

The Oban Times

& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

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Argyll's island student costs soar due to imbalance in grant aid

TIMESLINE

Council flies flag for human rights

A SPECIAL flag was raised at Argyll and Bute Council's headquarters in Lochgilphead last week in support of International Human Rights Day.

Policy lead for communities and culture Councillor Robin Currie said: 'Every person living in Argyll and Bute is a hugely valued member of our communities. As a major employer and as a provider of services the council has a responsibility to protect human rights while recognising that individuals and groups have different needs.'

Sleeper trial for Oban in February

THE Caledonian Sleeper will travel between London and Oban instead of Fort William for three weekends in February 2016 due to planned engineering works.

Serco took the decision to reroute to Oban during the planned works to test customer appetite for the service as it considers plans for potential route expansion in the future.

Depending on the level of public support, both Fort William and Oban will be considered for the future, managing director Peter Strachan explained.

Police appeal for witnesses

POLICE are appealing for witnesses after the window of a Mercedes car was smashed last Saturday or Sunday.

A bicycle, thought to belong to the vandal, was left by the vehicle on Mossfield Drive, Oban.

Anyone with information should contact Constable Alan Hogg in Oban Police Station on 101.

LOUISE GLEN
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THE HIGH cost of educating students at Tisee High School came under the spotlight last week at Argyll and Bute Council after concerns were raised about the level of funding for rural and island schools.

At a meeting of the Community Services Committee at Kilmory Castle last Thursday, it was revealed that the cost of education at Tisee High School sets the taxpayer back £33,361 per pupil – one of the highest costs per student in the whole of the UK.

In comparison, the cost per pupil at Oban High School was £5,901, while in Tobermory High School it costs £9,320 per pupil.

Councillors had assumed that special Grant Aid Expenditure (GAE) payments to cover high island costs would help to balance the books. However, this was dismissed by officers, who



ask for a 'step change' in the way cash was distributed and suggested the local authority would be 'cheaper buying 25 places at George Watson's College' [for Tisee students] in order to help reduce the costs of the education budget.

The cost of a year's education at the exclusive Edinburgh college is £10,983.

Speaking at the meeting, head of education Ann Marie Knowles told councillors: 'Overall, we are in the fourth position for per-pupil school spend in Scotland. Yet we are unable to access the same benefits as the three other island authorities.'

Defending the need for the school, Tisee parent council chairman Will Wright said it was integral to the island community. Mr Wright continued: 'Having the high school provision here is an essential part of island life. It allows the island to have a sustainable future.'

'If it were to close it would be a huge loss to the island commu-

nity and simply something we as an island would not accept.'

A spokeswoman for Argyll and Bute Council said: 'The council has no plans to close any schools in Argyll and Bute at this time in order to make savings.'

The average cost per high school pupil in Argyll during 2014/15 is £7,924, while the Scottish average is £5,514.

The cost of accommodating pupils in hostels such as Glen-cruitten in Oban was mitigated by the grants received from the Scottish Government and did not add to the cost of education, the spokeswoman said.

The average primary school education cost in Argyll is £5,911, while in Scotland it is £4,734. The nine pupils at Achaleven Primary School, by Connel, cost £12,845 per pupil, while the cost per pupil at Dunbeg Primary is only £4,532 per student.

The four pupils at Barcaldine Primary School cost £25,543, while pupils Lochnell Primary School cost £4,260.

FUNDING: Because Argyll and Bute is not classed as an island council it does not receive additional Grant Aid Expenditure for its island secondary pupils.



Santa and Rudolph visit sealife sanctuary



Santa and his reindeer paid a visit to the Scottish Sealife Sanctuary at Barcaldine on Sunday for the centre's annual Winter Festival Funday and reindeer parade. t50reindeerparade01

'Knitting teachers' only way to solve crisis, says director

OTHER than 'knitting teachers' there is no way to solve the teaching crisis in Argyll and Bute Council, according to the executive director for community service.

Cleland Sneddon told councillors that unless the Scottish Government understood the predicament facing the council, then the region would miss out on more than £1.57 million.

Last week, government figures revealed Argyll and Bute was one of only four authorities in Scotland to see a reduction in teacher numbers, which broke an agreement with the government to maintain teacher numbers.

Ann Marie Knowles, head of education, said: 'We have gone to extraordinary measures to recruit teachers.'

'We want the government to consider not penalising us because we did a significant amount of advertising for these posts and we had money in the budget for them.'

'We were told by the Scottish Government that we could put our central staff in the figures and later on we were told that this was not the case.'

'Other local authorities in Scotland are able to include these staff, so we feel that we are being treated unfairly.'

'The advice we were given was different to other authorities and we are being penalised for it.'

Former teacher Isobel Strong, councillor for Bute, said the conditions of employment in adverts for posts was often off-putting to applications.

Mrs Strong said: 'People are not going to move to the area for short-term jobs with no support for housing. We need to do more to support teachers to move into the area.'

The committee members were told that significant negotiations were now taking place with the Scottish Government.



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Christmas heartache for fiancée

THE PARTNER of former soldier Billy Irving has said she has given up hope of getting him home for Christmas. It is now almost certain that the Connel man will spend a second Christmas and New Year on bail in India while he waits for the slow hands of justice to move in the courts. Billy and five colleagues were arrested on October 12, 2013, when the American ship, the MV Seaman Guard Ohio, was detained by the Indian Coast Guard after it entered Indian waters as part of anti-piracy operations, and the crew were accused of carrying

illegal weapons. The case was quashed by the Madras high court, but was subsequently challenged in the Supreme Court, which ordered a retrial. The trial is ongoing. British Prime Minister David Cameron wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month, asking for his help to bring the six men home. Billy's fiancée Yvonne MacHugh, mother of Billy's nine-month-old son, has resigned herself to the fact that the couple 'just have to ride it out' while they wait for the Indian justice system to do its work. Yvonne said: 'I have no idea

when it will end. But it doesn't look likely that Billy will be back for Christmas. We just need to ride it out.' In an email from India, Billy said: 'The Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO) says it has raised our case at the highest level now for two years, so it shows you that just raising our case has done nothing. It will not interfere, even when we have proven our human rights have been violated. This has been proven by letters from Indian lawyers, Human Rights at Sea and other organisations, but the FCO will not help and will not

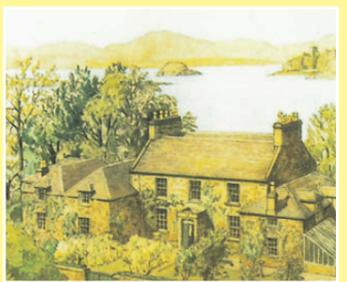
investigate it until it is all over. 'So two years on, our human rights have been violated and the UK Government and the FCO are happy to let our human rights continue to be violated for how ever long this fiasco will go on for.' A FCO spokeswoman said: 'Ministers have raised this case more than 20 times since November 2013, urging for it to be resolved as soon as possible. 'We will continue to press at the highest levels, however, we cannot interfere in an ongoing legal process in another country.'

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MULL
lines

Association celebrates with appeal for volunteers

ON FEBRUARY 12, 2016, members and friends of the Mull and Iona Association will gather in the Piping Centre in Glasgow at 7.30pm to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of the association.

The concert will be chaired by Sir Lachlan Maclean of Duart and Morvern Bart, Honorary President of the Association, and will be followed by a dance.

A special anniversary programme prepared by Dr E Mairi MacArthur will be available, bringing the history of the association up to date.

Stuart Dunn, Murdo MacKenzie and Ann MacKichan,

who are trustees, congratulated the management committee on the work it has done over the years to make this celebration possible.

Two long-serving members of the present committee have indicated their intention to retire at the next annual general meeting, and the organisation is hoping to encourage new members to join.

Anyone interested in volunteering with the Mull and Iona Association, helping to continue to celebrate and promote the language, culture and music of the two islands should contact secretary Elizabeth Graham on 0141 576 5380.

Photographer to exhibit at Celtic Connections

A DECADE of recording musicians in profile at Mull arts and music venue An Tobar will see a Salen man premier his work at this year's Celtic Connections.

Alan Jack, 67, will present an exhibition of his work of photography, showing off some of the biggest, newest and most interesting traditional and rock musicians on the island.

Alan, a former teacher, explains: 'There are 30 or 40 images, all taken in An Tobar. The work brings together two of my great passions - music

and photography. Since I retired I have been keeping myself busy in the tourist information centre and taking photographs.

'By taking these photographs I have also had a chance to meet and talk to some of my greatest heroes of the music scene.'

'The fact that these meetings have all taken place on the island is a testament to the work that has been done at An Tobar in bringing musician to a small audience who wants to enjoy such music.'



Dougie MacLean is one of the artists Alan Jack has photographed and will feature in the exhibition.

Oban trio joins forces to bring Lorne Bar into local ownership

LOUISE GLEN
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THE LORNE Bar in Stevenson Street is coming into local ownership this week after a long period of time in the hands of national operators.

Island businessman Calum Maclachlainn is backing Declan Curran and Lindsay MacDonald, who both run or own premises in the town. The trio announced the purchase last week.

Mr Maclachlainn, who had been set to take over the running of The Oban Inn until a contract was unable to be finalised, is delighted to be going into partnership with the Mr Curran and Ms MacDon-



Calum Maclachlainn and Declan Curran seal the deal for the purchase of the Lorne Bar. 7.151bar1

ald. He said: 'After the fiasco with regards to The Oban Inn, where the council would not fulfill its obligations, I felt that there was still a need to take local bars back into local hands.'

Both Mr Curran and Ms MacDonald, of Markie Dans, have said one of the reasons behind their partnership is that they want to keep as much revenue in Oban as possible, using local businesses for supply and trying to stem the flow

of money leaving the town.

Mr Curran, who has managed the bar for more than a decade, said: 'It was a fantastic opportunity to build-up the business into the local pub people have always wanted it to be.'

The partners considerable experience in operating pubs will mean a brighter future for the Oban bar.

Within their plans to rebuild the business, the duo are looking to establish the Lorne as Oban's number one seafood pub, offering fresh, home-cooked food at a reasonable price, using local suppliers, alongside offering a fantastic late night and live entertainment programme.

Revamp of Tobermory play park comes one step closer

A PLAY PARK on the isle of Mull has come another step closer to being revamped following a successful fundraising event.

The Tobermory Play Park Appeal is fundraising to revive the only public play park in the town, with £31,000 having already been raised towards the £50,000 target.

A Christmas hamper worth £500 was auctioned at the start of the month raising £2,690.

Marion MacLean, chairwoman of the Tobermory Play Park committee, said: 'We are yet again left astounded at the support for our project from this little community and are delighted to have got a step closer towards our target.'

'I would like to thank everyone who contributed in any way, be it by giving a donation towards the hamper, organising the prizes or buying or selling tickets. What a fantastic prize.'

Thanks were extended from the committee to all the businesses and individuals who do-



Prizes from the Tobermory play park committee Christmas raffle were chosen earlier this month.

The play park committee was established in 2014 by a galvanised group of parents and grandparents fed-up with the current, underused facilities.

Huge efforts have been made by the committee to raise the necessary funds to complete the project, mirrored by the unstinting support of the local community. To date, 50 per cent of the funding has come through local donations and fundraising.

The next fundraiser planned is a Burn's Supper dinner dance on Friday January 22 at the Aros Hall, Tobermory. Dinner includes a three-course meal plus a complimentary dram of local whisky.

Tickets for both the dinner and dance are £35, or for the dance only, £10, and can be bought from Thorne Wyness Architects, next to the bank, or from any of the playpark committee members.

All money raised through ticket sales and the bar will contribute to the Tobermory Play Park Appeal.

nated to the fantastic hamper and helped sell raffle tickets. The winner, Andrea Martin of Croig, was announced following the draw at the Tobermory Pre-five Unit on December 1.

New figures show region tops the list of workplace injuries

ARGYLL and Bute has the highest rate of workplace injuries in Scotland, according to latest figures.

Some 547 workplace injuries for every 100,000 workers in the area were reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) for the year 2014-15.

The overall workplace injury rate per 100,000 for Britain is just 288.

National not-for-profit campaign group for injured people, the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL), is highlighting the reality behind the figures for workers in the area.

'In many cases, workplace injuries happen when someone did not take proper care to protect employees and colleagues,' said APIL president Jonathan Wheeler. 'Suffering lies behind these figures and an injury can often have a knock-on effect

on the injured person's family, particularly if he or she is unable to work or care for children during recovery, or needs help with day-to-day living.'

Some areas of employment are more likely to have more injuries because of the nature of the local industry.

Mr Wheeler continued: 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing are the most dangerous industries for workers. Agriculture has the most workplace injuries and fatalities by far. But every worker in every industry should be able to expect to turn up for a day's work and return home unharmed. Health and safety is often considered to be 'red tape' and cutting red tape is high on the government's agenda.'

Mr Wheeler added: 'The safety of our workforces, however, is more important than anything else.'

Catriona and the waves - third hybrid ferry is launched on the Clyde

A CUTTING-EDGE ferry, which is the third of three hybrid vessels, has been launched on the Clyde.

But MV Catriona required a bit of manual help to slide down the ramp after the bottle of champagne failed to do the trick.

The £12million diesel-electric hybrid vessel was built by Ferguson Marine Engineering in Port Glasgow and is designed to operate on short CalMac crossing routes around the Clyde and Hebrides.

The route for this ferry will be announced by CalMac Ferries Ltd early in 2016.

The ferry can carry 150 passengers, 23 cars or two HGVs and is the third ferry built for the fleet to rely on a low-carbon hybrid system of traditional diesel power and electric lithium-ion battery power.

Her sister ship, the MV Hallaig, was the first in the world to incorporate the low-carbon technology when it launched in December 2011.

The innovative vessel was launched by Mrs Anna Østergaard, wife of Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL) chairman, Erik Østergaard but required some adjustments under the hull to finally launch.

MV Catriona is owned by CMAL and will be run by CalMac Ferries Ltd Clyde and



MV Catriona's official launch. Photograph: Caledonian MacBrayne

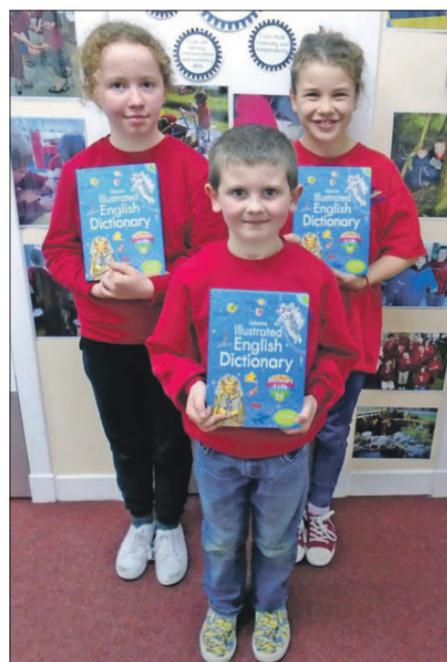
Hebrides Ferry Service operators.

Sea trials are scheduled for spring 2016 and the ferry will enter service following testing and certification. Mr Østergaard said: 'We are very proud that the design and construction of this new class of ferry, using world-class technology, was carried out in Scotland, continuing a proud tradition of shipbuilding on the Clyde.'

'The launch of our three hybrid ferries - MV Hallaig, MV Lochinvar and MV Catriona - demonstrates CMAL's commitment to leading the way in innovative ferry design and our focus on creating new vessel technology.'

'The technology is cleaner, quieter and cheaper to operate.'

Words to the wise



Every year the Rotary Club of Oban generously buys and distributes fully-illustrated Dictionaries4life to primary schools in the Oban area. This year Lismore primary was one of the schools to receive the dictionaries. Pictured above are three happy pupils with the new books.

Argyll pupils' performance 'good and strong' despite exam results

COUNCILLORS were told to review 2015 exam results with 'extreme caution' after complaints about performance from some elected members.

A meeting of Argyll and Bute Council's community services committee heard that performances in all high schools in the area were 'good and strong'.

However, in a verbal report to elected members, head of education Ann Marie

Knowles said: 'We always try to make sure [pupils] have the curriculum open to them.'

'If there are changes then we want to make sure they achieve success. However, in some areas there are particular challenges in subjects such as the sciences and languages, and I can't say that doesn't have a direct impact on attainment.'

'Change in the examination programme means that

extreme caution should be exercised when making comparisons of the overall levels of performance across and between schools.'

The report shows the performance of Argyll schools in 2015 was five per cent below the current national average.

Higher results were almost two per cent below the national average.

In Oban, 900 pupils were put forward for National Five

qualifications, with 71 per cent achieving A-C awards. Oban put more pupils forward than any other school in Argyll and Bute.

Helensburgh's Hermitage Academy performed least well in National Five qualifications within Argyll and Bute, with 50 per cent of pupils entered achieving A-C grades.

The best performing schools were Islay and Tobermory, with both achieving 85 per cent.

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Connel businessman steps in with bright idea to help kirk

LOUISE GLEN
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ST CONAN'S Kirk members have had their prayers answered thanks to the generosity of an Argyll electrical engineering company and the Friends of St Conan's Kirk action group.

Following reports in *The Oban Times* about thefts from the architecturally important building on Loch Awe side, Kenneth Ferguson from Connel decided to step in and help.

Last year, in three separate incidents, ornate and unique locally-styled lead from the cloister area of the church was stolen. The total value for these thefts was £45,000.

Mr Ferguson said: 'I was shocked to hear about the thefts in the area.

'As an electrical contractor, I knew there was something that I could do to help. So I decided I needed to take action.

'We work predominately in the North Lorn area so I wanted to give back to the community, and it seemed right to help the volunteers at St Conan's.'

As well as fitting a number of CCTV cameras, which were match funded by the Friends of St Conan's Kirk, external lighting is also due



Kenneth Ferguson and his team with Peter Hennessey outside St Conan's Kirk. 26_151stconanas (2)

to be fitted on the building.

Mr Ferguson continued: 'The LED energy-efficient lighting will make a real difference to the outside of the building. Internal lighting has also been fitted. This will be remotely controlled by daylight sensors, which have also been fitted.'

Peter Hennessey of the voluntary Friends of St Conan's Kirk said he was delighted that Mr Ferguson had offered to help.

Mr Hennessey said: 'This is a generous gift from Kenneth Ferguson that has allowed the Friends to match fund the amount.

'We are seeing some real movement in our work here at St Conan's, with this money kick-starting a positive project that will not only protect the unique nature of the building, but will also allow us to light up the building.

'Next year we will be continuing

St Conan's needs your vote

ST CONAN'S KIRK has been named in The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland's (RIAS) list of the top 100 buildings in Scotland from the last century.

The list, published this week, will now go to a public vote to find the best building in Scotland of the 20th century.

St Conan's Kirk was a labour of love for Walter Campbell of Innis Chonain. The nave and choir were built between 1881-86 and the church was extended and embellished between 1907-30.

For more information about voting visit www.foa2016.com

our programme of community events. Work to a roof will allow us to open up a community room that will be a meeting space in the area as well as an opportunity for an education room and archive inside St Conan's Church.'

A Police Scotland spokesman said they were following a definite line of enquiry into the theft of the lead.

Parking income in Oban is on the rise

CAR PARKING income in Oban is at its highest of all time - running at almost 50 per cent more than the council's target.

For the financial quarter up until September 2015, the council took in £342,156, more than £100,000 more than it had hoped to make.

The overall target for Argyll and Bute car parks and on-street parking was £523,221.

For the month of November, roads manager Kevin McIntosh told elected members at the bi-monthly Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Committee, there were 807 fines issued in Argyll and Bute Council area - 390 in Oban. Councillors agreed to look at keeping more of the money brought in from car parking in Oban.

CalMac staff praised for customer care

CALMAC customer service staff have been awarded the Contact Centre Association (CCA) global accreditation, the first ferry company to achieve the standard.

The award highlights CalMac's high level of customer care, continuous review of technology and communications, good customer service across all available channels and ongoing staff development to ensure it is always at the forefront of the industry.

Sandy Crighton, CalMac's general manager

of customer operations, said: 'CalMac's customer care staff deal with difficult scenarios all year round and always endeavour to achieve the best outcome for our passengers. I'm proud of the commitment shown by all of them. It's a great early Christmas present for the staff and the company as a whole.'

The company was praised for introducing a range of new customer initiatives to improve the overall CalMac experience, many of which were as a direct result of customer feedback.

Council to plough ahead with consultation despite Audit Scotland criticism over cuts

COMPLAINTS about the way the local authority has salami sliced budgets rather than making long-term choices has drawn serious criticisms from the Scottish Government's auditors - the Accounts Commission.

At an unusual meeting held last Saturday, Argyll and Bute Council administration members discussed the Service Choices budget cuts. Council sources have told *The Oban Times* there is a 'real sense of tension' within the administration, and called the meeting a 'crisis summit' after the Audit Commission dismissed the Service Choices documents as lacking innovation.

However, following the meeting, Deputy Leader Councillor Ellen Morton said that while there was discussion around the budget and plans would not be shelved.

She said: '[We] discussed the audit report briefly, in very general terms.

'[There was a] lot of discussion around the budget as you would expect, but absolutely no discussion of scrapping the current consultation. I certainly would not support it. It is scheduled to run until the end of December and that will continue.'

The council spends around £240 million in providing local services each year and is looking to reduce its costs by between £21.7million and £26 million over the next five years.

MSPs Michael Russell, John Finnie and Mike MacKenzie continue to be critical of the Service Choices process, and opposition councillors have left the Service Choices budget working group claiming they cannot agree with the



current proposals.

Audit Commissioners are currently reviewing various concerns raised in their Argyll and Bute Council Best Value report published last week.

The report called on the council to 'take a more innovative approach to dealing with its financial challenges that is in line with its strategic vision and priorities for the area. This includes looking beyond reducing or withdrawing services and, more fundamentally, examining how it can do things differently.'

The best value report states: 'The council's approach to meeting future financial challenges needs to improve. Options for longer term savings are heavily based on low-level cuts to individual service budgets and involve reducing or stopping services, rather than doing things differently. There is no indication of what sustainable services will look like in the future.'

Within this broad strategy, Service Choices provides the process for deciding where to make future budget

savings linked to the council's strategic priorities. The council agreed to consult the public on 150 savings options totalling almost £16.7 million.

Forty-three of the choices represent service cuts of £20,000 or less.

Criticising the Service Choices consultation, the report states: 'Given the nature of many of the proposals, it is difficult to see how the public would be able to offer an informed opinion on them.'

'With the exception of creating a charitable leisure trust and proposals to reduce the frequency of bin collections, transformational savings relate to internal management actions. The council needs to consider more effective ways to consult with the public, to more clearly inform people about the impact of the savings proposals and to better assess public opinion on new ways of delivering those council services that people value most.'

Mr Russell, MSP for Argyll and Bute, said: 'This report demonstrates that there are still big problems that the council leadership needs to overcome, including a culture of secrecy. Moreover it is entirely clear that the suggested solutions that the council is putting forward - the so called Service Choices - are the wrong ones, and will actually make things worse.'

'Consequently I would suggest that the council withdraws its present consultation and sits down with all those involved and concerned in order to find and implement an alternative approach. We could then build on that and start to get the council working for all of us.'

Call for businesses to tap into EU funding

A £40 MILLION deal to support local businesses, courtesy of the European Investment Fund and credit facility IWOCA, should be used by people in Argyll and Bute.

The guarantee scheme will allow IWOCA to lend to small businesses, backed financially by the European Commission.

A small business can apply for the funding at www.iwoca.co.uk, meaning they can be approved for up to £100,000 within a few hours.

Alyn Smith MEP and Michael Russell MSP have backed the deal.

Mr Smith said: 'This could be a considerable boon for those small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs, who need rapid access to finance to grow their business. At a time when credit can be hard to come by and cash flow remains the single biggest problem facing business, this scheme might not be for everyone but it has its place, and businesses in Argyll and Bute should certainly be aware of it.'

Mr Russell added: 'This scheme could be of great benefit to small businesses under pressure in Argyll and Bute and I hope that all small business owners will consider utilising it, if they could benefit. The scheme illustrates the benefits of being part of a Europe that wants every area to flourish.'

Hotelier vents anger after council chairwoman slates room prices

STEVEN RAE
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A HOTEL owner has voiced his anger at comments made to a national newspaper by the chairwoman of Oban Community Council regarding the cost of hotel rooms in the town.

With planning permission lodged last week for a Premier Inn hotel to be built on the site of the former Harbour Bowl on Shore Street, chairwoman of the community council, Marri Malloy, was quoted in the press praising the cost of rooms at the national chain.

She said: 'It is a budget hotel, which we don't have in Oban. Some of the hotels are quite expensive, especially if you have children.'

'We thought it might encourage more families to come for holidays. You have to try to suit everybody, not just couples with plenty of money.'

Tom Hayward, who owns the Kings Knoll Hotel on Dunollie



Councillor Roddy McCuish has welcomed the news that a Premier Inn could be built in the town. 16_151roddyharbour01

Road in Oban, was unhappy with her comments and took to social media to voice his anger. He said many local hotels were either cheaper or around the same price as the nearest Premier Inn to Oban - in Fort William - for a double or twin room, including breakfast.

Mr Hayward said: 'I think Marri Malloy would do well

to check her facts before criticising hard working local business folks. I believe an apology may be due.

'Personally, I'm livid at the perception this will create about Oban being an expensive place to stay. I don't expect to be given an unfair advantage by any official body. I think I should be treated along with

others in an equitable fashion, however, I don't expect to be stitched up either.'

When contacted by *The Oban Times*, Mrs Malloy said, on behalf of Oban Community Council: 'For too long the former Harbour Bowl has been an eyesore in the centre of our town and we think it is fantastic that at last the site will be used. Each year Oban welcomes visitors from all over the world, each having their own preferences when it comes to cost of accommodation and each desiring certain facilities and level of service.'

'We are fortunate to have a large number of established hotels in the town which fulfil the current demand. However, we should always be looking to expand the range of people coming here.'

'An additional hotel in the centre of town, which caters to a market that is perhaps under-represented, could lead to interest from some who hadn't previously thought of coming

to Oban. This will lead to a valuable increase in business for local shops, restaurants and attractions, all generating further employment in the town.'

Whitbread, which owns both Premier Inn and Costa Coffee, has applied for permission to knock down the Harbour Bowl and build a four-story hotel with 81 bedrooms.

Chairman of Oban Lorn and the Isles Area Committee councillor Roddy McCuish welcomed the news Premier Inn was coming to the town, having previously called the derelict bowling alley 'a terrible blight on the town'.

He said: 'I'm delighted to see this site developed and the fact that Premier Inn is coming to Oban shows the confidence major investors have in this growing area. Premier Inn will enhance the fantastic hotels we already have in Oban. It's good we have such a fabulous choice of great establishments in the town.'

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Rest nets hold back debris and keep vital route open



A photograph from the hill opposite shows the amount of debris caught during the landslide.

STEVEN RAE
srae@obantimes.co.uk

A LANDSLIDE estimated to weigh 1,000 tonnes was successfully caught during storm Desmond at the Rest and Be Thankful.

Specially-designed debris protection measures caught the material as it came down the slopes, stopping it reaching the A83 trunk road.

The road remained open to motorists at all times despite the extremely heavy rainfall experienced on December 5, brought in by the storm.

Transport Scotland estimated the debris was the equivalent of around 50 lorry loads.

A road sweeper cleared some mud that had reached the road and, as a precaution, specialist geotechnical engineers were on site to inspect the netting as well as the wider site.

Five debris protection barriers

caught boulders and sediment as a result of material coming down from the steep slopes of the hills above.

Assessments have been carried out by BEAR Scotland's geotechnical team, and contractors and arrangements have now been made to remove the debris, which was started last week and should be finished in the new year.

Derek Mackay MSP, minister for transport and islands, said: 'This is a vital route for communities in Argyll and we know how important it is that the road stays open.'

'This recent landslide has shown us that our investment has helped to keep the A83 open, as the netting at the Rest and Be Thankful has been successful in preventing approximately 1,000 tonnes of debris reaching the road, ensuring continuity of access to the region.'



Lodge cheques in with £2,500 for MS Centre

A cheque presented to Oban's MS Centre will help with the essential items required to keep the invaluable service going. Stressing that every penny counts, voluntary board members of the popular Oban charity thanked Lodge St Modan 985 for its generous donation of £2,500 to the group's work. Ross Muir and DJ Barr of the Taynuilt-based lodge handed the cheque over to the committee. 26_t41mscentre1

Cash needed to halt concerning rise in numbers on housing list

A TOTAL of 829 people are waiting for a home in north Argyll, Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee was told last week (December 9).

Speaking about the number of people on a waiting list for a permanent home, Alastair MacGregor, chief executive of Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA), said the demand for a home in the area would continue to cause concern until a major amount of cash was injected into housing in the area.

Delivering an annual report to councillors, Mr MacGregor said: 'In Argyll, there are 3,000 people on the waiting list for a house.

'In Oban, Lorn and the Isles there are 829 people. These include 601 who are on the list with 128 homes classified as overcrowded, 75 people who are on the homeless list, and 153 people are on the transfer list, of whom 48 are overcrowded.'

Mr MacGregor explained that more than 5,000 houses in Argyll and Bute had been lost to the social housing market through the Westminster government's right-to-buy scheme.

However, there has never been any money to replace these homes in the area.

Mr MacGregor said: 'In manifesto commitments, the SNP have promised 50,000 new

homes and Scottish Labour have said 60,000, so putting the politics aside there will be more houses in Scotland. After 33 years of campaigning for social housing it's great news that finally housing is on the political agenda. In Argyll we need to make sure that we are ready to bid for those houses when money is released. If we get two per cent of that total it will mean 110 houses, or maybe 200 if we are really successful, but we need to be ready to bid.'

Councillor Roddy McCuish, chairman of Argyll and Bute Council committee, said: 'It would be very embarrassing if we couldn't get these houses built.'

School house could be family home

AN EMPTY house in an area with a large housing demand is 'lying empty and deteriorating' despite a housing association asking to take over the property.

The school house at Bonawe has been empty since the last head teacher moved out some years ago.

Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA) agreed to look into taking over the home - one of very few four apartment houses in north Lorn - but to date it has still not heard back from Argyll and Bute Council which owns the property.

Alistair MacGregor, chief executive of ACHA, told members of Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee last week (December 9): 'If the council is looking for the property to come back into use and belong to the housing association, then we are ready to take it over.'

Area chairman Councillor Roddy McCuish said: 'This property will be getting worse by the day.'

'The house needs to be brought back into use.

'We will request this is moved on as quickly as possible so it can give a family a much-needed home.'

Road safety calendar win

A TALENTED youngster has been chosen as the winner of this year's Argyll and Bute Council road safety calendar competition.

Annie Liddell's brightly coloured poster, which bears the message 'Buckle Up! Don't push your luck' was selected as the over-all winner

by a panel of judges. Eleven-year-old Annie, a P7 pupil from Strachur Primary School in Cowal, was thrilled, and a little surprised, to be this year's winner.

Every primary school classroom in Argyll and Bute will receive a calendar to remind pupils about road safety.



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POLICE FILES with Sergeant Alan Moore

Police crack Oban crime wave

POLICE in Oban solved a crime wave in the town by pooling resources from across the region.

After being called to a jewellery shop in Oban town centre, it took police less than 24 hours to find the people alleged to be involved in a series of offences, including wilful fire raising, drug dealing, car theft and attempted robbery.

Police received an alarm call from the specialist shop and when they got to the scene they witnessed damage to the shop caused by a heavy implement.

Enquiries led to three men, aged 38, 40 and 43, being interviewed by officers, two of whom are from the Oban area. One of the men was searched under the misuse of drugs act and was suspected of being in possession of a large quantity of diazepam, a Class C drug.

After work by a team of police scene examiners, uniformed officers, CID and the criminal investigation unit, the men were charged with the attempted theft of a motor vehicle, the attempted theft from a motor vehicle and the wilful fire raising of a third motor vehicle. Sergeant Alan Moore said: 'There is no place for anyone involved in criminal activity to hide.'

The men were reported to the procurator fiscal.

Driver over drink limit

POLICE officers pulled over an HGV lorry to find that the driver was suspected of being over the drink drive limit.

At 9am on Saturday December 12, a marked police vehicle stopped the driver on the A816 near Soroba, Oban, and found that in both the breath test and the subsequent test in Oban Police Office he was over the drink drive limit.

Sergeant Alan Moore warned drivers not to drink and drive.

He said: 'People need to be aware of driving after a night out or in.

'Never risk drink driving because the consequences are more than losing your licence - in some cases people could have their car impounded and also lose their jobs.'

Tiree road crash

AN OFF-DUTY officer on the isle of Tiree caught a suspected drink driver on the B0865 at Scarnish.

The 27-year-old has been reported to the procurator fiscal following an accident on Monday December 7. It is alleged that the man refused to comply with a breath test, and later with a police

surgeon's blood test, without giving a reasonable excuse. The man has been reported to the procurator fiscal for careless driving and failure to provide a sample of breath or blood.

Man facing drug charge

AT 6.20PM on Saturday evening (December 12) a 20-year-old man from the Glegallan area of Oban was suspected of being in possession of cannabis, a Class B drug.

The man, who was searched under the misuse of drugs act, was also found to be in possession of a large amount of cash.

The man has been reported to the procurator fiscal.

Drug driver reported

A MAN suspected of driving under the influence of drugs was arrested at 3.40am on Sunday December 11 on the A85 at Connel.

The 50-year-old man was stopped under the misuse of drugs act by officers in a marked police car. Officers believed the man was under the influence of drugs and impounded his car.

The man was later charged with alleged driving offences and a report has been made to the procurator fiscal.

Sanctuary staff lose battle to save turtle

A STRICKEN turtle being cared for at the Scottish Sea Life Sanctuary near Oban has died.

Named Harley after the dog who discovered him on a beach in Troon on December 5, the loggerhead turtle was being cared for by staff at the sanctuary in Barcaldine, as reported in last week's *Oban Times*.

After being rushed to the sanctuary by the Scottish Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA), staff battled to save Harley's life when his body temperature plunged to a dangerously-low 10 degrees. One half of his shell was also coated in goose barnacles, which were removed by staff.

Staff had given Harley a 50/50 chance of survival and were battling to get his temperature up to a safe 23 degrees but he lost his fight for life on December 11.

Harley's size suggested he was around 10 years old, with the average life expectancy of loggerhead sea turtles usually 47 to 67 years.



Murray backs Oban plans to revamp West Highland Championship courts

'I have great memories of Oban Tennis Club from playing there as a teenager,' says British Fed Cup captain

LOUISE GLEN
lglen@obantimes.co.uk

TENNIS coach and tennis star Andy Murray's mother, Judy Murray, is making a racquet about *The Oban Times* campaign to Buy a Ball and keep the only championship tennis courts in the West Highlands open.

Speaking exclusively to the newspaper, the captain of the British Fed Cup team said it was vital that the club received the support it needed to resurface the championship courts.

Ms Murray, who has just celebrated both her sons triumphing at the Davis Cup, has a personal reason for getting involved in the Buy a Ball campaign.

She said: 'I have great memories of Oban Tennis Club from playing there as a teenager in the West Highland Championships, one of the highlights of the annual calendar.'

'I also remember playing the Triangular International there many years ago and it poured for all three days!'

Judy continued: 'It's vital the club gets the support it needs to resurface the courts, so I hope that local businesses and tennis fans will get behind the campaign to raise the £40,000 shortfall required to complete the work.'

It's not the best time of year for tennis, so let's hope that sportsScotland recognises the importance of flexibility in terms of the completion deadline. After all, a club with no courts isn't much use to anyone.'

Following last week's article, Nick Wesley, manager of Atlantis Community Leisure contacted *The Oban Times* to say that the campaign received a donation of £2,500 from Argyll Beats Cardiovascular Disease (ABCD).

Mr Wesley added: 'We are also now offering each person who donates to the campaign the chance to win a year's

free tennis and lessons. The winner will be drawn when the new tennis courts open.'

SportsScotland said it was considering Ms Murray's request for a flexible deadline, but was unable to respond before *The Oban Times* went to press. The organisation said it would make a statement next week.

The minimum donation to the campaign is £5 and anyone wishing to give money can now do so via the MyDonate page on Atlantis Community Leisure's website at www.atlantisleisure.co.uk



Children continue to take the blame for Stafford Street woes

YOUNGSTERS on bikes have once again been blamed for damage to the glass barrier at the £600,000 development on Stafford Street, Oban.

But there was also an admission at the Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Committee that the glass had not been fitted properly.

In an update to the committee, development manager Andrew Collins said: 'As I have already told members, the damage to the new area has been caused by kids on bikes jumping all over the area.'

But speaking in defence of the youngsters, Councillor Roddy McCuish asked for the real reason and was told that the bonding used on the glass was not robust enough for the weight of the structure on top.

After questioning by Mr McCuish, the development manager added: 'To be fair they [the contractor] have not put it [the glass screen] in correctly - there was not sufficient bonding and as a result they are quite easy to lift out. It is probably a difficult thing to get right - the difference between keeping it flexible enough but also strong enough to withstand what is expected of it.'

Councillor McCuish said that councillors Iain Maclean and Iain MacDonald should liaise with businesses in the area to find out what they wanted to do with the space.

Mr McCuish said: 'The businesses need to know what they can and can't do in the area. We don't want the same situation as happened last year, when no one was using the space at all.'

He concluded: 'Go away and come back with a solution and we just need to work hard to make sure this is delivered before Easter.'

Councillors Maclean and MacDonald said they would speak to all the traders as soon as possible in order to reach some consensus.

Councillor Neil MacIntyre asked how many official complaints had been submitted about the Stafford Street development.

Officers understood that one complaint had been in regard to providing seating that enhanced one public area while other businesses were not given the same investment.

Objections lodged over fish farm plans for Loch Etive

A PLANNING application submitted by fish farmers Dawnfresh was due to be decided by a council planning committee yesterday (Wednesday).

The application is for the addition of two 80-metre cages at the company's Sailean Ruadh, Etive 6 site.

Objections were submitted to Argyll and Bute Council from Scottish Natural Heritage and Archhatten Community Council, with its members deciding at the meeting on Monday that they should send in an objection.

There are also 100 members of the public who objected, including campaign group Friends of Loch Etive, which has fought against Dawnfresh's expansion on the loch since the company's operations began there.

Dawnfresh company director Gideon Pringle declined to comment on the application while it was still due to be heard by the committee.



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End of the road for travel project

A PROJECT providing easy access to transport in Lochaber will end on Hogmanay.

Lochaber Transport Advice and Booking Service was created as a fixed-term scheme in March last year to create joint working in transport services to and from health and social care appointments but Highland Council has announced money is not available to keep the project running long-term.

A spokesperson said: 'Whilst the project has been able, in part, to demonstrate that co-operative working between the organisations can deliver benefits, particularly in the healthcare sector, the decision to close the project has been based on the cost of operating the service relative to the numbers of people being assisted, and a lack of longer term finance being available to ensure the project could be operated sustainably beyond the project conclusion date of December 31.'

'Those who have used the services of the Lochaber Transport Advice and Bookings Service will be informed individually of the planned closure.'

MSP backs plan for warm homes

HIGHLANDS and Islands MSP Rhoda Grant has backed Scottish Labour's plans for a Warm Homes Act.

Nearly one million homes in Scotland live in fuel poverty, including many in the Highlands and Islands, according to the national welfare charity Turn2us.

Rhoda Grant said: 'It is a national disgrace that in modern day Scotland more than half of our low income families are struggling with energy bills despite being in work. I know that applies to families across the Highlands and Islands and that's why I want to see action.'

'Scottish Labour would introduce a Warm Homes Act which would overhaul regulations and get Scotland ready for an energy efficiency revolution so that no one has to live in a home which they can't afford to heat. A Warm Homes Act will create jobs, tackle fuel poverty and mean we live up to our aspirations to be a world leader in tackling climate change.'

Protecting children and young people

A NEW multi-agency group has been set up for the Outer Hebrides to ensure the safety of children and young people across the islands.

As part of an education awareness programme on child sexual exploitation (CSE), 52 multi-agency staff - including members of education and children's services, and the police - participated in child protection training days in Stornoway and Benbecula.

Key agencies will also work together to identify culprits, disrupt their activities and ensure that they are prosecuted.

Police Inspector Roddy Mackay, chairman of the CSE group, said: 'We are committed to raising awareness of child sexual exploitation in all its forms and this is a key part in our wider commitment to ensuring we all do our part to prevent vulnerable children and young people from coming to harm. I would urge anyone with concerns about a child or young person to always report it. Help us to make sure that abuse and exploitation of any kind has no place in our communities.'

Residents indicate support for Old Man of Storr visitor plans

STAFF REPORTER
fort@obantimes.co.uk

A SURVEY on the future management of a visitor site at the Old Man of Storr has seen more than half the residents of a north Skye community respond to the questionnaire.

Early indications show there is support for Staffin Community Trust (SCT) managing or buying the site.

SCT had asked residents for their views on its aspiration to purchase or manage Highland Council-owned land at the famous island landmark, with directors helping to hand deliver 255 questionnaires to Staffin households and businesses last month.

The local authority owns an



One of Skye's most popular landmarks, the Old Man of Storr, could soon have a new car park, toilets and a refreshment kiosk.

82-hectare site at the Storr from the roadside upwards.

SCT has been in talks with officials about improving visitors' experience at the hugely popular location, which attracts people from all over the world. This could involve a new off-road main car park, toilets, interpretation boards and refreshment kiosk.

They received 139 replies - a 54.5 per cent response rate - including a formal response from Skye Mountain Rescue Team and VisitScotland.

SCT and the council have now started analysing the responses and will publish a report documenting the results, which will be shared with the community, in the next few weeks.

The SCT views the Storr as a key gateway to Staffin and vital economic driver for shops, cafes, accommodation providers and other businesses. More than 100,000 people have already visited the Storr this year. Council-led traffic surveys have estimated approximately 70 per cent of Storr visitors continue north on the A855 road to Staffin.

SCT chairman Donald Macdonald said: 'I want to first thank the community of Staffin for the high number of responses submitted which clearly indicates there is an overwhelming desire to see significant improvements at the Storr. This is such an important and iconic tourist location for the whole of Skye

and should be seen as having huge economic benefit, particularly for the communities to the north. Having seen the extremely positive response given by The Highland Council to the broad idea of development at this site, we now need to engage the other agencies and Lottery to ensure adequate funding is made available to make this one of the best visitor locations in Scotland.'

A council spokeswoman said: 'The Highland Council is encouraged by the response rate and positivity of feedback. We continue to look forward to working in partnership with SCT to deliver a solution at Storr that benefits the community and visitors.'

Groups share council cash

ELEVEN Lochaber groups have been awarded a share of more than £13,000 from Highland Council's ward discretionary fund.

At the meeting on December 7, Lochaber Music Festival was granted £400 for the 2016 event, £450 was given to the Nether Lochaber Senior Citizens Association as a contribution to the Christmas meal, £400 went to the Plantation Community Association for winter activities and £808 was given to Action for Seniors Kinlochleven towards a celebration activity.

A grant of £2,966 was put towards a feasibility

study for toilet facilities at the Commando Memorial, West Highland Museum received £2,500 as contribution to a feasibility study for expansion, Isle of Eigg Community Association gained £2,181 for hall enhancements and £872 went to Mallaig and District Swimming Pool for carbon neutral improvements.

Lady Lovat Primary School will benefit from £250 for transport costs, Lochaber Archaeological Society gained £375 for a replacement plaque and £2,299 went to Voluntary Action Lochaber for a micro community plan.

Annual rotary charter night dinner



FORT William hosted almost 70 Rotarians and guests at the annual Rotary Club of Lochaber Charter Night dinner.

Recently retired consultant surgeon at the Belford Hospital David Sedgwick delivered a positive speech, on the importance of communities for good quality of life, at the event in the Alexandra Hotel on December 5.

Bottles of whisky from the Ben Nevis Distillery were raffled to raise rotary funds and rotarian Ian Abernethy won the last of 60 specially produced Rotary 60th anniversary bottles of whisky.

Guests included Ken Moncrieff, president of the Oban rotary, and his wife Betty.

GATHERING: the Rotary Club of Lochaber enjoyed its annual Charter Night dinner.

Partnership helping reduce number of casualties amongst young drivers

A NEW partnership between Highland Council and Highland Road Safety Group is helping to reduce casualties amongst young drivers and motorcyclists on Highland roads.

Young drivers (17-25) are a high priority for the local authority, with its Road Safety Unit actively promoting, supporting and co-ordinating road safety education and the vast majority of Highland schools are taking part in road safety education.

Statistics presented to the Highland Council's Communities and Partnerships Committee show a steady decrease in motorcycle and young driver casualties over recent years.

Whilst the cost in suffering caused by

collisions is immeasurable, in economic terms, each fatality on the roads costs on average £1.8 million and each serious casualty costs an average of £206,000.

Chairman of the committee councillor Hamish Fraser said: 'Even one single road death or serious injury is one too many.'

'But the downward trend in these casualties is a welcome sign that the road safety work being done by partner agencies is having a positive impact.'

'Education plays a key role in getting the messages across at an early age and these initiatives are clearly very important in helping to reduce tragedies into the future.'

Sheriff tells women to 'grow up' after abusive behaviour lands them in court

TWO FORT William women were told to 'grow up' by a sheriff after they were found guilty of threatening and abusive behaviour.

Paisley Adams and Nikki Campbell, both care of an address in Caol, were accused of shouting, swearing and threatening a woman with violence in a street in Plantation on the night of September 4 and were found guilty following a one-day trial in Fort William Sheriff Court on December 10.

Adams, 23, was found not guilty of being in possession of a knife on the same evening, due to insufficient evidence.

Sheriff Richard Davidson heard from two witnesses that Campbell, 27, had tried to force

entry to the victim's house and was shouting and swearing, threatening to hurt the woman and her family, after hearing her brother was in danger, which she later discovered had not been the case.

They also said Adams had rushed to the aid of Campbell and threatened the householder after she pushed Campbell away from the house.

Sheriff Davidson deferred sentencing on Campbell until March 1 for background reports. Adams' sentence was deferred until February 2 for the preparation of reports already requested for a previous charge. He said: 'The behaviour both of you participated in was disgraceful and you both have to grow up.'



Former members of Lochaber Schools Pipe Band were reunited after more than 30 years.

Bandmates together again after 30 years

THE LOCHABER Schools Pipe Band of the 1980s and early 1990s met up for a reunion in Fort William.

It was a chance for old friends to meet, share stories and enjoy a few tunes on the pipes at the Ben Nevis Inn and retired Pipe Major Duncan MacDonald travelled from Maryburgh to attend.

The reunion was the idea of Catherine Stables (nee Robertson) who said: 'I had a dream one night about meeting up with all my old friends who were in the schools pipe band the same time as me. I contacted a few of them and the event took off from there. We were so delighted that our tutor, Pipe

Major Duncan MacDonald, could come along and share in the celebrations and people travelled from far and wide to attend.'

Ali Berardelli (nee MacDonald), who helped to co-ordinate the event, added: 'We hope this is the first of many reunions of the Lochaber Schools Pipe Band and that we might even be able to perform a few of our old set tunes together in the future.'

The former bandmates came up with all my old friends who were in the schools pipe band the same time as me. I contacted a few of them and the event took off from there. We were so delighted that our tutor, Pipe

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Our offices will be closed on Thursday 24th and Friday 25th of December and Thursday 31st December and Friday 1st January 2016

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HETAS

One last ward round for retired Belhaven nurses

RETIRED nurses had the chance to look around their former workplace before it is transformed into housing.

The ladies explored the old Belhaven Ward in Fort William, which closed in 2013, to say farewell to the medical centre's era as Lochaber Housing Association and Highland Council will redevelop the site into affordable housing next year.

Fort William councillors Thomas MacLennan and Brian Murphy joined the former nurses, along with Scottish Government representatives, for the tour on Tuesday, and pictured the future of the building as five wheelchair friendly bungalows

and a block of eight flats. Councillor MacLennan said: 'While we are celebrating the future of the Belhaven Ward site as a new housing development, which is sorely needed in Fort William, it is fitting that we mark the contributions that were made by all those who worked and served at the ward which was latterly used for physiotherapy and occupational therapy services.'

'That is why we are here to commemorate and celebrate at the same time.'

Former nurses and Highland councillors say goodbye to Fort William's Belhaven Ward.



Call for clarity on broadband boost

A HIGHLAND MSP hopes for clarity on which areas are to benefit from superfast broadband in the new year.

Rhoda Grant, MSP for the Highlands and Islands, said many constituents were unsure about when, or if at all, they would receive a better internet service.

She said: 'The programme, when announced, gave real hope for future improvements but, almost three years on, many people still don't know if they are going to benefit.'

Festive opening for sports centres

SPORTS facilities in Uist and Barra will be open during the Christmas period this year for the first time.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar will use this trial to gauge public interest with a view to making it permanent in future years.

Castlebay Sports Centre will be open from December 29 until December 31 and Inilclate Sport Centre will be open December 28 until December 31 as well as January 4.

For opening times see the comhairle website.

SERVICES COULD BE LOST COMPLETELY AS HIGHLAND FUNDING SHORTFALL MORE THAN TREBLES

Deepening budget black hole tops council agenda

EMMA CRICHTON
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AN 'UNPRECEDENTED' and ever-widening hole in the budget will be high on the agenda for a full meeting of Highland Council due to be held today (Thursday).

Recent developments, including a higher than expected grant cut and a potential 25-hour week for primary schools, has left officials and elected members with a funding gap of up to £53.5 million for next year. This equates to almost 10 per cent of the council's total budget.

In December last year the local authority had forecasted a shortfall of £14.6 million but this has more than tripled in light of recent changes.

The biggest blow to the council came after the UK Spending Review, when it was revealed the level of local au-

thority grant reduction could be between four and five per cent, compared to an assumption of just 1.6 per cent. This, combined with the cost of a longer school week and other budget pressures and savings from last year which haven't been met, has left Highland Council with far less money than anticipated.

A report by director of finance Derek Yule revealed the funding gap will be £38.811 million if the grant cut is four per cent, rising to £43.379 million if the grant is slashed by five per cent. This doesn't include £10 million of savings already agreed, pushing the gap to £53.564 million.

Mr Yule said in his report that some services could be lost altogether in this latest blow: 'Over the past few weeks there have been a couple of significant events that will make a material change to the existing



The council must now consider ceasing some functions altogether

Derek Yule
Director of Finance

budget forecasts and options for budget savings. Current forecasts of the scale of grant reduction are unprecedented and represent a real game changer in terms of the current level of service provision. The

extent to which a significant proportion of the full budget is ring fenced, either due to contractual obligations or legislative requirements, means that the impact on other services is considerable and the council must now consider ceasing some functions altogether.'

The Scottish Government proposal to introduce a minimum 25-hour teaching week in primary schools could also put an end to Highland Council's cost-cutting suggestion to close all schools at lunchtime on a Friday. Currently, primary one, two and three pupils in the Highlands are only in school 22 and a half hours each week, due to travelling times to and from rural schools. This means the new legislation would cost the council more money, as well as preventing it from making savings by cutting hours.

Mr Yule said: 'An additional

half an hour in class each day would cost Highland Council £2 million in teaching hours. This would be a significant additional cost at a time when the overall budget is reducing and forms a further constraint on how the council can manage its resources and respond to community needs.'

'The current budget for primary school teachers is around £46 million. This new proposed legislation will effectively ring fence eight per cent of the council's overall budget, meaning a higher proportion of savings will have to be found from other council services.'

Councillors are due to discuss saving options at today's meeting and it is thought final decisions will be made by February next year.

Council leader Margaret Davidson and budget leader Bill Fernie were both unavailable for comment.

TIMESLINE

Pupils in tune for annual concert

THE ANNUAL Lochaber Music School Christmas Concert will take place this Sunday.

The event begins at 3pm in St Margaret's Church, Roy Bridge, and will feature orchestra, choirs, traditional musicians, string ensembles, clarsach ensemble and handbell ringers.

The audience will also be invited to join in a selection of favourite carols to the accompaniment of the music school's orchestra. Afterwards, a raffle and home-made refreshments will be on offer with all proceeds going to the music school's 2016 activities.

Restaurant and takeaway plans

THE FORMER Co-operative shop in Ballachulish could be turned into a restaurant and takeaway following an application for planning permission.

The store has been empty since February last year when a new Co-op opened in the south Lochaber village.

An application for a restaurant and takeaway with a small shop and toilets was lodged with Highland Council last month, with a decision expected to be made by the end of the month.

More time for say on a better future

CONSULTATION on how to improve the future of the Highlands has been extended.

The Highland-wide Local Development Plan outlines planning and housing issues and consultation was due to end on December 19 but has been put back until January 29 because of recent community council elections. Plans can be viewed at consult.highland.gov.uk.

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www.facebook.com/obantimes



A' toirt Gàidhlig thugaibh

Cuiribh ur taic airson an tuilleadh sheilbheachd airson BBC ALBA agus BBC Radio nan Gàidheal ann an sgrùdadh Urras a' BhBC

Support increased resources for BBC ALBA and BBC Radio nan Gàidheal in BBC Trust review

Tha BBC ALBA agus BBC Radio nan Gàidheal soirbheachail agus tha sinne aig MG ALBA ag iarraidh gum bi iad nas fheàrr buileach dhuibh.

BBC ALBA and BBC Radio nan Gàidheal are successful and we at MG ALBA want them to be even better for you.

San Dàmhair, tron cho-chomhairle mu ùrachadh Cairt Rìoghail a' BhBC, thuirt sinn gu bheil sinne ag iarraidh gun tèid 10 uair a thìde de phrògraman ùra a chur gu ruige BBC ALBA gach seachdain leis a' BhBC. Cheadaicheadh seo seirbheis nas coileanta a thabhann airson ar prìomh luchd-amhairc.

Tha Urras a' BhBC a-nis a' dèanamh sgrùdadh air BBC ALBA agus BBC Radio nan Gàidheal. Feumaidh sinn ar n-argamaid a dhèanamh a-rithist agus bhiodh sinn fada nur comainn nam b' urrainn dhuibh ar cuideachadh a-rithist. Tha fios a-nis nach fhaighear an £1m bho Rìaghaltas na RA agus tha sin a' dèanamh ar freagairt nas cudromaiche buileach.

Nach gabh sibh an cothrom fios a chur gu Urras a' BhBC gus innse dhaibh gu bheil sibhse, mar ar luchd-amhairc, airidh air seirbheis nas coileanta agus mar sin gu bheil an tuilleadh sheilbheachd a dhith bhon BhBC airson BBC ALBA agus BBC Radio nan Gàidheal.

Faodar ceisteachan Urras a' BhBC a lionadh a-steach aig:
www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust

No cuiribh ur freagairt ann an sgrìobhadh gu:

BBC Trust Nations Review Consultation

ICM Unlimited, Creston House, 10 Great Pulteney Street, London, W1F 9NB

Tha sgrùdadh Urras a' BhBC a' dùnadh air 17 Faoilleach 2016.

Airson tuilleadh fiosrachaidh, cuiribh fios thugainn:
Fòn: 01851 705550 P-dealain: fios@mgalba.com

In October, during the UK Government's consultation on the BBC's charter, we said we would like the BBC to provide 10 hours of new programming weekly for BBC ALBA, which would help to provide a more comprehensive service for the channel's core audience.

The BBC Trust is now reviewing BBC ALBA and BBC Radio nan Gàidheal. We need to make that same case again, and we would once again be grateful for your help. The recent news that MG ALBA will no longer receive £1m from the UK Government makes your response even more important.

Please participate in the BBC Trust review and ensure the desire for a more complete service is expressed, and that more investment is therefore required from the BBC for BBC ALBA and BBC Radio nan Gàidheal.

You can complete the BBC Trust's questionnaire here:
www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust

Or send your response in writing to:

BBC Trust Nations Review Consultation

ICM Unlimited, Creston House, 10 Great Pulteney Street, London, W1F 9NB

The BBC Trust's review closes on 17 January 2016.

If you would like more information, please do contact us at:
Tel: 01851 705550 Email: fios@mgalba.com



Viewpoint

PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HB
email: editor@obantimes.co.uk

The Oban Times & WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

Established 1861 No 8216

THIS week, members of St Conan's Kirk will be breathing a sigh of relief thanks to the generosity of Connel businessman Kenneth Ferguson.

Mr Ferguson stepped in after *The Oban Times* reported that on three occasions ornate and unique lead, totalling £45,000, had been stolen from the kirk.

However, hearing of the Kirk's problems, Mr Ferguson

stepped in to help, donating and fitting a number of CCTV cameras, and he also plans to fit external lighting on the historic building.

The generosity and community spirit of people such as Mr Ferguson is what makes Argyll such a wonderful place to live and work. And, at Christmas in particular, good news is always welcome.



Days gone by - view of Loch Awe, 1911

THIS week's flashback photograph was submitted by Mrs Bridgeland of Crinan Harbour and features a stunning view of Loch Awe taken in 1911. Digital versions of flashback photos for *The Oban Times* can be sent to 'editor@obantimes.co.uk' or prints sent to the editor, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban PA34 4HB. Anyone who wishes a print returned should include a stamped-addressed envelope.

Responsibility for cuts lies firmly with MSPs

Sir, Argyll and Bute Council is still struggling to make unpalatable decisions on which services to cut to match its reduced funding.

It is regrettable our MSP, far from campaigning to support the council, is attacking it.

Now it has been revealed in the consultation process that if the council increases Council Tax by three per cent, the Scottish Government will reduce the council's grant by the same amount.

So even if residents were prepared to pay more Council Tax to protect our more vital services, our payments would be stolen by Holyrood.

It could not be clearer that the responsibility for the depth of cuts the council has to make is that of MSPs in Holyrood and not our poor, struggling councillors.

David Pollard, Salen, Isle of Mull.

Holyrood dragging its feet on broadband

Sir, When questioned by myself on March 18, Vodafone promised it would bring 4G mobile internet to the West Highlands and islands once the Scottish Government has put the necessary broadband infrastructure in place.

Angus MacNeil MP, *The Oban Times*, December 3, tried to pass off

this old news as a fresh announcement made at a meeting of his. He also said he would be writing to BT to get the fibre broadband in place. It is not BT he should be writing to. Responsibility for funding for the necessary broadband infrastructure lies with the SNP Government. It's them he should be writing to and calling on to stop dragging their feet and get this vital infrastructure in place as soon as possible.

Alan Reid, Liberal Democrat candidate for Argyll and Bute.

Impact of wind farm noise a real concern

Sir, Mike MacKenzie, September 7, stated the main adverse health effects from wind turbines 'seem' to result from 'worry'.

He is wrong, as Christine Metcalfe has again pointed out in her November 26 article 'Blowing in the wind - or willful blindness?'.

There is no clinical or acoustic evidence, collected directly from those living near wind power developments, which supports that assertion, anywhere in the world, despite the best efforts of the global wind industry product defence team to manufacture it.

However, there is clinical and acoustic evidence from around the world over the last 30-plus years that wind turbines and other sources of pulsing infrasound and low frequency noise from a range of industrial sound and vibration sources directly

cause sleep deprivation and other symptoms which engineers call 'annoyance' and which UK Low Frequency Noise Expert Geoff Leventhall has admitted are the same as 'wind turbine syndrome' symptoms.

Shamefully, the UK wind turbine noise pollution regulations, known as ITSU 97, exclude measurement of the very sound frequencies in the infrasound and low frequency noise ranges, which NASA research funded by the US Department of Energy led by Dr Neil Kelley, established as the direct cause in the 1980s.

Mr Mackenzie should listen to his Scottish constituents being seriously adversely impacted because of noise nuisance.

Sarah Laurie, by email.

Recycling stamps for guide dog cash

Sir, I am appealing for used postage stamps to help me raise funds for Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Recycling used postage stamps is an easy way to raise money for the charity and I am in need of all types of postage stamps, including British, Foreign and Christmas stamps. I would be grateful if you could cut the stamps from their envelopes - leaving a one centimetre margin around the stamp - and send them to: Myrna Chave, PO Box 91, Virginia Water, Surrey, GU25 9AR. Thank you.

Myrna Chave.

Glasgow Letter

ROBERT ROBERTSON
robert.d.robertson@hotmail.co.uk

Glasgow Islay Choir new CD a hit

I'VE BEEN listening to Glasgow Islay Gaelic Choir's new CD 'By Arrangement' in my car all week.

The CD was put together in secret by the choir and presented, as I wrote last week, to Kirsteen Grant, to celebrate her 25th year as the choir's conductor.

All 23 tracks are Kirsteen's own arrangements that have been recorded live both in competition and concert over her time as conductor.

It's a really lovely album in which the choir give ceilidh sing-alongs like Fàilte Do dh' Eilean Leòdhais and Filoro laldy, but also produce a great depth of emotion for more emotive songs like Nuair Bha Mi Òg.

As well as her success in the choral world, Kirsteen has had a glittering solo career.

She trained in London and Italy and had title roles in operas such as 'La Traviata' and 'Madame Butterfly'.

She won the Gold Medal at the Royal National Mod at a young age and went on to perform in the White Heather Tours to Canada alongside the Alexander Brothers.

I have always personally enjoyed Kirsteen's arrangements, which provide lots of musical interest whilst always maintaining the melody and feeling of the original song.

I think the CD displays that beautifully and is a fitting tribute to Kirsteen's special 25 years.

New Gaelic children's book

A NEW Gaelic book for children entitled *Montaidh an Cù Glic*, which translates as *Monty the Wise Dog*, is being launched on Friday December 18 in Hillhead Library at 10am.

The author, Gayle Clarke of Wee Mackay Publishing, lives in Bearsden and has connections to the islands of Lewis and Skye. The book has been partly funded by the Gaelic Books Council and will be stocked in their shop at 32 Mansfield Street.

The Vatersay Boys

AS EXPECTED, the Vatersay Boys had the Barrowlands absolutely bouncing on Friday night.

At one point, they had seven pipers on the stage at the same time - and one of the boys played while sitting on another piper's shoulders.

That amounts to a fairly quiet night for the Vatersay Boys!

Clydebank Highlanders cèilidh

THE CLYDEBANK Highlanders had a great ceilidh on Friday night in the Napier Hall, Old Kilpatrick, despite all the colds and flus going around at the moment.

Kenny Thompson was very much at home as chairman and also sang, and this year's gold medallist, Donald Iain Brown, had a successful first visit to the Clydebank ceilidh.

Ryan Corbett, a young man from Milngavie, gave excellent renditions on the accordion and another young lad called Chris Michie treated the audience to some magic on the flute.

Robert Wood was the Piper and Kirsteen Grant was the accompanist for the evening.

Sydney MacGougan, a member of the association who will celebrate her 90th birthday on January 31, was presented with flowers and cut a birthday cake as an early celebration. Happy birthday Sydney!

True story

SINCE it's the lead up to Christmas, I thought I would include a true, light-hearted story I heard last week.

Two well-known island gentlemen

came down to Glasgow last weekend and found themselves trying to negotiate the subway on the Saturday morning after the Glasgow Skye.

Their destination was only a couple of stops away but, possibly because of how they were feeling after the excesses of the previous night, they didn't emerge from the labyrinth beneath the Glasgow streets for more than 45 minutes.

When they were finally back up on street level, they were forced to admit the reason their journey had taken them so long.

They had been sitting on the train waiting for Merkland Street - a station which ceased to exist in 1977!

They had, therefore, gone full circle round the whole subway until they eventually decided to get off at Partick. They should perhaps have consulted a map rather than the old Francie and Josie song which references Merkland Street, but which is clearly more than 40 years out of date!

Friday December 18: Launch of new Gaelic children's book

Montaidh an Cù Glic, Hillhead Library, 10am.

Thursday December 31: Park Bar Hogmanay celebrations with Trail West.

Thursday December 31: Droiteach Social, Gealbhan na Callaine, Sutherland's Bar in the Argyll Hotel, 973 Sauchiehall Street.

Saturday January 9: Glasgow Skye Association New Year Family Cèilidh, Crawford Hall.

Pub scene

Park Bar: Thursday December 17: Session. Friday December 18: Eriskey Lit. Saturday December 19: Scott Harvey. Sunday December 20: Scott Harvey.

Islay Inn: Friday December 18: Black Velvet. Saturday December 19: Twist of Fate. Wednesday December 23: quiz night.

Beachd Ailein

ALLAN CAMPBELL
ailean@obantimes.co.uk

THA E DO-SHEACHANTA cuid a dheasbadan a ghreasadh, gu snraichte far am bheil ceistean toinnte, ach 's math as fhiach cumail a' còmhradh!

Eadar mu 1760 agus 1830 nochd atharraichean mòra tionnsgalach ann am Breatann agus ged a thug seo beairteas agus adhartas gu bith, thathas a-nise ag aithneachadh gun do dh'adhbharaich e cuideachd gun do dh'èirich teas na cruinne aon cheum Celsius bhon àm sin.

Thug sin buaidh chunnartach air àrainneachd agus aimsir an t-saoghail agus tha eòlaichean air a bhith a' rabhadh bho chionn bhliadhnaichean gun feumar casg a chur air meudachadh an teasachaidh agus an saoghal a dhion bhò grios.

Tha còrr air fichead bliadhna bho thòisich còmhraidhean agus aonta fhaotainn air amas agus bliadhnaichean na cruinne a lùghdachadh agus gun teagamh 's e adhartas mòr a chòilean riochdairean faisg air 200 dùthaich far feadh an t-saoghail, bho chionn làithean, nuair a dh'aontaich iad obrachadh còmhla a dh'ionnsaigh a' chinn-uidhe sin.

Chuir iad romhpa ann an 'Aonta Pharis' gun cuir gach dùthaich an sàs poileasaidh is gnìomh a chumas an

fhàs ann am blàthachadh na cruinne eadar seo agus 2100 gu mu leth ceum Celsius neo nas lugha.

Cha robh leithid nan Stàitean Aonaichte air an ainm a chur ris na bhànaichte air a chaidh aontachadh roimhe agus thathas a' measadh an taice bhuapa agus bho leithid Sìona air leth misneachail.

Mar a bhiodh dùil 's dòcha, tha cuid air a ràdh mar-thà nach eil seo gu leòr agus nach obraich an aonta ri linn 's nach eil dòighean ann gun dùthchannan a pheanasachadh ma dh'fhàilligeas iad.

Ach le aon eòlaiche ag ràdh gun gearrte na dhà leth an sgrìos a thigheadh bho èirigh àirde nan cuantan, nan coileante aonta Pharis, tha fhios gur e adhbhar misneachd agus molaidh a th' ann.

Chuir am Prìomhaire Daibhidh Camshron failete air an aonta is e ag ràdh gum bheil Breatann air toiseach anns an iomairt an aghaidh blàthachadh na cruinne, is gum bheil sinn a' toirt stiùireadh dha dùthchannan eile air an t-slighe air adhart.

'S dòcha gum bheil, ach dh'fheumte faighneachd ciamar a tha co-dhùnadh an t-Seansaileir cùl a chur

ri teicneòlas gas carbon a ghlacadh agus a ghleidheadh fon chuan na eisimpleir?

Agus aig an aon àm 's a thathas a' brosnachadh a' mhòr-shluaigh càraichean a sheachnadh agus còmhdaidh poblach a chleachdadh tha e a' nochdadh nach eil trèanaichean gu leòr againn airson na bheil gun cleachdadh an-dràsta fhèin a ghùlain! Comhairle bhuainn nach d' fhuair againn 's dòcha?

DAVID Cameron was right to welcome the Paris agreement on greenhouse gas emissions, and he may be correct to say that Britain is already leading and advising in this regard.

However, it is difficult to understand how the decision to effectively kill the possibility of world-leading carbon-capture technology at Peterhead demonstrates such a commitment.

Similarly, while government encourages car-users to switch to public transport to aid the environment, Scotland's rail system is apparently too small to cope with current passenger levels.

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

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Send your letters and flashback photographs to The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, PA34 4HB, or email editor@obantimes.co.uk

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

Crannog Lane, Lochavullin estate, Oban, PA34 4HB.

We will attempt to resolve your issue in a timely, reasonable and amicable manner. However, if you are unsatisfied with our response, you can contact IPSO, which will investigate the matter. You can

either telephone IPSO on 0300 123 2220 or email inquiries@ipso.co.uk. IPSO is an independent body which deals with complaints from the public about the editorial content of newspapers and magazines.

We will abide by the decision of IPSO.

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.

ARDNAHEIN CARE
Leading Excellence in Elderly Care

10 Glenmorag Avenue,
West Bay, Dunoon PA23 7LG

Warm, friendly, home from home meeting all individual care and nursing needs of older people.

Manager Mrs Harkins RN welcomes enquiries for respite, convalescence, short and long stays

01369 703371

ARDNAHEIN CARE is an impressive home from home providing respite and longer stays for older people with nursing and care needs in Argyll and Bute and farther afield. Set in beautiful West Bay, Dunoon, Ardnahein Care with its far reaching beach, river and mountain views provides "a homely, relaxed and personalised service where the needs, choices and preferences of individual residents are well managed and the meaningful involvement of residents and their families is welcomed and valued." "Healthcare is well managed and the staff team are trained and motivated", according to Inspectors who called unannounced and spent two days inspecting all aspects of care in this impressive home.

The Inspectors concluded Ardnahein Care provides high quality healthcare and support for well-being through qualified, motivated staff under strong and effective management in a quality environment that feels like 'home from home' in which residents and relatives express high satisfaction. Quality of provision was

graded 'Good' in all areas: care and support; the environment; staffing; and management and leadership. Residents and relatives told Inspectors exactly what life was like at Ardnahein Care, saying: "Everything is just the way I like it", "I'm well looked after", "Very good - warm and friendly", "It's lovely - nice and clean and homely", "Staff are very, very good", "The food's lovely", "I get everything I need - I'm very content", and relatives said: "it's good to see him so happy and settled", "It doesn't feel like a care home - it's like visiting Mum at home", "We liked it straight away - it has a lovely feel about it", "The attitude of staff and the ambience of the establishment fill me with confidence", "We couldn't ask for more."

Registered Nurse and Manager Mrs Margaret Harkins RN, who took over management of Ardnahein Care in September 2014 with 30 years experience nursing and managing care for the elderly, said the report confirmed what she and her staff, residents and their relatives knew, that Ardnahein Care provides a strong and positive choice for anyone requiring respite or longer term care for age or health related needs. Mrs Harkins RN praised her excellent

Ardnahein Care doesn't feel like a care home!

staff team for their dedication to meeting the wide range of health-care needs provided for at Ardnahein Care, in a professional, caring manner, while engaging each resident and their family in their care, wishes and routine of life which maximized their enjoyment and well-being. Ardnahein Care has fully qualified nurses on staff and provides nursing care as required by residents in addition to the excellent standard of residential care and support. Also, in addition to residents who choose Ardnahein Care as a long term home, individual and regular respite stays at Ardnahein Care are available and provide people in receipt of care in their own homes with a welcome break and much needed boost for their health care and feelings of well-being.

With no legal difference between residential and nursing homes, more and more people are opting for the quality of life in Ardnahein Care Mrs Harkins said, where their health needs can be met in a relaxed, homely environment in which they do not feel 'hospitalised', either short or long term. Mrs Harkins RN welcomes enquiries for advice on respite and longer term care at Ardnahein Care and is happy to arrange visits to the home or to visit people in their own homes. Mrs Harkins resides in a bungalow in the grounds of Ardnahein Care so she is always available and can be contacted on 01369 703371.

OT

TIMESLINE

Police seek help in hunt for culprits

POLICE in Lochaber are appealing for information about the following crimes in the area.

Sometime between 5pm on Saturday December 10 and 12.30pm the following day, a car parked on Kilmallie Road, Caol, was damaged.

On the night of Saturday December 6, a grey North Face waterproof jacket, fleece and sheepskin-lined hat were stolen from a bar in Fort William town centre.

Sometime between December 4 and 5, an industrial unit at Camaghael, Fort William, was broken into.

Anyone with information about these incidents is asked to contact police on 101, the confidential line on 01397 702000 or Crimestoppers on 0800555111.

Keeping on target with fire safety

ACCIDENTAL fires in the Highlands have dropped in the last few months, according to a report by the region's most senior officer.

There were 55 house fires between April and September, compared to 70 in the same period last year and none were fatal, against one in 2014.

Deliberate fires were also down from 97 last year to 73 this year.

Scott Hay, Scottish Fire and Rescue's local senior officer for Highland, said: 'The service works closely with partner agencies and communities to reduce the number of accidental dwelling house fires through home fire safety visits and the installation of free smoke detectors.'

Cards transformed into cash bonanza

OLD CHRISTMAS cards can be recycled to raise money for the British Heart Foundation as part of an annual campaign by a Fort William resident.

Every year Kath Johnston turns cards into gift cards which are distributed to 14 shops for the charity.

Last year, more than 12,000 tags were made raising more than £1,000.

Cards can be dropped off at the Alexandra Hotel or to Kath direct at 119 Lochaber Road, Upper Achintore.

They can also be picked up by contacting 01397 703689.

Newsdesks

01631 568000
01631 703003

New path and bridge pave the way ahead for disabled

EMMA CRICHTON
ecrichton@obantimes.co.uk

A NEW all-ability path and bridge in Glen Nevis will give disabled people the chance to explore some of Scotland's most beautiful wild scenery.

Highland Council has submitted a planning application for a new crossing over River Nevis at Glen Nevis Visitor Centre, as part of a £500,000 project by Nevis Landscape Partnership to provide a two-mile riverside walk, accessible to wheelchair users and people with other mobility problems.

It is hoped the route will provide more opportunities for outdoor activities, education and engagement with nature,

all at the foot of Britain's highest mountain, Ben Nevis.

The new bridge will be wider than the existing crossing, built by army servicemen in the 1980s, and will be sturdier to cope with the large number of visitors and charity walks which take place. It will also be the starting point for the riverside walk, featuring 200 new trees to be planted by volunteers, local children and community groups. Information panels about trees and wildlife will be included, along with benches and picnic tables.

Audrey Sinclair, chairwoman of Highland Council's planning, development and infrastructure committee, said: 'The council recognises that Ben Nevis is a key driver of the

Lochaber economy and that a high quality visitor experience is critical to the success of both the local and wider tourist industry. The works proposed in Glen Nevis not only contribute to the safety and enjoyment of those taking access to the high hills, but will also now enable a far wider range of visitors to enjoy the scenery and splendour of the glen. The Nevis Landscape Partnership is a good example of organisations working together to deliver far more than each could have achieved in isolation.'

Arthur Cowie, chairman of Lochaber Disability Access Panel, said the group had received plans for the path and would be discussing the project at a meeting in January. He

added: 'The panel welcomes anything which improves and promotes accessibility in Lochaber.'

A decision on the planning application should be made by the end of the month.

The current bridge faces the pressure of 100,000 visitors to Ben and Glen Nevis every year and needs extensive repair annually to remain safe. It can only hold the weight of five people at a time and has been deemed unsuitable for a wheelchair user without assistance.

Nevis Landscape Partnership has also highlighted that the poor location of the bridge means many people heading up the Ben miss mountain safety information displayed at the visitor centre.



Front: Neo Boomer, P3, Rebecca Leslie, P7, and Dennis Wilk, P5. Back left, Nick Thomson, head teacher, and Graham Wemyss from Graham Construction.

Time capsule sends a message to the future

PUPILS from the new Lundavra Primary School in Fort William have sent a message to the future after burying a time capsule to mark the completion of the new building.

The pupils buried a range of different memorabilia in the time capsule, last Friday, to capture the history of both Fort William and Upper Achintore schools, which merged earlier this year, as well as looking ahead to the future of the new school.

Items included class photos, uniform samples, badges, copies of The Oban Times, a Now That's What I Call Music CD and pupil lists.

The overall collection was decided by children from each of the schools, who worked together in groups to form a list of suggestions. Built by Graham Construction, the £10 million building replaced Fort William and Upper Achintore Primary schools to form an 11-class school and opened in October.

Workers from the construction team helped to place the capsule into the ground.

Head teacher Nick Thomson said: 'The time capsule really grabbed our pupils' imaginations. Our pupils selected items for the time capsule that celebrate their former schools, as well as looking forward to the start of Lundavra Primary School. It will make an interesting collection for future pupils, staff and parents to reflect on.'

Court hears man pushed boy, 12

A MAN has admitted pushing a 12-year-old boy and deliberately cutting his own arm in front of children.

John Henderson, originally from Fort William but now living in Larkhall, appeared in the town's sheriff court on Thursday and admitted shouting and swearing at a woman and her son in a house in Fort William on the afternoon of January 3.

The court heard the 46-year-old then took a knife from

the kitchen and cut his right forearm in front of the pair and other children.

Sheriff Richard Davidson deferred sentence until January 5 for background reports and a restriction of liberty assessment.

He told Henderson: 'You behaved in a completely unacceptable manner. Children may be permanently disturbed after witnessing what you did and that is also completely unacceptable.'

Make a difference with grant cash

COMMUNITIES in the Highlands have been encouraged to apply for a share of a £1 million grant.

Applications are open for the Scottish and Southern Energy Sustainable Development Fund, which supports groups hoping to make a difference in their area.

Highlands and Islands MSP Rhoda Grant said: 'This fund provides a real opportunity to transform communities in a number of ways from improving community broadband projects to upgrading village halls. A number of areas in the Highlands have benefited in the past.'

To apply see sse.com/community/sustainablefund/

Proactive attitude to climate change

MOST people in the Highlands think climate change is an 'immediate and urgent problem', according to a new survey.

Almost two thirds (66.4 per cent) of Highland Council's 989 respondents expressed this attitude, an increase on the 53.8 per cent recorded in a similar poll in 2011.

The survey also showed 87.2 per cent think climate change is either partly, mainly or entirely caused by human activity. Highland Council leader Margaret Davidson said: 'This shows residents in Highland have a progressive, proactive view towards tackling climate change. The council will continue to look for ways to cut its carbon footprint and help communities reduce their own emissions.'

This comes after an appeal in Tesco collected 319 kilograms of food for those in need, the equivalent of more than 300 meals.



Food bank volunteer Pat Leslie, left, and manager Alex McConnachie, receive a £400 donation from Clare Russell and Stephen Kennedy on behalf of McIntyre and Company. 21_f51donation01

Fort lawyers make a case for helping busy food bank

FORT William lawyers took advantage of the season of good will when they donated £400 to Lochaber Food Bank.

Clare Russell and Stephen Kennedy of McIntyre and Co Solicitors and Estate Agents, handed over the cheque when they spent the afternoon volunteering at the town centre charity last Wednesday.

This comes after an appeal in Tesco collected 319 kilograms of food for those in need, the equivalent of more than 300 meals.

Food bank manager Alex

McConnachie said: 'We're so grateful for everyone's generosity and I think it comes out more at Christmas. People are looking at their own families and everything they have and want to help those less fortunate.'

Alex himself has been looking out for new ways to help those in need, particularly in the cold winter months, and now has some wood pellets at the food bank to give to people who are struggling to heat their homes.

He said: 'If people can't afford food they're going to be

struggling to put their heating on.'

'The council fitted a lot of these biomass heaters recently so we thought we should have some wood chips for anyone who needs them. I won't see anyone freezing in their homes at Christmas.'

Christmas also means school holidays, when many parents won't get the benefit of free lunches for their children.

Alex encouraged anyone who was struggling with this added expense to contact the food bank for help.

Concern over Fort council future

THE FUTURE of Fort William Community Council could be in doubt as members feel they are not being supported or making progress with campaigns.

The new council was elected last month but on Tuesday night the group held a special meeting to discuss whether it can continue. This comes

after the group recently objected to two Highland Council planning applications, the new Lundavra Primary School and council offices, both of which were approved by the local authority. The community council is also short of four members and has no permanent chairman. See next week's edition for more information.



Volunteers braved freezing temperatures to clear out the old Greenfingers space at Claggan. 21_f51greenfingers01

Hardy volunteers help breathe life into former garden project

A GARDEN project in Fort William is to be revived after a community space had been left to fall into disrepair.

Hardy volunteers braved freezing conditions on Saturday to resurrect the old Greenfingers area at Claggan Park.

The team filled a skip with old materials as part of a plan to breathe life into an old project, set up by the late Dr Su Sen.

Greenfingers was originally set up in 1999 as a place for people with disabilities to learn gardening skills and socialise but hasn't been used for more than two years.

A group of volunteers have now come together in the hope the green areas of Claggan can be used as community spaces for gardening and walks.

Donald Young, secretary of the

interim group, said: 'We're just a temporary group who want to get Greenfingers up and running but we hope a permanent group of volunteers will take over. Some members of the interim group might stay on but we won't make any big decisions until a proper committee has been set up.'

'We want to bring the area back to life and make it somewhere nice for the people of Claggan to use and hopefully it will bring the residents together. We would like to see it being a real community project.'

The first event to showcase the space will be a Winter Magic festival on Monday night (December 21) where volunteers will show off the 13 areas of interest in the space, along with a Santa's grotto and music. The festival will run from 3pm until 7pm.



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MORVERN lines

New book about St Kilda

JUST when it seemed nothing more could possibly be written about St Kilda, Historic Environment Scotland (formerly The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland) have published a lavish new 320-page book written by Angela Gannon and George Geddes called, 'St Kilda - the Last and Outmost Isle' which is likely to be the definitive volume on St Kilda and its outlying islands for many years to come.

This is a magnificent work, beautifully written with many sketches, drawings and dozens of old and modern photographs - some never before seen in print. Its seven chapters cover geology, first settlers, visiting antiquaries and archaeologists, clerics and clans, chiefs and landlords, crofting, the army rocket range, evacuation and the present day. This is no dry history or another happy-clappy saga written by a couple of summer visitors.

The back cloth is a dazzling concentration of towering basaltic cliffs, ancient buildings, showers of guillemots, razorbills, great skuas, gannets and puffins; the violence and danger of the surrounding seas; tales of work and play which encapsulate former island life, births and deaths, submarines and catastrophe and the treasured places Hirta, Soay, Dun, Stac an Armainn and Boreray still hold in the Hebridean mind.

The stage is a microcosm of richness: Viking gold, whales, hermits, healing wells and early carved crosses, memories of clearances and other stories passed down from generation to generation. 'St Kilda - the Last and Outmost Isle' (ISBN 978 1 902419 91 6) is available from the publishers, John Sinclair House, 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 9NX, price £25, on Amazon and in all good book sellers.

St Kilda will forever be linked with Morvern for it was on the pier at Lochaline that most of the evacuees disembarked on August 29 1930 to begin a new life on the Scottish mainland.

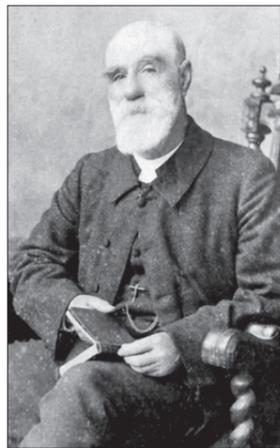
Even before that date, several other ties bound the two places together. George Herbert Strutt, who bought Kingairloch in 1902, went regularly in his steam yacht 'Sanda' to purchase tweed for his family and estate employees.

Later, in 1922, the Rev Alexander MacDiarmid, the esteemed United Free Church minister of Morvern from 1882 to 1924, made the journey to preach to the inhabitants and on one occasion gave every household on the island a copy of his Gaelic translation of The Lord's Prayer.

Deer stalking memories

THE BACK end of the year is a time for reading and although they appeared a few years ago there are two books I can especially recommend. The first, by Duff Hart-Davis, is called, 'Among the Deer - a Stalker Looks Back'. This is an absorbing memoir in which Duff Hart-Davis reminisces about 50 years of stalking in the UK. Of particular interest, to those of us who live and work in this area, are his chapters about days on the hill at Conaglen, Glenaladale, Knoydart, Glenkinglas and in Morvern and of the stalkers and characters he met there.

Mentioned in the chapter about Morvern is the saga of the disappearance of Arthur Strutt, the owner of Kingairloch Estate, who walked out of his



Rev Alexander MacDiarmid who visited St Kilda before it was evacuated.

house in 1977 and was not seen again until five years later when, despite many searches made by the famous Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team and their dogs, his body mysteriously turned up in a wood half a mile away.

The Chamberlain of Lews

THE SECOND is 'None Dare Oppose - the Laird, the Beast and the People of Lews' written by John Macleod and published by Birlinn. This book is about Donald Munro, an unscrupulous lawyer whom James Matheson, the owner of the Island of Lews appointed as his factor, or chamberlain, in 1853, to take charge of his affairs.

This spine-chilling book reveals how Munro eased himself into every civic, legal and industrial position in Lews and for two decades held the whole island under a reign of terror until the islanders eventually rose up and brought about his downfall. Little wonder factors were included in three old Highland curses - the others being foxes and bracken.

Disappearing landmark

ABOUT the same time as Munro was at the height of his power in Lews, hundreds of people in Morvern were suffering from starvation and deprivation when the potato crop failed and they were forced to leave their traditional holdings to make way for the great southern sheep flocks.

Many emigrated, others moved to Glasgow, while those that remained were herded into overcrowded ghettos around the coastline. To alleviate certain death, the Rev John Macleod, the parish minister, petitioned the Highland Relief Board for meal in return for statute labour.

The meal arrived regularly from Leith and was kept below Finuary Manse in a store which became a dwelling. Sadly, due to Highland Council planners and their indifference towards the preservation of local history, this fine example of traditional vernacular architecture, is shortly to join the ranks of a growing number of prominently placed 'look at me' glass villas more suited to the Home Counties than the shores of the beautiful Sound of Mull.

Iain Thornber
iain.thornber@btinternet.com

Plockton

SEVENTY-SIX brave senior citizens ventured out on one of the wettest and windiest nights of the year for a meal.

Despite the weather, the group enjoyed the annual Plockton Senior Citizens dinner and dance on December 4, with a meal from the Plockton Inn and music from Glenelg Ceilidh Band.

More than £11,000 was raised in just a week for good causes in Plockton.

A coffee morning on November 21 raised £5,550 for the village drama club, a Christmas fair in Plockton High School raised £4,800 for school funds and a sale in the Lighthouse Centre raised £1,120 for Plockton and Kyle Free Church foreign mission funds.

Stornoway

STORNOWAY Primary School could soon have improved facilities following concerns raised by parents.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has agreed to look into the cost of increasing space at the Lewis school, to address issues including the size of the gym hall, changing facilities and storage.

This comes after parents complained about standards in comparison to other island schools.

Stornoway North councillor Gordon Murray said: 'I am delighted that a costing will be presented to the council early next year. As the comhairle agrees, every child should have equal opportunity and are committed to achieving the best outcomes for children, young people and families. We are confident that the parents' campaign for adequate facilities for their children will be successful.'

Mallaig

MONTHS of preparation proved worthwhile for Mallaig High School pupils who performed a Scottish version of a Shakespeare play.

The Lochaber youngsters travelled to Eden Court in Inverness to stage their take on A Midsummer Night's Dream as part of the UK-wide Shakespeare Schools Festival, with the cast and crew all made up of pupils.

From a serious showdown between Hermia (Anna Biddulph) and Helena (Hannah Morrison) to dancing donkey Bottom (Edward Lee), and a huge amount of glitter from fairies played by Megan Morrison, Duncan Biddulph and Louise Duncan, the play, written by Lauren Moir and directed by Amanda Tevendale, was a resounding success, judging by the laughter and cheering from an enthusiastic audience.

Another stand-out performance came from the stage band Matthew Baker, Roslin Wilkinson, Georgia Dennis, Anna Robertson and Ellie Tevendale, who impressed with their live Scottish music.

Lewis/Harris

A GOOSE management meeting is to be held tonight (Thursday), hosted by the Lewis and Harris Greylag Goose Management Group.

The event is to provide information on reducing agricultural damage caused by the birds, while maintaining a stable population.

The meeting will take place at the Coastguard Station, Stornoway, from 7.30pm.

Tiree

TIREE High School pupils were treated to a musical performance last week when two members of the West Highlands traditional rock band Skipinnish visited the school.

Robert Robertson and Ross Wilson of the popular Scottish Gaelic band were on the island to say thank you to the people who showed Hebridean hospitality at this year's Tiree Music Festival (TMF).

The festival campsite was famously evacuated on the Friday night in July due to high winds and heavy rain. Emergency accommodation was required for festival-goers and staff at the school, including Miss McArthur, Miss Doncaster, Mr Monaghan and Mrs Malcolm, welcomed 150 people who stayed overnight in the school.

The festival then went ahead on the Saturday and Sunday as planned.

The TMF organisers arranged a fantastic experience for pupils to say thank you for looking after their fans and supporters. The event was enjoyed by everyone.

Robert and Ross performed a few tunes in a short concert for them, and left them a signed TMF 2016 poster which will be used as a fundraiser later.

The school would like to thank the TMF organisers for arranging the special treat.



The popular ceilidh band Hò-rò at the Coll Association ceilidh in Glasgow.

Island associations join Coll ceilidh to ensure evening goes with a swing

RECORD numbers attended the Coll Association's annual ceilidh recently at the National Piping Centre, Glasgow.

More than 125 members and friends came together on the evening to enjoy a buffet supper followed by a ceilidh with the West Highland band Hò-rò.

The association was delighted that representatives from other associations were able to join them on November 21, includ-

ing the Lewis and Harris, Islay, Mull and Iona, Skye and Tiree associations.

Once again the night was generously supported by many Coll businesses including the Coll Hotel, Tigh na Mara B&B, Tyrii Pottery, CalMac and Tiree Music Festival.

Members extended their thanks to everyone who donated a prize to the raffle, which raised almost £900, as

well as to everyone who joined them on the evening and made the event such a great success.

The next event in the Coll Association calendar is the annual bowling evening on January 19, 2016.

To join the Coll Association, or to find out any further information, contact secretary, Clara McGhee, at collassociation@hotmail.co.uk

Tiree

PUPILS from Tiree High School will combine efforts this afternoon (Thursday) for a Christmas play.

Traditionally, only the primary department staged a play every other year, however, this year the school has decided to perform a whole school Christmas concert, which will involve pupils from early learning and childcare, primary and secondary departments.

The concert will be held in the An Talla community hall from 1pm with pupils and staff joined by members of the community.

Tiree

TIREE High School held its annual parents' evening for S2 and S3 pupils on November 19.

The evening was a chance for parents to catch up on their children's progress this term as the Christmas holiday approach.

Caroline Chalekley, deputy head teacher, said: 'We hope that the parents and pupils who attended this week's parents' evening found the discussions and information useful and that pupils and parents now know how the learning ahead can be facilitated. Everyone knows that steady effort is always required but sometimes a small adjustment, a determination to complete homework to deadline or a better understanding of how aspects of work combine can really make a huge difference to confidence, making learning much easier. We know our parents support their children by helping to apply the advice and guidance given at home as we all work to improve the progress being made.'

Taynuilt

CHORISTERS in Taynuilt are planning to sing Christmas carols throughout the village this evening (Thursday).

Organiser Davy Paterson said: 'I'm once again organising carol singing as a fundraiser for Yorkhill Children's Foundation.'

'Between 7-9pm we'll be singing in Achlonan, Aldersyde, Achnafearna and Cruachan Cottages. 'At the end of the evening mince pies and mulled wine will be provided for the singers at Tainuilt Hotel. Everyone is welcome to come along; join us at Tainuilt Sports Pavilion at 7pm.'

Skye

A PROFESSIONAL stunt cyclist from the Isle of Skye, who performs and videos his feats and tricks in unique and dangerous locations, has released his latest video.

Danny MacAskill, who was born and raised in Dunvegan, takes to the rooftops of a village on Gran Canaria and puts his life on the line as he manoeuvres from ledge to ledge and back flips from roof to roof.

Danny published his first video online in 2009, which was filmed and produced by his flatmate Dave Sowerby, and it became an overnight success.

The video has received 36 million views to date and helped the Dunvegan man receive sponsor-

Lochalsh

A TRADITIONAL music band, made up of three siblings from Kyle of Lochalsh and another member from Glasgow, was the star of the show at the SQA Star Awards ceremony in Edinburgh last month. The pupils, Ciorstaidh Sarah Chaimbeul, Eosaph Caimbeul, Brighde Chaimbeul and Lachlan Kennedy, who attend St Mary's Music School in Edinburgh, didn't win an award, but they entertained the audience throughout the night and marched in front as they went for dinner.

The SQA Star Awards recognise inspirational achievements and commitments from individuals across Scotland.

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Loch Awe

IT IS hoped that a car abandoned at the Tigh Line pub in Lochawe village will eventually be moved when new owners take over the building. Police are aware of the vehicle but it is believed it will be unable to be moved until the owner is able to do so - or it is removed by new owners. Police told Glenorchy and Innishail Community Council that they will look into the matter again.

Glenorchy and Innishail

A POLICE report at Glenorchy and Innishail Community Council led to a general discussion about the continuing theft of lead from St Conan's Kirk in Lochawe. Councillors heard that CCTV cameras were now in place and being monitored. PC Darren Miller said that the thefts seemed to happen when he was not there and wondered if there was some 'local knowledge' involved in the crimes. Other church thefts might be related and communities were asked to be vigilant. Poaching at the barrage had been reported and in this situation police had considerable powers. Since October there have been nine road traffic accidents, 12 reports on the manner of driving, two mountain rescues and reports of dogs worrying livestock in the community council area. In the crime report given to the community council, eight people had been reported for dangerous driving, two for careless driving and four for speeding, some of who were detected in the village of Bridge of Orchy. One driver stopped for speeding had other defects with his car and no insurance. Cannabis was recovered from another vehicle.

Campebltown

CARE home staff in Campebltown came together with volunteers from a Church Friends Group to host a Christmas coffee morning. Held at Lorne and Lowland Church Hall, the festive stalls were manned by volunteers from the Church Friends Group, while Auchinlee staff oversaw the ovens and the coffee flasks. The care home staff also sold gift hampers they had made themselves, as well as a vast array of cakes. All money from the gift stalls will be put towards a special outing for residents, which is often a much-anticipated trip for a fish supper taken down to overlook Davaar Island. Mince pies, shortbread, coffees and teas were all sold to raise funds for the general running of the home, which has a specialised dementia care unit.



Church Friends Group volunteers Hope Johnstone, Jane McCorkindale, Carol Abernethy and Marlin McMurchy on the bake stall. 04_c50auchinlee03

Lochgilthead

PUPILS will be getting into the festive spirit tonight (December 17) as they prepare to entertain their guests at the Lochgilthead High School Christmas concert. Families and members of the public are welcome to the school tonight to enjoy music from the school choir, the wind band and pipe band. The event is in aid of school funds, and doors open at 7pm for a 7.30pm start. There was a concert in Ardrishaig Hall on Sunday (December 13) with Mid Argyll Youth Chorus and Bar None Community Choir providing entertainment.

Campaigners delight as Scottish Government announce Kintyre ferry to become permanent

A KINTYRE campaign group has completed its voyage as the Ardrossan to Campbeltown ferry is set to become a permanent service. Councillor John Armour also campaigned with the sub group and said: 'I would like to pay tribute to the Scottish Government for going ahead with this service. It would not have got off the ground without the work of ex-councillor John Semple and for that I thank him and Mike Russell MSP for their support.' Mr Semple was instrumental in securing the three-year trial, which started in 2011. Argyll and Bute MSP Michael Russell said: 'I am delighted that Derek Mackay has announced such an excellent Christmas present for the people of Kintyre. This was, when launched in 2013, the first new Scottish ferry route in more than two decades and its success has led to the very welcome decision to make it permanent.' With the Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) applying on the route since last summer numbers swelled in August and September with an £81 return for a car and £15 return for a foot passenger. Mr Armour added: 'This can only be good for the economy of South Kintyre and wider Argyll and Bute. We must build on the excellent vehicle and passenger numbers during the last three years and look at a more suitable timetable.' The campaign had cross-party support and Argyll First Councillor Donald Kelly said: 'After all the campaigning this is welcome news. It is now more important than ever to gain maximum benefit that the service is properly marketed, and is affordable. The timetable requires to be re-scheduled to better meet the needs of the local community and business.' A spokesperson for tourism organisation Explore Campbeltown, which sent three people to the sub group, said: 'We are excited to work with the operator to help promote the service and boost visitors to the area in the coming years.'



Dr Steve Brusatte, left, and Dr Tom Challands standing over sauropod tracks and an artist's impression of sauropod dinosaurs, which would have roamed Skye 170 million years ago. Photograph: Mark Wilkinson. Credit: Jon Hoard.

Rare imprints see Skye confirmed as largest dinosaur site in country

THE biggest dinosaur site in Scotland has been discovered on the Isle of Skye, revealing hundreds of rare imprints from some of the biggest animals to live on land. The prints, made by sauropods around 170 million years ago, are helping scientists to fill a gap in the evolution of these enormous dinosaurs. It is thought they grew to 15 metres in length and weighed more than 10 tonnes. Skye is one of the few places where fossils from the Middle Jurassic Period can be found. Dr Steve Brusatte, of the University of Edinburgh's School of GeoSciences, who led the study, said: 'The new track site from Skye is one of the most remarkable dinosaur discoveries ever made in Scotland. There are so many tracks crossing each other that it looks like a dinosaur disco preserved in stone. By following the tracks you can walk with these dinosaurs as they waded through a lagoon 170 million years ago, when Scotland was so much warmer than today.'

LORN lines

No plans for ancient bridges in Lorn

A REPORT to councillors last week (Wednesday 9) showed Argyll and Bute Council had not put any money into bridges throughout the Lorn area. No questions were raised by councillors at an area committee meeting last week, with roads manager Kevin McIntosh, despite a lack of spending on some crossings described as 'ancient'. During public question time, *The Oban Times* asked what provision was being made for the most vulnerable bridges, such as Kilniver bridge and the Bridge over the Atlantic at Seil. Both bridges, dating from the late 18th century, have previously caused concern, not least because there are no alternative routes to the islands of Luing, Seil and Easdale, as well as to the Kilniver and Ardmaddy areas. Councillor Elaine Robertson, Oban North and Lorn, said a contingency plan was 'almost in place' for any crisis that put the bridges out of action. Councillors said they would find out what work had been done on the bridges for the next area committee meeting in two months' time.

Lucky trio to benefit from club cash

OBAN and District Classic Vehicle Club recently held its annual general meeting and decided on which local causes would benefit from the money collected by the club over the past year. The three causes chosen were; The Salvation Army, Oban High School Pipe Band and Mary's Meals, each of which received a cheque for £400. Club chairman Kevin Devine said: 'The money was collected at various events held throughout the year by the car club, and as we are a non-profit-making organisation, the money is always donated to local causes.'



Sarah McCoshim, food teacher with Healthier Scotland, shows a group how to make chickpea hot pot. 17_15cooking01

Drive to promote healthier eating

BUDDING chefs were cooking with gas recently when the Healthier Scotland Cooking Bus visited Oban. The bus, a specially-designed lorry with a fully equipped kitchen classroom, was parked at Oban High School all last week. Although it was the school's home economics department that got in touch with Healthier Scotland, various other community groups and members of the public took advantage of the free, practical cookery classes. The lessons are funded by the Scottish Government and are provided in conjunction with the Food Standards Agency Scotland. Morag MacKinnon, principal teacher of food technology at Oban High School, explained: 'The school requested the cooking bus as our 80 second-year pupils weren't getting any home economics due to staffing issues. As well as that class, the bus has been used by pupils from the learning centre, staff training sessions, and pupils from PE, science and modern language classes. They incorporated aspects of cooking into their lessons, such as the PE pupils looking at nutrition and the language classes learning about foreign cuisine.' Members of Soroba Young Families, Hope Kitchen, Argyll Young Carers, Oban Youth Cafe, as well as local primary school pupils all took advantage of the free workshops.

Green, gold or a nice shade of grey?

COUNCILLORS have decided that green and gold are the traditional colours of Oban. The conversation came up at a meeting of Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee, where Celtic supporter Councillor Roddy McCuish said he understood the colours just happened to be the same as his team. Joking with his fellow councillors, he said: 'As an alternative we could have 50 benches of grey.'



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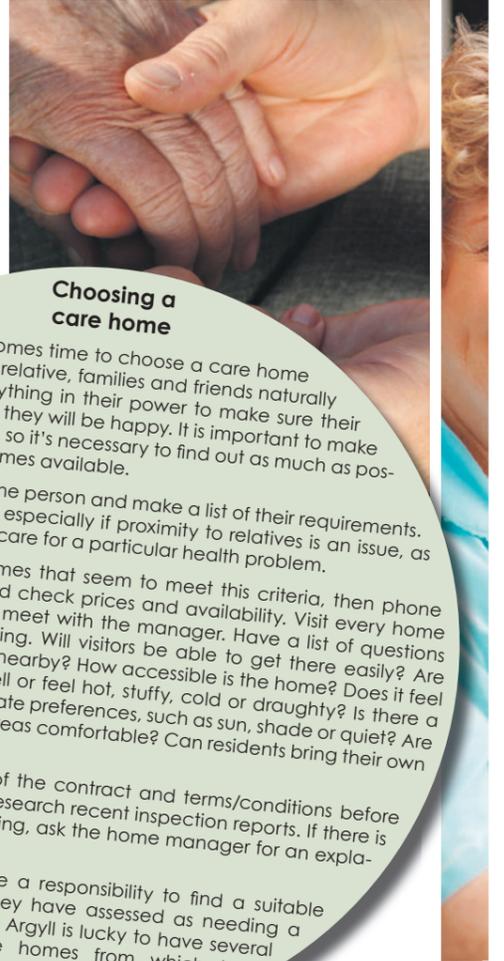
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Choosing a care home

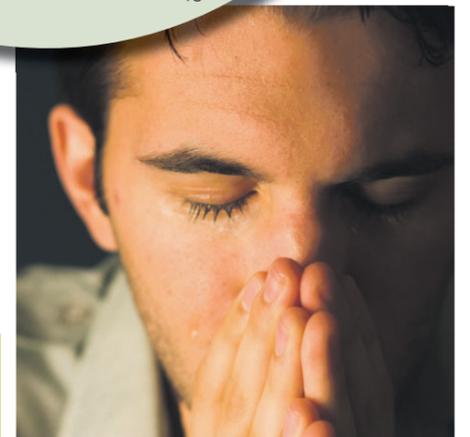
WHEN it comes time to choose a care home for an elderly relative, families and friends naturally want to do everything in their power to make sure their needs are met and they will be happy. It is important to make an informed decision, so it's necessary to find out as much as possible about the care homes available.

The first step is to talk to the person and make a list of their requirements. This might involve location, especially if proximity to relatives is an issue, as well as facilities or specialist care for a particular health problem.

Make a shortlist of care homes that seem to meet this criteria, then phone each to request brochures and check prices and availability. Visit every home on the list to look around and meet with the manager. Have a list of questions to ask and consider the following. Will visitors be able to get there easily? Are there transport links or facilities nearby? How accessible is the home? Does it feel clean and inviting? Does it smell or feel hot, stuffy, cold or draughty? Is there a choice of rooms to accommodate preferences, such as sun, shade or quiet? Are pets allowed? Are the public areas comfortable? Can residents bring their own furnishings?

Always ask to see a copy of the contract and terms/conditions before coming to a decision, and research recent inspection reports. If there is anything that needs clarifying, ask the home manager for an explanation.

Local authorities have a responsibility to find a suitable home for anyone they have assessed as needing a care home place. Argyll is lucky to have several excellent care homes from which to choose.



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THE SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is committed to reducing the number of injuries and deaths involving older people over winter and reducing the number of fires due to cooking, smoking materials and alcohol over the festive period.

We want you to join Scotland's fight against fire by following our winter safety tips:

- Keep portable heaters away from curtains and furniture, never use them for drying clothes, and turn them off before going to bed.
- Never leave an electric blanket switched on when you're in bed unless it is marked 'suitable for all night use'. Check the blanket, plug and flex for damage and, if in doubt, don't use it.
- Unplug fairy lights and electric Christmas decorations and blow out candles when you leave the house or go to bed.
- Leaving cookers unattended or being distracted while cooking is the most frequent cause of fire in the

home. Never cook hot food while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

- Most fatal fires are caused by smoker's materials. Don't smoke in your chair or in bed if you've been drinking or you're feeling tired.
- Check your smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms are working and replace batteries if necessary. Use Christmas as a reminder to clean them and remove dust.
- If you have a chimney make sure it's swept this winter and use a fire guard where necessary.
- For more advice on how to keep your home safe from fire this winter visit www.firescotland.gov.uk/winter

If you know an older person and are worried about their safety this winter why not look in on them and make sure they get the support that's available through a free Home Fire Safety Visit?

Have a safe Christmas!

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Lochaber Women's Aid offer specialist support to women, children and young people affected by Domestic Abuse

Contact us on 01397 705734 for confidential support

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LOCHABER WOMEN'S AID

Christmas and New Year is a time of great joy for many people but can be a difficult time for those living in fear of abuse in their own homes.

The extended holiday period can be particularly stressful for women living with violent and controlling partners, as the family is together for an extended period of time and existing abuse can intensify.

If you are affected, or if you suspect you know someone who may be affected, we want you to know that support and advice is available.

At Lochaber Women's Aid, we are here to listen, believe and support you. We will guide you through the upset, confusion and anxiety caused by Domestic Abuse and support you to make decisions.

In addition to supporting women, our team of specialist workers will also help children and young people who have been affected by domestic abuse make sense of their feelings.

If you need to talk in confidence to a specialist worker please phone us on 01397 705734. Support is only a phone call away.

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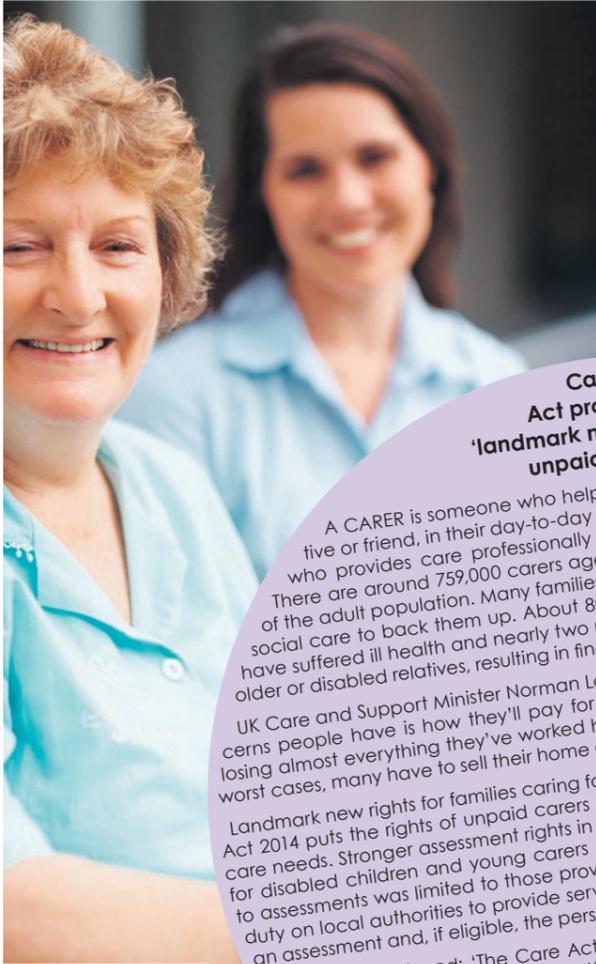
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community



Care Act promises 'landmark new rights' to unpaid carers

A CARER is someone who helps another person, usually a relative or friend, in their day-to-day life. This is not the same as someone who provides care professionally or through a voluntary organisation. There are around 759,000 carers aged 16 and over in Scotland - 17 per cent of the adult population. Many families struggle to provide care without the right social care to back them up. About 80 per cent of carers providing full-time care have suffered ill health and nearly two million people have given up work to care for older or disabled relatives, resulting in financial challenges in the short and longer term.

UK Care and Support Minister Norman Lamb said: 'We know that one of the biggest concerns people have is how they'll pay for their care. Until now people have unfairly faced losing almost everything they've worked hard for in order to get the care they need - in the worst cases, many have to sell their home or exhaust their life savings.'

Landmark new rights for families caring for loved ones came into effect in April 2015. The Care Act 2014 puts the rights of unpaid carers on the same legal footing as the rights of those with care needs. Stronger assessment rights in the Children and Families Act 2014 for parents caring for disabled children and young carers also came into force in April 2015. Previously, access to assessments was limited to those providing regular and substantial care, and there was no duty on local authorities to provide services to meet carers' needs. Now all carers can have an assessment and, if eligible, the person she cares for or the carer herself can get support.

Mr Lamb continued: 'The Care Act represents the most significant reform of care and support in more than 60 years, putting people and their carers in control of their care and support. For the first time, the Act will put a limit on the amount anyone will have to pay towards the costs of their care.'

Heléna Herklot, chief executive of Carers UK, said: 'These are the strongest rights ever for carers. We'd urge all families caring for a disabled, frail or ill family member or friend to find out about their new rights to an assessment from their local authority. Many carers say that they find the assessment process helpful in understanding what support might be out there and helping them to make decisions.'

Family and friends three times more likely to be aware of domestic abuse than police

MOST people in Britain do not feel equipped to help someone who is suffering from domestic abuse despite almost one in three people knowing a victim, new findings from a national charity organisation show.

Those with personal experience of domestic abuse are more than three times more likely to say that their friends and family were aware of the abuse than the police, with an even smaller number saying a specialist domestic abuse worker was aware.

Victims may be too afraid or isolated to talk to others about their abuse, which makes the role of other people offering support even more crucial. More than one in three people who have personally experienced abuse didn't tell anyone else. Whilst friends and family can play a key role encouraging victims to seek specialist help, they currently face huge difficulties in helping victims this way. These barriers range from a fear they might make a victim's situation worse if they spoke about it to someone else, to feeling unequipped to help because they don't know what to do or who to contact if they think a family member is being abused.

The new findings from a survey of more than 2,000 British adults, carried out for Citizens Advice by ComRes, reveal that around one in five feel that not knowing what to do, or who to contact, would discourage them from telling anyone else about suspected abuse, and half of those who have personally experienced domestic abuse report that their friends and family were aware of what they were going through.

If you are experiencing domestic violence or abuse, or you are concerned someone you know might be in an abusive relationship, you can seek help by calling confidential helplines.



North Argyll Carers Centre

Supporting Carers in North Argyll and the Islands  carerstrust Scotland action-help-advice

Do you provide unpaid help and support to a family member, child, partner, relative or friend, who could not manage without you?

We provide: advice and information, support groups, emotional and practical support, training and activities, therapies, counselling and advocacy.

We have an outreach service supporting carers in rural and remote areas with regular visits and activities organised for carers across the area.

For further information please call us on 01631 564422 or e-mail on info@northargyllcarers.org.uk

Registered as a Scottish Charity No: SC040902

Do you care? We can help

North Argyll Carers Centre offers both practical and emotional support to unpaid carers across North Argyll and the Islands. Support comes in many forms and carers are welcome to drop-in to the centre on Oban's Albany Street or call us to find out more about what we do and access ongoing support.

We currently offer ongoing one to one support, weekly coffee morning, therapies, counselling, support groups, social outings, respite opportunities, training and activities, a young carers service, an outreach support worker for carers on the islands and rural mainland carers. We also offer Oban Hospice Community Services where there is a support service for those with life-limiting conditions and their carers.

We can also offer carer support plans to support you in your caring role. If you or someone you know cares for someone, do get in contact and see how we can help you. Everyone is welcome and our service is confidential.

Contact us on 01631 564422 or info@northargyllcarers.org.uk and we are on Facebook as north argyll carers centre.



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LYNN OF LORNE

Lynn of Lorne Care Home has recently enjoyed investment internally and welcomes a new management team to lead the home in the provision of excellent care.

Care Home Manager Louise Glasgow has years of experience and an excellent track record within the care home industry. She explains little more about life at Lynn of Lorne: 'Lynn of Lorne is very much a home from home for our residents and their families. Recent investment brings a fresh look to the home, with upgrades to our bedrooms and living and communal areas, which has really made an impact and certainly adds to our friendly, welcoming atmosphere.'

'We offer 61 nursing care and respite care beds, and our highly trained team actively supports and promotes the privacy, dignity and independence of each resident. Our in-house chef prepares nutritious meals for every palate, and home baking is incredibly popular.'

'Our activities co-ordinators ensure that life is as full as it can be for residents, including regular day trips and entertainment visiting the home.'

'We're looking forward to our Christmas activities, too - though we know at this time of year loneliness can be quite overwhelming for the older person living alone. That's why our group living and activities bring so many benefits.'

'Support, company and independence really does make such a difference to our residents and visiting guests, who thrive in our care home environment, which is why our respite services can be a great help at this time of year.'

'We'd welcome anyone who would like to find out more to get in touch - we'd be delighted to tell you more.'

If you'd like to find out more or would like to visit Lynn of Lorne Care Home please call Louise Glasgow on 01631 720278 or email for a brochure on lynnoflorne@mckenziecare.com

Care is at the heart of everything we do...

Lynn of Lorne Care Home provides a superior standard of accommodation and promotes small group living to our residents. Although equipped with every modern comfort, Lynn of Lorne retains an air of unhurried tranquillity, a welcoming atmosphere and a sense of family that ensure residents feel relaxed and at home.

Our highly experienced team offer a level of care that's second-to-none and have an intuitive understanding of hospitality and service ensuring our residents always receive high quality care tailored to their needs.

To find out more about our home or arrange a tour to see what life is like at Lynn of Lorne, call Louise Glasgow on 01631 720 278 or email louise@mckenziecare.com



Lynn of Lorne
CARE HOME

Benderloch, By Oban PA37 1QW www.mckenziecare.com



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Traditional Music Awards showcase ambassadors of booming industry

A SUPERB evening of entertainment at the BBC Alba Traditional Music Awards saw the who's who of modern music mix with the old timers, who still making feet dance and tap.

There was no one star of the night as Mary-Ann Kennedy and Tony Kearney presented the star-studded event.

The 13th annual ceremony was streamed worldwide for the first time.

The prestigious awards – organised by Hands Up for Trad – saw stars of the Scottish music scene take to Dundee's Caird Hall to celebrate and honour the very best of traditional talent.

This year's notable winners included Treacherous Orchestra, who clinched the coveted Album of the Year award, sponsored by Birnam CD, for their second album 'Grind', while founding band member, Ross Ainslie, scooped PRS for Music's Composer of the Year.

This year has been a busy one for the band, having toured the UK promoting the album to rave reviews. Ross has weaved tour dates around the band's to promote his collaborations with some of the biggest names in trad and also worked with Greg Lawson on the orchestration of Martyn Bennett's GRIT – Celtic Connections

Opening Concert, which was awarded Event of the Year.

Other winners of the prestigious prizes included Gaelic Singer of the Year winner, Griogair Labhruidh, who beat off stiff competition from Alyth McCormack, Ainsley Hamill and Fiona J MacKenzie.

Griogair has made a name for himself in recent years as not only a talented singer but also as a tutor and performer in Gaelic rap, bringing the language to a more mainstream audience through eclectic events across the country.

Greentrax Recording's Live Act of the Year went to Rura, whose energetic live performances has earned them national acclaim and a string of sold-out shows in 2015, despite having formed only a couple of years ago.

Their line-up is made up of some of the biggest names on the Scottish folk scene, including Adam Holmes, Steven Blake, Jack Smedley, David Foley and Adam Brown – each having played individually across the globe.

Pipe Band of the Year went to Shotts and Dykehead Caledonia Pipe Band, who wowed 50,000 music fans at Glasgow Green this summer when they won the heralded 2015 World Pipe Band Championships, becoming the first Scottish band to win the title in

10 years.

Event founder and Hands Up for Trad Creative Director Simon Thoumire said: 'This was our first year in Dundee and it was more than worth the wait. We've had a spectacular night with tremendous talent being celebrated, so congratulations once again to tonight's nominees and worthy winners.'

'Year upon year, we see some of the best talent in the world come to these awards and we are humbled to see our 13th year one of the biggest and best yet, with support from the public and acts continuing to grow.'

'We would also like to thank the Caird Hall for being such warm hosts, Dundee City Council for its overwhelming support this year and MG ALBA for its continued contribution to the awards and allowing the whole world to tune in and enjoy the evening with us – we can't thank you enough for your support.'

The evening saw performances from some of the country's best loved acts, including the legendary Peatbog Faeries, who will be celebrating 25 years of music in 2016, world-renowned fiddler Duncan Chisholm and Gaelic singer Cathy Ann MacPhee and Winner 2015 BBC Radio Scotland Young Traditional Musician of The Year singer Claire Hastings before the

night was concluded by a fantastic ceilidh.

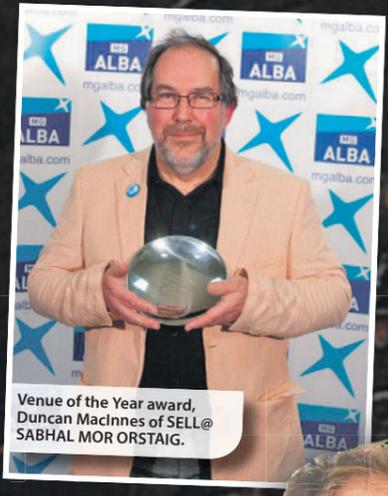
Iseabail Mactaggart, of MB Alba, said: 'Hands Up for Trad and MG ALBA have worked successfully in partnership for the past eight years to showcase some of Scotland's finest performers and celebrate our rich musical culture, spanning the Scottish Gaelic, Scots and English languages.'

For the first time this year, Na Trads were streamed worldwide via www.bbc.co.uk/alba.

Making BBC ALBA's content available to bigger and new markets is just one of the benefits that ensue from successful co-productions such as Port, a BeesNees/TG4 series, which won the award for Trad Music in the Media. Co-production is not only an aim in itself, it is vital to enhancing the success of the creative sector, pooling resources and reaching new markets, exposing them to Scotland's content and rich cultural heritage.

Stuart Fleming, of PRS for Music, said: 'PRS for Music is delighted to be here in Dundee to celebrate the vast wealth of talent in Scotland's Traditional Music scene. We'd like to congratulate all tonight's nominees and winners.'

Photographs courtesy of Chris James



Venue of the Year award, Duncan MacInnes of SELL@SABHAL MOR ORSTAIG.



Daimh, winner of Scottish Folk Band of the Year.



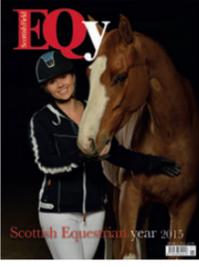
Gregg Lawson, GRIT, Celtic Connection opening concert, winner of Event of the Year.



Album of the year - Grind by Treacherous Orchestra. From left, John Summervill, Innis Watson, Adam Sutherland and Ally Hutton.



Composer of the Year, Ross Ainsley



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SCOTTS OUTTRAD

MUSIC AWARDS

2015



Jenn Butterworth, winner of Music Tutor of the Year.



Up and Coming Artist of the Year, sponsored by the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, League of Highland Gentleman, from left Ross Wilson, Alec Dalgligh and Seoragh MacIntyre.



Hayley McInnes, piper for Shotts and Dykehead Caledonia Pipe Band, which won Scottish Pipe Band of the Year.



Julie Fowlis accepts the Trad Music in the Media award for BBC ALBA's Port.



Gaelic singer of the year, Griogair Labhruidh.

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MacPhail's MUSIC

APART from Runrig, the Vatersay Boys are the most popular band ever to emerge from the Scottish islands. Their attraction crosses all boundaries of age, background and geography. They are a phenomenon of musical energy and if you ever have the opportunity to go for pint with them take it, but BEWARE!

I'm delighted that my first job as a contributor to *The Oban Times* is to write a feature on the Vatersay boys. Louise Glen (the boss of my new 0.02 full time equivalent media contract) told me I have to do it in less than 500 words – impossible task. It's like asking a professor of theology to sum up the Old Testament on the back of beer mat.

Firstly, I will admit to my strong bias in their favour – they are one of my favourite bands. I have been good friends with them for more than 15 years. My GP identifies them on my medical records as the probable cause for any future liver problems.

Last Friday, they stormed the famous Barrowland Ballroom in Glasgow with their 13th consecutive annual sell-out performance there. Few bands have the pulling power to fill such a large venue even for a one-off gig, but to do it every year indicates the band's magnetism. Tickets have been known to sell on eBay for up to £250.

Many people over the years have asked the question: 'Why are they so popular?' To me the answer is very simple. They are so popular, because they are so good. Brothers, Andy and Michael Campbell, who are the Vatersay ingredient and primary tune players in the band, are two of the most naturally-gifted musicians I have ever met. They do not have to try when they play – they just pick up their accordions and amazing music comes out.

I often state how little a part natural talent contributes to musical ability, sighting opportunity to learn, good teachers, encouraging parents, hours of studious practise etc as the foundations. Well, guys like this are the exceptions who prove the rule. The raw talent they have is such that they could have been left on Rockall as babies, been raised by a Sgarbh and a Puffin on a diet of sandeels and at the age of 18 been given an accordion each and they would immediately play the French National Anthem because they heard it once from a passing trawler.

Donnie MacNeil's drumming strongly drives the melody and his on-stage presence is a vital part of any Vat Boys experience. Donnie is also the main organiser and the boss when it comes to bookings, logistics, sound, light and keeping the whole operation running. He is brother of Mick MacNeil, a founder member of Simple Minds, so, again, no shortage of natural musical talent there.

Jo Greenen, the bass player and the variety of top pipers and whistle players who join them combine to put the finishing touches to this powerhouse of West Coast musical magic. I could happily begin work on a 50,000-word thesis on the identifiable components that make the Vatersay Boys unique and amazing. But more important than any of the detail is the over-all experience they create with their music, their character and their craic.

You will surely be compelled to book for Barrowlands 2016.

Aspiring young Argyll authors asked 'What's Your Story?' for national writing project

TWO teenagers from Argyll have been selected by the Scottish Book Trust to work on a national literary project for young people.

Scott Thomson, 15, who is an aspiring short story writer from Tobermory, and Katie Luxmoore, also 15, a promising novel and short story writer from Tayvallich, applied for the project and were accepted to work with eight other young people on the national, 'What's Your Story?' project.

The project, the first nationwide programme of its kind in Scotland, is aimed at increasing opportunities for young people to access and contribute to literary culture across Scotland.

What's Your Story? will involve a two-day creative writing conference in June 2016, to create a network of young writers and illustrators groups across Scotland, and an online resource to encourage and support Scotland's teenage writers.

These resources will be developed by the 10 teenage participants, in collaboration with the Scottish Book Trust and partners, for their peers throughout Scotland.

The participants are also being professionally mentored in their chosen forms and genres, and will be showcasing work completed during their mentorship on the programme at the two-day conference.

The youngsters, who represent many different genres of writing, include a screenwriter, a pair of poets, two non-fiction writers of travelogues and life stories, a Gaelic poet and two short story writers. A Gaelic poet and a graphic novelist complete the line-up.

Speaking about the project, Scott said: 'I'm really excited by it. There aren't a lot of people near me, or close to me, who are in to writing, so it's really encouraging and quite inspiring to see other writers and people who enjoy writing. I had never met anyone before my age who was in to that.'

Katie said: 'I applied to learn more about my style of writing and to see what other young people in Scotland are writing. I also wanted to meet other people who think the same as me about writing, and have similar interests and hobbies. I also wanted to learn what I can do to improve my writing.'

Nicole Brandon, young writers co-ordinator at Scottish Book Trust, said: 'The enthusiasm for creative writing and illustration shown by our 10 teens in the initial weeks of the programme has been both extraordinary and joyful. Their faith in the ability of literature to inspire adventure, empathy and imagination has given What's Your Story? phenomenal momentum, and we cannot wait to showcase their contributions to Scotland's literary and creative culture.'

Their passion and conviction that young people have always deserved to be a part of our literary culture as creators and critics – not resigned to a default role as consumers. As access points to that side of our creative culture, Scotland's literary organisations have a responsibility to help them get involved.

It's our privilege to follow the lead of our teenage participants and create new and fruitful opportunities for them and their peers to connect with each other, grow in confidence and ability, and collaborate to create their own new facet to Scotland's literary culture.'

The project is funded by Time to Shine, Creative Scotland's arts strategy for young people, and is intended to celebrate and nurture the talent and ambition of young writers and illustrators of all backgrounds, connect them with others across the country who hold similar interests, and help them shape the future of literature in Scotland. The support of The Gaelic Books Council has aided this goal through specific provision for a teen participant working in the Celtic language.

The judging team, including two teenage members of Youth Arts Voice Scotland, and representatives from Creative Scotland, The Gaelic Books Council and Scottish Book Trust carefully reviewed 50 entries from around Scotland before selecting the final 10. Participants were selected on the enthusiasm and dedication they expressed for teenage participation in creative and literary culture.

For more information, visit: www.scottishbook-trust.com.

Scott Thomson, 15, from Mull, who is an aspiring short story writer

A feast of fiddle for Portree sees 12 exceptional pupils take to the stage

THE AUDIENCE of Skye Accordion and Fiddle Club, who gathered for its December meeting in Portree's Royal Hotel, had a feast of fiddle music awaiting them as fiddle tutor Laura Harrington brought along no less than 12 of her pupils and one cellist, collectively known as 'Skye Strings', to demonstrate their talents.

With ages ranging from primary school to teenagers, they put on a superb programme of music with contributions from solo, groups and the whole band, introducing each of the sets themselves and with some great arrangements.

More fine fiddle sets came from another fiddle tutor, Caerina Campbell, also acting as master of ceremonies for the night, with two of her pupils, Ellie MacPherson and Marina Slater, and piano backing by John Cameron.

Guitarist Helen Nichols treated the audience to a song she had composed and club stalwarts, John MacGilvray on piano accordion, John Cameron on keyboard and Donald John Campbell on drums, provided some toe-tapping sets.

Welcome visitor Denis Hurst from the Black Isle took to the stage for several sets on his two-row button-box to the delight of the audience, accompanied on keyboard by a member of the guest band, Kevin Gardiner.

Young Erin Baker on piano accordion accompanied by her dad George is a regular player at the club and kept the feet tapping with some nice sets. Highlight of the night was the appearance of the guest band, The Alan Gardiner Trio, with Alan from Biggar leading on piano accordion, his brother Kevin from Larbert on second box and on drums, Steven MacInnes of Tobermory. Scottish dance music at its very best flowed from this fine trio who brought the evening to a close with a great stramash including local players.



The Alan Gardiner Trio, guest band at Skye Accordion and Fiddle Club's December meeting.

Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year

to all relatives, friends and neighbours from Iain MacKechnie, Selma,

SEASONS GREETINGS

Best wishes to all friends in Dalmally, Loch Awe, Taynuilt, Connel, Oban, Lismore, Appin and Benderloch. Have a good Christmas and New Year. James MacArthur, Oban

Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year

Elizabeth Cameron sends love and best wishes to all family and friends for Christmas and the New Year. Lynne of Lorne, Benderloch.

Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year

to all our family, friends and neighbours from Ian & Sheila, Pulpit Hill

Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year

to all friends and neighbours. Hope 2016 will be happy and healthy for you and yours from Rhoda Gross.

Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year

Seasons greetings to all our friends and neighbours. Hope 2016 will be happy and healthy for you and yours from Margaret MacLeod and family

Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year

Helen MacBean wishes her friends and neighbours a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Victoria Court.

SEASONS GREETINGS

Archie Neil Beaton would like to wish all friends and relations a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

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A fundraising Soup Lunch

in aid of **Oban Pipe Band**

will be held in Oban Pipe Band Hall, Shore Street on Saturday 19th December 2015

From 12 noon - 2.00pm
Admission £3.00

An Comunn Gàidhealach MEUR CHRUACHAIN (Cruachan Branch)

Cèilidh na Nollaig

Saturday 19th December in Taynuilt Village Hall at 7.30pm

Mary Catherine MacNeil, Freddy MacKenzie, Alasdair MacDonald, Alasdair MacLean

Taynuilt Primary School Choir, The Isla Sinclair Dancers.

Fear an Taighe - Duncan MacNeil

Stovies and home baking - Raffle includes Christmas hamper.

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- 1 Debonair (6)
 - 2 Ship of the highest standard (1-3)
 - 3 V shape (7)
 - 4 Sword (5)
 - 5 Sailing vessel (8)
 - 6 One who has temporary breathing problems (6)
 - 12 Handle (8)
 - 14 Curl (7)
 - 16 Cry of triumph (6)
 - 18 Unstraight limb (6)
 - 19 Many fish (5)
 - 21 Something owed (4)

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION

1	M	P	U	G	N	S	K	E	T	C	H
T	I	O	S	N	E	I					
S	E	Q	U	O	I	A	O	I	L	E	D
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D	I	G	E	S	T	G	Y	P	S	U	M

Santa Dash - fun filled for Killin folk

THE KILLIN Santa Dash held on December 12 was another great success.

The event, in its third year, was organised by Pete Waugh of Tay Fitness. A hundred Santas took part and ran from the Falls of Dochart Inn to the Bridge of

Lochay Hotel, where the Killin choir welcomed them home with a rendition of carols. Thanks went to the many people who volunteered and ran stalls at the finish and, of course, all the Santas for making it such an unusual and wonderful event.



Monty finds a Gaelic voice

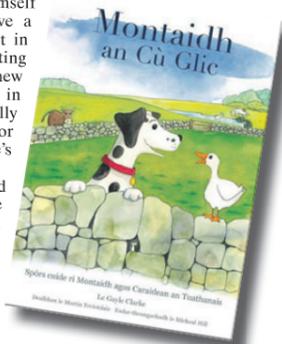
MONTY the Dalmatian is about to meet a whole host of new Gaelic-speaking friends in a new publication *Montaidh an Cù Glic*. Broadcaster Michael Hill has translated Gayle Clarke's hugely popular story into Gaelic and now young Gaelic speakers can enjoy the antics of this loveable dalmatian. *Montaidh an Cù Glic* has been beautifully illustrated by Martin Teviotdale and will be launched tomorrow, (December 18), in Hillhead Library in Glasgow where Michael will host a reading session for young Gaelic speakers and their parents.

Gayle, author and publisher of the Monty tales, said: 'As a grandmother of eight, I am acutely aware of how important it is to encourage young children to want to

read independently for pleasure. I hope that the young Gaels, parents and learners of the language, enjoy reading about the antics of Monty and his friends.' Michael said, 'When I found out that Gayle wanted to translate her book into Gaelic, I jumped at the chance to be involved - rather like Monty himself would. I have a great interest in Gaelic writing and I think new literature in Gaelic is really important for the language's well-being.'

'I would love to be involved in more writing projects, so if Monty is after more

fun with his Gaelic friends, I would be more than happy to help him out with the language.' Rosemary Ward, director of the Gaelic Books Council added: 'I have no doubt that this book will be a welcome addition to the wealth of children's publications supported by the Gaelic Books Council.'



A showcase of Texan talent

LOCHABER High School hall was filled with the sounds of trumpet, cello and percussion when a trio from Texas performed. The well-attended Drumpetello concert was part of the Lochaber Music For All season and included four newly commissioned works, each telling a story or creating a sound picture, all delightfully described by Mary Thornton, the

trumpeter of the American group. As well as the evening performance, the trio spent the day providing musical workshops which went down well with the 30 children in attendance. The next concert in the Music For All Series will take place on Saturday January 13 in the Ben Nevis Hotel, featuring Glaswegian musician Bill Fleming and his band.



American trio, Drumpetello, performed to a packed Lochaber High School.

Skerryvore and Skipinnish to kick off 2016 with Lochaber gig

CELTIC rock band Skerryvore will kick off the new year with a gig in Fort William, following the success of a similar event earlier this year.

The group, along with special guests Skipinnish, will play to a buzzing Lochaber crowd in the Nevis Centre on January 2. Both bands played

in the same venue in January of this year and the gig was so successful the number of tickets on sale has been bumped up to more than 700.

Doors open at 7pm. Tickets are £15 and are available from the venue or the Skerryvore website www.skerryvore.com.



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Fri 18th - Thurs 24th December 2015

Brooklyn (12A) 132 mins
Sat: 18.30, Wed: 20.45

Brooklyn is a romantic drama set in the 1950s in which a young woman on a visit to her native Ireland from New York must decide in which country and with which man she will spend the rest of her life.

Frozen Sing-A-Long (PG) 108 mins
Thu: 11.45am

Fearless optimist Anna teams up with Kristoff in an epic journey in a race to find Anna's sister, Elsa, whose icy powers have trapped the kingdom in an eternal winter.

Hotel Transylvania 2 (PG) 109 mins
Sun: 12.15

The Drac Pack is back for an all-new monster comedy adventure in Sony Pictures Animation's Hotel Transylvania 2!

It's a Wonderful Life (U) 130 mins
Thu: 17.20 (Christmas Eve)

FREE!
Oban Phoenix presents this free event - a special Christmas treat. This Christmas we would like to thank all of our loyal customers by presenting a Christmas Eve screening of the beautiful classic film 'It's a Wonderful Life'. The ultimate seasonal feel-good film.

Kids Club: Miracle on 34th Street (U) 114 mins
Sat: 12.00

Children's classic. A lawyer and a little girl must prove that a man claiming to be Santa Claus is the real thing. 1994. Kids just £4 - adults FREE!

Spectre (12A) 170 mins.
Last chance to see!

Mon: 18.45, Wed 17.40
A cryptic message from Bond's past sends him on a trail to uncover a sinister organisation. While M battles political forces to keep the secret service alive

Star Wars: Episode VII - The Force Awakens (12A) 156 Mins
Fri: 00.05, 19.30, 22.30, Sat & Tues: 17.30, Sun: 14.30 & 20.30, Mon: 20.30, Wed: 12.30 & 18.30.

3D version: Fri: 16.30, Sat & Tues: 14.30 & 20.30, Sun & Mon: 17.30, Wed: 15.30 & 21.30, Thu: 14.10
A continuation of the saga created by George Lucas set thirty years after Star Wars: Episode VI - Return of the Jedi (1983).

Sunset Song (15) 153 mins
Fri: 20.45, Sat: 21.00, Sun: 19.00

Based on the classic book. The daughter of a Scottish farmer comes of age in the early 1900s.

The Dressmaker (12A) 138 mins
Sat: 16.00, Wed: 15.00

Based on Rosalie Ham's best-selling novel. The Dressmaker is the story of femme fatale Tilly Dunnage who returns to her small home town in the country to right the wrongs of the past.

The Good Dinosaur (PG) 121 mins
Fri: 16.15 & 18.30, Sat: 11.30 & 13.45, Sun: 14.15, Mon: 16.30, Tues: 12.15, 16.45, Wed: 12.55, Thu: 14.20.

3D version: Sun & Tues: 12.00
The Good Dinosaur asks the question: 'What if the asteroid that forever changed life on Earth missed the planet completely and giant Dinosaurs never became extinct?' Arlo learns the power of facing his fears and discovering his true capabilities.

The Lady in the Van (12A) 124 mins
Sun: 16.30, Tues: 14.30

A man forms an unexpected bond with a transient woman living in her car that's parked in his driveway.

The Snowman (U) 26 mins
Thu 12.00 and 13.10 (Christmas Eve)

FREE!
Oban Phoenix Cinema presents this free event! Family favourite, award winning story of a boy whose snowman comes to life at midnight.

The Snowman and the Snowdog (U) 24 mins
Thu: 12.35 and 13.45 (Christmas Eve)

FREE!
Oban Phoenix Cinema presents this free event! A short animated film created as a sequel to the Snowman to make the 30th anniversary of the original short film.

Victor Frankenstein (12A) 130 mins
Tue: 19.00

James McAvoy and Daniel Radcliffe star in a dramatic and thrilling twist on legendary tale.

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The restaurant offers an extensive list of fine wines, malt whisky and indulgent menus featuring Scottish game, local fish and seasonal produce crafted with imagination and flair and is the ultimate setting for extraordinary dining. The exquisite nineteen bedroom hotel is adorned with opulent furnishings, fine linens and Italian marble en-suites as well as secret stairways, traditional log fires, a whisky snug and spectacular grounds, all just minutes from the clubhouse and golf facilities.

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To enter, send your answer, name, address, telephone number and email address to Competitions, Wyvex Media, Fettes Park, 496 Ferry Road, Edinburgh, EH5 2DL. Closing date is December 31, 2015. Entrants must be 18 or over. Employees of Wyvex Media, the competition promoters, and their direct families are ineligible to enter. No purchase necessary. The winner will be first correct entry drawn after closing date. No cash alternative is available. The winner will be informed by telephone. Promoter reserves the right to request post publicity. Indicate if you do not wish to receive further information from promoter. Usual Wyvex Media rules apply. This competition is open to readers of other Wyvex Media publications.

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

TUESDAY: 0800 AM on FM, 0810 Breakfast Show, 1000 Ken Hunter, 1200 Memories are Made of This with Ken Hunter, 1330 The Quiz with Danni Hay, 1500 Lesley Blair-Simmonds, 1700 Drivetime with Jim Lynch, 1900 Sounds Scottish with Archie Cameron, 2000 Highest Praise with Stuart, 2100 Elaine Lamb, 2300 Northern Soul with Gordon Covey

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 Drivetime with Campbell and Coll, 1900 Country Meets Rock with Len & Ken, 2100 Gordon's Grooves

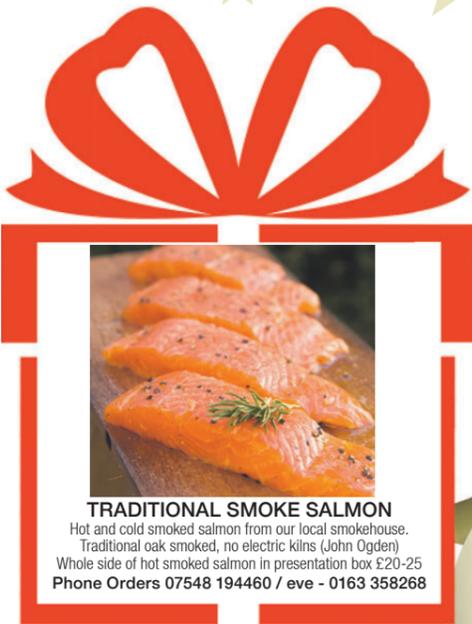
THURSDAY: 0800 Morning show, 1100 Molly's Mix with Molly Black, 1300 CLYDE 2, 1500 Gordon Covey, 1700 Drivetime with DJ Taz, 1900 Christine's Collection, 2100 Ann's Ceilidh, 2200 Margo Till Midnight

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 Country Meets Country with Jackie Craig, 2000 Friday Night with Innes, 2100 TFI Friday with Jim Lawn

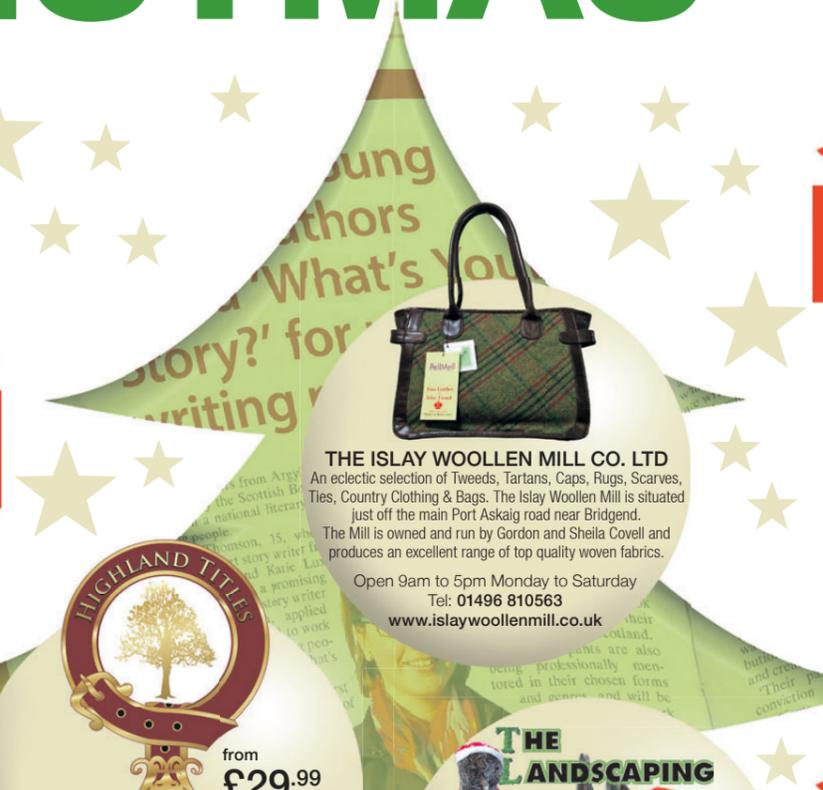
SATURDAY: 0900 Swingin' Sixties, 1000 Saturday Morning Live with Linda Crosher, 1330 CLYDE 2, 1800 Sports View with the Dream Team, 1900 Marcus, 2000 Dave Lewis

SUNDAY: 0900 Sunday Morning with Breege, 1100 - 1400 Allan, 1630 Archie Darling, 1800 Ken's Friends with Ken Hunter, 1900 New Country Show with David Entwistle, 2100 Drum & Bass with Graham Scott

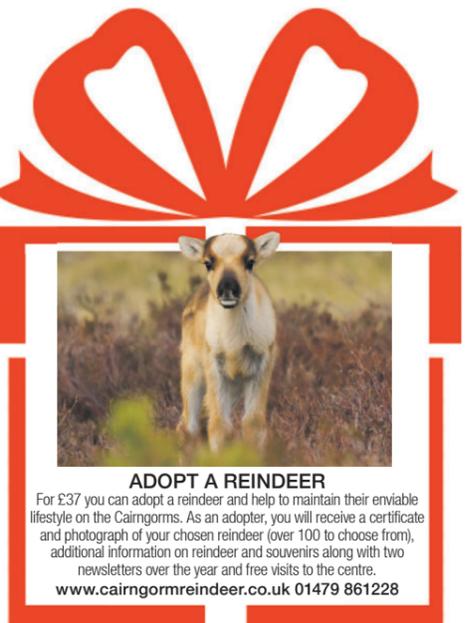
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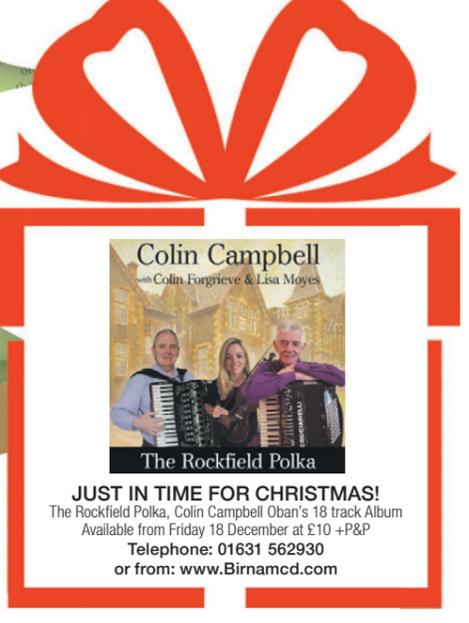
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Raindrops keep falling on my shed...

FARMING in persistently wet weather, increasingly the 'norm' for Argyll, can be a challenge for farmers.

But one Mid Argyll farm business is taking on the elements by focusing on producing quality.

Argyll escaped the worst of storm Desmond, which swept across the country a couple of weeks back, but for persistent year-round rainfall, the region is hard to beat.

The McNair family at Stroneskar, Ford, faces the challenge of farming through the rain on a daily basis.

Stroneskar runs to 1,000 acres among hills up to 1,000 feet south of Loch Awe, carrying a suckler herd and a hefted flock of Black-face ewes.

Duncan McNair is the third generation to farm there, following in the footsteps of his grandfather - who took over Stroneskar in 1945 - and father, Alasdair, who still works alongside his son on the farm. Alasdair's wife, Sheena, copes with the farm paperwork for the family business.

'The problem with the weather is

that the ground never gets a chance to dry out properly. It can't take any more water,' said Alasdair. 'And bits that were dry in the past have become wet, and infested with rashes. You see rashes in places they never were before.'

'This last while it's been constant day after day of wind and rain,' Duncan explained.

'And cold rain is worse for livestock than snow or whatever. They just don't thrive the same when it's wet and cold - and the wind is blowing.'

The sheep are fed supplementary feed blocks, which were not needed in the past, according to the McNairs. 'I don't think you would use them unless they were needed, because they're so expensive,' remarked Alasdair.

'But it's good for the sheep, if you can keep the deer off them,' he added.

And a new steel frame shed, built by Duncan with help from his father and employee Robert Campbell, helps when the rain is falling. 'The shed is really needed these days with the weather,' said

Duncan. 'It makes things a lot simpler and helps get cattle off the ground. We clip our sheep in here, and it is a godsend when we're calving cows, turning an awkward job at grass into an easy one.'

Duncan this year managed to source a load of distillers' draff to supplement silage for his cattle. 'I had a job finding somewhere to store the size of load that arrived, but it's cheaper than conventional concentrates, so we'll see how it goes,' he said.

The focus is on producing quality, native cross and blue-grey, easy-to-handle heifers.

'We make a point of getting them used to seeing people and being handled, so they should be easier to manage as cows,' Duncan said.

'We manage the heifers in two age-group batches, and sell them in-calf. We have some very good customers, and they seem to like what we produce.'

Duncan continued: 'It's not easy with the weather we get, but as long as they are fed well, they will do well, and that's what we try to achieve.'



From left, Alasdair, Sheena and Duncan McNair.



Stroneskar heifers being fed outside in the unavoidable mud.

Rural college students pick up prizes



Back row (left to right): Andrew Blaikie, David Sneddon, Stuart Douglas, Andrew Simpson, Fraser Graham, Keir Harvey Waugh, Gemma Waugh, Ruairidh MacKinnon, Stuart Patterson.
Front row (left to right): Adam McGovern, Joanne King, Zara Kane, Sally Gow, Martina Bradacova, Emma Bradshaw, Mairi Dalgleish, Jessica Ireland Hughes, Heather Kerr.

ARGYLL was represented as staff, students and families came together to celebrate this year's 26 star students at Scottish Rural College Ayr campus.

Three special prizes are open to students across all subject areas, and the remainder are awarded by subject area, ranging from agricul-

ture, applied bioscience through to horticulture/garden design and sport and recreation management.

As reported in last week's *Oban Times*, 20-year-old Ruairidh MacKinnon from Oban, undertaking a four-year degree course in agriculture, was awarded the Malcolm Cup for the best first year

student in farm mechanisation. Deputy campus dean David Hume said: 'The annual awards ceremony is one of the highlights of the academic year and an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of our students following their hard work and commitment.'

Market reports

ISLAY

Dunlossit tops kilo prices at Islay sale

AT UNITED Auctions' annual Islay sale of lambs and sheep on December 7, there was a catalogued entry of 2,660 head. All classes sold in keeping with current mainland values.

A good offering of quality bred stock was on offer which resulted in 100 per cent clearance.

Lambs sold to a top price per head of £69.50 for a pen of Suffolk crosses from Mrs Bignall, Sannaigmore, and ewes from Carrabus sold to £82.50 for Suffolk crosses. Leading the prices per kilo was an outstanding pen of Blackface lambs from Dunlossit Farms, Ceannacroic which realised 163 pence.

Principal lots and prices:
Top prices per head:
Lambs:

SUFFX: £69.50 - Sannaigmore: £68.00 - Carrabus: £66.00 - Bayview and Octofad: £64.50 - Bayview: £62.00 - Islay Estates. TEXX: £69.00 and £68.00 - Bayview: £68.00 - Carrabus: £66.00 - Carn: £65.50 - Carrabus. CHEVX: £47.00 - Coille Farm: £46.00 - Ardfarnal. CROSS: £51.50 - Coille Farm: £50.50 - Sannaigmore: £49.50 - Coille Farm: £48.00 - Ballychattrigan. MULE: £58.50 - Starchmill: £56.00 - Coull: £50.00 - Ardtalla Estate. BF: £54.00 - Kilchiaran: £53.00 - Ceannacroic: £51.50 - Carn. Ewes: SUFFX: £82.50 - Carrabus: £67.50 and £65.50 - Coull. TEXX: £78.00 - Carrabus: £76.00 and £71.00 - Bayview. CHEVX: £44.50 - Dhoidmhairi. CROSS: £52.50 - Sannaigmore: £49.50 - Octofad.

MULE: £52.50 - Ardtalla Estate. BF: £56.50 - Uiskentuie: £53.50 - Lossit: £49.00 - Kilchiaran.

Top prices per kilo:
Lambs:
SUFFX: 154p - Octofad: 152p - Starchmill: 148p - Islay Estates: 147p - Octofad: 146p - Coull: 145p - Lossit: 144p - Paicr A Chlassan and Kilchiaran. BELTX: 142p - Bayview. TEXX: 162p - Ardbeg: 155p - Bayview: 149p - Lossit: 145p - Carn and Dhoidmhairi: 144p - Ballychattrigan: 143p - Carn: 142p - Ardbeg and Lossit. CHEVX: 142p - Coille Farm. CROSS: 144p - Coille Farm: 142p - Ballychattrigan and Ardbeg: 140p - Coille. MULE: 147p - Starchmill: 143p - Ballachlaven: 142p - Kindrochaid. BF: 163p - Ceannacroic: 152p - Kilchiaran: 146p - Ballychattrigan: 142p - Kinnabus Farm.

STIRLING

Stirling UA auction sees 6,000 sheep through ring

ON THURSDAY December 10, United Auctions sold 4,917 prime sheep, including 3,790 lambs, averaging 144.3p/kg. Also under the hammer were 1,127 ewes and rams.

Top prices:
Lambs (3,790) - Mains of Dalrulzion (BTeX) £86; Braeside of Lindores (Tex) £83; Wester Middleton and Loaning (Suff) £80; Old Faskally (Char) £67; Druisdale (Chev) £73.50; Sauchrie Mains (Mule) £65; West Bracklinn (BF) £69.50.

Top prices per kilo:
Lambs (3,790) - Mains of Dalrulzion (BTeX) 193p; Braeside of Lindores (Tex) 192p; Nisbet (Suff) 162p; Old Faskally (Char) 147p; Auchenfoyle (Chev) 163p; Lossit Home Farm (Mule) 135p; West Bracklinn (BF) 154p.

Top prices:
Ewes (1,127) - Cairn (Tex) £107.50; Ejay (BTeX) £94.50; Cairn (Tex x) £106.50; Nether Pratis (Suff) £78.50; Belskavie (Suff x) £77.50; Belskavie (Chev) £77.50; Castlehill (Mule) £63.50; Killeonan (BF) £51.50. Tups (42) - Luss (BF) £81; Dalchalloch (BF) £79.

Caledonian Marts Stirling - cattle and sheep sale

STORE cattle, store lambs and feeding ewes were under the hammer at Caledonian Marts Ltd, Stirling on Monday December 14. The auction firm sold 185 cattle, to a top price of 252p per kg for an Aberdeen Angus bullock from W Adam and Son, Shankhead, Stirling, and to £1,190 gross for a Limousin heifer from D and L Graham, Mains of Burnbank Farm, Blairdrummond.

In total, 94 bullocks were sold to an average of 192p per kg. The top price per head was £1,100 for an Aberdeen Angus bullock from the University of Glasgow, Cochno. Eighty-one heifers averaged 191p per kg, selling to 248p per kg for an Aberdeen Angus, again from Shankhead.

Ten black and white bullocks averaged 130p per kg, selling to 158p per kg from T Patterson and Sons, Stenhouse, Kirkcaldy and to £800 from the same farm.

A total of 605 store lambs and feeding ewes were also sold on Monday. The top price of the day went to K and A Graham, Easterton Farm, Doune at £60 for a pen of Beltex cross lambs purchased by J Taylor Easter Ochtermuthill.

Leading prices:
Store cattle
Bullocks per head
£1,000 Redhall and Cochno; £980 Acres; £950 East Kerse; £940 Stenhouse.
Heifers per head
£1,000 and £920 East Kerse; £870 Redhall; £860 East Kerse.

Store lambs
Suff: Hillhead £59
Cont: Hillhead £58
Beltex X: Turdees £58
Suff X: Craigannet
Tex: Hillhead £57
Mule: Easterton £56
Suff X: Easter Fordell and Balceachy £55
BF: Ardchonnell and Craigannet £40

BF ewe lambs: Todholes £36

Feeding ewes
Chev: Craigannet £45
BF: Boreland £44
BFX: Bridge Farm £40
Chev X: Bridge Farm £40

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LAST GATHER AT CULANEILAN KINLOCHEWE ROSS-SHIRE

On 5th November the last gathering took place at Culaneilan, a hill sheep farm extending to some 4100 acres from the head of Loch Maree and North East to Heights of Kinlocheve and to Inverbroom.

The tenants John & Malcolm MacDonald were giving up the tenancy due to health reasons, their Father Duncan MacDonald took over the tenancy in 1933 from the outgoing tenant Farquhar Renwick who then took over the sheep farm of Inverbroom where the family members still farm and are well known breeders of Cheviot Tups, and on the occasion of the last gather it was fitting to have the Renwick family helping with the gathering and dipping - Scott Renwick and his son Farquhar and nephew Gavin MacDonald along with local shepherd Donnie Beaton. The farm ran a flock of around 740 North Country Cheviots and at the Autumn sales commanded the top price at Lairg & Dingwall Marts. There has been sheep on Culaneilan hills since 1851. The MacDonalds originally came from Invergarry in Lochaber. Their grandfather John, along with his brother Hugh drove cattle from Skye & Lochaber to the stance at Falkirk. John & Malcolm were the 6th generation of sheep farmers from a well known Lochaber farming family - and they still intend to keep some ewes on croft land in Kinlocheve.

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Comhairle Earra-Ghàidheal agus Bhòid

PLANNING

These applications listed below together with other related documents may be inspected at Municipal Buildings Albany Street Oban PA34 4AW, Monday to Friday 9am to 12:30pm and 1:30pm to 5pm. On Wednesdays, the Customer Service Points will open at 10am. At the alternative locations detailed below or by logging on to the Council's website at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk. Written comments for the following list of applications should be made to the above address within 21 days of this advert. Please quote the reference number in any correspondence.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2013 REGULATION 20(1) ADVERT STATEMENT

Ref	Proposal	Site Address	Location of Plans
15/02979/PPP	Site for the erection of dwellinghouse.	Land South East of Acha Farmhouse Arinagour Isle of Coll Argyll and Bute PA78 6SY	Sub Post Office Isle of Coll
15/03141/PP	Erection of industrial storage shed	Unit 7C4 Glengallan Road Oban Argyll and Bute PA34 4HG	Oban Area Office
15/03168/PP	Installation of drainage system to serve dwellinghouse approved under planning permission 14/02241/PP	Land South West of Lora House Connel Oban Argyll and Bute	Sub Post Office Connel
15/03190/PP	Erection of dwellinghouse	Land West of St James Church Ardrecknish Argyll	Sub Post Office Dalmally
15/03244/PP	Installation of biomass boiler cabin with associated fuel	Glencrutten Hostel Dalintart Drive Oban Argyll and Bute PA34 4EF	Oban Area Office

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997 (AS AMENDED), RELATED PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997

Ref	Proposal	Site Address	Location of Plans
15/03144/PP	Erection of replacement shed	20 Eastdale Island Oban Argyll and Bute PA34 4TB	Sub Post Office Balvicar

These applications listed below together with other related documents may be inspected between 09:00-17:00hrs Monday to Friday at 1A Manse Lochgilphead Brae PA31 8RD, at the alternative locations detailed below during their normal opening times or by logging on to the Council's website at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk. Written comments for the following list of applications should be made to the above address within 21 days of this advert. Please quote the reference number in any correspondence.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2013 REGULATION 20(1) ADVERT STATEMENT

Ref	Proposal	Site Address	Location of Plans
15/03192/PP	Erection of Class 4 industrial unit, installation of septic tank and formation of vehicular access	Land East of Glenegedale House Glenegedale Isle of Islay Argyll and Bute	Sub Post Office Port Ellen

Argyll and Bute Council encourages planning applications to be made on-line through The Scottish Government website: <https://eplanning.scotland.gov.uk>

The Council maintain a Register of planning applications which can be viewed during normal office hours at Planning and Regulatory Services, Central Validation Team, 1A Manse Brae, Lochgilphead PA31 8RD.

A weekly list of applications can be viewed at the above address and at all Council Libraries.

Any letter of representation the Council receives is considered a public document and will be published on our website. Anonymous or marked confidential correspondence will not be considered.

DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE (OFF STREET DISABLED PERSON'S PARKING PLACES) ORDER 2015

On Monday 14th December 2015 Argyll and Bute Council made the above named Order in accordance with the Disabled Persons' Parking Places (Scotland) Act 2009 and the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

The Order, which comes into operation on 1st February 2016, makes it an offence for anyone to park in a marked disabled person's parking bay in Argyll and Bute Council off street car parks, unless they are a holder of a valid blue badge and are using it in accordance with the national blue badge legislation.

This Order applies to all Argyll and Bute Council off street car parks that are not already covered by a controlling order.

A copy of the Order is available to view at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk or can be inspected at Argyll and Bute Council Offices during normal office hours Monday to Friday at: 1) Municipal Buildings, Albany Street, Oban; 2) Broadalbane Street, Tobermory; and 3) Council Headquarters, Kilmory, Lochgilphead.

Any person, who wishes to question the validity of the Order or any provision contained in it on the grounds that it is not within the powers conferred by the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, or on the grounds that any requirement of that Act or any instrument made under it has not been complied with in relation to the Order may, within six weeks from 18th December 2015, apply to the Court of Session for this purpose.

(QUEENS PARK PLACE AND STATION ROAD, OBAN) (TEMPORARY ONE WAY OPERATION) ORDER 2015

On Monday 14th December 2015, Argyll and Bute Council made the above named Order under Section 14(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, as amended, which temporarily restricts the permitted direction of travel on the entire lengths of Queens Park Place and Station Road, Oban (U47), between its junction George Street (A85) and its junction with Argyll Square (A816).

The restrictions which are required because public realm works are being executed on or near the lengths of road, will be effective when indicated by signs from 0800 hours on the 4th of January 2016 until 2359 hours on the 1st of July 2016 or until the works are complete whichever is the earlier.

During the first phase of the works the permitted direction of travel will be northerly from Argyll Square (A816) to George Street (A85). As the works progress the permitted direction will reverse to southerly from George Street (A85) to Argyll Square (A816).

Traffic signs will be displayed identifying the specified direction of travel at all times.

Jim Smith, Head of Roads & Amenity Services, 1A Manse Brae, LOCHGILPHEAD PA31 8RD

Proposed Assignment of a Grazings Share(s)

Mr Robert H C Kirchen is applying to the Crofting Commission for consent to assign the grazings share(s) pertaining to the croft at Braemarvoir CG and Uisken CG to Mrs Caroline MacPhail of 1A Bentalla Crescent, Salen, Isle of Mull PA72 6JH. If you have an interest in this application, you may submit comments on the proposal in writing or some other permanent form to the Crofting Commission, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness IV3 8NW (e-mail: info@crofting-scotland.gov.uk) within 28 days from the date of publication of the advert. Please note that any comments you provide are part of an open process and will be made available to interested parties. Your comments would also be released under a Freedom of Information enquiry.

www.highland.gov.uk

The Highland Council Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

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 25 December 2015 to 4 January 2016 inclusive) at the SERVICE POINT, LOCHABER HOUSE, HIGH STREET, FORT WILLIAM, PH33 6EL and online at <http://www.highland.gov.uk>

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

Reference Number	Development	Address	Proposal Description
15/04318/FUL	Ionad Nibheis, Glen Nevis, Fort William		Construction of new footbridge including all ability access ramps
15/04413/PIP	1 Low Bridge, Glen Gloy, Spean Bridge		Erection of 2 semi-detached houses & associated site development works (renewal of permission 12/03432/PIP)
15/04443/PIP	Land 25m NW of Camus-Na-Ha, Annat View, Corpach, Fort William		Erection of dwelling (renewal 10/03304/PIP)
15/04482/FUL	12 West Tirindish, Spean Bridge		Alterations & extension to provide self contained residential unit
15/04502/FUL	Development site at former Builders Yard and Store, Rear of Shop Units, Patience Way, Caol, Fort William		Change of use from industrial unit to house
15/04523/LBC	6 High Street, Fort William		Installation of CCTV cameras and external lighting

Time period ends 11 January 2016. For application 15/04523/LBC, time period ends 15 January 2016

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

CROFTING COMMISSION COIMISEAN NA CROITEARACHD FIRST REGISTRATION OF COMMON GRAZINGS

The Crofting Commission have registered the following Common Grazings on the Crofting Register held by the Registers of Scotland.

Uragai Common Grazings, Colonsay Registration Number: CG207

Any person who wishes to challenge the registration may appeal to the Scottish Land Court. The appeal must be brought within 9 months from the date of this advert and should be made directly to the Land Court.

Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home

CROFTING COMMISSION COIMISEAN NA CROITEARACHD DECROFTING APPLICATIONS

J A MacDonald
2 Portnaluchraig, Arisaig & Moirdart
0.023 ha - Existing house site
4.86.62223

Nominations (Glasgow) Ltd
Stuckroich, Strathlachlan
0.322 ha - Existing house site
4.86.61928

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

Glenorchy Camanachd Annual General Meeting

20:00
January 8th 2016
in the Dalmally Community Centre

All members and affiliates welcome.

For more information contact Duncan on **01838 200388**

First Registration of a Croft

Miss Sarah Marie Cecilia (Morag) MacKintosh has registered South Corran, Kilmalie 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 2 September, 2016.

Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C2049.

First Registration of a Croft

Mrs Deirdre Frances Roberts has registered the croft, 3 Bracora and Part Glasnacardoch, Glenelg 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 24 August, 2016.

Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C2030.

First Registration of a Croft

Mrs Kirstie Cecilia Cameron-Sutcliffe has registered the croft 86 Portuairk, Ardnamurchan & Sunart, on the Crofting Register held by the Registers of Scotland.

Any person who wishes to challenge the registration may apply to the Scottish Land Court by 20th July 2016. Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C1257.

First Registration of a Croft

Mrs Mary Yule Macleod has registered the croft 3 Uragai (shares), Uragai, Colonsay in 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 20 July 2016.

Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C1809.

First Registration of a Croft

Mrs Christina Helen Grant has registered her croft Achavaich, East End, Kilfinichen & Kilvickoon, Isle of Iona (Reg No A0725) in 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 23 August 2016.

Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C2018.

First Registration of a Croft

Robert Bennett has registered his croft 14 Kilvaree, Kilvaree, Ardchattan & Muckkairn in 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 2 July 2016. Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C1791.

First Registration of a Croft

Miss Gwen Marjore MacTaggart has registered the croft 24b Carnach, Lismore & Appin, 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 26 August, 2016.

Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C2036.

OBAN PHOENIX CINEMA AGM

Thursday January 7th at 7pm at Oban Phoenix Cinema. Free cinema screening afterwards for all members. Everyone welcome. Membership £5. Membership forms from Oban Phoenix Cinema. Contact Louise Glen-Lee, Director, for more details **01771 7526999**

West Coast PROPERTY GUIDE

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Barriers to home ownership fall as housing market sentiment improves



UK CONSUMERS have reported that all the major barriers to property purchase have fallen, the Building Societies Association's final Property Tracker of 2015 reveals.

Raising a deposit - the single biggest barrier since 2010 - is now at its lowest level for six years.

However, it still presents a barrier to more than half of consumers with 52 per cent saying it is a hurdle to overcome. This is down from 59 per cent in September 2015 and the high of 69 per cent in September 2011.

From September to December 2015, access to mortgage finance as a barrier to home ownership dropped from 41 per cent to 38 per cent. The affordability of monthly mortgage repayments fell from 35 per cent to 33 per cent and lack of job security is now at 26 per cent, down from 28 per cent.

The results indicate that people are feeling reasonably confident about home ownership as an option for them. This could partially be as a result of the focus on housing in Chancellor George Osborne's Autumn Statement in November and is evidenced by the strong lending by building societies and other lenders across the market this year.

Commenting on these results, Paul Broadhead, BSA head of mortgage policy said: 'This snapshot of sentiment in the housing market shows that consumers are feeling reasonably optimistic about getting on or moving up the property ladder. Awareness of Government schemes, such as Help to Buy and the new Help to Buy, London plus the availability of higher loan-to-value mortgages helps to bring choice and competition to the market. Housing generally needs to remain a top priority for the Government.'

'Now is the time to focus on building more homes, supported by appropriate investment in infrastructure, in order to begin to address the long term imbalance of housing supply with demand. Innovative mortgage products and intermediate forms of tenure must also be championed - not just by building societies - but by all lenders, the regulators and government.'

This will go some way to delivering a sustainable housing market which caters to the needs of a wide range of credit worthy consumers, not just those with 'vanilla' borrowing requirements.'

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Buying someone a bike

this Christmas? The Guild of Experienced Motorists has some handy safety and security tips

ROAD SAFETY organisation GEM Motoring Assist is encouraging everyone to put safety first when giving a bicycle as a present this Christmas.

GEM chief executive David Williams MBE says: 'A bike makes a fantastic and exciting Christmas present for most ages, and it encourages good health and exercise for grown-ups and children alike.'

'But we do want safety to be the priority - and that's why we urge buyers to see beyond the bright colours and fancy styling to ensure that any bike is right for the person riding it.'

GEM has compiled some useful safety and security tips for anyone who's buying a bike this Christmas:

- Make sure the bicycle is the correct size for the person riding it. As a guide, they should be able to straddle the bike and touch the ground with the balls of both feet.
- Seek out a local supplier with a good reputation, who will sell you a bike that's right for your needs - and correctly assembled for the person riding it.
- Another good reason to 'buy local' is that these bike shops tend to offer high quality after-sales service.
- GEM supports the wearing of cycle helmets. So make sure the helmet fits correctly. Children are more likely to wear a helmet if they like the look of it.
- Stress the importance of being seen by other road users. High-visibility clothing is vital for safety.
- If buying for a child, don't expect them to achieve Tour de France standards on their first ride. Encourage them and offer basic help with steering, braking and good observation somewhere quiet and private if possible - before letting them anywhere near a public road.
- Find out about formal training and proficiency schemes such as those offered by local authorities. Check availability with a local council.
- Help to make sure the bike remains the property of the person it's bought for, by also buying a decent lock.
- Another good plan is to register the bike on the National Property Register (www.immobilise.com). Then if it does get stolen, it will be easier for the police to trace it back if they recover it.

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Mum and Harry xxx

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Nicola McFadyen
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Mum, Dad & Craig
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Hollie MacLeod
Graduated from Glasgow Caledonian University with a BA Degree in International Retail Marketing. Hollie is the eldest daughter of Andrew and Margaret MacLeod, and granddaughter of Roddie and Janet MacLeod and Neillie and Christine Beaton. Hollie is partner to Malcolm Clark and mum to Beth.

Alasdair John Hoon
Graduated last month with a 2:1 in BEng (Hons) Structural and Architectural Engineering from Strathclyde University. Alasdair is a former pupil of Lochnell Primary and Oban High.

Jamie Joyce
Recently graduated from the Open University with a Bachelor of Science degree with Honours. Jamie is the son of Mike and Grace Forbes and the late John Joyce.

Victoria Bichener
Graduated from University of Glasgow with Master of Letters with Distinction in Material Culture and Artefact Studies. Daughter of Alan & Valerie Bichener, Thornliefe Guest House, Oban.

LOCAL SERVICES

DEATHS

QUINN - John Alexander Thomson. Passed away peacefully at home on December 11, 2015. Devoted husband and much loved by family and friends, will be greatly missed by all. Graveside service to take place at Ellesmere Cemetery, Swan Hill, on December 29, 2015 at 2pm. Donations received will go to Cancer Research. Enquiries to - Co-operative Funeralcare, Unit 6 Brownlow Street Parade, Whitechurch, Shropshire, SY13 1QW 01948665687

ROBERTSON - Peacefully at home on Saturday, December 12, 2015. Andrew; best friend, soul mate, and dearly loved husband of June, loving dad of Keith, Niall, Nina and Jane, adored grand-dad of Ruaridh, a dearly loved brother and uncle and loving son-in-law of the late Annabel and Sandy MacLennan, formerly 'Cnoc-na-Sith, Connel. Funeral service at Hillside Parish Church on Monday, December 21, at 1.00pm, thereafter to Parkgrove Crematorium, Frickheim at 2.30pm to which all relatives and friends are respectfully invited. Family flowers only please. Donations in lieu, if desired may be made at the church door in aid of Cancer Research UK.

SIMMONDS - Peacefully at the North Argyll House, Oban on December 11, 2015 in her 92nd year, Rita Simmonds, beloved wife of the late Charlie, a dearly loved mum, granny and great-granny. May her good soul rest in peace.

WITTS - Jeffrey Charles of Drimfern, Inveraray, on December 10 2015, beloved husband of Judith, father of Jenny, son of Monica, brother of Vivien, Michael and Julia, uncle London to many. Missed on both sides of the world. Funeral on December 22, 2015 at Cardross Crematorium and afterward The George Hotel, Inveraray. No flowers please, donations to ASH.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CLARK - The family of the late Dorothy Clark wish to thank all relatives, friends and neighbours for kind expressions of sympathy. Thanks also to Rev. Jeff McCormick, Hamish Hoey and Son, Lorn and Islands Hospital and Lochnell Arms Hotel. The retiral collection for St Modan's Church amounted to £302.

MACINTYRE - The family of Calum would like to thank everyone for the cards and phone calls during his illness, Fr James MacNeil, all the staff at Lorn and Islands Hospital and ambulance staff. Also Catriona MacFarlane and all at Hamish Hoey and Rowantree Hotel. Collection for Oban/Barra lifeboats, the sum of £604 will be split accordingly. Undertaker on Barra, Fr John Paul, Margaret Ann Beggs and all the family in

Barra for all the help they gave us. Thank you all so much.

MUIR - Gilbert and family would like to thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral of Chrissie, a dear wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother and for all the cards and kind words of sympathy. Also to the Rev. Dugald Cameron for the heartfelt service and to Maggie Dougall for her kind words. Thanks to Hamish Hoey's for their caring and efficient funeral arrangements and to all the staff on Ward B at the Lorn and Islands Hospital for their kind care and attention to Chrissie during her short illness. The retiring collection of £627.40 goes to Argyll Beats Cardiovascular Disease.

TAYLOR - The family of the late Craig Dixon Taylor would like to thank all relatives, friends, neighbours and work colleagues for their kindness and support, along with the many kind expressions of sympathy, flowers, cards, phone calls, and visits received, following the tragic loss of Craig. Special thanks to local Ambulance service for their efforts, to Rev. David Carruthers for a most comforting and appropriate service, to Donald MacDonald Funeral Directors for dignified funeral arrangements, to the Kilmartin Hotel for providing all catering, especially given the large numbers in attendance. Finally our thanks to all who attended at church and graveside, in such large numbers, to pay their respects. Your support was greatly appreciated. The retiral collection has raised over £1500 for the Mid Argyll Agricultural Society Sheep Gates.

MEMORIALS

CAMPBELL - With many precious memories of Iain, who died on December 27, 1994, aged 49 years, a beloved husband, adored dad and a much missed gen and Iain a much loved son, cherished brother and adored uncle, who died on December 16, 2007, aged 29 years.

We give our loved ones back to God and just as He first gave them to us and did not lose them in the giving so we have not lost them in returning them to Him. Life is eternal, love is immortal, death is only a horizon and a horizon is nothing but the limit of our earthly sight.

All our love today and always - Seonaid, Annmarie, Marion and family xxx
CARMICHAEL - Very special memories of Kate who died December 20, 2013. Always in our thoughts. Forever in our hearts.
- All the family x

CLARK - In loving memory of a dear sister, Kirsteen Clark, who passed away 22 December, 2012. Loved and remembered.
- Sister Alice and brother-in-law John, Dumfries-shire.
DUFF - Remembering our son Stuart, tragically taken from us

15 years ago on December 18, 2000.

Love and miss you always.
- Mum and Dad xxx
GALBRAITH - In loving memory of my dear wife Katherine, who passed away December 17, 2013. Loved and remembered always. Rest in peace precious angel.
- Your loving husband John.

GALBRAITH - Mum we love and miss you always.
- JJ, Paul and Katie.

HOWE - In loving memory of dear wife, mum, mother-in-law and granny, Betty, who died December 18, 2014. Loved and remembered every day.
- Willie, Susan, Peter, Aga, Paul, Laura and Jack xxx

MACALLISTER - David Mercer. In loving memory of David who died December 21, 2004. Fondly remembered.
- Rosemary, Fiona, Alex and David.

MACRAILD - Mae. Treasured memories of a dear mum, gran and great-gran who died December 20, 2013. Deep are the memories Precious they stay No passing of time Can take them away.
- Kenny, June, Marilyn, Sandy and families.

MAITLAND - In loving memory of a dear brother and brother-in-law, James, died December 23, 2012. Always in our thoughts Sadly missed.
- Catherine and Alasdair.

NICOLSON - In loving memory of our dear mother and grandmother Christina (née Stewart), who died December 19, 1985, also our dear sisters and aunts Mima MacAulay, who died December 30, 1989 and Mary McTaggart, who died August 23, 2011. Memories are a precious gift That keep you always near. Sadly missed by all the family.

SIMMONDS - In ever loving memory of my dearly loved husband, loving dad, grandad and great-grandad, William Simmonds, who passed away December 20, 2013, aged 79 years. RIP. No farewell words were spoken No time to say goodbye You were gone before I knew it and only God knows why My heart still aches with sadness And secret tears still flow For what it meant to lose you No one will ever know.
- Your loving wife Sheila, sons William and Kevin, daughters Valerie, Veronica, Angela and Eileen, Caol, Torlundy and Inverness.

SIMPSON - Special memories of a much loved and devoted father, Joey, who passed away December 17, 2014. Sadly missed.
- William.

SIMPSON - Treasured memories of Joey, a very dear brother and uncle. Always in our thoughts.
- Annie, Katie and families.

LIFE lines

Trump - international embarrassment

IT HAS often been observed that the political system in the United States inherited the worst elements of the United Kingdom's: a two-party system that is 300 years out of date and a legislature so convoluted that justice serves the establishment better than the electorate. The presidential election circus now travelling across the most powerful nation on earth could have been hugely entertaining if it had not been for unintended consequences. The spectacle that was Donald Trump is now a horror. Successful businessman he may be, but how would that qualify him - or anybody - for the roles and responsibilities of head of state and commander-in-chief of the US armed forces? Mr Trump's private business dealings are his concern, but attempts here to bully planning authorities, occupiers of neighbouring properties and even the Scottish Government

are matters of public record. His bid to become the Republican Party's presidential candidate for next year's elections is an international concern. In the course of his campaign so far he has offended Muslims, Mexicans, women, disabled people, rival candidates and the overwhelming majority of moderate and progressive members of the global community. He remains unrepentant, and his fatuous belligerence now threatens the reputation of people and places associated with him. The issue is no longer about politics: it is about common decency, character and capability. The Republican Party could do themselves and the rest of the world a favour by removing him from the candidacy nomination. He can't win it if he's not in it.

Johnston Adams

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O' Come All Ye Faithful

A full guide to your local church services this festive season.

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St Mary's Fort William
Mass of Christmas Night
Christmas Eve 10pm (carol service 9.45pm) (No Midnight Mass)
Christmas Morning Mass 10.30am

Thought for the week - He, Jesus, was the Real Light who, in his coming into the World, gives light to everyone" John 1 v9

At this time of year, with longer periods of darkness, we certainly appreciate light in all its forms, with the warmth, comfort and cheer that it brings. Light dispels hopelessness, fear and despair, light changes things. The festive lights around us now arouse that special anticipation that is at the heart of Advent. Jesus spoke clearly about his purpose in coming to earth, of being God-Man amongst people, bringing light into our world. We may

ask why light is needed. The light that Jesus brings is the Real Light which shines into the darkness and chaos of human nature and reveals things as they really are, stripping away concealments, so showing true character and values, and the need for change. In this rescuing light of Jesus, people can really see what their lives are like and be drawn close to God, finding a Guiding Light for all the uncertainties and struggles of everyday living. The path that was

dark becomes clear and the words from Psalm 119 are meaningful "— Your word is a lamp to guide me and a light for my path—" As Christmas draws near, we remember that Jesus, the Light of the World, came to rescue us from the darkness of destruction, bringing hope into our world of sin and sadness. He was born to be the transforming light of our lives, and we can rejoice that Jesus is Emmanuel—, 'God with us'.

Rev Carol Leech

The Good Shepherd, Kinlochleven
Christmas Eve - 7pm Vigil
St Mun's Ballachulish
Christmas Day - 11am Family Service
Fr Barrett wishes you a Happy & Peaceful Christmas

VISITATION AT TAYNUILT
Canon Fraser wishes you all a peaceful and Happy Christmas & New Year
Thursday 24th December Carols at 11.30pm followed by midnight mass
Friday 25th December 10.30 a.m. Christmas Mass
ALL WELCOME

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We would like to thank all our supporters for their continuing generosity and wish everyone a very Merry Christmas.
Please join us for a time of Celebration and Fellowship at 11am on Christmas morning. NB. The Shed will be closed from Dec 23rd to Jan 6th inclusive and there will be no Worship Service on Dec 27th.

KILMORE & OBAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
Christmas Services
Friday 18 December Christingle 6.30pm
Sunday 20 December Advent 4 10.30am Nativity
Thursday 24 December Christmas Eve 7.00pm
Kilmore 9.00pm
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Friday 25 December Christmas Day 10.30am
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Monsignor James L MacNeil
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THURSDAY 24th DECEMBER
6.30 p.m. Christmas Vigil Mass
11.30 p.m. Carol Service followed by Midnight Mass
FRIDAY 25th DECEMBER CHRISTMAS DAY
10.30 a.m. Christmas Day Mass
All Welcome

ST ANDREWS EPISCOPAL CHURCH
High Street, Fort William
Thursday 24th December 11.45pm Midnight Mass And Blessing Of Crib
Friday 25th December 10.45am Family Eucharist
All Are Welcome

Oban Congregational Church
Christmas Eve Church will be open between 11-2pm
Christmas Eve Watch night service by candle light 11.30pm.
Christmas morning Short thanks giving service at 11am.
Sunday 27th December Carol Service 11am
Wishing everyone a happy and peaceful Christmas and hope to see you.
Rev Ken Hunter

'Vale too strong for Fort William

Football

Deveronvale	4
Fort William	1
Highland League	

FORT William FC suffered another blow at the weekend when they went down 4-1 to Deveronvale.

It took just 15 minutes for the home side to get ahead at the Princess Royal Park with an early goal from Scott Fraser.

After 23 minutes, the Fort were 2-0 down before Stephen McGhie pulled one back for the visitors just before half time.

But another two goals for Deveronvale in the second half ensured there was no way back for the Claggan side losing 4-1 in the end.

Fort William was due to welcome Huntly to Claggan as *The Oban Times* went to print last night (Wednesday) in what would be a crucial game for the home side. Before the game, Huntly were just four points ahead and one position higher in the Highland League.

Ally Ewen's men are back at home on Saturday, when they welcome Lossiemouth to Claggan, kick off 3pm.

Pam rolls with top score of 188 Ten-pin bowling

ALLEYCATS have retained their position at the top of the Lochaber Building Supplies ten-pin bowling league after week nine.

They are currently on 43 points in the scratch division, followed by The Creeps with 33. Ardtoe and Co and British Legion Fort William are tied for third on 25 points.

The handicap division is a much closer battle with British Legion leading on 31 points, followed by The Creeps on 30 and Mis Fits on 28.

Individually, the best game this week was rolled by Pam Weller of Alleycats with a 188. Other notable scores came from Ben Weller and Darren Duncan, both of The Creeps, with 177.

The top handicap game came from Rossamy Wareing of Ardtoe and Co with 227.

Pam Weller had both the best two-game scratch series with 356, a season high, and the best two-game handicap series with 424.

The Creeps swept the board with the best team scores of the week, including the best scratch game of 600, best handicap game of 789, the top two-game scratch series of 1,190 and the top two-game handicap series of 1,568.

Weather wins at Kinlochleven Girls' shinty

IT WAS a disappointing end to Kinlochleven High School's girls-only shinty tournament as it had to be called off before the end due to poor weather.

Teams had travelled from Fort William, Oban, Ardnamurchan, Mallaig and Glenurquhart for the seven-sided tournament which stopped as a result of the high winds.



The field sets off for the Beinn Bhan Bash race on Sunday.

Visiting runners sweep the boards at Beinn Bhan Bash

IT WAS visitors who swept the table on Sunday in the latest of the Lochaber Athletic Club (LAC) winter league races.

Paul Henry, unattached, took first place in the Beinn Bhan Bash at Glenoy, finishing in 41 minutes and 43 seconds, followed by Manuel Gorman

of Westies, just four seconds later. Junior runner Luke Taylor of Highland Hill Runners took third in 42 minutes and 54 seconds.

Jon Gay was the first LAC runner to cross the finish line, taking fourth place in 43 minutes and 18 seconds. First lady home was unattached Helen

Gertig who finished in 51 minutes and 22 seconds, taking 16th place overall. First LAC lady was Amanda Blackhall in 27th place with a time of 53 minutes and 40 seconds.

Next race

The next race of the winter league is the Cruim Leacainn on Boxing Day.

Registration from 10am at the Yurts car park, Torlundy.

Top 10 finishers (LAC unless otherwise stated): 1 Peter Henry (unattached) 41:43; 2 Manuel Gorman (Westies) 41:47; 3 Luke Taylor (Highland Hill Runners) 42:54; 4 Jon Gay 43:18; 5 Craig Mattocks (Carnethy)

Athletics

45:52; 6 Alan Smith (Deeside Runners) 47:17; 7 Gavin MacMillan 47:45; 8 Ian Mackellaig 47:50; 9 Geoff Simpson (Highland Bog Trotters) 48:45; 10 Neil Waslidge 49:45.



Kinlochleven pupils Jo Shepton and Rebekah Gunn with Paralympian David Smith MBE.

Kinlochleven gets set for community action

KINLOCHLEVEN High School has been picked as one of just 100 schools in Britain to take part in a champions training programme.

Pupils Rebekah Gunn and Jo Shepton travelled to Birmingham with head teacher Rebecca Machin to attend the 'Get Set for Community Action' training programme, to learn how to make their community a healthier and better place.

The youngsters met with Olympian Christian Malcolm and Paralympian David Smith MBE, who gave talks about the benefits of volunteering.

Volunteering

Jo, fourth year, said: 'The event was an amazing experience for everyone involved and was extremely inspiring, with tips from the athletes such as finding a passion for something will mean that volunteering for it is a joy for you as well as a good skill and having gratitude for everything, no matter how small.'

'The programme aims to help people find what they love, try their hardest and do well for others with passion.'

Joe takes honours in winter league race at Strontian

Cycling

KEEN cyclists travelled by ferry to their race destination of Strontian for the second round of West Highland Wheelers' winter league.

Joe Barnes was the clear winner in the field of 19, finishing the two-lap race in 56 minutes and 16 seconds, ahead of second place Yan Valentine in one hour, four minutes and 50 seconds.

It was a sprint finish for third place with Gavin Linfield crossing the finish line in one hour, five minutes and 15 seconds, just two seconds ahead of Neil Wright in fourth.

It was a double victory for the siblings as Hannah Barnes took first lady in one hour, 10 minutes and 12 seconds, followed by Emma Holgate in second and Fiona Thompson in third.

Alistair Poll's finishing time of one hour, 13 minutes and 14 seconds earned him first junior. The third round of the winter league will be Sunday December 27 at Leanachan Forest.

Results: 1 Joe Barnes 56:16; 2 Yan Valentine 1:04:50; 3 Gavin Linfield 1:05:15; 4 Neil Wright; 5 Jamie Gall 1:05:47; 6 Tom McMahon 1:06:14; 7 Iain Rogerson 1:06:25; 8 Mark Clark 1:06:51; 9 Hannah Barnes 1:10:12; 10 Alistair Poll 1:13:14; 11 Keir Gibson 1:14:31; 12 Gregor Muir 1:15:49; 13 Emma



Third-place Gavin Linfield powers through puddles and mud in the West Highland Wheelers winter league. Photo Simon Willis

Holgate 1:16:29; 14 Roddy Wells 1:18:09; 15 Doug Little 1:22:04; 16 Shaun MacLeod 1:25:56; 17 Fiona Thompson 1:30:12; 18 Gill Ryan Higginson 43:46.

Lochaber athletes do well in Elgin Cross country

LOCHABER athletes travelled to Elgin to take on a muddy and hilly course for the north district cross country championships.

In the under 20s men's race Steven Burns took sixth place in a star-studded race featuring two British internationals and finished the eight-kilometre route in 32 minutes and seven seconds at the event on December 5.

In the ladies, Ciara Largey tackled the 6.4km route in 28 minutes and 14 seconds to finish in 12th place.

But it was the juniors who stole the show with siblings Ben and Rebecca Johnstone both achieving qualification into the inter-district championships at Holyrood next month.

Ben took fourth place in the under 15 boys finishing in 15 minutes and four seconds while Rebecca ran to sixth place in the under 15 girls with a time of 18 minutes and three seconds.

Game called off Rugby

LOCHABER Rugby Club's home clash against Kinloss Eagles, scheduled for Saturday, had to be postponed at the request of the visiting team.

Following a Christmas break, Lochaber's next game will be a tough game away to Garioch, who are currently second in the league, on January 9.

Scottish Calendars 2016



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Postal fail to deliver as Saints march on in the Scottish Cup

Postal United	0
Oban Saints	1
Scottish Cup - 4th Round	

OBAN Saints earned their place in the fifth round of the Scottish Amateur Cup with a hard-fought 1-0 win over old rivals Postal United in Glasgow's east end.

Postal's grass park at Haghill had still not recovered from the flooding which forced the cancellation of last week's match therefore the game went ahead last Saturday afternoon on the all weather surface at Crownpoint.

Saints kicked off playing down the pronounced slope towards the Crownpoint Road and carved out the first opportunity inside the first minute.

Donald Campbell picked out Ross Maitland about 22 yards out and with his back to goal, Maitland turned well and fired in a low left-foot shot just wide of the right hand post of keeper Thomas Hollis.

Postal's first attempt of note came in the fourth minute in the shape of a powerful long-range shot from Mark Muir which Saints keeper Thomas McCulloch did well to hold.

A jinking run at the heart of the Postal defence from Craig MacEwan produced an excellent save from Hollis in the 15th minute. MacEwan picked up the ball just inside the Postal half and evaded a string of challenges before curling a right-foot shot from the edge of the box.

However, Central Scottish Amateur Football League Select goalkeeper Hollis narrowed the angle well and made a fine save diving to his left.

Two minutes later Saints had an appeal for a penalty kick dismissed by referee Willie McCulley. Dougal Graham made a good run up the left wing skipping over a lunging challenge from Postal right back Steven Hannah and cutting into the box where he hit the byeline and appeared to be

bundled over by veteran of many Postal v Saints games Paul Freeman but the referee ruled the challenge to be fair and waved away the appeals.

Donnie Campbell and Craig MacEwan linked up well to open up the Postal defence for another shooting chance for MacEwan whose right foot shot from 24 yards was again well held by keeper Hollis.

Dean Smith went down under a heavy challenge in the 36th minute to win a free kick wide on the right and level with the 18-yard line. Despite getting the benefit of the decision, Willie Gemmell continued his protests at the strength of the challenge for too long and referee McCulley showed the Saints midfielder the yellow card.

Maitland then curled in a terrific cross which MacEwan met perfectly with a flicked header which landed inches wide of the base of keeper Hollis' right-hand post.

Three minutes later Saints pounced on a rare mistake in the Postal defence.

Maitland and Smith closed down Hannah and Freeman as they attempted to play the ball out from the back and MacEwan intercepted a loose pass leaving him one on one with the keeper. MacEwan attempted to round the Postal netminder who spread himself well but appeared to catch MacEwan's feet bringing him down in the process.

However, referee McCulley ruled there had been no contact and booked the Saints man for simulation.

Saints then opened the scoring from the best move of the match in the 42nd minute. Smith dropped deep to pick up the ball from Paul Kerr and delivered a terrific first time pass which split the Postal defence and picked out Campbell's run through the inside left channel.

His composed left-foot finish



Saints put the Postal defence under pressure during the first half of last Saturday's Scottish Amateur Cup tie at Crownpoint.

Match report and photo: Derek Black

beat the keeper low down to his right to give Saints the lead, which they comfortably held on to for the remainder of the half.

The visitors remained on top at the start of the second half and had a good chance to extend their lead in the 48th minute when Maitland cut in from the left and, from the corner of the six-yard box, tried to pick out Smith in the centre. Brian Eaglesham made an important interception to snuff out the danger when perhaps Maitland should have taken on the shot himself.

Smith had a sight of goal in the 57th minute when he raced through to get on the end of a flick on from Maitland.

Once again Hollis was alert to the danger and was quickly off his line to close down the angle forcing Smith to snatch at the chance sending his lob just over the crossbar.

With the match entering the final third, Postal began to pose more of a threat with Saints dropping deep to protect their lead.

A quickly taken corner on the hour mark caught Saints napping with Brendan Queen picking out the unmarked Brian Eaglesham on the right hand corner of the box. He had McCulloch at full stretch to tip his dipping left-foot shot over the crossbar.

Postal were enjoying a good spell at this point and James Simpson tried his luck with a dipping left foot volley which McCulloch held well.

The home side continued with their shoot-on-sight policy with Mark Muir sending two identical efforts flashing wide of McCulloch's right hand post within minutes of each other.

Manager Alex Craik made his first change in the 68th minute with Scott Maitland replacing Dougal Graham in a straight swap at left back.

Saints received some respite from the Postal pressure when Smith won a free kick just inside the Postal half.

Gemmell took the free kick short to David McArthur, who

fired in a dangerous looking low cross which was deflected wide for a corner.

With 14 minutes remaining on the clock Saints made their second change with Allan MacKay replacing Smith at centre forward.

This also signalled a change of formation to a defensive minded 4-5-1.

The introduction of MacKay almost paid off for Saints when, despite being held back by his opponent, he out-muscled Eaglesham wide on the right and sent a cross to the back post for Campbell, who looked certain to score but somehow Hollis produced an incredible save to claw the ball behind for a corner.

Postal's aerial bombardment continued with Saints indebted to a terrific clearing back post header from Maitland under pressure from Paolo Petrucci.

Perhaps mindful of the last gasp equaliser conceded against Goldenhill in Saints last away trip, Craik then joined the fray

Football

for the closing stages with the injured Kerr making way for his manager.

Craik's presence at the heart of the defence helped to repel Postal's long balls but the entire Saints rearguard were left helpless when a dipping 90th-minute cross flew over their heads catching McCulloch underneath the ball and unable to shake off the close attentions of Petrucci the ball nestled into the bottom corner of the net.

Fortunately for Saints McCulloch's blushes were spared when referee McCulley ruled that the Postal striker had fouled the Saints keeper, thus preserving his clean sheet and securing Saints progress to the fifth round where they will face last season's beaten finalists Craigshill Thistle in Oban on Saturday January 9.

Saints will now have a well earned festive break, but the squad will still be training hard to be ready for the Craigshill game.

Artemis Macaulay Cup draw

Shinty

THE MACAULAY Association is delighted to announce a further three-year sponsorship deal with Artemis, the leading UK fund manager based in Edinburgh and London.

This will allow the Macaulay Association to carry on with promoting youth shinty in and around the Oban area.

The financial security will also ensure the Macaulay Cup final and the Macaulay Sixes will still be promoted at the highest level in shinty.

The Macaulay Cup Final will be played on the August 20 2016 at Mossfield Stadium, Oban.

The Macaulay Sixes will be played on the June 12 2016 at the same venue.

The draw for the 2016 Artemis Macaulay Cup was made last weekend live on Oban FM, by Argyll and Bute councillor Roddy McCuish, along with Davie Thomson and Davie Hamilton from the Macaulay Association.

Round 1 - Kyles Athletic v Aberdeen; Oban Camanachd v Inveraray; Bute v Oban Celtic; Glasgow Mid Argyll v Ballachulish; Kingussie v Newtonmore; Glenurquhart v Skye; Kinlochshiel v Fort William; Lovat v Lochaber

Round 2 - Kyles Athletic v Aberdeen v Glasgow Mid Argyll or Ballachulish; Bute or Oban Celtic v Oban Camanachd or Inveraray; Glenurquhart or Skye v Kinlochshiel or Fort William; Kingussie or Newtonmore v Lovat or Lochaber

Semi-final - Kyles Athletic or Aberdeen or Glasgow Mid Argyll or Ballachulish v Bute or Oban Celtic or Oban Camanachd or Inveraray; Glenurquhart or Skye or Kinlochshiel or Fort William v Kingussie or Newtonmore or Lovat or Lochaber.



Kyokushinkai Karate

CALEDONIA Kyokushin held a grading test in Lochgilphead on Sunday December 6 with the following results:

10th Kyu: Arran Crawford, Cameron MacIver, Jack Rhodick, Fergus MacInnes and Alistair Anderson.

9th Kyu: Mirren Angus, Andrew Crawford, Stuart Phillips and Donald Robertson.

8th Kyu: Darcy Curran, Karen Paterson and Fiona McClean.

6th Kyu: Ethan Gascoigne.

4th Kyu: Jilly Lefebvre.

1st Kyu: Mhairi Weldon.

Another grading test was held

in Oban on December 12, results to follow in the next article.

The Kyokushinkai clubs continue to train until December 23 and re-open on January 6. Beginners are welcome to start during the first three months of the New Year. Oban classes are on Thursday evenings, children from 6pm and adults from 7pm. For more information contact Iain Rodger on: 07584 166542 or iain@ikku.co.uk

Kickboxing

SENSHI Do Kick Boxing held its last grading of the year on Sunday December 6. Congratulations

MARTIAL ARTS

WITH IAIN RODGER

to Craig MacIachlan, Andrzej Dariusz Pytka, Colin Campbell and Rory Fleming on gaining their 2nd Dan Black Belts, also to Kaitlyne MacLeod on passing her 1st Dan Black Belt, Kaitlyne did the club proud with her gutsy determination and performance.

Passing their Junior Black Belts were Kirsty MacIntyre, Sara MacIntyre, Jessica Graham and

Carrick Hobson.

Other grades achieved were:

9th Kyu Yellow Belt: William Ward.

7th Kyu Green Belt: Ryan Daniels, Aiden Denholm, Ayden McKenna, Innes McKinney and Hazel McGhee.

6th Kyu Blue Belt: Andrew Macknight, Harry Needham and Darren Van Der Meer.

4th Kyu Red Belt: Conner MacLean.

3rd Kyu Brown Belt: Connor Beatie and Logan Galbraith.

2nd Kyu Brown Belt: Daniel MacInnes.

1st Kyu Brown Belt: Zak Allan.

For club details contact Wullie Rodger on: 07588 513618 or shihanwill@gmail.com

Shukokai Karate

ARGYLL Martial Arts (incorporating Argyll Shukokai) classes continue as normal in Oban, Dalmally and Inveraray. Anyone wanting details or wishing to join should contact Kenny Gray on

kenni.gray@btinternet.com

BJJ (Brazilian Jiu Jitsu)

OBAN BJJ held a seminar and grading on Saturday November 30 with head instructor Marcos Nardini.

The seminar covered grip breaks along with butterfly guard sweeps and attacks.

Everyone's hard work over the last year was rewarded when Mateusz Grabiec, Jarek Cimoszuk, Lee Williamson, Chris Rowan and Dawid Lo were given stripes and are now all four-stripe white belts.

Craig Cameron is now a three-

stripe white belt while the others who attended were given their first or second stripe. Instructor Cogie Potter was awarded his first stripe in blue belt. This has been a very successful year for Oban BJJ, from getting officially recognised by the UKBJJF to the continued success in competitions around Scotland, the introduction of kids classes and having an official professor black belt in Marcos Nardini. Classes will stop on December 18 and resume on Monday January 4.

For class information contact Cogie Potter on: cogiepotter@gmail.com



Kyokushinkai Karate students with their grading certificates.



Brazilian Jiu Jitsu students.



Kick boxing students after their grading.

Week 1 of 2

To allow for our Christmas deadlines Spot the Ball will run for 2 weeks - all entries must be in by 10am on Tuesday 29 December

SPOT THE SHINTY BALL

THIS WEEK'S JACKPOT £1650

LAST WEEK'S SHINTY BALL WAS HERE...

This week's nearest the ball winners, who each receive £25 are:

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J Kennedy Stirling Road Kilsyth

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 10am Tuesday 29th December. No refunds will be given for entries received after the deadline. You may hand it into The Oban Times Head Office, Lochavullin, Oban by the same time. Otherwise all entries must be posted.

Competition rules
No responsibility will be accepted for entries which are delayed, mistaid or lost, and proof of posting cannot be accepted as proof of delivery.
The Company's decision is final on all matters relating to the

The game starts with a jackpot of £500 and will increase by £50 per week until it is won outright. To win the jackpot, the centre of your crosses must be in the exact centre of the ball. If the crosses overlap the entry will be void.

If no correct entry is received, two 'near miss' prizes of £25 will be awarded. When the jackpot is won, no other prizes will be awarded that week.

competition and no correspondence will be entered into. The final decision rests with the Company.
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Employees of Wyvex Media, their immediate relatives and any person otherwise connected with the competition are ineligible to enter.

Please remember to enclose £1 for 20 crosses. The maximum number of attempts on this coupon is 20, but you may enter on separate coupons as many times as you wish. No photocopies allowed. You agree to abide by the rules. How to enter: Mark your crosses using a ballpoint pen. Twenty crosses may be put on this coupon for £1. Send to "Spot the Shinty Ball" Competition, The Oban Times, P.O. Box 1, Oban PA34 4HB

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Depleted Green Machine win in Kilmarnock

Kilmarnock	21
Oban Lorne	34
BT West Division One	

A DEPLETED Oban Lorne squad of 18 players travelled to take on Kilmarnock last Saturday. The Green Machine, who have been without a game since November 7 due to the weather, were without several first team players for this match.

Despite the absences, Oban still managed to field a strong team for the fixture.

From kick-off, Oban's forwards were dominating the breakdown and were managing to create good ball for scrum half Dom Ma to distribute to some strong runners in the team.

Several phases of short attacks from the Oban pack resulted in the first try of the day with hooker Robin MacQueen touching down over the line for a 5-0 lead.

Oban continued their pattern of play and were looking dangerous moving forward. Back row players Airidas Savickas and Lorne MacLachlan were making some good breaks up field providing the rest of the team the platform to attack from.

Just as Oban were looking to build on their good start, a Craig Wright pass was intercepted on halfway by a member of the

Kilmarnock back line, who raced clear to score under the posts. This put the hosts 7-5 ahead against the run of play.

Oban, however, refused to let this dent their confidence and hit back almost immediately with a try very similar to their first scored by prop Tommy Sutherland. This was converted by Wright for a 12-7 lead.

Oban almost added to their lead as a Wright cross field kick just missed South African winger Sandile Khumalo, who would have been clear through to score. Oban did manage to extend their lead just before half time. An impressive break from Centre Callum MacLachlan and pass to the supporting Khumalo gave a 17-7 lead to the Green Machine at half time.

One change was made at half time with Connor Ferris replacing Khumalo at fullback as the try scorer left the field with a hamstring injury. Daniel Broderick from Mid Argyll also took to the field in the second half for his Oban Lorne debut.

Oban started the second half as they had completed the first by dominating possession and territory with a superb powerful performance from the forwards. A quick recycled ball near the try line was fired out to the back

line where it found MacLachlan, who bulldozed over the defence for Oban's fourth try of the afternoon.

The Green Machine were now out of sight and were looking increasingly comfortable in all aspects of the match. A second try from man-of-the-match Sutherland further increased the scoreline to 29-7 with 25 minutes remaining.

Kilmarnock's first real spell of pressure took its toll on the visitors, who lost prop MacQueen to a yellow card.

With a man advantage, the hosts came back into the match by scoring two unanswered tries to narrow the gap to 21-29.

As Oban were starting to look increasingly vulnerable, a scrappy pass from the Kilmarnock backs was hacked forward to Wright, who finally managed to control the ball and touch down beneath the posts for the final try of the day.

Kilmarnock pressed for a late consolation score but could not breakdown a stern Oban defence who managed to hold out for an impressive 34-21 win.

This was a great result for Oban Lorne considering the number of players missing from the squad. It also showed the value of the feeder team, Argyll and Bute,



Man of the match Tommy Sutherland barges his way over the line for one of his two tries.

Photo: Stephen Lawson

playing in Division 4 which is giving strength in depth and valuable game time to the squad.

The result means that Oban close the gap on fourth place to just one point. This Saturday the Oban side have a tough fixture as they host promotion chasing Newton Stewart at Glencruitten. The visitors have only lost one game all season and have recorded some big wins in recent weeks. The game kicks off 2pm at Glencruitten.

The west coast weather again took its toll on the rugby fixture card on Saturday with Argyll and

Bute's Division 4 match against Glasgow East being postponed due to an unplayable pitch in Hamilton.

Argyll and Bute are now without a game until Saturday January 9 when they travel to Glasgow to take on Shawlands RFC.

Oban's U18 team were again left without a fixture on Saturday as Strathaven and Cartha pulled out of the fixture due to a lack of available players.

Sundays U16 match away to Birkmyre was postponed due to an unplayable pitch in Kilmacoll.

Rugby

Oban's U14/15 (S1,2,3) friendly fixtures on Saturday away to Cliftonhall School were also postponed on Saturday due to the weather.

Oban Lorne RFC hosted Level 1 Refereeing in Rugby Union course in the clubhouse on Sunday. Coaches from throughout Argyll and Bute attended the course from schools and clubs including Tarbert Academy, Islay High, Oban High, Islay RFC, and Oban Lorne RFC.

Oban Camanachd holds AGM Shinty

MORE THAN 40 members of Oban Camanachd Club attended the AGM held at Rockfield Centre recently where the following officebearers were voted in for season 2016:

Club Chieftain - Ian MacIntyre; president - Alan Dunning; honorary vice president Nigel Evans; treasurer - Fiona Livingston; secretary - Christopher Eccleston; first team manager - Ian Hay; second team manager - Gareth Evans; Under 17s team coaches - David MacCuish, Scott Buchanan and George Easton; Under 14s team coaches - Stephen Sloss and Brian Logan.

First team manager Ian Hay has also co-opted Paul Kersley, Dugie Macintyre and Alex MacVicar as his assistants. Second team manager Gareth Evans has co-opted David MacCuish and secretary Chris Eccleston to assist him.

Duncan MacMillan continues in the key role as Lotto and 100 Club convenor. Duncan has been involved with the club lotto since it started in season 1996-97. The club general committee was selected from the above plus Duncan MacKinnon and Mairi Dunning.

In the general discussion that followed it was noted that while the club has had a successful season at all levels this has been achieved despite the erratic scheduling of fixtures which the club highlighted at the Camanachd Association AGM.

On the call of club president Alan Dunning, who thanked Christine Lind for serving as club secretary for five years, but who had decided not to seek re-election, and the members who had attended, the meeting was brought to a close.

Next up is the club's traditional New Year fixture between Camanachd and Lochside played at Mossfield Stadium on a date still to be decided. Camanachd were drawn at home to Inveraray, last year's beaten finalists, in the first round of the Macaulay Cup with the winners to play either Bute or Oban Celtic.

Mr Hay said: 'We hoped for a home draw and to avoid favourites Kyles Athletic till the latter stages of the competition, so the draw has been kind to us in that respect.'

Saints youths' results and fixtures Youth football

LAST weekend's results: Stenhousemuir 1, Under 13s 2. Scoring for Saints were Neilly Russell and Connor Moore. Larkhall 1, Under 14s 0; Gartcairn 10 Under 15s 2. Saints goalscorers were Cameron Kerr (2) and Scott Mossman. Under 16s v Port Glasgow, postponed Under 19s 3, Dumbarton United 3. On target for Saints were Fraser MacFarlane, Matty Kelly and Ross MacMillan.

This weekend's fixtures: Under 13s v Dumbarton Riverside; Under 14s no game; Under 15s no game; Busby v Under 16s; Under 19s no game.

Athletic at home Football

OBAN Athletic play their final league game before the festive break when they take on Duntocher either at Glen 2 or the 3G pitch, kick-off 2pm



Robert with the Scottish Amateur golf trophy

Robert quits sunshine of America to raise his profile on international circuit

A PROMISING Oban golfer is teeing up for a professional career in the sport next year after leaving the sunshine of the United States for the sleet and snow of Scotland.

Robert MacIntyre, who will go down in history as the first left-handed player to win the Scottish Amateur Golf Championship, returned home early from his university in Louisiana and instead of returning will focus on raising his profile on the international circuit.

'I'm done with university,' he said. 'I had a successful season overall, but it just wasn't the same over there.'

Robert is going to wait and get

some more experience under his belt before he aims to take the next step in his career.

He continued: 'I'm going to stay amateur for another season before trying to get my tour card next year.'

'A lot of people turn professional too soon and end up not achieving anything.'

It won't take the 19-year-old 'leftie' long before getting his season off the ground, as he is set to get his year off to a flying start by travelling to South Africa at the end of January for three and a half weeks to compete in a series of individual tournaments.

And not long after he will be back in the sky, this time headed

for Spain, in order to represent his country.

With the support of the town, Robert will be able to join his three team mates in flying the Scottish flag in a European team competition.

Raise money

Earlier this year, Oban got behind the talented youngster and organised a charity tournament to raise money to go towards travel expenses.

More than 40 teams showed up to take part in the event and a variety of sports teams battled it out on the course and raised more than £3,000 in the process, with the Oban Athletic team coming out victorious.

Golf

Robert, who was in America at the time of the tournament, said: 'I'd like to thank everyone who has supported me. It's been a great help, from the whole town.'

'I'd like to give an extra thanks to Gareth Evans for organising the tournament. The money raised will help me play in bigger tournaments.'

With the combination of the local fundraising efforts and money received from the Scottish Golf Union, the 19-year-old will play in all the big amateur events throughout Britain and Europe this season.

Oban Pool League has red hot title race in full swing

IF OBAN folk are cold and wet on a Thursday evening, they would be well advised to frequent some of the town's watering holes and thaw out because The Oban Pool League has a red hot title race in full swing.

Four sides entered last week's proceedings perched at the top, separated only by frame difference and with a four-point advantage over the chasing pack. The Lancaster 'A' and The Lochnell were safe in the knowledge either or both Markie Dans 'A' and The Lochavullin's Cellar's 100 per cent record would have to subsist with them scheduled to play each other.

By close of play, the four had become three and the Ben Lora boys became the league's fourth different pacesetters in as many weeks. They may well be the self-proclaimed fun team of The Oban Pool League, but their

rivals better believe The Lochnell's title aspirations are deadly serious.

The villagers played host to the league's most charismatic side The Outreach, who were on their travels for the third consecutive week following the decision to play both home and away this season. Unless The Lochnell succumbed to complacency anything other than an emphatic victory would be classed as a major upset considering the irrefutable gulf in class between the sides.

The banter brigade was in full voice throughout the evening from both sets of players with The Lochnell certainly not immune to the charms of their colourful opponents off the table. Unfortunately, on the baize no empathy was shown in a performance so cold it would unnerve even Vladimir Putin, propelling them to top spot. Last year's murmurs

from over the Connel bridge of a potential title winning team have rapidly transcended into battle cries reverberating across Loch Etive that they are this season's team to beat. At this point, in this current vein of form it would be folly to suggest otherwise.

Despite winning themselves, The Lancaster 'A' have been leapfrogged after an insipid display away to The Lochavullin.

The Combie Street venue wasn't quite at full capacity for the well mannered contest but there was plenty of eyes on the action. It would be fair to say the audience were of a more mature nature than normal which possibly explains the reason why the tie never really got ignited. The Lancaster were always in control without every really entertaining the respectful onlookers, who would in truth describe the match as lacklustre. A more hostile re-

ception will await The Lancaster 'A' on their return to face title rivals and reigning holders The Lochavullin's Cellar in February.

Markie Dans 'A' welcomed The Lochavullin's Cellar on the back of a strong start to the campaign and were quietly confident they could put a dent in their oppositions quest to retain their crown, whilst strengthening their own claims. The conclusion of the opening doubles set saw the home side hold a slender advantage which they maintained even up to the third singles before the champions went through the gears to claim victory.

However, another dogged performance from their pairings meant they claimed the second doubles section and suggests Markie Dans 'A' may just have come of age, despite the defeat. This was a clear indication that they have the mental toughness to

compete across all competitions this season, the only doubt now remains if they have the talent.

The two points secured means current holders remain level with The Lochnell and The Lancaster 'A' heading into the new year.

The six up-coming games involving the three look set to be pivotal in deciding the destination of the championship trophy, although their scalps will be coveted amongst the remaining sides with big bulls eyes painted on their undefeatable backs.

The remaining matches saw both The Lancaster 'B' and The Gluepot ease over the line against Markie Dans 'B' and The Wide Mouthed Frog respectively. The victors have now settled into mid-table security and they will be looking to loosen the top three's grip alongside Markie Dans 'A'.

Only two matches are in play

Pool

tonight (Thursday), as four teams contest the first round of The Oban Filling Station (OFS) Knock-Out Cup. The Wide Mouthed Frog host The Lancaster 'B', but that will be overshadowed by the glamour tie that is the Connel derby. The Lochnell will have home advantage over foes The Gluepot as early season bragging rights are up for grabs along with a quarter final place.

Results, December 10: Lancaster B 9, Markie Dans B 3; Lochavullin 4, Lancaster A 8; Lochnell 11, Outreach 1; Markie Dans A 5, Lochavullin's Cellar 7; Wide Mouthed Frog 3, Gluepot 9. Fixtures, December 17: OFS CUP 1st Round - Wide Mouthed Frog v Lancaster B; Lochnell v Gluepot.

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WEATHER

Thursday Heavy rain
Winds strong southerly
Temperatures 9°C to 12°C.

Friday Heavy rain
Winds strong south westerly
Temperatures 5°C to 8°C.

Weekend Outlook Heavy rain on Saturday
Heavy rain on Sunday
Winds strong southerly
Temperatures 5°C to 8°C.

Stop Press: New pontoons recently installed by North West Marine at Kyle Lochboisdale for visiting yachts

TIDAL INFORMATION

Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday December 17, 2015** are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour) BST)

Date	am			pm				
Thur	03.19	1.2	09.25	3.6	16.01	1.4	21.40	3.3
Fri	04.16	1.4	10.25	3.5	17.06	1.5	22.44	3.1
Sat	05.25	1.5	11.46	3.4	18.17	1.6	** ** *	**
Sun	00.07	3.1	06.41	1.5	13.28	3.4	19.29	1.5
Mon	01.46	3.2	07.57	1.4	14.38	3.6	20.35	1.4
Tues	02.55	3.4	09.07	1.3	15.33	3.7	21.32	1.2
Wed	03.46	3.6	10.07	1.1	16.20	3.9	22.23	1.0

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)

Port	Difference	Port	Difference
Ardrishaig	-5.35	Mallaig	+0.25
Campbeltown	-5.30	Portree	+0.55
Crinan	-0.47	Tobermory	+0.16
Islay Port Ellen	2.00	Dover	+5.30
Lochboisdale	+0.30		

Ferry Crossings/Sea States

Route	Sea State
Oban to Barra/South Uist	Moderate
Oban to Coll/Tiree	Moderate
Kennacraig to Islay	Moderate

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One last ward round for retired Belhaven nurses

RETIRED nurses had the chance to look around their former workplace before it is transformed into housing.

The ladies explored the old Belhaven Ward in Fort William, which closed in 2013, to say farewell to the medical centre's era as Lochaber Housing Association and Highland Council will redevelop the site into affordable housing next year.

Fort William councillors Thomas MacLennan and Brian Murphy joined the former nurses, along with Scottish Government representatives, for the tour on Tuesday, and pictured the future of the building as five wheelchair friendly bungalows

and a block of eight flats.

Councillor MacLennan said: 'While we are celebrating the future of the Belhaven Ward site as a new housing development, which is sorely needed in Fort William, it is fitting that we mark the contributions that were made by all those who worked and served at the ward which was latterly used for physiotherapy and occupational therapy services.'

'That is why we are here to commemorate and celebrate at the same time.'

Former nurses and Highland councillors say goodbye to Fort William's Belhaven Ward.



Call for clarity on broadband boost

A HIGHLAND MSP hopes for clarity on which areas are to benefit from superfast broadband in the new year.

Rhoda Grant, MSP for the Highlands and Islands, said many constituents were unsure about when, or if at all, they would receive a better internet service.

She said: 'The programme, when announced, gave real hope for future improvements but, almost three years on, many people still don't know if they are going to benefit.'

Festive opening for sports centres

SPORTS facilities in Uist and Barra will be open during the Christmas period this year for the first time.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar will use this trial to gauge public interest with a view to making it permanent in future years.

Castlebay Sports Centre will be open from December 29 until December 31 and Linciate Sport Centre will be open December 28 until December 31 as well as January 4.

For opening times see the comhairle website.

SERVICES COULD BE LOST COMPLETELY AS HIGHLAND FUNDING SHORTFALL MORE THAN TREBLES

Deepening budget black hole tops council agenda

EMMA CRICHTON
ecrichton@obantimes.co.uk

AN 'UNPRECEDENTED' and ever-widening hole in the budget will be high on the agenda for a full meeting of Highland Council due to be held today (Thursday).

Recent developments, including a higher than expected grant cut and a potential 25-hour week for primary schools, has left officials and elected members with a funding gap of up to £53.5 million for next year. This equates to almost 10 per cent of the council's total budget.

In December last year the local authority had forecasted a shortfall of £14.6 million but this has more than tripled in light of recent changes.

The biggest blow to the council came after the UK Spending Review, when it was revealed the level of local au-

thority grant reduction could be between four and five per cent, compared to an assumption of just 1.6 per cent. This, combined with the cost of a longer school week and other budget pressures and savings from last year which haven't been met, has left Highland Council with far less money than anticipated.

A report by director of finance Derek Yule revealed the funding gap will be £38.811 million if the grant cut is four per cent, rising to £43.379 million if the grant is slashed by five per cent. This doesn't include £10 million of savings already agreed, pushing the gap to £53.564 million.

Mr Yule said in his report that some services could be lost altogether in this latest blow: 'Over the past few weeks there have been a couple of significant events that will make a material change to the existing

“
The council must now consider ceasing some functions altogether”

Derek Yule
Director of Finance

budget forecasts and options for budget savings. Current forecasts of the scale of grant reduction are unprecedented and represent a real game changer in terms of the current level of service provision. The

extent to which a significant proportion of the full budget is ring fenced, either due to contractual obligations or legislative requirements, means that the impact on other services is considerable and the council must now consider ceasing some functions altogether.'

The Scottish Government proposal to introduce a minimum 25-hour teaching week in primary schools could also put an end to Highland Council's cost-cutting suggestion to close all schools at lunchtime on a Friday. Currently, primary one, two and three pupils in the Highlands are only in school 22 and a half hours each week, due to travelling times to and from rural schools. This means the new legislation would cost the council more money, as well as preventing it from making savings by cutting hours.

Mr Yule said: 'An additional

half an hour in class each day would cost Highland Council £2 million in teaching hours. This would be a significant additional cost at a time when the overall budget is reducing and forms a further constraint on how the council can manage its resources and respond to community needs.'

'The current budget for primary school teachers is around £46 million. This new proposed legislation will effectively ring fence eight per cent of the council's overall budget, meaning a higher proportion of savings will have to be found from other council services.'

Councillors are due to discuss saving options at today's meeting and it is thought final decisions will be made by February next year.

Council leader Margaret Davidson and budget leader Bill Fernie were both unavailable for comment.

TIMESLINE

Pupils in tune for annual concert

THE ANNUAL Lochaber Music School Christmas Concert will take place this Sunday.

The event begins at 3pm in St Margaret's Church, Roy Bridge, and will feature orchestra, choirs, traditional musicians, string ensembles, clarsach ensemble and handbell ringers.

The audience will also be invited to join in a selection of favourite carols to the accompaniment of the music school's orchestra. Afterwards, a raffle and home-made refreshments will be on offer with all proceeds going to the music school's 2016 activities.

Restaurant and takeaway plans

THE FORMER Co-operative shop in Ballachulish could be turned into a restaurant and takeaway following an application for planning permission.

The store has been empty since February last year when a new Co-op opened in the south Lochaber village.

An application for a restaurant and takeaway with a small shop and toilets was lodged with Highland Council last month, with a decision expected to be made by the end of the month.

More time for say on a better future

CONSULTATION on how to improve the future of the Highlands has been extended.

The Highland-wide Local Development Plan outlines planning and housing issues and consultation was due to end on December 19 but has been put back until January 29 because of recent community council elections. Plans can be viewed at consult.highland.gov.uk.



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No plans to withdraw sleeper train from Fort William

THE OPERATOR of the Fort William to London sleeper train has 'no intention' of withdrawing the service from the town.

Lochaber councillors raised concerns about the future of the link between Fort William and the capital city, a vital tourist service, after it was announced

the train would stop in Oban for three weekends, with a bus service between there and Lochaber, due to engineering works. This sparked concerns from councillors Ben Thompson and Andrew Baxter after a statement from operators, Serco, said they would like to receive feedback on the Oban stop for 'long-

term planning'. But Peter Strachan, the managing director of the Caledonian Sleeper, said Oban was a 'potential addition to the network, not an either/or with Fort William'.

He added: 'We've absolutely no intention of withdrawing the Fort William service.'

Ban on firefighters is 'unnecessary and inefficient'

FIREFIGHTERS in the Western Isles have been banned from attending some emergencies because they are unable to go to vital training on the mainland.

A report by the HM Fire Service Inspectorate said some retained and voluntary staff had been ordered not to respond to emergency calls because their breathing apparatus (BA) compe-

tenency had expired, despite them being fully trained in all other aspects.

The inspectorate highlighted that the remote location of the Western Isles made it difficult for firefighters to attend training but called the ban 'unnecessary and an inefficient use of resources'. The report stated: 'As well as considering additional support for remote staff

who may find it difficult to attend the mainland for BA refresher training, there seems no reason why staff whose skills maintenance is out of date in respect of one aspect of operations, for example breathing apparatus, cannot remain available for other duties, for example driving, if their watch manager is content for them to do so.'

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Front: Neo Boomer, P3, Rebecca Leslie, P7, and Dennis Wilk, P5. Back left, Nick Thomson, head teacher, and Graham Wemyss from Graham Construction.

New path and bridge pave the way ahead for disabled

EMMA CRICHTON
ecrichton@obantimes.co.uk

A NEW all-ability path and bridge in Glen Nevis will give disabled people the chance to explore some of Scotland's most beautiful wild scenery. Highland Council has submitted a planning application for a new crossing over River Nevis at Glen Nevis Visitor Centre, as part of a £500,000 project by Nevis Landscape Partnership to provide a two-mile riverside walk, accessible to wheelchair users and people with other mobility problems. It is hoped the route will provide more opportunities for outdoor activities, education and engagement with nature,

all at the foot of Britain's highest mountain, Ben Nevis. The new bridge will be wider than the existing crossing, built by army servicemen in the 1980s, and will be sturdier to cope with the large number of visitors and charity walks which take place. It will also be the starting point for the riverside walk, featuring 200 new trees to be planted by volunteers, local children and community groups. Information panels about trees and wildlife will be included, along with benches and picnic tables. Audrey Sinclair, chairwoman of Highland Council's planning, development and infrastructure committee, said: 'The council recognises that Ben Nevis is a key driver of the

Lochaber economy and that a high quality visitor experience is critical to the success of both the local and wider tourist industry. The works proposed in Glen Nevis not only contribute to the safety and enjoyment of those taking access to the high hills, but will also now enable a far wider range of visitors to enjoy the scenery and splendour of the glen. The Nevis Landscape Partnership is a good example of organisations working together to deliver far more than each could have achieved in isolation.' Arthur Cowie, chairman of Lochaber Disability Access Panel, said the group had received plans for the path and would be discussing the project at a meeting in January. He

added: 'The panel welcomes anything which improves and promotes accessibility in Lochaber.' A decision on the planning application should be made by the end of the month. The current bridge faces the pressure of 100,000 visitors to Ben and Glen Nevis every year and needs extensive repair annually to remain safe. It can only hold the weight of five people at a time and has been deemed unsuitable for a wheelchair user without assistance. Nevis Landscape Partnership has also highlighted that the poor location of the bridge means many people heading up the Ben miss mountain safety information displayed at the visitor centre.

TIMESLINE

Police seek help in hunt for culprits

POLICE in Lochaber are appealing for information about the following crimes in the area. Sometime between 5pm on Saturday December 10 and 12.30pm the following day, a car parked on Kilmallie Road, Caol, was damaged. On the night of Saturday December 6, a grey North Face waterproof jacket, fleece and sheepskin-lined hat were stolen from a bar in Fort William town centre. Sometime between December 4 and 5, an industrial unit at Camaghael, Fort William, was broken into. Anyone with information about these incidents is asked to contact police on 101, the confidential line on 01397 702000 or Crimestoppers on 0800555111.

Keeping on target with fire safety

ACCIDENTAL fires in the Highlands have dropped in the last few months, according to a report by the region's most senior officer. There were 55 house fires between April and September, compared to 70 in the same period last year and none were fatal, against one in 2014. Deliberate fires were also down from 97 last year to 73 this year. Scott Hay, Scottish Fire and Rescue's local senior officer for Highland, said: 'The service works closely with partner agencies and communities to reduce the number of accidental dwelling house fires through home fire safety visits and the installation of free smoke detectors.'

Cards transformed into cash bonanza

OLD CHRISTMAS cards can be recycled to raise money for the British Heart Foundation as part of an annual campaign by a Fort William resident. Every year Kath Johnston turns cards into gift cards which are distributed to 14 shops for the charity. Last year, more than 12,000 tags were made raising more than £1,000. Cards can be dropped off at the Alexandra Hotel or to Kath direct at 119 Lochaber Road, Upper Achintore. They can also be picked up by contacting 01397 703689.

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Time capsule sends a message to the future

PUPILS from the new Lundavra Primary School in Fort William have sent a message to the future after burying a time capsule to mark the completion of the new building. The pupils buried a range of different memorabilia in the time capsule, last Friday, to capture the history of both Fort William and Upper Achintore schools, which merged earlier this year, as well as looking ahead to the future of the new school. Items included class photos, uniform samples, badges, copies of The Oban Times, a Now That's What I Call Music CD and pupil lists. The overall collection was decided by children from each of the schools, who worked together in groups to form a list of suggestions. Built by Graham Construction, the £10 million building replaced Fort William and Upper Achintore Primary schools to form an 11-class school and opened in October. Workers from the construction team helped to place the capsule into the ground. Head teacher Nick Thomson said: 'The time capsule really grabbed our pupils' imaginations. Our pupils selected items for the time capsule that celebrate their former schools, as well as looking forward to the start of Lundavra Primary School. It will make an interesting collection for future pupils, staff and parents to reflect on.'

Court hears man pushed boy, 12

A MAN has admitted pushing a 12-year-old boy and deliberately cutting his own arm in front of children. John Henderson, originally from Fort William but now living in Larkhall, appeared in the town's sheriff court on Thursday and admitted shouting and swearing at a woman and her son in a house in Fort William on the afternoon of January 3. The court heard the 46-year-old then took a knife from the kitchen and cut his right forearm in front of the pair and other children. Sheriff Richard Davidson deferred sentence until January 5 for background reports and a restriction of liberty assessment. He told Henderson: 'You behaved in a completely unacceptable manner. Children may be permanently disturbed after witnessing what you did and that is also completely unacceptable.'

Make a difference with grant cash

COMMUNITIES in the Highlands have been encouraged to apply for a share of a £1 million grant. Applications are open for the Scottish and Southern Energy Sustainable Development Fund, which supports groups hoping to make a difference in their area. Highlands and Islands MSP Rhoda Grant said: 'This fund provides a real opportunity to transform communities in a number of ways from improving community broadband projects to upgrading village halls. A number of areas in the Highlands have benefited in the past.' To apply see sse.com/community/sustainablefund/

Proactive attitude to climate change

MOST people in the Highlands think climate change is an 'immediate and urgent problem', according to a new survey. Almost two thirds (66.4 per cent) of Highland Council's 989 respondents expressed this attitude, an increase on the 53.8 per cent recorded in a similar poll in 2011. The survey also showed 87.2 per cent think climate change is either partly, mainly or entirely caused by human activity. Highland Council leader Margaret Davidson said: 'This shows residents in Highland have a progressive, proactive view towards tackling climate change. The council will continue to look for ways to cut its carbon footprint and help communities reduce their own emissions.'



Food bank volunteer Pat Leslie, left, and manager Alex McConnachie, receive a £400 donation from Clare Russell and Stephen Kennedy on behalf of McIntyre and Company. 21_f51donation01

Fort lawyers make a case for helping busy food bank

FORT William lawyers took advantage of the season of good will when they donated £400 to Lochaber Food Bank. Clare Russell and Stephen Kennedy of McIntyre and Co Solicitors and Estate Agents, handed over the cheque when they spent the afternoon volunteering at the town centre charity last Wednesday. This comes after an appeal in Tesco collected 319 kilograms of food for those in need, the equivalent of more than 300 meals. Food bank manager Alex

McConnachie said: 'We're so grateful for everyone's generosity and I think it comes out more at Christmas. People are looking at their own families and everything they have and want to help those less fortunate.' Alex himself has been looking out for new ways to help those in need, particularly in the cold winter months, and now has some wood pellets at the food bank to give to people who are struggling to heat their homes. He said: 'If people can't afford food they're going to be

struggling to put their heating on. The council fitted a lot of these biomass heaters recently so we thought we should have some wood chips for anyone who needs them. I won't see anyone freezing in their homes at Christmas.' Christmas also means school holidays, when many parents won't get the benefit of free lunches for their children. Alex encouraged anyone who was struggling with this added expense to contact the food bank for help.

Concern over Fort council future

THE FUTURE of Fort William Community Council could be in doubt as members feel they are not being supported or making progress with campaigns. The new council was elected last month but on Tuesday night the group held a special meeting to discuss whether it can continue. This comes after the group recently objected to two Highland Council planning applications, the new Lundavra Primary School and council offices, both of which were approved by the local authority. The community council is also short of four members and has no permanent chairman. See next week's edition for more information.



Volunteers braved freezing temperatures to clear out the old Greenfingers space at Claggan. 21_f51greenfingers01

Hardy volunteers help breathe life into former garden project

A GARDEN project in Fort William is to be revived after a community space had been left to fall into disrepair. Hardy volunteers braved freezing conditions on Saturday to resurrect the old Greenfingers area at Claggan Park. The team filled a skip with old materials as part of a plan to breathe life into an old project, set up by the late Dr Su Sen. Greenfingers was originally set up in 1999 as a place for people with disabilities to learn gardening skills and socialise but hasn't been used for more than two years. A group of volunteers have now come together in the hope the green areas of Claggan can be used as community spaces for gardening and walks. Donald Young, secretary of the interim group, said: 'We're just a temporary group who want to get Greenfingers up and running but we hope a permanent group of volunteers will take over. Some members of the interim group might stay on but we won't make any big decisions until a proper committee has been set up. 'We want to bring the area back to life and make it somewhere nice for the people of Claggan to use and hopefully it will bring the residents together. We would like to see it being a real community project.' The first event to showcase the space will be a Winter Magic festival on Monday night (December 21) where volunteers will show off the 13 areas of interest in the space, along with a Santa's grotto and music. The festival will run from 3pm until 7pm.

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Argyll's island student costs soar due to imbalance in grant aid

LOUISE GLEN
lglen@obantimes.co.uk

THE HIGH cost of educating students at Tیره High School came under the spotlight last week at Argyll and Bute Council after concerns were raised about the level of funding for rural and island schools.

At a meeting of the Community Services Committee at Kilmory Castle last Thursday, it was revealed that the cost of education at Tیره High School sets the taxpayer back £33,361 per pupil – one of the highest costs per student in the whole of the UK.

In comparison, the cost per pupil at Oban High School was £5,901, while in Tobermory High School it costs £9,320 per pupil.

Councillors had assumed that special Grant Aid Expenditure (GAE) payments to cover high island costs would help to balance the books. However, this was dismissed by officers, who



ask for a 'step change' in the way cash was distributed and suggested the local authority would be 'cheaper buying 25 places at George Watson's College' [for Tیره students] in order to help reduce the costs of the education budget.

The cost of a year's education at the exclusive Edinburgh college is £10,983.

Speaking at the meeting, head of education Ann Marie Knowles told councillors: 'Overall, we are in the fourth position for per-pupil school spend in Scotland. Yet we are unable to access the same benefits as the three other island authorities.'

Defending the need for the school, Tیره parent council chairman Will Wright said it was integral to the island community. Mr Wright continued: 'Having the high school provision here is an essential part of island life. It allows the island to have a sustainable future.'

'If it were to close it would be a huge loss to the island commu-

nity and simply something we as an island would not accept.'

A spokeswoman for Argyll and Bute Council said: 'The council has no plans to close any schools in Argyll and Bute at this time in order to make savings.'

The average cost per high school pupil in Argyll during 2014/15 is £7,924, while the Scottish average is £5,514.

The cost of accommodating pupils in hostels such as Glen Cruitten in Oban was mitigated by the grants received from the Scottish Government and did not add to the cost of education, the spokeswoman said.

The average primary school education cost in Argyll is £5,911, while in Scotland it is £4,734. The nine pupils at Achaleven Primary School, by Connel, cost £12,845 per pupil, while the cost per pupil at Dunbeg Primary is only £4,532 per student.

The four pupils at Barcaldine Primary School cost £25,543, while pupils Lochnell Primary School cost £4,260.

FUNDING: Because Argyll and Bute is not classed as an island council it does not receive additional Grant Aid Expenditure for its island secondary pupils.



TIMESLINE

Council flies flag for human rights

A SPECIAL flag was raised at Argyll and Bute Council's headquarters in Lochgilphead last week in support of International Human Rights Day.

Policy lead for communities and culture Councillor Robin Currie said: 'Every person living in Argyll and Bute is a hugely valued member of our communities. As a major employer and as a provider of services the council has a responsibility to protect human rights while recognising that individuals and groups have different needs.'

Sleeper trial for Oban in February

THE Caledonian Sleeper will travel between London and Oban instead of Fort William for three weekends in February 2016 due to planned engineering works.

Serco took the decision to reroute to Oban during the planned works to test customer appetite for the service as it considers plans for potential route expansion in the future.

Depending on the level of public support, both Fort William and Oban will be considered for the future, managing director Peter Strachan explained.

Police appeal for witnesses

POLICE are appealing for witnesses after the window of a Mercedes car was smashed last Saturday or Sunday.

A bicycle, thought to belong to the vandal, was left by the vehicle on Mossfield Drive, Oban.

Anyone with information should contact Constable Alan Hogg in Oban Police Station on 101.



Santa and Rudolph visit sealife sanctuary



Santa and his reindeer paid a visit to the Scottish Sealife Sanctuary at Barcaldine on Sunday for the centre's annual Winter Festival Funday and reindeer parade. 150reindeerparade01

'Knitting teachers' only way to solve crisis, says director

OTHER than 'knitting teachers' there is no way to solve the teaching crisis in Argyll and Bute Council, according to the executive director for community services.

Cleland Sneddon told councillors that unless the Scottish Government understood the predicament facing the council, then the region would miss out on more than £1.57 million.

Last week, government figures revealed Argyll and Bute was one of only four authorities in Scotland to see a reduction in teacher numbers, which broke an agreement with the government to maintain teacher numbers.

Ann Marie Knowles, head of education, said: 'We have gone to extraordinary measures to recruit teachers.'

'We want the government to consider not penalising us because we did a significant amount of advertising for these posts and we had money in the budget for them.'

'We were told by the Scottish Government that we could put our central staff in the figures and later on we were told that this was not the case.'

'Other local authorities in Scotland are able to include these staff, so we feel that we are being treated unfairly.'

'The advice we were given was different to other authorities and we are being penalised for it.'

Former teacher Isobel Strong, councillor for Bute, said the conditions of employment in adverts for posts was often off-putting to applications.

Mrs Strong said: 'People are not going to move to the area for short-term jobs with no support for housing. We need to do more to support teachers to move into the area.'

The committee members were told that significant negotiations were now taking place with the Scottish Government.



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BBC Trust Nations Review Consultation

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Tha sgrùdadh Urras a' BhBC a' dùnadh air 17 Faoilleach 2016.

Airson tuilleadh fiosrachaidh, cuiribh fios thugainn:

Fòn: 01851 705550 P-dealain: fios@mgalba.com

BBC ALBA and BBC Radio nan Gàidheal are successful and we at MG ALBA want them to be even better for you.

In October, during the UK Government's consultation on the BBC's charter, we said we would like the BBC to provide 10 hours of new programming weekly for BBC ALBA, which would help to provide a more comprehensive service for the channel's core audience.

The BBC Trust is now reviewing BBC ALBA and BBC Radio nan Gàidheal. We need to make that same case again, and we would once again be grateful for your help. The recent news that MG ALBA will no longer receive £1m from the UK Government makes your response even more important.

Please participate in the BBC Trust review and ensure the desire for a more complete service is expressed, and that more investment is therefore required from the BBC for BBC ALBA and BBC Radio nan Gàidheal.

You can complete the BBC Trust's questionnaire here:
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Or send your response in writing to:

BBC Trust Nations Review Consultation

ICM Unlimited, Creston House, 10 Great Pulteney Street, London, W1F 9NB

The BBC Trust's review closes on 17 January 2016.

If you would like more information, please do contact us at:

Tel: 01851 705550 Email: fios@mgalba.com



Connel businessman steps in with bright idea to help kirk

LOUISE GLEN
lglen@obantimes.co.uk

ST CONAN'S Kirk members have had their prayers answered thanks to the generosity of an Argyll electrical engineering company and the Friends of St Conan's Kirk action group.

Following reports in *The Oban Times* about thefts from the architecturally important building on Loch Awe side, Kenneth Ferguson from Connel decided to step in and help.

Last year, in three separate incidents, ornate and unique locally-styled lead from the cloister area of the church was stolen. The total value for these thefts was £45,000.

Mr Ferguson said: 'I was shocked to hear about the thefts in the area. As an electrical contractor, I knew there was something that I could do to help. So I decided I needed to take action.'

'We work predominately in the North Lorn area so I wanted to give back to the community, and it seemed right to help the volunteers at St Conan's.'

As well as fitting a number of CCTV cameras, which were match funded by the Friends of St Conan's Kirk, external lighting is also due



Kenneth Ferguson and his team with Peter Hennessey outside St Conan's Kirk. 26_151stconanas (2)

to be fitted on the building.

Mr Ferguson continued: 'The LED energy-efficient lighting will make a real difference to the outside of the building. Internal lighting has also been fitted. This will be remotely controlled by daylight sensors, which have also been fitted.'

Peter Hennessey of the voluntary Friends of St Conan's Kirk said he was delighted that Mr Ferguson had offered to help.

Mr Hennessey said: 'This is a generous gift from Kenneth Ferguson that has allowed the Friends to match fund the amount.'

'We are seeing some real movement in our work here at St Conan's, with this money kick-starting a positive project that will not only protect the unique nature of the building, but will also allow us to light up the building.'

'Next year we will be continuing

St Conan's needs your vote

ST CONAN'S KIRK has been named in The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland's (RIAS) list of the top 100 buildings in Scotland from the last century.

The list, published this week, will now go to a public vote to find the best building in Scotland of the 20th century.

St Conan's Kirk was a labour of love for Walter Campbell of Innis Chonain. The nave and choir were built between 1881-86 and the church was extended and embellished between 1907-30.

For more information about voting visit www.foa2016.com

our programme of community events. Work to a roof will allow us to open up a community room that will be a meeting space in the area as well as an opportunity for an education room and archive inside St Conan's Church.'

A Police Scotland spokesman said they were following a definite line of enquiry into the theft of the lead.

Parking income in Oban is on the rise

CAR PARKING income in Oban is at its highest of all time - running at almost 50 per cent more than the council's target.

For the financial quarter up until September 2015, the council took in £342,156, more than £100,000 more than it had hoped to make.

The overall target for Argyll and Bute car parks and on-street

parking was £523,221.

For the month of November, roads manager Kevin McIntosh told elected members at the bi-monthly Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area Committee, there were 807 fines issued in Argyll and Bute Council area - 390 in Oban. Councillors agreed to look at keeping more of the money brought in from car parking in Oban.

CalMac staff praised for customer care

CALMAC customer service staff have been awarded the Contact Centre Association (CCA) global accreditation, the first ferry company to achieve the standard.

The award highlights CalMac's high level of customer care, continuous review of technology and communications, good customer service across all available channels and ongoing staff development to ensure it is always at the forefront of the industry.

Sandy Crighton, CalMac's general manager

of customer operations, said: 'CalMac's customer care staff deal with difficult scenarios all year round and always endeavour to achieve the best outcome for our passengers. I'm proud of the commitment shown by all of them. It's a great early Christmas present for the staff and the company as a whole.'

The company was praised for introducing a range of new customer initiatives to improve the overall CalMac experience, many of which were as a direct result of customer feedback.

Council to plough ahead with consultation despite Audit Scotland criticism over cuts

COMPLAINTS about the way the local authority has salami sliced budgets rather than making long-term choices has drawn serious criticisms from the Scottish Government's auditors - the Accounts Commission.

At an unusual meeting held last Saturday, Argyll and Bute Council administration members discussed the Service Choices budget cuts. Council sources have told *The Oban Times* there is a 'real sense of tension' within the administration, and called the meeting a 'crisis summit' after the Audit Commission dismissed the Service Choices documents as lacking innovation.

However, following the meeting, Deputy Leader Councillor Ellen Morton said that while there was discussion around the budget and plans would not be shelved.

She said: '[We] discussed the audit report briefly, in very general terms.'

'[There was a] lot of discussion around the budget as you would expect, but absolutely no discussion of scrapping the current consultation. I certainly would not support it. It is scheduled to run until the end of December and that will continue.'

The council spends around £240 million in providing local services each year and is looking to reduce its costs by between £21.7million and £26 million over the next five years.

MSPs Michael Russell, John Finnie and Mike MacKenzie continue to be critical of the Service Choices process, and opposition councillors have left the Service Choices budget working group claiming they cannot agree with the



BUDGET NEWS

current proposals.

Audit Commissioners are currently reviewing various concerns raised in their Argyll and Bute Council Best Value report published last week.

The report called on the council to 'take a more innovative approach to dealing with its financial challenges that is in line with its strategic vision and priorities for the area. This includes looking beyond reducing or withdrawing services and, more fundamentally, examining how it can do things differently.'

The best value report states: 'The council's approach to meeting future financial challenges needs to improve. Options for longer term savings are heavily based on low-level cuts to individual service budgets and involve reducing or stopping services, rather than doing things differently. There is no indication of what sustainable services will look like in the future.'

Within this broad strategy, Service Choices provides the process for deciding where to make future budget

savings linked to the council's strategic priorities. The council agreed to consult the public on 150 savings options totalling almost £16.7 million.

Forty-three of the choices represent service cuts of £20,000 or less.

Criticising the Service Choices consultation, the report states: 'Given the nature of many of the proposals, it is difficult to see how the public would be able to offer an informed opinion on them.'

'With the exception of creating a charitable leisure trust and proposals to reduce the frequency of bin collections, transformational savings relate to internal management actions. The council needs to consider more effective ways to consult with the public, to more clearly inform people about the impact of the savings proposals and to better assess public opinion on new ways of delivering those council services that people value most.'

Mr Russell, MSP for Argyll and Bute, said: 'This report demonstrates that there are still big problems that the council leadership needs to overcome, including a culture of secrecy. Moreover it is entirely clear that the suggested solutions that the council is putting forward - the so called Service Choices - are the wrong ones, and will actually make things worse.'

'Consequently I would suggest that the council withdraws its present consultation and sits down with all those involved and concerned in order to find and implement an alternative approach. We could then build on that and start to get the council working for all of us.'

Call for businesses to tap into EU funding

A £40 MILLION deal to support local businesses, courtesy of the European Investment Fund and credit facility IWOCA, should be used by people in Argyll and Bute.

The guarantee scheme will allow IWOCA to lend to small businesses, backed financially by the European Commission.

A small business can apply for the funding at www.iwoca.co.uk, meaning they can be approved for up to £100,000 within a few hours.

Alyn Smith MEP and Michael Russell MSP have backed the deal.

Mr Smith said: 'This could be a considerable boon for those small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs, who need rapid access to finance to grow their business. At a time when credit can be hard to come by and cash flow remains the single biggest problem facing business, this scheme might not be for everyone but it has its place, and businesses in Argyll and Bute should certainly be aware of it.'

Mr Russell added: 'This scheme could be of great benefit to small businesses under pressure in Argyll and Bute and I hope that all small business owners will consider utilising it, if they could benefit. The scheme illustrates the benefits of being part of a Europe that wants every area to flourish.'

Hotelier vents anger after council chairwoman slates room prices

STEVEN RAE
srae@obantimes.co.uk

A HOTEL owner has voiced his anger at comments made to a national newspaper by the chairwoman of Oban Community Council regarding the cost of hotel rooms in the town.

With planning permission lodged last week for a Premier Inn hotel to be built on the site of the former Harbour Bowl on Shore Street, chairwoman of the community council, Marri Malloy, was quoted in the press praising the cost of rooms at the national chain.

She said: 'It is a budget hotel, which we don't have in Oban. Some of the hotels are quite expensive, especially if you have children.'

'We thought it might encourage more families to come for holidays. You have to try to suit everybody, not just couples with plenty of money.'

Tom Hayward, who owns the Kings Knoll Hotel on Dunollie



Councillor Roddy McCuish has welcomed the news that a Premier Inn could be built in the town. 16_151stroddeharbour01

Road in Oban, was unhappy with her comments and took to social media to voice his anger. He said many local hotels were either cheaper or around the same price as the nearest Premier Inn to Oban - in Fort William - for a double or twin room, including breakfast.

Mr Hayward said: 'I think Marri Malloy would do well

to check her facts before criticising hard working local business folks. I believe an apology may be due.'

'Personally, I'm livid at the perception this will create about Oban being an expensive place to stay. I don't expect to be given an unfair advantage by any official body. I think I should be treated along with

others in an equitable fashion, however, I don't expect to be stitched up either.'

When contacted by *The Oban Times*, Mrs Malloy said, on behalf of Oban Community Council: 'For too long the former Harbour Bowl has been an eyesore in the centre of our town and we think it is fantastic that at last the site will be used. Each year Oban welcomes visitors from all over the world, each having their own preferences when it comes to cost of accommodation and each desiring certain facilities and level of service.'

'We are fortunate to have a large number of established hotels in the town which fulfil the current demand. However, we should always be looking to expand the range of people coming here.'

'An additional hotel in the centre of town, which caters to a market that is perhaps under-represented, could lead to interest from some who hadn't previously thought of coming

to Oban. This will lead to a valuable increase in business for local shops, restaurants and attractions, all generating further employment in the town.'

Whitbread, which owns both Premier Inn and Costa Coffee, has applied for permission to knock down the Harbour Bowl and build a four-story hotel with 81 bedrooms.

Chairman of Oban Lorn and the Isles Area Committee councillor Roddy McCuish welcomed the news Premier Inn was coming to the town, having previously called the derelict bowling alley 'a terrible blight on the town'.

He said: 'I'm delighted to see this site developed and the fact that Premier Inn is coming to Oban shows the confidence major investors have in this growing area. Premier Inn will enhance the fantastic hotels we already have in Oban. It's good we have such a fabulous choice of great establishments in the town.'



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Depleted Green Machine win in Kilmarnock

Kilmarnock 21
Oban Lorne 34
BT West Division One

A DEPLETED Oban Lorne squad of 18 players travelled to take on Kilmarnock last Saturday. The Green Machine, who have been without a game since November 7 due to the weather, were without several first team players for this match.

Despite the absences, Oban still managed to field a strong team for the fixture.

From kick-off, Oban's forwards were dominating the breakdown and were managing to create good ball for scrum half Dom Ma to distribute to some strong runners in the team.

Several phases of short attacks from the Oban pack resulted in the first try of the day with hooker Robin MacQueen touching down over the line for a 5-0 lead.

Oban continued their pattern of play and were looking dangerous moving forward. Back row players Airdas Savickas and Lorne MacLachlan were making some good breaks up field providing the rest of the team the platform to attack from.

Just as Oban were looking to build on their good start, a Craig Wright pass was intercepted on halfway by a member of the

Kilmarnock back line, who raced clear to score under the posts. This put the hosts 7-5 ahead against the run of play.

Oban, however, refused to let this dent their confidence and hit back almost immediately with a try very similar to their first scored by prop Tommy Sutherland. This was converted by Wright for a 12-7 lead.

Oban almost added to their lead as a Wright cross field kick just missed South African winger Sandile Khumalo, who would have been clear through to score.

Oban did manage to extend their lead just before half time. An impressive break from Centre Callum MacLachlan and pass to the supporting Khumalo gave a 17-7 lead to the Green Machine at half time.

One change was made at half time with Connor Ferris replacing Khumalo at fullback as the try scorer left the field with a hamstring injury. Daniel Broderick from Mid Argyll also took to the field in the second half for his Oban Lorne debut.

Oban started the second half as they had completed the first by dominating possession and territory with a superb powerful performance from the forwards. A quick recycled ball near the try line was fired out to the back

line where it found MacLachlan, who bulldozed over the defence for Oban's fourth try of the afternoon.

The Green Machine were now out of sight and were looking increasingly comfortable in all aspects of the match. A second try from man-of-the-match Sutherland further increased the scoreline to 29-7 with 25 minutes remaining.

Kilmarnock's first real spell of pressure took its toll on the visitors, who lost prop MacQueen to a yellow card.

With a man advantage, the hosts came back into the match by scoring two unanswered tries to narrow the gap to 21-29.

As Oban were starting to look increasingly vulnerable, a scrappy pass from the Kilmarnock backs was hacked forward to Wright, who finally managed to control the ball and touch down beneath the posts for the final try of the day.

Kilmarnock pressed for a late consolation score but could not breakdown a stern Oban defence who managed to hold out for an impressive 34-21 win.

This was a great result for Oban Lorne considering the number of players missing from the squad. It also showed the value of the feeder team, Argyll and Bute,



Man of the match Tommy Sutherland barges his way over the line for one of his two tries.

Photo: Stephen Lawson

playing in Division 4 which is giving strength in depth and valuable game time to the squad.

The result means that Oban close the gap on fourth place to just one point. This Saturday the Oban side have a tough fixture as they host promotion chasing Newton Stewart at Glencruitten.

The visitors have only lost one game all season and have recorded some big wins in recent weeks. The game kicks off 2pm at Glencruitten.

The west coast weather again took its toll on the rugby fixture card on Saturday with Argyll and

Bute's Division 4 match against Glasgow East being postponed due to an unplayable pitch in Hamilton.

Argyll and Bute are now without a game until Saturday January 9 when they travel to Glasgow to take on Shawlands RFC.

Oban's U18 team were again left without a fixture on Saturday as Strathaven and Cartha pulled out of the fixture due to a lack of available players.

Sundays U16 match away to Birkmyre was postponed due to an unplayable pitch in Kilmacollm.

Rugby

Oban's U14/15 (S1,2,3) friendly fixtures on Saturday away to Cliftonhall School were also postponed on Saturday due to the weather.

Oban Lorne RFC hosted Level 1 Refereeing in Rugby Union course in the clubhouse on Sunday. Coaches from throughout Argyll and Bute attended the course from schools and clubs including Tarbert Academy, Islay High, Oban High, Islay RFC, and Oban Lorne RFC.

Oban Camanachd holds AGM Shinty

MORE THAN 40 members of Oban Camanachd Club attended the AGM held at Rockfield Centre recently where the following officebearers were voted in for season 2016:

Club Chieftain - Ian MacIntyre; president - Alan Dunning; honorary vice president Nigel Evans; treasurer - Fiona Livingston; secretary - Christopher Eccleston; first team manager - Ian Hay; second team manager - Gareth Evans; Under 17s team coaches - David MacCuish, Scott Buchanan and George Easton; Under 14s team coaches - Stephen Sloss and Brian Logan.

First team manager Ian Hay has also co-opted Paul Kersley, Dugie Macintyre and Alex MacVicar as his assistants. Second team manager Gareth Evans has co-opted David MacCuish and secretary Chris Eccleston to assist him.

Duncan MacMillan continues in the key role as Lotto and 100 Club convenor. Duncan has been involved with the club lotto since it started in season 1996-97. The club general committee was selected from the above plus Duncan MacKinnon and Mairi Dunning.

In the general discussion that followed it was noted that while the club has had a successful season at all levels this has been achieved despite the erratic scheduling of fixtures which the club highlighted at the Camanachd Association AGM.

On the call of club president Alan Dunning, who thanked Christine Lind for serving as club secretary for five years, but who had decided not to seek re-election, and the members who had attended, the meeting was brought to a close.

Next up is the club's traditional New Year fixture between Camanachd and Lochside played at Mossfield Stadium on a date still to be decided. Camanachd were drawn at home to Inveraray, last year's beaten finalists, in the first round of the Macaulay Cup with the winners to play either Bute or Oban Celtic.

Mr Hay said: 'We hoped for a home draw and to avoid favourites Kyles Athletic till the latter stages of the competition, so the draw has been kind to us in that respect.'

Saints youths' results and fixtures Youth football

LAST weekend's results: Stenhousemuir 1, Under 13s 2. Scoring for Saints were Neilly Russell and Connor Moore. Larkhall 1, Under 14s 0; Gartcairn 10 Under 15s 2. Saints goalscorers were Cameron Kerr (2) and Scott Mossman. Under 16s v Port Glasgow, postponed Under 19s 3, Dumbarton United 3. On target for Saints were Fraser MacFarlane, Matty Kelly and Ross MacMillan.

This weekend's fixtures: Under 13s v Dumbarton Riverside; Under 14s no game; Under 15s no game; Busby v Under 16s; Under 19s no game.

Athletic at home Football

OBAN Athletic play their final league game before the festive break when they take on Duntocher either at Glen 2 or the 3G pitch, kick-off 2pm

Robert quits sunshine of America to raise his profile on international circuit



Robert with the Scottish Amateur golf trophy

A PROMISING Oban golfer is teeing up for a professional career in the sport next year after leaving the sunshine of the United States for the sleet and snow of Scotland.

Robert MacIntyre, who will go down in history as the first left-handed player to win the Scottish Amateur Golf Championship, returned home early from his university in Louisiana and instead of returning will focus on raising his profile on the international circuit.

'I'm done with university,' he said. 'I had a successful season overall, but it just wasn't the same over there.'

Robert is going to wait and get

some more experience under his belt before he aims to take the next step in his career.

He continued: 'I'm going to stay amateur for another season before trying to get my tour card next year.'

'A lot of people turn professional too soon and end up not achieving anything.'

It won't take the 19-year-old 'leftie' long before getting his season off the ground, as he is set to get his year off to a flying start by travelling to South Africa at the end of January for three and a half weeks to compete in a series of individual tournaments.

And not long after he will be back in the sky, this time headed

for Spain, in order to represent his country.

With the support of the town, Robert will be able to join his three team mates in flying the Scottish flag in a European team competition.

Raise money Earlier this year, Oban got behind the talented youngster and organised a charity tournament to raise money to go towards travel expenses.

More than 40 teams showed up to take part in the event and a variety of sports teams battled it out on the course and raised more than £3,000 in the process, with the Oban Athletic team coming out victorious.

Golf

Robert, who was in America at the time of the tournament, said: 'I'd like to thank everyone who has supported me. It's been a great help, from the whole town.'

'I'd like to give an extra thanks to Gareth Evans for organising the tournament. The money raised will help me play in bigger tournaments.'

With the combination of the local fundraising efforts and money received from the Scottish Golf Union, the 19-year-old will play in all the big amateur events throughout Britain and Europe this season.

Oban Pool League has red hot title race in full swing

IF OBAN folk are cold and wet on a Thursday evening, they would be well advised to frequent some of the town's watering holes and thaw out because The Oban Pool League has a red hot title race in full swing.

Four sides entered last week's proceedings perched at the top, separated only by frame difference and with a four-point advantage over the chasing pack. The Lancaster 'A' and The Lochnell were safe in the knowledge either or both Markie Dans 'A' and The Lochavullin's Cellar's 100 per cent record's would have to subside with them scheduled to play each other.

By close of play, the four had become three and the Ben Lora boys became the league's fourth different pacesetters in as many weeks. They may well be the self-proclaimed fun team of The Oban Pool League, but their

rivals better believe The Lochnell's title aspirations are deadly serious.

The villagers played host to the league's most charismatic side The Outreach, who were on their travels for the third consecutive week following the decision to play both home and away this season. Unless The Lochnell succumbed to complacency anything other than an emphatic victory would be classed as a major upset considering the irrefutable gulf in class between the sides.

The banter brigade was in full voice throughout the evening from both sets of players with The Lochnell certainly not immune to the charms of their colourful opponents off the table. Unfortunately, on the baize no empathy was shown in a performance so cold it would unnerve even Vladimir Putin, propelling them to top spot. Last year's murmurs

from over the Connel bridge of a potential title winning team have rapidly transcended into battle cries reverberating across Loch Etive that they are this season's team to beat. At this point, in this current vein of form it would be folly to suggest otherwise.

Despite winning themselves, The Lancaster 'A' have been leapfrogged after an insipid display away to The Lochavullin.

The Combie Street venue wasn't quite at full capacity for the well mannered contest but there was plenty of eyes on the action. It would be fair to say the audience were of a more mature nature than normal which possibly explains the reason why the tie never really got ignited. The Lancaster were always in control without every really entertaining the respectful onlookers, who would in truth describe the match as lacklustre. A more hostile re-

ception will await The Lancaster 'A' on their return to face title rivals and reigning holders The Lochavullin's Cellar in February.

Markie Dans 'A' welcomed The Lochavullin's Cellar on the back of a strong start to the campaign and were quietly confident they could put a dent in their oppositions quest to retain their crown, whilst strengthening their own claims. The conclusion of the opening doubles set saw the home side hold a slender advantage which they maintained even up to the third singles before the champions went through the gears to claim victory.

However, another dogged performance from their pairings meant they claimed the second doubles section and suggests Markie Dans 'A' may just have come of age, despite the defeat. This was a clear indication that they have the mental toughness to

compete across all competitions this season, the only doubt now remains if they have the talent.

The two points secured means current holders remain level with The Lochnell and The Lancaster 'A' heading into the new year.

The six up-coming games involving the three look set to be pivotal in deciding the destination of the championship trophy, although their scalps will be coveted amongst the remaining sides with big bulls eyes painted on their undefeated backs.

The remaining matches saw both The Lancaster 'B' and The Gluepot ease over the line against Markie Dans 'B' and The Wide Mouthed Frog respectively. The victors have now settled into mid-table security and they will be looking to loosen the top three's grip alongside Markie Dans 'A'.

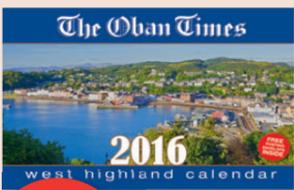
Only two matches are in play

Pool

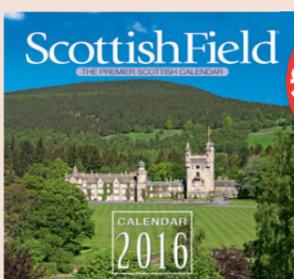
tonight (Thursday), as four teams contest the first round of The Oban Filling Station (OFS) Knock-Out Cup. The Wide Mouthed Frog host The Lancaster 'B', but that will be overshadowed by the glamour tie that is the Connel derby. The Lochnell will have home advantage over foes The Gluepot as early season bragging rights are up for grabs along with a quarter final place.

Results, December 10: Lancaster B 9, Markie Dans B 3; Lochavullin 4, Lancaster A 8; Lochnell 11, Outreach 1; Markie Dans A 5, Lochavullin's Cellar 7; Wide Mouthed Frog 3, Gluepot 9. Fixtures, December 17: OFS CUP 1st Round - Wide Mouthed Frog v Lancaster B; Lochnell v Gluepot.

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'Vale too strong for Fort William

Football

Deveronvale	4
Fort William	1
Highland League	

FORT William FC suffered another blow at the weekend when they went down 4-1 to Deveronvale.

It took just 15 minutes for the home side to get ahead at the Princess Royal Park with an early goal from Scott Fraser.

After 23 minutes, the Fort were 2-0 down before Stephen McGhie pulled one back for the visitors just before half time.

But another two goals for Deveronvale in the second half ensured there was no way back for the Claggan side losing 4-1 in the end.

Fort William was due to welcome Huntly to Claggan as *The Oban Times* went to print last night (Wednesday) in what would be a crucial game for the home side. Before the game, Huntly were just four points ahead and one position higher in the Highland League.

Ally Ewen's men are back at home on Saturday, when they welcome Lossiemouth to Claggan, kick off 3pm.

Pam rolls with top score of 188

Ten-pin bowling

ALLEYCATS have retained their position at the top of the Lochaber Building Supplies ten-pin bowling league after week nine.

They are currently on 43 points in the scratch division, followed by The Creeps with 33. Ardtoe and Co and British Legion Fort William are tied for third on 25 points.

The handicap division is a much closer battle with British Legion leading on 31 points, followed by The Creeps on 30 and Mis Fits on 28.

Individually, the best game this week was rolled by Pam Weller of Alleycats with a 188. Other notable scores came from Ben Weller and Darren Duncan, both of The Creeps, with 177.

The top handicap game came from Rossamy Waring of Ardtoe and Co with 227.

Pam Weller had both the best two-game scratch series with 356, a season high, and the best two-game handicap series with 424.

The Creeps swept the board with the best team scores of the week, including the best scratch game of 600, best handicap game of 789, the top two-game scratch series of 1,190 and the top two-game handicap series of 1,568.

Weather wins at Kinlochleven

Girls' shinty

IT WAS a disappointing end to Kinlochleven High School's girls-only shinty tournament as it had to be called off before the end due to poor weather.

Teams had travelled from Fort William, Oban, Ardnamurchan, Mallaig and Glenurquhart for the seven-aside tournament which stopped as a result of the high winds.



The field sets off for the Beinn Bhan Bash race on Sunday.

Visiting runners sweep the boards at Beinn Bhan Bash

IT WAS visitors who swept the table on Sunday in the latest of the Lochaber Athletic Club (LAC) winter league races.

Paul Henry, unattached, took first place in the Beinn Bhan Bash at Glenly, finishing in 41 minutes and 43 seconds, followed by Manuel Gorman

of Westies, just four seconds later.

Junior runner Luke Taylor of Highland Hill Runners took third in 42 minutes and 54 seconds.

Jon Gay was the first LAC runner to cross the finish line, taking fourth place in 43 minutes and 18 seconds. First lady home was unattached Helen

Gertig who finished in 51 minutes and 22 seconds, taking 16th place overall.

First LAC lady was Amanda Blackhall in 27th place with a time of 53 minutes and 40 seconds.

Next race

The next race of the winter league is the Cruim Leaccain on Boxing Day.

Registration from 10am at the Yurts car park, Torlundy.

Top 10 finishers (LAC unless otherwise stated): 1 Peter Henry (unattached) 41:43; 2 Manuel Gorman (Westies) 41:47; 3 Luke Taylor (Highland Hill Runners) 42:54; 4 Jon Gay 43:18; 5 Craig Mattocks (Carnethy)

Athletics

45:52; 6 Alan Smith (Deeside Runners) 47:17; 7 Gavin MacMillan 47:45; 8 Ian Mackellaig 47:50; 9 Geoff Simpson (Highland Bog Trotters) 48:45; 10 Neil Waslidge 49:45.



Kinlochleven pupils Jo Shepton and Rebekah Gunn with Paralympian David Smith MBE.

Kinlochleven gets set for community action

KINLOCHLEVEN High School has been picked as one of just 100 schools in Britain to take part in a champions training programme.

Pupils Rebekah Gunn and Jo Shepton travelled to Birmingham with head teacher Rebecca Machin to attend the 'Get Set for Community Action' training programme, to learn how to make their community a healthier and better place.

The youngsters met with Olympian Christian Malcolm and Paralympian David Smith MBE, who gave talks about the benefits of volunteering.

Volunteering

Jo, fourth year, said: 'The event was an amazing experience for everyone involved and was extremely inspiring, with tips from the athletes such as finding a passion for something will mean that volunteering for it is a joy for you as well as a good skill and having gratitude for everything, no matter how small.'

'The programme aims to help people find what they love, try their hardest and do well for others with passion.'

Joe takes honours in winter league race at Strontian

Cycling

KEEN cyclists travelled by ferry to their race destination of Strontian for the second round of West Highland Wheelers' winter league.

Joe Barnes was the clear winner in the field of 19, finishing the two-lap race in 56 minutes and 16 seconds, ahead of second place Yan Valentine in one hour, four minutes and 50 seconds.

It was a sprint finish for third place with Gavin Linfield crossing the finish line in one hour, five minutes and 15 seconds, just two seconds ahead of Neil Wright in fourth.

It was a double victory for the siblings as Hannah Barnes took first lady in one hour, 10 minutes and 12 seconds, followed by Emma Holgate in second and Fiona Thompson in third.

Alistair Poll's finishing time of one hour, 13 minutes and 14 seconds earned him first junior. The third round of the winter league will be Sunday December 27 at Leanachan Forest.

Results: 1 Joe Barnes 56:16; 2 Yan Valentine 1:04:50; 3 Gavin Linfield 1:05:15; 4 Neil Wright; 5 Jamie Gall 1:05:47; 6 Tom McMahon 1:06:14; 7 Iain Rogerson 1:06:25; 8 Mark Clark 1:06:51; 9 Hannah Barnes 1:10:12; 10 Alistair Poll 1:13:14; 11 Keir Gibson 1:14:31; 12 Gregor Muir 1:15:49; 13 Emma



Third-place Gavin Linfield powers through puddles and mud in the West Highland Wheelers winter league. Photo Simon Willis

Holgate 1:16:29; 14 Roddy Wells 1:18:09; 15 Doug Little 1:22:04; 16 Shaun MacLeod 1:25:56; 17 Fiona Thompson 1:30:12; 18 Gill Barnes 1:42:55. Short course: Ryan Higginson 43:46.

Lochaber athletes do well in Elgin Cross country

LOCHABER athletes travelled to Elgin to take on a muddy and hilly course for the north district cross country championships.

In the under 20s men's race Steven Burns took sixth place in a star-studded race featuring two British internationals and finished the eight-kilometre route in 32 minutes and seven seconds at the event on December 5.

In the ladies, Ciara Largey tackled the 6.4km route in 28 minutes and 14 seconds to finish in 12th place.

But it was the juniors who stole the show with siblings Ben and Rebecca Johnstone both achieving qualification into the inter-district championships at Holyrood next month.

Ben took fourth place in the under 15 boys finishing in 15 minutes and four seconds while Rebecca ran to sixth place in the under 15 girls with a time of 18 minutes and three seconds.

Game called off Rugby

LOCHABER Rugby Club's home clash against Kinloss Eagles, scheduled for Saturday, had to be postponed at the request of the visiting team.

Following a Christmas break, Lochaber's next game will be a tough game away to Garioch, who are currently second in the league, on January 9.

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WEATHER

Thursday Heavy rain
Winds strong southerly
Temperatures 9°C to 12°C.

Friday Heavy rain
Winds strong south westerly
Temperatures 5°C to 8°C.

Weekend Outlook Heavy rain on Saturday
Heavy rain on Sunday
Winds strong southerly
Temperatures 5°C to 8°C.

Stop Press: New pontoons recently installed by North West Marine at Kyle Lochboisdale for visiting yachts

TIDAL INFORMATION
Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday December 17, 2015** are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour) BST)

Date	am			pm		
Thur	03.19	1.2	09.25	3.6	16.01	1.4
Fri	04.16	1.4	10.25	3.5	17.06	1.5
Sat	05.25	1.5	11.46	3.4	18.17	1.6
Sun	00.07	3.1	06.41	1.5	13.28	3.4
Mon	01.46	3.2	07.57	1.4	14.38	3.6
Tues	02.55	3.4	09.07	1.3	15.33	3.7
Wed	03.46	3.6	10.07	1.1	16.20	3.9

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)

Ardrishaig	-5.35	Mallaig	+0.25
Campbeltown	-5.30	Portree	+0.55
Crinan	-0.47	Tobermory	+0.16
Islay Port Ellen	2.00	Dover	+5.30
Lochboisdale	+0.30		

Ferry Crossings/Sea States

Oban to Barra/South Uist	Moderate
Oban to Coll/Tiree	Moderate
Kennacraig to Islay	Moderate