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& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

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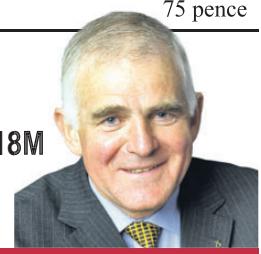


Planning your retirement

Campaigners sleep on Oban's cold streets

Business update

HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS TO RECEIVE £18M
Lochboisdale regeneration project gains large slice of European Regional Development funding



Also inside this week: 'Snow joke' as freak storm strikes • Mull driver recognised as future champ

Salmond bids to keep Skykon open

FIRST Minister Alex Salmond, speaking in an exclusive interview with *The Oban Times*, said that if he and his government fail to save the Skykon Campbeltown factory, it won't be for want of trying.

Negotiations are taking place behind the scenes and he has met with potential buyers for the wind turbine tower manufacturer.

See Page 9

Oban policemen promoted

LOCHGILPHEAD has a new police inspector, Alistair Davidson has moved from Oban to take up the post.

Inspector Davidson, aged 45, has transferred from the role of detective sergeant with the CID based in Oban.

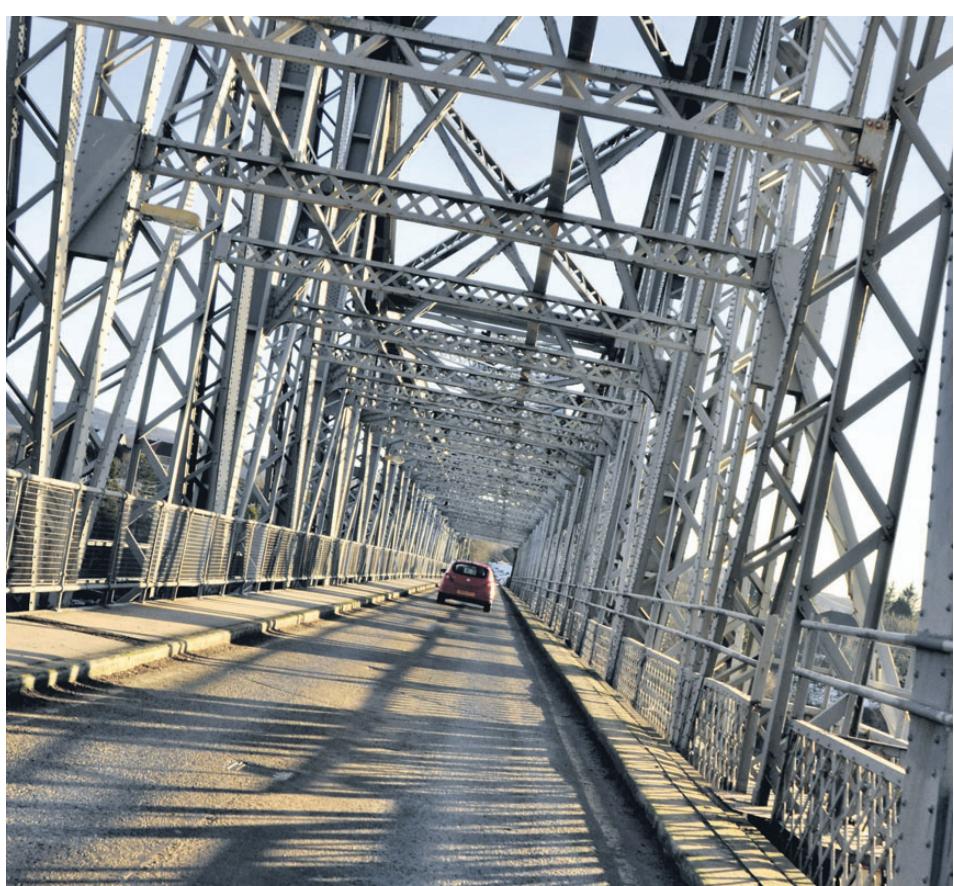
Originally from Glasgow he joined the force in 1991 and after service in various locations in the West End of Glasgow was promoted to uniform sergeant in Oban in 2005; there he served also as a community sergeant before transferring to CID.

Tiree windfarm meeting today

TIREE will host a consultation workshop today (Thursday) on the Scottish Government's draft plans for offshore wind farms.

Government officials will present the outcomes of the consultation and give an update on proposed developments, such as the Argyll Array.

The workshop will be held at An Talla between 6.30pm-9pm, with refreshments available from 6pm. For more information, contact the Scottish Government wind consultation team on 0131 244 1617.



Work on electricity cables will require Connel Bridge to close for five consecutive nights next week 17_t02bridge01

Connel Bridge to close overnight

CONNEL Bridge is set for five overnight closures next week as part of work to move an electricity cable.

No pedestrians

While motorists will only see minor disruption, pedestrians might not be so lucky, as the footpath is likely to be impassable for the duration of the work, although the contractors, Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE), are looking

at ways to reinstate the path in between closures.

SSE want to remove a 10kV power cable from the overhead steel bridge beams and install a new underground cable through service ducts under the footways of both masonry arch viaducts of the bridge.

The first closure will take place at midnight on Monday, with the bridge reopening at 6am on

Tuesday. The bridge is scheduled to reopen fully at 6am on Saturday.

A spokesman for Transerv, who maintain Scotland's roads, said: 'The work is dependent on the weather, but we have to work on the basis that the closures are going ahead as planned.'

'There may be some disruption on the footway, but SSE are working on ways to reinstate the path

between closures.'

The spokesperson said contractors will attempt to reduce the number of overnight closures by starting work earlier, at 8pm, if traffic flow allows.

If so, the bridge's permanent traffic lights will be set on red for periods of up to 15 minutes at a time.

Access for emergency services will be provided during the work.

Argyll's top road traffic police chief moves to Glasgow as policy change takes hold

ARGYLL'S road policing chief, Inspector Hugh O'Neill, will take up a post as Response Policing Inspector in Govan, Glasgow next week.

Inspector O'Neill's move comes as road policing officers in Oban are absorbed into an overhaul of traffic policing. Inspector O'Neill, who held the Argyll post

for 15 months, said: 'I will take back fond memories of working with the local communities in Argyll who have shown me that community spirit is still very much alive in this area.'

I have worked closely with community councillors, the media and other partner agencies to ensure that our roads are safer.'

Between a rock and a hard place

HIGH level talks are taking place on whether Argyll and Bute Council can survive the current financial crisis.

With a harder than expected budget cut from the Scottish government and more claims on any cash for problem areas such as roads and infrastructure, *The Oban Times* understands parliamentary executives are fearful that the council will have overspent by mid-to-late autumn 2011.

Adding to the woes of the authority is the cancelled school closure programme with an instant loss of almost 20 per cent of savings from the proposed budget.

A Scottish government insider has told *The Oban Times* that there are 'serious concerns' in parliament that the council can come up with the necessary savings to keep the administration on budget - and still provide statutory obligations such as community safety, roads

EXCLUSIVE REPORT by LOUISE LEE

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maintenance, social services, improved infrastructure for public transport and education priorities.

'It seems the council does not have the stomach for making any serious cuts and it is imperative they do so,' he said. The official, who did not want to be named, added: 'There are serious concerns about the state of Argyll and Bute Council's budget plans.'

Unrealistic

Referring to dropped plans for 19 school closures, he said: 'It is simply unrealistic for the council to tot-up savings in their budget that do not exist.'

Savings from the school estate was to be a major part of the funding cuts.

It is understood that if the council fails to meet its budget there will be no bail-

out for the local authority. In the case of a huge council overspend the Scottish government will send in its own officials who will run the council in place of the current administration.

Oban councillor Roddy McCuish, SNP member of the opposition, said: 'I believe the Scottish government have doubts about Argyll and Bute Council's ability to put together this critical budget. Certainly I would think there would be some difficulty in getting a budget passed by elected members.'

Where are the £15 million savings going to come from? We certainly have not seen any figures to date that will make it work.'

A spokeswoman for the council said the council would be delivering a balanced budget. She said it was not an option for the council to make cuts as it was legally obliged to produce a balanced budget.

Celebrities join Oban cinema campaign

A-LIST CELEBRITIES are lining up to become patrons of Oban Phoenix Cinema.

Harry Potter's Hagrid, Robbie Coltrane, the White Witch from *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Oscar winner Tilda Swinton, Four Wedding and A Funeral's John Hannah and Scottish film director Bill Forsyth of *Gregory's Girl* and *Local Hero* fame have all backed the plans for the cinema.

Two of the patrons have indicated they may even come to the town to help the

cinema launch later in the year.

John Hannah said: 'I am very happy to be a patron.'

I know Oban well both from visiting there and in fact filming there. I truly believe it would be a nail in the coffin of rural life if such a communal activity was lost.'

Whisky Galore

A film-making patron has also lent his support to the cinema. Ed Crozier is managing director of Whisky Galore Films

Limited, an accredited West End of London theatre producer and television producer.

The Oban Phoenix Cinema group are continuing in its fundraising efforts with a stall at the Volunteer Fair at Glencutten Road Church Centre on Saturday, January 15 from 10am. Sponsor forms for seats will be available.

Next week, *The Oban Times* will launch its Ticket-Times campaign to raise cash for the building.

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Oban man battles with court officials

A SHOCKED Oban courthouse witnessed a 20-year-old Oban man grab his custody escort in a headlock after he was told he would be remanded in custody.

Joshua Griffiths, of no fixed abode, had pled guilty to assaulting a woman and striking another woman on the head with a door on January 7, 2011.

He was remanded in custody for court reports but refused to be handcuffed to be taken out of Oban Sheriff Court on Monday and attacked the escort.

Five police officers, a solicitor and the prisoner's mother tried in vain for several minutes to release the victim who works for security firm Reliance.

Griffiths was eventually handcuffed and removed from the building.



Warm and wet at Atlantis

Brothers Finbar (left) and Paddy Dunne are pictured giving Atlantis Leisure's new inflatable assault course a thorough testing during its first public outing at the Oban swimming pool and leisure complex last Saturday.

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Tiree's 'Tilley' generates first £10,000 for community

Island windfarm project starts producing cash after only nine months

TIREE will launch its new Windfall Fund later this month after the community's wind turbine, Tilley, generated its first £10,000 cheque.

Tiree Renewables Energy Ltd (TREL) handed the cheque to the Tiree Community Development Trust in December, only nine months after Tilley started operating.

The cash has now been placed in a ring-fenced bank account, with withdrawals

only to be made for grants. The money won't be used by the Trust for administration or staff costs.

Tiree director, Tish MacKinnon, welcomed the cheque, saying the cash was particularly welcome given the current economic climate.

She said: 'For the community, it's a very good thing that the money is coming in now.'

'Councils are cutting all grant funding and are restructuring just now.

There's also less money coming from European grant funding.

'But this is only the beginning. The turbine will generate more cash and we believe the sums it will generate will be higher in future too.'

Estimates

When it was first 'switched on' in March, expectations were that Tilley would generate its first payment after a year. That those estimates were in fact underestimates has come

as welcome news for the community.

As a result, it is now hoped the Windfall Fund will be able to invite applications more than once a year.

Tish said: 'It's been doing really well and it's a lot of money to have been raised for an island with a population of 700.'

'The fund will be launched at the end of this month at an open meeting at the hall, An Tall.

'Everyone is welcome and applications will be

invited from anyone with a project that benefits the community - be that a group or individual.'

The launch meeting will be held on January 29, from 1pm to around 4.30pm. Application forms and guidance notes will be available on the day and from the trust office and website thereafter.

Applications for the first tranche of funding must be submitted by March 31, with a maximum of £1,000 per application.

**Beachd Ailein**

Ailean Caimbeul

OIDHCHE NA SEANN BHLIADHN' ÚIRE an raoir!

Ach an i seo, mar a thuit Mairi Mhór, Bliaidhn' Úr "bheir sòlas dhuinn"? Uill, tha i air tòiseachadh gu math dhan Ghàidhlig le dearbhadh gun tèid BBC Alba air Saorleir uaireigin san Earrach. Tha cuideachd a h-uile coltas gun tèid Institiù OGE nam Mile Bliaidhn a dhainneachadh mar Oiltigh na Gàidhealtachd's nan Eilean uaireigin eadar seo is am a Caisge. Mar sin, tha Gàidhlig gu bhith air a foillseachadh nas mothu na bha riamh tro phrògraman telebhisean air an ruig duine sam bith a thoghas. Bidh miltean a bharrachd a' coimhead BBC Alba agus is neònach mura talaidh sin daoinne chun a' chànan ionnsachadh. Agus dha Gàidheil agus eile as gach àite, bidh a-nise cothrom ann ceumannan foghlaim a thaghadh agus Oiltigh na Gàidhealtachd. Fior adhartas, agus tha e iomchaidh taing a thoir dhan a liuthad neach agus buidheann a rinn uimhir a spàrnar thor mòran bliadhnaichean guan a cinn-uidhe sin a thoir a-mach.

Ach tha feum againn fhathast air cothroman cosnaidh téairneair air Ghàidhealtachd agus gu sónraichte as na h-Eileanan, a-muigh 's-a-staigh, gus oigridh a ghleidheadh as na sgriean sin. Tha sin bunaiteach dhan eacnamaid agus dhan chànan agus tha an dùblan nas miosa buileach as na sgriean air an iomall. Ach, mar a tha mi air a thogail roimhe, tha beirtas aig coimhearsnachdan an iomall de ghaoth agus cumhachd mar airon dealain a chruthachadh agus nach b' fhiach cuid den sin a chleachadh dhadh gus tionsgalan ùra a thàladh dhan taobh an iar. Tha sinn a' cluinniùn mòran mu na trioblaidean a' ann dealain a ghiùlan a-mach gu margaidhean móra na dùthcha agus, gun teagamh, tha e ceart is iomchaidh gun tachradh sin agus gun coisinnseadh na coimhearsnachdan sin às. Ach tha cothrom eile na chois cuideachd.

Mar a bhios fios aig neach sam bith a tha an sàs ann an gniomhachas, tha cosgais mhòr air lùib teas is cumhachd ionad-obrach sam bith agus, tha mise den bheachd gum biodh e gu math tarraingeach dha luchd-gnothaich de gach seòrsa beachdachadh air gluasad gu ionad far am biodh an cumhachd sin a' tighinn thua aig pris shaor, neo fiu 's an asgaidh, fhad 's a tha iad a' fastadh as an sgire. Sin dà shòrsa cumhachd dha Comhairlean is dha Buidhnean lomairt.

THE OLD NEW YEAR last night!

2011 looks promising for Gaelic with BBC Alba to be available on Freeview and with news that the UHI Millennium Institute is likely to be confirmed as the University of the Highlands and Islands. So, more exposure for Gaelic and more learners, and opportunities for people of all ages to access University education nearer home.

But long term employment is still a challenge in island and remote communities. Alternative energy production is rightly seen as an opportunity, but shouldn't councils and enterprise agencies consider attracting new businesses to the peripheral areas by offering premises with cheap, or even free, energy?

Alternative use of power!

Ailean Caimbeul (Allan Campbell)
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Training schemes ahead of target as body faces cuts

MORE than 250 people in Argyll and Bute have joined Skills Development Scotland (SDS) training programmes since April.

SDS says the number of people signing up for programmes such as Modern Apprenticeships, Get Ready for Work, Training for Work and Skillseekers is already ahead of the 2010/11 target.

The chief executive of Skills Development Scotland, Damien Yeates, said: 'Along with our partners, SDS has already delivered 65 per cent of this year's annual target for modern apprenticeship starts and we are committed to keeping up this success.' If you are looking for help

into work or training, or need advice, call the careers helpline on 0800 917 8000.

Those made redundant or businesses looking to take on a trainee, or need help or advice, should contact the employers helpline on 0800 783 6000.

Meanwhile, the SDS has announced it is seeking 125 voluntary redundancies as it faces cuts of around £20million, around a tenth of its budget. The organisation had previously cut 90 jobs in 2009.

Chairman of SDS, John McClelland, said: 'Since its creation, SDS has made some sustained and positive impact on skills provision in Scotland.'

Police pleased with campaign response

A TOTAL of 201 people have been reported for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs in the Strathclyde Police area during the month-long nationwide Winter Drink and Drugs Driving Campaign.

The campaign also resulted in police requesting 12 forfeitures of vehicles, which are sought if drivers re-offend.

However, Argyll and Bute's road policing chief Hugh O'Neill says he is pleased with the response from drivers in the area and says Argyll motorists have heeded the warnings of drink/drug driving.

He added: 'We usually run at about six or seven per cent of the total figure and I would suggest the vast majority of Argyll motorists have heeded the warnings of drink/drug driving.'

'We ran road checks in at least two areas of Argyll every day and drivers seemed to appreciate what we were trying to do - make roads safer.'

Tighnabruaich and Strachur face changes to GP service

Rural Cowal left with five options over medical cover

RESIDENTS in Tighnabruaich and Strachur have received letters from NHS Highland stating that an out-of-hours medical service will not be delivered by local GPs.

Confirmed

The announcement comes after Dr Carle, the Kyles Practice GP, confirmed that he would be opting out of providing overnight and weekend medical cover for Tighnabruaich and Strachur from March 17.

It was hoped that a consortium of GPs from the Kyles, Strachur and Lochgoilhead practices could deliver the out-of-hours service seven days a week but residents have been told that is no longer an option.

Local GP cover formed

the basis of two proposals, which could be adopted as a response to urgent medical cover post March 17, but these have been deemed unsuitable, as has the possibility of using a private contractor.

Five options

A Project Working Group, set up to appraise a range of options available to the NHS, says another five options remain.

In the letter NHS locality manager for Cowal and Bute, Viv Smith, said: 'The news that two of the options have led to being discounted is obviously disappointing for all of us but it does not detract from the fact that there are still a number of potential options that we will continue to investigate.'

Drop in sessions are to be

held in February to keep members of the public abreast of the changes taking place and options available.

The five remaining options include extending Dunoon's community hospital Accident and Emergency staffing to cover Strachur and Tighnabruaich; using the hospital service, plus a second on-call doctor; using the hospital service, plus a second on-call doctor day time on weekends and bank holidays, plus local practice input from 7am.

Other options are to use two GPs to provide cover every day of the year and also cover Dunoon hospital; and using existing Dunoon hospital services and an additional paramedic or emergency nurse to provide an initial response.



ARGYLL building company MacLeod Construction has presented second year bricklaying apprentice, James McMillan, from Oban, with the company's Apprentice of the Year Award for 2010.

James was nominated by site manager Gordon Ram for the quality of his work and his positive attitude.

James is one of approximately 20 trainees and apprentices currently employed by MacLeod Construction throughout Argyll, with others working in trades such as joinery, roof tiling and cement work, administration, management and computer aided design. James is pictured receiving his certificate and a cheque for £50 from director, Kenny MacLeod.

Council uses all of winter budget as frost and snow set to continue

ARGYLL and Bute Council will have to find at least an additional £1million to fix frost affected roads thanks to this year's prolonged winter weather.

Cash headache

Heavy snow and frost has also caused the council to exhaust its entire winter

maintenance budget by the end of December 2010, leaving the local authority with another cash headache – and with a month of winter weather forecast.

While roads on the Argyll mainland have deteriorated dramatically, roads on several islands have suffered

serious structural damage, with some pot-holes now more akin to craters.

Dilemma

The council's transport spokesperson, Duncan MacIntyre, said: 'The recent weather plus the amount of salt and grit on the roads has caused real problems

for our roads. We are now faced with the dilemma of whether or not to fix them now or to wait for the weather to get better before we do the work.

'There are some potholes and cracks in the roads that are really dangerous and need to be tackled – but

money is tight.'

'We exhausted our entire winter maintenance budget by the end of December and we are into overspend now.'

Mr MacIntyre is hopeful that the Scottish Government can find extra cash to help pay for the work

as the entire country faces up to similar problems, with an estimated £100million required to repair the damage the winter has done so far to Scotland's roads.

But with money already in short supply, he admits funding may have to be taken from elsewhere to

pay for at least some of the carriageway repair work.

He said: 'No doubt it will impact on next year's money.'

Road salt, however, is not in short supply, with a fresh delivery expected to arrive in Argyll from Chile this week.

More than double limit drink driver loses licence again

AN Oban man has been disqualified from driving for a second time after he was caught at more than double the drink driving legal limit. Lee Campbell, 23, Flat 2, SOLAS, Albany Street, admitted, at Oban Sheriff Court, to driving his friend's vehicle without insurance on the A85 near Dunbeg on January 10 while more than double the legal drink/drive limit.

Former policeman and farmer dies suddenly

A FORMER Oban police officer died last week after taking ill in his vehicle.

John Simpson, 59, of Craigentaggart Farm, Kilmore, was driving on Soroba Road, Oban, at around 8.25pm last Thursday before pulling into a petrol station.

Police driving behind Mr Simpson stopped to speak to him when he took ill.

The officers and an off-duty nurse who happened to be in the petrol station administered first aid and CPR. Mr Simpson was then taken by ambulance to Oban's Lorn and Islands Hospital, but died a short time later. A spokesman for Strathclyde Police confirmed that Mr Simpson's family had been notified and that a post mortem examination was underway.

£2m Lottery cash comes to Argyll

ALMOST £2m of Lottery funding was invested in Argyll and Bute last year.

Now people in the county are being called on to nominate their favourite Lottery-funded project for recognition in The National Lottery Awards 2011.

The National Lottery is encouraging these projects, and any organisation that has received Lottery funding over the past 16 years, to enter the awards and gain national recognition for their work.

The entrants that make it to the finals of The National Lottery Awards will receive national recognition at an event broadcast on BBC One later this year. They will also have a chance to win a £2,000 prize. Visit www.lotterygoodcauses.org.uk to find out more or phone 0207 960 6828. Entries to be received by February 18.

Plug is pulled on Connell road lights

Council transport spokesman calls halt to toucan crossing

"The fact is that the attitude they approached this with was all wrong."

Councillor Duncan MacIntyre

Community Council to develop a mutually acceptable solution at some future date.

'They are going to continue with plans to widen the shore-side footpath, which we're all in agreement with, and they're going to give us some lovely new benches too.'

'I think that's a complete success for us and we've shown that they can't just do what they want.'

'I'd like to thank *The Oban Times* for highlighting this issue, which assisted us in achieving our objective.'

Mr MacIntyre said: 'I think Mr Wands overstated his case. He was pretty much of a mind that what he wanted was going to happen.'

It's understood that the decision to build the lights as part of a toucan crossing was reversed within an hour of Mr MacIntyre's email. Connell Community Council secretary, Lee Stewart, received a letter last Friday confirming that the plan had now been dropped.

Comments made by Mr Wands at the meeting were relayed to Argyll and Bute councillor and transport spokesperson, Duncan MacIntyre, who in turn emailed Mr Wands' manager at Transport Scotland.

Mr Stewart said: 'I took the matter up with Duncan MacIntyre and he fired emails out in several directions.'

'Twelve hours later and I receive a letter from Craig Cameron.'

'The letter said Transport Scotland have now removed the crossing from their forthcoming contract and will work with Connell

Community Council to develop a mutually acceptable solution at some future date.'

'They are going to continue with plans to widen the shore-side footpath, which we're all in agreement with, and they're going to give us some lovely new benches too.'

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Mr MacIntyre said: 'I think Mr Wands overstated his case. He was pretty much of a mind that what he wanted was going to happen.'

Volunteers from the Hope Kitchen that runs out of the Salvation Army's hall on Stevenson Street braved six inches of snow to demonstrate the need for more to be done to help people keep a roof over their heads.

They were even joined in their protest by a wandering

homeless man, Luke, who said he appreciated their efforts.

Reminder

For the charity's Jess MacDonald, it was all to much of a reminder of what life could have been like after she was made homeless in 2007.

She said: 'I was homeless about three and a half years ago. I had tried to kill myself and had an alcohol addiction. It was not an easy time.'

'At that time, you had to

book your bed every night at the Solas homeless unit and, while I was lucky enough to hold on to my job, not everyone is.'

'The sleep-out went really well and no, it was not easy.'

'Luke came along at 3am and said, 'Ah, friends like myself' and we had to explain why we were there. By that time the wind was up and it was about minus three degrees. He said he was a bit hungry so we got him some food.'

'He had come from Elgin then Fort William. He got fed-up there and moved on. People come here expecting to find a big hostel or something, but there is none.'

'There are around 20 homeless people in Oban at the moment and that really worries me.'

The Hope Kitchen has been running since November 2009 but received full charitable status in September last year.

The soup kitchen is open every Wednesday and Saturday between 6pm-9pm, and there's a drop-in every Monday and Friday between 2pm-4pm.

Loch Awe inquiry hears true cause of fishermen's deaths will never be known

A FATAL accident inquiry, into the deaths of four fishermen on Loch Awe, has conceded the reason the men fell into the water from their boat will never be known.

On the final two days of the inquiry, on Monday and Tuesday, Procurator Fiscal Craig Harris and solicitors representing the emergency services made their submissions to Sheriff Douglas Small.

Much speculation

The submission, given by Mr Harris, outlined circumstances surrounding the deaths of Craig Currie, 30, William Carty, 47, Stephen Carty, 42, and Thomas Douglas, aged 36 on March 21, 2009 after hearing hundreds of hours of evidence from more than 80 witnesses.

The solicitors admitted there had been much speculation over what happened in the boat that would result in the men falling overboard.

Sheriff Small told solicitors: 'I don't think that is something we are ever going to know.'



The makeshift camp on the shores of Loch Awe to which the fishermen were never to return

Mr Harris said alcohol might have been a contributing factor in the deaths of the men on Loch Awe.

He told the court last Monday that he believed the men got into a boat around 1.15am after drinking in Tight Line pub, Lochawie.

Evidence suggested, he claimed, that the men who were generally 'sensible' about going out onto the water had decided to take the small boat out in a fog that was 'amongst the worst in living memory.'

Mr Harris continued: 'The

recorded shouts were heard by emergency service personnel on the shoreline.

Mr Harris continued: 'I believe the men became disorientated on the water.'

Mr Carty's last phone call to Mr Colquhoun, a fellow fisherman who had stayed behind on the shoreline, was at 2.13 am. The men were found with mobile phones in their pockets. Mr Harris suggested this inferred the men were not phoning in panic therefore he concluded that it was a quick immersion when the boat tipped, perhaps due to an 'internal movement in the boat' and the four men were plunged into the water.

Solicitors representing Strathclyde Fire and Rescue, Strathclyde Police, Scottish Ambulance Service, Royal National Lifeboat Institution and Maritime Coastguard Agency all agreed the deaths were caused by cold-water immersion and that a new topographical survey of the loch should be carried out, as the last recorded survey was in 1908.

Doctors warn of mumps epidemic on the west coast as numbers affected continue to rise

UNPRECEDENTED numbers of children, teenagers and adults are contracting mumps, during an outbreak doctors are describing as an epidemic on the west coast.

More than 200 adults and

children have contracted the viral condition also called epidemic parotitis, but there are few medical treatments for the painful glandular swelling associated with the illness. Mumps is spread in saliva

in the tiny droplets of fluid when someone coughs or sneezes. People with mumps are infectious from up to seven days before and up to seven days after the glands first start to swell.

Ken Oates, consultant in Public Health Medicine for NHS Highland, said: 'We are investigating a number of suspected cases in Argyll. The MMR vaccine gives very good protection against

mumps infection and so we would encourage anyone who is still at secondary school or at college/university, and who has not had the MMR vaccine, to contact their GP practice and arrange to be vaccinated.'

Russel 'interference' claim goes before Scottish Parliament

ALLEGED interference into the proposed Argyll school closures by Education Secretary Mike Russell was to be the subject of a debate in the Scottish Parliament today (Thursday).

Mr Russell, who is to stand as the SNP candidate in Argyll at the next Scottish Parliament elections has been reported to Holyrood's standards watchdog over allegations he intervened in local school closures for political gain.

A leaked e-mail revealed he had questioned Argyll and Bute SNP councillors about their support for several school closures in the area.

The e-mail, sent from Mr Russell's parliamentary e-mail account, told councillors their reputations would be damaged if they were seen to support the closure and also branded council officials 'obdurate'.

Mr Russell was due to make a statement on the matter yesterday (Wednesday).

Former Westminster parliamentary candidate David Graham, who unsuccessfully contested the Argyll seat for Labour last year, reported Mr Russell to the Scottish Parliament standards commissioner.

Mr Russell says his comments contained in the e-mail were part of a normal conversation between a minister and a councillor and refutes the claims he interfered with councillors' decisions.

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Book Club views Potter

OBAN High School's Book Fanatic Club (BFC) took a highly anticipated bus trip down to Braehead to see Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part One on December 15.

This was a trip in the name of research, that is, to see if the new Potter adaptation was as superb as the book.

With the weather forecast threatening to postpone the cinema visit it was not only Voldemort who created fear amongst the pupils.

Luckily the snow held out and we were able to make the journey safely, well safely for the pupils but not all Harry Potter characters survived our hot air balloon debate on route. And with the final instalment due out in the summer we should be safe enough to have a repeat trip without weather threats, possibly at our very own Oban Phoenix cinema.

Skiing

OBAN High Ski Club is hoping to begin trips to Nevis Range or Glencoe next week, weather permitting, places on each trip are strictly limited however pupils will be rotated so that as many pupils as possible have an opportunity to ski with the club.

It will be the responsibility of pupils to catch up with any missed schoolwork.

Pupils who wish to join Oban High Ski club should pick up a consent form from the office and return it there as soon as possible with their joining fee of £10.

Mr MacPherson and Mr Mitchell (both qualified Alpine Ski Leaders) will be leading the groups, offering some structured skill development and practice.

January trips will be for pupils who can ski - this means that they are able to perform turns and have successfully used chairlifts, button tows and t-bars.

Some equipment will hopefully be available for use from Stramash but for our first trip next week pupils will need their own ski equipment.

Beginner's trips will be in February/March weather permitting. Costs are £25.00 per pupil per trip - this covers minibus fuel and half day ski pass.

Basic equipment check will be carried out before each departure - ski gloves, hat, and suitable ski clothing are all essential along with eye and skin protection.

Pupils should also bring with them a packed lunch that they should consume before arrival at the ski resort.

Man arrested over alleged assault

A 34-YEAR-old man has been reported to the procurator fiscal for an alleged assault on a 30-year-old man in the Soroba area of Oban last Friday.

Oban teenager attempted to intimidate police officers in their home

A TEENAGER repeatedly drove past a house occupied by two police officers, in order to intimidate them, Oban Sheriff Court has heard.

Barman Ruairidh Duncan, aged 19, of 15 Nelson Road was found guilty last Wednesday of causing a breach of the peace by his actions, which intended to cause alarm to married off-duty police constables Andrew and April Barron, on April 8 last year.

The incident was pre-dated by a dangerous driving charge, which resulted in a conviction for Duncan,

where Mr Barron was the investigating officer. However, PC Barron was verbally warned following an internal investigation of his actions on conclusion of the case, when he informed the DVLA that penalty points had been imposed on Duncan's licence - a task

usually carried out by the court.

On April 8, Mrs Barron and her young daughter became alarmed when they saw Duncan's car three times outside their home in a remote country location.

Mrs Barron told the court Duncan was staring in the

window. Mr Barron went outside to ask him why he was there but Duncan, who had three other teenage boys in the car, drove off. Mr Barron followed and when Duncan pulled over Mr Barron said: 'I asked him why he was at my house and he replied with words to the

effect: 'Are you worried I now know where you live?'

Duncan admitted he had stopped near the Barron's house three times.

He said he was meeting someone at the nearby hotel to see a car that was for sale, but had taken a wrong turning.

Sheriff Tom Ward said he couldn't accept Duncan's evidence, which was not corroborated by the passengers of his car when they took the witness stand.'

Sentence was deferred until January 28 for background reports.

Lives at risk if Oban wardens removed

Former policeman highlights dangers of cost cutting plan

EXCLUSIVE
REPORT by
STEVEN FLANAGAN
sflanagan@obantimes.co.uk

Move Oban police station and ambulance depot into community fire station.

former police sergeant
Neil Owen

A FORMER police sergeant with nearly 20 years experience in Oban believes the removal of traffic wardens from our streets could cost lives.

Neil Owen, who still lives in the town, says the controversial proposal by Strathclyde Police, which is currently under consultation, would lead to gridlock in Oban and prevent the safe and timely passage of emergency vehicles through the town centre.

Adding that he recognised the need to save cash, he suggested that the force should instead sell the Albany Street police station and the Ambulance Station into the Community Fire Station, which has excess capacity and is well capable of absorbing all three organisations.

'Use some of the savings to fund two traffic wardens, a paltry sum to consider when the town's infrastructure is next gridlocked in six months time.'

Meanwhile, Argyll and Bute Council are preparing a formal response to even a temporary overload in traffic volume and when this situation compromises the passage of emergency vehicles then lives can be put at risk.

I am only too aware of the hard work done by the traffic wardens and just how critical their efforts are to ensuring the through-put of traffic through our Victorian streets - particularly during the summer season.

'There is no manifest need to elaborate on the obvious implications but there is a need to identify solutions and in these times of economic constriction, thinking needs to be accordingly reactionary.'

'One solution is as follows; close Albany Street Police Station and sell off for



Members of the Royal British Legion Scotland who attended the branch's final meeting, where it was dissolved. 16_102legion02

Oban loses fight to keep British Legion

THE ROYAL British Legion Scotland's (RBLS) Oban branch has been dissolved following an emotional final meeting of members in the Royal Hotel.

Twenty branch members and Lord Lieutenant Kenneth MacKinnon gathered on Monday to formalise the procedure, which became necessary because of an ageing membership.

But, on a hopeful note, branch president and secretary Bert MacBrayne, who received a plaque from the Lord Lieutenant for his 15-year stewardship, vowed to carry on the annual Poppy Appeal in Oban, which has raised £46,805 since 2002.

As the president received his plaque there were shouts of 'well deserved' from members.

Addressing the members as 'comrades', an emotional Bert replied: 'It is difficult to say anything. The plaque is in my name but we couldn't

have got to this point without you; it refers to each and every one of you.'

The branch, formed in 1934, was once previously



Bert MacBrayne, right, receives his plaque from Lord Lieutenant Kenneth MacKinnon. 16_102legion01

been dissolved when in 1953 the committee cited apathy as the contributing factor.

Reformed

It was reformed in 1983 by 48 new members at a meeting in the Regent Hotel and in 1995 its local profile was raised with a series of pro-active moves.

Lord Lieutenant MacKinnon said: 'Bert's retirement from the police coincided with a vacancy for the post of chairman at the Oban branch of the RBLS and it was to the branch's good fortune that he agreed to fill this post. As other posts fell vacant Bert became president and also carried out duties of the secretary.'

Mr MacKinnon said the plaque was in recognition of Bert's 'fine and outstanding record of dedicated service' to the branch.

Tarbert residents fight proposed Barmore Road housing plan

THE REVISED housing development planned for Barmore Road in Tarbert has been met with disapproval from Tarbert residents.

'Abomination' The development, described by one villager as an 'abomination', features eight affordable homes including five flats, situated in a two-and-a-half storey building, one detached and two semi-detached houses.

A separate planning application for the building of a retail unit on the former Tarbert Garage site is also due to be submitted to Argyll and Bute Council.

Tarbert and Skipness Community Council has told council planners that they welcome affordable housing but are concerned about the density of

the housing, the proximity of some of the houses to a neighbouring home and access roads.

In a letter to the planning department, Tarbert Community Council chairman, Jenny Carlile, said: 'It appears to us that in order to accommodate the retail use, the residential units have been flung to the far edges of the site. This has resulted in them being cramped, only 1.5 metres from the large block of flats to the site boundary, and with the other units being very close to and under the truck road. This has given us a development, which completely lacks cohesion.'

Ms Carlile said affordable housing and retail units make 'uncomfortable neighbours', using the Burnside

development in Tarbert as an example.

She added: 'We would not want the same to happen on Barmore Road.'

Michael Watts, who lives at Mossbank cottage, neighbouring the proposed site said the scheme would be an 'abomination to a beautiful village'.

He said: 'In this amount of space the massing of dwellings is grotesquely high and the residential amenity is still extremely bad.'

But Ian Cram, director at Bell Ingram, responsible for the architectural work at Barmore Road, said: 'The design has been successfully developed through face-to-face meetings with the planners and changed to reflect any concerns raised.'

Whisky industry enters new world of qualifications

A NEW qualification for whisky distillers will mean the Scottish industry's workers will be among the most highly-qualified in the world.

SIVQ

Skills Development Scotland has teamed up with the Scotch Whisky Association (SWA) to provide funding aimed at encouraging an additional 200 whisky workers to gain a Spirit Industry Vocational Qualification (SIVQ).

Supported by the SWA's 56 member companies, the aim of the SIVQ is to standardise good practice and allow skills to be recognised across the industry - helping employees climb the career ladder and ensuring companies know their staff can perform their duties to

high standards.

Health, Safety and Skills Manager at the SWA Alison Galbraith said: 'The Scotch Whisky industry is a cornerstone of the Scottish economy, worth around £4 billion a year.'

'Over 10,000 people are employed in the sector and it is vital we recognise and capture their skills if this industry is to keep growing.'

Standardised

Angela Constance, minister for skills and lifelong learning, said: 'Although the industry continues to grow, it is important that the specialised skills its workforce develops are standardised allowing skills to be transferred and for individuals to build successful careers.'

Glasvegas fails to find big Oban audience

Jill Jackson in support role finds favour

GLASGOW rockers Glasvegas were the latest high profile band to come to the Corran Halls in Oban, but fewer than half the tickets available were taken up.

Of the 1,000 tickets on sale, only 350 were sold, although those that were in attendance did well to generate a good atmosphere.

After arriving on stage fashionably late, the band, with new drummer Jonna Lofgren, blasted

out new songs, as well as crowd favourites, such as Geraldine.

One crowd member said: 'It was a great night and we are lucky to have these sort of bands coming to Oban. Why more people didn't turn up I don't know.'

'I heard a lot of people talking about coming but when it came to the crunch a lot just didn't bother.'

Despite the modest turnout, there were a number of people from different parts of Scotland,

who had travelled to Oban just to see the band.

Support act Jill Jackson impressed the crowd, with some saying they preferred her solo spot to the main event. Jill, from Paisley, is no stranger to Highland audiences having supported Runrig previously.

Right: Glasvegas lead singer James Allan during Monday night's performance at the Corran Halls.



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ADRIAN FLUX

World-class event for Lorn

International orienteering brings 3,500 competitors to Oban area

OBAN and Lorn will welcome 3,500 competitors this summer for an international orienteering event, which is expected to generate £2.5 million.

The biennial Scottish Six Days Orienteering Event will come to Argyll for the first time in its 30-year history when the world-class international field competes on courses in Dunollie and Dunstaffnage, Achnacloch, Glen Lonan, Lochnell and Shenavallie and Ardchattan.

Argyll and Bute councillors reminded of Code of Conduct

COUNCILLORS throughout Argyll and Bute have been issued with copies of their Code of Conduct by its own chief executive office.

The documents were sent out reminding elected members that they have not to speak out against council officials.

Councillor Roddy McCuish told The Oban Times he was aware that one member of the council had already been reported to officials after shouting at a fellow elected member in a public place at Kilmory, but he was unable to comment on why the documents had been sent out to all elected members.

Another councillor, who did not want to be named, commented: 'Councillor Mary-Jean Devon was shouted at in front of five or six people by another elected member. She was told she was disgraceful for voting against the Alliance grouping on the council. I am sure she voted the way her constituents would have wanted her to.'

Charity cash stolen in Oban shop raid

CHARITY boxes and a sum of cash were among the items stolen from a shop in Stevenson Street, Oban overnight.

Scott's Sandwiches was broken into sometime between 4.30pm on Monday and 7.30am on Tuesday when a number of items were stolen.

Oban Police are urging witnesses, or anyone with any information about the crime, to contact the station on 01631 510 500.

Badenoch gain shinty history grant

THE LONG and decorated history of shinty in Badenoch will be documented thanks to a £25,020 grant from the European-funded Leader programme.

Newtonmore Camanachd Association made a successful grant application to research the history and culture of shinty in Badenoch.

"We are very grateful for the positive support we've had..."

Scottish Six Days Orienteering Event organiser Ross Lilley

Entries for the event (July 31 – August 6) are being received from Australia, USA and all over UK and Europe.

Event co-ordinator, Ross Lilley, is aware of the huge task ahead of the organising committee. He said: 'We are keenly aware of the logistical task of accommodating and transporting this many people around the Lorn area and are very grateful for the positive support we've had from land owners, tourist businesses and local authorities to date.

'On each day's competition around 40 separate courses will be specially planned, catering for toddlers, pensioners and elite runners alike.

'It is truly a family sport and consequently we are expecting a family holiday atmosphere during the week.'

The event centre is focused on the Benderloch and Trallic area, using existing camping and self catering accommodation.

Organisers are bringing additional power, washing and sanitary facilities to the area and are liaising closely with the local roads authorities.

Ross said: 'Lorn communities should expect brief periods of heavy

traffic as competitors find their way to and from each competition area in the morning and afternoon on competition days. Outwith the competitions it is expected participants will visit the area's attractions.

'Consequently tourist and food businesses should expect higher demand than normal during the week.

'If people think they might be affected by the event, positively or negatively, then I want to hear from them so we can incorporate those concerns into our planning.'

'From experience we know that more than half of the participants will have never been to Oban before and we expect that once they have tasted what the area has to offer they will be back for future visits.'

Lorn hosts several international class areas that have held British Orienteering Championships and Scottish League events in recent years.

Orienteering is an outdoor adventure sport. The aim is to navigate in sequence between a set of control points marked on a unique orienteering map and decide the best route to complete the course in the quickest time.

The routes for the Scottish Six Days Orienteering Event are as follows:

Day 1: Dunollie – Dunstaffnage
Day 2: Ardchattan (Achnacloch)
Day 3: Creag Mhic (Achnacloch – Clash Darg)
Day 4: Torinturk (Glen Lonan)
Day 5: Lochnell and Shenavallie
Day 6: Ardchattan

For more information visit www.scottish6days.com/2011/where-to-stay



Oban traffic came to a standstill with many drivers opting to abandon vehicles and attempt to walk home

'Snow joke' as freak storm strikes

THE HEAVIEST single snowfall for more than 50 years brought Oban to a standstill last Saturday evening.

Late afternoon sunshine changed rapidly to heavy and persistent snowfall bringing approximately seven inches of snow to the centre of the town within a two hour period.

Town cut off

All major roads in and out of the town were closed, resulting in weekend shoppers and weekend workers either stranded in, or out of, town.

Many people were forced to stay with relatives or friends until conditions improved on Sunday morning.

Public transport was cancelled and motorists were stranded in vehicles or abandoned their cars and attempted to walk home as the freak storm struck a geographically small area of the west coast.

The abandoned cars then



Numerous vehicles were stranded on Oban's Esplanade as seven inches of dry snow fell on the town within a two hour period

became an additional surrounding area caused obstruction as road crews and emergency services battled against the conditions.

An ambulance, called to attend a patient in Dunbeg could not get out of Oban and a police Land Rover assisted by uplifting paramedics and escorting them the three miles to the village.

Chief Inspector Glen Bland of Oban Police said: 'Significant snowfall in Oban and the immediate

of snowfall.'

The A816 south of Oban at Scammadale road-end was reportedly covered in 10 inches of thick snow, while the A85 at Connel was made impassable due to the snow and a vehicle off the road.

Joy Dunlop, Royal National Mod Gold Medallist had to cancel her post-Mod celebrations.

Joy had organised a ceilidh in Oban to celebrate her successes in Caithness but had to cancel her plans at the last minute due to the weather.

While Joy was stranded in Connel, her father, Sandy Dunlop, had the opposite problem in that he was stuck in Oban. All was well just before midnight when a passer-by in a 4x4 vehicle offered him a lift out to Connel and he finally made it home.

Oban Police had a flood of calls related to the snow, with numerous cars off the road or involved in a spate of minor accidents.

Netherlorn pipers pay tribute to John MacColl

TO MARK 150 years since the birth of the great North Argyll piper, John MacColl, Netherlorn Piping Society's January recital will be made up of tunes composed by him.

The recital, on Wednesday, January 19, will feature Angus D MacColl and Angus J MacColl plus Oban High School Juvenile Pipe Band. Netherlorn Piping Society president Alistair Dewar said: 'This month's recital will be a little different from the norm, as it will take the form of a tribute to John MacColl, 150 years to the month since he was born.

'We will tell a little of the history surrounding this talented man who, besides being a tremendous piper and composer, was also a gifted sportsman, a Highland dancer and all round athlete. It promises to be an interesting and enjoyable evening.'

Drunk Oban cyclist had stolen bike

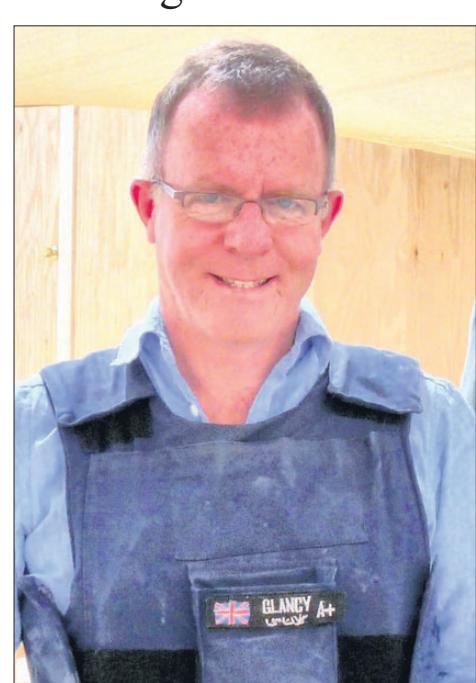
POLICE officers arrested a 22-year-old man at 11pm last Friday after spotting him cycling a child's bicycle through Oban, while under the influence of alcohol.

The arresting officers found the bicycle had been stolen from a nearby garden and charged the man with theft - and for being drunk in charge of a bicycle.

ACHA introduce web payment scheme

ARGYLL Community Housing Association (ACHA) has introduced a new web payment service for tenants. The association decided to introduce the service in recognition of the fact that more and more people are using on-line services. A spokeswoman said: 'While many tenants still prefer to use other methods there is a growing demand to access services outwith office hours.'

Oban procurator fiscal awarded OBE for anti-drug action in war-torn Afghanistan



David Glancy pictured during his secondment in Afghanistan - David is now tackling crime from his post as Procurator Fiscal at Oban Sheriff Court

ACTING procurator fiscal at Oban Sheriff Court, David Glancy, has been awarded an OBE for investigating and prosecuting 'high end' drugs offences in Afghanistan.

David was on secondment for 21 months from the Crown Office to the British Embassy, working as part of the British Embassy Rule of Law team. Along with US prosecutors and Norwegian police advisers, he supported and advised the Afghan Criminal Justice Task Force.

The work of this Afghan legal institution was to deal with cases involving particularly either high quantities of narcotics, significant drug traffickers operating across international borders or Afghan public officials corruptly involved in the drug trade. It is believed insurgency benefits from drug crime in Afghanistan, whereby around \$100 million of drug money goes annually to the Taliban.

David, a former TA soldier, said: 'I am surprised, but delighted, by this honour. I am grateful to the Crown Office, both for enabling me to go on secondment and for their support during it. Working in the hostile environment of Afghanistan was a huge professional challenge.'

'While the UK armed forces are a major component of the NATO Coalition, many volunteers from across the UK Civil Service, working alongside the military, are committed to building the capacity of the Afghans to tackle the many problems within their own country.'

Volunteer mountain rescue team hit all-time high as call outs double

OBAN Mountain Rescue Team had its busiest ever year in 2010, attending 35 emergency calls.

The unexpected high number of calls has underlined the importance of the volunteer team, which has become a crucial emergency response on the hills and coastal areas of Argyll.

Team member Ross Lilley said: 'We don't know why there were so many calls last year. Our average is around 20 call outs per year.'

'From what we've garnered anecdotally from other mountain rescue teams there has been an increase across the board but there was no pattern to indicate

this might happen.'

The team, which was formed 11 years ago, now has 30 active members, plus a handful of probationers.

Ross suggested the increase in mountain rescue call outs could be down to more people staying at home for holidays.

'There's no doubt we are in demand,' he added. 'We are a useful volunteer force for the area and although the police lead the way they rely on us to be the first responders.'

The 35 call outs, four of which were on the Isle of Mull, can be divided equally between three types on incident.

Thirteen calls were to look for missing people and a similar number were calls from mountaineers who had been injured and required retrieval from the hills.

However, the remaining calls were 'false alarms' where the team had been mobilised, only to discover the casualty had found their own way off the hill.

Ross said one of the most challenging rescues was on Ben Buidhe, Loch Fyne, when they joined Arrochar Mountain Rescue Team to look for an injured climber who had been on the hill for more than 24 hours before he was found.

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Karen Rhodes
RBS customer for 5 years

Here for you

COLONSAY

POWER cuts between Christmas and New Year have been linked to a fault in the sub-sea electricity cable to the mainland.

Scottish and Southern Energy carried out a temporary repair to the cable, which serves Colonsay via Jura and Islay, on December 20.

However, on December 27 a one-hour power cut was blamed on a fault in the cable and a two-hour power cut the following day was caused by problems with the back-up generators in Bowmore on Islay.

A 15-minute power cut on December 22, however, is suspected to have been caused by a 'bird strike' which triggered the line's auto-reclose safety system, which shuts off the power until engineers are satisfied the line is safe.

A Scottish and Southern Energy spokesman said he did not anticipate any further problems with the power supply to the island.

BOWMORE

MORE than 200 people attended the Hogmanay party in Bowmore Hall.

The party, organised by the hall committee, started after the bells and carried on into the small hours with music from Bowmore band Bandit - Jim Smith and Peter MacTaggart.

The committee has invited celebrity impersonator Jesse Garon to perform at the hall on January 22.

All money raised from the event will go to hall funds.

PORT ELLEN

HIGHLAND dancing teacher Ella Edgar has had an eventful few weeks, as her retirement coincided with an MBE in the New Year's Honours List.

Ella, who has taught three generations of dancers for more than 30 years, was born at Lotts on the island and has worked at both Ardbeg and Bruichladdich distilleries and at Port Ellen Primary School in administration roles.

In December she retired after 10 years at Bruichladdich Distillery, where she helped to establish the independent company.

Islay-based Councillor Robin Currie said: 'If anyone deserves that honour, Ella does. Her classes have been a great thing for the island and she is a very community-minded person. I am pleased she has been rewarded for her efforts.'

PORTNAHAVEN

IT WAS not possible to hold Islay's traditional 'New Year Dance' in the Rhinns Hall, Portnahaven, this year, as a result of increasing costs and staff shortages. It is hoped the dance may be held again in the future. SC

JURA

A RECORD producer on the island is celebrating after a record he produced and played on has topped the European music charts.

'Poets and Lighthouses' by BBC World Music award winner Albert Kuvezin and Yat Kha is at number one in the World Music Charts Europe (WMCE) which reflects the most requested and played world music across Europe.

The recording was made by producer and musician Giles Perring at his Sound of Jura studio. The album features the vocals of Albert Kuvezin, a singer from the Tuva Republic in Mongolia, who travelled to Jura in 2008 to record.

Also prominent on the recording is Jura piper Neil Cameron. The CD sleeve was designed by Jura's Deborah Bryce of graphics arts firm Creative Hound.

This is the third CD album to emerge from Sound of Jura since it opened in 2006. Giles said: 'The chart placing confirms we have something special on Jura.'



Heavy snow resulted in treacherous driving conditions on the A85 at Connel on Saturday night.

BALLACHULISH

BALLACHULISH Community Council has been awarded a £2,300 grant from Highland Council to erect an obelisk at the entrance of Ballachulish Slate Quarry.

The monument, a memorial to the slate quarries in and around Ballachulish, stood outside the West End Hotel, Fort William, until last year, when it was removed to make way for the new finish line of the West Highland Way. The council plans to erect it along with an information board to explain the meaning behind the monument to visitors.

It says it needs another £1,500 to cover the cost of the project and is currently looking into other funding sources.

SPEAN BRIDGE

MINOR roads around Spean Bridge have been left in a treacherous state after the recent freezing weather conditions.

Road surfaces have been left riddled with cracks and potholes making routes including that to Killiechonate difficult to pass.

KYLEAKIN

KYLEAKIN Environmental Group is to carry out remedial tree work to the overhanging growth impeding on Kyle House Brae before the onset of spring.

Other work to be undertaken includes clearing out the adjacent gully of brambles and the selective felling of trees at the lower end of the Brae to allow others to mature.

BENDERLOCH

THERE'LL be plenty of model behaviour in the Victory Hall, Benderloch, tonight (Thursday January 13).

Lorn Model and Model Engineering Club is staging an open show in conjunction with Oban Die-cast Club.

The event takes place from 6pm.

Secretary Richard Stennet said the annual show would

feature a variety of models, including boats, aircraft, locomotives and traction engines.

'A lot of people in this area are particularly interested in the model boats,' he said.

Anyone interested is welcome to go along and see what's on show.

There is no admission charge and refreshments will be available.

CRIANLARICH

RESIDENTS of Crianlarich and Tyndrum are hoping to have more say in how the council provides local services.

A meeting with Stirling Council's Chief Executive Officer Bob Jack is likely to take place in the next few weeks after a prior date in November, arranged by Breadalbane Community Council Forum, was postponed.

Residents believe services such as flower and ground maintenance, bin emptying, small repairs and cleaning of public toilets could be provided by someone locally.

It is understood that currently council staff or contractors travel up to 50 miles to the Breadalbane area for that reason.

LOCHEARNHEAD

LOCHEARNHEAD'S community council is hoping to meet Stirling Council's Chief Executive Officer and its park rangers in an effort to deal with the increasing problems caused by irresponsible campers.

The amount of litter found on the shore of Loch Eann has increased drastically in recent months. Wild campers have moved to the area after new bylaws forbid the activity in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park.

While police have been attempting to deal with the problem by increasing patrols and issuing fixed penalty notices, Balquhidder, Lochearnhead and Strathyre Community Council is looking for a more effective way to manage the loch's shore.

Community council vice chairman Alistair Barclay

said one idea being put forward is for estate managers to issue coded rubbish bags with fishing permits so culprits can be traced if they leave a mess.

The community council hopes to meet with Stirling Council officials next month.

ARISAIG

ARISAIG Community Council will hold its first meeting of the new year at the Astley Hall, Arisaig, on January 24 at 7.30pm.

Members of the public are welcome to attend.

KILCHOAN

KILCHOAN Kayak Club members shook off their New Year cobwebs with a paddle across Kilchoan Bay to Ormsaigbeg shore.

Seven kayakers took part in the paddle at lunch time on Sunday January 2 before heading back to shore for a cup of tea. With the temperature sitting around 6°C and a light wind, the conditions provided a perfect start to 2011.

SCALPAY

SOME of the fresh water lochs were frozen during the festive season.

Naturally, no attempt should be made to walk on them, in case the ice gives way.

Driving conditions have been difficult too, although snow ploughs and gritters have been out. Luckily, delivery vans have been able to overcome the conditions.

It was not so long ago that cars would have chains fitted to their wheels for grip on the icy roads.

Not for some time could it have been said that herring was so scarce around Christmas and New Year.

A local boat was recently out for herring but returned with bad news – not a scale to be found. It is a frustrating time for the fishermen who remember 'cranes' of herring being caught.

However, pollock seems to be plentiful when the opportunity arises to fish for them.

Although there is a good market on Harris, overall

catches remain light. We wish a speedy recovery to all islanders in hospital at the moment.

A Happy New Year to all readers of this column.

BERNERAY

A BERNERAY project to keep alive the local Gaelic oral tradition will continue with a community ceilidh in the island cafe, which will be organised in the coming weeks.

Led by Berneray Historical Society (BHS) and funded by Bòrd na Gaidhlig, Guthan Bheàrnaraigh (Voices of Berneray), staged the first of its 'house ceilihs' in the same venue in November.

BHS secretary Andrew Ross told *The Oban Times* that the initiative, which is being supported by a project worker one day a fortnight, had two aims.

He said: 'First, we want to capture some of the folklore, tales, songs and poems from the elderly people on the island before it's too late. There is an informal teaching element as well – to pass on these songs and stories to Gaelic learners at various levels through the house ceilidhs and story telling sessions.'

APPIN

A HOGMANAY Dance was held in Appin Village Hall for the first time in a number of years.

However, the lead up to the celebrations were marred by an interrupted water supply, which initially affected Port Appin, followed by the rest of Appin, which caused some businesses to close.

Christmas time was marked with an evening service on Christmas Eve, conducted by the Rev Roderick Campbell.

A large congregation attended and mulled wine and mince pies were served afterwards. A Christmas day service was also held the following morning.

The Episcopal Church carol service was held in the Parish Church on December 19 as a result of work being carried out at the Episcopalian Church.

'You don't need to be a fluent Gaelic speaker as you'll be given tutoring and it's a good chance to learn some Gaelic or to dust off your 'blas'.

ISLAY

MELANIE McNeill and Aaron McEachern of the 5M Tutor Group at Islay High School, presented a £318 cheque to Jimmy Campbell on behalf of the Islay and Jura Sick Children's Fund.

Thanks go to everyone who bought raffle tickets and/or donated a prize.

The fund helps Islay and Jura families with expenses when a sick child is admitted to a mainland hospital or requires extended medical treatment or specialised equipment.

SC

Scotland's new Transport Minister Keith Brown MSP announced without any consultation that from 2011 the Air Discount Scheme will not now apply to residents of the Highlands and Islands for business travel.

Islanders claim the decision shows a lack of understanding of the needs of their communities.

One Ileach said: 'Expensive travel costs are a fact of life in Islay, with travel to the wider world always involving either ferry or air transport.'

'Concerning Islay businesses, while there are a few outposts of wealthy multinational companies in Islay in the form of some distilleries and estates, most of Islay's businesses operate as family-run small firms or as sole traders.'

If businesspeople from the Highlands and Islands fly to Glasgow for a meeting and take the chance to visit family while they are there, who is going to decide whether the trip is for business or personal travel?

'Are purchasers of airline tickets to be interrogated prior to buying their tickets when using the Air Discount Scheme?'

AS THE last event was so popular, the next Islay Has Talent will be held in Islay High School on Wednesday January 19 at 7.30pm.

To enter, please give your name to Dennis Melrose at Islay High School, or to Cathie Thomson.

A raffle will be held, donations appreciated.

CÒSIR Ghàidhlig Ille, Islay's senior Gaelic choir, resumes practices for 2011 today (Thursday) at 7.30pm in Bowmore Hall, with conductor Iseabail Mactaggart.

The choir will be starting to learn the new 2011 pieces and new members are welcome to join.

As well as the four-part mixed voice choir, there are mens and ladies choirs for members to participate in. The choir rehearses every Thursday evening and more frequently before public performances or competitions.

'You don't need to be a fluent Gaelic speaker as you'll be given tutoring and it's a good chance to learn some Gaelic or to dust off your 'blas'.

TIREE

TIREE Renewable Energy Ltd (TREL) have bid a fond farewell to Ian Tainsh, who has stepped down from the board after five years voluntary work.

Mr Tainsh was one of the driving forces behind TREL and a key figure in getting the island's community turbine, 'Tilley', up and running.

A spokesperson for TREL said: 'TREL, the trust and the Tiree community owe Ian a huge debt of gratitude for the determination and incredible amount of work he has put into making TREL a success and ensuring Tilley is here on the island, generating money for all of us.'

'We will miss not only his technical accounting and governance but also his deadpan comments and turn of phrase. We wish Ian well and a well-deserved rest.'

'Please contact any member of the Comann Eachdraidh, phone 01876500293, or email admin@taigh-chearsabhagh.org.'

DOWN YOUR WAY

This week - Crinan and Craignish

RESIDENTS in Craignish are having their say on how they want their community to develop, by creating their own community development plan.

A group of residents, frustrated by a lack of community consultation from Argyll and Bute Council, created a community planning steering group under the area's community council in January 2010.

It is hoped a Craignish Community Plan will be officially adopted by the council when the next local development plan is drawn in 2013.

Mary Smyth, secretary of Craignish Community Council, said: 'We are letting the council know what we want for the area as opposed to it telling us what it recommends.'

The council has been very supportive of this project and I am confident that what we come up with will be accepted, perhaps with some small amendments.'



John Dunlop, director of Crinan Boatyard, with Auld Reekie, a 1943 puffer currently being restored by the yard.

CRINAN Boatyard is keeping busy throughout the winter with work flooding in from around the world.

With refits and repairs being carried out to boats from Nepal and Canada, the yard is keeping its head above water. John Dunlop, director of Crinan Boatyard, said: 'We're pleased we're managing to hold our own in these difficult times. We're doing a lot of refurbishments to fish farm vessels as well as pleasure craft and we're currently working on Auld Reekie.'

The yard hopes *Auld Reekie* will be fully restored to her former glory later this year.

BUSINESSES in Craignish are once again being called upon to support Ardfearn Race Night.

Letters have been sent to businesses in the area to sponsor individual races at the event, organised to raise funds for the Dochas Centre, in Lochgilphead, and the Oban branch of Alzheimer Scotland.

Guests can also 'buy' a horse competing in the final race.

The event, which takes place on February 19, raised £3,500 for two Argyll charities when it took place for the first time last year.

SERVICES at the village post office in Craignish have returned to normal after a failing internet connection in the area disrupted operations for three weeks.

People can now post parcels, withdraw money, pay bills and receive pension payments as normal. People in the area

HARRIS

CALEDONIAN MacBrayne (CalMac) is considering introducing a Sunday service from Tarbert on Harris and has opened discussions with local people on the proposal.

Currently no ferries run from the island on the Sabbath, although a boat goes empty from Harris to North Uist to provide a Sunday service from Lochmaddy to Skye.

A CalMac spokesman said: 'I can confirm that we are consulting on a Sunday Tarbert service although it only applies in the winter and is via Lochmaddy in both directions.'

'We are aware that local opinion is divided on the need for a Sunday service for Harris and have begun a consultation process with the local community as is required by the terms of our contract. We would stress that no decision will be taken on this until consultation is complete.'

Sunday sailings began from Stornoway to Ullapool in June 2009, despite strong opposition from church groups. CalMac stressed it was only responding to local demand and under European law could not refuse to run the ferry because of religious objections.

LEWIS

COASTGUARD teams were called out to help care workers reach elderly people on Lewis after four inches of snow fell last weekend Friday.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar asked Stornoway Coastguard for the use of its 4x4 vehicles.

Stornoway watch manager Martin Collins said: 'We are happy to assist if called upon in such situations.'

STORNOWAY could become a hub for dental care in the Highlands and Islands following the opening of its new state-of-the-art Dental Treat and Teach centre.

Funded by the Scottish Government, it is hoped that the new facility will attract dentists to the area, thus reducing waiting lists and increasing the number of people registered with a dentist. Western Isles MSP Alasdair Allan said: 'This project is one which I know many people have been waiting to see become a reality and will be a valuable asset to the Western Isles for many years to come.'

WESTERN Isles Council has welcomed the launch of the new Universal Home Insulation Scheme for all homes on Lewis and Harris.

The new scheme will offer free loft and/or cavity wall insulation for home extensions, which were not covered through the previous programme, the Home Insulation Scheme.

The Scottish Government funded initiative has now been finalised and will run from January until the end of March this year.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's chairman of environmental and protective services Norman MacDonald said: 'I would urge householders in Lewis and Harris to contact the number given below without further delay.'

For more information or to take advantage of the free offer, phone 0800 512012.

STRACHUR

STAFF at local post offices say that the future of the village post offices in Cowal should be secure following a review of postal services in Scotland.

Ian Asher, who works at the post office in Strachur village store, said following the closure of St Catherine's post office last year, there is not another postal service for 15 miles.

Patricia Watt, owner of Colintraive Hotel and village store, echoed Ian's

Hollywood star drops in on Dalmally

STAFF at Mary's Meals in Dalmally had a special Christmas present when Hollywood heart-throb Gerard Butler dropped in for a visit.

The 300 star visited with his mother and had the female staff swooning as he met them at their Craig Lodge office.

The charity's founder Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow had received a CNN Hero of the Year Award from the actor at a glitzy ceremony in Los Angeles in November.

That night Gerard chatted with Magnus and his wife Julie about the charity, which feeds 400,000 schoolchildren in developing countries around the world.

Love of Argyll

Gerard and Magnus shared experiences of Haiti, where a Mary's Meals project is in place and Gerard visited after the earthquake in January 2010.

They also spoke of their shared love of Argyll, where Gerard had previously been on holiday to Loch Awe, and agreed to keep in touch.

Gerard also stopped off for lunch at the Green Welly Stop on the way to Dalmally.

Visiting

Louisa McLennan, of Mary's Meals, explained: 'This Christmas Gerard was visiting his mother, who still

lives in Scotland.

'She had seen Magnus give a talk at a Celtic Connections event last year, so decided to take a drive to Argyll to make the most of the snowy scenery and visit our head office in Dalmally.



Gerard Butler with Mary's Meals founder Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow.

he was coming to visit until his mother phoned up that morning and asked if it was okay for them to pop in.

CNN Heroes

The staff really enjoyed their visit and although it was very brief, Gerard still took time to chat to everyone and have his photo taken.

'We are grateful for his support, through the CNN Heroes show and since, and

hope very much that he will continue to be involved.'

Gerard has recently been working in Africa, filming *Machine Gun Preacher*, about a reformed drug dealer who starts a home and school for orphans affected by conflicts in northern Uganda and southern Sudan, and expressed a particular interest in Mary's Meals' work in that region.

delighted the audience and sent them home with smiles on their faces.

The club makes its annual visit to south Skye on Thursday February 3 when it will meet in the Broadford Hotel to be entertained by the fine music of Iain and Murdo Cameron and Friends - not to be missed.

- John Grundy

THE CLAN Donald Skye Visitor Centre at Armadale will host the first of its 2011 food fairs on Saturday from 11am to 3pm.

Small Isle of Skye producers will display foods including bread, smoked products and game.

Organiser Louise Pinkney said fairs were started last year on a trial basis and have proved so popular that they will become regular monthly fixtures.

IONA

IONA Village Hall welcomed in the New Year with a party for the whole family.

The night was a great success with revellers dancing well into the wee small hours.

MC Gordon Bruce pulled together a night of party games, disco music and welcomed a live band onto the stage.

Money was raised for the village hall and Mary's Meals from a door collection and raffle.

GLENUIG

GLENUIG is to round off its New Year celebrations on a Caribbean note with a visit from a Glasgow reggae band.

The 13-piece Captain Slack's Mezzanine All-Stars will provide an evening of Jamaican music - with a Scottish twist in the lyrics -

in Glenug Hall this coming Saturday.

Prizes will be awarded on the night to the best Caribbean influenced fancy dress.

BARCALDINE

SNOW and ice resulted in several minor road accidents in the Sutherland's Grove and Creagan Bridge area over last weekend.

No injuries were reported.

LISMORE

HIGHLAND ceilidh band *Pneumatic Drills* tore up the dance floor at Lismore Village Hall last Monday with a selection of ceilidh and classic tunes.

The boys were supported by three Lorn youngsters: Ewan MacDonald, Malcolm Clark and Lismore lad Murray Willis, who all took part in last year's Argyll Ceilidh Trail.

GIGHA

ONE OF Gigha's best-known residents, Kenny McNeill, retired last week from his job as engineer on the island's car ferry *MV Loch Ranza*.

A popular member of the crew, Kenny, of Keill Cottages, was employed by Caledonian MacBrayne for the past 12 years.

As well as looking after the ferry's main engines and generators, Kenny carried out many other 'hands on' tasks, both mechanical and non-mechanical. Ferry colleagues gathered in the Gigha Hotel to present Kenny with a token of their appreciation - a nautical clock and a book on Hebridean shipping. Handing over the gifts, Skipper Freddy Gillies paid tribute to his shipmate's diligence and expertise in *Loch Ranza*'s engine room.



Guest band the Ross MacPherson Scottish Dance Band in action at Portree: Donald John Campbell of Portree on drums, Calum MacPhail of Dalmally on fiddle and leader Ross MacPherson of Connel on accordion.

AN APPLICATION for the siting of trestles for oyster farming off the Isle of Gigha has been validated.

To be sited at East Tarbert Bay, Gigha, Argyll and Bute Council validated the application on December 27 2010.

The application for the proposed oyster farm is due to be decided on February 26.

INVERARAY

STAFF at the Co-op in Inveraray are appealing for members of the community to share their fundraising ideas and initiatives.

The call comes after the Co-op decided to support Enable Scotland throughout 2011.

The Inveraray branch aims to raise £1,000 before December 2011 and has already planned coffee mornings and a fayre with stalls selling a variety of goods.

Enable Scotland campaigns for a better life for children and adults with learning disabilities and supports them and their families to live, work and take part in their communities.

Anyone who would like to get involved in the fundraising projects should make themselves known to staff at the Co-op on Main Street. THE ROYAL Burgh can now boast to having one of the best bars in the country after the George Hotel was awarded a 'Best Bar in Scotland' accolade.

The award comes from the Good Soup Guide, an online Scottish tour guide which recommends where to get good soup, good ale, and things to see and do in Scottish towns.

Described by founder of the Good Soup Guide Edward Burns as

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The Oban Times

& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

Let the force be with us

PROPOSALS to merge Scotland's eight police forces into one centrally-controlled unit have been in the spotlight again this week as Holyrood wrestles with the pros and cons of such a move.

Area chief constables are predictably against the cost cutting plan which would see many of their posts go in a bid to save an estimated £194m a year.

While experience tells us that 'centralisation' rarely brings the savings anticipated, there are several alternative avenues which could coordinate and enhance the current emergency service structure that may be worth exploring. An obvious option would be the combination of police, fire, ambulance and, where practical, coastguard services under one roof - one emergency centre, one call, one integrated response. Probably too simple!

GLASGOW LETTER

Celtic Connections 2011

TONIGHT (Thursday) features the opening concert of this year's festival and it will be preceded by a torchlight procession starting in George Square at 4.45pm.

Throughout the festival, which lasts until the end of the month, music from locations worldwide will be featured and our own Scottish music will be well represented.

Ceol's Craic, the Gaelic Club, will have a full programme from Thursday January 20 to Saturday January 22 in the CCA on Sauchiehall Street. Its programme will include workshops, films, live music and dancing while exploring aspects of the connections between Gaelic and other world traditions with many well known artistes taking part.

The full programme for the festival is readily available. For tickets telephone 0141 353 8000 or online at [www.celticconnections.com](http://celticconnections.com).

Family ceilidh

AS IN previous years, Glasgow Skye Association got the New Year underway with an informal evening for their friends in Partick Burgh Hall.

It was very much a full-house in the Mid Hall as president Donald Fletcher introduced the entertainment for the evening, accordionists Jonathan Campbell and Charlie Kirkpatrick and singers Calum Ross and Cameron MacKichan. To add interest there was variety in the form of a quiz, community singing and, of course, no Skye function would be complete without the high quality supper.

Last week's column indicated the wrong date for this function. I apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused. I can assure readers that over indulgence during New Year celebrations was not the reason!

Traditional evenings

JANUARY is, of course, the time to celebrate our National Bard and some local associations will be catering for our needs.

On Saturday January 22 it will be turn of the Glasgow Islay Association when it holds its annual Burns' Supper in the Crawford Hall, Beith Street, Partick, at 7pm.

On Monday January 24, the St Columba Church Guild will have its Scot's Night in the church hall at

7.30pm. Tickets, costing £7, include a meal plus ceilidh and are available from all members or at the door.

The Tiree Association will have its Burns' Supper in Ralston Community Hall on Saturday January 29. For tickets telephone 07810 242685.

Congratulations

IT LOOKS as if it is going to be a busy time for Alastair MacInnes, president of the Uist and Barra Association, and his wife Jessie.

The reason? Their son Ian announced his engagement on Christmas Day to Debbie Griffiths from Partick and Jessie's niece Lynne MacKillop, formerly of Beardsen and now of London, announced her engagement to David Low of London.

Congratulations to both couples.

Diary dates

Thursday January

13: Celtic Connections Opening Concert, Royal Concert Hall, 7.30pm.

Friday January 14:

Clydebank and District Highlander's Association ceilidh, Napier Hall, Old Kilpatrick, 7.30pm.

Saturday January 15:

Highlander's Club dance, Partick Burgh Hall, 8pm - Susan MacFadyen Band, Stirling An Comunn Gaidhealach ceilidh, Lesser Albert Hall, 7.30pm. Piping competition final, Islay Inn - see below

Tuesday January

18: Comann Gaidhlig Ghlaschu, Sgoil Ghaidhlig Ghlaschu, 7.30pm - Mark Wringe.

Wednesday January 19:

Gaelic Quiz, Park Bar, 7.30pm.

Saturday January 22:

Glasgow Islay Association Burns' Supper - see above.

Pub scene

CALUM Iain MacCorquodale and friends will play in the Park Bar on both Friday and Saturday with Stewart Cameron/Simon Moran on Sunday while in the Islay Inn it will be Crooked Reel on Friday and Pneumatic Drills on Saturday.

The final of the Piping Competition, run in conjunction with the National Piping Centre, will take place in the Islay Inn on Saturday and will feature Margaret Dunn, Glenn Brown, Chris Armstrong and Ally Henderson.

In keeping with the informal nature of this competition, the audience will vote to decide the winner.

Neil Murray, Telephone

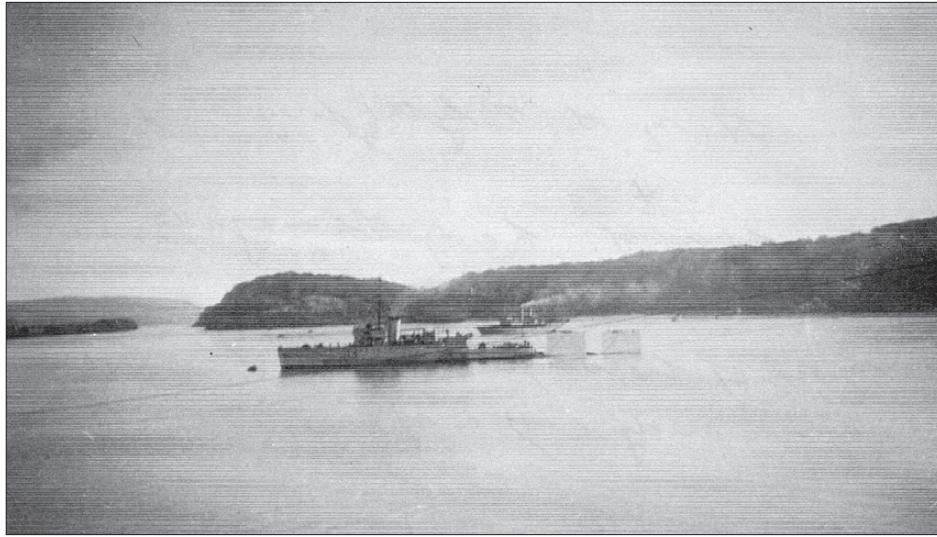
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It is the policy of The Oban Times Group to correct any errors in print. If you find an error of fact on our pages please write to The Editor, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HB giving your daytime telephone number where possible. This statement of policy will appear on this page every week along with any corrections or clarifications. The Oban Times adheres to the Press Complaints' Commission's Code of Conduct. The views expressed in The Oban Times are not necessarily those of this newspaper.



Ship in Tobermory Bay - 1944

Nigel Campbell of Dumbarton submitted this week's flashback photograph which shows HMS Blyth in Tobermory Bay in 1944. Most of the ships had left for Normandy and D-Day. We invite readers to send in flashback photographs. Please send prints to *The Oban Times*, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll, PA34 4HB, or email editor@obantimes.co.uk. Prints or emails must be accompanied by a caption, name, address and telephone number. Anyone wishing their prints returned must supply a stamped addressed envelope.

Letters to the editor

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www.obantimes.co.uk

Telephone: 01631 568000
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ACHA working to support law-abiding tenants

Sir,

THE OBAN Times is to be congratulated on its analysis of eviction figures in Argyll and Bute.

To give an idea of the scale of this loss of income, closing all the 26 schools on the council's original hit list would have saved £2,000,000 a year.

I find it astonishing that Mike Russell and Jim Mather are in agreement with this cut.

Mr Russell, Mr Mather and their SNP colleagues are responsible for slashing public expenditure in Argyll and Bute. On behalf of the people of Argyll and Bute, I appeal to them to think again and give us our £5,500,000 back.

Alan Reid, Argyll and Bute MP, 95 Alexandra Parade, Dunoon, Argyll.

Arrogant attitude

Sir,

I am sorry I have reduced the quality of my rural community by reaching my 70s and therefore becoming geriatric.

I was unaware I had also become injurious to my community.

Perhaps Mr White, letters page, *The Oban Times*, December 30 2010, would like to suggest a solution to this problem? Euthanasia perhaps? Talk about arrogance.

Sylvia Preston, Argyll.

What's on for the under threes?

Sir,

My daughter, son-in-law and two-year-old grandson will be moving up to live in the Oban area - Loch Melfort - later this year.

I have been looking into the local provision of pre-school activities, playgroups or a play gym for my grandson but all I have been able to find is a small ball pool at the leisure centre?

Surely there must be more than this? I would be pleased to be told that I am wrong and that there is provision for under threes to meet and have fun with other children. I would welcome any help and can be emailed at brendafallon@hotmail.co.uk. Thank you from a grateful grand-mother.

B Fallon, Kilchrenan.

SNP government to blame

Sir,

I welcome Argyll and Bute Council's decision to abandon the consultation process on school closures

and to go back to the drawing board.

These closure proposals, drawn up by the former SNP/Independent administration, were fatally flawed.

However, it is important to remember that the main cause of the council's financial problems is the decision by the SNP Government that

Who has not heard it said

'the council's a joke' or had a

good chuckle at the antics it

gets up to as it goes about our

country's business?

No-one, I am sure, who has

spent long in these parts.

Our council has been a

source of wry amusement

for the last 100 years. Better

to laugh than cry, maybe?

The trust finds itself at the

beginning of a new phase

When it gobbles up a quarter of a billion annually we are certainly entitled to have a good laugh at the council's expense: but we are even more entitled to know that every pound of that vast sum of our money is spent responsibly.

Each time Audit Scotland carries out an audit of Argyll and Bute Council we hear something along the super-complacent lines of 'not really very good value for money but there are signs of improvement'.

We tolerated that poor value for our money during the long period of increasing affluence when we could see that even council services were increasing year by year.

However, it's all change now. The word 'austerity' is being used more and more and soon enough we will come to appreciate exactly what it means. When austerity really hits us in Argyll, will it then be a time to stop laughing at the council and to wring every penny of value for our money out of them?

As residents, I think deep down we have always known what we would have to do to get value out of it. That, of course, is to take the council in hand ourselves for clearly no-one else is going to do it.

It may not be as easy as laughing or crying over it but if we take it on and straighten it out it should be incomparably more rewarding. But who knows, it may be easier to do than we think.

Arthur McFarlane, Mount Tarbert.

Oban Hogmanay

Sir,

May I take this opportunity to thank the individuals who made our Hogmanay at the Oban clock tower that little bit special.

Thank you Alan Mackenzie, our MC, Captain Malcolm Scott of CalMac, Billy Ingram, property officer, and Malcolm Kerr for pyrotechnics.

See you all same time, same place this year.

Callum MacLeod on behalf of the Meet, Greet and Go Gang.

Delighted to see visitors at Arduaine Garden

Sir,

I am writing to thank readers for supporting their local National Trust for Scotland property.

It was a tough environment for heritage properties last year, what with ash clouds and rather wet spells throughout July and August, but nevertheless, we've been delighted to see many of you out at Arduaine Garden.

Many of our wildlife species are already in need of protection.

This is just one reason we can do without these monstrous and hideous machines.

David Foster, Clachan Seil, Oban.

A view from the tower

by McCaig

Local government reform urgently needed

AS WE enter the second decade of the 21st century facing stringent reductions in all public services provided by Scottish local government we cringe with fear, especially if we are employed by a local authority.

This is because we could be one of thousands joining the dole queue as local councils have to enforce the cuts which will keep the Auditor General and his staff off our backs and those of our employers.

These cuts will affect the professional as well as the clerical staff and that means teachers will have to go and subjects cease to be taught. In an urban situation that can be mollified by agreements between senior secondaries in a city or part thereof to do Chinese in one school and Russian in another so there is some sort of choice - preferably both as those who

command these languages along with Spanish will become 'the high flyers' of this century along with the mathematicians and scientists.

The modern Scottish student has to get over his/her suspicion of learning languages other than English. And, all too often, they don't even learn English very well judging from job application letters.

I have chosen to concentrate on the proposals to make teachers, at primary through to senior secondary level, redundant

because this is the one that has caused most angst among parents and all those who believe, as I do, that a community that loses its school begins to suffer a loss of confidence in its community and moves on. All the good work done by the Highlands and Islands Development Board and its successor, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, in 'building communities' will go for naught - but at what price?

I know of no-one in local government who now believes that the current system of local government finance can go on. Every local authority has massive debts, despite a 'squeeze' in every one of the last ten years.

I have posed the question in this column: what is to be done about this? And I am pleased to say that councillors of all political colours and independents are saying there has to be a new form of local government now.

Whichever party or parties forms the new government in the Scottish Parliament after the May elections will have to appoint a commission to deal with this fundamental problem; strange to say, there is a current Lord Wheatley, a senior Court of Session judge, who could well chair a commission to take on the reform of Scottish local government started by his late father.

John Lowrie Morrison OBE

IN LAST week's column,

I mentioned briefly that

'Jolomo' had received an

OBE in the New Year's

Vital road salt arrives on Western Isles

VITAL road salt deliveries to the Western Isles are being unloaded from cargo ships this week – just as milder weather arrives.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has continued to treat roads with salt and grit although supplies, the council said, were ‘running low’.

Freezing weather on Monday saw particularly icy conditions, with many routes having to be re-treated.

Portree spotlight on work of Scottish Natural Heritage

LOCAL people are being invited along to an informal reception by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) at the Royal Hotel in Portree next Wednesday.

SNH chairman Andrew Thin and area manager George Hogg will host the event, which runs from 7pm to 9pm.

Mr Thin said the evening would provide an opportunity for informal discussion about the work of SNH in the area. The reception is free and light refreshments will be provided.

Audio book download service launched in Highlands

HIGHLAND Council has launched a new audio book download service for library members.

The internet-based service can be accessed from libraries across the region, from home, on journeys to work and even abroad on holiday.

More than 600 free titles will be available for a trial period of six months under council plans to increase access to library books online – irrespective of where users are.

More information is available at local libraries or at www.highland.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/libraries.

Developer in bid to build new homes at Spean Bridge

A SPEAN Bridge property developer is looking for permission to build four new homes near Torlundy.

Roddy Campbell of RE Campbell (Joinery) Ltd want to build the new houses, as well as eight car parking spaces, on a 6,600 square metre area 50 metres north-east of Ben View Crescent, near the A82.

Seafood company cooks up new business

A HIGHLANDS and Islands seafood company which transports west coast live shellfish worldwide hasn't let the winter weather stop it cooking up new business.

Scot West Seafoods has been selling live langoustines, lobsters, shrimps and other species of shellfish from the seas around the west coast of Scotland to a predominantly Spanish market since 2003.

With the support of Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) the company has been looking at how processing its own products will allow it to target high-end retail and restaurant markets.

The business has bases in Kyle, Harris and the Uists employing around 30 staff.



Bringing in the Old New Year: Glenfinnan shinty players young...and the not quite so young. 10_f02glen02

Shinty brings in Old New Year at Glenfinnan

GLENFINNAN residents celebrated the Old New Year of January 12 on Saturday with an old tradition – a shinty game between villagers.

A bonfire beside the partly iced-up River Finnan, mulled cider and mulled wine warmed up the contestants before the match, which began with the traditional throw up at 3pm.

The rough pitch under Glenfinnan's

famous viaduct was frozen and proved somewhat bumpy but that did not deter the sides from serving up a competitive game.

Action

The ball was difficult to see at times in the snow and almost ended up in the river from time to time, while local artist Gail Wendorff's horse Dancer tried to join the action on several occasions.

The result was the least important element on an enjoyable social occasion, but for the record 'The 45s' scored a 3-2 win over Glenfinnan.

Match organiser Glenfinnan Estate manager Alasdair Gibson said: 'There was great community spirit for our traditional Old New Year festivities.'

'The youngest player was only three years old.'

Skye forest fundraising halfway towards target

A FUNDRAISING campaign to help buy a forest on the Isle of Skye for the community is more than halfway towards its target.

Sleat Community Trust has banked £10,119 in its Tormore Forest Appeal

so far – and has until March 31 to find the remainder. The trust needs £20,000 from public contributions to help meet the £330,000 asking price – and is asking 1,000 people to sponsor '1,000 acres of Skye' at £20 a shot. The trust hopes

to own and manage the forest for the benefit of the community and visitors. The bid for the Forestry Commission Scotland-owned woodland is being made through the National Forest Land Scheme.

Estate and trust set for deer talks

REPRESENTATIVES from Black Corries Estate, Glencoe, are to meet neighbouring landowners National Trust for Scotland (NTS) in an effort to come to an agreement over the trust's deer management policy, *The Oban Times* can reveal.

During the recent harsh winter weather, deer in the area have taken cover in NTS woodlands in Glencoe and deer stalkers in the neighbouring estate are concerned the animals may be shot en masse.

NTS confirmed the meeting, due to take place in Glencoe Visitor Centre on Monday, will cover a range of countryside management issues, including deer management.

Retired crofter Alistair MacDonald recently spoke to *The Oban Times* about the problems he felt had been

EXCLUSIVE REPORT by RICHARD HADDOCK fort@obantimes.co.uk

caused by the NTS decision to take away sheep and deer from the glen.

He said: 'When you remove deer and sheep like they have done here, all the wildlife in the area suffers. They are attempting to cover us with trees. The glen is a culture all of its own, and there has never been trees there.'

'They took away the sheep and deer and everything else died out. They don't seem to understand how important these animals are to the whole area.'

He added: 'There used to be lovely wild flowers as well, but without the animals there to fertilize them, they've nearly all gone as well.'

NTS's communications

manager Sarah Cuthbert-Kerr rejected Mr MacDonald's claims, saying they are doing everything they can to protect flora and fauna in the area.

She said: 'The trust's approach at Glencoe is designed to restore the delicate and important habitats that can be found there.'

'In fact, there were trees in the area historically, however, these died out due to over-grazing. It is this biodiversity which the trust is trying to protect so that it survives for future generations.'

A similar deer problem was highlighted by *The Oban Times* last January when Forest Enterprise staff shot 26 deer who had been taking shelter in Forestry Commission woods near Loch Arkraig.

As the winter ferry timetable meant a long wait, the lifeboat crew were asked to take him across.

Lifeboat operations manager John Cameron told *The Oban Times*: 'As far as I'm aware the fire was dealt with comfortably. It was nothing too exciting.'

Lifeboat crew ferry firefighter to Raasay

PORTREE lifeboat crew are used to saving lives in high-risk operations – but were given a slightly more mundane task on Tuesday.

A chimney fire was reported in Raasay and a fireman from Portree was going across the water to provide back up to the Raasay fire fighters in case the flames took hold.

HE'S done it before and he wants to do it again. First Minister Alex Salmond, speaking in an exclusive interview, said that if he and his government fail to save the Skykon Campbeltown factory, it won't be for want of trying.

Negotiations are taking place behind the scenes and he has met with potential buyers in Denmark and the Machrihanish operation followed weeks later. The factory has not reopened after the holiday break.

Mr Salmond said: 'Nobody can give an absolute promise. At this stage these are difficult negotiations but I am deeply committed to this plant and I'm going to strain every sine to save these jobs, not for the first time but for a second time.'

I am hopeful that it can be done.'

In October 2008 Vestas announced it was closing the factory and in March following year Alex Salmond was guest of honour when Skykon was given a plant of honour.

Within two years Skykon went into administration in Denmark and the Machrihanish operation followed weeks later. The factory has not reopened after the holiday break.

'The problem had nothing to do with Machrihanish but to do with developments in Denmark over which management [in Scotland] had no control,' he said.

The First Minister added: 'I

Private care home plan hits buffers

EXCLUSIVE REPORT by STEPHEN NORRIS snorris@obantimes.co.uk

PLANS for a private 60-bed care home at the Blair Mhor near Fort William have hit the buffers, *The Oban Times* can reveal.

Dingwall-based RDS Healthcare was aiming to build the home under a leasing agreement with Cheshire property firm Kingsgate Developments, which owns the site.

Highland Council planners granted permission in June 2008, but RDS and Kingsgate have failed to agree cash terms.

RDS already operates homes at Rosemarkie, Inverness and Cullen and had hoped to add Fort William to its portfolio.

But managing director Ashley Sham told *The Oban Times* the development was off because Kingsgate's asking price was too high.

He said: 'Unless the developer thinks that the price will come down at Blair Mhor, then I don't think it will progress.'

'The market has changed and people have to be a bit more realistic about what to expect.'

'You have to remember that in 2007-8 the property bubble burst. People were paying high prices for sites

RDS Healthcare was 'no longer part of any consortium to develop and operate the new proposed care home in Fort William'. He did not know if there were any other companies still involved, but thought it unlikely.

The news puts further pressure on Highland Council to ensure Lochaber has sufficient bed capacity for those in need.

Fort William and Ardnamurchan councillor Bren Gormley told *The Oban Times* the council's recent decision to halt a new and bigger Invernevis in Caol was shortsighted, given private sector uncertainty.

He said: 'We know that we are going to have an increase in demand over the next half generation and we know that a refurbished Invernevis will not do that.'

'Where will the funding for a private care home come from? If you were a bank would you put money into a care home in Manchester, Leeds or Glasgow – or Fort William? Where is the safe investment? Kingsgate will now be looking long and hard at their planning consent. What's to stop them saying 'what about a Travelodge instead'?

Ardnamurchan nurses back on call out-of-hours

NHS HIGHLAND has bowed to community pressure and allowed district nurses to provide out-of-hours medical care in west Ardnamurchan meantime.

The decision represents a major victory for West Ardnamurchan Community Council (WACC) which mounted a hard-hitting campaign after being told the existing service was 'neither safe nor sustainable' and would be axed. GPs, NHS 24 and the Scottish Ambulance Service would instead provide cover from next month. But compromise talks involving NHS Highland, Scottish Ambulance Service and West Ardnamurchan representatives will now take place – a process which could take up to a year.

Council leader Michael Foxley emailed WACC on Tuesday on behalf of NHS Highland to inform them of the move. Chairman Rosie Curtis welcomed the 'wonderful news', but said WACC would not be withdrawing its formal complaint to the NHS.

'A senior representative of NHS Highland should come down here and admit they made a serious mistake and apologise for all the worry it has caused people.'

New council group formed in Argyll and Bute

A NEW political group has been formed within Argyll and Bute Council.

Councillor George Freeman and Councillor Gordon Chalmers have registered The Argyll and Bute Independent Councillors Group. This follows on from the expulsion of Councillor Freeman from the Alliance of Independent Councillors.

Mr Chalmers said: 'This group will allow a different perspective on the issues going through council from both ends of the council area – with George in Garelochhead and me on Mull.'

'It is an opportunity for any like minded councillors who might not appreciate the flow of governance in the council and would like to join us.'



First Minister Alex Salmond

Salmond vows to fight for Campbeltown turbine jobs

HE'S done it before and he wants to do it again. First Minister Alex Salmond, speaking in an exclusive interview, said that if he and his government fail to save the Skykon Campbeltown factory, it won't be for want of trying.

Negotiations are taking place behind the scenes and he has met with potential buyers in Denmark and the Machrihanish operation followed weeks later. The factory has not reopened after the holiday break.

'The problem had nothing to do with Machrihanish but to do with developments in Denmark over which management [in Scotland] had no control,' he said.

The First Minister added: 'I

have been personally in touch with potential buyers of the Machrihanish factory, I know the area and I think it is a great plant with a great future and a fine work force, these are great assets for a potential buyer.'

The First Minister could not reveal who the interested parties are or their nationality but he ruled out Chinese involvement saying this is a major investment in a relatively short time scale - the Chinese investments in Scotland announced at the weekend are the result of negotiations begun last July.

'There is a very great urgency here, the administrators are working hard with a major

customer, Siemens, in order to allow the plant to continue working; negotiations are on going and the work force have a meeting on Wednesday,' he said.

Leader of Argyll and Bute Council, Dick Walsh and chief executive Sally Loudon, and council direct-ors travelled to Edinburgh to meet with the First Minister on Wednesday afternoon.

The administrator from Ernest and Young also called a meeting with the Campbeltown-based workforce on Wednesday morning to update them on attempts to save the factory, as *The Oban Times* went to press.

'There is a very great urgency here, the administrators are working hard with a major

OT

Man jailed for drunken attack on girlfriend

A CAOL man attacked his girlfriend with a wooden baton in a drunken rage, hitting her so hard the baton split in half.

Gary Wallace, aged 37, of 172 Kilmallie Road, pled guilty to assaulting Natalie Smith, aged 21, by repeatedly striking her on the body and head with the baton, throwing a number of objects at her and repeatedly hitting her on the body, all to her injury. The attack took place at the couple's home on December 20.

After Wallace had spent much of the day at the pub, the pair went to bed around 10.30pm. He was restless and kept Ms Smith awake but when she tried to leave to sleep in the spare room, Wallace became angry, pushed over a dresser and threw a stone ornament at her, narrowly missing.

Wallace then punched both her arms and threw more objects at her. These included an alarm clock, a bottle of perfume and a table lamp, all of which hit her. He then picked up the baton and hit her several times while she tried to protect herself in the bed. One blow

EXCLUSIVE
REPORT by
RICHARD HADDOCK
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which hit the back of Ms Smith's head split the baton in two. She called the police from her mobile phone from under the duvet, but Wallace grabbed the phone before she could speak. Police traced the call and attended the scene.

Prosecutor Alison Wylie told Fort William Sheriff Court the attack left Ms Smith with a tender head, a bruised elbow, a three centimetre cut on her knee and pain in her ankle. She required crutches to walk for a period after the assault.

Defending, Hamish Melrose said Wallace had a long-standing drink problem and was 'totally ashamed' of his behaviour.

Sentencing Wallace to six months in prison, Sheriff Douglas Small said: 'He is a thoroughly unpleasant person when he's had too much to drink. This was a most distasteful assault. It is indeed fortunate she didn't suffer any more serious injuries.'

Appeal to community to get involved

VOLUNTARY Action Lochaber (VAL) is planning two community events early in 2011.

VAL, run by the Volunteer Centre Lochaber at its base at An Drochaid in Fort William, has lined up a 'get involved in your community' event in Caoil Community Centre on March 19 and a community enterprise conference at the Sunart Centre in Strontian on March 25.

VCL's Rachel Tonks said one of the group's main priorities for 2011, the European Year of the Volunteer, was to increase opportunities and support available for social enterprises in Lochaber.

More information is available on 01397 704633 or from lochaber@volunteerhighland.org.

Adventure centre's power scheme plan

A LOCHABER outdoor adventure centre has applied for permission to build a new 100kW hydro scheme.

As well as the hydro scheme, the Abernethy Trust, Ardgour, wants to build a powerhouse, an access track from the B8043, a 650 metre underground

pipe and an outfall returning water to the burn.

A document supporting the application to Ross, Skye and Lochaber planning committee said: 'The trust is interested in producing renewable energy using the natural resources available at their Ardgour site.'



Hamish MacInnes opens the new transceiver park at Glencoe Mountain.

Glencoe legend opens new mountain safety base

LEGENDARY Glencoe mountaineer, rescue pioneer and author Dr Hamish MacInnes officially opened Glencoe Mountain Resort's new mountain safety base on Saturday.

The BCA/Anatom Transceiver Park will allow skiers, boarders, climbers and walkers to practise using special radio devices designed to locate people buried by snow.

The avalanche transceivers, small electronic transmitter/receivers, are worn around the chest and send out a constant signal, detectable even through metres of snow. Rescuers or fellow climbers looking for avalanche victims switch to 'search mode' on the unit to pick up the casualties' signal, allowing them to quickly find where they are buried.

Glencoe Mountain marketing manager Daniel Loots said: 'Many backcountry enthusiasts own these devices but very few spend any time practising with them - meaning that often their first experience with the search function is in an actual incident.'

'The aim of the park is to encourage mountain users to spend time practising rescues. In these incidents time is the critical factor - mortality rates are over 70 per cent for anyone buried over 15 minutes.'

The ski resort's founding figure Philip Rankin and former manager Peter Weir both attended the opening ceremony.

Mr Rankin, aged 93, made the trip up the chairlift and over the plateau to witness the event. BCA manufactures mountain safety equipment and Anatom is the UK importers.

Now that Mr Alexander



Schoolchildren at Sgoil nan Loch in Lewis who were involved in the Crofting Connections project.

Photograph courtesy of the Soil Association.

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HIGHLANDS MP and Chief Secretary to the Treasury Danny Alexander has been accused of renegeing on an election pledge on exempting Scotland's mountain rescue teams from paying VAT on vital gear.

Mr Alexander promised action on the issue before last May's General Election, saying 'it was not possible' to put a price on the work mountain rescue teams do.

But the Conservative-LibDem UK Government hiked VAT to 20 per cent last week - leaving the lifesaving volunteers, who are funded by public donations, facing yet higher bills for equipment.

Mr Alexander said two days before the May 6 poll: 'It has never been right that a vital service which relies on donations from the public and extraordinary commitment from volunteers is second in command to Chancellor George Osborne.'

Lochaber SNP Councillor Bren Gormley says it's time for him to stand by his words.

He said: 'Mountain rescue teams throughout Scotland give unstinting service to their communities, both locally and to the wider mountaineering community - all given freely in the spirit of the joy of the hills.'

'They are supported by

donations given freely by the public who value and respect their contribution.

Despite this HM Treasury skims around £200,000 of that gifted money annually for VAT.

'The Government has resisted calls for VAT exemption, arguing that it would not be allowed by European law, but it is absolutely clear that VAT paid could be refunded.'

The cost to the exchequer is small, but the difference is enormously significant for mountain rescue teams.

I hope this is a policy which will be put into action.'

Now that Mr Alexander

REPORT by
STEPHEN NORRIS
snorris@obantimes.co.uk

from other parts of Scotland associated with mountain rescue teams.

'Perhaps this might be a Liberal Democrat promise that is followed through - but I'm not holding my breath.'

Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team leader John Stevenson backed calls for the service to be VAT exempt.

He told *The Oban Times*: 'This does cost us quite a lot of money. The public are very supportive of us and I don't think it's right that the Government should help themselves to money donated to us that is used to pay for equipment - especially when we are working for nothing.'

A Treasury spokesman said: 'The Government cannot extend or introduce new zero rates because of EU restrictions.'

'However the Government acknowledges the important work of the mountain rescue teams and continues to consider this issue.'

Home composting popular in Highlands

MORE than 27,000 households in the Highlands have bought subsidised home composting bins since a zero waste scheme began in 2004, figures show.

Over a third of the contents of an average household bin are suitable for home composting, including tea bags, eggshells, grass cuttings and garden waste - and even the contents from a vacuum cleaner.

Tim Morton of Zero Waste Scotland said the environmentally friendly project produced excellent free compost for garden plots.

Local LEADER grants top £1.5 million

GRANTS from a European fund supporting small-scale sustainable community-led projects in the Outer Hebrides have passed the £1.5million mark.

The local LEADER Innse Gall programme has backed various projects including recycling and laundrette business Carthannas Nis, Barra Watersports' community programme and An Lanntair Arts Centre in Stornoway.

Cothrom's 'Re-Store' furniture recycling scheme in South Uist and

Crofting Connections, a Scotland-wide project to encourage schoolchildren to learn about crofting and horticulture, were among other recipients.

Under Crofting Connections, schools

including Sgoil nan Loch in Lewis, learned about the history of crofting,

studying soil fertility, spinning,

weaving, waulking songs and the importance of bees to crofting areas.

Pupils were also involved in growing

seeds and traditional garden crops using

new and old methods both outside and

in polytunnels.

LEADER funding helped the people of Tolsta in Lewis buy and run their local shop, while the most recent award of £310,300 helped provide broadband infrastructure to the Tolsta, Dalmore, North Harris and Grimsay.

The fund still has more than £1.1m remaining and the LEADER Innse Gall Local Action Group is inviting communities to contact their local LEADER officer, either in Uist or Stornoway, to find out more or visit the website at www.outerhebridesleader.co.uk.

New chapter in Berneray story project

New chapter in Berneray story project

EXCLUSIVE
REPORT by
STEPHEN NORRIS
snorris@obantimes.co.uk

they left part of Berneray's culture disappeared. Our new project will be all about how that affected them in their new lands, recapturing some of that lost material and bringing it back to Berneray.'

Mr Ross confirmed a funding application to support the project was due to be submitted this week. 'We are looking for half from LEADER, with the rest coming from other sources, including ourselves,' he said. 'We have already been passed at the pre-application stage. They were happy with the general principles of what we want to do.'

He added: 'We are aiming to employ a part time project worker if it all goes according to plan.'

The renovated building, which doubles as the island's visitor information centre, will host the new material - if money required for the venture can be secured.

BHS secretary Andrew Ross told *The Oban Times* the 18-



Nurses Cottage on Berneray: could host new exhibition.

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Community landowners seek backing

THE ORGANISATION representing Scotland's community landowners is asking all political parties for backing in advance of the Holyrood elections in May.

Meeting in Inverness on Monday, Community Land Scotland - whose members account for 500,000 acres of land in the Highlands and Islands - agreed to ask the parties to commit themselves to the expansion of, and ongoing support for, community land ownership.

In a joint statement, the Community Land Scotland

board said: 'The reform of Scotland's landowning structure is a process that requires ongoing political support. We cannot stop at 500,000 acres and say that is the job done.'

'There are many other communities where the same options and opportunities exist, but they will not be fulfilled unless the political and financial will exists to support them.'

Community Land Scotland also called on the Scottish Government to make 'a long overdue decision' on the

proposed community buy-out in the Pairc area of Lewis, where the absentee landowner is resisting the crofting community's right to buy. Ministers have yet to rule on the matter.

Chairman David Cameron said: 'The inescapable fact is that, after a period of rapid expansion of community ownership, momentum has been lost in recent years.'

'It is our view that the success of community ownership more than justifies that support, on economic as well as social grounds.'

Mr Cameron, director of North Harris Trading, a subsidiary of the North Harris Trust, said 'the key question' was whether in future it would be possible to put together the kind of funding packages which supported successful

New book charts lives of emigrants overseas

ISLAND Emigrants, published by The Book Trust records historical experiences of families moving across the waters.

The book is full of human stories of the life-changing experiences of emigration, as well as touching on one of the most fundamental aspects of island history.

Alayne Barton of the Book Trust said: 'Emigration is a phenomenon which over the centuries has affected most families in the Outer Hebrides. It is still an important part of island life today, through the personal links with people of island descent all over the world. The history of emigration challenges us to assess how islanders regard the past, and to reflect on how these worldwide links could be developed to mutual advantage in the future.'

'Certain themes associated with emigration tend to dominate popular understanding and overshadow everything else. First amongst these is the Clearances. In many minds clearance and emigration are different sides of the same coin. But the story of emigration is far more complex and multi-faceted and the various authors reflect this. Marjory Harper's chapter offers insightful conclusions on different phases of island emigration, and Bill Lawson's gives a masterly overview based on pioneering statistical research on families in the Outer Hebrides which demonstrates clearly that very different factors led to emigration at various times from the 18th century onwards.'

'Another popular image of emigration is the deserted island, typified by 20th century evacuations as in the case of St Kilda or the Great Blasket Island in Ireland, and characterised by feelings of great nostalgia and a sense of guilt for a lost culture.'

'It is not only in the case of Barra and Cape Breton that cultural links are maintained today. Greta Mackenzie's account of finding relatives in Patagonia and the stories of Norman MacRae and Annie MacRitchie linking Stornoway and Detroit bear vivid testimony to that.'

The book is available from The Islands Book Trust, on 01851 880737.

Glasgow String Quartet bring classics to St John's



St John's Cathedral, in Oban, was filled with the soul-stirring sounds of the Glasgow String Quartet on Sunday in a special performance sponsored by Enterprise Music Scotland. Violinists Bill Chandler, Jacquie Speirs, were joined by Ian Budd on viola and Betsy Taylor on Cello as they performed works by Hyden, Brahms and Barber. 15_102quartet1



Màran, who are hoping their new single, Latha Math, will become the first Gaelic song to achieve UK Top 40 status since Runrig.

Màran bid to bring Gaelic back to the UK's Top 40

A BAND with strong roots in Lochaber is hoping to make history by having the first Gaelic song to hit the UK top 40 since Runrig.

Màran's single, Latha Math, which means 'fine day' or 'good day' has been described as a catchy fusion of pop with traditional Highland music. So proud are they of it, the band have set their sights as high as possible and should the online only single hit the top 40, the song will receive airplay on BBC RadioOne.

The six-piece group is made up of Spean Bridge's Gary Innes on accordion and Fort William's Ewen Henderson on pipes and fiddle. Lead singer, Norrie MacIver, hails from Carloway, on the Isle of Lewis.

Bassist Ross Saunders and drummer Scott Mackay come from the central belt, while Morayshire's Calum Stewart completes the line-up on flutes and uilleann (elbow) pipes.

They don't think their ambitions are unrealistic – even if nobody has managed to match Runrig since An Uibhal As Airde made history by making number 18 in the charts in 1995.

Downloads

Gary, also captain of Scotland's shiny team, said: 'You only need to chart 7,500 downloads that week to make number 40 in the chart. While that is ambitious, we think it is possible.'

'For example, if everyone in Oban, Lochaber, Skye and the islands who supports the Gaelic language or likes our music spends 79 pence buying the single; we're looking at number one, not 40.'

'We just hope people will support us!'

Thankfully, the band has had some expert help along the way. The single was produced by legends Phil Cunningham and Calum Malcolm, while Stuart Hamilton – who has worked with some of music's biggest names over the years, including Runrig – engineered the recording.

Gary said: 'This whole experience so far has been superb. It's incredible to be in such company while recording.'

The group also have the

perfect platform from which to launch their bid. The song will receive its first public airing on Sunday at the ABC in Glasgow as part of Celtic Connections, before being formally launched on Monday, with a special single launch gig at the city's Apple Store in Buchanan Street at 5pm the following day.

The single will be available to download from Monday on iTunes, Amazon, HMV and Play.com.

You can find out more about the band on its website at manran.co.uk.

North Argyll-based band play debut gig on home turf

'Having a female lead singer in a rock band adds something different'

NORTH ARGYLL band Cold Flame entertained crowds at Cuan Mhor recently as they made their debut performance.

Invited to support fellow Oban rockers The Works at the gig, the band said they were delighted to be playing their first gig on home turf.

The five piece features Craig Macdonald and Cammie Boyd on guitar, Scott Jackson on drums, Morray McNiven on bass and Hannah Matheson on vocals.

Describing their sound as 'rock' the band played covers of Brian Adam's Summer of '69, Wagon Wheel, Sweet Child of Mine

and Proud Mary. Scott said: 'We really want to thank The Works for inviting us to play with them and giving us our first gig in Oban. We look forward to getting as many gigs as possible in 2011.'

Formerly known as The Spin Offs, the band started as a group of friends playing the guitar, aged 15.

But with a few changes in the line-up and the addition of Hannah, niece of Scottish folk singer Karen Matheson, as lead singer, Cold Flame was formed.

'Having a female lead singer in a rock band adds something different to the band,' said Scott.



Members of Cold Flame Craig Macdonald, Cammie Boyd, Scott Jackson, Hannah Matheson and Morray McNiven. 08_101coldflame01

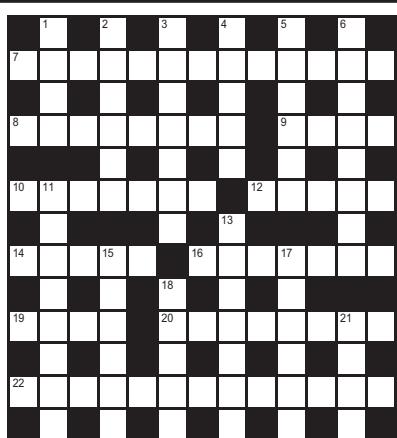
GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

Across

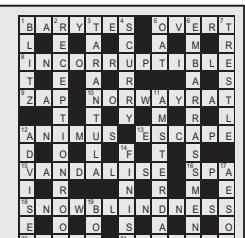
- 7 Time to tease? (5,5,3)
- 8 Make someone nervous (5,3)
- 9 Black (4)
- 10 Threesome (7)
- 12 Church assembly (5)
- 14 Analyse grammatically (5)
- 16 Impractical (4-3)
- 19 Jug. (4)
- 20 Most powerful (8)
- 22 Testing place (7,6)

Down

- 1 Composition (4)
- 2 Found in vitamin B complex (6)
- 3 Undies (1-6)
- 4 Direction (5)
- 5 Harden (6)
- 6 Write for pay rather than enjoyment (8)
- 11 Behind (8)
- 13 Feathers (7)
- 15 Endeavored (6)
- 17 Creamy yellow drink (6)
- 18 Food from heaven (5)
- 21 Sound muscles? (4)



Last Week's Solution



New Tai Chi classes starting soon
A unique opportunity to study the ancient art of Tai Chi.
Thursday 20th January

7.45 to 9.15 pm

The classes are held in

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Tai Chi Instructor Susanne Lin McCordell

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E: susannemccordell@hotmail.co.uk

W: www.susannemccordell.co.uk

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An Comunn Gaidhealach MEUR CHRUAICH (Cruachan Branch)
CEILIDH
Saturday, 15 January in Taynuilt Village Hall at 7.45pm
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Oban Gaelic Choir, Conductor Sileas Sinclair
(solos from Choir Members)
Deirdre MacDonald – fiddle : Sileas Sinclair – accordion
Rebecca Hill – clarinet : Finlay Wells – guitar
Toni Russell Dancers
Fear an Taighe: Duncan MacDonald
Admission £3.00. £2 for Members & Children 5-16 yrs including Tea.
A Warm Welcome Extended to All
(Funds collected promote The Gaelic Language, Music and Culture)

Celtic Connections ticket winners head for Glasgow festival

WINNERS of the The Oban Times Celtic Connections competition for concert tickets were chosen this week from a basket full of entries.

The annual Celtic music and arts festival running for 18 nights from January 13 will see some of the biggest names in traditional and some not-so-traditional music descend on Glasgow.

Three lucky Oban Times readers will be attending three of the biggest concerts on the festival programme.

Ticket winner Kate Anderson from Barcaldine will enjoy a night in the company of the Fiddlers' Bid; Jessie MacInnes from Glasgow will be going along to listen to the delights of Tiree-based band Skerryvore and Sarah Morton from Oban has won tickets to attend the ever popular Highland Sessions.

Full details of the Celtic Connections programme can be found online at www.celticconnections.com

Battlefield go Gaelic for first time

THE NEWEST member of the Battlefield Band, Fort William's Ewen Henderson, will sing lead vocals on the band's first ever Gaelic song, 'A' Bhriogais Uallach' (The Pompous Trousers).

Multi-instrumentalist Ewen, who is better known for his fiddle playing, only joined the band a matter of months ago.

The renowned folk group will be touring Hawaii this month and they will be presenting material from their upcoming album.



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APPIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Ethel Johnston

Saturday 15 January

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Reg. Scottish Charity No. SC026411

R.S.S.P.C.C (Children 1st)

Coffee Morning

Regent Hotel

Saturday 15th January

10-30-12 £2

Netherlorn Piping Society

Presents

The Music and History of John MacColl

Played by

Angus MacColl

And Angus J. MacColl

On Wed, 19th January 2011

In Argyllshire Gathering Halls, Oban

At 7.30pm

Entry: adults £3 children Free

Planning your retirement

IF YOU'RE planning ahead for your retirement, you'll be more than aware that there's more to think about than just your leaving party.

Everything from getting the most out of your pension to how you'll spend all the extra spare time you'll have will be running through your mind - never mind where you'll go for your first retirement holiday!

Thankfully, whatever it is you seek, there are options aplenty.

Given the current economic climate, your most pressing concern is bound to be money. Pensions aren't exactly what they were and you may be thinking about revamping your finances to make life a little more comfortable.

But before you take a leap of faith, it's worth consulting the experts at Oban chartered accountants, R A Clements. They'll guide you through the pros and cons of the available options and help you squeeze every ounce of benefit from your assets.

Thankfully, they also have offices in Lochgilphead, Fort William and on Mull - so you won't have to venture too far to sort out your finances.

Once that's sorted out, you can start thinking about the fun stuff - what are you to do with your time?

What about keeping fit? Work is no longer an obstacle to getting down to the gym, so now would be the perfect time to give it a go. Energie Fitness, at

Lochavullin Road, offer training programmes to suit all, including a personalised plan to get you moving at your own pace.

And because they offer a money back guarantee if you don't see positive results within six weeks, there's no reason not to give it a go.

If your body has been battered enough in your working life though, you may prefer some cerebral training. The University of the Third Age, then, should be your first port of call.

Not strictly a university by modern definition, the U3A is for those that are retired or who work part time and who are free during the day to take part in a variety of interests and activities in informal, friendly surroundings.

The Oban branch meets at the Caledonian Hotel, Station Square, on the first Tuesday of every month at 10.30am and is the ideal starting point for anyone looking to get involved.

There are, of course, some good causes you may wish to invest your time in. Argyll and Bute Befrienders matches volunteers with children who find themselves in vulnerable positions. Put simply, the service puts volunteers together with children requiring care, with the focus on having fun and providing good, emotional support.

Homestart is another charity that looks for volunteers, this time those with parenting experience, to help families as a whole.

Volunteers effectively give parents a shoulder to lean on, helping keep families together when times are tough. Your time could make a world of difference to someone who just needs a helping hand.

Mind you, now is also the time you might be needing a wee helping hand yourself.

By the time you reach retirement age, you may find your eyesight is starting to falter. With that in mind, it would be wise to take a trip to Wallace Optometrists in either Oban or Lochgilphead at least once a year for an eye examination. All eye tests in Scotland are paid for by the Scottish Government, so it won't cost you a penny. If you do require glasses, you can rest assured that Wallace Optometrists offer highest quality Kodak lenses to match their unrivalled level of service.

Another reality of old age is that you may find making repairs and installing new appliances etcetera to your home can become more difficult. Again, there's no need to worry as Argyll and Bute Care and Repair are there to help. Their assistance is just a phone call away, so give them a call and see what they can do for you.

With all this to consider and more, you'll have your work cut out trying to simply sit down and enjoy a hot cup of coffee!



Befrienders

Because children's lives are never just black and white

Are you retired with some time to spare?
We would value your life experience.

Please contact Cathi Bertin
01546 603144
cathibertin@btconnect.com
PO BOX 9576,
Lochgilphead, PA31 9BB



U3A
Scotland
Oban

We have many daytime interest groups run by our enthusiastic members.

To find out more come to our friendly monthly meeting on the 1st Tuesday of every month in the Caledonian Hotel, Oban or consult our website www.u3ascotland.org.uk and follow the Oban link.



Some members of Oban U3A Geology Group enjoying a trip to Luing last Summer.

Oban U3A

The U3A is a national organisation for those who are retired or who work part time and who are free during the day to take part in a variety of interests and activities in informal, friendly surroundings. Each local group is independent and the activities are set up and run by its members based on their interests.

Oban U3A started in 2008. We now have more than 90 members and 13 interest groups. The current groups are: German, French Conversation, Scottish History, Craft Group, Reading Groups, Choreographed Ballroom Dancing, Playing the Recorder, Walk and Lunch, Personal Memories/Creative Writing, Geology, Poetry Reading, Jazz Appreciation, Beginners Bridge.

There is an informal open meeting on the first Tuesday of every month at 10.30am in the Caledonian Hotel, Station Square, Oban. This is our monthly meeting; we chat and get to know one another over a cup of coffee. This is where we share information about interest groups, excursions, and talk about future plans. If you would like to know more about our U3A please come along to one of these Tuesday meetings - you will be made very welcome or visit www.u3ascotland.org.uk and follow the Oban link.

Home START
Support & friendship for families

VOLUNTEERS WANTED IN ARGYLL

Do you have any parenting experience and a few hours a week to spare?

We are looking for volunteers to visit families all over Argyll.

Sometimes simply being a friend can make all the difference.

FOR MORE INFO PLEASE CALL
01586 551140 for Kintyre, Islay, Jura, Mid
Argyll, Cowal & Bute
or 01631 566749 for the Oban area.

Home-Start

Home-Start is the UK's leading family support charity. We support thousands of parents who are struggling to cope. Our families need support for many reasons including post-natal illness, disability, bereavement, the illness of a parent or child, or social isolation.

Home-Start is looking for volunteers to visit families all over Argyll. Real people with real parenting experience can make a real difference to families struggling to cope.

Even if you only have a few hours a week to spare we would love to hear from you.

Home-Start provides support, friendship and practical help to families, helping to provide the best possible start for their children.

We don't need super nannies, we need real people like you.

Training is provided together with any expenses.

For further information about Home-Start services in - Kintyre, Islay, Jura, Mid Argyll Cowal and Bute call 01586 551140
Oban Area call 01631 566749

At R A Clement Associates our staff have spent many years advising clients on their best options for a happy retirement.

If you need some guidance through the maze of different possibilities, we can help you too. Just phone us to make an appointment.

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We all hope that our standard of living will remain the same when we retire. To achieve this aim you need expert advice and forward planning. At R A Clement Associates we have experienced staff available to advise you on all aspects of retirement. We tailor our advice to suit each, individual client. For example, we can outline the various pension possibilities available to you and help you to decide which one would best suit your circumstances. For those of you running your own business you may want to start planning an exit strategy so that you can look forward to retiring when it best suits.

The draft 2011 finance bill will change pension legislation giving some savers more flexibility with their retirement money. The existing rules which oblige people to buy an annuity from an insurance company by the age of 75 will end in April 2011. There is also a reduction to the annual amount which people can add to their pension fund tax free.

If you want to know how this will affect you, or if you have any other retirement questions, please call us on (01631) 562643. We have friendly staff who are eager to help.



Thinking of trying on your dancing shoes?

For details of a Scottish Country Dancing class near you, contact Sue Porter on

01631 563103



Scottish Country Dancing

You'd like to keep fit and active but want something more than that. An enjoyable evening out and the opportunity to make new friends? That's exactly what Scottish country dancing offers.

So forget any preconceived ideas you might have and give it a try. The enjoyment and friendship you'll experience for yourself when you join any one of the many clubs that meet throughout the week in the Oban area. Don't worry if you've got two left feet, we'll find the missing right one - we'll even find you a partner if you need one!

As for proof of the fitness benefits then look no further than the recent study carried out by the Strathclyde Institute of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences. To quote the study 'Not only is country dancing enjoyable and sociable but there also appears to be clear evidence that it's an effective recreational exercise for particular types of fitness in later life.'

So what are you waiting for? The Royal Scottish Country Dancing Society Lorn Branch meets in Oban each Monday night. All abilities of dancers, including beginners, will be made welcome. If you'd like to know more contact Sue Porter at 01631 563103.

Argyll & Bute CARE & REPAIR

Are you over 60 and/or disabled?
Are you an Argyll and Bute resident?
You could benefit from free independent confidential advice and assistance with:

- Small repairs to your home such as changing a light bulb, installing security chains, flatpack assembly and minor decorating.
- Applying for grants to enable you to remain in your own home

For more information please contact

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Tel: 01631 567780 Fax: 01631 567486

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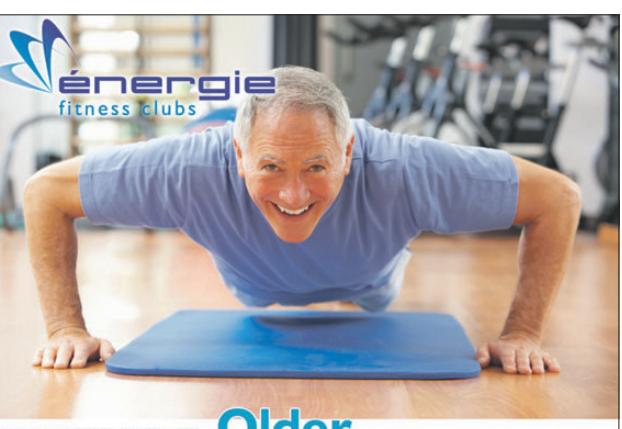
Argyll & Bute Care & Repair

Argyll & Bute Care & Repair is a charity that helps the over sixties and/or disabled to remain in their own homes. The range of services offered includes free help with organising major renovations to adapt a home to suit an occupant's needs, to carrying out small safety works such as replacing alarm batteries, lightbulbs, etc.

Contemplating major changes at home can be daunting, but our Care & Repair Officers are there to help throughout the process. They can guide clients through drawing up designs, applying for grants, dealing with planning and building control, obtaining estimates and finding a contractor to carry out the work.

We also employ six Housing Support Officers who can carry out minor/small repairs that can make life so much better, for example changing tap washers, erecting a shelf, small plastering jobs, etc, for which a small charge is made.

We work closely with Argyll & Bute Council, NHS and the emergency services amongst others and cover the whole of Argyll & Bute, with staff living within the communities they help. To find out more about Argyll & Bute Care & Repair's services please contact the Oban office, 120 George Street, telephone 01631 567780.



For more information call

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Did you know that during the daytime it is much quieter and that we have specific studio classes designed for the over 55's? We have around 40 classes per week, many during the day, including Hatha Yoga, Pilates and BodyBalance all of which involve great stretching and postural strength exercises.

At Energie Fitness, we have a passion for amazing results and we can help you achieve the goals that you desire. It is important as we get older, especially for women, that we exercise our bones through resistance training to combat the effects of osteoporosis and we can offer you a tailor made programme guaranteed to bring you results.

Come and enjoy the comfortable atmosphere of the club and meet our highly qualified team who really do care about your exercise experience.

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To find out how Business Gateway can help your business, contact the local office on 01546 605 459 or visit www.bgateway.com

Supporters of the Oban Times Business pages



Taxpayers may face fines over forms

TAXPAYERS could be fined more than £442 million for late or wrongly completed self-assessment forms this year.

The warning from professional advice website unbiased.co.uk comes as the January 31 deadline for 2009/10 online returns looms closer.

A report by the website claims that, while late returns will make up an estimated £116million in charges, around £310million of charges will come as a result of miscalculations made on tax forms. Sixteen million pounds will also be paid out by taxpayers in surcharges for unpaid tax from previous years.

Last year, £430million was paid in charges, and unbiased.co.uk say the £12million increase will come as a result of people making more avoidable errors, as well as an increase in the number of taxpayers who are subject to self-assessment.

Karen Barrett, chief executive of unbiased.co.uk, said: 'Taxpayers around the UK face hefty fines if they fail to fill out their self-assessment forms correctly and in time for January 31 deadline.'

'Last year, over one million forms were filed late, leading to penalties and in most cases additional surcharges.'

'In this tough economic climate, where money is tighter than ever, we are urging consumers to take 'tax action' and plan carefully.'

'Failure to meet the January 31 deadline will incur an automatic late payment charge of £100. If the form still hasn't been completed and returned by July 31, there will be a further penalty of £100.'

HMRC is then able to apply a charge of up to £60 a day until the return is filed.

It is important to act now if you've not registered to file your tax return online. Once you've signed up at www.hmrc.gov.uk/online, you'll be given a username and an activation code will be posted to you within seven working days.

Only once this has been activated can you file online.

Even if you have filed online before, check if you have a username and password to hand. If not, replacements can take up to seven working days to arrive.

For help or more information, log on to www.hmrc.gov.uk/sa or phone the self assessment helpline on 0845 9000 444.

Fusion completes Ghana project

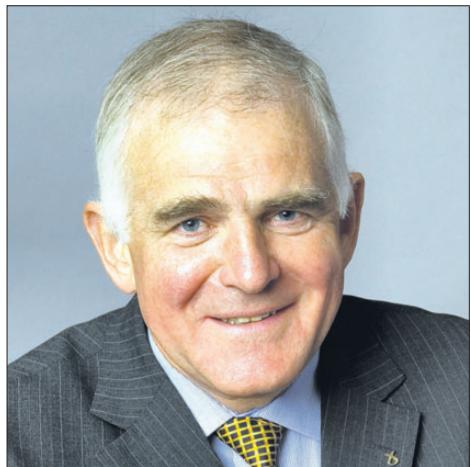
BARCALDINE firm Fusion Marine has successfully completed the installation of a fish farm in Ghana for tilapia.

The Volta River farm, which employs local fishermen, consists of three Fusion Marine Aquaflex 40m circumference polyethylene pens and two 70m pens. As far as it is known, the 70m pens are the largest currently found on a freshwater site in Africa.

Fusion Marine Project Consultant Professor Carmelo Agius said: 'The Fusion Marine pens will enable the industry to pitch itself at a different level of operation altogether and catalyse the introduction of modern management strategies in this fledgling industry throughout Africa.'

Highlands and islands to receive £18million of EU cash

Lochboisdale regeneration project gains large slice of European Regional Development funding



Enterprise, Energy and Tourism Minister, and MSP for Argyll and Bute, Jim Mather.

How is your business shaping up this year?

WITH the festive period over, many small businesses are using the start of the new year to review their activities and plan the year ahead.

Argyll and Bute Council's Business Gateway is on hand to help entrepreneurs develop their plans with a team of experienced business advisers.

'Evaluating how your business has fared to date and developing a realistic plan of action is important to help your business survive and grow,' advises councillor Dick Walsh, Argyll and Bute's council leader and spokesperson for the economy.

'Discussing your ideas in confidence with an impartial business adviser from Business Gateway could help your growth ambitions to be achieved.'

Whether business owners are looking for help in reaching new markets, developing new products or want specific advice around sources of funding or taking on employees, Business Gateway can help through its adviser support, comprehensive website www.bgateway.com and range of workshops.

To find out more or to book an appointment with a business adviser contact business.gateway@argyll-bute.gov.uk or call 01546 605 459.

Managing the VAT rate change

THE standard rate of VAT increased from 17.5 per cent to 20 per cent on January 4, 2011.

The way businesses should account for this change depends upon the type of business, but for any sales

TOURISM, renewable energy projects and road improvement schemes across the Highlands and Islands are to receive a £18million cash boost.

It is hoped that the cash from the European Regional Development Fund will create more than 60 jobs and safeguard the area's economic recovery.

One of the largest slices of the grant, £1.88million, will go towards the Lochboisdale Regeneration project to help provide a site for enhanced transport and cargo facilities, the creation of development land for commercial and business activity and the creation of 2km of road, including a causeway.

Three projects will receive

half a million pounds: the modernisation of the Sconser ferry terminus to Raasay; road improvements to the A890 Strathcarron – Banacra east of Lochcarron, the A861 at Drynie Hill south of Kinlochmoidart in Lochaber, and on the A838 north approach to Laxford Bridge in northwest Sutherland; and the complete upgrade of the A865 through North and South Uist, to double track between Lochmaddy in Daliburgh.

Other significant projects include £224,000 to encourage walking and cycling as alternative forms of transport across the Highlands and Islands; and

a further £115,000 to aid local companies looking to fully exploit their products through the EU protected food name scheme.

"...the Highlands and Islands has real and tangible advantages over its competitors"

Energy and Tourism Minister - Jim Mather MSP

The Scottish Government's Enterprise, Energy and Tourism Minister, and MSP for Argyll and Bute, Jim Mather, said: 'This is a significant investment

across a wide range of projects which will provide important support to both the economy of the Highlands and Islands and Scotland as a whole.'

'Tourism and renewable energy are areas where Scotland - and the Highlands and Islands in particular - has real and tangible advantages over its competitors.'

'The Highlands and Islands has many remote communities, for whom transport access is a vital issue. That is why improving various roads across the region is an important part of this funding. Above and beyond that, it will help several local economies as Scotland continues to recover from recession.'

No change for Argyll jobseekers

THE NUMBER of people claiming Jobseekers Allowance in Argyll and Bute has not changed in the last year.

Figures released by the Office for National Statistics show that 1,734 people aged between 16-64 in the council ward were on the dole as of November 11 2010, just over three per cent of the population.

While the number of men claiming the benefit in the last year dropped by 37, the exact same number of women made new claims.

There was also no change to the total number of people on unemployment benefit in the Highland Council ward, with 3,882 people still signing on.

However, new employment opportunities in the Western Isles saw the number of people claiming Jobseekers Allowance there drop by 0.4 per cent to 497.

Meanwhile, unemployment fell by a total of 5,000 throughout Scotland, while unemployment throughout the UK as a whole increased.

Total employment in Scotland increased by 17,000 during the three months to October 2010 - a rise of 0.3 per cent points, and the fifth consecutive reported increase in Scotland's employment rate.

Salmon farm staff given shares

STAFF at the Scottish Salmon Company have been awarded shares in the business in a bid to engender greater employee participation and support.

A total of 350 people are employed by the Scottish Salmon Company at sites across the Hebrides - from the Isle of Lewis in the north to Arran in the south - and at its headquarters in Edinburgh.

Each employee will receive 100 shares as part of the move by the independent Scottish producer.

Bill Hazeldean, newly-appointed chief executive officer of the Scottish Salmon Company, said: 'Our staff are our most important asset and going forward, we wish to encourage teamwork, transparency and open participation.'

'This award is the first stage in our ongoing plan to encourage employee participation through share ownership and thereby create a more open structure to ensure that interests of all stakeholders are aligned.'

The Scottish Salmon Company has about 40 sites across the west coast and Hebrides and accounts for 20 per cent of Scotland's output of salmon.

Kilmelford resort gains fourth gold crown in a row

A LUXURY self catering resort in Kilmelford has been awarded its fourth consecutive Gold Crown Award by Resort Condominiums International (RCI).

Melfort Village received the 2011 award earlier this month after flying through the RCI's tough rating criteria.

Christine Roberts, manager at Melfort Village, said: 'Melfort Village is proud to be affiliated to RCI. We are thrilled with our award and thank RCI for this recognition.'

Melfort Village is one of the most successful timeshare operations in Scotland. It is owned and managed by The Melfort Club, the association of Melfort timeshare owners which was formed in the late 1980s.

The Oban Times Business Section



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SALMON farmering company Marine Harvest has donated £1,000 to Lochaber High School as part of its support for community organisations. The school put £500 of

the cash towards the cost of a new minibus, while the other £500 helped fund gift mugs for all pupils and staff to commemorate Lochaber High's 50th anniversary. Pictured above is Jane

MacKay from Marine Harvest with deputy head teacher Paul Reynolds and some Lochaber High School pupils, all of whom have parents who work for Marine Harvest.



Marine Harvest donates £1,000 to Lochaber High

Credit card control

CREDIT card holders gained greater control of their accounts this month.

Members of the UK Cards Association agreed on a new voluntary code to revamp the way credit cards are governed, with the move set to cost the industry £600million over the next two years.

The hope is that the changes will make managing credit card debt easier for consumers and bills simpler to understand.

The biggest change is to the way balances are paid off. The most expensive debt on the card will always be paid off first, while the minimum repayment on all new credit cards will be set at the end of March so that even if consumers only pay the minimum, the balance will always be reduced.

Navy
rescue
crews kept
busy

SEARCH and rescue crews from the Royal Navy's HMS Gannet at Prestwick have just completed a run of seven calls in seven days, following a busy Christmas period.

The week up to Christmas brought with it six call outs for the duty teams, including one on Christmas Day and two on Boxing Day.

Three of the calls were to medical transfers from Islay, and the others included flights to Lochgilphead and the Isle of Bute.

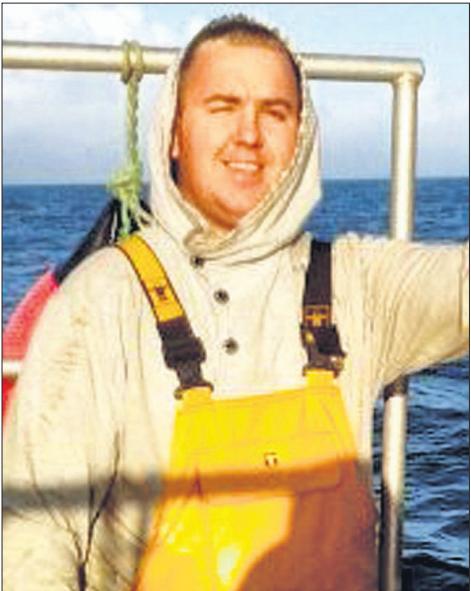
The following week, including Hogmanay and New Year's Day, was quiet but from January 3-10 the emergency crews stepped back up to full tempo, including one day, which took them from the extreme north of their coverage area (Ben Nevis), to the extreme south (Lake District).

During that week, six people were rescued after a total of some 13 hours of flying time – an average of nearly two hours per job.

Last Saturday afternoon the duty team received a call from Fort William police to aid in the search and subsequent rescue of two fallen French climbers on Ben Nevis.

Young Tarbert fisherman in dramatic sea rescue

Plucked from freezing sea off Isle of Gigha and flown to hospital by helicopter



Sean Taylor from Tarbert is in a serious condition in Crosshouse Hospital, Kilmarnock after a dramatic sea rescue off Gigha

A YOUNG FISHERMAN from Tarbert is in hospital fighting to recover after a remarkable rescue from the sea.

His family and a small army of friends on his Facebook page are all willing on father-to-be Sean Taylor, aged 21, from Tarbert, every step of the way.

Dragged overboard

He was pulled over the side by an automatic creel shooter while fishing for crab on the *Blue Angel* off Gigha on Thursday.

It has been estimated that Sean was under the bitterly cold water for eight minutes, at a depth of up to 50 metres.

The skipper Mark Sheldrick cut the gear ropes and got Sean back on board, made a Mayday call and the emergency services swung into action.

Clyde Coastguard organised a direct radio

link with a doctor to advise Mark as he worked to keep Sean alive and the boat headed to Tayinloan Pier; the Royal Navy's search and rescue helicopter 177 was scrambled from HMS Gannet, Prestwick.

Helicopter

Police and local coastguard teams went to Tayinloan Pier and the ferry for the Isle of Gigha cleared her berth at Tayinloan and stood off while the rescue took place.

Plucked from the boat by a helicopter winch man, Sean was flown to Crosshouse Hospital in Kilmarnock.

When he arrived Sean's condition was described as 'critical' he was placed on a ventilator and his family and partner Natasha MacNaughton were called for.

Doctors said he would have died but for the fact that his body all but shut down

because the sea temperature was well below freezing. And Sean has proved to be a fighter.

Speaking at the time of the accident chief inspector Marlene Bailie said: 'We are monitoring his condition closely. He is still in hospital and his condition is critical; his family are there with him.'

'Serious'

Slowly but surely his condition has been improving and by the time *The Oban Times* went to press, the hospital were saying Sean's condition was 'still serious but stable'.

Sean and Natasha MacNaughton are expecting a baby soon and just about to move into their first home in Tarbert.

Friends of the couple are sending messages of support via facebook, best summed up by one of them: 'yer doin brav big fla. stick at it.'

Store trade remains steady at Caledonian sale

CALEDONIAN Marts from Garrochtrie, Port Stirling Ltd sold 389 store cattle and 17 young bulls, plus 768 store lambs and feeding sheep at Stirling on Monday.

Bullocks averaged 143p (+1.5p) and sold to 208p per kg for two 265kg Limousins from Wester Whin, Slamannan and £955 for a 630kg Limousin from Glenstockdale, Stranraer.

Bullocks from Lorn sold to 200p and to £435.

Heifers averaged 158p (+3p) and sold to 196p per kg for two 230kg Limousins

Ewes sold to £39 for Crosses from McBride, Auchentlochan.

Prime sheep rates continue to rise

DINGWALL and Highland Marts Ltd., sold 74 prime cattle and 601 prime sheep at Dingwall when trade for sheep continued to rise while cattle were back on the week by an average of 4.5p per kilo.

Prime bullocks averaged 172.9p (-4.3p) and sold to 182p per kg for a 565kg Limousin cross from Drummond Farm, Evanton, and £1,245.60 for a 720kg Simmental cross from Tore Farm, Culbokie.

Prime sheep trade up at UA Stirling

UNITED Auctions sold 3,726 prime sheep including 2,698 lambs averaging 171p/kg (+1.8p) and 1028 ewes and rams at Stirling last Thursday.

Texel lambs from Guardswell sold to £92, while Beltex from Luckenburn fetached £87.50 and to 201p per kilo from Coilavoulin. Texel ewes from Kilwinning sold to £106.50, with Kinloch selling Charollais to £97.50.

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To find out more about living and working in Argyll & Bute visit us at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk

Argyll & Bute COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES : EDUCATION
REGISTRATION OF INFANT BEGINNERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS SESSION 2011/2012

Children who attain the age of five years between 1 March 2011 and 29 February 2012 should be registered for education during the week commencing 17 January 2011.

Parents concerned should take their children to the appropriate local primary school on one of the school days during the above week between the hours of 10.00am and 3.00pm.

Gaelic Medium Education

Gaelic Medium Education is available in the following schools:- Bowmore Primary School, Islay; Tìre Primary School, Tiree; Salen Primary School; Mull; Rockfield Primary School, Oban; Strath of Appin Primary School, by Oban; Sandbank Primary School, Dunoon.

The child's birth certificate should be produced. A leaflet providing information for parents on enrolment of children in school and giving details of placing request procedures (including under age placing requests) may be obtained from any school or from Community Services, Argyll House, Alexandra Parade, Dunoon, PA23 8AJ (Tel: 01369 705058).

CLELAND SNEDDON
Executive Director of Community Services

PLANNING

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997 (AS AMENDED), RELATED PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997

Take notice that the applications in the following schedule may be inspected during normal office hours at 67/69 Chalmers Street Ardriishaig PA30 8DX, at the location detailed below and by logging on to the Council's website at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk and clicking on Online Planning Applications. Anyone wishing to make representations should do so in writing to 67/69 Chalmers Street Ardriishaig PA30 8DX within 21 days of the appearance of this notice. Please quote the reference number in any correspondence.

SCHEDULE - DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION PLANS

Ref No: 10/02108/LIB
Applicant: Diana Mary Wharton
Proposal: Installation of replacement windows
Site Address: Blackbrae 94 Main Street Port Charlotte Isle of Islay Argyll And Bute PA48 7TY
Location of Plans: Sub Post Office Port Charlotte

Ref No: 10/02089/PP
Applicant: Diana Mary Wharton
Proposal: Alterations and change of use of byre to form ancillary residential accommodation.
Site Address: Blackbrae 94 Main Street Port Charlotte Isle of Islay Argyll And Bute PA48 7TY
Location of Plans: Sub Post Office Port Charlotte

Ref No: 10/02091/LIB
Applicant: Diana Mary Wharton
Proposal: Alterations and change of use of byre to form ancillary residential accommodation.
Site Address: Blackbrae 94 Main Street Port Charlotte Isle of Islay Argyll And Bute PA48 7TY
Location of Plans: Sub Post Office Port Charlotte

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997 (AS AMENDED), RELATED PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997

Applications for planning permission listed below together with the plans and other documents submitted with them may be examined at Lorn House Albany Street Oban PA34 4AR and the location detailed below between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday to Friday and by logging to the Council's website at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk and clicking on Online Planning Applications. Written comments for the following list of applications may be made to Planning and Regulatory Services Lorn House Albany Street Oban PA34 4AR by the 03/02/2011

Ref No: 10/02023/PP
Applicant: Mr Robert Denova
Proposal: Erection of dwellinghouse, detached garage and associated works.
Site Address: West Ardui Dervaig Isle Of Mull Argyll And Bute PA75 6QR
Location of Plans: Sub Post Office Dervaig

Ref No: 10/02130/PP
Applicant: Mr And Mrs C And J Johnson
Proposal: Erection of dwellinghouse and detached garage.
Site Address: Garden Ground Of Carding Mill Gallanach Road Oban Argyll And Bute PA34 4PD
Location of Plans: Oban Area Office

Ref No: 10/02131/PP
Applicant: Mr And Mrs M Anderson
Proposal: Erection of extension
Site Address: Ullish Balvairc Isle Of Seil Oban Argyll And Bute PA34 4TE
Location of Plans: Sub Post Office Balvairc

Argyll and Bute Council maintain a Register of planning applications which can be viewed between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. at Planning and Regulatory Services, Dalriada House, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8ST. An extant list of planning applications can be viewed on the Council's website www.argyll-bute.gov.uk.

A weekly list of applications can be viewed at Planning and Regulatory Services, Dalriada House, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8ST and Argyll and Bute Council Libraries.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2008 REGULATION 20(1)

ADVERT STATEMENT

Applications for planning permission listed below together with the plans and other documents submitted with them may be examined at 67/69 Chalmers Street Ardriishaig PA30 8DX and the location detailed below between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday to Friday and by logging to the Council's website at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk and clicking on Online Planning Applications. Written comments for the following list of applications may be made to Planning and Regulatory Services 67/69 Chalmers Street Ardriishaig PA30 8DX by the 03/02/2011

Ref No: 10/02104/PP
Applicant: Duncan Hunter
Proposal: Site for the erection of a dwellinghouse
Site Address: Plot 2 Land North Of Isla View Lower Kilchattan Isle Of Colonsay Argyll And Bute
Location of Plans: Sub Post Office Isle of Colonsay

Ref No: 10/02108/PP
Applicant: Duncan Hunter
Proposal: Site for the erection of a dwellinghouse
Site address: Plot 3 Land North Of Isla View Lower Kilchattan Isle Of Colonsay Argyll And Bute
Location of Plans: Sub Post Office Isle of Colonsay

Argyll and Bute Council maintain a Register of planning applications which can be viewed between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. at Planning and Regulatory Services, Dalriada House, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8ST. An extant list of planning applications can be viewed on the Council's website www.argyll-bute.gov.uk.

Any letter of representation the council receives about a planning application is considered a public document. Please therefore note that representations will be made available for public inspection and, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act, will be copied on request. They will also be published on the council's web site.

The author of such a representation is solely responsible for its content and accuracy.

Anonymous representations will be shredded and those marked confidential will be returned to the sender. Neither will be taken into account when the application is being considered.

Details of representations we receive on planning applications can be viewed on the council's website at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/publicaccess

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 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) at the AREA PLANNING AND BUILDING STANDARDS OFFICE, FULTON HOUSE, GORDON SQUARE, FORT WILLIAM, PH33 6XY; online at www.highland.gov.uk and, where given, the alternative location(s).

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 | Alternative locations where application may be inspected and time period for comments |
|------------------|--|--|--|
| 10/04654/FUL | Onich Hotel Onich | Retention of marquee at Onich Hotel | Lochaber Area Planning & Building Standards Office (14 days) |
| 10/04943/FUL | Allt Coire Mheall Challuim Kilmorie Ardgour | The construction of a hydro scheme, formation of access road and erection of power house | Lochaber Area Planning & Building Standards Office (14 days) |
| 10/04999/LBC | Duncansburgh MacIntosh Church The Parade Fort William | Extension to church to form new hall and upgrading of existing access | Lochaber Area Planning & Building Standards Office Regulation 5 - affecting the character of a listed building (21 days) |
| 10/05014/PIP | Site 150m North of Faichen Wood House Faichen Invergarry | Erection of house | Lochaber Area Planning & Building Standards Office (14 days) |
| 10/05034/FUL | Ocean View Sanna Kilchoan Acharacle | Extension to dwelling house | Acharacle Service Point (14 days) |
| 10/05052/FUL | Land 15m NW of Shore Cottage Lochline Morvern | Erection of an interpretation panel | Lochaber Area Planning & Building Standards Office (14 days) |
| 10/05055/FUL | Land 150m NW of Commando Memorial Spean Bridge | Erection of interpretation panel | Lochaber Area Planning & Building Standards Office (14 days) |
| 10/05056/FUL | Land 50m West of Dalmore Cottage Sonne Kilchoan | Erection of an interpretation panel | Acharacle Service Point (14 days) |
| 10/05057/FUL | Land 23m SE of Tresloig Hill Tresloig Fort William | Erection of interpretation panel | Lochaber Area Planning & Building Standards Office (14 days) |
| 10/05066/MSC | Land 50m North East Of Ben View Benview Crescent Torlundy Fort William | Erection of 4 houses | Lochaber Area Planning & Building Standards Office (14 days) |

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

Man denies assaulting police officer

A FORT William man has denied assaulting a police officer by punching him on the body and leg.

John Morris, aged 55, of Glenlochy Guest House, North Road, pled not guilty to assaulting the constable at Shepherd's Cottage, Isle of Muck, on November 1.

The trial will be heard at Fort William Sheriff Court on January 26 when two police officers will give evidence for the Crown.

Fort William driver to stand trial

A FORT William man has denied his careless driving caused him to hit another car in a car park.

John Gallacher, aged 53, of 8 Brown Court, denies driving without due care and attention and colliding with the car in Moray Place Car Park, Fort William, on July 3.

The trial, which will hear from two defence witnesses, will be heard at Fort William Sheriff Court on February 3.

MSP praised for bid to improve safety of young drivers

ROAD safety charity Brake and Direct Line has awarded Highlands and Islands MSP David Stewart the parliamentarian of the month award for his campaign to introduce Graduated Driver Licensing and improve the safety of young drivers.

In June last year, Mr Stewart launched campaign group North of Scotland Driving Awareness Team to stop young people dying on Scottish roads. His interest began after hearing about a crash in Inverness involving young drivers in which Callum Matheson, aged 17, and Ahlee Jackson, also 17, died.

Not guilty plea to drink drive charge

A MAN has denied driving in Lochaber whilst more than twice the blood alcohol limit.

David McNamee, aged 30, of 23 Stirling Drive, Johnstone, Renfrewshire, pled not guilty to drink driving on Glen Nevis Road and at Glen Nevis Campsite, near Fort William, on September 12.

Two defence witnesses will give evidence at the trial, which will be heard at Fort William Sheriff Court on January 26.

Man accused of violent assault on partner

THE TRIAL of a man accused of violently attacking his partner in her Fort William home will be heard later this month.

Raymond MacDonald, aged 47, of Masie Bank, Birch Tangle, Auchengower Park, Shore Road, Helensburgh, denies assaulting the woman by stamping on her back, seizing her by the body and pulling her down the stairs, all to her severe injury. The alleged incident took place at 27 Banff Crescent on February 13.

The trial will be heard at Fort William Sheriff Court on January 26.

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Australians donate special plaque in memory of bard

Former Tiree man on mission to deliver tribute to famous Berneray son

EXCLUSIVE

REPORT by
STEPHEN NORRIS
snorris@obantimes.co.uk

A BEAUTIFULLY engraved plaque brought by special courier from Australia will mark the final resting place of Berneray Gaelic bard Iain (John) Archie MacAskill, *The Oban Times* can reveal.

The plaque, donated by the Metropolitan Cemeteries Board (MCB) in Perth, Western Australia, is fashioned from Admiralty bronze and, according to MCB chief Peter MacLean, 'will last forever'.

It reads: 'In memory of John Archie MacAskill, who journeyed from Berneray to Western Australia to start a new life. Sadly he died on 4th June, 1934 and was buried at Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth, Western Australia.'

'His grave was marked by this headstone placed by his family. Some of his poems referred to his longing to return to his native land, a desire honoured by his descendant family when in March, 2010 John Archie MacAskill was exhumed and later interred in the Berneray Cemetery.'

'This plaque is provided to the people of Berneray by the Metropolitan Cemeteries



Calum MacKinnon, left, accepts the plaque from Metropolitan Cemeteries Board chief executive officer Peter MacLean on behalf of the MacAskill family at Karrakatta Cemetery in Western Australia.

Board in Western Australia.'

Former Tiree man Calum MacKinnon, who now lives in Western Australia, will deliver the plaque in person to Iain Archie's granddaughter Alina MacAskill Simpson when he visits Scotland on May 24.

Alina raised almost £7,000

from ceilidhs and donations for her trip to Perth with Iain Archie's nephew Iain MacAskill last March to bring Iain Archie's remains back to Berneray for burial.

Mr MacKinnon became intrigued by Iain Archie after reading his poetry and contacted the

MacAskill family in 2000. Alina told *The Oban Times*: 'Calum helped the family so much in bringing Iain Archie home and managed to trace the farm he once had and got us copies of Iain Archie's paperwork. Calum has also got Iain Archie's name inscribed

on the welcome walls in Albany, the port Iain Archie arrived in 1925.' She added: 'I thought the gesture of the Metropolitan Cemeteries Board was amazing. Peter MacLean's father or grandfather came from the Isle of Lewis, so I think he could understand

why we were doing what we did. We were treated like royalty when we went out there.'

The plaque features an image of Iain Archie's headstone, which will stay in Karrakatta cemetery as a permanent reminder.

Mounted on a black granite stone part, donated by George Rooney Memorials of Barrhead, the plaque is due to be erected at the graveside in June, Alina said.

She added: 'We are hoping to get a book published in the next year or so with Iain Archie's works and the story of his journey home.'

Iain Archie MacAskill was a soldier in the Great War, renowned piper, Glasgow policeman and Berneray crofter before he left home, aged 27, for Australia on New Year's Day 1925.

He farmed in the outback east of Perth but despite his crops growing well, the bank foreclosed on him in October 1931.

He began writing songs and poems in Gaelic the night before he left Scotland and continued to eulogise Berneray and his desire to return. Illness, poverty and homesickness for his homeland brought John Archie to a pauper's grave, aged only 36.

Probation for man who helped wash blood-stained clothes

A FORT William man helped clean another man's bloodstained clothes and shoes after an alleged assault.

Gavin Maxtone, aged 28, of 7 Pinegrove Court, pled guilty to attempting to pervert the course of justice by allowing the man to wash bloodstained items in his washing machine and providing

him with clean clothes, knowing he had been involved in an assault.

Police officers went to Maxtone's home to look for the man after a tip off and found the blood-covered clothes in the washing machine, Fort William Sheriff Court heard.

Prosecutor Alison Wylie said:

'They could see his clothes didn't fit and he had no shoes on.'

Defending, Stephen Kennedy said police did not require any forensic

evidence from the clothes for the assault case and that Maxtone was drunk at the time.

'My client acquiesced in letting

the other person use the washing

machine,' he said.

fit and he had no shoes on.'

Defending, Stephen Kennedy said police did not require any forensic evidence from the clothes for the assault case and that Maxtone was drunk at the time.

'My client acquiesced in letting

the other person use the washing

machine,' he said.

'He takes full responsibility for the offence and he has shown full remorse.'

Sheriff Douglas Small told Maxtone he would have faced a significant custodial sentence if he had destroyed evidence police had later required.

He said: 'Any interference with a

police investigation must be looked at very seriously by the court.'

Maxtone also pled guilty to a second charge of being in possession of 3.5 grammes of cocaine on Belford Road on January 30. He was sentenced to 240 hours community service and 15 months probation.

Publican admonished on vodka charge

A FORT William publican has escaped punishment for selling vodka from a Smirnoff bottle that lab tests later proved was not the premier spirit.

Alasdair Fraser, aged 57, of 1 Fife Place, had earlier pled guilty to displaying the 1.5 litre bottle of vodka on his Station Bar gantry with a label falsely describing the contents and was appearing at Fort William Sheriff Court for sentencing.

Fraser was working in his pub on November 6 2008 when trading standards officers took samples of Smirnoff during a routine visit.

Chemical analysis results later showed the balance of sugars found in the vodka were significantly different from Smirnoff, proving the spirit offered was not as advertised.

Prosecutor Alison Wylie told the court: 'It was not watered down, but appeared to have been a different vodka.'

'People do buy vodka by brand and clearly what was exposed for sale was not what it purported to be. When the officers confronted him with the analysis he did appear surprised.'

Defending, Stephen Kennedy said Mr Fraser's 'whole livelihood' depended on being judged by the licensing authority as being a fit and proper person to run a pub.

He was the 'main breadwinner' for his family, drawing a salary of around £1,300 per month net from the business. His wife also worked behind the bar and earned

£104 per week. 'He has had the pub for 18 years and this is the first blemish on his record during that period,' Mr Kennedy said.

'Mr Fraser's position here is that the vodka advertised on his gantry was contaminated.'

The lawyer accepted that could not be proved but suggested either that Mr Fraser's busy bar staff could have 'inadvertently'

mixed the Smirnoff with another brand when topping up the 1.5 litre bottles on the gantry, or that Smirnoff bought by Mr Fraser under a local supermarket offer of two litre bottles for £20 had been contaminated before the purchase. The publican usually bought his vodka from a Dumfries-based spirits supplier.

'He told the trading standards officers that and produced the receipts,' said Mr Kennedy. 'He did not knowingly or willingly display vodka falsely described for sale in his premises. He was totally unaware of the contamination'

Mr Fraser told *The Oban Times* outside the court: 'I'm pleased the sheriff got it right. It is very worrying when you don't know what is going to happen to you, but I feel fine now.'

Lochaber High School annual Burns Supper

LOCHABER High School will hold its annual Burns Supper in the school on Saturday January 29 at 7.30pm. Depute head teacher Alan Morgan will be in the chair for the evening. Speakers will be: Address to a Haggis - Jim Sutherland; Immortal Memory - Iain Welch; Toast to the Lassies - Bill Cameron; Reply - Jacqui Hill; Tam O' Shanter - John Hutchison; To a Mountain Daisy - Chelsea MacGillivray. Music will be provided by Robert Robertson and Euan Wilkie.

damaging the paintwork and denting the body. The incident happened on the evening of June 14. Fort William Sheriff Court heard both men were so drunk on the night they had little

recollection of the event. Sheriff Douglas Small sentenced Neilly to 150 hours community service.

Fraser was given 160 hours community service as he had previous convictions.

Drunk pair had little recollection of running over car

TWO LOCHABER men of 62 Kennedy Road, Fort William, pled guilty to wilfully or recklessly damaging the property of another by running over the roof, boot and bonnet of a car parked on Sutherland Avenue, Kinlochleven,

damaging the paintwork and denting the body.

The incident happened on the evening of June 14. Fort William Sheriff Court heard both men were so drunk on the night they had little

Pensioner banned from driving

A LOCHABER pensioner has been disqualified from driving for six months after hitting another car and a lampost.

Shirley Farnell, aged 73, of 12 Glenview Caravan Park, Strontian, pled guilty to driving without reasonable consideration for other persons on the A82 Belford Road, Fort William, on October 18. She failed to stop when a car in front slowed down and collided with it before mounting the kerb, hitting a lampost and damaging her car. Farnell told Fort William Sheriff Court she had already decided to give up driving voluntarily as her eyesight was not good enough.

Sheriff Douglas Small told Farnell if she changed her mind she would have to re-sit the driving test before regaining her driving licence.

Men remanded in connection with assault

TWO MEN, both aged 26, have appeared in Stornoway Sheriff Court and have been remanded in custody in connection with an assault in Tomair, Balallan, Isle of Lewis, on January 7.

Enquiries are continuing and police in Stornoway are appealing to the public for anyone who witnessed, or has information relating to the incident, to contact them at Stornoway Police Station on 01851 702222 or via Crimestoppers on 0800 555111.

Self-defence claim

A CAOL man accused of assaulting a man in Fort William has claimed he acted in self-defence.

Paul Allan, aged 38, of 58 Blair Mhor Road, denies assaulting Iain MacKay by repeatedly punching and kicking him on the head and body at Olwyn Courtyard on August 29 2010.

The trial is due to be held at Fort William Sheriff Court on February 9.

Everyone's favourite competition is back and The Oban Times is looking to find the west coast's bonniest baby in 2011.

If you think your baby is the cutest in the West of Scotland then nominate them.

Our panel of judges will help us find our Bonnie Baby of 2011 and the top tot will be crowned Oban Times Bonnie Baby 2011 and his/her parent or guardian will receive a top prize with two runners up also receiving an award.

The deadline to enter your child is **Monday, January 24 at 5pm** and children must be under the age of two on **24/01/2011**.

Parent/Guardian must consent to publication of their child's photograph in our papers by signing the entry form.

Entries, including one photograph, MUST be accompanied by the official entry form which can only be obtained from The Oban Times. Photocopies will not be accepted.

If you wish your picture returned, please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

Normal Oban Times terms and conditions apply and the editor's decision is final.

Send your entry to:
The Oban Times Bonnie Baby Competition, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll

Name of parent/guardian: _____

Address: _____

Full name of child: _____ Age at 24/01/2011: _____

Signature of parent/guardian: _____

OT

**Drugs seized
on Skye**

A 23-YEAR-old man appeared in private on petition at Portree Sheriff Court on Monday in relation to offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

The man was arrested in Portree Retail Park at the weekend following an intelligence-led operation by Northern Constabulary officers, which resulted in the seizure of drugs with an estimated street value of £5,000. He made no plea or declaration and was remanded in custody.

**Bad weather
closes schools**

A NUMBER of Lochaber schools were closed on Monday because of the wintry weather.

Spean Bridge Primary and Roybridge Primary were unable to open as many staff were unable to get to the school. Upper Achintore Primary was closed because of the conditions, as was Invergarry Primary.

The slippery roads also meant pupils at Lochaber High School got the day off as their school transport did not run.

Glencoe Primary could not open as the heaters in the school were not working, and Fort William RC Primary was closed as a result of problems with their water pipes.

**Climbers cheat
death on Ben Nevis**

TWO FRENCH climbers cheated death after falling more than 200 metres down Ben Nevis on Saturday afternoon.

The men, both in their 20s, were climbing the Indicator Wall route on the mountain when they slipped and fell into Observatory Gully at about 2pm.

A climber on nearby Tower Ridge heard the two men shouting for help and alerted Lochaber Mountain Rescue (LMR). An LMR helicopter was in the area training at the time so was able to reach the men quickly and transfer them to Belford Hospital.

They both suffered broken bones and have severe concussion.

LMR's John Stevenson told *The Oban Times*: 'When they woke up, they couldn't remember anything that had happened. I don't think they even realised they were in Britain. They're very lucky to still be with us today.'

**Mice blamed for
Skye power cut**

MICE trying to escape the winter cold have been blamed for a power cut to a building at Clan Donald Skye's Armadale HQ.

The rodents gnawed through wires in a fuse box, knocking out power last Wednesday and Thursday.

Scottish Hydro engineers responded promptly to head gardener Louise Pinkney's callout, but said an electrician would be needed to replace the damaged fuses.

'The garden cat was the biggest casualty, because there was no heating in the shed overnight,' Ms Pinkney told *The Oban Times*.



Olwyn MacDonald, left, with Isabel Campbell as work begins on the Lochaber Rural Complex at Tirlundie in 1999.

Hotel marquee application

THE ONICH Hotel's owners have applied to Ross, Skye and Lochaber planning committee for permission to retain their marquee for another year.

The marquee was erected in May 2009, and the hotel's co-owner Maria Wilson, of Linleven Hotel Company, applied for permission to build a permanent building to replace the marquee in September.

A design statement accompanying the

request said: 'The above application is for a temporary period and the council encouraged the applicants to apply for a permanent structure to replace the marquee. This was implemented and was registered on September 28 2010.

'To date no decision has been made and if planning approval is issued the building of the extension would commence after the main tourist season ends this year.'



Fort William Social Club: hit by flood damage. 10_f02fort01

Fort FC facing £1,000 social club repair bill

FORT William FC is likely to face a repair bill in excess of £1,000 after the boiler packed up and pipes burst in the social club at Claggan Park.

Recent severe frosts had iced up the boiler's fuel lines and knocked out the heating, which had been left on to prevent water pipes from freezing.

When the boiler failed, the temperature inside plummeted and despite the water supply being turned off club officials found 15 bursts in the hot and cold supply.

Damage included sodden plasterwork and damage to the boiler, which packed

County was wiped out because Claggan Park was frozen.

The prolonged cold spell – Fort have not played at home since October 9 – has left chairman John Wattzman counting the cost in tradesmen's bills and lost revenue.

He told *The Oban Times*: 'I would think the repair bills would be into four figures. The social club is a different part of the club and is its own business, but we have not been taking money in. It has all been going out.'

'We do have a lot of midweek games coming up, but they don't tend to be so good for revenue.'

Buzzard struggles back to fitness after attack by stag

A RED deer stag stamped on a buzzard in a Lochaber car park as local wildlife struggled to find food during the recent spell of freezing weather.

Shocked staff at the Kings House Hotel, Glencoe, witnessed the incident and put the injured bird in a cardboard box before contacting the local Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA). The animal charity's Lochaber officer Dawna Connolly collected the juvenile predator and took it to Anne Ferguson in Spean Bridge, who has years of

experience in nursing animals back to health. Mrs Ferguson, the mother of Ferguson Transport boss Ali, fed the buzzard until it had recovered from its Christmas Eve encounter with the deer.

Last Friday Ms Connolly tried to release the bird close to where it was found in Glencoe, but it only managed a few flaps before it fell back to earth. Ms Connolly told *The Oban Times*: 'Hotel staff

Tributes paid to Olwyn Macdonald

Long-serving former Highland councillor dies at Caol home

TRIBUTES have been paid to long-serving former Highland councillor for Lochaber Olwyn Macdonald, who died at her home in Caol on Sunday evening.

Born in Torquay and educated in Exeter, Mrs Macdonald, who was 78, moved to Lochaber and made a major contribution to local politics in the Highlands between 1989 and 2007.

Her late second husband, Iain 'Dubb' Macdonald, was also a prominent councillor. He died in January 2001.

Olwyn became a member of Lochaber District Council in 1989 after serving as Caol Community Council chairman and Caol Community Centre management committee treasurer.

She then went on to serve on Highland Regional Council between 1990-96 and Highland Council from 1995-2007, chaired Highland Council's social work committee between 1999-2001 and served as vice-chairman of the housing and social work committee between 2001-2007.

Olwyn was also Lochaber area committee convenor between 1999-2007 and took a lead on developing deaf services throughout

the Highlands. Her final political pledge was to save the council-run lunch club at Caol Community Centre, which is under threat.

She told *The Oban Times* in November: 'I will take this the whole road. I will have people out on the streets. This is going to be like the Belford Hospital campaign. In Lochaber we are not going to put up with it.'

Highland Council Convener Sandy Park said Olwyn was 'hugely popular and hard working'.

Passion

He said: 'She always had her local community at heart and always fought very hard and with passion for what she thought was right. She did so much good work for the community she served and for the wider Highlands through her specialist interest in social work and housing issues.'

'She will be sorely missed by her colleagues and our thoughts at this time are with her family.'

Councillor Michael Foxley, who knew Olwyn for more than 30 years, said: 'She was a deeply caring person, a very conscientious councillor and great fun to be with.'

'She was a most formidable lady who was respected right

across the political spectrum thanks to her sense of fairness and the tenacity with which she tackled issues she felt passionately about.'

'So many people will be saddened by her loss.'

Former Lochaber area manager for the council John Hutchison said Olwyn was 'a huge friend' to Lochaber, at her height fighting campaigns with Iain Dubb on issues such as the Fort William sleeper and Belford Hospital.

He said: 'Caol was always in her heart.'

'I knew Olwyn for over 30 years and worked with her for most of that time. She was a real community leader for Lochaber - fearless when standing up for what she believed in.'

Lochaber Rural Education Trust trustee Isabel Campbell said: 'Olwyn was very approachable and very professional. She stood up for the community that she served.'

Olwyn's funeral service will be held tomorrow (Friday) at 1pm in St John's, Caol, led by Father Roddy Johnston.

Interment will follow at Kilmallie Cemetery with the reception at Caol Community Centre.

Man threatened Job Centre staff

A MAN angrily threatened members of staff in Fort William Job Centre after being told he was no longer eligible for benefits.

James Reade, aged 28, of 29 Scarrel Terrace, Castlemilk, Glasgow, pled guilty to conducting himself in a disorderly manner by shouting, swearing and threatening staff in the Job Centre and committing a breach of the peace on July 14. He also admitted a separate charge of conducting himself in a disorderly manner on High Street, Fort William, on August 8.

He shouted, swore, attempted to fight with and struggled with two men, committing a breach of the peace.

After recently being told he would no longer receive benefits as his partner had a new job, Reade appeared at the Job Centre at lunchtime smelling of alcohol. He

approached one member of staff, shouting at her that he wasn't leaving until he spoke to someone about his benefits. After being asked to leave by a security guard, Reade threatened the worker, the security guard and members of the public in the centre before walking out, kicking a glass window as he left.

He soon returned to continue his rant and was stopped by police outside the building.

The second incident occurred in the early hours of the morning outside the Ossian's Hotel, with police present at the scene.

Sheriff Douglas Small deferred sentencing Reade until October 13 for good behaviour, saying: 'I have to take a serious view of your behaviour in the Job Centre. Public servants should not be subjected to this kind of behaviour.'

Sheriff upholds challenge over police interviews with woman

A CHALLENGE over police procedures during interviews with a Lochaber woman accused of embezzling £195,000 from her employers has been upheld by a sheriff.

Sheriff Douglas Small agreed with defender Allan Mcleod that the interviews with Doreen MacKenzie, aged 43, were unlawful as she was not offered access to solicitor. A recent ruling by the Supreme Court means police can no longer question suspects without allowing access to their lawyer.

She was also only cautioned once during 30 hours of interviews over two days in July 2007 and was not told of her right to remain silent.

Book-keeper

Ms MacKenzie, of 68 Loanfern, Ballachulish, denies committing fraud against her employees while she was book-keeper for Chisholm's Garage between 2001 and 2006.

The two officers who conducted the interviews gave evidence at a debate at Fort William Sheriff Court.

Sergeant Donald Campbell said they did not discuss with Ms MacKenzie the possibility of having a solicitor present during the interviews, which was in keeping with Scottish law at the time.

He also said Ms MacKenzie's parents mentioned getting in touch with a solicitor in Glasgow when Ms MacKenzie was taken in for questioning.

Two further issues lodged by the defence will be heard on March 4.



Lochaber SSPCA officer Dawna Connolly before attempted release of the buzzard on Friday.

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IMER TR225 SCAFFOLD HOIST (capacity 200kg), used, brackets and bucket, £350 onto Telephone 07810 483763 (Duror).

TRADITIONAL WHITE BASIN New York traditional bathroom white basin pedestal brand new in box, £49.99 Telephone 01866 833202.

TRADITIONAL WHITE BATHROOM basin, brand new in box, 2 tap hole traditional New York, £49.99 Telephone 01866 833202.

WHITE COSMOS TILES new boxed Ceramica Cotto tiles not needed large 10"x8", ideal for bathroom or kitchen 45 tiles, £35 Telephone 01631 720369.

WORKSTATION Kity Bestcombi, circular saw, spindle moulder, planer, thicknesser, morticer, £500 onto Telephone 01546 870601.

CAR ACCESSORIES

BATTERY Car/Van, new, £45 Telephone 01499 500658².

EXHAUST BOX Peugeot 306 petrol cat exhaust box, new. Telephone 01880 820110 after 8pm, £40 Telephone .

CARS AND CAR PARTS UNDER £250

MICHELIN PRIMACY HP 225/55/R16 95W used tyres. vge 2*5.5mm tread, 2* 4.5mm tread, £160 onto Telephone 07810 483763 (Duror).

CD'S, DVD'S AND VIDEOS

THUNDERBIRDS BOXSET every episode on 9 DVDs, mint condition, £30 Telephone 01586 820069.

Advertise your unwanted items in either The Oban Times, Campbeltown Courier or Argyllshire Advertiser and your ad will also appear online at www.westcoastclassifieds.co.uk. Simply use the coupons on this page or visit the website and input your details there

X-FILES BOXSET collectors edition complete boxset, all 9 seasons (an amazing 61 discs) and the x-files movie, mint condition, £49 Telephone 01586 820069.

CLOTHES, SHOES AND ACCESSORIES UGG STYLE CHILDS BOOTS girls knitted Ugg style child's boots from George at ASDA, 1 month old, unused. Cost £10. Size 13 in black. £5 Telephone 01631 720149.

DOMESTIC APPLIANCES AGA(GREEN) OIL FIRED two ovens, vgc offers over £100. Telephone 01838 200223.

LPG GAS COOKER Cannon Chichester, offers. Telephone 01838 400251.

LPG GAS HOB 5 burners, working condition, offers. Telephone 01838 400251.

LPG RAYBURN red, working condition, offers. Telephone 01838 400251.

RECTELLA CURTAINS fully lined eyelet curtains deep red with gold stitching. width 111cm/44". length 137/54" brand new still in pack. 2pairs, £40. Telephone 07787 125579.

DOMESTIC PETS JACK RUSSELL TERRIER PUPS great temperament. Both parents can be seen. Telephone 01852 300770.

WORKING COLLIE DOG and two collie pups of good working strain, ideal work or pets. Telephone 01687 462098².

FIREARMS GUNS FOR SALE WINCHESTER .223 RIFLE c/w 6X45 scope, £350. Brono .22 rifle c/w 4X32 scope, £200. Firearm Certificate holders only. Telephone 01586 554058.

ONE CLULITE LAZERLIGHT (Fox light 1,000,000 candle power) c/w gun fittings and rechargeable battery back pack, £49.99 Telephone 01586 554058.

SHOTGUN Baikal 12 bore shotgun, side by side hammer, £49.99. Shotgun Certificate holders only. Telephone 01586 554058.

FURNITURE WOODEN DOUBLE with 2 drawers, £25 Telephone 07742 212284.

BLACK LEATHER SETTEES 3 + 4 with extendable leg rest. Good condition, £100 Telephone 07742 212284.

CHEST OF DRAWERS BRAND NEW Beech coloured, width: 120cm, depth: 48cm, height: 55cm from Ikea, still in box, cost £80 will accept, £45 Telephone 01586 550272 or 07787 091138.

PINE WARDROBE in very good condition- self assembly, £20 Telephone 01631 710167.

STAG "MINSTREL" triple mirror, six drawer dressing table, £29.50 Telephone 01631 720495.

HEALTH AND FITNESS VISIT AIR ROWING MACHINE has console monitors. Folds flat for storage, as new, £49.99 Telephone 07879 826551.

HOME FURNISHINGS CURTAIN POLE BRUSHED STEEL Homebase 3mtrs long comes with round finials, curtain rings and fixings. £10 Telephone 01866 833202.

KITCHEN AND BATHROOM MICROWAVE OVEN Saisho MW2000 model, basic 650W microwave (no grill or oven facility). Used condition, complete with Instruction Manual, £10 Telephone 01880 820060.

LIVESTOCK COLLIE PUPS farm reared pups, working parents, ready now. Telephone 01583 431216.

GARDEN HENS Pure Breeds and Hybrids, Point of Lay Pullets, DEFRA Reg. Telephone 01786 842788 evenings please

PIGEONS white Fantails. Telephone 01631 720311.

MAIL ORDER

SCOTTISH FIELD CALENDARS, featuring spectacular photography of some of our most scenic lochs, rivers, beaches and mountains. Always a popular gift for family and friends at home or abroad. Order on-line at www.scottishfield.co.uk

RAFFLE collectors edition complete boxset, all 9 seasons (an amazing 61 discs) and the x-files movie, mint condition, £49 Telephone 01586 820069.

TICKETS For your prize draw, numbered and perforated to your requirements. From Krisp Print. Telephone 01586 554975.

TOYS AND GAMES BIGTRAK TOY (the 80s are back), programmable truck, boxed and in mint condition, £25 Telephone 01586 820069.

MOTORCYCLE EQUIPMENT CHILD METAL RIDE ON CAR ride on toy, in perfect condition. Old fashioned race car style. Lovely item, always kept indoors. £80 new, £40 Telephone 07795 297136.

OUTDOOR SPORTS EQUIPMENT CHILD'S TOY SHOPPING TROLLEY metal play shopping trolley. Collapsible, good condition, £10 Telephone 07795 297136.

HILL WALKING ICE AXE 73cm long, CAMP, only used couple of times, telephone office hours only, £30 Telephone 01631 566080.

POWER TOOLS DRILL COMBI 24v, 2 batteries, £45 Telephone 01499 500658.

PRINTING AND STATIONERY PAPER & CARD A4/A3 size, sold in reams or by the box, ideal for copiers, lasers and fax machines. Contact Krisp Print. Telephone 01586 554975.

WANTED OUTBOARD MOTORS all makes, including Seagull and Anzani and parts, running or not. Telephone 01852 314009.

SCRAP METAL all types of scrap metal, we uplift scrap cars, call Mr Cook, West Coast Scrap Metals. Telephone 01499 500638 or 07787 991636.

PERSONALS

LOST
In Oban on December 30th
Ladies Watch with Rings attached
Great sentimental value
Reward for items returned
Tel: 0141 6378803

Happy 21st Birthday
Kirsty

Lots of love from Mum, Dad and Iain xxx

"Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation: For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works."
What does the Lord Jesus Christ mean to you?

www.WordsbytheWaySide.co.uk

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BIRTHS

CAMPBELL - Grace Jane, Neil and Eilidh are delighted to announce the safe arrival of their daughter, weighing 7lb 6oz, born on December 27, 2010 at Stirling Royal Infirmary. A little sister for Isobel, granddaughter for Helen and the late John Taylor, Ardeonaig, Donnie and Isobel Campbell, North Connel.

MACLEAN OF ARDGOUR - At Raigmore Hospital on December 29, 2010, to Ewen and Anne, a son, Hector Robert.

MALLOCH - Donald and Joan are delighted to announce the birth of their son Alexander Donald, on December 22, 2010 at the Royal Alexandra Hospital, Paisley. A brother for Archie, fifth grandson for Anne and Donald Malloch, Alexandra Place, Oban, third grandson for Catherine and the late John Macaulay, Sheshader, Isle of Lewis and seventh great grandchild for Robert McCulloch, Lynn Court, Oban. Special thanks to Ronni and all at Oban Maternity Unit, Johnnie and Robbie, ambulance crew and staff at RAH.

ENGAGEMENTS

McMULLAN-LAWRIE
Both families are delighted to announce the engagement of Lee to Shona on December 24, 2010.

MCKERRAL - **MACDONALD** - Both families are delighted to announce the engagement of Colin, youngest son of Donnie and Kate McKerral, Southend, and Katherine, daughter of John and Christine MacDonald, Oban.

WHITEHEAD-MACADAM - Congratulations go to Kevin Whitehead and Toni Macadam who were engaged on Christmas Day. We couldn't be happier for such a lovely couple! All our love Gary, Julie, Connor and Heather

DEATHS

BONAR - Flaurie (nee Smith) passed away suddenly at the RAH, Paisley on January 5, 2011, aged 66 years. Devoted wife of the late John, much loved Mum and Nana, will be sorely missed.

CAMERON - Peacefully on January 4, 2011 at Lynn of Lorne Nursing Home, formerly of Mull View, Laurel Crescent, Oban, John, husband of the late Jessie Ann, dear father to Kathleen and grandpa to Cameron and Lynn. Sadly

missed. A funeral service took place on January 7, 2011, at the Church of Scotland, Glencruitten Road.

CHALMERS - Peacefully, after a long illness, at Lorn and Islands Hospital, Oban, Olive Frances Chalmers (née Tindall), aged 91 years, beloved wife of the late George and very much loved mother of son George and daughters Olive and Christine. Devoted mother-in-law of Hilary, Terry and Dugie, dear grandmother to Karen, Elaine, Katie, Fiona and Douglas and great grandmother to Charlotte, Dougal, Fraser, Chloe and Emma. Sadly missed by her brothers and sister and all their families. Funeral service to be held at Lorn Parish Church, Isle of Arran on Friday, January 14 at 1pm, thereafter to Lamlash New Cemetery to which all family and friends are respectfully invited. Family flowers only please. There will be a retiring collection for The Arran Hospice Fund at the church if you wish to contribute.

MCLEISH - Suddenly at home on January 3, 2011 in her 88th year, Morag (née Kirkpatrick), a much loved mum, granny, great granny, great-great granny and great-great-great granny.

ROBERTSON - Suddenly but peacefully, after a short illness born with dignity, on January 6, 2011 in his 71st year, George (former manager of D.E. Shoes), beloved husband of Margaret (née MacInnes) and a dear dad to George and Lorne. Rest in Peace.

SAUNDERS - Suddenly at Lorn & Islands Hospital, Oban on Thursday 6 January, 2011 aged 86, Stuart Arthur Saunders, beloved husband and best friend of the late Chrissie. Cremation at Cardross Crematorium at 2.15 pm on Tuesday 18 January, 2011. No flowers please. Donations to National Trust for Scotland, Royal Horticultural Society for Scotland, The John Muir Trust or Sense Scotland, c/o McPhee & Partners, George Street, Oban, PA34 5RZ

SHORTHOUSE - Peacefully in Inverness on January 7, 2011 Charles Shorthouse, aged 93 years, late of Strontian, beloved husband of the late Jean, sadly missed by all his family and friends. The funeral will take place from St Oran's Church, Connel on Thursday, January 13 at 1pm. Thereafter to Achtnabha Cemetery. Family flowers only please. Retiring collection/donations if desired for Alzheimer Scotland and Macmillan Nurses.

LAMONT - Peacefully on December 29, 2010 at Tigh a Rudha, Hugh Alex, The Knowes, Balevullin, Isle of Tiree, aged 78. Funeral service was held at Heyleipol Church on December 31 and thereafter at Kirkapol Cemetery.

MACKINNON - Peacefully at the Campbeltown Hospital, on January 6, 2011 Margaret Low MacGregor, in her 74th year, 65 Tomaig Road, Campbeltown, dearly beloved wife of the late Alasdair MacKinnon, much loved mother of Lynda and Marie and a dear mother-in-law and gaga.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MACCALLUM-Henrietta (Babs), Claggan. The family wish to express their heartfelt thanks to everyone involved in the care of Babs during her recent illness. The kindness and consideration shown by Moss Park Nursing Home, MacLellan funeral undertakers, Glen Mor Surgery and all the friends and neighbours has given us great comfort. Thanks also to all who attended the funeral at the Duncansburgh MacIntosh Church and to

John Fraser for his sincere service. The generous sum of £443.41 from the retiring collection has been donated to Moss Park Resident's Welfare Fund.

MACLENNAN - The family of the late Chrissie MacLennan wish to thank most sincerely all relatives, friends and neighbours for the kindness and sympathy shown to them during their recent sad loss, also for the cards. Special thanks to the Rev. Liz Gibson for her kind words and comforting service and to Alastair MacDonald for music, also to Andrew Anderson and Ross for their guidance and professional handling of all arrangements and finally many thanks to all those who attended church and graveside.

MACKAY - Sheila, Moyra, Sandra and Jack would like to thank all family and friends for their kind expressions of sympathy following the sudden death of their brother Donald. Thanks also to all of Donald's friends for their support to him especially Maggie, Allan, Archie and old school pal John. Special thanks to Jeff for his moving ceremony and to Hoey and Son for their professional and caring services. The collection will be distributed to charities close to Donald's heart.

SCOTT - Iain, Jane and all the Scott family, would like to thank family, friends, neighbours and carers for their endless cards and letters following the very sad passing of Ted, a dear friend to all ages. Special thanks to Dunaros staff, Lorn and Islands staff, doctors at the Salen surgery, also Pete, all ambulance and lifeboat crew, Billie MacClymont for special funeral arrangements for dad. A special thank you to Cathie for the splendid service and celebration of Ted's full and wonderful life.

HINEAN - Peacefully in her sleep, on Sunday morning, January 9, 2011 in her 66th year, Gillian Elizabeth, beloved wife of John, much loved mother of Lucy, Matthew, James, Jodie and Chloe and a special granny. Now in perfect peace in the presence of her Lord. The funeral will take place from St Oran's Church, Connel on Thursday, January 13 at 1pm. Thereafter to Achtnabha Cemetery. Family flowers only please. Retiring collection/donations if desired for Alzheimer Scotland and Macmillan Nurses.

FERGUSON - Suddenly on 2 January 2011, Jessie Ferguson, 106 Upper Borve, Barra, aged 77 years. Beloved wife of the late Hamish Ferguson, a much loved mother, mother-in-law, sister, aunt, sister-in-law and grandmother.

ROBERTSON - Suddenly at home on January 3, 2011 in her 88th year, Morag (née Kirkpatrick), a much loved mum, granny, great granny, great-great granny and great-great-great granny.

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FERGUSON - Suddenly on 2 January 2011, Jessie Ferguson, 106 Upper Borve, Barra, aged 77 years. Beloved wife of the late Hamish Ferguson, a much loved mother, mother-in-law, sister, aunt, sister-in-law and grandmother.

ROBERTSON - Suddenly at home on January 3, 2011 in her 88th year, Morag (née Kirkpatrick), a much loved mum, granny, great granny, great-great granny and great-great-great granny.

SAUNDERS - Suddenly at Lorn & Islands Hospital, Oban on Thursday 6 January, 2011 aged 86, Stuart Arthur Saunders, beloved husband and best friend of the late Chrissie. Cremation at Cardross Crematorium at 2.15 pm on Tuesday 18 January, 2011. No flowers please. Donations to National Trust for Scotland, Royal Horticultural Society for Scotland, The John Muir Trust or Sense Scotland, c/o McPhee & Partners, George Street, Oban, PA34 5RZ

SHORTHOUSE - Peacefully in Inverness on January 7, 2011 Charles Shorthouse, aged 93 years, late of Strontian, beloved husband of the late Jean, sadly missed by all his family and friends. The funeral will take place from St Oran

Phoenix boxers compete in tri-nations tourney

Lochaber boys meet former world champion Amir Khan

LOCHABER Phoenix Boxing Club competed in their most exciting venture yet last at a tri-nations tournament hosted last weekend by Amir Khan's amateur club Gloves ABC at the Reebok Stadium, home of Bolton FC.

Clubs from England, Wales and Scotland took part, with Lochaber Phoenix putting

up four boxers – although light welterweight Stephen Cameron's opponent pulled out and no suitable replacement could be found. The Lochaber squad stayed at the five star De Vere hotel at the Reebok, had lunch in an executive box, took in the summer.

York and met Amir Khan, former world champion Robin Ried and boxing hero Michael Gomez.

The icing on the cake came when Network Rail donated the £6,000 ring, built specially for the event, to the Lochaber club. It will be on show in the Nevis Centre at next home show in the summer.

BOXING



James Aitchison, right, is presented with his trophy by Amir Khan. His opponent Jack Featherstone, left, was controversially given the decision.



Clash of the ash at Old New Year's game

THE now-traditional Old New Year shinty match between Glenfinnan villagers below the viaduct certainly proved to be a combative encounter on Saturday afternoon.

'The '45s', boosted by a strong female contingent, eventually triumphed over Glenfinnan 3-2 in the nine-a-side match, which was limited to 20 minutes each way because of fading light.

Event co-organiser, Glenfinnan Estate manager Joann Alasdair Gibson, reckoned

SHINTY
the women gave 'The '45s' the edge.

'They definitely made the difference,' he told *The Oban Times*. Alasdair was a busy man on the day - he doubled up as Glenfinnan team member and referee!

Above, The '45s' Scott Gibson takes evasive action as Glenfinnan's Iain MacFarlane clears. Rushing to Scott's assistance is Joann Robertson.

Goon Squad take over at top of indoor league

GOON Squad have overtaken Livercaul at the top of the Ali Young Winter League after a 1-0 win over Funky Five at the Nevis Centre on Sunday night. Livercaul are a point behind after losing a five-goal thriller with Caol.

Bottom side Caley Jags came close to picking up their first point of the season but narrowly lost

FOOTBALL

3-2 to Achintore FC. On an evening of high-scoring games, HW Energy and Crazy Crofter played out a 3-3 draw whilst NGTW beat All Trades 4-2.

Lochaber Leisure stay a point ahead of Caol in third after they defeated

A BIG field of 96 hardy souls took part in Lochaber Athletic Club's annual New Years Day Race at Nevis Range and enjoyed excellent conditions for the 2.5-mile, 2,000 climb up to the Snowgoose Restaurant.

Large icy patches present on the course at Christmas time had melted and with no wind there were lots of good times.

Local man Davie Rogers produced a new record of 23 minutes 12 seconds – just three seconds faster than Robbie Simpson's record from 2010.

Tom Smith was also in good form and finished second,

this after he had completed his 200th Ben Lora ascent the previous day! Visitor Euan Taylor finished third in 24 minutes 24 seconds.

Finished

First lady home was Megan Wright from Highland Bog

Trotters who finished ninth overall and just one place behind trial biker Danny MacAskill.

Second lady was Emma O'Shea from Deeside. Dawn Scott was the first local lady

finishing third in a time of 28minutes six seconds.

Other good runs included

John Hepburn's return to form, finishing fifth just in front of Manny Gorman.

ATHLETICS

Mountain biker James Shirley finished tenth on his 22nd birthday and a good time was produced by skier Davie Austin.

The tailenders - who seemed to be doing more chatting than running - still managed fast times of under 53 minutes.

The club would like to thank the Nevis Range team for welcoming competitors and assisting moving prizes and clothing up the gondola. Thanks also go to timekeeper Andy Rogers and to the many supporters on the hill.



Fort William FC players after their training session at the Nevis Centre on Saturday. 10_f02for01

MacDonald comes through indoor training session

FORT WILLIAM FC starlet Sean MacDonald got back to full training on Saturday almost four months after major ankle surgery.

With Fort's game against Nairn County wiped out by the frozen Claggan Park pitch, manager Calum MacLean and assistant James Annette took the squad to the Nevis Centre for their first Saturday indoor a-five-a-side session.

Sean, 18, came through the bounce games without any problem – although the ankle was understandably stiff and sore after the intensive workout.

Assistant Fort boss James Annette was delighted the talented youngster was firmly back on the road to playing first team football after his long period of recuperation.

He told *The Oban Times*:

'Sean had a serious ankle

FOOTBALL

problem and they decided to operate on him in September because it was just getting worse.

'He was just starting to break into the first team but the ankle injury was becoming an ongoing problem for him.'

'This is his first full training session – the lad has been working in the gym, working out and has been under the physiotherapist to get fit.'

Annette added: 'This is our first Saturday at the Nevis Centre. We have to keep fitness levels up and keep the boys together regularly.'

'But it's really match fitness they need – at the end of the

last game against Clach two

or three of them went down

with cramp because they had

not played for six weeks.'

ALLEYCATS are the top dogs in Nevis Centre ten-pin bowling league

TEN-PIN BOWLING

ALLEYCATS remain top of the scratch division in the ten-pin bolting league at the Nevis Centre being the only team with the maximum of 35 points after beating British Legion 5-0.

Just one point behind are Underdogs, who picked up all fixtures in a walkover. Council remain in third place just another point behind after beating Phoenix 5-0. Further down the table the Likely Lads jump from 8th to 5th after beating Rotavators 5-0.

In the handicap division Underdogs remain in top spot with Alleycats still in second place two points behind. Will-O-Bees move into third after beating Bowjax 3-2. Last week's third place team Rotavators drop to 6th after going down 5-0 to the Likely Lads.

Individually Tony Whitelocke of Alleycats had the top two scratch games (168 & 158) and therefore the top scratch series (326) as well as the top handicap game (224). Linda Gillespie of Fairway Fillies had the second best handicap game of 222 (scratch 125) bowing off an average of 78. Similarly Paul Brian (Rotavators) had the third best handicap game of 220 (scratch 112) off an average of 64. Phoenix's Jackie Hill created a stir with her 'turkey' (3 strikes in a row) in their match against Council.

Pam Weller (Alleycats) still holds the top scratch average with 144. Brian Stewart (Council) remains second on 139.

Riverbank Splodge race called off

ATHLETICS

TREACHEROUS conditions left Lochaber Athletic Club with no option but to call off its winter league Riverbank Splodge race from Claggan Park at Fort William on Sunday morning.

Overnight snow turned to slush and then froze, leaving the route iced up and potentially dangerous to runners.

This Sunday sees the annual five-mile Vitrified Fort Race from Glen Nevis. Organiser for the event, which is for all age groups from under-11 upwards, is Ian Adams on 07957 501793.

Spot the SHINTY BALL Competition

WIN £1600

LAST WEEK'S SHINTY BALL WAS HERE...

WIN £1600

SPOT THE SHINTY BALL

Competition Rules

No responsibility will be accepted for entries which are delayed, mislaid or lost, and proof of posting cannot be accepted as proof of delivery. The Company's decision is final on all matters relating to the competition and no correspondence will be entered into. The final decision rests with the Company. In the event of more than one correct entry, the jackpot will be shared equally between all winning entries. Any decision regarding the awarding of a prize is entirely at the discretion of the Company. The Company reserves the right to declare the competition null and void at any time, subject to its discretion and to make full refund of the price of the coupon to any person who has entered the competition at that time. Employees of The Oban Times Limited, their immediate relatives and any person otherwise connected with the competition are ineligible to enter.

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 reach "Spot the Shinty Ball" Competition, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HB by 12noon Tuesday. You may hand it into The Oban Times Head Office, Lochavullin, Oban by the same time. Otherwise all entries must be posted.

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Mull driver recognised as future champ

A YOUNG Mull rally driver is being tipped for the top after securing a place on the elite Team UK.

John MacCrone, aged 21, of Dervaig, has been chosen as one of only three young British rally drivers on the team, which will offer the islander specialist advice and back-up as he prepares for a possible career in rally competitions.

Team UK was set up by the Motor Sports Association (MSA) in a bid to find the next Colin McRae or Lewis Hamilton.

Team members will be schooled in mechanics, equipment, sports psychology and safety, as well as racing techniques. They will even have to sit a test with the Institute of Advanced Motoring to see how they drive on public roads.

Glasgow co-driver Stuart Loudon is grandson of Boyd Tunnock, who heads up the famous biscuit company, and

RALLYING

has also been selected for the team. He will be advised by Colin McRae's former navigator Nicky Grist and will rejoin John for the new season in the pair's Ford Fiesta R2.

It has been a sharp rise in the drivers' standings for John, who won the Scottish Junior Rally Championship in 2009 and followed up this success with a second place in the British Rally's Fiesta Sporting Trophy.

The apprentice joiner told The Oban Times: 'I contacted Team UK to say I was interested in being involved and asked them to come and watch me but little did I know they had already been doing that.'

'It was a brilliant feeling to be chosen. It is added pressure for the forthcoming season but I think that's a good thing.'

'To have guys that are the



Mull's John MacCrone in action. Photo courtesy of Jakob Ebrey Photography.

best at what they do behind you is brilliant.'

'We will be going out to win the Fiesta Sporting Trophy this year and to gain more experience at this level of competition.'

'We had a lot of issues with reliability last season and we hope that will not be as big a problem this year.'

With the weight of Team UK behind him John has ambitions of progressing beyond the British Championship.

The pair also hope to race abroad this season.

He added: 'If you ask any rally driver the ultimate goal is to get to the World Rally Championship, which is

difficult to do but you've got to give it a go.' To be eligible for Team UK drivers must: Be aged between 17 and 24, be British and have raced at least one year in a recognised MSA championship.

Fiona Miller, programme manager for Team UK, said: 'John has shown us a huge amount of potential. He

has not been competing for that long - he only started in 2005 - but had a great season in the British Rally Championship and we feel he has demonstrated all the signs to do well in the sport.'

'Over the past couple of years he has started to make his mark.' John's stock rose further last year when

Motorsport News placed him at number one in a list of young drivers to watch out for next season across all types of racing.

John is sponsored by Tunnock's, Palletforce and TSL Contractors.

His first race of the new season is on February 24 in Bournemouth.



Laura McMillan won last year's ladies half marathon in 1.35.10 and is pictured running the Westport Beach stretch of the race. Photograph courtesy of John McFadyen.

MOKRUN voted top UK event

THE Mull of Kintyre (MOKRUN) Half Marathon has been voted as the top event in the UK by Runner's World readers.

In the magazine's February edition, the event took the top spot in the magazine's 2010 Ultimate Race Guide.

Organisers have increased numbers for this year's race to 750 entrants for the 10K and half marathon as its popularity grows up and down the country.

Overall the MOKRUN was voted best for atmosphere and beginners.

MOKRUN's organising

committee is delighted to be ranked the number one half marathon in the UK.

'We are also extremely pleased to win two other categories, we are overwhelmed with the positive feedback,' said the committee. 'It's such

a fantastic achievement to be voted by the runners themselves, who nominated MOKRUN ahead of hundreds of other deserving and exciting races.'

This year's race will take place on Sunday May 29, with events organised throughout the weekend, including a

HALF MARATHON

pre-race pasta party and a post-race ceilidh.

Already this year's races have attracted runners from around the globe and entries are filling up fast.

'We hope that this year's race will be just as great a success as last year,' said the committee. Junior fun run forms can now be downloaded from www.mokrun.com and you can enter online for the 10K or half on www.runnersworld.co.uk/mokrun.

Visit the council's website to see what courses are available or for more information email sportcoaching@argyll-bute.gov.uk. Alternatively, you can pick up a form from the first floor of the West Highland Housing Association building in Crannog Lane, Oban.

PREPARATIONS for the new shinty season got underway in Oban's Mossfield Stadium on Saturday with the annual Oban Camanachd v Lochside new year friendly.

The originally scheduled date between Camanachd's first and second team had to be postponed because of the weather, but Saturday's game

survived the frost and a light covering of snow – even that evening's blizzards.

SHINTY

An upset could have been on the cards, but Oban Camanachd triumphed over their second team by 6-1.

A spokesman for the club said the game was a good workout for the lads and

gave Camanachd's new coaches Diarmuid MacMillan and Andrew Pearson, together with Lochside's David MacInnes and Tony Howlett, a good idea of their player's abilities as the new season approaches.

FOOTBALL

Carpenters 5 5 0 0 15
RM Builders 5 4 0 1 12
Atlantis Leisure 4 3 0 1 9
Hydro 5 2 1 2 7
Dunollie 5 2 1 2 7
Oban Times 5 2 0 3 6
Oban High 5 0 0 5 0
Scottish Sea Farms 4 0 0 4 0

Results: RM Builders 11, Oban High School 2; Carpet Fitters 5, Dunollie 1; Oban Times 3, Hydro 4.

SPORTS IN OBAN

SPORTS Hall Athletics comes to Oban this Saturday, 15th January, when area heats take place at Atlantis Leisure.

The contest starts at 12.30pm and entries will be taken on the day from noon. Athletes at under-9 to under-17 can take part.

the weather

Sponsored by
NANCY BLACK Ships' Chandler

Thursday

Heavy rain.
Winds moderate, south, south easterly.
Temperatures 8°C to 9°C

Friday

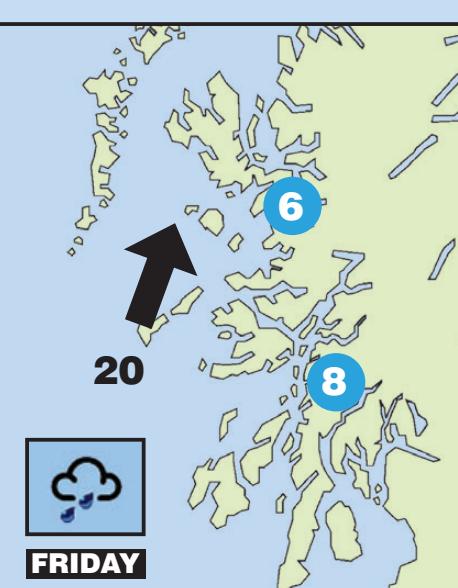
Heavy rain showers.
Winds moderate, south, south westerly.
Temperatures 6°C to 8°C

Weekend Outlook

Heavy rain.
Winds strong, south, south westerly.
Temperatures 6°C to 10°C

Ferry Crossings/Sea States

Oban to Barra/South Uist - Moderate
Oban to Coll/Tiree - As above
Kennacraig to Islay - As above



Tides

Sponsored by
NANCY BLACK Ships' Chandler

Tide tables for Oban during the week from

Thursday, January 13, 2011

are listed below with differences for major ports listed beneath.

All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

| Date | am | | pm |
|------------|-----|-------|-------------------------|
| Thur 05.14 | 2.0 | 11.17 | 3.1 18.07 2.0 23.23 3.0 |
| Fri 06.17 | 2.1 | 13.03 | 3.0 19.12 2.0 *** ** |
| Sat 01.11 | 2.9 | 07.31 | 2.1 14.42 3.1 20.18 1.9 |
| Sun 02.49 | 3.1 | 08.53 | 1.9 15.40 3.3 21.18 1.6 |
| Mon 03.46 | 3.3 | 10.06 | 1.6 16.26 3.5 22.10 1.3 |
| Tues 04.33 | 3.6 | 10.58 | 1.4 17.07 3.7 22.56 1.0 |
| Wed 05.14 | 3.8 | 11.42 | 1.1 17.45 3.9 23.39 0.7 |

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)

| | | | |
|------------------|-------|--------------|-------|
| Ardriahig | -5.35 | Lochboisdale | +0.30 |
| Campbeltown | -5.30 | Mallaig | +0.25 |
| Crinan | -0.47 | Portree | +0.55 |
| Islay Port Ellen | 2.00 | Tobermory | +0.16 |
| Dover | | | +5.30 |



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