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Barra's marine areas row escalates

SNH refute councillor's claims of chairman's impropriety

THE chairman of Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) is facing criticism over moves to impose environmental designations on Barra and claims that he did not declare a vested interest.

'Tough questions'

Island councillor Donald Manford told *The Oban Times* that Andrew Thin has tough questions to answer after he personally took an interest in attempting to impose the controversial Special Area of Conservation (SAC) status on two marine areas off the east coast of the island - Sound of Barra and East Mingulay - despite a suggestion that he owns a holiday home there.

Mr Manford believes Mr Thin's participation was improper, given the designations could have a major impact on any building work, particularly the development of possible renewable energy sources such as wind turbines.

The SNP councillor has now written to Mr Thin - who has regularly visited the island property for years - asking him to explain his actions.

Mr Thin's apparent personal involvement was revealed as a result of freedom of information (FOI) requests by campaign group, Southern Hebrides Against Marine Environmental Designations (SHAMED).

However, SNH strongly refute any allegations of impropriety, stressing that the Bruernish holiday home is actually owned by Mr Thin's brother and two other parties.

The development comes just as the island's local authority, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, considers a report recommending the

EXCLUSIVE REPORT by
Steven Flanagan
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Councillor Donald Manford council oppose the designations, due to questionable environmental benefit and possible adverse economic impact.

Mr Manford said: 'One of the striking things that has come out in the FOI is the personal interest Mr Thin has taken.'

'That seems to have spurred a lot of interest from SNH in designating these sites.'

'These designations would most drastically have an impact on the east of the island and in

"Mr Thin does not own a property on the Isle of Barra."

spokesperson for Scottish Natural Heritage

particular affect the possibility for renewable energy developments there. Andrew Thin owns a property in the area.

'I have written to him to ask if he thinks it is reasonable to declare an interest and why he didn't in this context.'

From its headquarters in Inverness, a Scottish Natural Heritage spokesperson told *The Oban Times* it was not possible to speak directly to Mr Thin, but stated there has been no wrongdoing.

The spokesperson said: 'Our chairman has not been involved in decision-making with respect to the scientific advice we have provided to the Scottish Government in relation to a possible SAC in the Sound of Barra.'

'As with any similar controversial issue, however, he has kept himself fully informed on the issues involved in order to be in a position to brief Scottish Ministers as required in his role as SNH chair.'

'Mr Thin does not own a property on the Isle of Barra.'

'He does holiday there from time to time in a property controlled by his brother and two non-family members.'

'This is, as you would expect, declared in his register of interests.'

Meanwhile, the SHAMED group have taken issue with another comment divulged under FOI requests from a senior manager, which they say suggests designations should not be postponed because she had worked on them for two years.

SNH said: 'It is unfair to single out individual staff for comments they have made without SHAMED being aware of the full context.'



Cinderella's ugly sisters take fashion to the limit

Celebrity stylist Gok Wan would be in his element sorting out Oban's two ugly sisters, Michael Wall, left, and Roddy MacEachen, who were attempting to impress their Prince Charming during Spotlight Musical Theatre's production of Cinderella. Louisa Hyde was the three-in-one producer, director and choreographer of the pantomime, which attracted more than 1,600 people over three days last week at the Corran Halls. The traditional panto - one of the best attended Spotlight pantomimes ever - also featured a comic cameo from Councillor Roddy McCuish, who re-enacted his apology from the ill-fated 'Obang' fireworks display.

Tarbert claims Transport Scotland ignores village road safety concerns

TARBERT and Skippess Community Council is calling for an independent inquiry into Transport Scotland's response to road safety concerns.

The call comes after the community council said it could no longer have 'constructive dialogue' with the area manager of the national roads authority.

Writing to Keith Brown, minister for transport and infrastructure, the group called for an inquiry and set out a list of concerns about the A83 trunk road.

Bob Chicken, chairman of the group's roads committee, said the road was a threat to 'life and limb' for both pedestrians and motorists alike.

He said: 'The A83 in Tarbert is characterised by its steepness, sharp bend, complex junction and narrowness - two trucks cannot pass unless one goes onto the sole, narrow pavement. This, as well as increasingly heavy HGV usage, has led this stretch of road to become, in our opinion, a real hazard.'

Mr Chicken said despite

suggesting traffic calming measures, Transport Scotland has refused to take action.

He added: 'They never seem to offer solutions; they can only offer refusals. We have seen other communities with a less apparent case for traffic calming measures get them installed. For this reason we believe that we have reached the end of the road with Transport Scotland and call upon the minister to appoint an independent person or body to look into Transport Scotland's response to our road safety concerns.'

As *The Oban Times* went to press Keith Brown's response had not been confirmed.

However, a spokeswoman for Transport Scotland said: 'We take seriously our responsibilities in managing and maintaining the trunk road network, not least this stretch of the A83. We are, as always, ready to work with local communities to address their concerns. However it is not always possible to action requests due to feasibility, suitability and budget.'

Marina sale looks 'very encouraging'

OBAN Marina Ltd could be in the hands of new owners early in the New Year, after 'very encouraging' interest from potential buyers.

The profitable marina on Kerrera was handed over to administrators last month after financial difficulties at parent company Shawland Developments Ltd.

Last week a closing date of December 20 was set by estate agents Graham and Sibbald, and already several formal expressions of interest have been received.

Overtaken tanker shuts A83 diversion

TRAFFIC in and out of Argyll almost came to stand still on Tuesday after road closures on the A83 and the designated diversion route, the A819.

The A819 Inveraray to Dalmlally road is the diversion route for traffic heading for Arrochar and Glasgow, after a landslide at the Rest and Be Thankful closed the A83 outwith daylight hours. But the diversion was closed on Tuesday afternoon as engineers battled to retrieve a loaded water tanker which overturned.

Working for four hours to get the tanker upright, the engineers narrowly managed to clear the key transport route before the A83 closed for the night.

Final link in Connel Bridge works

A FINAL planned closure on the Connel Bridge takes place this evening, Thursday, 10pm to 6am.

Scotland TransServ said the work is progressing well and to schedule. Engineers have been making arrangements to allow escorted access on foot for those who need to cross the bridge to reach work from Sam.

A spokesman said: 'We are grateful to the public for their patience and understanding.'

Just as one set of works is completed, another begins, with a full closure of the A82 north of Corran Ferry between Friday, December 9 at 8pm and Monday, December 12 at 6am while a dangerous rock is removed.



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Chess master - aged nine

A YOUNG chess master from Oban has been selected to represent his country for the third time for a home nations competition.

Liam Richmond, aged nine, of Rockfield Primary School has had strong results in recent Chess Scotland Junior Congress competitions and will now represent Scotland at under-12 level.

The youngster will travel to Liverpool this weekend to compete in the annual Liverpool Quadrangular Tournament against teams from Wales and the North and South of England.

Scotland will also enter teams in the under-14 and under-16 sections and to add to the excitement of playing for their country, the squads have been told they will be accompanied by Grandmaster Matthew Turner, who will be their coach for the weekend.



Mother of five is Student of the Year

A SINGLE mother of five children is officially top of the class after being named Scotland's Colleges student of the year.

Arlene Simpson has her hands full at home, but always wanted to be a qualified hairdresser. When Argyll College UHI's new centre opened in Oban in 2010, complete with a training salon, Arlene seized the opportunity to fulfil her career dreams with both hands.

Arlene, who picked up her prize at an awards ceremony in Glasgow, said: 'If you had asked me three years ago if I could do this I would not have

been able to say yes. 'I really enjoy being mum, but I had forgotten who I was - now I've found out who I am again and I'm thoroughly enjoying being me and mum.'

Arlene stood out for the judges because of her hard work and determination, not missing a single day of her SVQ Hairdressing Level 3 and giving her limited free time to help fellow students.

Rena MacDonald, curriculum manger, said she has been an inspiration. She said: 'Arlene is what an ideal student should be - keen, motivated and interested in others as well as herself.'

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Barra nursery in closure threat

A COMMUNITY-run nursery on Barra which last month won a £5,000 grant in a national competition is being threatened with closure by its local authority. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES) will this week decide whether or not to go to public consultation on a proposal to move the compulsory pre-school nursery requirement from the Barra Children's Centre in Castlebay to the town's primary school by August next year. Behind the proposal is a complaint that the centre has insufficient capacity. However, the £5,000 granted to the nursery from P and G Champion Mums Foundation will help pay for renovations to the building, while grant funding is currently being sought to pay for three new posts to increase capacity.

"I would be entirely confident that full service provision can be delivered in the existing premises."

Councillor Donald Manford

There is frustration too that the council will consider spending money on renovating the school to make room for pre-school classes when a purpose-built facility already exists, while a public meeting on the island in September showed there was overwhelming support for the centre.

Local councillor, Donald Manford, is backing the children's centre stance and will call for the proposal to be thrown out but there remains real concern that the nursery, which teaches both English and Gaelic, could be closed.

Abigail Treffry, one of the centre's voluntary directors, said: 'We have a fantastic premises, a great deal of community support and the potential to extend the building and expand the services available on-site.'

'This could include a plan to increase the accommodation available for pre-school education if CnES were to give a commitment to remain at the centre for a number of years.'

'It is therefore frustrating that CnES might plan to invest in refurbishing the primary department to accommodate the pre-school classes when purpose-built accommodation is already available.'

Mr Manford said: 'I certainly hope it's not a foregone conclusion. I would be entirely confident that the full service provision can be delivered in the existing purpose built premises.'

'While I hope the proposal will be thrown out, I'm never against a general consultation with people with a full and frank exchange of views provided the best interests of the children are served.'



The prize-winning picture of Lismore Lighthouse in early morning light

Lismore in early light proves inspirational

A PHOTO of Lismore Lighthouse, taken from the Mull ferry as it passed Duart, has been declared the most inspiring in Scotland by a national photography competition.

The competition, run by Chilean winery Isla Negra, ran regional heats before selecting a UK winner.

This lighthouse picture by amateur photographer Simon Filsell won the Scottish heat but lost out to a scenic shot from Blackpool in the national final last week.

Simon said: 'Back in 1981 my church choir from Coventry spent a week singing on the West Coast of Scotland, and I fell in love with the place.'

'During that trip, we went to sing a concert in Iona Abbey - one of the most spiritual places in Britain.'

'Years later, my wife came for two weeks' holiday in Argyll, and I was very keen

to take her to Iona. We took a very early morning ferry from Iona, and this photo of Lismore lighthouse was taken from the ferry, as the weak northern sun rose from behind the mountains to the east.'

Bills for bins 'likely' as Argyll and Bute strives to save money

'All services are likely to be affected'

ARGYLL and Bute Council is considering charging for services as it strives to meet a savings target of £74million by 2015.

The authority also said fortnightly collections of general household waste are 'likely' in a possible arrangement that would see recyclable waste collected on alternate weeks.

Tough measures

The possible money-savers were revealed during a live webchat last week, when the public were given the chance to put their questions on next year's budget directly to senior council officers and administration leader, Dick Walsh.

The cash-strapped local authority says it has already identified £64million of the savings target it needs to meet by 2015, but tough measures were still being considered with another £10million to save.

Chief executive, Sally Loudon, said 'all services are likely to be affected' as a result.

Responding to a question on what other options are available to raise additional funds, Bruce West, the council's head of strategic finance, said: 'The council is considering the balance in terms who meets the costs of services - users or the taxpayer - but one of the key issues is the ability to actually recover any charges and we need to recognise practical issues.'

'We are looking at all services but there are no specific proposals in the budget at the moment.'

Recycling

On waste collection, Douglas Hendry, executive director of customer services, said: 'The council is more likely to do things like go to alternative types of collection.'

For example, week one, general; week two, recyclables etcetera.

'[It's a] 'greener' approach too.'

Mr Hendry said recycling more would help ease budgetary pressures, as the council would pay less in landfill tax.

However, Mr Walsh took a

swipe at the Scottish Government for continuing to impose its freeze on the council tax, saying an increase would be prudent.

He said: 'It certainly makes sense when you consider all this that the council tax should be increased to protect/preserve services.'

'However in recent years the Scottish Government, as part of our financial settlement, has made it clear by indicating that we were to increase the council tax we would face sanctions and penalties.'

'They would be significant requiring the council to increase the tax substantially to accommodate the penalties etcetera.'

New car park boost for Appin

NORTH Argyll villagers are hoping to unlock their area to tourists and create much needed capacity for church and community events with a new car park.

Appin lies on the popular Oban to Fort William cycle track, with diverse wildlife and the stunning Castle Stalker.

Appin Community Trust hopes a new landscaped car park on a site opposite the village hall, gifted to the community in the 1980s, will encourage more visitors to stop off.

Dr Iain MacNicol, trust member, said: 'A car park sounds a bit dull, but it's more than that. It's going to open up the entrance to Appin and give us a chance to tell people what's in Appin.'

'Sadly, we have had three or four huge funerals in the last few years where there were several hundred cars and police had to direct traffic, so it will make a big improvement to road safety in the village.'

Although there has been a dire need for more parking for years, the land has only recently zoned as suitable for community use. The plan has the backing of Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Water and Scottish Hydro, who all have an interest in the site.

Last month, the community trust received planning permission and it is now hoping to attract funding for a sensitive transformation into parking for at least 50 cars amongst trees and interpretation boards. Subject to funding, they hope the new facility will be in place by summer 2012.

Glasgow retains world piping event

PIPERS from around the world will be descending on Glasgow in each of the next four years, as the city has been confirmed as hosts for the World Pipe Band Championships until 2015.

The Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association (RSPBA) made the announcement that 'the Worlds' will be staying in Glasgow after the city saw-off competition from Belfast. George Usher, president of the RSPBA, said: 'The bands get such a warm welcome and genuinely look forward to competing at Glasgow Green - and the hospitality of a city which embraces piping.'

The festival attracts more than 200 bands, and 30,000 supporters and spectators.

Tobermory's tree lands in bay but lights must go on

CHRISTMAS was very nearly cancelled in Tobermory after the village's Christmas tree went for a swim in the bay.

The tree, which was donated by Iggesund Forestry, became victim of the monsoon weather conditions on Mull last week.

Volunteers of the Tobermory Christmas Lights Committee found it lying in the bay last Monday but were able to spruce it up in time for the Christmas lights being switched on last Friday.

Committee chairwoman Andrea MacPhail explained this year's search for a tree had been made all the more difficult after regular contributors Forestry Commission Scotland declined to donate one.

Andrea said: 'Despite the horrendous weather last week the volunteers were happy to put up the lights and put the tree up - twice.'

'A special thanks to my husband John and Dodo MacLean who put up all the decorations.'

The weather also did its best to spoil the lights switch-on last Friday, when the heavens opened as former Tobermory GP, Dr Bill Clegg, flicked the switch.

Mount Stuart wedding award

A BUTE stately home has been named as the second best historic wedding venue in the country. Mount Stuart was runner up in the best wedding venue and also short-listed for the hidden gem accolade in the Hudson's Heritage Awards.

Woman charged after obstructing paramedics

A 47 YEAR old woman has been charged with obstructing emergency services after allegedly providing false details to paramedics at Hynish Crescent, Oban, last Thursday.

Five hamper winners

CHRISTMAS came early for five readers, when they won a delicious Mull of Kintyre Cheddar Hamper in *The Oban Times* festive supplement.

The lucky winners are: Fiona MacInness (Tobermory), Elizabeth Small (Lochgillhead), Mrs A McNab (Lochawe), Mrs C Valentine (Kilmore) and Mrs M Paisley (Fort William).

Sunday arrest for disorderly man

POLICE arrested a 20 year old man at 0.20am on Sunday after he was accused of conducting himself in a disorderly manner.

A report has been submitted to the procurator fiscal.

School trip 'good practice' advice

A SCHOOL trip to a sawmill by Argyll pupils has been picked as an example of good practice by the Health and Safety Executive.

Having assessed the safety issues of visiting a working sawmill, the successful visit by four Helensburgh primary schools now features in the organisation's advice on planning school trips.

Man charged after pub disturbance

OFFICERS from Strathclyde Police arrested a man in Oban's Stevenson Street at 2am on Monday in connection with an alleged disturbance at a nearby licensed premises.

Argyll and Bute school star search

THE HUNT is on for Argyll and Bute's school stars to put themselves forward for the Scottish Education Awards 2012.

The county has a great track record in the national competition, with three finalists and one winner last year.

Nominations for the 17 categories, including best teacher, sustainable school and Gaelic culture award, can be made on www.scottisheducationawards.co.uk.

Row over the way ahead leads to resignation

A ROW about the future structures of Argyll and Bute Council has broken out after a resignation from a cross-party group to look at change.

'Script'

The Council's Executive set up a short-term working group to consider how to improve and streamline the political management arrangements in the council.

But last week, Helensburgh councillor James Robb resigned from the group, saying it was working to a 'pre-determined script'.

In a letter to council chief executive Sally Loudon, Councillor Robb said: 'I had hoped this group would take a wide ranging and open-minded approach to better arrangements at the Council that would increase member

participation and accountability. That has proved not to be the case.'

'The public cannot understand why on critical local planning decisions the councillors they elected to represent them cannot take part in the decision.'

'The scrutiny arrangements do not allow for accountability to all members as there is no provision for members to 'call in' decisions of the Executive Committee for review.'

Council leader Dick Walsh said Councillor Robb's decision to resign was 'regrettable ... as the issues he raises in his letter are amongst those being explored by the group.'

He also highlighted that Councillor Robb had not been able to attend all the group meetings.



Village hall committee chairwoman Fiona Dickie, right, looks on as Elma Lennox cuts the ribbon to declare the hall open again.

Kilmore Hall re-opens

THE COMMITTEE that runs Kilmore Village Hall has called on more people to use it after re-opening the venue following a £35,000 refurbishment.

Well-known Kilmore woman Elma Lennox cut the ribbon to officially open the hall before the community came together outside to switch on the village's Christmas lights last Saturday.

Fiona Dickie, chairwoman of Kilmore Village Hall Committee, said: 'This hall is for the whole community and we would like to see more groups involved, particularly youth groups.'

Refurbishment of the 62-year-old building included renewing the roof, improved insulation and the addition of a disabled toilet and disabled ramp.

The Oban Times would like to say a huge **THANK YOU** to all those who nominated an angel for our **Angel of the Year Competition**. The competition is now closed and the winner will be announced next week

Six-and-a-half per cent ferry fare increases hit islands without RET

FERRY fares will increase by 6.5 per cent from April – but only for those islands not included in the Roads Equivalent Tariff (RET) scheme. Local authorities were last week advised of the above-inflation increase for all Caledonian

MacBrayne (CalMac) routes throughout the Clyde and Hebrides, as well as NorthLink ferry connections to Orkney and Shetland. The news will come as a bitter blow to islands like Mull, Lismore, Canna, Rum, Iona,

Jura, Muck and Raasay, which have not been included in the expanded RET scheme at this stage but continue to struggle against increased living and business costs. There has already been some suggestion that the increased

fares are in effect paying for the permanent extension of the RET to the Western Isles, Coll and Tiree, but Transport Scotland said the move has been forced by cuts imposed by the UK Government. A spokesperson for Transport

Scotland said: 'The decision was made in order to safeguard lifeline ferry services in light of cuts imposed on the Scottish Government by the UK Government as well as increases in fuel costs.' Mandie Currie, chair of

Lismore Community Council, said: 'I think we're all too busy struggling to get by to be angry at the increase. People are being squeezed from every angle and this won't be good for the island.' Meanwhile, Alan Reid, Lib-

eral Democrat MP for Argyll and Bute, said: 'This increase, well above the rate of inflation, is a blow to ferry passengers. The blow will fall most heavily on those islands, like Mull and Bute, which will not benefit from RET.'

Cement mixer stolen in Dalmally

POLICE are appealing for witnesses after a concrete mixer was stolen from a building site in Dalmally.

The orange Belle cement mixer, which has a Honda engine, was taken sometime between November 12-30.

Anyone with information should contact constable Iain Young through Oban Police Office - 01631 510500

TV cameras make tracks for Argyll

ARGYLL is at the heart of BBC Television's *Country Tracks* programme this coming Sunday when presenter Joe Crowley visits one of Scotland's most historic archery fields at Armaddy Castle, south of Oban, and meets today's longbow archers who still use the natural landscape to full advantage.

The programme also explores the West Highland Way as it travels through Glencoe and Joe Crowley will test both his skill and nerve as he kayaks through the turbulent waters of the Falls of Lora, as Loch Etive tumbles out into the Firth of Lorne.

The programme will be broadcast on Sunday, December 11, at 11am.

Appin crash charge

A MAN has been charged with driving without due care and attention in connection with a collision which occurred near Appin last week. The 40 year old allegedly collided with a wall near Creagan Bridge.



Traffic officers will be performing random spot checks throughout Oban and Argyll during their winter safety campaign. 15_149police1

Oban surgeon jailed after insurance scam

Nine-month jail sentence follows £25,000 attempted fraud

AN OBAN cancer surgeon risks being struck off after being jailed for a £25,000 house insurance scam. Ramesh Gupta, aged 50, was this week locked up for nine months following his conviction at Glasgow Sheriff Court for attempted fraud. Gupta is already suspended from Lorn and Islands Hospital in Oban in relation to other matters. The surgeon had taken out a

policy two days after a burst pipe flooded his house in January last year. He then made a bogus claim for the damage, which had also spread to his neighbour's property. Sheriff Nigel Ross told the shamed £100,000-a-year medic that a prison term was the only appropriate sentence. A trial in September heard how a leak occurred at Gupta's home in the city's Titwood Road, Crossmyloof, on January

11 last year. Gupta - who owns a string of properties - then took out insurance before making a claim a month later pretending the incident had just happened. Craig and Caroline McKirdy - neighbours affected by the damage - confirmed the date when the leak occurred. Gupta claimed he had never tried to make a claim, but had just 'alerted' the insurance company to the leak.

Gupta was represented by top QC Gordon Jackson when he returned to the dock this week. The lawyer said there was 'a degree of family pressures and influences' involved in the fraud bid. Adding: 'There are a large number of references from his medical background and they all speak highly of him. My understanding is that he will pay an enormous price for what he has done in terms of his professional career.'

First offenders' cars will be forfeited warns police

DRINK and drug drivers in Argyll and Bute face having their cars forfeited for a first offence as police launch their zero-tolerance festive road safety campaign. Officers started randomly stopping cars on roads throughout the county from Monday as they aim to reduce the shocking statistics that show one in seven fatal accidents are caused by a driver who is under chemical influence. Many of those can be 'next morning' drivers, but police say they won't be taking any excuses if they catch someone putting at risk the lives of other road users or pedestrians. Oban's Chief Inspector Brian

Auld said: 'This year we've extended the vehicle forfeiture scheme to first-time offenders who are either three times over the drink drive limit or for those who refuse to provide a sample. This is because there are still people who flout the law and drive while under the influence. We would hope people would think twice about drink driving because of the human impact, about the risk, harm and impact they can have on other members of the public and themselves. Of course, we hope the possibility of forfeiture acts as an extra deterrent.' With nearly a repeat offender caught in Scotland every day for the last two years, they won't

escape the gaze of the police. 'In the last two years, 702 repeat offenders have been caught throughout Scotland. In that time, 155 vehicles have been forfeited, with a further 18 orders pending,' Inspector Auld said. 'With that in mind, repeat offenders will face forfeiture in the same way. We want to make our roads safer.' Motorists will also be required to show that their vehicles are road worthy, with checks on tyres, lights and mirrors performed when a vehicle is stopped. The winter safety campaign will run until January 3 next year.

'Stop-strip' fails to halt runaway driver in six-mile car chase

Car loses tyre as driver tries to escape

AN OBAN woman admitted leading police on a dramatic car chase through the town and over Connel Bridge when she appeared at Oban Sheriff Court on Monday. Appearing from custody, Charlene MacDonald, 26, of 21 Combie Court, admitted a series of traffic offences just after midnight on December 3, starting on the A85 at Corran Esplanade, Oban when she failed to stop for police. She further admitted driving between Oban, Connel and the A828 without headlights, repeatedly crossing to the opposing carriageway and causing other drivers to take evasive action.

MacDonald continued to drive despite the her vehicle losing a tyre after repeatedly hitting the verge. Police deployed a spiked stop-strip in a bid to stop MacDonald's car at the junction between the A85 and A828 but she continued to drive on the deflated tyres. MacDonald further admitted failing to provide breath specimens and committing all the offences while on bail. Sentence has been deferred until December 13 to debate the full seizure of the vehicle, but an interim seizure was imposed after fiscal deputy Mairi Crilley successfully argued forfeiture of the vehicle was a valid part of the potential punishment.

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Auction aims to aid widow and children at Christmas



Derek Dempster with some of the auction prizes on offer at the charity fundraiser. 16_149auction01

A MOTHER of two, who lost her partner and her home this year, will receive a special Christmas gift from friends this year. Michelle Donn's partner, shepherd James Steele, died in August this year after falling on Ben Cruachan while gathering sheep on the hill. Then came another bombshell as Michelle and her two young children, aged five and two, lost their home in Lochawe, which was tied into her husband's job. Driven by a desire to help the family this Christmas, friend of the family Derek Dempster, and his colleague Deborah Wyton, have organised a fundraising festive auction and raffle to be held in the Corran Halls next Saturday (December 17) between 1 - 4pm. There will be performances from Taynuilt Gaelic Choir, Taynuilt Swing Band and the Lush Puppies, added to craft stalls and children's activities in the hall. Among numerous lots are a signed Celtic football and a signed Honda touring car team shirt. Derek is overwhelmed by public support. He added: 'This fundraiser won't bring James back but it will help ease the financial burden on this family.' Anyone wishing to pledge prizes or donations can contact Derek on 01866 822 755.

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Lorn Lines

ARGYLL Community Housing Association (ACHA) has completed its first rendering and roofing contract in Oban. Four homes at 53 to 56 Longdale Crescent have had a makeover with new roofs, replacement renders, gutters, window sills and downpipes. The contract, which also introduced enhanced insulation, was worth £110,000 and was carried out by A C Whyte.

MEMBERS of Oban Photographic Club turned out to their weekly meeting on Monday evening in the Regent Hotel Oban to see the Scottish Photographic Federation's print portfolio. The portfolio was the cream of the prints submitted by members of photographic clubs from all over Scotland and was judged by a panel of three judges. As well as the usual excellent colour section there was a very well supported black and white section. The subjects were varied, including landscape, abstract, portrait and wildlife. While not everyone agreed with the judges' choice (who does?) there were certainly many very good and worthwhile images on show. The next meeting of the club is on Monday, December 12 when local professional photographer, Cameron Harris, will give the results of the Dusk to Dawn competition.



Officers from the Vehicles and Operators Services Agency (VOSA) joined police officers for a spot-check of commercial vehicles at Pennyfuir, near Oban, as part of the Strathclyde Police Road Safety Week. Pictured are VOSA vehicle examiner Graham Reid with police constables Scott Lewis, Lochgilphead, and Andy Barron, Oban. 16_148vosa01

MARY Scanlon MSP will be the guest speaker at the Christmas Lunch of the Lorn Lunch Club in Oban. The lunch will be held on December 16 at 12.15pm for 12.45pm in the Regent Hotel, Oban. A Christmas raffle will be held with many attractive prizes.

AS PART of Oban Pipe Band's ongoing fundraising efforts, a soup lunch will be held on Saturday, December 10 in the Pipe Band Hall from noon. An offer will be a selection of homemade soups, tea, coffee and homebaking. Two hampers will also be raffled on the day.



Royal Scottish Country Dancing Society chairwoman Ruth Beattie, left, and chief executive Elizabeth Foster with the Dunbeg pupils who gave a presentation on how to encourage young pupil to take part in country dancing. 16_148dunbeg01

Dunbeg pupils play their part for Scottish Country Dancing

A CELEBRITY endorsement from Lady Gaga and a kilted Homer Simpson as a mascot would encourage more children to take up traditional Scottish country dancing, according to a youth survey conducted by Dunbeg Primary School. First in Scotland Dunbeg's primary five and six pupils were selected as the first schoolchildren in the country to conduct a survey for the internationally known Royal Scottish Country Dance Society (RSCDS). They presented their advice and findings at Atlantis Leisure, Oban, recently to the RSCDS committee and management team. According to the survey results 88 per cent of 5 - 16 year olds



Homer Simpson, in a kilt, was suggested as a mascot for Scottish Country Dancing.

would be more encouraged to do Scottish country dancing if the RSCDS had a mascot. Among the more popular suggestions were a Highland cow, a bear and even Homer Simpson in a kilt. A comprehensive list of celebrities who children would like to see promote country dancing was topped by Lady Gaga, although JLS, Katie Perry and Billy Connolly were also favourites. The survey revealed that 76 per cent of five-16 year olds would more likely to try country dancing if a famous person learned how to do it and told children how much fun it was. RSCDS chairwoman Ruth Beattie, whose parents hail from Argyll, said: 'This type of research is a new concept for us and has been led by our development worker Susan Rhodes, from Tarbert. It is the first survey of its type but that's not to say it will be the last because it has been very worthwhile and has certainly given us food for thought.'

Development worker Susan Rhodes said Dunbeg had been selected to compile the survey because the school has been supportive of Scottish country dancing and includes it in its curriculum. She added: 'Their findings could change the way we think about promoting Scottish country dancing to young people.' The youngsters have been working on the project since the beginning of September, starting with an information session from Sue Porter of the local RSCDS branch, who told them about the history of Scottish country dancing and about the RSCDS today. Subsequent sessions with psychologist Hans Kok helped to develop questions and interviewing skills in preparation for conducting interviews with children from other schools in the Oban area. The RSCDS, now represented by 13,200 members in 169 branches across the world, was formed in 1923 by Glasgow's Jean Milligan and Mrs Stewart of Fasnaclach, Appin.

Argyll drops on recycling league table as rules change

ARGYLL'S track record on green waste disposal has fallen foul of a change in what counts as recycling. For the last two years, Argyll and Bute Council beat government targets by recycling and composting more than 40 per cent of all household rubbish through kerbside collections, bottle and can banks and recycling centres. Changing rules The council also set up a public private partnership agreement with Shanks to treat mixed waste, producing a 'compost-like output' used in landfill restoration. But the Scottish Government and SEPA announced in March 2011 this material would now be considered as recovered waste that is diverted from landfill, but no longer contributes to recycling rates. Now only four local authorities have worse rates of recycling and composting than Argyll and Bute, most of them also using similar waste treatment processes. A council spokesperson said: 'While Argyll and Bute Council's recycling, composting and recovery rate is still above 40 per cent for the April-June 2011 period recently reported, the new classifications have reduced the recycling and composting rate to 28.2 per cent for this quarter. 'The council continues to focus on reducing landfill and this has been demonstrated with a year on year reduction in landfill over the past five years. 'The council is also fully committed to recycling and we hope to offer increased kerbside recycling materials provision to several areas sometime during 2012/13 financial year.'

Argyll forest plan short-listed

A PLAN for how Argyll and Bute's forests are used has been short-listed for a prestigious planning award. The Argyll and Bute Woodland and Forestry Strategy was named last week as a finalist in the rural areas and natural environment category of the Royal Town Planning Institute Planning Awards. Winners will be announced in February 2012.

Forteith Foodservice wins national industry award in London

OBAN-based wholesaler, Forteith Foodservice, has been named the UK's independent depot of the year at the Federation of Wholesale Distributors' Gold Medal Awards 2012. Presented at a ceremony in London last week, the 'Gold Medal' was awarded to the business in recognition of the range of initiatives introduced over the past year, particularly its local sourcing partnerships. Also recognised was the extremely low staff turnover and continued investment in services despite trying economic conditions. Senior partner, John Forteith, said: 'This is a tremendous honour for our depot in Oban and is a testament to the hard work, dedication and loyalty of our staff. 'This has been a fantastic year for the company; winning the Scottish Wholesalers' Association 'Best Delivered Wholesaler-Foodservice' award and a list of both Scottish and UK national awards through our refrigeration and heat pump solutions side of the business. 'We are very proud of being recognised UK-wide by our peers.'

Speakers' club meets in Oban

MEMBERS of Oban Speakers' Club were surprised, although pleasantly so, last week when Eamonn Arthur's speech on 'William and Mary' turned out to be on a college of that name in America. They enjoyed his speech and those by Donald Macaskill on 'Who wants to be a millionaire' and Frank Walton on 'Grandchildren'. The speakers and their immediate critics Jim Fraser, Alex Clark and Malcolm Black were introduced in a light-hearted way by Iain Fullerton. In the second half of the programme the topics master Tom Clegg gave topics to Bill Leech, Ian Crawford, Jim Fraser, Willie Melville, Malcolm Black and Alex Clark. Timekeeper for the evening was Guido Faccenda and the general evaluator was Roy Wood. The next meeting, the last one before the Christmas and New Year break, will be held on Thursday, December 15.

Ardfern drink-driver loses licence for 18 months

AN ARDFERN man will be without his driving licence for 18 months after being caught drink-driving last Sunday. Appearing at Oban Sheriff Court on Monday, Iain Dougall MacLean, 38, of Kennel Cottage, Lunga, admitted driving on the B8002 and Ardlarach Road, Ardfern with 52 mgs of alcohol in his breath, when the legal limit is 35mgs. He was also fined £300.

Faulty streetlights cause problems

As the longest nights of the year approach, Oban streetlights have again been leaving pedestrians in the dark. Iain Macdonald, who lives in Albany Street, contacted *The Oban Times* to say: 'Pedestrians rely on the light that emanates from the entries to the apartment buildings to illuminate a very small percentage of the walkway. 'I myself have taken to carrying a small torch with me, but for others, especially the elderly, it is not safe.' The Albany St fault was duly fixed, but a spokesperson for Argyll and Bute Council said this was not the only problem in the town as engineers battled old infrastructure.

Oban SWRI host open night

THE OBAN branch of the Scottish Women's Rural Institute (SWRI) held an Open Night last week when the town branch welcomed members from many other institutes. Despite the inclement weather almost 80 braved the elements for a convivial evening of friendship old and new. Amongst the new friends was Tomoe, who was paying a brief visit from Japan to a friend in Oban. Tomoe, whose name means friend, brought a selection of spectacle cases and bags which she had made from recycled Kimonos. She kindly donated them as raffle prizes and proved a delightful guest. The theme for the evening was 'Christmas sparkle'. Mulled wine was served as people arrived and then the two 'Ks', Karen and Kay, showed us how we could add some sparkle to our Christmas tables, including various ways of making holders for place names, folded serviettes, individually decorated wine glasses, using beads, and flower arrangements. Following supper the raffle was drawn and it was, once again, time to face the elements. The Oban branch would like to offer thanks to all for coming, with special thanks going to Karen and Kay and all who contributed to the raffle, the lavish supper and all who helped in the kitchen.

Oban infrastructure plans go on back burner

PLANS to upgrade the roads through Oban town centre have been put on hold. Scotland TransServ had planned to carry out a scheduled programme of improvements from the northern entrance of the town to the ferry terminal this year. However, speaking at the recent Local Area Community Planning Group in the Corran Halls, Oban, TransServ's Cathel MacAskill did not give an alternative date for the work. A spokesman for TransServ said: 'The major trunk road scheme through Oban does not feature in the one year indicative programme for 2012/13. 'In financially constrained times the scheme is competing against other priorities across the network.' Argyll and Bute Councillor Louise Glen-Lee said: 'It causes me great concern that Oban's roads, paths and lighting are no longer in TransServ's plans for the foreseeable future.'

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Debate on rural Scotland under independence raises more questions

'THIS is a rough beast of a country that we live in but its time has come at last - it is lurching towards Bethlehem to be reborn.'

That was the view of Argyll QC Ian Hamilton, setting out the case for independence

in a debate about how rural Scotland should vote in a future referendum.

The event, organised by Scottish Land and Estates, was held last week at SAMS, Dunstaffnage, attracted big name speakers from the world of

politics and a packed audience representing rural interests.

Murdo Fraser MSP, recently defeated for the Scottish Conservatives' leadership, said Scotland has for the past 300 years been part of 'the most successful economic and fiscal

union that the world has ever seen'. He added there were few reasons why rural Scotland should take a different stance on independence to urban Scotland.

The main focus of Alan Reid, Lib/Dem MP for Argyll and

Bute, was on unanswered questions - when would a referendum take place, what would the question be and how would the results be assessed, particularly if there were two questions.

'It is going to be at least 2014 before we have the referendum,'

he noted, 'so we are going to have more of these debates.'

SNP Argyll and Bute MSP Michael Russell said he was disappointed not to hear a coherent and positive argument for the retention of the union. He said: 'This is a chance to

raise all our games.' He added an independent Scotland would be better represented in Europe.

'Lots of things happen in terms of working together and co-operation - how do we create the circumstances to do better together.'

Arrest follows Connell disorder

A 20 YEAR old man was arrested near the A85 in Connell on Sunday morning, charged with acting in a disorderly manner and obstructing paramedics.

Credit union announce largest savings payout

ARGYLL and Bute residents are celebrating Christmas early this year with a share of almost £1million from the Scotwest Christmas Savings Account.

Scotland's largest credit union has had its biggest payout since its launch in 2007 with nearly 100 Argyll and Bute members benefiting from the savings account.

Under the scheme, residents in Argyll and Bute are able to spread the cost of the festive season throughout the year.

The savings account runs from the middle of November each year with savings paid out the following November in plenty of time for Christmas.

Police appeal as window smashed

POLICE are appealing for witnesses after a window was smashed at Mill Park Terrace, Oban between midnight and 10am on Sunday.

Oban car driver had no licence

A 21 YEAR old male has been reported to the procurator fiscal, accused of driving without a licence on Oban's Tweeddale Street.

New childcare helpline for Argyll and Bute

A GOVERNMENT service helping families to find childcare, activities and support in their local area has been rolled out to Argyll and Bute.

The Family Information Service takes over from the childcare information service. The helpline can be contacted on 01369 708157 or www.scotthifamilies.gov.uk.

Driver of van with no MOT charged

A 56 YEAR old man from Bristol was charged with driving his Ford Transit van without a valid MOT test certificate after being stopped at George Street, Oban, last Tuesday.

Key road closure halts traffic and trade

Inveraray, Mid Argyll and Kintyre artery shut by A83 landslide

LAST WEEK'S landslide at the Rest and Be Thankful is still damaging trade, especially in Inveraray, Mid Argyll and into Kintyre, local businesses have confirmed.

Sharp fall in trade

The A83 Inveraray to Tarbet main road has now partially re-opened during daylight hours, following the landslide last Thursday morning, but businesses say they are still suffering the effects.

Transport officials said overnight closures would continue until the current weather pattern changed.

Shops, pubs, restaurants and hotels say they have experienced a sharp fall in passing trade as motorists and commercial traffic take alternative routes, or avoid Argyll altogether.

Chris Clarke from the family-run George Hotel in Inveraray said the landslide had put people off coming to the area.

'We have definitely been affected; we have had a lot of cancellations for accommodation and had very little passing trade this week.'

He added: 'It is hard to estimate the effect it has had on takings but probably about 20 per cent across the board.'

Urging Transport Scotland

to find a permanent solution to the problems at the Rest and Be Thankful, he said: 'The A83 is our lifeline; we need it.'

Virginia Sumsion, from Loch Fyne Oysters, said trade had also fallen at their Cairndow-based business: 'We are very concerned,' she said. 'In terms of the shop and the Oyster Bar business falls away to nothing; it's a huge issue for us.'

As *The Oban Times* went to press the A83 was still opening between 8.30am and 4pm.

A spokesman for Scotland Transperv said: 'The safety of the public and our workforce is absolutely paramount and the monitoring of the area of the most recent landslide on the A83 continues. We are grateful to the public for their continuing support and patience.'

When the A83 is closed east-bound, Glasgow-bound traffic is being diverted via the A819 Inveraray to Dalmlally road to join the A85 to Tyndrum, followed by the A82 to Crianlarich, then the A82 Crianlarich to Tarbet road.

Alan Reid MP said: 'In view of the importance of this road, the Scottish Government must carry out far more work here to prevent further landslides blocking this vital road link.'



The pure-bred Charolais heifer Allanfauld Fizz which won the supreme champions title at Smithfield for Ewan MacPherson and Sons, Mill Farm, Barcaldine

Lorn farmer creates Smithfield history

A BARCALDINE family has made livestock farming history after becoming the first to win the prestigious East of England Smithfield Festival Supreme Championship at Peterborough with a 19-month old pure-bred Charolais.

Historic victory

Ewan MacPherson and family, of Mill Farm, Barcaldine, watched intently as the blonde, 604kg Charolais heifer Allanfauld Fizz clinched the historic title, also becoming only the second ever pure-bred to win the much sought-after accolade, the last pure-bred winning 32 years ago in 1979.

It is the third time the MacPherson family have won the supreme championship at Smithfield, but it is prob-

ably their most celebrated title, bringing to a bright end what has been a particularly difficult year.

The family were united in grief in September when 86-year old Ewan Snr, sadly lost his wife, Carrie, after an illness.

Allanfauld Fizz was shown by Ewan's eldest son, Donald, at the show last Friday and speaking afterwards, Donald, who farms in his own right near Berwick-on-Tweed, said it was a particularly emotional event.

'It was a fantastic moment for the whole family.'

'It's not been an easy time with mum passing away, so this was great, especially for my dad.'

'The day itself was really emotionally charged, my sisters had tears in their eyes and it

was quite a moment when we discovered we'd won.'

Previous Smithfield success

MacPherson and Sons' previous victories at the prestigious Smithfield event came in 1989 with The Bandit, and in 1995 with Donald Bhan.

They have also won the reserve championship title three times.

With as much emotion tied to Fizz's victory, it is little wonder that she's already considered a member of the family.

While the prize-winning heifer they bought from Archie MacGregor in Kilsyth in April of this year was sold to Fred Murray, Wrangham, Wooler, for £9,000 after the Smithfield event, the MacPhersons plan on bringing her back to Mill Farm

in the summer.

It's not the first competition Fizz - by Elgin Davinchi and out of Allanfauld Carolyn - has won this year, earlier clinching the champion pure-bred title at the Scottish Royal Highland Winter Fair.

She has also been shown by Donald's 12 year old son, Ross, who is keen to follow in the proud family tradition of showing cattle.

In selecting the stylish Charolais heifer as his supreme champion, Smithfield Show judge, Tecwyn Jones, from Conwy, said: 'Out of a tremendous show of cattle, this heifer really caught my eye with her style, character and correctness.'

'She has an optimum covering

of muscle and her length and clean shape is second to none.'

'In the championship, she beat the opposition mainly on her free walking, good legs and overall correctness.'

The Charolais breed had further success when Wil Owen, Gwynedd won the King's Cup for the best animal bred by exhibitor. British Charolais Cattle Society chief executive David Benson said: 'It's great to end this year on such a high, going into our Golden Jubilee year after winning the supreme championship and King's Cup at Smithfield and a successful autumn sale circuit with records broken at Stirling, Dunganon and Welshpool proving Charolais bulls are still in high demand.'



Council mark 50th anniversary of theatre company

FOLLOWING last Thursday night's performance of *Cinderella* by the Spotlight Musical Theatre Group at a packed Corran Halls, Oban, local councillor Neil Mackay, presented a quail from Argyll and Bute Council to mark Spotlight's 50th anniversary.

This year's three-in-one producer, director and choreographer Louisa Hyde can be rightly proud of her whole team for putting on another excellent Spotlight production for the whole town to enjoy.

Left: Spotlight chairwoman Morven Wright accepts the anniversary quail from Councillor Neil Mackay.

'MacBrayne's' name for new bar sparks legal row

THE OWNER of Oban's newest bar, MacBrayne's, has clashed with ferry bosses following claims the name will cause confusion on Oban's South Pier.

Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL) has sought legal advice following the name change at the former Waterfront Bar, situated near to the CalMac Ferry Terminal in Oban.

But Calum MacLachlainn, who co-owns MacBrayne's Bar, says he will not be 'bullied' by the company and insists the name change is part of a necessary makeover.

Mr MacLachlainn told *The Oban Times*: 'MacBrayne's is not trademarked, yet there are 190 businesses called Caledonian. Why are they picking on us?'

'I'm not as much upset as I am disappointed that CMAL is spending taxpayers money fighting something like this and I will be speaking to

Scottish ministers about it.

'We will defend this vigorously and will not be bullied.'

A spokesman for Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited (CMAL) said: 'As owner of the Caledonian MacBrayne trade mark, CMAL has been in contact with the owner of the former Waterfront Restaurant in Oban to highlight concerns about the proposed name change of the establishment to MacBrayne's.'

'CMAL's concern is that the use of the name could lead to a public misconception that the restaurant has a direct link to the Caledonian MacBrayne business and has been in discussions with the owner to resolve the matter.'

'However, as the owner has progressed the rebrand without seeking permission to use the name, the matter has now been passed to CMAL's solicitors for further action.'

Housing priorities called into question

A DECISION to expand the priority need category for housing has been criticised as ineffective and disruptive to communities.

More than 3,000 people are on Argyll's housing waiting list, but half of all social housing vacancies go to people assessed as in priority need. Even those applicants have to wait an average of 47 weeks because of a lack of homes.

Last month Argyll and Bute councillors voted to give all unintentionally homeless people priority status, in line with Scottish Government targets.

But Councillor Roddy McCuish said this could have a major impact on those who have been waiting on the mainstream housing list, some of them for years.

He said: 'I'm heart sorry for homeless people but I don't think it's the way to address the problem. All we are doing is creating more lists.'

'It must be very depressing for someone who has been waiting on the housing list for years in an overcrowded house when, perhaps because of the homeless legislation, someone gets allocated a house faster.'

'I have lots of constituents who would gladly wait for 47 weeks for a house,' added councillor McCuish wryly.

A paper presented to the council's executive said that the number of families applying as homeless was falling and the council's homelessness department used a preventative approach to prevent people becoming homeless.

Four arrests after vandalism spree

FOUR men have been arrested following a three hour rampage at a Corran Esplanade hotel during which smoke detectors were destroyed and extinguishers emptied.

The men, three of whom are aged 19 and from the Montrose area, the other aged 21 and local to Oban, have been charged with conducting themselves in a disorderly manner, vandalism, culpable and reckless conduct and behaving in a threatening and abusive manner.

They were released on bail and a report submitted to the procurator fiscal.

Family Hogmanay party to raise funds for charities

AN OBAN-based charity is hosting the town's main Hogmanay party this year at the Argyllshire Gathering Halls.

Oban 365 is expecting 400 people to attend its Oban Family Hogmanay event, with music for the evening entertainment from The Antics, Hebridean Ceilidh Band and Dan Finnigan.

Donations from businesses in the town have already covered the cost of the event, so Oban 365 will split all proceeds between the Anthony Nolan Trust and Argyll Beats Cardiovascular Disease (ABCD).

One of the event organisers, Ian MacInnes, said: 'Having a young family myself, I was aware there wasn't an organised event inside a venue this year, so I thought it was a good idea to organise a family friendly Hogmanay party and raise money for charities at the same time.'

Signed Old Firm football strips, bed and breakfast nights and golf outings are also being raffled off on the night.

Tickets for the event are on sale from the venue and shops within the town, or by contacting oban365@live.co.uk

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Dangerous overhanging rock to be removed this weekend

FORESTRY Commission Scotland says 'we're ready' to tackle a dangerous 250-tonne rock overhanging the A82 near Fort William.

The work will close the road to all traffic a mile north of the Corran Ferry from 10pm tomorrow night until 6am on Monday. One lane is already shut to allow 350 bags of stone and tyre bales needed to cushion the road during rock removal to be stockpiled.

Project manager Alan Dickerson said: 'We are all set, we're raring to go and we want to get the job done.'

Meanwhile, Scotland Transpore hopes to empty roadside gulleys and clean signs during the closure. Highland Council staff will carry out litter picking on the traffic-free road. Diversions are in place via the Corran Ferry.

See 'panto hit by road closure', page 4.

Crew member airlifted to hospital from prawn boat

A CREW member was airlifted from a prawn boat between The Isle of Rum and Sleat on Monday after he became ill.

Stornoway coastguard was contacted and tasked Mallaig lifeboat to attend the casualty, Mallaig man Donald Kennedy.

Two lifeboat crew, one a paramedic, boarded the Mallaig-owned *Amethyst* to assess Mr Kennedy, aged 59, and found him to be showing signs of disorientation.

Stornoway coastguard rescue helicopter was scrambled at 12.20pm to take Mr Kennedy to the MacKinnon Memorial Hospital in Broadford.

Speaking to *The Oban Times* through charge nurse Chrisann O'Halloran on Tuesday morning, Mr Kennedy said 'a big thank-you' to all those involved in the rescue.

Ms O'Halloran said the patient's condition was

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Pupils at Upper Achintore Primary enjoyed the snowy weather on Monday. 20_149snow02

First winter snowfall delights pupils

MANY parts of the west Highlands were hit with the first snowfall of the winter at the start of the week.

After a relatively balmy November, the wintry weather finally hit, leaving roads and pavements treacherous.

Up to four inches of snow fell on Fort William and six inches in Roy Bridge, but coastal areas saw less. Much of Skye escaped the worst of the weather, with northern parts of the island most affected. Kyleakin

and Sleat saw little snow. Portree Primary School acting head Flora MacDougall told *The Oban Times* on Tuesday: 'It's beautiful; the whole playground is covered with a dusting of white snow. The kids are having a great time.'

'They were out making snowmen yesterday. It's perfect sledding weather.'

After a small amount of snow fell on Monday in Plockton, there was little more than a thick frost the next day.

Oban Times Lochalsh correspondent Charlie Macrae said: 'We didn't get very much snow. There's a bit of a covering but the roads are still black.'

'There was a bit of frost this morning but we didn't get any snow overnight.'

All schools remained open, but a number of school buses were reported to have problems negotiating the icy roads. Northern Constabulary warned motorists to take extra caution on roads across the region.

Two injured after budget cuts blackout

FURIOUS South Uist people want their street lights switched back on at night after two Lochboisdale men were injured in the budget cuts blackout.

Local butcher Lawrence Beaton and Lochboisdale Hotel head chef Michael MacDonald both fell in the pitch dark after attending the same party on November 27.

Mr Beaton, 56, sustained suspected fractured ribs and Mr MacDonald, 24, a badly broken ankle. Mr MacDonald is currently still in Western Isles Hospital in Stornoway awaiting surgery.

Western Isles Council is trialling a street-light switch off between 12am and 6am to save money - but Mr Beaton, of Kenneth Place, says the council's policy is dangerous. He told *The Oban Times*: 'When I left the house it was raining and crossing the road I could not see a thing in front of me.'

'I had to feel my way along the fence and when I bumped into it I hurt my ribs. There's no way it would have happened if all the lights were still on.'

'I'm not happy about it and I think there's a bigger accident

EXCLUSIVE
REPORT by
STEPHEN NORRIS
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waiting to happen. The council is shelling out £7,000 on a party in Stornoway on Hogmanay - which finishes at 11pm because it's the Sabbath the next day. What's the point of that when they can't even give us lights here after 12am?'

Lochboisdale Hotel owner Calum MacAulay said Mr MacDonald's friends found him 'hanging on to the lamp post' with a shattered ankle and unable to walk.

He fears his key employee will be off work until March - and warns others could suffer a similar fate as thousands of exiles return for New Year.

He told *The Oban Times*: 'A lot

of visitors will be coming over the next few weeks and there could be a lot more accidents when they go visiting relations.'

'If there are no lights I don't think they'll be too happy. They'll wonder what's going on and think 'what a place!'

'They should review the times they switch the lights off, especially at this time of year. Sheet ice in the dark - my God, it's absolutely deadly.'

He added: 'I understand the need to make cuts, but surely the lights could be timed to go off at 12.30am weekdays, but left on at weekends when there's a chance people will be out and about late.'

A Western Isles Council spokesperson said: 'In certain more populated areas we are looking at extending the lighting hours. This is an issue we are aware of.'

Moidart firm fined £8,500

A RENEWABLE energy company has been fined £8,500 after building an unauthorised channel to its hydro station which caused a flood in Moidart.

Irene Power Company Limited, which operates the Roshven Hydro Scheme, redirected the Irine Burn at Roshven, contributing to the river bursting its banks in August 2009.

Water and rocks blocked the A861 and damaged nearby Roshven Farm.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) was alerted by members of the public to work being carried out above the hydro scheme in April 2010.

Officers found a 580metre channel between the Irine Burn and an unnamed burn.

The channel diverted the burn and collected surface run-off water, increasing the flow of water into the Irine Burn, which allowed extra power to be generated by the hydro scheme.

Fort William Sheriff Court heard the unauthorised channel was poorly engineered and designed.

The damage caused by the flooding cost Highland Council £459. The £900,000 scheme was constructed in 2008.

The company pled guilty to constructing an extra channel for extracting water from another burn without authorisation between January 1, 2009 and April 28, 2010.

Flooding
Area Procurator Fiscal Tom Dysart said: 'Irene Power Company carried out work which led to significant flooding of the surrounding area which cost hundreds of pounds to repair. It is thanks to members of public that this offence was brought to the attention of SEPA.'

'I hope this conviction will serve as a warning to other companies who consider by-passing the regulations.'

Corncrakes and hen harriers help crofter Jock land £4,000 from government bio-diversity pot

AN ISLE of Skye crofter's environmental plan to promote bio-diversity on his land has won government cash backing.

The money will reward Jock Gordon of Kilmuir for supporting species such as corncrakes, hen harrier, lapwing and brown hare.

His project includes increasing 'sanctuary' areas for rare plants and animals and a corncrake-friendly hay-mowing regime. Mr Gordon, 42, said the £4,161

By STEPHEN NORRIS
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from the Rural Priorities agri-environment fund was 'a big boost' to his working croft - and the corncrake.

He told *The Oban Times*: 'I thought if we are having the corncrakes, we may as well do this properly. The birds arrived in May, but we had that bad gale and they seemed to vanish. But the year before we had them all

summer - they croaked away all night long.'

'And we have otters living down at the bottom at the shore, hen harriers and rare orchids too. I think the government has to realise we have very valuable habitats here that have disappeared elsewhere.'

'The money will also help cover the cost of running the machines, fencing and drainage. It will definitely make the croft more viable.'

Mr Gordon, originally from Balfron in Stirlingshire and a former craftsman at Yarrow's shipyard on the Clyde, moved to Skye five years ago and initially continued in the boat repair business.

Now he grows oats and hay for fodder and potatoes for his family.

He said: 'I ended up marrying a local girl and got into crofting by default.'

'I did that through the croft

entrance scheme, which was a great way of getting younger people into the industry.'

The Scottish Government's Rural Priorities agri-environment fund distributed £30.5million to organic farm businesses across the country.

Rural Affairs Secretary Richard Lochhead said: 'The funding also clearly demonstrates our commitment to protecting the vulnerable flora and fauna that inhabit Scotland's rural areas.'

Portree, Mallaig Christmas fun

PORTREE High School pupils are hosting a Christmas Fayre this Saturday. Organised by the pupil council, the event will feature performances from the school's talented musicians, Portree Primary School and the local panto group. The fayre will run from 11am until 4pm.

Meanwhile, Mallaig High and Mallaig and Lady Lovat primary school pupils are to stage a production of 'We Will Rock You'. Under director Lucy Hodes and choreographer Vicky Horn, some 'very impressive' dance routines have been produced.

The show at Mallaig High School on December 13, 14 and 15 starts at 7.30pm.

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Hundreds enjoy Leven Festival

KINLOCHLEVEN got into the festive spirit on Saturday when hundreds of people from across Lochaber enjoyed the 2011 Christmas Leven Festival.

Ice cave grotto
The event, now in its fourth year, saw families flock to the Ice Factor to see Santa in his freezing ice cave grotto, a family of reindeer and Santa's elves. Music from local band The Shine, Christmas stalls, festive fare and a tombola added to the occasion.

Organiser Kay McDuff told *The Oban Times*: 'We made over £800 on the day and that goes back into the Christmas festival funds.'



John Groundwater and Brodie visit Santa in his icy grotto at the Kinlochleven's Ice Factor on Saturday. 20_149santa01

We are also donating money to the baby café in the community centre, to the country dancing and the local English church.'

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Jessica's winning smile

A LOCHALSH toddler has become 'the face' of the 2012 Eilean Donan Photography Exhibition.

Jessica Crawford was just 15 months old when mum Lynne photographed her across from the castle on a cloudy afternoon in August.

The competition challenged photographers to produce an image capturing the castle's standing in the local community in a unique way - and from hundreds of entries Lynne's beautiful image of Jessica was judged the winner.

Lynne, 34, who lives in Dornie, said: 'There were some absolutely cracking entries from both professional and amateur photographers.'

Lynne's mum Nina was delighted that little Jessica, now 18 months, had helped show off her mother's talent with a camera.

Nina told *The Oban Times*: 'Lynne's doing a photography course online. The guy who's running it really likes her stuff. He was quite impressed with the photo and has given her a bit of work.'

The exhibition will celebrate 100 years since Lieutenant Colonel John MacRae-Gilstrap began to restore the castle to its former glory in 1911. The castle was re-opened in 1932 after 20 years of hard toil.



Lochalsh past and future: Jessica Crawford, pictured at 15 months, with Eilean Donan Castle in the background. Photograph: Lynne Crawford.

Mart appeal for missing farm antique

AN AUCTION mart trustee is making a public appeal for help after an antique piece of farming machinery gifted to it disappeared.

Efforts to track down a pedal powered threshing machine have drawn a blank after it went missing from Ben Nevis Auction Mart some time over the summer.

Isabel Campbell, one of six Lochaber Agricultural Trust trustees, was gifted the 100-year old foot thresher by the late Alec Kennedy, a crofter from Blarmafalach, near Fort William. After a long search, Ms Campbell finally found a restorer with the skills needed to bring the machine back to full working order.

But when she took Aberdeenshire farmer Alan

EXCLUSIVE

REPORT by
STEPHEN NORRIS
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Gray down to the mart, the foot thresher could not be found. It had been hoped the antique would become a popular attraction for local school children visiting the trust at An Clachan to learn about crofting practices in days gone by.

Through *The Oban Times*, Ms Campbell asks anyone who could help her find the missing thresher to get in touch.

She said: 'I would like to know what happened to it. I was hoping to get it restored so the kids could see how the oats were threshed hundreds of years ago. It would have been good to get it going as a museum piece and

show them how it works. I would have shifted it months ago, but it was so heavy.

'I have already informed the Kennedy family that it has gone missing. I was so upset about the whole thing.'

Many Highland crofters relied on foot threshers, commonly manufactured in the northeast, to separate oats grown on in-by-land.

The thresher is operated by a man seated on a stool and cycling two foot pedals, linked by cranks to a gear wheel, which spins the rotating threshing drum at high speed.

Corn introduced at the front feeding channel and the grain is separated from the ears, dropping through to be collected on the floor, while stalks and chaff are ejected at the rear.

Second chance to appoint local representatives

RESIDENTS in Lochaber and Skye have a second chance to appoint local representatives in community council elections.

After the first deadline last month, Nether Lochaber and Glen Coe and Glen Etive both

failed to attract enough nominees, as did Glendale, Broadford and Strath, Dunvegan, Raasay, Sleat, Skeabost and District on Skye.

The deadline for nominations is 4pm tomorrow (Friday).

Murder inquiry launched into teenager's death

POLICE have launched a murder inquiry into the death of a South Uist teenager found dead in a derelict building in a Lewis township.

Liam Aitchison, aged 16, disappeared on Tuesday November 22 and his body was found in Steinish near Stornoway last Tuesday.

Detective Chief Inspector Kenny Anderson said a 'major inquiry team' had been set up to lead the investigation.

He said: 'The response from the community in Stornoway to appeals for information has been very positive and I would appeal to anyone who may have information in relation to this crime to contact the incident room at Stornoway Police Station.'

'In particular, we wish to trace witnesses who may have seen three people wearing hooded type tops, who were seen walking in the Steinish village area shortly after midnight on Tuesday November 22 into the early hours of Wednesday November 23.'

Liam's family have asked anyone with any information about the youngster's death to contact the police. In a statement, the family said: 'We would like to thank everyone for all the kind words and offers of support. We'd also like to thank the police and our family liaison officers.'

'Most importantly we beg you, if you have any information and have not brought it forward as yet we urge you - please go as to the police. Without this help we can't get peace.'

Since the summer, Liam had moved between Carloway on Lewis and his family home in Lochboisdale. It is believed he may have been living rough in the dilapidated building.

Anyone with any information should contact Stornoway Police Station on 01851 702222 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Independence 'yes' result would nullify constituency changes

A CONTROVERSIAL carve-up of the Highlands into new 'super constituencies' for future UK elections would be nullified by a 'yes' vote in a 2014 independence referendum, it is being claimed.

And Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch SNP MSP Dave Thompson says the current row over seat boundaries for the Westminster poll could end up being meaningless.

The Boundary Commission for Scotland (BCS) visited Inverness last week to hear comments on creating two huge constituencies in the Highland Council area from the three existing ones.

Under the draft proposals, the number of Scottish MPs will fall from 59 to 52.

Lochaber would be split in two for the first time, with the River Lochy and the A830 the dividing line. North electors would vote in the new Inverness and Skye seat, while those in the south would come under Argyll, Bute and Lochaber.

Highland Council proposed transferring 4,040 electors in Caol and Corpach from the northern seat into the Argyll constituency to balance up the numbers.

Applecross and Lochcarron should likewise be moved from Inverness and Skye into the Caithness Sutherland and Ross and Cromarty, the council said.

If the BCS rejects the changes, the council wants the new seats' names to be Argyll, Bute and

South Lochaber, and Inverness, Nairn, Skye, Lochalsh and North Lochaber.

Ross, Skye and Lochaber Lib Dem MP Charles Kennedy urged BCS to 'reconsider', suggesting the three seats currently within Highland Council area should be retained.

Mr Kennedy said: 'The net reduction of one in our Highlands and Islands representation runs completely contrary to the stated aim of the review, to achieve greater parity and equality of constituency representation. By using the large constituency provision I fought for, we could retain our representation. I urge the Boundary Commission to revisit the possibility of three Highland seats.'

But Mr Thompson warned all the wrangling - and any final decision - could count for nothing.

He told *The Oban Times*: 'The Boundary Commission will come to their conclusions by 2013 and any UK election after that would be on the new boundaries.'

'However, if the referendum on independence is held in 2014 and there is a 'yes' vote, I expect negotiations for independence would be completed before the date of the next UK election in May 2015, in which case they [the UK boundaries and constituencies] would no longer be relevant to Scotland.'

The BCS consultation finishes on January 4 2012.

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High school staff and pupils raise cash for Mary's Meals



Wee Can Club members from Lochaber High School at their stall on High Street on Friday. 20_1498b501

BIG-HEARTED pupils and staff from Lochaber High School braved heavy showers to raise cash for Mary's Meals on Friday.

Twelve members of the school's Wee Can Club set up stall on Fort William High Street to sell homemade Christmas gifts and produce.

Pupils also made street collections and met a generous response from Christmas shoppers.

The money raised will go on providing locally sourced meals to children in countries such as Malawi, Haiti and tsunami-ravaged Japan. Backpacks full of items for use in the classroom and for personal hygiene will also be provided to pupils. The Wee Can club meets twice weekly at the school over lunchtime and this year chose Mary's Meal's as its target charity.

The aid organisation feeds almost 600,000 needy children across the world, in countries stricken by poverty, natural disasters - or both.

Learning support teachers Kirsty Mair and Ellen McAllister assisted the pupils.

Ms McAllister told *The Oban Times*: 'The effort of the pupils has been inspiring. It is a model of community involvement and has created a sense of thinking about others across the world.'

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Down Your Way

This week - Nether Lochaber

NETHER Lochaber Church will play host to the popular St Bride's Primary School Christmas Concert on December 14 and 15.
Pupils from the school will perform a nativity play and sing Christmas carols for parents, teachers and members of the local community.



St Bride's Nursery pupils read stories with Amy McDougall, network librarian, as part of outreach work from Kinlochleven Library. Ms McDougall also visits nurseries and playgroups in Kinlochleven, Duror and Ballachulish. The children at St Brides were reading some of the nominees of the Roald Dahl Funny Prize and giving their opinions.

NETHER Lochaber Senior Citizens Association is holding its annual Christmas lunch in the Onich Hotel on Friday December 16.

Around 50 local residents aged 70 and over have been invited to the party, which starts at 1pm.
Committee members ask anyone eligible in the area who has not received an invite to contact chairperson Sheila MacDonald on 01855 821265.
The committee fundraised throughout the year for the event. Activities included two baking stalls, a hugely successful crepe stall at Lochaber Agricultural Show and a raffle for a Christmas Hamper, which was made up by Christine Cameron.
The committee would like to thank all those who have donated home baking, money and their time over the past 12 months.
Special thanks to Maria and staff at the Onich Hotel who always make the lunch such a success.
New committee members are needed. Anyone interested should contact Sheila on the above number.



Nether Lochaber Village Hall. 20_499hall01

NETHER Lochaber village hall committee met last Friday to discuss local people's views on the proposal to create a new multi-use community hub.
A questionnaire was circulated to find out the views of people in the Onich area.
The century-old building next to the A82 is in poor condition and the committee has been advised plans for a replacement on site would fall foul of planners.
The church is considering knocking down its hall and building a new one on the site, which it owns along with the surrounding land. The village hall committee, faced with the closure of its hall, want the new facility to bring indoor activities in Nether Lochaber under a single roof.
The committee will hold another public meeting, probably in the New Year.

Next week DOWN YOUR WAY visits Craignure with Chief Reporter Euan Paterson.
You can contact him on 01631 568000 or email epaterson@obantimes.co.uk.

BARCALDINE

BARCALDINE Primary School will have a busy end of term, with lots of activities before the holidays.

This evening, Thursday, they are hosting a community night at the Sea Life Centre, with stalls, refreshments and entertainment.
Next week there will be a nativity play with a twist at St Modan's Church, Benderloch.

PLOCKTON

PLOCKTON and District Horticultural and Arts and Crafts Society presented Gardeners' Question Time in Plockton Hall on November 23 with three panellists: Donald Mackintosh from Loch Duich Plants, Inverinate; Calina MacDonald from Calina's Conserves, Carbost and Ron Johnstone from Lusan Landscapes, Kilmore.
An audience of more than 30 enjoyed the evening. Wine and mince pies were served.

THE FOLLOWING evening, Plockton Historical Society presented a talk by Roddy MacLennan of Lochcarron on the life of a retired butcher. Despite the inclement weather more than 40 people attended and enjoyed Roddy's anecdotes.

THE AGM of the Lochalsh branch of the Royal British Legion Scotland was held in the Lochalsh Hotel on November 21.

There was the usual attendance. Members stood in silent tribute, especially for Jock Healy, Alasdair Davidson, Les Wooley and Arthur Shaw who had passed away since the last AGM.
Treasurer Donnie Gordon gave his report, which showed that despite donations of £578.06 funds were low. There were 76 paid up members. A fund-raising committee was elected.

The branch was delighted that the poppy collection for the Earl Haig Fund was a record £4,505.48.

The following officer bearers were elected: President - Lieutenant Commander Berwyn Edwards, Inverinate; Vice President - Hector Morrison, Achmore; Chairman - Noel Gordon, Balmacara; Vice Chairman - Paul Newton, Ardelve; Secretary - Charlie M MacRae, Plockton; Treasurer - Donnie Gordon, Balmacara; Representative to area meetings and conferences - Berwyn Edwards; Piping advisor - Iain MacFadyen, Kyle; Standard Bearer - Seamus Maguire, Kyle.
Committee: Major Alastair Stewart, Balmacara; Lieutenant Commander Andy Will, Plockton; Stuart Mackenzie, Achmore; Jonathan MacSween, Ardelve; Nina Shanks, Ardelve; Lloyd Burt, Kyle, and Terry Grant, Kyle. The branch will distribute 30 parcels at Christmas. **CM MacRae.**

SCALPAY

SCALPAY'S only shop is to re-open next spring after a share option scheme netted £15,000 - £5,000 more than the target total.
The 300 islanders have been without a local store since 2007 when the then owners closed it down.
The building remained unsold for over a year, before Scalpay residents took the lead, setting up their own community company, which now has 259 members.
The successful fundraising



Kinlochleven teachers 'gunged' for Children in Need

Kinlochleven High School head teacher John McGilp and art teacher Helen Roberts were 'junked' with a bucket of green gunge for the recent Children in Need appeal. Pupils Millie Coleman and Bethany Hardman won a raffle for the honour of pouring the sticky liquid over the 'victims'. Along with this and other activities including nail painting, paying to watch a comedy film and cake selling the school raised £460. Mr McGilp said: 'That's not bad for a pupil population of just under 150!'

drive has allowed the Buth Scalpaigh Co-operative to advertise for staff. It is anticipated that the successful applicants will start work by March or April.
Currently islanders make a round trip of 14 miles over the bridge to Tarbert, Harris, for provisions.

EASDALE

EASDALE branch of the Royal British Legion Scotland collected £1,409.67 on behalf of Poppy Scotland in the run up to Remembrance Sunday.
The collection covered Kilmelford, £434.45, with Seil, Easdale and Luing totalling £975.22. Members took part in a house-to-house collection and local churches, shops and hostellers took part. Jean Alexander, secretary, thanked everyone who contributed.

BENDERLOCH

RESIDENTS have the chance to hear first hand about plans to conduct research into carbon capture at Ardmucknish Bay near Benderloch.
The project on the cutting edge technology is being led by Dr Henrik Stahl from the Scottish Marine Institute at Dunstaffnage (SAMS). He will lead an investigation into the impact of storing carbon

dioxide in reservoirs below the seabed, particularly if there are leaks.
The work centring on Ardmucknish Bay is due to begin in spring 2012, and the scientists are holding an information evening at the Victory Hall, Benderloch, tonight, Thursday, at 7.30pm.

COLONSAY

PLANS to erect a covered cycle shed in the centre of an Argyll village have received a lukewarm response from the community.
Ardchattan Community Council is keen to encourage cyclists using stretches of the National Cycle Route 78 to stop off in the village of Benderloch and use its shops and cafe. But community councillors felt the design and scale of a bike shed proposed by Sustrans was inappropriate and over the top.

Lewis Morrison said: 'It strikes me as an inappropriate development - it's more for attaching to the side of a building.'
Jimmy Hanlon, who owns the Ben Lora Cafe, said: 'Ninety-nine per cent of people on the bikes are there short-term. I think they are missing the point - if it's raining, no one gets on their bikes and goes anywhere. Why can't they just fix cycle racks on to the railings?'

Margaret Adams said she found the two suggested locations, both visible from the main road, inappropriate too. Community councillors said putting it by the end of the current route would be more sensible, though a keen cyclist pointed out that anyone with an expensive bike would not want to leave it out of sight.
Sustrans was asked to put up the cycle shed by Argyll and Bute Council - as an alternative to cyclists parking at the village's school shed.
However, cycle parking is unlikely to be installed before the next stretch of cycle path is built in the village.

MORVERN

A TOP line-up of authors have now confirmed they will be attending the first Colonsay Book Festival to be held from April 27 to 29.
Alexander McCall Smith, creator of The No 1 Ladies Detective series, will be travelling to the island, along with Sophie Cooke, Liz Lochhead, Margaret Elphinstone, Robin Laing, James Robertson and Kenneth Steven.
A detailed programme is currently being prepared.

MORVERN

MORVERN Community Council held its November meeting in Lochaline Village Hall.
Abridged draft minutes: Chairman Iain Thornber made reference to the recent announcement of the sale of the Lochaline Sand Mine and of the part the community council had played in supporting and encouraging this latest development in its history and of the welcome long-term, stable employment opportunities it would bring to the area.
Mr Miller-Craig outlined some of the problems relating to the falling roll and its effects on staffing levels at the school. The funding effect of the loss of 10 pupils roughly equates to the cost of a single member of staff. Next year will be difficult because the loss of a large number of sixth form pupils will be compounded by a disproportionately low intake from the feeder primary schools. The fact that numbers of children from Morvern are attending Tobermory only aggravates the problem. The rural head

KILCHRENAN



Lucky escape for driver
A road sweeper lorry veered off the verge of the C29 single track Kilchrenan to Dalavich road last Thursday. It happened at the same spot where a driver was killed in April 2003.

MORVERN

MORVERN Community Council held its November meeting in Lochaline Village Hall.

place after the road had been treated.

It was also pointed out that on occasions when the morning run had been cancelled, parents had driven their children to school later, only to find that the return run in the afternoon had not taken place.

It was made clear that the contract was for both runs, and the fact that one had been abandoned was not a reason for the other to be cancelled. The contract should be obtained for scrutiny and amendment if necessary. It was reported that a 4x4 has been obtained for the Drimmin component. It was also reported that the gritting truck driver will be living in Lochaline, so that the gritting run will start from Lochaline.

Mr Miller-Craig was asked what could be done to discourage parents from sending their children to Tobermory. The question of payment for cross-boundary transport was raised, and it appeared that this had been an apparent oversight by Highland Council which perpetuated an ad hoc arrangement in place for children already attending Tobermory when Ardnamurchan HS was opened, and their siblings. This loophole is now being addressed by the respective treasurers.

Various suggestions were made about ways of introducing Lochaline pupils to AHS at an early stage, some of which are already in place, including a road show and an open invitation to Mr Adams to introduce pupils to the sport and IT facilities at the school on a periodic basis. An invitation has also been made for the children to avail themselves of AHS sporting facilities during the current phase of school building. Asked about making the AHS newsletter available to Lochaline families, this was agreed. The current AHS prospectus is being sent to every home and will be updated in February.

Other matters: A82 closures at Onich - because of local intransigence, this resurfacing project has been postponed indefinitely.

A problem was highlighted of water pouring down the village brae after heavy rain, with run-offs almost all blocked, and large amounts of gravel being washed down. To be reported to Iain Bruce-Low.

In bringing the last meeting of the present council to a close the chairman thanked those in attendance for their support. The outgoing council, and particularly the chairman, was thanked from the floor for their diligence and hard work over the past three years.

STORNOWAY

A NEW reader-in-residence has been appointed for Western Isles Libraries under Creative Scotland's Creative Futures programme.
For the next six months, Ian Stephen will work with library staff on a series of events and activities aimed at encouraging people to share a love for words, reading and creative writing.
Mr Stephen was born in Stornoway and still lives there. He studied education, drama and literature at Aberdeen University, graduating with a B Ed (Hons) with distinction.
He worked for the coastguard service for many years, but has been a full time writer and artist since winning the first Robert Louis Stevenson Award in 1995.

He said of his new posting: 'I'm very happy that the application with Western Isles Libraries has been chosen to be one of the Scotland-wide group of readers in residence projects.
'My aim is to complete several publication projects while working to raise awareness of different generations of writing from Scottish islands, so I'm very much looking forward to meeting with readers who use the excellent library resources throughout the Western Isles.'
Mr Stephen's residency was launched last Thursday at Stornoway Library when the public enjoyed readings, storytelling and music ahead of the Christmas lights switch-on.



Ian Stephen: writer in residence. Photograph by Mats Rehrman.

ISLAY LETTER

Donald MacCuaig

HIS FAMILY and many friends mourn the passing of Bowmore resident Donald MacCuaig who died in the local hospital on November 24, aged 87.
Donald, who was of Skye and Glenelg parentage, was born and grew up in Partick, Glasgow. He went to sea at an early age and enjoyed a varied maritime career during which he gained his master's ticket. He also had a long association with MacBraynes and for a number of years was the chief officer on the *MV Lochell* which served the Islay route for more than three decades.
Seafaring days over, Donald joined the staff of the local hydro board and was the friendly and welcoming face at the power company's retail outlet at Bowmore. He married Bella Shaw from Leorin in 1960 and last year the couple celebrated their golden wedding.
In fitter days Donald was a Gaelic activist and chaired and performed at various ceilidhs and concerts. He was also an accomplished fiddle player and his Gaelic singing interests saw him being awarded the gold medal for traditional singing at the National Mod in Stirling in 1987.
Donald was of the Free Church persuasion and was a regular worshipper and precentor at the Free church at Portmahaven before it closed its doors. He

then worshipped with the local Baptist congregation and his well attended funeral service at the Round Church in Bowmore on November 28 was conducted by Jim MacNulty, pastor of the island's Baptist congregation. Interment followed at Bowmore cemetery. Donald will long be remembered as a hospitable and kindly man and an amusing raconteur. His stories, particularly those which involved some of the characters who crewed the MacBrayne steamers, found a ready audience.
Sincere sympathy is extended to Bella, his daughter Mairi, son Iain, all the grand-children and the wider family at this time of separation and loss. Thig croich air an t-saoghal ach mairidh gaol agus ceol.

Christingle at Bowmore
CHILDREN from across the island were in top form at the Christingle service which kicked off the Christmas celebrations at the Round Church in Bowmore.
This was an exuberant night of worship and fun overseen by the Rev Dr Rob Barlow, parish minister for Kilarrow linked with Kildalton and Oa.
Proceeds will be donated to the Islay and Jura Sick Children's Fund. It was a happy group of young and not so young worshippers who headed home in the cold night air clutching their shining Christingles.

Carols at Ardbeg

LOCAL Baptists Mary and James MacAulay will host an afternoon of carol singing at their home at the Old School, Ardbeg, on Sunday December 11 at 3pm.
Money raised will be donated to the Livingstonia Mission Hospital in Malawi and will be used to buy much-needed bedding and other items. Everyone is invited to go along and sing favourite carols and enjoy a plethora of mince pies washed down with ample supplies of tea and coffee.

Special birthdays

CONGRATULATIONS to Dugie MacDougall of Port Ellen who has now joined the ranks of the nonagenarians.
Dugie is a well-known Ileadh who made his mark on the local soccer scene and the golf links at Machrie. He was also a much sought after Gaelic singer at island events and also enjoyed great success at both local and National Mods. Near an aighdeachd a Dhughail agus cum ort. Congratulations also to Morag Ross of Glensigdale who has reached the big 70. Family and friends greet Morag, mine hostess at the seasonal Cafaith Blasda at Ionad Chaluim Chille Ile. Many happy returns Morag and keep the strawberry tarts coming!
Hugh Smith, 4 Flora Street, Bowmore, Islay, PA43 7JX. Telephone 01496 810658.

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CONNEL

CONNEL Surgery is saying goodbye to practice manager Gail MacGregor later this month, after 17 years with Taynuilt Medical Practice. Gail, who is retiring at the end of the month, will be replaced by Jessica Woodhouse, originally from Norwich. The practice is also introducing a new option for patients to make appointments online. Any registered patients who would like to use this facility should send their name, address and email details to high_ubb.tmp@nhs.net.

KILMALLIE

KILMALLIE Community Council (KCC) is to look into ways of getting a high-speed internet connection for the area. Many people in the Corpach and Banavie area do not have access to a broadband connection. One of the possible solutions being looked at is using innovative long-range wireless systems. A KCC spokesperson said: 'KCC is encouraging residents to share their views and experiences of broadband connection issues through the web site and newsletter.'

MORAR

MORAR Community Council held its November 7 meeting in Lady Lovat Primary School. Abridged minutes: Christmas lights have been checked by Alistair Neil MacKay. An even older set had surfaced but when he plugged them in the transformer they started smoking so they have been binned. Eleanor Read has spoken to Robbie Milne and is returning the other set to Highland Council. She will ask about using the HC service and if this is too dear the community council will buy its own. Unsafe road surface on A830 at Arienskill - Bob Mitchell of Transport Scotland replied that a study of the A830 between Glenfinnan and Lochailort is well advanced and all accident data known to the police has been examined. Steve Watton of Scotland Transerv is carrying out the study. Network Rail - secretary contacted them regarding the dilapidated fencing from Morar Station to Kinsadel and



Connel Brownies hosted a St Andrews evening in response to a volunteering challenge. 16_148brownies01

Connel Brownies rise to the challenge

FIRST Connel Brownies have earned themselves a special new badge for completing a volunteering challenge. The pack organised a St Andrews evening for friends and neighbours,

providing entertainment, decorations and refreshments. Lexie Sloan organised a new badge in honour of the occasion and the girls earned hostess, entertainer and speaker badges. The challenge was set by

Eleanor MacKinnon from Argyll Voluntary Action. She said she was delighted at how the brownies responded: 'They have just taken to it like ducks to water. I'm sure they will all be volunteering in years to come.'

towards Mallaig. She did so by phoning the National Helpline as apparently this is the fastest way to get action and was given the Reference Number 2937426. Three members of the community council said that they had seen men working on the fencing. Senior Citizens' Christmas Lunch - Eleanor will ask the West Highland Hotel if it will host it. Snow clearing - secretary contacted Mark Crowe regarding the concerns expressed but there is no response so far. Road surface - is in poor condition with potholes from Morar village to Beoraid. Secretary will inform TEC Services. Mairi Maclean, chairperson, thanked Martin Poole, Maureen Sutherland,

Morven Weir, all of whom are not standing for re-election, for their attendance and work on the community council over the years. Also Mairi Maclean herself is not standing for re-election.

ISLAY

SCOTTISH and Southern Energy (SSE) has entered a planning application for siting a 50-metre meteorological data recording mast between Ballinaby and Saligo, in a scenic area of the Rhinnis of Islay. The proposed site lies within a Site of Special Scientific Interest and the area is also of significant archaeological interest. It is believed SSE is planning to collect data prior to applying for statutory consent

for an offshore wind farm off the coast of Islay. The proposal would be for the installation of a large development; installation of 138 wind turbines which would potentially generate 690MW. The turbines would cover approximately 93 square kilometres out at sea, and be located 13kms offshore, within view of much of Islay's western coastline. SSE expect to submit an application to the Scottish Government for this development towards the end of 2013. A public exhibition of graphics and promotional materials was held by SSE in Bowmore Village Hall on August 3 2010 with the aim of giving local people the opportunity to ask questions about the project at an early stage.

SSE has since had research carried out in Islay, as shown by their publication of reports, but appear not to have engaged further with the Islay communities since the time of their exhibition in 2010. SSE provides information on the Islay wind proposal on their website at <http://www.sse.com/Islay/ProjectInformation/> For further information about the Islay windfarm proposal, email susan.scobie@sse.com.

PHILIP Maxwell, chairman of Islay Energy Trust, gave evidence to the UK House of Commons Scottish Affairs Select Committee Inquiry into the Crown Estate. The committee is investigating the role of the Crown Estate and its relationship with the

Scottish Parliament. Giving oral evidence in support of IET's written submission to the committee, Philip stressed the importance of local communities in the planning, operation and economic aspects of marine renewables. Evidence was also given by Sandy Brunton, chairman of Scottish Islands Federation and Ruchir Shah, head of policy department at the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations.

AN ADDITIONAL Islay Craft Fair will be held at Ionad Chalum Chille on Saturday December 17. This time the event features Christmas gift ideas from James Deane Photography, Tomás Macdonald-Wilson and Kate and Russell.

DUNBEG

DUNBEG Rainbows and Brownies held their annual Holly Tea on Friday December 2 in Dunbeg Parish Church. The sum of £120.50 was raised for Brownie funds. The organisers thanked all the parents who helped and the people of Dunbeg for their continued support. The group also enjoyed a Christmas trip to a panto on Saturday afternoon and will now take a break until the New Year.

LOCHEARNHEAD

WINTRY weather arrived with a bang this week, but police spot checks in Lochearnhead showed some vehicles were not ready for the icy conditions. Tyres were the main problem, with a number of drivers issued fixed penalty notices as a result. Community Constable Andrew Ward said: 'It is important to ensure that your vehicle is road worthy at all times but it is even more important at this time of year - when weather conditions can change very quickly for the worse - that your tyres are up to the job.'

TIREE

TIREE High School's Christmas Post Box is up and running, with deliveries costing 15p per local card delivery. The last posting day will be Friday December 16. Children in P4-P7 will then sort and deliver the cards with the money raised going into the primary school fund.



Beachd Ailein
Ailean Caimbeul
NUAIR a bhiodh m' athair a' bruidhinn air cuideigin a bha teann neo mosach le airgead, gu math tric chanadh e, "dh'fheanadh e a' mhial nan robh e smaointinn gum faighheadh e reic air a' gheir aice!" Cha chuala mi an gnàthas-cainnt eibhinn seo aig duine ach aige fhèin agus 's e dealbh annasach a th'ann 's e a' daingneachadh cho fìor dhìon 's a tha nàdar an duine air am bheillear a' bruidhinn. Thàinig na faclan nam inntinn às ùr is mi ag èisteachd ri Seòras Osborne a' mineachadh inleachdan iongantach leis am bheil Riaghaltas na Co-bhanntachd dol a dh'fheuchainn ri trioblaidean na h-eaconamaidh a leasachadh. Chan eil cùisean idir fallain a thaobh beairteas na dùthcha agus le dearbhadh gum bheil an dealradh beag fais air an deach uimhir a dh'fhàilte a chur bho chionn beagan mhiosan a-nise air seargadh, tha e follaiseach gum bheil bliadhnaichean cruaidh romhainn. A rèir an fhiosrachaidh a th'air nochdadh bhon Ofis Uallach Buidseat neo-eisimeil (OBR), tha e coltach gun crìon ire beairteis shluagh Bhreatainn faisg air ochd às a' cheud thar an deichead gu 2016. Tha sin gu bhith a' ciallachadh gum bi sinn aig an aon ìre 's aig an robh sinn ann an 2006! Suidheachadh draghail da-rìribh agus tha an Seansailear cuideachd air aideachadh gum bi faisg air dùblachadh anns an àireamh de luchd-obrach sheirbheisean poblach a chailleas an dreuchdan, bho cheithir ceud mìle gu seachd ceud is deich mìle, thar na h-ùine sin. A' beachdachadh air an deasbad ghuineach a tha dol a thaobh peinnean na roinne poblach, tha e doirbh gum amharas a bhith agad gur e ionnsaigh phoilitigeach a th'ann an cuid de na tha chaitir le amas barrachd is barrachd de sheirbheisean a ghluasad dhan roinn phrìobhadhich. Ach bha beagan aig Osborne a thug misneachadh cuideachd. Chan eil an Riaghaltas dol a chur suas cis cinnidh toiseach na h-ath bhliadhna mar a bha dùil aca agus tha idir air buidhnean peinnean a bhrosnachadh gum airgead mòr a thasgadh ann an leasachaidhean poblach air feadh na dùthcha. Beag 's gu bheil e, 's math e! Agus saoilidh mise nach eil e gu dòifair ciamar a dh'innses an Seansailear an seachd, tha e air gèilleadh gu ìre agus tha e a' tuigsinn mu dheireadh gum bheil e dèanamh barrachd ciall airgead a chosg a' pàigheadh dhaoine gus obair a dèanamh seach cosg air taic dha daoine a tha diomhain.

CANCELLATION of another increase in fuel duty is good news in that the government is not going to take yet more from us. But the Chancellor's overall message is stark and we are facing years of real hardship. Pension fund investment in public works is encouraging, and where every aspect of our national infrastructure apparently requires major investment it seems logical to focus some effort on creating work in these sectors and boosting the economy and people's morale at the same time. Better to spend on work rather than supporting unemployment. Ailean Caimbeul (*Allan Campbell*) ailean@obantimes.co.uk.

AULTBEA

A FILM night in Aultbea Hall raised £510 towards the Russian Arctic Convoy Museum project being developed for the Wester Ross village. The film, called *Hurricanes over Murmansk*, was part documentary, part wartime footage. Organiser and project chairman Francis Russell said: 'It was a good evening, as more than 150 people turned up and we ran out of chairs.' The proposed museum will honour those who lost their lives on merchant ships carrying vital supplies to the Soviet Union during WW2. The convoys suffered grievous losses from enemy planes and submarines on the treacherous route round Norway to Murmansk.

TAYNUILT



Pupils on the draw at library

Taynuilt Primary School pupils recently visited Oban Library to see an exhibition of contemporary children's book illustrations curated by Julia Donaldson. The primary one and two pupils travelled in by train and were given the opportunity to view original illustrations of books they had been using in school. The children even made some illustrations of their own.

A WHIST drive held in Taynuilt, in aid of Children in Need, has raised £165. Cardmaster was Leslie Servant for five-and-a-half tables in the village hall. Gents: 1 John Ross, 2 Lorna MacLennan, 3 Christine Allan. Consolation prize went to Jim Groat from Connel. Ladies: 1 Isobel Groat, Connel; 2 Mary Mitchell; 3 Margaret Forbes, Connel. Consolation prize went to Ann Sutherland. Travelling prizes went to Jim Groat and Ivy Smart.

A PLAN for five new homes in Taynuilt has been approved. The application, by Lonan Properties, was given planning permission in principle. There were no objections to the plans for the site, west of 'Aldon'.

SLEAT

CAMUSCROSS and Duisdale Initiative on Sleat has set up its own Facebook page to allow local residents to give their thoughts on the sustainable community hub being planned for the Sleat townships. To log a comment got to <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Camuscross-and-Duisdale-Hub/279215592120800>.

Around the Rurals

Kilmore

PRESIDENT Isabel Smith welcomed members of Kilmore SWRI to the November meeting in a lovely and bright newly refurbished hall. After business, Isabel introduced Alice Campbell from Taynuilt SWRI who brought along a display of her beadwork. It was awesome. She instructed members in the art of making earrings with lovely coloured beads. A lovely evening enjoyed by everyone. The vote of thanks was given by Rhoda Thomas and tea was served by Ann Ferguson and helpers. Competition: piece of jewellery - 1 Hannah MacGregor; 2 Jean Timmons.

Arisaig

THE ARISAIG branch of the Scottish Womens Rural Institute held its monthly meeting in the Astley Hall on November 17. Julie Gordon gave a talk on 'Healthy Winter Living' to ten members. Competitions: Savoury Oatcake Topping - 1 Margaret MacEachen; 2 June Cairns; 3 Helen Lamb. Interesting tea towel - 1 Vera MacDonald; 2 Anne Cameron; 3 Daphne Heaps. The raffle was won by Dunriona Stewart.

KILCHOAN

A KILCHOAN crofter is counting his losses after 12 of his chickens were found dead next to the hen-house. A mink, known locally as 'The Brigand', is believed to be responsible for the slaughter of Hughie MacLachlan's hens. The voracious killer is thought to be the same animal which decimated neighbouring crofter Tom Bryson's flock of rare breed chickens recently. Traps, according to local sources, have been set.

Email your district news to editor@obantimes.co.uk or call 01631 568000.

Ecologist gives talk to natural history society

LOCHABER Natural History Society welcomed National Trust for Scotland (NTS) ecologist Dan Watson to its November meeting. Mr Watson, who has responsibility for monitoring flora and fauna on Glencoe and Ben Lawers, told members Glencoe is protected at national and European level. To ensure diverse habitats and flora remain in a favourable condition, regular monitoring is needed on a six-year cycle - more often for rare plant populations such as drooping saxifrage and Highland saxifrage, relics of the last ice-age still hanging on in Britain in very small numbers. Often these rare alpine are only found on the most inaccessible ledges, out of reach of hungry deer and sheep - and ecologists! NTS also participate in other national surveys such as collecting

data for the forthcoming bird and butterfly atlas updates. The European Glencoe Special Area of Conservation boasts unusual habitats such as Alpine calcareous grassland, alkaline fen and, towards the foot of the glens, alder woodland. Semi-permanent snowbeds are a rare and ephemeral habitat threatened by warmer springs, and evidence suggests lying snow has decreased significantly in the last 30 years. Dan discussed the conflicts of management that occur with different habitats, often found side-by-side - some requiring no grazing at all to protect rare plants on ledges, others needing grazing to keep down growth of coarse grasses and scrub encroachment. NTS has a controversial deer culling policy in order to control numbers, but this has apparently led

to improved survival rates through the severe winters experienced in the last couple of years. Glencoe's treasures are subject to many threats, and to date there has been mixed success in maintaining and/or improving both species populations and habitats. Clearly though, if NTS were to do nothing, these would be in a far worse state, and the ongoing monitoring effort is a very important part of maintaining biodiversity on the hills. LNHS meets at 7.30pm in the Alexander Hotel, Fort William, once a month throughout the winter, and all are welcome. The next talk, on Wednesday December 14, from society chairman and botanist Dr Ian Strachan, is entitled 'Sea Pinks and Samphire - Saltmarsh and Shingle on the West Coast'. For further details contact Jon Mercer 01397 712700, info@glenloylodge.co.uk.

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Infrastructure needed, and needed now

AN AMBITIOUS programme of infrastructure improvements encompassing 80 projects throughout the length and breadth of the country, announced this week by the Scottish Government, is to be welcomed as recognition of the need for the works to be done.

The proposals will also give much needed impetus to the economy via its impact on the recruitment market, however, with the majority of the proposals being allocated completion dates in the distant future and no clear indication as to how these proposals will be funded, the government leave themselves open to criticism.

Perhaps politicians will praise the cautious approach, praise the commitment to such projects as the long-talked-about duelling of the A9, a new Forth Bridge or the Glasgow Airport rail link, but talk is the only cheap part of the programme and the estimated £60 billion bill for these long-term aims will be with us for a very much longer period.

The success or failure of this Scottish government will be measured by the 'doing', not the 'saying'.

GLASGOW LETTER

Glasgow Skye Association

THIS year's Annual Gathering Concert of the Glasgow Skye Association was held for the first time in the Assembly Hall of Sgoil Ghaidhlig Ghlaschu.

Sineag MacIntyre and Donald Murray were joined by fellow singers Riona Whyte and Gillebride MacMillan. Robert Nairn played accordion selections and the Phoenix Honda Glasgow Skye Pipe Band performed.

Unfortunately for the audience and the artists, the fireworks which greeted them from the area around the school prior to the concert continued during part of the evening and this, together with noise from the heating panels, caused some distraction but with help from accompanist Norma MacDougall, the artists coped with these distractions extremely well.

Archie Robertson, president of the Camanachd Association, was chairman for the evening, a role for which he was admirably suited with his strong Skye connections and his fund of amusing stories. Brogan Elder, grand-daughter of vice president Margaret and Brian Elder, presented Archie and Marion, who accompanied him, with mementoes of the occasion. Robert Nairn's Band played at the dance in Glasgow University Union after the concert.

As is customary, the annual dinner took place on the Thursday evening and once again the Hilton Grosvenor was the venue. In his address, Archie Robertson entertained with amusing and interesting anecdotes. He talked of his experiences throughout his working life and of his travels within the shinty community. Perhaps more significantly he talked of present day crofting, a topic close to his heart now that he is retired and can spend some time in Lower Breakish. Committee member Christine MacLeod proposed a toast to the guests and to the kindred associations and Malcolm Campbell, President of the Glasgow Islay Association, proposed a toast to the Skye Association. Entertainment during the evening was provided by Kenna Campbell, Seumas Campbell and Finlay MacDonald.

Congratulations

CONGRATULATIONS to Celtic Connections which has been awarded the title Best Large Festival at a UK events awards ceremony in Wembley Arena.

With this being known as the 'Oscars' of the event industry, Celtic Connection's

Donald Shaw said 'We are absolutely delighted to win such a coveted award.'

Clydebank ceilidh

TOMORROW evening, Friday December 10, Clydebank and District Highlander's Association will celebrate 90 years since the association was formed.

It is fitting that for this very special event Katie MacDonald, who was president of the association for many years, will be guest chairperson. The ceilidh will be in the usual venue, Napier Hall, Old Kilpatrick, at 7.30pm when a good attendance is expected.

Gaelic bookshop

FOR ALL readers who have still to finish, or even start, their Christmas shopping the Gaelic Bookshop on Mansfield Street, Partick, will be open on Saturdays from 10am until 4pm.

Tolbooth, Stirling

THE SUCCESSFUL Christmas ceilidhs of past years will take place in the Tolbooth, Stirling, on Saturday December 17 at 3pm and then at 8pm.

Diary dates

Thursday December 8: Live at the Star, St Andrew's in the Square, 8pm, North Sea Gas. Friday December 9: Clydebank and District Highlander's Association Ceilidh - see above. Saturday December 10: Glasgow Skye Association Children's Party, Renfield Centre, 260 Bath Street, 2.30pm. Paisley and District Highlander's Association Ceilidh Dance, Elderslie Village Hall, 7.30pm. Friday December 16: Uist and Barra Ceilidh Dance, Crawford Hall, Beith Street, Partick, 9pm to 1am. Saturday December 17: Highlander's Club, Partick Burgh Hall, 8pm - Charlie Kirkpatrick's Band. Christmas Ceilidhs at Tolbooth, Stirling - see above.

Pub scene

MY APOLOGIES for publishing the wrong bands for both the Park Bar and the Islay Inn last week. This week's bands will be as printed last week with Willie Cameron and Martin Pottinger being in the Park Bar on Friday and on Sunday. On Saturday Robert Nairn with Donald MacRae will be in the Park while in the Islay Inn it will be Parting Glass on Friday and Penny Dogs on Saturday.

Neil Murray. Tel: 0141 954 8105. Email: neilmurray@yahoo.co.uk.



Prizewinning Oban lady golfers

This week's flashback photograph features the top lady golfers from Glenruitten Golf Club at a prizegiving from days gone by. It was submitted by reader Mrs H Pearson. Back row: Christine Lind; Mary MacLean; Bunty Graham; Rena Anderson; Doreen Brown; Margaret Watson; Mary E MacLean and Mary C MacLean. Front: Helen Pearson; June Pearson; Jessie MacCallum and Jean Black. We invite readers to send in flashback photographs. Please send prints to The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll, PA34 4HB, or email editor@obantimes.co.uk. Prints or emails must be accompanied by a caption, name, address and telephone number. Anyone wishing their prints returned must supply a stamped addressed envelope.

Sensible Argyll Hotel decision

Sir, At last, a sensible decision in the long saga of Oban's Argyll Hotel.

Do you think we will ever be told how much time and how much of our money on salaries and other related expenses was wasted because of ridiculous demands imposed by the various officials. Graeme Pagan, Neaveton, Oban.

Keep lights on all night

Sir, Real problems have arisen in the Western Isles since the council decided to switch off public lighting in the late evening.

People have had accidents - broken ankle, broken ribs and torn ligaments to name a few - as a result of this policy. I am also aware complaints have been submitted, I believe to Technical Services, relating to this matter, of which mine is one.

This policy seems to prioritise budgeting targets above the health and safety of islanders, living in areas of relatively higher population, where hotels and bars close late and dances and ceilidhs end during the

hours the lights are switched off. Surely it is reasonable to suggest that this is quite dangerous as well as tempting to the minority who may consider acts of criminality? Further, police may wish to secure eye witnesses in the unlikely event of a crime in these parts. How could they do that if the street lights were switched off at the time?

Some sparsely populated areas, such as Seallaidh a Bharraidh in South Uist, have retained street lighting throughout the night - yet people in Lochboisdale and Balivanich are in complete darkness between the hours of midnight and 6am. What, if any, is the rationale behind this? Certain residents are restricted to their homes for fear of injury and criminality and not others. In essence, this is discriminatory. In addition, residents were not sent correspondence regarding this new initiative.

Council budgets are a major issue - but to tighten the purse strings in this way can cause accidents, which in turn renders residents unable to work. Consequently, their levels of income falls, affecting the local economy. Hotels and bars are heavily reliant upon local trade in the winter months. Also, with house fires statistically more prevalent at

Christmas, it is only a matter of time until the folly of this move is learnt the hard way. Eileen Beaton, 6 Gask Place, Knightswood Glasgow.

Alcohol one of the worst possible drugs

Sir, I write regarding your story 'Bloom' raffle aids drug education, The Oban Times, December 1.

Wonderful for Oban in Bloom to be helping fight narcotics by funding education schemes for children.

However, it seems to this reader that the people who accepted the donation of 'bottles of malt from Oban and Tormory distilleries' for the raffle had better educate themselves first. Alcohol has been, and remains, one of the worst possible drugs, claiming thousands of lives every year, damaging health, families and communities and causing, for example, a massive rise of serious liver problems, especially among Scotland's and the UK's binge-drinking younger generation. I would applaud this initiative wholeheartedly if the fund-raising raffle managed to stay clear of any drugs. Margaret Powell-Joss, Dunollie Road, Oban.

the delay; I know some of you were very concerned.

Huge thanks to those of you who stopped on scene and/or have contacted me with offers of help or passed on messages. This is something Mull does best and it is totally heart-warming that this happens. Thank you all. Jenny Reddaway, Tormory, Isle of Mull.

Seil treatment plant transformed

Sir, Well done! I recently had cause to complain about the untidy state of the sewage treatment plant on Seil.

I am pleased to report that although, of course, it is still poorly sited, it has undergone a serious tidy up and looks much the better for it.

The ugly toad has been transformed, if not into a handsome prince then perhaps into a respectable working gentleman! James Mellor, Innishail, Clachan Seil, Isle of Seil.

Immeasurable sacrifice

Sir, The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) Forces Help, Argyll and Bute Branch, remember the immeasurable sacrifices made by our servicemen, women and their families.

Since 2001, almost 400 members of our Armed Forces have given their lives and many more have been horrendously injured. But it will be a long time before the full effect of the conflict is known on all those who have taken part. As our soldiers, sailors and airmen return home, some will be carrying physical and mental scars that will last a lifetime. For some, their long term care will fall to families and friends who will often require support themselves.

SSAFA Forces Help, Argyll and Bute will be here for veterans and their families as the effects of war remain a long time after peace has been declared.

We all owe a debt of gratitude towards all those men and women who have served their nation.

Mike Richardson, SSAFA FH Argyll and Bute.

Thanks - Mull at its best

Sir, A special message of thanks to everyone involved in helping me following my car accident on the Tormory road on December 2.

First, to Ian who witnessed what happened and called the ambulance and other emergency services including Pete and Martin, Dr Frank, Neil, Karen and Edna on the medical team plus the lady whose name I don't know for that welcome cup of coffee I never got to finish! Thanks also to Tormory retained fire-fighters; Mairi for being second on scene and PC Young for keeping the formalities to the required minimum.

My sincere apologies to everyone who got held up; thank you for your patience and consideration at

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 an email, 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.

PRESS POLICY

WE AT The Oban Times do our utmost to make sure that all our reports are fair, accurate and balanced, but we accept that, on occasion, mistakes can occur in the hectic process of producing the biggest local newspaper in the West Highlands.

It is the policy of The Oban Times Group to correct any errors in print. If you find an error of fact on our pages please write to The Editor, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HB giving your day-time telephone number where possible. This statement of policy will appear on this page every week along with any corrections or clarifications.

The Oban Times adheres to the Press Complaints' Commission's Code of Conduct. The views expressed in The Oban Times are not necessarily those of this newspaper.

20 Years Ago

Those Were The Days The Oban Times Thursday, December 12, 1991

Meeting over parking plans

TWO multi-storey car parks could be built in Oban if Strathclyde Regional Council agrees to plans from the Chamber of Commerce.

The car parking problem in the town may come to a head when Oban and Lorn Chamber of Commerce meets with the council to discuss plans.

When the Chamber Management Committee met recently, chairman David Webster announced that a meeting was being arranged to discuss their original plans for the town and the council's new draft document.

A report this week said: 'The Chamber of Commerce could unashamedly take full credit for the Region's Draft Consultative Document as it contained all the major proposals submitted by the Chamber.'

The Consultative Document from Strathclyde Regional Council contains improved signposting to the car parks; access to Corran Halls Car Parks from Dunollie Road; widening of George Street to the south of Stafford Street and one-way traffic around Station Road, Queen's Park Place, George Street and Airds Place.

The Chamber will be pressing for a multi-storey car park between the Post Office and Municipal Buildings in Albany Street and one in Tweeddale Street.

Four-legged senior citizen heads for the hills

CHARLIE the cross-bred donkey was no angel when he turned tail on the Tarbert road in a one-horse race that stopped the traffic.

His Houdini-style escape from the paddock at Inverneil Health Clinic near Ardrishaig would have pleased the great man himself when, for the third time, Charlie deftly untied the ropes on the gate and stampeded towards Tarbert via the A83. An entourage of willing helpers was brushed aside as the equestrian senior citizen made his big bid for freedom. The ensuing chase resulted in one of the most hilarious donkey derbies this side of Argyll with Oban Times reporters in hot pursuit.

Several miles and many carrots later he was cornered, haltered and led back home, but his stubborn streak prevailed and only as dusk fell did he condescend to return to the walled garden at Inverneil. The camera-shy Charlie is 32 years old in human terms, but donkeys age seven times as fast as people. His owner Mrs Betty Hutton is no stranger to such stampedes and admits to getting fitter by the minute. 'This

Public inquiry on opposition to Skye bridge

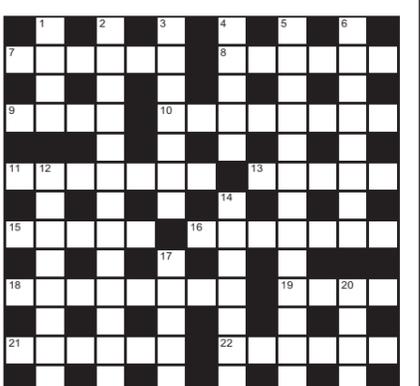
THE SCOTTISH Office will hold a public inquiry into opposition to the proposed Skye Bridge.

To be held on January 28 1992, the inquiry has been welcomed by the chairman of Skye and Lochalsh District Council, Councillor John Farquhar Munro. 'Now objectors will be given the chance to air their views,' said Councillor Munro. Last Wednesday, a special district council meeting was held to discuss the bridge issue. It was unanimously agreed to support Kyle Community Council in its call for the re-routing of the mainland approach road. Councillors feel a new route, which runs along the foreshore of the Lochalsh Hotel, should be investigated.

Representations have been made to the Scottish Office regarding the district council's concerns over the proposed toll structure. Councillor Munro said that an intended £5 to £6 toll charge for cars was unacceptable, and called for the structure to be reviewed. Chief Executive of the council, David Noble, said that concerns had also been expressed over the height of the new road and pedestrian access.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

- Across
7 Give in to (6)
8 Attacking device (6)
9 Wise men (4)
10 Abridge (4,4)
11 Render unnecessary (7)
13 Begin (3-2)
15 Disinclined (5)
16 Spaghetti film? (7)
18 Rough (8)
19 Type of dealer (4)
21 Teach (6)
22 Spanish dish (6)
Down
1 Liquid lamp type (4)
2 Manager (13)
3 Statement of gratitude (7)
4 Beau (5)
5 Propelled by hot water on water... (6,7)
6 ...big trouble (3,5)
12 Gas escaping from the rear (8)
14 Proof of purchase (7)
17 Plunder for weapon! (5)
20 Draw out (4)



Last week's solution
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Burns Brothers Ceilidh Band
All Fingers and Thumbs
 The Burns Brothers Ceilidh Band's long overdue debut album features music that is as full of lift and clever arrangements as it is terrific musicianship. John Burns (accordion), George Burns (accordion), Graham Crichton (drums), Neil Ferguson (fiddle), Tom Orr (piano), Mark MacDougall (bass guitar) feature.

Bah! Humbug
The Alternative Christmas Album
 Do you twinkle like the lights on a Christmas tree at the approach of Christmas or do you throw up your arms in dismay? If the latter applies then this album is definitely for you. This collection of humorous songs poke fun at the usual array of festive fayre in a way that is guaranteed to put a smile on even the most steadfast Scrooge.

Orkney's Live Lounge
Makaracket
 Orkney College's Young Enterprise team challenged local bands to perform Live Lounge as on BBC Radio 1. Each act was given a short list of possible songs and had to give their own interpretation with a distinctly Orkney twist. The result is as surprising and engaging as it is entertaining.

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West Highlands taste sweet success at Trad Music Awards

10 artists inducted into Scottish Traditional Music Hall of Fame

WEST Highland musicians took home a host of prizes from this year's MG ALBA Scots Trad Music Awards.

In particular, it was a night to remember for Manran, who picked up Album of the Year and celebrated an individual honour for Plockton-schooled lead singer Norrie MacIver, voted best Gaelic singer.

A record number of almost 100,000 votes were cast online by the public ahead of the event, dubbed 'the Brits of the trad scene', which was presented by hosts Mary Ann Kennedy and Tony Kearney at a glittering ceremony at Perth Concert Hall.

Successful
 The two awards crowned a successful year for Manran, who received national exposure with an attempt on the UK top 40 with Gaelic single Latha Math.

Fort William's Gary Innes, accordion player with the band, said: 'We're extremely happy, but shocked.'

'We were up against some really stiff competition in that category, not least Davy Steele, who is an absolute legend and had released his 10-year anniversary album, Steele the Show.



Isle of Seil's Aidan O'Rourke was named Composer of the Year.

the west coast but it also shows how forthcoming people are in supporting these musicians. None of us would have won awards if people hadn't voted for us.

'There was a great atmosphere at the event. It's a great night, a bit like an office party for musicians.'

Ardnamurchan accordionist Robert Nairn's stock rose further after claiming the award for Scottish Dance Band of the Year and Tirez's Skerryvore was named Live Act of the Year, as well as playing at the concert.

Seil's Aidan O'Rourke was named Composer of the Year, while the Blazin' Fiddles' Blazin' in Beaully was voted Community Project of the Year.

Hall of Fame
 Among 10 artists inducted into the Scottish Traditional Music Hall of Fame were Donald MacLeod, Islay, and Tobermory maestro Bobby MacLeod.

Skye's Arthur Cormack was presented with the Hamish Henderson Services to Traditional Music Award.

The MG ALBA Scots Trad Music Awards aired on BBC ALBA on Monday and will be repeated tomorrow (Friday).

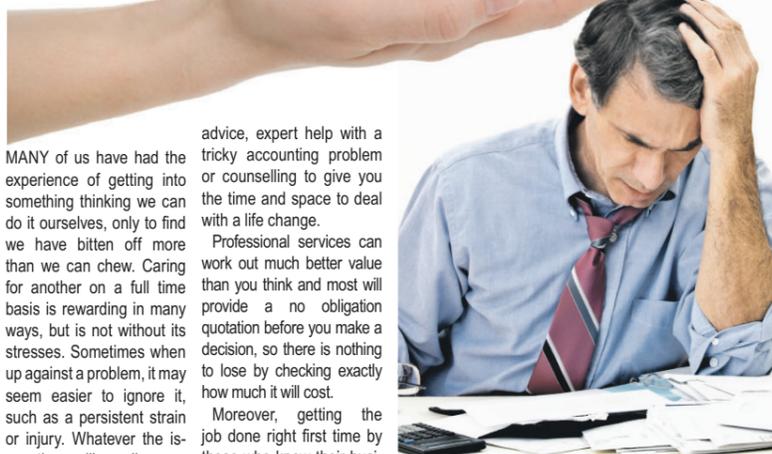


Manran won Album of the Year and celebrated an individual honour with lead singer Norrie MacIver being voted best Gaelic singer.



Isle of Tiree band Skerryvore was named Live Act of the Year, and played at the awards.

Help out hand



MANY of us have had the experience of getting into something thinking we can do it ourselves, only to find we have bitten off more than we can chew. Caring for another on a full time basis is rewarding in many ways, but is not without its stresses. Sometimes when up against a problem, it may seem easier to ignore it, such as a persistent strain or injury. Whatever the issue, there will usually come a point when a bit of professional assistance becomes an option to explore.

While people are tightening their belts just now, there are plenty of areas of life where spending a little money pays off in terms of peace of mind, stress-busting and expertise. This is particularly true when faced with a new or difficult situation - legal

advice, expert help with a tricky accounting problem or counselling to give you the time and space to deal with a life change. Professional services can work out much better value than you think and most will provide a no obligation quotation before you make a decision, so there is nothing to lose by checking exactly how much it will cost. Moreover, getting the job done right first time by those who know their business can save you cash, as well as time and stress, in the long run.

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A story of fireworks and fairies

IT WAS panto time again in Oban last week as the packed Corran Halls audiences enjoyed Spotlight Musical Theatre Group's production of Cinderella.

In what is a special year for the production company, Councillor Neil Mackay handed over a quack from Argyll and Bute Council after the show last Thursday to mark Spotlight's 50th anniversary.

Cinderella's journey from rags to riches was a joy from start to finish with Iona Robertson in the title role impressing the crowd with her amazing singing voice.

The Ugly Sisters (played by Roddy MacEachan and Michael Wall) were hilarious with their flow of banter and a succession of over the top costumes.

Stuart Smith struck a suitably sympathetic chord as the henpecked Baron Hardupp, forever under the thumb of the Baroness played

with a magnificent haughty glamour by Fiona Brydon. Cinderella's handsome Prince was the consistently impressive John Robinson, whose singing in particular charmed the crowd. He was ably assisted by his right-hand man Dandini, played with leprechaun-like glee and exquisite comic timing by Kevin Baker. A huge favourite too was Buttons (Stephen Day) who delighted the audience with his lovable persona and witty adlibs.

More fun was to be had from the Brokers Men (and Lady) played for all out slapstick laughs by Steve Finlayson, Freddie Baker and Eileen Barr. Bill Matthews injected more hilarity (and an incredible 'Go Compare' style moustache) as Professor Putz, aided by his glamorous, pink haired assistants (Linsey McGlone and Amy King). The 'Magical Makeover'

team of Fairy Godmother (Frances Melville) and fairies (Lauren Angus and Rachel MacGregor) sprinkled their magical fairy dust to bring the show to its traditional happy ending and the curtain came down on a wonderful evening.

The backstage crew led by Geoff Miller once again provided clean and crisp scene changes and a troupe of those 'backstage boys' appeared on stage during one of Saturday night's numbers dancing along the backdrop, though whether they were meant to, nobody is sure.

Artistic work for the sets and props was up to its usual high standard and Cinderella's coach brought a flurry of excitement and 'ooos' and 'ahhs' as it made its way through the audience. The three-in-one producer, director and choreographer Louisa Hyde should be rightly proud of her whole team.

'A Christmas Carol' set to be a showstopper



Lochaber Showstoppers are making final preparations for their annual festive show, 'A Christmas Carol', which starts tonight (Thursday) at the Nevis Centre. The musical, described by director Clare Brewer as 'not quite a panto', tells Dickens' classic tale of Ebenezer Scrooge, Bob Cratchit, Tiny Tim and the ghosts of Christmas past, present and yet to come. The impressive set for the show was designed and built by the cast members. The show is also on Friday and Saturday night, with a matinee performance on Saturday. Tickets are available from the Nevis Centre. 20_49show01

Campbeltown Brass Band upbeat about the future

AFTER entertaining home audiences for more than three decades, Campbeltown Brass is looking to expand across Argyll and create more opportunities for its musicians.

The band already has a number of members from Mid Argyll who travel twice a week to rehearse with the band, with others

starting to show interest, so the move is seen as a natural progression by musical director, Jamie McVicar.

The band is working with the Scottish Brass Band Association so players across the whole of Argyll and Bute can benefit. For more information about Campbeltown Brass visit campbeltownbrass.co.uk.

Singers in fine voice

MEUR LOCHABAIR held a grand ceilidh dance in The West End Hotel, Fort William on November 26.

Lashing rain and gale force winds didn't deter the attendance of guest artists and visitors.

The excellent Ness Melodeon seven-piece band kept the feet tapping and Lochaber musician George Smith accompanied the guest singers.

Mod gold medallists Norman MacKinnon from Tiree and Jean MacKay provided a fine choice of songs. From Oban, Harris born singer

Freddie MacKenzie, Mod gold medal winner in 1981, was in fine voice and his choice of songs took a tour of the islands.

The Meur Lochaber committee presented him with a picture and his wife Mary received a basket of flowers.

The gift was an appreciation of his efforts - Freddie has supported the Fort William ceilidhs since his Mod win.

Young Lochaber lad Ally Weir, medal winner of oral competitions at this year's Mod in Stornoway, gave a very expressive rendition of Gaelic recitations.

Skye musicians feel the frost

THE THREAT of wintry weather may have contributed to the poor turnout for the monthly meeting of the Skye Accordion in the Royal Hotel, Portree last Thursday.

Accordionists Ceitidh Douglas and her father, Blair, entertained the audience in great style and Ceitidh then went on to demonstrate the intricacies of *The Laird of Drumbair* to her father, much to the amusement of the audience. Other local musicians to keep the

audience feet tapping were fiddlers Wendy Riva, Joe Buchan and the club's youngest regular player, 11-year-old Ellie MacPherson. Accordionists John Cameron and John MacGilvary formed a trio with drummer Jock Davidson. Once again the highlight of the club night was the guest duo of button-box players, Jimmy and Alexander Lindsay.

Next club night will be in the Royal Hotel, Portree on January 5 with The Sileas Sinclair Trio.

Nairn trio attracts big audience in Oban

THE ROBERT Nairn Trio, which was named Scottish Dance Band of the Year at the weekend, played the headline spot at this month's Oban Accordion and Fiddle Club.

MC Freddie MacKenzie welcomed a large audience, many of whom had travelled a long distance to see the band last Thursday in the Argyllshire Gathering Halls.

First on stage was accordionist Craig McFadyen, Oban, followed by Janet Graham, Cumbernauld, Colin Campbell, Oban, Gregor MacCormick, Appin and Ross MacPherson, Connel, who also played keyboard. On drums were David Cameron and Archie Cameron, both Oban, and playing melodeon was James MacArthur, Oban.

Guest artist Robert Nairn Trio is made up of Kentra's Robert on his three-row button key accordion, his brother Allan on drums and Ross Wilson, Bunnassan, on keyboard.

The trio played many west coast tunes and sets to the enjoyment of the audience who showed their appreciation for the faultless sound from the band.

Robert also demonstrated his skill playing some tunes on his melodeon. The MC for the second half, Archie Cameron, Oban, thanked both the local and guest artists for another night of excellent music. The evening ended with a rousing stramash.

Next month the club welcomes the Alan Gardiner Scottish Dance Band to the Argyllshire Gathering Halls on January 13.



Accordion and fiddle fans from across Argyll travelled to see Oban's special guest, the Robert Nairn Ceilidh Band, from left: Allan Nairn, Robert Nairn and Ross Wilson. 16_149nairn01

Another great night at Inveraray

INVERARAY and District Accordion and Fiddle club had a good crowd at their November club night, welcomed by chairman, Niall Iain MacLean.

Fyne Folk opened proceedings with Sally Hall, Duncan Crawford, Alex John MacLeod and Jake MacKay on fiddle, Agnes Liddell on keyboard and Allan McIntosh on accordion.

Other local players were - James MacArthur on melodeon, Johnny Fisher on button-key accordion accompanied by Allan and Jimmy MacDonald on keyboard, Billy Buchanan on accordion - playing at the club for the first time, accompanied by Allan and Jake MacKay on 'moothie', along with Agnes and Allan.

Guest artists were Wayne Robertson from Perth and Davy Stewart from Kilmuir, both on accordion.

At the next meeting the ever popular MacAllister Brothers - Archie on fiddle and Alex on accordion - will top the bill.

Oban album seeks charity funds

SOME of the best musicians in the Oban area have come together to record an album of 20 original songs to celebrate an anniversary and to help a charity.

Oban Mic, held every Sunday in O'Donnell's Bar, celebrated its first birthday on Sunday by launching the Oban Mic Live album.

The double CD will be sold in aid of Argyll Animal Aid and Nordoff Robbins Music Therapy, a charity that encourages people with mental health problems to express themselves via

music. Mel Wallace one of the Oban Mic organisers, said: 'Everyone pooled their musical equipment and experience in order to provide a full stage set-up.'

'The standard of original songs and performances at these weekly nights is exceptional and has given the opportunity to local musicians to be heard, leading to many cross-genre collaborations.'

Indeed, the album caters for all tastes in live music from mellow acoustic guitars to colourful rap

lyrics. The album was recorded over five Oban Mic nights during the summer and features: Rianna McMahon, Danny Finnigan, Dave Ayling, Kevin Smith, Colin MacLean, Kevin 'K9' Irvine, Rory O'Byrne, Iona Robertson, Peter MacDougall, Joseph O'Donnell, Lance Stewart, Ronnie Gibson, Gavin Eisler, Kim Gillies and Mel Wallace.

The CD is available to buy from O'Donnell's, Oban Music, Creature Comforts, Scotch Corner, Kronks and Oban Veterinary Surgeons.

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Published on 15th December

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Tyndrum Gold is a limited-edition 15 year old Speyside Malt whisky, launched specially in November this year to celebrate news that a gold mine will be established at Cononish. The first run of Tyndrum Gold, available from the Green Welly Stop, has been limited to 600 bottles, which are being numbered and sold to appeal to collectors and connoisseurs alike.

To win a 70cl bottle of Tyndrum Gold, simply answer the question below and fill in your details along with your answer and post to TG Comp, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, PA34 4HB.

Entries must be submitted by Monday, December 19, 2011.

The winner must be able to collect in person from The Oban Times office in Oban.

In which village will you find the Green Welly Stop?

a) Tyndrum b) Taynuilt c) Dalmally

Answer.....
 Name.....
 Address.....
 Telephone..... Email.....

Terms and conditions: For over 18s only. The winner must be able to collect their prize from The Oban Times office in Oban and may be asked for proof of age. The prize is as stated. No cash alternative. The Editor's decision is final. Photocopied entries will not be accepted. The winner may be asked to take part in publicity and may appear in a Wyvex Media publication and website. This competition is not open to Wyvex Media and associated company employees and their families.

Local Origins Rural Network
Local Producers Christmas Fayre
 Thursday 16th December
 Victory Hall, Benderloch
 10am to 7pm
 community ceilidh after
LOTS TO EAT AND DO
 01631 720223
market@lori.org.uk
loricomunity.ning.com

The Friends of Crarae present a
CAROL CONCERT
 by
THE CORRAN SINGERS
 FURNACE VILLAGE HALL
 Thursday 8th December
 7.30 pm
 Seasonal punch & mince pies; Raffle
 Tickets £5.00 at the door
 Children free if accompanied by an adult

The Rotary Club of Oban
Christmas Celebration
Corran Halls
 Sunday 18th December 3pm
 A celebration with Carols, Christmas songs and readings
 All local musicians
 Entry by Donation for Children
 1st and Erskine Hospital

Rockfield Primary
HOLLY TEA
 Sat 10th Dec
 10.am til 12.00
 at the school campus
 Festive Fun
 Father Christmas
 Homebaking
 Good as New Toys and Gifts

gigfestive guide
 your essential guide to live music in argyll

Thursday night > Ceilidh and Club til 2am.
 Saturday night > Club Night 10.30-2am
 Skipinnish Ceilidh House
 Friday 9 December > Chris Suckle 9.30pm
 Markie Dams
 Saturday 10 December > Party night with Chris Suckle & Crooked Reel from 7.30pm
 Markie Dams
 Friday 9th December > Pool Competition
 The Oyster Inn & Gluepot, Connel Cash Prizes, 7pm
 Saturday 10th December > Tambo Park and
 The Oyster Inn & Gluepot, Connel Open Mic Night
 Fri 16 & Sat 17 December > Ceilidh Party Night
 Markie Dams Cairdeas 9.30
 Friday 23 December > Black Friday with Chris Suckle
 Markie Dams 9.30pm - open till 2am
 Sat 24 & Sun 25 December > Sandra MacBeth
 Markie Dams 9.30pm - open till 2am
 Saturday 31st December > Taste of Scotland Dinner Dance
 The Oyster Inn & Gluepot, Connel with Eriskay Lilt
 Sunday 1st January > General Knowledge Quiz
 The Oyster Inn & Gluepot, Connel 1pm
 Sunday 1st January > Glue Pot Race Night
 The Oyster Inn & Gluepot, Connel 8pm

COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

A Fundraising
SOUP LUNCH
 In aid of
OBAN PIPE BAND
 Will be held in
 Oban Pipe Band Hall
 Shore Street
 Sat. 10th December
 From 12 noon - 2.00pm
 Entry by donation
ALL WELCOME

Inveraray & District
Accordion & Fiddle Club
Argyll Hotel, Inveraray
Wednesday 14th
December
 At 8.00pm
 Guest Artists
 From Campbeltown
 The MacAllister Brothers
Supporting players most welcome

Oban & Lorn Lions Club
SANTAS GROTTO
 In the Royal Hotel, Oban
Saturday 10th and
Saturday 17th December
 10am - 3pm
 Entry by Donation

Dunollie, The 1745 House
Kitchen Ceilidh
 Poetry, Music & Milled Wine
Friday 9th December
 at 7.30pm
 Featuring Norman Bissell & Kirsty Macdonald
 with music from Chris Beveridge
 Tickets £10 Booking Essential
 Contact: 01631 570 550
info@dunollie.org www.dunollie.org

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 THURSDAY 22ND DECEMBER
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 OR ADVICE ABOUT THE IMPACT OF ILLICIT SUBSTANCES
 OR ALCOHOL ON LOVED ONES
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 December 2011
 at Crear, Kilmory
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 Donations welcome.
 A warming buffet lunch at £15 a
 head, will be available from 1pm.
 Please book in advance.
 Tel: 01880 770699 (during office hours),
 or e-mail concerts@crear.co.uk

* * * * *

Santa's Grotto at Arduaine Garden

Sat 17 & Sun 18 Dec, 12noon-4pm

Celebrate the festive season with us at the beautiful Arduaine Garden. Santa will be making a guest appearance plus it's never too early for mulled wine and mince pies, so we'll have plenty of those too! Adults £6, Concessions £5. Children £3 - includes visit to Santa and a small gift (accompanying adults free)

Arduaine Garden
 Arduaine, Oban, PA34 4XQ
 Tel: 0844 493 2216
www.nts.org.uk/christmas

the National Trust
 for Scotland
 a place for Christmas

The National Trust for Scotland for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410

Campbeltown Brass

Argyll's Brass Band

For almost three decades now, Campbeltown Brass has been busy entertaining audiences across the country. The last few months has seen the band record music for BBC Radio 3, participate in Tynwald Day on the Isle of Man, and perform all over Argyll, from the MOK Music Festival, to Inveraray Castle and the Lochgilphead Lantern Parade.

In August, 14 band members from Kintyre and Mid-Argyll took part in the National Youth Brass Band summer course at St Andrews, one of the largest contingents from any single band in the country, and the only players from Argyll. And, in November, Campbeltown Brass Juniors were crowned Scottish Champions at the Youth Championships in Perth.

In the current climate of Council cuts, the part played by community-based charitable organisations, such as Campbeltown Brass, is becoming ever more vital. The band is now starting to set up links with other organisations to enable it continue to expand its support of music-making in the community. Local enterprise MJC Music, for example, is delighted to provide instrument repair and tuition services for the band.

To find out more about Campbeltown Brass, to support our work, to join, or become a Friend of the Band, contact Liz Richardson, on 01586 554252, or visit us at our website: www.campbeltownbrass.co.uk

MJC Music
 Brass Instrument Specialists
 33 Clebe Street
 Campbeltown,
 PA28 6GA
 Tel: 01586 558034
info@mjcmusic.com
 brass tuition - advice - instrument repair

Argyll scientist has iodine history paper published

AN ARGYLL scientist has led an international paper into the 200th anniversary of research into one of the most important chemicals.

Iodine was discovered accidentally in 1811 by French chemist Bernard Courtois when burning seaweed and is now used in computer screens, X-ray images and mobile phones.

Professor Frithjof Küpper of the Scottish Marine Institute at Dunstaffnage, has co-ordinated a group of 11 scientists to produce a review of the history of research into iodine, published last week in a German journal *Angewandte Chemie*.

MSP backs youth employment plan

HIGHLANDS and Islands MSP Mike MacKenzie has welcomed news Scotland will have a dedicated Youth Employment Minister and invest an extra £30million in young people.

The funding will help Scotland's youth back into training, work or education to secure a strong workforce for the future.

Details of the ministerial post and allocation of the £30m will be outlined before Parliament breaks for recess.

The Highlands and Islands MSP said: 'This is a fantastic announcement from the First Minister that will help get our 16-19 year olds back into work, education or training.'

'The Minister's priority will be to promote skills and work for 16 to 24-year-olds and to ensure not a single school leaver becomes just an unemployment statistic.'

Crianlarich Hotel joins Best Western

THE CRIANLARICH Hotel has joined the world's largest group of independently-owned hotels, Best Western.

However, the 36-bedroom hotel will continue to remain independently owned and managed by Andrea Paton of Byrne Ventures.

Andrea Paton said: 'We are absolutely thrilled to be part of the Best Western group.'

'Becoming a hotel with personality will certainly put us on the map and help us grow both our leisure and business customer base.'

'The brand's reputation proves we are definitely on the road to success.'

The hotel is now live in the Best Western global distribution system meaning that guests are able to book into the hotel from wherever they are in the world.

Keith Pope, director of Best Western, added: 'The Best Western Crianlarich Hotel is a fantastic addition to our portfolio.'

'With a great location and warm, welcoming staff, we look forward to bringing more world-wide guests to Crianlarich.'

Best Western has 280 hotels across Great Britain.

Luxury Oban guesthouse receives 4-star gold status from VisitScotland

AFTER just two seasons in business, Alt Na Craig Guesthouse in Oban is swiftly becoming regarded as one of the best in Scotland.

Set in more than three acres of wooded garden, the stone-built Victorian turreted house, originally commissioned in 1865, has been refurbished to become a luxury boutique-style guesthouse and has recently been awarded the prestigious 4-star 'Gold Award' by VisitScotland.

Owner Ina MacArthur said she was proud to be the only 4-star guesthouse in the town to have achieved this award, joining a small group of only 29 guesthouses in the whole of Scotland.

Ina said: 'We are delighted to receive these accolades and the 4-star Gold Award is the icing on the cake. 'We decided to come to Oban as, not only is it my husband's birthplace, it is also a great place to live, do business and of course come for a holiday. 'There is just so much to do and see in the area that the only complaint we get from our guests is that they wished they had stayed longer.'

As well as their recent award, the striking guest house with its elevated position over romantic seascape views of Oban Bay, Dunollie Castle and the Firth of Lorne, has been featured in The Independent's '50 best weekend retreats' and 'Scotland the Best' by Peter Irvine, regarded by many as a 'Scottish Bible'.

They have been included in the re-write of Patricia Schultz's '1,000 places to see before you die'.



Fort William bakers in business for 30 years

After 30 years since starting in business in Fort William, Nevis Bakery marked the occasion with a reunion of staff past and present, including staff from their restaurant the Harvester, which used to be in Fort William's High Street. The firm has two shops, one in Oban and Fort William, and a bakery at Annat, which sends products all over the UK.

Report highlights west coast's offshore wind power potential

AREAS for potential offshore wind developments on the west coast could be greatly expanded following a Scottish Government scoping study.

A report published last week by Marine Scotland Science identifies new areas for medium-term development, unlocking a potential extra 10 Gigawatts of production.

It examines environmental, heritage and industrial constraints on development and concludes huge chunks of Scottish Territorial Waters between Barra and Kintyre have few barriers to windfarm development.

It expands current areas earmarked for potential development, including south of the Argyll Array off Tiree's western shore, north west of Coll and south of Kintyre as well as a new potential zone south of Islay.

Energy Minister Fergus Ewing also announced a new £5 million fund for offshore research and development. Speaking at a Europe-wide conference on wind energy he said: 'By positioning Scotland as a world leader in low carbon activities, we are witnessing new investment and new jobs. Offshore wind could support almost 50,000 direct and indirect jobs in Scotland by 2020, generating over seven billion pounds for our economy, while there is already 300 million pounds being invested to develop the next generation offshore wind turbines.'

Gareth Baird, The Crown Estate's Scottish Commissioner, said the report was a milestone for offshore wind development.

City trader swaps London for an island life online

A FORMER London broker has swapped the bustle of a city office for his parents' converted garage in a remote part of Islay after starting up his own financial trading website.

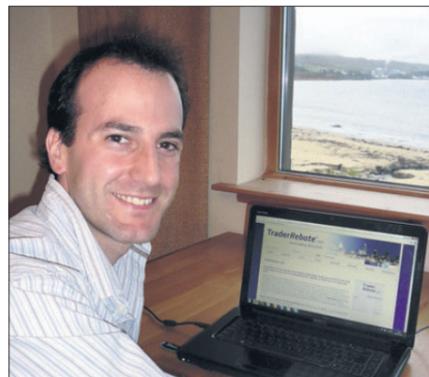
Alasdair Woodman set up TradeRebate.com in March this year and has been busy building a client base from his 'office' in Kilnaughton, near Port Ellen.

TraderRebate.com brings financial trading to the growing online marketplace for cash-back.

The website refunds its members a portion of all trading charges paid to its participating brokers, regardless of the profit or loss on their trades. It's free to register for the service and takes less than a minute to make a claim.

Alasdair explained: 'Like a lot of other similar services I, through the website, introduce customers to brokers and get paid commission on every trade

'The difference with my new website is I give cash back to the customers.'



Alasdair Woodman is building his business from his panoramic office on Islay.

that takes place as a result of the introduction. The difference with my new website is I give cash back to the customers.'

Alasdair said he sees this model as a more attractive prospect for potential customers and hopes to carve out a niche for himself in an otherwise saturated sector.

The concept can give Alasdair's customers a rebate of up to 47 per cent of the trading charges that they pay to these brokers and provides rebates for financial spread betting, forex and CFD trading with futures options and other products to follow shortly.

But while the 29-year-old's new venture is a similar line of work to his previous employment, Alasdair's surroundings could not be more different.

'It's nice to look out the window onto a beach instead of another office building,' he admitted. 'But we do have the odd power cut!'

West Highland Gas fired up for winter



Ready for the big chill: West Highland Gas employees, from left: Alex Watkins, Debbie Dunsmore, Sandra Elliott, George Currie and Ailsa MacEwan.

WEST Highland Gas Oban depot is taking on the harsh weather and economic climates in equal measure as it gears up for winter by employing four new people.

Sandra Elliott and George Currie have both joined to work as delivery drivers and Debbie Dunsmore has joined to provide sales and administration support to Ailsa MacEwan, the accounts and office supervisor.

'They have all been trained in gas, cookers, heaters, accessories and other energy products.'

Alex Watkins, the new area supervisor said: 'I'm delighted to have a strong team in place. It will help ensure we are able to provide a regular service to

all our customer whatever the weather, and there is always a friendly voice at the end of the phone to handle questions or emergency orders.'

West Highland Gas has been providing gas in Argyll since the 1960s. Today it has depots in Fort William, Mull, Oban, Lochgilphead, Campbeltown and Dunoon, selling a full range of gas for homes to hotels.

John MacLachlan, managing director, said: 'We are delighted to be able to offer three new jobs in this harsh economic climate.'

'It will make certain that both our regular customers and new ones can rest assured that their energy needs will be delivered whatever the weather.'

Country house on the market

DUNGALLAN Country House - Oban's only five-star guesthouse - has been put on the market with an asking price of £1m.

The former hotel, on Gallanach Road, is a Victorian-style villa and split over three levels.

It was purchased in 2001 as a two-star hotel but since then its accreditation rose following a high level refurbishment.

Graeme Smith, who is handling the sale at Christie and Co, said: 'Dungallan Country House is presented in outstanding condition, both internally and externally. It stands in an elevated location on Gallanach Road with 200-degree panoramic sea views. Its location is second to none in Oban.'

Owners Mike and Marion Stevenson-Coates currently operate the property along with one full-time member of staff and the business currently trades from April to November.

The 11-bedroom property, which has retained its licence from when it was a hotel, sits within three acres of gardens.

Mr and Mrs Stevenson-Coates have recently received full planning permission for a two-storey dwelling accessed directly from halfway up the driveway. This plot is available by separate negotiation and has a guide price of around £200,000.

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Uiskentuie Aberdeen Angus bullocks lead United Auctions' Islay Christmas sale at £1,180

UNITED Auctions held their annual Christmas sale of 487 of all classes of calves and store cattle at Islay Auction Mart last Saturday.

An excellent entry of mainly spring born calves were on offer to a packed ringside of buyers and all stock was cleared at

satisfactory rates.

Bullocks sold to an average of £629.39 per head or 207.34 per kilo which recorded a rise of £144.07 per head and 60.11 pence per kilo. Heifers sold to an average of £559.62 per head or 197.10 which recorded a rise of £134.41 per head and 52.49

pence per kilo.

The top price per head for bullocks came from Uiskentuie when Aberdeen Angus crosses sold to £1,180. The same home sold the top priced heifers when their Limousin crosses sold to £1,045.

Leading the top call per kilo

was Ardalla Estate when a pen of their Charolais bullock calves sold to 268pence and the same home shared the top per kilo with Kintra at 228pence for Charolais and Limousin crosses respectively.

The top 12 consignments per kilo for bullocks and heifers were: Kintra (23) 233p; Kilbride (24) 222p; Ardalla (20) 222p; Knocklearach (53) 215p; Mansfield (28) 213p; Smalladh (21) 210p; Frederick Cresc. (9) 210p; Brybruch (13) 208p; Scarrabus (55 AA) 207p; Woodend (20) 207p; Ballychattrigan (9) 203p and Ronnachmore (20) 206p.

Sheep rates stay high at Dingwall sale

DINGWALL and Highland Marts Ltd sold 2,740 store sheep at Dingwall on Thursday when lambs again met the dearest trade of the season, while ewes maintained recent keen rates.

Lambs averaged at £56.65 and sold to £86 for a pen of Beltex crosses from Tillieglen, Dunphail. Ewes averaged £53.01 and sold to £111 for a pen of Texels from Little Kildrummie, Nairn.

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Market reports
ISLAY United Auctions
Bullocks
Aberdeen Angus X: £1180, £1155 and £945(2) Uiskentuie £930, £785(7) and £755(2) Ootomore £655 Knocklearach £650(6), £645(4) and £615(13)
Scarrabus
Charolais X: £900, £755(4) and £725
Brybruch £670(7), £655(2) and £610(2) Knocklearach.
LimousinX: £1045(2) and £930
Uiskentuie £910 Corryr £880(5)
Uiskentuie £875 Ballychattrigan(3) and Lossit £870(5) and £810(2)
Uiskentuie £755(3) Balaclava £745(3)
Ballychattrigan £735 Lossit £670
Knocklearach £665 Balaclava(3) and Knocklearach(4) £655 6 Bayview £635(2) and £630 Kintra £625(5)
Knocklearach £610 Ballychattrigan £605 Kintra(5) and Woodend(4).
ShorthornX: £745(4) Ootomore.
Simmental X: £925 and £745(2) Corryr.
Heifers
Aberdeen Angus X: £935 and £800 Uiskentuie £695; Lorgba £655; Cattadale.
Blonde D'AquitaineX: £1025 Uiskentuie.
Charolais X: £935 Uiskentuie £675(6) Brybruch £600(13) Knocklearach.
LimousinX: £1045, £915 and £875(11) Uiskentuie £875, £820(3) and £795 Lossit £790(8) Uiskentuie £775 Knocklearach £770 Lossit £755 Uiskentuie and Woodend £715(3) and £700(2) Balaclava £680 6 Bayview £660 Ballychattrigan £645(2) Balaclava £615(9) Kilbride.
Simmental X: £795(2) and £715(3) Corryr £685 Island £605 Corryr.
In-calf heifers
£950 Greanan.
Prices per kilo
Bullocks
Aberdeen Angus X: 236p(10), 215p(17) and 207p(6) Scarrabus 205p Knocklearach 200p(7) Ootomore.
Charolais X: 264p(5) and 241p Ardalla Estate 222p(7) and 219p(2) and 215p Knocklearach 214p(4) and 209p Brybruch 201p Ardalla Estate.
LimousinX: 260p(2), 253p(2) and 248p(5) Kintra 248p(3) Kilbride 243p(7) 14 Mansfield Terr 241p Ardalla Estate 239p Kintra and Knocklearach(5) 234p(2) Kintra 232p Kilbride 230p RSPB Kinnabus (2) and Smaladh(9) 227p(2) Woodend 225p(2) Black Park 224p 6 Bayview 222p Knocklearach 220p Kintra 215p(7) Ronnachmore 213p Woodend 212p(3) Ballychattrigan 210p Woodend(4) and Knocklearach(4) 208p Balaclava(3) and Smaladh(2) 207p Ballychattrigan 201p(3) Ardalla Estate 200p(3) Ballychattrigan.
Simmental X: 229p(4) and 205p Frederick Crescent.
Heifers
Charolais X: 228p(5) Ardalla Estate 221p(13) Knocklearach 207p(6) Brybruch 206p(6) 14 Mansfield Terr. LimousinX: 228p(4) Kintra 226p(5) and 223p(11) Kilbride 216p(3) Smaladh 215p Ballytarsin 214p(4) Woodend 211p(10) Knocklearach 209p(12) 9 Mansfield Road 208p(2) Woodend 207p Kintra(6) and Smaladh 205p and 204p Uiskentuie 204p Ronnachmore(9) and Balaclava(2) 203p Woodend(5) and Knocklearach.
DINGWALL Dingwall and Highland Marts
Lambs:
Teanluick, Beaulie, £84; BeltexX: Smith, Cromarty, £83; TexelX: Ballone, Abriachan, £82; SuffolkX: Tillieglen, £81; CharmoiseX: Ballone, Abriachan, £80.50; Cheviot: Balmacann, Drumadrochit, £79; Cross: 66/67 Farr, Bettyhill, £78; Meatline: Clynelish Farm, Brora, £75.50; Zwarble Broynach, Claredon, £71; Blackface: Drumgask, Laggan, £70.50; Bluefaced Leicester: Broomhill, Muir of Ord, £67; CharollaisX: Carnoch, Errogie, £63.
Ewes:
TexelX: Little Kildrummie, £105; Mule: Achlone, Shebster, £98; Bluefaced Leicester: Broomhill, Muir of Ord, £96; Cheviot: Balgill, £89; SuffolkX: Cambusmore Estate, Dornoch, £79; Cross: Little Kildrummie, £78; Blackface: Bunchrew, Inverness, £64; ShetlandX: Little Kildrummie, £56.
Rams:
Cheviot: The Swallows; Culbokie, £92; Texel: Easter Balmungie, Rosemarkie, £90; Char - 8 Drinan, Elgol, £70.
STIRLING United Auctions
Bullocks:
251-300kgs Corsonen £645, 229.5p; 301-350kgs Bogside £775, 233.4p; 351-400kgs Bogside £830, 214.5p; 401-450kgs Drumtee £900, 210.3p; 451-500kgs Aldourie £1065, 205p; 501-550kgs Aldourie £1065, 205p; 551-600kgs Barone £835, 143.2p 601-650kgs South Arditie £1110, 179p.
Heifers:
Up to 250kgs Hillview £320, 128p; 250-300kgs Corsonen £590, 215.8p; 301-350kgs Logan £635, 183.5; 351-400kgs Drumtee £750, 198.4p; 401-450kgs Aldourie £900, 202.2p; 451-500kgs Boydston £995, 200p; 501-550kgs Aldourie £1040, Boydston 194.7p; 551-600kgs Drumplin £1020, 170p.
OTM Cows:
Mid Cambushinnie (BB) £1235, 151p; Dougall Est (BDA) £1235, Hillview 150.3p; Immeroin (Cha) £1135, East Dowally 132.2p; East Dowally (Lim) £1125, Dunalastair Est 159.6p; OTM Bulls:
South Brownhill (BDA) £1320, 179.1p; Glenside (Sim) £1095, 123.2p; Hillview (Limp) £1065, 143.2p.
Sheep
Lambs
High Balernoek (TexX) £68; Bridgend (TexX) £66; Finnich Blair (TexX) £65.50; Fleurs (SuffX) and Knowhead (Mul) £65; Rhodders (F) £59.50; Knowhead (BF) £59; Ewes
High Balernoek (BF) £48

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Precious Things set to sparkle with refurbished outlet

SUCCESSFUL Oban-based lingerie retailer Precious Things recently embarked on a shop refurbishment programme which will also see its product range extended to include women's clothing for the 30-plus age group.

Owner Deirdre Sharkey set up the business in George Street three years ago. She has since built a wide and loyal client base, including locals and visitors and benefits from a lot of repeat business. Having listened to her customers, Deirdre is confident that the new range of smart casual clothing will be well received. Her aim is to stock affordable brands not previously available

in Oban. Deirdre will complete the refurbishment work and re-open in time for the Christmas shopping rush.

Party wear
'I've got some party wear in for the Christmas season. It is great to be able to meet our customers' demands and I am very grateful to Business Gateway for

helping me on this journey,' she explained. Deirdre has taken advantage of a range of support from Business Gateway, including attending the two day start-up workshop and working with a business adviser, Nicky Archibald. 'Business Gateway helped me a lot,' confirmed Deirdre.

'The workshop made me aware of all the things you have to think about when setting up in business. It has also been very helpful having a single point of contact and someone to run things past.'

Through her Business Gateway advisor, Deirdre was also put in touch with the Scottish Chambers of Commerce Business Mentoring Scheme. 'My business mentor had very relevant experience and knowledge of the retail sector and was able to advise about specific issues such as use of space and stock,' she said. For more information contact Deirdre on 01631 562510.



Liz Crichton of the Creagan Inn and Hamish Malcolm, Bank of Scotland, celebrate the takeover of the Creagan Inn.

Lochside inn under new ownership

Couple look to the future with Creagan Inn investment

A COUPLE who ran a successful restaurant and bar business in Fort Augustus have become the new owners of the iconic Creagan Inn, Appin.

Liz and Allan Crichton plan to open the week before Christmas after agreeing a joint funding package with Bank of Scotland.

The Crichtons ran the highly acclaimed restaurant/bar The Bothy for 11 years but sold the business six years ago. The sailing enthusiasts voyaged from Loch Ness to the South of France then went on to live on Portugal's Silver Coast.

But homesickness – and a desire to be back with their family – saw them return to Scotland and start searching for a business venture that would suit their talents and found the Creagan Inn, which had been closed for a year. 'Creagan Inn has endless

possibilities,' says Liz. 'We know we have an important, year-round role to play in the community but we will look to the tourist season as well.'

Accommodation
'With the new Oban to Fort William Cycle Route passing our door and two important dive sites nearby, we like to think our accommodation will be in demand as well.'

When the couple bought the Creagan Inn, the new Facebook page gained 164 'likes' in the first two days.

Plans are in hand to construct a wall and transform the open-plan restaurant bar into a 'Real-Ale' pub and separate restaurant divided by a feature stone wall and wood-burning stove. Liz added: 'I'd like to thank Hamish and his team at the Bank of Scotland for making this possible.'

Centenary of the Orb celebrated

Harris Tweed trademark recognised throughout world

THE WORLDWIDE reputation and 'sanctity' of Harris Tweed's Orb trade mark and the year-round work it provides was heralded at a seminar to mark Orb's centenary.

But there was also concern raised by Harris Tweed Hebrides chairman Brian Wilson at the recent Shawbost seminar over the lack of indigenous weavers among the younger island population.

At the seminar, organised by the Islands Book Trust on behalf of the Harris Tweed Authority, Mr Wilson said: 'We must be not only the champagne of fabrics but also the vintage Margaux, pursued by the aspirational around the world for rarity as well as quality.'

He said the current mantra to customers was 'order early to ensure supply'. But he also warned: 'Quality, provenance and skills would probably not have been enough to save Harris Tweed if it was not for one crucial factor - the existence of a definition embedded in legislation which means that Harris Tweed can only be produced here.'

'If it was legally possible to produce something called Harris Tweed elsewhere, whether on the mainland of Scotland or in the cheap labour economies of the textiles universe, then that would have happened long ago and these islands would have been left protesting vainly that ours was the only genuine article.'

'So the most important key to securing the industry's future is very straightforward - nobody must seek to meddle with the legislation or in any other way undermine the sanctity of the trade mark which it embodies.'

Mr Wilson described the Harris Tweed Act of 1993 as 'a minor miracle of Parliamentary navigation', which would never be repeated, whether at Westminster or Holyrood.

On a less positive note, Mr Wilson said that his biggest long-term concern was about where the weavers of the future were going to come from.

'With penny numbers of children entering the rural schools in traditional crofter-weaver communities, there is going to be no indigenous labour force of the future. And just as Harris Tweed is integral to the local economy, so also it is a deeply enmeshed part of the Gaelic, crofting culture. But without a fresh supply of recruits who are products of that culture, then the profile of the industry 20 years from now is bound to be very different from what it is today. That reflects a much wider problem of perpetual out-migration largely due to lack of economic opportunity.'



Harris Tweed's Orb trade mark has become a guarantee of quality.

Business reporter:

Steven Flanagan
sflanagan@obantimes.co.uk
01631 568021



Business Advertising:

Claire Firth
cfirth@wyvexmedia.co.uk
01631 568013

Self-assessment deadline approaching for the self-employed

WITH the deadline for filing a paper tax return already passed, Argyll and Bute Council's Business Gateway is reminding anyone in self-employment that the deadline for self-assessment online submissions is midnight on January 31 2012.

Normally anyone registered as self-employed with HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) will need to complete a tax return to tell HMRC about their income and capital gains or to claim tax allowances or reliefs.

'The local Business Gateway team is on hand to offer advice on completing self-assessment online,' explained Councillor Neil Mackay, Argyll and Bute Council's spokesperson for enterprise.



Councillor Neil Mackay, Argyll and Bute Council's spokesperson for enterprise.

Small business checklist

This month:

- Prepare to submit your Self Assessment Tax Return if you are a sole trader or a partnership. The deadline for online submissions is 31 January 2012

- Get ready for winter conditions – whether you are based in business premises or are out on the road, make contingency plans for bad weather

- Consider whether a seasonal promotion could help boost your business

- If winter is the quiet season for your business, use the time for maintenance, developing marketing plans, stock-taking or reviewing your suppliers

- If you notified HMRC under the 'VAT Initiative' campaign you need to send your VAT registration form by December 31 to take advantage of a reduced penalty

Need help?
Business Gateway offers support and advice. Contact the local office on 01546 605459



Site acquired by BSW Timber
James Wink, an apprentice engineer at BSW Timber's Fort William mill, has been named Apprentice of the Year by Inverness College UHI. The 20-year-old from Corpach collected the accolade after excelling in his first year on the job. BSW maintenance manager Graham Lawrie said: 'By supporting people like James, BSW can ensure that we have a burgeoning team which will help meet the challenges of the industry and continue to grow year-on-year.'

Tourism awards change

VISITSCOTLAND has announced major changes to the Scottish Thistle Awards following a widespread consultation exercise with the tourism industry.

The changes include creating a new regional format, as well as revamping the final event format.

VisitScotland will now run four localised Scottish Thistle Award celebrations, which will take place between April and May 2012.

These events will see local tourism businesses compete in 12 categories, winning the chance to move forward to the main national event in November

2012. The regional award areas will be: Highland and Islands; North East; South/Central East and South/Central West with the winners of each progressing to the final awards ceremony.

Malcolm Roughhead, chief executive of VisitScotland, said: 'Since 1992 the Scottish Thistle Awards have led the way in terms of recognising the brilliant tourism organisations and businesses that this country has to offer. The new format will allow us to reach all regions in Scotland.'

Entries opened on November 15 and further details can be found at scottishthistleawards.co.uk.

Investing in apprenticeships for 30 years

'Our apprenticeships are about encouraging sustainable communities' - **Kenny MacLeod**

ARGYLL builders MacLeod Construction is marking 30 years of apprenticeships by vowing to continue to invest in the area's future.

Since 1981, the Lochgilphead-based company has taken on 100 to 150 young apprentices, a large portion of which are still with the firm. On average, approximately 10 per cent of the company's workforce is likely to be in some form of apprenticeship or training.

With 20 such people currently on their books, that commitment to the community is as strong as ever.

The business celebrated its 30-year apprenticeships milestone with its newest construction partner, Bield Housing Association. Five MacLeod apprentices are working at its 14 unit site at Glenshellach in Oban.

Kenny MacLeod, joint managing director of the family business, is also chairman of the Argyll Training

Group. He said: 'As a successful local business we are 100 per cent committed to putting investment back into the community where we are based and to supporting its young people.'

'Our modern apprenticeships are at the heart of this commitment.'

'Our apprenticeships are about encouraging sustainable communities, enabling our young people to stay in the area by offering them skills and employment.'

Admirable

Robert Cameron, development manager with Bield Housing Association, said: 'We warmly congratulate MacLeod Construction on 30 years of apprenticeships. It is an admirable record.'

'We share their commitment to investment in the local community, and at Bield we are pleased to support the employment of local people on our development projects.'



The company's apprentices, wearing blue helmets, take part in the celebrations at the Bield construction site at Glenshellach in Oban. From left: Ross Addison, David Barnett, Darren MacPhee, Kenny MacLeod, James MacMillan, Robert Cameron from Bield Housing Association, James MacMillan, Gregor Cameron, George Prosser and Derek Black. 15_147macleod1

ATTENTION ALL BUSINESSES

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69%
of the business community read the regional press

Source: Business Choice II, The Newspaper Society

Regional Press
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Source: Consumers' Choice V, The Newspaper Society

Regional Press
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When moving home, 62% of people relocate within a five-mile radius.

This illustrates a strong attachment to the local area. Regional press is the relevant choice for property advertising.

Source: Consumers' Choice V, The Newspaper Society

Regional Press
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BIRTHS

DIDCOCK - Graham and Julie nee MacKenzie, are delighted to announce the safe arrival of Ryan Scott, on November 21, 2011. A beautiful wee brother for Aimee, first grandson for Liz and Alfie and Libby and Ivan. Thanks to all at Oban Maternity Unit, especially Kirsteen McKellar and Gillian O'brian.

DEATHS

CHANCE - Ted in his 75th year peacefully at home on the Isle of Seil, on Wednesday, November 30, 2011 with his adoring partner Louise, at his side. A scientist until the end, Ted donated his body to medical research. There will be a humanist service to celebrate his life on Monday, December 12 at 12 noon in Seil Island Hall, Ellenabeich. All welcome. Please wear something bright.

CRAIK - Peacefully on November 2, 2011, Alexander (Sandy), Dunoon, died at Inverclyde Hospital, formerly Dalnally and Oban. Much loved husband, father, grandfather and great grandfather.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ROSS - Elizabeth would like to thank all family, friends and neighbours for all their kind support in her sudden and sad loss of George. Heartfelt thanks to Gwyneth and Martin in their efforts to help George and Davie Dougan, Paramedic and Ambulance Technicians. To all at the Belford Hospital and Police. Thanking Rev Dr Malcolm Kinnear for a very comforting service, Davie Corrigan for his tribute and shared memories, Mike McFall for courteous and efficient funeral arrangements. To all who travelled to pay their respects to George. Maria and staff at Onich Hotel for catering. The sum of £1,537.35 retiring collection for R.N.L.I.

IN MEMORIAM

BUNTING - In loving memory of my mother Jessie, who died December 11, 1980, my stepfather Willie, died February 10, 2003 and brother Arthur, died October 30, 2001. Forever in our thoughts. - Alasdair and family Tirez.

BELL - In loving memory of our dad John, who passed away on December 12, 2004 also remembering our mum Betty, who passed away on July 21, 2002. Sorely missed
Inserted by John and Morvyn.

GORDON - In loving memory of a much loved husband, father and grandad, David Francis, who sadly passed away December 9, 2010. Missed every day.
- Jenny, Angela, Keira, David and Becham family.

GIBSON - Loving memories of a dear mother, granny and great granny Jenny, died December 12, 2003, also loved ones gone before.
Always loved and remembered
Tommy, Nellie and family.

KENNEDY - Treasured memories of our dear loved mum, granny and great granny Eva, who passed away December 6, 2003.
The flowers we place upon your grave
May wither and decay
But our love for you
Who sleeps beneath
Will never fade away.
- Love Emily, Ken, Kathleen, Roddy, Iain, Louise, Bruce, Marie, Jenna and Norman.

MACCALLUM - Cherished memories of Jackie a dear husband, father and grandfather who passed away on December 9, 1993. Always in our thoughts

MACEACHEN - In loving memory of Alister, dear husband, father and papa, died December 8, 1998. R.I.P.
Beautiful memories
Sincerely kept
Of one we will love and never forget.
- Margaret, Michael, Pauline, Craig and Scott.

MACINTOSH - In loving memory of my wife, mum and gran Morag who died November 27, 1979. Always remembered.
- Inserted by her husband Ewen and family, Isle of Barra.

MACINTYRE - In loving memory of my dear father, Hugh MacIntyre, who passed away on December 9, 1970. R.I.P.
I lost a father with a heart of gold
Few of his like this world could hold
For those left behind he did his best
God grant him now eternal rest.
- Inserted by his loving daughter, Flora

MACINTYRE - In memory of Joe McCombie, a loving husband, dad and granddad, who passed away December 11, 2004. Always in our thoughts
Will never fade away
Love and miss you
Wilma and family, Oban and Glasgow.

MACINTYRE - (McCombie). In loving memory of Joe a dear son brother, brother-in-law and uncle, who died December 11, 2004.
Always in our thoughts.
- Bert and family.

MACKINNON - In loving memory of our dear mum and granny Mary Stewart, passed away December 4, 2008.
Loved and remembered always.
- All the family.

MACPHEE - Treasured memories of our mum and granny Angela (Angye), who passed away suddenly on December 13, 2010 and our dad and granda John (Jocka), who passed away on December 2, 2003.
Loved and remembered every day
Sorely missed.
- John, Rosie, Julie, Ronnie, Nicola, Toni and Craig.

MACQUARRIE - In loving memory of our dear loved mum, Agnes, who died December 14, 2008 and our dear father and grandad, Donald John, who died May 21, 1989. Always in our thoughts
- Inserted by Simon, Ishbel, Kirsteen and Kevin, Dumbarton

ROBERTSON - 10th Anniversary
In loving memory of our dear mum Josie, who passed away December 8, 2001.
Deep in our hearts you will always stay
Loved and remembered every day
Sandra and Morag

SANDISON - In memory of our precious son Liam. We are sad within our memory
Lonely are our hearts today
For the one we loved so dearly
Has forever been called away
We think of him in silence
No eye can see us weep
But many silent tears are shed
When others are asleep
Until we meet again wee man
We love and miss you always.
- Mum, Dad, Aaron and Cameron.

SANDISON - In loving memory of our darling grandson, Liam, sadly taken from us on December 10, 2006, age 4 years.
You left us precious memories
That make us laugh and cry
But the love you planted in our hearts
No millionaire can buy
Love and miss you forever.
- Granda and Granny Sandison, Craggan.xx

SANDISON - In loving memory of our dear grandson, Liam, who died December 10, 2006.
Remembering you is easy
We do it every day
It's the pain of losing you
That never goes away
Till we meet again Liam.
- Love Gran and Grandpa xx.

SANDISON - In loving memory of our nephew and cousin, Liam, who sadly passed away December 10, 2006
A thousand words won't bring you back
We know because we've tried
Neither will a million tears
We know because we've cried
Forever in our hearts.
- Love Auntie Linda, Uncle Angie, Sean and Lisa.xxxx

SMITH - Precious memories of our beloved mother Jessie, who died December 5, 1992.
Never a day passes when you are not in our thoughts and in our hearts
Loving you always.
- From your daughters Amina, Janet, Mary and their families xxx.



Sacrament of confirmation

Children of St Mary's RC Church in Fort William after receiving the sacrament of confirmation from Bishop Joseph Toal of the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles.



Three Ardchattan elders clock up 120 years' combined service

Ardchattan Kirk celebrated 120 years combined service by three elders. Archie Buchannan, Donnie Campbell and Malcolm Macdonald were ordained Elders of the Parish on Sunday November 27 1971 at the church. They are pictured, with Minister Rev Jeff McCormick and session clerk Mrs Ann MacLeod, at the front of Ardchattan Kirk, which itself reached an important milestone this year, having been open for worship for 175 years.



Club race night raises £1,000 for Mary's Meals

Members of Oban No.1 Celtic Supporters' Club presented a cheque for £1,000 to Dalmally-based charity Mary's Meals. Mary's Meals representative Kathy Wylie said the money would enable the charity to feed 100 children at school for one year in Malawi. The cash was raised at the club's recent annual charity race night. The evening was sponsored by Phoenix Honda and the top prize of a micro-light flight with Oban Air Sports was won by Mary MacKinnon of Clan Trees. The sponsor's prize was won by Roddy's Garage.

ECCLIASTICAL NOTICES

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS, LOCHABER AND LORN MEETING.
Meeting for Worship on the Second Sunday of each month.
11 am at Port Appin Public Hall.
All welcome.
Bring and share meal afterwards.

ASSOCIATED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, OBAN
Campbell Street Church
Sunday 11 December 2011
11 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.
Phone-In 'Worship Link' available
Rev. Archie McPhail MA, MTh
(01631) 567076
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SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH ANGLICAN COMMUNION
Sunday 11 December 2011
Advent 3
St John's Cathedral, Oban
Annunciation
Holy Communion08.00
Sung Eucharist.....10.15
Sunday School and Creche
Loop System
Large Print Hymn Books
All Welcome
Norman MacCallum,
Provost.
(01631) 562323
St Columba, Gruline, Mull
Mattins 11.00
St Columba,
Bishop's House, Iona
Holy Eucharist..... 10.00

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WEDDINGS



PRONK - MACLEAN
Esther Pronk and Roderick Maclean were married at Campbeltown Registry Office on November 30th 2011.
The happy couple then travelled to Oban for a Wedding Blessing at St Johns Cathedral.
Photograph by Perfect Images, Dunbeg, Oban



MACDONALD - BIRRELL
Domhnall Iain & Lisa were married in St Clements Church, Isle of Harris on the 16th September.
The reception was held at Rodel Hotel.
A perfect day, surrounded by family & close friends.

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MACINTYRE - DEWAR
Sandra MacIntyre and Euan Dewar were married at the Church of Scotland, Corran Esplanade on October 29th 2011.
They celebrated their marriage with a large number of family & friends at Skippnish Ceilidh House.
Photograph by Perfect Images, Dunbeg, Oban

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Carers centre marks success of stalls

OBAN'S North Argyll Carers' Centre said: 'We need approximately £20,000 to keep the stalls going. Our funding from LEADER is due to expire, but we are keen to continue the stalls.
'At the moment, we are supporting a huge number of carers and this is something that can be extremely helpful for them.
'We are hoping to expand the scheme and create a workshop on Mull. Money is also needed to buy materials for the stall, as we can't have the carers spending their own money on that.'
Market stall co-ordinator Mairi Fleck said she's seen the real benefit of the stall.
'It really makes a huge difference to people,' she said. 'It is great the way it supports carers emotionally, and they have really banded together because of this.'
'People generally undervalue the things they produce themselves, but when they see them selling they get a huge confidence boost.'
Local councillor Louise Glen-Lee has been a long time supporter of the stall and hopes the Carers' Centre can get funding to continue the initiative.
She said: 'I've seen these stalls when I visit the markets and go round the fairs and it really empowers people.
'This was actually quite a big risk for the centre because it was new and innovative. It has more than proved its worth.'

Church children do their bit for Children in Need

The youngsters of Ardchattan Church did their bit for Children in Need on November 27. The group held a soup lunch and cake bake, which they organised in North Connel Hall. The event was held after the joint Sunday Service and was well supported, raising £163 for the charity.
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Rugby match ends in chaos

Players from both sides became involved in a mass brawl after the full time whistle

West Division Two
**Oban Lorne 3
Lenzie 19**

OBAN Lorne's home tie against rivals Lenzie descended into chaos after the full time whistle at Glencruitten when players from both sides became embroiled in a mass brawl.

First aiders had to patch up their players following the melee, which happened as the full-time whistle sounded.

Despite a hard game, which was played at a high intensity,

no-one expected the scenes that followed the final whistle. A concerned Oban Lorne president Dee Bradbury said: 'Any infringements or acts of disorder will be subject to an internal investigation by the club.'

'There may also be further sanctions by the Scottish Rugby Union.'

Oban offered little attacking flair during the preceding 80 minutes with wingers Allan Wright and Fergus Matheson

mere spectators for much of the game. Oban made a good start to the match and seemed to be in control during most phases of play. Without creating any chances of note, the men in green were awarded an early penalty that was comfortably converted by Angus MacCallum to give a 3-0 lead.

The home side were dealt a blow shortly after with second row Jamie MacMillan taken off injured and he was replaced by

Connor Ferris. Lenzie started to get into the game and scored following a 5-metre scrum. Oban were dealt a further setback when prop Connor Kerr was taken off with an ankle injury. This meant that Corrie Louw was moved forward into the front row, with Andy MacDougall switching to No. 8 and Gary MacEwan coming into the game off the bench.

Lenzie started to dominate the match, while Oban struggled with a poor scrum and were undone with several handling errors and indiscipline at the breakdown. The away side stretched their lead to 12-3 with another try before halftime.

Both teams played out an uneventful but hard fought second half to the game.

Lenzie scored their third and final try to lead 19-3 midway through a dominating 40 minutes.

Oban failed to create any scoring chances of note, something that will concern coach Corrie Louw. The men in green have now only scored 13 points in their last three league matches.

Oban Lorne find themselves sitting in ninth place in West Division Two and welcome Wigtonshire to Glencruitten next Saturday at 2pm in what is a must win game.

RUGBY

Youths selected for district squads

TWO YOUTHS from Oban Lorne RFC have been selected for representative district sides. Angus MacCallum, aged 17, who plays centre/stand off for the first team, has been selected for the under-18 Glasgow side, having already represented them last season in the U17 squad.

Sixteen-year-old Magnus Bradbury, who now attends

Merchiston Castle School in Edinburgh, has been selected for the Edinburgh under-18 squad, having previously represented Glasgow last year.

If selected for the final representative squads, both players will be in action on December 18 at Murrayfield. Glasgow take on Caledonia at 1pm and Edinburgh play the Borders at 3pm.

Selectors will be present at both matches and will select the under-18 Scotland squad from the players on show.

The under-18 Scotland squad play England and Wales at home in March and away to Ireland in Dublin. They will also spend 10 days in Madrid in April at the FIRA European Championships.



Oban Otters hand out the prizes

OBAN Otters swimming club brought their season to an end with a swimming gala, at Atlantis Leisure, and a prizegiving, at the Argyllshire Gathering, last week.

The winners were as follows: MacLean Cup - Evie Turner; MacKay Cup - Ellis Hunter; Spence Shield - Grace

Thompson; Hutchison Cup - Jordan MacKay; Achnacreebeg Trophy - Robyn MacGregor; Larchfield Trophy - Fergus Lawson; MacKinnon Cup - Ella MacKechnie; McCracken Cup - Hugo Stahl; Tyndrum Cup - Eve Beaton; Bank of Scotland Cup - Jack Fletcher; Intermediate Shield - Fiona MacLean; Iona Shop Trophy - James MacIntyre; Gateway Cup - Emma Thompson;

Forteth Cup - Lorna Thompson; Hunter Cup - Patrick MacKinnon; Beaver Timber Shield (girls) - Lorna Thompson; Beaver Timber Shield (boys) - Patrick MacKinnon. The new season will begin on January 12, 2012. 16_149otter01

SWIMMING

Bunessan dominates Mull athletics

TOBERMORY High School hosted 72 young athletes last Saturday for the Mull contest of Sports Hall Athletics.

Athletes from Mull Harriers, based in Bunessan, made up almost a third of the total entry and won four out of the 11 individual titles.

Abbie Catto from Bunessan Primary was arguably the top athlete on the day dominating the under-9 age group winning all her events.

Elana Cameron won the under-7 category for Bunessan, while Bunessan boys filled the top three places in the under-7 age group with Iain MacCallum winning ahead of Adrian Lawson and James Edmundson.

Bunessan triumphed again in the boys under-9 contest, with Sam Burns only a half point ahead of Jamie MacGillivray.

Tobermory Primary dominated in both boys and girls contests in the under-11 category through Fraser Mitchell and Molly Reade.

Charlotte Peacock was under-13 champion winning five out of the seven events. Scott Paterson from Salen and Ross MacCraone from Tobermory had a close contest in the boys under-13 section, with Scott winning overall. Cullen McClymont, Craignure was the boys' under-17 champion and Sian Henderson from Salen was the girls' winner. Natalie McDowall, Tobermory won the under 15s.

Rockfield lead the way

C League results:
Salen Sharks 0, Ben Lora 1; S. Grasshoppers 0, Park Sparkies 2; Rockfield Rovers 4, Rock 0; S. Sharks 2, Dunollie 1; S. Grasshoppers 1, Appin 2; Ben Lora 0, Park Sparkies 1; S. Sharks 0, Rovers 1; S. Grasshoppers 0, Rovers 2; Dunollie 0, Appin 1; S. Sharks 1, Rovers 0; S. Grasshoppers 0, Rovers 4; Ben Lora 4 Dunollie 0; S. Sharks 2, Park Sparkies 0; S. Grasshoppers 1, Dunollie 1; Ben Lora 0, Rovers 0; S. Sharks 5, Appin 0; S. Grasshoppers 0, Ben Lora 3; Rovers 0, Park Sparkies 5; S. Grasshoppers 1, S. Sharks 1; Dunollie 0, Park Sparkies 4; Ben Lora 2, Appin 0; Rovers 1; Park Sparkies 1; Ben Lora 1, Rovers 0; Appin 0, Rovers 6; Rovers 1, Dunollie 2; Park Sparkies 2, Appin 0.

| Positions at December 4 | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----|----|---|----|----|----|-----|
| 'A' League (P7 and under) | | | | | | | |
| Rockfield | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
| Lochnell | 9 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 26 | 2 | 26 |
| St Columba's | 9 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 17 | 9 | 20 |
| Rockfield Rapids | 9 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 22 | 14 |
| 'B' League (Development) | | | | | | | |
| Taynuilt | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
| Park | 6 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 14 | 1 | 17 |
| Achadh Na Creige | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 5 | 15 |
| St Columba's | 6 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 12 | 8 |
| 'C' League (P5 and under) | | | | | | | |
| Ben Lora | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
| Park Sparkies | 14 | 11 | 2 | 1 | 23 | 1 | 38 |
| Rockfield Rovers | 14 | 10 | 3 | 1 | 22 | 3 | 37 |
| Salen Sharks | 14 | 10 | 2 | 2 | 28 | 4 | 36 |
| Dunollie | 14 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 12 | 9 | 25 |
| Rockfield Rockets | 14 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 7 | 22 | 25 |
| Appin | 14 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 6 | 24 | 24 |
| Salen Grass | 14 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 3 | 21 | 21 |
| | 14 | 0 | 4 | 10 | 3 | 20 | 18 |



Lochnell's Stewart MacAllister in full flow on his way to scoring a fine solo goal. 16_149footy01

Youngsters beat the weather

THE SENIORS of the Oban Express Primary Football experienced four seasons in one day at the Oban High School Community Pitch on Sunday, with high winds, hail, snow, rain and sunshine all making an appearance.

When the football got underway the parents and coaches were entertained by Saints 02 and the youngsters of Pumas with Saints winning through a deflected Lennon Campbell shot.

The Pumas bounced back with a win over Wasps, in which Connor Moore (2) and Ross Campbell were the scorers.

The Pumas were also involved in the two best games of the day: They held on to win 2-1 against Tralee and looked to be sailing against Galaxy until an Ellis Hunter goal secured Galaxy a 2-2 draw.

Galaxy had earlier put on a good display against the wee Saints with midfielder Kenni Gray timing some excellent tackles but Saints opened the scoring through Jude Bain, who went on to claim a hat trick, and Cameron Clark who smashed home an excellent first time effort. The wee Saints' last match against Jags ended goalless.

Tralee enjoyed a win against the Wasps with Stuart Black grabbing one of the goals but despite a hat trick from Ryan Henriksen against the All Stars they were on the wrong side of a 6-4 scoreline, with Andy Ritchie and Beppe Lopez amongst their scorers. The All Stars had earlier been beaten by Lochnell who had a strong squad on the day and had Stewart MacAllister and Sean Gordon on target as well as Finlay Bennet finding his range.

Thistle had a good day at the office and had both Cameron Hill and Keir McLean in fine form; McLean hit three hat tricks and Hill went one better in the match with Wasps, scoring four.

The Jags had a mixed day but got on with the task which saw Finbar Dunn, Liam Tanno and Luke Graham all find the net with Ryan Woodrow scoring twice in the match against Tralee.

The youngest teams of the junior league once again filled Atlantis leisure with drama and excitement as they continue with their fun fours development.

PRIMARY FOOTBALL

Saints' Scottish Cup game rained off

OBAN Saints Scottish Amateur Cup 4th round tie away to Dynamo East Kilbride last Saturday was called off due to the heavy rain which made the playing surface at Brancumhall unplayable.

The match has been relisted for this Saturday, kick-off 2pm with referee George Allen from Johnstone in charge.

The winners of the Myre Athletic v Saints West of Scotland 3rd round tie have been given a home game in the 4th round against one of the 'big guns' of amateur football, Ayrshire outfit Knockentiber.

Saints' youths - results and fixtures

LAST weekend's results: Under 13s v Lenzie postponed; Under 14s v Goldenhill postponed; Under 15s no game; Under 16s 2, Ardencaple 0. Netting for Saints were Allan MacPhee and Rhuiradh Cain.

This weekend's fixtures: Under 13s v Blair Thistle; Clyde Valley v Under 14s; EDFC United v Under 15s; Bajaffray Thistle v Under 16s.

Over 35s league

INDOOR FOOTBALL

LATEST scores: Seil 2, Taynuilt 3; Sail Trim Coach 2, Trialists 12; Hydro 5, Spartak 6.

League positions at Friday 2 December

| Team | P | W | D | L | Pts |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|-----|
| Taynuilt | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| Emergency | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Trialists | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| WCM | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Teachers | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Spartak | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Seil | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Hydro | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| STC | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |

Close encounters of a pool kind

RESULTS from Oban Pool League: Lancastr A 3, Claredon 6; Lochavullin 6, Markie Dans B 3; Cellar 9, Backpackers 0; Markie Dans A 5, Lancastr B 4.

Fixtures: Claredon v Lancastr B; Backpackers v Markie Dans A; Markie Dans B v Cellar; Lancastr A v Lochavullin.

| Team | P | W | L | Pts |
|---------------|---|---|---|-----|
| Cellar | 5 | 4 | 1 | 8 |
| Claredon | 5 | 4 | 1 | 8 |
| Lancastr A | 5 | 4 | 1 | 8 |
| Markie Dans A | 5 | 3 | 2 | 6 |
| Lancastr B | 5 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Lochavullin | 5 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Markie Dans B | 5 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| Backpackers | 5 | 0 | 5 | 0 |

Oban darts league

Positions as of 2nd Dec

| Team | P | W | L | F | A | Pts |
|-----------|---|---|---|----|----|-----|
| Aulays A | 3 | 3 | 0 | 20 | 7 | 6 |
| Balmoral | 3 | 1 | 2 | 13 | 14 | 2 |
| Golf Club | 2 | 1 | 1 | 12 | 6 | 2 |
| Claredon | 2 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 11 | 2 |
| Aulays B | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 16 | 0 |

Competition results: Open Doubles Winners - D Martin / C MacCallum Runners up - A MacNeil / K Carmichael

Open Singles Winner - D Wallace (Aulays A) Runners up - S MacLennan (Golf Club)



Scottish Schools Homecoming Challenge Shield winners, Oban High School.

Oban come out on top

UNDEFEATED Oban High School has won the third annual Scottish Schools Homecoming Challenge Shield.

This year's event, held at Oban High, proved to be the best attended yet with seven teams taking part.

Oban senior pupils welcomed Portree, Inverkiething, Dingwall, Lochgilphead, Lochaber, Douglas/Boclair to a glorious winter's day at their school.

After an action-packed four hours of shinty it was the host team that came out on top, dropping only one point in their six matches.

An undefeated Portree came runners-up two points behind,

SCHOOL SHINTY

with Lochaber picking up third place.

Andrea James, Active Schools co-ordinator at Oban High School, was on hand to present medals to all the pupils playing on the day and the trophy to Oban captain Malcolm Clark.

The South of Scotland Schools Camanachd Association thanked all the teams for making the trip and also Diarmid MacMillan for giving up his time to referee the games, to Active-schools' Jillian Gibson and Andrea James for their help on the day and to Oban High School for hosting the event.

Weather

Thursday Heavy rain showers.
Winds strong, west, south westerly
Temperatures 5°C to 10°C

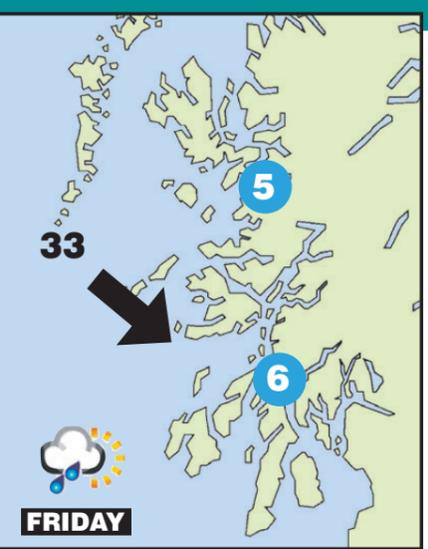
Friday Heavy rain showers.
Winds strong, north westerly
Temperatures 0°C to 6°C.

Weekend Sunny intervals.

Outlook Winds moderate, westerly
Temperatures 0°C to 4°C.

Ferry Crossings/Sea States

| | |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Oban to Barra/South Uist | Moderate |
| Oban to Coll/Tiree | Moderate |
| Kennacraig to Islay | Moderate |



Tides

Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday, December 8, 2011** are listed below with differences for major ports listed beneath. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

| Date | am | pm |
|------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| Thur 04.00 | 3.5 10.35 | 1.6 16.26 3.7 22.35 1.4 |
| Fri 04.38 | 3.7 11.19 | 1.5 17.05 3.8 23.12 1.2 |
| Sat 05.15 | 3.8 11.44 | 1.4 17.42 3.9 23.49 1.1 |
| Sun 05.51 | 3.9 12.20 | 1.4 18.18 3.9 *** ** |
| Mon 00.25 | 1.1 06.25 | 3.9 12.57 1.4 18.51 3.8 |
| Tues 01.01 | 1.1 06.59 | 3.9 13.33 1.4 19.24 3.7 |
| Wed 01.37 | 1.1 07.34 | 3.9 14.09 1.4 19.59 3.6 |

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)

| | | | |
|------------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| Ardrishaig | -5.35 | Portree | +0.55 |
| Campbeltown | -5.30 | Tobermory | +0.16 |
| Crinan | -0.47 | Dover | +5.30 |
| Islay Port Ellen | 2.00 | | |
| Lochboisdale | +0.30 | | |
| Mallaig | +0.25 | | |

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The Oban Times prints two editions of the paper. There is the main edition as well as the Fort William (Northern) Edition.

Sometimes pages that appear in the Fort William edition do not appear in the main edition (and vice versa).

As an electronic subscriber you get the main edition plus the pages that appear in the Northern edition.

The Oban Times

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Dangerous overhanging rock to be removed this weekend

FORESTRY Commission Scotland says 'we're ready' to tackle a dangerous 250-tonne rock overhanging the A82 near Fort William.

The work will close the road to all traffic a mile north of the Corran Ferry from 10pm tomorrow night until 6am on Monday. One lane is already shut to allow 350 bags of stone and tyre bales needed to cushion the road during rock removal to be stockpiled.

Project manager Alan Dickerson said: 'We are all set, we're raring to go and we want to get the job done.'

Meanwhile, Scotland Transerv hopes to empty roadside gullies and clean signs during the closure. Highland Council staff will carry out litter picking on the traffic-free road. Diversions are in place via the Corran Ferry.

See 'panto hit by road closure', page 4.

Crew member airlifted to hospital from prawn boat

A CREW member was airlifted from a prawn boat between The Isle of Rum and Sleat on Monday after he became ill.

Stornoway coastguard was contacted and tasked Mallaig lifeboat to attend the casualty, Mallaig man Donald Kennedy.

Two lifeboat crew, one a paramedic, boarded the Mallaig-owned *Amethyst* to assess Mr Kennedy, aged 59, and found him to be showing signs of disorientation.

Stornoway coastguard rescue helicopter was scrambled at 12.20pm to take Mr Kennedy to the MacKinnon Memorial Hospital in Broadford.

Speaking to *The Oban Times* through charge nurse Chrisann O'Halloran on Tuesday morning, Mr Kennedy said 'a big thank-you' to all those involved in the rescue.

Ms O'Halloran said the patient's condition was 'satisfactory'.



Pupils at Upper Achintore Primary enjoyed the snowy weather on Monday. 20_149snow02

First winter snowfall delights pupils

MANY parts of the west Highlands were hit with the first snowfall of the winter at the start of the week.

After a relatively balmy November, the wintry weather finally hit, leaving roads and pavements treacherous.

Up to four inches of snow fell on Fort William and six inches in Roy Bridge, but coastal areas saw less. Much of Skye escaped the worst of the weather, with northern parts of the island most affected. Kyleakin

and Sleat saw little snow. Portree Primary School acting head Flora MacDougall told *The Oban Times* on Tuesday: 'It's beautiful; the whole playground is covered with a dusting of white snow. The kids are having a great time.'

'They were out making snowmen yesterday. It's perfect sledding weather.' After a small amount of snow fell on Monday in Plockton, there was little more than a thick frost the next day.

Oban Times Lochalsh correspondent Charlie Macrae said: 'We didn't get very much snow. There's a bit of a covering but the roads are still black.'

'There was a bit of frost this morning but we didn't get any snow overnight.'

All schools remained open, but a number of school buses were reported to have problems negotiating the icy roads. Northern Constabulary warned motorists to take extra caution on roads across the region.

Two injured after budget cuts blackout

FURIOUS South Uist people want their street lights switched back on at night after two Lochboisdale men were injured in the budget cuts blackout.

Local butcher Lawrence Beaton and Lochboisdale Hotel head chef Michael MacDonald both fell in the pitch dark after attending the same party on November 27.

Mr Beaton, 56, sustained suspected fractured ribs and Mr MacDonald, 24, a badly broken ankle. Mr MacDonald is currently still in Western Isles Hospital in Stornoway awaiting surgery.

Western Isles Council is trialling a street-light switch off between 12am and 6am to save money - but Mr Beaton, of Kenneth Place, says the council's policy is dangerous. He told *The Oban Times*: 'When I left the house it was raining and crossing the road I could not see a thing in front of me.'

'I had to feel my way along the fence and when I bumped into it I hurt my ribs. There's no way it would have happened if all the lights were still on.'

'I'm not happy about it and I think there's a bigger accident

EXCLUSIVE
REPORT by
STEPHEN NORRIS
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waiting to happen. The council is shelling out £7,000 on a party in Stornoway on Hogmanay - which finishes at 11pm because it's the Sabbath the next day. What's the point of that when they can't even give us lights here after 12am?'

Lochboisdale Hotel owner Calum MacAulay said Mr MacDonald's friends found him 'hanging on to the lamp post' with a shattered ankle and unable to walk.

He fears his key employee will be off work until March - and warns others could suffer a similar fate as thousands of exiles return for New Year. He told *The Oban Times*: 'A lot

of visitors will be coming over the next few weeks and there could be a lot more accidents when they go visiting relations.'

'If there are no lights I don't think they'll be too happy. They'll wonder what's going on and think 'what a place!'

'They should review the times they switch the lights off, especially at this time of year. Sheet ice in the dark - my God, it's absolutely deadly.'

He added: 'I understand the need to make cuts, but surely the lights could be timed to go off at 12.30am weekdays, but left on at weekends when there's a chance people will be out and about late.'

A Western Isles Council spokesperson said: 'In certain more populated areas we are looking at extending the lighting hours. This is an issue we are aware of.'

Moidart firm fined £8,500

A RENEWABLE energy company has been fined £8,500 after building an unauthorised channel to its hydro station which caused a flood in Moidart.

Irene Power Company Limited, which operates the Roshven Hydro Scheme, redirected the Irine Burn at Roshven, contributing to the river bursting its banks in August 2009.

Water and rocks blocked the A861 and damaged nearby Roshven Farm.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) was alerted by members of the public to work being carried out above the hydro scheme in April 2010. Officers found a 580metre channel between the Irine Burn and an unnamed burn.

The channel diverted the burn and collected surface run-off water, increasing the flow of water into the Irine Burn, which allowed extra power to be generated by the hydro scheme.

Fort William Sheriff Court heard the unauthorised channel was poorly engineered and designed.

The damage caused by the flooding cost Highland Council £459. The £900,000 scheme was constructed in 2008.

The company pled guilty to constructing an extra channel for extracting water from another burn without authorisation between January 1, 2009 and April 28, 2010.

Flooding
Area Procurator Fiscal Tom Dysart said: 'Irene Power Company carried out work which led to significant flooding of the surrounding area which cost hundreds of pounds to repair. It is thanks to members of public that this offence was brought to the attention of SEPA.'

'I hope this conviction will serve as a warning to other companies who consider by-passing the regulations.'

Corncrakes and hen harriers help crofter Jock land £4,000 from government bio-diversity pot

AN ISLE of Skye crofter's environmental plan to promote bio-diversity on his land has won government cash backing.

The money will reward Jock Gordon of Kilmuir for supporting species such as corncrakes, hen harrier, lapwing and brown hare.

His project includes increasing 'sanctuary' areas for rare plants and animals and a corncrake-friendly hay-mowing regime. Mr Gordon, 42, said the £4,161

By STEPHEN NORRIS
snorris@obantimes.co.uk

from the Rural Priorities agri-environment fund was 'a big boost' to his working croft - and the corncrake.

He told *The Oban Times*: 'I thought if we are having the corncrakes, we may as well do this properly. The birds arrived in May, but we had that bad gale and they seemed to vanish. But the year before we had them all

summer - they croaked away all night long.'

'And we have otters living down at the bottom at the shore, hen harriers and rare orchids too. I think the government has to realise we have very valuable habitats here that have disappeared elsewhere.'

'The money will also help cover the cost of running the machines, fencing and drainage. It will definitely make the croft more viable.'

Mr Gordon, originally from Balforn in Stirlingshire and a former craftsman at Yarrow's shipyard on the Clyde, moved to Skye five years ago and initially continued in the boat repair business.

Now he grows oats and hay for fodder and potatoes for his family. He said: 'I ended up marrying a local girl and got into crofting by default.'

'I did that through the croft

entrance scheme, which was a great way of getting younger people into the industry.'

The Scottish Government's Rural Priorities agri-environment fund distributed £30.5million to organic farm businesses across the country.

Rural Affairs Secretary Richard Lochhead said: 'The funding also clearly demonstrates our commitment to protecting the vulnerable flora and fauna that inhabit Scotland's rural areas.'

Portree, Mallaig Christmas fun

PORTREE High School pupils are hosting a Christmas Fayre this Saturday.

Organised by the pupil council, the event will feature performances from the school's talented musicians, Portree Primary School and the local panto group. The fayre will run from 11am until 4pm.

Meanwhile, Mallaig High and Mallaig and Lady Lovat primary school pupils are to stage a production of 'We Will Rock You'. Under director Lucy Hodes and choreographer Vicky Horn, some 'very impressive' dance routines have been produced.

The show at Mallaig High School on December 13, 14 and 15 starts at 7.30pm.



Sheena Mitchell and John Groundwater took their children Archie and Brodie to see Santa in his icy grotto at the Kinlochleven's Ice Factor on Saturday. 20_149santa01

Hundreds enjoy Leven Festival

KINLOCHLEVEN got into the festive spirit on Saturday when hundreds of people from across Lochaber enjoyed the 2011 Christmas Leven Festival.

The event, now in its fourth year, saw families flock to the Ice Factor to see Santa in his freezing ice cave grotto, a family of reindeer and Santa's elves. Music from local band The Shine, Christmas stalls, festive fare and a tombola added to the occasion.

Organiser Kay McDuff told *The Oban Times*: 'We made over £800 on the day and that goes back into Christmas festival funds. We are also donating money to the baby café in the community centre, to the country dancing and the local English church.'

Kay added: 'We donated the selection boxes we had left to Kinlochleven Primary School's party. It was a great day.'

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Jessica's winning smile

A LOCHALSH toddler has become 'the face' of the 2012 Eilean Donan Photography Exhibition.

Jessica Crawford was just 15 months old when mum Lynne photographed her across from the castle on a cloudy afternoon in August.

The competition challenged photographers to produce an image capturing the castle's standing in the local community in a unique way - and from hundreds of entries Lynne's beautiful image of Jessica was judged the winner.

Lynne, 34, who lives in Dornie, said: 'There were some absolutely cracking entries from both professional and amateur photographers.'

Lynne's mum Nina was delighted that little Jessica, now 18 months, had helped show off her mother's talent with a camera.

Nina told *The Oban Times*: 'Lynne's doing a photography course online. The guy who's running it really likes her stuff. He was quite impressed with the photo and has given her a bit of work.'

The exhibition will celebrate 100 years since Lieutenant Colonel John MacRae-Gilstrap began to restore the castle to its former glory in 1911. The castle was re-opened in 1932 after 20 years of hard toil.



Lochalsh past and future: Jessica Crawford, pictured at 15 months, with Eilean Donan Castle in the background. Photograph: Lynne Crawford.

Mart appeal for missing farm antique

AN AUCTION mart trustee is making a public appeal for help after an antique piece of farming machinery gifted to it disappeared.

Efforts to track down a pedal powered threshing machine have drawn a blank after it went missing from Ben Nevis Auction Mart some time over the summer.

Isabel Campbell, one of six Lochaber Agricultural Trust trustees, was gifted the 100-year old foot thresher by the late Alec Kennedy, a crofter from Blarmafalach, near Fort William. After a long search, Ms Campbell finally found a restorer with the skills needed to bring the machine back to full working order.

But when she took Aberdeenshire farmer Alan

EXCLUSIVE

REPORT by
STEPHEN NORRIS
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Gray down to the mart, the foot thresher could not be found. It had been hoped the antique would become a popular attraction for local school children visiting the trust at An Clachan to learn about crofting practices in days gone by.

Through *The Oban Times*, Ms Campbell asks anyone who could help her find the missing thresher to get in touch.

She said: 'I would like to know what happened to it. I was hoping to get it restored so the kids could see how the oats were threshed hundreds of years ago. It would have been good to get it going as a museum piece and

show them how it works. I would have shifted it months ago, but it was so heavy.

'I have already informed the Kennedy family that it has gone missing. I was so upset about the whole thing.'

Many Highland crofters relied on foot threshers, commonly manufactured in the northeast, to separate oats grown on in-by-land.

The thresher is operated by a man seated on a stool and cycling two foot pedals, linked by cranks to a gear wheel, which spins the rotating threshing drum at high speed.

Corn introduced at the front feeding channel and the grain is separated from the ears, dropping through to be collected on the floor, while stalks and chaff are ejected at the rear.

Second chance to appoint local representatives

RESIDENTS in Lochaber and Skye have a second chance to appoint local representatives in community council elections.

After the first deadline last month, Nether Lochaber and Glen Coe and Glen Etive both

failed to attract enough nominees, as did Glendale, Broadford and Strath, Dunvegan, Raasay, Sleat, Skeabost and District on Skye.

The deadline for nominations is 4pm tomorrow (Friday).

Murder inquiry launched into teenager's death

POLICE have launched a murder inquiry into the death of a South Uist teenager found dead in a derelict building in a Lewis township.

Liam Aitchison, aged 16, disappeared on Tuesday November 22 and his body was found in Steinish near Stornoway last Tuesday.

Detective Chief Inspector Kenny Anderson said a 'major inquiry team' had been set up to lead the investigation.

He said: 'The response from the community in Stornoway to appeals for information has been very positive and I would appeal to anyone who may have information in relation to this crime to contact the incident room at Stornoway Police Station.'

'In particular, we wish to trace witnesses who may have seen three people wearing hooded type tops, who were seen walking in the Steinish village area shortly after midnight on Tuesday November 22 into the early hours of Wednesday November 23.'

Liam's family have asked anyone with any information about the youngster's death to contact the police. In a statement, the family said: 'We would like to thank everyone for all the kind words and offers of support. We'd also like to thank the police and our family liaison officers.'

'Most importantly we beg you, if you have any information and have not brought it forward as yet we urge you - please go to the police. Without this help we can't get peace.'

Since the summer, Liam had moved between Carloway on Lewis and his family home in Lochboisdale. It is believed he may have been living rough in the dilapidated building.

Anyone with any information should contact Stornoway Police Station on 01851 702222 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Independence 'yes' result would nullify constituency changes

A CONTROVERSIAL carve-up of the Highlands into new 'super constituencies' for future UK elections would be nullified by a 'yes' vote in a 2014 independence referendum, it is being claimed.

And Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch SNP MSP Dave Thompson says the current row over seat boundaries for the Westminster poll could end up being meaningless.

The Boundary Commission for Scotland (BCS) visited Inverness last week to hear comments on creating two huge constituencies in the Highland Council area from the three existing ones.

Under the draft proposals, the number of Scottish MPs will fall from 59 to 52.

Lochaber would be split in two for the first time, with the River Lochy and the A830 the dividing line. North electors would vote in the new Inverness and Skye seat, while those in the south would come under Argyll, Bute and Lochaber.

Highland Council proposed transferring 4,040 electors in Caol and Corpach from the northern seat into the Argyll constituency to balance up the numbers.

Applecross and Lochcarron should likewise be moved from Inverness and Skye into the Caithness Sutherland and Ross and Cromarty, the council said.

If the BCS rejects the changes, the council wants the new seats' names to be Argyll, Bute and

South Lochaber, and Inverness, Nairn, Skye, Lochalsh and North Lochaber.

Ross, Skye and Lochaber Lib Dem MP Charles Kennedy urged BCS to 'reconsider', suggesting the three seats currently within Highland Council area should be retained.

Mr Kennedy said: 'The net reduction of one in our Highlands and Islands representation runs completely contrary to the stated aim of the review, to achieve greater parity and equality of constituency representation. By using the large constituency provision I fought for, we could retain our representation. I urge the Boundary Commission to revisit the possibility of three Highland seats.'

But Mr Thompson warned all the wrangling - and any final decision - could count for nothing.

He told *The Oban Times*: 'The Boundary Commission will come to their conclusions by 2013 and any UK election after that would be on the new boundaries.'

'However, if the referendum on independence is held in 2014 and there is a 'yes' vote, I expect negotiations for independence would be completed before the date of the next UK election in May 2015, in which case they [the UK boundaries and constituencies] would no longer be relevant to Scotland.'

The BCS consultation finishes on January 4 2012.

High school staff and pupils raise cash for Mary's Meals



Wee Can Club members from Lochaber High School at their stall on High Street on Friday. 20_1498501

BIG-HEARTED pupils and staff from Lochaber High School braved heavy showers to raise cash for Mary's Meals on Friday.

Twelve members of the school's Wee Can Club set up stall on Fort William High Street to sell homemade Christmas gifts and produce.

Pupils also made street collections and met a generous response from Christmas shoppers. The money raised will go on providing locally sourced meals to children in countries such as Malawi, Haiti and tsunami-ravaged Japan. Backpacks full of items for use in the classroom and for personal hygiene will also be provided to pupils. The Wee Can club meets twice weekly at the school over lunchtime and this year chose Mary's Meal's as its target charity.

The aid organisation feeds almost 600,000 needy children across the world, in countries stricken by poverty, natural disasters - or both. Learning support teachers Kirsty Mair and Ellen McAllister assisted the pupils.

Ms McAllister told *The Oban Times*: 'The effort of the pupils has been inspiring. It is a model of community involvement and has created a sense of thinking about others across the world.'

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FW

Cow rescued from bog

AN UNFORTUNATE west Ardnamurchan cow had to be rescued after getting stuck in a bog during stormy weather last week.

Local resident Janice Rodger raised the alarm and Hughie MacLachlan was able to rescue his animal with help from his brother Titch, his sisters Rosie and Nan and a small digger.

Countryfile star guest speaker at Fort William fundraiser

ADAM Henson, TV star of Adam's Farm on Countryfile, is coming to Fort William on Friday May 11 2012 to be the guest speaker at a fundraising dinner being organised by Lochaber Rural Education Trust.

The event will be held in Caol Community Centre and will include an auction, raffle and a ceilidh dance.

Local school children will have the opportunity to meet Adam in the Rural Education Centre at An Clachan in the afternoon between 2pm and 4pm. For further information on tickets contact Isabel or Linda on 01397 703819. Corporate tables are welcome.

City campus cash boost

INVERNESS College UHI has been given the green light to invest nearly £5million in a state-of-the-art campus for the city.

Support from the Scottish Funding Council will bring together students and staff currently at the college's Longman and Midmill campuses to a new site at Beechwood, significantly modernising the institution's estate.

Education secretary Michael Russell said the new campus would provide 'considerable benefits' for staff, its 8,500 students and the local economy.



Lady Lovat pupil designs winning Christmas card

P4 pupil Heather Nicolson celebrates with her Lady Lovat Primary schoolmates after she saw her design being made into a Christmas card at the printers for Lochaber Housing Association. Heather's winter scene was picked as the best of dozens of entries from Lochaber primary schools and will feature on cards being sent out to more than 600 tenants. Heather was presented with a framed copy of her design and a gift by LHA staff members Irene Christie and Alistair Kennedy. Heather said: 'My prizes were super. My picture is up on my living room wall so that everyone can see it.' Chief Executive Blair Allan thanked all the schools who took part and especially thanked Printsmith for welcoming the children into their workshop.

Council welcomes new energy fund

HIGHLAND Council has welcomed Scottish and Southern Energy plans to set up a new Scotland Sustainable Energy Fund that could be worth more than £90 million over 25 years.

The Highlands stand to gain significantly as community benefit for each megawatt of generation capacity from wind turbines installed should rise from £2,500 per annum to £5,000.

More good news is that the fund will be available for

organisations promoting skills development, community energy schemes and improving the built and natural environment.

Council leader Michael Foxley said: 'This is very welcome news indeed. We have consistently argued for a minimum of £5,000 per annum for each megawatt of generation capacity and the setting up of this fund finally recognises this threshold.'

'We are also pleased that SSE

stakeholders, such as the council, to discuss the fine detail of how the fund is distributed with the aim of maximising the benefit for local communities, enhancing the skills of local workers, through training, creating jobs and seeing real improvements to the fabric of our local communities.'

The commitment will cover all new onshore wind farms constructed in Scotland from January 1 2012.

Have your say on Gaelic Language Plan

THE WEST Highlands public is being invited to submit comments on Highland Council's second Gaelic Language Plan for 2012-16.

The Gaelic committee appeal follows public meetings at eight venues across the region, including Portree, Fort William and Dingwall.

Chairman Hamish Fraser

thanked those who attended and urged anyone unable to attend the meetings to make their views known by 5pm on Wednesday January 4, the closing date for the consultation.

The final draft will be submitted to the Gaelic committee on March 8.

The full Highland Council will

consider the final plan on April 5 before submitting it to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for final approval.

Comments can be made online at the council's website at www.highland.gov.uk/gaeliclanguageplan by e-mail to gaelic@highland.gov.uk or by post to Gaelic Development Manager, The Highland Council, Town House, Inverness, IV1 1JJ.

Police appeal for witnesses to three car collision on Skye

POLICE in Skye are continuing to appeal for witnesses to a road traffic collision on the A855 at Rigg, Isle of Skye, on Friday.

The accident, which occurred around 12.30pm, involved three vehicles and saw two people being taken to the Dr MacKinnon Memorial Hospital in Broadford for treatment.

PC Dan Goodwin told *The Oban Times*: 'There was substantial damage to two of the vehicles.'

Contact Portree Police Station on 01478 612888.

Panto hit by road closure

Group expects work will have impact on audience numbers

THIS weekend's A82 closure has been called 'unfortunate' by the director of a Fort William panto which could see attendance figures hit by the works.

Lochaber Showstoppers director Clare Brewer told *The Oban Times* they were expecting the closure to have an impact on the number of people from south Lochaber attending the show.

'A Christmas Carol' starts tonight (Thursday), with further performances on Friday and Saturday evening and a matinee on Saturday.

Ms Brewer said: 'It's unfortunate. We plan things a year in advance so we had no idea this would happen.'

We've already had a few people phoning to ask us what the times are for the show.

'We're advising people to come along on the Thursday night. The Friday and Saturday nights will mean a long trip for people, although we do have a matinee on Saturday afternoon.'

She added: 'Ballachulish has its own panto on Saturday and we're happy to share our audience with them. Hopefully the people in Fort William will come out and support us.'

Meanwhile, Stagecoach has confirmed its hourly bus service between Fort William and Kinlochleven will not run during the works.

The last 44 bus service from Fort William to Kinlochleven will be at 8pm tomorrow (Friday) December 9 and from Kinlochleven to Fort William at 8.55pm. The road is due to re-open on Monday, with the first buses leaving Fort William at 6.34am and Kinlochleven at 7.33am. Steve Walker, managing director of Stagecoach in the Highlands, said: 'We apologise for any inconvenience caused by this closure, which is outwith Stagecoach's control.'

Forestry Commission Scotland will remove a 250-tonne overhanging rock one mile north of Corran Ferry between 10pm on Friday and 6am Monday.

Bid to ensure fair share of national jobs

A MOVE for a concerted campaign to ensure the Highlands claims its share of jobs from Scotland's new national emergency services is underway.

The unity call came in a letter from Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch MSP Dave Thompson to Highland, Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles councils chief executives and co-chairs of the joint police and fire board covering the area.

Mr Thompson suggests a meeting to agree a collective strategy on making a bid for the north to

host some backroom functions of the new single Scottish police and fire services.

Mr Thompson said: 'We must guard against an assumption that all central office functions for the new national police and fire services are best dealt with from the HQ in Tulliallan. It is important that we get organised quickly to allow us the best chance to submit a successful bid for some of this work to be carried out in the Highlands and Islands. After all, if the new national services are launched

with this work already happening elsewhere, it would be far more difficult to make a case for them to be relocated. That is why it is so important that we have an early united and coherent approach to presenting a case for these functions to be spread around Scotland.'

Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill pledged in parliament that jobs in human resources, finance, legal affairs and information and communications technology could be spread around Scotland.



Sports day marks end of Lochside Malawi project

Pupils at Lochside RC Primary finished up their class project on Malawi with a day of sporting activity and a competition to design their own trainers. The children were allowed to wear their own trainers to school in exchange for a £1 donation to the newly-formed 'Rights Respecting Schools Group' charity. The money raised will go towards training people in Malawi with work skills such as joinery, plumbing and painting.

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Wet and warm autumn

AUTUMN in central Lochaber was the wettest and warmest for years, records have shown.

At Achnabobane near Spean Bridge, amateur meteorologist Andrew Bootman measured an eye-watering 965mms - or 38 inches of rainfall - over September, October and November.

The total - more than three feet of rain - was 38.3 per cent above the average since 2002, when Mr Bootman began taking measurements.

Average temperature over the three months was 10.6C (51.5F), a full 2C (3.6F) above what would have been expected.

Mr Bootman picked out November as being particularly exceptional. In 2011 the average temperature was a balmy 8.8C (47.8) - an incredible 3.35C (6F) higher than the norm. By comparison, in November 2010 mean temperatures measured 2.2C (36F), 3.2C (6F) below average - and 6.6C (11F) colder than this year.

Mr Bootman told *The Oban Times*: 'It has been very wet and very mild. However, looking out my window just now there's snow on the Grey Corries so I think December will see a change - as long as it's not like last year!'

Roy Bridge village shop for sale

THE VILLAGE shop in Roy Bridge has been put up for sale as the owners plan a move away from the area.

Raymond and Lorna Weir, originally from East Kilbride, bought Roy Bridge Stores four years ago and told *The Oban Times* they were considering moving back to the central belt.

Mr Weir said: 'We're looking at long-term possibly moving to be closer to family so we've put the shop on the market to see what happens. Until then it's business as usual. We're in no rush to sell.'

Mr Weir also said they wanted the business to continue as a shop after any sale. He said: 'We've done a lot of work and spent a lot of money on it and we've got a lot of positive feedback from the public. We're very keen to see the work we've done continued. The shop is vital for the village.'

Local priest Father Tom Wynne said: 'It is the ardent wish of most people that whoever buys the shop, the village will continue to be served with the same warm efficiency and kindness that it has experienced over the years since Raymond bought the business.'

Plans lodged for holiday cottages on former reservoir

PLANS have been lodged with Highland Council for seven holiday cottages and a manager's house/holiday cottage in a remote Lochaber glen.

Mr J P Mainardi, of Inverskilavulin,

Glenloy, wants to build the development on a former reservoir site 560ms southwest of Inverskilavulin, near Banavie.

Agents are D Kelly Design, of High Street, Fort William.

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Police get tough on drink drivers

FIRST-TIME drink drivers could have their vehicles seized, taken away for sale or destroyed under a tough new forfeiture scheme.

That's the uncompromising message from Northern Constabulary as its four-week festive safety campaign got underway on Monday.

Since 2009, police have had powers to seize vehicles under a warrant issued by the court for drivers caught drink or drug driving for a second or subsequent time.

But now first time offenders found to be more than three times the legal limit, and those refusing to provide a sample for analysis without reasonable excuse, also risk having their vehicles sold or scrapped. A criminal record, a substantial fine and minimum 12-month ban will be automatic.

The move, part of the Association of the Chief Police Officers in Scotland festive crackdown, will be backed up by increased patrols.

Head of the force's road

policing unit Inspector Derek Paterson issued a stark warning to persistent and high tariff offenders.

He said: 'On conviction their vehicle is forfeited, then sold or destroyed. It is hoped the added consequences will act as a deterrent and further discourage those intending to drive whilst under the influence of drink or drugs. And in a new move this year we will be carrying out static checks on roads morning, noon and night and therefore the likelihood and consequences of getting caught has never been higher.'

'I would therefore ask members of the public to report those who drive under the influence of drink or drugs irrespective of whether they are family, friends or work colleagues. They are all risking lives and we will deal robustly with anyone committing such a serious offence.'

He added: 'Our communities see driving under the influence of drink or drugs as a major concern and this is clear to us given the support we receive.'

Lorry driver fined for hitting trailer

A LORRY driver who hit a trailer while making his way through roadworks in Rannoch Moor and left the scene without exchanging details has been fined £270 and given six penalty points.

Prosecutor Alison Wylie told Fort William Sheriff Court Wishaw man Peter Flannery was stopped on the A82 at White Corries by temporary traffic lights and, after waiting around five minutes, he decided to move on. Flannery clipped the back of the trailer he was trying to pass and was stopped by a workman,

but drove off after discussions became heated.

Defending, Hamish Melrose said his client had been told he could move on by a workman and was 'unaware' of any collision at the time.

Flannery, of 154 Innerleithan Drive, Coltness, pled guilty to driving without due care and attention, colliding with a flatbed trailer and damaging it on June 9.

The 41-year-old also admitted leaving the scene of an accident without giving his details.

Lotto jackpot rises to £1,100

THERE were no winners again in the Fort William FC lotto draw on Saturday. Numbers were 2-10-12. The jackpot goes up to £1,100 this week.

Newsdesk 01397 703003



Christmas gift: Allan and Tanya Ross present nurses Donna and Rachel with the children's resources.

Gifts bring cheer to toddler's ward

THE PARENTS of a Lochaber toddler who died from cancer have made an emotional return to the hospital where he fought for life.

Corpach couple Allan and Tanya Ross visited the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Edinburgh at the weekend to make a special Christmas delivery of gifts from their charity, STAR for Harris.

Five television/DVD combos, electronic reading materials, games consoles and music resources were donated to make life for children undergoing long and punishing chemotherapy a little more bearable. And a weekly music therapy initiative, also funded by the charity, is scheduled to start in January for

By STEPHEN NORRIS
snorris@obantimes.co.uk

oncology patients on the ward and at an associated drop-in centre. Tanya told *The Oban Times*: 'When Harris was on the ward, he continued to meet milestones even though he was so ill and undergoing such gruelling treatment. We credit this partly to the many toys and resources we had for him so this inspired us to use some of the money raised for STAR for Harris' to provide a range of toys and activities for children being treated for cancer right now.'

'The televisions are a necessity on an oncology ward where many children are attached to various drips and infusions

and therefore unable to wander around freely or are simply too ill to leave their bed.'

'We were delighted as we were met on the ward by two of Harris's favourite nurses - Donna and Rachel.' She added: 'We also have a delivery of a television/DVD combo and a wide range of DVDs being delivered to Clie Villa this week by Harris's friend and ward buddy, Victoria, aged four. She has just finished treatment for leukaemia.'

'Clie Villa is the Clie Sargent house where we stayed with Harris during our 10 months in Edinburgh, so was our city home.'

The charity has also started funding similar resources for

children going into isolation—their most intense cycle of chemotherapy.

'We have just delivered our first load to a wonderful little boy called Gregor who is about to go through a bone marrow transplant at Yorkhill Hospital, Glasgow,' said Tanya.

Harris died last year from an aggressive brain tumour aged just 16 months. STAR (Supporting Treatment and Awareness Raising) highlights the vital need for early diagnosis of life-threatening cancers in young children and helps fund treatment.

The charity has already gifted £13,000 towards precision 'satnav' instrumentation used in brain surgery to the RHSCE.

Learner driver banned from obtaining full licence for six months

A CAOL learner driver has been banned from obtaining a full licence for six months after driving a car alone and without the owner's knowledge.

Craig Tolmie, of 48 Camesky Road, pled

guilty to taking the car without the owner's consent from Torlundy Road on November 13 and driving on various roads, including Torlundy Road and North Road, without valid insurance. The 18-year-old admitted

driving without a qualified driver and no 'L' plates.

Sentencing Tolmie to carry out 70 hours unpaid work, Sheriff David Hall said: 'This was a stupid thing for you to do.'

Unusual film about time puts ancient proverb to the test

TIME AND tide wait for no man, English chronicler Chaucer wrote – now a Knoydart resident filmmaker is putting the ancient proverb to the test.

In an unusual film project about time, Sam Firth is filming herself in exactly the same place on the beach outside her Inverie home, at exactly the same time every day for a year.

The demanding schedule for the film, entitled *Stay the Same*, means Sam can't leave home for more than 23 hours at a time.

This weekend she'll risk a shopping trip to Fort William – but only if sea conditions allow the return ferry trip to Mallaig.

Sam, who started filming on the summer solstice this year and will shoot her last 10 minutes of silent footage on June 21 2012, described her project as 'a bit more experimental than I am used to'.

She told *The Oban Times*: 'So far there's been nothing so important that I can't work around – if you are going to do something like this, you can't do it by halves.'

'Obviously, if I needed to go to hospital or if a family member got sick I would have to leave – and if I started going bonkers I would stop.'

'I stand in silence for ten minutes every day in all weathers, sometimes it's really windy. It is about our relationship with time, nature and place – people want to live a faster and faster pace of life and yet at the same time want to slow down the aging process.'

'The final film will be 15 minutes long – some days

By STEPHEN NORRIS
snorris@obantimes.co.uk

snorris@obantimes.co.uk might only have a few seconds. Hopefully you will see the tide going out and coming back and the light changing through the seasons.'

Stay the Same is Sam's third short film and follows the success of her one-minute film *ID*, which won several awards internationally.

Reaction to the UK Film Council and Creative Scotland-funded project, Sam says, has been one of the most interesting things about it.

'People are used to me being off the wall already, but everyone wants to see what the final result is,' she said.

'I have had strangers tell me how they feel about aging and death and I am pretty sure most of the locals think I am bonkers.'

'A lot of my friends are worried the film might send me mad, but on a day to day basis I am actually enjoying it.'

She added: 'I think in your late thirties you become increasingly aware of your own aging and the limitations of time, especially as a woman. Up until recently I was living like I had forever – which of course none of us do.'

Sam is not the only one working on the theme – she has found the local postie's dad has been taking photos of the same gate every week for more than 20 years.

Next project is a film with Mallaig Primary School next year – Sam just needs to make sure she is back home in time to film each morning.



Sam Firth: filming every day on the shore at Inverie. Photograph by Jim Manthorpe.



Samantha Arch: pensions 'not gold-plated'. 20_499strike02

NHS PHYSIOTHERAPIST Samantha Arch was among those taking part in Wednesday's protests. Ms Arch, who is based at Fort William Health Centre at Camaghael, said the new pension deal would leave her working later and receiving a smaller pay out.

She said: 'They are asking me to contribute more and more to my pension and retire even later. They are saying our pensions are gold-plated, but that's just not true. The majority of public sector workers are women and they are affected more by this. Most of them will have taken career breaks or would have worked part time for a period, and that means they've paid less into their pensions.'



Stephen Carruthers: unhappy at government proposals. 20_499strike03

LOCHABER High School English teacher Stephen Carruthers joined the strike to show his opposition to the UK government's pensions reform package.

Mr Carruthers warned the new proposals could adversely affect schools.

He told *The Oban Times*: 'I'm here because the government's cuts in education are already starting to have an effect on pupils in Lochaber. The new pension plans will make it even more difficult to attract new teachers in future.'

'I will be paying significantly more into my pension contributions and receiving considerably less, as well as not being able to retire until I'm 67.'



Workers in Fort William showed their anger with government plans for public sector pensions. 20_499strike01

By RICHARD HADDOCK
rhaddock@obantimes.co.uk

Mass walk-out of Lochaber public service workers

STRIKING Lochaber public sector workers are hoping last week's mass walk-out will force the UK Government to 'show some sense' over pension reforms.

Union members took to the streets of Fort William last week as part of nationwide protests against proposals which would see workers more than ten years short of pensionable age working longer, contributing more and, potentially, receiving less when they retire.

Pickets were on duty outside Lochaber High School, Belford Hospital, the council's TEC Services depot at Carr's Corner and Lochaber Leisure Centre.

A Unison Scotland spokesperson told *The Oban Times*: 'There is no more strike action planned at the moment. We hope that the strength of feeling shown last Wednesday will be enough to persuade the government to show some sense and stop trying to make public sector workers pay what is in effect an extra tax through their pensions to bail out the banks. We urge the government to enter serious negotiations.'

A group of around 40 striking workers met outside Highland Council offices in the town, marching down the High Street and along the A82 bypass, attracting plenty of attention with flags, whistles and vuvuzelas.

During the strike, all schools across the Highlands were closed, routine operations at Belford Hospital and Broadford Hospital were postponed and the Corran Ferry did not run. Council service points at Broadford, Kyle, Portree and Fort William were all closed for the day and refuse collections in Lochaber and Skye were cancelled. Lochaber Leisure Centre was open for a short time in the afternoon and Fort William's Montrose Centre for adults with learning disabilities was also open.

Mass walk-out of Lochaber public service workers

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Six-and-a-half per cent ferry fare increases hit islands without RET

FERRY fares will increase by 6.5 per cent from April – but only for those islands not included in the Roads Equivalent Tariff (RET) scheme. Local authorities were last week advised of the above-inflation increase for all Caledonian

MacBrayne (CalMac) routes throughout the Clyde and Hebrides, as well as NorthLink ferry connections to Orkney and Shetland. The news will come as a bitter blow to islands like Mull, Lismore, Canna, Rum, Iona,

Jura, Muck and Raasay, which have not been included in the expanded RET scheme at this stage but continue to struggle against increased living and business costs. There has already been some suggestion that the increased

fares are in effect paying for the permanent extension of the RET to the Western Isles, Coll and Tiree, but Transport Scotland said the move has been forced by cuts imposed by the UK Government. A spokesperson for Transport

Scotland said: 'The decision was made in order to safeguard lifeline ferry services in light of cuts imposed on the Scottish Government by the UK Government as well as increases in fuel costs.' Mandie Currie, chair of

Lismore Community Council, said: 'I think we're all too busy struggling to get by to be angry at the increase. People are being squeezed from every angle and this won't be good for the island.' Meanwhile, Alan Reid, Lib-

eral Democrat MP for Argyll and Bute, said: 'This increase, well above the rate of inflation, is a blow to ferry passengers. The blow will fall most heavily on those islands, like Mull and Bute, which will not benefit from RET.'

Cement mixer stolen in Dalmally

POLICE are appealing for witnesses after a concrete mixer was stolen from a building site in Dalmally. The orange Belle cement mixer, which has a Honda engine, was taken sometime between November 12-30.

Anyone with information should contact constable Iain Young through Oban Police Office - 01631 510500

TV cameras make tracks for Argyll

ARGYLL is at the heart of BBC Television's *Country Tracks* programme this coming Sunday when presenter Joe Crowley visits one of Scotland's most historic archery fields at Armaddy Castle, south of Oban, and meets today's longbow archers who still use the natural landscape to full advantage.

The programme also explores the West Highland Way as it travels through Glencoe and Joe Crowley will test both his skill and nerve as he kayaks through the turbulent waters of the Falls of Lora, as Loch Etive tumbles out into the Firth of Lorne.

The programme will be broadcast on Sunday, December 11, at 11am.

Appin crash charge

A MAN has been charged with driving without due care and attention in connection with a collision which occurred near Appin last week. The 40 year old allegedly collided with a wall near Creagan Bridge.



Traffic officers will be performing random spot checks throughout Oban and Argyll during their winter safety campaign. 15_149police1

Oban surgeon jailed after insurance scam

Nine-month jail sentence follows £25,000 attempted fraud

AN OBAN cancer surgeon risks being struck off after being jailed for a £25,000 house insurance scam. Ramesh Gupta, aged 50, was this week locked up for nine months following his conviction at Glasgow Sheriff Court for attempted fraud. Gupta is already suspended from Lorn and Islands Hospital in Oban in relation to other matters. The surgeon had taken out a

policy two days after a burst pipe flooded his house in January last year. He then made a bogus claim for the damage, which had also spread to his neighbour's property. Sheriff Nigel Ross told the shamed £100,000-a-year medic that a prison term was the only appropriate sentence. A trial in September heard how a leak occurred at Gupta's home in the city's Titwood Road, Crossmyloof, on January

11 last year. Gupta - who owns a string of properties - then took out insurance before making a claim a month later pretending the incident had just happened. Craig and Caroline McKirdy - neighbours affected by the damage - confirmed the date when the leak occurred. Gupta claimed he had never tried to make a claim, but had just 'alerted' the insurance company to the leak.

Gupta was represented by top QC Gordon Jackson when he returned to the dock this week. The lawyer said there was 'a degree of family pressures and influences' involved in the fraud bid. Adding: 'There are a large number of references from his medical background and they all speak highly of him. My understanding is that he will pay an enormous price for what he has done in terms of his professional career.'

First offenders' cars will be forfeited warns police

DRINK and drug drivers in Argyll and Bute face having their cars forfeited for a first offence as police launch their zero-tolerance festive road safety campaign. Officers started randomly stopping cars on roads throughout the county from Monday as they aim to reduce the shocking statistics that show one in seven fatal accidents are caused by a driver who is under chemical influence. Many of those can be 'next morning' drivers, but police say they won't be taking any excuses if they catch someone putting at risk the lives of other road users or pedestrians. Oban's Chief Inspector Brian

Auld said: 'This year we've extended the vehicle forfeiture scheme to first-time offenders who are either three times over the drink drive limit or for those who refuse to provide a sample. This is because there are still people who flout the law and drive while under the influence. We would hope people would think twice about drink driving because of the human impact, about the risk, harm and impact they can have on other members of the public and themselves. Of course, we hope the possibility of forfeiture acts as an extra deterrent.' With nearly a repeat offender caught in Scotland every day for the last two years, they won't

escape the gaze of the police. 'In the last two years, 702 repeat offenders have been caught throughout Scotland. In that time, 155 vehicles have been forfeited, with a further 18 orders pending,' Inspector Auld said. 'With that in mind, repeat offenders will face forfeiture in the same way. We want to make our roads safer.' Motorists will also be required to show that their vehicles are road worthy, with checks on tyres, lights and mirrors performed when a vehicle is stopped. The winter safety campaign will run until January 3 next year.

'Stop-strip' fails to halt runaway driver in six-mile car chase

Car loses tyre as driver tries to escape

AN OBAN woman admitted leading police on a dramatic car chase through the town and over Connel Bridge when she appeared at Oban Sheriff Court on Monday. Appearing from custody, Charlene MacDonald, 26, of 21 Combie Court, admitted a series of traffic offences just after midnight on December 3, starting on the A85 at Corran Esplanade, Oban when she failed to stop for police. She further admitted driving between Oban, Connel and the A828 without headlights, repeatedly crossing to the opposing carriageway and causing other drivers to take evasive action.

MacDonald continued to drive despite the her vehicle losing a tyre after repeatedly hitting the verge. Police deployed a spiked stop-strip in a bid to stop MacDonald's car at the junction between the A85 and A828 but she continued to drive on the deflated tyres. MacDonald further admitted failing to provide breath specimens and committing all the offences while on bail. Sentence has been deferred until December 13 to debate the full seizure of the vehicle, but an interim seizure was imposed after fiscal depute Mairi Crilley successfully argued forfeiture of the vehicle was a valid part of the potential punishment.

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Auction aims to aid widow and children at Christmas



Derek Dempster with some of the auction prizes on offer at the charity fundraiser. 16_149auction01

A MOTHER of two, who lost her partner and her home this year, will receive a special Christmas gift from friends this year. Michelle Donn's partner, shepherd James Steele, died in August this year after falling on Ben Cruachan while gathering sheep on the hill. Then came another bombshell as Michelle and her two young children, aged five and two, lost their home in Lochawe, which was tied into her husband's job. Driven by a desire to help the family this Christmas, friend of the family Derek Dempster, and his colleague Deborah Wyton, have organised a fundraising festive auction and raffle to be held in the Corran Halls next Saturday (December 17) between 1 - 4pm. There will be performances from Taynuilt Gaelic Choir, Taynuilt Swing Band and the Lush Puppies, added to craft stalls and children's activities in the hall. Among numerous lots are a signed Celtic football and a signed Honda touring car team shirt. Derek is overwhelmed by public support. He added: 'This fundraiser won't bring James back but it will help ease the financial burden on this family.' Anyone wishing to pledge prizes or donations can contact Derek on 01866 822 755.

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International success for young Phoenix boxer

LOCHABER Phoenix Boxing Club has added another historic victory to its growing list of successes – this time on the international stage.

Young talent Chris Bradley took the ring to box for Scotland against England in Manchester on Sunday – and exceeded all expectations to defeat his adversary.

Chris, 14, came up against the smart boxing Ged Shaw, a top class operator, but the Lochaber youngster's pride and guts saw him through.

The Scottish corner were surprised to find Chris three points down after the first round, but a clinical display saw the Fort William boy come out for round three level. Then, it was a case of cometh the man cometh the hour

as both boxers threw caution to the wind – and it was Bradley who had the desire to claim victory after a stirring battle.

Cornerman Niall Clark said: 'The win was nothing less than deserved as Chris has trained five days a week at the Lochaber Phoenix gym this season on top of travelling literally thousands of miles to train weekly with the Scotland squad.'

'He becomes the first boxer from Lochaber Phoenix to win for a boxing match for his country in 20 years.'

Elsewhere, Lochaber Phoenix were in Bannockburn on Friday with four boxers on the card at a show promoted by Hillpark ABC.

Kevin Aitchison faced the host club's Leighton MacKenzie, but

the 12 year-old found aggression alone was not enough against a clever opponent.

But Kevin's brother, 14 year-old Scottish champion James Aitchison, produced a near perfect display to completely outclass Hillpark's Connor Stewart.

In a very intimidating atmosphere, James was like a calm oasis right to the final bell and outclassed his accomplished opponent to clinch a landslide unanimous decision.

Up against Hillpark's Steven Buchanan, Lochaber's novice welterweight Liam Jordan Jordan showed huge improvement in technique to comprehensively defeat his man. Finally, topping the bill was senior light-welterweight Aidan Donnelly against

the home club's Gary Hamilton in a real barnstormer.

The crowd were on their feet for the entire contest as both boxers threw a tremendous amount of leather in a pulsating encounter.

Beginning the last Aidan was five points down, but staggered the Hillpark boxer in a relentless rampage. However, the bell came too soon and Donnelly came up an agonising point short.

The club will have three boxers in action at Dundee on Sunday when Chris Donnelly is scheduled to top the bill on his return to the ring. Liam Jordan and Scottish novice champion, 15 year-old Igor Sliwinski are also in action.

BOXING



Pride of Scotland: Chris Bradley won a bout for his country against England on Sunday. 20_1496bx01

Alleycats bowl them over

SPORTS ASSOCIATION

AFTER week five of the Lochaber Building Supplies 10-pin bowling league Alleycats remain in top spot in the scratch division with 23 points.

Council are in second spot on 22 points with Likely Lads moving into third on 18 points after beating Fairway Fillies 5-0.

Underdogs still lead the handicap division with 18 points with Alleycats on 16 points with Ardtoe/Nevis Radio and Rotavators sharing third a further point back.

The highest scratch team game of the week went to Alleycats with 609 whilst Council had the highest handicap game with 797. Council had the highest two-game scratch total with 1151.

Individually, the best game this week came from Gus Fraser (Council) with 185 scratch, 249 handicap, the latter being the season high. Pam Weller (Alleycats) had a 178 while Tim Attack (Ardtoe/Nevis Radio) chipped in with a 172. Pam Weller rolled the week's best two-game scratch series of 341.

Currently the top averages are from Tony Whitelocke (Alleycats) with 160 followed by Pam Weller (Alleycats) on 154 & Colin Pinkett (Council) on 150.

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Heavy defeat for Lochaber rugby boys

Aberdeen Wanderers 66, Lochaber 12.

LOCHABER slipped to another defeat last weekend as the RBS Caledonia Regional League Division Two North leaders Aberdeen Wanderers showed their class.

Lochaber's performance did demonstrate brief patches of how the side can play when they put their minds to it.

Bare Minimum

Lochaber travelled to Aberdeen with a bare minimum of fifteen players and put up a good fight

in the first twenty minutes of the match. Aberdeen scored a couple of soft tries but the match wasn't lost at that point. However, as several Lochaber players picked up injuries and had to play on, Aberdeen's try tally mounted.

Lochaber's spirits were lifted late in the first half when they scored a try against the run of play. Second row Chris Simpson intercepted a loose pass just outside the twenty-two and scampered the length of the pitch to score, with Kenny Turnbull converting.

The second half was more of the same, except Aberdeen were able to bring on fresh players. Lochaber dug in and tackled hard, but Wanderers strong runners broke tackles and their support players ran some great angles.

Late Flourish

Lochaber saved their best 'til last with a late flourish from the forwards. Number eight Adam Mercer took the ball on from a free kick and the pack got behind him and drove him towards the posts. Aberdeen stopped the

RUGBY

drive but Lochaber worked the ball to winger Dominic Smith, who showed good strength and skill to drive through, stretch and touch down one-handed over the line for his second try of the game.

Lochaber are due to play Moray home and away over the next two Saturdays. The clubs will have their fingers crossed the weather dries up as neither pitch is known for good drainage.



The Plateau Poma run at Glencoe had a good covering of snow at the start of the week.

Season could start a week early

LOCHABER'S skiing season may start a week early this year after the hills were hit with the first sustained snowfall of the winter this week.

The two ski resorts in the area, Nevis Range and Glencoe Mountain Resort, both saw heavy snowfall at the start of the week and may be able to open this weekend.

Nevis Range is currently closed for scheduled maintenance and is set to open next weekend, unless enough snow falls before Saturday.

Marketing manager Heather Negus said: 'Our opening date

is Saturday December 17, but given all the snow we've had, we'll make a decision at the end of the week about opening this weekend. If the snow's here, we will open.'

Ms Negus said the A82 closure would not affect the decision to open early, saying: 'We're recommending people come up the A9 and turn off at Dalwhinnie, and we've got a lot of local season ticket holders as well. We're not going to let some roadworks stop us from opening if the snow is here.'

Angela Macleod from Glencoe Mountain Resort told The

Oban Times they had not set a date for opening, but would start skiing 'as soon as we have enough snow'.

She said: 'We've got a bit of snow, but there's not enough at the moment. The [A82] road being closed this weekend is a bit of a problem as well. A lot of our staff come from Fort William so it adds an extra hour to their journey.'

'I don't know how sustainable the snow is, and we don't want to take on our staff and then have to pay them off.'

SKIING

Fort face a tough game at Formartine

FORT William manager Danny Conlon will be missing a number of first team players for Saturday's trip to Aberdeenshire to take on Formartine United.

Sean Grant, Kevin Ferguson and Andy MacLean are all likely to miss the match due to injury, while Chris Macleod and Danny Mackintosh have work commitments. Long-term injury victims John Campbell and Jonathan Smith will also miss out, with Stewart Gray set to continue in goal.

Conlon told The Oban Times Formartine are a better team than their mid table position suggests.

He said 'They've been pretty hot and cold so far. I haven't seen them but I've been told they are a good side individually and we're expecting a really difficult game.'

'But no matter who we're playing I'm more worried about us – it will be a tough game no matter who we are playing when we're away from home.'

Formartine are managed by

FOOTBALL

ex-Aberdeen manager Steve Paterson and feature a number of players with top-level experience, including former Dons Derek Soutar, Andrew Bagshaw and Alex Notman, and ex-Celtic and Dundee United midfielder David Hannah.

Fort's game against league leaders Forres Mechanics last weekend was cancelled due to an unplayable pitch at Claggan Park and will be rescheduled for a Wednesday as there are no free Saturdays left in the fixture list. Conlon said the fact his side have played six games less than the team above them in the league, Brora Rangers, is a cause for alarm.

'There's no doubt about it,' he said. 'It's a concern. The Highland League has said in the past teams have to fulfil their fixtures. But we've been unlucky; we've only had two games at home cancelled because of the pitch. The rest have been because of cup games.'

Ben wins as top three finishers are disqualified

JUNIOR racer Ben Miller won the latest winter league race at Wolfrax, Laggan, after confusion led to the top three finishers being disqualified.

In tough conditions, the front-runners missed a sign and took

MOUNTAIN BIKING

a wrong turn, meaning they did not complete the course correctly. Nix Forster was the first lady home.

Feathers fly at championships

INVERGARRY and Fort William RC produced the overall winners at the Lochaber Primary Schools Badminton Championships at Lochaber High School on Friday.

Invergarry's Taylor Rodgers beat off stiff competition from Spean Bridge's Jamie Macdonald to take the title by just a point, while in the boys' final Keir Gibson had to be at his best to defeat his Fort William RC classmate Lachie Shaw 15-12.

The event proved a big hit with schools and attracted entries from Arisaig, Banavie, Caol, Fort William, Fort William RC, Invergarry, Inverlochy, Lady Lovat, Lochside, Malliag, Roy

Bridge, Spean Bridge and Upper Achintore.

Each primary entered two boys and two girls, who competed in a round robin tournament for a place in the quarter-finals.

The hard fought matches entertained those waiting to play, and once the scores were collated a couple of additional play-offs were needed to decide the best eight boys and girls.

Some great badminton was on display in the knockout games – and Lochaber High School pupils refereeing the tournament were highly impressed by the standard on show.

Fresh from battle, the losing semi-finalists came back

BADMINTON

on court for the 3rd/4th place playoffs, which saw Ruaridh Cant from Upper Achintore beat Fergus Fraser from Invergarry and Emily Haine from Upper Achintore take 3rd place from Freya MacDonald of Caol.

The championships were organised by High Life Highland's Active Schools co-ordinator Bridget Thomas, in conjunction with primary and secondary PE staff.

Ms Thomas said: 'Many thanks to Lochaber High School for hosting the competition and to all those who helped and supported on the day.'



Lochaber Primary Schools Badminton Championships winners, left to right: Taylor Rodgers (Invergarry), Jamie Macdonald (Spean Bridge), Emily Haine (Upper Achintore), Keir Gibson (Fort William RC), Lachie Shaw (Fort William RC) and Ruaridh Cant (Upper Achintore). 20_1496bd02

Weather

Thursday Heavy rain showers.
Winds strong, west, south westerly
Temperatures 5°C to 10°C

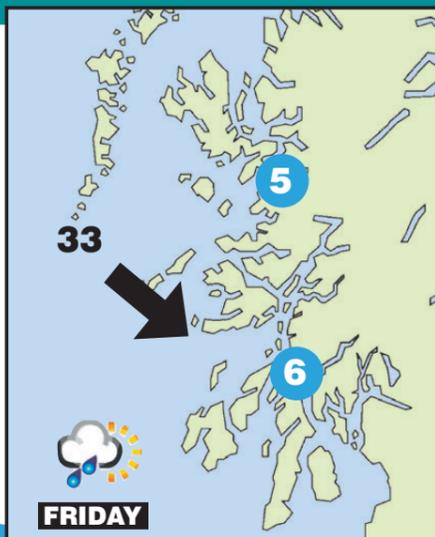
Friday Heavy rain showers.
Winds strong, north westerly
Temperatures 0°C to 6°C.

Weekend Sunny intervals.

Outlook Winds moderate, westerly
Temperatures 0°C to 4°C.

Ferry Crossings/Sea States

Oban to Barra/South Uist Moderate
Oban to Coll/Tire Moderate
Kennacraig to Islay Moderate



Tides

Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday, December 8, 2011** are listed below with differences for major ports listed beneath. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

| Date | am | pm |
|------|---|----|
| Thur | 04.00 3.5 10.35 1.6 16.26 3.7 22.35 1.4 | |
| Fri | 04.38 3.7 11.19 1.5 17.05 3.8 23.12 1.2 | |
| Sat | 05.15 3.8 11.44 1.4 17.42 3.9 23.49 1.1 | |
| Sun | 05.51 3.9 12.20 1.4 18.18 3.9 ** ** * | |
| Mon | 00.25 1.1 06.25 3.9 12.57 1.4 18.51 3.8 | |
| Tues | 01.01 1.1 06.59 3.9 13.33 1.4 19.24 3.7 | |
| Wed | 01.37 1.1 07.34 3.9 14.09 1.4 19.59 3.6 | |

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)

| | | | |
|------------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| Ardrishaig | -5.35 | Portree | +0.55 |
| Campbeltown | -5.30 | Tobermory | +0.16 |
| Crinan | -0.47 | Dover | +5.30 |
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