other play



ANTICIPATION: (From left) Oban's Jessica Main, Alex Elliott and Edie Elliott will have to fight off the grown-ups when the new play park is complete in August 16\_t07playpark01

parks in Argyll and Bute to the tune of £1.9 million over the last 16 years.

'We believed that gave the authority the opportunity to support Oban's play park.'

'Tom Murphy, amenities manager for the council, has agreed to look after the park once we have completed it and he has been incredibly helpful in helping us move forward.'

'We have now received the legal minute of agreement to formally recognise legal aspects of the play park that we, and the local authority, are accountable for.'

But it was to the fundraising from the community that Lyndsey praised as her highlight of the past year.

She said: 'From lemonade to chocolate bingo alongside the Big Toddle (a sponsored walk

for children and adults) to little James Morris, who gave his dad's copper jar to the fund, as well as community sing-alongs it has been an incredible year.'

'The whole community has pulled together.'

The group was told the night before the meeting that £15,000 had been donated from the Robertson Trust - another boost to the project.

**Merging services under discussion**

**EUAN PATERSON**  
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THOSE interested in finding out more about the merging of health and social work services are being invited to an informal discussion group in Oban.

Argyll Voluntary Action (AVA) is hosting a coffee and cake

morning to help provide and gather information on the integration of health and social care.

Glenn Heritage, chief executive of Argyll Voluntary Action, said: 'Health and social care integration is the single greatest change taking place and one which everyone has an interest in engaging with.'

'The focus is to ensure person-centred services which are person-centred and where services will work together to maximise resources. This year will see the production of a three-year strategy and we are keen to hear your initial views and thoughts at an exciting time for us all.'

The coffee morning will take place at Glencruitten church hall next Thursday, February 19, at 10.30am until 11.30am.

Those who wish to attend should contact Hannah Kenter or Rhona Dougall by Sunday at [hannah@argyllvoluntaryaction.org.uk](mailto:hannah@argyllvoluntaryaction.org.uk) / [rhona@argyllvoluntaryaction.org.uk](mailto:rhona@argyllvoluntaryaction.org.uk) or phone 01631 564839.

**Lions help pipers tune into America**



OBAN High school pipe band is one step closer to an American dream, after a charitable group donated £1,000 towards a trip to New York.

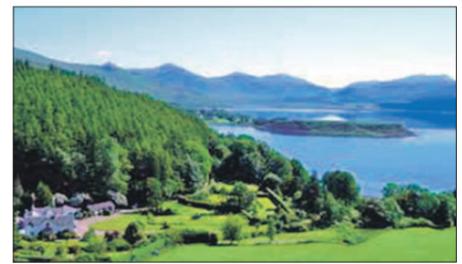
Oban and Lorn Lions club made the donation on Monday for the trip in April, when the band will play during the iconic Tartan Day Parade. The money goes towards the cost of transporting instruments, one of the band's biggest expenses.

Lions Club president Bill Coultts said: 'The club hopes the trip can raise Oban's profile and bring more tourists here, as well as benefiting the school.'

Music teacher Morven McKerrill and head teacher Peter Bain thanked the club for its support.

Pictured left, Oban high school staff, pipe band members and representatives of the Lions club, with the cheque. 16\_t07lionscheque01

**MULL lines**



TIRORAN FOREST: generating projects with a £750,000 boost

**Forest plan gains funds**

A SCOTTISH Land Fund award of £750,000 will help a community on Mull make a move towards owning 792 hectares of Tiroran Forest.

Morven Gibson, local development officer for South West Mull and Iona Development (SWMID), said: 'We are getting closer to Tiroran Forest becoming an income-generating, community-owned asset which will be managed by the community, for the community.'

South West Mull and Iona Development has been community account managed by Highlands and Islands Enterprise since 2011.

Kerrien Grant, head of strengthening communities, Argyll and the Islands said: 'The acquisition of Tiroran forest is a leading example of what ambitious communities can achieve through dedication and commitment.'

'The group has worked incredibly hard to develop income generating projects for the benefit of the community.'

'The acquisition of the forest is set to offer significant opportunities for improving wider sustainable development, such as through employment, volunteering, recreation and land management.'

The forest would be run as a commercial enterprise and will provide a means of sustainable income generation for the local community and the creation of three new jobs in the first year of ownership.

The next steps will be to secure the remaining key elements within the overall funding package to buy the forest from Forestry Commission Scotland and to consult further with the local community about prioritising potential projects within the forest.



LIGHTS: Keeping the memory alive - pupils in Tobermory remember the Holocaust

**Holocaust remembered**

TOBERMORY high school commemorated Holocaust memorial day by creating a memorial in the school gym.

S3 pupils worked in religious and moral education (RME) to create boards telling the stories of the Holocausts and genocides in Bosnia, Rwanda, Cambodia and Darfur.

Two lines of light represented the railway line which took many to their deaths in Auschwitz.

The theme of Holocaust memorial day was 'Keep the Memory Alive' and life stories of some of the survivors and victims were also on the wall as well as films on laptops.

Visitors to the memorial lit candles in memory of all those affected by the Holocaust and genocides.

Students and staff from both the primary and secondary schools visited the memorial and many were moved by the experience.



SPOTTED: Mull's celebrity white-tailed eagle turns up in Dumfries

**Sona finds new home**

A MULL-born white-tailed eagle, which hit the headlines last year when her dramatic eviction from a nest as a chick was caught on camera, has caused a new stir.

The bird, nicknamed Sona, had to be returned to her nest by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) climbers last June after being attacked by an intruding eagle and falling 30 feet to the ground.

Now Sona has being repeatedly sighted in the south-west corner of Scotland, where white-tailed eagles haven't bred for more than 150 years.

Dave Sexton, RSPB Scotland Mull Officer, said: 'We know this bird well after all the drama last summer, and I'm extremely relieved to hear that she's alive and apparently healthy.'

'We got her back into her nest uninjured after her dangerous fall, and she fledged a few weeks later.'

'It's unusual to have so many sightings of a juvenile like this in Dumfries and Galloway, even though it's perfect eagle habitat.'

**New manager has roots in wood**

A WELL-VERSED woodland expert has taken the helm as district manager of the Forestry Commission in Lochaber.

Dr Ben Lennon (right), who has worked with the commission since 1994, has been planning manager in the area since 2011 and said he is looking forward to the new challenge.

Awarded a doctorate in 2010 for his study on woodland history, Dr Lennon has also published a number of papers on woodland and landscape history.

He said: 'I've been involved with forestry all my working life and it's great to come to Lochaber and lead the team in meeting the challenges ahead.'

'It's a beautiful part of the world and we have some of the best bits of the national forest estate here too.'

'It's a fantastic local and national asset and we're all about ensuring that it continues to deliver a wide range of benefits for communities, individuals,



for biodiversity and the economy. 'There are obviously challenges ahead, tree health and the steep ground harvesting programme being two obvious ones, but I'm looking forward to the task.'

**Mull vandal sought**

POLICE on Mull are appealing for witnesses after the tyre of a car was slashed in Dervaig on Sunday, February 8 sometime within a two-hour period.

The driver of a black Kia Venga parked and left the car at 12.15pm in the village.

On returning at 2.15pm the driver discovered one of the back tyres had been damaged.

Anyone who saw anything suspicious or has any information about the incident should contact PC Carr at Salen police office.

**Culvert closes road**

A COLLAPSED culvert caused the A82 at Pulpit Rock to close on Monday night for several hours.

The road between Tarbet and Crianlarich closed initially around 5pm.

Trunk road maintenance contractors BEAR Scotland assessed the damage and temporary repairs took place in conjunction with contractors McLaughlin and Harvey with the Loch Lomondside road re-opening around 9pm.

The area at the collapse was monitored overnight.

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# Steep learning curve for pensioners as they call for a bus service to the tower

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DISGRUNTLED Oban pensioners who live near to McCaig's Tower have said the lack of a regular bus service and toilets serving the tourist venue is making their lives a misery.

At present, the closest bus service to the tower is on Longsdale Road, more than half a mile away. It is run by West Coast Motors on behalf of Argyll and Bute council.

The pensioners, aged between 72 and 83, some of whom have artificial hips and knees and suffer from arthritis and asthma, struggle to walk up the famously steep climb when heading home from the town centre.

Laurel Crescent resident Sheila Findlay, who lives with husband John, raised the issue last week at a special Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee meeting.

Talking to *The Oban Times*, Sheila, 77, said: 'It doesn't matter what way you go, you have to come up the hill to get to the tower.'

'One day I met a tourist, who had come up as far as Craigard Road. I asked her if she was going into the tower, and she said "I'd love to, but I won't manage any further, I'm absolutely done in".'

Sheila also said the lack of public toilets in the area meant people often urinated next to the tower, on her property.

She continued: 'I don't blame the people who do the toilet next to McCaig's, because they have no alternative. It takes such a long time to get back down into the town, and sometimes you are desperate for the toilet and just have to go.'

Husband John added: 'For health reasons, I have to go for a walk every day, and it would be nice to be able to use a different route for once.'

'But I can't because if I walked down the hill I wouldn't get back up, so I end up doing the same circuit every day.'

Elda Sharp, 80, who lives in Laurel Road, walks with two sticks, following hip replacement



LEFT FOOTING THE HILL: Pensioners say the lack of a bus service to McCaig's Tower is causing problems. Maggie Dougall, third from right, who works for Argyll Voluntary Action, is supporting the pensioners' efforts to get a regular service

surgery last year. She said that taxi journeys were her only option when going into the town. 'You can take the bus to Longsdale Road but I live past that, and I'm not strong enough on my feet to walk the extra journey,' she said.

'I have to take taxis, but at anything from £3 to £5 per trip, it's expensive, especially considering I have a free bus pass.'

John, Sheila, and Elda are all members of Oban and District

Senior Forum, a group which gives elderly people in the area a platform to discuss issues of concern to them. A petition started by the group for a bus to serve the McCaig's Tower area has so far raised more than 60 signatures.

Bill Coultis, 81, who lives in Laurel Crescent and walks with a stick, said the lack of public transport meant McCaig's Tower was not being used to its full potential.

Bill, who is president of the fundraising group Oban and Lorn Lions Club, said: 'McCaig's Tower is the most iconic building in Oban, if not Argyll and Bute.'

'The fact that so many locals and tourists can't get to it is madness. The Lions club has a concert in the summer and some people can't even make it up to it. I definitely think it could be better signposted too.'

When contacted by *The Oban Times*, a staff member at West

Coast Motors said bus routes were solely a matter for the council.

A spokeswoman for Argyll and Bute council said: 'When operators tender for bus services funded by the council, the timetable specification forms part of the contract. Any changes in the timetable must be agreed by the council.'

'The council works closely with operators when designing services to ensure it achieves best value

for the public, whilst remaining within budget allocation.'

'Changes to commercial timetable (those not funded by the council) must be a viable option for the operator before they will be considered, and it is only a courtesy for the operator to notify the council when changing any part of their commercial operation.'

'Currently there is no additional budgetary provision for new services.'

## Police find drugs during town raid

TWO men, aged 20 and 21, were stopped and searched in Oban's Stevenson Street around midnight on Friday, February 6 and are alleged to have cannabis in their possession.

Earlier on the same evening, a 37-year-old woman was stopped and searched in Hysker Gardens in Oban at 7.50pm and was suspected of having a quantity of herbal cannabis in her possession.

A 20-year-old man suspected to be in possession of cannabis has also been reported to the procurator fiscal in Oban.

The man was searched in Sinclair Drive in the town at 3.10pm on February 9.

## Suspect reported for nurses assault

A MAN was arrested on Saturday evening at Lorn and Islands hospital in Oban after he was alleged to have assaulted two of the nursing staff.

The 20-year-old man had attended the accident and emergency department around 11pm with an injury and is understood to have become abusive to both members of staff. Police reported the man to Oban's procurator fiscal.

## Hydro schemes to feed 4,800 homes

WORK has begun on two run-of-river hydro-electric schemes at Upper Falloch and Derrydarroch on the 10,000-hectare Glenfalloch Estate, near Crianlarich, in Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park.

With a combined capacity of 6.1MW, the two new, plus two current, schemes could generate enough electricity for 4,800 homes.

## Royal Mail vehicle slashed by vandals

A ROYAL Mail vehicle parked in Jura Road, Oban, was vandalised sometime between Saturday and Monday, February 7 and 9.

Contact PC Johnstone at Oban police with any information about the incident.

## Oddjob scrubs up very well

HE MAY share the name of a famous Bond villain and his crushing jaws make him a feared predator of the deep.

But Oddjob, the seven-kilogram common snapping turtle, was the face promoting an event at Barcaldine's Scottish Sealife Sanctuary last week to highlight the conservation of turtle species.

Oddjob and the 27 other turtles at the sealife sanctuary were being given a deep clean as part of Turtle-fest, a four-day celebration last week, designed to foster awareness of threats to turtles.

The sanctuary has hosted a special refuge for abandoned and illegally imported freshwater turtles since 2011.

The assorted residents include John, Paul, George and Ringo - four Mississippi Map Turtles - and an Australian snake-necked turtle called Miss Moneypenny. They live in specially designed heated displays and enjoy the devoted attentions of the Sanctuary's animal care team.

'They all gradually acquire a crusty coating of algae on their shells,' explained aquarist Farrah Minchin. 'Left for too long it can lead to shell-damage so we spent a good couple of hours with water and tooth brushes giving them all a good scrub.'

Farrah said many turtle species are endangered because of the loss of their natural habitat. And some have also been kept as pets, in the wake of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle craze, and have since been abandoned.



BRUSH-UP: Scottish Sealife Sanctuary aquarists Anna Price, left, and Farrah Minchin treat Oddjob, the snapping turtle, to his scrub down

## GP out-of-hour service 'unaffordable'

THE out-of-hours GP service in Argyll and Bute is at breaking point as the cost of the service reaches £3 million.

NHS Highland health board members have now been forced to replace GPs with nurses in an attempt to slash the cost of the service.

It costs £21 per hour for a care nurse as opposed to £129.89 for a locum doctor.

Pilot projects using nurses will be implemented in Mid Argyll and Kintyre from next month.

Gill MacVicar, director of operations at NHS Highland, said the current system for patients needing urgent care was 'not affordable'. Figures reveal that

providing the service in some areas of Argyll and Bute can top £2,157 per patient, in stark contrast to Inverness, where the cost is £85.49.

Ms MacVicar said: 'The strain on finances of delivering out-of-hours care is so severe it will now mean other important developments are not able to be progressed.'

The model of care used between the hours of 6pm and 8am was put in place in 2004 when GPs were able to opt out of providing the service on a practice basis.

Since 2008, the responsibility for the service is managed at a local level. In that time, the cost

has risen by 20 times. In Oban, there are on average 54 call-outs a week for advice or an urgent appointment at home or in the hospital. On Mull, there is an average of two, while Lochgilphead sees seven and Campbeltown two every week.

However, a spokesman for NHS Highland said: 'One of the main reasons for the variation in costs across Argyll and Bute is that in certain localities, such as Mid Argyll and Kintyre, the costs include the provision of GP services within local hospitals, whereas in other areas such as Oban the costs are solely for GP out-of-hours services in the community.'

## Cash help for Islay and Jura communities

A PANEL made up of residents on the islands of Islay and Jura is being formed to help allocate a fund of a quarter of a million pounds to groups and clubs.

The islands are one of six Scottish communities to receive money from the charity Fourteen, set up by the Big Lottery Fund.

The panel will then devise a Fourteen plan to help its decision-making on how to disburse the funds throughout the communities.

People, clubs and organisations will then be invited to bid for the money but will have to meet the criteria set by the panel.

Gary Scott, head of fundraising, Islay and Jura Community Enterprises, said: 'Fourteen is a real opportunity for everyone from eight to 80 to come together to make Islay and Jura an even better place to be.'

## Inspiration at printing talk

OBAN artist Alice Strange inspired the women of Oban SWRI following her talk at the group's January meeting.

Alice gave a print-making demonstration, displaying examples of her own work, including the Herring Girls posters for the Oban Winter Festival, and HMS Challenger prints finished off the demonstration, as fine examples of digital collage making.

Lyndsay Elliot of Oban SWRI said: 'Alice was extremely generous sharing her tips and techniques learned over the years of print-making, and encouraged the members to have a go from using cut out potato stamps to more complex digital collage making.'

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**Extra NHS cash should reduce bed-blocking**

MORE cash for NHS Highland should see bed-blocking in Argyll and Bute hospitals reduced.

The Scottish government has given the health authority an extra £1.8 million for the current year, bringing its total allocation to more than £550 million. Nearly 100 patients died in NHS Highland hospitals last year while on a delayed discharge list.

Scottish health minister Shona Robison said: 'Tackling delayed discharge is an absolute key priority for this government and the £1.8 million for NHS Highland in 2015-16 is crucial to this effort.'

'Reducing delayed discharge not only helps individual patients, who benefit from getting home or to a homely setting as quickly as possible, but also helps to ease pressure across the system.'

'As we head towards the integration of health and social care this additional funding will also support work under-way to transform care services which will get people who may be unnecessarily staying in hospital home or into a homely setting.'

**Carers' concerns mean missing out on respite care**

NHS Highland wants carers to have access to respite care.

A recent board meeting heard that unpaid carers had expressed 'significant dissatisfaction' with respite care provision over a 'long period of time'.

Concerns included a lack of acceptable residential care, in particular for young adults, a lack of day care for older adults, a lack of awareness of entitlement and availability and a lack of access to emergency respite.

Board members agreed to take a review of respite break provision for unpaid adult carers of adults to find out what carers wanted and needed.

**Euan Paterson reports from the first area committee meeting of its kind**  
**Councillors set new agenda with radical style of public meeting**

FROM bins to building projects, there were few topics of the day that weren't covered during a special two-and-a-half hour council meeting in Oban's Corran Halls, hosted by the area's councillors.

The new format, which was applauded at the end of the meeting last Tuesday, allowed members of the public to ask questions of the seven Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee councillors, without the interventions of council officers and lawyers.

Speaking this week, councillor Roddy McCuish, the committee chairman, said he and his fellow councillors were working to find answers to all the questions raised and that they would report back when they had answers.

He added: 'I am happy to do another meeting like that but it could be themed for different groups like the business community, building trade or aquaculture.'

The question and answer format concluded with a round of applause for the councillors who commented on a range of issues:

**On who runs the council:** Oban businessman Gilbert MacKechnie asked councillors who ran Argyll and Bute council.

He said: 'Council officials seem to overstep their authority to the extent that councillors rubber stamp decisions made by officials in Kilmory and I don't call that democracy.'

Councillor McCuish replied: 'There is not one council official in this room. If we can have more of this type of meeting across Argyll and Bute it will give more people confidence.'

'Maybe other councillors are not as pro-active as we are in Oban but we have an area committee that works hard and works together.'

'Officials can be nervous about this kind of thing because of what people might say.'

**On party politics:** Ardchattan community council



QUIZZED: Councillor Roddy McCuish chaired the meeting from the centre of the room.

chairwoman Margaret Adams welcomed the new format of meeting, insisting party politics should be kept out of local government.

She said: 'I want to be assured that councillors will know what is right for the community, not what their party is telling them.'

Councillor McCuish said he could give that assurance at area committee level but added: 'The politics of Kilmory are a mystery to me.'

Former council election candidate for the SNP, Gerry Fisher, pointed out that the area committee was only eight councillors out of 36 on the entire Argyll and Bute council and a majority party was needed to make decisions.

He said: 'Keep party politics out if it? You can't do that. In Argyll and Bute we have a Titanic that struck the iceberg 10 years ago and people began leaving.'

'What we have been talking about is rearranging the deck chairs, not looking at the real problem and that is the admin-

istration does not have a plan to reverse the decline in population in Argyll and Bute and that will lead to its death.'

Councillor Ian MacLean replied: 'What we are trying to do is move beyond political point scoring. We have to try and do something different and I hope it shows we are listening.'

**On council staffing:** Gordon Stewart asked councillors if the 'elephant in the room' was that the local authority did not have enough staff.

Councillor MacLean said staff levels were sufficient but there were 'financial constraints', while Councillor Neil MacIntyre said: 'In care and health services we do need more people.'

Councillor McCuish said: 'I don't think we have enough staff. If it wasn't for the goodwill of our staff the council would collapse. They work really hard and regularly go above and beyond.'

Tom Hayward of the Kings Knoll hotel asked: 'If the staff are working so hard, why does Argyll

and Bute consistently come bottom of the league tables?'

Councillor Mary Jean Devon responded: 'We don't always come last. Planning is rated the third highest in Scotland and children and families services are up for an award for their service review. The problem is we don't tell enough 'good news' stories - we have lots of them.'

**On Oban airport:** Sean MacIntyre, Dunbeg, asked whether Oban airport was being used to its full potential, given the money spent on it.

Paul Keegan, who ran the airport before the council took over, said £25 million had been spent on the airport and that £75,000 per year from parking revenue was used to subsidise it.

Saying the council's project had 'crashed and burned' he said the profitable private flights from Europe had 'pretty much disappeared'.

However, George Berry said: 'Any town that aspires to anything needs an airport.'

**On the vacant Harbour Bowl building:**

When asked what could be done with the building, Councillor McCuish said he would like to see legislation that forced landlords to pay a land tax if a building was not occupied within three years.

However, the meeting agreed there was little that could be done at present to force the landlord to act.

**On the old Rockfield building:** Alastair MacGregor, chief executive of Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA), asked if the Oban Communities Trust's business proposal for a community hub was not accepted, would the council revisit ACHA's offer to build social housing.

Councillor Iain Angus MacDonald said it was an 'impossible question', because councillors did not yet know what the OCT business plan entailed.

**On parking:** Oban businesswoman Donna McCulloch asked where her money went when she paid for a parking ticket.

Councillor MacLean said: 'In this area we collect around half a million pounds and the rest of Argyll is budgeted to collect around £20,000. There are pros and cons to this because somewhere like Helensburgh can produce more in taxation.'

'Oban, Lorn and the Isles needs to look at keeping more money in Oban but we all need to play our part in that.'

Margaret Adams then questioned the current payment method, adding that constantly having to return to her car to add another ticket meant she was less likely to stay and spend money in the town.

She added that a lot of parking meters still did not accept certain coins.

Councillor McCuish explained that 13 new parking machines were on order.

**Only half of all toddlers attend health checks**

INFANTS in the west Highland are missing out on vital health checks.

NHS Highland board members were told recently that only half of toddlers aged between 27 - 30 months attended appointments arranged to monitor their rate of development.

This is well below the health board target of 95 per cent.

The check-ups include the promotion of strong, early child development, comprising social and language progress alongside monitoring the weights of the infants.

Staff shortages were cited as one of the main reasons why there were no follow-up calls to rearrange missed appointments.

NHS Highland board members were told: 'The position is improving and it is anticipated that as a result of the various pieces of improvement work being undertaken, the challenging target will be achieved by March 2016.'

Computer systems for staff are now being developed to make sure all the relevant information is distributed to parents at the touch of a button.

**Whist drive raise charity cash**

TAYNUILT Whist Drive held on January 23 raised £117.75 for Erskine.

Card master was Dougie McDougall. Gents: 1 D McDougall, 2 Wendy Forbes, Consolation Alice McNeill, Travelling Prize Stella Huntingford; Ladies: 1 Margaret Forbes, Connel, 2 Isobel Groun, Consolation and Travelling Prizes Ann Sutherland. The next Whist will be held on Friday February 20 for Taynuilt SWRI.

**Weekly bins back**

BINS in Oban's Soroba are back to a weekly collection and fortnightly for paper after concerns over overflowing rubbish onto the streets.

**Cùrsaichean Goirid SMO An t-Earrach 2015**

Bidh cùrsaichean goirid a' tilleadh gu Sabhal Mòr Ostaig as t-Earrach am bliadhna le cùrsaichean Ghàidhlig, ciùil agus dannsa. Bidh an t-Ionad Nàiseanta airson Cànan is Cultar na Gàidhlig a' ruith 15 cùrsaichean thairis air cola-deug aig toiseach a' Ghiblein. Bidh a' bhana-sheinneadair chliùiteach, Cairistiona Primrose, a' stiùireadh cùrsa ann an Òrain Ghàidhlig agus bidh am fìdhleair bhon chòmhlán thraidiseanta Dàimh, Gabe McVarish, a' teagasg na fìdhle. Bidh Sophie Stephenson a' Cille Chuimein a' ruith cùrsa do dhaoine sam bith aig a' bheil ùidh ann an dannsa ceum. Cuideachd, bidh cùrsa ùr a' ruith do dhaoine aig a' bheil Gàidhlig bho thùs ach 's dòcha gu bheil sibh a' faireachdainn nach eil misneachd agaibh bruidhinn neo sgrìobhadh

agus mar sin, tha sibh airson na sgilean labhairt, leughaidh is sgrìobhadh agaibh a leasachadh.

Bidh consairtean, cèilidhean is seiseanan ciùil a' ruith aig a' Cholaiste fhad 's a tha na cùrsaichean goirid ann agus bidh na tachartasan seo fosgailte do dhùine sam bith. Bidh oidhche shònraichte ann Dimàirt 31/3/15 far am bi Cairistiona Primrose, Artair Cormack, Blair Dùghlas agus an caraidean a' cluich ann an cuirm-ciùil fo stiùir SEALL. Cuideachd, bidh cotroim ann a dh'èisteachd ri Gabe McVarish, Mairead Green agus Anna Massie a' cluich aig a' Cholaiste feasgar Dimàirt 7/4/14. Gheibh sibh tuilleadh fiosrachaidh is tìocaidean airson nan consairtean seo air an làraich-lìn aig SEALL.

**SMO Short Courses Easter 2015**

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig's Short Courses will be returning this Spring with 5 day courses at the College based in Skye. The National Centre for Gaelic Language and Culture will be running a range of courses in Gaelic, music and dance over a 2 week period. There are 15 courses available including Gaelic language courses from beginner level 1 to advanced level 10. Christine Primrose will also be hosting her unique Gaelic Song course which is an ideal opportunity to study the language, music and history of an

a new course for native Gaelic speakers who may feel they have lost confidence in speaking the language or who wish to read and write the language better. Skye tutor, Alec "Valtos" MacDonald will be teaching this important course for those who wish to improve their spoken Gaelic and reading and writing skills.

As usual there will be plenty of concerts, cèilidhs and music sessions running at the College over the 2 weeks which are open to the general public. Local arts agency SEALL will be presenting

concerts each Tuesday over the fortnight with Christine Primrose, Artair Cormack and SMO musician in residence Blair Douglas together with special guests appearing on 31/3/15. Gabe McVarish will also be performing when he joins renowned musical duo, Mairead Green and Anna Massie on stage on Tuesday 7/4/15. More information and tickets for these events can be accessed through SEALL's website: www.seall.co.uk



**Càisg - Easter 2015**

In 2015 why not spend a week on Skye at Scotland's National Centre for Gaelic language & culture? Our courses include Gaelic language & song, traditional music and dance. For Easter 2015, we will be running a special course for native speakers of any level who seek to improve their reading, writing and speaking skills.

**30/03 - 03/04/15**

Gàidhlig / Gaelic Levels 1, 3, 5, 7, 9

Gàidhlig do dh' fhlèantaich  
Gaelic for Native Speakers

Òrain Ghàidhlig  
Christine Primrose's Gaelic Song Course

**06/04 - 10/04/2015**

Gàidhlig / Gaelic Levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10

Dannsa-ceum  
Step Dancing with Sophie Stephenson

Fidheall / Fiddle with Gabe McVarish

For more information about all the Short Courses at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, please visit the College's website: www.smo.uhi.ac.uk Or you can phone or send an email to the Short Course team: 01471 888 240 / cg.smo@uhi.ac.uk

**Police repeat alert over rural thefts as thieves target Kilninver garage**

ANOTHER break-in and theft from a garage in a rural location of Lorn has prompted Police Scotland to renew their warning about making sure outbuildings, sheds and garages are secure.

It was only last month that police launched 'Operation Quarterlight' to tackle the rise in rural crime.

Sergeant Alan Moore at Oban police office again warned that such buildings were being targeted by thieves because they were known to often be left unlocked and contain high value goods such as chainsaws, cordless drills, power tools, strimmers and the like.

'Make sure they are locked away and out of sight and review your security regularly to make sure it is adequate. 'Often that is enough of a deterrent,' he said.

He added that the police were happy to give advice on security and visit homes or premises.

In the latest case, it was a garage in the Kilninver area which was broken into sometime between January 20 and February 6 and a quantity of tools stolen.

Anyone who has seen an individual or individuals acting suspiciously in the area, probably in a vehicle such as a van, are urged to contact Oban police immediately on 101.

# Anger as writ threatens to stop work on North Pier

**BUT OWNERS SAY THEY HAD TO TAKE LEGAL ACTION TO PROTECT THEIR RESTAURANTS**

LOUISE LEE  
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WORK to transform Oban's North Pier could be brought to a grinding halt for years after two businessmen raised a court action to stop the long-awaited construction programme.

The father and son owners of Ee-usk and Piazza restaurants, Alan and Calum MacLeod, claim the disruption caused by the work could badly damage their businesses as it will greatly restrict access for customers to their North Pier premises.

The injunction was served on Argyll and Bute council, the body responsible for the multi-million pound programme of works designed to rejuvenate Oban's seafront.

The council has until today, Thursday (February 12), to challenge the legal action.

Oban councillors fear the writ could hold up the demolition of the White building and the construction of a multi-purpose performance space on the North Pier.

Councillor Roddy McCuish, the chairman of Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee, said he was 'more than disappointed' by the legal action.



“All this legal wrangling will do is hold up the project. Taxpayers will pay the cost of this legal challenge”

Roddy McCuish (Pictured left)



“A compromise could have been reached if only we had been allowed to keep the access to our buildings”

Alan MacLeod (Pictured left)

He said: 'This legal action could potentially delay the project by years.

'We have had a dialogue with the Alan and Calum over a number of years and we met with them at the area committee only last month to discuss their concerns.

'We had understood that it had been a very positive meeting.

'I was led to believe that we had reached an agreement. So receiving this writ was out of the blue.

'All this legal wrangling will do is hold up the project.

'The public purse will pay the

cost of this legal challenge – not councillors, not the council but the public's hard-earned money. Is this what we want to spend our money on?

'The cash for this project was allocated in 2008. The people of this town want to see the money being spent.

'I am sure they will share my disappointment that this could stop the work for yet another summer.

However, Alan MacLeod told *The Oban Times* he blamed the council for holding up the North

Pier development because he said it had infringed his and his son's rights by limiting access to their North Pier restaurants.

He said: 'What they are going to build will, in the simplest terms, block off the access to our restaurants granted to us in our 99-year lease with the local authority.

'This goes against the terms of our agreement.

'We have no other option but to issue a writ against the local authority to ask it to stop what it is doing.

'A compromise could have been reached if only we had been able to keep the access to our buildings.

'A former employee drew up an agreement of working on the pier – every single aspect of that agreement has now been broken.

'I have been talking with one of the councillors – but the truth is he is absolutely powerless to do anything.'

Work on phase one of the project - Stafford Street - is already under way and won't be affected by the legal challenge.

**MP to take whisky case for tax break to parliament for Commons debate**

EUAN PATERSON  
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THE WHISKY industry should be given a tax break in order to protect jobs, says Argyll and Bute MP Alan Reid.

Mr Reid, who is also vice chairman of the all-party parliamentary group on Scotch whisky, is calling on a two per cent cut in excise duty, following on from last year's freeze on the alcohol duty escalator.

The MP has been granted a debate in the House of Commons today (Thursday) during which he will make his plea.

Mr Reid said: 'Almost £5 billion a year is added to the UK economy by the Scotch whisky industry. This is a vital part of the UK economy.

'I represent a constituency where the whisky industry provides good quality employment in remote and rural locations.

'The whisky industry is clearly vital to Islay and Jura. It also provides much needed employment in Campbeltown, Oban and Tobermory.'

Mr Reid's comments come following a report entitled *The Economic Impact of Scotch Whisky Production in the UK*, commissioned by the Scotch Whisky Association (SWA), which has just been published.

He added that it was unfair that almost 80 per cent of the average price of a bottle of Scotch Whisky was taxation.

**Survey results reveal power to the people**

ELECTRICITY production and supply should be taken into public ownership to prevent 'scandalous' surcharges, according to residents of the Highlands and islands.

Dave Thompson, MSP for Ross, Skye and Lochaber, said more than 98 per cent of respondents to a survey in his constituency said they would like to see the supply of power taken away from energy companies, to prevent rural areas being charged more than towns and cities.

Currently energy users in the Highlands and islands are subject to a two pence surcharge and a report on the survey conducted by Mr Thompson showed 98.7 per cent of 1,711 respondents stated energy production and supply should be taken into public ownership.

He said: 'This is a fascinating response and one that shows folk will only put up with big company profiteering for so long.

'I say to the UK government and the Ofgem energy regulator that the people of Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch have spoken, so I urge them to abolish this unfair policy forthwith.'

An Ofgem spokesman said: 'We recognise that the north of Scotland faces higher costs. This reflects the cost of running the network in that area and the same methodology applies across Britain, resulting in regional variations.'

**Broadband project ahead of schedule**

CRAIGNURE on Mull, Campbeltown and Lochgilphead will receive superfast broadband services this summer – ahead of the scheduled programme in 2016.

Argyll and Bute MSP Michael Russell has welcomed the Scottish government's announcement that communities in Argyll are to benefit from a further roll-out in the next six months.

Mr Russell said: 'In December, I welcomed news that the subsea links to deliver superfast broadband in Argyll had been completed. That has meant that the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband project is now ahead of schedule.

'This is the most ambitious project to deliver superfast broadband in Europe. Even those areas which are out of scope at the moment are being actively investigated by BT.

'During the next few months, many more people in Argyll will have superfast broadband available to them, and I look forward to these services becoming available to all my constituents before too long.'

**Delivering a coded message for Argyll**

THE ISSUE of paying more for deliveries to Argyll has led a Lochgilphead woman to set up a social media campaign to stop 'postcode discrimination'.

Norma MacLennan contacted major retailers to ask why they insist on charging more for deliveries to Argyll to discover it is classed as part of the Highlands and islands.

She said: 'Any part of the UK should be deliverable. We are being penalised for where we live. It is not any more difficult to deliver to Argyll.'

Norma's campaign can be found at [www.facebook.com/pages/Postcode-Discrimination](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Postcode-Discrimination)

**Evening to highlight the return of beavers**

KNAPDALE'S beavers will be the focus of an event to be held near Lochgilphead next week.

The event, which will be held in the Cairnbaan hotel on Thursday evening, February 19, will feature short talks from some of the scientists who carried out research into the experimental return of the animal to the Scottish countryside from 2009 to 2014.

Speakers from the universities of Stirling and Oxford, the James Hutton Institute, Scotland's Rural College and Scottish Natural Heritage will take part. The event is free.

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**Knapdale**

THE BBC has apologised after a reporter described the Knapdale beavers site in Mid Argyll as 'the middle of nowhere' during a report.

Alan Reid, Argyll and Bute's MP, complained to the broadcaster, claiming the BBC Devon reporter 'insulted' his constituents during a report on beavers in the wild near the Devon town of Ottery St Mary.

Explaining the beaver population in Devon was the first in England for 500 years, the reporter said: 'There is a population up in Scotland. The difference there, though, is that they are out in the middle of nowhere but here on the River Otter they are quite close to civilisation, the town of Ottery St Mary.'

In an apology to Mr Reid, BBC news said it was not the reporter's intention to sound 'dismissive' and that he was explaining the Scottish beavers were in a more remote and rural location.

Mr Reid said: 'The residents of Lochgilphead, Ardrishaig, Cairnbaan, Crinan and Tayvallich will be shocked to discover that they live far from 'civilisation', I'm sure,' said Mr Reid, who has called on the BBC to broadcast a positive news item about the high quality of life in Mid Argyll to make up for the 'insult'.

**Western Isles**

COUNTRY-WIDE 4G phone networks must include the Western Isles according to an MP.

The fourth generation in mobile phone technology, 4G offers the fastest speeds yet for internet surfing on the move, on similar levels to home broadband.

Angus MacNeil, MP for Na h-Eileanan an Iar, is anxious to know if his constituency will benefit from UK government plans to deliver its coverage across 90 per cent of the country by 2017.

In a parliamentary question, Mr MacNeil said: 'I am anxious that this 90 per cent should apply to the Western Isles, particularly as 2G and 3G failed to achieve anything close to 90 per cent geographical coverage.'

'Recently we have seen that mobile telephones are no longer a luxury, but are a social utility and it is high time that the UK government recognised that in island and rural areas.'

**Stornoway**

AN INVESTIGATION has been launched after five people were treated for suspected carbon monoxide poisoning in Stornoway.

Police, ambulance and fire officers attended the engineering workshop on Seaforth Road on Wednesday, February 4, after the workers - understood to be four men and one woman - had shown symptoms common with gas poisoning.

The Health and Safety Executive has now launched the investigation to look at the causes of the incident.

Carbon monoxide is often called the silent killer as the highly poisonous gas has no smell or taste.

Symptoms are similar to flu or food poisoning, such as including headaches, dizziness and nausea.

**Glencruitten**

RESULTS of the whist drive held at Glencruitten Golf Club, Oban, on February 2 were: Ladies: 1 Catherine Pearson; 2 Frances MacMillan; booby prize, Lorraine Campbell, travelling prize Frances MacMillan; Gents: 1 Ewan MacLeod; 2 George MacKenzie, booby prize, Stephen McCuish, travelling prize, George MacKenzie.

The next whist drive will be held in the clubhouse on Tuesday February 17 at 7.30pm. Come along and enjoy a fun night out with tea and homebaking for £3 plus raffle. Everyone is welcome.

**Fort William**

MEMBERS of Fort William's women's rural institute enjoyed a craft night at their February meeting.

The ladies took part in card making, paper folding and quizzes while enjoying tea and home baking.

The competition for best card was won by Eileen Cameron with Sylvia Roy a close second. The raffle was won by Hilary Denny.

Herbalist Clare Holohan will attend the next meeting at 7.15pm on Monday March 2 to discuss her work. A warm welcome is extended to all ladies to join members at Inverloch Hall.

**Inveraray**

FOR THE second month running, the weather was not kind to the Inveraray and District Accordion and Fiddle Club, which had to cancel its club night on January 14.

The club hopes it will be third time lucky next Wednesday, February 11, when the ever-popular Skipinnish Ceilidh Band takes the stage as guest artist.



**BRIGHT SPARKS:** a Lochaber high school enterprising group raised £1,317 for Highland Hospice by making Christmas crafts

**Pupils' craft skills raise Highland hospice cash**

ENTERPRISING Lochaber high school pupils raised more than £1,300 for Highland Hospice.

Morvern Harper, Rachael Tozer, Francesca Smith, Abi Smith and Becky MacInnes, all sixth year, used a start up-grant of £250 from the

charity's young apprentice scheme to buy materials which they made into Christmas-themed products and sold at craft fairs across Lochaber.

The £1,317.18 earned, along with a presentation delivered to judges in Inverness, earned the girls third place

in the competition. Lochaber high school headmaster Jim Sutherland congratulated the teens on their success and thanked teachers Miss MacCallum and Miss Doherty for mentoring the budding entrepreneurs throughout the project.



**STEP BACK IN TIME:** the Lismore children wore togas during Roman Week

A ROMAN Week was held at Lismore primary school, packed with activities exploring aspects of Roman life.

The children learnt many interesting things about the language, the food and the army, and even tried their hand at mosaic making.

After looking at some archaeological evidence for the Romans and trying to work out the function of various artefacts they enjoyed a visit from archaeologist Clare Ellis, who answered lots of questions about what archaeologists do and shared some of her most exciting finds.

Clare, from Argyll Archaeology in Campbeltown, was on Lismore to supervise the lifting, cleaning and storage of eight medieval grave slabs, dating from the 13th century, that were in the graveyard of the medieval cathedral at Lismore church.

These grave slabs will eventually be put on display at the church.

To celebrate all they had learnt during the week, the children had

**Lismore**

a Roman dinner party. Dressed in togas fashioned out of sheets and handmade Roman-inspired jewellery, they feasted on dates, olives, grape juice and other Roman delicacies, including swan (chicken) and (chocolate) dormice. Sumus Romani!

LISMORE Lumieres welcomed a record number of film-goers to their screening of acclaimed British film 'What We Did On Our Holidays', starring Rosamund Pike, David Tennant and Billy Connolly.

A well-tuned comedy that everyone with a family could relate to, it delivered laugh-out-loud gags, a few tears and some 'they're not really going to do that, are they?' moments, all against a backdrop of glorious Scottish scenery.

Look out for upcoming screenings of Pride and The Hundred Foot Journey.

**Kilmallie**

ABRIDGED minutes of the Kilmallie Community Council (KCC) January meeting:

Members had a discussion about the problem of cars parked on pavements. Residents are being encouraged to report incidents to the police immediately as cars can be uplifted if they are causing an obstruction.

KCC regrets the loss of potential developer contribution funding due to Tesco pulling out of the Blar Mor site.

Community participation is being sought for the West Highland local development plan review process.

Highland Council planning department is continuing to attribute applications to wrong community council areas.

More than 30 per cent of Kilmallie's applications have been incorrect in the last year, impacting search results on eplanning. It was agreed to raise the issue again with the planning department.

KCC will join the Scottish Rural Action group, at no cost. Christine Hutchison will be the contact for the community council.

It was agreed that the secretary should be paid an honorarium of £300 for 2014/2015.

KCC expressed thanks to Russell Leaper (secretary) for offering to donate it back to KCC for a community fund, less any income tax payable. KCC members have further offered voluntary contributions to cover the income tax and so the full £300 will be available to kick start the community fund.

Concern was expressed about the condition of the pavement outside the Co-op, with potholes that are a danger to pedestrians, especially the elderly and disabled. KCC agreed to write to BEAR Scotland to request action.

Concern was expressed about litter outside the Co-op. It was agreed to ask the Co-op manager for information on whose responsibility it was to deal with litter. Also litter bins were not being emptied regularly enough by Highland Council.

**MORVERN lines**

FOR THE past few weeks I have been camping, walking and travelling around Kintyre helping to raise money and awareness for Save the Children and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

What a fascinating peninsula it is and one full of history.

There must be as high a concentration of archaeological and historical sites here as anywhere else in Scotland.

Although Kintyre is some distance south of Morvern, both were once part of the great Argyll Estate. Indeed, it is almost certain that the income the Dukes of Argyll derived from the rich farmlands and the kelp industry, particularly along the west coast and around Campbeltown, Machrihanish and Southend, subsidised the afforestation and management of the wonderful oak woods which still dominate the Morvern landscape.

Unlike Morvern, the Kintyre peninsula has numerous sea caves. These are more prominent on the east coast which is doubtless the result of the geology.

Many show signs of occupancy, some probably for thousands of years. Near Southend, at Kiel, there is a set of footprints incised in a rock near Kiel graveyard which according to local legend and a bit of imagination, mark the spot where St Columba either came ashore from Ireland or made one of his many prophecies. They reminded me of a similar set above Lochaline with the same explanation.

Not far from here I saw the imposing remains of Kiel House which was once the Kintyre technical college until it was destroyed by fire. It was relocated to Dumbarton and became a well-known public school retaining the name of Kiel.

Further up the east coast, standing on a prominent headland, is a tall and graceful Celtic cross commemorating the Marquis of Lorne and his wife Princess Louise, a daughter of Queen Victoria. Unfortunately the inscription was too weathered to be legible.

I heard locally that the farm it stands on was a wedding gift to the couple from the Duke of Argyll.

There is a story, which used to be well known in Argyll, that when news of the marriage came out, a local Campbell announced there could be no doubt who was honouring whom. The Queen was said not to have been amused when one of her ladies in waiting told her!

St Ciarin's Cave, just south of Campbeltown, is an impressive rock-shelter noted for its size and recorded history. Tradition has it that St Ciarin, one of the 12 Apostles of Ireland, landed here with a band of followers and used it as a base to convert the local pagans to Christianity. It has a fine echo which no doubt enhanced their daily office. It contains a medieval baptismal font and a decorative rounded stone with an incised cross. Its function is unknown.

Close by and below the high water mark, is a large millstone. It was probably carved not far away and damaged when being loaded onto a ship which doubtless accounts for it being abandoned. There are links with the island of Arran in a nearby place name.



**FASCINATING:** Tarbert Harbour viking ship

I was interested to see many more English placenames on the local maps instead of the customary Gaelic ones. Morvern has very few of the former.

Foraging among the boulder-strewn shore to the south west of Southend produced a badly eroded ship's canon. Its length and shape indicates it might have been cast in the 17th century, perhaps earlier. Other metal debris suggests many vessels foundered along these shores.

Kintyre, like Morvern, has become blighted by the appearance of some weird and wonderful houses whose architecture would not be out of place in suburbia.

On many headlands and conspicuous hills, huge glass and metal 'palaces' have been permitted to dominate the primeval landscape. They bear little resemblance to the local, more homely, farmhouses which have withstood the passage of time and are infinitely more pleasing to the eye from every direction.

Sadly one 'bad egg' opens the door for others. The only hope is senior planning officers will recognise they have a duty of care to look after our fragile countryside for decades by resisting the present Scottish government's tendency for building houses no matter where and at what cost to the local landscape.

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**EAGER:** Plockton primary school pupils question Dave Thompson about politics

**Plockton**

PLOCKTON primary school pupils grilled their MSP when he visited last week.

The curious youngsters enjoyed learning about politics from Dave Thompson, MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch.

Mr Thompson said: 'It was fantastic to visit Plockton primary school and meet the hardworking teachers who are sowing the seeds for our bright future, which was evident in spades, from the very enthusiastic and inquisitive children who took time out to question me.'

**Tighnabruaich**

KILFINAN Community Forest Company (KCFC) has been awarded £750K from the Scottish Land Fund (SLF) to buy Upper Acharossan forest from Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS).

Upper Acharossan is a 434-hectare mixed conifer woodland sited adjacent to Kilfinan Community Forest, which the community also acquired from FCS in 2010.

This will bring the total community ownership to 561 hectares, and increase KCFC's capacity to increase local employment, build affordable housing, create more recreational facilities and aid training and skills development.

KCFC will use the knowledge and experience gained through managing the current 127-hectare woodland since 2010 to deliver a range of environmental improvements, including rhododendron control, deer management, and the enhancement of natural habitats.

The expanded community woodland

will offer financial security to KCFC - a registered charity established in 2007 - via an extensive harvesting programme, enabling timber to be sold commercially, as well as continuing to supply the community sawmill and wood fuel enterprise. Timber income will enable KCFC to take on more staff to help manage the expanded enterprise, and provide job security to staff presently employed by the charity.

The charity plans to create circular forest walks, bike tracks and camping areas, as well as the construction of a bunkhouse as low cost accommodation for visitors to the area.

Nikki Brown, KCFC's development manager, said: 'This is a real turning point for KCFC.'

'Our primary aim is to be a sustainable business which can support its own staff and core operations via income generated by the charity; having control of this much larger area will really strengthen our ability to do this.'

TRANSPORT LEADERS ASKED TO EXPLAIN 'DANGEROUS' AND 'SHAMBOLIC' STATE OF TRUNK ROUTES IN LOCHABER

# Road rage as A82 crumbles weeks after surface repairs

EMMA CRICHTON  
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TRANSPORT leaders have been asked to explain 'dangerous' and 'shambolic' trunk roads in Lochaber.

Residents and politicians have called for meetings with the management of Transport Scotland and BEAR Scotland as they are 'disgusted' with the crumbling surfaces and potholes on key routes throughout the area.

This comes after the junction leading to Spean Bridge between the A82 to Inverness and the A86 to Kingussie began to crumble just weeks after long-awaited resurfacing work.

John Fotheringham, chairman of Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge and Achnacarry Community Council, said: 'The road is just utterly shambolic.'

'I made a nuisance of myself for months to have it repaired and we were promised a pristine road when they agreed to resurface but lo and behold we are back to square one.'

“ Does a life need to be lost before something is done? ”

Robert Bryson  
Smiddy House owner

Robert Bryson, who owns Smiddy House in Spean Bridge, said the 'terrible state' of the road was having an impact on tourism in the area.

He said: 'The road is in a terrible state. It just hasn't been done properly. My guest house is right at the road and the lorries are so loud bumping up and down on the potholes, it's got to be disturbing visitors. It sounds like the lorries are about to come right into the house.'

'It wouldn't be difficult to lose control because of the state of



DANGEROUS: a lorry driver prepares to avoid a pothole on the A830 Fort William to Mallaig 20\_107road02

the road. Does a life need to be lost before something is done?'

This has led Mr Fotheringham to invite management of Transport Scotland and BEAR to the next community council meeting on March 10 and both organisations have confirmed

they plan to attend. The chairman has encouraged all residents of the community council area to attend and raise concerns.

Meanwhile, Highland councillor Allan Henderson has slammed Transport Scotland for spending £10 million on bridge

improvements on the A830 Fort William to Mallaig, while potholes he compared to trenches remain elsewhere on the same road. He said: 'While upgrading road surfaces is always welcome, it is baffling to the travelling public why, for the second time,

the perceived best section on a 40-mile road is grubbed up to be resurfaced, in the middle of winter, when other worn out, and frankly dangerous sections, are ignored.

'Why even is the trench, and that is what it is, outside BSW in Corpach completely ignored when there is disgust amongst the travelling public about the state of the road there?'

'Someone in Transport Scotland needs to put their head above the parapet and explain their actions, or is the problem that no one asks questions and is willing to take responsibility?'

A Transport Scotland spokeswoman said 'major resurfacing' in Corpach was scheduled for early next month. She added: 'We fully appreciate the importance of the A830 and we work with our operating company BEAR on its ongoing maintenance, in consultation with local communities.'

'The works have been programmed on the basis of overall need, such as the strength of the road and not just the requirement for resurfacing.'

## Fort William author launches latest book

A FORT William author is launching his latest book in primary schools across the town.

Barry Hutchison's latest children's novel 'The Shark-headed Bear Thing' proved popular with Lochside RC pupils when he visited to sign copies on Friday. 20\_107author01



## Get together and help volunteer group

A VOLUNTEER group in Fort William is appealing for new members to help fundraise for Cancer Research.

Lochaber Together has raised more than £70,000 since its inception in 2010 but is now short of volunteers due members' commitments.

Adam Ramsey, chairman of the Lochaber Together committee, said: 'Our big annual event is the Run Together Lochaber on Sunday April 26.'

'We are looking for volunteers

to help with the setting up of the event and on the weekend itself to make the event a huge success.'

'We work closely with the Cancer Research UK shop on the High Street which is also looking for volunteers to help with cash handling, customer service and stock processing.'

Dorothy Rodger, Cancer Research UK's fundraising manager for Scotland, said: 'I would like to thank Lochaber Together for the fantastic amount it has raised and the

massive contribution it has made to our vital work over the past five years. We have made enormous progress in the fight against cancer and continue to do so. However, we have only been able to do this thanks to the dedication and commitment of our volunteers and supporters without whom we would not be able to fund our vital research.'

To volunteer or for more information contact Mr Ramsey on 07887 706100.

## Family's festive lights boost hospice funds



A FAMILY whose Christmas lights brought festive cheer to Ardchattan had another gift for an Oban charity.

The Cotton family, of Dalnabeich, North Connel, collected £343.54 in donations from people across the parish in gratitude for their extravagant Christmas lights display at the house.

Home owner Tina Cotton and her son Darren and grandson Dean, who live in Oban, last week handed over a cheque to Fay MacPhee of Friends of Oban Hospice. Darren decorated his mother's house with a winter wonderland of light which could be clearly seen across Loch Etive in nearby Connel, thanks in part to the lack of street lights outside the house.

Tina said: 'Darren put the lights up over a period of three weeks and it took three days to get them down, so it was quite hard work. We had a donation box on the gate outside the house and people would drop off a donation. We would like to thank everyone for being so generous.'

After receiving a cheque from four-year-old Dean, Fay said: 'It was an excellent total for the charity and a nice surprise.'

Darren hopes to set up an even bigger lights display this year.

GENEROUS: Darren and Dean Cotton hand over the cheque to Fay MacPhee of Friends of Oban Hospice 16\_107cheque01

STRUGGLE ENDS WITH FORMAL APOLOGY AND A MONTH'S LINE RENTAL CREDITED BACK TO ACCOUNT

## O2 admits misleading mum over reason signal was down

STEVEN RAE  
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AN APPIN woman has been given a formal apology and a month's free line rental from O2 after the phone operator admitted she was misled about loss of service.

The apology comes as mobile operators in Argyll and Bute come under intense scrutiny.

As reported in The Oban Times last month, Heather Allen, whose son Cameron suffers from the rare condition brittle-bone disease, was forced to buy a new phone and sim card from rival network provider EE after O2's service was down from January 9 to 23. Cameron's condition means Heather needs to keep in constant contact with him as he could be hospitalised at any time.

Following a struggle to receive information about timescales for fixing faults, a member of the company's executive relations team wrote to Mrs Allen last week admitting she had been misled when a member of the company's customer service team told

her the outage was due to planned maintenance, rather than a fault with a mast.

As an apology, O2 credited £32.87 - one month's line rental - to her account.

Mrs Allen said: 'I'm glad the complaint was upheld and happy the matter was finally dealt with properly. It's just a shame it took so long.'

Meanwhile, MP for Argyll and Bute Alan Reid spoke in the House of Commons during a debate on rural communications on February 3.

In particular, constituents on Islay have had no service for periods of up to three weeks at a time over the winter.

He said: 'A mobile phone service is not a luxury these days, but a necessity. I'm aware of a farmer who broke a leg. He was conscious and able to use his mobile phone but, because he had no signal, he had to lie in severe pain until someone found him. That shows the importance of mobile phone coverage these days.'

Talking to The Oban Times, Dr Rob Matthews, a senior network commu-

nications manager with Vodafone discussed the problems customers were having in Scotland.

He said: 'Obviously, customers expect to be able to use their mobiles wherever they go, otherwise they're not truly 'mobile' phones. We are working hard to upgrade our websites to keep customers best informed about any disruption to service, whether planned or unplanned.'

Discussing specific problems in the West Highlands over the last year, Dr Matthews, who holds a PHD in applied physics, said: 'We recognise in the last 12 months there have been several faults with our site on the isle of Islay and we apologise for the inconvenience this has caused our customers. The site on Islay is linked to the rest of the network via a site on the isle of Mull. During the summer, it took us longer to repair the fault on Islay than we would have wished as we had to access both sites on Islay and Mull on several occasions to determine and repair the fault.'

When pressed on the issue that many rural customers felt frustration about

second-class service at the same cost as other customers, Dr Matthews said: 'All our customers are important to us. That's why Vodafone invested £1 billion in our network for 2014/2015, and another £1 billion in 2015/16, to eventually upgrade all base stations to the very best service equipment available to us.'

'Vodafone aims to double the 3G coverage in the whole of rural Scotland. By 2017, our target is to supply 98 per cent of the population of the UK with 4G.'

When approached by The Oban Times, O2 did not make anyone available for an interview, but said in a statement: 'At the end of this month, O2 will be meeting a number of Scottish government officials and MSPs to discuss our coverage and network investment plans for Scotland. We continue to roll out 4G as well as modernise our existing 2G and 3G networks which will ultimately deliver faster speeds and greater coverage across the UK. This translates into an investment of around £2 million per day.'

## Rent rise cap set at one per cent

THE COST of council accommodation rent in the Highlands will not be raised by more than one per cent in the next year.

The local authority's community services committee agreed to cap the increase for 2015/16 during a meeting last week, despite national council rent increases averaging almost four per cent last year.

A one per cent increase will also be applied to hostel rents, gypsy/traveller site pitches, garage and garage site rentals, as well as caretaking and CCTV services.

## Curtain-up on charity concert

TALENTED young musicians are to team up with a high school swing band from Lancashire to raise money for a children's charity.

Royal National Mòd medal winning instrumentalists and singers from Lochaber Music School will take to the stage with 24-piece St Augustine's high school swing band during the fundraising concert for Mary's Meals, based in Dalnally, Argyll.

The event on Wednesday evening (February 18), will kick off in Roy Bridge Hall from 7.30pm.

## Ski centres land £5.5m boost

SKI CENTRES are to benefit from a £5.5 million boost.

A share of funding from Highland and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise will be given to both Nevis Range and Glencoe in Lochaber, as well as Aviemore and Cairngorm.

Glencoe will use the money to replace chairlifts while Nevis Range will benefit from upgrading gondola controls and improving lighting damaged by stormy weather as well as making improvements to the building on the top station.

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# The Oban Times

& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

## Question of taking care

It couldn't have been expressed in starker terms: GP out-of-hours care is now largely unaffordable in the west Highlands. This appears to be the single, bleak conclusion of Gill MacVicar.

And she should know: because Ms MacVicar is the operations director of NHS Highland. The disparity in costs of providing a traditional GP out-of-hours service in some parts of Argyll is staggering: it racks up to an eye-watering £2157 per patient as compared with £85.49 in Inverness. NHS Highland is now piloting a scheme where nurses replace GPs for out-of-hours care. We can only hope that this development has a healthy prognosis.

### Glasgow Letter

#### Oidhche de Phìobaireachd

TODAY, Thursday February 12, Glasgow University's Comunn Oiseanach (Ossianic Society) holds its annual piping competition, 'Oidhche de Phìobaireachd', in The Park Bar.

I mentioned in my first Glasgow Letter the extent to which Comunn Oiseanach provides opportunities for students in Glasgow to speak Gaelic.

The society is more than 180 years old and has an incredibly rich history. Although its membership is made up solely of students from Glasgow University, its events, which include ceilidhs, language days and the occasional organised Gaelic pub crawl, are open to everyone.

This free-entry piping event was held last year for the first time in more than half a century after a committee member discovered an old constitution of the society which stated a piping competition and a literature competition should be held annually - something the society now proposes to do. Having staged a literature competition last term, the committee has chosen Thursday night for this year's piping competition.

Four of the city's top universities - Strathclyde, Glasgow Caledonian, The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, and Glasgow University itself - will be represented with the competition judged by Ewen Henderson and Griogair Labhradh. Each competitor will play a Gaelic air followed by a medley.

President of Comunn Oiseanach and fourth year Gaelic student Karen Oakley told me the event is great for raising the profile of both the society and Gaelic.

She said: 'A lot of what we do is for Gaelic students at Glasgow University but this is one of our best events for reaching people outwith the uni. Anyone can come in and hear the piping and see what Comunn Oiseanach is all about. There is a strong connection between Gaelic and piping - you only need to look at the names of many of the greatest composers of pipe tunes to see that - so we like to keep the emphasis of the competition on the Gaelic language.'

With this in mind, there is a special quack donated by the Park Bar for the winner of the Gaelic air competition. The night will be chaired by bean-an-taighe Annabel MacLennan from Lewis.

The chance for anyone to walk in off the street and experience Gaelic spoken and traditional pipe tunes being played can only be a good thing for the profile of Gaelic in Glasgow. Karen added: 'We're delighted the Park Bar is having us back again for the second year running.'

**Robert Robertson**  
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### Press Policy

WE AT The Oban Times endeavour to ensure that all our reports are fair and accurate and comply with the Editors' Code of Practice set by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO). We realise, however, that mistakes happen from time to time.

If you think we have made a significant mistake and you wish to discuss this with us, please let us know as soon as possible by any of the three methods: emailing editor@obantimes.co.uk; telephoning the editor on 01631 568046; writing to the Editor at The Oban Times, Crannog Lane, Lochavullin estate, Oban, PA34 4HB.

We will attempt to resolve your issue in a timely, reasonable and amicable manner. However, if you are unsatisfied with our response, you can contact IPSO, which will investigate the matter. You can either telephone IPSO on 0300 123 2220 or email inquiries@ipso.co.uk. IPSO is an independent body which deals with complaints from the public about the editorial content of newspapers and magazines.

We will abide by the decision of IPSO.

'It is great to hold the competition in such a relaxed atmosphere which makes it different from most other piping competitions.'

#### Mull and Iona Gathering

THE MULL and Iona Association Annual Gathering takes place this Friday, February 13.

The concert starts at 7.30pm and will be chaired by E Mairi MacArthur.

Artists include Norman Mackinnon, Eilidh Munro, Stuart Cameron, Carissa Bovil and the Mull and Iona Pipers. The dance, to the music of Deoch 'n' Dorus, will begin at 9.30pm and continue until midnight.

The evening also includes tea. Tickets are £10 for adults and £5 for children.

#### Coincidence?!

Looking for a bit of feedback on how I've been doing so far with the Glasgow Letter, I phoned one of the Skipinnish boys - an avid *Oban Times* reader - to ask his opinion.

'Well,' he said, 'I think you should be able to work that out for yourself by looking at the layout of the page. Your Glasgow Letter is always directly above the section that tells people how to get in touch with the paper if they have complaints about anything that has been written. That being below your column is surely not a coincidence!'

It's always nice to have such supportive friends. If anyone has any funny or interesting stories relating to highlanders or islanders in the central belt that might be suitable for the Glasgow Letter, please send me an email and let me know.

#### Pub scene

**Park Bar: Friday February 13:** Scott Harvey. **Saturday February 14:** Eriskay Lilt. **Sunday February 15:** Scott Harvey.

**Islay Inn: Friday February 13:** Crooked Reel. **Saturday February 14:** Twist of Fate. **Sunday February 15:** Open Mic.

#### What's on

**Thursday February 12:** Oidhche de Phìobaireachd, Park Bar, 7pm. **Friday February 13:** Clydebank and District Highland Association, ceilidh, Napier Hall, Old Kilpatrick, 7.30pm. **Friday February 13:** Mull and Iona Association, Annual Gathering concert and dance, National Piping Centre, 7.30pm.

**Friday February 20:** Taigh na Gàidhlig Gaelic House, ceilidh, Partickhill Bowling Club. **Friday February 27:** Glasgow Islay Gaelic Choir Annual Concert, Bearsden Burgh Hall, 7.30pm. Chairman Alasdair Gillies.

**Robert Robertson**  
robert.d.robertson@hotmail.co.uk



## New playpark opens in Oban - July 1994

July 19 1994 saw Dave Bleazard, Elaine Wolfstencroft, Sandy Slater, David Preston and John Buchan celebrate the opening of the then new Oban playpark outside Atlantis Leisure. The park was funded by Oban and Lorn Sport's Council and the Scottish Sports Council. Digital versions of flashback photos for *The Oban Times* can be sent to editor@obantimes.co.uk or prints sent in to Editor, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban PA34 4HB. Anyone who wishes a print returned should include a stamped, addressed envelope.

## Letters to the editor

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### Coach drivers deserve credit

Sir, I was heartened to read in a recent *Oban Times* of the assistance received by Mary Ann Kennedy by a bus driver at Ardgour.

Often, the efforts driving staff make beyond the line of duty are simply taken for granted, as is commonplace in many walks of public service.

As a serving bus driver elsewhere in Scotland, I feel this is a timely opportunity to write to express my admiration and thanks to the guys who are driving for West Coast Motors, Shiel Buses and Citylink on some of the most challenging and difficult roads in Scotland.

Coach services to Oban, Fort William and Skye operate over the A82 and A87 trunk roads. For the sort of large coaches that have to be used to provide reasonable passenger comfort, drivers face a major challenge in safely negotiating these routes which are often narrow, at high altitude and prone to suffer severe weather as regular travellers know.

Despite the responsibilities of this job, the profession as a whole is not well paid. Our thanks are due to everyone concerned for their sterling efforts to maintain services in winter, which are so important to the communities they serve.

**Lawrence Macduff, Kilmarnock.**

### Worthwhile exercise

Sir, Can I on behalf of the area committee of Oban, Lorn and the Isles thank everyone who attended the meeting on Tuesday February 3 in the Corran Halls, Oban.

Your local elected members found this a very worthwhile exercise and hope those who attended were of the same mind. It was good to see so many people turning out in Oban to give their views and comments on the council in their area.

Only by continuing this community engagement can the councillors do their best to reflect the views of the community. **Councillor Roderick McCuish, chairman, Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Committee.**

Sir, In the light of the present emphasis on waiting times and targets for accident and emergency departments,

More worrying was the

vandalism carried out by otherwise respectable adults who I could name but will spare their blushes.

What can be said about the referendum is voter engagement with the debate was healthy with a record turnout and high voter registration.

Any policy that puts at risk this voter engagement, like the proposed poster ban, should be resisted. The fact people feel strongly enough to campaign about the democratic process should be the story and not Mr Dolan's petty attempt to stir bad feeling.

**Jan Brown, Ardferrn. Dismay at MP's intervention**

Sir, As I rule I never reply to the rants that pass for Alan Reid's weekly letters to local newspapers

However, I am forced to make an exception this week and express my disgust at his intervention in the matter of the kidney dialysis unit in Campbelltown in which he attempts to connect the issue to last year's referendum campaign and his present attempt to secure re-election.

For the record, at the request of councillor Donald Kelly I contacted NHS Highland to make plain to them my view that they should stop asking for money from the community and get on with installing and operating the unit. I believe Jamie McGrigor did the same.

I have also been involved in arguing for dialysis provision in Oban. Neither of us, as far as I am aware, saw the suffering of local kidney patients or the generosity of the local community as things which we could later exploit to do down our political opponents.

**Michael W Russell MSP, Argyll and Bute. A sore winner**

Sir, We are all familiar with sore losers but the new phenomenon of the sore winner is epitomised by Tom Dolan in your January 29 edition.

He appears to be afraid of a second referendum but chooses to style himself 'Better Together local coordinator' as if he is still fighting the last one. No one realistically expects a second referendum unless there is a groundswell of public opinion in favour of a re-run.

With regard to his comments about damage to 'No Thanks' posters, 'Yes' posters were being damaged and removed in large numbers on a daily basis, in at least one case, by a youngster who made no distinction between 'Yes' or 'No'.

More worrying was the

and illiberal position. The SNP has failed to support rural areas. Argyll and Bute Liberal Democrat MP, Alan Reid, was able to get money from the UK government to help bring superfast broadband to Argyll and Bute. This money was handed over to the SNP government.

But many people remain frustrated as no-one can tell them when, or even if, their home or business will be connected to faster broadband speeds.

**Ursula Craig, Cove. Campbells exonerated**

Sir, Traditionally Highlanders tend to be reserved at public events, a characteristic noted by outsiders.

Yet, a couple of fellows carrying banners usually attend the annual commemorative service for the victims of the Massacre of Glencoe on February 13 1692.

Who are they and why are they there each year? Perhaps that was why a bishop in the Episcopal Church of Scotland queried its purpose when he attended a service a few years ago.

Some local knowledge may help. Angus MacDonald, a local Taigh a' phuir man, performed the first discreet act of remembrance in 1930. He had been asked by his neighbour, Mary Rankin, to lay a wreath on the monument early in the morning each year, a task later carried on by his son Robert. Mary knew of the oral tradition passed down telling us that the first clansman to be killed was Duncan Rankin (Dunchadh MacRaing) while crossing the River Coe at Invercoe.

The same oral tradition passed down to my family did not mention animosity towards people who happen to be called Campbell.

This can now be confirmed by searching online for The Calum Maclean Project: The Massacre of Glencoe. Calum recorded the views of native Gaelic speakers in various places in the Highlands and discovered that popular tradition exonerated the Campbells.

**Ewan Macintyre, Inverness. Your Letters**

THE EDITOR welcomes letters of approximately 300 words in length for publication on this page. The editor also reserves 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 telephone number is also required for verification.

Anonymous letters or those supplied without a contact telephone number will not be printed.

Please write or fax to: Letters page, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll, PA34 4HB. Fax: 01631 568001. Email editor@obantimes.co.uk

## Beachd Ailein Ailean Caimbeul

NACH E AN SAOGHAL a tha a' fàs beag! Nach tric a chluinnear an abairt sin aig daoine is iad a' gabhail beachd air cothroman sibhail, agus gu sònraichte air na cothroman conaltraidh a th' againn an-diugh. Tha daoine a bha beò tro na h-ochdadh bliadhna a chaidh air atharraichean do-chreidsinneach fhaicinn anns gach raon dem beatha làitheil. Bhiodh liosta ro fhada feuchainn oirre ach tha sinn uile mothachail gum bheil cùisean mòran nas goireasaiche an-diugh, ged a bhios cuid againn a' cuimhneachadh le cianalas air cleachdaidhean a dh'fhalbh ri linn gach sochair air am bheil cothrom a-nise.

Saoidh mi fhìn nach eil raon anns am bheil na h-atharraichean sin nas nochdte na saoghal naidheachdan, is comas aig na meadhanan aithrisean agus deilbh a chraoladh beò mar a tha cùisean a' tachairt, an ire mhath a càrnaidh sam bith den t-saoghal. Tha sinn air fàs cho cleachdte ri leithid sin 's nach eil sinn cha mhòr mothachail air ealantas na seirbheis. Agus le sùilean an t-saoghail air na tha a' tachairt nach saoleamaid gum biodh an fhollaiseachd sin a' cur ceannsaill air giùlan agus gnìomhan dhùthchannan agus luchd-riaghlaidh an t-saoghail. 'S dòcha gum bheil e a' dèanamh beagan cuideachaidh ach feumar aideachadh gum bheil saorsa phrìseil aithris naidheachd an-diugh fo dhùbhlàn nas motha na chunnacas bho dhìonn greise. Nuair a thug ceannairciche ionnsaigh bhòrbh ann am Paris bho chionn beagan sheachdainean, bha gutan far feadh an t-saoghail a' dìteadh na thachair, agus mòran a' moladh saorsa a bhith aig luchd-naidheachd aithris air na rudan nach bi feadhainn ann an cumhachd ag iarraidh gum faic, neo gun cluinn, sinn. Ged a bha an argamaid a thaobh saorsa às leth modh-obrach na h-iris Charlie Hebdo làidir, saoidh mise gum bheil na thachair anns an Eipheit a thaobh luchd-naidheachd na companaidh telebhisean Al Jazeera, agus dhan fhear-naidheachd Iapanach (agus dithis eile) ann an Siria, nas eagalach buileach. Bha saorsa cothrom beachd ga àicheadh dhan iris anns an Fhraing ach tha aithris na firinn a thaobh gach oic a tha a' gabhail àite ga àicheadh dhan t-saoghal anns na suidheachaidhean eile, agus chan fhaod sin soirbheachadh.

Theagamh gun can cuid nach tachradh casg aithris den leithid san dùthaich seo agus nach feuchadh riaghaltais ri fiosrachadh a chleith bhon mhòr-shluagh chun na h-aon ìre. Ach cuimhnicibh air mar a bha am Prìomhaire Mairead Thatchar a' feuchainn ri smachd a chumail air fiosrachadh mu na bha a' gabhail àite ann an Cogadh na Falclands, is na meadhanan ann am Breatann a' faicinn telebhisean Ameireaganach a' craoladh na aithrisean a bh' air am bacadh dhaibhsan! Agus dè na dheidhinn Chilcot? Mun àm a nochdas an aithris sin bidh clòimh liath a' fàs oirre!

THE TREATMENT of the Al Jazeera news team in Egypt should be universally condemned. So-called news management is not unique to any one country or government, and while taking care to avoid propaganda the freedom to factually report events must always be defended.

Ailean Caimbeul (Allan Campbell)  
ailean@obantimes.co.uk

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24				25		

**Across**

1 Rulers (7)

5 Leg bone (5)

8 Put upon (7)

9 Describing phrase, which doesn't make sense in the normal way! (5)

10 Chief official of a town or city (5)

11 Rainproof material (7)

12 Saggy (6)

14 Rag (6)

17 Try (7)

19 Sarcastic remark (5)

22 German sub (1-4)

23 Stand up and applaud (7)

24 Sit in on (5)

25 Short witty remark (7)

**Down**

1 Reasonable belief in a God (5)

2 Quick (5)

3 Riding support (7)

4 Funny show (6)

5 Woven yarn (5)

6 Cut of beef (7)

7 One who distributes charity (7)

12 Transylvanian gentleman? (7)

13 Audibly (3,4)

15 A coin equal to 100 pence (7)

16 Good-for-nothing (6)

18 Choral composition (5)

20 Pipe material (5)

21 Casual attire (5)

**LAST week's SOLUTION**

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## Green light for new island hospital

A NEW hospital in south Skye has been approved, just days after a campaign group called for independent scrutiny into how the decision was made.

On Tuesday NHS Highland announced Shona Robison, Scottish government cabinet secretary for health, had given the go-ahead for the proposed 'service redesign' which will see a replacement hospital for the Dr MacKinnon Memorial built in Broadford to serve the communities of Skye, Lochalsh and South West Ross. Portree Hospital, further north, is to remain open but will lose some services, including in-patient beds. This comes just two days after a campaign group, including Portree and Kilmuir community councils, wrote to Ms Robison and politicians in the area requesting independent scrutiny into how NHS Highland carried out the public consultation.

A spokesman for the group said: 'It is still not apparent, even after public consultation, how the local management is going to implement government policy effectively, whether the changes are patient-centred, whether the proposed new facility is in the optimal location for the delivery of acute care or whether the proposed catchment is even rational in clinical terms.'

Furthermore, there does not appear to be any concrete proposals as to how palliative or respite care will be delivered effectively in the communities concerned.'

But Ms Robison welcomed the health board's plans and said she was convinced the proposal was 'credible and viable'.

NHS Highland chairman Gary Coutts added: 'We look forward to continuing to work with the community in the detailed planning of health and social care provision that best meets the needs of everyone in the area.'

## CARE BOSS PROMISES MORE STAFF ARE BEING RECRUITED TO IMPROVE SERVICES IN REMOTE VILLAGES

# Rural care at home pledge

EMMA CRICHTON  
ecrichton@obantimes.co.uk

STEPS are being taken to improve home care for vulnerable people in the west Highlands, according to a health chief in the area.

Recruitment is underway for staff in Skye and Lochaber, which Gill Brown, care at home operations manager for the area, hopes will improve the service and allow NHS Highland to make better use of resources, despite her assurances carers 'are not thin on the ground'.

This will include 'bank' staff who choose when and how often they work and comes after Ms Brown said it can be 'difficult' to provide help for people after time in hospital or if they become dependent on non-medical care, including washing and going to the bathroom.

During discussions with members of Duror and Kentallen community council, south Lochaber, on Monday night, concerns were raised about how care is provided in rural villages and how quickly staff can be brought in when the need arises, but Ms Brown insisted NHS Highland was not short of carers. She said: 'We're not thin on the ground. It is more difficult to provide care [than in cities] because we have to take into account the travel times and costs to get carers out to remote areas but we're hoping recruiting bank staff will help with that.'

But when asked if care staff were available to Duror or Kentallen if they were required in the imminent future Ms Brown admitted it 'would be difficult'.

Resident Dave Crystal said there had been problems with community care in south Lochaber since Glencoe Hospital closed in 2009. He added: 'I campaigned against the closure and attended countless meetings. We were told then care at home would be improved to accommodate losing the hospital yet here we are, years later, with the same issues and the same questions.'

Jonathan Baxter, chairman of Duror and Kentallen community council, said the meeting was helpful but still left some questions unanswered.

He said: 'I'd like to thank Gill for giving up her time to come and speak to us. It was informative and I felt like she took our concerns on board. 'The only thing is, we asked who is responsible for letting care at home know a carer is needed, especially if the person involved hasn't been in hospital, and I don't feel we're much further forward with that. 'There are locals here who could be a valuable resource in terms of helping other villagers so I hope that will be taken on board and can go some way to solving the problem.'

## New youth hostel to open on Skye

A NEW youth hostel on Skye is set to open next month.

The centre, providing a mix of private and shared accommodation in its 18 rooms, will be housed in the former Bayfield Backpackers and adjacent Bayfield Guest House sites in the centre of Portree.

The opening of the hostel is part of modernisation plans from the Scottish Youth Hostel Association (SYHA), including refurbishment of the group's Oban site.

Keith Legge, chief executive of SYHA, said: 'Portree has been on our list for a long time as an ideal location for a youth hostel. We have finally been able to achieve this objective whilst we continue to update and reconfigure our hostelling network across Scotland.'

'The Isle of Skye is one of the most-visited destinations in Scotland and we look forward to welcoming more guests to this beautiful island.'

## Gaelic language 'milestone'

GAELIC will become the main language taught in six Western Isles primary schools from this year.

The announcement that Bernera, Breasclete, Castletay, Iochdar, Leverhulme Memorial and Sgoil an Taobh Siar will receive Gaelic school status was hailed a 'milestone' for the development of the isles' mother tongue by Dr Alasdair Allan, minister for learning, science and Scotland's languages.

Figures from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar show 47 per cent of primary one pupils in the Western Isles are already in Gaelic medium education.

Dr Allan said: 'This is a milestone in the delivery of Gaelic primary education in Scotland, which has an important role in developing future generations of speakers. Great things are happening at the six schools, with Gaelic taking its place at the heart of the curriculum, strengthening pupils' bond with Gaelic language, culture and bilingualism.'

English medium education will still be available at each of the schools.

## Huskies head for high street parade

A PACK of huskies will parade along Fort William High Street as part of a fundraising walk of the West Highland Way.

Organiser Jim Tait is calling on pet owners to join him on the 97-mile trip from Glasgow to the town to raise money and awareness for a dog rescue centre.

The challenge, from April 29 until May 7, will see Jim take his six rescue huskies on the popular route in aid of Saints Sled Dog Rescue charity.

The 52-year-old's wife Fiona, originally from Fort William, will be supporting him by driving their dog van and caravan from location to location.

He said: 'I would love to get as many people and huskies involved as possible. I know the full trip is a big ask so if anyone would like to join us for part of it, or even the last mile through Fort William, they're more than welcome.'

'Raising money is important but for me it's more about raising awareness of the great work done by the charity. That's why I want to make as much fuss as possible and get as many dogs there as possible.'

For more information or to take part contact Mr Tait via email on jamestait1963@sky.com or search Saltire Saints Sled Dogs on Facebook.



Jim Tait will walk the West Highland Way with his six pet huskies. Photo Rosie Jake Photography

## Re-think on road grit cutbacks

PLANS to reduce the treatment of some roads in the Highlands are to be revisited following concerns from the public and councillors.

A decision to cut the number of 'low traffic' roads gritted in winter was made by the Highland council in December last year as part of money-saving measures but last week the authority's community services committee supported a move to look again at the proposals, thought to save £120,000 each year.

Councillor Graham Mackenzie, chairman of the community services committee, said: 'The budget savings agreed in December 2014 did not affect the pre-treatment or gritting services during this winter. These are continuing as normal.'

'It is clear, however, that there is some public concern, raised by members, around the future change to our winter policy and in response to these concerns, the committee will make a request to full council, through the director of finance, to explore options for alternative savings that would allow this saving to be removed.'

'We will carry out a review of winter maintenance and will bring this back to our meeting in August.'

# Call to keep ferry debate afloat as fare hike stalls

REMOTE communities have been temporarily saved from paying higher fares for a ferry connecting the Ardnamurchan peninsula to central Lochaber but campaigners say the issue must be taken more seriously.

Members of Highland council's community services committee voted to defer a proposal to increase fares on the Corran ferry by four per cent to allow further research into implications and alternative options.

A report provided to the committee meeting last week also reiterated concerns the council could be breaching European state aid law by subsidising the ferry, which continues to run at a £115,000 loss, despite three fare hikes in the last three years.

Tony Boyd, chairman of campaign group Free Crossing for Corran, called the state aid worries 'a smoke screen'.

He said: 'Highland council has failed the local communities served by the Corran crossing and it realises it and the Scottish government must now stop prevaricating and hiding behind the smoke screen of state aid and engage in a realistic and practical debate on the future of the crossing.'

'The future of the narrows may lie with a vessel, maybe a fixed link, may yet be a job-creating renewables-orientated crossing, but what is sure at the moment is that neither local authority nor national government is taking this seriously, nor genuinely looking at the best way forward.'

'Frankly, neither can wait to have the matter off their hands.'

Mr Boyd also thanked councillors of both Lochaber wards, Fort William and Ardnamurchan and Caol and Mallaig, for their support.

But Graham MacKenzie, chairman of the local authority's community services committee, still believes a fare increase is the way forward.

He said: 'If the service was transferred to Transport Scotland under road equivalent tariff, the fare increases would be significantly higher than the relatively small increase we are proposing. A fare increase is therefore the best option for the communities who use the ferry.'

'The advice we have consistently received from Transport Scotland is that state aid rules are a consideration for the council.'

'The council, therefore, has a duty to seek to reduce the deficit.'

A Transport Scotland spokesman said the organisation, run by the Scottish government, 'remains open to further discussions' about taking over Corran ferry.

## Views sought on health plans

RESIDENTS of the Western Isles are being asked for their views on plans to integrate health and social care services.

A proposed partnership between Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and NHS Western Isles is available until February 27 as part of the consultation period. The document outlines the planned model for health and social care, how services will be delegated, delivered and monitored.

This is available via [www.hsci-wi.org.uk](http://www.hsci-wi.org.uk), together with a feedback form which can be completed online or downloaded. The information and forms can also be requested by contacting Maggie Fraser of NHS Western Isles ([maggie.fraser1@nhs.net](mailto:maggie.fraser1@nhs.net) or 01851 708060) or Colin George Morrison of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar ([colin.morrison@cne-siar.gov.uk](mailto:colin.morrison@cne-siar.gov.uk) or 01851 822615).



LOOKING AHEAD: an architect's impression of how the community centre and bunkhouse on Canna could look

## Islanders push ahead with ambitious bunkhouse plan

THE DEVELOPMENT trust of an island of just 21 people is taking steps to build a community centre and bunkhouse.

Volunteers on Canna, the most westerly of the Small Isles, hope the new facility will encourage more people to move to the island and will boost tourism.

A grant from the Big Lottery funded a feasibility study for what Isle of Canna Development Trust members said will become a 'community hub' and could also house a new school.

Stewart Connor, project manager, said: 'The feasibility study went well and architects have

drawn up impressions of what the hub could look like. The next step is to apply for planning permission whilst trying to drum up funding.'

'We could be looking for anything between £600,000 and £800,000.'

The Isle of Canna is owned by the National Trust for Scotland which Mr Connor said had been 'very supportive' of the plans. He added: 'The only problem we might face is most funding groups like the Big Lottery say the community must own the land and building but because the island is owned by the trust, land can't be sold to us. The trust has been very supportive so far so hopefully we can find a solution.'

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THE GAELIC BOOKS COUNCIL

**THE DONALD MEEK AWARD 2015**  
The Gaelic Books Council is inviting submissions from Gaelic writers for the Donald Meek Award 2015. The Donald Meek Award was established in 2010 with financial assistance from Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Creative Scotland and aims to encourage and support Gaelic writers in their craft. Rosemary Ward, Director of the Gaelic Books Council said: "The Donald Meek Award is an annual competition which seeks to encourage new and creative Gaelic writing and we are seeking new works in a variety of genre from emerging and established Gaelic writers. Two new prizes were added to the Donald Meek Award last year, thanks to additional funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig: a First Book (by a new writer) prize and a Highly Commended prize. We are interested in receiving new Gaelic creative works – poetry, short stories, novels or drama – which are as yet, unpublished, but are nearing completion, and could be progressed to publication. We will also accept academic works and research studies written in English, but which have a strong Gaelic subject matter, as long as they have not been published before the closing date." You can receive further information on the Donald Meek Award from Rosemary Ward, Director, The Gaelic Books Council or on the website, [www.gaelicbooks.org](http://www.gaelicbooks.org). Applications must be submitted no later than Friday 3 April 2015.

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OBAN BUSINESSES TAKE THE HONOURS AT PRESTIGIOUS RETAIL AWARDS IN GLASGOW

# They're taking the retail experience to a new level

**STEVEN RAE**  
srae@obantimes.co.uk

WHEN it comes to flowers, Petals of Oban has proven itself to be the 'best of the bunch', being named North West Florist of the Year at the Scottish Independent Retail Awards, held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Glasgow on Sunday.

Based in Albany Terrace, Petals was one of five Oban businesses to pick up awards in the North West region awards.

Voted for by the public, the awards highlight the value of independent retailers to the communities they operate within, rewarding the entrepreneurial spirit behind many of the thriving local businesses recognised.

Petals of Oban was set up by Agnes MacArthur 25 years ago, and is now run by her daughter, Lynette MacArthur, from Taynuilt.

'It sounds cheesy but it was "blooming marvellous" to win,' said Lynette, whose daughter Alexandria accompanied her to the awards.

'It's a great achievement for the town to have so many winners too, and one of the first people to come into the shop and congratulate me was Moreen Gracie, who owns (fellow Oban florists) the Flower Basket, which sums up the great community spirit we have in the town.'

Winning the Bakery of the Year award was the icing on the



**SWEET:** Stewart and Helen Mackechnie of Oban Chocolate Company

cake for husband and wife team of Heinz and Sylvia Bossard.

The Gibraltar Street bakery has been open in the town for 10 years now, with son Michael also involved in the family-run business.

Sylvia said: 'We're absolutely delighted. It's a great honour to be chosen and a testament to our

great staff. It was lovely to see so many businesses from Oban nominated at the awards, and for the size of the town, five awards is a great achievement.'

The event was also a good hair day for staff at The Ark salon in Aird's Crescent, who picked up the award for Hair and Beauty Retailer of the Year.



**BAKE MY DAY:** Sylvia Bossard from Bossard's Patisserie

'Unfortunately, we couldn't make it to the ceremony,' said Kate Walton, who runs the salon with business partner Andrea Simpson.

Kate added: 'We're absolutely delighted for the recognition from our clients. I think they especially appreciate our environmentally-friendly products.'

Winning Coffee Shop of the Year was a sweet victory for Oban Chocolate Company, based on Corran Esplanade.

Helen Mackechnie, who owns the shop with husband Stewart, said: 'The nomination was a bit out of the blue, and I was very nervous on the night.'

'It's great to be nominated for



**FLOWER POWER:** Alexandra Mcleod and Lynette MacArthur of Petals

any award and to win it is obviously brilliant.

'It's our amazing staff and loyal customers who deserve the praise.'

The final winner from Oban was The Little Bay Café, on Stafford Street, in the Eatery of the Year category whose staff were unfortunately unable to

attend the ceremony and were unavailable for comment.

Obviously 'career-driven', Isle of Skye business Kenny's Garage was the only other winner from the West Highlands, in the Garage of the Year category.

No one from the garage attended the awards, or was available for comment.

# Power company's dedicated staff brave the elements to help keep the lights on

**EUAN PATERSON**  
epaterson@obantimes.co.uk

ALLAN MacKechnie and his team of engineers and contractors knew what to expect when they went into work on the morning of January 9.

Winds of more than 100mph, blizzards, driving rain, sheet ice and lightning had battered the north west Highlands the previous night, crippling the power network and, over just four days, 120,000 properties across the north of the country were without electricity because of 1,400 faults.

'It is very unusual to have that many faults over that period of time,' said Scottish and Southern Energy Power Distribution (SHEPD) Oban team manager Allan MacKechnie. 'If the weather warning from our control room in Perth predicts anything over 50 faults it is considered an "exceptional event" - over 10 days from the beginning of January there were seven exceptional events declared in Argyll and West Highlands.'

In those circumstances, the offices in Oban, Fort William and Skye will be manned 24/7. They collate local information so that when the boys go to work in the morning their job sheets are already made up.'

On the morning of January 9, the teams arrived at their local offices at 6am.

'That first day is all about getting as many people out as possible,' said Allan. 'The first day is mostly finding where the faults are. In these circumstances everyone knows what they are supposed to do and they know it will be a long day, but a lot of the boys thrive on it because it is a break from the norm.'

'The squads will work through to midnight, at which point a decision will be made on whether to stand down. If the fault is only going to take another hour to fix, they will stay on.'

'Following that, you have to get eight hours sleep before you come out again because you need to be fresh - if you're knackered, that's when things could go wrong.'

Overnight, while the foot sol-



**WHATEVER THE WEATHER:** clockwise, from left, SHEPD Oban team manager Allan MacKechnie; tree cutters clear fallen trees from power lines in snowy weather; and engineer Colin Campbell returns to the daily maintenance work on a power line in Dalmally.



diers catch up on rest, the office staff and 'scouts' will deal with any new faults being reported, ready to give to engineers the following morning.

Allan said: 'We were well prepared for the storms.'

'December was the first major issue. There was a lot of lightning damage across the network, but in January the problem was just the wind - 95 per cent of the problems were caused by trees coming down and demolishing lines.'

'In lightning and high winds you have to wait - you can't send the boys out in that. It just wouldn't be safe.'

'That said, we aim to get everyone back on as quickly as possible and well within three

days. Any longer than that and we are gutted because we live in these communities.'

'It's also a pride thing, knowing that we have done our jobs as quickly as possible.'

This determination to maintain supply to remote parts of the area was typified when 12 customers on Coll were off for two to three days. No ferries were running and the plane wouldn't fly.

SHEPD engineers sought Scottish government permission to charter a coastguard helicopter to get to the fault on the island.

'We got some nice phone calls from islanders, who hadn't expected us,' Allan said.

Because of their efforts at the turn of the year, SHEPD staff received messages of thanks by



letter, social media, phone calls and in person.

'It is really nice to get those messages but whether the power is off for five minutes or 15 hours we do exactly the same thing because following procedure is what keeps the boys safe,' said Allan.

'It is a difficult job, because the lines we are working on are not always close to the road and we often have to climb a hill, or cut through fallen trees to get to where a fault lies.'

'We carry pull lifts and other equipment, around 25 kilograms per man, so often the hard bit is getting to the fault.'

'On the first day of the January storm I was in at 6am and I wasn't clear of jobs until the Monday, working until midnight each day. 'It is a physically demanding

job and not for everyone but it is a great job for young guys in the local area. You can't beat the opportunities, training and equipment you get.'

Over the past four years SHEPD has invested £162 million in its overhead lines and underground cables.

In the wake of the winter storms the lines we are working on are not always close to the road and we often have to climb a hill, or cut through fallen trees to get to where a fault lies.

'We carry pull lifts and other equipment, around 25 kilograms per man, so often the hard bit is getting to the fault.'

'If that bank of trees was left they could come down on the lines in the next storm. We have to be ready for things like that.'

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# Social Scene

## Atomaig Piseag weekend Clachan, Kintyre

**T**HE ARGYLLSHIRE ladies Gaelic choir, Atomaig Piseag, enjoyed a weekend of workshops and its annual general meeting at Balnakiel House, Clachan in Kintyre last weekend. Singing led by conductor Raymond Bremner of Thrumster saw the choir return to its many songs of the last 10 years. The two-day event saw choir president Elma Davidson, from Barcaldine, stand down from the post she has held for 10 years. The new president was named as Sheena McTighe of Tainuill.



REHEARSAL: Raymond Bremner, choir conductor, puts the women through their paces. 16\_107social11



SOPRANO: Joy Dunlop led the group in some acapella singing of both modern and traditional Gaelic songs. 16\_107social7



SECRETARY: choir secretary Audrey Paterson of Tainuill. 16\_107social1

Below from left:

**MID ARGYLL:** The women of Mid Argyll Fiona and Christine Johnson who celebrated the choir's five-years-in-a-row achievement. 16\_107social5

**OBAN GAL:** Nicola Pearson of Oban, who sings with more than four choirs, made the journey from the Western Isles where she works. 16\_107social3

**GLITTER:** Moira Young of Achnamara and Mhairi Renton of Campbeltown enjoyed the workshops and meetings of the choir's annual general meeting. 16\_107social4

**SILVER MEDALLIST:** Donna Dugdale from Mull. 16\_107social9



## Valentine's Day traditions from around the world

**S**T VALENTINE'S Day is celebrated across the globe and love is a universal theme.

But not everyone chooses to celebrate it with roses and boxes of chocolate.

Many places have their own traditions associated with February 14, which vary throughout regions and countries around the world.

**Japan:** In this part of the world, it's all about spoiling the man on Valentine's day and not the other way around like in most Western cultures.

Japanese women present the men in their lives with gifts (mostly chocolates), to express either their love, courtesy or social obligation.

**South Korea:** Adapted from the Japanese tradition of Valentine's Day, women in South Korea also spoil their men with chocolates on this day.

In return, they receive gifts from men on 'White Day', in a similar fashion to Japan.

**Denmark and Norway:** Largely imported from the west 'Valentinsdag' as it is known, was not very widely celebrated until more recently.

However, there is a quirky little tradition that locals have embraced and made pop-

ular on this day know as 'Gaekkebreve', which are funny little poems or rhyming love notes that men send to women anonymously.

**Slovenia:** February 14 in Slovenia, marks the first day of working in the fields.

St Valentine or 'Zdravko', as he's better known there, is one of the country's patron saints of spring.

As such, it's an auspicious day to start working in vineyards and fields as usually around this time of year one starts noticing the revival of plants and flowers.

**Finland and Estonia:** Here Valentine's Day is more a celebration of friendship rather than a romantic love fest.

February 14 is called Ystävänpäivä in Finnish and Sõbrapäev in Estonian, which literally translates to 'Friend's Day'.

**Wales:** The Welsh celebrate 'St Dwynwen's Day' (the patron saint of lovers) on January 25, which is their equivalent to Valentine's Day.

On this day it is customary to gift love-spoons, an age-old tradition that started when Welsh men would carve intricately decorated spoons of wood and present them to a lady that they were

interested in courting or marrying.

This tradition is carried on even today as men gift their ladies spoons.

**Norfolk, England:** Along with traditional Valentine's Day customs of cards and flowers and romance, the people of Norfolk have a Santa Claus of sorts who goes by the name 'Jack Valentine'.

This lovable but mysterious character is said to knock at little children's doors on Valentine's eve and sneakily leaves them little treats and small presents.

**Scotland:** Back in the midst of medieval time, if anyone wanted to demonstrate their love, they did so by presenting the recipient of their affection with a Luckenbooth brooch.

This silver brooch consisted of entwined hearts or hearts with a crown on top.

The name derived from the Luckenbooth or Locking Booths - small shops that were a regular feature on Edinburgh's Royal Mile.

The brooch not only demonstrated affection, but was also held to protect against evil.

It was also often given to the bride and groom on their wedding day, a tradition which is still popular today.

## Orange & lemon apricot cake

Lusciously light citrus sponge

**Ingredients**  
125g butter  
125g golden caster sugar  
2 large eggs  
1 lemon  
50g ground almonds  
50g plain flour  
50g soft, dried apricots

**For the buttercream:**  
200g butter  
100g icing sugar  
5 tsp double cream  
grated zest of 1 lemon  
grated zest of 1 orange

**Method**  
Set the oven at 180C/gas mark 4. Cut the butter into small pieces and beat with the sugar until light and fluffy. Add the eggs one at a time. Finely grate the zest of the lemon and add to the mixture, then add the almonds and flour. Chop the apricots finely, stir them in, then pour into a lined baking tin. Bake for about 35 minutes until risen, pale gold in colour and lightly firm to the touch. Remove from the oven and leave to cool.

Make the buttercream by beating the butter with the icing sugar to a soft cream. Grate the zest from the lemon and the orange, add to the butter and continue beating for a minute or two. Fold in the double cream gently. Slice the cake in half horizontally. Use some of the butter cream to sandwich the layers together. Use the remaining buttercream to cover the top and sides and scatter with sugar crystals and, if you wish, a few petals.



## Lovely Valentine Recipes

VALENTINE'S Day comes round just once a year so it's the perfect excuse to spoil a loved one with a homemade treat.

Why not try one of these delicious recipes this weekend?

Get flirty with this cheeky cocktail, which is so easy it makes the perfect pre-dinner drink - even if heading out to celebrate.

The sponge is light, fresh and fruity, which makes a welcome change from the stereotypical rich, heavy chocolate treats associated with Valentine's Day.



### Flirtini

#### Passionate passionfruit cocktail

**Ingredients**  
100ml vodka  
1 tbsp raspberry liqueur  
50ml passion fruit juice  
handful of ice  
½ passion fruit (optional)

**Method**  
Put two Martini glasses in the freezer for five mins to chill. Mix the vodka, raspberry liqueur, passion fruit juice and a handful of ice in a jug or cocktail shaker. Strain into the glasses and float ½ a passion fruit on the top of each, if you like.

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# Highlights from the opera

REVIEW: Scottish Opera, Saturday February 7, Victory Hall, Benderloch

FROM THE moment the four singers bounded on to the stage and launched into the quartet, 'Chelietoglorio' by Mozart, the audience could tell that this was going to be opera, but with a difference. Scottish Opera's 'Opera Highlights' tour pulled into Benderloch on Saturday night. And the packed audience at the Victory

Hall was treated to an operatic box of delights, proving once and for all that a night at the opera can be fun too. Reisha Adams, soprano, Sioned Gwen Davies, mezzo-soprano, Sam Furness, tenor and Ben McAteer, baritone, performed a varied programme to suit all tastes from the popular 'Habanera' from Bizet's 'Carmen' to 'Touching

Eden' which was written specially for this year's tour by Liam Paterson, Scottish Opera's current composer in residence. The four singers, who were accompanied by music director Ina Selvelieva, on piano, had the minimum of props - a table and four chairs, two large wicker screens and a picnic basket, but they brought each work to life with their

vivacious performances. The songs themselves were all linked to a party and its aftermath, which worked a treat on a small stage, and included 'Dance Duet' from 'Hansel and Gretel' by Engelbert Humperdinck, 'EuchwerdeLohn' from Beethoven's 'Fidelio', 'Oh Happy We' from Candide by Leonard Bernstein and 'Oh would that I again could

see' from Jeanie Deans by Hamish McCrum. Gilbert and Sullivan fans greatly appreciated 'Fair Moon, to thee I sing' and 'In a contemplative fashion' from 'HMS Pinafore' and 'The Gondoliers' respectively. 'Papagena, Papagena' from Mozart's popular opera, 'The Magic Flute', sung by Ben McAteer and Reisha

Adams, was hilarious and the encore 'Place Settings' brought the house down. The 'Opera Highlights' tour continues in the Highlands tonight, Thursday, February 12, at Loch Torridon Community Centre, and on Saturday at the Astley Hall, Arisaig, then travels throughout Scotland, finishing in Bathgate on March 7. EAH



HIGHLIGHTS: From left to right - Sioned Gwen Davies, Ben McAteer, Reisha Adams and Sam Furness, in a scene from 'Touching Eden'.

## Grants for Skye creatives

CREATIVE residents of Skye and Lochalsh are invited to apply for a contemporary arts project. Atlas, based in Portree, is offering grants of up to £3,000 to artists, writers, dancers, musicians and filmmakers to help develop their skills or produce new work. Anyone born in Skye or Lochalsh or who completed their secondary education in the area can apply. An Atlas spokesman said: 'The aim of the awards is to offer artistic and professional development opportunities that respond to, and support, the needs of artists as they change throughout their career - from recent graduates and emerging artists, to those who have developed their practice over many years and may be looking at new directions.' The closing date for applications is Friday, February 20. For more information contact Rosie Somerville via rosie@atlasarts.org.uk or 07787551847.

## Historic event rescheduled

A TRIP to a historic house in Lochailort has been rescheduled after last month's storms postponed the original visit. The event at newly restored Roshven House, built by famous painter Jemima Blackburn and her husband in the 19th century, was originally planned for January but power cuts in Lochailort meant it had to be rescheduled for Sunday May 3. Attendees will be given a talk by Rob Fairley, who wrote a book about the painter, and shown a number of original Blackburn pieces still retained in the house. To attend contact Colleen Foggo at the West Highland Museum via colleen@westhighlandmuseum.org.uk.

## Not the Antiques Roadshow

ANTIQUA collectors can have their prized possessions valued at a special event in Fort William's West Highland Museum next weekend. 'Not the Antiques Roadshow' will run from 11am-2pm in the Cameron Square museum on Saturday February 21, as part of a fundraising campaign run by members.

## Champion junior brass player

A YOUNG tenor horn player from Campbeltown Brass Band has been crowned Scottish junior solo champion at the Scottish Brass Band Association's national solo and ensemble championships. Amy Paterson was praised on Saturday in Livingstone for her fine performance of 'La Belle Americaine', which placed her first out of 15 top junior brass talents from around the country.

## Oban Camera Club

FORMER principal teacher of art at Oban high school Val Hamilton was the guest speaker at Monday's Oban camera club meeting in Oban's Regent Hotel. Mrs Hamilton, who recently retired from teaching, gave a slick graphic presentation of work by some of her former pupils. Many of these students have gone on to significant and prominent careers all over the UK, in design and creativity. Mrs Hamilton also explained the impact of creativity on photography.

## Sabhal Mòr Ostaig commemorates founder in naming of new development

THE FIRST building in Sabhal Mòr Ostaig's (SMO) new Kilbeg development will be named in memory of Sir Iain Noble. The new centre for Skye's Gaelic college will be called Ionad Iain Nobail (The Iain Noble Centre), to commemorate the man who was instrumental in the establishment and early development of SMO. Lord Minginish, Rodrick MacLeod, chair-

man of the SMO's board of directors, said: 'It is altogether appropriate that this new building should be named after Iain Noble. 'Were it not for Iain there would be no such place as Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and the enormous benefits it has brought to the south end of Skye would never have happened, but it is also appropriate in another way. Kilbeg is about renewal, revival

and progress - the very things to which Iain devoted his life when he came to Sleat. Thus the building will be iconic of the man.' The Iain Noble Centre will house college staff as well as providing teaching and research facilities and business premises. Sir Noble's widow, Lady Lucilla Noble, said: 'I know how much happiness this news will bring to all Iain's friends,

both near and far. 'Given the challenges that he overcame in setting up Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, combined with his lifelong commitment and endeavour towards ensuring the future of the Gaelic language, culture and education, it will also be appreciated that Iain's name will continue in perpetuity at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.' The new building will be officially opened later this year.



ICONIC: The first building in Sabhal Mòr Ostaig's new development



IN MEMORY: The building will be named after Sir Iain Noble.

Listings for 13 February - 19 February	
<b>Big Hero 6</b>	Daily Except Sun: 11:30,13:00,17:30 Sun: 13:00,17:30
<b>Big Hero 6 3D</b>	Daily Except Sun: 16:00 Sun: 10:30
<b>Valentine's Day Special Endless Love</b>	Sat: 20:30
<b>NT Live: Treasure Island</b>	Sun: 15:00
<b>Shaun the Sheep Movie</b>	Daily Except Sun: 11:00,13:50,15:20,18:20 Sun: 11:00,12:50,15:20,18:20
<b>Whiplash</b>	Daily Except Sat: 20:30 Sat: 20:00,22:20
<b>Wild</b>	Daily Except Sat: 20:15

## COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

**32nd Highlands and Islands Music & Dance Festival**  
1st-3rd May 2015  
Syllabus/entry forms from oban music or Tel: 01631 710302  
www.obanfestival.org  
Closing date: 16th March 2015

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Please ask for details

**SOUP LUNCH**  
in aid of Oban Pipe Band will be held in Oban Pipe Band Hall Shore Street on Saturday 14th February 2015  
From 12 noon - 2.00pm  
Admission £3.00

**Valentine's Day COFFEE AFTERNOON**  
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Digital Photography (next steps)	Wednesdays 5 - 7 pm from 22 April for 5 weeks
Excel for beginners and those with some experience	Wednesdays 7 - 9 pm Lorn House from 25th February for 5 weeks
IT Drop In Help with CVs, job applications, email etc	Thursdays 11 - 1 pm Lorn House. Ongoing weekly
Computing for Beginners 55 plus	Tuesdays 10.30 - 12.30 pm 6 week course Oban Library - next class starting after Easter
One to One computer sessions	Please call to arrange
Computer sessions for Adults Lochnell Primary	One to One and group available - please call to book Thursdays 5.30 - 7.30 pm from 19th February for 6 weeks.
Dunbeg Primary School	Taster session Wednesday 25th February 3 - 6 pm Then 5 week sessions 5.30 - 7.30 4 March - 1 April
Job Information Club	Fridays 10 am - 12 noon Job Centre Plus
English for Speakers of other Languages	Mondays 7 - 8.30pm Tuesdays 2 - 4 pm, Oban Library
Creative Craft Workshops	Workshop sessions in Oban, Kilmelford, Appin and Taynuilt from March - please call for more information

**Most classes are free of charge.**  
For further information, or to book a place, please contact us at:  
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If you, or anyone you know may benefit from help with their reading, writing and/or number skills; help is at hand. Please call Brian on 01631 567952 to see what is available. Support is typically on an individual basis, but small groups do exist. We don't have a set 'curriculum'; we support people to learn what they want at a pace that suits them - all of which is free of charge.

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THIS WEEK'S LISTINGS	MONDAY:	TUESDAY:	WEDNESDAY:	THURSDAY:	FRIDAY:	SATURDAY:	SUNDAY:
0800 AM on FM, 0810 Breakfast Show, 0900 Monday Morning with Andy and Stephen, 1100 Molly Black, 1300 CLYDE 2, 1500 Jim Edge, 1700 Drivetime with Danni Hay, 1900 Rosie's Highland Fling, 2000 John McLuckie's Show, 2100 David Cullen, 2200 American Jukebox with Michelle	0800 AM on FM, 0810 Breakfast Show, 0900 Sound Scottish (repeat), 1000 Comfort Zone with Doug Carmichael, 1300 CLYDE 2, 1500 Elaine Lamb, 1700 Drivetime with Maggie May, 1900 Ken Hunter, 2000 Memories are	0800 AM on FM, 0810 Breakfast Show, 0900 Sound Scottish (repeat), 1000 Comfort Zone with Doug Carmichael, 1300 CLYDE 2, 1500 Elaine Lamb, 1700 Drivetime with Campbell and Coll, 1900 Country Meets Rock with Len	Made of This with Ken Hunter, 1330 The Quiz with Danni Hay, 1500 Lesley Blair-Simmonds, 1700 Drivetime with Jim Lynch, 1900 Sounds Scottish with Archie Cameron, 2000 Highest Praise with Stuart, 2100 Elaine Lamb, 2300 Northern Soul with Gordon Covey	0800 Maggie May's Carousel, 1100 Molly's Mix with Molly Black, 1300 CLYDE 2, 1500 Gordon Covey, 1700 Drivetime with DJ Taz, 1900 Christine's Collection, 2100 Ann's Ceilidh, 2200 Margo Till Midnight	0800 Jean Ainsley Breakfast Show, 1000 Teeny and Tiny Show, 1300 CLYDE 2, 1500 Weekend Warmup with Ian Blair-Simmonds, 1700 Drive Show with Jim Lynch, 1845 Sports View, 1900 Country Meets Country with Jackie	0900 Maggie's Swingin' Morning, 1000 Saturday Mixes, 1300 CLYDE 2, 1800 Sports View with the Dream Team, 1900 Marcus, 2000 Dave Lewis	0900 Sunday Morning with Breege, 1100 - 1400 Allan, 1630 Archie Darling, 1800 Ken's Friends with Ken Hunter, 1900 New Country Show with David Entwistle, 2100 Drum & Bass with Graham Scott

# 'Which way are you going?'

Intrepid round Britain trekkers find their paths cross in Campbeltown



POINTED: Adam Short, left, and Richard Long crossed paths in Campbeltown in the middle of two epic walks for charity

THEY would have been entitled to ask each other: 'How's the feet?'

Or - 'You don't fancy turning around and keeping me company?'

Hardy hikers Adam Short and Richard Long shared an uplifting chance meeting in Campbeltown one Sunday recently en route to epic charity walks around the coast of Britain - going in opposite directions.

Adam from Bournemouth and Richard Long from Gloucester crossed paths at the town's war memorial, in the midst of journeys seeing them cover a

combined 8,000 miles in less than a year.

Their meeting was all the more incredible given the huge distances involved.

Adam, 41, left from Southampton last March and is travelling anti-clockwise along the coast to raise money for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and Save the Children. Richard, who started his trek at Penzance last May, is travelling clockwise in aid of Help For Heroes.

Adam featured in *The Oban Times* last month after the newspaper's columnist Ian Thornber extended Highland hospitality

and put him up for several nights over the festive period.

Ian was so inspired by Adam's journey he accompanied him to Kintyre in his car, often wild camping with him as well as preparing him flasks of coffee and other provisions.

He said: 'Both men have had incredible journeys and are so committed they are even taking in some of the Western Isles which feature war memorials.'

'Meeting each other was a real morale boost for them in continuing on their enormous tasks.'

'Adam is sticking closely to the coast which means covering

every crag and bay the coastline presents. The Kintyre terrain is a real challenge because there are beaches, cliffs and woodland right down to the sea at certain points. Wild camping in the recent cold weather has proven a real hardship. The pair are glad to take up the occasional meal and warm bed when they can and remarked upon the generosity of people in the Highlands.'

Adam intends to reach Southampton this summer, while Richard's arduous trek is not due to be completed until November 11, 2018, more than four years after leaving Cornwall.

# Yeoman Glensanda pushes the boat out with £1,000



DIGGING DEEP: David Lamb, quarry operations manager at Glensanda (third from left) presents the cheque to Oban lifeboat representatives

QUARRY company Yeoman Glensanda has presented a cheque for £1,000 to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI).

The company was one of the main sponsors of the charity's Glasgow Gladrags Ball and Celebrity Auction, which raised more than £8,500 for Oban Lifeboat.

David Lamb, quarry operations manager at Glensanda, presented the cheque to Oban lifeboat coxswain John Hill and officials of Oban RNLI fundraising group. Les Stewart, treasurer of the fundraising group, said: 'The very generous sponsorship we received from Glensanda and fellow sponsors, Tunnock's and CalMac,

meant more cash from the event was able to go directly towards saving lives at sea.'

'We would like to thank them all for their support. It is much appreciated.'

The crew of the Oban-based Mora Edith MacDonald spent the most hours at sea of any lifeboat crew in Scotland last year.

# Lorn gardeners learn more about Chilean incomers

MEMBERS and visitors welcomed Martin Gardner MBE, of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, to Lorn Garden Club last week when he spoke on the subject of 'Chilean Garden Plants'.

Martin is coordinator of the International Conifer Conservation Programme and has spent a great deal of time over the last 22 years in discussions with land owners throughout Britain and Ireland to develop a network of more than 200 conservation sites for some of the threatened conifers of the world.

His work has taken him all over

the globe, but he has a special interest in the flora of Chile and his knowledge of that subject was the basis of his presentation.

It is not always recognised that many of the best-known shrubs and trees in Scottish gardens are natives of Chile, and his talk was very well received.

The next evening meeting will be at 7.30pm on Tuesday March 3 at the St John's Cathedral Hall.

The speaker will be well-known alpine nurseryman Ian Christie, from Kirriemuir, telling members about 'Spring Treasures'. Everyone is welcome to attend.

# Pointed talk takes archaeological society back in time

LORN Archaeological and Historical Society (LAHS) enjoyed an excellent talk last month by Ken Mactaggart on the MacPhe-drons - arrow makers and ferry operators of Lochawe.

The next talk will be on Friday February 20, at 7.30pm in St Columba's cathedral hall, Oban.

The speaker will be Annie Tindley of Dundee University.

LAHS is holding a coffee morning on Valentine's Day, in St John's Cathedral Narthex from 10.30am to 12noon.

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# Business

editor@obantimes.co.uk

01631 568000

## Pal on the move to Benderloch

SCOTTISH Sea Farms has appointed a new freshwater production manager, Pal Tangvik, who arrives at South Shian, Benderloch, from Norway.

The 51-year-old joins the company with 25 years of aquaculture experience.

His remit is to manage all of the freshwater production for Scottish Sea Farms, including six sites, and manage 45 members of staff.

Jim Gallagher, managing director at Scottish Sea Farms, said: 'Pal brings a wealth of knowledge and experience.'

Mr Tangvik said: 'I saw this role as an excellent opportunity to share my experience and to learn more about the aquaculture industry in Scotland.'



**NEW FACE:** Pal Tangvik, Scottish Sea Farms' new freshwater production manager, will be based at South Shian.

## First class student support praised

WEST Highland college UHI has been praised for how well students from care backgrounds are supported.

Battle UK, a group which works with 'looked after' youngsters, awarded the college a quality mark for how it helps young people from the application and interview stage to graduation.

Lydia Rohmer, principal and chief executive of West Highland college, said: 'This award demonstrates our determination to ensure that every single one of our students, no matter what their personal circumstances, receives the support they need. We want to give all of our students a great experience at college and to help them achieve their goals and move on to the next stage of their lives.'



**THINKING BIG:** Oliver Millington can't wait to convert the old church into a climbing centre

## Climb aboard for last leg of fundraising

A NEW indoor climbing centre in Fort William could be open by the end of the year if the final £40,000 can be raised.

The former MacIntosh Memorial Church is on its way to being converted into the new facility, including a cafe and sports massage service, but young entrepreneurs Oliver Millington and Naomi Hatto are appealing for help in the last leg of fundraising.

The couple behind Three Wise Monkeys Climbing have started a crowdfunding campaign to raise the £40,000 needed to open the first phase of the project.

Mr Millington, managing director and founder of Three Wise Monkeys, said: 'The project is a truly exciting prospect for Fort William and the climbing community

in the UK. Having a new indoor activity for all ages and abilities open all year round would be a huge benefit to people who love the amazing outdoor area that we live in, but get stuck when the weather is poor.

'We're crowdfunding because we want the local and visiting outdoor community to have a chance to be part of the history of our project.'

'We've put together some great rewards too, so as well as a brilliant new climbing centre in town, everyone will get something back for supporting us.'

Rewards for donors range from t-shirts through to lifetime memberships for the centre.

To find out more visit [www.crowdfunder.co.uk/three-wise-monkeys-climbing](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/three-wise-monkeys-climbing)



**TASTE OF SUCCESS:** onboard services manager Craig Harkness (centre), joined by the steward and galley teams on board the MV Caledonia Isles, proudly displays the ship's accreditation certificate

## Fine food sees CalMac sail off with top Visit Scotland produce award

FINE dining on the high seas has led to ferry company Caledonian MacBrayne being recognised for promoting Scottish food produce.

The company has been awarded Visit Scotland's 'Taste Our Best' accreditation, becoming the first ferry company to receive the accolade.

Seven of the company's Mariners restaurants on board the larger ships have been recognised in Scotland's Year of Food and Drink.

Two other ships are in the process of being

assessed and, once in service, the MV Loch Seaforth will also be appraised by the judges.

The ships already awarded Taste Our Best accreditation are: MVs Isle of Lewis, Hebrides, Caledonian Isles, Finlaggan, Hebridean Isles, Isle of Arran and Lord of the Isles.

More than 50 per cent of the Mariners Menu is Scottish, offering the likes of Barra-landed Haddock, smoked salmon from Argyll Smokery in Dunoon, along with burgers sourced from around Argyll. The company's spending with suppliers across the network is worth around £5.188 million.

The accreditation sees the Mariners restaurants join such illustrious company as The Three Chimneys in Skye, Martin Wishart at both Edinburgh and Loch Lomond, and The Ubiquitous Chip in Glasgow.

'We have worked hard to put together a menu which not only satisfies our hungry customers, but which is value for money and promotes good Scottish produce,' said retail operations manager Kurt Hart.

VisitScotland's Taste Our Best accreditation ensures that at least 40 per cent of the menu will be Scottish produce.

## Dedicated dental team accepting new NHS and private patients in Tarbert

MID ARGYLL'S longest established independent dental surgery is registering new patients.

The team at Tarbert Dental would like to welcome both NHS and private registrations.

A skilled and dedicated team of four dentists and seven dental nurses and reception staff work out of the state-of-the-art dental surgery, which provides first class facilities on a par with those found in cities throughout the UK.

Established more than 30 years ago, the practice has constantly kept ahead of the field and boasts



**AHEAD OF THE FIELD:** Tarbert Dental

digital scanning equipment, which enables the dentist to carry out non-invasive crown, bridge and implant treatments.

Using the digital equipment helps to save time and avoids uncomfortable procedures.

Tarbert Dental is proud to have had the first full colour 3D scanner in Scotland.

Linda Garwood, who has headed the surgery for three decades, is a leading dental practitioner and has more than 20 years in training newly qualified NHS dentists.

The practice is around an hour from Oban, Inveraray and

Campbeltown. Tarbert is also well served by CalMac ferries from the Inner Hebrides, with free parking in the village.

Julie Brown, practice manager, said: 'Working with the best digital laboratories in Glasgow, we can offer every service including implants, crowns, bridges, veneers and tooth whitening. All treatment options will be detailed on a full treatment plan with costs and details of procedures.'

To book a free dental exam contact the surgery on 01880 820387 or email [Julie@tarbertdentalsurgery.co.uk](mailto:Julie@tarbertdentalsurgery.co.uk)

## Urgent call to ditch flight tax

HEBRIDEAN communities are being 'punished' by air passenger duty (APD), which has seen £3.58 million paid in two years, according to one Western Isles politician.

Angus MacNeil, SNP MP for Na h-Eileanan Iar, said the tax, only applicable to flights coming into the isles from other Scottish airports, should be abolished to encourage visitors to the area.

This comes after Mr MacNeil

requested the information from the House of Commons library and discovered £3.58 million was paid in APD for flights to the Western Isles between 2011 and 2013 - £1.21 million in 2011 and 2012 respectively and £1.25 million in 2013.

He said: 'This is an astonishing figure from a London tax that punishes locals, the business community and visitors further. This figure should not be taken lightly. It represents at least

£52 for every return flight for a family of four.

'APD punishes Scotland and its island communities by making our airports uncompetitive in their efforts to attract and consolidate new direct routes. This duty is restricting Scotland and our islands' ability to realise the economic and business benefits which direct air connections bring.'

Mr MacNeil added the UK

government planned to devolve the tax to Scotland and the SNP Scottish government planned to 'reduce it by 50 per cent per cent with the aim to abolish it completely'.

A spokesman from the UK government treasury said although a date for the devolution of APD had not been set, the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties are all committed to bringing forward a bill in the next UK parliament session.

**SCOTTISH BEAVER TRIAL** Evening Talks & Drop In Session

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# Farming

## Get ready for the Highland Cattle Society's 124th Spring Show and Sale



**T**HE Highland Cattle Society's long association with Oban continues into 2015 as the town hosts the 124th annual spring show and sale at the livestock centre.

Councillor Roddy McCuish, chairman of Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee will welcome exhibitors, buyers, judges and stockmen to the town at a civic reception to mark the occasion.

Visitors from all over Europe attend the annual show and sale, which takes place this weekend from Friday to Monday.

The reception will be held in the Royal Hotel, Oban, on Saturday evening.

Ahead of the reception councillor McCuish explained Oban was proud to host the annual show and sale.

He added: 'I am delighted that once again the Highland Cattle Society has chosen Oban as the venue for its annual spring show and sale. 'This is a very prestigious event and I look forward to welcoming everyone here this weekend.'

The society was founded in 1884 and has one of the oldest herd books in Great

Britain, if not the world.

There has been only one sale not in Oban since the start of the auction in the late 1800s - that sale was held in Perth when Oban Livestock Centre was being upgraded.

Highland cattle have spread from the west of Scotland and are instantly recognisable throughout the world.

Written records go back to the 18th century and the Highland Cattle Herd Book, first published in 1885, lists pedigrees since that time.

New folds are founded every year both at home and abroad and

in recent years Highland Cattle societies have been started in Sweden, Denmark, Austria, Germany, Holland, Finland, France, Switzerland and Norway.

There are Highlanders in Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, Estonia, USA, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Poland, and the Faroe Islands.

This weekend's sale will attract a large number of buyers from outwith the UK.

To add to the international feel this year, the society has invited Germany's Jochen Born to judge the show on the Sunday.

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## Kintyre dairy farmers could gain from Scottish dairy brand plans

A SCOTTISH dairy brand is to be set up to promote products at home and abroad.

To be launched later in the year, the brand is part of an action plan announced by Scottish rural affairs secretary Richard Lochhead to help boost the country's dairy industry profile.

'Here in Scotland we can produce some of the best cheese, butter and other dairy products around,' said Mr Lochhead.

'I want to make it easier for consumers to choose Scottish products first - providing much needed support to local farmers and boosting the Scottish economy.'

'I also want to help our dairy farmers capitalise on the proud reputation of Scottish food and drink and access more export opportunities.'

'Establishing a dairy brand will help consumers recognise the Scottish option and promote Scottish produce to overseas buyers.'

'I will shortly publish an action plan to help ensure a more sustainable future for the industry.'

'This will help to deliver

the support our dairy farmers need to face the future with confidence and certainty in the face of the changing price of milk.'

Mr Lochhead announced the action plan to the Scottish parliament's rural affairs, climate change and environment committee, where he was giving evidence.

Meanwhile, Argyll and Bute MP Alan Reid last week called on the UK government during a debate on the dairy industry in Westminster to do more to support farmers.

'There are many dairy farms in Kintyre and the industry is a vital part of the local economy which would struggle without the dairy industry,' said Mr Reid.

'As well as direct employment on the farms themselves, the dairy industry supports many other local businesses, including the Campbeltown Creamery which makes the famous Mull of Kintyre Cheddar.'

He added that the co-operative First Milk, to which all Kintyre's farmers belong, had a part to play in Kintyre.



DAIRY BRAND: Campbeltown Creamery makes the famous Mull of Kintyre Cheddar 08\_c46creamery01

'I would urge First Milk to invest in the creamery and secure the future of both the creamery and the local dairy industry.'

'Grants from the Scottish Government have been offered provided First Milk makes its own investment.'

He said while it was generally agreed that dairy demand would outstrip supply in the

long-term, price intervention was set too low to have any effect before the situation got more serious.

While welcoming a decision to give the Groceries Code Adjudicator powers to fine supermarkets, he pointed out that many producers didn't come under the code because they didn't sell directly to supermarkets

and called for it to be reviewed and extended this year.

'The adjudicator should be able to be proactive and be seen as a genuine threat to those who breach good practice,' said Mr Reid.

'In times of price falls it is the primary producer, the dairy farmer, whose business is impacted by the low prices.'

## Kenny takes Lochaber stock judging title



TAKING STOCK: Lochaber shepherds at the annual stock judging competition

LOCHABER shepherds held their annual stock judging competition at Lochaber Rural Complex on Friday, with 97 competing.

The open competition was won by Kenny MacCallum, who was also the highest place local. Second placed in the open was Helen

MacColl, who was also highest place lady.

A total of £953 was raised by the end of the evening, which was divided between two local charities, one to help the deaf and the Belford Hospital in Fort William.

Thanks were given to all those who took part and helped to make the evening a success.

Results:

Open Competition:  
1 Kenny MacCallum, 361 points; 2 Helen MacColl, 354; 3 John MacPherson, 350; 4 equal Donald MacDonald and Roddy MacLeod, 344; 5 Garry McFall, 342.

Highest placed local:  
Kenny MacCallum.  
Highest placed lady:  
Helen MacColl.

Children under 16:  
1 Karen Lawrie, 355; 2 Iona Cameron, 334; 3 Cheyenne Cameron, 324; 4 Eilidh MacArthur, 320; 5 Katie Cameron, 319.

Team Competition:  
1 John MacPherson and Alec MacPherson, 671; 2 Garry McFall and Heather McFall, 658; 3 Brian Strachan and Colette Strachan, 643.

## Caledonian Marts says all options still on the table

UNITED Auctions has confirmed it has registered an interest in a takeover of Oban Livestock Centre operator Caledonian Marts.

The move comes following weeks of speculation into the future of Caledonian Marts, which leases the Oban mart and also operates and owns another auction site in Stirling.

Last Wednesday, February 4, United Auctions released a statement confirming that it had registered an interest in buying the firm.

United Auctions executive chairman David Leggat said: 'Obviously, we're interested in the situation and have many mutual customers. The process is subject to a confidentiality agreement, which we clearly want to respect.'

Joint managing director Robin Tough added that United Auctions, 'wanted to be prepared for all eventualities' regarding the wider farming community in Scotland.

An emergency meeting was held last month at Oban Livestock Centre by Caledonian

Marts, where shareholders of the farmers' co-operative met with managing director James Cullens to discuss its failing finances.

Mr Cullens said at the time he was hopeful customers and supporters would manage to provide the money needed to bring the firm out of debt.

In a statement released on Monday, Mr Cullens said: 'The board of directors would like to make it abundantly clear that no decision has been reached on the future of the company and that it hasn't entered

into any negotiations with any interested parties at this stage.'

'Rather it continues to explore the strategy outlined to, and agreed by, members at the shareholder meeting, which is to pursue the company's recapitalisation through share raising process

while simultaneously considering offers for the business.'

United Auctions currently operates a network of different auction marts across the Scotland, including Stirling, Huntly, Lairg, Dalmally, Tiree, Islay and South Uist.

## MARKET REPORT

ALL classes of sheep met an exceptional trade at Dingwall and Highland Marts in Fort William on February 5 where 716 sheep were sold.

Lambs (435) averaged £44.33 and sold to £94.00 gross for a Suffolk cross from Hillside Farm, Kilchoan.

Ewes (105) averaged £43.81 and sold to £118.00 gross for a Suffolk from

Breakachy, Laggan. Rams (163) averaged £58.39 and sold to £115 gross for a Suffolk from Steall, Camaghael.

Feeding sheep (13) averaged £45.69 and sold to £65.00 gross for a Blackface wether from Fersit, Roy Bridge.

Leading prices per head: Lambs: SuffX - Blargie Farm, Laggan, £80; BF

- Ardnamurchan Estate, Kilchoan, £77; Chev - Ardnamurchan Estate, £71; Rouge - Greenfield, Invergarry, £70; Zwart - Balgowan, Laggan, £66; Suff - Breakachy, £66; Ber - Branault, Achateny, £65; TexX - Branault, £64; Swale - Hillside, Kilchoan, £64; LleyX - Ardnornish Farms, Oban, £60; Mule - Glendoe Estates, Fort

Augustus, £51. Ewes: BF - Insh Farm, Spean Bridge, £69; Chev - Antium Farm, Dervaig, £48. Rams: LleyN - Keppoch Farms, £90; Chev - Achnaha, Kilchoan, £88; Belt - Ardnornish Farms, £87; Char - 19 Blarmafalach, £79; BF - Achnaha, £77; Suff - Greenfield, £74; Tex - 10 Erracht Drive, Caol, £68.

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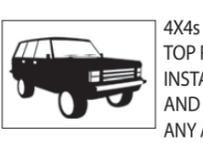
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## Property Classifieds

### Buying your next home top tips

#### Research the Market

Getting the home of your dreams may seem difficult, but the process can be simplified by carrying out careful research of the market.

The way people buy property has been revolutionised over recent years:

The very first thing any modern house hunter should do is to log on to the internet where a wealth of information about the local housing market can be found.

You should look at the property in local newspapers where you are interested in living. This will give you a good idea of house prices in the area.

Next, take a drive around the areas you are considering. Look at the types of properties that are around there. Take a note of what facilities are nearby and how close any train or bus routes are. Work out how long your commute might be.

Go for a walk around any areas which you like and look out for any 'For Sale' signs, and which estate agents they belong to.

After that, visit the nearest town and have a good look

in the estate agents' windows. Take your time to work out a full picture of the market in the area.

When you have a mortgage in principle in place, it is then the time to pay a visit or make a phone call to the agent which you think has the strongest presence in the market for the type of home you are looking for.

Arm yourself with any questions which you cannot answer yourself. Tell the estate agent your guide price range, but be flexible - you can look at houses above your budget in a slowing market, as there may be opportunity for negotiation.

Keep in mind the prime principle of property buying - location, location, location. Many argue that a smaller property in a better location will hold its value better and have a stronger resale value than a larger home in a less desirable area.

Once you have a clear understanding of the market and what it can offer, you will be in a better position to act quickly when your estate agent, (which should be a member of the National Association of Estate Agents), shows you the right property. You will also be able to express better to the estate agent exactly what you are looking for, which will save time all round.



#### House Viewing

It is likely to be the biggest purchase you will ever make, so ensuring you ask the right questions when viewing a potential new home is essential.

The National Association of Estate Agents has five key tips to remember when viewing a property:

Spend some time thinking about what it is you want from your new home - What kind of property will suit your lifestyle? What location is most desirable and affordable? Do you want a garden? How many bedrooms do you need? Do you want a new or old property? Taking the time to identify what is important to you will save you time in your property search.

Preparation is key - Be ready with a list of questions you want to ask the vendor and the estate agent. For example, asking how long the house has been on the market may give you a clue to any potential problems with the property. You might also need to ask; what fixtures and fittings will be left? What are the neigh-

bours like? Why is the vendor moving? What are the parking arrangements? How much does the property cost to run? In order to keep each property you view clear in your mind it is best to take notes along the way.

Be observant - look for any potential problems and costs such as dysfunctional guttering, cracks in the interior and exterior walls or brown stains on the ceiling that may indicate a leaky roof, for example.

Try to visualise yourself living there - ignore the décor as much as you can and try to think about whether your furniture will fit into the house and how it will look with your style applied to it. View the property in daylight and be sure to check out the area at other times of the day: a quiet road might be manic during rush hour and a desirable neighbourhood may look different at night.

Be polite but don't feel uncomfortable looking around a house, it is a big investment to make, so it pays to be a little nosy.



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We are seeking to appoint a Payroll & Pensions Assistant to join our Payroll Department based in Fort William.

Reporting to the Payroll/Pensions Manager the post holder will assist in all aspects of the monthly payroll and will be responsible for the processing of payroll data on a daily basis ensuring that the information is input accurately and within the appropriate timescale.

The successful candidate will be responsible for the processing of all new employees into the Payroll & Pension system and will ensure that all auto enrolment requirements are met. They will assist the Payroll/Pensions Manager in the production of month end reports, liaise with internal departments and external agencies with regards to payroll information and will deal with queries from employees in relation to their pay.

Working hours will be 30 per week with a degree of flexibility from both parties as hours may fluctuate dependent upon volume of work. The working pattern will be agreed with the successful candidate.

**Payroll & Pensions Administrator**  
(20 hours)

We are seeking to appoint a Payroll & Pensions Administrator to join our Payroll Department based in Fort William.

Reporting to the Payroll/Pensions Manager the post holder will assist in all aspects of administration of payroll support and administration of pension scheme paperwork.

Experience of working within a busy admin department would be advantageous, however it is not essential, as full training will be provided.

Applicants should be fully computer literate, organised, reliable & punctual and an attention to detail is essential. Good communication skills and a confident telephone manner are vital.

Working hours will be 20 per week with a degree of flexibility from both parties as hours may fluctuate dependent upon volume of work. The working pattern will be agreed with the successful candidate.

If you feel that you possess the relevant skills/experience and are looking for a new challenge, please apply in writing, stating clearly which role you wish to be considered for, to: Gillian Dempster, Human Resources Assistant, Marine Harvest (Scotland) Ltd., Business Resource Centre, Blar Mhor Industrial Estate, Fort William PH33 7PT. The closing date for applications is Friday 20th February 2015.



The Oban Times  
& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

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The right candidate will be educated to HNC/SVQ 3 level or equivalent, with experience of working directly with young people. A commitment to children's rights and working in partnership with young people is essential for this post, as is the ability to work flexibly and form positive relationships. A driving licence and access to a car for work is also essential for this role.

For further information on the post and to apply, please visit our website [www.whocarescotland.org/vacancies](http://www.whocarescotland.org/vacancies)

**Closing date for applications: 23rd February 2015**

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Loch Ness

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Candidates must possess excellent computer skills, particularly in Microsoft Excel and Word. A current full driving licence is essential for the role.

In return the successful candidate will benefit from a highly competitive salary package, plus bonus scheme.

If you feel you have the necessary skills to rise to this challenge, please apply in writing no later than Friday 27th February 2015 to: Vicky Ferguson, Human Resources Manager, Marine Harvest (Scotland) Limited, Business Resource Centre, Blar Mhor Industrial Estate, Fort William PH33 7PT.



**KINLOCHLEVEN COMMUNITY TRUST DEVELOPMENT OFFICER**

Kinlochleven Community Trust are seeking an ambitious individual to join our team within our Kinlochleven office as Local Development Officer. Candidates must have management experience and will take responsibility for the day to day running of the office. You will have a keen interest in community development and have a proven track record of successful funding applications. Experience of estate management would be desirable.

The Development Officer will report to the Chairman of Kinlochleven Community Trust, or a nominated representative appointed by him/her. This post is 35 hours per week which offers an initial two year contract.

The Development Officer will be an excellent communicator; able to keep Directors, Staff, Community, Stakeholders and Funding Partners abreast of progress. A self-starter, he/she will be a well focused individual with excellent interpersonal skills. Competitive salary depending on skill set and experience.

A detailed job description is available from **Mr Andrew Baxter, Chairman, Kinlochleven Community Trust, Unit 4A, Kinlochleven Business Park, Kinlochleven, PH50 4SH or via email [andrew@papagenos.co.uk](mailto:andrew@papagenos.co.uk).**

Please forward your CV and covering letter in support of your application to Mr Andrew Baxter at the above address and email. Closing date for all applications will be Thursday 26th February 2015. Interviews will be week commencing 9th March 2015.

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We welcome applications from all sections of the community and we are committed to promoting equal opportunities. This post will be subject to a Disclosure Scotland check.

Closing Date: 12 noon on Friday 20th February 2015  
 Interviews will be held in Oban late February 2015.

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# Tinker's Heart row not resolved yet, says MSP

A BATTLE for the future of the Tinker's Heart will see the Travelling community go head-to-head with a landowner in order to secure its future.

The Tinker's Heart is a rare piece of Travellers' history where weddings were performed over colourful quartz stones of important historic value at the entrance to Hell's Glen near Strachur.

A petition to secure and preserve the future of the stones has met with silence from the landowner, Kate How.

Mrs How has now written to the Scottish government, which is conducting an investigation into ways to preserve the stones.

Mrs How wrote: 'I was assured that the matter of the Tinkers' Heart had been dropped.'

'As you are aware neither the Scottish parliament nor Argyll and Bute council feel that the site is of sufficient historical interest to merit a listing.'

'Furthermore, it has been agreed by all parties that the land upon which the Tinkers' Heart is located belongs to Ardnò Farm.'

'I can assure you that the site is well looked after and protected against cattle.'

'Furthermore there is

a sign on the gate inviting passers-by to have a look.

'The gate will be unlocked.'

'I consider that enough has been done to ensure that everyone wishing to visit the Tinkers' Heart can do so.'

Argyll and Bute MSP Michael Russell said: 'I am very concerned that Kate Howe seems to think that this matter is resolved. It isn't.'

'There is a desperate need for action to improve access, signage and safety at the site as well as preserve the monument itself.'

'Mrs Howe needs to accept that the Travelling community has to be part of the process of change that is required and I would hope she will now co-operate with it and with the parliamentary committee that will take the matter forward.'

Jess Smith writer and campaigner, whose forebearers belonged to the area, told the petitions committee that there was much explaining to be done as to why some places were seen as important historically while others were not.

'If the area was recognised as a Scottish monument through the Scottish government and Historic Scotland



TRAVELLER'S CHAMPION: Jess Smith at the petitions committee

then everybody concerned, and that covers the entire country, will be satisfied that those who make important decisions on our behalf make no comparisons between all of its peoples.'

Culture secretary Fiona Hyslop MSP said: 'Scheduling a monument would not automatically bring the benefits that the Traveller community is seeking for the Tinkers' Heart.'

'Scheduling sites and monuments does not affect land ownership.'



FENCED OFF: The Tinker's Heart as it is today

## Oban speakers tackle range of topics

A WIDE RANGE of subjects were discussed at last week's meeting of Oban Speakers' club.

In the first half of the programme the chairman Archie McPhail introduced the speakers, Frank Walton, who talked on the Rosetta Mission, Nick Maclean, who talked about Thomas Telford and Jim Fraser, who spoke about Hiram Bingham the third.

In the second half of the programme the topics chairman Peter Mills gave subjects ranging from birds to election posters to Bill Leach, Roy Wood, Alex Clark and Guido Faccenda.

The timekeeper for the evening was Eamonn Arthur. Willie Melville gave the general evaluation.

The next meeting which will be the annual ladies' night will be held in the Undercroft Church Hall, Glencluittan road, Oban, on Thursday 19 at 8pm.

## Mull mum uses phone extension cable to neighbours to get a line

A FIRST-time mum, who lives on an island, has been forced to share a party line with neighbours when BT fixed her up to the wrong extension.

Susan Ferguson, who lives at Tiroran on Mull with husband Gary and baby Struan, has been waiting to have her phone line fitted for more than eight weeks. She says she has had numerous missed appointments with BT Open Reach.

In some cases workers calling after 5pm to say they are not coming,

meaning she waited in for them for a full day. Susan said: 'When a BT engineer finally came to our house, I was delighted. He set about at work in the house.'

'He told me he was going off to the exchange and I expected to see him back at our house but he didn't appear. My husband came home and said he would try to fix up the broadband and phone.'

'When he plugged it in it started to work.'

Susan's joy was short lived when she realised

the call was not for her but for her neighbour. Susan believes the engineer hooked up the wrong line to the wrong box.

'My neighbour was then left without a phone. When we finally got through to BT we were told the engineer had gone home for the day. Susan eventually hooked up her phone line via a phone extension across the garden and into her neighbour's house. She then discovered her other neighbours were also

without a phone line. 'When I phone Oban to complain I was basically told, "Don't phone us - we'll phone you". How they are going to do that I have absolutely no idea,' she said. 'I have got a young baby and I have no way of speaking to anyone. Mobile phones don't work down here so it means we are on our own.'

Susan's employers at Tiroran House Hotel have been taking messages for the couple - but it is time, she says, that it was fixed once

and for all. My neighbours are not young and they need their phone lines as much as we do.'

BT said it had received a fault report relating to one of the lines on December 11 and this was cleared on December 16.

A BT spokesperson said: 'We've confirmed with the customer that the line is working. Tests on Mr Ferguson's line are inconclusive, so we're carrying out advanced diagnostics to ensure it's working correctly.'

## Bus and train fares go up while fuel and driving costs go down

BUS and train fares between the West Highlands and the central belt should not be going up while the cost of driving is going down.

That is the view of Brian Murphy, councillor for Fort William and Ardnamurchan, after Scottish Citylink increased prices on its Glasgow-Fort William coach service by an average of three per cent this month.

A return between

the two destinations was hiked from £38.80 to £40, a single from £22.80 to £23.50 and an advance 'apex' return from £27.20 to £28.00.

In addition, all train fares across Scotland, except for off-peak journeys, rose by the inflation rate of 2.5 per cent after the new year, with an anytime return fare from Glasgow to Fort William going from £50.60 up to £51.90.

Councillor Murphy said: 'In this part of the world transport is of vital importance to the community, which has to travel much further than people in the central belt. I think the transport operators should be reviewing these [pricing] decisions until fuel prices start increasing, cost savings should be passed on to rail and bus passengers too.'

A Scottish Citylink spokeswoman said

that the company's own fuel costs were fixed in advance to protect customers from fluctuations in oil prices, meaning they got no benefit from the recent price falls.

She added: 'Fares are set according to different factors and costs, including labour and insurance.'

'The money generated from fares is essential as it allows us to re-invest in our

network to deliver even better services.'

Meanwhile, a ScotRail spokeswoman said: 'We announced in August last year that off-peak fares were being frozen for the second year in a row, while peak fares would increase by inflation based on the July 2014 retail price index.'

'In effect, fares for four in 10 journeys have again been frozen.'

## public notices

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**PLANNING**  
These applications listed below together with other related documents may be inspected at Municipal Buildings Albany Street Oban PA34 4AW, Monday to Friday 9am to 12:30pm and 1:30pm to 5pm. On Wednesdays, the Customer Service Points will open at 10am. At the alternative locations detailed below or by logging on to the Council's website at [www.argyll-bute.gov.uk](http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk). Written comments for the following list of applications should be made to the above address within 21 days of this advert. Please quote the reference number in any correspondence.

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2013 REGULATION 20(1) ADVERT STATEMENT**

Ref	Proposal	Site Address	Location of Plans
14/02774/PPP	Demolition of garage and site for the erection of dwellinghouse	The Shed Tigh Kerragher Loch Awe Dalmally Argyll and Bute	Sub Post Office Dalmally
15/00097/PP	Erection of dwellinghouse	Land West of River Lodge Gruline Isle of Mull Argyll and Bute	Sub Post Office Aros Isle of Mull
15/00100/PPP	Site for the erection of dwellinghouse	Land North West of Mill of Avich Dalavich Taynuilt Argyll and Bute PA35 1HL	Sub Post Office Taynuilt
15/00192/PP	Erection of dwellinghouse	Land East of Loch Na Beithe Cottage North Connell Oban Argyll and Bute PA37 1DX	Sub Post Office Ledaig
15/00202/PP	Erection of dwellinghouse and formation of vehicular access	Plot 2 Hayfield Glenshellach Oban Argyll and Bute PA34 4DJ	Oban Area Office

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997 (AS AMENDED), RELATED PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997**

Ref	Proposal	Site Address	Location of Plans
15/00179/LIB	Installation of kitchen extract system including installation of timber louvre in existing window opening	Iona Abbey Isle of Iona Argyll and Bute PA76 6SQ	Sub Post Office Isle of Iona
15/00240/LIB	Erection of extension to dwellinghouse	Achnacone House Appin Argyll and Bute PA38 4BE	Sub Post Office Ledaig

These applications listed below together with other related documents may be inspected between 09:00 - 17:00hrs Monday to Friday at 1A Marne Lochgilphead Brae PA31 8RD, at the alternative locations detailed below during their normal opening times or by logging on to the Council's website at [www.argyll-bute.gov.uk](http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk). Written comments for the following list of applications should be made to the above address within 21 days of this advert. Please quote the reference number in any correspondence.

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2013 REGULATION 20(1) ADVERT STATEMENT**

Ref	Proposal	Site Address	Location of Plans
15/00178/PP	Change of use of dwellinghouse (Class 9) to backpackers hostel (Class 7)	The Marne Port Ellen Isle of Ilay Argyll and Bute	Sub Post Office Port Ellen

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997 (AS AMENDED), RELATED PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997**

Ref	Proposal	Site Address	Location of Plans
15/00154/LIB	Alterations and extension to dwellinghouse	Jura House Craighouse Isle of Jura Argyll and Bute	Sub Post Office Craighouse Isle of Jura

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997 (AS AMENDED)**

Notice is hereby given that Ilay Estates have submitted a Masterplan to Argyll and Bute Council in respect of the proposed Strategic Masterplan Area MAST 1/6 Bowmore and proposed Mixed Use Allocation MUJ 3002 as identified in the proposed 'Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan (February 2013)'. A copy of the Masterplan (reference 15/00236/MPLAN) may be inspected Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm at Planning and Regulatory Services, Area Office, 1A Marne Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8RD, at the Service Point, Jamieson Street, Bowmore during normal opening times and by logging on to the Council's website at [www.argyll-bute.gov.uk](http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk) and clicking on Online Planning Applications during the period of 28 days beginning with the date of this notice.

Any person who wishes to make representations to the council about the Masterplan should make them in writing to Planning and Regulatory Services, Area Office, 1A Marne Brae, Lochgilphead, PA31 8RD before the 12th March 2015. Argyll and Bute Council encourages planning applications to be made on-line through The Scottish Government website: <https://eplanning.scotland.gov.uk>

The Council maintain a Register of planning applications which can be viewed during normal office hours at Planning and Regulatory Services, Central Validation Team, 1A Marne Brae, Lochgilphead PA31 8RD. A weekly list of applications can be viewed at the above address and at all Council Libraries. Any letter of representation the Council receives is considered a public document and will be published on our website. Anonymously or marked confidential correspondence will not be considered.

**ROADS (SCOTLAND) ACT 1984**

**THE ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL (U24 GLENSHELLACH ROAD, OBAN) (REDETERMINATION OF MEANS OF EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHT OF PASSAGE) ORDER 2015**

Notice is hereby given that on Monday 9th February 2015, Argyll and Bute Council in exercise of the powers conferred on them by Sections 71(2) of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 made the above mentioned Order. Copies of the Order as made and of the accompanying plan, have been deposited at the offices of:

1. Roads & Amenities Services, Municipal Buildings, Albany Street, Oban;
  2. Argyll & Bute Council Offices, Kilmory, Lochgilphead.
- and may be inspected there free of charge from 12th February 2015 during normal office hours. The effect of the Order is stated in the Notice in the Edinburgh Gazette dated 13th February and the Oban Times dated 12th February 2015. The Order comes into operation on Monday 20th February 2015.

JIM SMITH, Head of Roads & Amenities Services, 1A Marne Brae, LOCHGILPHEAD, PA31 8RD

[www.highland.gov.uk](http://www.highland.gov.uk)

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997 (AS AMENDED), RELATED 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 between the hours of 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) at the SERVICE POINT, LOCHABER HOUSE, HIGH STREET, FORT WILLIAM, PH33 6EL and 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
15/00119/FUL	Land 25m SW of 8 Blar Mhor Industrial Estate, Lochsidey, Fort William	Erect industrial building
15/00270/FUL	The Old Forge, Inverie, Knoydart, Mallaig	Staff and manager accommodation
15/00340/PIP	Land 115m NE of Savary, Lochaline, Morvern	Erection of dwellinghouse and improvements to existing access - vary Condition 5 of 14/03220/PIP
15/00344/PIP	Land 120m SE of 1 Savary, Lochaline, Morvern	Erection of dwellinghouse and improvements to existing access - vary Condition 5 of 14/03221/PIP

Time period for comments is 14 days  
ePlanning Centre, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, INVERNESS IV3 5NX  
Email: [eplanning@highland.gov.uk](mailto:eplanning@highland.gov.uk)

**PROPOSED SUBLET OF A CROFT**

Mrs Andrea Docherty is applying to the crofting commission for consent to sublet the whole croft 397 South Boisdale, South Uist to Martin Matheson of 379a Garrynamonie, South Uist for 10 years.

If you have an interest in this application, you may submit comments on the proposal in writing or some other permanent form to the crofting commission, great glen house, Leachkin road, Inverness IV3 8NW (email: [info@crofting.scotland.gov.uk](mailto:info@crofting.scotland.gov.uk)) within 28 days from the date of publication of the advert.

Please note that any comments you provide are part of an open process and will be made available to interested parties. Your comments would also be released under a freedom of information enquiry.

**Bid4OBAN Ltd**  
**Notice of AGM**  
Tuesday 17th March 2015  
At The Argyllshire Gathering Halls, Breadalbane Street, Oban  
6.00pm for Members,  
6.20pm for General meeting

**Oban Times PUBLIC NOTICES**  
**Oban Times PUBLIC NOTICES**

**First Registration of a Croft**  
Mrs Jennifer M Hastings has registered their croft 14,15,16 Inverroy, Kilmoinvaig, 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 12 November, 2015.  
Details of the registration can be found at [www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home](http://www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home). The croft registration number is C827

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**BOOKS**  
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THE CASQUE OF LITERATURE Edited by Charles Gibbon. Publisher Blackie & son 1892, volumes 1-6. Very good condition, £95 Telephone 07795 143291.

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SHOWER TRAY brand new (still wrapped) white ceramic shower tray, 760cm square, £25 Telephone 01546 602611.

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wishes to take this opportunity to thank friends, neighbours and members of the church congregation of Ardchattan for their wonderful support in the recent times. They made a trying time much easier. May God bless you all.

**Happy 21st**

**Happy 21st David**  
Love Mum, Joe, Kyle, Kayleigh & Shaun



ENGAGEMENTS

**SMITH - MACKAY** - Mr and Mrs Smith and Mr and Mrs MacKay and families are pleased to announce the engagement of Allan and Claire on January 31, 2015.

DEATHS

**CAMERON** - Aileen, aged 76 years, of Arduil, formerly Connel. Beloved wife of the late John and mother to Sandra and Stuart, grandmother to Colin, James and Alistair. Died peacefully at Lochside, Helensburgh on Friday February 6, 2015. The funeral will be held at Cardross crematorium on Friday February 13, at 1:15pm.

**DOUGLAS** - Peacefully at Eadar Glinn Care Home, Oban on February 8, 2015 in his 95th year, Robert Douglas (Bob), beloved husband of the late Janet née MacGillivray, a much loved dad, grampa, great-grampa and father-in-law.

**GUNN** - Henrietta, (Etta), 3 Lynn Gardens, Oban and formerly of Dalmlally and Lochawe, died peacefully at the home of her daughter Joan, after a courageous battle fought with great dignity. Widow of the late David Gunn and mother of Joan, David, Stuart, Annetta and Christine. A beloved granny and great-granny, who will be sorely missed by us all.

**MACDONALD** - Peacefully on January 26, 2015 Joan (Seonag), aged 75 years, beloved wife of Ernie, loving mum of Mairi and devoted nan of Darren and Kerri.

**MACDONALD** - John Norman Macleod of Ahmore, North Uist and Dollar. Peacefully at Strathcarron Hospice on February 6, 2015. Loving husband of Ella, dear father and father-in-law of Iseabal and Geoff and proud grandfather of Calum and Robyn.

**MACKENZIE** - Murdoch. In Edinburgh, surrounded by his loving family, on February 3, 2015, aged 76. Dearly cherished husband of Anne, father, father-in-law, grandfather and beloved brother of Kenneth. Thanking Service at 2pm on Thursday, February 12, at Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh, everybody welcome. Dark clothes optional. Family flowers only. Retiring collection in lieu of flowers. Refreshments at Augustine United Church.

**MACPHAIL** - Peacefully after a short illness on the February 8, 2015 aged 92 years, Mary Jane MacPhail (Bunty), Knock, Isle of Mull. Sadly missed by all her family and friends. Funeral service was held at Salen Parish Church on the February 11, 2015 thereafter to Pennygown Cemetery.

**MILL** - Peacefully in Pentland View Care Home on Thursday February 5, 2015, Marjory Sinclair née Macadeie, in her 90th year, of Breakrivach, Westfield, Thurso. Beloved wife of the late William Mill, much loved mother of Henry, Mairi, Russell and the late John and baby Henry. A dear granny, great-granny, mother-in-law and aunt. Now at rest.

**STOOKE** - Peacefully, at the Lynn of Lorne Care Home, on Wednesday February 4, 2015, aged 82 years, Ann Elisabeth, (Lis), of East Frelisabeth, Bardsdale. Family and friends are invited to Achnaba cemetery, Ardchattan on Wednesday February 18 at 1 pm for a short graveside service and interment, followed by a gathering afterwards to share memories at The Oyster Inn, Connel. Family flowers only. A collection will be made for local charities.

**Oban Times**  
BIRTHS, MARRIAGES, DEATHS

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BIRTHS, MARRIAGES, DEATHS

**Oban Times**  
BIRTHS, MARRIAGES, DEATHS

**WILLIAMSON** - Peacefully on February 7, 2015 after a long illness bravely borne Mae Nisbet (née Cameron) aged 87 years. Loving wife of the late David John Williamson and beloved mother & mother-in-law of Sandra & Dennis, Eric & Moira, Pamela & Angus... unconditional love for her dear grandchildren Laura & Sean, Carol & Kevan, Mark, Trina, Vhairs, Steven & Donna, Leanne & Malcolm & Scott and her great grandchildren Devin Leigh Josh, Emma, Cameron Noah & Eli. Private Cremation, Memorial Service at Luss Parish Church on Tuesday February 17 at 1pm. All welcome. Family flowers only.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**FARADAY** - Maurice. The family of the late Maurice Faraday of Burton-in-Lonsdale, North Yorkshire would like to thank all relatives and friends for their kind words, messages of sympathy and generous donations to North West Cancer Research. Thanks also to Rev. Anne Russell and B&W Funerals for their guidance and compassion at this sad time.

**HORNE** - The family of the late Robin Horne would like to thank, most sincerely, everyone who paid their last respects at Perth crematorium and memorial service at Taynait (at which a total of £860 was collected for Diabetes Scotland). Thank you also to Reverend Robert Brookes, Hamish Hoey Funeral Directors and all the staff at Robin's Nest. Also heartfelt thank you to all friends and neighbours who have been so kind to Robin - particularly over the last year.

**HOWE** - The family of the late Betty Howe would like to thank doctors/nurses at the Medical Centre, Oban, also carers, Father James for his home visits and hospital visits, neighbours for their sympathy cards and telephone calls. Special thanks to my neighbours Jonny and Isabel Craig, they kept an eye on me. To Hamish Hoey and Son for their excellent funeral arrangements and to the Royal Hotel for excellent buffet. Also thanks to Ward A for their kindness to Betty in her final days. To her friends in Eriskay, thank you for your cards and prayers. Thank you all. £438.76 was collected for Diabetes UK (Scottish Branch).

**KERR** - William. May 12, 1930 - January 29, 2015. Following the recent sad passing of the late Willie, the family wish to thank most sincerely friends, neighbours and colleagues for their kindness, calls, cards and flowers and to those who came to St. Modans Church and travelled to Cardross crematorium to pay their respects. To ambulance crew, all staff in Lorn and Islands hospital especially Accident and Emergency and Ward I whose care for dad was wonderful and their kindness and support towards the family won't be forgotten. To Catriona Hoey and staff for professional and dignified arrangements. Rev. Jeff Mc Cormick for his fitting services both at the church and the crematorium. A.J. McColl who piped at the church. The Oyster Bar and Coach House who provided refreshments after the services. Maureen Gracie for flowers. Special thanks go to dad's neighbours who 'looked out' for him over the recent years. A retiring collection was taken and will be given to Ward I, Lorn and Islands hospital.

**MACKENZIE** - Donald, Betty, Gina and families would like to thank family and friends for all the kindness and support shown to us following the sad and sudden death of Alex. Thanks to Dr Calder and Dr Wilmington, Ballachulish and Belford Hospital. A very special thanks to Jim and Freida, Vince, Cathie and Ken and Laura, who have been a tower of strength throughout. Thanks also to Rev Fallows

for the lovely service and Mike McFall for most caring and personal funeral arrangements. The generous sum of £560 was raised and donated to St John's Graveyard Fund. Thank you all.

**MACLARTY** - Angus and family would like to thank relatives, friends and neighbours for cards and kind expressions of sympathy received following Mary's passing. Thanks to Dr Simpson and staff at Glenaray Ward for their care and attention; to R MacDonald and staff for funeral arrangements; and to Sandy and Rhona Thomson, for organist accompaniment and for arranging church flowers. Special thanks to Rev Roddy MacLeod and Chris Thornhill for an uplifting service. Finally, our thanks to all for their kind donations towards the funeral purvey at the Hall. The retiring collection for Craignish Parish Church raised £330.

**MACLEAN** - The family of the late Isa would like to thank all relatives, friends and neighbours for all their kindness and support following the very sad loss of our mum and granny. Thanks to Hilary Brown and staff of Ward I for looking after mum, a special mention to Rev. Ken Hunter for his personal and comforting service to mum (granny) and all his visits to mum in hospital. Also a huge thank you to Fraser Inglis for his fitting and uplifting tribute to mum. A special thank you to Dr. Norman MacIver and Connel surgery, to Ian at Dand A Munn for his professional and personal service, also thanks to Angus MacColl for his lovely piping tribute. A big thank you to all who attended the church and Achnaba. The amount of £601 was raised for Macmillan nurses (Oban). We will always miss you mum, shine bright granny.

**SINCLAIR** - Carena, Malcolm, Ann-Marie and family would like to sincerely thank all relatives, friends and neighbours for the kindness and support shown to us by way of flowers, cards, calls and messages received after the sudden loss of Donald. We are most grateful to Dr Kathleen MacGregor, ambulance crew and Police Scotland. Our appreciation to Donald MacKinnon for his kindness to the family, with visits, prayers and a very fitting service for Donald. Grateful thanks to Hamish Hoey and Duncan Gunn, Funeral Directors for their professional service. Thanks also to the ladies of Appin for providing a beautiful funeral tea. Finally, our thanks to all who attended at church and graveside to pay their respects. The very generous retiring collection raised £735 for the Special Care Baby Unit at Yorkhill Hospital.

**MACGREGOR** - In loving memory of my darling wife Rhoda. Always in my thoughts. - Alasdair

**MACGREGOR** - In loving memory of Rhoda, who passed away February 15, 2013. There's a face that's always with us, a voice we'd love to hear, a laugh we will always remember of a mum we loved so dear. - Love Linda and Dennis Miss you gran. - Love Jordan and Eilidh Hugs and kisses great-gran. - Love Millie and Jessica xx

**MACGREGOR** - Rhoda, February 15, 2013. Always in our thoughts. - Ken and Flo

**MACGREGOR** - In loving memory of Rhoda, mum, mother-in-law and gran, who passed away February 15, 2013. Loved and remembered always. - John, Catherine Anne, Erin and Laura xx

**MEMORIAL SERVICE**

  
In loving memory  
Catherine Kyle Mulligan  
7th February 1972 - 9th  
February 2014  
From her friend Gillie

**MEMORIAMS**

**CAMERON** - In loving memory of my dearest partner Linda, passed away February 5, 2012. Silent thoughts of times together Hold memories that will last forever Loved and remembered always. - Alex MacNicol (Tottie).

**CURRIE** - Cherished memories of Lily who died February 15, 1989 and Archie who died June 1, 1998. Forever loved and missed by all. - Margaret, Donald and family.

**Renfrew and Islay.**  
The gates of memories never close. - Mike.

**LAIRD** - In loving memory of Susan (Oozie), beloved wife of the late Davy and a much loved mum and nana, who died February 14, 2003. Loved and remembered always.

**MACCALLUM** - Precious memories of our brother and uncle Alistair. Died tragically in a road accident on February 11, 2010, age 40 years. Behind a smile there's many a tear, for the one we lost and loved so dear. - Inserted by Catherine Ellen, Allan, Wilma and families.

**MACCORMICK** - In loving memory of Johnnie, a much loved husband, father and grampa, who passed away February 11, 2014. - Iona, Catriona, Donna and families.

**MACDONALD** - Remembering a much loved mother, gran and great gran Catherine, who passed away on February 6, 1998 and loved ones gone before. Loved and remembered Not just today But every day. - Jean and family, 47 Drumfada Terrace, Corpach.

**MACDONALD** - Johnnie. 7th anniversary. Precious memories of a dear husband and father, who died February 14, 2008. Behind our smiles There's always a tear Of the one we lost and loved so dear. Forever in my thoughts. - Your loving wife Ina. Loved and missed always dad. - Your daughter Hazel and Liam xx

**MACDONALD** - In loving memory of our dear parents, Thomas Freeland passed away February 12, 1986 and Jessie MacKenzie, passed away February 7, 1994. Forever in our thoughts. - Inserted by Donald, Neil, Isabel and family.

**MACDONALD** - In loving memory of my dear wife Catherine MacDonal, Churchfield House, Kinlochewe, who passed away on February 1, 2007. Also remembered at this time, my dear cousins, Hugh MacDonal, Stronaba Farm, Spean Bridge, who passed away February 1, 1984 and Robert MacDonal, who passed away at Maidstone, Kent, January 17, 1990. John Ch 14 v 2-3; In my father's house are many mansions. - Malcolm MacDonal

**MACGREGOR** - In loving memory of my darling wife Rhoda. Always in my thoughts. - Alasdair

**MACGREGOR** - In loving memory of Rhoda, who passed away February 15, 2013. There's a face that's always with us, a voice we'd love to hear, a laugh we will always remember of a mum we loved so dear. - Love Linda and Dennis Miss you gran. - Love Jordan and Eilidh Hugs and kisses great-gran. - Love Millie and Jessica xx

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**MACLEAN** - In loving memory of a dear sister, auntie and grand-auntie Katie, died February 8, 2010. We watched you getting tired a cure was not meant to be God put his arms around you and whispered come with me. Our lady star of the sea pray for her. - Annag and family, Oban and Glasgow.

**MACLEAN** - Cherished memories of Mary Campbell MacLean (née MacDonald), a darling wife, mother, granny and mother-in-law, who died February 8, 2005. We miss your smile, your cheery ways We miss the things you used to say And when old times we do recall It's then we miss you most of all. - Alistair, Dugald, Arlene, Maria, Karma, Alistair, Susan and Martin.

**MACLEAN** - In fond memory of a dear mother, granny and great-granny Isabella MacLean who died February 6, 1984. Also a dear father and grandpa Dugald MacGregor MacLean who died August 27, 1963. Both fondly remembered. - Alistair, Elizabeth and families.

**MENZIES** - Treasured memories of Hamish, a dear husband, dad and grandpa, who died February 10, 2007. Always in our thoughts. - Betty and family.

**POULTON** - In loving memory of our baby son and brother Danny, who died on February 15, 1992. Forever in our hearts - Mum and Hannah, Bunessan.

**SMALLEY** - Treasured memories of Sally, our mum, mum-in-law and granny who died February 14, 2013. Long are the days without you here But we know that you are near You're never more than a thought away Very sorely missed - Angus-John, Paula, Ruairidh-John and Ella

**STEWART** - In loving memory of Mina, who died February 12, 2002. Also remembering Jimmy and James and loved ones gone before and after. Quietly today your memory we treasure Missing you always Forgetting you never. - From all the family.

**SUTHERLAND** - Precious memories of our dearly loved son Innes, taken from us on February 14, 1999, aged 21 years. There is a place in our hearts that is yours alone A part of our lives no one can own Deep in our memories you are with us yet To love, cherish and never forget Loved and remembered everyday. - Mum and Dad xx.

Innes, a much loved brother, brother-in-law and uncle. We miss your smile, your joking ways We miss the things you used to say When old times we do recall It's then we miss you most of all. Forever in our thoughts and hearts. - Your big sisters, Keri, Iona and Catherine xxx.

**SUTHERLAND** - Happy memories of our dear nephew and cousin Innie, who died February 14, 1999. Today, tomorrow, Our whole lives through We'll treasure the memories we have of you With much love. - Robert, Julie, Siobhan and Robbie x.

Service welcomes new member to Church of Scotland Readership

REV JEFF McCormick welcomed Peter Mills into the Church of Scotland Readership at a special service in Oban Parish Church on January 30.

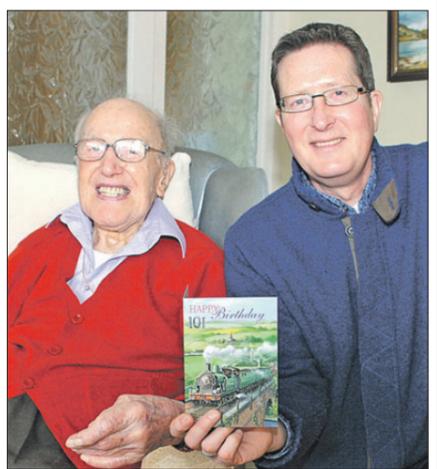
Rev McCormick, moderator of the service and Rev Dr Ken Ross, minister of the Netherlorn parishes, preached the sermon.

Mr Mills was for many years a lay preacher in the Methodist Church in Warwickshire and joined the Church of Scotland after moving to Oban in 2011.

He has already contributed much to the life of Oban Parish Church and will also work more widely in the Christian communities in Argyll.



WELCOME: At the service (from left) Rev Chris Fulcher; Rev Dugald Cameron; Rev Jeff McCormick, presbytery moderator; Peter Mills; Dr Christopher T Brett, presbytery clerk; Rev Dr Kenneth R Ross. Photo: Alex Clark



Willie Taylor of Lyndhee, Ganavan, celebrated his 101st birthday at home on January 30 with friends and neighbours and he received a visit from Rev Dugald Cameron, Oban Parish Church minister. Willie is one of the oldest members of Rev Cameron's congregation.

Thought for the week

Why give thanks to God?

AT first glance Psalm 136 is a psalm of thanksgiving. In the New Living Translation, this psalm exhorts us 12 times to 'give thanks' to God.

What does it mean to give thanks to God? Commonly, we give thanks to someone who has done something for us.

Thanksgiving acknowledges a person for acting in a positive way. We see this sense of thanksgiving in Psalm 136. Verse 5, for example, reads, 'Give thanks to him who made the heavens so skillfully.'

Our thanks acknowledges God's action in creation and gives him appropriate credit. Yet the use of 'give thanks' in Psalm 136 goes beyond our ordinary sense of thanksgiving. Consider the psalm's first verse, for example: 'Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever.'

Though one might rightly note that God's goodness and faithful love are communicated through his actions, this verse doesn't specifically connect thanksgiving to what God has done but to who God is.

We are to give thanks not just because God has done good things for us, but because God is good.

Thus, Psalm 136 takes us beyond thanksgiving to a deeper acknowledgement of not only God's actions but also of God's nature. The Hebrew verb yadah, translated here as 'give thanks,' means more than 'acknowledge someone when that person does something good for you.'

It has the sense of speaking out what is true. Thus, beyond saying 'thank you' to God when God blesses us, we are to confess his goodness, his grace, his beauty, his grandeur.

Practically speaking, thanksgiving often leads us to deeper praise. When we think of what God has done for us, we can't hold back our gratitude.

But, even more, our consideration of God's actions helps us to reflect upon God's nature. God does good for us because God is good. Thus, thanksgiving opens the door to praise by bringing to mind God's character. Give Thanks. Bill Harvey

The Oban Times

& West Highland Times  
THE REGIONAL NEWSPAPER FOR THE WEST HIGHLANDS, ISLANDS AND ARGYLL



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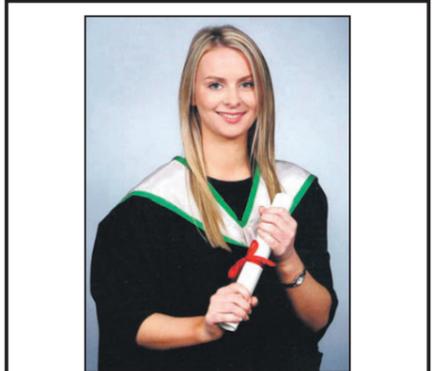
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GRADUATIONS



Laura Jane MacKillop graduated from the University of Stirling with a BSc in Adult Nursing. Laura is the daughter of John and Jane MacKillop, Glendoe, Fort Augustus, Granddaughter of Duncan and Flora MacKillop, Dumoon, and Elspeth and the late Alasdair McKenzie, Fort William, formerly Swordle Farm. Laura is presently nursing in Raigmore Hospital, Inverness.



Lori Hannah graduated from Canterbury Christ Church University with a BA (Hons) in Informal Education (Youth Work and Community Learning and Development). Lori is a former pupil of Rockfield Primary and Oban High School and daughter of David Hannah and the late Carol McNeily.

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# Phoenix fighter brings home intermediate championship

'The boxers who work the hardest invariably have had the most success.'

FORT William boxer Adam Watson has been crowned Scottish intermediate middleweight champion in his first full season following a Glasgow competition at the weekend.

The 26-year-old Lochaber Phoenix athlete claimed the novice title earlier this season but upped his game against Chris MacLeod of Highland Boxing Academy on Sunday for the intermediate crown.

MacLeod came out like a steam train in the opener but Watson's defence has improved immeasurably and he showed good lateral movement to avoid the majority of the blows coming his way all the while looking to land his own shots.

The tactics of both boxers shortly became apparent as

MacLeod attempted to charge in and overwhelm Watson while the Lochaber boxer fired straight shots onto the oncoming Inverness man then fired hooks over the top when things were at close range.

**Quality shots**  
Towards the end of the round a trickle of blood appeared at the side of MacLeod's eye as Watson became more accurate with his punch picking and at the round's end had clearly landed the better quality shots.

In the second MacLeod again attempted to make a storming start but Watson was now into his groove and his fast counters began to land ever cleaner and knock back MacLeod's head.

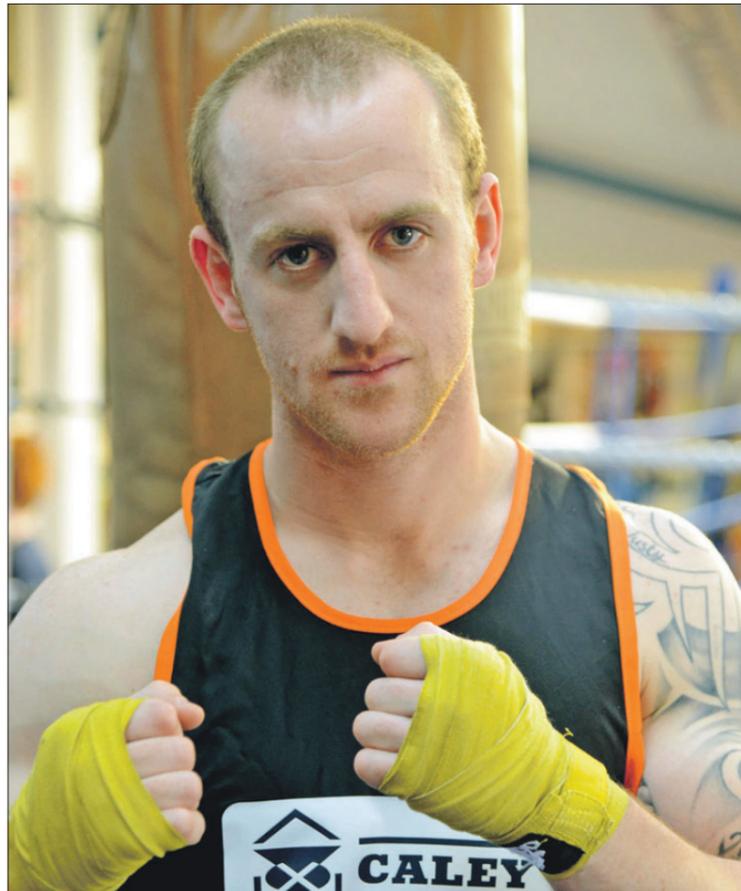
Watson was now landing in combination and the eye injury of

## Boxing

MacLeod was clearly worsening. With the round midway through the referee had no option but to stop the contest in Watson's favour as MacLeod's eye injury had got so bad there was no way he could continue.

Lochaber Phoenix Club official Steve Docherty said: 'Adam has done tremendously well since starting boxing, showing a great attitude to training and constantly striving to improve.'

'He's also been doing roadwork to help with his fitness and weight management. In fact it's been a feature of all the success we've had this season, that the boxers who work the hardest invariably have had the most success.'



BIG HITTER: Adam Watson

## Lack of numbers leave Lochaber pointless

Ross Sutherland	48
Lochaber	0
Caledonia League Division 2 North	

LOCHABER Rugby Club had a dire Saturday in Invergordon, only managing to gather 12 players at the starting whistle.

But the plans of Ross Sutherland to have an easy game were soon thwarted by Lochaber's aggressive defence.

The 12 hard-working players kept their ground and managed to hold the scrum and put the attackers on the back foot.

The Ross Sutherland players soon found the solution out wide and started scoring many tries via their wingers.

Lochaber can be proud to have managed to carry the ball inside the opposite 22, camping on the line for a couple of minutes. Twice, the visiting team managed to defend their own try line for five minutes resulting in a knock out by a Ross Sutherland player and a turnover ball.

Despite the tremendous defensive efforts deployed, the hard work put in by all players and many heroic tackles, with hardly any possession, Lochaber got overwhelmed by the numbers out wide and conceded a heavy loss of nine tries to nothing.

This Saturday, Lochaber welcome Ross Sutherland to Banavie in the Caledonia north division two league.

## Rotators lead scratch division

### Ten pin bowling

AFTER week 15 of the Lochaber Building Supplies ten pin bowling leagues at the Nevis Centre in Fort William, Alleycats stay in the lead of scratch division with 64 points. The Creeps are in second place, also on 64 points, with Ardtoe/Nevis Radio in third place on 59 points.

In the handicap division Rotators regain top spot with 59 points after previous leaders Alleycats, now in second place on 57 points, went down 5-0 to Ardtoe/Nevis Radio who remain in third place on 52 points.

The top individual scratch game this week came from Stewart Duncan of The Creeps with 192. Duncan also had the top two game scratch series with 326 and the top two-game handicap series of 414. David Mee of Rotators had the top handicap game of 239.

The Creeps swept the board this week in the team honours with the top scratch team game of the week of 576, the top handicap game of 794, the top two-game scratch series of 1,146 and the top two handicap team series of 1,582. Highest scratch average is currently held by Pam Weller of Alleycats on 156 followed by Tony Whitelocke, also of Alleycats, on 152 and Stewart Duncan, The Creeps, on 147.



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## Fort William ready for Nairn clash

FORT William Football Club manager Calum MacLean says his team will be ready for Nairn County on Saturday, just a fortnight after going down 4-0 to the same team.

The Fort boys will return to Station Park for a Highland League fixture on Saturday after being knocked out of the Breedon Aggregates cup in the preliminary round on January 31.

But MacLean said the Fort boys were prepared for the return clash, off the back of a 6-0 victory against juniors Contin FC last Saturday.

He said: 'It's going to be tough

facing Nairn after they beat us quite convincingly recently but I think we will be ready for them this time.'

'We hadn't played in weeks until the last Nairn game but the bounce game against Contin at the weekend helped, it gave us the chance to try a few things and we'll be much better prepared this time round.'

Despite still riding on the success of winning four games in a row, for the first time in the club's Highland League history, MacLean said the months without a game on home turf was causing

## Football

problems. He added: 'We're absolutely dying to get back to Claggan.'

'We haven't played at home since November but hopefully we've seen the last of the snow.'

The next home game will be on Wednesday February 18 when Fort begin the battle against a fixture backlog of 10 games with a clash against Rothes. The following Saturday the Claggan side will travel to Mackessack Park to face Rothes again in what MacLean called 'massive games'.



NEW TEAM: Fort William ladies look forward to the creation of a female shinty team in the town

## First all-female training session for Fort William shinty club

FORT William Shinty Club's first ever all-female training session will be held in the town tonight (Thursday).

Women and girls aged 15 and over of all abilities are welcome to the Nevis Centre taster event from 7.15pm to develop their skills as part of the club's ambi-

tion to create a ladies team.

Following the joint ladies and junior session on Friday night, it was agreed by coaches female training would be held every Thursday evening for the next five weeks (excluding February 19). Women from elsewhere in Lochaber without a ladies' club

## Women's shinty

close by, including Kinlochleven and Ballachulish, are also encouraged to attend.

Coaches have also asked those attending to bring shinty sticks where possible.



## Cricketers bowled over at open day

AN OPEN day to encourage more people to play cricket in Lochaber was well attended at the weekend.

Novices enjoyed the opportunity to try their hand at the sport in the Nevis Centre on Saturday, as part of an event organised by Fort William Cricket Club.

## Cricket

Pictured above are potential new cricketers Jordan Jamieson, bowling, and John MacIver, batting, two of the many people drawn to the Fort William Cricket Club's open day in the Nevis Centre.

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## THIS WEEK'S JACKPOT £1750

We have removed the shinty ball from the photograph opposite. Now look carefully at the position of the players and use your skill and judgement to place a cross at the exact point where you think the centre of the ball was. You may have a maximum of 20 attempts on this coupon at a cost of £1. If you wish to have more attempts, you must enter on separate coupons.

### Easy to enter

Cut out your completed coupon and put your entry plus £1 per 20 attempts into a sealed envelope and post it to 'Spot the Shinty Ball' Competition, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HB by 12noon Tuesday. You may hand it into The Oban Times Head Office, Lochavullin, Oban by the same time. Otherwise all entries must be posted.

### Competition rules

No responsibility will be accepted for entries which are delayed, mistaid or lost, and proof of posting cannot be accepted as proof of delivery.

The Company's decision is final on all matters relating to the

game starts with a jackpot of £500 and will increase by £50 per week until it is won outright. To win the jackpot, the centre of your cross must be in the exact centre of the ball. If the crosses overlap the entry will be void.

If no correct entry is received, two 'near miss' prizes of £25 will be awarded. When the jackpot is won, no other prizes will be awarded that week.

competition and no correspondence will be entered into. The final decision rests with the Company.

In the event of more than one correct entry, the jackpot will be shared equally between all winning entries. Any decision regarding the awarding of a prize is entirely at the discretion of the Company.

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Please remember to enclose £1 for 20 crosses. The maximum number of attempts on this coupon is 20, but you may enter on separate coupons as many times as you wish. No photocopies allowed. You agree to abide by the rules. How to enter: Mark your crosses using a ballpoint pen. Twenty crosses may be put on this coupon for £1. Send to 'Spot the Shinty Ball' Competition, The Oban Times, P.O. Box 1, Oban PA34 4HB



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AIMING HIGH: Struan Smith wins this line-out during last Saturday's BT West Regional Shield final against GHK held on the synthetic surface at Lochinch Country Park. Photo: Veronica Speirs

# Oban Lorne lose in West Regional final

## The team's focus now returns to league duty where they still have six games left

GHK	34
Oban Lorne	7
BT Regional Shield Final	

A SPIRITED second half comeback was not enough to see Oban Lorne through their first ever West Regional Shield final against a well drilled GHK.

The Oban squad and management team had spent weeks preparing for one of the biggest games in the club's history but found the West Division 1 leaders a hurdle too far.

The game's venue was switched at the last minute, because of a frozen pitch at Old Anniesland, to the IRB approved synthetic surface at Lochinch Country Park, a surface that would have favoured the running power of the GHK backs.

The 'home' side, who are unbeaten this season, looked dangerous from the start; a charge-down try was ruled out and a try-saving tackle from Oban flanker Struan Smith made worrying viewing for the travelling support of around 100 fans. Minutes later, a lineout from a

penalty for a high tackle allowed GHK hooker Gordi Reid to score the first try of the day from a well worked catch and drive.

Oban were struggling to keep up with the pace of the GHK team and the Oban team's ever reliable scrum and lineout was starting to creak under the pressure.

The lead was extended on 15 minutes with a try on the left hand side by Borthwick. A well struck conversion gave a 12-0 lead.

Oban were dealt another blow with second row Lorne MacLachlan coming off the field with a suspected broken nose. He was replaced by Kieran Connolly.

### Breakdown

GHK increased the lead to 15-0 with Oban giving away a penalty at the breakdown, as the match looked to become a one-sided affair.

But shortly before halftime the Oban support were given something to cheer about when centre Craig Wright broke away from within the Oban half. Wright failed to find any of his supporting players as GHK regained

possession from the resulting ruck.

A break from centre Craig Wright from within his own half gave the Green Army something to cheer about but just as Oban made their impact on the game GHK scored their third try through Scott Robertson to give an impressive 20-0 lead at halftime.

The Oban coaching team of Corrie Louw, Aaron Collins and Murray Hamilton had some words of inspiration for the team at halftime and this seemed to work wonders.

The Oban pack started to put their mark on the game with the scrum starting to heal from a shaky start.

Craig Wright was held up over the line, resulting in a five-metre scrum. Oban's forwards bulldozed over the line allowing scrum half Graham MacEachan to touch down with the help of a huge roar from the Oban support. Andrew Abraham converted.

Oban were now playing with more confidence and man-of-the-match Andy MacDougall

was putting in a fantastic performance along with centre Cammy Smith, whose direct running was putting GHK on the back foot.

But the GHK backline remained a threat and broke away from within their own half, leading to a Mike Martin try. GHK scored again at the death with Robin Coates intercepting a stray Oban pass close to the line.

Oban Lorne, though disappointed with the result, were left feeling proud of their achievements this season that have seen the team defeat four teams in West Division 1, and remain favourites for the Division 2 title.

The Green Machine's focus now returns to league duty where the side still have six league games remaining this season. Oban sit in second place but have two games in hand on rivals Cambuslang.

Oban's next game is at home to Clydebank on February 21.

Argyll and Bute RFC are back in action this week as they travel to play Clydesdale.

Oban under-16s have a league game scheduled for this Sunday at home to Cumbernauld.

### Pre-season friendly fixtures

#### Shinty

- Saturday February 14**  
Fort William v Lochaber An Aird, Fort William, 1.30pm throw up.  
Glenorchy v Strachur Dalmally, 1.00pm throw up.  
Newtonmore v GMA The Eilan, Newtonmore.  
Oban Celtic v Glengarry venue tbc.  
Tayforth v Oban Lorn Tayforth, 1.00pm throw up.  
Taynuilt v Ballachulish Taynuilt throw up tbc.  
Col Glen v Bute 2nds Glendarual 1.00pm throw up.  
Glenurquhart 1sts v Skye Blairbeg, Drumnadrochit, throw-up tbc.  
Glenurquhart 2nds v Skye, Drumnadrochit throw-up tbc.

- Saturday February 21**  
Ballachulish v Lochside Rovers The Jubilee, Ballachulish throw up tbc.  
Fort William v Lovat An Aird, Fort William, 1.00pm throw up.  
GMA v Kyles Athletic Peterson Park, Yoker.  
Glenorchy v Bute Mart Park, Dalmally 2.00pm throw up  
Glenorchy 2nds v Bute 2nds Mart Park, Dalmally, 2.00 throw up  
Inverness v Caithness Bught Park, Inverness 1.00pm throw up.  
Lochaber v Beaully Spean Bridge.  
Oban Lorn v Aberdeen Mossfield, Oban 1.00pm throw up.  
Ewan Morrison Memorial Cup - North Skye v South Skye Paire nan Laoch, Skye throw up tbc.

- Saturday February 28**  
Fort William 2nds v Lochside An Aird, Fort William 1.30pm throw up.  
GMA v Oban Camanachd - Peterson Park, Yoker.  
Oban Celtic v Kilmory venue tbc.  
Oban Lorn v Glenorchy 3G pitch, Oban High School, 1.00pm throw up.  
Strachur v Ballachulish Strachurmore.  
Lochcarron v Skye 2nds Battery Park, Lochcarron throw up tbc.  
Bute 6 a sides - Bute 1sts, 2nds and youths The Meadows, Rothesay.

## Taynuilt pick up the silverware

TAYNUILT took home a host of silverware from the final round of this season's Oban area coaching committee winter league, played on Sunday at Atlantis Leisure, Oban.

The village side won the B and C leagues, while player Louis MacFarlane won the newly introduced Ryan MacPhail Memorial Quich for the most sporting player.

With the National Indoor Festival taking place on February

#### Youth shinty

28 in Fort William, all the participating teams fought hard to try and secure their places.

In the primary five section Taynuilt C were in pole position to end top of the table and secured the title by winning their last round of games.

The B league, aimed towards developing players, was won for the second year in a row by Taynuilt B.

This year's senior primary-seven-and-under winners were Park Primary, who won all of their games and will represent the Oban area well at the national finals.

The Oban area coaching committee thanked everyone for supporting the winter leagues throughout the last four months, not least Amanda MacPhail, of the Ryan MacPhail Memorial Fund. Its grant covered the cost of the hall and medals for the players.



CHAMPIONS: Unbeaten Park Primary were A league winners.



AT THE DOUBLE: The two league-winning Taynuilt teams.

SPORTING: The Ryan MacPhail Memorial Quich's inaugural winner, Louis MacFarlane.

## Lochnell steal the show again

#### Pool

FOR THE second week running The Lochnell headlined the Oban Pool League's fixtures and once again they won on their travels.

This time they maintained a four-month winning streak against Markie Dan's 'A', whose enigmatic season so far has perplexed their opponents as much as themselves.

The Corran Esplanade watering hole may find comfort in the uprising of their junior outfit, Markie Dan's 'B'. They mercilessly pummeled a Gluepot side bereft of confidence to climb up into fourth spot.

The Lancaster 'B' pose a serious threat to both Markie Dan's teams after a comfortable away win over the Lochavullin in Combie Street.

Concluding last week's round up, the league leaders The Lochavullin's Cellar swept aside The Outreach to continue to set the pace.

The fixture was always going to be a case of damage limitation for The Outreach who, to their credit, battled against the odds and salvaged pride and prevented the full house.

The Oban Pool League committee would like to remind all teams and captains that scorecards must be handed in to The Lancaster Hotel no later than Friday morning.

Only one game will take place next Thursday between Markie Dans 'A' and The Lochavullin's Cellar. This re-scheduled fixture goes ahead instead of the original cup semi-finals which have been postponed because of the European championships in Malta.

Results, February 5: Markie Dans A 4-6 Lochnell; Outreach 1-9 Lochavullin's Cellar; Gluepot 3-7 Markie Dans B; Lochavullin 1-9 Lancaster B.

Today's (Thursday) fixtures: Lochnell v Lancaster A; Outreach v Markie Dans A; Markie Dans B v Lochavullin's Cellar; Lochavullin v Gluepot.

## Three Peaks Yacht Race returns Challenge

A SAILING, mountain running and cycling challenge including ascents of the highest points in Scotland, England and Wales is set to return to Fort William this summer.

The 38th Three Peaks Yacht Race will kick off on June 27 as teams set sail from Barmouth on the Welsh coast, taking on 389 miles of sailing, 24 miles of cycling and 60 miles of mountain running, with a total climb of 14,000ft to the top of Snowdon, Scafell Pike and Ben Nevis.



## Camanachd win over Inveraray is a Fyne start to pre-season programme

Oban Camanachd played their first pre-season match outwith the club against Inveraray and scored a morale-boosting 5-2 win over their premier league counterparts. Goals from Andrew 'Papa' MacCuish, Lorne Dickie (2), Scott MacMillan and Malcolm Clark gave them the win. A youthful Inveraray side, playing their first match of the season, began the match well, with goals from Fraser Watt and Lewis McNichol, but Camanachd's experience and superior match fitness proved the difference on the day. Inveraray continue their pre-season this weekend with a first versus second team match, then play Oban Celtic the following week. Oban Camanachd next play on February 28 against Glasgow Mid Argyll. Photo: Kevin McGlynn

## Fort William under 14s win indoor title

#### Youth shinty

FORT William are the 2015 North Under 14 indoor champions after edging out Skye Camanachd with a 'Golden Goal' in extra time in a tense final in Aviemore.

Nine teams played out two round robin leagues recently and as ever at Dalfaber the action was fast and furious with no little skill on show in the seven-minute league games.

Fort William and Glen Urquhart were clear winners in the Blue league, only dropping a point apiece after an exciting 4-4 draw when playing each other. Fort William edged top place by virtue of scoring two more goals than Glen.

Skye topped the Red league with a perfect record but it required a play-off match to separate Kinlochshiel and Beaully with Shiel going through.

Newtonmore, Kingussie, Beaully, Inverness and Lochaber then played an extra play-off match each to decide the final placings before the semi finalists came together.

First up were Skye and Glen Urquhart and the impressive Glen team pushed the islanders all the way before eventually going down 5-3.

Fort William and Kinlochshiel

then contested a really close affair that shiel showed up really well in before going down 2-0 to Fort.

Kinlochshiel defeated Glen Urquhart 3-1 in the third and fourth place play-off match.

The final was a rip roaring affair which swung from end to end.

Fort struck first but Skye hit back strongly to lead 2-1 at half time. Fort William didn't panic and kept playing some nice shinty and this paid off with two goals giving them what looked like a match winning 3-2 lead but the equally impressive Skye had other ideas and with the last hit of normal time they squared the final.

A 'golden goal' extra time period would be required to decide the destination of the trophy and the last word was left to Victor Smith who slotted home to win the tournament for Fort.

Thanks are due to referees Evan Macrae and Calum Girvan and especially to all coaches and drivers for taking the teams to the tournament in challenging driving conditions and thankfully everybody got home safe and sound.

## Athletic at home to Glasgow West

LAST Saturday's West of Scotland premier division match between Millerston and Oban Athletic was called off after a pitch inspection found the playing surface to be unplayable.

The Oban side should be back in action this Saturday when they have a home league game against

#### Football

Glasgow West Athletic presently sit in third with West in 11th place in the league.

The match will take place at Glenruitten with a 2pm kick-off. Referee in charge is John Stobo.

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## Pint-sized potter in the frame for Scotland pool debut in Malta

'The boys eat, sleep and breathe pool. I think that's why Oban makes up nearly half of the Scottish junior team'

A 10-YEAR-OLD pool prospect is in the frame for international honours next week after being selected as the youngest member of the Scottish junior team.

Sean Sneddon is one of three Oban boys in the seven-strong Scottish under-18 side that will compete at the European Eightball Pool Federation championship in Malta.

The Soroba boy, who is the youngest player in the competition, will be joined by Oban's Damien Williamson and current Scottish junior champion Brandon Ferris.

### Captain

Oban is also supplying two players to the men's team, Barry Clark and Brian Edwards, and two players to the women's team, Kerry Munro and Sean's auntie Laura Ann Sneddon, who will captain the side.

Laura Ann, manager of The Lancaster Hotel, began teaching her nephew how to play around three years ago and he regularly plays on the hotel's pool tables.

She said: 'Sean has been playing

here for a while and no-one has ever let him win. So he knows now that when he beats me, he is playing better.

'He can pot a ball from any part of the table - he's probably a better potter than me - but with my tactical knowledge I can still get the better of him - most of the time!

'When he stayed with me he would practise on my pool table all the time. Quite often the sound of balls going down the railing was my alarm clock at 5am.'

Sean, who attend Park primary school, will play an 18-year-old in his opening round match but the pint-sized potter insists he has no fear.

He has already represented The Lancaster in an Oban Pool League cup match.

Asked about the prospect of facing a much older opponent, Sean said: 'I feel kind of normal because I have been playing older boys and adults here [The Lancaster Hotel].

'After playing them so much I

### Pool

have just had no fear of playing bigger people.

'I am just going to try my best and enjoy it.'

Although he is a debutant for his country, the trip to Malta is a familiar one for Sean, who has joined his auntie in previous years.

### Tasty food

'I would go with my auntie to lots of tournaments but Malta is the best, because it has lots of tasty food.'

Laura Ann runs a junior pool club at The Lancaster Hotel every Wednesday and has 15 members, including Oban's three junior internationals.

'All three of those boys eat, sleep and breathe pool,' said Laura Ann. 'I think that's why Oban makes up nearly half of the Scottish junior team.'

The Oban players will attend the European Eightball Pool Federation championship between February 14 - 21.



PINT-SIZED POTTER: 10-year-old Sean Sneddon will represent his country at the European Eightball Pool Federation championships in Malta. 16\_107pool01

## Saints' opponents fail to travel

### Football

LAST Saturday's Scottish Amateur Football League (SAFL) premier division match between Oban Saints and Alba Thistle due to be played at Glencruitten was called off on the Friday when the Paisley club could not raise a team to travel to Oban.

This will go down as an unfulfilled fixture and will be brought in front of the SAFL executive committee.

Saints secretary David Buchanan said: 'The committee takes a dim view of teams failing to fulfill fixtures and Alba are likely to face a heavy fine and we will probably be awarded the points, but we would far rather play the game.'

This Saturday the Oban side face a trip to Glasgow to take on Easthall Star in the first round of the Jimmy Marshall Cup. The game will be played at Stepford Football Centre with a 2pm kick-off. Referee in charge is Michael Auld.

The winners have been given a home tie in the second round against either Dunoon or Jamestown.

Manager Iain Jackson should have a full squad to choose from for the Easthall fixture.

Iain said: 'It's been a very frustrating season for us so far. We haven't been playing very well although we turned in a good performance against Harstanes last time out so hopefully our performances will improve in the second half of the season.'

'We don't know too much about Easthall except that they are a very good young side so we will be giving them every respect and we are expecting a tough game.'

## Scottish amateur league results and fixtures

### Football

LAST Saturday's results: Premier Division - Finnart 2, Campbeltown Pupils 3; Haldane United 5, Kings Park Rangers 2; Oban Saints v Alba Thistle unfulfilled fixture; Thorn Athletic v Busby postponed.

This Saturday's fixtures: Jimmy Marshall Cup first round - Dunoon v Jameson, Easthall Star v Oban Saints; Coronation Cup - Rossvale v Tarbert; SAFL Premier Division - Alba Thistle v Campbeltown Pupils; Premier Division Two - Dunoon Athletic v Port Glasgow; Paisley v Lochgilhead Red Star.

## Wasted journey for Saints Under 13s Youth football

SAINTS Under 13s travelled to take on Clydebank last Sunday only for the game to be called off when they arrived. The referee deemed the pitch to be unplayable due to the hard overnight frost and he had no option but to call the game off.

Coach Brian Forgievrie was annoyed that the home club had not checked the pitch in the morning to prevent what proved to be a wasted journey.

This weekend's fixtures: Under 13s v Dumbarton United; Renton Craighandro v Under 14s; Under 15s v Renton Craighandro; Under 16s no game; Ardencaple v Under 19s.

## Taynuilt to host Glasgow Celtic Society Cup for the first time

THE VILLAGE of Taynuilt is providing the new venue and a new principal sponsor for this season's Glasgow Celtic Society Cup final.

Taynuilt-based Gregor Cameron Consultancy has become the new sponsor of shinty's oldest competition, the final of which will be played at the village's sportsfield for the first time on Saturday, June 27.

Iain Cameron, honorary secretary of the society, said: 'We think it is the right policy that communities which contribute so much to sustaining shinty should benefit from hosting the sport's big occasions.'

'Taynuilt is ideally situated at the heart of one such community,

Iain Cameron, left, honorary secretary of the Glasgow Celtic Society, and new sponsor Gregor Cameron with the trophy outside Taynuilt sports pavilion.

with excellent facilities in a lovely setting.

'With the very welcomed support of our new sponsor, Gregor Cameron Consultancy, and with the help of volunteers from the local sports council, we are confident that the Gregor Cameron Consultancy Celtic Society Cup Final can attract a large attendance and be a memorable occasion for the community.'

Company director Gregor Cameron said: 'We are delighted to have the opportunity to support the Glasgow Celtic Society in bringing this year's Celtic Cup final to Taynuilt.'

'Our sponsorship agreement with the Glasgow Celtic Society will allow the company to support the sport of shinty, whilst enabling the Taynuilt Sports Council to showcase its excellent new sports facilities through staging the Celtic Cup final.'

Fraser Inglis, chairman of the Taynuilt Sports Council, said: 'The sports council is honoured to have been chosen to provide

### Shinty

the venue for the 2015 Celtic Cup final.

'We have invested heavily to upgrade our facility for the benefit of local users and we're very pleased the arena is recognised as being brought up to a standard fit to house shinty's prestigious events.'

The draw for this season's competition was made at the sponsorship announcement last Friday.

First round byes: Inveraray, Kyles Athletic, Oban Camanachd and Glasgow Mid Argyll.

First round ties: Oban Celtic vs Kilmory, Strachur vs Ballachulish, Glenorchy vs Bute, Taynuilt vs Aberdour.

Second round ties: Strachur / Ballachulish vs Oban Celtic / Kilmory, Taynuilt / Aberdour vs Inveraray, Glenorchy / Bute vs Oban Camanachd, Glasgow Mid Argyll vs Kyles Athletic.

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**WEATHER**

**Thursday** Cloudy with light rain showers  
Winds light south south easterly  
Temperatures 4°C to 6°C.

**Friday** Sunny periods  
Winds moderate south easterly  
Temperatures 3°C to 6°C.

**Weekend Outlook** Cloudy on Saturday  
Light rain on Sunday  
Winds strong south westerly  
Temperatures 5°C to 7°C.

**TIDAL INFORMATION**

Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday, February 12, 2015** are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

Date	am				pm			
Thur	04.35	1.7	10.19	3.2	17.22	2.0	23.05	3.0
Fri	05.46	1.8	11.30	3.0	18.46	1.9	***	**
Sat	01.00	2.9	07.07	1.8	13.58	3.0	20.04	1.8
Sun	02.51	3.1	08.27	1.6	15.20	3.2	21.14	1.5
Mon	03.47	3.4	09.41	1.3	16.10	3.5	22.11	1.1
Tues	04.33	3.8	10.39	0.9	16.51	3.7	22.59	0.7
Wed	05.14	4.1	11.27	0.6	17.29	3.9	23.44	0.4

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)

**Ferry Crossings/Sea States**

Oban to Barra/South Uist	Moderate
Oban to Coll/Tiree	Moderate
Kennacraig to Islay	Moderate

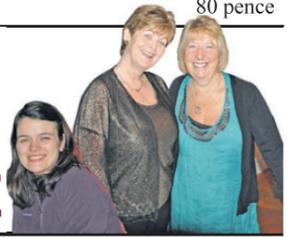
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### Social Scene

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TRANSPORT LEADERS ASKED TO EXPLAIN 'DANGEROUS' AND 'SHAMBOLIC' STATE OF TRUNK ROUTES IN LOCHABER

# Road rage as A82 crumbles weeks after surface repairs

**EMMA CRICHTON**  
ecrichton@obantimes.co.uk

TRANSPORT leaders have been asked to explain 'dangerous' and 'shambolic' trunk roads in Lochaber.

Residents and politicians have called for meetings with the management of Transport Scotland and BEAR Scotland as they are 'disgusted' with the crumbling surfaces and potholes on key routes throughout the area.

This comes after the junction leading to Spean Bridge between the A82 to Inverness and the A86 to Kingussie began to crumble just weeks after long-awaited resurfacing work.

John Fotheringham, chairman of Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge and Achnacarry Community Council, said: 'The road is just utterly shambolic.'

'I made a nuisance of myself for months to have it repaired and we were promised a pristine road when they agreed to resurface but lo and behold we are back to square one.'

Robert Bryson, who owns

“Does a life need to be lost before something is done?”

**Robert Bryson**  
Smiddy House owner

Smiddy House in Spean Bridge, said the 'terrible state' of the road was having an impact on tourism in the area.

He said: 'The road is in a terrible state. It just hasn't been done properly. My guest house is right at the road and the lorries are so loud bumping up and down on the potholes, it's got to be disturbing visitors. It sounds like the lorries are about to come right into the house.'

'It wouldn't be difficult to lose control because of the state of



**DANGEROUS:** a lorry driver prepares to avoid a pothole on the A830 Fort William to Mallaig 20\_107road02

the road. Does a life need to be lost before something is done?"

This has led Mr Fotheringham to invite management of Transport Scotland and BEAR to the next community council meeting on March 10 and both organisations have confirmed

they plan to attend. The chairman has encouraged all residents of the community council area to attend and raise concerns.

Meanwhile, Highland councillor Allan Henderson has slammed Transport Scotland for spending £10 million on bridge

improvements on the A830 Fort William to Mallaig, while potholes he compared to trenches remain elsewhere on the same road. He said: 'While upgrading road surfaces is always welcome, it is baffling to the travelling public why, for the second time,

the perceived best section on a 40-mile road is grubbed up to be resurfaced, in the middle of winter, when other worn out, and frankly dangerous sections, are ignored.

'Why even is the trench, and that is what it is, outside BSW in Corpach completely ignored when there is disgust amongst the travelling public about the state of the road there?'

'Someone in Transport Scotland needs to put their head above the parapet and explain their actions, or is the problem that no one asks questions and is willing to take responsibility?'

A Transport Scotland spokeswoman said 'major resurfacing' in Corpach was scheduled for early next month.

She added: 'We fully appreciate the importance of the A830 and we work with our operating company BEAR on its ongoing maintenance, in consultation with local communities.'

'The works have been programmed on the basis of overall need, such as the strength of the road and not just the requirement for resurfacing.'

### Rent rise cap set at one per cent

THE COST of council accommodation rent in the Highlands will not be raised by more than one per cent in the next year.

The local authority's community services committee agreed to cap the increase for 2015/16 during a meeting last week, despite national council rent increases averaging almost four per cent last year.

A one per cent increase will also be applied to hostel rents, gypsy/traveller site pitches, garage and garage site rentals, as well as caretaking and CCTV services.

### Curtain-up on charity concert

TALENTED young musicians are to team up with a high school swing band from Lancashire to raise money for a children's charity.

Royal National Mod medal winning instrumentalists and singers from Lochaber Music School will take to the stage with 24-piece St Augustine's high school swing band during the fundraising concert for Mary's Meals, based in Dalnally, Argyll.

The event on Wednesday evening (February 18), will kick off in Roy Bridge Hall from 7.30pm.

### Ski centres land £5.5m boost

SKI CENTRES are to benefit from a £5.5 million boost.

A share of funding from Highland and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise will be given to both Nevis Range and Glencoe in Lochaber, as well as Aviemore and Cairngorm.

Glencoe will use the money to replace chairlifts while Nevis Range will benefit from upgrading gondola controls and improving lighting damaged by stormy weather as well as making improvements to the building on the top station.

### Fort William author launches latest book

A FORT William author is launching his latest book in primary schools across the town.

Barry Hutchison's latest children's novel 'The Shark-headed Bear Thing' proved popular with Lochyside RC pupils when he visited to sign copies on Friday. 20\_107author01



### Get together and help volunteer group

A VOLUNTEER group in Fort William is appealing for new members to help fundraise for Cancer Research.

Lochaber Together has raised more than £70,000 since its inception in 2010 but is now short of volunteers due members' commitments.

Adam Ramsey, chairman of the Lochaber Together committee, said: 'Our big annual event is the Run Together Lochaber on Sunday April 26.'

'We are looking for volunteers

to help with the setting up of the event and on the weekend itself to make the event a huge success.'

'We work closely with the Cancer Research UK shop on the High Street which is also looking for volunteers to help with cash handling, customer service and stock processing.'

Dorothy Rodger, Cancer Research UK's fundraising manager for Scotland, said: 'I would like to thank Lochaber Together for the fantastic amount it has raised and the

massive contribution it has made to our vital work over the past five years. We have made enormous progress in the fight against cancer and continue to do so. However, we have only been able to do this thanks to the dedication and commitment of our volunteers and supporters without whom we would not be able to fund our vital research.'

To volunteer or for more information contact Mr Ramsey on 07887 706100.

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## No staff for out-of-hours mums

WOMEN in Skye and Lochalsh who go into labour outwith office hours over the next month will have to travel to Inverness to give birth.

Significant staff absence and a general shortage of midwives has forced NHS Highland to announce a temporary suspension of its out-of-hours midwifery service for births in Skye and Lochalsh.

Charles Kennedy MP is calling the situation 'under resourced' and wants immediate action to rectify the situation.

Mr Kennedy said: 'Mothers-to-be are facing what is simply a lottery; if they do not give birth between the hours of 9am and 5pm, then they have no choice but to embark on an inadmissible journey.'

'The dedication shown by the midwifery team across Skye and Lochalsh must be recognised. With understaffing they have been truly stretched. Mothers and staff need and deserve support.'

'It is clear our NHS services are under resourced. Action to rectify this is needed immediately.'

A spokesman for NHS Highland said: 'The suspension will be for a month in the first instance and the situation will be reviewed on a weekly basis.'

NHS Highland west area manager Tracy Ligema said: 'This is not a decision we have taken lightly but, because of staff shortages through illness, we have been left with no option. There are currently insufficient midwives in Skye and Lochalsh to cover the out-of-hours on-call required for local births and to ensure compliance with European Working Time Regulations. The normal planned daytime midwifery service will continue unchanged - 9am-5pm, seven days per week.'

She added that an ongoing search had so far failed to secure adequate cover, adding that midwifery was one of a number of specialties where there was currently a general shortage of staff.

'The temporary suspension will apply to the period outwith the normal working hours of 9am-5pm, seven days a week. It will mean that women who planned to have their baby in Skye or Lochalsh will have to go to Raigmore maternity unit in Inverness for their birth if it happens out of hours.'

Sarah McLeod, NHS Highland's lead midwife in the area, said: 'We hope everyone in the community understands the reasons for this and we thank them for their support in this challenging time.'

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## Green light for new island hospital

A NEW hospital in south Skye has been approved, just days after a campaign group called for independent scrutiny into how the decision was made.

On Tuesday NHS Highland announced Shona Robison, Scottish government cabinet secretary for health, had given the go-ahead for the proposed 'service redesign' which will see a replacement hospital for the Dr MacKinnon Memorial built in Broadford to serve the communities of Skye, Lochalsh and South West Ross. Portree Hospital, further north, is to remain open but will lose some services, including in-patient beds. This comes just two days after a campaign group, including Portree and Kilmuir community councils, wrote to Ms Robison and politicians in the area requesting independent scrutiny into how NHS Highland carried out the public consultation.

A spokesman for the group said: 'It is still not apparent, even after public consultation, how the local management is going to implement government policy effectively, whether the changes are patient-centred, whether the proposed new facility is in the optimal location for the delivery of acute care or whether the proposed catchment is even rational in clinical terms.'

Furthermore, there does not appear to be any concrete proposals as to how palliative or respite care will be delivered effectively in the communities concerned.'

But Ms Robison welcomed the health board's plans and said she was convinced the proposal was 'credible and viable'.

NHS Highland chairman Gary Coutts added: 'We look forward to continuing to work with the community in the detailed planning of health and social care provision that best meets the needs of everyone in the area.'

## CARE BOSS PROMISES MORE STAFF ARE BEING RECRUITED TO IMPROVE SERVICES IN REMOTE VILLAGES

# Rural care at home pledge

EMMA CRICHTON  
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STEPS are being taken to improve home care for vulnerable people in the west Highlands, according to a health chief in the area.

Recruitment is underway for staff in Skye and Lochaber, which Gill Brown, care at home operations manager for the area, hopes will improve the service and allow NHS Highland to make better use of resources, despite her assurances carers 'are not thin on the ground'.

This will include 'bank' staff who choose when and how often they work and comes after Ms Brown said it can be 'difficult' to provide help for people after time in hospital or if they become dependent on non-medical care, including washing and going to the bathroom.

During discussions with members of Duror and Kentallen community council, south Lochaber, on Monday night, concerns were raised about how care is provided in rural villages and how quickly staff can be brought in when the need arises, but Ms Brown insisted NHS Highland was not short of carers. She said: 'We're not thin on the ground. It is more difficult to provide care [than in cities] because we have to take into account the travel times and costs to get carers out to remote areas but we're hoping recruiting bank staff will help with that.'

But when asked if care staff were available to Duror or Kentallen if they were required in the imminent future Ms Brown admitted it 'would be difficult'.

Resident Dave Crystal said there had been problems with community care in south Lochaber since Glencoe Hospital closed in 2009. He added: 'I campaigned against the closure and attended countless meetings. We were told then care at home would be improved to accommodate losing the hospital yet here we are, years later, with the same issues and the same questions.'

Jonathan Baxter, chairman of Duror and Kentallen community council, said the meeting was helpful but still left some questions unanswered.

He said: 'I'd like to thank Gill for giving up her time to come and speak to us. It was informative and I felt like she took our concerns on board. 'The only thing is, we asked who is responsible for letting care at home know a carer is needed, especially if the person involved hasn't been in hospital, and I don't feel we're much further forward with that. 'There are locals here who could be a valuable resource in terms of helping other villagers so I hope that will be taken on board and can go some way to solving the problem.'

## New youth hostel to open on Skye

A NEW youth hostel on Skye is set to open next month.

The centre, providing a mix of private and shared accommodation in its 18 rooms, will be housed in the former Bayfield Backpackers and adjacent Bayfield Guest House sites in the centre of Portree.

The opening of the hostel is part of modernisation plans from the Scottish Youth Hostel Association (SYHA), including refurbishment of the group's Oban site.

Keith Legge, chief executive of SYHA, said: 'Portree has been on our list for a long time as an ideal location for a youth hostel. We have finally been able to achieve this objective whilst we continue to update and reconfigure our hostelling network across Scotland.'

'The Isle of Skye is one of the must-visit destinations in Scotland and we look forward to welcoming more guests to this beautiful island.'

## Gaelic language 'milestone'

GAELIC will become the main language taught in six Western Isles primary schools from this year.

The announcement that Bernera, Breascleite, Castletay, Lochdar, Leverhulme Memorial and Sgoil an Taobh Siar will receive Gaelic school status was hailed a 'milestone' for the development of the isles' mother tongue by Dr Alasdair Allan, minister for learning, science and Scotland's languages.

Figures from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar show 47 per cent of primary one pupils in the Western Isles are already in Gaelic medium education.

Dr Allan said: 'This is a milestone in the delivery of Gaelic primary education in Scotland, which has an important role in developing future generations of speakers. Great things are happening at the six schools, with Gaelic taking its place at the heart of the curriculum, strengthening pupils' bond with Gaelic language, culture and bilingualism.'

English medium education will still be available at each of the schools.

## Huskies head for high street parade

A PACK of huskies will parade along Fort William High Street as part of a fundraising walk of the West Highland Way.

Organiser Jim Tait is calling on pet owners to join him on the 97-mile trip from Glasgow to the town to raise money and awareness for a dog rescue centre.

The challenge, from April 29 until May 7, will see Jim take his six rescue huskies on the popular route in aid of Saints Sled Dog Rescue charity.

The 52-year-old's wife Fiona, originally from Fort William, will be supporting him by driving their dog van and caravan from location to location.

He said: 'I would love to get as many people and huskies involved as possible. I know the full trip is a big ask so if anyone would like to join us for part of it, or even the last mile through Fort William, they're more than welcome.'

'Raising money is important but for me it's more about raising awareness of the great work done by the charity. That's why I want to make as much fuss as possible and get as many dogs there as possible.'

For more information or to take part contact Mr Tait via email on jamestait1963@sky.com or search Saltire Saints Sled Dogs on Facebook.



Jim Tait will walk the West Highland Way with his six pet huskies. Photo Rosie Jake Photography

## Re-think on road grit cutbacks

PLANS to reduce the treatment of some roads in the Highlands are to be revisited following concerns from the public and councillors.

A decision to cut the number of 'low traffic' roads gritted in winter was made by the Highland council in December last year as part of money-saving measures but last week the authority's community services committee supported a move to look again at the proposals, thought to save £120,000 each year.

Councillor Graham Mackenzie, chairman of the community services committee, said: 'The budget savings agreed in December 2014 did not affect the pre-treatment or gritting services during this winter. These are continuing as normal.'

'It is clear, however, that there is some public concern, raised by members, around the future change to our winter policy and in response to these concerns, the committee will make a request to full council, through the director of finance, to explore options for alternative savings that would allow this saving to be removed.'

'We will carry out a review of winter maintenance and will bring this back to our meeting in August.'

# Call to keep ferry debate afloat as fare hike stalls

REMOTE communities have been temporarily saved from paying higher fares for a ferry connecting the Ardnamurchan peninsula to central Lochaber but campaigners say the issue must be taken more seriously.

Members of Highland council's community services committee voted to defer a proposal to increase fares on the Corran ferry by four per cent to allow further research into implications and alternative options.

A report provided to the committee meeting last week also reiterated concerns the council could be breaching European state aid law by subsidising the ferry, which continues to run at a £115,000 loss, despite three fare hikes in the last three years.

Tony Boyd, chairman of campaign group Free Crossing for Corran, called the state aid worries 'a smoke screen'.

He said: 'Highland council has failed the local communities served by the Corran crossing and it realises it and the Scottish government must now stop prevaricating and hiding behind the smoke screen of state aid and engage in a realistic and practical debate on the future of the crossing.'

'The future of the narrows may lie with a vessel, maybe a fixed link, may yet be a job-creating renewables-orientated crossing, but what is sure at the moment is that neither local authority nor national government is taking this seriously, nor genuinely looking at the best way forward.'

'Frankly, neither can wait to have the matter off their hands.'

Mr Boyd also thanked councillors of both Lochaber wards, Fort William and Ardnamurchan and Caol and Mallaig, for their support.

But Graham MacKenzie, chairman of the local authority's community services committee, still believes a fare increase is the way forward.

He said: 'If the service was transferred to Transport Scotland under road equivalent tariff, the fare increases would be significantly higher than the relatively small increase we are proposing. A fare increase is therefore the best option for the communities who use the ferry.'

'The advice we have consistently received from Transport Scotland is that state aid rules are a consideration for the council.'

'The council, therefore, has a duty to seek to reduce the deficit.'

A Transport Scotland spokesman said the organisation, run by the Scottish government, 'remains open to further discussions' about taking over Corran ferry.

## Views sought on health plans

RESIDENTS of the Western Isles are being asked for their views on plans to integrate health and social care services.

A proposed partnership between Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and NHS Western Isles is available until February 27 as part of the consultation period. The document outlines the planned model for health and social care, how services will be delegated, delivered and monitored.

This is available via www.hsci-wi.org.uk, together with a feedback form which can be completed online or downloaded. The information and forms can also be requested by contacting Maggie Fraser of NHS Western Isles (maggie.fraser1@nhs.net or 01851 708060) or Colin George Morrison of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (colin.morrison@cne-siar.gov.uk or 01851 822615).



LOOKING AHEAD: an architect's impression of how the community centre and bunkhouse on Canna could look

## Islanders push ahead with ambitious bunkhouse plan

THE DEVELOPMENT trust of an island of just 21 people is taking steps to build a community centre and bunkhouse.

Volunteers on Canna, the most westerly of the Small Isles, hope the new facility will encourage more people to move to the island and will boost tourism.

A grant from the Big Lottery funded a feasibility study for what Isle of Canna Development Trust members said will become a 'community hub' and could also house a new school.

Stewart Connor, project manager, said: 'The feasibility study went well and architects have

drawn up impressions of what the hub could look like. The next step is to apply for planning permission whilst trying to drum up funding.'

'We could be looking for anything between £600,000 and £800,000.'

The Isle of Canna is owned by the National Trust for Scotland which Mr Connor said had been 'very supportive' of the plans. He added: 'The only problem we might face is most funding groups like the Big Lottery say the community must own the land and building but because the island is owned by the trust, land can't be sold to us. The trust has been very supportive so far so hopefully we can find a solution.'

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# Jobs and services face axe

## Former leader forecasts financial misery over 'black hole' in budget

**LOUISE LEE**  
llee@obantimes.co.uk

A FAILURE to implement austerity budget savings has created a 'black hole' of between £27 - £37 million in the council's finances for 2016.

That's the stark forecast from Helensburgh councillor James Robb, a former leader of Argyll and Bute council.

Councillor Robb has argued the staggering predicted deficit has been caused by the council's reluctance to make 'any substantial savings to date'.

And at a budget meeting last week, the council's head of finance Bruce West told councillors that this year's one per cent budget reduction 'is the lowest saving the council has made to my knowledge'.

However, council leader Dick Walsh said the council was faced with a 'very difficult' financial position and wanted to gain stability with this year's budget.

The council has made £40 million worth of savings since a council tax freeze was introduced by the Scottish government in 2006.

Councillor James Robb, the opposition finance spokesman, said he was 'seriously concerned about the black hole in the council's finances'.

He said: 'The council will need to find ongoing savings from a



Councillor Ellen Morton

lump sum in future years - that is going to be almost impossible to do and maintain our current staff levels.

'Staffing is the biggest bill; and teachers' salaries are protected, so it will come down to removing positions that the council does



Councillor James Robb

not need to keep. Jobs such as music tuition, nursing homes, care at home, libraries and youth services or closing schools. As councillor Walsh suggested last time, substantial savings had to be made.'

Councillor Robb continued: 'The council has not made appropriate savings to smooth the way.'

'We can cut back on what we already provide - but it is time to start making the real decisions. I am very concerned about implications on next year's budget. It will get to a point where it just cannot be balanced under these terms. The biggest question is, where is the money going to come from to protect staff?'

'Why are we not talking about the real problems yet to come? Why are we making painless choices?'

But council deputy leader Ellen Morton defended the council's record: 'Mr Robb is not correct if he thinks that finding one per cent of budget savings this year has not been painless.'

'So many things within departmental budgets are fixed in our agreements with the Scottish government, which gives us very little scope for making savings.'

'Seventy, eighty, ninety per cent of budgets are set and cannot be changed. The savings can't come from teacher numbers, or from school meals or from various projects as laid down by the council and the government.'

'There is no denying we are going to have to make on-going difficult choices. We are managing budgets with the minimum pain.'

'Our staff are our biggest asset and without them we will not be able to grow the economy. We have no plans to review our school estate within the term of this council.'

The council has an annual budget of £237 million and has 4581 members of staff. The council's wages bill is £134 million, a rise of £4 million from last year.



WRITE ON: Euan Paterson, right, receives his award from Diageo's Keith Miller

## Euan's tactics are just right as he scoops the top prize

OBAN Times journalist Euan Paterson has won the title of Sports Writer of the Year at the annual Highlands and Islands Media Awards.

Euan caught the eye of judges with his portfolio of three articles, including last season's shinty match report on the abandoned National Division decider between Oban Camanachd and Fort William.

Euan said: 'It was a surprise

and a thrill to receive the sports writer award and I would like to thank the organisers and sponsors for putting on a great event.

'The West Highlands is a fantastic area for sports stories and I am extremely grateful to those who help me every week by submitting reports and leads.'

'The Oban Times strives to support the area's top sporting individuals, teams and clubs, allowing them to receive the

recognition and acclaim they deserve.'

Euan was among 270 guests at the annual Diageo-sponsored Highlands and Islands Press Ball, held at the New Drumossie Hotel, Inverness, last Friday.

The Oban Times was shortlisted for Newspaper of the Year and Euan's colleague, Emma Crichton, was shortlisted in the Young Journalist of the Year category.

### TIMESLINE

#### Skerryvore tickets sell out in an hour

EARLY tickets for Skerryvore's 10th anniversary concert in Oban later this year sold out in less than an hour.

Band member Daniel Gillespie said he was 'speechless' by the demand for the tickets.

Skipinnish, Sharon Shannon and the Red Hot Chili Pipers will also join the band on stage.

The next batch of tickets will go on sale tomorrow (Friday) through the band's website.

#### New train operator sleeping on the job

NEW sleeper carriages have been ordered by train company Serco, which is to take over the Caledonian Sleeper service at the beginning of April.

While the new carriages will include berths with en suite facilities, regular berths, airline-style cradle seats and 'pod' flat-beds, the stock is not likely to be rolling on the West Highland line until 2018.

#### Fuel discount for mainland villages

THE APPIN and Morvern postcodes are two of 17 set to benefit from the government's Rural Fuel Rebate Scheme.

The rebate, announced last month, allows retailers to receive up to a 5p per litre fuel duty discount on unleaded petrol and diesel.

This year is the first time the discount has been introduced on the UK mainland.

#### Oban pensioners' towering issue

A GROUP of pensioners have called for a bus route to reach Oban's iconic McCaig's Tower.

They say a lack of service means people are struggling to climb the steep hill up to the building. See page three.

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### Town retailers lift awards

BUSINESS is booming for five Oban retailers as, at the weekend, they were named winners at the Scottish Independent Retail Awards.

Oban's eateries were well-represented, scooping three of the five regional awards won by businesses in the town, along with winners in the hair and beauty and florist categories in the north west region.

Councillor for Oban North and Lorn Iain Stewart MacLean said: 'I heartily congratulate all the businesses in winning these awards.'

'This is a great example of the hard work of these businesses, and is an indication of what is on offer for people both living in the town, and visitors here.'

For a full report and pictures, turn to page 11.

## Family's festive lights boost hospice funds



A FAMILY whose Christmas lights brought festive cheer to Ardchattan had another gift for an Oban charity.

The Cotton family, of Dalnabeich, North Connel, collected £343.54 in donations from people across the parish in gratitude for their extravagant Christmas lights display at the house.

Home owner Tina Cotton and her son Darren and grandson Dean, who live in Oban, last week handed over a cheque to Fay MacPhee of Friends of Oban Hospice. Darren decorated his mother's house with a winter wonderland of light which could be clearly seen across Loch Etive in nearby Connel, thanks in part to the lack of street lights outside the house.

Tina said: 'Darren put the lights up over a period of three weeks and it took three days to get them down, so it was quite hard work. We had a donation box on the gate outside the house and people would drop off a donation. We would like to thank everyone for being so generous.'

After receiving a cheque from four-year-old Dean, Fay said: 'It was an excellent total for the charity and a nice surprise.'

Darren hopes to set up an even bigger lights display this year.

GENEROUS: Darren and Dean Cotton hand over the cheque to Fay MacPhee of Friends of Oban Hospice 16\_107cheque01

STRUGGLE ENDS WITH FORMAL APOLOGY AND A MONTH'S LINE RENTAL CREDITED BACK TO ACCOUNT

## O2 admits misleading mum over reason signal was down

**STEVEN RAE**  
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AN APPIN woman has been given a formal apology and a month's free line rental from O2 after the phone operator admitted she was misled about loss of service.

The apology comes as mobile operators in Argyll and Bute come under intense scrutiny.

As reported in The Oban Times last month, Heather Allen, whose son Cameron suffers from the rare condition brittle-bone disease, was forced to buy a new phone and sim card from rival network provider EE after O2's service was down from January 9 to 23. Cameron's condition means Heather needs to keep in constant contact with him as he could be hospitalised at any time.

Following a struggle to receive information about timescales for fixing faults, a member of the company's executive relations team wrote to Mrs Allen last week admitting she had been misled when a member of the company's customer service team told

her the outage was due to planned maintenance, rather than a fault with a mast.

As an apology, O2 credited £32.87 - one month's line rental - to her account.

Mrs Allen said: 'I'm glad the complaint was upheld and happy the matter was finally dealt with properly. It's just a shame it took so long.'

Meanwhile, MP for Argyll and Bute Alan Reid spoke in the House of Commons during a debate on rural communications on February 3.

In particular, constituents on Islay have had no service for periods of up to three weeks at a time over the winter.

He said: 'A mobile phone service is not a luxury these days, but a necessity. I'm aware of a farmer who broke a leg. He was conscious and able to use his mobile phone but, because he had no signal, he had to lie in severe pain until someone found him. That shows the importance of mobile phone coverage these days.'

Talking to The Oban Times, Dr Rob Matthews, a senior network commu-

nications manager with Vodafone discussed the problems were having in Scotland.

He said: 'Obviously, customers except to be able to use their mobiles wherever they go, otherwise they're not truly 'mobile' phones. We are working hard to upgrade our websites to keep customers best informed about any disruption to service, whether planned or unplanned.'

Discussing specific problems in the West Highlands over the last year, Dr Matthews, who holds a PHD in applied physics, said: 'We recognise in the last 12 months there have been several faults with our site on the isle of Islay and we apologise for the inconvenience this has caused our customers. The site on Islay is linked to the rest of the network via a site on the isle of Mull. During the summer, it took us longer to repair the fault on Islay than we would have wished as we had to access both sites on Islay and Mull on several occasions to determine and repair the fault.'

When pressed on the issue that many rural customers felt frustration about

second-class service at the same cost as other customers, Dr Matthews said: 'All our customers are important to us. That's why Vodafone invested £1 billion in our network for 2014/2015, and another £1 billion in 2015/16, to eventually upgrade all base stations to the very best service equipment available to us.'

'Vodafone aims to double the 3G coverage in the whole of rural Scotland. By 2017, our target is to supply 98 per cent of the population of the UK with 4G.'

When approached by The Oban Times, O2 did not make anyone available for an interview, but said in a statement: 'At the end of this month, O2 will be meeting a number of Scottish government officials and MSPs to discuss our coverage and network investment plans for Scotland. We continue to roll out 4G as well as modernise our existing 2G and 3G networks which will ultimately deliver faster speeds and greater coverage across the UK. This translates into an investment of around £2 million per day.'

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# Steep learning curve for pensioners as they call for a bus service to the tower

STEVEN RAE  
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DISGRUNTLED Oban pensioners who live near to McCaig's Tower have said the lack of a regular bus service and toilets serving the tourist venue is making their lives a misery.

At present, the closest bus service to the tower is on Longsdale Road, more than half a mile away. It is run by West Coast Motors on behalf of Argyll and Bute council.

The pensioners, aged between 72 and 83, some of whom have artificial hips and knees and suffer from arthritis and asthma, struggle to walk up the famously steep climb when heading home from the town centre.

Laurel Crescent resident Sheila Findlay, who lives with husband John, raised the issue last week at a special Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee meeting.

Talking to *The Oban Times*, Sheila, 77, said: 'It doesn't matter what way you go, you have to come up the hill to get to the tower.'

'One day I met a tourist, who had come up as far as Craigard Road. I asked her if she was going into the tower, and she said "I'd love to, but I won't manage any further, I'm absolutely done in".'

Sheila also said the lack of public toilets in the area meant people often urinated next to the tower, on her property.

She continued: 'I don't blame the people who do the toilet next to McCaig's, because they have no alternative. It takes such a long time to get back down into the town, and sometimes you are desperate for the toilet and just have to go.'

Husband John added: 'For health reasons, I have to go for a walk every day, and it would be nice to be able to use a different route for once.'

'But I can't because if I walked down the hill I wouldn't get back up, so I end up doing the same circuit every day.'

Elda Sharp, 80, who lives in Laurel Road, walks with two sticks, following hip replacement



LEFT FOOTING THE HILL: Pensioners say the lack of a bus service to McCaig's Tower is causing problems. Maggie Dougall, third from right, who works for Argyll Voluntary Action, is supporting the pensioners' efforts to get a regular service

surgery last year. She said that taxi journeys were her only option when going into the town. 'You can take the bus to Longsdale Road but I live past that, and I'm not strong enough on my feet to walk the extra journey,' she said.

'I have to take taxis, but at anything from £3 to £5 per trip, it's expensive, especially considering I have a free bus pass.'

John, Sheila, and Elda are all members of Oban and District

Senior Forum, a group which gives elderly people in the area a platform to discuss issues of concern to them. A petition started by the group for a bus to serve the McCaig's Tower area has so far raised more than 60 signatures.

Bill Coultis, 81, who lives in Laurel Crescent and walks with a stick, said the lack of public transport meant McCaig's Tower was not being used to its full potential.

Bill, who is president of the fundraising group Oban and Lorn Lions Club, said: 'McCaig's Tower is the most iconic building in Oban, if not Argyll and Bute.'

'The fact that so many locals and tourists can't get to it is madness. The Lions club has a concert in the summer and some people can't even make it up to it. I definitely think it could be better signposted too.'

When contacted by *The Oban Times*, a staff member at West

Coast Motors said bus routes were solely a matter for the council.

A spokeswoman for Argyll and Bute council said: 'When operators tender for bus services funded by the council, the timetable specification forms part of the contract. Any changes in the timetable must be agreed by the council.'

'The council works closely with operators when designing services to ensure it achieves best value

for the public, whilst remaining within budget allocation.'

'Changes to commercial timetable (those not funded by the council) must be a viable option for the operator before they will be considered, and it is only a courtesy for the operator to notify the council when changing any part of their commercial operation.'

'Currently there is no additional budgetary provision for new services.'

## Police find drugs during town raid

TWO men, aged 20 and 21, were stopped and searched in Oban's Stevenson Street around midnight on Friday, February 6 and are alleged to have cannabis in their possession.

Earlier on the same evening, a 37-year-old woman was stopped and searched in Hysker Gardens in Oban at 7.50pm and was suspected of having a quantity of herbal cannabis in her possession.

A 20-year-old man suspected to be in possession of cannabis has also been reported to the procurator fiscal in Oban.

The man was searched in Sinclair Drive in the town at 3.10pm on February 9.

## Suspect reported for nurses assault

A MAN was arrested on Saturday evening at Lorn and Islands hospital in Oban after he was alleged to have assaulted two of the nursing staff.

The 20-year-old man had attended the accident and emergency department around 11pm with an injury and is understood to have become abusive to both members of staff. Police reported the man to Oban's procurator fiscal.

## Hydro schemes to feed 4,800 homes

WORK has begun on two run-of-river hydro-electric schemes at Upper Falloch and Derrydarroch on the 10,000-hectare Glenfalloch Estate, near Crianlarich, in Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park.

With a combined capacity of 6.1MW, the two new, plus two current, schemes could generate enough electricity for 4,800 homes.

## Royal Mail vehicle slashed by vandals

A ROYAL Mail vehicle parked in Jura Road, Oban, was vandalised sometime between Saturday and Monday, February 7 and 9.

Contact PC Johnstone at Oban police with any information about the incident.

## Oddjob scrubs up very well

HE MAY share the name of a famous Bond villain and his crushing jaws make him a feared predator of the deep.

But Oddjob, the seven-kilogram common snapping turtle, was the face promoting an event at Barcaldine's Scottish Sealife Sanctuary last week to highlight the conservation of turtle species.

Oddjob and the 27 other turtles at the sealife sanctuary were being given a deep clean as part of Turtle-fest, a four-day celebration last week, designed to foster awareness of threats to turtles.

The sanctuary has hosted a special refuge for abandoned and illegally imported freshwater turtles since 2011.

The assorted residents include John, Paul, George and Ringo - four Mississippi Map Turtles - and an Australian snake-necked turtle called Miss Moneypenny.

They live in specially designed heated displays and enjoy the devoted attentions of the Sanctuary's animal care team.

'They all gradually acquire a crusty coating of algae on their shells,' explained aquarist Farrah Minchin. 'Left for too long it can lead to shell-damage so we spent a good couple of hours with water and tooth brushes giving them all a good scrub.'

Farrah said many turtle species are endangered because of the loss of their natural habitat. And some have also been kept as pets, in the wake of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle craze, and have since been abandoned.



BRUSH-UP: Scottish Sealife Sanctuary aquarists Anna Price, left, and Farrah Minchin treat Oddjob, the snapping turtle, to his scrub down

## GP out-of-hour service 'unaffordable'

THE out-of-hours GP service in Argyll and Bute is at breaking point as the cost of the service reaches £3 million.

NHS Highland health board members have now been forced to replace GPs with nurses in an attempt to slash the cost of the service.

It costs £21 per hour for a care nurse as opposed to £129.89 for a locum doctor.

Pilot projects using nurses will be implemented in Mid Argyll and Kintyre from next month.

Gill MacVicar, director of operations at NHS Highland, said the current system for patients needing urgent care was 'not affordable'. Figures reveal that

providing the service in some areas of Argyll and Bute can top £2,157 per patient, in stark contrast to Inverness, where the cost is £85.49.

Ms MacVicar said: 'The strain on finances of delivering out-of-hours care is so severe it will now mean other important developments are not able to be progressed.'

The model of care used between the hours of 6pm and 8am was put in place in 2004 when GPs were able to opt out of providing the service on a practice basis.

Since 2008, the responsibility for the service is managed at a local level. In that time, the cost

has risen by 20 times. In Oban, there are on average 54 call-outs a week for advice or an urgent appointment at home or in the hospital. On Mull, there is an average of two, while Lochgilphead sees seven and Campbeltown two every week.

However, a spokesman for NHS Highland said: 'One of the main reasons for the variation in costs across Argyll and Bute is that in certain localities, such as Mid Argyll and Kintyre, the costs include the provision of GP services within local hospitals, whereas in other areas such as Oban the costs are solely for GP out-of-hours services in the community.'

## Cash help for Islay and Jura communities

A PANEL made up of residents on the islands of Islay and Jura is being formed to help allocate a fund of a quarter of a million pounds to groups and clubs.

The islands are one of six Scottish communities to receive money from the charity Fourteen, set up by the Big Lottery Fund.

The panel will then devise a Fourteen plan to help its decision-making on how to disburse the funds throughout the communities.

People, clubs and organisations will then be invited to bid for the money but will have to meet the criteria set by the panel.

Gary Scott, head of fundraising, Islay and Jura Community Enterprises, said: 'Fourteen is a real opportunity for everyone from eight to 80 to come together to make Islay and Jura an even better place to be.'

## Inspiration at printing talk

OBAN artist Alice Strange inspired the women of Oban SWRI following her talk at the group's January meeting.

Alice gave a print-making demonstration, displaying examples of her own work, including the Herring Girls posters for the Oban Winter Festival, and HMS Challenger prints finished off the demonstration, as fine examples of digital collage making.

Lyndsay Elliot of Oban SWRI said: 'Alice was extremely generous sharing her tips and techniques learned over the years of print-making, and encouraged the members to have a go from using cut out potato stamps to more complex digital collage making.'

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FW

# Pint-sized potter in the frame for Scotland pool debut in Malta

'The boys eat, sleep and breathe pool. I think that's why Oban makes up nearly half of the Scottish junior team'

A 10-YEAR-OLD pool prospect is in the frame for international honours next week after being selected as the youngest member of the Scottish junior team.

Sean Sneddon is one of three Oban boys in the seven-strong Scottish under-18 side that will compete at the European Eightball Pool Federation championship in Malta.

The Soroba boy, who is the youngest player in the competition, will be joined by Oban's Damien Williamson and current Scottish junior champion Brandon Ferris.

### Captain

Oban is also supplying two players to the men's team, Barry Clark and Brian Edwards, and two players to the women's team, Kerry Munro and Sean's auntie Laura Ann Sneddon, who will captain the side.

Laura Ann, manager of The Lancaster Hotel, began teaching her nephew how to play around three years ago and he regularly plays on the hotel's pool tables.

She said: 'Sean has been playing

here for a while and no-one has ever let him win. So he knows now that when he beats me, he is playing better.

'He can pot a ball from any part of the table - he's probably a better potter than me - but with my tactical knowledge I can still get the better of him - most of the time!

'When he stayed with me he would practise on my pool table all the time. Quite often the sound of balls going down the railing was my alarm clock at 5am.'

Sean, who attend Park primary school, will play an 18-year-old in his opening round match but the pint-sized potter insists he has no fear.

He has already represented The Lancaster in an Oban Pool League cup match.

Asked about the prospect of facing a much older opponent, Sean said: 'I feel kind of normal because I have been playing older boys and adults here [The Lancaster Hotel].

'After playing them so much I

### Pool

have just had no fear of playing bigger people.

'I am just going to try my best and enjoy it.'

Although he is a debutant for his country, the trip to Malta is a familiar one for Sean, who has joined his auntie in previous years.

### Tasty food

'I would go with my auntie to lots of tournaments but Malta is the best, because it has lots of tasty food.'

Laura Ann runs a junior pool club at The Lancaster Hotel every Wednesday and has 15 members, including Oban's three junior internationals.

'All three of those boys eat, sleep and breathe pool,' said Laura Ann. 'I think that's why Oban makes up nearly half of the Scottish junior team.'

The Oban players will attend the European Eightball Pool Federation championship between February 14 - 21.



PINT-SIZED POTTER: 10-year-old Sean Sneddon will represent his country at the European Eightball Pool Federation championships in Malta. 16\_107pool01

## Saints' opponents fail to travel

### Football

LAST Saturday's Scottish Amateur Football League (SAFL) premier division match between Oban Saints and Alba Thistle due to be played at Glencruitten was called off on the Friday when the Paisley club could not raise a team to travel to Oban.

This will go down as an unfulfilled fixture and will be brought in front of the SAFL executive committee.

Saints secretary David Buchanan said: 'The committee takes a dim view of teams failing to fulfill fixtures and Alba are likely to face a heavy fine and we will probably be awarded the points, but we would far rather play the game.'

This Saturday the Oban side face a trip to Glasgow to take on Easthall Star in the first round of the Jimmy Marshall Cup. The game will be played at Stepford Football Centre with a 2pm kick-off. Referee in charge is Michael Auld.

The winners have been given a home tie in the second round against either Dunoon or Jamestown.

Manager Iain Jackson should have a full squad to choose from for the Easthall fixture.

Iain said: 'It's been a very frustrating season for us so far. We haven't been playing very well although we turned in a good performance against Harstanes last time out so hopefully our performances will improve in the second half of the season.'

'We don't know too much about Easthall except that they are a very good young side so we will be giving them every respect and we are expecting a tough game.'

## Scottish amateur league results and fixtures

### Football

LAST Saturday's results: Premier Division - Finnart 2, Campbeltown Pupils 3; Haldane United 5, Kings Park Rangers 2; Oban Saints v Alba Thistle unfulfilled fixture; Thorn Athletic v Busby postponed.

This Saturday's fixtures: Jimmy Marshall Cup first round - Dunoon v Jamesown, Easthall Star v Oban Saints; Coronation Cup - Rossvale v Tarbert; SAFL Premier Division - Alba Thistle v Campbeltown Pupils; Premier Division Two - Dunoon Athletic v Port Glasgow; Paisley v Lochgilphead Red Star.

## Wasted journey for Saints Under 13s Youth football

SAINTS Under 13s travelled to take on Clydebank last Sunday only for the game to be called off when they arrived. The referee deemed the pitch to be unplayable due to the hard overnight frost and he had no option but to call the game off.

Coach Brian Forgive was annoyed that the home club had not checked the pitch in the morning to prevent what proved to be a wasted journey.

This weekend's fixtures: Under 13s v Dumbarton United; Renton Craighandro v Under 14s; Under 15s v Renton Craighandro; Under 16s no game; Ardencaple v Under 19s.

## Taynuilt to host Glasgow Celtic Society Cup for the first time

THE VILLAGE of Taynuilt is providing the new venue and a new principal sponsor for this season's Glasgow Celtic Society Cup final.

Taynuilt-based Gregor Cameron Consultancy has become the new sponsor of shinty's oldest competition, the final of which will be played at the village's sportsfield for the first time on Saturday, June 27.

Iain Cameron, honorary secretary of the society, said: 'We think it is the right policy that communities which contribute so much to sustaining shinty should benefit from hosting the sport's big occasions.'

'Taynuilt is ideally situated at the heart of one such community,

Iain Cameron, left, honorary secretary of the Glasgow Celtic Society, and new sponsor Gregor Cameron with the trophy outside Taynuilt sports pavilion.

with excellent facilities in a lovely setting.

'With the very welcomed support of our new sponsor, Gregor Cameron Consultancy, and with the help of volunteers from the local sports council, we are confident that the Gregor Cameron Consultancy Celtic Society Cup Final can attract a large attendance and be a memorable occasion for the community.'

Company director Gregor Cameron said: 'We are delighted to have the opportunity to support the Glasgow Celtic Society in bringing this year's Celtic Cup final to Taynuilt.'

'Our sponsorship agreement with the Glasgow Celtic Society will allow the company to support the sport of shinty, whilst enabling the Taynuilt Sports Council to showcase its excellent new sports facilities through staging the Celtic Cup final.'

Fraser Inglis, chairman of the Taynuilt Sports Council, said: 'The sports council is honoured to have been chosen to provide

### Shinty

the venue for the 2015 Celtic Cup final.

'We have invested heavily to upgrade our facility for the benefit of local users and we're very pleased the arena is recognised as being brought up to a standard fit to house shinty's prestigious events.'

The draw for this season's competition was made at the sponsorship announcement last Friday.

First round byes: Inveraray, Kyles Athletic, Oban Camanachd and Glasgow Mid Argyll.

First round ties: Oban Celtic vs Kilmory, Strachur vs Ballachulish, Glenorchy vs Bute, Taynuilt vs Aberdour.

Second round ties: Strachur / Ballachulish vs Oban Celtic / Kilmory, Taynuilt / Aberdour vs Inveraray, Glenorchy / Bute vs Oban Camanachd, Glasgow Mid Argyll vs Kyles Athletic.



## SPOT THE SHINTY BALL

LAST WEEK'S SHINTY BALL WAS HERE. . .



This week's nearest the ball winners, who each receive £25 are:

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## THIS WEEK'S JACKPOT £1750

We have removed the shinty ball from the photograph opposite. Now look carefully at the position of the players and use your skill and judgement to place a cross at the exact point where you think the centre of the ball was. You may have a maximum of 20 attempts on this coupon at a cost of £1. If you wish to have more attempts, you must enter on separate coupons.

### Easy to enter

Cut out your completed coupon and put your entry plus £1 per 20 attempts into a sealed envelope and post it to 'Spot the Shinty Ball' Competition, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HB by 12noon Tuesday. You may hand it into The Oban Times Head Office, Lochavullin, Oban by the same time. Otherwise all entries must be posted.

### Competition rules

No responsibility will be accepted for entries which are delayed, mistaid or lost, and proof of posting cannot be accepted as proof of delivery.

The Company's decision is final on all matters relating to the

game starts with a jackpot of £500 and will increase by £50 per week until it is won outright. To win the jackpot, the centre of your cross must be in the exact centre of the ball. If the crosses overlap the entry will be void.

If no correct entry is received, two 'near miss' prizes of £25 will be awarded. When the jackpot is won, no other prizes will be awarded that week.

competition and no correspondence will be entered into. The final decision rests with the Company.

In the event of more than one correct entry, the jackpot will be shared equally between all winning entries. Any decision regarding the awarding of a prize is entirely at the discretion of the Company.

The Company reserves the right to declare the competition null and void at any time, subject to its discretion and to make full refund of the price of the coupon to any person who has entered the competition at that time. Employees of Wyvex Media, their immediate relatives and any person otherwise connected with the competition are ineligible to enter.

Please remember to enclose £1 for 20 crosses. The maximum number of attempts on this coupon is 20, but you may enter on separate coupons as many times as you wish. No photocopies allowed. You agree to abide by the rules. How to enter: Mark your crosses using a ballpoint pen. Twenty crosses may be put on this coupon for £1. Send to 'Spot the Shinty Ball' Competition, The Oban Times, P.O. Box 1, Oban PA34 4HB



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## Phoenix fighter brings home intermediate championship

'The boxers who work the hardest invariably have had the most success.'

FORT William boxer Adam Watson has been crowned Scottish intermediate middleweight champion in his first full season following a Glasgow competition at the weekend.

The 26-year-old Lochaber Phoenix athlete claimed the novice title earlier this season but upped his game against Chris MacLeod of Highland Boxing Academy on Sunday for the intermediate crown.

MacLeod came out like a steam train in the opener but Watson's defence has improved immeasurably and he showed good lateral movement to avoid the majority of the blows coming his way all the while looking to land his own shots.

The tactics of both boxers shortly became apparent as

MacLeod attempted to charge in and overwhelm Watson while the Lochaber boxer fired straight shots onto the oncoming Inverness man then fired hooks over the top when things were at close range.

### Quality shots

Towards the end of the round a trickle of blood appeared at the side of MacLeod's eye as Watson became more accurate with his punch picking and at the round's end had clearly landed the better quality shots.

In the second MacLeod again attempted to make a storming start but Watson was now into his groove and his fast counters began to land ever cleaner and knock back MacLeod's head.

Watson was now landing in combination and the eye injury of

### Boxing

MacLeod was clearly worsening. With the round midway through the referee had no option but to stop the contest in Watson's favour as MacLeod's eye injury had got so bad there was no way he could continue.

Lochaber Phoenix Club official Steve Docherty said: 'Adam has done tremendously well since starting boxing, showing a great attitude to training and constantly striving to improve.'

'He's also been doing roadwork to help with his fitness and weight management. In fact it's been a feature of all the success we've had this season, that the boxers who work the hardest invariably have had the most success.'



BIG HITTER: Adam Watson

## Lack of numbers leave Lochaber pointless

Ross Sutherland	48
Lochaber	0
Caledonia League Division 2 North	

LOCHABER Rugby Club had a dire Saturday in Invergordon, only managing to gather 12 players at the starting whistle.

But the plans of Ross Sutherland to have an easy game were soon thwarted by Lochaber's aggressive defence.

The 12 hard-working players kept their ground and managed to hold the scrum and put the attackers on the back foot.

The Ross Sutherland players soon found the solution out wide and started scoring many tries via their wingers.

Lochaber can be proud to have managed to carry the ball inside the opposite 22, camping on the line for a couple of minutes. Twice, the visiting team managed to defend their own try line for five minutes resulting in a knock on by a Ross Sutherland player and a turnover ball.

Despite the tremendous defensive efforts deployed, the hard work put in by all players and many heroic tackles, with hardly any possession, Lochaber got overwhelmed by the numbers out wide and conceded a heavy loss of nine tries to nothing.

This Saturday, Lochaber welcome Ross Sutherland to Banavie in the Caledonia north division two league.

## Rotators lead scratch division

### Ten pin bowling

AFTER week 15 of the Lochaber Building Supplies ten pin bowling leagues at the Nevis Centre in Fort William, Alleycats stay in the lead of scratch division with 64 points. The Creeps are in second place, also on 64 points, with Ardtoe/Nevis Radio in third place on 59 points.

In the handicap division Rotators regain top spot with 59 points after previous leaders Alleycats, now in second place on 57 points, went down 5-0 to Ardtoe/Nevis Radio who remain in third place on 52 points.

The top individual scratch game this week came from Stewart Duncan of The Creeps with 192. Duncan also had the top two game scratch series with 326 and the top two game handicap series of 414. David Mee of Rotators had the top handicap game of 239.

The Creeps swept the board this week in the team honours with the top scratch team game of the week of 576, the top handicap game of 794, the top two-game scratch series of 1,146 and the top two handicap team series of 1,582. Highest scratch average is currently held by Pam Weller of Alleycats on 156 followed by Tony Whitelocke, also of Alleycats, on 152 and Stewart Duncan, The Creeps, on 147.



NEW TEAM: Fort William ladies look forward to the creation of a female shinty team in the town

## First all-female training session for Fort William shinty club

FORT William Shinty Club's first ever all-female training session will be held in the town tonight (Thursday).

Women and girls aged 15 and over of all abilities are welcome to the Nevis Centre taster event from 7.15pm to develop their skills as part of the club's ambi-

tion to create a ladies team.

Following the joint ladies and junior session on Friday night, it was agreed by coaches female training would be held every Thursday evening for the next five weeks (excluding February 19). Women from elsewhere in Lochaber without a ladies' club

### Women's shinty

close by, including Kinlochleven and Ballachulish, are also encouraged to attend.

Coaches have also asked those attending to bring shinty sticks where possible.

## Fort William ready for Nairn clash

FORT William Football Club manager Calum MacLean says his team will be ready for Nairn County on Saturday, just a fortnight after going down 4-0 to the same team.

The Fort boys will return to Station Park for a Highland League fixture on Saturday after being knocked out of the Bredon Aggregates cup in the preliminary round on January 31.

But MacLean said the Fort boys were prepared for the return clash, off the back of a 6-0 victory against juniors Contin FC last Saturday.

He said: 'It's going to be tough

facing Nairn after they beat us quite convincingly recently but I think we will be ready for them this time.'

'We hadn't played in weeks until the last Nairn game but the bounce game against Contin at the weekend helped, it gave us the chance to try a few things and we'll be much better prepared this time round.'

### Problems

Despite still riding on the success of winning four games in a row, for the first time in the club's Highland League history, MacLean said the months without a game on home turf was causing

### Football

problems. He added: 'We're absolutely dying to get back to Claggan.'

'We haven't played at home since November but hopefully we've seen the last of the snow.'

The next home game will be on Wednesday February 18 when Fort begin the battle against a fixture backlog of 10 games with a clash against Rothes. The following Saturday the Claggan side will travel to Mackessack Park to face Rothes again in what MacLean called 'massive games'.



## Cricketers bowled over at open day

AN OPEN day to encourage more people to play cricket in Lochaber was well attended at the weekend.

Novices enjoyed the opportunity to try their hand at the sport in the Nevis Centre on Saturday, as part of an event organised by Fort William Cricket Club.

### Cricket

Pictured above are potential new cricketers Jordan Jamieson, bowling, and John MacIver, batting, two of the many people drawn to the Fort William Cricket Club's open day in the Nevis Centre.

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<b>WEATHER</b> <b>Thursday</b> Cloudy with light rain showers Winds light south south easterly Temperatures 4°C to 6°C. <b>Friday</b> Sunny periods Winds moderate south easterly Temperatures 3°C to 6°C. <b>Weekend Outlook</b> Cloudy on Saturday Light rain on Sunday Winds strong south westerly Temperatures 5°C to 7°C.				<b>TIDAL INFORMATION</b> Tide tables for Oban during the week from <b>Thursday, February 12, 2015</b> are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Ardishaig</td> <td>-5.35</td> <td>Mallaig</td> <td>+0.25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Campbeltown</td> <td>-5.30</td> <td>Portree</td> <td>+0.55</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Crinan</td> <td>-0.47</td> <td>Tobermory</td> <td>+0.16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Islay Port Ellen</td> <td>2.00</td> <td>Dover</td> <td>+5.30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lochboisdale</td> <td>+0.30</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		Ardishaig	-5.35	Mallaig	+0.25	Campbeltown	-5.30	Portree	+0.55	Crinan	-0.47	Tobermory	+0.16	Islay Port Ellen	2.00	Dover	+5.30	Lochboisdale	+0.30																		
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