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& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

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Jail for man who attacked friend with tin whistle

A MAN who scarred and stabbed his best friend with a tin whistle has been jailed for 10 months.

Oban sheriff court heard last week that Craig MacMillan, 42, had been drinking strong cider with his friend on August 30 in the Mill Lane area of Oban, when they started to fight.

MacMillan, who had been staying in homeless accommodation in the town, claimed to have been struck by his friend and in retaliation had hit him 'with a stabbing motion' with a penny whistle.

The victim had three cuts to the back of his head and more on his arm, some of which needed staples and stitches.

MacMillan told Oban police: 'He's my best friend. He assaulted me but I assaulted him back and I'm sorry lads.'

Pleading guilty, MacMillan's sentence was backdated to September 2 when he was remanded.

Pupils serve up real treat for veterans

OBAN high school pupils welcomed the 'old guard' to their assembly hall on Tuesday for the 10th anniversary of the school's Pensioners' Treat.

Senior citizens were invited for tea, coffee, shortbread and mince pies, made by pupils from the food technology class and served by the hospitality students. There was also musical entertainment for the guests.

Among the guests were World War Two veterans Tom Lennox (pictured left), 95, and his next door neighbour and fellow veteran, Ian Tindall (pictured right), 94, who have both attended all 10 treats. Young pupil Ben Collins (pictured centre), 15, was on hand to serve the two veterans.

Oban high principal music teacher Morven McKerrell said: 'My grandfather made up a list of guests for the first ever Pensioners' Treat and from those 30-odd people, it's grown to around 70 people who are here today.'



TIMELINE

The best year ever for Oban musician

OBAN-based musician Angus MacPhail is reflecting on 2014 as his best year yet after his band Skipinnish was named live act of the year at the MG Alba Scots Trad Awards.

Angus, from Tiree, formed Skipinnish with Lochaber's Andrew Stevenson in 1999 but in 2014 the band had two number one singles and a Commonwealth Games gig.

For more, see page 11

Landslide road on Holyrood agenda

A PETITION calling on a permanent solution to landslide problems on the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful will be discussed by the Scottish government on February 17.

The submission by the Argyll First group of Argyll and Bute councillors is a repeat of a previous petition of more than 10,000 signatures.

Wee Toon cinema plan given £1.1m

CAMPBELTOWN Picture House supporters are celebrating a £1.1 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund towards its £3 million restoration plan.

Campbeltown Community Business Group, which is behind the cinema plan, now hopes to complete the refurbishment in 2016.

Oban Times hits the streets early

WITH Christmas Day and New Year's Day both falling on a Thursday, *The Oban Times* will be printed early to ensure our readers don't miss out.

The paper will be on sale on Tuesday, December 23 and Tuesday December 30.

Normal service is resumed on January 8.



Oban drives parking cash

STAGGERING 96% OF ARGYLL AND BUTE'S PARKING REVENUE EXPECTED TO BE GENERATED BY TOWN'S BELEAGUERED DRIVERS

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DRIVERS in Oban, Lorn and the Isles (OLI) have been expected to generate more than 96 per cent of Argyll and Bute council's entire car parking revenue in the first half of the financial year.

By the end of the second financial quarter of 2014/15, the car parking income target from OLI was £541,375, compared with the overall council target of £561,088.

This means less than £20,000 is expected to come from Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay; Helensburgh and Lomond; and Bute and Cowal.

The figures, presented in an 'area scorecard' shown to mem-

bers of OLI area committee last week, showed that the amount of parking income in the area was below target at £414,070.

The figures have angered Oban councillor Graham Fraser of Alba, who says the targets are 'unfair' on the town.

He said: 'I can't say the figure is surprising because the streets are being swept clean of cars by the traffic wardens.'

The knock-on effect of this target is Oban is being deprived because motorists are being hounded from the streets.

'The job of traffic wardens is to keep people moving and make sure there are spaces available, not make lots of money for the council.'

'Oban is of strategic impor-



Motorists are being hounded from the streets

Graham Fraser
(Pictured)

tance to the council because it is probably the busiest town in Argyll and Bute but people here are not being treated fairly.'

Councillors at the area committee said they would raise

the issue as part of a review of parking charges to take place on January 29 and encouraged members of the public to make their views known through community councils.

OLI councillor Iain Stewart MacLean said on Tuesday: 'It does seem to some people that OLI is subsidising other parts of Argyll with the figures quoted for parking.'

'The amount of money surprised me but it needs further analysis.'

'I am supportive of the review in January and I will be looking for a better outcome for OLI.'

Responding to the claim the charges were unfair on OLI, committee chairman councillor Roddy McCuish said the targets

had to be 'looked at' during the parking charges review.

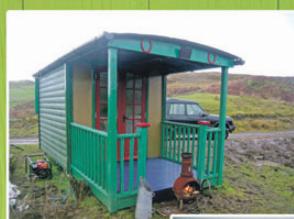
But he warned against sudden wholesale changes to how revenue is divided between areas, stressing that contributing to the wider Argyll and Bute pot had its benefits.

He said: 'Helensburgh raises so much more council tax than other areas and that comes back to places like Mull, Coll and Tiree, so I don't think we should create policy that means some areas will suffer if we all keep money in our own area.'

'But we do have to look at whatever area raises the most, getting the most benefit from it.'

'I will be asking for a staged process for areas to keep a bigger proportion of money.'

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Flats planned for Kilbowie House

LOUISE LEE
llee@obantimes.co.uk

AGREEMENT has been reached over the future of the vacant council-owned Kilbowie House in Oban.

The Victorian mansion is set to become six flats if plans are approved by Argyll and Bute council this week, *The Oban Times* understands.

Members of Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee (OLI) considered a number of offers for the former council offices in private and accepted a substantial sum for the building.

A last-minute motion brought by Oban councillor Iain Angus

MacDonald and signed by councillor Elaine Robertson failed to stall the sale of the property.

Area chairman councillor Roddy McCuish said: 'We have received a number of interesting offers for the Kilbowie property.'

'This has helped us to take a decision today which provides a good outcome for everyone.'

'It ensures we get best value for the public purse and secures a future for what is still an attractive building in a prominent Oban location.'

'It is only appropriate to contact everyone who made an offer first, so it is not possible to go into any more detail at

this stage.' During a recent site visit, councillors described Kilbowie House as in good repair.

The B-listed building was thought to require substantial work to ceilings in order to make the building wind and watertight.

However, the fact-finding mission by the Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee found the building was 'undervalued' and had 'great potential'.

Following the site visit last month, councillor McCuish said: 'From all the reports, we were expecting to see damage and disrepair throughout the building and it was the opposite.'

'We will be employing 14 people and will turn over at least £4 million in our first year.'

'The building is in good order. George Campbell (council clerk of works) and his team have done a superb job making sure it is wind and watertight.'

International publishing house Bombardil had a bid for the building turned down earlier this year.

The company has since moved its planned investment from Oban to Dornie.

Marianne Ruggard, one of the owners of the company, said: 'Highland council has made it very easy to take our multi-million pound company to the north.'

'We will be employing 14 people and will turn over at least £4 million in our first year.'

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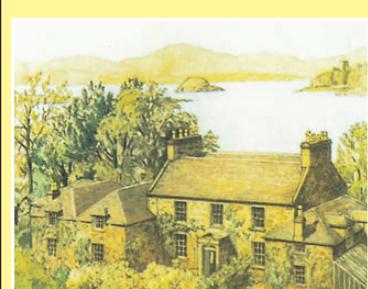
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Lottery luck for 17 millionaires

SEVENTEEN people living at PA postcodes have become National Lottery millionaires over the last 20 years.

And 155 prizes of £50,000 or more have been paid out in the PA area over the same period.

Communities across the area have been winners too, with 2,493 grants, amounting to £93,657,511, awarded to individuals and organisations across the arts, sports, heritage, health, education, environment, charity and voluntary sectors.

An Tobar on Mull was the recipient of the area's first National Lottery grant.

A National Lottery spokesperson said: 'Twenty years is a milestone to celebrate and thank National Lottery players from Argyll and Bute for their contribution to many life changing projects.'

Distillery extends band sponsorship

KILCHOMAN Distillery has extended its sponsorship of Islay Pipe Band for a further three years.

Band member Andrew McEachern thanked the distillery for its continued support and Kilmeny Ceilidh Club, which contributed to band funds.

Meanwhile, the band has been recording a new CD at Headhunter Records in Glasgow, which it hopes to release at Easter. The band's pipe major, Nigel Morris, is teaching piping at the high school and primaries two days a week, having taken over from James Carmichael.

Benefactor's cash boost for housing

ULVA school community association has pulled out the stops by raising and donating more than £3,000 to the island's housing project from events including a St Andrew's ceilidh.

With gift aid and a match funding pledge from a private benefactor, the total from the school is £6,400.

The housing group hopes to start building in spring 2015 - but this can only happen when it has secured all the necessary funds. The group still has around £40,000 to raise and is encouraging people to donate.

Population of isle of Iona up by 52

THE POPULATION of Iona increased from 125 in 2001 to 177 according to the 2011 census.

There has also been an increase in the number of households on the island increasing from 57 in 2001, to 69 in 2011.

Concern voiced over police merger plans

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A PLANNED merger between two police divisions, announced last week without prior consultation, will 'undermine' community policing in Argyll, says one MSP.

Police Scotland is proposing to merge L Division (Argyll and West Dunbartonshire) with K Division (Inverclyde and Renfrewshire), a move that has led to speculation L Division headquarters at Dumbarton could be downgraded.

But L Division commander Chief Superintendent Helen Swan said no detail within the proposal had been decided and insisted the merger could cut out 'duplication' between the divisions, allowing the force to increase front line services.

The plan comes just months after Police Scotland removed the chief inspector's post from Oban, amalgamating the role with the chief inspector for Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the islands.

Highlands and Islands MSP John Finnie is a former police constable and a member of the Scottish Parliament's justice committee, as well as its policing sub-committee.

He criticised the proposal as 'centralisation' that would 'undermine' community policing.

He said: 'The national service suffers from an instinct to centralisation that frustrates the public's wish for responsive, local policing.'

This is felt particularly keenly in rural police divisions, where there are greater distances and greater diversity between communities. Throwing Port Appin in



WARNING: John Finnie MSP thinks the division merger could damage community policing

together with Port Glasgow is not a recipe for locally-sensitive decision making.

'Policing in Argyll and Bute has altered enough in recent years and not always for the better. I think we need to take the time to reflect on the less than two years' experience of the single service. I'd like to see a moratorium on any further change which will inevitably see rural policing lose out.'

He told *The Oban Times*: 'If you are in Oban you may be asking, "Is this area being downgraded?"

'The sheriff court won't be holding jury trials - they are going to Dumbarton - and there was the removal of the chief inspector's post. Politics is about priorities and the priority should be having decisions made as locally as possible.'

'This move might be the test bed for elsewhere in Scotland but we want more local decision-making, not less.'

Oban-based councillor Roddy McCuish, leader of the council's Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee, is angry that elected members were not consulted on the matter before it was made public.

He said: 'This announcement has worked differently; we are being told, "This is what we are doing. What do you think?" That's not consultation. It seems like a fait accompli.'

Assistant Chief Constable Wayne Mawson, who is responsible for local policing in the West of Scotland, said: 'As a policing service we are continually evolving as we keep our structures under review. Local commanders have identified opportunities to further strengthen local policing, increase consistency in the provision of our service to communities and ensure we continue to look for financial savings where we can marry this with service improvements.'

Police Scotland needs to make £28.4m savings in this financial year, rising to £83.2 million in 2015-16 and £100m in 2016-17.

In response to claims Dumbarton police station would be downgraded, Police Scotland said no decisions had been made, as talks on the proposed merger were at an early stage.

Parents fight on against school closures

PARENTS on north-west Skye say they will continue to fight plans to combine four primary schools into one, leaving some children with a round trip of more than 20 miles.

Highland Council's education, children and adult services committee will decide next month whether to approve the recommendation to close Edinbane, Knockbreck and Struan schools and move pupils to a new and larger Dunvegan primary school. This will follow a

final public consultation period, between now and January 14.

The move would see a new amalgamated school with four classrooms built to house 66 pupils.

Knockbreck primary currently holds five pupils, Struan and Edibane each have six, while the larger Dunvegan has 43.

The three smaller schools lie several miles away from the site of the proposed new building, the furthest being Knockbreck at 11 miles, which would mean

extra travelling for children in the existing catchment areas.

Fiona MacDonald, secretary of Knockbreck primary school parent council, said: 'It is important to protect smaller schools. The travelling is a big issue because a lot of our road is single track and incredibly busy in the summer, and the journey times will also be longer than the council is willing to admit.'

[The council] also says our kids don't currently have the opportunity to play team games but

they already go to other schools for PE so they don't miss out.'

Drew Millar, Highland councillor for Eilean a' Cheò, supports the plans for a new campus. He said: 'Having listened to the professionals, they have said a new school would be of huge educational benefit.'

Copies of reports about the proposal can be found on the Highland council website. Paper copies are available at each of the four schools and Portree library.

University students come to rescue of lost seabirds



UNIVERSITY students have come to the rescue of seabirds which lost their bearings whilst migrating and became stranded in Mallaidh.

Martyna Syposz and Filipa Goncalves, who study life

sciences at Anglia Ruskin university in the south of England, spent the autumn helping local volunteers catch and release manx shearwaters back on to their routes towards South America after the birds became disorientated and landed on the mainland.

The birds are believed to have been on their way home for the winter from the Isle of Rum, which holds the second largest breeding colony of manx shearwaters in the world.

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MULL lines

Iona social housing boost

SOCIAL housing will be built on Iona for the first time in 30 years.

The last sum of money, £361,000 from Argyll and Bute council, will go towards building five new houses for rent on the island.

The new properties will more than double the available social housing on the island.

The council's Strategic Housing Fund grant to Iona Housing Partnership (IHP) was agreed last Thursday by the council's community services committee in recognition of the importance of affordable housing in maintaining and developing the area's economy and growing its population.

West Highland Housing Association will build two three-bedroom and three two-bedroom terraced homes.

Additional funding of £426,000 will be provided by the Scottish government, a further £150,000 from Iona Housing Partnership and West Highland Housing Association and private finance of £227,000.

A spokeswoman for Iona Housing Partnership said: 'Iona Housing Partnership is delighted at the outcome of the meeting today and look forward to the development being completed much sooner with this crucial award from the council.'

IHP would also like to thank those who have supported the Glebe Field project for the last decade by raising funds to both buy the land and then enable the plans to be ready for building.

'This will help the local community to consolidate the regeneration success that is happening by providing much-needed homes for those who are committed to staying on the island permanently.'

IHP is looking forward to working with West Highland Housing Association to deliver the scheme as planned.'

The time and cost for transporting raw materials and labour to a rural island location for such a development can add between 30 – 45 per cent depending on the location of the island and its transport links to the mainland.

Tobermory panto success



FUN SHOW: The annual Tobermory panto was well received by packed out crowds at the Aros Hall. Tickets were passing hands right up until the last minute to get in to see the show. A full review of the pantomime, Humpty Dumpty and the Magic Wall, will be in next week's Mull Lines

Musical Minds celebrates



CELEBRATIONS: award-winning Mull Musical Minds is hosting its second birthday party today (Thursday). The party is starting at 12.30pm at An Roth in Craignure. The group has much to celebrate after being shortlisted in a number of community awards in 2014.

MIKE MACKENZIE MSP Highlands and Islands

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Hoping to strike a chord with town's traders as project gets under way

A SITE office and meetings with Oban street traders in Stafford Street will be set up following the appointment of Raynesway Construction as the developer of CHORD stage one.

The construction company will deliver around £600,000 of public realm improvements along Stafford Street from January to May 2015 as part of the Argyll and Bute council project.

The local authority says it plans to set up the site office by Monday, January 19 and meetings with traders along Stafford Street to go ahead on Wednesday, January 14 or Thursday, January 15.

These meetings will introduce key members of the construction team to local businesses to discuss how best to minimise disruption during the construction stage.

A project start-up event is also planned for mid-January.

Chairman of Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee, Oban-based councillor Roddy McCuish, said: 'This is another great boost for the project which is really taking shape now. I'm delighted to have a national company of such repute on board to deliver the works.'

'We're going to be working very hard to keep people informed about what's happening. We appreciate there will be some disruption, and I would just urge people to be patient and bear with us while the work is ongoing.'

The improvements to Stafford Street will provide a terraced seating and viewing area; a flexible open area (with power and Wi-Fi) for small scale events and a shelter with inlaid artwork and ornamental colour changing LED lighting.

Pier performance area will destroy trade, says owner

LOUISE LEE
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AN OBAN businessman, who employs more than 70 people, says a 'useless performance space' to be developed on the North Pier will 'devastate' his business.

But Argyll and Bute council, which is responsible for the scheme - part of the Oban CHORD waterfront enhancement project - claims it will increase the number of visitors to the area.

However, Alan MacLeod, who runs the internationally-renowned Ee-usk fish restaurant and family restaurant Piazza on the North Pier, said access to his business will be severely restricted when the adjacent White Building is knocked down as part of the redevelopment project, and says it will 'effectively' close his business.

He also claimed the development infringed his rights as a tenant of the local authority.

Mr MacLeod wrote to all of Oban's councillors saying: 'In a final attempt to persuade you to re-site the performance space on the North Pier, will you please be aware of the contribution of the North Pier restaurants to the economy.'

The income tax, national insurance, VAT, rent and rates amount to more than £670,000 per annum.

'Siting the performance space where you propose is going to seriously affect the viability of my business.'

'How much will the performance space contribute to the economy? Will you please give me the figures?'

I urge you, please, to seriously



CONTROVERSIAL: the North Pier's proposed outside performance space

consider the business sense of your decision.'

Mr MacLeod's opposition comes as the council announced the contractor for another stage of the CHORD programme - the redevelopment of Stafford Street.

An Argyll and Bute council spokesman said: 'In place of

the White Building on Oban's North Pier, the council will be

constructing a new, purpose-built facility which will include a harbour office, additional public toilets and showers; secure locker facilities, storage and laundry, a waiting area for coach parties and cruise ship passengers and an exciting circular gathering

space, covered by a timber and glass canopy.

'We have used a series of consultations with the local community, particularly those directly affected by the project, including Mr MacLeod's restaurant business.'

'This was to inform them of our final plans and we are confident

that it is a design which will suit everyone.'

'This is one of many projects going on in Oban which are all designed to improve the experience for visitors and residents.'

Work is due to start on the £5.6 million CHORD waterfront improvements for the town in January of next year.

Blue-sky thinking as high-flying firm is ready for lift-off

LOUISE LEE
llee@obantimes.co.uk

A MULL businessman became so frustrated with cancelled ferries he has now bought a helicopter to get workers back and forth to the island on the same day.

Andy Knight, managing director of construction company TSL Contractors Limited, said he was fed up with the delays and has pumped more than £1 million into his new high-flying transport venture.

The *Oban Times* reported in August the concerns business people on Mull were having with talks over a later ferry service in the winter which would enable them to attend meetings on the mainland and return to the island on the same day.

The business community thought the negotiations had run aground and were duly abandoned.



In a moment of genuine 'blue-sky' thinking, Mr Knight came up with the plan for the helicopter.

He said: 'All the islands are in easy reach by helicopter.'

'And Inverness, Glasgow, Perth and Ayrshire all fall within a 60-mile radius of the helicopter's

base. Anywhere within half an hour's reach of Oban will make us extremely competitive.'

Andy believes the new Eurocopter AS350B3, branded as Skyhook Helicopters and flown by Angus Gibson, from Skye,

will be in demand across the area and is prepared to put his

money where his mouth is.

He added: 'This is an initial investment in excess of £1 million and I think that over time it will prove successful.'

The new helicopter operation will be based in the north Argyll area and day-to-day operations will be headed by manager Dun-

can McDonald, who previously worked for British International Helicopters in Cardiff.

TSL Contractors Limited started with a staff of three in 1979 and now employs nearly 100 people in four offices in Oban, Fort William, Loch Lomondside and on Mull.



AIMING HIGH: Andy Knight (left) has secured a helicopter to transport workers to and from the islands

Still no mobile service on Coll

ISLANDERS on Coll are still waiting for much-anticipated mobile phone coverage after the installation of vital equipment was postponed.

A connection issue has meant the link between Coll and Mull is still not operational, with network provider Vodafone claiming it is outwith its control.

Despite apologising for a delay, *The Oban Times* has learned the company did not have a schedule for the work to be completed, instead claiming it would be done 'as soon as possible'.

The island is to gain mobile phone

coverage for the first time through a community project developed by the Scottish Futures Trust, the Scottish government's Demonstrating Digital Programme, and the community-run organisation Development Coll.

The £165,000 project has included a new mast, with Vodafone providing its equipment free of charge.

A Vodafone spokeswoman said: 'We have been waiting for delivery of the equipment that provides the link between Coll and Mull.'

'This has now arrived and is being

shipped to our contractors for installation.'

'When this is complete there will be a little more work to make the transmission path operational but our engineers are working hard to get the site up and running as soon as possible. We're sorry about the delay but this has been beyond our control.'

She said no specific date had been earmarked for the start of the service but that it was in the company's interests to have it up and running as quickly as possible.

Unsecured car theft warning

POLICE are appealing for witnesses after property was stolen from a car parked outside the Alexandra Hotel on Oban's Corran Esplanade around midnight on December 8.

Anyone who may have seen anything suspicious or anyone acting suspiciously in the area at the time is asked to contact PC Iain MacLeod at Oban police office on 101.

Oban police want to remind people to ensure that their cars are left secure and items of value put out of sight, especially at this time of year when shopping or Christmas presents may be left in a car and taken advantage of by opportunistic thieves.

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Fraudster escapes jail to repay sum to Tiree company

A MAN who stole £5,000 from an island haulage company has been ordered to pay the money back.

Oban sheriff court heard last week that Robert MacLean, of St Mary's Wynd, Stirling, had a string of previous convictions for crimes of dishonesty but if jailed the company would not get its money back.

MacLean, who pleaded guilty to theft, had called MacLennan Motors on Tiree in February saying he had a six-wheel Scania, low loader and trailer for sale and after some negotiation there was an agreement to secure them with a £5,000 deposit made by a bank transfer.

Subsequent calls that day to the accused had failed to make contact and the company went to the police the following day.

The court heard MacLean, 48, had made some attempt to contact the company later, in order to pay the money back after seeing the vehicles and deciding they were not in a saleable condition, but had been told the matter was in the hands of the police.

He then spent the money.

Sheriff Douglas Small placed the accused on a community payback supervision order for 24 months and ordered him to pay £5,000 compensation to MacLennan Motors.

Ferrets row led to attack on wife

A BENDERLOCH man assaulted his wife after she let his ferrets out following an argument over who was supposed to feed them.

Oban sheriff court heard last week that 69-year-old first offender Denis Healey of Achaduin had thrown his wife of 39 years to the floor on November 30, held her by the throat, punched her and shouted and swore at her.

Healey had drunk a bottle of whisky and his wife a bottle of wine at the time of the offence.

'This stems from a row over ferrets. It was a row over who was to feed them,' said defence solicitor Gordon Seaton. 'Mrs Healey went into the garden and let the ferrets out.'

He said the offence was out of character for Healey and the couple had since been reconciled.

Sentence was deferred on Healey, who pleaded guilty to assault and breaching the peace, for nine months for him to be of good behaviour.

Shop manager to pay back £4000

THE FORMER manager of Oban's WH Smith shop in George Street has pleaded guilty to embezzling £2,300 plus taking £1,700 worth of cigarettes.

Carol Lester of Longsdale Terrace in Oban admitted taking the cash and the cigarettes from the store last year.

At Oban sheriff court last week, Lester, 41, was placed on a community payback order, required to do 250 hours' unpaid work and was ordered to repay £4,000 to WH Smith within 36 months.

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Wind turbine plans stall

SEPARATE plans to erect wind turbines at Kilchrenan and Arduaine have both been recommended for refusal.

Kilniver and Kilmelford community council was among the objectors to a plan by Celtic Sea Ltd to erect a 50-kilowatt, 34-metre (to blade tip) wind turbine at its Arduaine site.

At yesterday's (Wednesday) planning committee meeting Argyll and Bute councillors were also advised to reject a plan from Kilchrenan man Brian Neish, who applied to erect a 61-metre (to blade tip) turbine and access track north east of Barbreck Farm, Kilchrenan.

Arduaine has been the centre of activity in Argyll for the shellfish farms of Celtic Sea Ltd (CSL) for the last 20 years.

Harvested shellfish are transported from farms on Mull and on the mainland to Arduaine for central purification, packing and dispatch to the markets.

The company says the turbine is required to power large seawater pumps and for filter and UV systems to operate its purification system to Food Standards Agency standards.

The turbine would also be connected to the national grid which would allow exportation of any surplus electricity.

But Kilniver and Kilmelford community has led the dissenting voices, stating the turbine would have a negative visual impact and set a precedent. The community council also questioned the efficiency of a turbine sited in a sheltered cove.

Mr Neish's plan has attracted 27 objections, including Avich and Kilchrenan community council. The community council is concerned about the impact construction traffic would have on Kilchrenan, as well as concerns over visual impact, noise and wildlife safety.

Farmer wins seat on council



ELECTED: John Armour is a new councillor for South Kintyre after his by-election win

A KINTYRE man, 'born and bred' has been elected as the newest recruit to Argyll and Bute council, at a by election held last Thursday.

Claiming almost 60 per cent of the vote, father-of-two John Armour, 53, from Drumlembie, says he wants to support the people in his ward to make their lives better.

John, who is married to Carole, has lived in Kintyre his whole life and runs a beef and sheep, family farm at High Tirfergus.

Winning the South Kintyre seat for the Scottish National Party (SNP), John says he wants to deal with the issues people have been bringing to him while he was going round the doors.

He succeeds John Semple, who also served as an SNP councillor in the ward before his recent resignation.

Councillor Armour said: 'In my leaflet I said I would listen to everyone. I can't promise that I can put everything right – or even do everything that people want. But I will listen and I will do my best for people.'

'Some of the issues people have been telling me about when I have been on the doorsteps have been about the state of the roads and problems with flooding.'

'There are other concerns that I have about the lack of speed in dealing with the concerns of people who are in social housing. 'If I can do something then I

will. What you see is what you get with me. I am a straight-talking person.'

'Sometimes I will say things that people might not want to hear, but I will always try to be straight with everyone.'

Councillor Armour is keen to encourage discussion on the timetable for the Campbeltown to Ardrossan ferry.

He said: 'The ferry is an asset to the area. But the timing of the ferry means that businesses are getting little benefit from it.'

'People use the ferry on a Friday to go to Ayrshire or Glasgow and come back – but if it was on a Saturday I'm sure people would get much more benefit from it.'

On a 28 per cent turnout of

the electorate, Mr Armour was elected at stage one of the process, receiving 942 first preference votes. There were 1,515 valid ballot papers out of a total 1,522.

Charlotte Hanbury (Scottish Conservative and Unionist) polled 203, Michael Kelly (Scottish Labour Party) 156 and Joyce Oxborrow (Scottish Liberal Democrats) 214.

Argyll and Bute MSP Michael Russell welcomed the vote, adding: 'John will be a first class councillor for South Kintyre.'

'He is rooted in the area and as a community activist he knows what needs to be done for the place and all those who live there.'

Schools monitored for natural gas

LOCHABER schools are being tested for levels of a naturally occurring radioactive gas.

Radon is a normally harmless substance found in air everywhere, but Highland council staff are concerned some buildings may have a higher than average concentration which could increase the risk of lung cancer in the long term.

Starting this month, 34 schools in the Highlands will be checked including Lochaber high, as well as Banavie, Lochside RC and Inverlochy primary schools in the Fort William area.

St Brides, Ardgour, Glencoe and Strontian primaries will also be visited, where council staff will examine whether or not the levels of radon are high enough to warrant action being taken.

Those below a level of 400 becquerels per cubic metre (Bq/m^3) are said to pose no threat but those higher must have the substance pumped out.

Bill Alexander, Highland council's director of care and learning, said: 'We will issue a further update to all schools once further monitoring results are received.'

Driver guilty of careless driving

AN OVERTAKING manoeuvre cost a driver nine points on his licence and a £400 fine last week at Oban Sheriff Court.

Damian Ryszka, of Colonsay Terrace in Oban, pleaded guilty to careless driving on the A828 near the junction to the Traveller's site near Benderloch on May 22.

The court heard Ryszka, 28, was travelling towards Connel Bridge when he pulled out to overtake a minibus.

But a car had turned out from the junction and was heading towards the accused, causing the minibus driver to brake hard to allow Ryszka back into his own side to avoid a collision.

Payback order for drunk Mull man

A MULL man who shouted, swore and threatened his mother in her home while he was drunk has been ordered to get treatment for his alcohol problem.

Callum MacDougall, 47, of Bunessan, admitted the offence from May this year at Oban Sheriff Court last week.

The court heard it was not the first time MacDougall had committed such an offence to his mother.

He was placed on a community payback order for a year and as a condition ordered to get treatment for alcohol abuse and carry out 150 hours' unpaid work.

Head-butts lands man in court

A MAN who head-butted a teenager in the face has been ordered to pay his victim £200 in compensation.

Oban Sheriff Court heard last week that Hugh Vennard, of Longdale Road in Oban, had shouted at two teenagers in Queen's Park Place in the town, walked over and without warning head-butted one of them.

They reported the incident at Oban police office and Vennard, 32, was arrested.

He was ordered to carry out 270 hours unpaid work and pay £200 compensation.

Newsdesk
01631 568000



CHECKS: fire safety officers Alan Thomson, Adam Barclay, Duncan Lister and Martin Hill, with Oban couple Phil and Marie Montieth, who had a home fire safety visit



Ibiza Sun staff celebrate winning salon of the year at the Scottish Hair and Beauty Awards. From left: Emma Lynn, Sharon Murphy, Kelsey Grant, Dorota Palicka, Basia Banaszak and Kamila Wszelaka.

Lochaber beauticians celebrate award win

LOCHABER beauticians had plenty to celebrate at their Christmas night out as they were named winners of a regional award.

Dorota Palicka, owner of Ibiza Sun in Fort William, picked up the prize for north west salon of the year at the Scottish Hair and Beauty Awards in Glasgow.

She said: 'We didn't expect a win at all. It was totally unexpected when our salon was called to the stage.'

The following weekend, Mrs Palicka and 'her girls' put their glad rags on and enjoyed a night out in the town to celebrate.



WINNER: pictured receiving a £20 cash prize from Oban Camera Club's Peter Cleave is Valerie Marshall from Lerags, by Oban. She won a competition organised by the club, where the public was asked to identify 15 buildings in Oban town centre, photographed from an unusual angle. The competition was organised as part of Oban Winter Festival.

Valerie lands £20 club prize

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Height of ignorance as villagers kept in the dark over rail mast



COMMUNICATIONS BREAKDOWN: Connel resident Sandy Dunlop next to the mast at Connel Ferry station 16_t51mast01

STEVEN RAE
srae@obantimes.co.uk

A 29-metre communications mast has been branded an 'eyesore' by a Connel resident, after it was built without community consultation.

The mast, constructed by Network Rail at Connel Ferry railway station, did not need planning permission because under permitted development rights, prior permission from the local authority is not required.

Sandy Dunlop, who serves on Connel community council, can see the mast clearly from his house, which is just under a mile away.

He said: 'There should be consultation with neighbours and the community council but there was nothing. A massive crane appeared in the early hours of Sunday morning, and by midday the thing was up – I couldn't believe it when I saw it.'

'The council is in no way to blame because Network Rail can build on ground without asking.'

'The visual impact it has is huge – it's an eyesore. I think it's terrible that it can be put up without any public consultation.'

Michael McPhee is manager at the Falls of Lora hotel, which is right behind the station, and also lives next door to the hotel.

He said: 'Normally when there's

a major change or construction there's a letter or something sent out to people in the area to make them aware of what's happening, but there wasn't any consultation at all.'

'I would say there's a total lack of courtesy on the part of Network Rail.'

'You can see it from everywhere around about the station, it's a huge structure.'

A Network Rail spokesman said: 'Argyll and Bute council was informed of the plans in June.'

'The mast is part of our communication and signalling systems and is necessary for the operation of a safe and reliable

rail network. The mast is one of a network of similar masts across the country.'

'The siting of each mast is carefully considered to try to minimise its impact on nearby property, but where each mast sits is also limited by the geography of each location and the need to maintain even signal coverage.'

A spokesman for the council said: 'Under permitted development rights, telecom companies can build certain things without planning permission. Network Rail consulted the council out of courtesy, and the onus is on them to inform the public of any plans.'

Drug abuse driver banned and fined

POLICE stopped a car on Oban's Corran Esplanade after watching it being driven in an erratic manner between Dunbeg and Oban.

At Oban sheriff court last week, Christopher Campbell-Smith pleaded guilty to being unfit to drive through drink or drugs on the A85 on April 26 and possession of class C drug suboxone.

A breath test came back negative but a wrap with the drug was found in the car, which the accused said was his.

Campbell-Smith, aged 34, of Soroba Road, Oban, was examined by a doctor who said the accused was not fit to drive.

Because of a previous conviction for drink-driving, Campbell-Smith was banned from driving for three years and fined £495. He was fined £135 for possession.

Pylon set on fire

A LIGHTNING strike saw an electricity pylon at Grulin on Mull set on fire. Emergency services and Scottish and Southern Energy engineers were called at 3.30pm on Friday to Benmore Estate to deal with the blaze.

Early morning raid

A WOMAN was arrested in the Oban in the early hours of Thursday morning last week on suspicion of possessing the class B drug herbal cannabis. A report has been sent to the procurator fiscal.

Oban's back roads are a dead end

OBAN'S back roads are not suitable diversions when the A85 is closed through weather or road traffic incidents, police have confirmed.

Police Scotland has been looking at establishing a new contingency plan since May this year when the A85 at Pennyfuir was closed for eight hours following a fatal road crash.

Following the road closure, traffic in and around Oban was gridlocked for hours. Oban police later admitted its

contingency plans had proved ineffective as Connel and Glen Lonan back roads clogged up.

But after a review involving the area's road policing inspector Adam MacKenzie it was concluded that any official diversion via back roads would be unsuitable.

Now Oban councillors want the police and Argyll and Bute council to come up with an alternative plan by the next area committee meeting on January 14.

The call by committee chair-

man Roddy McCuish was in response to a report given last Wednesday by Oban police Inspector Julie McLeish, who said it would be 'inadvisable' to use the back roads when the A85 closed.

She told councillors: 'We have looked at that option and it won't work. The convoy system would take around 45 minutes and the roads are not suitable for that amount of traffic.'

'Also, the speed at which these incidents happen means we

have no time to take control of the back roads.' Inspector MacKenzie told The Oban Times: 'Unfortunately, Oban, like many other places, has one major road going in and if that closes, the back roads struggle to take the volume of traffic.'

Asked if the time taken to reopen roads could be reduced, he replied: 'We are actually very sharp on that. The fire and ambulance have to treat people at the scene and only then do we investigate.'

Police chief in move to reassure villagers

POLICE Scotland has moved to allay fears that Dalmally police station is to close after the community officer based in the village moved to Oban. PC Iain Young has transferred to Oban, leaving the Dalmally station vacant.

Responding to community concerns that cash-strapped Police Scotland would use the vacancy as an opportunity to close the station, divisional commander Chief Superintendent Helen Swan said: 'The job advert has gone out across Scotland and I am optimistic it will attract good interest from suitable candidates. It is our intention that the post will be filled.'

She added that the inclusion of the police house accommodation in the job advert should give the community further reassurance that no closure is planned.

Chief Superintendent Swan added there were no plans to close other village stations in Taynuilt and Appin, adding: 'Like all our estates, police offices are constantly reviewed because we have to be responsive to community needs and also be efficient and deliver front line services within a budget. I will never say, "It will never happen" but for the foreseeable future these posts are staying as they are.'

Drug user told he'll go to jail next time

A MAN who was caught growing cannabis which he said was for his own use has been ordered to carry out unpaid work in the community.

Twelve plants at varying stages of growth were found in November last year in the former McCaig Road, Oban, home of Ritchie Cummings, who now lives in Crieff.

The court heard labourer Cummings, 43, who pleaded guilty, had been a cannabis user for a long time and was likely to continue to use the substance.

Sentencing the accused to carry out 300 hours of unpaid work, Sheriff Douglas Small told Cummings that it was a serious offence and illegal, even if the accused didn't think so and if he did it again, he would be likely to end up in jail.

Councillor calls for Port Beag meeting

A PROMISE made to constituents on their doorsteps during an Oban by-election campaign is being honoured by a local councillor.

Prior to being elected in May this year, councillor Neil MacIntyre heard concerns from residents of Gallanach Road over the state of the council pier at Port Beag, which was littered with dilapidated storage huts and garages.

Councillor MacIntyre said: 'We will have a meeting of owners and residents to discuss the area.'

Port Beag sits between the RNLI station and the Northern Lighthouse Board. Owned by Argyll and Bute council, many different residents and businesses use the area.

Councillor Roddy McCuish confirmed there were no plans to sell it off, but the local authority was simply tidying it up.

Highlighting the power of attorney

THE IMPORTANCE of having trusted family and friends able to make important decisions for their loved ones is being highlighted by NHS Highland, Argyll and Bute Council and the third sector Partnership.

The 'Start the Conversation' campaign has been launched across Argyll and Bute to raise awareness of the importance of having 'Power of Attorney' granted to a trusted relative or friend.

For more information, visit www.mypowerofattorney.org.uk

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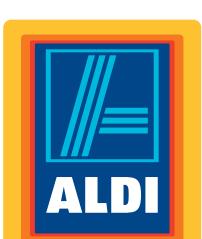


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Islay

A VERY special library service, which lends out toys instead of books, will be able to grow and expand thanks to an award of £9,671.

The Islay and Jura Toy Library will now benefit more children in isolated areas across the two Hebridean islands thanks to the grant from the Communities and Families Fund, an initiative supported by the Scottish Government and Big Lottery Fund.

Toy Library co-ordinator Kirsten MacLellan said: 'We've been so lucky to get this lifeline funding from the Communities and Families Fund.'

'We transport our quality toys, games and resources to different centres in the remote islands of Islay and Jura where experienced play leaders and volunteers deliver family fun activities.'

'We plan to expand our existing services in response to local circumstances and develop a monthly activity club for primary school children.'

'We are very grateful for this continued support which means we can turn our plans into reality.'

Aileen Campbell, minister for children and families, said: 'I am always pleased to see the wide range of projects the Communities and Families Fund supports and I hope this funding will be welcome news for these organisations before Christmas.'

I want Scotland to be the best place to grow up and our joint venture with the Big Lottery Fund aims to help families and communities flourish by supporting local projects that can make a big impact on improving the lives of children and families.'

The Communities and Families Fund has a budget of £4.5 million from The Scottish Government and £1.5 million from the Big Lottery Fund.

Groups can apply for funding from £250 to £10,000. For more information visit the communities and families fund section at biglotteryfund.org.uk

AN ISLAY man who was announced as a recipient of an OBE award in the Queen's Birthday Honours earlier this year has only recently picked up the award.

George Hosking, originally from Bowmore, travelled to Windsor Castle to receive his OBE on December 8 from HM the Queen.

The founder and chief executive officer of the WAVE Trust, Mr Hosking received his award for services to reducing violence, particularly child abuse.

The honour comes nearly 70 years after his uncle, John Cameron, who was also from Bowmore, received the OBE.

His late uncle was a captain in the merchant navy and was awarded the OBE in January 1945 after being torpedoed three times in the Atlantic and leading his crews to safety on each occasion, twice in harrowing journeys of two weeks afloat.

The WAVE Trust is currently leading a campaign to reduce child maltreatment in the UK by 70 per cent by 2030.



OBE: George Hosking

being torpedoed three times in the Atlantic and leading his crews to safety on each occasion, twice in harrowing journeys of two weeks afloat.

Piper Cameron Sharp welcomed the guests and after an excellent meal, Santa Claus dished out parcels.

Dancing to music by the Glenelg dance band followed.

A COFFEE morning in Plockton hotel on November 22 raised more than £350 for Plockton drama club funds and the annual Christmas fair at Plockton high school on November 29 raised £4,700 for school funds.

The festive table decoration contest was won by Isobel Morton with Pauline Elwell coming second and Christine Haynes in third.

Ms Morton also won the cupcake competition, this time sharing first prize with Nicky Parish.

There will be no meeting in January as members will be holding a late Christmas meal.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday February 5 when Henrik Chart is scheduled to give a talk on 'food for thought'.

Tiree

TIREE high school has asked pupils and their families to get to school punctually to help with the smooth running of the school day.

Staff have noted that pupils can miss out if they arrive in class after the bell has rung, as the rest of the class will already have begun their morning routine.

Head teacher Myra McArthur has asked the children to remember that the school day begins at 8.55am, rather than 9am.

**Kyle of Lochalsh**

WET WEATHER couldn't dampen the spirits of the families who turned out in force to support the Kyle of Lochalsh Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

Children visited Santa's grotto and the group's fundraising event and this, combined with homebaking and craft stalls, raised £1,000 for the charity.

FESTIVE FUN: the MacDermid family enjoyed a visit to Santa's grotto

Plockton

THE LOCHALSH branch of the Royal British Legion Scotland (RBLS) held its annual meeting in the Lochalsh Hotel, Kyle December 3.

The treasurer submitted a satisfactory report despite expenditure of £4,432.95.

All the office-bearers were re-elected and Nina Martin was elected welfare officer. There were 66 paid-up members.

The secretary reported that Highland council was to have the lettering of the Lochalsh war memorial and the Plockton war memorial improved in March.

He also reported that the poppy collection of £4,479.69 was the highest since 2011. The branch will send out 21 parcels at Christmas.

THE ANNUAL senior citizens' dinner and social evening was held in Plockton hall on December 5 and was greatly enjoyed by 90 guests from Plockton and district and Achmore and district.

Piper Cameron Sharp welcomed the guests and after an excellent meal, Santa Claus dished out parcels.

Dancing to music by the Glenelg dance band followed.

A COFFEE morning in Plockton hotel on November 22 raised more than £350 for Plockton drama club funds and the annual Christmas fair at Plockton high school on November 29 raised £4,700 for school funds.

Lewis

A BUDDING chef from Lewis has been named top of the class after she received an award for her talents in cooking.

Sarah MacKillop was presented with City of Glasgow college's Nautical Cookery prize for both the best practical work and top written exam results of her class. The 25-year-old CalMac chef said: 'I'm really proud to have won this award. I'm grateful to CalMac for supporting me and giving me the opportunity to learn and develop my skills.'

**MSPs quizzed by Spean youngsters**

Spean Bridge primary school pupils had a visit from two politicians during Fort William Parliament Day when Highlands and Islands MSPs David Stewart and Rhoda Grant took time out of their busy schedules to visit primary 5-7 classes. Head teacher Kate MacGillivray said: 'The pupils have been studying the Scottish parliament for some time. We had a mock debate which everyone enjoyed and the children had some really good in-depth questions for the MSPs.'



EYECATCHING: The winning mural, made by Glenbar primary school, which shows the ACT logo, made with only natural resources and materials

Glenbar's winning mural a class ACT

THREE groups of youngsters from Argyll and Bute have won prizes in a competition run by the charity Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust (ACT).

Entitled 'Your Act', the competition was open to all schools, clubs and groups within Argyll and the isles.

Groups of children aged 18 and under were tasked with making a giant mural of the ACT logo using nothing but natural resources and materials.

Glenbar primary school, near Campbeltown, scooped first prize of £300 with its colourful and imaginative mural, with Lochdonhead primary on Mull and Islay high John Muir award group both winning runner-up prizes.

Julie Young, development officer for ACT, explained: 'We're a new charity with one main aim - to maintain, enhance and promote the coast and countryside of Argyll and the isles, so it can be enjoyed by residents, businesses and visitors.'

'The idea behind the competition was to encourage young people to get outdoors and to use our natural resources in an art project.'

'We thought it would be a great idea to ask groups to make a mural using our brand name - to help schools to become familiar with us and what we do.'

Julie also praised the quality of the 19 submissions, received from schools and groups throughout the region.

MORVERN lines**A famous Campbell poet**

'A chieftain to the Highlands bound
Cries Boatman do not tarry!
And I'll give thee a silver pound
To row us o'er the ferry!'

'Now who be ye, would cross Lochgyle
This dark and stormy water?
O I'm the chief of Ulva's Isle,
And this, Lord Ullin's daughter.'

The author of this famous poem was Thomas Campbell (1777-1844) whose statue stands in George Square, Glasgow.

He is remembered for a number of well-known compositions including 'Ye Mariners of England', 'Locheil's Warning', 'Glenara' and 'The Battle of the Baltic'. In the last he writes, of the ships, 'Like Leviathans afloat lay their bulwarks on the brine', which, for me, always conjures up an amusing image of an overweight ladies bathing party! He is, however, best remembered for 'The Ballad of Lord Ullin's Daughter' which used to be taught in every primary school in the Highlands - at least it was in my younger days.

What is not so well known is that Campbell spent the summer of 1795 on Mull and in Morvern shortly before or after. On Mull he lived at Sunipol, a small farm lying between Dervaig and Caileach Point, where he was tutor to the children of Archibald Campbell, the Duke of Argyll's tacksman. In Morvern he lodged with the Gregorsons, who lived in the old mansion house above Ardornish Castle which was demolished in 1907.



GATHERING PLACE: Old Ardornish House

Although of humble appearance and no larger than a farm house, Ardornish House was a gathering place for some of the greatest statesmen, travellers and literary figures in the United Kingdom, Florence Nightingale, Lord Tennyson and Sir Walter Scott to name only three.

Campbell, who was born in Glasgow and educated at the town's high school and university, was the youngest of 11 children of Alexander Campbell (1710-1801), son of the sixth and last Laird of Kirnan near Kilmichael Glassary, descended from the MacIver-Campbells. He was a prime mover in establishing the University of London and became Lord Rector of Glasgow University (1826-1829) in competition against Sir Walter Scott. He died in Boulogne, France aged 66.

I am not aware there is a memorial to him on Mull. It would be fitting if there was.

Fuel prices in Morvern

IT WOULD be no exaggeration to say there is concern in Lochaline at the cost of fuel at the community development's pumps.

Motorists have been paying a hefty 152.9 pence per litre for both petrol and diesel for years, despite the fall in the price of crude oil around the globe.

In comparison, Morrison's, Fort William, just 40 miles away, is currently charging 115.9 pence per litre for petrol and 121.9 pence for diesel. No one expects a small village store to be able to compete with supermarkets and, of course, we'd be whining if the pumps were to close but, come on, the differential is unreasonable.

The pumps were replaced some years ago thanks to a major public fundraising effort spearheaded by Mrs H Watt, then treasurer of Morvern community council.

Without this campaign they would have disappeared completely which puts the inflated price in due perspective - the community saved them and now is saddled with the price.

They are owned by Morvern Community Development Company which was assisted financially by HIE whose remit and that of the client, is to ease the lot of those living in remote rural parts and to advance regeneration within the community.

Driving motorists out of the parish to seek fuel and to shop elsewhere is doing nothing for the area. If anything community development companies should be able to subsidise fuel, not profit by it. The Morvern Development Company has done so well up until now it is a pity it is letting itself down on this issue.

Unprofitable, unsightly forests

EXTENSIVE timber-felling and extraction is taking place on the west side of Glen Liddesdale, known as 'The Devil's acre', on the privately owned, 13,000-acre Lauderdale Estate.

The removal of tightly-packed Sitka spruce forests, which have hidden so much of Argyll's unique landform for the past 40 or so years, is universally welcomed by many geography and geology students. Long may it continue.

Of course, the nation needs timber; it also needs food. If worked properly the Highland hills can still provide the country's finest beef, venison and lamb but we cannot eat trees.

Scotland should stop trying to play around with timber growing and import all its needs from the Baltic nations which are masters of the industry. One only needs to visit Denmark and Norway to see how a forest should be properly managed and cropped.

The acid test is would our glens be covered with so many unsightly Sitka spruce plantations if they were not accompanied by large grants? The answer, in most cases, would be a resounding 'no'.

Iain Thorner

iain.thorner@btinternet.com

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TREAT: Spean Bridge and Achnacarry Senior Citizens Association hopes to make this Christmas a cracker following its annual festive lunch 20_f5seniorlunch01

Christmas lunch cheer for senior citizens

CHRISTMAS came early for Spean Bridge and Achnacarry Senior Citizens Association when members were treated to their annual festive lunch.

Pensioners from the area gathered over two days last Wednesday and Thursday for a meal in Spean Bridge's four-star Russell's Restaurant.

Members of the association help to

organise the Caledonian Challenge walking trek along the West Highland Way every summer and are given £2,000

by the Scottish Community Foundation each year as a 'thank you', which helps to fund events such as the Christmas lunch.

Ardnamurchan

ARDAMURCHAN high school pupils held their own in a Gaelic competition, but were pipped at the post by a team from Edinburgh.

Charlie-Anne Pleming and Rona Nicolson travelled to Stornoway to take part in the BT National Gaelic Debate and defeated Mallag's argument about the success of online hotel and restaurant reviews. But the S4 pupils didn't make the final four when they were defeated by a group from James Gillespie's high school.

DEBATE: Rona Nicolson, left, and Charlie-Anne Pleming

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DOUBTS HANG OVER NORTH ROAD SHOP DEVELOPMENT

Red light for Fort William retail park

EMMA CRICHTON
ecrichton@obantimes.co.uk

A PLANNED retail park in Fort William, including a supermarket and home discount store, is expected to be recommended for refusal by planning officers next week.

Aldi and Home Bargains are already confirmed tenants for the site, with Marks and Spencer also in talks with developers, but applicants Morbaine Ltd were said to be 'extremely disappointed and frustrated' to hear Highland council officials plan to recommend rejection of the five-unit retail park at North Road.

It is thought the reason for refusal will be that a new site, combined with the planned Tesco at Blair Mhor, will create too much competition for the town centre, despite the Blair site still being empty three years after planning permission was granted.

The Morbaine proposal, which could bring 150 permanent jobs and more during construction, received widespread public support during a consultation in March but it is expected members

“I think there will be arguments held up about this”

Councillor Bill Clark

of the council's south planning applications committee will be asked to vote against the plan when it is discussed on Tuesday.

Morbaine already has permission for 55,000 square-feet of retail space but has requested a change to allow food stores on the site between the Rio Tinto Alcan junction and Ben Nevis Motors on the A82.

Alex Brodie, director of the development company, said he has 'contractual obligations' to Aldi and Home Bargains and will start building as soon as possible if his company is granted permission next week.

He added: 'Given the near

unanimous public support for our retail park, we are extremely disappointed and frustrated that council officers have recommended that the committee reject our application. 'Whilst we understand officers are working under policy constraints, the site at Blair Mhor has been empty for a number of years and there is no sign of any shops appearing anytime soon.'

'We hope the councillors will see beyond the recommendation of the officer, acknowledge the local demand for additional retail options and choose to make the right decision for Fort William.'

A Tesco spokesman said: 'We know that many people in the local community are keen to see the new store open and we're very grateful for the support we've received for our plans in Fort William.'

'We'll provide an update to the local community as soon as we can and in the meantime we'll work hard to provide a great service to local customers from the existing town centre Metro store.'

Councillor Bill Clark said the North Road development 'shouldn't have been held back' when it came before the south planning committee in 2011.

He added: 'Last time round I warned the committee not to put all of its eggs in one basket and that's exactly what it did by granting the Blair site and refusing Morbaine.'

The best interests of residents weren't put first the last time and they always should be. I think there will be arguments held up about this.'

CHRISTMAS CONCERT A CRACKER



Lochaber music school performed its Christmas concert last Sunday to a packed audience in St Margaret's RC church in Roy Bridge. A ceremony held afterwards in Roy Bridge village hall saw the music school's Christmas raffle drawn, where the crowd enjoyed a variety of seasonal refreshments. Proceeds from both this and door admissions raised just over £1100 for the group. Peter Rose, Lochaber music school musical director, said: 'It was a very successful concert and the children played and sang beautifully.'

Renewed calls for fair energy pricing

ENERGY regulator Ofgem says it will examine the benefits of a national charge to avoid residents in the Highlands and islands paying higher energy costs than everywhere else.

People in the region have complained about having to pay a two pence electrical surcharge - amounting to an extra £300 on their bills per annum - prompting Dave Thompson, MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch, to campaign for what he calls 'fair energy pricing'.

A spokesman for Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE), the main energy supplier in the region, said: 'SSE favours replacing this regional variation with one national charge across Great Britain.'

Shortage of firefighters sees Kilchoan home left burning

A HOUSE in Kilchoan was left burning for more than an hour as a shortage of firefighters and bad weather hampered attempts to put out the blaze.

The property, in the hamlet of Kilmory, went up in smoke around midday last Friday, but all retained staff from the nearby Strontian and Lochaline fire stations were unavailable at the time.

No-one was inside the building when the incident occurred, though it was partially destroyed.

It is believed that some of the local fire team were at work in Fort William and by the time crews arrived at the scene the building was already well alight. The fire was eventually extinguished.

Phil Green, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service group manager, said that blizzard conditions also slowed down the team's response but acknowledged the lack of a retained workforce in the area.

He said: 'This highlights how crucial it is that our communities support Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and sign up to become retained firefighters.'

'Group manager Pat McElhinney and watch manager from Kilchoan, Rosemary Curtis, attended a recent Kilchoan community council meeting to

appeal to the community to support the service and help provide daytime retained cover.'

Another incident saw a house fire in Kinlochelie, near Glenfinnan, in the early hours of Saturday, in which an adult and child received minor injuries.

Two appliances from Fort William arrived and extinguished the flames around 2.15am, by which time the occupants were outside the one-storey bungalow.

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WITH Christmas Day and New Year's Day both falling on a Thursday, The Oban Times will be printed early to ensure our readers don't miss out.

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Have a Cosy Christmas and a Happy New Year



North Connel Christmas lights brighten hospice funds

AN ARGYLL family have managed to turn the luminous Christmas lights on their house into a festive fundraising endeavour.

Tina Cotton, who lives in North Connel with husband Gerald, decided to put a box asking for donations to Oban Hospice on her front gate after passers-by regularly stopped to admire the neon decorations.

Tina's son Darren and daughter-in-law Maxine decided to decorate the house this year for their own children Dean, three, and Lauren, two.

Darren said: 'I used to decorate the house when I was a teenager but hadn't done it in years, but with the kids being young I decided to get the box of lights out of the attic.'

'They're pretty impressive and can be seen from the other side of the Connel Bridge.'

'Quite a few people have come across the water to see it; one couple driving across the Connel Bridge thought the house was a nightclub.'

Tina explained: 'We had quite a few knocks on the door from people telling us how lovely the lights are, so we put a box on the gate for donations to Oban Hospice - but we take the box in every night for security reasons. It's already raised £76 so hopefully it'll be a decent amount when we take the lights down after New Year.'

'The hospice is a good local cause that we sometimes feel gets forgotten about, so we're pleased to be doing our bit to help.'



LIGHT FANTASTIC: Gerald and Tina Cotton with their son Darren and daughter-in-law Maxine, and grandchildren Dean and Lauren. The lights on Tina and Gerald's house attracted attention from passers-by, prompting the family to take donations for Oban Hospice 16_t50lights01/02

Residents fear Loch Etive will become 'industrialised' over the course of the next decade but company moves to allay fears

Fish farm expansion defended

STEVEN RAE

srae@obantimes.co.uk

A FISH FARM firm which wants to expand two of its sites on Loch Etive has moved to reassure the public over what will be visible on the water and any increase in noise from automated feeders.

Gideon Pringle of Dawnfresh gave his second presentation in three weeks at Ardchattan primary school on December 11, discussing his firm's plans for expansion on the loch, having also addressed Ardchattan community council on November 20.

The meetings were both in relation to the planning application the company has lodged to expand its Etive 3 fish farm on the loch, which would increase the size and tonnage of the Port Na Mine (Etive 3) fish farm's existing cages and see six new cages installed and a permanently moored feed barge at the site.

The plans split public opinion at the meeting, with a vote held afterwards showing six votes in support, 10 votes against and eight people abstaining.

Mr Pringle said the next stage of the Etive 3 plans would be for them to go before Argyll and Bute council's planning committee.

He also admitted that Dawnfresh planned an identical expansion of its Etive 2 site, which is to the west of Etive 3 on the loch.



LOCH ETIVE: Dawnfresh has held two meetings about its latest plans to expand two of its fish farm sites on the loch

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Sunday parking plan 'a disgrace'

FORT William could be the only town in the Highland region to charge for parking on a Sunday, which the town's community council chairman called 'a disgrace'.

Highland councillors were deciding today (Thursday) whether to implement Sunday charges as part of money-saving measures but only car parks in Fort William and Inverness were highlighted under the proposal.

Neil Clark, chairman of Fort William community council, said he was not opposed to paying for parking on a Sunday but said the rule should be the same across the board.

He added: 'I understand we're in a difficult place money-wise and savings have to be made somewhere. My issue is with the fact people will have to pay for parking in Fort William seven days a week while other towns don't charge at all.'

'A while back we were told the economy in Dingwall was too fragile to charge to park but isn't Fort William's fragile? It should be the same rule across the board. It's a disgrace.'

A Highland council spokeswoman said that it would not be appropriate to comment prior to committee but added that proposals would be discussed at the council meeting today.

NHS grounds to be tobacco-free

NHS HIGHLAND has pledged to have smoke-free grounds across all its sites by the end of March 2015.

As part of a Scotland-wide initiative, the smoke-free policy aims to guarantee that everyone who enters NHS Highland premises, vehicles and grounds, has the right to breathe air that is free of tobacco smoke.

While smoke-free grounds should have been in place since January 1 2008 this has not always been followed.

The aim is to bring in the ban in February 2015 to allow any issues to be resolved before the ban formally comes into place.

For further information, visit: www.smokefreehighland.co.uk

Driver stopped and arrested

POLICE stopped the 28-year-old driver of a car on George Street, Oban, at midnight on December 10 and after making inquiries discovered he was a disqualified driver.

The man was arrested and charged with taking and driving a car without the owner's consent, having no insurance and no licence.

Cars slide off road in bad weather

A NUMBER of cars were reported sliding off roads during the wild weather last week as roads flooded and the first snows hit high ground.

Oban police were kept busy dealing with calls to single-car accidents, particularly on the A82 near Bridge of Orchy.

Residents hit out over hospital decision

RESIDENTS in the north of Skye have slammed NHS Highland's decision to build the island's new hospital in Broadford.

The Save Portree Hospital Group claims that the existing facility in Portree 'will no longer be a hospital', after a bid was approved to remove all of its overnight beds once the new building opens in the south of the island.

A statement from the campaigners said: 'The proposed "spoke facility" in Portree is being punted by NHS Highland as a hospital but it will have no beds, no accident and emergency and no 24-hour medical cover.'

'There will be no additional beds or services to replace what will be lost.'

The number of hospital beds in Skye and Lochalsh has already been cut from 43 to 32 in the last 10 years. The cuts are expected to reduce that to 28 beds.

This so-called redesign of services is nothing more than a cost-cutting exercise that's been designed to save NHS Highland £850,000 a year.'

However, health officials believe there is no option but to make the cuts.

A spokesperson from NHS Highland said: 'All too often people either have to be admitted or discharged to hospital because we don't have the right community services and support.'

'And we cannot invest in these services if we continue to manage with inpatient facilities across multiple sites.'

The NHS originally considered building the new hospital in the north of the island but this plan was dropped.

Rannoch wind farm on hold as developer reviews plans

THE COMPANY behind a proposed wind farm on Rannoch Moor has put its plans on ice for six months following objections by residents and conservationists.

Talladh-a-Bheithre Wind Farm Ltd asked for a planning extension for 24 turbines, each 125 metres tall, on a 50-square mile stretch of wilderness east of Fort William, with the application now due to be considered in May.

The decision was made after 958 formal objections from various parties and pressure from the Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCoS), Keep Rannoch Wild (KRW) and the John Muir Trust (JMT), all of which fear the development will disfigure the landscape and endanger wildlife.

Talladh-a-Bheithre Wind Farm Ltd - the UK subsidiary of Dutch firm Eventus BV - asked for the extension after 'reviewing responses' and now plans to 'prepare and submit further and additional environmental information'.

Scottish Natural Heritage estimates that a wind farm near Loch Rannoch would kill a golden eagle every 19 months plus harm populations of otters, ospreys and other species.

Heather McDade, head of policy at the John Muir Trust, said: 'This development would be a stab in the heart of Scotland's wild land.'

'We do not believe it is acceptable that the developers are given a six-month extension to improve their application in light of massive opposition.'

Talladh-a-Bheithre Wind Farm Ltd states its new development would generate £375,000 per year through community benefit opportunities and will make amendments to the proposals for the planning authority, Perth and Kinross Council.

Kirsty Leiper, of MHP Communications which represents the group, said: 'The applicant has agreed that there is scope to prepare and submit additional environmental information by way of an addendum to the environmental statement.'

The publication and publicity of the addendum will be undertaken in agreement with the Scottish government's energy consents and deployment unit.'

AXE LOOMS OVER EVENTS VENUE AS COUNCILLORS MEET TO DECIDE WHERE BUDGET CUTS WILL BE MADE

Nevis Centre closure fears

EMMA CRICHTON
ecrichton@obantimes.co.uk

HIGHLAND councillors are deciding today whether to back budget cuts worth £42 million, which could lead to the closure of Lochaber events venue, Nevis Centre - which includes soft play, ten pin bowling and a sports hall - could lose some or all of the £170,000 it receives each year from Highland council.

Local authority members were due to gather in Inverness this morning (Thursday) to discuss proposed changes in services from schools to leisure, in an attempt to plug part of the £64 million funding gap.

Councillors will also be voting on issues including reducing the number of secondary school teachers, implementing Sunday

parking charges in Fort William and cutting grants for leisure centres by 50 per cent over the next three years.

If councillors agree to reduce funding for third parties, Nevis Centre - which includes soft play, ten pin bowling and a sports hall

- could lose some or all of the £170,000 it receives each year from Highland council.

Budget leader Maxine Smith said the resource as a whole would be cut, as opposed to grants for each centre, meaning some groups could receive their full grant, while others get nothing at all. She explained: 'We changed from the original proposal so now nothing at all

will be taken away in the first year and the full reduction won't be implemented until year three.'

'This will give organisations the chance to talk to the council and look at other options for funding.'

'Each group will have to fill out a new form proving how they benefit the health and wellbeing of their community.'

'If they can't prove that, they could receive a reduced grant or may not get anything at all.'

Councillor Smith added the choices were 'difficult' and said members had 'done their very best' to listen to the views of local people.

During the consultation stage last month, Nevis Centre

manager Kenny McLaughlin said the facility 'wouldn't survive' a budget cut. He added: 'Even if we charged £500 a day, five days a week, for a big event in the main hall it wouldn't fill the gap left by the grant. There just aren't enough days.'

Fort William community council chairman Neil Clark said the Nevis Centre closing would have a 'huge impact' on the town.

He added: 'It is extremely well-used and is an asset to us. If the Nevis Centre closed it would be a big loss to Fort William but it wouldn't have a big impact on the people in Inverness and unfortunately that's where the decision is being made.'

The council's opposition group released alternative proposals for cost-cutting including reducing the salary of councillors and removing discretionary budgets and funding.

Independent councillor and leader of the opposition Carolyn Wilson said: 'We always expressed concerns that this budget and its consultation was too rushed and we feel it has resulted in some damaging and unnecessary proposals being put forward. We have come up with some common sense, good housekeeping alternatives that keep the services people say are important to them in their communities.'

Pedestrian hurt in collision with car

A PEDESTRIAN was taken to hospital with minor injuries after a collision with a car outside the Job Centre on Fort William High Street last Wednesday at around 2.45pm.

Police are keen to speak to the drivers of a white Volkswagen Polo and a Range Rover who may have information about the incident.

Three days later, through the night between 7.30pm on Saturday and 10.30am on Sunday, a red Seat Ibiza was removed unlawfully from outside a house on Glenkingie Street in Caol, but later recovered on the A830 at Corpach.

The same night, there was also damage caused to a black Mitsubishi L200 parked on Appin Road, Kinlochleven.

Anyone with information about these incidents is asked to call local police on 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555111.

North and south Uist a bird haven

THE COAST around North and South Uist is said to be one of the best places to see breeding wading birds in western Europe.

A recent survey involving the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Scottish Natural Heritage found more than 9,000 pairs of species on the machair of the islands, including lapwings, redshanks and snipes, which draws thousands of birdwatchers to the area every year.

Stuart Taylor, RSPB Uist species officer, said: 'The islands have no foxes, stoats, badgers, pine martens or any other native predatory land mammals. This enables the birds to breed in higher concentrations than anywhere else.'

Energy firm lights up trip funds with £500 donation

FUNDING for Lochaber high school's sixth year trip to London received a welcome boost thanks to a £500 donation.

Staff from local biomass heating specialist HW Energy presented the cheque to pupils on behalf of the company.

The money will be used to pay for the 100 pupils' travel around the city during the trip in February, which will see the students visit museums, Westminster and the Tower of London as well as attending a West End show.

DELIGHT: Lochaber high school's deputy head teacher Donald MacLean receives a £500 cheque from Elaine Cameron from HW Energy as Alasdair Miles, also of HWE, and sixth year pupils look on



Mountain group showcases plans

REPAIRS to crumbling footpaths and an archaeological dig around Ben Nevis are some of the plans being showcased by a conservation group in Lochaber.

The Nevis Partnership - which looks after the area surrounding Britain's tallest mountain - held an open day in its new headquarters in Claggan, Fort William, on December 5, where the team spoke to visitors about its main project, the Nevis Landscape Partnership, a five-year plan which was unveiled earlier this year.

Budget leader Maxine Smith said: 'The biggest share of the council budget is spent on care and learning and where we can mitigate the impact on education, we will do so.'

Having listened to the concerns of the public regarding proposals to reduce the primary school week, the administration group decided to remove the proposal from year one (2015/16), to allow further work on the detail and to minimise any impact on the peak and its surrounding glen.

This will include an archaeological excavation of the 2,000-year-old Dun Deargail fort in the west of Glen Nevis, starting next year. There will be engagement events with schools and West Highland College, and the production of four short films about the area distributed to both schools and colleges,



OPEN DAY: the Nevis Partnership team welcomed visitors to their new office in Claggan to learn about future enhancements of the Ben Nevis experience. From left to right, Leona Jones, Lizzie Cooper, Freja MacDougall and Lewis Pate 20_f5nevis01

which will premiere at the Fort William Mountain Film Festival every year.

In addition, repairs will soon start to rapidly deteriorating paths around Ben Nevis, plus

the building of new ones such as a north face path which will give hillwalkers a much-improved

route down from the mountain's summit. Freja MacDougall, from the Nevis Partnership, welcomed visitors to the group's open day.

She said: 'We are providing people with the opportunity to learn about our five-year plan and see our new offices here, which we recently moved into

from our old base in Torlundy.'

The Nevis Partnership has joined forces with Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland, the John Muir Trust, Highland council and Lochaber chamber of commerce to implement the programme.



'Weather bomb' power cuts and travel disruption

MORE than 17,000 homes in the Western Isles were left without power last Wednesday as a 'weather bomb' struck Scotland.

Winds of up to 80mph saw power cuts and the closure of all schools, nurseries, sports and leisure facilities in the Hebrides, together with the cancellation of buses and most ferry services. The remote island of St Kilda even saw wind speeds of 144mph - thought to be one of the highest records in the UK - while the Skye bridge was closed to all high-sided vehicles.

In Lochaber, residents experienced gale force winds, thunder, lightning, heavy rain and hail, while ScotRail cancelled all of the day's train services from Mallaig, Fort William and Oban to Glasgow.



Could your business play a part in a multi-million pound schools construction project?

Argyll and Bute Council, with Hub North Scotland and Morrison Construction, is investing in a new high school for Oban

Find out how your company could get involved as a sub-contractor or supplier - come along to our Meet the Buyer Event

Wednesday 21st January 2015

Corran Halls, Oban - 1pm to 5pm

Register at www.morrisonconstruction.co.uk

One-to-one slots available to pre-book





CÙRSAICHEAN GOIRIDH SHORT COURSES 2015

In 2015 why not spend a week on Skye at Scotland's National Centre for Gaelic language & culture? Our courses include Gaelic language & song, traditional music, photography and exploring the history and culture of Skye. For Easter 2015, we will be running a special course for native speakers of any level who seek to improve their reading, writing and speaking skills. Some of our courses are shown here but for a full list and further information, please visit our website Thigibhachileidhoirinn.com

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| Gàidhlig - Gaelic Levels: 2, 4, 6, 8 & 10 | |
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The Oban Times

& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

Who will drive change?

It's one thing to admire the candour of our senior police officers when they admit that Oban's back roads are nothing short of a dead end when it comes to providing a set of vital emergency routes in and out of the town when the main A85 is closed by weather or accident.

However, it is equally frustrating and perhaps falls into the category of stating the obvious. You only have to live in the town for less than a year to understand fully the precarious grip we maintain with the outside world.

The dreadful accident in Pennyfuir in May cut off Oban from the rest of Argyll and Scotland for a full eight hours - traffic was gridlocked; the town was isolated.

In the immediate aftermath, there was talk from the great and the good that contingency plans would be put in place and that Oban would have the 'resilience' - whatever that means - to cope with a similar situation.

Six months have past and we're still stuck in the same rut, waiting for a solution to a problem that is only going to get worse. Who is going to drive the agenda for change? As the impact of Road Equivalent Tariff fast approaches our highways, time is not on our side.

Glasgow Letter

Christmas songbook

FED UP with Christmas shopping? Needing to get some relaxation and fun back into your life?

If so the City Halls is the place to be tonight (Thursday) at 8pm when Phil Cunningham takes to the stage with his now customary group of friends.

In what has now become a Glasgow fixture, before heading for Edinburgh, Queen's Hall and then Perth Concert Hall, you will be guaranteed an evening of wonderful Christmas music, old and new.

Eddi Reader, Karen Matheson, Kris Drever, and John McCusker will join Phil together with instrumentalists Ian Carr and Kevin McGuire as well as a special guest brass band.

Add in some community singing of old Christmas favourites and you will step out of the City Halls with your batteries fully recharged.

Clydebank and District Highlanders' Association

THE 'BANKIES' held its last ceilidh of 2014 in Napier Hall, Old Kilpatrick, and despite a poorer attendance than usual those present enjoyed a relaxed evening with quality entertainment.

Secretary Mairi Howieson, as if she did not have enough to do, joined Alasdair Whyte, the local group Rock Salt and Iain MacLean as the singers for the evening.

Indeed the association was indebted to Iain for stepping in from his seat in the audience. They were ably supported by excellent instrumental selections from piper Robert Wood and accordionist Willie Scott with Kirsteen Grant as accompanist and as I indicated last week I was charged with orchestrating proceedings.

This event highlighted many of the typical characteristics of this type of function and perhaps in the coming weeks, as we review the past year and look forward to 2015,

Your Letters

THE EDITOR welcomes letters of approximately 300 words in length for publication on this page.

The editor also reserves the right to shorten, to amend or to refuse to print them. Names and postal addresses must be supplied, including on emails, to indicate good faith. A daytime telephone number is also required for verification.

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

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

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.



Cruive pool, River Awe, near Taynuilt

This week's flashback photograph was submitted by Colin Armstrong of Coventry and features the Cruive pool on the River Awe, near Taynuilt in days gone by. Prints or emails of flashback photos sent to editor@obantimes.co.uk should be accompanied by a caption, name, address and telephone number. Anyone who wishes a print returned must supply a stamped, addressed envelope.

Letters to the editor

PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HB
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www.obantimes.co.uk

Telephone: 01631 568000
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No grasp of local issues

Sir,
I dearly love the NHS. Our Appin surgery has been wonderful, as have the district nurses and other community staff.

But, reading *The Oban Times*, I despair of the wider NHS's grasp of local geographical issues.

Patients from Oban regularly undertake gruelling six-hour round trips for rou-

tine appointments/scans.

Those who are too frail cannot access services including epilepsy and diabetes at all.

As for the road to Oban, how is an emergency GP going to reach us in Appin if the road is closed at Dunbeg/Connel Bridge/Barcaldine centre for six hours at a time as has been the case frequently this year?

The back road from Oban to Connell becomes impassable as well.

Is a GP going to be

helicopter in to Appin?

I think not. Appin surgery is also a prescribing pharmacy. What access will emergency GPs have for essential drugs?

Fabia Gray, Appin.

Good luck to Co-op 'family'

Sir,
I fully agree with what M Diamond says in letter published in last week's Oban Times 'No respect for

Co-op staff'.

I would like to thank all the staff in the Co-op for being so nice and friendly and I am so sorry that this had to happen. It was like a family in there.

I wish all the staff lots of luck in the future and thank them for looking after me and their other customers like they have done over the years.

The bakery there was second to none too.

Dorothy C Parker, Ardconnel Road, Oban.

Social Media

LAST week's photographs of two contrasting views of Oban prompted many readers to comment on our Facebook page:



Beautiful scene: a clean and tidy war memorial on Oban's esplanade



OVERFLOWING: rubbish bins in Soroba

pickups to work when they were struggling with weekly collections? Seagulls pull rubbish out and litter goes everywhere.

Zoe Leach: The people who clean our streets try to keep them clean. The council could pay for more street cleaners and fine the untidy ones? Our street cleaners do a wonderful job.

Mike Thomson: I was born in Oban but left it 27 years ago. My family still live in Oban, so I go back usually once a year. It makes me sad to see how run down

the town looks with all the empty shops, boarded up buildings and the famous Oban Inn closed.

David Wilson: I do like how people are complaining about the lack of shops in Oban, but the main reason for it is they aren't financially viable.

I was looking into opening up a bakery in town but after talking to a business analyst it was shown the rental on premises is too high compared to the average spend per head in town.

Anniko Cameron: There are so many things to be proud of in Oban but unfortunately the lack of good shops, considering the amount of young families that live here, is not one.

Claire Douglas Bruce: Take a walk along the Esplanade and see the rubbish strewn all over the beach or up the steps behind the Corran Halls to Dunollie and tell me there isn't a litter problem?

John Lamont: Sometimes think there's too much concern for visitors rather than focusing on local services.

Zoe Leach: The people who clean our streets try to keep them clean. The council could pay for more street cleaners and fine the untidy ones? Our street cleaners do a wonderful job.

Nancy Saxby, Canada: Of

all the places in the world we have travelled, Oban is the most beautiful and welcoming. Every city has its less than lovely side, but we didn't find anything to complain about in Oban.

Stella Holmes: As a regular visitor to Oban for the last 14 years, I still love the town. Yes there are empty shops but you will see that in all town centres today.

Bins and rubbish are also a feature of our towns as councils attempt to balance their books. Oban's atmosphere has never changed. The excitement of the ferries taking people to so many destinations, the lovely shops, very friendly locals and fabulous scenery are what keep me coming back.

Tony Hodgen: The amount of young people dying in the town over the last couple of years and the reasons why should be a bigger concern rather than an over-spilling bin in the street.

Dawn Osborne-Harris: Oban is clean compared to a lot of places. You should have seen the state of where I used to live down in Workington, Aspatria, Cumbria.

Rosslyn Gemmill: The main problem with the bins in Soroba is that kids get sent to the bins to put rubbish out and they can't reach the lids to close them.



Beachd Ailein

Ailean Caimbeul

'S NEÖNACH GUR E annas sam bith a th' ann a bhith a cluinninn mar a tha na h-àireamhan a tha a' nochdadh aig ionadan tubaist agus èigginn ospadail feedh na dùthchea a' dol suas gu mòr than miosan a' gheamhraidh.

Ach chan e tubaisteann neo èigginn a tha a' cur mòran chun nan ionadan sin a rèir coitais, ach fios gum faigh iad aire dhotairean lasaithe na bhiodh coltaich nan d' rachadh iad chun nan ionadan-slàinte àbhaisteach aca fhèin. A rèir aithrisean bho urrasan slàinte, tha seo a' cur uallach cho mòr air cui'd de na h-ospadalan is gum bheil cunnart ann nach tèid aca air seasamh ris na bheil a' tighinn orra de dh'iaratas.

Tuigear carson a tha seo na adhbhar dragh la luch-obrach slàinte a tha gu dicheadh a' sìreadh taic is leigheas a thoirt dha euslaintich, agus tuigear cuideachd carson a bu chòir dhan-suidheachadh a bhith na dhragh dhan riaghaltas. 'S ann aig an riaghaltas a tha smachd air an iomhas agus 's e an riaghaltas seo cuideachd a chuir uiread de smachd air buidsean slàinte an urra ri dotairean-teaghlaich na dùthchea, agus the a doirbh a cheidsinn nach eil na h-atharraichean sin air buaidh a thoirt air mar a tha an t-seirbheis air a libhrigeadh agus an t-ùine a dh'fheumas daoine feitheamh gus dotair fhacinn mar phàirt den duilgeadas sin. Air a' Ghàidhealtachd co-dhùiù, tha na h-ospadalan mas miosa buileach nuair a thig e gu ceann-latha fhaotain airson speisiallaichte slàinte fhacinn, is daoine gu bitheanta a' feitheamh eadar tri is ceithir miosan is iad fo iomagain a thaobh an cui'd slàinte.

Gun teagamh sam bith, tha dotairean aig gach ire fo uallach mhòr agus tha iad air ùine a chur seachad ag ionnachsachadh, ach aig an aon àm tha iad air an deagh phàigheadh an coimseas air coimseas a' mhòr-chuid eile. Mar sin a e doirbh a thugissin carson, ann an ceann a tuath na h-Alba gu sòrnachta, a tha sinn cho gann de dotairean is gum bheil milleanan ga chosg air feadhainn a tha giamhach air cùmhnanntan goirid. 'S dòcha gun canadh cui'd gum bheil an ire páighidh airson cùmhnanntan pairt-ùine che fialaidh agus nach eil brosnachadh ann dha dotairean cùmhnanntan làn-ùine a ghabhail. Ach feumar cuimheachadh nach eil ionadan tubaist is èigginn ospadail idir goireasach dhan mhòr-chuid air an duthach, agus ann an iomadhach aite chan eil fiu 's dotairean-teaghlaich faisg orra. Cuimhlichibh mar sin air nàbaidhean, chan ann a-mhàin aig àm Nollaigach ach fad na bliadhna!

WHILE the difficulty in recruiting doctors and consultants to the Highlands and islands is worrying, urban hospital accident and emergency departments in the south of the UK are also under severe pressure with many people attending rather than wait for appointments with family doctors.

Most rural communities have no easy access to accident and emergency and some don't even have a GP nearby. Remember to look out for neighbours not just at Christmas time, but all year round.

Ailean Caimbeul (Allan Campbell)

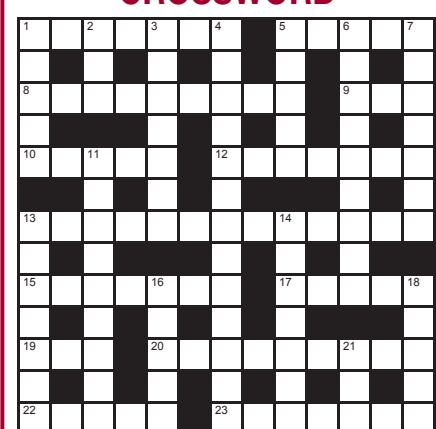
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| 5 Sound heard when Santa is coming... (5) | 2 Where they had no room for Mary (3) |
| 8 ...left for Santa (5,4) | 3 Go back, from outdoors (2-5) |
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Skipinnish toast top trad finish to 2014

EUAN PATERSON
epaterson@obantimes.co.uk

A FOUNDING member of the ceilidh band Skipinnish says victory at the MG Alba Scots Trad awards has rounded off the best year in the band's 15-year history.

Tiree native Angus MacPhail says he has a number of highlights from 2014 but described the moment his band won live act of the year at the awards ceremony in Inverness Leisure Centre as 'absolutely amazing'.

Accordionist Angus said: 'If am totally honest I didn't think we had a hope of winning a category that included Skipinnish and the Peat bog Faeries, so I was totally shocked.'

'I still think it must have been a mistake - it was Skerryvore that won but they read out the wrong name.'

A record breaking figure of more than 100,000 public votes went towards deciding the award recipients at the 12th annual Scots Trad Awards held on Saturday.

Broadcast live on BBC ALBA, the prestigious awards - organised by Hands Up for Trad - was hosted by Gaelic television personality Tony Kearney and Lochaber musician and broadcaster Mary Kennedy.

The best live act prize was awarded as Skipinnish's newly released single December reached number one in the world music charts, their second number one this year. The celebrations con-



BEST YEAR: Skipinnish topped off a 2014 to remember by winning best live act of the year at last weekend's MG Alba Scots Trad Music Awards.

tinued into Sunday and Monday in Glasgow, as Skipinnish were joined by Skerryvore, Vatersay Boys and Trail West for a cel-

ebratory session. Angus said: 'This is by far the best year of the band and the progress we have made in that time is amazing.'

Our line-up and the standard of our own material has improved, we are playing more gigs to more fans and the success of our

releases - the Western Ocean album and singles Walking on the Waves and December - has really surprised us.

Argyll to train teachers

STUDENTS in Argyll and Bute will now be able to study for a primary teaching career in Oban, after a local college added a new diploma course to the curriculum.

Argyll College - part of the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) - has been approved to offer a Postgraduate Diploma in Primary Education (PDGE), which will be offered in partnership with Argyll and Bute council.

Argyll College UHI will be working closely with the council to contribute directly to the supply of locally-based primary teachers in Argyll, with the first group of students based at the Oban campus due to start in August 2015.

Fraser Durie, principal of Argyll College UHI said: 'We are delighted to be able

to offer this opportunity for students to study and work in Argyll and Bute for the PGDE in Primary Education.

'Previously, students would have had to travel outside the region and incur considerable additional costs in order to follow this route.'

'It is another milestone for the college to be able to deliver this, our first, taught postgraduate diploma.'

There is currently a shortfall of primary teachers in Argyll and Bute, with Ashfield primary school, located 10 miles west of Lochgilphead, closing in November this year.

Argyll and Bute Council has previously stated it struggles to recruit teachers to the area.

The apple of her eye

Park primary school pupil Catriona McFarlane saw the apple of her eye recently during the school's Apple day.

The youngster was photographed holding one of the entries in the largest apple competition as the school celebrated the fourth anniversary of its school orchard on November 20, with a day of fantastic fruity fun. 16_t5apple01



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Councillor MacDougall would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.
Nollaig Chridheil agus Blàdhna Mhath Ur

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Expertise in Argyll sought for school projects

LOCAL businesses are being encouraged to find out how they can benefit from new schools being constructed in Argyll and Bute at a series of 'Meet the Buyer' events next year.

Argyll and Bute council, in partnership with Hub North Scotland, is planning new secondary schools for Oban and Campbeltown as well as the new Kilmory Primary School in Dunoon.

The main construction contract has been awarded to firm Morrison Construction, and there are opportunities for local companies to get involved either as sub-contractors or suppliers for the significant projects.

'Meet the Buyer' events will be held in Dunoon, Oban and Campbeltown during January.

Argyll and Bute council's Policy Lead for Education and Lifelong Learning, Councillor Aileen Morton, said: 'Here in Argyll and Bute we have lots of locally owned companies who have the skills, expertise, local knowledge and capacity to play a part in these major projects. I would encourage businesses to come along to their local Meet the Buyer event to find out more and get involved.'

The sessions will be held between 1pm and 5pm in Dunoon's Queen's Hall on Tuesday, January 20, 2015, in Oban on Wednesday, January 21 at the Corran Halls, and in Aqualibrium, Campbeltown on Thursday, January 22.



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what's on

THE OBAN TIMES
FREE EVENT LISTING

THURSDAY 18TH DECEMBER

Ramblers Walk, Oban to Gallanach, Contact 01855 821279
Gaelic Conversation Group, Furan Gaelic Centre, Corran Halls, Oban, 7pm

SATURDAY 20TH DECEMBER

Santa at the Royal Hotel, Oban, 11am-3pm
Gaelic Conversation Group, Furan Gaelic Centre, Corran Halls, Oban, 11.30am

SUNDAY 21ST DECEMBER

Ramblers Walk, Meall an Doire Dhùibh & B. Mheadhoin, Contact 01855 821279
Christmas Gifts Craft Fair, Great Western Hotel, Esplanade, Oban, 10am-4pm

THURSDAY 25TH DECEMBER

Ramblers Walk, Stob Coire Raineach - Glencoe, Contact 01855 821279

Email details of your event titled 'What's On' to whatsone@obantimes.co.uk



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The issue dated Thursday 1st January will be available to buy from the 30th Dec all advertising must be booked in by Wednesday 24th

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Oban gearing up for Hogmanay party

THE PARTY of the year is soon to get underway as Hogmanay in Oban - the free gig at the Corran Halls - makes final plans for the party.

This year the party is longer than last year with a rocking start at 7pm.

There is also a change of venue from last year's event, which was held at the town's Station Square.

The Corran Halls car park plays host to this year's outdoor event.

The volunteer committee has brought together some great bands from in and beyond the town and some of the rising stars from the group's 'opportunity knocks' competition.

Charlotte Lawson
Charlotte Lawson will be making her stage debut.

She is one singer with an incredible voice and stage presence who will no doubt have the crowd singing along.

From Easdale village, she is no stranger to belting out the big tunes as she has taken part in

musicals and performances at Oban high school.

Come along early if you want to hear the incredible voice that is Charlotte Lawson.

Perfectly Flawed

Next up are young band Perfectly Flawed, featuring great guitars and drums.

These guys only get better and better playing a variety of covers and some of their own music.

It will be a treat to hear the boys breaking new ground by playing on the Hogmanay stage.

Ballet West Outreach

Ballet West Outreach group will also be making it on the stage to give a performance from some of its pupils from the local area.

The Taynuilt ballet school is renowned for breath taking performances and it will be no different on the night of Hogmanay.

Come and see local children perform in the town.

Nicky MacInnes
Singer songwriter

Nicky MacInnes is the one to watch as she plays a superb set for the Hogmanay in Oban line up.

She sings a mixture of different cover songs and writes some of her own music.

She plays every week at an open mic night.

Nicky taught herself how to play the guitar when she was a student in Glasgow and has been playing now for about three years all in all.

Ceol an Aire

This band, with a little bit more experience, will be coming on to the stage with all the Hogmanay energy that folk need to get them into the party spirit.

This outstanding band, which can only be described as superb, is Ceol an Aire - the band that could lift the spirits of almost anyone.

They will be outstanding again on the big stage.

Malcolm Clark is a fantastic front man for the band.

It will be interesting to know if there is anyone

this Oban man doesn't know in the crowd as he has been in the music business for some time now.

Crackin' Craic

Crackin' Craic, Scott Sinclair and Ruairidh Allan, are so much fun - the name says it all.

With Scottish dance and country music, these guys will get the circulation going.

They are building up quite a following around the town and beyond and, again, are not to be missed.

The Works

Electricians, lawyers, business owners and international experts all from Oban, The Works is the bad boys' band of the 1980s.

The Works rock band is internationally famous and incredibly good at getting the town rocking.

Look out for the handsome and dangerous front man, Colin 'Wally' MacNiven who does more high kicks than Rolling Stones front man Mick Jagger.

And now he is bringing his band to Oban to share in the celebrations at the Hogmanay in Oban party.

Brian Hughes
Ending the line up is Brian Hughes and his band.

Brian is Scottish country music royalty and plays the best tunes with a quality sound.

In 1999, he released his first album Days Gone Down and to showcase it put together a one-off gig at Glasgow's Renfrew Ferry with a band of volunteers given the name of The Lone Sharks.

The following years saw the release of a further three albums, Windmills, Back To Where I'm Going and My Kind Of Paradise, the latter two winning Album of The Year at the British Country Music Awards 2006 and 2011 respectively.

Further awards included songs of the year for 41 Goin' On 17 and Damascus Road. Tours include the UK, US and Europe.

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And now he is bringing his band to Oban to share in the celebrations at the Hogmanay in Oban party.



CORRAN HALLS CARPARK

Wednesday December 31
Starts at 7pm

Local businesses support Hogmanay in Oban

ORGANISERS of the Oban in Hogmanay party have praised businesses for coming up with the cash to celebrate New Year.

Alongside Oban Common Good Fund, BID4Oban and Argyll and Bute Council, many Argyll businesses have helped to make the event possible. Thanks goes to Jewson Oban, Sinclair Plant and Contracting, Neil McGougan, Jackson's Butchers, Beaton & McMurchy Architects, Oban Milk Supplies and Creran Marine which have all supported Hogmanay in Oban.

Get your tickets

TICKETS for the gig are available at Oban Filling Station and the Corran Halls.

While the tickets are free they are limited in number and must be shown at the gate of the party.

Marshalls wanted

THE organising committee for Hogmanay is still looking for marshalls to help out at the event.

Organisers say it is a great way to start the New Year by helping out at the party and putting on a show for the world.



Perfectly Flawed will be playing on the night



Charlotte Lawson will be making her stage debut
Singer songwriter Nicky MacInnes will be there



The Works will be performing at Oban's Hogmanay party again this year



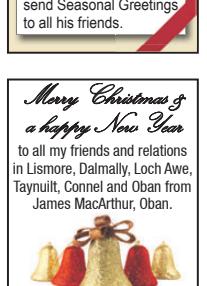
Popular ceilidh band Ceol an Aire will be performing for the second year in a row



Brian Hughes and his band are headlining the event



Your Personal Christmas Greetings



Prepare to take a roller-coaster ride as the IRN-BRU Carnival rolls back into town!

IT'S THAT time of year again...from Friday December 19 2014 until Sunday January 11 2015* the ultimate adrenaline junkies' playground, the IRN-BRU Carnival, is set to take over the top of your lungs as you are spun and swung 50ft feet into the air!

To celebrate the return of Europe's largest indoor funfair, the IRN-BRU Carnival has teamed up with *The Oban Times* to offer readers the chance to win one of 15 pairs of tickets to the ultimate festive day out.

Making a debut this year is the 'Crazy Mouse', a thrilling roller-coaster that will send the daredevils in the family on a speed frenzy journey. Also new for 2014 is the 'Dreams Live' and 'TopFlip' which will take riders on an up-side-down spin. Visitors can reach new heights on the returning 'Extreme XL'

Celebrating 94 years of family fun, the Carnival is Europe's largest in-

door funfair with over 60 rides and attractions.

With new and exciting additions this year, it's set to be even bigger and better than ever before.

As a family 'must do', make sure to visit the IRN-BRU Carnival as part of your family's festive fun!

Entry price is £13 with visitors receiving 10 vouchers which can be used on all rides and most stalls* (each ride is one voucher and stalls are two vouchers).

For full information please visit www.irn-bru-carnival.com.

You can also get your hands on a two for one entry voucher to the IRN-BRU Carnival when you purchase a 24 pack of Regular or Sugar Free IRN-BRU cans from selected supermarkets in Scotland.

Closing 94 years of family fun, the Carnival is Europe's largest in-



To be in with a chance of winning a pair of tickets, just cut out this week's token 1 and look out for token 2 along with the entry form in next week's *Oban Times*.

Terms & Conditions
This competition is open to all adults over the age of 18. All entries must include the name and contact details of the entrant. Entrants will not be considered if they do not have all information specific. Winners will be chosen at random, this decision is final. Prize is one pair of tickets to the IRN-BRU Carnival. Prize is only valid for one day. This prize has no cash alternative, is non-refundable and non-exchangeable. Travel is not included. The IRN-BRU Carnival reserves the right to refuse entry without explanation.



Seven Days

llee@obantimes.co.uk

As families prepare for Christmas, here is a list of things to do that you might not have thought of...

Thursday 18

WHAT Park Primary Christmas Service
WHERE Park Primary
TIME 10am
COST free

It will be standing room only for parents and families of children at the Park School Christmas Service.

Friday 19

WHAT Washington Irving
WHERE Corran Halls
TIME 7.30pm
COST £10

Homecoming gig for some of the band members with guest performances from Ella the Bird. Electric folk and lots of fun to be had with the boys from Washington Irving.

Saturday 20

WHAT All Saints Christmas Carol Service
WHERE St Margaret's Lochgilphead
TIME 4pm
COST Donation

All Saints Christmas Carol service will be conducted by Father Simon MacKenzie. Everyone is welcome at this ecumenical service.



Sunday 21

WHAT Winter Solstice Walk
WHERE Kilmartin House Museum
TIME 10.30am
COST free, but cost for buffet. Booking essential

Celebrate the turning of the year and the coming of longer days with a walk through the heart of Kilmartin Glen's prehistoric landscape. Explore why this time might have been special for the people living here thousands of years ago. After the walk there will be a hot buffet at Kilmartin Museum Café.

The walk will be led by Sharon Webb, curator of Kilmartin Museum.

The walk is free but booking is essential. Buffet costs £8 for adults, £5 for children, booking is also essential for the buffet.

Please wear suitable clothing and footwear.



Monday 22

WHAT Carols, mince pies and mulled wine
WHERE Treslaig Hall, Ardgour Church
TIME 7pm
COST free

A great night out at the Treslaig Hall for all the family.



Tuesday 23

WHAT Tickets for the Oban Hogmanay party
WHERE Various locations
TIME when open
COST free

Pick up your tickets for the Hogmanay in Oban party featuring some great bands from 7.30pm on December 31.

This year the event takes place at the Corran Halls with young, old and veterans (The Works - an Oban boy band from the 1980s) playing to the crowds. Ceol An Aire are also playing at the gig. So dress up warm, and get your dancing shoes on - and remember to pick up some tickets today.

Wednesday 24

WHAT Christmas Eve
WHERE Oban Phoenix Cinema
TIME various
COST various

Step out of the chaos of Christmas for a couple of hours and come along to the cinema to watch a classic Christmas film.



MUSICIAN: Allan Henderson has quit the touring circuit to become a fiddle, bagpipes, piano and keyboard tutor.

Blazin' Fiddles musician now offering tuition

A MALLAIG musician has said goodbye to touring and performing to allow him to pass on his knowledge to the next generation.

Allan Henderson, founding member of Highland band Blazin' Fiddles, left the band earlier this year to spend

time with his family and has now turned his attention to tuition in fiddle, bagpipes, piano and keyboard.

The father of four said: 'I was with Blazin' Fiddles for the best part of 20 years and I loved it but when you're a family man the touring

is difficult. I'm enjoying spending more time with my kids but passing on what I know is so important to me.'

'I was really lucky growing up because I had patient people around me who were willing to teach me and that's what got me where

I am today. Now it's my turn to do the same for other people.'

'I want to pass on those skills and the passion for music.'

Lessons with Mr Henderson can be booked by calling 07887750359 or by emailing hnederhog@hotmail.com

COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

Oban Accordion & Fiddle Club
Hot Supper and Dance
with Colin Garvin
Scottish Dance Band
Friday 9th January 2015
7.30pm - late
The Royal Hotel
Tickets: £15, Children £7.50
Includes 2 course supper
For tickets contact
01631 562077
07979 520792
or Oban Music Shop

An Comunn Gaidhealach MEUR CHRUACHAIN (Crucian Branch)
CÉILIDH NA NOLLAIG
Saturday 20 December
Taynuilt Village Hall, 7.30pm
Singers - Mary Catherine MacNeil, Freddy MacKenzie,
Hector MacFadyen, Rebecca Hill
Piper - Alasdair MacLean, The Isla Sinclair Dancers
Feart ag Taighe - Duncan MacNeil
Stovies & home baking - Raffle includes Christmas hamper.
Admission including Members £4.00 : Children (5-16 yrs) £2
(Funds collected promote The Gaelic Language, Music and Culture)

Four out of five adults use their local paper to find out what's on
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THIS WEEK'S LISTINGS

MONDAY:
0800 AM on FM,
0810 Breakfast Show,
0900 Monday Morning with Andy and Stephen,
1100 Maggie May Black,
1300 CLYDE 2,
1500 Jim Edge, 1700 Drivetime With Dann Hay, 1900 Rosie's Highland Fling, 2000 John McLuckie's Show, 2100 David Cullen, 2200 American Jukebox with Michelle

TUESDAY:
0800 AM on FM,
0810 Breakfast Show with Maggie May, 1000 Ken Hunter, 1200 Memories are

Made of This with Ken Hunter, 1300 The Quiz with Danni Hay, 1500 Lesley Blair-Simmonds, 1700 Drive-time with Jim Lynch, 1900 Sounds Scottish with Archie Cameron, 2000 Highest Praise with Stuart, 2100 Elaine Lamb, 2300 Northern Soul with Gordon Covey

WEDNESDAY:
0800 AM on FM,
0810 Breakfast Show, 0900 Sound Scottish (repeat), 1000 Comfort Zone with Doug Carmichael, 1300 CLYDE 2, 1500 Elaine Lamb, 1700 Drive-time with Ian Blair-Simmonds, 1900 Weekend Warmup with Ken Hunter, 1900 New Country Show with Jim Lynch, 1845 Sports View, 1900 Country Meets Country with Jackie

& Ken, 2100 Gordon's Grooves

THURSDAY:
0800 Maggie May's Carousel, 1100, Molly's Mix with Molly Black, 1300 CLYDE 2, 1500 Gordon Covey, 1700 Drive-time with DJ Taz, 1900 Christine's Collection, 2100 Ann's Ceilidh, 2200 Margo Till Midnight

FRIDAY:
0800 Jean Ainsley Breakfast Show, 1000 Teeny and Tiny Show, 1300 CLYDE 2, 1500 Weekend Warmup with Ian Blair-Simmonds, 1700 Drive Show with Jim Lynch, 1845 Sports View, 1900 New Country Show with David Entwistle, 2100 Drum & Bass with Graham Scott

SUNDAY:
0900 Sunday Morning with Breege, 1100 - 1400 Allan, 1630 Archie Darling, 1800 Ken's Friends with Ken Hunter, 1900 New Country Show with Graham Scott



An Oidche Ron Nollaig / Christmas Eve
Cuirm @ Celtic: Capercaillie

Capercaillie: còmhla air a bheil meas agus iarráidh mhòr is iad a' comharrachadh nan deich blàthna ficeadaí aca còmhla. The acclaimed band in concert at Celtic Connections 2014. Part of their 30th anniversary celebration s, the concert shows a band at the top of their game.

9.55pm



Cuirm @ Celtic: Capercaillie

Là na Nollaig / Christmas Day

Mànran bho Fèis na Mara

Mànran - còmhla air a bheil meas anns gach ceàraidh den t-saoghal - gu h-àraidiann ann am Malaig far a bheil iad a' clúch dha luchd-leantainn bheothail aig Fèis na Mara. Recorded at the Fèis na Mara festival in Mallaig in October 2014, music from the renowned band Mànran, plus special guests.

11pm

Dìlhachadh 26 Dùblachd / Boxing Day

Mòd 2014: Mòd na Clòinne

Còthrom coimhead air ais còmhla ri Cathy Nic Dhòmhnaill air cuid de dhà oirigh aig a Mod na Clòinne ann 2014. Cathy MacDonald offers another opportunity to enjoy some of the successful performers from the Children's Mod 2014.

7.30pm

Dilain 29 Dùblachd / Monday 29 December

Dilleachdan Gemma / Gemma's Orphans - Pàirt 1

Aig aois dreach 17 rinn Gemma Steele à Uibhist a Deas suas a h-inntinn gun robh i a' iarrashtachann ann an Kenya a chuidheachadh. San t-sreath seo de thri phrограм, gheibh sinn sealadh togarrach mun bhoireannach òg, treun is déanachadh, Gemma Steele.

An absorbing and revealing profile of an exceptional young woman - Gemma Steele. We follow Gemma as she attempts to build her second orphanage in Kenya - providing beds for 40 children with space to expand. A heart-warming and moving story of both person, and two different communities in Scotland and Kenya.

8.25pm

Dileachdan Gemma / Gemma's Orphans - Pàrt 1

Fad corr is 40 bliadhna, bha stàinte sluaigh Uibhist a Tuath fo churam an Dotair Alasdair MacLeod. Rannsachaidh am program seo mar a chòimheadach a ès déidh sluaigh tri mile sgapte eadar 16 eilean, le gaineann Rathaidhean agus gun fòn.

The story of the legendary Dr. Alasdair MacLeod who served the community of North Uist for over 40 years.

10pm

Dilain 29 Dùblachd / Monday 29 December

An Dotair Mòr

Fad corr is 40 bliadhna, bha stàinte sluaigh Uibhist a Tuath fo churam an Dotair Alasdair MacLeod. Rannsachaidh am program seo mar a chòimheadach a ès déidh sluaigh tri mile sgapte eadar 16 eilean, le gaineann Rathaidhean agus gun fòn.

The story of the legendary Dr. Alasdair MacLeod who served the community of North Uist for over 40 years.

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20 VISION



David Adams McGilp
Regional director, VisitScotland

David Adams McGilp has lived and worked in Mid Argyll most of his life. Since the summer of 2008, he has been one of VisitScotland's regional directors, with responsibility for creating and maintaining strategic partnerships with government, local authorities, the enterprise network and industry to ensure that the visitor economy is a development priority. He works across Argyll and the islands, Dunbartonshire and Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, and has additional national responsibility for marine tourism.

Where have you lived and worked?

My family moved from Glasgow to Knapdale in Mid Argyll in the 1970s. I moved to Dundee when I was 17 to work as a design and layout artist on a teenage magazine, then back home a couple of years later to help on the family farm when my stepfather died.

I worked in fish and shellfish farming, road construction and in an optician's before ending up in plant operator training for a local civil engineering firm.

When Kilmartin Museum opened in 1997, I got the job of marketing officer and I stayed there for several years. That's how I got involved in tourism, really. I was invited to be an inaugural member of the tourism innovation group and served on the board of the Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions and the Scottish Tourism Forum (which later became the Scottish Tourism Alliance).

I ran a small online consultancy for a while too, and worked

for community groups as well as some public sector clients, and was privileged to work on projects in the USA, across Europe, the Balkans and Scandinavia.

How do you see your area growing over the next six years?

It is no secret that Argyll faces a potential population crisis in the coming decades, and a falling population will mean a less prosperous region. The local authority acknowledges the importance of the visitor economy and how it can contribute to economic recovery and growth.

My firm view is that the other priority sectors – forestry, renewables and food and drink – are not incompatible with leisure, recreation and tourism activity, and that together the package has the potential to encourage young people to stay in the area and families to move here.

These sectors have growth capacity and with that comes

rewarding and fulfilling employment, mobility in the housing market and renewed community and investor confidence. There are obstacles – a lack of affordable homes, short-term contracts, high dependence on the public sector – but we have the products and services that could grow to create a climate for improvement if parochialism, protectionism, apathy and negativity could be put aside.

Can you say a bit about the direction you would like to see it take?

There have already been some significant moves in the right direction. Argyll and Bute Council's CHORD and Lorn Argyll TIF programmes represent once-in-a-generation opportunities to re-energise some of our main towns in ways that will deliver long-term benefits to the greatest number of sectors.

I would like these models, or versions of them, to be reproduced in other places – those places with the greatest need for regeneration and those places with the best prospect of sustaining economic growth, social improvement and environmental responsibility.

I would like more communities and groups to take responsibility for their futures by securing reliable long-term income streams based on realistic business cases, rather than rely on discontinuous project-based, short-term grant assistance. It can happen. I was really impressed by plans in Northern Ireland for coastal communities to buy equity in offshore renewable energy installations.

As well as having a share of the assets and the profits of sales to the national grid, this model introduces discounted local electricity tariffs as well as annual windfalls from commercial partners. They even propose to train the local workforce to service and maintain the network, which will translate into significant local re-investment.

Tourism

Either we are all tourists or none of us are. Nowadays there are fewer distinctions between tourism, recreation and leisure activities. I suppose one definition would be the things people do in their spare time, so that includes what we all do as consumers even in our own towns and villages. We buy stuff locally,

we take part in local activities, go to local events and festivals, even visit local attractions (how many people take a stroll along the banks of the Crinan Canal, for example?) without necessarily understanding our own contributions to a sustainable economy.

For me, it's all about the destination. Argyll is like a magic carpet – a tartan one, with the sets made up of innumerable outstanding destinations and awe-inspiring journeys connecting them.

People have been coming to visit the region for centuries, and many have liked what they have encountered so much that they have moved here permanently. I think most people would agree that it's a big and diverse enough space to accommodate development and progress without damaging its breath-taking scenic beauty. Striking the perfect balance between connectivity, energy requirements, housing, employment, waste management, food production, education, health care, heritage, culture, recreation and leisure is always going to be challenging, but authentic experiences happen in real places and real places are never perfect.

I hope we can protect the authenticity of the Argyll experience because that is its greatest marketable commodity.

Culture

Much of the appeal of Argyll and the islands lies in its extraordinary concentration and diversity of cultural asset: literature, poetry, music and song in Gaelic and English are everywhere evident. Painters, sculptors, craftspeople and photographers have been influenced by their surroundings here forever and their work continues to add value to the experience, whether you are from down the road or the other side of the world. The growing popularity of events and festivals across the region is a testimony to community support and every one of them is an investment in the future. People visit, people like, people visit again, more people visit.

The list of natural and built heritage assets is impossibly long, but people are interested in prehistory, the early church, architecture and civil engineering. The very fabric of the countryside and coast is alive with rare and interesting habitats and species and the hills, lochs, sea and island-scapes shout their loveliness as soon as you step outside.

Economy and jobs

The four-platform recovery and growth strategy makes a great deal of sense to me. The local authority and the enterprise network understand the region's greatest strengths and I look forward to a functional and profitable integration of tourism, renewables, forestry and food and drink.

There is already a great deal of complementary activity and with 2015 being Scotland's Year of Food and Drink, I am confident that Argyll and the Isles can use the worldwide media exposure to best effect.

Transport

When I passed my driving test, the improvements to the A82 at Loch Lomond-side were not yet complete and I still marvel at the difference those works have made. Nowadays the focus is on Pulpit Rock and the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful. Road improvement is a continuous cycle – we all get frustrated at delays and diversions and annoyed at occasional pothole damage to our cars – but it happens everywhere, all the time.

Until someone comes up with a flexible wearing surface that's frost, moisture and subsidence resistant we have to accept that road works are necessary.

The passenger and vehicle ferry network has expanded significantly in the last 30 years, and while it will never please everybody all of the time, there are great options for moving around Argyll and the islands all year.

It's a bit of a mystery to travellers from North America and the Antipodes that there's no scheduled flights from Glasgow to Mull, for example. With a number of perfectly serviceable airstrips and growing demand for those scheduled services that do exist, there must be an opportunity to expand the internal air transport network into and around the region.

Increased capacity and frequency of rail services to Oban and Helensburgh have had a positive impact on travellers, and I would expect further development to meet consumer demand.

Young People

As a young person growing up in a small village, my priority was to get a moped when I was 16.

It was my ticket to independ-

ence, despite frequent embarrassing breakdowns by my parents and it meant I could visit my friends in other settlements. A year later I got a car, so I was a proper grown-up and could go further away, with friends, and for longer.

My daughter's generation interacts more-or-less entirely by mobile telephone apparatus, and I can see the advantages on cold, wet days. There were fewer opportunities for entertainment available to us, but we lived in a place bristling with things to see and do if you had any kind of imagination.

Most of my schoolmates left to go on to higher education or work away from Argyll. Most of them have returned. That tells me something about the enduring appeal of the place. It tells me that the opportunities are there for those that look for them, but I also know the struggle my own daughter is having trying to find a part-time job.

Depopulation

More jobs, more houses. More houses building more houses? Houses for people who build houses? There will always be a core of economic activity – there has to be – but identifying and exploiting opportunities will be the key to growth. That's why I think integration of activities at a destination or community level hold the best prospect of a bright future.

If you could imagine tourism in 2020 – what would your worst fears be?

I worry that we don't take full advantage of marine and coastal tourism development opportunities. For example, any port or harbour development from now on should include shared infrastructure. For a tiny fraction of extra capital expenditure, slipways and step-ashore facilities could be integrated to benefit recreational, leisure and tourism sectors, including cruise ship tenders.

My other concern is about a fake repertoire establishing itself as real. I am sure we have all encountered examples of modified histories or inaccuracies finding their way into publicity and marketing material. It's not necessary. Argyll has a rich history and a real one. Let's celebrate it, rather than invent a new one.

How do you feel people could work together to achieve the aims you have set out above?

There is real evidence that they already do. Practical partnerships between the public agencies and the private sector and there is an increasing role for third sector and community groups to uphold their interests.

Partnership only works if all the partners exert equal effort and I think the product is mature enough in Argyll for all partners to work towards common objectives. They might not always agree on the precise mechanism, but there is a real wealth of experience and expertise across the region, and I would encourage anyone with a good idea to share it. It might work, it might not. We won't know unless we try.

How do you see The Oban Times playing a role within that?

Responsible journalism has a huge role to play in local development. Press-backed campaigns are invaluable aids to recruitment and funding assembly and have the capacity to motivate entire communities. A good newspaper knows its readership and will necessarily deliver news and comment that's relevant and factual.

What training and other provisions would need to be in place in order that this was achieved?

The increasing suite of vocational and academic opportunities through the University of the Highlands and Islands network is encouraging. Students can access most courses from anywhere on the network, which means that they don't necessarily have to move away to study. For those that want to, industry placements in Argyll would help with living and travel arrangements, and any further concessions on public transport would be very welcome. I would like to see distance learning or alternative delivery opportunities extend to more institutions, allowing students to study the course of their choice from a home base, lowering living costs and allowing time for part-time employment.

The living wage is a practical incentive, and is to be supported.

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Colin, Lynn and Sharon

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We would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas

Nollaig Chridheil & Bliadhna Mhath Ùr

bh Shabhal Mòr Ostaig

Festive Fun



St Columba's primary school in Oban performed the nativity 'Rock around the Flock'



Norman Nicholson conducting the Oban Bach Orchestra during Sunday's annual charity carol concert, organised by the ROTARY Club of Oban. 16_151concert01

THE ROTARY Club of Oban held its annual charity carol concert at the weekend in front of a packed audience at the Corran Halls. Several local choirs and music groups took part in an afternoon of festive singing on Sunday, including music by

the Oban Bach Orchestra, conducted by Norman Nicholson. Reverend Nicki McNelly and Oban high school head boy James Kane and head girl Allyson Boyd were invited to give readings, along with Ronnie Neil and Ken Moncrieff of the rotary club.



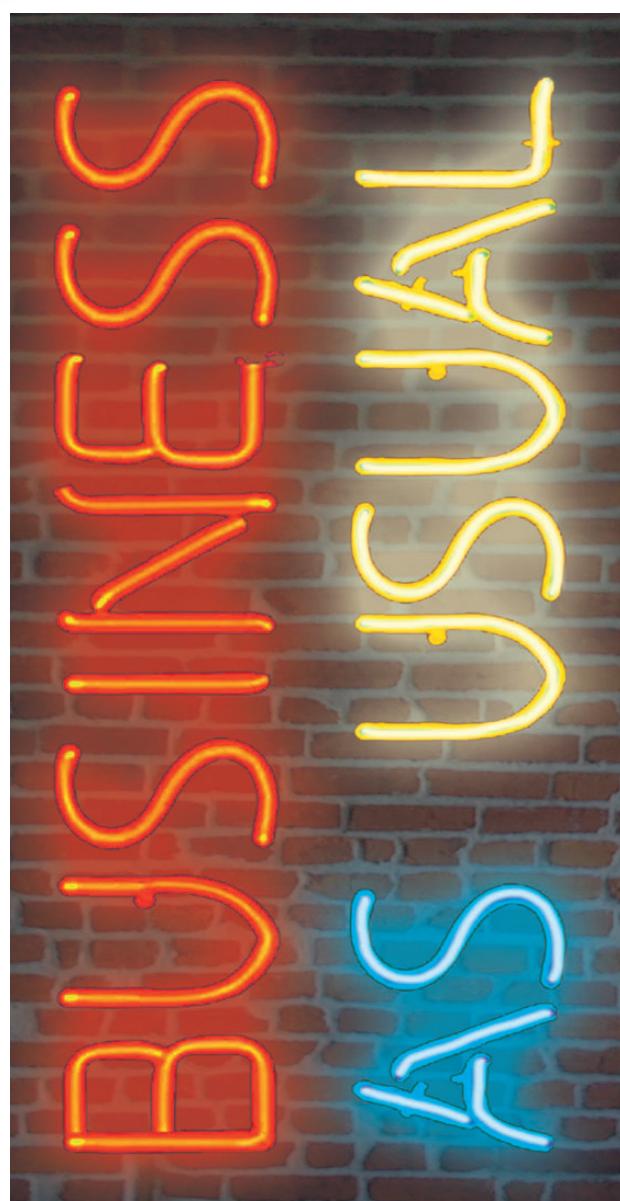
Six-year-old Rhys McCloskey met Santa at Templars Hall in Tarbert 08_a50tarbxmas04



Phoebe Hutton, three, from Lochgilphead 08_a50lochxmas04



Brother and sister Louise and Tom Pendreich with Santa at Lochgilphead Joint Campus' Christmas fair 08_a50school06



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Joseph, Mary and Jesus are visited by shepherds, wise men and an angel, at the Rockfield primary school nativity play 15_151nativity01

ROCKFIELD Primary school held its Nativity play recently, with the primary one, Gaelic primary one and pre-five pupils performing together for the first time. The assembly hall was packed at Oban primary campus on December 11 as family and friends gathered to see the classic tale of Mary and Joseph travelling to Bethlehem and the birth of baby Jesus.

The audience was treated to some Christmas songs, including We Wish you a Merry Christmas and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, and the Gaelic class also performed a Christmas song in Gaelic.

Claire Campbell, principal teacher of early level, was delighted with the performance. ‘I thought the whole thing was absolutely fantastic,’ she said. ‘The oldest children are only five years old and the youngest are three, so for them to get up on stage and sing and perform with such confidence is brilliant.’

‘I’d like to thank all the staff here for all their support over the past two weeks and the parents for helping the children learn their lines.’

‘It’s the first year we’ve done the play with the early level [pre-five] children, and I thought it was a great success, and great to see such a brilliant turnout and fantastic support from the parents.’

Pictured are Cairngorm staff Fiona Smith, Gillian McCullen and Norman McCullen with Santa and three of the reindeer 16_151reindeer01

Santa visited the Scottish Sealife Sanctuary at the weekend, bringing some special visitors with him. As well as seeing his grotto, children could meet reindeer from the Cairngorm reindeer herd, making it a special day for visitors to the sanctuary in Barcaldine.

Residents of Abbeyfield care home enjoyed Glencoe primary school’s Christmas show ‘Gabriel’s big break’

Santa visited the Royal Hotel in Oban on Saturday, organised by the Oban and Lorn Lions club. Brothers Calum and Jamie MacAllister are pictured with Santa and their gifts 16_151roysanta01

Brothers Ross and Robert Potter-Irwin got to meet Santa at Arduaine Garden on Sunday. The Ardfern siblings, who attend Craignish primary school, both received a gift from Santa in his grotto 16_151grotto01



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TÍOSA NA



The Killin Santa Dash held last Saturday saw more than 100 santas run from the Falls of Dochart Hotel to the Bridge of Lochay Hotel. The event was organised by Pete Waugh of Tay Fitness. Killin Choir welcomed the red-suited runners home with a rendition of carols



South Lochaber primary school pupils met in the Leven Centre for a Scottish country dancing festival, with the help of Kinlochleven high school pupils

20_f51dancing01



Banavie primary one, two and three pupils kicked off the school's Christmas concert with a 'Ralph the reindeer' pantomime

20_f51banavie01



All smiles from Lochyside RC's Nativity cast

20_f51lochyside01



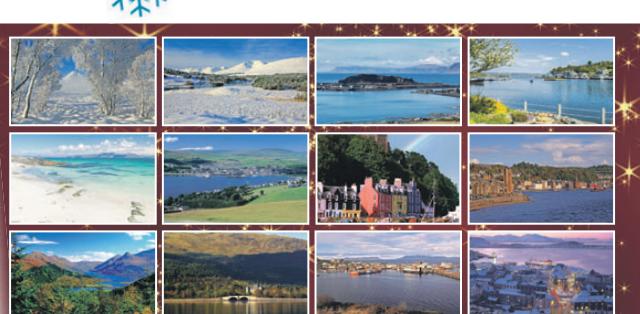
Caol children performed a rock and roll version of Cinderella

20_f51caolpanto01



Ballachulish primary 1-3 pupils prepare to showcase their Nativity to the rest of the school

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Snowing me, snowing you

The Institute of Advanced Motorist's chief examiner, Peter Rodger, is offering weekly motoring tips to riders and drivers.

This week he is advising drivers about travelling in snow.

While there is just snow forecast at the moment for the north-east of Scotland, the unpredictability of our weather means it could come elsewhere at any time.

If you have to travel in bad weather plan your journey thoroughly. Think about where you are going and what it will be like all the way along the journey. If you can, avoid travelling on less-used roads or country lanes as these are less likely to be gritted.

Before setting off, clear all your windows and mirrors fully. Clear off snow piled on the roof of your car and the bonnet too, as it can fall and blow on to the windscreen. Don't leave anything obscured.

Start your car gently from stationary and avoid high revs. If road conditions are extremely icy and you drive a manual car you should move off in a higher gear rather than first gear. You should stay in a higher gear to avoid wheel spin.

It's important you get your speed right when travelling in snow. Never drive so fast that you risk losing control and don't drive so slowly that you risk losing momentum for getting up a slope.

At the very least double your stopping distance

from the vehicle in front of you – ideally lengthen it much more than this. This will give you more time to slow down without relying on your brakes.

Make sure you slow down sufficiently before reaching a bend so you have enough time to react to any hazards that appear as you go round it – and so you do not skid as well. You should have finished slowing down before you start to turn the steering wheel.

If you break down or have to pull over on a motorway or dual carriageway, you should leave your vehicle and stand to the safe side of it, but not in front of it, when waiting for help.

Peter Rodger, chief examiner, said: 'Many of the problems associated with travel during snow could be avoided if people planned in advance. People routinely travel with only the minimum of safety equipment, without realising their journey could be a lot longer than expected.'

'At the very least you should have a shovel, torch, blanket, jump-leads and tow rope. You should ensure your mobile phone is fully charged, and the number of your recovery organisation is saved into it. And don't set out without knowing the location of petrol stations on your way.'

'This all might sound obvious, but too many of us forget to do any of this. Don't be one of the ill-prepared, and listen to the weather forecast for the whole length of a winter journey to help you prepare for it.'



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Farming

Market Reports

DALMALLY

UNITED Auctions held its annual Christmas show and sale on December 6 of all classes cattle and a sale of all classes sheep at Dalmally Auction Mart.

A record entry of 576 head of cattle sold to a packed ringside of buyers whilst all classes of sheep sold at very high levels.

Judging the various classes of cattle prior to the sale was in the hands of Gordon Kemp, Aberdeen-shire who made the following awards:

Bullock over 10 months: 1 Mr I R Morrison, 13 Eoligarry, Barra; 2 Mr A J Morrison, 10 Eoligarry, Barra; 3 M/s Anderson, Tullochan, Killin.

Heifer over 10 months: 1 and 2 Mr A J Morrison.

Bullock Calves: 1 Mr I R Morrison; 2 M/s Anderson; 3 M/s MacGillivray, Achuran, Lismore.

Heifer Calves: 1 Mr A Cameron, Ardchatten, By Oban; 2 Mr A MacGillivray; 3 M/s Anderson.

Champion Animal: Mr I R Morrison (Bullock over 10 months).

Reserve Champion Animal: Mr A J Morrison (Bullock over 10 months).

Overall, the bullocks sold to average £779.18 per head or 242 pence per kilo (£823.59 or 236.76 pence per kilo) and the heifers averaged £646.14 or 232.08 pence per kilo (£699.33 or 234.76 pence per kilo last year).

Bullocks sold to a top price per head of £1,520 for Aberdeen Angus Cross from No13 Eoligarry and to 346 pence per kilo for Limousin crosses from Achuran, Lismore.

Hereford cross heifers from Clachan, Tiree sold to £1,200 and to 304 pence per kilo for Limousin crosses from Brenachaille.

This sale brings a close to the 2014 calendar sales for Dalmally Auction Mart which has been a record trading year for the centre. Principal lots and prices:

Top prices per head: Bullocks: AAx: £1,520 – 13 Eoligarry, Barra; £1,235 – 10 Eoligarry, Barra; £1,200 – 15 Moleigh Farm; £940 – Cairnbaa (Mrs D Jordan), BSHx: £920 – Glenbar Farm, CHARx: £960 – Carnoch 16, HERx: £1,250 (and £1,190); 13 Eoligarry, Barra; £1,235 (and £1,195) – 10 Eoligarry, Barra; £1,150 – Moleigh Farm; £1,095 (and £1,054); 10 Eoligarry, Barra; £1,005 – Tullochcan; £1,000 – 10 Eoligarry, Barra; £945 – 13 Eoligarry, Barra; £935 (and £935); 85 Bovine Barra; £930 – Cairnbaa (Mrs D Jordan); £925 – Garron and Melfort Farms (2) and Craignagartag (5); 10 Eoligarry; £905 – Garron and Melfort Farms; £900 – Sonachan Farm, SIMx: £1,400 – Ruaidheabhal (D Morrison Jr); £1,268 and £1,255 – 10 Eoligarry, Barra; £1,195, £1,154; £1,195, and £1,100 – Moleigh Farm; £760 – Torran Farm, LIMx: £850 – Gleneochan Estate, CHARx: £900 (2) – Barnakill Farm, HERx: £1,200 (2), £1140, £930 (2) and £890 – Clachan, Tiree, IMx: £985 (2) – 13 Eoligarry, Barra; £945 – Ardchatten; £895; and £890 – 10 Eoligarry, Barra;

SHx: £860 and £800 – Braes of Ardeonaig, LUING: £730 – Priestdale Estate, BSHx: £600 – Ashgrove.

Top prices per kilo:

Bullocks: AAx: 275p (4), 259p (4) – Machrins Farm, Colonsvy: 248p (2) – 123 Craigston, Barra: 244p – 236 Bruernish, Barra: 243p (3) – Moleigh Farm: 243p (2) – 123 Craigston, Barra: 241p – Cairnbaa (Mrs Jordan); 240p – 236 Bruernish, Barra: 236p (2) – 239 Bruernish, Barra; 234p – 239 Bruernish, Barra: 231p – 237 Bruernish, Barra: 229p (6) – Moleigh Farm: 226p – 10 Eoligarry, Barra: 225p – 13 Eoligarry, Barra: 223p – 123 Craigston, Barra: 223p – 123 Craigston, Barra: 214p – Cairnbaa (Mrs Jordan); 240p – 236 Bruernish, Barra: 236p (2) – 239 Bruernish, Barra; 234p – 239 Bruernish, Barra: 231p – 237 Bruernish, Barra: 229p (6) – Moleigh Farm: 226p – 10 Eoligarry, Barra: 225p – 13 Eoligarry, Barra: 223p – 123 Craigston, Barra: 214p – Cairnbaa (Mrs Jordan); 240p – 236 Bruernish, Barra: 236p (2) – 239 Bruernish, Barra; 234p – 239 Bruernish, Barra: 231p – 237 Bruernish, Barra: 229p (6) – Moleigh Farm: 226p – 10 Eoligarry, Barra: 225p – 13 Eoligarry, Barra: 223p – 123 Craigston, Barra: 214p – Cairnbaa (Mrs Jordan); 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west coast recruitment



Purchasing Assistant

Fort William



Marine Harvest (Scotland) is the largest Aquaculture Company operating in Scotland. Our marine and freshwater sites are located throughout the West Coast, Outer Isles and Argyll.

We are seeking to appoint a Purchasing Assistant to join our Purchasing Department in our processing plant in Fort William. The Department is responsible for the purchasing of equipment, supplies and services for the processing and logistics departments.

The Purchasing Assistant will be required to liaise with suppliers as well as other internal functions to ensure goods and services are purchased at the lowest ultimate cost, in line with the overall purchasing strategy.

The Purchasing Assistant will issue invitations to tender, analyse the bids received and prepare relevant contractual documents. They will also be involved in supplier evaluation and selection and will eventually be responsible for rationalising the supply base to further reduce spend.

Training and development will be given to the successful candidate in all areas of purchasing including negotiation, tendering, supply base rationalisation and cost reduction.

Person Specification

- Conversant with Microsoft Office packages (Word, Excel and PowerPoint)
- Excellent communication and numeracy skills
- Purchasing experience within a fast moving environment would be an advantage

The post is offered on a full-time permanent position, working a 40 hour week.

If you feel that you possess the appropriate skills and are looking for a new challenge, please apply in writing to Gillian Dempster, Human Resources Assistant, Marine Harvest (Scotland) Ltd., Business Resource Centre, Blair Mhor Industrial Estate, Fort William PH33 7PT, no later than Wednesday 31st December 2014.



Fish Farmer Magazine

EDITOR

Based Edinburgh or Oban

Industry Leading Magazine and Web sites

As Editor you will be responsible for managing the day to day production of the monthly print title "Fish Farmer" as well as sourcing and contributing daily news and analysis to the websites (fishfarmer-magazine.com and fishupdate.com) and associated social media.

You will continue to develop the printed publications and fully evolve all aspects of the business to include a comprehensive digital strategy.

The position requires a proactive approach from concept and strategy through to fulfilment. This includes the need for full liaison with the commercial team in order to maximise revenue from all platforms including online and offline company profiles and commercially led features.

In addition you will need to work closely with the senior management team to develop all products to their full commercial value.

You will enjoy a competitive salary, contributory pension scheme, healthcare and a generous holiday allowance.

Closing date for applications is Friday 23 January 2015

Apply by sending your CV, covering letter and present salary by post or e-mail to: Alison Arden Wyx Media Ltd, Crannog Lane, Oban, PA34 4HB. ali@wyxmedia.co.uk

Fish Farmer FISHupdate

public notices

First Registration of a Croft
Ian Rae has registered his croft Fearann Beag, Isle of Coll on the crofting register held by the Registers of Scotland. Any person who wishes to challenge the registration may apply to the Scottish Land Court by 3 August 2015. Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is A1559.

CROFTING COMMISSION COIMISEAN NA CROITEARACHD DECROFTING APPLICATIONS

Mr N D Macalister Hall Torrisdale Glen, Saddell & Skipness 0.26 ha - Existing house site 4.86.53397

Mr A Dawson 33 Achadafail, Kilfinichen & Kilvickeon 0.57 ha - Site for a dwelling house 4.86.53436

Comments can be made to the Crofting Commission by any member of the crofting community within the locality of the land, within 28 days of the date of this newspaper. Crofting Commission, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness IV3 8NW or info@crofting.scotland.gov.uk

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CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR REFUSE COLLECTION ARRANGEMENTS

Oban and Lorn

Refuse and recycling collections due on 25th and 26th December will be collected on the following day ie. 25th will be collected on 26th, 26th on 27th December.

Refuse and recycling collections due on 1st and 2nd January will be collected on the following day ie. 1st will be collected on 2nd, 2nd on 3rd January.

Moleigh Recycling and Civic Amenity Site will be closed on 25th/26th December and 1st/2nd January.

Mull and Iona

Refuse and recycling collections due on Thursday 25th December will be collected on Saturday 27th December.

Refuse and recycling collections due on Thursday 1st January will be collected on Friday 2nd January.

Glenquoich Recycling and Civic Amenity Site will be closed on 25th/26th December and 1st/2nd January.

Tiree

Refuse and recycling collections due on Thursday 25th December will be collected on Wednesday 24th December.

Refuse and recycling collections due on Thursday 1st January will be collected on Wednesday 31st December.

Gott Bay Recycling and Civic Amenity Site will be closed on 25th/26th December and 1st/2nd January.

Information is also available on the Council website and from your local office.

www.highland.gov.uk



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

The applications listed below, along with plans and other documents submitted with them, may be examined between the hours of 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) at the SERVICE POINT, LOCHABER HOUSE, HIGH STREET, FORT WILLIAM, PH33 6EL and online at <http://wam.highland.gov.uk>.

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

Reference Number Development Address Proposal Description

14/04382/FUL Land 40M West of Eilean Feoir, Portuairk, Kilchoan Erect dwelling

14/04394/FUL Cruachan Hotel, Achintore Road, Fort William Demolish existing extension and erection of 24 bedroom extension

14/04499/PIP Land 200M North East of Strathview, Lower Scotstown, Strontian Re-application of application 14/01201/PIP for Proposed House Plot previously had Planning Permission ref: 07/00246/OUTLO

14/04555/FUL Fassfern Forest, Kinlochell, Fort William Upgrade existing forest access.

14/04586/PIP Site 35M North West of Dalbreaghha, Onich Erection of house & garage (renewal of 11/03787/PIP)

Time period for comments is 26 days due to Christmas holidays
ePlanning Centre, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, INVERNESS IV3 5NX
Email: eplanning@highland.gov.uk

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EDITOR

Based Edinburgh or Oban

Industry Leading Magazine and Web sites

As Editor you will be responsible for managing the day to day production of the monthly print title "Fish Farmer" as well as sourcing and contributing daily news and analysis to the websites (fishfarmer-magazine.com and fishupdate.com) and associated social media.

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Closing date for applications is Friday 23 January 2015

Apply by sending your CV, covering letter and present salary by post or e-mail to: Alison Arden Wyx Media Ltd, Crannog Lane, Oban, PA34 4HB. ali@wyxmedia.co.uk



Abacus Services
Payroll Bureau Services

Payroll Assistant

Abacus Services (part of R A Clement Associates) are looking for a payroll assistant to join the busy payroll office in Oban. Candidates must have a "can do" attitude and experience in processing payrolls is essential. Salary commensurate with experience.

Please apply in writing, enclosing your C.V. to Helen Clark, Office Manager at R A Clement Associates, 5 Argyll Square, OBAN, PA34 4AZ or by email to hc@raclement.co.uk

Oban Times RECRUITMENT

Oban Times RECRUITMENT

Oban Times RECRUITMENT

Oban Times RECRUITMENT

ORMSARY FARMERS BOOKKEEPER/ADMINISTRATOR

An experienced bookkeeper is required to be responsible for processing the accounting transactions of the businesses, customer and supplier contact and support, general administration and invoicing at Ormsary Estate in Argyll.

The successful candidate should have a good working knowledge of Microsoft Office (especially Excel) and experience with accounting software. A relevant qualification would be desirable but is not essential if sufficient experience is demonstrable. The successful applicant will have strong verbal and written communication skills and the ability to work individually and as part of a small rural management team.

An attractive employment package including pension is offered for this position.

Ormsary is a diversified estate with excellent local community and schooling facilities.

Apply with CV and references to:

Mrs Barbara Cutler, Finance Manager, Ormsary Farmers, Ormsary Estate Office, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8PE or email to Enquiries@Ormsary.co.uk.



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TODDLER TRIKE with parent handle, suit boy or girl, new condition. Great Christmas present, £15 Telephone 01397 702067.

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WINTER TYRES Nokian WR A3 205/55 R16 H 94XL on steel rims 16"x6J5 stud PCD 112 ET50mm. Good tread. Fit 2011 Skoda Octavia VRS, set of four, £150 Telephone 01631 564954.

CLOTHES, SHOES AND ACCESSORIES

CAPE Massimo Dutti short medium size cape. Grey, 73% wool. Bought in Spain, worn twice. Oban, £15 Telephone 07825 079365.

MONSOON BEAUTIFUL SILK PARTY Skirt, size 20. New, chocolate brown knee length. Fantastic for Christmas and parties, £12 Telephone 01852 300478.

NEW GIRLS JACKET New Look Aviator style jacket, brown with piping, age 9-10, £7 Telephone 01397 702067.

DOMESTIC PETS

GERMAN SHORT-HAIRED PUP beautiful home reared puppies ready

20th Dec, KC reg and pedigree, 3 bitches 1 dog. Both parents working can be seen, £700 Telephone 01387 740575.

FURNITURE

'HABITAT' DOUBLE BED FRAME slate blue metal bed frame with beech slats, good condition, £45.00 Telephone 01546 600267 or 07917 567268.

GARDEN

LAWNMOWER & STRIMMER Flymo lawnmower, Black & Decker strimmer & 10m cassette reel. All

As New, boxed with instructions. Bargain!, £50 Telephone 07596 741279.

HEALTH AND FITNESS

GYM GLX as per shopping channels, brand new, never used, extras and manuals, cost £140, £50 Telephone 01546 886252.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

VIBROGYM massage plate series 200, excellent condition, £99 Telephone 01546 870601.

HOBBIES AND CRAFTS

PEARLISED PAPER & CARD White, Baby Blue & Baby Pink colours in stock available

in A3/A4/A5 sizes, from 13p per sheet. Contact Krisp Print. Telephone 01586 554975.

PERSONAL ENTERTAINMENT

22INCH FLAT SCREEN TV with remote, works well all the usual plug ins, £15 Telephone 07923 846492.

OUTDOOR SPORTS EQUIPMENT

32"SONY TV 2 1/2 years old, surplus to requirements, £99 Telephone 01546 526999 Taynuilt.

MAIL ORDER

KIDS SKI BOOTS Kids red Salomon T3 ski boots. Mondo 22. Shoe size approx 2.5 to 3, £20 Telephone 01866 822591.

SCOTTISH FIELD CALENDARS

featuring spectacular photography of some of our most scenic lochs, rivers, beaches and mountains. Places include: Stirling, Fort William, Glencoe, Aberdeen, Isle of Skye. Ex-rental

metal, double bed on bottom, single bed on top, good condition, £70ono Telephone 07411 505040.

VICTORIAN DRESSING TABLE 27" H 41" L 20" W believe mahogany with tillable attached mirror. Curved corners, carved legs draws delicate intricate & pretty, £99.99 Telephone 01631 750135.

MALTESE TERRIER/BICHON FRISE Pup, Adorable, cuddly white balls of fun, ready for the forever home, both parents can be seen, Boys £25 Girl £59.50 Telephone 07771 930975.

FURNITURE

'HABITAT' DOUBLE BED FRAME slate blue metal bed frame with beech slats, good condition, £45.00 Telephone 01546 600267 or 07917 567268.

GARDEN

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EDINBURGH, GLASGOW, LOCH LOMOND, KELSO, AViemore, FORFAR, RUM AND EIGG, SHETLAND, GLENTRUOOL AND DRYBURY. Always a popular gift for family and friends at home or abroad. Order on-line at www.scottishcalendars.co.uk

OBAN TIMES WEST HIGHLAND CALEDNDAR, fabolous views of the West Highlands portrayed in this handy and conveniently sized calendar. Places include: Inveraray, Appin, Oban, Seil, Isle of Mull, Campbeltown, Tarbert, Machrihanish, Fort William. Ideal for home offices or as a gift. Order on-line at www.scottishcalendars.co.uk

KIDS SKIS 130cm Dynastar Team kids carver skis, black and yellow with Salomon bindings. Good condition, £45 Telephone 01866 822591.

PERFUMES

JO MALONE Pomegranate Noir perfume, 100ml, boxed, new, unwanted gift, £55 Telephone 07809 678443 (Oban).

JO MALONE Amber and Patchouli perfume, 100ml, new, boxed, unwanted gift, £55 Telephone 01397 702067.

PET ACCESSORIES

CAT PLAYSTATION brand new item in box. 2 tiered shelves scratch poles & a sleep area. Height approx 48". Would suit a small / med size cat, £20 Telephone 01855 831669.

PHOTOGRAPHY

D50 CAMERA BODY plus YXTM battery

PERSONAL NOTICES

DOMAIN NAME FOR SALE thetartanhotel.co.uk and thetartanhotel.uk Offers in the region of £30,000. Telephone 07733 080339.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

1/4 ACOUSTIC GUITAR Messina 1/4 Classical guitar, with black case. Would suit child/beginner, £15 Telephone 07917 563888.

1/4 SIZE VIOLIN with bow and case. Good condition, nice sound, £45 Telephone 01546 600267 or 07917 567268.

GUITAR MULTI EFFECTS PEDAL by Vox Stomplab 2G compact guitar multi effects with expression/wah pedal. New, unwanted gift, boxed with instructions, £49 Telephone 01546 606367.

HOLIDAY

218cm, depth 103cm. Cost £750 will accept, £100 Telephone 07717 526999 Taynuilt.

ENTERTAINMENT

32"SONY TV 2 1/2 years old, surplus to requirements, £99 Telephone 01546 526999.

ENGAGEMENTS

McCORKINDALE
- GLENANN - The families of Shona McCorkindale and Philip Peterson Glenann, Scammadale, are delighted to announce their engagement on December 5, 2014.

RUBY WEDDING

McQUEEN
- MACKINNON - George to Moira on December 20, 1974 at Oban Old Parish Church by late Rev John MacLeod.

Present Address: Shian, Tobermyr.

DEATHS

DUNLOP - Peacefully on December 14, 2014, Carleton Henry, beloved husband of Nancy, dear father of Bill and Margaret, dearly loved grandfather and great-grandfather. Funeral in Oban Old Parish Church on Friday, December 19 at 12.30pm.

MACDONALD - Suddenly, but peacefully, at home on December 13, 2014, Ella Furneaux Cooper, aged 79 years, of Belmont Road, Ayr. Much loved wife of Rev. Ian U. Macdonald, loving mother of Neil and David, mother-in-law of Anne and Susan, Gaga of Catriona and Caitlin and gran of Cameron and Angus. Funeral service at Castlehill Parish Church on Friday December, 19 at 2.45pm. thereafter to Mason Hill Crematorium, by Ayr, at 3.30pm.

McCULLOCH - Peacefully at Lorn & Islands Hospital, Oban on December 13, 2014, in his 102nd year. Robert McCulloch, beloved husband of the late Margaret Stevenson, dear father to Anne, Jack and Robert, a much loved father-in-law, grandfather and great-grandfather. Funeral will take place from Oban Parish Church, Glencruitten Road, Oban on Monday December, 22 at 1.00 pm thereafter to Pennyfuir Cemetery.

McKECHNIE - Suddenly at the Southern General Hospital, Glasgow on Tuesday December 9, 2014, Wendy, Isle of Coll, beloved wife of John, mother and grandmother. Funeral service took place on Wednesday, December, 17 at Perth Crematorium.

Oban Times
BIRTHS, MARRIAGES, DEATHS

SMITH - John Duncan. Peacefully in Ayr Hospital on Sunday December 14, 2014. Much loved husband of Fiona MacCaig loving father of Graeme, Kirstyn and Cameron. Son of the late John and Henrietta Smith dear brother of Robert and David. Service in Girvan South Parish Church on Friday December 19 at 12 noon. Family flowers only, retiral collection in aid of British Diabetes Association.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

GRACIE - Margaret, Moreen, Sandra and families would like to sincerely thank all relatives, friends and neighbours for their kind support extended to them. Thanks to Rev. Dugald Cameron for his comforting service and to Dr Chukwuma and Dr Adams for their attention over the past year and to all staff at the Lorn Medical Centre, Betty Graham, ambulance drivers, and all at A and E and to all at Ward B of Lorn and Islands District Hospital for their excellent care. A big thank you to Albert and Ted for their daily visits to Alan at the house and to Ted for the very eloquent eulogy of Alan, it was very much appreciated. To Ian of Munn's, thanks for the efficient and sympathetic handling of the funeral and to the Lochness Arms for an excellent buffet. Finally thanks to all who travelled from far and near to be with us at the church and graveside. The sum of £729.18 was donated for Marie Curie Cancer Care. 14 Glencruitten Drive.

MEMORIAMS

CAMPBELL - In memory of our mum and dad. Miss you more each day that passes.

- Love Maree and Gary xx

CARMICHAEL - Very special memories of Kate who died December 20, 2013. Always in our thoughts. Forever in our hearts.

- All the family x

CLARK - Kirsty. This Christmas we quietly remember a wonderful mum & granny who passed away on December 22, 2012. Also Graham, a beloved dad & grandpa who passed away on August 7, 2006.

So greatly missed by us all. Such happy memories.

- Alison, Rhuaridh, Katie and Coll.

CLARK - In loving memory of Alexander (Tom) Clark, who passed away on December 26, 2012.

- Sadly missed by Marion (Morag) and family.

DUFF - Remembering Stuart who died aged 26 yrs on December 18, 2000.

- Love and miss you always Mum and Dad xx

JAMIESON - In memory of my dear friend Helen, who passed away on December

graveside service and to Hoey's the undertakers for their support and guidance. Thank you to all those who attended the service.

MACLEOD - Margaret, Sandy and Mhairi would like to thank the staff of Wards A and B of the Lorn and Islands Hospital for the care and compassion given to Campbell and his family during his stay in hospital. Many thanks also to Dr. M. Boyle, Dr. R. Wilson, Dr. F. MacLennan and all the staff at Lorn Medical Centre. Special thanks to district nurses, Gaynor, Lucy and colleagues, ambulance staff, Marie Curie staff and E.C.C team who cared for Campbell in a professional and dignified manner. Also the brethren of Oban Commercial Lodge 180 and the Rev. D. Cameron, Ian MacInnes of D & A Munn for his professionalism and The Royal Hotel.

Thankyou to all our friends, family and neighbours for the kindness they have given us during this time. £1085.14 was generously collected for Marie Curie Cancer Care.

MEMORIAMS

MACLEAN - Rose. In loving memory of our dear mother and granny, passed away December 15, 2011.

We hold you close within our hearts and there you shall remain, to walk with us throughout our lives, until we meet again.

- Love John, Sandra, Maggie, Janet and Kirsten.

MAITLAND - In loving memory of our dear brother and brother-in-law, James, who died December 23, 2012.

In the hearts of those who loved you, you will always be there.

Sadly missed.

- Catherine and Alasdair.

NICOLSON - In loving memory of our dear mother and grandmother Christina Stewart, died December 19, 1985. Also our dear sisters and aunts Jemima (Mima MacAulay), died December 30, 1989 also Mary (McTaggart), died August 23, 2011.

Precious are the memories silently kept

Of those we loved and shall never forget.

- Sadly missed by all the family.

SIMMONDS - In loving memory of William Simmonds who passed away December 20, 2013, a dearly loved husband, loving dad, grandad and great grandad. R.I.P.

It does not need a special day to bring you to our minds

The days we do not think of you

Are very hard to find.

- Your loving wife Sheila, sons William and Kevin, daughters Valerie, Veronica, Angela and Eileen, Caol, Torlundy and Inverness.

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PITCHING IN: Lochaber Rugby Club's all-new pitch will be opened on Boxing Day after being closed for 14 months. It is seen before (above) and after (right) the resurfacing work.

'The impact of being away from Banavie hit the club hard on and off the pitch'

Rugby

and women's teams trained for much of the year at the Black Parks, while the youths used the King George V Park in Fort William, but during the dark winter nights all teams had to share Lochaber high school's astroturf pitches.

Alistair MacKinnon, president of Lochaber Rugby Club, said: 'The club is looking forward to being back at Banavie on a regular basis and would like to thank the players, coaches and supporters for putting up with the disruption.'

'Training on the high school astroturf meant that they were unable to do any contact training

off the pitch, causing disruption to training for the senior players as well as making it challenging to try and accommodate youth games.'

'The players' patience has paid off in the long run, as the pitch is now properly established and

which wasn't helpful to the team for proper pre-match preparation, which definitely had an impact on the scores last season as well as player moral.'

'The players' patience has paid off in the long run, as the pitch is now properly established and

strong enough to take a scrum.'

The president's match on December 26 will kick-off at 2pm, with both teams led out by the club's primary 6-7 player of the year Fergus Beradelli, who will carry the match ball and present it to both captains.

After-match celebrations in the clubhouse will see live music, a champagne toast, Christmas jumper competition and raffle, with a ball signed by the current Scotland squad as a prize.

Free soup and a roll will be provided for all attendees.



Fort William manager hoping for four in a row

FORT William manager Calum MacLean says his side will return to action fresh and full of confidence, after an unplanned two-week break due to postponements.

Last Saturday's match away to Turriff United was called off because of a frozen pitch, following the cancellation of the previous week's game at home



Calum MacLean

to Deveronvale, delaying his side's chances to continue their fairytale winning run.

Fort inflicted consecutive defeats on Buckie Thistle, Keith and Huntly last month to make it three wins in a row for only the second time in their history and they now have the chance to make it a record-breaking four when Inverurie Locos visit Claggan Park this Saturday.

MacLean is certain that his side can carry on where they left off.

He said: 'I think the squad has started to click. Everybody's confident and on a high at the moment.'

'We have to keep ahead of Keith in the league and keep picking up points.'

'Inverurie are a good side and

anyone will come to Claggan and find it hard to play against us.'

'We are quietly confident; we've got to be.'

Midfielders Sean Ellis and Stuart Vance will be available to start their first matches, both in their second spells with the club, since re-signing short-term contracts which will keep them at Claggan until mid-January.

MacLean added: 'The boys haven't had a game yet and I'm hoping the weather doesn't scupper their deals but they are raring to go.'

'There is still a buzz about the place and we are still on for four in a row.'

THERE were mixed fortunes for three local youngsters competing at Durie's boxing club, Glasgow, on Sunday.

Lochaber Phoenix boxing club's Dan Nixon continued his fine form with a defeat of the more experienced Connor MacLeod from Granite City boxing club.

Despite the latter's superior height and reach, Nixon dominated and landed a number of crucial close-range left and right hooks to win the fight, in what was a very physical and draining contest throughout. Robert MacDonald's great recent run was brought to an end with a loss by points to Robert Hewitt from Durie's.

Both were on the offensive throughout but despite MacDonald's clever footwork, he lost over three rounds to a strong opponent.

Lochaber's Kein Johnston took on Durie's Keiron Yardley in an exhibition match the same night, with the former using it as a chance to put training techniques into practise. After a spirited

Mixed fortunes for three local boxing youngsters

Boxing

match, the two opponents got a tremendous reception from the Glasgow crowd.

The previous weekend in Perth saw the Lochaber Phoenix fighters go unbeaten, with Mark Gillespie, Cameron Whyte and Robert MacDonald all victorious. December 5 saw middleweight Gillespie deliver a very strong performance against Joseph Kuper from the Fair City amateur boxing club, in which he won every round.

The following night, 12-year-old Whyte defeated Granite City boxing club's Phoenix MacNeil, while MacDonald was the winner in a bout against Connor MacLeod from the same city.

Following last week's events, the Scottish Intermediate championships will take place during the last weekend of January and will involve a number of competitors from Lochaber boxing club.

To allow for postage over the festive period spot the ball will run for the next 2 weeks.

SPOT THE SHINTY BALL

LAST WEEK'S SHINTY BALL WAS HERE...

THIS WEEK'S JACKPOT £1400

We have removed the shinty ball from the photograph opposite. Now look carefully at the position of the players and use your skill and judgement to place a cross at the exact point where you think the centre of the ball was. You may have a maximum of 20 attempts on this coupon at a cost of £1. If you wish to have more attempts, you must enter on separate coupons.

Easy to enter
Cut out your completed coupon and put your entry plus £1 per 20 attempts into a sealed envelope and post it to "Spot the Shinty Ball" Competition, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HB by 12noon Monday 29th December.

You may hand it into The Oban Times Head Office, Lochavulin, Oban by the same time. Otherwise all entries must be posted.

Competition rules
No responsibility will be accepted for entries which are delayed, mislaid or lost, and proof of posting cannot be accepted as proof of delivery.

The Company's decision is final on all matters relating to the competition and no correspondence will be entered into. The final decision rests with the Company.

In the event of more than one correct entry, the jackpot will be shared equally between all winning entries. Any decision regarding the awarding of a prize is entirely at the discretion of the Company.

The Company reserves the right to declare the competition null and void at any time, subject to its discretion and to make full refund of the price of the coupon to any person who has entered the competition at that time.

Employees of Wyvern Media, their immediate relatives and any person otherwise connected with the competition are ineligible to enter.

Please remember to enclose £1 for 20 crosses. The maximum number of attempts on this coupon is 20, but you may enter on separate coupons as many times as you wish. No photocopies allowed. You agree to abide by the rules. How to enter: Mark your crosses using a ballpoint pen. Twenty crosses may be put on this coupon for £1. Send to "Spot the Shinty Ball" Competition, The Oban Times, P.O. Box 1, Oban PA34 4HB.

Winners will be announced in the issue dated 1st January 2015

WEEK 1 of 2



Please tape your £1 coin here

Name
Address
..... Tel No.

Finlay wins Appin hill race

Athletics

IT WAS another victorious weekend for Finlay Wild, who came first in Lochaber Athletic Club's Appin hill race on Sunday.

With the runners keen to get back into action after a fortnight off, Wild was over the line in 28 minutes and 6 seconds, with Tom Smith coming second in 30 minutes and 13 seconds.

Steve MacDonald was third in 32 minutes and 12 seconds, while the first lady home was Edie Hemstock, finishing in 36 minutes and 13 seconds.

Top 20 finishers (Lochaber Athletic Club unless otherwise stated): 1 Finlay Wild 28:06; 2 Tom Smith 30:13; 3 Steve MacDonald 32:12; 4 Tim Brand 35:19; 5 Aidan Donnelly 35:29; 6 Michael Bell 35:56; 7 Gavin MacMillan 36:01; 8 Ali Kennedy 36:07; 9 Edie Hemstock 36:13; 10 Hughie Macintosh 36:16; 11 Finlay Walton, Westerlands Cross Country, 36:18; 12 Neil Waslidge, unattached, 36:21; 13 Nick Charlton, RCS Cycles, 36:37; 14 Sarah MacKenzie 36:47; 15 Lewis Fyffe 36:53; 16 Andy Craig 37:22; 17 Barrie MacKinnon 38:24; 18 Ronnie Turner 38:35; 19 Jonathan Weir 40:42; 20 Michael Connolly 40:53.

Goon Squad are team to beat

Indoor football

THE GOON Squad remain five points clear of Lochaber Leisure at the top of the Ali Young indoor football league, after a 9-5 win against Barcelochy.

On the final day of fixtures before the teams head off on their two-week Christmas break, Lochaber Leisure kept up the pressure with a 10-4 defeat of Inverlochy United on Sunday, while the Valley remain close behind in third place, after winning 8-2 against Ali Young's team.

Florentina Turner had a hard-fought 3-2 win over HWE, whilst in another very close game, Portowcy beat Harlem Globe Stoaters by the same scoreline.

Other matches saw Nevis Range win 5-2 against Outer Milan and MHB win 5-2 against Barowcy.

Sports centre celebrates 10th anniversary

Sports centre

THE LEWIS sports centre celebrated its 10th anniversary on Saturday, with Western Isles councillor Alasdair MacLeod describing it as 'a tremendous success story' of the past decade.

The centre in Stornoway has hosted a number of major events since it opened in December 2004, including the Olympic Torch Relay, and was designated as the regional sports facility for the Outer Hebrides by sportscotland.

Several successful athletes from across the country have learned their trade there including Kara Hanlon - currently number 10 in the UK over 100 metre breaststroke - plus runners Connor MacLean and Michael MacMillan.

Among the centre's modern facilities are an astroturf football pitch, swimming pool, running track and games hall.

Green Machine march into West Regional final

Oban Lorne deliver only second defeat Carrick side suffered all season

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Oban Lorne | 20 |
| Carrick | 9 |
| Regional Shield - semi final | |

OBAN Lorne claimed the scalp of a team from the league above them for the third time this season as they marched into the final of the West Regional Shield.

The victory means the Green Machine is just two matches away from returning to Murrayfield, the venue of their most famous victory, the National Bowl, just two seasons ago.

Oban will face either Glasgow Accies or GHK in the final in Glasgow on Saturday, February 7.

West Division 2 team Lorne went into this encounter, knowing they had already beaten Allan Glens and Garnock from West Division 1, so to call them underdogs for this home fixture would have been a disservice.

The home side also boasted their strongest squad of the season on Saturday, prop Tommy Sutherland returned from injury after 12 weeks out, ex-Cambridge University player Andrew Abraham also returned at stand-off

while a number of Oban squad players had to be left out due to the SRU's ruling of four substitutions for the game.

Both sides looked to test each other in the opening minutes of the game with Oban's pack looking confident and Carrick's backline looking very dangerous on the counter attack.

Oban were dealt a blow after five minutes when scrum half Graham MacEachan was sin binned by referee Willie Malone for a dump tackle. Andrew Abraham filled in for MacEachan while Dave McCabe played at stand off as Oban played the next 10 minutes with 14 men.

Well taken penalty

Abraham took Oban into the lead after eight minutes with a well taken penalty to the delight of the large home support.

But Carrick were dominating both territory and possession with Oban defending superbly in their own half. Eventually the away side drew level with a penalty from Sean Christie, which acted as a moral victory for the impressive Oban defence.

Oban took the lead again

after 35 minutes with another Abrahams penalty. At this stage neither team had looked like crossing the tryline and were being drawn into a forwards' battle.

Out of nowhere Oban Lorne scored the first try of the game. Oban winger Plato Moisiadis pounced on a dreadful individual error by the Carrick fullback and hacked the ball towards the line.

The Oban player outpaced two Carrick defenders to gather the ball and dive over the tryline to increase Oban's lead to 13-3 with a successful conversion.

Into the second half Oban Lorne's poor discipline was starting to cost them as they gave away four successive penalties meaning Carrick found themselves back into the game with two penalties from Christie.

With the score at 13-9 Oban freshened up the team with wing Callum MacLachlan coming onto the field. With the Oban front row dominating, Oban began pressurising the Carrick tryline.

A Carrick scrum from five metres out was turned over, allowing Oban flanker Struan Smith to touch the ball down over the line for the second try of the day. Craig Wright stepped up to slot over a very impressive conversion

from close to the touchline to give a 20-9 scoreline going into the closing stages of the game.

The result is only the second defeat Carrick had suffered all season.

Player Allan Wright said: 'If

the team can put on similar performances in the remainder of this season's games it is going to be a successful time for the club.'

Concentrate

The team must now concentrate on league duty as they

travel to play Stewart in Castle Douglas this Saturday. Oban beat Saturday's hosts 39 - 23 earlier this season and know a win is required to keep up the pressure on Cambuslang at the top of the table.



FLEET-FOOTED: Oban Lorne centre Craig Wright shows his marker a clean pair of heels Photo: Stephen Lawson.



PRIDE OF BRITAIN: Susie Wolff represented Team GB in the Race of Champions, the first woman to do so.

Susie becomes first woman to compete in Race of Champions

OBAN'S Susie Wolff helped Great Britain reach the final of the Race of Champions (ROC), as she became the first woman to compete in the event.

The all-Scottish team of Wolff and retired Formula 1 driver David Coulthard lost to Team Nordic's Le Mans legend Tom Kristensen and world rallycross champion Petter Solberg in the final of the event last Saturday at Bushy Park race circuit in

Barbados.

On a hot afternoon in the Caribbean, legends from many of the world's biggest motor sport series teamed up in pairs to battle for national pride.

They raced a mix of cars – including the Ariel Atom Cup, Audi R8 LMS, Stadium Super Truck, VW Polo RX, KTM X-Bow, ROC Car and Euro NASCAR – on a purpose-built parallel track at Bushy Park Barbados.

Before the racing the drivers

unfurled a banner in conjunction with the institute for advanced research into brain and spinal cord injuries ICM in honour of ROC's absent friend Michael Schumacher as he continues his recovery from his skiing accident. Schumacher and fellow countryman Sebastian Vettel had previously won a record six consecutive ROC Nations Cup titles.

The Scots had seen off host nation Barbados in the semi-final after dominating in the group stages.

They topped Group B with five wins out of six – three for Coulthard and two for Wolff.

The following day Coulthard won the individual event, defeating Mercedes driver Pascal Wehrlein in the final.

Motor racing

nation Barbados in the semi-final after dominating in the group stages.

They topped Group B with five wins out of six – three for Coulthard and two for Wolff.

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PRIZEWINNERS: Members of Lochaber and District Motorcycle Club collected awards at the recent Scottish Auto Cycle Union prize ceremony. Pictured are Gary MacDonald (Premier Champion), Gary MacLennan (Twinshock Champion), Ben Dignan (C Class Youth Champion), Andrew Dignan, who was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award, and Philip MacRae, third in the Sportsman Category. Missing from the photo is Lex Edgar, who was third in the E Class Youth.



KNOCKDOWN: Wullie Rodger floors his opponent 16_t51karate01



VICTORY: Referee Lisa Douglas raises Wullie's hand in victory, after he knocked Robert down four times in the first round 16_t51karate01

Seconds out but big fight fails to go the distance

'It's great that we have raised money for the hospital, which is the main thing, it's just a pity the fight didn't last longer for the crowd'

THE BUILD-up lasted for months, but it was over in less than two minutes.

The charity karate grudge match, featuring local fighters Wullie Rodger and Robert Neil, ended in the first round on Saturday as Wullie won following four knockdowns.

Robert's efforts weren't in vain, however, as the bout at the Corran Halls raised £2,320 for Yorkhill Sick Children's Hospital, where his son underwent major heart surgery in 2011.

Both fighters were confident beforehand, with Wullie saying he would do his talking on the mat, and Robert saying he hoped the best man would win.

In the end, Wullie, who is former World United Martial Arts (WUMA) super heavyweight champion of Britain, was too big and strong for Robert, who was giving away a lot in weight difference.

Wullie said after the fight that he knew in his own mind he would win.

'He's not used to full-contact fighting which made the difference because there's a big difference between the styles that we do,' he said.

'It's great that we have raised money for the hospital, which is the main thing, it's just a pity the fight didn't last longer for the crowd.'

Robert was magnanimous in

defeat, saying: 'Congratulations to Wullie on a powerful and spectacular performance. I was totally out-gunned by his impressive onslaught of combinations.'

'Although disappointed at not winning I had enjoyed myself thoroughly and I am pleased to have been part of this event.'

'Many thanks to the general public of Oban who attended to make it so successful.'

Martial arts

The £2,320 raised from ticket sales and donations was presented to Yorkhill Children's Charity on Monday.

Robert also thanked staff at the Corran Halls, referee Lisa Douglas, and everyone who made donations towards the event.



PLEASED: Wullie, who said before the fight he would 'do his talking on the mat', was pleased to raise the cash for Yorkhill 16_t51karate02

SSE Scottish Hydro announces Youth Development Fund

Youth shinty

IN PARTNERSHIP with SSE Scottish Hydro, the Camanachd Association has announced the Scottish Hydro Youth Development Fund is now open for applications, with a share of £5,000 available to shinty clubs across Scotland.

The Scottish Hydro Youth Development Fund was established in 2010 and aims to support member clubs which wish to increase youth participation by providing a maximum grant award of £500 in support of new or enhanced club initiatives that will deliver sustainable growth in the number of young people playing shinty.

It is a competitive application process with a total annual award budget of £5,000.

All applications will be considered by the review group and funding awards will be prioritised

Oban pool players fall just short of the mark in inter-league competition at Peterhead

OBAN went into the weekend's Scottish Eightball Federation National Inter-League competition as a team to watch.

But despite causing a stir with victory over one of the favourites in their opening match, the Obanites came home empty handed.

Top Break Snooker and Pool Hall in Peterhead provided the venue for three days of intense competition and Oban sent two sides to represent the west coast.

Five of Oban A's seven players had represented Scotland at this year's home internationals. Captain Barry Clark, Mikey Ross, Peter MacDougall and Brian Edwards all played in the men's event and were complemented by the experience of league stalwarts Richard MacDougall and Dougie Swan.

The nucleus of the second team comprised former participants Andy MacDonald, Chris Anton, John Kinig and Mark Purdie, but the selection committee took

the opportunity to blood debuts Kenny MacKechnie, Bobby Martin and Andrew Chapman, which should stand the league in good stead with an increased national team calendar next year.

The young side managed two draws and will be better for the experience.

High quality

Oban A had only one match on the Friday against much fancied hosts Top Break, which drew the eyes of all neutral supporters anticipating a high quality match.

Much to the delight of the majority of participating sides Oban ran rampant and simply brushed aside their opponents running out comfortable winners by 10 frames to four.

Buoyed by the previous night's success Oban A started off a run of six consecutive games on Saturday with a draw against a legendary Fraserburgh team.

Although the point would prove to be a decent result, the manner in which Oban let a five-game

lead slide bewildered the players. Unfortunately for Oban B they faced the backlash in their Saturday opener, as their own

team put in the performance of the tournament to make it two wins from three and remain undefeated.

Oban A's first defeat was a narrow one against Lockerbie but they bounced back with two resounding wins over The Doonhamers and East Neuk B sit on four wins and a draw from six matches.

Tiredness

Their concluding match of the day after 10 hours of solid play was against home team Peterhead. Tiredness was now visibly evident in most of the players, which was starting to creep into shot selections at critical times and their final match of the day ended in defeat.

Sunday's remaining group sessions saw Oban A lose in controversial circumstances to East Neuk A, with the Fifers calling

Pool

rather dubious fouls on the Oban boys.

Oban A completed their last remaining match still seething against Elgin knowing qualification had all but been secured. A combination of complacency and an impressive Elgin display resulted in the east coast side running out comfortable winners.

With East Neuk A and Fraserburgh gaining the top two automatic semi-final slots, Oban A once again squared off against Elgin in the play-off. An improved Oban performance took the match to the concluding frame but credit must go to Elgin's Cameron Spence for claiming his team's victory with an unlikely clearance.

Oban Pool League thanked all representing 14 players and congratulated Fraserburgh, who lifted the trophy on Sunday evening after defeating East Neuk 'A' in the final.

Saints' West Cup tie called off at the last minute

Football

THE West of Scotland Cup fourth round tie between Harestanes and Oban Saints due to be played in Kirkintilloch last Saturday was called off minutes before the Oban side were due to leave for the fixture.

In fact the Saints squad were in the club minibus ready to leave when the phone call came to say the pitch was frozen and the game was off.

Saints secretary David Buchanan said: 'It was frustrating having the game called off at such short notice but I can sympathise with Harestanes having to make the early decision. We've had to do it ourselves on numerous occasions and it's not an easy decision to make.'

'You have to take into consideration that the pitch is frozen and unplayable at that time in the morning but it might be playable by kick-off time. If you say the game is on the referee may deem the pitch unplayable when he arrives so rather than take any chances I think Harestanes made the right decision.'

With amateur football taking a festive break and Harestanes still in the Scottish Cup, the West Cup tie is now scheduled to take place on Saturday, January 17 at the earliest.

If Saints were successful in beating Harestanes they would face a difficult away tie against Bannockburn or Duntocher.

Oban Athletic also face a difficult match in the fifth round, away to Ayrshire premier division leaders Tarbolton.

Scottish Amateur League results and fixtures

Football

LAST Saturday's results: West of Scotland Cup 4th round - Harestanes v Oban Saints postponed; Premier Division - Campbeltown Pupils 3, Busby 0; Premier Division Two - Centre v Lochgilphead Red Star postponed; Division 1B - Milton of Colquoun v Tarbert postponed. The SAFL will now take a festive break with games starting again on Saturday January 10.

Oban Saints youth results and fixtures

Youth football

LAST weekend's results: Dumbarton Riverside 0, Under 13s 9. Scoring for Saints were Aaron McKay (3), Aidan McPee (2), Whitecraigs v Under 14s postponed; Under 15s 4, Ardencaple 0; Under 16s v Drumchapel United postponed; Milngavie v Under 19s postponed.

This weekend's fixtures: Under 13s v Broomhill SC; Renton Craigandro v Under 14s; Broomhill v Under 15s; Under 16s no game; Under 19s no game.

Tight at the top

Over 35s football

LATEST scores before the Christmas and New Year break: Clements 1, Trialists 5; Emergency 5, Teachers 6.

| League table | P | Pts |
|----------------|---|-----|
| D & K Lafferty | 3 | 9 |
| Trialists | 3 | 9 |
| Taynuilt | 3 | 6 |
| Teachers | 4 | 3 |
| Emergency | 2 | 0 |
| Clements | 3 | 0 |

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WEATHER

Thursday Heavy rain
Winds strong westerly
Temperatures 4°C to 7°C.

Friday Cloudy with light rain
Winds strong west south westerly
Temperatures 5°C to 7°C.

Weekend Outlook Light rain showers Saturday
Heavy rain on Sunday
Winds strong north westerly
Temperatures 4°C to 8°C.



FRIDAY

TIDAL INFORMATION

Tide tables for Oban during the week from Thursday, December 18, 2014 are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

| Date | am | pm | Ardriishaig | -5.35 | Mallaig | +0.25 |
|------|-------|-----|-------------|-------|---------|-------|
| Thur | 02.58 | 3.3 | 08.31 | 1.7 | 15.09 | 3.5 |
| Fri | 03.42 | 3.5 | 09.26 | 1.5 | 15.53 | 3.6 |
| Sat | 04.22 | 3.7 | 10.17 | 1.3 | 16.34 | 3.8 |
| Sun | 05.01 | 3.9 | 11.03 | 1.1 | 17.13 | 3.9 |
| Mon | 05.39 | 4.0 | 11.49 | 0.9 | 17.51 | 4.0 |
| Tues | 00.10 | 0.8 | 06.17 | 4.1 | 12.36 | 0.8 |
| Wed | 00.53 | 0.7 | 06.57 | 4.1 | 13.21 | 0.7 |
| | | | | *** | *** | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)

Moderate Moderate Moderate

Ferry Crossings/Sea States Oban to Barra/South Uist Oban to Coll/Tiree Kennacraig to Islay

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DOUBTS HANG OVER NORTH ROAD SHOP DEVELOPMENT

Red light for Fort William retail park

EMMA CRICHTON
ecrichton@obantimes.co.uk

A PLANNED retail park in Fort William, including a supermarket and home discount store, is expected to be recommended for refusal by planning officers next week.

Aldi and Home Bargains are already confirmed tenants for the site, with Marks and Spencer also in talks with developers, but applicants Morbaine Ltd were said to be 'extremely disappointed and frustrated' to hear Highland council officials plan to recommend rejection of the five-unit retail park at North Road.

It is thought the reason for refusal will be that a new site, combined with the planned Tesco at Blar Mhor, will create too much competition for the town centre, despite the Blar site still being empty three years after planning permission was granted.

The Morbaine proposal, which could bring 150 permanent jobs and more during construction, received widespread public support during a consultation in March but it is expected members

I think there will be arguments held up about this

Councillor Bill Clark

unanimous public support for our retail park, we are extremely disappointed and frustrated that council officers have recommended that the committee reject our application. Whilst we understand officers are working under policy constraints, the site at Blar Mhor has been empty for a number of years and there is no sign of any shops appearing anytime soon.

'We hope the councillors will see beyond the recommendation of the officer, acknowledge the local demand for additional retail options and choose to make the right decision for Fort William.'

A Tesco spokesman said: 'We know that many people in the local community are keen to see the new store open and we're very grateful for the support we've received for our plans in Fort William.'

'We'll provide an update to the local community as soon as we can and in the meantime we'll work hard to provide a great service to local customers from the existing town centre Metro store.'

Councillor Bill Clark said the North Road development 'shouldn't have been held back' when it came before the south planning committee in 2011.

He added: 'Last time round I warned the committee not to put all of its eggs in one basket and that's exactly what it did by granting the Blar site and refusing Morbaine.'

The best interests of residents weren't put first the last time and they always should be. I think there will be arguments held up about this.'

Don't miss out on your Oban Times

WITH Christmas Day and New Year's Day both falling on a Thursday, The Oban Times will be printed early to ensure our readers don't miss out.

The paper will be on sale in the usual retailers on Tuesday December 23 and Tuesday December 30 respectively.

Normal service is resumed on Thursday January 8.

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Call to make link road a priority

A FORT William civic leader has told Highland council's chief executive a link road between the town and Caol must be made a priority.

Neil Clark, chairman of Fort William community council, wrote to Steve Barron asking for answers about the future of the proposed development, which was approved by the local authority almost 25 years ago. He said with the increase of out-of-town businesses there would be a 'negative impact' on the town without an alternative route, which would run from An Aird to the Fort William to Mallaig trunk road at Blar Mor.

Mr Clark added: 'Fort William High Street currently has a significant number of properties lying empty and, although the out-of-town retail park on the Blar Mor has not materialised, there are cur-

rent out of town centre planning consents for other commercial and retail developments which could have a considerable negative impact unless there is a closer linkage between Fort William High Street and the Caol and Corpach areas.'

'There is no doubt a new link road to Caol would also significantly alleviate A82 traffic bottlenecks from Belford Road to Lochy Bridge. Given our support for the principle that all decisions taken by the Highland council are based on strict priority criteria, we are confident a positive business case can be made for its inclusion in Highland council's upcoming capital plan.'

The community council chairman also raised concerns about Inverness being given priority in light of the current construction of the city's west link road, the

estimated cost of which has risen from £27.2 million to £34.4 million.

He added: 'The Caol to Fort William link road is no less a priority for Lochaber than the west link road is for the Inverness area. We are well aware of current financial restrictions but, taking cognisance of the continually spiralling estimated costs of the Inverness west link road, our council considers some restriction on the increased spending on that particular project should be introduced to allow for some capital spending in the peripheral parts of Highland council's area.'

A Highland council spokeswoman said: 'The council has received correspondence from Fort William community council regarding the Caol to Fort William link road and the council will respond directly to the community council in due course.'

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Residents hit out over hospital decision

RESIDENTS in the north of Skye have slammed NHS Highland's decision to build the island's new hospital in Broadford.

The Save Portree Hospital Group claims that the existing facility in Portree 'will no longer be a hospital', after a bid was approved to remove all of its overnight beds once the new building opens in the south of the island.

A statement from the campaigners said: 'The proposed "spoke facility" in Portree is being punted by NHS Highland as a hospital but it will have no beds, no accident and emergency and no 24-hour medical cover.'

'There will be no additional beds or services to replace what will be lost.'

The number of hospital beds in Skye and Lochalsh has already been cut from 43 to 32 in the last 10 years. The cuts are expected to reduce that to 28 beds.

This so-called redesign of services is nothing more than a cost-cutting exercise that's been designed to save NHS Highland £850,000 a year.'

However, health officials believe there is no option but to make the cuts.

A spokesperson from NHS Highland said: 'All too often people either have to be admitted or discharged to hospital because we don't have the right community services and support.'

'And we cannot invest in these services if we continue to manage with inpatient facilities across multiple sites.'

The NHS originally considered building the new hospital in the north of the island but this plan was dropped.

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AXE LOOMS OVER EVENTS VENUE AS COUNCILLORS MEET TO DECIDE WHERE BUDGET CUTS WILL BE MADE

Nevis Centre closure fears

EMMA CRICHTON
ecrichton@obantimes.co.uk

HIGHLAND councillors are deciding today whether to back budget cuts worth £42 million, which could lead to the closure of Lochaber events venue, Nevis Centre - which includes soft play, ten pin bowling and a sports hall - could lose some or all of the £170,000 it receives each year from Highland council.

Budget leader Maxine Smith said the resource as a whole would be cut, as opposed to grants for each centre, meaning some groups could receive their full grant, while others get nothing at all. She explained: 'We changed from the original proposal so now nothing at all

parking charges in Fort William and cutting grants for leisure centres by 50 per cent over the next three years.

If councillors agree to reduce funding for third parties, Nevis Centre - which includes soft play, ten pin bowling and a sports hall - could lose some or all of the £170,000 it receives each year from Highland council.

Budget leader Maxine Smith said the resource as a whole would be cut, as opposed to grants for each centre, meaning some groups could receive their full grant, while others get nothing at all. She explained: 'We changed from the original proposal so now nothing at all

will be taken away in the first year and the full reduction won't be implemented until year three.'

'This will give organisations the chance to talk to the council and look at other options for funding.'

'Each group will have to fill out a new form proving how they benefit the health and wellbeing of their community.'

'If they can't prove that, they could receive a reduced grant or may not get anything at all.'

Councillor Smith added the choices were 'difficult' and said members had 'done their very best' to listen to the views of local people.

During the consultation stage last month, Nevis Centre

manager Kenny McLaughlin said the facility 'wouldn't survive' a budget cut. He added: 'Even if we charged £500 a day, five days a week, for a big event in the main hall it wouldn't fill the gap left by the grant. There just aren't enough days.'

Fort William community council chairman Neil Clark said the Nevis Centre closing would have a 'huge impact' on the town.

He added: 'It is extremely well-used and is an asset to us. If the Nevis Centre closed it would be a big loss to Fort William but it wouldn't have a big impact on the people in Inverness and unfortunately that's where the decision is being made.'

The council's opposition group released alternative proposals for cost-cutting including reducing the salary of councillors and removing discretionary budgets and funding.

Independent councillor and leader of the opposition Carolyn Wilson said: 'We always expressed concerns that this budget and its consultation was too rushed and we feel it has resulted in some damaging and unnecessary proposals being put forward. We have come up with some common sense, good housekeeping alternatives that keep the services people say are important to them in their communities.'

Pedestrian hurt in collision with car

A PEDESTRIAN was taken to hospital with minor injuries after a collision with a car outside the Job Centre on Fort William High Street last Wednesday at around 2.45pm.

Police are keen to speak to the drivers of a white Volkswagen Polo and a Range Rover who may have information about the incident.

Three days later, through the night between 7.30pm on Saturday and 10.30am on Sunday, a red Seat Ibiza was removed unlawfully from outside a house on Glenkingie Street in Caol, but later recovered on the A830 at Corpach.

The same night, there was also damage caused to a black Mitsubishi L200 parked on Appin Road, Kinlochleven.

Anyone with information about these incidents is asked to call local police on 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555111.

North and south Uist a bird haven

THE COAST around North and South Uist is said to be one of the best places to see breeding wading birds in western Europe.

A recent survey involving the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Scottish Natural Heritage found more than 9,000 pairs of species on the machair of the islands, including lapwings, redshanks and snipes, which draws thousands of birdwatchers to the area every year.

Stuart Taylor, RSPB Uist species officer, said: 'The islands have no foxes, stoats, badgers, pine martens or any other native predatory land mammals. This enables the birds to breed in higher concentrations than anywhere else.'

Meeting on more island powers

A HOLYROOD minister has committed to giving more community powers to Scotland's islands.

Derek MacKay, the Scottish government's islands minister, met with Angus Campbell, leader of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, to discuss the proposals on Thursday.

He said: 'The government's proposals to empower all of Scotland's island communities included a commitment to appoint an islands minister and I am keen to engage with all the island leaders individually as well as with the Our Islands Our Future campaign.'

Living wage bid turned down

WESTERN Isles councillors have been unsuccessful in a bid to help low-paid workers.

Councillors Gordon Murray and Rae MacKenzie proposed an amendment to secure the living wage for the lowest-paid employees in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, who started work in 2013, but this was voted down at a meeting on December 6.

Councillor Murray said: 'I am very disappointed the administration chose not to back date the living wage.'



Energy firm lights up trip funds with £500 donation

FUNDING for Lochaber high school's sixth year trip to London received a welcome boost thanks to a £500 donation.

Staff from local biomass heating specialist HW Energy presented the cheque to pupils on behalf of the company.

The money will be used to pay for the 100 pupils' travel around the city during the trip in February, which will see the students visit museums, Westminster and the Tower of London as well as attending a West End show.

DELIGHT: Lochaber high school's deputy head teacher Donald MacLean receives a £500 cheque from Elaine Cameron from HW Energy as Alasdair Miles, also of HWE, and sixth year pupils look on

Mountain group showcases plans

REPAIRS to crumbling footpaths and an archaeological dig around Ben Nevis are some of the plans being showcased by a conservation group in Lochaber.

The Nevis Partnership - which looks after the area surrounding Britain's tallest mountain - held an open day in its new headquarters in Claggan, Fort William, on December 5, where the team spoke to visitors about its main project, the Nevis Landscape Partnership, a five-year plan which was unveiled earlier this year.

Budget leader Maxine Smith said: 'The biggest share of the council budget is spent on care and learning and where we can mitigate the impact on education, we will do so.'

Having listened to the concerns of the public regarding proposals to reduce the primary school week, the administration group decided to remove the proposal from year one (2015/16), to allow further work on the detail and to minimise any impact on the peak and its surrounding glen.

This will include an archaeological excavation of the 2,000-year-old Dun Dearg fort in the west of Glen Nevis, starting next year. There will be engagement events with schools and West Highland College, and the production of four short films about the area distributed to both schools and colleges,



OPEN DAY: the Nevis Partnership team welcomed visitors to their new office in Claggan to learn about future enhancements of the Ben Nevis experience. From left to right, Leona Jones, Lizzie Cooper, Freja MacDougall and Lewis Pate

20_f5nevis01

which will premiere at the Fort William Mountain Film Festival every year.

In addition, repairs will soon start to rapidly deteriorating paths around Ben Nevis, plus the building of new ones such as a north face path which will give hillwalkers a much-improved

route down from the mountain's summit. Freja MacDougall, from the Nevis Partnership, welcomed visitors to the group's open day.

She said: 'We are providing people with the opportunity to learn about our five-year plan and see our new offices here, which we recently moved into

from our old base in Torlundy.'

The Nevis Partnership has joined forces with Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland, the John Muir Trust, Highland council and Lochaber chamber of commerce to implement the programme.



'Weather bomb' power cuts and travel disruption

MORE than 17,000 homes in the Western Isles were left without power last Wednesday as a 'weather bomb' struck Scotland.

Winds of up to 80mph saw power cuts and the closure of all schools, nurseries, sports and leisure facilities in the Hebrides, together with the cancellation of buses and most ferry services. The remote island of St Kilda even saw wind speeds of 144mph - thought to be one of the highest records in the UK - while the Skye bridge was closed to all high-sided vehicles.

In Lochaber, residents experienced gale force winds, thunder, lightning, heavy rain and hail, while ScotRail cancelled all of the day's train services from Mallaig, Fort William and Oban to Glasgow.

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We are inviting applications for Junior and Senior School for August 2015.
Bursaries are available for up to 100% of tuition fees from £1 upwards.
For further information and to request an application form, please contact our Admissions Department.

To find out more please call 01436 672 476
or email admissions@lomondschool.com

Jail for man who attacked friend with tin whistle

A MAN who scarred and stabbed his best friend with a tin whistle has been jailed for 10 months.

Oban sheriff court heard last week that Craig MacMillan, 42, had been drinking strong cider with his friend on August 30 in the Mill Lane area of Oban, when they started to fight.

MacMillan, who had been staying in homeless accommodation in the town, claimed to have been struck by his friend and in retaliation had hit him 'with a stabbing motion' with a penny whistle.

The victim had three cuts to the back of his head and more on his arm, some of which needed staples and stitches.

MacMillan told Oban police: 'He's my best friend. He assaulted me but I assaulted him back and I'm sorry lads.'

Pleading guilty, MacMillan's sentence was backdated to September 2 when he was remanded.

Pupils serve up real treat for veterans

OBAN high school pupils welcomed the 'old guard' to their assembly hall on Tuesday for the 10th anniversary of the school's Pensioners' Treat.

Senior citizens were invited for tea, coffee, shortbread and mince pies, made by pupils from the food technology class and served by the hospitality students. There was also musical entertainment for the guests.

Among the guests were World War Two veterans Tom Lennox (pictured left), 95, and his next door neighbour and fellow veteran, Ian Tindall (pictured right), 94, who have both attended all 10 treats. Young pupil Ben Collins (pictured centre), 15, was on hand to serve the two veterans.

Oban high principal music teacher Morven McKerrell said: 'My grandfather made up a list of guests for the first ever Pensioners' Treat and from those 30-odd people, it's grown to around 70 people who are here today.'



Oban drives parking cash

STAGGERING 96% OF ARGYLL AND BUTE'S PARKING REVENUE EXPECTED TO BE GENERATED BY TOWN'S BELEAGUERED DRIVERS

EUAN PATERSON
epaterson@obantimes.co.uk

DRIVERS in Oban, Lorn and the Isles (OLI) have been expected to generate more than 96 per cent of Argyll and Bute council's entire car parking revenue in the first half of the financial year.

By the end of the second financial quarter of 2014/15, the car parking income target from OLI was £541,375, compared with the overall council target of £561,088.

This means less than £20,000 is expected to come from Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay; Helensburgh and Lomond; and Bute and Cowal.

The figures, presented in an 'area scorecard' shown to mem-

bers of OLI area committee last week, showed that the amount of parking income in the area was below target at £414,070.

The figures have angered Oban retailer Graham Fraser of Alba, who says the targets are 'unfair' on the town.

He said: 'I can't say the figure is surprising because the streets are being swept clean of cars by the traffic wardens.'

The knock-on effect of this target is Oban is being deprived because motorists are being hounded from the streets.

'The job of traffic wardens is to keep people moving and make sure there are spaces available, not make lots of money for the council.'

'Oban is of strategic impor-



“Motorists are being hounded from the streets”

Graham Fraser
(Pictured)

tance to the council because it is probably the busiest town in Argyll and Bute but people here are not being treated fairly.'

Councillors at the area committee said they would raise

the issue as part of a review of parking charges to take place on January 29 and encouraged members of the public to make their views known through community councils.

OLI councillor Iain Stewart MacLean said on Tuesday: 'It does seem to some people that OLI is subsidising other parts of Argyll with the figures quoted for parking.'

'The amount of money surprised me but it needs further analysis.'

'I am supportive of the review in January and I will be looking for a better outcome for OLI.'

Responding to the claim the charges were unfair on OLI, committee chairman councillor Roddy McCuish said the targets

had to be 'looked at' during the parking charges review.

But he warned against sudden wholesale changes to how revenue is divided between areas, stressing that contributing to the wider Argyll and Bute pot had its benefits.

He said: 'Helensburgh raises so much more council tax than other areas and that comes back to places like Mull, Coll and Tiree, so I don't think we should create policy that means some areas will suffer if we all keep money in our own area.'

'But we do have to look at whatever area raises the most, getting the most benefit from it.'

'I will be asking for a staged process for areas to keep a bigger proportion of money.'

TIMELINE

The best year ever for Oban musician

OBAN-based musician Angus MacPhail is reflecting on 2014 as his best year yet after his band Skipinnish was named live act of the year at the MG Alba Scots Trad Awards.

Angus, from Tiree, formed Skipinnish with Lochaber's Andrew Stevenson in 1999 but in 2014 the band had two number one singles and a Commonwealth Games gig.

For more, see page 11

Landslide road on Holyrood agenda

A PETITION calling on a permanent solution to landslide problems on the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful will be discussed by the Scottish government on February 17.

The submission by the Argyll First group of Argyll and Bute councillors is a repeat of a previous petition of more than 10,000 signatures.

Wee Toon cinema plan given £1.1m

CAMPBELTOWN Picture House supporters are celebrating a £1.1 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund towards its £3 million restoration plan.

Campbeltown Community Business Group, which is behind the cinema plan, now hopes to complete the refurbishment in 2016.

Oban Times hits the streets early

WITH Christmas Day and New Year's Day both falling on a Thursday, *The Oban Times* will be printed early to ensure our readers don't miss out.

The paper will be on sale on Tuesday, December 23 and Tuesday December 30.

Normal service is resumed on January 8.

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or e-mail:
Email: jamie.mcgregor.msp@scottish.parliament.uk

Hoping to strike a chord with town's traders as project gets under way

A SITE office and meetings with Oban street traders in Stafford Street will be set up following the appointment of Raynesway Construction as the developer of CHORD stage one.

The construction company will deliver around £600,000 of public realm improvements along Stafford Street from January to May 2015 as part of the Argyll and Bute council project.

The local authority says it plans to set up the site office by Monday, January 19 and meetings with traders along Stafford Street to go ahead on Wednesday, January 14 or Thursday, January 15.

These meetings will introduce key members of the construction team to local businesses to discuss how best to minimise disruption during the construction stage.

A project start-up event is also planned for mid-January.

Chairman of Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee, Oban-based councillor Roddy McCuish, said: 'This is another great boost for the project which is really taking shape now. I'm delighted to have a national company of such repute on board to deliver the works.'

'We're going to be working very hard to keep people informed about what's happening. We appreciate there will be some disruption, and I would just urge people to be patient and bear with us while the work is ongoing.'

The improvements to Stafford Street will provide a terraced seating and viewing area; a flexible open area (with power and Wi-Fi) for small scale events and a shelter with inlaid artwork and ornamental colour changing LED lighting.

Rannoch wind farm on hold as developer reviews plans

THE COMPANY behind a proposed wind farm on Rannoch Moor has put its plans on ice for six months following objections by residents and conservationists.

Talladh-a-Bheithe Wind Farm Ltd asked for a planning extension for 24 turbines, each 125 metres tall, on a 50-square mile stretch of wilderness east of Fort William, with the application now due to be considered in May.

The decision was made after 958 formal objections from various parties and pressure from the Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCofS), Keep Rannoch Wild (KRW) and the John Muir Trust (JMT), all of which fear the development will disfigure the landscape and endanger wildlife.

Talladh-a-Bheithe Wind Farm Ltd - the UK subsidiary of Dutch firm Eventus BV - asked for the extension after 'reviewing responses' and now plans to 'prepare and submit further and additional environmental information'.

Scottish Natural Heritage estimates that a wind farm near Loch Rannoch would kill a golden eagle every 19 months plus harm populations of otters, ospreys and other species.

Heleen McDade, head of policy at the John Muir Trust, said: 'This development would be a stab in the heart of Scotland's wild land.'

'We do not believe it is acceptable that the developers are given a six-month extension to improve their application in light of massive opposition.'

Talladh-a-Bheithe Wind Farm Ltd states its new development would generate £375,000 per year through community benefit opportunities and will make amendments to the proposals for the planning authority, Perth and Kinross Council.

Kirsty Leiper, of MHP Communications which represents the group, said: 'The applicant has agreed that there is scope to prepare and submit additional environmental information by way of an addendum to the environmental statement.'

The publication and publicity of the addendum will be undertaken in agreement with the Scottish government's energy consents

Pier performance area will destroy trade, says owner

LOUISE LEE
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AN OBAN businessman, who employs more than 70 people, says a 'useless performance space' to be developed on the North Pier will 'devastate' his business.

But Argyll and Bute council, which is responsible for the scheme - part of the Oban CHORD waterfront enhancement project - claims it will increase the number of visitors to the area.

However, Alan MacLeod, who runs the internationally-renowned Ee-usk fish restaurant and family restaurant Piazza on the North Pier, said access to his business will be severely restricted when the adjacent White Building is knocked down as part of the redevelopment project, and says it will 'effectively' close his business.

He also claimed the development infringed his rights as a tenant of the local authority.

Mr MacLeod wrote to all of Oban's councillors saying: 'In a final attempt to persuade you to re-site the performance space on the North Pier, will you please be aware of the contribution of the North Pier restaurants to the economy.'

The income tax, national insurance, VAT, rent and rates amount to more than £670,000 per annum.

'Siting the performance space where you propose is going to seriously affect the viability of my business.'

'How much will the performance space contribute to the economy? Will you please give me the figures?'

I urge you, please, to seriously



CONTROVERSIAL: the North Pier's proposed outside performance space

consider the business sense of your decision.'

Mr MacLeod's opposition comes as the council announced the contractor for another stage of the CHORD programme - the redevelopment of Stafford Street.

An Argyll and Bute council spokesman said: 'In place of

the White Building on Oban's North Pier, the council will be constructing a new, purpose-built facility which will include a harbour office, additional public toilets and showers; secure locker facilities, storage and laundry, a waiting area for coach parties and cruise ship passengers and an exciting circular gathering

space, covered by a timber and glass canopy.'

'We have used a series of consultations with the local community, particularly those directly affected by the project, including Mr MacLeod's restaurant business.'

'This was to inform them of our final plans and we are confident

that it is a design which will suit everyone.'

'This is one of many projects going on in Oban which are all designed to improve the experience for visitors and residents.'

Work is due to start on the £5.6 million CHORD waterfront improvements for the town in January of next year.

Blue-sky thinking as high-flying firm is ready for lift-off

LOUISE LEE
llee@obantimes.co.uk



AIMING HIGH: Andy Knight (left) has secured a helicopter to transport workers to and from the islands

In a moment of genuine 'blue-sky' thinking, Mr Knight came up with the plan for the helicopter.

He said: 'All the islands are in easy reach by helicopter.'

'And Inverness, Glasgow, Perth and Ayrshire all fall within a 60-mile radius of the helicopter's

base. Anywhere within half an hour's reach of Oban will make us extremely competitive.'

Andy believes the new Eurocopter AS350B3, branded as Skyhook Helicopters and flown by Angus Gibson, from Skye,

will be in demand across the area and is prepared to put his

money where his mouth is.

He added: 'This is an initial investment in excess of £1 million and I think that over time it will prove successful.'

The new helicopter operation will be based in the north Argyll area and day-to-day operations will be headed by manager Dun-

can McDonald, who previously worked for British International Helicopters in Cardiff.

TSL Contractors Limited started with a staff of three in 1979 and now employs nearly 100 people in four offices in Oban, Fort William, Loch Lomondside and on Mull.

Still no mobile service on Coll

ISLANDERS on Coll are still waiting for much-anticipated mobile phone coverage after the installation of vital equipment was postponed.

A connection issue has meant the link between Coll and Mull is still not operational, with network provider Vodafone claiming it is outwith its control.

Despite apologising for a delay, *The Oban Times* has learned the company did not have a schedule for the work to be completed, instead claiming it would be done 'as soon as possible'.

The island is to gain mobile phone

coverage for the first time through a community project developed by the Scottish Futures Trust, the Scottish government's Demonstrating Digital Programme, and the community-run organisation Development Coll.

The £165,000 project has included a new mast, with Vodafone providing its equipment free of charge.

A Vodafone spokeswoman said: 'We have been waiting for delivery of the equipment that provides the link between Coll and Mull.'

'This has now arrived and is being

shipped to our contractors for installation.'

'When this is complete there will be a little more work to make the transmission path operational but our engineers are working hard to get the site up and running as soon as possible. We're sorry about the delay but this has been beyond our control.'

She said no specific date had been earmarked for the start of the service but that it was in the company's interests to have it up and running as quickly as possible.

Unsecured car theft warning

POLICE are appealing for witnesses after property was stolen from a car parked outside the Alexandra Hotel on Oban's Corran Esplanade around midnight on December 8.

Anyone who may have seen anything suspicious or anyone acting suspiciously in the area at the time is asked to contact PC Iain MacLeod at Oban police office on 101.

Oban police want to remind people to ensure that their cars are left secure and items of value put out of sight, especially at this time of year when shopping or Christmas presents may be left in a car and taken advantage of by opportunistic thieves.

The Oban Times
& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

Our offices will be closed on Thursday 25th and Friday 26th December and Thursday 1st and Friday 2nd January



Could your business play a part in a multi-million pound schools construction project?

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with Christine Primrose

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KNOCKDOWN: Wullie Rodger floors his opponent Photo by Kevin McGlynn



VICTORY: Referee Lisa Douglas raises Wullie's hand in victory, after he knocked Robert down four times in the first round 16_t51karate01

SSE Scottish Hydro announces Youth Development Fund

Youth shinty

IN PARTNERSHIP with SSE Scottish Hydro, the Camanachd Association has announced the Scottish Hydro Youth Development Fund is now open for applications, with a share of £5,000 available to shinty clubs across Scotland.

The Scottish Hydro Youth Development Fund was established in 2010 and aims to support member clubs which wish to increase youth participation by providing a maximum grant award of £500 in support of new or enhanced club initiatives that will deliver sustainable growth in the number of young people playing shinty.

It is a competitive application process with a total annual award budget of £5,000.

All applications will be considered by the review group and funding awards will be prioritised

in support of those proposals which best meet the stated aims and criteria of the scheme.

Camanachd Association youth director Callum Duff said, 'Sourcing funding is a constant challenge for clubs, so the Scottish Hydro Youth Development Fund is a great avenue of support which we are able to offer them.'

The award panel was very impressed with the standard of applications received in the last round and are confident this round will be no different.'

Guidelines and application form can be downloaded from the Camanachd Association website

Deadline for the submission of applications is Friday January 30 2015.

Oban pool players fall just short of the mark in inter-league competition at Peterhead

OBAN went into the weekend's Scottish Eightball Federation National Inter-League competition as a team to watch.

But despite causing a stir with victory over one of the favourites in their opening match, the Obanites came home empty handed.

Top Break Snooker and Pool Hall in Peterhead provided the venue for three days of intense competition and Oban sent two sides to represent the west coast.

Five of Oban A's seven players had represented Scotland at this year's home internationals. Captain Barry Clark, Mikey Ross, Peter MacDougall and Brian Edwards all played in the men's event and were complemented by the experience of league stalwarts Richard MacDougall and Dougie Swan.

The nucleus of the second team comprised former participants Andy MacDonald, Chris Anton, John Kinzig and Mark Purdie, but the selection committee took

the opportunity to blood debuts Kenny MacKechnie, Bobby Martin and Andrew Chapman, which should stand the league in good stead with an increased national team calendar next year.

The young side managed two draws and will be better for the experience.

High quality

Oban A had only one match on the Friday against much fancied hosts Top Break, which drew the eyes of all neutral supporters anticipating a high quality match.

Much to the delight of the majority of participating sides Oban ran rampant and simply brushed aside their opponents running out comfortable winners by 10 frames to four.

Buoyed by the previous night's success Oban A started off a run of six consecutive games on Saturday with a draw against a legendary Fraserburgh team.

Although the point would prove to be a decent result, the manner in which Oban let a five-game

lead slide bewildered the players. Unfortunately for Oban B they faced the backlash in their Saturday opener, as their own team put in the performance of the tournament to make it two wins from three and remain undefeated.

Oban A's first defeat was a narrow one against Lockerbie but they bounced back with two resounding wins over The Doonhamers and East Neuk B sit on four wins and a draw from six matches.

Tiredness

Their concluding match of the day after 10 hours of solid play was against home team Peterhead. Tiredness was now visibly evident in most of the players, which was starting to creep into shot selections at critical times and their final match of the day ended in defeat.

Sunday's remaining group sessions saw Oban A lose in controversial circumstances to East Neuk A, with the Fifers calling

Pool

rather dubious fouls on the Oban boys.

Oban A completed their last remaining match still seething against Elgin knowing qualification had all but been secured.

A combination of complacency and an impressive Elgin display resulted in the east coast side running out comfortable winners.

With East Neuk A and Fraserburgh gaining the top two automatic semi-final slots,

Oban A once again squared off against Elgin in the play-off. An improved Oban performance took the match to the concluding frame but credit must go to Elgin's Cameron Spence for claiming his team's victory with an unlikely clearance.

Oban Pool League thanked all representing 14 players and congratulated Fraserburgh, who lifted the trophy on Sunday evening after defeating East Neuk A' in the final.

Saints' West Cup tie called off at the last minute Football

THE West of Scotland Cup fourth round tie between Harestanes and Oban Saints due to be played in Kirkintilloch last Saturday was called off minutes before the Oban side were due to leave for the fixture.

In fact the Saints squad were in the club minibus ready to leave when the phone call came to say the pitch was frozen and the game was off.

Saints secretary David Buchanan said: 'It was frustrating having the game called off at such short notice but I can sympathise with Harestanes having to make the early decision. We've had to do it ourselves on numerous occasions and it's not an easy decision to make.'

'You have to take into consideration that the pitch is frozen and unplayable at that time in the morning but it might be playable by kick-off time. If you say the game is on the referee may deem the pitch unplayable when he arrives so rather than take any chances I think Harestanes made the right decision.'

With amateur football taking a festive break and Harestanes still in the Scottish Cup, the West Cup tie is now scheduled to take place on Saturday, January 17 at the earliest.

If Saints were successful in beating Harestanes they would face a difficult away tie against Bannockburn or Duntocher. Oban Athletic also face a difficult match in the fifth round, away to Ayrshire premier division leaders Tarbolton.

Scottish Amateur League results and fixtures

Football

LAST Saturday's results: West of Scotland Cup 4th round - Harestanes v Oban Saints postponed; Premier Division - Campbeltown Pupils 3, Busby 0; Premier Division Two - Centre v Lochgilphead Red Star postponed; Division 1B - Milton of Colquoun v Tarbert postponed.

The SAFL will now take a festive break with games starting again on Saturday January 10.

Oban Saints youth results and fixtures Youth football

LAST weekend's results: Dumbarton Riverside 0, Under 13s 9. Scoring for Saints were Aaron McKay (3), Aidan McPhee (2), Whitecraigs v Under 14s postponed; Under 15s 4, Ardencaple 0; Under 16s v Drumchapel United postponed; Milngavie v Under 19s postponed.

This weekend's fixtures: Under 13s v Broomhill SC; Renton Craigandry v Under 14s; Broomhill v Under 15s; Under 16s no game; Under 19s no game.

Tight at the top Over 35s football

LATEST scores before the Christmas and New Year break: Clements 1, Trialists 5; Emergency 5, Teachers 6.

| League table | P | Pts |
|----------------|---|-----|
| D & K Lafferty | 3 | 9 |
| Trialists | 3 | 9 |
| Taynuilt | 3 | 6 |
| Teachers | 4 | 3 |
| Emergency | 2 | 0 |
| Clements | 3 | 0 |

To allow for postage over the festive period spot the ball will run for the next 2 weeks.

SPOT THE SHINTY BALL THIS WEEK'S JACKPOT £1400

We have removed the shinty ball from the photograph opposite. Now look carefully at the position of the players and use your skill and judgement to place a cross at the exact point where you think the centre of the ball was. You may have a maximum of 20 attempts on this coupon at a cost of £1. If you wish to have more attempts, you must enter on separate coupons.

Easy to enter
Cut out your completed coupon and put your entry plus £1 per 20 attempts into a sealed envelope and post it to "Spot the Shinty Ball" Competition, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HB by 12noon Monday 29th December.

You may hand it into The Oban Times Head Office, Lochavulin, Oban by the same time. Otherwise all entries must be posted.

Competition rules
No responsibility will be accepted for entries which are delayed, mislaid or lost, and proof of posting cannot be accepted as proof of delivery.

The Company's decision is final on all matters relating to the competition and no correspondence will be entered into. The final decision rests with the Company.

In the event of more than one correct entry, the jackpot will be shared equally between all winning entries. Any decision regarding the awarding of a prize is entirely at the discretion of the Company.

The Company reserves the right to declare the competition null and void at any time, subject to its discretion and to make full refund of the price of the coupon to any person who has entered the competition at that time.

Employees of Wyvern Media, their immediate relatives and any person otherwise connected with the competition are ineligible to enter.

Please remember to enclose £1 for 20 crosses. The maximum number of attempts on this coupon is 20, but you may enter on separate coupons as many times as you wish. No photocopies allowed. You agree to abide by the rules. How to enter: Mark your crosses using a ballpoint pen. Twenty crosses may be put on this coupon for £1. Send to "Spot the Shinty Ball" Competition, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban PA34 4HB.

Winners will be announced in the issue dated 1st January 2015

WEEK 1 of 2



Please tape your £1 coin here
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PITCHING IN: Lochaber Rugby Club's all-new pitch will be opened on Boxing Day after being closed for 14 months. It is seen before (above) and after (right) the resurfacing work.

'The impact of being away from Banavie hit the club hard on and off the pitch'

Rugby

and women's teams trained for much of the year at the Black Parks, while the youths used the King George V Park in Fort William, but during the dark winter nights all teams had to share Lochaber high school's astroturf pitches.

Alistair MacKinnon, president of Lochaber Rugby Club, said: 'The club is looking forward to being back at Banavie on a regular basis and would like to thank the players, coaches and supporters for putting up with all the disruption.'

The club's Banavie pitch has been out of use since September 2013, when it was closed for extensive resurfacing work.

During this period, the senior

off the pitch, causing disruption to training for the senior players as well as making it challenging to try and accommodate youth games.

'Training on the high school astroturf meant that they were unable to do any contact training

which wasn't helpful to the team for proper pre-match preparation, which definitely had an impact on the scores last season as well as player moral.'

'The players' patience has paid off in the long run, as the pitch is now properly established and

strong enough to take a scrum.'

The president's match on December 26 will kick-off at 2pm, with both teams led out by the club's primary 6-7 player of the year Fergus Beradelli, who will carry the match ball and present it to both captains.

After-match celebrations in the clubhouse will see live music, a champagne toast, Christmas jumper competition and raffle, with a ball signed by the current Scotland squad as a prize.

Free soup and a roll will be provided for all attendees.

Football

anyone will come to Claggan and find it hard to play against us.'

'We are quietly confident; we've got to be.'

Midfielders Sean Ellis and Stuart Vance will be available to start their first matches, both in their second spells with the club, since re-signing short-term contracts which will keep them at Claggan until mid-January.

MacLean is certain that his side can carry on where they left off.

He said: 'I think the squad has started to click. Everybody's confident and on a high at the moment.'

'We have to keep ahead of Keith in the league and keep picking up points.'

'Inverurie are a good side and

Mixed fortunes for three local boxing youngsters

Boxing

THERE were mixed fortunes for three local youngsters competing at Durie's boxing club, Glasgow on Sunday.

Lochaber Phoenix boxing club's Dan Nixon continued his fine form with a defeat of the more experienced Connor MacLeod from Granite City boxing club.

Despite the latter's superior height and reach, Nixon dominated and landed a number of crucial close-range left and right hooks to win the fight, in what was a very physical and draining contest throughout. Robert MacDonald's great recent run was brought to an end with a loss by points decision to Robert Hewitt from Durie's.

Both were on the offensive throughout but despite MacDonald's clever footwork, he lost over three rounds to a strong opponent.

Lochaber's Kein Johnston took on Durie's Keiron Yardley in an exhibition match the same night, with the former using it as a chance to put training techniques into practise. After a spirited

match, the two opponents got a tremendous reception from the Glasgow crowd.

The previous weekend in Perth saw the Lochaber Phoenix fighters go unbeaten, with Mark Gillespie, Cameron Whyte and Robert MacDonald all victorious. December 5 saw middleweight Gillespie deliver a very strong performance against Joseph Kuper from the Fair City amateur boxing club, in which he won every round.

The following night, 12-year-old Whyte defeated Granite City boxing club's Phoenix MacNeil, while MacDonald was the winner in a bout against Connor MacLeod from the same city.

Following last week's events, the Scottish Intermediate championships will take place during the last weekend of January and will involve a number of competitors from Lochaber boxing club.

Fort William manager hoping for four in a row

FORT William manager Calum MacLean says his side will return to action fresh and full of confidence, after an unplanned two-week break due to postponements.

Last Saturday's match away to Turriff United was called off because of a frozen pitch, following the cancellation of the previous week's game at home



Calum MacLean

to Deveronvale, delaying his side's chances to continue their fairytale winning run.

Fort inflicted consecutive defeats on Buckie Thistle, Keith and Huntly last month to make it three wins in a row for the second time in their history and they now have the chance to make it a record-breaking four when Inverurie Locoos visit Claggan Park this Saturday.

MacLean is certain that his side can carry on where they left off.

He said: 'I think the squad has started to click. Everybody's confident and on a high at the moment.'

'We have to keep ahead of Keith in the league and keep picking up points.'

'Inverurie are a good side and



TIDAL INFORMATION

Tide tables for Oban during the week from Thursday, December 18, 2014 are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

| Date | am | pm | Ardriishaig | -5.35 | Mallaig | +0.25 |
|------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------|---------|-------|
| Thur | 02.58 3.3 | 08.31 1.7 | 15.09 | 3.5 | 21.32 | 1.6 |
| Fri | 03.42 3.5 | 09.26 1.5 | 15.53 | 3.6 | 22.12 | 1.4 |
| Sat | 04.22 3.7 | 10.17 1.3 | 16.34 | 3.8 | 22.51 | 1.2 |
| Sun | 05.01 3.9 | 11.03 1.1 | 17.13 | 3.9 | 23.30 | 0.9 |
| Mon | 05.39 4.0 | 11.49 0.9 | 17.51 | 4.0 | ** ** | ** |
| Tues | 00.10 0.8 | 06.17 4.1 | 12.36 | 0.8 | 18.29 | 4.0 |
| Wed | 00.53 0.7 | 06.57 4.1 | 13.21 | 0.7 | 19.10 | 3.9 |

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)



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WEATHER

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Thursday | Heavy rain Winds strong westerly Temperatures 4°C to 7°C. |
| Friday | Cloudy with light rain Winds strong west south westerly Temperatures 5°C to 7°C. |
| Weekend Outlook | Light rain showers Saturday Heavy rain on Sunday Winds strong north westerly Temperatures 4°C to 8°C. |

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Ferry Crossings/Sea States

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Finlay wins Appin hill race

Athletics

IT WAS another victorious weekend for Finlay Wild, who came first in Lochaber Athletic Club's Appin hill race on Sunday.

With the runners keen to get back into action after a fortnight off, Wild was over the line in 28 minutes and 6 seconds, with Tom Smith coming second in 30 minutes and 13 seconds.

Steve MacDonald was third in 32 minutes and 12 seconds, while the first lady home was Edie Hemstock, finishing in 36 minutes and 13 seconds.

Top 20 finishers (Lochaber Athletic Club unless otherwise stated): 1 Finlay Wild 28:06; 2 Tom Smith 30:13; 3 Steve

MacDonald 32:12; 4 Tim Brand

35:19; 5 Aidan Donnelly 35:29;

6 Michael Bell 35:56; 7 Gavin

MacMillan 36:01; 8 Ali Kennedy

36:07; 9 Edie Hemstock 36:13;

10 Hughie Macintosh 36:16;

11 Finlay Walton, Westerlands

Cross Country, 36:18; 12 Neil

Waslidge, unattached, 36:21;

13 Nick Charlton, RCS Cycles,

36:37; 14 Sarah MacKenzie

36:47; 15 Lewis Fyffe 36:53; 16

Andy Craig 37:22; 17 Barrie

MacKinnon 38:24; 18 Ronnie

Turner 38:35; 19 Jonathan Weir

40:42; 20 Michael Connolly

40:53.

Goon Squad are team to beat

Indoor football

THE GOON Squad remain five points clear of Lochaber Leisure at the top of the Ali Young indoor football league, after a 9-5 win against Barcelochy.

On the final day of fixtures before the teams head off on their two-week Christmas break, Lochaber Leisure kept up the pressure with a 10-4 defeat of Inverlochy United on Sunday, while the Volley remain close behind in third place, after winning 8-2 against Ali Young's team.

Fiorentina Turner had a hard-fought 3-2 win over HWE, whilst in another very close game, Portowcy beat Harlem Globe Stoaters by the same scoreline.

Other matches saw Nevis Range win 5-2 against Outer Milas and MHB win 5-2 against Baroway.

Sports centre celebrates 10th anniversary

Sports centre

THE LEWIS sports centre celebrated its 10th anniversary on Saturday, with Western Isles councillor Alasdair MacLeod describing it as 'a tremendous success story' of the past decade.

The centre in Stornoway has hosted a number of major events since it opened in December 2004, including the Olympic Torch Relay, and was designated as the regional sports facility for the Outer Hebrides by sportscotland.

Several successful athletes from across the country have learned their trade there including Kara Hanlon - current number 10 in the UK over 100 metre breaststroke - plus runners Connor MacLean and Michael MacMillan.

Among the centre's modern facilities are an astroturf football pitch, swimming pool, running track and games hall.