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Oban schoolboy launches his own eco-war on plastic straws

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SIX-YEAR-OLD 'eco-boy' Felix Hughes is on a superhero mission to save the world from plastic waste.

Felix, a pupil at Oban's Rockfield Primary School, has tackled giant milk supplier Müller Milk over the use of plastic straws it attaches to its drinks cartons.

The campaigning youngster, inspired to stop plastic pollution after watching TV hit *Blue Planet*, sent copies of his Müller Milk letter to Prime Minister Theresa May, the boss of Argyll and Bute Council, local politicians, Greenpeace, his head teacher and *The Oban Times*.

In his letter, he said: 'I like milk but I don't like the straw and the plastic wrapping it comes in. My school is quite big and we think there is around 1,000 straws going into the bin every week. I would like you to make paper straws or design something that you can drink out of that does not have any plastic in but can still break the carton lid.'

A Müller spokesman said its straws on milk cartons can be recycled into non-food products and it is working with its packaging supplier to identify potential alternatives.

He added: 'Our advice is to leave the straw in the pack and to ensure the pack is sent for recycling.'

Felix's mum Susannah said they had double-checked with Argyll and Bute Council and were satisfied Müller's advice was correct.

The youngster's school is following Felix's lead and is waiting for delivery of new recycling bins to help keep it green.



Felix with one of his targeted Müller Milk cartons, complete with plastic straw. 16_T09_Felix Hughes03

His brother Rufus, nine, has also been joining in the eco-campaign and their head teacher, Caroline Fothergill, said: 'We are very proud of them for showing such leadership.'

Argyll and Bute MP Brendan O'Hara was so impressed by Felix's 'humbling' letter he told *The Oban Times* he had decided to join the all-party parliamentary group on plastic waste.

He said: 'I am so impressed that Felix has written to so many influential people. Plastic waste is becoming a huge problem. I hope Müller Milk and other producers take his views on board.'

The youngster was delighted to receive a reply from Downing Street which said: 'It was very good of you to get in touch and for taking the time and trouble to share your thoughts about this important matter. Your views were very well expressed.'

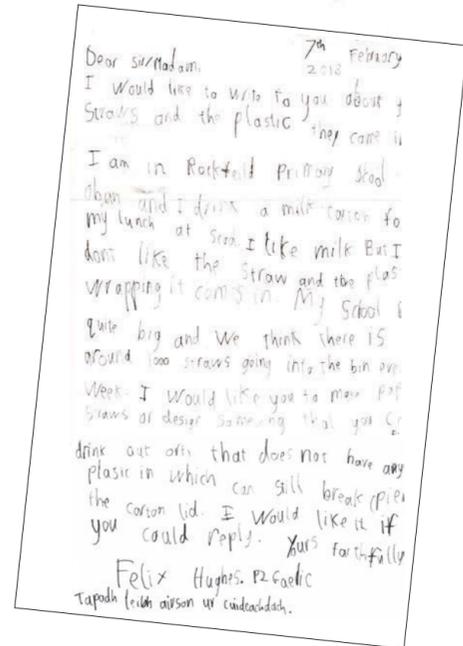
Meanwhile, Argyll and Bute Council chief executive Cleland Sneddon said he had spoken to its catering team who have already been working with Müller and other councils to come up with a different way of providing straws that are not made of plastic but can still pierce the carton. He said: 'It

might take a little time for the manufacturers to find a way of doing this but the company have told us they are keen to find a way to tackle the problems. I hope they are able to come up with a solution soon as I, too, am keen we reduce the amount of plastic we use.'

Oceans campaigner at Greenpeace UK Tisha Brown said they were 'honoured' to be included in Felix's campaign and added: 'We wholeheartedly support it and would advise Müller Milk to take it very seriously.'

Green MSP John Finnie was delighted to receive a copy of

The Oban Times / SUPPORTS
NO PLASTIC FREE ARGYLL



Felix's letter and said: 'There has been a lot of action in recent months in Scotland with groups working to get rid of the ever-growing plastic waste problem we all face. I am especially delighted to see that much of this action is coming from young people, forcing

long overdue action from older people like myself.'

Argyll MSP Michael Russell said he was 'really keen to work with Felix' and was talking to a number of people in the area about how to make Oban a plastics-free town'.

Comment – page six.

Green light for Tiree campsite

A NEW campsite on Tiree was approved at a local hearing in Crossapol hall on Tuesday.

Karl Hughes applied to create a campsite, including 10 motorhome and 10 tent pitches plus toilets and showers, on land north of Sunset Cottage, Balevullin.

A council report recorded 12 supporters and 18 objectors.

Officers recommended councillors approve the campsite, because it would visually integrate with the landscape, contribute to Tiree's tourism economy, and reduce 'indiscriminate overnight sites'.

Given the size of the small crofting community, a local hearing was called on Monday, when councillors voted seven to two for approval.

Grass fire lights up Appin sky

FIREFIGHTERS were called to tackle a grass fire on a hillside above Appin on Monday night.

The fire near Inverhyme Farm lit up the night sky.

A spokesperson for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service said firefighters were alerted at 7.45pm.

She added: 'Operations Control mobilised two fire engines to the fire on the hillside near Inverhyme Farm where firefighters extinguished the fire.'

'Crews left the scene at 9.20pm after ensuring the area was made safe.'



Screen Machine Scotland's Mobile Cinema

Tobermory Thu 1 - Sat 3 March
Bunessan Mon 5 - Tue 6 March
Craignure Wed 7 March

Paddington 2 (PG) 103 mins
"a pure delight" Empire *****
01/03 at 5.30pm, 07/03 at 5.30pm

Star Wars: The Last Jedi (12A) 152 mins
"about as much fun as you could have at the movies" Deadline 01/03 at 8.30pm, 05/03 at 8.30pm

Jumanji (12A) 119 mins
"a crowd-pleasing romp" Observer
02/03 at 5.30pm

Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri (15) 115 mins
Frances McDormand and Woody Harrelson star.
"Funny, brutal" Empire ***** 02/03 at 8.30pm,
06/03 at 8.30pm, 07/03 at 8.30pm

Rocket Post: A National Theatre of Scotland show (£6/£4) (PG) 60 mins
An extraordinary show for families, packed with songs, charm and humour. "Rocket Post lifts off and flies ... thoroughly engaging" Herald 03/03 at 2pm

Coco (PG) 105 mins
"Pixar has raised the animation bar" Empire
03/03 at 5.30pm, 05/03 at 5.30pm

Darkest Hour (PG) 125 mins
"Churchill's darkest hour is Gary Oldman's finest" Empire 03/03 at 8.30pm, 06/03 at 8.30pm

Futureproof - prior to screenings of *Three Billboards* and *Darkest Hour*, we will show a free photo presentation.

Book at: www.screenmachine.co.uk. Tickets also at the cinema 30 mins before screenings. Cash only, no cards. £7.50 Adults. Concessions £5.50. (except Rocket Post - £6/£4)



'Unpalatable' care cuts warning

PROPOSALS to cut £10 million from Argyll and Bute's health and social care budget will go public on March 21, but some options are 'extremely unpalatable' and potentially could affect a large number of jobs, a councillor has warned, writes Kathie Griffiths.

Details of proposals will go online on the council and Health and Social Care Partnership's websites on that date.

Members of the Integration Joint Board will then meet on March 28 to decide which proposals will be taken forward to the next year to fill the multi-million pound shortfall.

The warning of hard decisions

ahead came from Argyll and Bute councillor Kieron Green at Monday's Oban Community Council meeting.

Councillor Green, who is also the vice-chairman of the Integration Joint Board, was quizzed for more details but remained tight-lipped, saying he was not in a position to give information away before it was officially in the public domain.

He said: 'I have seen a fair few proposals, some are extremely unpalatable. We are working out which ones can be brought forward. Some of the proposals concern me deeply,' he added, telling the community council it was important the situation

was handled sensitively because there were 'potentially a large number of jobs that could be affected'.

He told the community council: 'We don't want to concern staff unnecessarily if there are proposals that might not see the light of day.'

There are fears that proposals could include closing Oban's council-owned Eadar Glinn care home in Drummole Road and could cost hospital beds.

At the last Care Inspectorate visit in November 2017, the home's care and support was ranked as 'very good' and its management and leadership were rated as 'excellent'. How-

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Workshop examines GP services on Mull and Iona

A WORKSHOP has been held to plan a modernised NHS model to support the successful permanent recruitment of GPs to Mull and Iona.

Members of Mull and Iona's three patient participation groups, community councillors, health and social care staff from the three practices and the hospital, together with local and senior management, attended the workshop.

The event considered the national and local picture regarding the challenges facing GP recruitment in Argyll and Bute, the Health and Social Care Partnership's (HSCP) strategic plan detailing how GP practices will be configured in future and implications of the new GP contract which sees work transferring from GPs to other health and social care staff.

The workshop heard from community members regarding concerns over the existing service, as well as considering proposals on how services could be provided on the islands. This included the implications of moving the GP surgery from Salen to Craignure, the importance of there being a GP service provided on the Ross of Mull and Iona and how this could operate both in and out of hours.

It was agreed a further workshop would be arranged in March at which detailed and costed service model options would be presented based on the following:

- Identify and detail the costs and benefits and options to provide local services if the Salen surgery was to move to Craignure.

- Single island GP practice for Mull and Iona operating out of three locations – Tobermory, Salen/Craignure and Bunessan, plus the branch surgery on Iona.

- It is envisaged GPs and the rest of the practice clinical team would operate on a rota across all the GP surgeries and houses to provide the primary care service for Mull and Iona.

- Prepare and present a range of service model options as to how the workforce could be configured to support day time and out-of-hours routine, urgent and hospital emergency care assessed needs using GPs, advanced nurse practitioners, practice and community staff and community services.

- Develop a clear recruitment and marketing strategy to attract GPs to apply for the posts and to identify how the community's expertise can help design and support this.

Canadian teacher denied her visa for a third and final time

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A CANADIAN who was the only applicant for a job teaching Gaelic at Bunessan Primary School has had her visa rejected for the third time by the Home Office, Argyll's 'deeply disappointed' MSP has reported.

Qualified teacher Sine Halfpenny from Antigonish in Nova Scotia, who studied at Sabhal Mór Ostaig on Skye, applied for the post at the Ross of Mull's new Gaelic unit last June and

was offered the job subject to her visa application.

Bunessan Primary School, which educates 38 pupils, provides English and Gaelic-medium education, following a request by the Ross of Mull and Iona Comann nam Pàrant group in 2016. Three families then enrolled three P1 pupils to start in summer 2017, with another child due to start in 2018. But parents learned the Home Office refused Ms Halfpenny's first application because 'she did not meet the salary requirements'.

Argyll and Bute Council then applied for a Tier 2 Sponsorship Licence, to permit it 'to sponsor Sine for up to five years or until her salary was sufficient for her to live and work here without becoming a burden on the state'.

However, this was also rejected. A Home Office spokesperson explained: 'Her sponsor's application, for a restricted certificate of sponsorship, was rejected as it failed to meet the required points.'

The council re-applied, but said it would re-advertise the

post if unsuccessful. Last week Argyll and Bute MSP Michael Russell expressed his 'deep disappointment' that Ms Halfpenny's application has been declined for a third time.

Mr Russell said: 'This ridiculous decision by the UK government shows their nonsensical position on immigration. There is literally no one else to take this job and the candidate who has been successful is desperately keen to teach on Mull.'

'Migration based upon an artificial cap on numbers is a

disgraceful approach which can only damage Scotland. The price for this UK government folly is being paid by the parents and children of Bunessan. The parents of Bunessan have put in a lot of hard work to get a Gaelic unit established and to find the final blockage in getting a dedicated teacher required is London Tory obsession with keeping migration numbers down is outrageous and ridiculous.'

'I have asked the Scottish Government to support the

council in redoubling its efforts to get this sorted for the good of the children and community on Mull.'

On Monday, Argyll and Bute Council re-advertised the full-time post.

A Home Office spokesperson said: 'Previously, Ms Halfpenny's visa was refused as she did not submit a Certificate of Sponsorship. Her sponsor's application, for a restricted Certificate of Sponsorship, was refused as it failed to meet the required points.'



Alexander Anderson in his lifeboat kit.

Prestigious award for Tobermory's youngest lifeboat crew member

TOBERMORY RNLI's youngest crew member has won a prestigious award to mark his volunteer work on the lifeboat.

Alexander Anderson received Argyll and Bute's Youth Volunteering Award at a ceremony in Helensburgh.

Alexander, 17, joined Tobermory's volunteer crew in May last year. Within 24 hours of receiving his pager, he was responding to his first 'shout' – a false alarm to an emergency beacon which had gone off near Loch Scridain.

Since then, Alexander has responded to several more call-outs and trained every week with the rest of the volunteer crew.

Alexander's citation for the Argyll and Bute Youth Award read: 'While currently studying for his Highers, Alexander also has the responsibility of being a senior prefect and is actively involved in the life of

the school, attending prefect meetings and school council meetings, and he is a keen sportsman.'

'Alongside school, Alexander also juggles his duties as a volunteer lifeboat crew member with the RNLI. As the youngest member at 17, he has impressed his fellow crew members with the effort and commitment he puts in to any task he is given, becoming a highly respected member of the crew in the short time he has been there.'

Alexander follows in the footsteps of his father, who spent more than 20 years on Tobermory lifeboat as a volunteer and full-time mechanic before retiring in 2016.

Tobermory RNLI chairman Richard 'Popz' Fairbairns said: 'This is a very well-deserved award for Alexander. As well as attending exercises every week and putting in the effort as he progresses to com-

pleting his initial training as a crew member, he has already responded to eight shouts.'

'As the award citation states, this is in addition to his school activities and other interests.'

'All of us at the station congratulate Alexander on winning this prestigious award.'

Leader of Argyll and Bute Council Aileen Morton said: 'We have so much to be proud of in Argyll and Bute and our young people are a huge part of that.'

'That's why it's a real pleasure to recognise the contribution they make to life in our communities through the Argyll and Bute Awards 2018.'

'These awards are much more than a way of highlighting the many achievements and successes of Argyll and Bute's young people. They tell our young people that they matter – that what they do makes a difference to life in Argyll and Bute.'

Council concerned over remote air control plan

NEW CONCERN has been expressed about plans by Highlands and Islands Airport Ltd (HIAL) to move to a system of remote air traffic control towers.

Western Isles Council and Na h-Eileanan an Iar MSP Alasdair Allan have both voiced new fears about the proposal.

In a letter to HIAL's managing director, Dr Allan has questioned HIAL over the justifications for this proposal and raised concerns about the economic impact this could have in Benbecula and Stornoway.

Dr Allan said: 'When I met with HIAL's managing director and chairman about this proposal earlier this month, I was keen to stress there are concerns about the potential for the islands to lose high-quality, well-paid jobs.'

'My Westminster colleague Angus Brendan MacNeil MP and I have met members of the workforce who are concerned not only about future employment, but also about how feasible or desirable such a system would be.'

'HIAL has cited recruitment challenges as one of the motivations for this proposal, but this is an issue the industry as a whole faces and it is hard to accept

this is something unique to the islands.'

'It is also troubling that Benbecula is earmarked as the first airport to transition to remote operation. It would appear to be one of the airports with the best level of staff retention, minimal maintenance costs and it has the additional complication of significant military activity at both the airport and in the surrounding area.'

'While I welcome the fact HIAL has agreed to undertake a social impact assessment, there are still a great number of question marks around this proposal and I hope they will engage further with key stakeholders and the affected communities on these points.'

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar said it is to continue making representations to the UK and Scottish governments regarding its concerns.

The comhairle is worried about HIAL's proposals for remote tower and centralised approach surveillance technology as part of the company's 2030 strategy.

Councillor Uisdean Robertson, chairman of the comhairle's transportation and infrastructure committee, said: 'The comhairle is concerned at the

potential loss of a significant number of high quality, well-paid jobs in the islands.'

'Our understanding is that 17 posts could be lost directly from our communities which, in as fragile an economy as the Outer Hebrides, would be a substantial impact. A further four posts could be lost through indirect and induced impacts.'

'We also have concerns about a centralised monitoring system given the shortcomings in the reliability, resilience and security of existing communications infrastructure. There may also be implications for QinetiQ's operations at the MoD Hebrides range and this has not been explored in HIAL's scoping study.'

'The only response we have so far received is from the Scottish Government and I find it disappointing it has not responded more positively to our concerns in light of the fact that, once again, jobs are in danger of being lost to the islands and transferred to the mainland.'

'As we recently highlighted to CalMac, the islands desperately need work opportunities, particularly high skilled, high quality jobs which could go a long way to sustaining the fragile economy of the islands.'

Pipe band's delight at lottery backing

SGOIL Lionacleit Pipe Band (SLPB) is safeguarding its bagpipes with new cases as it prepares to represent the Western Isles at New York's Tartan Week in April.

The band is benefiting from the proceeds of Western Isles Lifestyle Lottery (WILL) tickets in Uist and is using this to buy bagpipe cases and host a homecoming event following Tartan Week.

John Daniel Peteranna, chairman of SLPB, said: 'We are grateful to the Western Isles Lifestyle Lottery for its recent award. We will be using part

of the award to buy bagpipe cases for the band. Bagpipes are fragile instruments and prone to damage. They are an awkward shape to pack and stow away. We have never had the luxury of bagpipe cases before and this will be a big asset to the band.'

'The remainder of the award will go towards a homecoming event after the band return from New York.'

He added: 'The band is made up of talented and dedicated young musicians who deserve the best support we can give them. We wish them well in New York and look forward to seeing

them on TV. They will be great ambassadors for Uist and the Western Isles.'

A spokesperson for the Western Isles Community Society, which operates WILL, said: 'We are delighted funding from WILL will enable the band to buy bagpipe cases and support their homecoming event for the Uist community. We wish them well with the trip.'

Residents in all areas of the Western Isles and beyond can directly benefit projects by taking part in the lottery and be in with a chance of winning three guaranteed weekly cash prizes.



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At Strathallan, we are committed to recognising and rewarding tremendous talent from across the globe. That's why, every year, we offer a limited number of prestigious scholarships across academics, sports and the arts. Successful candidates who demonstrate a high-level of achievement and potential will be honoured with a place and awarded a remission on fees. We also offer a number of means-tested bursaries giving every talented child the opportunity to access our education.

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For more information contact admissions@strathallan.co.uk or call 01738 815003.

Record numbers of dolphin sightings off West Coast

DOLPHIN sightings in the Hebrides have reached a record high, according to new research by marine conservation charity Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust.

Evidence collected during marine expeditions revealed a 24 per cent rise compared to the previous year.

The 2017 survey season recorded nearly 3,000 whales, dolphins, seals and sharks during more than 1,100 sightings.

The harbour porpoise was the most commonly seen species, with 363 sightings of 621 individuals.

Dr Lauren Hartny-Mills, science and policy officer at Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust, said: 'We have never documented so many sightings of common dolphins off Scotland's West Coast before.'

'Our findings highlight the importance of on-going monitoring and research to strengthen our understanding of what is taking place in Hebridean waters.'

'It is hard to say what is causing this increase, but a rise in sea surface temperatures linked to climate change could be playing a role.'

The research was conducted from April to October 2017, part of the charity's citizen science project monitoring whales, dolphins and porpoises – collectively known as cetaceans – and basking sharks in the Hebrides.



A common dolphin.

During 2017, the trust recorded 93 sightings of common dolphins, up from 75 sightings in 2016.

The encounters included 1,340 individual animals – down from 2016's high of 2,303. This is due to smaller group sizes and fewer super pods.

The annual expeditions depend on paying volunteers. In 2017, 75 volunteers worked alongside marine scientists, conducting visual surveys and acoustic monitoring with underwater microphones or hydrophones and identifying individual cetaceans through photography.

The trust is recruiting more citizen scientists to work on board for one to two weeks from April to October 2018.

Participation costs cover boat expenses, accommodation, training, food and insurance and support the charity's research.

For details, contact volunteercoordinator@hwdt.org, call 01688 302620, or visit hwdt.org/silurian

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10th March 2018

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Sexual assault man sentenced

A 59-YEAR-OLD man has been ordered to carry out 200 hours of unpaid work for sexually assaulting two women on Islay. Ian McLellan, of 22 Crichton Street, Millport, inappropriately touched a woman in June 2012 before pressing his body against hers and seizing her arms, preventing her leaving a basement. In March 2017, McLellan inappropriately touched and pressed against another woman. He was sentenced to 200 hours of unpaid work and given a 12-month supervision order, as well as being subject to a notification requirement, when he appeared in Oban Sheriff Court on Tuesday February 27. Sheriff Patrick Hughes said the offences fell at the lower end of the spectrum, but they would still have been 'deeply unpleasant' for the women.

Councillors back man's house plan

OBAN community councillors have backed a man's bid to build a house for himself and his family at Glencruitten. The applicant, Duncan Blainey, was required to present a 'masterplan' to councillors at Monday's meeting as part of Argyll and Bute Council's planning approval process. The masterplan was prepared because of new technical guidance for any proposed scheme sited in a potential development area. The application is to build the house on land south east of Achara. Monday's meeting was told if the house goes up, there would still be sufficient ground for Glencruitten Golf Club to expand if the Oban development road ever went ahead. The community council agreed the masterplan was 'fine' and had 'no objection'.

Budget unanimously agreed

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NO PUBLIC toilets will close, the roads safety unit will be kept and there will be a £5.5m cash injection for roads this year, in a budget unanimously agreed by Argyll and Bute Council last Thursday. Councillors also did not accept a £725,000 cut to health and social care services and instead gave an extra £844,000 to address 'cost pressures'. Staff cuts to environmental health and the council's central education team were also not implemented. However, the majority of savings options were passed, including a three per cent rise in council tax, losing two school janitor posts, changes to school

meal fees, increasing parking charges from £1 to £1.20 and introducing more in tourist destinations. Fares will be increased across all council ferry services to Luing, Easdale, Lismore and Jura in three years and their management will be transferred from ASP to 'in house' to 'make the service more sustainable' by saving £55,000 per year. Further changes are planned for the Jura to Islay ferry, including only running additional sailings when there is a minimum number of passengers and reviewing its 'on demand service (currently ferry runs over and above timetable) and the ferry fares to enable cost recovery'. While the council abandoned plans to close 36 of its 57 public

toilets, it would 'progress sustainable models' by adding turnstiles and charges, franchising some as kiosks, or transferring others as community assets. In the budget, councillors unanimously agreed to bridge a '£5 million funding gap in 2018/19' and build in 'protection for vital services against funding cuts in future years'. Councillor Aileen Morton, leader of the Argyll, Lomond and the Islands Group, told the chamber on Thursday February 22 that investment in the council's roads and footpaths network would more than double over the next two years from £6.6m to £14.9m, with an extra £8m added to the roads capital plan. Councillor Morton said: 'The

trunk road network in Argyll and Bute has now hit truly appalling levels with the A83, A82 and A85 all needing substantial investment. I call on the Scottish Government to invest in our roads now. 'We decided to allocate more than £1.5m to the Health and Social Care Partnership to deliver its vital social work services. This is more than was proposed in the budget pack. We've done as much as we can this year and over the past few years, and now it is time for the partnership to deliver sustainable change, resource transfer and integration.' Councillor Gary Mulvaney, deputy leader, added: 'We need to re-shape what we do. An example of this is the one council property initiative agreed today.

We will be proactively managing our 1,700 buildings and parcels of land, which will be better for the council and for local communities.' SNP opposition leader councillor Sandy Taylor thanked the council's leadership who welcomed their concerns, leading to their unanimous agreement. Further savings are expected in the years to come, with estimated budget gaps of £4.124m in 2019/20, and £6.249m in 2020/21. The council's last round of cuts, the budget report explained, saved £548,000 by reducing bin collections from fortnightly to every three weeks, £319,000 by removing school librarians from secondary schools, £50,000 in the mobile library

service, £39,500 by reducing street sweeping by 50 per cent, £100,000 by removing funding for Christmas lights, £120,700 by increasing cremation and burial charges by 20 per cent, £88,000 by removing 'school crossing patrollers', £58,000 by increasing piers and harbours berthing charges and £150,000 by increasing car parking charges from 80p to £1 and introducing year-round charges at other car parks, including on Mull. Further savings have been delivered by reducing funding for events and festivals, arts development and third sector grants and reducing creative arts programmes and grounds maintenance in schools and primary school supply teacher cover.

SAMS students stand in solidarity with striking lecturers

SCOTTISH Association for Marine Science (SAMS) students are supporting their lecturers who are on strike over pension changes. In a letter to their teachers, a group of students said they backed their decision to strike. The staff are picketing over plans to end the defined benefit section of the Universities Superannuation Scheme pension scheme which could see lecturers £10,000 worse off per year. Members of the University and College Union (UCU) at SAMS have joined 63 universities across the UK in the month-long strike. In a letter to the lecturers, a group of students wrote: 'We want to let you know that, although we have remained mostly silent, we students are aware of the situation. As our education will also be affected by this strike, we would like to let you know what we think of



SAMS staff are picketing over plans to change their pension scheme.

the matter. We understand why strike action has been called for: the reform regarding your pension schemes is very alarm-

ing and done with a seemingly complete disrespect for the work you do. The predicted reduction of £10,000 in retirement income

that would come from such a reform is simply unacceptable. Therefore, going on strike to protect your pensions and live-

lihood is a wholly necessary in this case. We do not expect you to just stand by and watch your future quality of life be attacked so blatantly. 'To the lecturers that are members of the UCU and have decided to strike, we stand in full solidarity and support this industrial action. We believe it is important you fight for your pensions and livelihood. 'You shape our learning and upsetting reforms that affect your future will affect our education. But looking past the lecturer-student relationship, we understand the magnitude of what is happening and reiterate we care and we support you.' Speaking to *The Oban Times*, senior lecturer Claire Gachon said: 'We are protesting against changes in pensions of academic staff. These changes are extremely unfavourable. We are paid by SAMS to teach students of UHI but when it

comes to pensions SAMS tells us they are powerless. They said they are supportive, but can't do anything. We are sad we can't teach our students, but they are very supportive of us.' Student Kirsty Black said: 'It's unanimous support. Quite a few of us will go into academia, so it will effect us in future.' Professor Nicholas Owens, director of SAMS, said: 'I understand the position of the union. In particular, I worry poorer pensions might make academic careers less attractive so UK academia could lose talent. Unfortunately SAMS cannot influence the employer position. 'As director of SAMS, I am also concerned about our students and alongside many colleagues have been working to reduce the impact the strike may have on their education. Many of our students are, however, supportive of their striking lecturers.'

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OT

Pledge to raise £5,000 after five years cancer free

AN OBAN woman is marking the fifth anniversary of being cancer free by raising £5,000 for charity.

Susannah McMillan was diagnosed with a rare form of throat cancer aged 23 and just seven weeks away from passing out as a medical assistant in the Royal Navy.

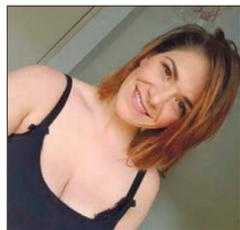
Now she wants to give something back 'to the people that helped me the most through my time of need'.

She said: 'I was diagnosed with an adenoid cystic carcinoma of my submandibular saliva gland. I went from boxing training up to three times a day to not being able to walk up a flight of stairs without feeling like I was going to collapse. I had an operation to remove the tumour in Plymouth then I was flown back to Scotland to recover before starting my radiotherapy. I stayed on the Teenage Cancer ward in the Beatson hospital where the nurses couldn't do enough for you. So to celebrate five years in remission I am hoping to raise £5,000 for the Teenage Cancer Trust and the Beatson hospital.'

'While I was in hospital I met a lovely young lady called Layla who was only 19 years old when she lost her fight with cancer and I would also like to raise this money in her memory.'

She added: 'I hope to raise more than £5,000 through different events over the next year. The first of these will be a charity race night at Soroba House, Oban, on Saturday April 14 from 7.30pm. I'm looking for local businesses to sponsor the horses or give donations for the raffle on the night to help me reach my target.'

To donate, visit either www.justgiving.com/fundraising/susannah-mcmillan5 or www.justgiving.com/fundraising/susannah-mcmillan4



Susannah McMillan.

Beach litter blitzers criticise council's 'haphazard' waste collection

OBAN beach cleaners say haphazard council collections of their weekly litter haul is 'rubbish'.

Every Wednesday a team of volunteer litter pickers from the town's New Hope centre go out to the George Street beach with buckets and bin bags to keep it tidy.

Broken bits of plastic, battered traffic cones, broken garden chairs, soft drink bottles, used paint brushes and clothing rags are regularly washed up.

Bags of bigger, bulkier rubbish are left at the top of the slipway to be taken

away by council waste collectors but sometimes it can be left for weeks on end, said Tam Ferris, one of the beach cleaners.

'Recently it has been hanging round for six to eight weeks, waiting to be collected. There's an obvious risk that what we've collected could just be swept back into the sea if there's a high tide or a wild night. We could really do with one or two big bins with a key by the sea wall so we could use them and lock them to keep it tidy.'

'We are very keen to work with

the council but their collections are haphazard. We clean the beach weekly so they should collect weekly. We all want Oban to be looking its best. It's amazing the difference we can make in just half an hour. We usually get about three bags of general rubbish every week that we sort through to recycle but sometimes there's bigger things like tyres or cones or garden chairs that we can't put in normal-sized bins.'

'We get help from some local organisations but are always looking for more support to keep the beach clean.

Donations of bin bags and litter grabbers are always welcome - as are more volunteers. We usually leave New Hope at about 10.30am on a Wednesday if people want to come and join us.'

Councillor Roddy McCuish said: 'It's great what the volunteers are doing. It's absolutely fantastic. There's three or four bin lorries passing there every day. I will mention it. We will do our best to support them.'

He also said if the beach cleaners thought new big bins would help keep the seafront tidy, he would be happy to

look at the idea. A sighting of council waste collectors emptying contents from blue and green bins into the back of the same wagon in Strathaven Terrace, has also been reported to *The Oban Times*.

The woman, who did not want to be named, said: 'I couldn't believe what I saw. Both bins emptied into the back of the same wagon.'

Councillor McCuish said: 'No, that should not be happening, especially when we are encouraging people to recycle. I'll look into it.'

Happy retirement is just what the doctor ordered

KATHIE GRIFFITHS
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk

COMMUNITY nurse Mo Griffiths has picked up a prescription for a long and happy retirement.

The 59-year-old from Taynuilt is the second generation of her family to look after Oban's health. Her mum Marie was a registered staff nurse at the old West Highland Hospital in the town and her father Kenneth Lipp was a well-known GP in the town who built up the practice where she has worked for the last 16 years.

This week, colleagues at Lorn Medical Centre in Soroba Road had a party to say farewell and good luck.

Flowers, gifts and a celebration cake iced like a nurses' uniform with a stethoscope and sticking plasters were presented to Mrs Griffiths to mark more than 30 years of service to nursing.

She trained in the east end of London before returning to her roots in Oban to work on the surgical wards of West Highland Hospital.

She took a three-year break



Left to right: Gaynor Wotherspoon, Mo Griffiths with her retirement cake, Dr Erik Jespersen and Frances Parkinson.

from her career to move south to Cornwall. The couple started with husband Colin when his marine laboratory job took them

to Cornwall. The couple started a family and, after a return to practice course, Mrs Griffiths

started work as a shift nurse before joining Lorn Medical Centre as a community nurse

Made in Argyll 'gues who' yarn bomb to be revealed in time for Mother's Day

OBAN'S latest yarn bomb will be unveiled in time for Mother's Day.

The newest street art addition to bollards opposite the town's train station will be revealed on Saturday March 10. However, the identity of its maker will stay top secret.

The unveiling will be unravelled as part of a mums' celebration at nearby homespun crafts shop Made In Argyll.

Yarn bombs already featured in the woolly line-up include a lighthouse, a man in a kilt and Louise and Thelma from the road movie.

Made In Argyll is running a competition with £40 of vouchers as prizes.

People are being encouraged to bring in a photograph of their mum which will be included in a special display in the shop window.

Contributors names will be put in a hat and drawn out on March 10 at noon with Oban celebrity Parsley the cat and his 'mum' Fiona Ferris helping.

'Come down and watch the fun as we will also be having an unveiling ceremony of the latest wool bombed creations that keep appearing opposite the station.'

'You won't want to miss this very special event,' said Ada Daley, one of 30 crafters involved in exhibiting at, selling at and running Made in Argyll.



A new yarn bomb will be unveiled near Oban train station on Saturday March 10. 15_T09_yarn bombs01-Oban

University Town launch event

A PROJECT aiming to turn Oban into a university town is inviting people to drop in to its launch event today (Thursday March 1) in the Corran Halls.

Oban is already home to 800 students at the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS), Ballet West and Argyll College UHI. However the 'Oban as a University Town Project' explains on its website: 'There's a big difference between having these great places to study and Oban developing into a thriving university town.'

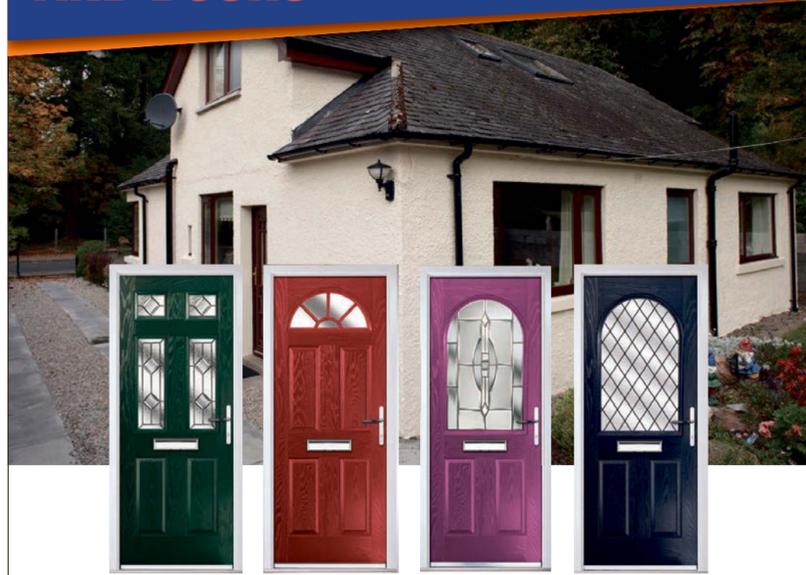
The free, all-day launch event, which runs from 11am to 7pm, invites people to find out about 'existing courses and ideas for future developments' and have their say in 'shaping the future for young people and learners of all ages, local business and services in Oban'.

The day starts with P6/7 schools workshops between 11am and 12.30pm, and 1.15pm and 2.45pm, with activities including Arctic science, creative design and computer programming.

Oban high school of Traditional Music will play from 3pm to 5pm, followed by the official project launch between 5.15pm and 6.15pm, featuring Oban High School Pipe Band, performances by Ballet West, talks by Argyll and Bute MP Brendan O'Hara and council leader Aileen Morton and a buffet provided by Argyll College.

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Specsavers Oban has pledged to focus all its fundraising this year on supporting local causes and organisations run by the community.

Opticians 'Love-ly' boost for charities

AN OBAN opticians organised a Valentine's raffle, with all proceeds going to community-run charities across Oban.

The town's branch of Specsavers has pledged to focus all its fundraising this year on supporting local causes and organisations run by the community.

The first fundraiser of the year was the raffling of a Valentine's-themed hamper for the perfect movie night in.

Tickets cost £1 each with one lucky winner receiving a hamper including prosecco, chocolates, popcorn and a £15 Netflix voucher.

Ken Macdonald, store director at Specsavers Oban, said: 'There are so many great charity organisations that are run by the community in Oban.'

'We wanted to focus our fundraising on them and it's great to kick start the pot with £36 from our Valentine's raffle. We hope to raise a great sum throughout the year which will be divided amongst various causes in the town.'

Get out and enjoy the wonderful walks in Oban

I HAD a wonderful walk at the start of this week from Station Square along the seafront to the War Memorial, then on to Dunollie on the Coach Path, writes BID4Oban town ambassador Kay McDonald.

It was cold but dry and I felt fantastic at the end of it. I'd had time to admire the scenery and the new life starting to grow all around me, and appreciate how clean and fresh the air was. It really raised my spirits and left me feeling alive and happy.

Walking is so good for your physical and mental health, but we all tend to get wrapped up in all the other things we have to do and forget to look after ourselves.

A good walk is one of the best ways to do that.

I'm lucky I have a dog which means I have to get out and walk. Even on the most awful of days, when I dread

it, once I'm out and about I always get something out of my walk.

We're lucky to live in a place where whichever direction you go there is no shortage of beautiful walks of all degrees of length and terrain.

Even a short walk through the town can have huge benefits, from the exercise to the social aspect of getting you out of the house and meeting people. It's lovely to be out for a walk and have most people say hello and smile. It's only a small thing, but it can really cheer up your day.

So go on, no excuses, get your coat on and go for a walk. You'll be amazed how good you feel at the end of it.

It will also give you the chance to look out for this week's photo. Last week's photo was from above The Original Factory Shop in Combie Street. I had never noticed it before.

WHERE IS THIS?



Make Argyll accessible for all disabled visitors



Eilidh Livingstone has an exhibition at New Hope.

New Hope backs Eilidh's focus on new career

WHEN it comes to planning her future, Taynuilt's Eilidh Livingstone has got the picture.

The former housekeeper has given hotel work the brush off to focus on making a name for herself as a photographer and the 21-year-old has just opened her first exhibition at New Hope in Oban.

Eilidh dabbled with photography while at Oban High School and has enrolled on an online course, but she is mostly self-taught. Time spent working in an orphanage in Malawi, with the oranges and yellows of the African landscape – so different from her native Highland hills – further inspired her camera work. Her fascination with the natural world continued back home, and she is now building up a collection of photographs and paintings she hopes to exhibit and sell.

She told *The Oban Times*: 'I love landscapes. One of my favourite places is Kelly's Pier near where I live. I've got hundreds of photos of it but it looks different every time. It changes with the light and the seasons. I like hillwalking, so there's always something that catches my eye when I'm out and about.'

Eilidh is now looking for funding opportunities to back her enterprise and is picking up handy tips from her shopkeeper dad Alan who has an outdoors business in Dunoon.

'I've done a few commissions and a couple of photo-shoots for people, so my name is getting out there. I'm so happy New Hope gave me the exhibition space. I'm hoping people will like what they see,' added Eilidh.

A NEW initiative aimed at improving disabled visitors' experience of visiting Argyll has been launched.

Michael Russell MSP and *The Oban Times* have teamed up with disabled access review website Euan's Guide to help Argyll businesses welcome disabled visitors.

Euan's Guide, which aims to 'remove the fear of the unknown' and inspire disabled people to try new places, was founded in 2013 by brother and sister Euan and Kiki MacDonald after Euan became a powerchair user.

After spending hours of their time making inquiries about access at places they wanted to visit, Euan and Kiki realised their experience was not unique and that many disabled people had difficulty in getting the information they needed to decide on where they visited and took their holidays.

The idea became Euan's Guide, now a digital charity helping to open up countryside, villages, towns and cities to disabled people everywhere.

Mr Russell met Euan and Kiki at the Scottish Parliament last year after submitting information to the guide about some of the places he represents. After discussion, he suggested they work with him and *The Oban Times* to make sure Argyll and Bute was doing its best to ensure maximum access for, and giving maximum information to, disabled people.



Michael Russell MSP has teamed up with *The Oban Times* and Euan's Guide to help Argyll businesses welcome disabled visitors.

An event is being held in the Corran Halls, Oban, on Friday April 27 from 11am-1pm, which will be open to local businesses, community organisations and representatives from tourist destinations throughout Argyll and Bute. Those attending will be able to find out how easy it is to sign up to Euan's Guide

and promote accessibility. Commenting on the event, Mr Russell, who will be present on the day, said: 'I was inspired by Euan's story and by his determination to make sure others were helped in the way he needed help but originally couldn't find. Euan and Kiki explained to me the benefits and relief from

worry and stress they have experienced from knowing what to expect from a business, organisation or tourist destination in terms of accessibility before they travel there. But there is also a big opportunity for tourism in Argyll and Bute because being known as disability friendly and accessible

will bring a boost in business. So coming to the event, which is kindly being supported by *The Oban Times*, will be profitable as well as informative.'

Susan Windram, editor of *The Oban Times*, said: 'When Michael approached us about holding this event, we were more than happy to support it. Argyll and Bute is obviously a busy tourist destination and the more businesses can do to ensure all our visitors have a positive experience while visiting, can only be a good thing.'

'This is also an ideal opportunity for local disability groups to come along and let businesses and community organisations know what they can do to improve facilities for disabled visitors.'

Euan's Guide said: 'We are delighted this event is taking place as there is a huge potential for Argyll and Bute to become a top accessible tourism destination in Scotland. The draw of its many islands and outstanding natural beauty can only be enhanced by promoting its accessible highlights to disabled visitors, whether that is accessible accommodation, wheelchair-friendly boat tours, disabled access information online, clear signposting or simply a warm welcome.'

To register for the event or to obtain further information, email Heather Wolfe on Heather.Wolfe@parliament.scot or call 0131 348 5738.

One-stop health care help could be just a call away

PLANS to introduce a single access point for people to get the right care service they need quickly are to be revealed in a series of roadshows.

Dates for the roadshows are still to be announced but the idea is for the public to have their say and help shape a number of ideas coming from Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) to reduce pressure on hospitals and support people to stay at home as long as possible.

The roadshows were discussed at Oban Community Council on Monday when councillors heard the single-point access would be a phone number to call up and speak to a professional who would decide what kind of care was needed.

A HSCP spokesperson told

The Oban Times details of the roadshows would be widely publicised in the coming weeks.

He said a great deal of work has already taken place in Oban, Lorn and the Isles to improve co-ordination between health and social care services.

'We are also working hard to reduce and tackle the level of re-admissions to hospital, delayed discharges and extend-

ed stays. All of these lead to demands on health and social care services, which in many cases can be avoided,' he added.

A working group has been set up to look at how services could be staffed in communities.

'This will ensure health and social care professionals continue to meet local needs and that the service is as effective and efficient as possible. There are

no proposals to reduce staffing levels locally and the group will also be taking into account the fact there may be differing needs for mainland services and those on the isles,' said the spokesman.

Anyone with questions can contact Phil Cummins, interim locality manager for Oban, Lorn and the Isles on 01631 788942 or email phil.cummins2@nhs.net

Still no opening date for maritime centre

WORK on Oban's delayed new maritime visitor centre is progressing well, according to Argyll and Bute Council.

The opening was expected early in the New Year, after a redesign and four years in the pipeline but there is still no official date.

The £1.6 million building on the town's North Pier is designed to complement the new pontoons, catering for marine tourists from cruise passengers to kayakers, yachters and sealife day trippers.

The new centre, attached to the category B-listed Columba Hotel, will provide public toilets and showers, secure lockers, waiting areas for cruise ship passengers and coach parties, waterfront office space and the council's harbour master's office.

A council spokesman told *The Oban Times*: 'The project is continuing to progress well and we will be in touch as soon as we have a date for the handover.'

The centre, on the site of the former White Building built in 1902 as the Steam Packet ticket office, is expected to increase visitor numbers with an estimated benefit of around £20 million to the area over the next 25 years.

It has been in development since 2013, with Argyll and Bute Council granting planning permission to the architects' designs in August 2014.

The plans were finally approved in July 2016, and the old White Building was demolished.

According to the project plan, the maritime visitor centre was due to be operational in July 2017, alongside the new pontoons and breakwater.

Man, 27, fined £600 fine for aggressive behaviour at party

A 27-YEAR-OLD man has been fined £600 after striking a door with two pieces of wood.

Martin MacKinnon of 24 Cairngorm Avenue, Aviemore, pleaded guilty to the charge when he appeared in Oban Sheriff Court on Monday February 26.

Procurator fiscal Eoin McGinty told the court MacKinnon went to a party with friends on August 13, 2017.

Mr McGinty said that after being asked to leave,

MacKinnon kicked the front door, before hitting it with a mop stick and then a different piece of wood. In MacKinnon's defence, it was said that he was provoked and was followed out of the house, so picked up the wood, but did not hit anyone.

Sheriff Patrick Hughes said: 'This is a particularly serious matter and would have been disturbing for people in the house. Someone who picks up not one, but two pieces of wood and brandishes them is very close to custody.'

Woman over drink limit

A 55-YEAR-OLD woman has been disqualified from driving for three years and received a £400 fine for drink driving.

Shona Paterson of Lossat, Anderson Drive, Rothiemay, was over the legal limit by nine micrograms when she drove on September 23 last year in Taynuilt.

Paterson appeared in Oban Sheriff Court on Monday February 26, when she pleaded guilty to the charge.

Paterson's defence solicitor Laura McManus said her client drank a bottle of beer at the beach before picking up a friend and having a drink of his wine.

The 55-year-old was disqualified for three years as one-month after this incident she was again charged with being over the legal limit.

Taynuilt man fined £500 for assault

A 22-YEAR-OLD man from Taynuilt has been fined £500 after being found guilty of assault.

Jonathan MacKenzie, of 2 Brenna Cottages, Taynuilt, was found guilty under provocation in August last year. His sentencing was deferred for six months for him to be of good behaviour.

Sheriff Patrick Hughes said: 'This is a very serious matter,' before fining MacKenzie £500, reduced from £750 for his period of good behaviour.

Disqualified driver in Dunbeg

A 67-YEAR-OLD man from Seil has been disqualified from driving for 63-months and fined £1,010 for driving without a licence and refusing to give a breath sample.

Iain Henderson of Balvicar Boatyard, Seil Island, pleaded guilty to driving while already disqualified, driving without insurance and failing, without reasonable excuse, to provide two samples of breath.

The initial incident took place on October 23 last year on Lorn Road in Dunbeg. In Henderson's defence, solicitor Eddie Thornton said his client accepts alcohol has played a big part in his life and is taking steps to deal with his drink-related issues.

When he appeared for sentencing on Tuesday February 27, Sheriff Patrick Hughes disqualified him for three years and fined him £300 for driving while disqualified, stating he will have to retake his driving test. He was also disqualified for nine

months and fined £260 for driving without insurance. And for failing to provide two samples of breath, when it was required to determine his ability to drive, Henderson was disqualified for 18 months and received a £450 fine.

Careless driving

A 56-YEAR-OLD motorcyclist from Liverpool has received nine penalty points and a £600 fine for careless driving.

Daniel Elder, of 3 Willedstan Avenue, Liverpool, strayed on to the opposing carriageway on a blind bend between Kilmelford and Kilniver, and collided with another vehicle.

Elder's defence solicitor Laura McManus said her client has held a driving licence since 1979 and a motorcycle licence since 2002 and this is his first offence.

Sheriff Patrick Hughes said: 'The roads are challenging and it's more important here that road users obey the rules of the road. It's very fortunate no one has been more seriously hurt.'

Drink driving

A 20-year-old man has been disqualified from driving for 12 months and fined £450 for drink driving.

Jake MacDonald of Belleport House, Dalmore, Alness, was caught driving onto the Fishnish Ferry on Mull in October 2017 with 55 micrograms of alcohol in 100 millilitres of breath, when the legal limit is 22 micrograms.

He appeared in Oban Sheriff Court on Monday February 26, where he pleaded guilty.

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OT

Uist

A UIST-BASED summer school has recorded its highest number of early bookings.

Ceòlas Uibhist, which takes place in the first week of July, will be held in Dalabrog.

Gaelic language continues to be the main draw at the school, which takes place in the strongest Gaelic-speaking community in the world.

This year also sees the first Gaelic-medium class on offer. Uist 'sean-chas', or oral Gaelic lore, will include substantial input from native speakers from the community.

Piping and Gaelic song are also a strong attraction, especially among attendees from North America.

More than a third of those already booked are from outwith the UK, a sign of Ceòlas' continued global appeal. Young people are also well represented, with another third of bookings by people under the age of 25.

Organisers are delighted with the level of interest. Mary Schmöller, officer and development manager, said: 'It's great to see so many new names which demonstrates the success of our diaspora events, of which Edinburgh in November brought in a quite a few.'

'We're in a real drive to expand current provision so that when Cnoc Soilleir comes on stream, it will be busy and lively.'

This year's tutors include Allan MacDonald, piobaire-achd; Kenneth MacKenzie and Sarah Hoy, playing for dance; Christine Primrose, Rachel Walker and Mary Jane Lamond, Gaelic song; Sophie Stephenson, Frank McConnell and Mats Melin, dance; Robbie Greig, Allan Henderson, Shelly Campbell and Eilidh Shaw, fiddle; Ashley MacDonald, youth piping; Ingrid Henderson, clàrsach, and Ailig Bhaltois MacDonald, Catriona MacIntyre, Catriona Black and Angus John MacDonald, Gaelic language.

Oban

AN OBAN writing group is to host a stage design workshop and open mic night.

Wurdplay, which meets every Tuesday in Hope Kitchen from 2.30pm until 4pm, will host the do-it-yourself stage design class on Sunday February 25 at 1pm in the Rockfield Centre.

Leading the free event will be Oban artist Susan McPherson who is taking inspiration from the work of Jackson Pollock.

Wurdplay's next open mic night is on Saturday March 3 and will feature James Kelman, author of *Dirt Road* and Booker prize-winning book *How Late It Was*.

The event starts at 8pm at the Rockfield Centre.

After selling out of their first poetry book, the group is re-printing more which will be available from Monday March 19.

The book is a collection of writing from authors in and around Oban and comes as Wurdplay plans to stage a theatre production.

Organisers are on the hunt for script writers to produce around eight pages, or 10-minutes worth, including dialogue.

'We'll have projectors, sound, lighting and actors to help tell the story. The deadline is Friday April 13. Then we'll get into the professional director workshops to spark our imaginations,' the organisers said.

To find out more, email wurdplaywriting@gmail.com.

Appin

THE FEBRUARY meeting of Appin's branch of the Scottish Women's Institute was held in Port Appin Hall and focused on photography.

The speaker for the evening needed no introduction as local photographer Linda Thomson had come along to talk about her work in the industry.

From early beginnings with an old box camera to her modern sophisticated equipment, Linda described her training and subsequent work showing many examples of her beautiful photographs.

She also gave tips to those wishing to improve their skills. It was an entertaining evening and Linda was warmly thanked by Margaret Ross.

Competition result: Knitted Pram Cover, Gold - Barbara Carmichael.

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Are you ready to get MAD with Atlantis Community Leisure?

Saturday 19th of May see's our first oneOff Muddy Atlantis Day. With gallons of mud, icy water and some shocks along the way. We are creating a 10k cross country assault course designed to challenge and test you. Get a team together or go solo and join in on a fun filled and crazy challenge right here in Oban.

The MAD team are creating some gruelling obstacles up some gut-busting hills, over craggy cliffs and through the chilly west coast sea. Keep your eyes peeled for sneak peaks of what they have in store for you.

Entry is £25 (plus booking fee) per person for age 16+

All money raised is going towards Atlantis Community Leisure 25th Birthday Fundraising campaign to upgrade the original facilities in the centre.

Raise extra money for our community centre and collect sponsors; download a sponsorship form or set up a sponsor page.

Build your team; grab your friends, work colleagues or gym buddies and attack this together.

Looking for some team mates? Head to our Facebook group (MAD- Teams) and find like-minded comrades.

We also have our wee MAD event for 8-16-year-olds.
The course involves loads of obstacles over a shorter distance and is taking place between 9-10am before the adults set off.

Entry is £10 (plus booking fee).

There will be spectator areas and it is completely free to come and watch.



Easdale Primary School pupils have won a nationwide competition to design a garden.

Easdale pupils bloom in garden contest

EASDALE Primary School pupils have won a nationwide competition to design a garden.

The talented youngsters came out top in environmental charity Keep Scotland Beautiful's contest to design a 'One Planet Picnic Pocket Garden'.

Their creations will now be brought to life at the Gardening Scotland exhibition in Edinburgh in June.

Schools from across Scotland were encouraged to develop designs for a garden that reflects the 2018 theme of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, using plants that can be eaten

and attract biodiversity and reusing materials which would otherwise be thrown away.

Easdale Primary School has been selected as one of 22 finalists for their innovative, sustainable and deliverable designs which will all be transformed into the Garden for Life at the Gardening Scotland event.

Eve Keepax, food and environment officer at Keep Scotland Beautiful, said: 'This competition is a practical, yet fun, way to learn about growing food sustainably and why it is important to them.'

'We look forward to working with the pupils from Easdale Primary School and seeing their designs create The Garden for Life.'

Three final winners will be selected at Gardening Scotland in the following categories: best garden for wildlife, best garden for one planet picnic theme and best garden for global goals theme.

The winning designs were selected by representatives of Keep Scotland Beautiful, the Garden for Life Forum, Gardening Scotland and the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations.

Company marks four decades with 'Fyne at Forty' weekend festival

FORTY years ago Cairndow landowner Johnny Noble and marine biologist Andy Lane registered their business of farming oysters in the clear waters of Loch Fyne in Argyll - selling them from a shed beside the A83.

In May this year the company will mark its 40th anniversary with a special 'Fyne at Forty' weekend festival, when thousands of visitors are expected.

To celebrate this global success story, Scottish band Hue and Cry - famous for hit singles such as *Labour of Love* and *Looking for Linda* - will headline an exciting lineup at the Fyne at Forty weekend event.

Pat and Greg Kane will perform an acoustic set with just piano and vocals in the Loch Fyne Oysters restaurant on Saturday May 13, when an audience of just 140 will also enjoy a magnificent seafood buffet. Tickets for this intimate concert event go on sale on Friday February 23.

Festival-goers will be given access to areas normally closed to the public, such as the oyster sheds where each oyster is graded,



The former farm steading at Clachan, Cairndow - now the world famous Loch Fyne Oysters restaurant.



Beautiful Loch Fyne - a big part of the company's success.

purified and hand-checked for freshness before being despatched to one of many customers around the world.

There will be champagne tours of nearby historic Ardkinglas House, and you can test your chef skills in our

oyster shucking competition or practice your navigation with our treasure hunt amid the fantastic Loch Fyne scenery. An evening ceilidh will take place on Friday 12 May followed by a spectacular fireworks show over the loch.

For youngsters there will be face painting and musical activities, while grown-ups can unwind with demonstrations from top chefs as well as wine and whisky tasting.

There will be great food available, and great music to enjoy in the entertainment beer marquee.

'We are planning a show-stopper of a weekend,' said managing director Cameron Brown.

'Loch Fyne is a global success story and we want the public to come and help us celebrate 40 fantastic years. We are excited about giving visitors a sneak peek at what goes on behind the scenes of our oyster farm, and I'm looking forward to having a bop at the ceilidh and hearing Hue and Cry's iconic hits.'

'There will truly be something for everyone at our Fyne at Forty weekend.'

Skye

THE NATIONAL Centre for Gaelic Language and Culture on Skye has announced the next recipient of the Jon Schueler Visual Artist residency and a new exhibition by last year's artist David Lemm.

The Jon Schueler Scholarship, now in its sixth year, is a unique international partnership between Sabhal Mòr Ostaig UHI and the Jon Schueler Charitable Trust, with support from the Royal Scottish Academy.

It has been established to celebrate and remember the life, work and artistic influence of internationally-renowned artist and abstract expressionist painter Jon Schueler (1916-1992) who had a special relationship with the landscape and environment of the Sound of Sleat.

Rachel Schmidt from the United States, who will take up her residency between July and October, is an installation artist based in Washington DC. She uses time-based media and installation to explore the world's impact on ecosystems, future landscapes and the role that myth plays in understanding of the environment.

Rachel received her MFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore before moving to Warsaw, Poland, for a year of artistic research. From 2012-2016, she worked as an exhibition

co-ordinator at the Smithsonian Hirshhorn Museum and has been an artist in residence at the Arlington Arts Center, Taipei Artist Village, Vermont Studio Center and the Taller Portobelo Norte in Panama.

Each year an international contemporary visual artist is selected. To date, there have been 1,300 applicants and recipients have included artists from Japan, France, Scotland and Germany.

An exhibition of work from the 2017 Schueler artist in residence, David Lemm, opened at Sabhal Mòr on Monday February 19.

Kath MacLeod, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig's arts development officer, said: 'From his week's Gaelic learning course in the summer on the college's short courses programme to running public studio events and workshops with school pupils, David has engaged fully with the community at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.'

The exhibition, entitled *Passing Place*, runs until Friday April 20.



David Lemm.

TORAVAIG Distillery Visitor Centre will open its doors in March.

The distillery began production last spring. Its two stills are named after the late merchant banker Sir Iain Noble and his widow Lady Lucilla.

Sir Iain, who died in 2010, founded the Edinburgh firm of Noble Grossart and was instrumental in founding Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Scotland's Gaelic college, near the distillery on the Sleat peninsula.

In 1976 he also founded 'Gaelic whisky' company Prban na Linne, which produces the malt Poit Dhubh.

The distillery has been welcomed with open arms by a neighbouring hotel.

The nine-bedroom Toravaig, voted Islands' Boutique Hotel and Informal Dining Room of the Year in the 2018 Scottish Hotel Awards, has recently undergone a major refurbishment including the fitting of new carpets, furniture and wall coverings.

It was last year's Islands' Wedding Hotel of the Year and is part of the Sonas group which also includes Duisdale and Skeabost hotels on Skye.

Anne Gunn, who owns the group with her husband Ken, said: 'We're thrilled Torabhaig distillery has begun producing lovely malt whisky. It's another reason for our guests to toast the beauties of Skye.'

Glenorchy and Innishail

GLENORCHY and Innishail Community Council will meet on Wednesday March 7 in Bridge of Orchy Hall from 7.30pm.

Items on the agenda include the closure of the C63 road, the 'No Pylons in Dalmally' campaign, health issues and the failure of Argyll and Bute Council to support the North Argyll Volunteer Car Scheme.

Members of the public, representatives of other community groups and schools are welcome.

At Random

MARTIN LAING
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Let's all ditch plastic

ISN'T young Felix Hughes a wee hero? The six-year-old Oban youngster is so concerned about the damage being done to the marine environment he has written a grown-up and erudite letter to a number of movers and shakers appealing for action to reduce the amount of plastic being dumped.

Felix's effort to help the marine eco system is just the latest attempt to jolt big firms, local authorities, small businesses and individuals into cleaning up our act.

We reported a couple of weeks ago about the Food from Argyll Cafe at the Pier in Oban moving to use Vegware instead of plastics for its takeaway food and drink containers.

Cafe manager Claire Bruce told us Vegware costs the same as 'traditional' plastic containers, so there was no reason not to make the switch.

Claire's initiative followed hot on the heels of a Glasgow primary school's successful bid to persuade CalMac to ban the use of plastic straws on its vessels. CalMac was only too pleased to agree to the aims of the #NaeStrawAtAw campaign.

Here at *The Oban Times*, we want to persuade everyone in Oban and the wider Argyll community - businesses, the council and all of you out there - to embrace the campaign.

A similar effort is taking place on Arran to make it the first plastic-free island in Scotland and it is already making serious inroads into the amount of plastic being used.

I personally have a long way to go to become greener but I'm prepared to make the effort.

I'm starting by questioning the plastic packaging we habitually accept as 'normal'. Instead of putting your carrots, onions or other veg into plastic bags, just put them into your trolley loose and then into your bag for life at



Left: Claire Bruce, Tommy Johnston and Martin Murray outside the Food from the Pier cafe in Oban.

the checkout. And let's all start asking - when we buy a coffee or portion of chips or whatever - to have it in Vegware or compostable containers. If enough of us apply pressure to the businesses involved, we can persuade them to change their ways. The economic reality of having disappointed customers can take us a long way.

Here in Oban, wee Felix has started a ball rolling but it's one that we can all pick up and run with.

Let's all get behind Felix and ditch the plastic. It will make a world of a difference.

Cruising to a bumper tourist season

I was intrigued to read on the Oban and Lorn Tourism Alliance website the list of cruise ships scheduled to arrive at Oban this summer.

There are more than 30 visits planned, bringing with them many hundreds of tourists who will, no doubt, spend their hard-earned cash in

the town's businesses and at other enterprises across Argyll.

This is brilliant news for the local economy.

I have no doubt the good folk at BID4Oban will be pulling out all the stops to welcome the visitors. Town ambassadors Kay McDonald and Joe Reich try to meet and greet every cruise ship that moors in the bay, helping those who come ashore to make the most of their visit.

Local shops, cafes, restaurants, pubs and tourist attractions will all benefit hugely from the influx of tourists, with the added spin-off benefit that these particular visitors are here without adding to the traffic congestion that can clog up the town.

We should all extend a warm welcome to the visitors.

What do you think?

WRITE to me at mllaing@obantimes.co.uk or The Oban Times, Crannog Lane, Oban, PA34 4 HB.

Boiled stag's head soup suits to a tea

MORVERN LINES
IAIN THORNER
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IN GLASGOW they say, 'You'll have your tea', and invite you in. In Edinburgh it's, 'You'll have had your tea', meaning, 'We assume you have eaten and won't need anything here'.

The friendly rivalry which exists between these cities has, perhaps, never been put more succinctly than by Lord Cockburn (1779-1854), a famous Scottish lawyer, in his pithy remark that the people of Edinburgh are what they are because when they were conceived their parents were fully clothed.

Having championed the Clydesiders, I was slightly taken aback last year in a holiday cottage in Lochaline when the Glasgow-born hostess, who should have known better, handed me a cup of tea with the comment, 'You'll not be wanting a biscuit!'

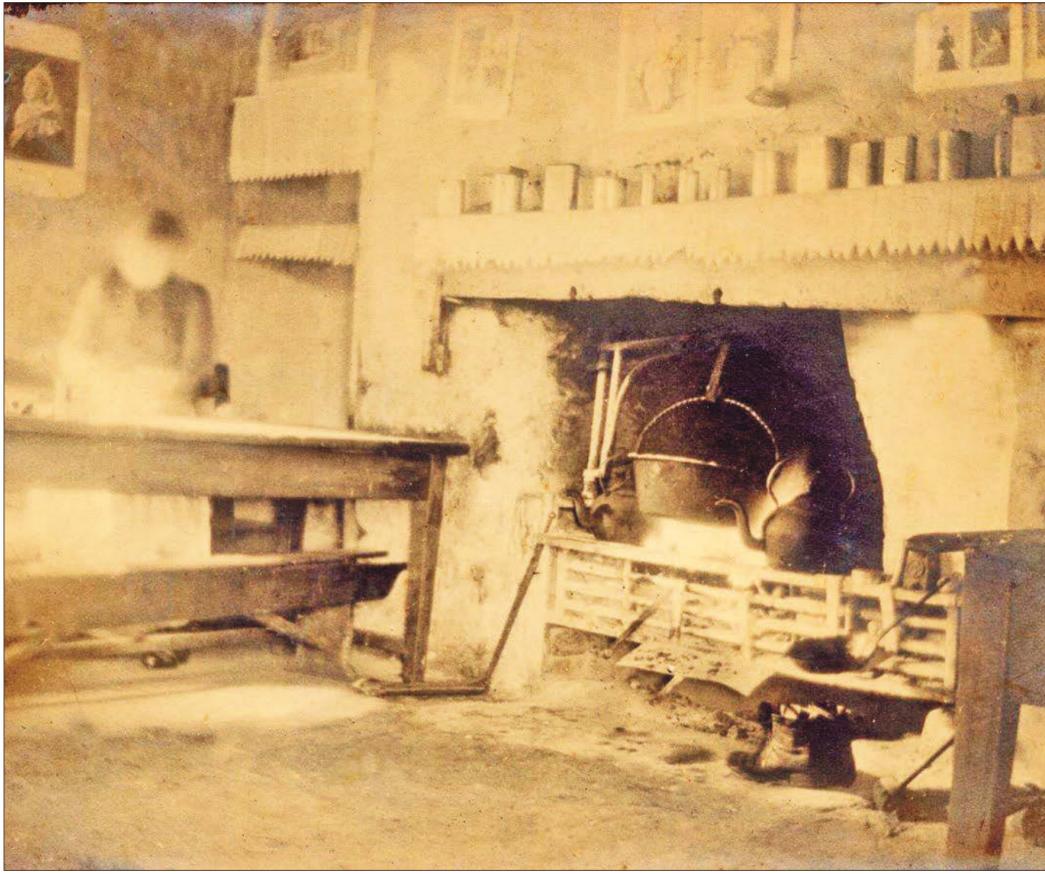
Such awkwardness was rarely found in the West Highlands and Islands, where free and open hospitality survived much later than anywhere else in the UK.

Fynes Morison, a graduate of Cambridge, visited Scotland in 1598 and commented on the lack of inns and the number of private householders who entertained passers-by. It was precisely because of this tradition that inns and hotels took so long to become established.

The lavish hospitality of the old Highland chiefs was equal only to their vanity and eccentricity.

A great hero was Clanranald, who, according to the old folk, would have seven casks of red Spanish wine in his stable and, if a stranger asked why, he would be told it was for his horses.

A McNeill chief went one better. Each night after dinner, he sent a trumpeter to the tower of Kismuil castle to proclaim: 'Ye kings, princes and chieftains of all the earth, be it known unto you that MacNeill of Barra has dined, so others may now do so.'



An old Highland kitchen (Laudale House) 1888 and young stags' heads apparently make fine soup. Photographs: Iain Thorner

Alexander Carmichael, the Lismore customs and excise officer and folklore collector, describes visiting a house in the Outer Hebrides before 1900 where he was asked to the table: 'There were fried herrings and boiled turbot, fresh from the sea, and eggs fresh from the yard. There was fresh butter and salt butter, wheaten scones, barley bannocks, and oat-cakes, with excellent tea and cream. This, said I, taking my seat, looks like the table for a reiteach [pre-wedding feast] rather than for one man.'

I know of private houses in the Highlands where extra

places are still set at the dining room table in case a visitor turns up unexpectedly - based, no doubt, on Hebrews 13:2, 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.'

On Arran, doors were seldom locked, even when the occupants went away for a day or two; anyone passing far from home and in need of nourishment, would simply go in and help themselves.

A nice reciprocal arrangement in the days of mutual trust and respect.

What did people eat a cen-



tury or so ago - and how was it cooked? Recipes are great sources.

I will begin with one for venison pasty which was invented by a French chef called Alex-

ander Guiblin, who travelled up from Derbyshire with the Strutt family to Kingairloch in the early 1930s to cook for them during the sporting seasons. When he left, he returned to Belper and set up a very successful pork pie shop there, which flourished for years.

'Use roasted, braised or boiled venison. Mince the meat finely, make a brown sauce with two small onions; two ounces of lean ham; two ounces of fat or butter; twelve peppercorns, crushed; one bay leaf, one carrot and a little thyme fried till brown.

'Add a little flour, put a glass of port wine and a little gravy from the meat. Add a little salt and a teaspoonful of Worcester sauce in, then strain to the meat and put into the paste and bake in a moderate oven for about half an hour.'

Chef Guiblin also made delicious game soups, which the next generation of the Strutt family recalled: 'Use venison or game. Make a good stock of the game or venison bones. Have a carrot, two onions, one turnip, two ounces of flour, two ounces of butter or fat and one quart of the stock.

'Clean the vegetables, cut them into slices. Melt the butter or fat in a saucepan, add the vegetables, and fry until a good brown colour. Stir in the flour and fry this also for a few minutes. Moisten it with the stock and stir over the fire until the soup boils. Let it simmer for about half an hour. Remove the fat, and season to taste with pepper and salt and a glassful of port wine.'

People ate what was readily available in the area in which they lived. Those on the West Coast enjoyed the usual assortment of sea fish, while others near the mouth of estuaries and along river banks, dined mainly on salmon and sea trout.

Here is an old recipe for kippering salmon: 'The fish must be cut up at the back, cleaned and scaled but not washed, and have the bone taken neatly out. Rub with equal proportions of salt or fine raw sugar, with a little saltpetre.

Let the fish lie for two days, pressing it with a board on which weights are placed, then hang it up. Peppers in powder may be added to the salt. This forms a favourite addition to a scotch breakfast. If long hung, the slices may be soaked in water for quarter of an hour. If the fish is very large it may be rubbed with salt and drained for a day.'

On the moors and glens, there were other delicacies in the game department such as 'haggis royal', consisting of mutton, suet, beef-marrow, bread crumbs or oatmeal, anchovies, parsley, lemon, pepper, cayenne, eggs and red wine.

To make: 'Take three pounds of leg of mutton chopped, a pound of suet chopped, a little, or rather as much beef-marrow as you can spare, the crumb of a penny loaf, the beat yolks of four eggs, a half pint of red wine, three mellow fresh anchovies boned, minced parsley, lemon grate, white pepper, crystals of cayenne to taste. Blend the ingredients well, truss them neatly in a veal caul (net) bake in a deep dish, in a quick oven, and turn out. Serve hot as fire, with brown gravy, and venison sauce.'

From the high tops there was a recipe for an antlered beauty. 'Take a fresh stag's head. Split open and wash well, remove fibres and the brains. Boil the head along with three to four pounds of venison, one dozen peppercorns, a few cloves and one teaspoonful of salt, in about three quarts water for eight hours. Strain and leave till the following day.

'When required, remove all fat and put stock into a pan with one carrot, onion and a small turnip. Leave to simmer for an hour, taking the lid off the pan in order that the stock can reduce. Thicken to creamy consistency with corn-flour and boil for five minutes. Strain out the vegetables and serve with a garnish of shredded carrot, turnip and tongue.'

It sounds disgusting!

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Peatlands hold a fascinating history of past climates

SANDY NEIL
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THE DARK STUFF: Stories from the Peatlands, is 'an evocative social history of Europe's peatlands, moors, bogs and heaths', written by Donald S Murray on the Isle of Lewis, author of *Herring Tales* and *The Guga Stone*.

Growing up on the family croft near Ness, Donald was 'either playing or working on the moor, chasing sheep across empty acres and cutting and gathering peat for fuel'.

Murray's latest book examines the life and traditions of Scotland's moors, which make up 20 per cent or 7,000 square miles of the landscape, but a conversation with an Australian on the Isle of Iona drew his gaze beyond the Highlands and Islands to peatlands across the world, including the 'infamous' bogs of Tasmania.

The Australian told him: 'The single most precious thing about bogs, worldwide, is their ability to preserve pollen grains.'

'Bogs contain layers and layers of environmental history dating back thousands of years. Palynologists identify these pollen grains and reconstruct past floras, and from that they can get at least some idea of

past climates and how plant composition changes with climate.

'It's how we know what the landscape may have looked like during the last Ice Age, compared to how it looks now. Peatlands not only keep the world's natural history safe, but can also give us a benchmark to develop a sense of how rapidly the world is changing now.'

Peat, Murray learned, comprises around three million square kilometres, around two per cent, of the earth's land area. 'The whole world was now peat, something I had half considered might be true on those wet and stormy days I was trapped on the island in my youth.'

'It existed not only in my immediate vicinity, beyond the house windows blurred by continual rainfall, not just in the northern hemisphere, but at the southern end of Patagonia in Argentina, the Falkland Islands, throughout Indonesia, New Zealand, and even the Kerguelen or Desolation Islands, not far from Antarctica, described by songwriter Al Stewart as "the loneliest place in the map".'

The book investigates the moor in literature, art and folklore, including the uses for the 120 species of sphagnum

moss, which can hold 20 times more water than they weigh when squeezed dry, when 'it looks like a kitten that's been standing too long in the rain'.

'In earlier centuries it was used to line nappies, soaking up urine and excrement too when someone in a household was suffering dysentery or diarrhoea. Women employed it as a sanitary product; both genders as a way of treating haemorrhoids. In the modern age, it is still sometimes used to cleanse home pools and spas. It is assisted in this by possessing sterilising, cleansing qualities.'

'In the First World War and during many conflicts beforehand, sphagnum moss was used to staunch blood and to create clean and sterile dressings for wounds. It could be used to stuff pillows to prop up what remained of the arm or leg of an amputee.'

'An English firm, Peat Products (Sphagnum) Ltd ... even advertised its ability to restore hair to an owner's precious pet dog, a chow-chow.'

Murray also examines our perception of moorland, 'asking how - for the sake, perhaps, of our planet's survival - we can learn to love a landscape we have all too often in our history denigrated, feared and despised'.

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Viewpoint



Write to us: send your letters to editor@obantimes.co.uk or The Editor, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HB

The Oban Times

& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

The public is to have its say on proposals to cut £10 million from Argyll and Bute's health and social care budget.

At a meeting of Oban Community Council on Monday night, it was explained that the details are to be made public on March 21, but Councillor Kieron Green has already warned that some options are 'extremely unpalatable' and potentially could affect a large number of jobs.

Following the proposals being made public, members of the Integration Joint Board will then meet on March 28 to decide which proposals will

be taken forward to the next year to fill the multi-million-pound shortfall.

Health care is hugely important but it is a stark reality that there is not enough money to fund everything we would want. So it is vital that if we are to ensure key services and facilities are to continue, people engage with the partnership to ensure they are protected.

There are already fears that proposals could include closing Oban's council-owned Eadar Glinn care home and could cost hospital beds.

We need to speak up if we are to prevent that happening.



Days gone by – 1995

We turn the clock back this week to 1995 and a very healthy turnout of martial arts students and instructors for an Argyll Shukokai course and grading.

MacPhail

ANGUS MACPHAIL
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HAVING been invited to a book launch that took place in Edinburgh at the start of this week, I thought it only polite to read in advance the book in question so I would be aware of the context and content of what was being released.

Reading is one of my favourite activities so normally this would have been a literary foray to look forward to.

However, this particular book is football-based. From a young age, despite being brought up in a house where football was fairly prevalent, this is a sport I have never managed to find any pleasure from following, reading about, watching and especially listening to others talk about.

The exploring of this particular novel was, therefore, expected to be a tedious chore.

With the expectation of a homework-like assignment ahead of me, and with the scars of long journeys with band mates boring the breaks off me droning on about this player and that player, and this fixture and that manager and all the usual jargon of the part-time football fan, I purchased and began reading

Saturday Bloody Saturday, co-written by Alastair Campbell and Paul Fletcher.

How wrong my forecast was!

All my football prejudices immediately disappeared as, from the first page, the language, the narrative, the characterisation, the tension and the excitement gripped hold of me and, until the book was finished, I felt like an addict unable to control the craving for the next chapter.

I have read some stinkers of books in the past year and it feels like such a frustrating let-down when you have given so much valuable time attempting to draw learning and/or pleasure from a piece of work that in the end does nothing to fulfil any desire.

What satisfaction to read something that turned my expectations upside-down and delivered, contrary to my predictions, one of the most satisfying reads of recent years.

Apart from the page-turning narrative, the main strength of this book is the clear characterisation. It frustrates me deeply when, as a reader, you are left unsure what the author's intentions are for the perception of a character.

In this book, the fault lines are refreshingly clear. The good guys are good, the bad guys are bad, and the complications

and contradictions of all are also given sufficient presence to maintain credibility.

The combined knowledge and experience of the two authors in the various threads of subject matter – football, politics, terrorism, internal team battles and potentially crippling personal battles – mean that the book is steeped in a realism and authenticity that can only be achieved by writers who really know their subject and have fully researched any cracks in between.

The combining of Campbell's political background, genius for clarity in message and overall flair as a writer with Fletcher's experience as a top professional footballer and stadium developer is a collaboration that has produced a piece of work far greater than either could have achieved individually.

It will not bring them a Nobel Prize for Literature, but it presents a rip-roaring and insightful window on worlds that most know little about. It will grasp your attention throughout and it delivers an ending of sheer brilliance to outflank the very finest of any page-turning best-seller.

Saturday Bloody Saturday may even convert me to becoming a football fan – and I am hoping for a sequel.

Rewilding of Scotland will address damage

Sir,
Iain Thornber bemoans the wacky characters and quirky schemes attracted to rural Scotland (Morvern Lines, February 15) and it is certainly true that some major landowners have inflicted a great deal of damage on Highland culture and ecology over the past 200 years or so.

However, he fails to understand that 'rewilding' is in part an attempt to redress some of that damage. He attacks the idea of rewilding by saying: 'At its most extreme, rewilding implies zero-intervention by humans, but no matter how hard anyone may try, it is almost impossible to find unaltered landscapes in Europe, including Scotland.'

He said it! I doubt if many serious conservationists propose rewilding 'at its most extreme' and if the landscape were 'unaltered', there would be no need in any case.

Wolves and bears wander freely in the Abruzzo mountains of central Italy, little more than 100 miles from Rome – a popular tourist area and hardly an unspoiled wilderness. And lynx are found in southern Scandinavia in farmed landscapes, as long as there is sufficient forest cover.

Mr Thornber refers to (presumably) these species as 'dangerous predators', but lynx attacks on humans are unheard of across Europe. And he worries that the deer which have been present for 10,000 years are to be 'sacrificed', but the deer coexisted with lynx (and wolves and bears) for most of that time and they now probably occur in higher numbers than at any previous time during that period.

The impact of lynx on deer numbers is likely to be modest and certainly wouldn't result in their eradication. They may even disproportionately impact the introduced forest-loving sika deer (result of past landowner follies and a hybridisation threat to native red deer).

As regards the Eigg stone, one could argue whether it depicts a non-indigenous lion, or a, possibly indigenous, lynx, but the Inchnadamph lynx (the identification of which he wrongly implies is in doubt) has been carbon dated to around AD180 and further fossil remains from Yorkshire have been dated to as recently as AD600. So depiction of a native lynx on a carving from the ninth century is not so improbable.

Given the low density at which lynx would naturally occur, the conditions needed for fossilisation, and the need to then find them, it is hardly surprising that fossil evidence is scarce.

I can find a little common ground with Mr Thornber in that the only serious suggestion for reintroducing lynx and other large mammals on the islands that I am aware of was from eminent mammalogist, the late Derek Yalden, back in 1986. He proposed a long-term attempt to re-establish the native fauna on the Island of Rum National Nature Reserve. However, Rum, at about 100km² is probably not big enough to sustain viable populations and Eigg certainly isn't.

Any serious attempt at reintroducing

lynx in Scotland would have to be on the mainland, but I get the sense that, whatever the evidence, Mr Thornber will still not think there's enough room for them.

Alex Farqhar,
by email.

The poor state of broadband on Mull

Sir,
I live on Loch Scridain, which is lovely but means I'm connected to the Tioran exchange. It can only supply a broadband speed of 0.5mbps, 1/50th of the UK average and 1/20th of the average from a conventional BT exchange.

I remember when the exchange was upgraded to this limited form of broadband and it seemed wonderful, but now it's a real inhibition to the normal course of life. We can't access things others take for granted, such as catch-up TV, Netflix or even the music service on Amazon Prime, and local businesses have to warn residents not to stream things on their phones.

Those things are luxuries but it increasingly affects essentials. Micro-soft issues updates of 10gb, a three-day download if everything is working OK, and more and more software companies no longer issue anything on disc. Some downloads are as much as 45gb, which is just not practical for us. Businesses often find their credit card machines don't work.

Currently the government is recommending satellite broadband but a 10mb service costs about the same as a mobile data contract and you have to keep your landline because satellite isn't good for conversations, so that's an extra £40 per month - in other words, it's around £90 per month to get an average service from a BT exchange.

The collapse of Gigha Plus, the latest of many Scottish Government promises to improve our connection, should be the subject of an inquiry. Where was the due diligence in awarding a contract to a company on the brink of bankruptcy and why was all the money given to it before the work was completed?

Here is an alternative: upgrade the two local exchanges, Pennyghael and Tioran, so they are capable of coping with the Scottish Government's promise of fibre optic for all by 2021. A by-product would be they are also capable of giving residents up to 17mbps (the average from an ADSL exchange is 9.5mbps) right now.

It would cost less than the price of a new Mondeo - I checked.

Richard Warwick,
Tioran, Isle of Mull.

Damage is being done to the environment

Sir,
The communications group EE is erecting numerous tall towers in Argyll.

Locally to me in Tayvallich, there are at least two major works in progress. The works are causing extensive dam-

age to the environment and wildlife.

There is litter everywhere, the single-track road is undermined and the works are causing mud slurry and flooding. Trees are being uprooted in a national nature reserve.

The towers themselves are not needed in such a sparsely populated area as existing networks are good. They are even bringing in contractors outwith Argyll.

This is a serious issue that is affecting communities all over Argyll and EE should answer our concerns, not least as to how these works were approved without local consultation.

Nick MacInneskar,
Tayvallich.

Patching roads will prove more costly

Sir,
Highway engineering professionals have been predicting for decades that, without major investment, the terminal deterioration of our roads network was inevitable.

Only planned reconstruction work will prevent further decline in the network and continuing to patch potholes with sticking plaster or, in modern parlance, 'managed condition decline' is dangerous, not sustainable and in the long-term more costly.

Mike Rayworth,
by email.

Rise of anti-semitism in Britain

Sir,
It's sad that in 2018 I write to you and express my concerns about the rise in anti-semitism in our country.

Attacks on Jewish people in the UK have hit record levels. In the past year, the charity that monitors anti-semitic abuse recorded 1,382 hate crimes.

That's a three per cent increase on 2016 figures and it is the highest figure since statistics were first recorded 34 years ago.

One of the reasons that it is rising is that extremists in taxpayer-funded universities can hold Israel Apartheid Week events. These events promote a message that Israel treats people differently because of their race. It is a lie.

In fact, it is the same type of lie that the Nazis spread in the 1930s that led to six million people being dehumanised and murdered.

The government has adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-semitism. That definition explains that describing Israel as a racist endeavour is anti-semitic.

Yet, in 2018, we are still having to fight what has been described as the world's oldest hatred - anti-semitism.

It's time for our government to act and finally fill the hole in our laws that allows this hatred to be publicly tolerated in our country.

I'd encourage all your readers to join the campaign to stamp out racism at www.israelbritain.org.uk/news.

Susan Wallace,
Corpach, Fort William.

Ailean Caimbeul

Social media

There was a mixed reaction to the details of Argyll and Bute Council's budget being passed last week, which included a three per cent rise in council tax as well as a pledge not to close any public toilets.

James Strang: '3 percent im happy to pay to keep services as long as they fix the roads in top 3 priority. Plus they can't close any public toilets in Oban because there is one I believe.'

Stuart Macdonald: 'Health & social care is top of my list. Happy to take a 3% hike if services are improved.'

Sue Sellar: 'There aren't any public toilets in Oban and you can't use the ones in the station unless a train is standing in the station!'

Jack Low: 'How about getting rid of councilors who dont work for the good of us jobe public and claim expenses for the slightest thing.'

John McGee: 'Get awe the pothole's

fixed for a start.You's never seem to bother maintaining minor roads but the major route's on a lot of Islands are like driving through sink hole's.You don't know it your car will climb out the other side of the many 100's there are..I have had many puncture's as the many.A hope the fat cat's are taken a pay cut to fund such need's.'

Kevin Devlin: 'A council spokesperson said that "to fund the gap, green bin collections would now be made bianually out-with Soroba."

Stuart Macdonald: 'Any money for health care?...I would've thought that was a very high priority.'

Ron Morrison: 'Thought the roads in Glasgow were bad but just back from visiting Gigha and found the A83 virtually impassable! If Argyll wants to attract tourists and employment the Council really needs to get its act together.'

Potholes and the state of many roads continues to be a hot topic.

Hilary Hannah: 'Having driven to the Vale of Leven on Friday, the roads are a disgrace. It took me over 2 hours to get there. Taynuilt, Lochawe, Inverary road full of potholes. Certainly they are doing work on the Inverary Road taking away the bad corner, but apart from that...nothing!. If cars get damaged due to this, I hope the roads dept are going to pay out compensation.'

Ali MacLean: 'The surface between Crianlarich and Tyndrum is an absolute joke.'

Fiona-Ann Vick: 'This bit just before tyndrum the car in front of us nearly did an emergency stop which was fine but the two cars behind us started blasting their horns and over took us and the car in front of us! Taynuilt is terrible I ended up with a smashed windscreen because of all the stones in the road.'

Press policy

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

If you think we have made a significant mistake and you wish to discuss this with us, please

let us know as soon as possible by any of the three methods: emailing editor@obantimes.co.uk; telephoning the editor on 01631 568046; writing to the Editor at The Oban Times, Crannog Lane, Lochavullin estate, Oban, PA34 4HB.

We will attempt to resolve your issue in a timeous, reasonable and amicable manner. However, if you are unsatisfied with

our response, you can contact IPSO, which will investigate the matter. You can either telephone IPSO on 0300 123 2220 or email inquiries@ipso.co.uk. IPSO is an independent body which deals with complaints from the public about the editorial content of newspapers and magazines.

We will abide by the decision of IPSO.



For press freedom with responsibility

Your letters

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

The editor also reserves the right to shorten, to amend or to refuse to print them. Names and postal addresses must be supplied, including on emails, to indicate good faith.

A daytime telephone number

is also required for verification. Anonymous letters or those supplied without a contact telephone number will not be printed.

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

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

Dedicated Derek sings the praises of his dream team



Over the coming year *The Oban Times* is running a series of fortnightly articles championing the work carried out by Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) in the Oban, Lorn and the Isles locality.

Each article will feature a specific service provided by the HSCP and will focus on the staff who provide that service and the role they play in making a positive difference for the people living in Oban and surrounding areas.

This week we look at the work of the lead physiotherapist for Argyll.

DEREK LAIDLER is Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership's lead physiotherapist.

His career at Lorn and Islands hospital began in 2010 and in 2012 he took on the role of physiotherapy team lead.

As team lead for physiotherapy in Oban, his job is to oversee the smooth day-to-day running of the physiotherapy department and one of the main elements in the job is to ensure that physiotherapy services across the area are developed to meet the strategic aims of the HSCP.

Derek is originally from Northumberland and has now settled in Connell with his wife Paula, sons Ben and Harry, and dog Seb.

He loves the country life because Argyll is such a great family-orientated place to raise his family and he continually meets amazing people. When things are tough, all he does is look around at the stunning scenery to realise how lucky he is to be part of the Oban community.

Derek started his physiotherapy career in a specialist stroke rehabilitation unit in the north-east of England and knew immediately he had chosen a suitable career. He then worked in a number of busy general hospitals with his main interest always remaining in neurology.

Derek's final job before moving to Oban was in accident and emergency, providing early assessment and treatment for patients.

Derek's normal working hours are 8.30am until 4.30pm, although having a very young family means that his day usually starts at the crack of dawn and, since he has no choice but to be up with the larks, he tries to have a workout session at the local gym before starting work.



Derek Laidler is planning to run the Glencoe marathon and take part in a 150-mile cycle challenge ... despite having a hip replaced in 2016.

His daily priority is to ensure that quality services are provided across hospital inpatients, community services and out-patient clinics.

Derek's managerial role also includes attending meetings to develop services and partnership working, but he always aims to spend as much of his time as he can delivering clinical practice for patients. He holds a very strong interest in patients who have been diagnosed with neurological conditions such as stroke and multiple sclerosis (MS) as physiotherapy treatment can help increase people's physical fitness which will help them to maintain active lifestyles.

Derek added that he could not ask for better co-workers. He is incredibly proud of his small 'dream team', as he calls them, who are all dedicated health professionals with a wide range of knowledge and skills.

He also emphasises the importance of demonstrating compassion towards every patient, carer and family member, and strongly believes that if you are unable to be compassionate at all times, then you really should not be working in any healthcare position or environment.

Derek juggles his different roles on a daily basis, with a huge reliance on support staff to help him. The biggest challenge he has daily is educating patients, families and carers about the risks posed by inactivity. He also always aims to discharge people from hospital as soon as it is clinically safe to do so because of the potential risks caused by being inactive.

Being dedicated to his healthcare role can sometimes make it difficult for him to switch off from his day job. However, having two lively boys under three does force him to switch off at home, as when he walks through his front door his focus is switched from work to helping his wife with nappies, toys and tantrums.

They are a physically active family and are regulars at the local parkrun at Ganavan Sands.

Despite Derek having a hip replacement in 2016, he will be completing a number of cycling events this year - including a 150-mile coast-to-coast cycle ride in one day, plus running in the Glencoe marathon in September - and he adds that it's pointless extolling the value of exercise if he is not going to take his own advice.

Derek would also like to remind everyone to make healthier life choices, such as exercising, eating better, drinking less alcohol and stopping smoking. These are just a few of the very simple things we can all do to make a big difference to leading happier, healthier and safer lives.

His advice is to visit nhsinform.com healthy living section to find out what you can do to look after your mental and physical wellbeing to get more advice, tips and information on healthier living.

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Now is the time to consider your new stove

If you have been mulling over the idea of installing a wood burning stove this pastwinter then now is the perfect time to get your project moving. Lead times are short and there is plenty of time to consider your options and get things organised before the onset of next winter.

Buying a stove can be a confusing and daunting experience. There are a huge number of products available and at widely varying quality and price.

The cost of buying and installing a stove is not insignificant so you will want to feel confident that you are making a good decision based on sound advice.

This is perhaps one of our best purchases ever. Many thanks for your help and advice so freely given.
Mr & Mrs C, Struchur

At Backwoodsman our aim is to guide you through this process as smoothly as possible. We want to ensure that you end up with the right product for your individual requirements and a safe, efficient installation that will give years of good service.

In the first instance (wherever practical) we recommend a site survey to enable us to get a clear picture of what you are looking for and what the job specifications entail. Our surveys are free and without obligation.

For further information please call us on 01631 720539 to discuss your ideas.

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Wed. 14 Mar. 2018, 0930 - 1230, West Highland Housing Association, Oban

KEEP YOUR BUSINESS SAFE ONLINE (CYBER SECURITY ESSENTIALS)
Find out how to take some simple steps to reduce your chances of being hacked and also how to minimise the impact if your business does suffer a cyber attack.
Fri. 16 Mar. 2018, 1000-1300, McCaig Suite, Corran Halls, Oban
Mon. 19 Mar. 2018 1000-1300, The Enterprise Centre, Lochgilphead

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A workshop for businesses already using Twitter who wish to produce more engaging content, reach a wider audience and measure the effectiveness. Features of Hootsuite an app to help manage and integrate your social media accounts will also be covered.
Tue. 20 Mar. 2018 1300-1600, The Enterprise Centre, Lochgilphead

LINKEDIN FOR BUSINESS
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Wed. 21 Mar. 2018 0930-1230, The Enterprise Centre, Lochgilphead

To book a place contact the Business Gateway team
01546 808363
argyll&bute@bgateway.com
visit www.bgateway.com/events



Fresh ideas for a Springtime wedding

To all brides & Grooms Argyllshire Gathering are having an OPEN DAY on Sunday 4th March 12.30 till 4pm

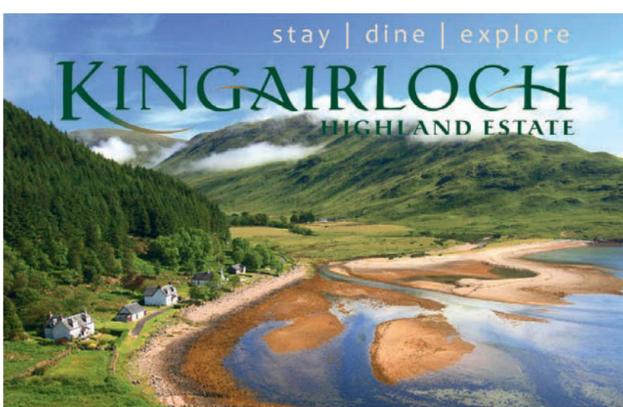
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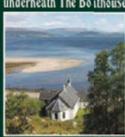
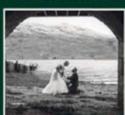
Kingairloch Estate

For those considering a Highland wedding experience, ceremonies can take place in the charming Kingairloch church and Kingairloch House is also licensed for civil ceremonies. The Boathouse Restaurant at Kingairloch Estate is ideal for wedding parties of up to 40 guests. The hills and glens, rivers and lochs of the estate provide a series of stunning back-drops for wedding photographs. Call now to start your highland experience wedding. 01967 411232.



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Anyone tying the knot in spring is spoiled for choice when it comes to fresh ideas for their big day.

Just look around you for cool inspiration and get those creative juices flowing.

Take a hint from nature, copycat those colours – subtle shades of whites, greens, pinks and yellows – to celebrate your new life as a married couple.

Starting out is a huge adventure so the wedding itself has to be a perfect beginning for both of you.

Planning is the key to

making sure the countdown to the ceremony and after-party runs as smooth as silk.

Families and friends will all offer help and there is no shame in delegation as long as you can keep a close track and no one gets carried away with ideas that might surprise the bride and groom.

If you choose to share out the preparation, make sure everyone is absolutely clear what they need to do and that they stick to your instructions. Let them know

how much you appreciate their help and enthusiasm but don't let them forget whose wedding it is.

Keeping a working list or file is something that lots of brides pass on as a top tip to others. Ticking off the boxes is hugely satisfying – even when it's other people who have done the work.

Save-the-date cards are trending right now to make sure you can guarantee the guests you want to be there.

Hen and stag nights are still fashionable but the wise bride and groom know

not to party too hard the night – or even the week – before if they both want to look their best.

Looking your best can also start well ahead of the wedding date, so a sensible keep-fit programme, eating healthily and indulging in beauty treats will pay dividends.

Finding the right dress is all about finding the right style to suit your shape and personality. Grab the opportunity to try different looks, sticking to the sweeping princess gown you have

dreamed of since childhood might not be the look for your older-self – that slinky fish-tail might just surprise you and your groom.

Dare to be different in the changing room – not just the style but the colour too. Seek out blushing pinks, peaches and soft vanillas if you want to stray gently away from white.

Shoes need to be comfortable but glamorous unless it's an outdoor wedding where ribboned wellies would be ideal – especially in the case of April showers!



OFFERS & competitions

To enter, send separate entries (in the same envelope) with your name, address, telephone number and email address to Scottish Field Competitions, Fettes Park, 496 Ferry Road, Edinburgh EH5 2DL or enter at www.scottishfield.co.uk. Closing date, unless otherwise stated, is 31 March 2018. **Winners drawn from all competitions also enter a prize draw to win a bottle of Berry Bros. & Rudd Islay Reserve whisky.**

WIN

A ONE NIGHT EASTER STAY AT ARDANAISEIG WITH DINNER FOR TWO PEOPLE



One of Scotland's most sought after exclusive use weddings and events venues is opening its doors to the public for a memorable week over Easter. Located on the shores of Loch Awe near Taynuilt in Argyll, it's the perfect setting for a wedding or special occasion. Our winners will stay for one night in a beautiful Master Loch Suite in this remarkable manor house. A sumptuous three course dinner, breakfast and true Scottish Highland hospitality await.

FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN, just answer the following question: On which loch is Ardanaiseig situated?

NB: Competition closes on 19 March 2018. Prize is for one night stay between 30 March – 2 April 2018.

WIN

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Highland Apartments by Mansley provide luxury living in the heart of Inverness. These serviced apartments on the corner of the High Street, overlooking the River Ness, offer the flexibility of self-catering accommodation with the added benefit of a daily housekeeping service, discounted dining, secure parking and wi-fi. Many feature designer interiors with balconies and terraces. Shops, restaurants, cafes and bars are just a short stroll away.

FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN, just answer the following question: What river runs through the centre of Inverness?

The prize is a stay in a deluxe one bedroom apartment for two nights. Stay must be taken before end of June. Accommodation is for two persons sharing. Prize includes car parking.

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Entrants must be 18 or over. Employees of Scottish Field, the competition promoters, and their direct families are ineligible to enter. No purchase necessary. The winner will be first correct entry drawn after closing date. No cash alternative is available. The winner will be informed by telephone. Promoter reserves the right to request post publicity. Indicate if you do not wish to receive further information from promoter. Usual Scottish Field rules apply. Information will be shared with promoters and sponsors.

Fort hotel owner wants the council slapped with ASBO

MARK ENTWISTLE
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THE owner of Fort William's popular Lime Tree An Ealdhain hotel, restaurant and art gallery is taking legal advice about slapping Highland Council with an anti-social behaviour order over late-night disturbances from the town's nearby West End car park.

David Wilson says he has had enough of boy racers revving their car engines late at night and disturbing his guests, as well as the noise from people illegally camping overnight in the car park.

'The last straw was on Sunday night when someone was revving a car that had an exhaust modified to sound like gunfire – in fact, we did think at first it actually was gunfire and it was reported to the police,' Mr Wilson told us.

One of the guests at the Lime Tree on Sunday night echoed Mr Wilson's comments.

'The amount of noise was ridiculous – it was so loud the windows were rattling,' she said.

Mr Wilson says the problems have been going on for years and his patience with Highland Council, which owns the car park, is now exhausted.

'This is not just disturbing our guests at the hotel but probably a large number of residents in the centre of the town. Modified exhausts such as these are illegal but nothing ever gets done about them,' he said.

'But despite my numerous complaints, Highland Council is still not acting in accordance with its responsibility to manage this car park properly.

'We really can't put up with the levels of noise any longer and something also needs done about the illegal camping.

'Recently I was forced to go outside and ask someone to turn off an industrial generator that they had fired up



David Wilson has been driven to distraction by anti-social behaviour in the West End car park.

right in front of the hotel late at night, only to be attacked by the man while a woman standing nearby egged him on with shouts of, "Kill him!"

Mr Wilson, who has been at the Lime Tree for 22 years, said he was not injured in the affray and had not bothered reporting the assault.

'Because the council and police seem unable to tackle these two issues, I am taking legal advice about having the council served with an ASBO because it is responsible for what happens in its own car parks,' added Mr Wilson.

'Highland Council has been absolutely useless and is not acting responsibly in ensuring public safety and security.

'We even offered to pay for a barrier at the car park and to manage it for the council, but got nowhere. So enough is enough.'

Asked to respond to Mr Wilson's criticism, a Highland Council spokesperson said the local authority was introducing amendments to the traffic order to address issues relating to overnight camping for this season.

'Issues relating to public order or

moving traffic violations are matters for Police Scotland,' the spokesperson added.

And local Fort William police inspector Isla Campbell said she was happy to meet Mr Wilson to discuss his concerns.

'We are aware of reports of anti-social behaviour involving vehicles in the West End car park in Fort William,' Inspector Campbell said.

'Fixed penalty notices have been issued to drivers and officers patrol the area, engaging with drivers.

'Where drivers are found to be using

their vehicles anti-socially, they will be dealt with appropriately.

'I would also urge drivers using the car park to show respect for other road users, as well as taking care not to cause disruption for residents and businesses in the area.

'Anyone with concerns about anti-social behaviour of any kind should report this to us as soon as possible so we can take suitable action.

'You can call 101 or pass information to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 if you wish to remain anonymous.'

Belford has highest mortality rate in country

BELFORD Hospital has the highest rate in Scotland of people dying within 30 days of being admitted, despite an overall reduction nationwide, writes Neill Bo Finlayson.

Figures released from the Scottish Government show that for the period July to September 2017, Belford Hospital had a significantly higher mortality rate than the national average and was the highest in the country.

Across Scotland, there were 6,084 deaths within 30 days of hospital admission during the 2017 period – 14 per cent fewer than predicted – while there has been a 10.6 per cent decrease in the mortality rate overall since 2014.

Belford Hospital in Fort William, however, is an exception to the trend, measuring a ratio that is almost double the national average.

NHS Highland said the high mortality rate in Fort William may be down to the number of beds at Belford Hospital and the lack of a community hospital or hospice in the area.

A representative of NHS Highland explained: 'Mortality ratios are calculated four times a year for all hospitals in Scotland.

'A slight rise in actual mortality and a small decrease in the predicted mortality rate has occurred for Belford Hospital.

'This has caused a single data point which is higher than usual but may simply be normal statistical variation, which can easily occur for a hospital with fewer than 40 beds in an area which has no community hospital or hospice.

'NHS Highland will be checking that all usual care and monitoring procedures are in place in the hospital.

'As a standard response in these circumstances, we will be reviewing all relevant clinical cases.'

Transport group lambasts bus firm for service review

NEILL BO FINLAYSON
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A LOCHABER transport group has blasted Stagecoach bosses for their 'gun to the head' negotiating tactics after announcing a review of all its services in the area.

Lochaber Transport Forum has said it is 'concerned and annoyed' that Stagecoach is considering closing the Fort William bus depot and may withdraw its service 45 route in the area.

The issue is made worse for forum members as the news comes without any prior discussion with the travelling public.

Forum chairman Brian Murphy said: 'Unfortunately, this is the sort of thing we have come to expect from Stagecoach over the years. They rarely seem to have much concern for the problems that their decisions cause passengers – especially the elderly and disabled.'

In a shock statement issued by Stagecoach last week, the company revealed that since April last year it has been unable to cover the cost of running its local network due to a combination of tender losses, reduced passenger demand and higher costs, and the situation is no longer sustainable.



Stagecoach's depot in Fort William is now under threat of closure as part of a review.

Stagecoach – which runs eight vehicles and employs 16 staff in Fort William – said its alternative proposals for service 45, which takes in Middle Street, Caol, Lochyside, Banavie and Inverloch, was not acceptable to the Highland Council and the route is to be axed, with its final day being Saturday March 17.

The company says it is also considering further options, including what is termed the 'closure of the business'.

'Reading between the lines, it looks like a "gun to the head" negotiating tactic by Stagecoach

to try to screw more money out of the council,' Mr Murphy continued.

'Quite rightly, the council has not succumbed to this cynical ploy, but it does need to be aware that this is a very important service for the Fort William area and that a solution is required urgently.'

Stagecoach has operated the Fort William bus business since 2008 when it took it over from Rapsons. But a combination of rising operating costs and changes to tenders awarded by the Highland Council in April

2017 has impacted the financial sustainability of the business.

However, Stagecoach says its Scottish Citylink services to Glasgow, Inverness, Oban and Skye will continue to operate.

Mark Whitelocks, managing director for Stagecoach North Scotland, told us: 'We are a significant local employer and we understand the importance of bus services for the local community.

'We also know that any change can be unsettling for our people. That's why we are working closely with both the trade union

to protect as many jobs and as much of the local bus services as possible. We're carrying out a consultation and will be working closely with staff during this process. However, the reality is that we simply cannot sustain the current operation.'

Lochaber MSP Kate Forbes spoke to Mr Whitelocks on Thursday last week and has urged Stagecoach to 'keep all options open'.

'I have spoken to the managing director of Stagecoach's operations in Lochaber to ask them to consider all options as they undergo a review,' she said.

'It is also important that staff are supported at every stage because not only are they facing uncertainty but it is often staff on the frontline who take the flak of changes in services.'

Given the infamous tailbacks during the tourist season across Fort William, Ms Forbes also said she was keen that more people were encouraged to use public transport.

She added: 'We should be getting more people out of their cars and into buses at a time like this, not reducing bus use.

'There are already challenges of congestion in Fort William and improving public transport would get more people out of their cars.'

Ski-Scotland blasts report over fake snow

THE marketing group behind Scotland's skiing industry has hit back at a recent report which claimed the country's ski resorts were spending more than half their budgets on artificial snow.

A report prepared by the Priestley International Centre for Climate recently claimed three of Scotland's main ski resorts were spending more than half their operating budgets on artificial snow factories following the poor 2016/17 season.

Ski-Scotland has rubbished these claims, however, saying that the information is incorrect and the reporting of which 'undermines the reputation both of the ski companies involved and the Scottish snowsports industry'.

They claim the climate report has derived its figures from a Ski-Scotland press release, which formed the basis of a news story published by *The Scotsman* last year about the trialling of snow machines at Scottish ski resorts.

A representative of the snowsports group said: 'In neither the online report nor in Ski-Scotland's release was any mention made of the cost of these trials. However, both story and release did refer to funding support from Highlands and Islands Enterprise

for one ski resort and a crowd-funding initiative by another.

'Certainly, the online story is not a credible source for the fanciful financial information quoted.

'It is a matter of fact that only two Technoalpin snow factories have been brought to Scotland this winter. One, heavily subsidised by the manufacturer, was trialled early in the season at Cairn Gorm Mountain and is currently at the Lecht Ski Centre. The other was leased by Glencoe Mountain and may become permanent if the crowd-funding initiative proves successful.'

Ski-Scotland says that to its knowledge no researcher from the Priestley Centre has been in touch with any of the country's five mountain ski resorts.

'It is regrettable that the academics responsible for this report did not check facts before making such damaging assumptions about any investment made by the ski companies in this trial. It does perhaps also raise questions about attention to detail in other parts of the report,' the representative continued.

'The Association of Scottish Ski Areas and Ski-Scotland report all five Scottish ski resorts are enjoying an excellent season.'

Body of climber is found

POLICE in Fort William confirmed that the body of Lochaber postman Jim Stalker, 55, who had been missing for a fortnight, was found on Saturday in the area of Beinn a Chaorainn, Glen Spean, by mountain rescue team members assisted by a Coastguard helicopter.

Fort William police extended their condolences to Mr Stalker's family and friends, and thanked all who were involved in searching for him.

A report will be sent to the procurator fiscal.

It has been a busy and sad few days for Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team, which had three call-outs on Sunday, including having 38 team members on Beinn a Chaorainn.

'It was a day of fantastic effort by all the people involved in all the rescues, unfortunately tinged with more than a fair bit of sadness,' said a statement on the team's Facebook page.

'Our thoughts are with the families and friends of all the casualties we have had on Scottish mountains this winter.'

Walker dies on Glenfinnan peak with three still missing

POLICE confirmed on Tuesday that the walker who died in the Glenfinnan area was Christopher Fryer, 38, from Norfolk.

Mr Fryer died following a fall in the area of the mountain Sgurr Thuilm around 10.30am on Saturday February 24.

Three other walkers remained unaccounted for in the Highlands as we went to press.

Searches are ongoing for overdue hill walker Stephen Mitchell, a 57-year-old who was reported missing after not returning as planned from a walk

in the Strathcarron area at the weekend. He set off on Friday February 23 from close to the Strathcarron Hotel and intended to walk in the Bendronaig Lodge, Lurg Mhor and Bearneas areas.

He is believed to have been near Beinn Dronaig at about

9am on Saturday February 24. Marcin Bialas also remains missing close to the summit of Ben Nevis, despite numerous searches for the 36-year-old in the Observatory Gully and Gardyloo Gully areas since January 21.

Neil Gibson has been missing in the Achnashellach area since February 8. The body of Mr Gibson's brother Alan, with whom he was walking, was found on February 10 on Beinn Liath Mhòr. The body of the brothers' dog was found on February 22.

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WHAT'S ON

I N O B A N

In partnership with Oban Town Diary bid4oban.co.uk



<p>Thursday 1st March</p> <p>Oban Accordion and Fiddle Club Royal Hotel 7.30pm</p> <p>Intermediate Food Hygiene Argyll College 9am-11am</p> <p>Oban A University Town Launch Event Corran Halls 11am-7pm</p> <p>Live Music & Entertainment @ Markie Dans FREE JUKEBOX EVERY THURSDAY</p> <p>Friday 2nd March</p> <p>Oban Dance Academy - Cheerleading Glencruitten Church Hall 6pm - 8pm</p> <p>Intermediate Food Hygiene Argyll College 9am-11am</p> <p>Live Music & Entertainment @ Markie Dans Live Music with Alan Frew from 9pm Free entry Open till 1am</p> <p>WHAT'S ON I N O B A N</p>	<p>Saturday 3rd March</p> <p>Intermediate Food Hygiene Argyll College 9am-11am</p> <p>Oban Dance Academy - Musical Theatre Class Glencruitten Church Hall 10am - 12.30pm</p> <p>Cearcall Còmhraidh (Gaelic Conversation Group) Furan Gaelic Centre, 12pm-1.30pm</p> <p>Comunn Gàidhealach an Obain Cèilidh Saturday 3rd March 2018 Masonic Hall, Albany Street, Oban 7.30pm Admission £6.00</p> <p>Live Music & Entertainment @ Markie Dans Live Music with Crooked Reel from 10pm Free entry Open till 2am</p> <p>Sunday 4th March</p> <p>Intermediate Food Hygiene Argyll College 9am-11am</p> <p>Hill Walk Bridge Of Orchy All Day</p>	<p>Live Music & Entertainment @ Markie Dans QUIZ NIGHT at 9.30pm £1 per person, max of 6 per team Win £20 bar voucher</p> <p>Monday 5th March</p> <p>Intermediate Food Hygiene Argyll College 9am-11am</p> <p>Oban Photographic Club Meeting Regent Hotel 7.15pm-9.30pm</p> <p>Tuesday 6th March</p> <p>Intermediate Food Hygiene Argyll College 9am-11am</p> <p>Irish Dancing Classes St Columba's Cathedral Hall 4.15pm-5.45pm</p> <p>Wednesday 7th March</p> <p>Intermediate Food Hygiene Argyll College 9am-11am</p> <p>Live Music & Entertainment @ The Lorne Bar Oban Lorne Pub Quiz Starting at 9pm £25 bar voucher prize and free pizza at half time</p>
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Best of the West Festival announces new transport links

The Best of the West Festival, the family-friendly, end-of-season showcase, will be taking place in the grounds of Inveraray Castle from Friday to Sunday, September 7-9.

Organisers said the event 'is arguably Scotland's finest boutique festival, where music and food lovers from across the globe gather to celebrate the very best in Scottish music, art, food and drink'.

They added: 'We are delighted to announce that West Coast Motors, via their West Coast Tours brand, will

be offering packages available to book online at <http://www.westcoasttours.co.uk> that incorporate special festival coach transport as well as entrance to the festival itself.

'The special services will run from Glasgow, Oban and Dunoon as in previous years and new for 2018 by popular demand from Tarbert (via Ardrishaig and Lochgilphead). Please note the Tarbert service is not available on the Sunday as the regular CityLink service is available that day. 'It is the perfect excuse to leave the

car at home and travel in style, with pick up and drop off at the festival entrance. This is a great option if you are a local who wants enjoy everything the festival has to offer or someone from further afield looking to widen their accommodation options.

'There is no need to find parking, save money on fuel, travel with your friends, meet new people and be kind to the environment.

'Remember to book early to avoid disappointment as limited seats are available.'

Headline acts already lined up include on the Friday Tide Lines and Seven Nations, Heron Valley on the Saturday, and Skipinnish and Bwani Junction on the Sunday.

There will also be festival kitchen headliners such as the Masterchef: The Professional 2016 winner Gary Maclean and Michelin star chef Graeme Cheevers.

A strictly limited number of Tier 1 tickets for Best of the West Festival will go on sale today (Thursday March 1).



Skipinnish at the Barrowlands in Glasgow. Photograph: Andrew Stevenson.

Victoria Beesley wrote and performs in My Friend Selma.



Children's drama about refugees is coming to Dalmally

A remarkable real-life story of one girl's journey from a war in Bosnia to safety in the UK is coming to Dalmally.

My Friend Selma, a children's show, visits Dalmally Community Centre on Saturday March 10.

The drama introduces young audiences (aged eight and over) to the true story of Selma Redzepagic,

a Bosnian refugee who fled war as a child and found safety in a disused boarding school in the UK.

Victoria Beesley, who lived with Selma and 52 other refugees from Bosnia when they first arrived in the UK, and became Selma's first British friend, wrote and performs this 40-minute storytelling on a set built out of a climbing

frame with a script created from interviews with Selma and others.

The play has won widespread plaudits from its staging elsewhere, including: 'I would give this show 280,00,00 out of 5' - Erin, P5 pupil, Arisaig Primary School.

This imaginative, empathetic work takes children along with Selma and

her family, as they see their world turned upside down and embark upon a life-changing journey full of tension, humour, joy, sorrow, confusion and hope.

It deals with issues such as war, the rights of a child and integration, and increases understanding of why people seek safety in Scotland, and what starting life in a

new country must be like for any young immigrant.

My Friend Selma is a Terra Incognita Arts production. The organisation was set up by Victoria Beesley in November 2012. For more information visit: www.terraincognita.org.uk.

The performance will begin at 7.30pm with tickets priced at £7 (price includes a Bosnian supper).

The Oban Times supports local charities and not-for-profit event organisers

Let us know about your forthcoming event to appear for free in our listings, in association with Oban Town Diary.

We have reduced our community noticeboard box adverts to just £10 plus VAT (where VAT is applicable)

Put your event in front of 25,000 readers and also see what we can offer you by promoting your event online - we have more than 11,000 followers on Facebook and 36,000 monthly visitors to www.obantimes.co.uk

It pay to advertise with The Oban Times - first for community news, business news and events throughout Oban, Lochaber and the West Highlands.

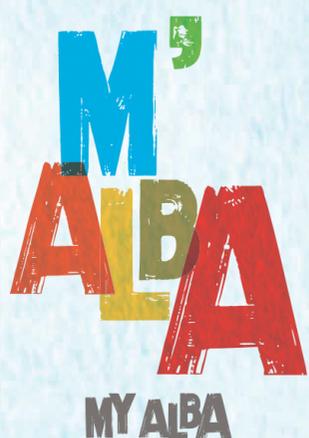
Contact Nadine or Rhona on 01631 568000



Events may charge. Please visit

www.obanwhatson.co.uk for more details.

To list your event, please call 01631 568000



DIARDAOIN 01 MÀRT
THURSDAY 01 MARCH
17.00 Prògraman Chloinne - Children's programming
19.00 Turas a' Bhradain (rpt)
19.30 Speaking our Language (rpt)
19.55 Binneas - Na Trads (rpt)
20.00 An Là - News
20.30 ÒR|NEW: Eòrpa
21.00 ÒR|NEW: DIY le Donnie
21.50 Belladrum 2017: The James Hunter Six (rpt)
22.25 Fraochy Bay (rpt)
22.30 ÒR|NEW: Fleasgaich an lasgaich - competitive fishing around the world
23.15 Hebridean Celtic Festival - The Boy Who Trapped The Sun (rpt)

DIHAOINE 02 MÀRT
RIDAY 02 MARCH
17.00 Prògraman Chloinne - Children's programming
18.35 Machair (rpt)
19.00 An Là - News
19.25 Fraochy Bay (rpt)

19.30 Cuimhneachan (rpt)
20.00 Òrain nan Gàidheal (rpt)
21.00 Hamish (rpt)
22.30 Belladrum 2017: The James Hunter Six (rpt)
23.10 Rathad na Deighe (rpt)
23.55 Binneas - Na Trads (rpt)

DISATHAIRNE 03 MÀRT
SATURDAY 03 MARCH
16.00 Prògraman Chloinne - Children's programming
19.30 Machair (rpt)
19.55 Fraochy Bay (rpt)
20.00 From Harris With Love: Chi Mì 'n Tìr (rpt)
20.30 North Coast 500 - Le Anne London (rpt)
21.00 ÒR|NEW: Òrain nan Gàidheal
22.00 Skipinnish aig Barrowland (rpt)
23.00 Fleasgaich an lasgaich (rpt)
23.45 Hebridean Celtic Festival - The Boy Who Trapped The Sun

(rpt)
23.55 Niteworks: Obair Oidhche (rpt)

DIDÒMHAICH 04 MÀRT
SUNDAY 04 MARCH
16.00 Prògraman Chloinne - Children's programming
18.30 Seachd Là
19.30 Alleluia (rpt)
20.00 Eòrpa (rpt)
20.30 Leugh Mi (rpt)
21.00 A' Ghàidhealtachd (rpt)
22.00 Òrain nan Gàidheal (rpt)
22.50 Hebridean Celtic Festival - Lau (rpt)
23.00 Skipinnish aig Barrowland (rpt)

DILUAIN 05 MÀRT
MONDAY 05 MARCH
17.00 Prògraman Chloinne - Children's programming
19.00 Caistealan Alba (rpt)
19.25 Speaking our Language (rpt)
19.55 Binneas - Na Trads - Tide

Lines (rpt)
20.00 An Là - News
20.30 Cuimhneachan (rpt)
21.00 ÒR|NEW: Trusadh - Falt
22.00 Port - Druthag Eile (rpt)
22.30 Opra an Iùir (rpt)
23.30 Fonn Fonn Fonn (rpt)

DIMÀIRT 06 MÀRT
TUESDAY 06 MARCH
17.00 Prògraman Chloinne - Children's programming
19.00 Turas a' Bhradain (rpt)
19.35 Speaking our Language (rpt)
20.00 An Là - News
20.30 ÒR|NEW: Leugh Mi
21.00 A' Ghàidhealtachd (rpt)
22.00 Trusadh - Falt (rpt)
23.00 Òran na Mnà (rpt)
23.30 Alleluia (rpt)

DICIADAIN 07 MÀRT
WEDNESDAY 07 MARCH
17.00 Prògraman Chloinne - Children's programming
19.05 Caistealan Alba (rpt)
19.30 Speaking our Language (rpt)
19.55 Binneas - Na Trads - Tide Lines (rpt)
20.00 An Là - News
20.30 North Coast 500 - Le Anne London (rpt)
21.00 Port - Druthag Eile (rpt)
21.25 ÒR|NEW: Mach à Seo!
- Ramsay is a twentysomething professional who adheres to the 'work hard, play hard' philosophy.
21.55 ÒR|NEW: Scottish Premiership - Kilmarnock v St Johnstone

DIARDAOIN 08 MÀRT
THURSDAY 08 MARCH
17.00 Prògraman Chloinne - Children's programming
19.00 Turas a' Bhradain (rpt)
19.30 Speaking our Language (rpt)
19.55 Binneas - Na Trads - Tide Lines (rpt)
20.00 An Là - News
20.30 ÒR|NEW: Eòrpa
21.00 ÒR|NEW: DIY le Donnie
21.45 Belladrum 2017: The Sherlocks (rpt)
22.25 Fraochy Bay (rpt)
22.30 ÒR|NEW: Fleasgaich an lasgaich - competitive fishing around the world
23.15 Hebridean Celtic Festival - Paddy Callaghan (rpt)
23.30 Mach à Seo! (rpt)

Future for Luing drama remains in good hands

Everyone likes a good murder mystery and the capacity audiences at the recent Luing Amateur Dramatic Society's performances of The Great British Bump-Off thoroughly enjoyed three excellent shows at Cullipool Hall.

Slightly adapted with local references from the two-act play by Lesley Gunn, the plot centred on the unlamented demise of 'the queen bee' judge of an annual island baking competition whom everyone disliked and had good reason to bump off.

Luing's well-deserved reputation for the qual-

ity of its baking made the choice of play all the more appropriate.

Ablly played by Helen Thomson, Patricia McLaren blackmailed her fellow baking judge Eduardo D'Angelo, handsome Italian TV chef (suave charmer Gregor Shuff) and the ladies' man chairman of the fete committee Major Gordon Watt OBE (rising star John Morgan). She also accused Hilary Stanton (the delightful Fiona Cruickshanks), business owner of Bakes and Buns, of cheating by buying her competition entry cakes from Tesco.

In true Agatha Christie style, the murderer could have been almost any of the play's quirky island characters but what was different in this case was that towards the end the audience was invited to ask questions of the cast and to guess who it was. This ensured active audience participation and kept everyone guessing until the last moment.

What was also remarkable about this show was that it saw the debut as director of 20-year-old Hazel Cruickshanks, and what a very fine job she made of it.

The young Luinneach demonstrated that she



The cast and crew with young director Hazel Cruickshanks (front centre).

was the opposite of the Patricia McLaren character by leading her team in a harmonious and positive way that was reflected in the way the cast clearly enjoyed the whole occasion.

As the ever reliable actor Kay Benn said in thanking Hazel on stage afterwards: 'We've all had the greatest time you could imagine.'

There was strength in depth too in the large cast of experienced ac-

tors with Joan Morgan as a hippy baker who used dodgy ingredients, pink-wigged Mary Whitmore as the smitten admirer of celebrity chef Eduardo and Pam Baker as Oban's accomplished answer to Sherlock Holmes, well supported by Rachel Cruickshanks and Sarah Ferguson.

However, with his specially grown moustache, cravat, pipe and upper crust accent, John Mor-

gan practically stole the show with his brio and humorous quips. He seemed to be enjoying himself as much as the audience did.

Even the music links between scenes were brilliantly chosen such as The Galloping Major by Stanley Holloway and Dean Martin's That's Amore which had audiences singing along to lines like: 'Bells will ring ting-a-ling-a-luing.'

This show was a splen-

did community effort with a large number of volunteers of all ages working behind the scenes to ensure everything went off well on the night.

The Isle of Luing has a long and renowned tradition of amateur dramatics and these performances made it abundantly clear that its future is in good hands.

Norman Bissell

The Baleshare Bard is back

Eighty years after its first publication, the collected Gaelic poems of North Uist's Baleshare Bard Roderick Mackay are back in print in a new revised new edition of Oiteagan à Tir nan Òg, 'Breezes from the Land of Youth'.

The book was launched at Lochmaddy Hall last Thursday by singers Julie Fowles and Linda MacLeod.

The Carmichael Watson Project, which looks after the 'treasure-chest of Gaelic stories, songs, customs, and beliefs collected by Lismore's pioneering folklorist Alexander Carmichael, holds the bard's own 152-page manuscript of poems at Edinburgh University Library.

The author of the

mysterious bundle, it explains, was described in the catalogue only as 'a North Uist bard'.

He was later identified as Ruairidh MacAoidh, mac an t-Saighdeir Ruaidh, or Roderick Mackay (1872-1949), a clerk to the factor to the North Uist estate, who travelled from township to township collecting rent.

In North Uist tradition, MacAoidh is better known as Bàrd Iolairigh after the district where he lived, in the north of the island of Baile Sear/Baleshare on the west coast of North Uist.

He was 'a very skilful, vivid, and humane poet gifted with a remarkable command of language and a keen eye for the quirks of his

fellow islanders and of island life'.

This book was originally published in Glasgow in 1938 as Oiteagan à Tir nan Òg, 'Breezes from the Land of Youth', but has been out of print for many years.

The publisher Acair said: 'Iain MacDonald, who edited the book, enriched this edition with a history of the people whom the poems are written about, as well as an extended account of the poet himself, along with an account of the initial reactions people had when it was first published.'

'There are a number of poems which did not feature in the original book, which add to the precious body of work

which was left behind by Roderick MacKay.

'This new edition of Oiteagan à Tir nan Òg is sure to stir up memories for those who have previously read some of these poems, but they will also be loved by new readers, and contemporary singers, as they are introduced to the rich heritage of North Uist Gaelic poetry.'

'Renowned singer Julie Fowles has written a foreword to Oiteagan à Tir nan Òg, and states that she remembers hearing these poems in her youth long before she read the book itself, and that this collection had a profound impact on the Gaelic songs she learned as a child, which have remained with her to this day.'

Top DJs play in Oban to raise money for charity

Some of the country's top DJs will make their way to Oban's Corran Halls this weekend for the charity event We'll Dance This Road Together.

Clyde 1's George Bowie and Jamie B will take to the stage to raise money for Pancreatic Cancer UK, as will local DJs Mark Gowdie, Pat Steeman, Stuart Fraser, Bryan L, Neil Gillies and Drew Walker.

The event will take place on Saturday March 3 from 9pm until 2am.

Organiser Tony Howlett said: 'I lost a dear friend through cancer in March last year, so I decided to put this on to raise money for Pancreatic Cancer Scotland.'

'I'm looking forward to it. Preparation for the event is going very well. I have a lot of sponsors, which will pay for the DJs, so all the ticket sales will go towards the charity.'

'Some of the DJs are charging at a discounted price and some are doing it for free.'

'Stuart Fraser will be

flying in from Dubai that day to come and do it. He lands in London and will get a flight to Glasgow, then make his way to Oban.'

Tickets can be purchased from Coasters, Digital Kangaroo and from the Corran Halls.

Also playing will be DJs Trevor Reilly, Sparkos, Mark MacLaughlan, Gonzo, Paul Norval, Andy Anderson, Kenny MacFarlane, as well as MCs Gally, Badboy and Conduct.

Your local radio listings

OBAN FM Community Radio - your local radio station
Tune in to 103.3 or listen live at www.obanfm.com

For requests, competitions or questions please email: studio@obanfm.org.uk or call us on 01631 570057

MONDAY: 08.00 AM on FM, 08.10 Breakfast Show, 9.00 Monday Morning with Stephen, 11.00 Ian Simmonds on Monday, 17.00 Drivetime, 19.00 Rosie's Highland Fling with Rosie Macoll, 20.00 John McLuckie's Show, 21.00 David Cullen show, 23.00 Station close down

TUESDAY: 08.00 AM on FM, 08.10 Breakfast Show, 10.00 Ken Hunter's Tuesday Morning, 13.00 Macky on FM, 17.00 Drivetime Jim Lynch, 19.00 Highest Praise - Stuart Chalmers, 20.00 Archie Darlings's Mix, 22.00 Clyde 2

WEDNESDAY: 08.00 AM on FM, 08.10 Breakfast Show, 09.00 Sound Scottish Repeat, 10.00 Comfort Zone, Doug Carmichael, 11.00 Comfort Zone, 12.00 Comfort Zone, 15.00 The Wednesday Jukebox with Michelle 17.00 Drivetime with Campbell, 19.00 Country Meets Rock & Roll - Len + Ken, 20.00 Country Meets Rock & Roll, 21.00 Gordon's Grooves with Gordon Macintyre

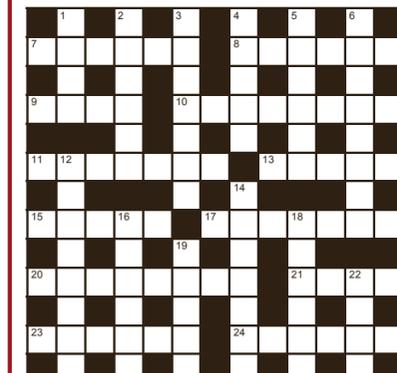
THURSDAY: 08.00 - 11.00 Breakfast with Andy and Sarah, 11.00 Molly's Mix with Molly Black, 13.00 Molly's Mix, 15.00 Drivetime with Stephen, 17.00 Drivetime with Stephen McPhee, 18.00 Drivetime with Stephen McPhee, 19.00 Christines Collection, 20.00 Christine's CD Collection, 21.00 Ann's Ceilidh, 22.00 Margo Till Midnight, 11.00 Margo Till Midnight

FRIDAY: 08.00 Breakfast Show with Laura, 10.00 Teeny and Tiny, 17.00 Drive Show with Jim Lynch, 17.30 Drive Show, 18.45 Sports View, 19.00 Country Meets Country with Jackie Craig, 20.00 Lewis Bingham, 21.00 Peter Rainnie

SATURDAY: 08.00 Breakfast Show with Stephen 10.00 Sat Morning Live, 11.00 Saturday Morning, 12.00 Saturday Morning Live with Linda Crowther, 12.03 Sat Morning Live, 12.05 Saturday Morning Live, 13.30 Clyde, 18.00 Sports View - Dream Team, 19.00 Sounds Scottish with Archie Darling, 20.00 Dave Lewis, 22.00 Margo Till Midnight

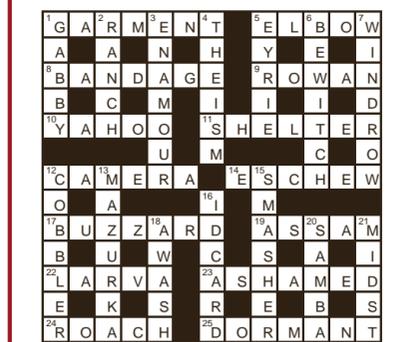
SUNDAY: 09.00 Sunday Morning With Breege, 10.00 Sunday Morning, 11.00 Sunday Brunch With Archie, 12.00 Sunday Brunch, 16.30 Archie Darling, 18.00 Ken's Friends - Ken Hunter, 19.00 New Country Show - David Entwistle, 21.00 Drum & Bass - Graham Scott, 23.00 Station Close Down

THE OBAN TIMES GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Chipper (6)
 - 8 Chewy sweet (6)
 - 9 Under cover (4)
 - 10 Prehistoric time (5,3)
 - 11 Not at all damp (4-3)
 - 13 News feature (5)
 - 15 A short musical composition (5)
 - 17 Guest house in France (7)
 - 20 Collarbone (8)
 - 21 Relating to oils (4)
 - 23 Heavy metal (6)
 - 24 Occupy (6)
- Down**
- 1 Woolly young (4)
 - 2 Wound up (2,4)
 - 3 Ugly sty? (7)
 - 4 Wedding (5)
 - 5 Shining (6)
 - 6 Keeps the young in its pocket! (8)
 - 12 Be far better than (8)
 - 14 One who is unbiased in a game (7)
 - 16 Lacking in (6)
 - 18 Filling (6)
 - 19 Rogue (5)
 - 22 Verge (4)

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION



COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

Oban Times LEISURE TIMES

Oban Times LEISURE TIMES

Oban Times LEISURE TIMES

Comunn Gàidhealach an Òbain

CÈILIDH

Saturday 3rd March 2018

Masonic Hall, Albany Street, Oban, 7.30pm

Admission £6.00

Featuring:

Kim Carmie, Rachel and Emma Deans

Norman MacKinnon

Piper/Accordion: Callum MacColl

Fear an Taigh: Eric Smith

If you would like to advertise in the Oban Times Community Noticeboard please call 01631 568000

MÀN RAN

WITH **HÒ-RÒ**

THE NEVIS CENTRE, FORT WILLIAM

Saturday 24th March, 2018

Doors open: 7:30pm Tickets: £20

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Glasgow Letter

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



Busy week for leachs

This week's Glasgow Letter has a distinct flavour of the island of Islay because I am simultaneously looking back to last weekend's Glasgow Islay Gaelic Choir Concert and forward to this weekend's Glasgow Islay Association annual gathering.

The choir were in fine voice last Friday and, although I could only stay for the first half of the evening, I was delighted to catch the superb solo performances of silver pendant winner Kenneth MacLeod from Lewis and the unbelievable box playing of Ryan Corbett from Milngavie, who excelled not only in Scottish traditional playing but in a phenomenal classical, continental piece.

The choir themselves also gave a number of performances in the first half including a stirring rendition of their own anthem, Moladh na Lannaidh.

The evening was wittily chaired by traditional gold medallist and former choir member John Joe Macneil from Barra. Many people at the

concert were also looking forward to this Friday night's Glasgow Islay gathering which features a sizeable line-up including myself, Alasdair Currie, Clare Jordan, the Islay Pipe Band, Màrtainn Skene, Pipe Major Andrew MacCowan, and the Glasgow Islay Choir's conductor, Kirsteen Grant. The concert will be chaired by David McArthur.

Tickets are available from the Islay Inn, the Park Bar, the Bowmore Hotel, the Port Charlotte Hotel, and Iain Laurie's shop in Port Ellen. Tickets can also be reserved at the door by messaging the Glasgow Islay Facebook page. Doors open at 7pm with the concert due to start at 7.30pm and the dance (to the music of Trail West) at 10.30pm.

Balloch Accordion and Fiddle Club

This is perhaps all too brief a mention of my first visit last Sunday night to the Balloch Accordion and Fiddle Club where I was delighted to be the guest artist.

There were a big number of local players including Gunna Sound's Campbell Brown and Eriskay Lilt's Don MacDonald.

Well done to Willie Scott and the committee for staging an excellent evening and I thoroughly recommend a visit to St Kessog's Hall on the third Sunday evening of every month.

What's on

Friday March 2: Clydebank and District Highland Association cèilidh at 7.30pm in the Napier Hall, Old Kilpatrick.

Saturday March 3: Uist and Barra Association annual piping competition from 9am in the College of Piping, Otago Street.

Friday March 9: Ceòlraidh Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu 125th anniversary concert celebrating Kenny Thomson's 35th year as conductor of the GGs in the Kelvinhead Hillhead Parish Church.

Saturday March 10: Glasgow Gaelic Musical Association's 125th anniversary dinner dance in the Hilton Doubletree Hotel at 7pm.

Monday March 12:

Glasgow Accordion and Fiddle Club - Roger Dobson Scottish dance band - at 7pm in the Scotstounhill Bowling Club.

Friday March 16: Glasgow Skye Association Cothrom na h-Oigridh (youth concert) at 7pm in the Crawford Hall.

Saturday March 17: Lewis/Harris Association cèilidh in the Crawford Hall at 7.30pm.

Saturday March 17: Clydebank and District Highland Association supper dance at 7.30pm

in the Napier Hall, Old Kilpatrick.

Pub scene

Islay Inn. Friday March 2: The Keelies.

Saturday March 3: The Buchanan Street Preachers.

Sunday March 4: Trail West.

Park Bar. Friday March 2: Beinn Lee.

Saturday March 3: North 56.

Sunday March 4: Beinn Lee.



The Glasgow Islay Association audience will be very much looking forward to hearing the island's very own 2017 Mòd gold mMedallist, Alasdair Currie, on Friday night.

'Ireland's Billie Holiday' Mary Coughlan to visit Oban during UK tour

By Iain McGrouther

Arguably the greatest female singer to have emerged from Ireland in recent times, the equivalent of Irish vocal royalty, Mary Coughlan is embarking on a UK tour this April.

Often described as Ireland's Billie Holiday, Mary will be bringing her legendary voice to the Corran Halls in Oban on Tuesday April 10.

'Whether into folk, blues or jazz, no one can fail to be moved by the emotional depth, expression and power in her voice, forged from an extraordinary life,' her promoter explained.

Since her first album Tired and Emotional rocketed her to overnight fame in 1985, she has recorded a further 15 solo albums, most recently the self-written Scars on the Calendar with Erik Visser.

Throughout her recording career, Mary has drawn heavily from her heroes: Billie Holiday (to whom she devoted a double album of her songs), Van Morrison and Edith Piaf. Even so, Mary, with her naked honesty, makes every song her own.

'Peppered with her dry waspish wit and irreverent banter, her live performances are in a league of their own,' her promoter adds.



Mary Coughlan.

'One thing is for sure, you will be taken on a journey of devastatingly beautiful, wide-ranging and engaging songs. Sad, sassy and droll, melancholy has never sounded better.'

Oban Unsigned 2018

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE OBAN TIMES AND OBAN LIVE

OBAN LIVE **The Oban Times**
& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

With the abundance of local talent right here on our doorstep, Oban Live and The Oban Times, the event's media partner, have teamed up to give one local band or artist the chance to perform at Oban Live 2018. The winner will join an impressive list of artists from trad-stars Skerryvore and Skipinnish to Ireland's hottest band Hermitage Green

Performing to thousands at Argyll's biggest live music event, taking place at Mossfield Stadium, Oban, June 8 & 9, the winning act will get their very own slot to showcase their talents. Last year's event attracted 7,800 attendees to the two-day concert. As well as benefiting from on-stage exposure and publicity from The Oban Times and Oban Live, the winning act will also receive weekend VIP tickets, backstage access (on performance day) and a merchandise goody bag.

HOW TO APPLY

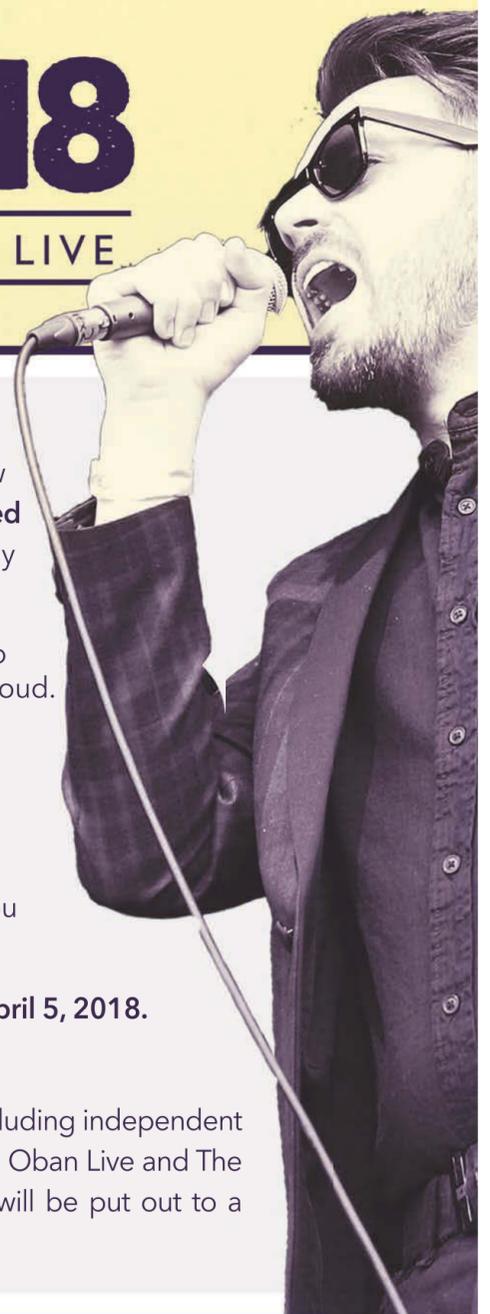
Carefully read through the terms and conditions below and head over to www.obantimes.co.uk/obanunsigned where you can apply online. You will be asked to supply the following:

- A web link to your music that is publicly available so we can download and listen, for example Sound Cloud.
- A web link to any film footage you may have
- A photograph of the artist (s)
- Artist logo (if you have one)
- A short description of the artist or band and why you believe you should win (around 250 words).

Applications must be received by 10am, Thursday April 5, 2018.

SHORTLIST

All entries will be handed over to a panel of judges, including independent judges from local institutions and a representative from Oban Live and The Oban Times. The panel will choose a shortlist which will be put out to a public vote.



Terms and conditions: Artists applying must currently live in Oban or the nearby surrounding area. For bands and duos, at least one member of the band must currently live in Oban or the nearby surrounding area. Applicants may include both original material and covers in their applications and the winner may include covers during their slot at Oban Live, June 8th or 9th. By applying to Oban Unsigned, entrants agree to give Oban Live, The Oban Times and obantimes.co.uk the right to use the music materials and any footage they have submitted as part of their application for campaign promotions on websites, on social media, and in print. Under-18s must have permission from a parent or guardian to take part and, if the winner is under 18, an adult must accompany them to the live show. The judges' decision is final. The winning act must have enough material for a 30 minute performance and must be available from 3pm, Friday June 8 and Saturday June 9 - Performance time and duration will be confirmed with the winning act. The winning act must take part in publicity. Closing date for applications is 10am, Thursday April 5, 2018. For Oban Unsigned enquiries please call 01631 568000 or email pauline@obanlive.com.

Opera Highlights tour to visit Ballachulish



Catherine Backhouse, William Morgan, Máire Flavin and Benjamin Lewis.
Picture: Tommy Ga-Ken Wan

By Iain McGrouther
Scottish Opera tours its show Opera Highlights to small venues across Scotland, including Ballachulish Village Hall on Tuesday March 6. Opera Highlights tells the story of Henrietta and Leon, two stage managers who have to cope with the demands of opera stars Sophia and Petrarch every night on tour. An 'extremely varied' programme is on offer for opera first-timers or seasoned fans. Favourites such as Rossini's Barber of Seville and Mozart's Così fan tutte will be performed alongside

lesser-known gems rarely seen on the Scottish stage. A new work, entitled Wings, created especially for the tour by Scottish Opera's emerging artist composer in residence, Samuel Bordoli, will also be featured. The cast of the spring tour is full of fresh new talent including mezzo-soprano Catherine Backhouse, soprano Máire Flavin; baritone Benjamin Lewis and tenor William Morgan. Patrick Milne accompanies the four talented young singers on piano and Jack Furness makes a return to the company to direct. Scottish Opera's general director, Alex Reedijk, said: 'Touring Scotland is at the heart of what we do and Opera Highlights is the perfect show to take to smaller and more remote communities around the country as it truly has

something for everyone. 'After a successful 17-date autumn tour, which saw the Opera Highlights team travel around Scotland from Stornoway to Stranraer, we're thrilled to be able to take the show on the road again this spring. The autumn Opera Highlights tour was a hit with audiences, and director Jack Furness' imaginative approach will no doubt bring out the best in this spring's fabulous young cast.' Scottish Opera also operates an extensive Education and Outreach Department which was the first of its kind in Europe. The programme brings opera to over 8,000 primary school children every year as well as many other activities including adult learning and Unwrapped taster sessions.

Mull Music Makers tune into course on conducting

The National Youth Choir of Scotland was back on Mull at the weekend for a third visit to the island in recent years to deliver children's workshops and training days. This time it was a conducting skills course run by leading choral director Michael Bawtree. Twelve people signed up for the course from Mull and Oban and participants included youth choir leaders, members of the Mull Gaelic Choir, and other enthusiastic singers. The course was taught brilliantly and covered general technique as well as addressing more specific issues people had been facing. There were lots of opportunity to get up and practice and there was also a demo choir session at the end with a group of willing young volunteers (or perhaps future conductors!).



Participants on the course on Mull pay close attention.



The Oban Times & WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

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bonnie babies

competition 2018

IS BACK!

After the overwhelming response from our readers last year Bonnie Babies is back. Make sure you enter your little bundle of joy into our 2018 competition for the chance to win

£500

of vouchers.

How to enter

We are now open for entries! The Oban Times Bonnie Babies 2018 competition is open to babies and toddlers born on or after June 14th 2014. Look out the most adorable photo of your gorgeous little one and enter online by visiting www.obantimes.co.uk/bonniebabies.

The Oban Times Bonnie Babies 2018 Supplement

After you enter your child, look out for our delightful Bonnie Babies 2018 supplement in a future edition of The Oban Times and Lochaber Times – a lovely little keepsake to show your children when they are older.

Vote for your favourite!

Readers will have the important job of voting for their favourite kiddy-winks in the supplement. We will then break it down to four further rounds of top 50, 30, 20 and finally top 10. From the top 10, the baby with the most votes will be crowned The Oban Times' Bonniest Baby 2018. **Good luck!**

The closing date for entries is noon on 26th March 2018.

ENTER ONLINE

www.obantimes.co.uk/bonniebabies

Terms and conditions: By entering the competition, you – the parent or guardian – consent to the reproduction of your child's photograph in The Oban Times Bonnie Babies Features in the paper and online and in any other related competition promotions. You agree that Wyvex Media Ltd has the right to publish the images and details of the entrant without payment for the purpose of promoting Wyvex Media Bonnie Babies campaign(s). If you do not wish for your child's photo to appear in the newspaper or online then you should not enter the competition.

The Oban Times Bonnie Babies 2018 competition is open to babies and toddlers born on or after June 14, 2014, and must live in Argyll & Bute or in postcode areas PH30-PH44, PH49, PH50 and Isle of Skye. The closing date for entries is noon on Monday 26 March, 2018. Only one entry per child. Poor quality photographs will not be accepted as an entry. The winner must take part in publicity. Employees of Wyvex Media Ltd and their immediate family are not eligible to enter. The prizes are as stated and not transferable or redeemable for cash equivalent.

We care about your personal information. The information gathered on the entry form will be used by us to contact you regarding the competition & the photo and name to enter you into the competition. We may also email you at the close of the competition. We will not pass on any of the information supplied by you in the entry form to any third party.

BUSINESS NEWS

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Island couple raise a glass to gin's success

A COUPLE who produce award-winning gin from their Colonsay home have secured their first national supermarket order with bottles due to appear on shelves this summer.

Fin and Eileen Geekie set up Wild Thyme Spirits Ltd in 2016 and have since sold more than 5,000 bottles, including sending their first exports to Canada.

Support from Business Gateway Argyll and Bute has helped them grow the business. Recently the couple have benefited from specialist marketing advice via the Business Gateway Local Growth Accelerator Programme, which is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund 2014-20 Structural Funds Programme.

Fin said: 'We're proud of our Colonsay Gin and the response we've had from the public. When we sold our 5,000th bottle, it was a special moment and since then we've expanded.'

'We exported our first shipment to Canada, including an exclusive special commemorative bottling for Canada's finest military regiment, the Lord Strathcona's Horse. We're also currently in negotiations with importers in Italy and Spain so it's an exciting time for us.'

'We have secured a national

supermarket order, although we can't say which one until nearer the time.

'Since setting up, we've had support from Business Gateway, which has been with us every step of the way. The specialist advice we received in marketing and PR has really given us a boost and put us in a great position.'

The success of Colonsay Gin has led Fin and Eileen to offer a 'gin lover's retreat' experience, making use of onsite accommodation built during the renovations. The weekend retreat offers visitors and gin enthusiasts a chance to choose from more than 200 gins and eat fantastic food while taking in the remote and beautiful scenery of the island.

For 2018, bookings for the retreat are already at 70 per cent as gin lovers seek a unique experience.

Fin added: 'Gin is loved by many people and we wanted to make use of our wonderful surroundings to offer something different. We also wanted to help the island's economy and tourism by bringing people to the island who have not been before. We are very aware of how important business is to the future sustainability of the



Fin and Eileen hard at work in their gin distillery on Colonsay, where they offer 'gin lovers' retreats'.

island and we're keen to start employing people as soon as we can. We are excited about the rest of 2018 and look forward to the Scottish Rural Awards, where we are finalists in the Best Artisan Spirit and Best Start-up Business categories.' Barbara

Halliday, an adviser for Business Gateway Argyll and Bute, said: 'Wild Thyme Spirits has been steadily growing since bottling its first gin in March 2016 and by accessing our range of services has cemented its position as an exciting and successful drink

producer in Scotland. By taking advantage of our specialist help, Fin and Eileen have benefited from tailored PR advice aimed at helping them grow their business.'

For more information visit www.wildthymespirits.com.

Western Isles prepares for apprenticeship week

COMHAIRLE nan Eilean Siar is backing Scottish Apprenticeship Week, the annual campaign to show apprenticeships work for businesses, individuals and the economy.

The week runs from Monday March 5 to Friday March 9 and the council is hosting a series of events to promote apprenticeship week, which is co-ordinated by Skills Development Scotland.

This year's campaign theme is Business, recognising the value work-based learning brings to employers across the country. This is an opportunity to raise awareness of the successes of apprentices who have chosen to get a job, get paid and get qualified to develop their careers.

Comhairle leader Roddie Mackay said: 'Research indicates there is demand from young people for opportunities to study and work on the islands.'

'As a comhairle, we are very supportive of providing opportunities for young people to pursue positive destinations within the islands and in doing so, slowing population decline

and strengthening the islands' economy.

'We invite local employers, school pupils, parents/carers, colleges and training providers as well as members of the public to participate in Scottish Apprenticeship Week events.'

Employers are encouraged to advertise any current or future apprenticeship vacancies during Scottish Apprenticeship Week.

Drop-in sessions for the exchange of ideas and information are as follows.

Stornoway Town Hall, 20 South Beach Street, Tuesday March 6, 10am-7pm; Wednesday March 7, 10am-7pm; Thursday March 8, 10am-1pm.

Sir E Scott School, Tarbert, Friday March 9, 12.25pm-1.15pm.

Cothrom Ltd, in partnership with SDS Careers, will be holding drop-in sessions in South Uist and Barra as follows:

Cothrom Learning Centre, Ormiclate, South Uist, Wednesday March 7, 10am-4pm; Castlebay Community School, Barra, Thursday March 8, 10am-2pm.

Go to www.cothrom.net for more information.

Work placements on offer

IN CONJUNCTION with Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is offering an opportunity to students with Gaelic skills to be employed for 10 weeks during the summer in the Western Isles with organisations which use Gaelic in the workplace every day.

These 10 weeks can take place anytime over the summer, but the placement must be completed by August 31.

This scheme has been running for many years, and has been very successful in terms of developing the Gaelic skills of students, and giving them valuable experience of a professional work environment. From the point of view of the organisations, the scheme can give them an opportunity to hire students to work on specific projects, work which

would not be possible to do without these students.

To take part, students must be in higher education (at university or in college); must have some Gaelic speaking, reading and writing skills; must be intending to return to higher education in autumn, 2018; the Gaelic organisations must pay the Living Wage to the students (£8.25 per hour); students must work at least 30 hours per week on their placements; and priority will be given to students who have not been on a placement before.

If you are a student with Gaelic skills, who will be in the Western Isles over the summer, and you wish to apply, fill in the application form at: <https://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/sgg>

The closing date for applications is March 30.

Ardbeg looks to the future with investment

ARDBEG Distillery has announced plans for a new still house, funded by multi-million-pound investment from The Glenmorangie Company.

Although still subject to planning approval, the distillery aims to start work this year and hopes to have the development completed by 2019.

Ardbeg has enjoyed year-on-year growth after being purchased by The Glenmorangie Company.

The plans announced last week will allow Ardbeg to continue to meet growing worldwide demand for its whisky.

Under the proposals, a new still house will be constructed on a site once occupied by warehouses and the number of stills would double from two to four.

Despite the planned changes, it will remain one of the smallest distilleries on Islay.

Its award-winning whisky will be care-

fully crafted in the same way it has been for more than 200 years.

Established in 1815, Ardbeg is renowned by whisky connoisseurs as the peatiest, smokiest and most complex of all the Islay malts.

Marc Hoellinger, chief executive of The Glenmorangie Company, said: 'We are delighted by Ardbeg's success since 1997 - and by the growing passion for our whisky from fans around the world.

'Ardbeg has been distilled on Islay since 1815 and, with a new still house, we will pave the way for future generations of smoky malt whisky lovers to discover the ultimate Islay malt.'

Islay residents will be invited to a meeting in the coming weeks to hear details of the distillery's plans.

The distillery will continue its normal operations throughout the development of its new still house.

Mobile app just the job for recruitment firm

HIJOBS, the pioneering Fort William-based recruitment site, is celebrating another year of success, leading the way for jobseekers in the Highlands and islands.

Its unique mobile phone app is changing the way people find work with its research data showing interesting statistics on how under-25s use the jobs market.

When it comes to finding a job and building a career, the under-25s of Scotland's Highlands and islands turn to the same place they live their lives: online.

Nearly a quarter of new jobseekers turn to their mobile phones to find work.

'For the mobile jobseeker, especially those who have never owned a PC, the process of finding a job should be as easy as shopping on Amazon or browsing Instagram,' said Christopher Snelgrove, the man behind the new app developed by HIJOBS.

The 18- to 24-year-old age group makes up 22.63 per cent of HIJOBS users.

Alongside the investment across the Highlands and islands in broadband and 4G by public and private sectors, it means the national and local job markets are just a smart phone away

from the UK's most remote communities.

'The increasing availability and reliability of fast internet in the Highlands will continue to be transformative for the prosperity of our rural communities. This improved connectivity paired with our continued development-for-mobile is making this a reality and opening more opportunities for a new generation,' said Christopher.

Business partner Laura Saunders, who runs the commercial side of the company, added: 'The HIJOBS app makes our job applicants quicker off the mark. Our app is one-stop and can be customised.'

'It's an end-to-end service, from job alerts through to applying on your phone.'

'It sounds pretty simple, but the vast majority of other job sites do not offer this complete service.'

HIJOBS clients include Hilton Hotels, Marine Harvest, NHS Highland, Caledonian MacBrayne, VisitScotland and Jewson.

'Our entirely self-service offering not only delivers results but has allowed for rapid expansion across the country,' said Christopher.

Food Waste Prevention Week workshops and training

BUSINESSES in Oban can get free support to cut food waste and save money during Food Waste Prevention Week - a series of training, events and workshops from Monday March 5 to Friday March 9.

The Scottish Government has set a target to reduce food waste by 33 per cent by 2025. As part of this campaign, Zero Waste Scotland's Resource Efficient Scotland programme has teamed up with Argyll and Bute Council and Food from Argyll to help Oban businesses increase profits and reduce their environmental impact.

Iain Gulland, Zero Waste Scotland's chief executive, said: 'We are delighted to bring the Food Waste Prevention Roadshow to Oban to help local businesses cut the cost of waste, while doing their bit for the environment. Food waste can have a big cost for businesses, but with research suggesting that up to 75 per cent of this could be avoided, handling food more efficiently can unlock big savings.'

'I'm encouraging all business owners or managers looking to boost their profits to come along to these beneficial events.'

The week begins with a 'What's in your kitchen?' cookery demonstration and tasting session at the Rockfield Centre, Stevenson Street, on Monday March 5 from 7pm to 9pm. The event is open to everyone and will provide helpful tips on how to make the most of food.'

On Tuesday March 6, Resource Efficient Scotland will host a webinar to launch an initiative to help Oban businesses redistribute leftover food to those in need.

The webinar will showcase an innovative online platform run by Plan Zheroes which enables

businesses to donate their surplus food to local charities and community groups, ensuring no food goes to waste. The webinar will be broadcast live between 11am and noon.

Oban businesses are then invited to join a half-day food waste prevention training workshop. The event will share the latest techniques and knowledge and provide delegates with valuable new skills that will help them tackle food waste. The workshop will be held on Wednesday March 7 from 10am to 1.30pm at The Royal Hotel, Oban.

Oban Food Waste Prevention Week is part of Zero Waste Scotland's Resource Efficient Circular Economy Accelerator Programme, which will invest £6million in Highland and Islands resource efficiency projects until December 2019, thanks to support from the European Regional Development Fund.

Businesses can find out more and register for the Food Waste Prevention Roadshow workshops by visiting www.resourceefficientscotland.com/ObanFWPWeek or calling 0808 808 2268.

Oban residents to be consulted on energy needs

OBAN has been chosen for a project which will examine energy consumption, future requirements and community wishes.

Argyll, Lomond and the Islands Energy Agency (ALEnergy) is hosting an event on Saturday March 3 at Oban's Glencruitten Church Hall.

The event will give the Oban community an opportunity to learn about the new and exciting Local Energy Oban project and tell ALEnergy what matters to them energy wise and what they would like to see prioritised.

The town is one of four communities chosen to develop local energy plans in the Highlands and Islands Enterprise region as part of the Community Benefits of Civic Energy (COBEN) project.

Using existing data plus information gathered at community consultations, the project will draw together local wishes and priorities on issues such as power, energy storage, heat, fuel poverty, transport, demand reduction and management as well as considering the implications for energy infrastructure and potential partnership opportunities.

It could consider, for example, the potential for locally-owned renewable energy schemes, or the number of homes with central heating, or those requiring improved insulation.

The findings could be used to help access funding for energy projects, as well as feeding into local authority development plans.

The COBEN Project, funded by the European Union, is one of six community energy projects across the North Sea region. The Scottish pilot is 50 per cent match-funded through the Scottish Government's community and renewable energy scheme.

The three other areas chosen to take part in the pilot project are Drumnadrochit, Barra and Vatersay in the Western Isles and Brae in Shetland.

The four local energy plans will set out key priorities and opportunities and make recommendations and suggest practical projects for each community.

Work in each area starts in October and local energy plans will be completed by mid-2018 with selected recommendations implemented by 2020.

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BUSINESS NEWS

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David Keat, owner of Brander Lodge Hotel, collects the best front of house team award.

Brander Lodge front of house team wins award

STAFF at a Bridge of Awe hotel are celebrating winning an award for their warm welcome and hospitality.

Brander Lodge Hotel won the prize for the best front of house team at Glasgow's Prestige Hotel Awards, which celebrates the best of Scotland's hotel industry.

David Keat, who bought the hotel in 2010, was surprised and delighted his 'wee hotel in Argyll' won the award against such impressive competition across the country.

'I nearly jumped out of my chair,' he said. 'It has

boosted morale in the staff after the winter. We have a great wee team here, all local,' he said. 'The lady who came to judge us holds no prisoners. We were told she had nothing but glowing reports. We pride ourselves on our home-away-from-home appeal.'

The hotel underwent a major year-long refurbishment, lasting from November 2015 to November 2016.

'We are really proud of what we have done,' Mr Keat said. 'It was a mammoth task. We are blessed in this area for tradespeople.'

Firms act to improve productivity and competitiveness

A SURVEY of more than 1,000 businesses in the Highlands and Islands has shown that almost all (95 per cent) have taken action in the past 12 months to become more productive and competitive.

This is according to the findings of the latest business panel survey published last week by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE).

The most common step taken by businesses (71 per cent) is encouraging staff to submit ideas for improvement. Others include introducing new practices (69 per cent), investing in premises or equipment (67 per cent), and collaborating with other businesses (65 per cent).

According to the latest ONS data, productivity in Scotland has traditionally lagged behind that of the UK, although the gap has narrowed.

The productivity challenge for the Highlands and Islands is more acute, reflecting the dominance of small firms in the regional economy, a lower share of high paying sectors, a lack of private sector head offices, and a strong service sector structure.

Just under three-quarters (72 per cent) of businesses that had taken action said this had enhanced their overall productivity. Other benefits included attracting new business (67 per cent) and staff feeling more engaged (66 per cent).

The main challenges faced in implementing changes were lack of time and attracting the right skills into the workforce.

In line with previous surveys, the majority (79 per cent) of respondents reported good (41 per cent) or steady (38

per cent) performance over the past year. More than three quarters (77 per cent) are optimistic about their prospects for the next 12 months and 88 per cent anticipate growth (41 per cent) or stability (47 per cent) in the next year or two.

Most businesses again reported stability in levels of employment, staff training, working hours and exports. However, while two fifths reported an increase in sales and turnover, only a quarter (24 per cent) saw a corresponding uplift in profits.

Recognition of the importance to the Scottish economy of free movement of people across the EU continues to grow, increasing from 75 per cent to 84 per cent over the past six months. Two fifths (40 per cent) felt this aspect was important to their own business. Around eight

in 10 (78 per cent) businesses recognise the importance of membership of the European single market to the Scottish economy.

Nine in 10 (89 per cent) businesses in the region see access to the European single market and/or free movement of people as important to the Scottish economy, and 64 per cent to the operation of their business.

Carroll Buxton, director of regional development at HIE, said: 'Raising productivity levels in an increasingly competitive economic environment is very important to sustain employment, income impacts and profits. This will help to encourage further business investment and spending, both of which are critical for sustainable economic growth.'

Scottish Knowledge Exchange award winners

A UNIQUE technology for the construction industry offering immersive 'walk throughs' of unbuilt houses and a technique for new drug discovery are among the winners of The Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards 2018.

The Innovation of the Year was awarded to a family-owned business, Norscot Joinery Ltd, in Caithness, which builds kit homes.

The company partnered with University of Strathclyde to research and develop virtual reality show home software combining advanced interactive visualisation of buildings with Building Information Modelling data. It will allow clients to immerse themselves in a house before it is built and interact with the design process, providing a better understanding of cost impacts of design changes.

Other winners were: Building Skills through Knowledge Exchange: Petra Crocker, KTP Associate from Edinburgh Napier University, worked with Multiply UK Ltd in Edinburgh to create a real-time digital consumer tool to drive the expansion and reputation of the company as industry experts in planning and insight.



Winners celebrate at The Scottish Knowledge Exchange Awards. Photograph: Greg Macvean.

Social and Environmental Impact: Moock Environmental Solutions Ltd (Cumbernauld) and University of Dundee for a project to recycle print toner powder for use across a range of applications including art, construction and animal medicines.

Multiparty Collaboration: European Lead Factory - University of Dundee European Screening Centre Newhouse, BioAscent Discovery, Pivot Park Screening Centre, Lygature, the University of Oxford and 30 private and public partners across

Europe for providing access to high-throughput screening to test medicinal compounds leading to the creation of new medicines.

Outstanding Contribution to Knowledge Exchange: Professor Bill Buchanan, School of

Computing, Edinburgh Napier University. Bill leads knowledge exchange through many collaborative projects and industry-led events and engagements which have contributed greatly to growing a thriving Scottish cyber security community.

The annual awards, run by Interface, celebrate the impacts achieved through business-academic partnerships. This year's event at the Royal Bank of Scotland Conference Centre in Edinburgh was attended by 300 people.

Speakers included Steve Stewart, from the award-winning independent craft brewery Stewart Brewing, and Professor Eleanor Shaw, Hunter Centre of Entrepreneurship, University of Strathclyde. Dr Siobhán Jordan, of Interface, said: 'The diversity of business-academic partnerships in this year's awards is impressive and testament to innovation thriving in the business-academic community. The winners have great potential to impact on society, the environment and the economy, while many of the partnerships demonstrate unexpected collaborations, for example, matching a joinery company with virtual reality experts.'

Big haul of awards for Argyll salmon firm?

ARGYLL-BASED Scottish Salmon Company (SSC) has been shortlisted in two categories of the Scottish Export Awards in recognition of its 'international growth and innovation'.

Its chief executive Craig Anderson has also been nominated in two categories at the Institute of Directors (IoD) Scotland Director of the Year Awards. SSC, which has offices at Cairndow, Stornoway and Edinburgh, will compete in the Most Entrepreneurial Exporter of the Year and Large Exporter of the Year categories at the 2018 Scottish Export Awards.

Mr Anderson is one of just 37 Scottish business leaders from 150 nominations to go through to the final stages of the IoD Scotland Director of the Year Awards. He is a finalist in the Director of the Year - Large Businesses and Regional Director of the Year - Edinburgh, Lothians and Borders categories.

The winners of both awards will be revealed at separate ceremonies in Glasgow on Thursday March 22.

Free practical advice and business support

WHETHER you're a first-time entrepreneur looking to start an enterprise or an experienced business owner looking to expand an existing venture, Argyll and Bute Council's Business Gateway team can provide practical advice and support, for free and in confidence.

'Business Gateway has been providing advice and support to new and existing businesses across Argyll and Bute since 2009,' said Councillor Aileen Morton, leader of Argyll and Bute Council.

'The team has engaged with hundreds of local businesses and provided workshops, business adviser support, information and referrals to help a wide range of local businesses to start up, survive or grow.

'I'd encourage businesses to find out more about what's on offer from Business Gateway. The service continues to evolve and, in addition to the well-established workshop and adviser support, there is one-to-one digital expert help available via the fully funded DigitalBoost programme and grant support to growing businesses available via our European-funded Local Growth Accelerator Programme.'

Digital support to help you grow

AS PART of a national programme across Scotland, DigitalBoost helps small- to medium-sized businesses use digital technology to generate business.



Rachel Ball at her of Ross of Mull Bunkhouse.

The comprehensive programme of fully-funded workshops aims to help businesses improve their website presence, understand and communicate with their customers better and ultimately increase sales.

Many local businesses have already benefited from the workshops.

Kirsteen Hutcheson, of Helensburgh Cycles, said: 'The DigitalBoost workshops gave us lots of ideas we're now working on.'

DigitalBoost workshops are taking place throughout March in Helensburgh, Lochgilphead, Dunoon and Oban. Topics include LinkedIn for Business, Keep Your Business Safe Online, Web and Social Media Analytics, Producing Engaging Online Content and Twitter and Hootsuite. To find out more or to book, visit

bgateway.com/digitalboost.

As well as the local workshop programme, one-to-one adviser sessions with digital specialists are also available to eligible businesses that would benefit from extra support on digital topics. Access to one-to-one support is by referral from a Business Gateway adviser.

Growth Accelerator Programme

BUSINESSES with growth ambitions are being encouraged to look at the support available from the Local Growth Accelerator Programme, which offers grant funding and specialist advice to help support growth.

'The help we've received from Busi-

ness Gateway has helped to scale up the business. They were there right from the start and have assisted us all the way,' said Claire Fletcher, of Jura-based Lussa Gin.

The programme is open to micro, small or medium-sized businesses based in Argyll and Bute, aiming to increase their turnover by £50,000 or more within the next three years. Anyone wanting to find out more or to register should visit www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/bglgap.

The Local Growth Accelerator Programme is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund 2014-20 Structural Funds Programme, with a total programme value of £544,200.

One-to-one advice

BUSINESS Gateway has a team of experienced business advisers who provide individual support on a range of issues from marketing, to funding, to taking on staff.

The advisers can also signpost specialist sources of help with particular issues, including manufacturing, exporting or tendering.

In 2017, more than 530 business adviser meetings took place, helping existing businesses and those looking to make the move into self employment.

'The start-up advice we received from Business Gateway was invaluable,' said Kim Wilson of The Conductor's Arms.

'Our adviser also helped us identify potential funding opportunities. As

a scientist, I had much to learn but Business Gateway was a massive help,' added Rachel Ball, from Ross of Mull Bunkhouse.

Skills workshops

A WIDE range of free business skills workshops is available. Business Gateway's workshop programme runs throughout the year offering topics for businesses at all stages of development.

Workshops aimed at those about to start or still in the early stages include the start-up workshop which covers planning, marketing and finance, as well as workshops on basic book-keeping, an introduction to social media for business and how to build a business website.

Existing businesses can access workshops covering HR issues, improving marketing, customer care, reaching more customers, selling with confidence, getting more from a website and effective use of social media.

Last year, more than 100 workshops took place in Argyll and Bute, with a total of 675 attendees. More than 85 per cent of attendees rated the workshops excellent or very good.

A programme of similar topics is planned for this year. To find out what's on offer and to book a place, visit bgateway.com/events.

To find out more about how Business Gateway can help you set up or develop your business call 01546 808363 or visit www.bgateway.com.

Get the best from your business with help from Business Gateway.

Free, practical advice and support to help grow your business. Call your local office on 01546 808 363 or visit www.bgateway.com/argyllandbute

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Fort mountain fest hits new heights

MARK ENTWISTLE

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ONE of the main highlights of this year's Fort William Mountain Festival 2018 was the Scottish Awards for Mountain Culture.

These were handed out to recipients at a special event in the Nevis Centre on Saturday evening.

The awards recognise those who have spent their lives in the hills, exploring everything the land has to offer and inspiring countless peers along the way.

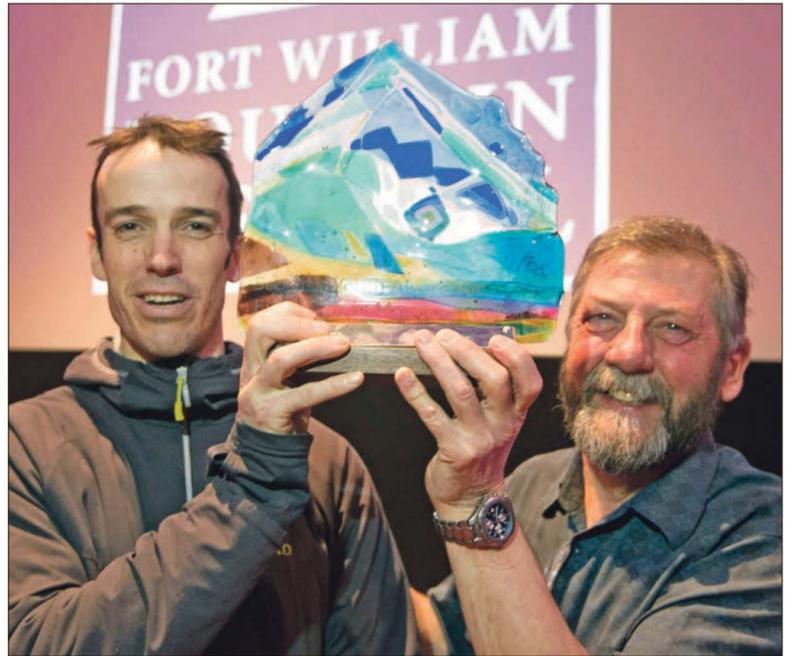
Every one of the 'Mountain Culture Ambassadors', young and old, were nominated for their dedication and contribution to the outdoors in a variety of ways.

From mountain rescue to mountain ecology, the mountain festival's organisers say their special hall of fame is a celebration of the people who see value in going out instead of staying in, choosing the path less travelled and having real adventures.

And each year the festival panel has the tough job of choosing a new ambassador as the nominees are outstanding.



Veteran climber Mick Taigh, centre, shows some of the exhibits from his Museum of Mountaineering to well-known local outdoor couple Alex and Mary Gillespie. Photographs: Iain Ferguson, The Write Image



Tom Gilchrist, right, of sponsors, Corpach Boatbuilders, presents the Scottish Youth award to Tom Randall who accepted it on behalf of Shauna Coxey.



Marking 50 years of the Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team were, left to right, Donald Watt, Terry Confield, John Stevenson, Ian Sutherland and Jim Ness.



Climber, walker and outdoor broadcaster Cameron McNeish received the 2018 award for Excellence in Mountain Culture. The trophy was presented by Rita Caven, of sponsors Liberty British Aluminium.

Climber Shauna wins Fort festival ambassador award

AS THE Fort William Mountain Festival got under way last Wednesday (February 21), festival organisers announced that Shauna Coxsey MBE, the UK's most successful competition climber, is the recipient of the fourth Scottish Youth Ambassador Award for Excellence in Mountain Culture.

The Scottish Youth Ambassador Award recognises and celebrates the achievements and accomplishments of one inspiring young person and their outstanding contributions to Scotland's mountains. Specialising in the climbing discipline of bouldering, Shauna is the current two-time reigning IFSC Bouldering World Champion and came third in the combined event in 2017.

Shauna is also director of the Women's Climbing Symposium, an event she organises to promote participation and progression of women in all disciplines of climbing.



She said it was real surprise and huge honour to receive the award: 'I am incredibly grateful to those who have nominated me. Although most

people will know me from my day job as a competition climber, much of my free time is spent climbing outside, whether that is on my door-

step in the Peak District or further afield.

'I love the fact that climbing is so varied and attracts people from all walks of life to try the sport, either down a wall or at a local crag.'

The award is sponsored jointly by Corpach Boatbuilding Company Limited, which provides marine services from its base in Fort William, and by the Nevis Landscape Partnership and Heritage Lottery Fund.

A festival spokesperson told us: 'Shauna has achieved great success in competition climbing to become the United Kingdom's most successful ever competition climber.'

'She has also demonstrated her strong commitment and great desire to share and encourage participation among the wider climbing community.'

Shauna, 25, was born in Runcorn and now lives in Sheffield.

THIS WEEK'S WALKS

LOCHABER AND LORN RAMBLERS

The walk leader is to be contacted beforehand for meet-up and start times. Car sharing usually possible and people can try before they buy. Further information at www.lochaberandlorn-ramblers.org.uk. Lochaber and Lorn Ramblers Group can be contacted by email on info@lochaberandlorn-ramblers.org.uk.

Thursday March 1
Stob Coire Claurigh and Stob Ban, Spean Bridge
Two spectacular hills at the eastern end of the Grey Corries ridge make a fine expedition.

Start at the Scout Hut at NN253806, where restricted parking is available, (or 2Km further south at NN255788, but the track is rough). Follow the track around Corriechoille House and continue S through the Lairig, in an area of forest recently cleared.

On emerging from the forest, leave the track and head S up steep rough ground to the summit of Stob Coire Gaibhre, 958m. Follow the rim of Coire na Ceanain S. It narrows to a fine ridge leading up to a summit at 1121m and on to Stob Coire Claurigh, 1177m. Descend SE then S to the col and lochan on the E side of Coire Ràth. A short steep ascent

leads to the summit of Stob Ban, 977m. Descend the E ridge which levels out then turns NE down to the bothy in the Lairig Leacach. There is a bridge across the Allt a Chuil Choirean just S of the bothy. Return N on the track to Corriechoille.

Grade: S; Distance: 19km; Height to climb: 130m; Map(s): LR41, EX392. Meet at Fort William Woollen Mill at 9am for start of walk at 9.45am. Leader: Andrew Gilbert 07808 924722.

Saturday March 3
Meall nam Fiannaidhean, Moidart
A short but quite tough walk into

the lonely hills of Moidart. Views of Castle Tioram, the Small Isles, Skye and Rois-bheinn.

Start from the A861 Kinlochmoidart to Glenuig road at NM 680736 where limited roadside parking is available.

Walk N up the hill along the A861 to the entrance to Kylesbeg, where a burn, An Doir' Allt, passes under the road. Follow the burn N uphill to Coire Doir' Uillt where the remains of shielings, lazy beds and a probable still site may be found.

Follow the burn E to the shore of Loch Ard a' Phuill. Continue E around the N side of the loch, turning S across some burns and

up to the summit of Meall nam Fiannaidhean, 313m.

Descend S to the col at 243m then W to a long narrow lochan about 400m distant.

Locate a dry stone dyke at the S end of the lochan and follow it S downhill through oakwoods to the footpath about 30m above the A861. This is an old pony track linking Kinlochmoidart with Lochailort.

Follow this W to the site of the Iron Age Fort at An Dun NM682735, guarding the narrows of Loch Moidart.

Rejoin the main road and return to the start
Grade: M; Distance: 7km;

Height to climb: 400m; Map(s): LR40, EX390. Meet at Corran Ferry slip for 9.15am sailing or Fort William Woollen Mill at 10am. Start of walk at 11am. Leader: Rick Atkinson 07587 549731.

NEVIS HILLWALKING CLUB
Please see full walk details at www.nevishillwalking.club. If anyone would like to go out on the walk please contact club secretary Suzanne Theobald on 01397 701783 or email enquiries@nevishillwalking.club.

Sunday March 4
Beinn Odhar Mhor, Beinn Odhar Bheag, Glenfinnan

Cross the River Etive, then take Start from the lay-by on the A830, where limited parking is available.

Cross the railway and head SW up uneven slopes on the NW side of the Allt Coire a' Choin Duinn. Following the fall-line, the route curves S past a lochan at NM846801, then SE to the summit of Beinn Odhar Mhor. Follow the undulating and sinuous ridge S, curving SE up to the summit of Beinn Odhar Bheag. Return by the same route

Distance: 11km; Height to climb: 1000m. Suggested by Gavin Theobald; coordinated by Andrew Gilbert.



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Union blasts milk price cut

MARTIN LAING
mlaing@obantimes.co.uk

SENIOR figures in the NFU Scotland have slammed the milk price cuts announced last week by Arla and First Milk.

NFUS vice-president Gary Mitchell, policy manager George Jamieson and milk committee chairman John Smith all blasted the companies. Mr Mitchell, a dairy farmer from Stranraer who currently supplies Arla, said: 'Arla's price cut of 2.5 euro cents per litre takes its milk price down to a very uncompetitive UK price of just over 26p per litre.'

'That is very disappointing for Arla suppliers, who are also owner members of the co-op. As a company that prides itself on its global exposure, added value brands and innovative initiatives, this price does not reflect the ambitions or expect-

tations of its farmer owners, nor the wider dairy community.

'As a co-op which judges itself on its ability to generate returns to its farmers, there must be a case for Arla-elected farmer leaders to hold the management to account over this unacceptable price.'

Mr Jamieson added: 'At the turn of the year, NFUS highlighted the ill-advised, hasty retreat on milk price by processors at the first sign of a weakening market. We had hoped that improving market signals in recent weeks would stall unreasonable price cuts.'

'Some commentators have supported NFUS in challenging processors. Milk prices in 2017 did not reach the heights the market justified, which should have taken farmers close to 32p per litre. Instead, the average price in 2017 was 28.8p, almost 10 per cent lower than in 2013

and 2014 when commodity prices were actually lower than they were last year.

'The sad and unacceptable fact remains that milk pricing is at the discretion of the processor, who has the power to effectively set a price to manage their margins and manage their risk. That is neither fair nor efficient and the long-term competitiveness of the UK dairy supply chain will suffer.'

'A question which the UK dairy supply chain must address is whether we delivering enough of the added value in dairy produce back to the farmers. Over the past year, according to AHDB, the average EU price has been 2.8p to 2.95p per litre ahead of the UK. Achieving the EU average price would mean an extra £40,000 to the average dairy farmer in Scotland.'

'That brings fresh focus to the very welcome comments

recently from the Grocery Code Adjudicator on milk contracts. NFUS, with our UK union partners, have long advocated contracts which addressed agreed pricing, volume, risk and transparency rather than imposed these.

'First Milk's cut is another very disappointing announcement. While accepting the reality that First Milk can only pay what it can afford as a members' organisation which needs sustainable business, this is a blow to farmers in Scotland who are facing severe feed issues.'

Mr Smith, a First Milk supplier who farms in Kintyre, said: 'We need Scotland and the UK to be a good place for dairying with all involved in the chain getting a fair return for their commitment, effort and investment.'

'Today's price news is disappointing given the strengthen-

ing seen in commodity markets of late.

'I am in regular dialogue with First Milk, have already spoken to Arla representatives since my appointment as committee chairman earlier this month and I am meeting with Arla in Lockerbie at the beginning of March.'

'These price falls must not spark a repetition of previous downward spirals where producers are left to carry all the burden. Production costs have soared with the very wet summer and autumn of 2017. Silage stocks are tight and the price of straw for bedding is more than £100 per tonne up on last year.'

'The Grocery Code Adjudicator is in discussion with the industry. Post-Brexit, we need contractual arrangements that promote fairness across the whole dairy supply chain and protect it from bully boy tactics.'

Around the markets

STIRLING - United Auctions on Thursday February 22 sold 5,069 prime sheep comprising 3,307 old season lambs selling to an average of 210.23 ppgk and 1762 ewes and rams.

Old season lambs (3,307): Harviesmailing (Btex) £124; Balleny (Tex) £117.00, Drumdownie (Suff) £113.00; Wester Thomaston (Chev) £112; Penston (Char) £109.00; Burnhead (BF) £105; Kerry Cottage (Mule) £104.00; Philiphaugh (Chev/Mule) £104. Old season lambs (3,307): Harviesmailing (Btex) 286p; Stanley (Tex) 249p; Woodhead of Aberdalgie (Chev) 247p; Woodhead of Aberdalgie (TexX) 245p; Ardtornish (Suff) 229p; Gilston (Chev/Mule) 221p; Redheugh (Char) 216p; West Lethans (BF) 214p; Kerry Cottage (Mule) 212p.

Ewes (1762): Cherryfield (Tex) £144.00; Southfield (Suf) £118.00; Kinaldy (Chev) £100.00; Ardtornish (Mule) £95.00; Cherryfield (BFL) £91.00; Philiphaugh (Chev/Mule) £88.00; Fullfordlees (BF) £75.00. Rams: Southfield (Suff) £116.00; Ejay (Tex) £110.00; Redheugh (Cross) £110.00; High Mildovan (BFL) £89.00; High Mildovan (BTEX) £83.00; Auchnafree (BF) £70.00

DINGWALL - Dingwall and Highland Marts on Thursday February 22 sold 2,189 sheep of all classes.

Lambs (860) averaged £67.89 and sold to £125 gross for a pen of Blackface's from Highfield Park, Conon Bridge. Ewes (338) averaged £47.70 and sold to £86 gross (twice) for a Suffolk from 8 Coll, Isle of Lewis and a pair of Cross's from Teanluick Croft, Muir of Ord. In-lamb gimmers and ewes (917) averaged £64.55 and sold to £160 gross for a pen of Cheviots gimmers from the dispersal from Upper Milton, Lairg.

Rams and feeding sheep (74) sold to £136 gross for a Texel ram from Dell Farm, Whitebridge. Leading prices per head: Lambs: Chev - Upper Milton, £100; SuffX - 2 Corbett Terrace, Uig, £90.50; TexX - Easter Strath of Auchterflow, Killen, £90; BeltX - Lochduh, Nairn, £87; Cross - Knockglass Farm, Dunbeath, £86; CharX - Culligran, Cupar, £82.

Ewes: TexX - Dell Farm, £85; Chev - 27 Melbost, Stornoway, £84; SuffX - Balvaird Farm, Muir of Ord, £76; Mule - Rhevackin Farm, Kiltarlity, £73; CHM - Auchmore Farm, Muir of Ord, £73. In-lamb gimmers: Chev - Upper Milton, £130, £100. CHM - Woodlands Farm, £90; Mule - Woodlands Farm, £90; TexX - 2 Marrisshadder, Staffin, £90.

Rams and feeding sheep: Suff ram - Ankerville, Nigg, £116; Tex wdr - 2 Corbett Terrace, £93; Chev ram - £92; BFL ram - Dell Farm, £92; Dingwall and Highland Marts on Friday February 23 sold 13 Blackface females at its show and sale. Mr A. Williamson, Eallagro, Isle

of Lewis, judged the Blackface section and awarded his champion to the first prize in lamb gimmer from Midlock Farm, Crawford, a daughter off a 12K Aitkenhead carrying twins sired by 90K Darchirla, realising £600 to Mr J. D. Davidson, Waterside Farm, Bridge of Alford.

The reserve champion was awarded to the second prize in lamb gimmer from Crackaig, a daughter off 50K Dalwyne carrying twins sired by 6K Auldhouseburn, realising £400 to Mr J. MacMillan, East Durran, Castletown. In the Blue-faced Leicester section the top price was awarded to Midlock Farm for a ewe lamb sired by 1538/J21 Midlock Bronco out of a 980/C2 Hewgill dam realising £500.

Averages: Blackface - nine gimmers, £354.44. BFL - four lambs, £410. Other leading prices: Blackface - In lamb gimmers - Crackaig, £560, Midlock Farm, £520. BFL ewe lambs - Midlock Farm, £480.

STIRLING - United Auctions on Wednesday February 21 sold 1050 store cattle and young bulls, 126 cast cows and forward cattle and 1882 store and breeding sheep.

Bullocks (561) - averaged 230.97p to 294.7ppk for a 308kg CHX from Ashmark, and to £1400 for a 718kg LimX from Balcaskie. B&W bullocks (50) - averaged 157.7p to 190.2ppk for a 418kg HOX from Meikle Camoquhill, and to £850 for a 574kg HFX from Easter Frew.

Heifers (387) - averaged 225.85p to 266.4ppk for a 289kg CHX from Ashmark, and to £1340 for a 666kg CHX from Newmill of Castleton. Young bulls (52) - averaged 203.4p to 253.5ppk for a SimX from Gateside, and to £1280 for a LimX from Drumtorber. Beef cows (91) - averaged 150.8p to 211.9ppk for a AAX from Burnside of Balhaldie and £1730 for a BRBX from Netherpton. Dairy cows (20) - averaged 114.52p to 140.4ppk for a HOX from Claylands and to £895 for a HFX from High Branchal. Forward cattle (15) - averaged 177.32p to 200.9ppk for a LimX from Hatton of Cargill and to £1370 for a LimX from Hatton of Cargill.

Bullocks: Up to 250kgs - Cairncurran £560, 243.5p; 251-300kgs - Langbank of Balhaldie £780, 265.3p; 301-350kgs - Dalhanna Farming £940, Ashmark 294.7p; 351-400kgs - Winfield £1030; Ochiltree Place 266.4p; 401-450kgs - Boydston £1100; Milton 261.2p; 451-500kgs - Balnaguard £1250; Craigview 250.0p; 501-551kgs - Craigview £1250; Wray House 240.4p; 552-601kgs - Balcaskie Farms £1320; Auchenkiln 229.5p; 602-651kgs - Balcaskie Farms £1320, 214.3p; 652-701kgs - Myroch £1320; Balcaskie Farms 200.9p; 702-999kgs - Balcaskie Farms £1400, 195.0

Heifers: Up to 250kgs - Gateside £575; Barney Mains 243.2p; 251-300kg - Craillloch £780; Ashmark 266.4p.

Limousin bull fetches 'extraordinary' price at Stirling sale

STIRLING - Caledonian Marts on Thursday February 22 sold 211 cattle, comprising 126 prime bullocks, heifers and young bulls, and 85 cast cows and bulls.

All classes of cattle upheld recent weeks prices and once again, more could have been sold to our large ringside of buyers. Bullocks averaged 215p Heifers averaged 215p Young bulls averaged 188p Beef cows averaged 138p Dairy cows averaged 124p Bullocks sold to 248p (twice) for Limousins from Learielaw, Broxburn and Brockwoodlees, Canonbie, purchased by T Johnston, Butcher Falkirk, and to an amazing £1696 from South Flanders, Kippen.

Heifers sold to 250p for a Limousin from Brockwoodlees selling to G Kirk and Son, Butcher, Denny and to a whopping £1670 for a Limousin from Dalchirla Farms, Muthill. Bulls sold to 228p for a Limousin from Mains of Throsk, Stirling to Charles Kirkpatrick and to £1572 for a Limousin from Craighhead, Torrance.

Leading prices
Bullocks ppgk:
242p and 240p Brockwoodlees
235p Todhall, Moorhouse, Learielaw and Easterton (Owen) 232p Candermain and Learielaw 230p Candermain 228p Cawtree and Moorfield 225p Faskine, Todhall and Candermain 220p Ramornie, Meikle Seggie, Faskine, Easterton and Bankhead (Kerr)
Heifers ppgk:
248p Learielaw 245p Knockhouse, Brockwoodlees, and Learielaw 242p Todhall 238p Bogleys, Wester Keillour and Knockhouse 232p Dalchirla and Faskine 228p Dulloumair, Todhall, Cawtree and Wester Keillour



The Limousin OTM Bull from Dalchirla Farms at an extraordinary £1739.50.

225p Moorfield, Bankhead and Cawtree 222p Cairnbog and Knockhouse
Bullocks per head:
£1696 South Flanders £1664 Dalchirla £1659 Todhall £1621 Learielaw
Heifers per head:
£1670 Dalchirla £1571 Knockhouse £1548 Learielaw £1523 Knockhouse
Young bulls ppgk:
218p Carriston
Also forward were 85 OTMs, cast cows and bulls.
Cows would be dearer on the week again therefore many more could have been sold to sellers advantage.
All classes of Cows and Bulls needed on a weekly basis. Please contact Oliver Shearman on 07730 046252 for more information.

Beef cows averaged 138p selling to 202p for a Charolais X from A Purdon, Easterton and to £1540 for a Charolais from JM More, Beild.
Dairy cows averaged 124p selling to 151p from M/s Patterson and Sons, Stenhouse and to £1200 from WA Hume and Co, Easter Clune.
Cast males and bulls averaged 142p selling to 178p for a Limousin from D Piper, Milliarne and to £1739.50 for a Limousin from Dalchirla Farms, Muthill.
Other leading prices
Beef cows per head £1370 Dalchirla £1340 Mosshall and Graystale £1320 Beild £1317 Easterton £1140 Glenwhilk £1100 Prathouse
Beef cows per kilo

184p Graystale 179p Dalchirla 178p Beild 161p Glenwhilk 159p Beild 158p Easter Goremyre
Dairy cows per head £1170 Easter Clune £1090 North Cassingray £1080 Solsgrith (Twice) £1040 North Cassingray £990 (Twice) and £960 Solsgrith £930 East Gartmillan
Dairy cows per kilo 147.5p East Gartmillan 144.5p North Cassingray 137p Solsgrith 136p North Cassingray 132.5p Solsgrith 132p Easter Clune 131p Solsgrith
Cast males and bulls ppgk:
178p Milliarne 175p Dalchirla 160p Milliarne 141p Shutterflat
Cast males and bulls per head:
£1550 Shutterflat £1324 and £1228 Milliarne

Land released to attract new farmers

MORE than 1,000 hectares of public land is to be made available to new farmers to attract people to farming. Forestry Enterprise Scotland, Scottish Water, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and Highland Council will all release land

across Scotland this spring for around 50 new farmers. Rural Economy Secretary Fergus Ewing said: 'One of the primary barriers to attracting new entrants to farming is the availability of land. That is why I am pleased to announce that

public bodies will release over 1,000 hectares of land this spring. 'The release of land is the direct result of the work of the Farming Opportunities for New Entrants group, which I launched in December 2016.'

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- New report finds shift away from diesel responsible for almost half of CO2 increase – with 'disappointing' electric car sales unable to bridge the gap.
- Tough EU industry targets looking increasingly challenging with -5.9% annual reduction needed to meet 95g/km level by 2021.
- SMMT calls for consistency from government in messages to consumers and long term incentives to deliver shared ambitions on climate change.

TUESDAY 27 February, 2018: The UK automotive industry today called for realistic policies from the government to support the transition to a low carbon future, with a warning that the anti-diesel agenda and slow take-up of electric vehicles could mean industry misses its next round of CO2 targets in 2021, with negative consequences for the UK's own climate change goals. The move came as a new report published by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) confirmed that the fleet average CO2 of newly registered cars rose for the first time on record in 2017 – despite vehicles becoming ever more efficient.

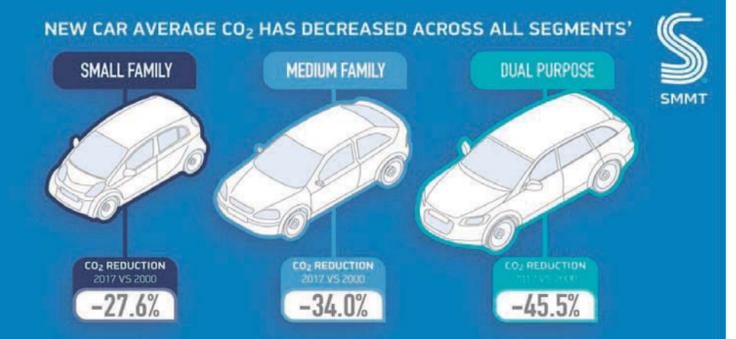
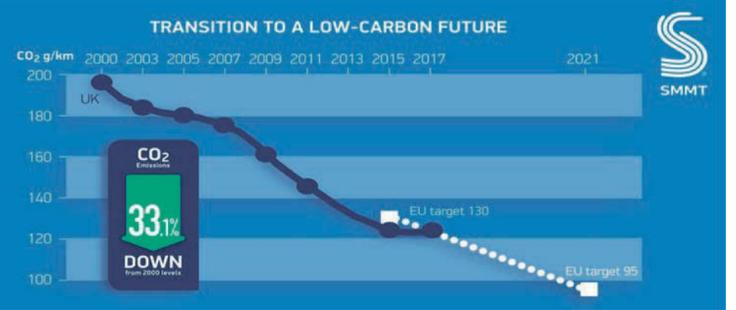
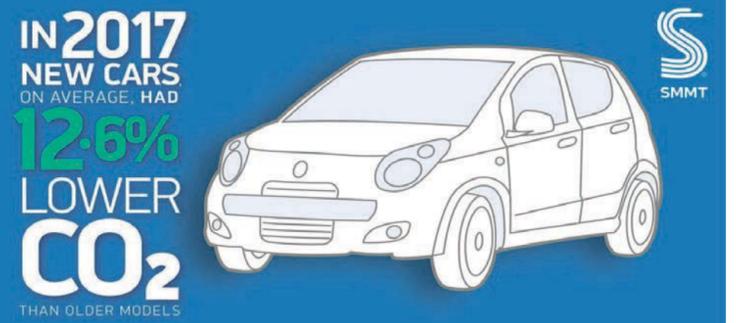
The SMMT New Car CO2 Report 2018: Driving the transition to a low carbon future reveals that carbon tailpipe emissions rose for the first time in two decades last year, by 0.8 per cent to 121.0g/km. This despite cars being ever more efficient, with new and updated models in 2017 emitting, on average, -12.6 per cent less CO2 than those they replaced. However, this was not enough to offset a -17.1 per cent decline in new diesel registrations as confusion over government policy caused buyers to hold back. Because diesel cars typically consume less fuel than petrol equivalents they emit, on average, 15-20 per cent less CO2, and about half last year's overall CO2 rise was attributable to this decline in diesel demand. Meanwhile, a substantial fall in registrations of smaller cars also had a significant effect, as falling consumer confidence hit the lower end of the market.

The increase in the fleet average new car CO2 figure follows 19 years of reductions thanks to massive investment in new, advanced engine, fuel and battery technology, as well as the use of lightweight

materials such as aluminium and composites. These ongoing improvements mean average CO2 is still a third (-33.1 per cent) lower than in 2000. The light commercial vehicle sector, 96 per cent of which is powered by diesel, has also shown impressive progress – with new vans last year reducing CO2 by -4.8 per cent – to a new low of 165.4g/km.

The report highlights the importance of internal combustion engines in the UK's journey to a low carbon future, with 99.5 per cent of the UK's 2.5 million strong new car market still powered, wholly or in part, by petrol or diesel. Alongside advances in petrol and diesel vehicle technology, which deliver lower CO2, vastly reduced NOx and almost zero particulates, industry is investing heavily in alternative technologies. More than a fifth of new car models now available are zero emission capable, yet they make up just five per cent of sales. For pure battery-powered vehicles, take up is even lower (0.5 per cent). Incentives have been scaled back and new tax measures imposed on hybrid and plug-in hybrid cars are undermining consumer and industry ambition for these technologies. Given hybrid vehicles outsell battery electric vehicles by a factor of 2.5 to 1, they will be an important part of the transition to the zero emission roads of the future.

Mike Hawes, SMMT Chief Executive, said: 'The industry shares government's vision of a low carbon future and is investing to get us there – but we can't do it overnight; nor can we do it alone. The anti-diesel agenda has set back progress on climate change, while electric vehicle demand remains disappointingly low amid consumer concerns around charging infrastructure availability



and affordability. To accelerate fleet renewal, motorists must have the confidence to invest in the cleanest cars for their needs – however they are powered. A consistent approach to incentives and tax, and greater investment in charging infrastructure will be critical. Now, more than ever, we need a strategy that allows manufacturers time to invest, innovate and sell competitively, and which gives consumers every incentive to adapt.'

The SMMT UK New Car CO2 2018 report charts the UK automotive industry's progress on

new vehicle CO2 reduction over two decades, and sets out its vision for the transition to low carbon motoring. It outlines the technology advances and electrification strategies of car manufacturers selling in the UK, with many committing to offer electric models across their entire product ranges by at least 2025. The report also calls for collective action from all stakeholders, including industry, government, fuel and energy companies, to overcome fears around range anxiety, accessible charging and affordability.

S&S SERVICES NEW 18 REG ON SALE NOW

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S&S - WEEKLY VISITS TO ARGYLL FOR SALES AND SERVICE



S&S SERVICES, HEATHFIELD, AYR
TEL: 01292 880080 or JOHN M:07831 808702

YES THEY DID IT AGAIN!

Dave Badder, Isuzu UK, presents S&S Services John Spicer 'Isuzu Dealer of the Year 2017' award.



AN AWARD-WINNING dealer comes to Oban on Saturday and Sunday, March 10 and 11.

One of the longest-serving Subaru dealers in the UK, S & S Services are a family run business aiming to meet each customer's individual needs.

S & S Services was first started by Brian and Dulcie Spicer in November 1979 from a small building at Sandyford Toll, Ayr.

An escalating client base was soon formed and the business relocated to Mossblown. While at Mossblown, Brian and Dulcie's son John joined the family business. For almost two decades cars were sold and serviced and many friendships were formed. The family business was further enhanced when John's wife Lesley joined the business in 1997.

It was in the latter nineties that the business had outgrown the location and plans were put in place to build

an impressive state-of-the-art showroom and workshop at Ayr.

The plans soon became a reality and S & S moved to Old Bridge Road, Ayr, in September 2000. Business has flourished to unbelievable standards meaning that S & S are now the top UK Subaru dealer.

Achieving Subaru UK's dealer of the year status continuously from 2007, S & S Services are your number one for Subaru, Isuzu and Great Wall franchise, with a large stock of new and used cars at competitive prices.

S & S Services have been supporting the people of Argyll for over 30 years and this weekend, they are coming to you.

On Saturday and Sunday, March 10 and 11, in Tesco car park, Oban, John Spicer will be showcasing some amazing new car offers. If you have a particular car you wish to view, please call John on 07831 808702.



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Visit hijobs.net

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TELEPHONE: 01631 568 000
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POST & IN PERSON: Lochavullin Industrial Estate, Crannog Lane, Oban, PA34 4HB. Office hours: Mon - Thurs 9- 5pm, Fri 9 - 4pm

E-MAIL: adverts@obantimes.co.uk
Please remember to give your name, address, postcode and phone number.

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March 6
Corran Halls,
Oban

WYVEX MEDIA



Refusing to go with the flow

Vacancy: 1 x Full Time Freshwater Operative

Location: Furnace Smolt Unit, near Inveraray, Argyll

Cooke Aquaculture Scotland is a leading company in the Scottish Salmon Industry producing exceptionally high quality products for an increasingly demanding market. We have operations throughout Scotland, Cumbria and the Northern Isles of Orkney and Shetland, together; we pledge a strong dedication to achieving a sustainable aquaculture industry.

We are currently seeking candidates to take on the position of Freshwater Operative at our Furnace Smolt Unit. As part of a small team, you will assist your colleagues in building strong key relationships and ensuring a safe working environment for all.

The Role:

The successful candidate will find themselves reportable to the Management Team for Furnace.

Qualifications/Skills required but not essential as full training can be given:

- At least 2 years' experience working in an Aquaculture Recirculation Unit
- Ability to participate in an Alarm Duty rota system
- Good understanding of the aquaculture industry
- Candidate must be flexible with regard to hours worked, weekend working will be required
- Be a good team player but have the ability to work alone when required
- Inter-personal and excellent communication skills
- Clean UK driving licence

The ideal candidate will be committed to achieving the best results in a challenging environment and delivering the highest standards of performance possible. In return, we offer a highly competitive salary, employer pension contribution, company bonus scheme and salary sacrifice programmes.

If you feel you have the necessary attributes to successfully fulfil this position and contribute to a progressive, results orientated company, then please send your covering letter and CV to krystal.flett@cookeaqua.com by 08 March 2018.



Class 2 HGV Drivers
Argyll & Bute, West of Scotland

Breedon Group plc is the largest independent construction materials group in the UK. We operate nearly 60 quarries, 27 asphalt plants, just under 200 ready-mixed concrete & mortar plants and three concrete block plants throughout England, Wales and Scotland, employing more than 2,100 people.

Due to our continuing growth we have vacancies for two Class 2 HGV Drivers delivering our product from our quarries in the Argyll and Bute area.

Ideally, you will have a strong knowledge of the local area and/or be willing to drive a sleeper cab (not essential) and work away in differing locations. You will have a clean driving licence and preferably be experienced in delivering concrete, coated asphalt and aggregates, although this is not essential as training will be provided.

You will have a proactive approach to health and safety and be fully conversant with EU rules on drivers' hours, digital cards and tachograph records. You must hold a current valid CPC card demonstrating your training.

Naturally you will be focussed upon fulfilling our customer requirements and therefore will be able to communicate in an effective and professional manner.

If you have the personal qualities to provide a genuinely positive contribution to our team, we offer a competitive salary and other benefits associated with a progressive employer. You must provide evidence of your right to work in the UK.

To apply, please send your CV with covering letter to: HR Recruitment, Breedon Northern Limited, Ethiebeaton Quarry, Monifieth, Angus, DD5 3RB

or email: hr.north@breedongroup.com

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Farming Support Manager

South Shian (Near Oban)

Scottish Sea Farms are an internationally recognised farmer of superior quality Scottish salmon. We pride ourselves in providing industry leading and highly personal development paths which build into fulfilling professional careers. If you are committed to developing our industry and are driven to put your strengths to work we would very much like to hear from you.

We are currently recruiting for a new position to support our Mainland Marine region based from our South Shian (nr Oban) Regional Office.

The role is designed to provide 1:1 routine mentoring of marine farm managers. Through this function farm managers have access to rapid, informed and influential decision making. They have an experienced practical support to share feedback, promote innovative action and improve planning.

Farming Support staff do not dilute the marine farm manager's responsibility rather they create the opportunity for accountability and stimulate progress. These roles are without parallel in the industry and align with SSF's commitment to coaching our farm managers to express their full potential and maximise their positive impact on the business

Candidates must demonstrate an understanding and track record of excellence in all aspects of Site Management.

To be considered you must ideally already be a highly respected Manager within the aquaculture industry, and be able to demonstrate your commitment in developing a strong safety culture. You will be open, honest and communicate with ease at all levels. Your ability to plan ahead will be matched by close attention to detail. This role forms part of the Mainland Senior Regional Production team and will be expected to add value to all aspects of the Mainland business.

In return Scottish Sea Farms will offer, a competitive package, discretionary company bonus, a company car and an attractive relocation package.

We are an equal opportunities employer and we welcome applications from all suitably qualified persons.

To find out more please contact Angela Hand, Recruitment & HR Coordinator on 01786 445521 or email angela.hand@scottishseafarms.com for an application pack.

Closing date: Friday 9th March 2018

Community Exercise

Referral Instructor

Full time, 1-year fixed term contract
expectation that this will be extended
Location: Oban, (travel throughout Argyll may be required)
Salary: £22.5 - £25K, dependent on qualifications
Closing Date: 18th March 2018

Healthy Options are recruiting for a proactive and dynamic Community Exercise Professional to work in collaboration with Health Professionals in delivering referral programmes. The successful applicant will provide a valued specialist service and be empathetic to our clients needs.

Our programmes are designed to support a wide range of individuals with varying physical and mental health conditions to enable and support them in changing their lifestyle and to become more active. You will work closely with health professionals across a wide range of disciplines who provide support, mentoring and who understand the importance of physical activity and life style change for their client's health and well-being.

You will be suitably qualified and be responsible for all aspects of the exercise programme delivery.

Lorn & Oban Healthy Options is a dynamic community health initiative working in collaboration with health professionals. Our collaborative approach is recognised as both innovative and unique in scale in Scotland. This is a fantastic opportunity to help this exciting and successful programme continue and develop to meet the needs of the population of Oban and Argyll.

Successful Candidate will have:

- Level 3 GP referral qualification (or equivalent)
- Level 4 exercise specialist qualifications (desirable or willing to work towards)
- Experience in designing and delivering activity programmes for clients with chronic conditions

For job description and further details please contact:-
Jackie Barron, Director, Lorn & Oban Healthy Options Ltd
jackie@lornhealthyoptions.co.uk
Registered Charity No. SC041998 Registered in Scotland No. SC383167



From Mallaig to Ardrossan, from Tiree toIslay, whether our customers want just a teaspoon of a full range of catering supplies, we'll supply their needs. We work as a team to provide every food option from quality ingredients to finished meals, including a number of own brand ranges as well as all the big brands and regional specialities. We believe in our food, and we know that our people behind the scenes are so very important in our success.

We have the following vacancies available

Transport Manager

Oban 48 hours per week

We are looking for a focused and driven individual to manage a busy and challenging Transport Department at our site in Oban, Argyll.

Warehouse Operative Days and Night Shifts Seasonal until Sept

Oban 40 hours per week

As part of the role you will be required to support other members of your team with general warehouse duties.

Telesales Executive Full Time Seasonal until Sept

Oban 37.5 hours per week

You will be responsible for making outbound calls and dealing with incoming calls, selling in new lines and maximising customer spend.

Drivers

Oban 48 hours - per week 5 from 6 days

Must possess a Category C LGV Licence or at least a 7.5 Tonne licence and have the relevant Tacho card and Driver Qualification card (DQC). You'll also enjoy a challenge and care about helping our customers succeed, taking pride in being the face of our company to so many people every day.

To apply for any of the above positions you can apply by sending your CV and covering email to debbiethomson@bidfood.co.uk
Closing date for applications Friday 16th March 2018

ALL Cars & Commercial GARAGE

We have a part-time position available for a general administrator to join our team.

8.30am - 1pm Monday - Friday
Must have clean UK driving license.



Unit 1/Crannog Lane Oban PA34 4HB

email: obangarage@gmail.com



We're looking for staff to join our team in Oban:
HG1 Drivers - 40 hours a week minimum
HG2 Drivers - 40 hours a week minimum
General Yard Staff - approx. 30 hours a week minimum
Work will involve early mornings, evenings and weekends.
We offer a competitive salary plus pension
For more information call Stewart on 01879 220 555 or email your CV to stewart@maclennanmotors.com

Boyd Brothers Haulage Ltd
Experienced HGV mechanic required to work in Corpach workshop.
To apply please call 0139772235

Fencer and General Farm Worker Position
Blue Beach Farm, San Carlos, Falkland Islands.

Blue Beach Farm has 5,000 dual-purpose merino sheep and 160 Angus cattle which are run in a sustainable system, in open pastures all year. The farm is located at San Carlos, a scenic and remote rural settlement with 6 inhabitants. (Find out more about the Falklands here: <https://www.falklands.gov.fk/our-people>.)

We have a vacancy for a farm worker and their partner. Ideally the position is for a couple but single applicants will be considered. The main applicant must be experienced in fencing and general farm work. Basic salary for the main applicant will be in the region of £15,000 -20,000 British Pounds per annum (depending on experience), free accommodation in your own house, and meat are also provided and there is ample opportunity for overtime.

Part-time work is available for the accompanying person including horticultural work and cooking and shed work at shearing times.

For further information email: bluebeachfarm@horizon.co.fk

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Part-time Seasonal Positions
Duty Manager (retail)
Catering Assistants (x2)
Catering Supervisor
Receptionist
Tour Guide

March - October. Full training provided.

www.dunollie.org for more info
Dunollie Museum, Castle and Grounds, Oban, PA34 5TT. Tel: 01631 570550

FACTORY ENGINEER
ISLE OF MULL
Full Time, Permanent
Competitive salary



We have a vacancy for a multi-skilled engineer. Responsible for keeping our factory and equipment running smoothly, the role involves routine repairs and preventative maintenance on a diverse range of factory production and packaging machinery, as well as building maintenance and other related tasks. Knowledge of food production machinery is not essential, but sound all-round engineering knowledge combined with good initiative and the ability to fault-find is key.

Hours flexible, five days per week.

For more information:

email joe@islandbakery.co.uk or phone 01688 302223.

MORRISON PLUMBING & HEATING ENGINEERS
We are looking for an experienced plumber to join our friendly team of staff. Experience in oil boilers preferable.

Good rates of pay & 7.5% employer contribution to pension.
Drivers licence essential.

Contact Maria on 01397 705333 or e-mail: johnmorrison.plumber@btinternet.com for further information.
Unit 9A1, Blar Mhor Industrial Estate, Fort William PH33 7PT.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

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E-MAIL: adverts@obantimes.co.uk
Please remember to give your name, address, postcode and phone number.

New Wave Foods Ltd
MARINE (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010
THE MARINE LICENSING (PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2013

Notice is hereby given that New Wave Foods Ltd, SC512270 - Forbes House, 36 Huntly Street, Inverness, United Kingdom, IV3 5PR, plans to hold a pre-application consultation event regarding a proposed licensable marine activity at West Kerrera - NM 78842 28029, Aird na Cuile - NM 81564 24901 and Sound of Insh - NM 74072 18024. The activity consists of Seaweed Cultivation.

Further information, can be obtained concerning the proposed Seaweed Cultivation from:

New Wave Foods, 1 Averon Way, AIness, Scotland IV17 0PF

The pre-application consultation event will be held between 4pm and 6pm on 29th March 2018 at:

Seil Hall, Ellenabeich, Seil, PA34 4RQ

Persons wishing to provide comments on the proposed Seaweed Cultivation can do so by writing to the prospective applicant at: info@newwavefoods.co.uk,

Or by post to
New Wave Foods, 1 Averon Way, AIness, Scotland IV17 0PF, not later than 12th April 2018.

Comments should be dated and should clearly state the name (in block capitals) and full return email or postal address of those making comment. Comments made to the prospective applicant are not representations to the Scottish Ministers. If New Wave Foods Ltd submits an application for a marine licence to Scottish Ministers, an opportunity will be given for representations to be made to the Scottish Ministers on the application.

www.highland.gov.uk

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997
PLANNING (LISTED BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997

The applications listed below, along with plans and other documents submitted with them, may be examined online at <http://wam.highland.gov.uk> or electronically at your nearest Service Point. You can find your nearest Service Point via the following link https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory/16/a_to_z

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
18/00572/FUL	Barn East Of Taigh Breagh Achnabobane Spean Bridge	Demolition of barn and erection of house (Renewal of planning permission 15/00773)
18/00802/FUL	House Site North Of Glenmore Jetty Glenborrodale	Erection of pod for holiday letting
18/00686/FUL	Land 180M SE Of 1 The Corries Caledonia Park Invergloy, Spean Bridge	Construction of a tarred bellmouth

Time period for comments is 14 days
ePlanning Centre, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, INVERNESS IV3 5NX
Email: eplanning@highland.gov.uk

Argyll and Bute Council

PLANNING

These applications listed below together with other related documents may be inspected between 09:00-12:30 -13:30-16:00 hrs Monday to Friday at Municipal Buildings Albany Street Oban PA34 4AW, 1A Manse Brae Lochgilphead PA31 8RD, at the alternative locations detailed below during their normal opening times or by logging on to the Council's website at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2013 REGULATION 20(1) ADVERT STATEMENT
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997 (AS AMENDED), RELATED PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997

Ref. No.	Proposal	Site Address	Location of Plans
18/00302/PP	Erection of 2 dwellings, installation of septic tank and formation of vehicular access	Land Opposite Dams Lodge (Old Deer Larder) Barcalidine Oban Argyll And Bute	Sub Post Office Connel
18/00324/PP	Change of use of croft land to firewood processing area (retrospective)	Land North West Of Taigh-Na-Bèithe Broilas Taynuilt Argyll And Bute PA35 1JW	Sub Post Office Taynuilt
18/00288/PP	Change of use from rough agricultural field to woods and garden amenity ground including erection of summer room, shed, composting facility and fencing.	Raineach Mhor Port Ellen Isle Of Islay Argyll And Bute PA42 7AW	Sub Post Office Port Ellen
18/00289/PP	Demolition of existing outbuildings and erection of agricultural building	Pennyraig Bowmore Isle Of Islay Argyll And Bute	Bowmore Area Office Isle of Islay

Written comments can be made to the above address or submitted online <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/find-and-comment-planning-applications> within 21 days of this advert. Please quote the reference number in any correspondence. Any letter of representation the Council receives is considered a public document and will be published on our website. Anonymous or marked confidential correspondence will not be considered. A weekly list of all applications can be viewed at all Area Offices, Council Libraries and on the Councils website.

To find out more about living and working in Argyll & Bute visit us at: www.argyll-bute.gov.uk
Comhairle Earra - Ghàidheal agus Bhòid

First Registration of a Croft

Mr A P McLean has registered their croft 7 Glenulf, Arisaig & Moidart on the Crofting Register held by the Registers of Scotland.

Any person who wishes to challenge the registration may apply to the Scottish Land Court 13 Nov 2018

Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C4867

First Registration of a Croft

Duncan Black has registered his croft 7 Port Ramsay (Share), Port Ramsay in the Parish of Lismore and Appin in the Crofting Register held by the Registers of Scotland.

Any person who wishes to challenge the registration may apply to the Scottish Land Court by 8 November 2018.

Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C4869.

Goods Vehicle Operator's Licence

Balfour Beatty Group Ltd of Fleet Services, West Service Road, Raynesway, Derby, DE21 7BG is applying to change an existing licence as follows:

- To add an operating centre to keep 6 goods vehicles and 4 trailers at Carrs Corner, Fort William, PH33 6TL

Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Scottish Traffic Area Office, Hillcrest House, 386 Harehills Lane, LS9 6NF stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A Guide to Making Representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's Office.

Oban Times PUBLIC NOTICES

Proposed Let of a Croft

Mr John Godfrey Day is applying to the Crofting Commission for consent to let the tenancy of the croft at Ichrachan Croft No3, Glenorchy & Innishail, to Mrs Undine Achilles-Day of The Swallows, 7 Otter Creek, Taynuilt, Argyll, PA35 1HP.

If you are a crofter, shareholder or owner of a croft in the township or if the Commission consider that you have a direct interest in this application, you may submit comments on the proposal in writing or other permanent form to the Crofting Commission, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness IV3 8NW (e-mail: info@crofting.scotland.gov.uk) within 28 days from the date of publication of this advert.

Please note that any comments you provide are part of an open process and will be made available to interested parties. Your comments would also be released under a Freedom of Information enquiry.

R E CAMPBELL (JOINERY) LTD

Wishes to invite you to a public consultation event in relation to the proposed mix use development of the site opposite to The Bridge Cafe, Spean Bridge. The event is being held to inform and consult the public on the emerging proposals and to gather feedback. Information and plans will be on display and members of the project team will be on hand to answer any questions. The meeting will take place on

THURSDAY 8TH MARCH
2.00PM - 6.00PM
SPEAN BRIDGE COMMUNITY CENTRE

If you are unable to attend the event or require information on the proposals, please contact

R E CAMPBELL (JOINERY) LTD
STATION ROAD, SPEAN BRIDGE
PH34 4EP
01397 712561
ENQUIRIES@CAMPBELL-HOMES.COM

Please note that comments made to R E Campbell (Joinery) Ltd are not representations to the council and if R E Campbell (Joinery) Ltd submits a planning application there will be an opportunity to make representations on that application to the council.

Argyll and Bute Council

Councillor Jim Lynch (E.W. 4 Oban South and the Isles)
Councillor Lynch will be holding a surgery on Friday 9th March 2018 in the Municipal Buildings, Albany Street, Oban from 2.00pm - 4.00pm. He can be contacted by email - Jim.Lynch@argyll-bute.gov.uk and by telephone 01631 567893

Councillor Elaine Robertson (E.W. 5 Oban North and Lorn)
Councillor Robertson will be holding a surgery on Friday 30th March 2018 in the Municipal Buildings, Albany Street, Oban from 2.00pm - 4.00pm. Councillor Robertson can also be contacted by email - Elaine.Robertson@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Councillor Sir Jamie McGrigor (E.W. 4 Oban South and the Isles)
Councillor Sir McGrigor will be holding a surgery on Friday 30th March 2018 in the Municipal Buildings, Albany Street, Oban from 2.00pm - 4.00pm. He can be contacted by email - Jamie.McGrigor@argyll-bute.gov.uk and by telephone 01631 567853

Councillor Kieron Green (E.W. 5 Oban North and Lorn)
Councillor Green will be holding a surgery on Friday 16th March 2018 in the Municipal Buildings, Albany Street, Oban from 2.00pm - 4.00pm. He can be contacted by email - Kieron.Green@argyll-bute.gov.uk and by telephone 01631 562 444

West Coast PROPERTY GUIDE

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PROPERTY NEWS LOCAL ESTATE AGENTS

West PROPERTIES FOR SALE & TO LET

BREADALBANE STREET, TOBERMORY

- Mid-terraced house
- 4 bedrooms/2 bathrooms/1 WC
- Traditional & unique home
- Tastefully decorated
- Garden & decking area
- EPC Rating C41

OIRO £220,000

We are delighted to present 15 Breadalbane Street, Tobermory for sale. This fantastic mid-terraced property was tastefully renovated just 4 years ago, retaining many of its traditional features to make an excellent family home. On entering the property, you are welcomed into the open plan kitchen and lounge space. The kitchen is modern and well-equipped and has space for a dining table in the middle. The warm welcome can be attributed to the large multi-fuel stove in the lounge, which serves the radiators around the house.

DRUM CAS, APPIN

- Detached Bungalow
- 4 bedrooms & 2 bathrooms
- Stunning loch views
- Lockside slip access
- Potential Mooring included
- EPC - C

£350,000

Drum Cas has been a much-loved and well-maintained family home, enjoyed by its current owners for over 14 years. Upon entering the property, you will enjoy its warm and homely feel. The porch to the front of the property has plenty of space to store jackets, coats, dog leads muddy boots and wellies. Immediately to your right, a doorway leads in to the bright and spacious lounge with a large window, bathing the room in natural light and allowing you to enjoy far reaching views across the field to the front of the house and Loch Crean beyond.

BRAESIDE HOUSE, TOBERMORY

- Detached House
- 5 bedrooms/ 4 bathrooms/ 1 shower room/ 1 WC
- Walk-in condition
- Fantastic holiday let or large family home
- Detached double garage
- EPC Rating: D66

OIRO £350,000

Braeside House is a spectacular two-storey property, unique in that it's accommodation is elegantly arranged over four landings. On entering the property, there is a small entrance vestibule and the right is the handy utility room where you can find a large stone cupboard and a WC. To the left, is the ground floor double bedroom and en-suite shower. All the bedrooms offer plentiful space for a double bed and storage, and the upstairs four bedrooms all feature en-suite bathrooms complete with showers over the bath.

info@west-property.co.uk
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FALL IN HOME-OWNERSHIP FOR YOUNG ADULTS

This increase in house prices relative to family incomes explains the fall in home-ownership for young adults. The likelihood of a young adult owning their own home given how their income compares with house prices in their region is little changed from twenty years ago.

But in 2015-16 almost 90 per cent of 25- to 34-year-olds faced average regional house prices of at least four times their income, compared with less than half 20 years earlier. At the same time, 38 per cent faced a house-price-to-income ratio of over 10, compared with just nine per cent 20 years ago.

In housing matters, there is always a mixture of social, economic and even cultural factors. Whilst the IFS statistics show a change in the demographics of homeownership, "on the ground" we are seeing increasing numbers of young professionals choosing to rent; The improved standards of rented property married with the flexibility renting offers young adults, make it an attractive option in an economy with less job security and a willingness amongst young people to move for new career opportunities. The Scottish Household Survey data showed that the proportion of households in the private rented sector has grown steadily from 5% in 1999 to 15.4% in 2016 and continues to grow. All of these factors and others such as mortgage availability, are affecting the sector and reflected in the substantial growth of the Private Rented Sector in Scotland in recent years.

The falls in homeownership have been sharpest for young adults with middle incomes. In 1995-96, 65 per cent of those aged 25-34 with incomes in the middle 20 per cent for their age owned their own home. Twenty years later, that figure was just 27 per cent.

The key reason for the decline is the sharp rise in house prices relative to incomes. Mean house prices were 152 per cent higher in 2015-16 than in 1995-96 after adjusting for inflation. By contrast, the real net family incomes of those aged 25-34 grew by only 22 per cent over the same 20 years.

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Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre (Oban) Ltd

AGM

Will be held on 27th March 2018 At 7pm
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Telephone: 01631 566602
e-mail: oban.msc@btconnect.com

CROFTING COMMISSION COIMISEAN NA CROITEARACHD DECROFTING APPLICATION

P Riley Ardchiavaig (Uisken) Whole croft 86491

Written comments from any member of the crofting community within the locality of the croft and any expressions of demand for the croft (which may be made public), may be sent to the Crofting Commission by 29/03/18. Crofting Commission, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness, IV3 8NW. info@crofting.scotland.gov.uk

Oban Times PUBLIC NOTICES

GOODS VEHICLE OPERATOR'S LICENCE

JST Services (Scotland) Ltd trading as JST Services of Highfield Business Park, St Quivox, Ayr KA6 5HQ is applying to add an operating centre to keep 4 goods vehicles and 4 trailers at Pennyghael Jetty, Pennyghael, Isle of Mull PA70 6HD. Owners or occupiers of land (including buildings) near the operating centre(s) who believe that their use or enjoyment of that land would be affected, should make written representations to the Traffic Commissioner at Hillcrest House, 386 Harehills Lane, Leeds LS9 6NF stating their reasons, within 21 days of this notice. Representors must at the same time send a copy of their representations to the applicant at the address given at the top of this notice. A guide to making representations is available from the Traffic Commissioner's Office.

MARINE (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010
INSTALLATION OF PERMANENT PONTOON MALLAIG HARBOUR

Notice is hereby given that Mallaig Harbour Authority has applied to the Scottish Ministers of the Scottish Government, under Part 4 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, in respect of the installation of a permanent pontoon at:

Cost	£250,000		
Location	Latitude	Longitude	
Mallaig Harbour	57° 00.353' N	005° 49.669' W	
	57° 00.350' N	005° 49.667' W	
	57° 00.359' N	005° 49.626' W	
	57° 00.362' N	005° 49.629' W	

(WGS84)

Plans showing the position of the works may be inspected at [Mallaig Harbour Office, Mallaig].

Objections relating to safety of navigation or environmental issues in respect of the application should be made in writing to:
Licensing Operations Team, Marine Scotland, Marine Laboratory, 375 Victoria Road, Aberdeen, AB11 9DB within 28 days of the date of this notice or by email to: MS.MarineLicensing@gov.scot, quoting reference: **06627**
Mallaig Harbour Authority

MARINE (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010
New Shellfish Farm, Loch Sunart, Highland Region

Notice is hereby given that Fassfern Mussels Limited has applied to the Scottish Ministers of the Scottish Government, under Part 4 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, in respect of a new shellfish farm at:

Cost	£2000		
Location	Latitude	Longitude	
Loch Sunart,	56° 41.325' N	005° 36.876' W	
Highland Region	56° 41.236' N	005° 36.760' W	
	56° 41.088' N	005° 37.236' W	
	56° 41.179' N	005° 37.348' W	

(WGS84)

Plans showing the position of the works may be inspected at Ardnamurchan Library, Sunart Centre, Strontian, PH36 4JA.

Objections relating to safety of navigation in respect of the application should be made in writing to:
Licensing Operations Team, Marine Scotland, Marine Laboratory, 375 Victoria Road, Aberdeen, AB11 9DB within 28 days of the date of this notice or by email to: MS.MarineLicensing@gov.scot, quoting reference: **06631**
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To the many wonderful tenants, their families and friends past and present, to my great colleagues and to my friends (who have freely given of their time and much more to enhance the quality of life of the tenants) - thank you for helping me have the best job ever for the past 26+ years, it has been a great pleasure and privilege. Thank you so much also to those who contributed to the very generous retirement presentations and gifts - plus the bubbly and pink gin, cheers!

Anne Ferguson, 3 Etive Gardens, Oban.

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GOLDEN WEDDINGS

MACTAGGART - **STIRLING** - On March 1, 1968 at Springfield Church, Bishopbriggs, Hamish and Sheila. With love from all the family.

DEATHS

FERGUSON - Donald. Peacefully at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital on February 21, 2018. Donald beloved husband of Lottie and a much loved father. Funeral service at Clydebank Crematorium, North Dalmotter on Saturday March 3, 2018 at 10.30 a.m., which all friends and invited to attend. Family flowers only please.

LINTON - Peacefully at home on Wednesday February 21, 2018, Donald, beloved husband of Jean, loving father of Sheila and Robert, devoted grandfather to Cooper and Skye. A sadly missed brother and father-in-law. Funeral service will take place at Oban Parish Church, Glencruitten Road, Oban, on Wednesday March 7, 2018 at 1pm., thereafter to Pennyfuir Cemetery. Family flowers only, donations in lieu if desired for Argyll Beats Cardiovascular Disease (known as ABCD).

LOUDON - Peacefully at Broadford Hospital, Broadford, Isle of Skye, on Monday February 19, Dorothy Stewart Murray, aged 76 years, formerly of Shullishadder Beag, Portree and of Hyndland, Glasgow, beloved wife of the late John Angus, mother of Allan and Iain and a loving grandmother, mother-in-law and sister. Interred at Portree Cemetery on Tuesday February 27, 2018. Sadly missed.

MACFARLANE - Peacefully at the Lorn and Islands Hospital, Oban, on February 20, 2018, Brian aged 69, beloved husband of Joyce, proud dad of David and father-in-law to Nihoma, much loved Grandad to Dugald and Rìoghach, much loved big brother to Lesley and special brother-in-law to Louise (Doris). Funeral will take place at St Oran's Church, Connel on Friday March 2, 2018 at 1.00 pm. Family flowers only. Donations if desired to Oban War and Peace Museum and Oban Hospice, C/o Hamish Hoey & Son Ltd, 37 - 39 Stevenson Street, Oban PA34 5NA.

MACINNES - Passed away peacefully at Hairmyres Hospital on Tuesday February 22, 2018. Louis beloved husband to the late Lilian, much loved father to Andrew and father-in-law to Liza, devoted papa Mac to Tilly and Georgie.

MACLEAN - Patricia, Stuart, Angus and Morven MacLean are sad to report the death of their father, Charles Stuart MacLean from Tobermory. Charles attended Oban High School and Glasgow Vet School. He died aged 68 at his home in Glasgow on February 18, 2018. He will be sorely missed.

McMURCHY - Peacefully at the Lorn and Islands Hospital, Oban, on February 22, 2018, William, beloved husband of Mary and dear dad of Alan, Eric, and Nicol. Father-in-law to Lorna and Sheila. Much loved Grandpa of Ellen, Shona, Cara, and Michael.

MORRISON - Suddenly and peacefully, at the Lorn and Islands Hospital, Oban on February 24, 2018, in his 72nd year, Robbie, beloved husband of Jeanette and dad of Alasdair and Roddy, papa to Callum. Funeral will take place at Cardoss Crematorium on Monday March 5, 2018 at 12.15pm. Family flowers only, donations in lieu if desired, for the Macmillan Day Bed Unit at the Lorn and Islands Hospital, Oban.

MEMORIAMS

BURTON - For our boys Paul Gordon Burton, died March 3, 1996 and David Campbell Burton, died April 3, 1972. Never forgotten.

- From the Burton family, Oban and East Kilbride.

GRANT - In loving memory of my dear father and our grandpa Angus, who died on March 3, 2016. Never more than a thought away

Loved and remembered every day

- Elizabeth, Julie and Steven, Keeper's Cottage, Dalmally.

MACARTHUR - In loving memory of John, our dear husband and dad, who died February 21, 2010. The house is so quiet without you

And we miss you in every way

But in God's own time we will meet you

In the land that is fairer than day

- Anne and family, Middleton

MACAULAY - Precious memories of Ian, a loving and caring husband, dad and grampa, who passed away February 20, 2013. You always had a smile to share

A laugh, a joke and time to care

A wonderful nature, warm and true

Are the many memories we have of you

- Mary, Neil, John, Ginah and family, Oban, Bulgaria and Dubai.

MACCOLL - In loving memory of Dugie, a dear husband, father and grandfather who passed away March 2, 2002. Forever in our thoughts.

- Margaret and family.

MACDONALD - In loving memory of my dear brother and our uncle Dian, who died March 7, 1977 and loved ones who have passed away before and since. Remembered always.

- Freena and family.

MACLEAN - Special memories of Calum who died suddenly on March 1, 1992. RIP.

Calum those we love, live in our hearts forever.

- With all my love Chrissie xx.

MACLEOD - In memory of Captain Donald MacLeod, Kilchoan, who died on March 1, 1996. Always remembered.

- Inserted by nephew Hugh.

MALLOY - Jimmy, Dad, Seanair. Died March 5, 2013. Much loved and sadly missed by all the family.

SHANKS - Treasured memories of my dear husband Jimmy Shanks, who died on February 23, 2016.

Your presence we miss
Your memory we treasure
Loving you always
Forgetting you never
- Lily, Eileen and Elayne.

WANT - In loving memory of our dear sister, aunt and great aunt, Margaret MacKinnon, who died March 3, 2014. Your memory is as dear today

As in the hour you passed away.

We love and miss you.

- Elizabeth, Roy, Shirley, Aiden and the girls



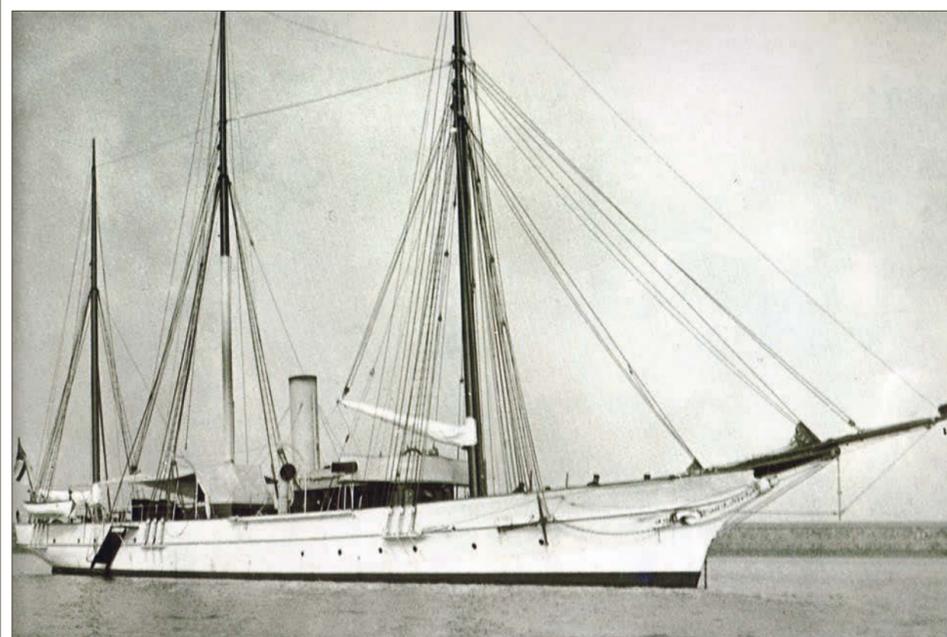
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Plans unveiled for Iolaire disaster memorial centre



The Iolaire.

WESTERN Isles residents are being encouraged to fill in a short survey on proposals for a world-class centre which will tell the story of the Iolaire tragedy.

Businessman Stewart Graham has proposed building a multi-million-pound visitor centre to mark the maritime disaster at Stornoway's Number One pier and an open day outling the plans was held in Stornoway Town Hall on Tuesday this week, February 27.

Mr Graham said: 'I hope local people and the business community to find out more about this important project which, 100 years after this most terrible tragedy, will provide a lasting legacy to the memory of the men who lost their lives.'

'I would also like to encourage local people and the business community to complete the feedback survey. 'It is vitally important

we gain as much feedback as possible from sections of the community to best inform how we take this important project forward.

'We should expect that what we create will encourage people from all over the UK and further afield to make visits to the island to take in this visitor experience as part of an island visit. Not only would this be a lasting testament, but the centre would provide a major economic boost for the islands.'

'We should all be proud of the project and how we tell the story. We should be proud of those who were lost and those who survived.'

Preparations are continuing for a series of events for the centenary commemoration of the Iolaire disaster.

A total of 201 island sailors, returning from the First World War, died in the early hours of January 1 1919 when the Iolaire sank after

running aground on rocks off Holm on the east coast of Lewis. It remains the worst maritime disaster during peacetime in the UK.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is to host a community event on the evening of December 31 2018 and a formal civic event on January 1 2019.

In addition, there will be participation by schools throughout the islands and many other community-orientated events.

The centenary commemoration events are being overseen by the Iolaire Working Party comprised of representatives of the comhairle, Comunn Eachraidh, Sandwick Community Council, Stornoway Historical Society and Museum nan Eilean. The comhairle is also liaising with the Royal Navy and Scottish Commemorations Panel.

A Community Remembers, the community event to be held

on December 31 2018 is at an early stage but plans include a lecture, military and school band performances, poetry readings and songs, drama and a spiritual element.

Weather dependent, there are plans for a vigil at the memorial at Holm in the early hours of January 1 2019, with a short service and laying of wreaths timed to coincide with events on the night of January 1 1919.

A service during the day of January 1 2019 is also being planned.

A planning application has been submitted to improve the path leading to the Iolaire memorial at Holm.

The survey can be completed by visiting www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/iolaire

For further information on the Iolaire and associated commemorative events, please visit the Facebook page www.facebook.com/AnIolaire/

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Thought for the week

This is a busy week in the Christian calendar. Last Sunday, we marked the Transfiguration, when Jesus with three of his disciples - Peter, James and John - went up Mount Sinai.

There Jesus met with Moses and Elijah. At the end of this encounter, when Jesus was transfigured into unparalleled brightness, the voice of God was heard to say: 'This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!' [Mark 9:7]

Yet on the way down the mountain Jesus gave his disciples 'orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead' [Mark 9:9].

What did he mean by this? Perhaps it was that we should listen to the word from the lips of Jesus that comes from the heart of His Father and is understood in our own heart through the power of the Holy Spirit, rather than what other people have to say about him.

God has his own priorities and, as a result of our imperfections as human beings, we do not always see or understand them. Thus there are often occasions when the greatest thing we can do is just to listen!

Rev Iain Barclay,
Appin Parish Church, linked with Lismore.

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Get your boat ready



Fitting out for 2018

ALTHOUGH wintry weather is still upon us, time is marching on for getting boats ready to launch for the summer season.

Many owners want their craft launched for Easter weekend at the end of this month. It may be that work needed has already been completed over the winter but, for many, fitting out is always last-minute, so it's time to prioritise jobs and get down to work.

As a first step, it's always useful to find out from the yard when they want to launch your boat, so you know what deadline there is to work to.

If you need any work carried out by the boat

professionals, get in touch as soon as possible to book a slot since this is their busiest time of year.

Set your workload list down alongside tools and materials required. Add an array of rags, silicone and grease, petroleum jelly, lubricating and penetrating oils, cleaning products, brushes, wet and dry sandpaper, rollers and tray, degreaser, rolls of tape, engine spares and treatments for your water and fuel tanks.

It's often the best idea to work from the outside in so that if you run out of time to launch any work required inside can be done on the water.

Hull and topsides

Removing all the old antifouling is a difficult and time-consuming task. However if it has built up over the years in thickness, then this is an important job since it reduces efficiency of boat movement in the water.

A variety of scrapers are available but care needs to be taken not to damage the hull, whether this is gel coat or wood or other. A smooth surface will pay dividends for re-application and help keep fouling at bay for the season.

This is a good time to inspect the keel and keelboats for signs of rusting or pitting and wear at the keel to hull joint that may be more evident after winter layup.

If anything looks suspect, ask the experts for the best course of action. Deep pitting on the keel may indicate anode problems and will need taken back to bare metal and an epoxy protective coating applied before anti-fouling.

Check the rudder, skeg fittings as well as the propeller and look for any play in bearings, stock or quadrant. Make sure the bonding wires from the anode are sound and replace the anode as required. Grease the shaft, steering cables and the log's paddle wheel where fitted.

A wide range of anti-fouling products is available on the market from powerboat finishes to racing and cruising coatings. Choice will depend on boat type, use and where it is kept. Your local chandler or

boatyard will advise on what suits best. Follow instructions for application with a stronger build-up in high impact areas – the leading edge of the keel and skeg and the keel to hull joint.

A long-handled radiator roller can be a good option to give an even finish with a paint brush to reach more inaccessible points. Some antifouling requires only one application; others need a few depending on longevity required. If stored on a cradle or stocks, leave some antifouling for painting the underside of the keel and cradle support points before the boat is launched while in the hoist.

Topsides and deck will require a thorough clean up after lying for a winter. This is always made easier if a polish was applied on layup.

Repair any problem area such as chips or crazing in the gelcoat as required. Where gelcoat is older it may need hard work to get the original finish back. Then apply a protective wax and polish well to keep the boat looking pristine throughout the season.

There is an extensive range of products in on offer for all requirements. Ask at the chandlery for advice.

Engines, fuel tanks and gas systems

Both inboards and outboards need serviced and this is most often done by a

professional whether by your boatyard or an independent engineer.

If undertaking on your own oil, filters and anodes should be renewed and exhaust fittings checked. Impellers and engine belt tension and mounts should also be inspected as well as the underside of the shaft – re-bed if any leaks are apparent. Keep spares of everything you think you may need on the boat during the season. With sail-drives the oil level and gaiter seal need checked as well as the earthing wires from the starter motor. Replace if there is any wear on hose and electrical connections.

Before launching all batteries need to be up to charge and holding. If they have not been on trickle charge over lay-up, re-charge now and monitor electrolyte levels if unsealed. Ensure the battery tray is dry and tighten securing straps making sure all gas vents are clear. Clean terminals and coat with petroleum jelly.

Fuel tanks should be full from laying up. If not, drain water off and treat with a diesel biocide. Inspect the gas system regularly and thoroughly. A qualified gas engineer will ensure the system conforms to current gas regulations and any suspect hoses and fittings should be replaced to manufacturer's recommendations.

Bilges

Inspect bilge pump impellers and gaskets, grease and replace if necessary. With automatic bilge pumps, see float switches

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to launch



work and the strum box is clear. Manual strum boxes should be pumped through to see hose is clear of blockages. Seacocks need serviced.

Deck gear, rigging and anchors

Dirt will have built up over the winter on deck and will need a good scrubbing with perhaps an anti-mould treatment. Deck gear needs checking for wear and tear.

Check the stanchion bases for any cracks and any corrosion in lifelines, particularly under plastic sheathing. Replace if suspect. Inspect rigging for broken strands and any cracking at terminals and renew if necessary. If rigging is dangerous boat insurance could be invalid. Your local sail rigging firm specialist will carry out a rig inspection for you if you are in any doubt.

Instrumentation and furling equipment at the masthead should be checked in case work is required before the mast is stepped. Overhaul winches and strip down any that are seized – soak components in degreaser and re-grease. If warps and sheets were removed for winter then this is the time to check over, renew and replace as required.

Similarly, look for corrosion on anchors and chain. Clean manual windlasses, check for wear and grease. Remove the gypsy in powered versions, grease the drum, look at the foot switch for wear, clean and grease electrical connections.

All wood on deck, teak slats etc should be oiled or varnished and paintwork touched up and stainless polished. This is an ideal time for maintenance of spray hoods and other cockpit coverings.

Interior

The cabin will need a good clean up if not already attended to over the winter. Most owners have a dehumidifier and heater installed to keep mould at bay so this will help greatly in the fitting out preparation.

Clean all the lockers before replacing everything and remember to display a list of where everything is in the boat. Clean the galley and check burners on gas cookers. Look over berth cushions and other soft furnishings checking for any damp if they have not been taken off for the winter for storage. Re-install for the season ahead and keep everything well aired.

Water tanks and heads

Any water in the water tank should be pumped through and a purifier added before re-filling for use. Flush through the heads adding washing up liquid/vinegar to lubricate the hoses and pumps. Check the boat's central heating system if there is one. Re-install any communication, navigation and other equipment that was removed for winter storage.

Safety equipment

The best time to go over safety equipment is at the end of the season which allows time to store properly and replace items if there are any issues. However, if this hasn't been done, it's essential now to see all equipment is in good condition since lives may depend on it. Fire extinguishers, flares, life-rafts, life-jackets and rubber dinghies should be inspected with items needing replaced or repaired if in any doubt as to condition. Invert MOB lights to see they work and change bulb and batteries if not. Some WD40 on the copper contact strip inside should ensure good connection. Silicone grease rubber seals. The RNLI will carry out a free safety check on your boat equipment and lifeboat

stations will check your life-jackets – this is really worthwhile. Make an inventory of where safety equipment is stored and display prominently in boat – items can then be found quickly and easily in an emergency.

Sails and sprayhoods

Sailmakers are on hand for advice and, since sails are the powerhouse of the sailing vessel, it's important they are in good condition. If this hasn't already been done, get your sails checked over and repair or replace as required. Similarly, sprayhoods and other outdoor canvas should be checked for wear. If new sails are needed, order as soon as possible, since this is the busy time for sail lofts.

Expert advice

Professional advice is on hand from boatyards, engineers, marine service and repair firms as well as chandlers and sail-makers. Each has their own area of expertise and don't hesitate to contact them for advice and to carry out work as required.

Whatever your plans are for getting out on the water – whether it be cruising, racing, fishing or just pottering about with your boat, enjoy a safe and successful 2018 season!



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Boyd Tunnock receives his Lifetime Commitment Award from RYA Scotland Volunteer chairman Ewan MacPherson.



Two members of the Tiree Wave Classic coaching team Sam Poole and Calum Nicol receive the Coach of the Year Award from Glen Porter of Ocean Sailing Scotland.

West coast sailors celebrate success afloat

The 2017 RYA Scotland Annual Awards, supported by Ocean Sailing Scotland

MARC TURNER

Royal Yachting Association

THE SIXTH RYA Scotland Annual Awards were hosted by sportscotland at Inverclyde National Centre this year.

This vital opportunity for RYA Scotland to share some of the many stories from clubs and those involved with our sport recognises all the work they do to make our sport one that is accessible and enjoyable for everyone.

Boaters from the west coast won in three of the main award categories and there were plenty of inspiring individuals and teams who make a massive difference to the sport. This year we also added a unique Lifetime Commitment Award to a member of the sailing community who has played an important role in competitive racing.

Glenn Porter of Ocean Sailing Scotland continued support for the event and opened the evening by praising the volunteers throughout the sailing community and linking this with the changes in technology both in our world and within the sport.

'The role of volunteers is one that continues across the generations. The technology itself may change but the ethos of the volunteering and our encouragement of that spirit must not change throughout the generations. We must continue to inspire future generations despite technology changes and challenges. It is now more important than ever that we

make sure that volunteering does not become a form of virtual reality, as you can in fact sail round the world virtually without getting your feet wet.'

A Lifetime Commitment Award was unanimously awarded to Boyd Tunnock CBE. Boyd and the Tunnock's product range have been synonymous with both the Scottish

of Clyde Cruising Club. I think you have to take time to put something back into the sport and be able to stop and start races and do things for a club. It's great competing, but remember the people who put it together.

of Clyde Cruising Club. I think you have to take time to put something back into the sport and be able to stop and start races and do things for a club. It's great competing, but remember the people who put it together.

'That is where the RYA comes in and helps the organisation. It's a great feeling to bring things together.'

Oban Sailing Club's Derek Grier won the Instructor of Year Award for the positive impact he has made on others at Oban Sailing Club and Argyll College.

Derek took on his RYA Powerboat instructor role which has been transformative for him personally and has had a positive impact on his students, sharing his maritime knowledge gained after a career in the Coastguard. He trains around 20-25 candidates a year to Powerboat Level II standard at Oban Sailing Club plus additional teaching for UHI Argyll College Maritime Skills Course.

As he took to the stage, Derek shared his thoughts on the award. 'I am just a small part of what goes on in the RYA and within Oban Sailing Club. This is for everyone that is instructing at Oban.'

'We all work just as hard and we get on with it and we enjoy it, we love it. I appreciate this, it is kind and I feel very humbled as my favourite thing about teaching is watching the successful development of the students. Thank you, I appreciate it.'

Coach of the Year Award

Prizewinners:

Lifetime Commitment Award
Boyd Tunnock

Volunteer of the Year:
Graham Russell, Forth Corinthian Yacht Club

Young Person of the Year:
Rory McKinna, Clyde Cruising Club

Elizabeth McKay Award:
Rebecca Coles, Annandale Sailing Club

Club of the Year:
Dundee Sailing Club

Instructor of the Year:
Derek Grier, Oban Sailing Club

Coach of the Year:
Tiree Coaching Team

Official of the Year:
Niall McLeod, Royal Northern and Clyde Yacht Club

Class Academy Sailor of the Year:
Catriona Forrest and Evie Tynan, Dalgetty Bay Sailing Club

Youth Sailor of the Year:
Alistair Coombs, Loch Venachar Sailing Club

Performance of the Year:
Andy Brown, Largs Sailing Club

Series and West Highland Week for many years, from supporting and competing in the events for four decades, but his generosity has extended well beyond these events to helping aspiring Olympians to regularly assisting organisations like

with his famous family biscuits. It's not the winning, although you say that when you losing, it's the nice friends you meet along the way. One of those friends, who recently passed away, was Ronnie Sharp who I served with as vice commodore



Instructor of the Year award went to Oban Sailing Club's Derek Grier. He was presented with his award by Glenn Porter.

went to the coaches who delivered the Tiree Wave Camp, a tailored event aimed at junior and youth windsurfers in a unique coastal environment. Instead of long hours on a RIB, the coaches spent most of the time in the water.

The Tiree Wave Camp Coaching Team enabled a mix of sailors, ranging in age from 9 to 19, from the recreational windsurfer to the GBR Racers, to expand their learning and create a positive wave sailing experience and to compete alongside the oldest windsurfing event in the UK, the Tiree Wave Classic.

Calum Nicol commented on behalf of the team: 'Obviously Sam and I are here tonight but there are several coaches who

weren't able to be here as we all worked very well together, including the senior Nicol. We think we did an okay job obviously and we're really proud of the sailors. Thank you.'

Niall McLeod, originally from Tarbert, Loch Fyne, gained the title of RYA Scotland Official of the Year. Niall is a highly committed race official, judging at all levels from Scottish, UK national and international events and unfortunately could not attend the awards as he was judging at the Ladies Team Racing Championships over the weekend. He did, however, express his gratitude on receiving the award via a short video.

Niall said: 'Thank you very much for this award. It is a nice recognition for all those times

Sailing

sat in a RIB watching other people sail. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped me along the umpiring and judging pathway. Thank you again.'

Volunteer chairman Ewan Macpherson brought the evening to a close returning to the valued work of clubs and centres across Scotland that create an environment that allows safe, successful and rewarding boating to take place.

The RYA Scotland Annual Awards Dinner can only take place with the support of the sponsors and this year was supported by Ocean Sailing Scotland.



Youngsters take to the water during the Tiree Wave Classic.



Niall McLeod, originally from Tarbert, won the Official of the Year category.

Saints not at their best but good enough to pick up three points

Oban Saints	3
East Kilbride	0
SAFL Premier Division	

OBAN Saints returned to Scottish Amateur Football League Premier Division action last Saturday when they welcomed 2015-16 champions East Kilbride FC Amateurs to a cold but sunny Glencruitten.

Extended runs in the Scottish and West of Scotland amateur cups had restricted Saints to just six Premier Division fixtures so far with this being their first league outing for almost four months.

The return of six players afforded manager Alex Craik the rare luxury of leaving himself out of the match day squad.

East Kilbride kicked off attacking the Mossfield end where their top marksman Johnny Diack forced an early corner kick after a sprint on the right with Scott Maitland. Paul Carmichael headed Reiss Tallon's delivery clear before Scott Maitland's tight hamstringing forced him to call it a day after just 90 seconds.

Maitland's departure forced a reshuffle in the Saints ranks with Jamie Graham moving to left back, Steven MacLeod to right back, Paul Carmichael dropping back to partner Marc Maccallum in the centre of defence with Carmichael's midfield berth being taken up by substitute Shaun MacIver.

Jamie Graham showed his willingness to get forward with an overlapping run on the left to fire over a cross from Willie Gemmill's through ball which unfortunately swung too close to stand-in keeper Jamie Innes.

The visitors were missing their dead ball expert Gavin Thomson so it was leading goal scorer Diack who assumed responsibility for an eighth minute free-kick on the corner of the Saints box. This came after a high line from the East Kilbride back four had caught Willie Gemmill offside just inside the Kilby half. Marc Maccallum headed Gary McDowal's long straight delivery out to the edge of the box where a stretching Shaun MacIver caught Mathew Meechan on the edge of the box. Diack took aim for the top corner, with Saints keeper Graham Douglas happy to see his effort fly wide

of the junction of post and crossbar.

At the other end, it was Saints turn to try and exploit a dead ball opportunity after Craig Scott had felled Lewis Cameron 28 yards out. Willie Gemmill succeeded in curling the ball up and over the East Kilbride wall but unfortunately also over the crossbar.

Saints' slow start to the match continued and only an uncharacteristically wayward finish from Johnny Diack spared Steven MacLeod's blushes after an equally rare mistake from the usually dependable Saints defender. MacLeod's under hit pass to Marc Maccallum in the 19th minute allowed Diack to intercept and race through for a shot from the left of the box which, from a good position, only succeeded in finding the side netting.

Two minutes later, Jamie Innes sent a clearance straight to the feet of Craig MacEwan.

Innes, however, quickly redeemed his error backped-



Saints' keeper Graham 'Sugar' Douglas made some excellent saves.

alling to his six-yard line to reach up and pluck MacEwan's attempted lob from the corner of the 18 yard box out of the air. Saints opened the scoring in the 23rd minute after a good passing move on the left involving Willie Gemmill and Craig MacEwan fed Donald Campbell on the edge of the 'D'.

Campbell held the ball up well and laid off to Shaun MacIver who fired a low shot across Jamie Innes and into the



Paul Carmichael heads clear during last Saturday's game against East Kilbride at Glencruitten. Match report and photographs: Derek Black.

bottom corner to give Saints the lead.

After going ahead, Saints strangely seemed to drop out of the game with the visitors enjoying a good ten minute spell. However, despite playing some nice passing football, East Kilbride were restricted to shots from distance by the experienced Saints back four marshalled in typically dynamic and vocal style by the returning Marc Maccallum.

Saints shook off their lethargy with a late flourish which saw Willie Gemmill crack a thunderous 20 yard shot off the crossbar.

A perfectly weighted Willie Gemmill ball through the inside left channel opened up the East Kilbride defence for Craig MacEwan to race into the box, only for Jamie Innes to come out and make a good block at his near post before referee Matthew Dickinson blew for half-time.

Saints opened the second half brightly with Craig MacEwan winning a corner on the left inside the first minute. Jamie Innes clawed away Willie Gemmill's inswinger. However, the East Kilbride defence couldn't fully clear their lines and Donald Campbell dribbled his way into the box before getting the ball caught under his feet and being closed down on the six yard line by Mathew Meechan and Craig Scott.

Graham Douglas was forced into action for the first time in the 47th minute after Marc Maccallum had made a good interception to cut out a Reiss Tallon cross from the right. East Kilbride took the resulting throw-in quickly and Tallon whipped in another cross, this time picking out former Charlton Athletic man Bob Thanda on the penalty spot, who for once, got the better of Keith Millar to power a header on target which Graham Douglas held well springing to his left.

Douglas was tested again in the 51st minute when Donald Campbell brought down

Johnny Diack 28 yards out. Jett Docherty's effort was straight at Graham Douglas though who gathered comfortably.

After his quiet start to the match, Graham Douglas was back in action again in the 58th minute making a fine save at his near post from Johnny Diack who had wriggled his way past Jamie Graham on the East Kilbride right before firing in a low shot.

The visitors kept the pressure on and had a loud appeal for a penalty kick turned down by the referee when Paul Carmichael dispossessed Johnny Diack just inside the left corner of the 18-yard box. Mr Dickinson waved play on and Carmichael strode out of defence to send Lewis Cameron away on the right



Keith Millar, who made a welcome return to the Saints' squad, marks East Kilbride's Bob Thanda, a former Charlton Athletic player.

where he won a corner kick off Mathew Meechan.

From the corner flag, Cameron picked out strike partner Craig MacEwan who shook free of Craig Scott to glance a header six inches wide of the keeper's right hand post.

Saints' skipper Donald Campbell's deft touch took him away from opposite number Gary McDowal in the 64th minute, however, his finish from the 18-yard line curled agonisingly

wide of the keeper's left hand post.

With Saints struggling to make an impression in the second half, manager Alex Craik made his first change of the afternoon in the 67th minute withdrawing Lewis Cameron, who had a quiet game by his standards, and introduced Connor Howe. Howe took up position on the right of the midfield diamond with Shaun MacIver moving forward to join Craig MacEwan.

Tempers briefly threatened to boil over after a mistimed tackle by Steven MacLeod on Reiss Tallon on the touchline. Mr Dickinson quickly restored order and restarted the game with a free-kick for East Kilbride but not before taking the name of MacLeod, Marc Maccallum and Stuart McMillan for their part in the heated debate that ensued. Keith Millar, who put in a good shift on his return from a hamstringing injury which had kept him out for four weeks, headed clear Mathew Meechan's free-kick from the left.

Saints were the grateful recipients of a major let-off in the 72nd minute when Stuart McMillan scooped over from three yards after Reiss Tallon had headed a Chris Philbin corner from the right back across the face of goal.

Saints rubbed salt into the East Kilbride wound by doubling their advantage straight from the restart. Donald Campbell and Craig MacEwan linked up well to send Shaun MacIver racing in behind the East Kilbride defence for another well-placed low finish across Jamie Innes and into the bottom corner for his fifth goal in three appearances since returning from suspension.

The two-goal cushion allowed Saints gaffer Alex Craik to give young Ruaridh Horne a run out at right back when he came on to replace Jamie Graham. The switch brought a third change of position for Steven MacLeod who showed his versatility by



Shaun MacIver is congratulated by his teammates after netting his and Saints' second goal.

taking up the left back berth. Saints put the final outcome beyond any doubt in the 77th minute when double goalscorer Shaun MacIver turned provider with a delicious cross from the left to pick out Craig MacEwan's back post run.

MacEwan's cushioned volley from a tight angle was parried onto the goal-line by Jamie Innes but, agonisingly for the keeper, the spin on the ball took it behind the line before he could scoop it away. Referee Dickinson was up with the action and well placed to award the goal and give manager Craik the chance to make another change. Daniel MacCuish replaced Willie Gemmill on the left of midfield and the youngster would continue his excellent form.

A driving 83rd minute run from Ruaridh Horne after Marc Maccallum had headed out a free-kick from the half-way line had the East Kilbride defence scrambling to get back. Saints, however, failed to capitalise when, from Horne's pass, Craig MacEwan sent his cross looking for Shaun MacIver too close to the goalkeeper.

The Saints' gaffer made his fifth and final change in the 84th minute replacing Steven MacLeod, who had filled every position along the back four, with another youngster Craig MacMillan. Graham Douglas made one final save to deny

Football

Stuart McMillan in the 85th minute before Saints passed up three presentable chances to add to the scoring in the closing stages.

Shaun MacIver's hat-trick opportunity came courtesy of another driving run from Ruaridh Horne, however, instead of shooting across the keeper as before, MacIver aimed for the near post where he found the side netting.

Horne's running won a 92nd minute free-kick when he was sent tumbling by Mathew Meechan. Saints skipper Donald Campbell bizarrely picked up a yellow card for not taking the free-kick when the wall was only seven yards away. Campbell appealed for the wall to retreat the required distance only to find his way into the referee's note book for his troubles. Predictably Campbell's free-kick failed to clear the wall before Mr Dickinson who, that incident apart, had a good game blew for full time.

Saints, meanwhile, resume their Scottish Amateur Cup campaign on Saturday when they welcome Yoker United of the Strathclyde Saturday Morning League to Glencruitten where they will do battle for a place in the quarter finals. Kick-off is 2pm with referee Thomas Gilchrist in charge.



East Kilbride keeper Jamie Innes tries in vain to scoop Craig MacEwan's volley back from behind the goal line.

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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

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SHINTY

Best for all shinty news, results and fixtures

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Severe weather forecast could put new shinty season on hold

THE COUNTDOWN is on to the new shinty season which throws-up on Saturday - weather permitting.

Marine Harvest Premiership

Kinlochshiel v Glenurquhart
Marine Harvest champions Kinlochshiel begin their bid for a second successive title against Glenurquhart at Kirktown.

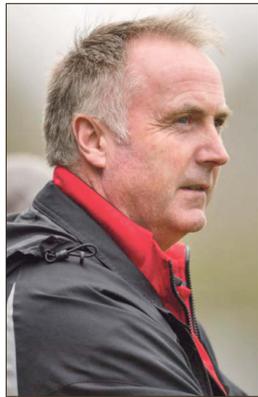
Paul MacRae captains a Kinlochshiel side which is largely unchanged from last term, although Oliver MacRae misses the start of the season as he is abroad. Donald Nixon has missed the pre-season for the same reason but will be back in time for this weekend's game.

Kinlochshiel manager Johnston Gill may also be without assistant manager Doe MacRae during the early part of the season because of work commitments.

Glenurquhart boss Ian MacLeod adds the club's 1988 Albert Smith medal winner Ally MacKintosh to his management team. Glenurquhart lost Lewis MacLennan and Neale Reid last season, whilst John Barr is awaiting an operation on an injury and has been left out of the club's 'named ten'.

Goalie Stuart MacKintosh is fit again though and youngster Finlay Ralston should see more game time. Glenurquhart defender Lachie Smith misses the start of the season through suspension.

Glenurquhart were the only team to record a league win against Kinlochshiel in their 2017 title winning season.



Oban Camanachd manager Ian Hay.

Oban Camanachd v Skye Camanachd
Oban Camanachd's opening fixture is a home meeting with newly-promoted Skye Camanachd at Mossfield.

Oban Camanachd manager



Skye's Kenny Campbell and Beaul's Robbie MacDonald fight for the ball. Photograph: Donald Cameron.

Ian Hay has a defensive headache for this one. Full back Gary McKerracher has decided to take a season away from the game, whilst Garry Lord is on holiday. Scott McKillop faces a spell on the sidelines as he recovers from injury. Doctors have ordered McKillop to rest his knee for three months before assessing whether an operation is necessary. Scott MacMillan is suspended.

Daniel Cameron and Matt Rippon could feature at the back and there could be a place for Keith MacMillan who has returned from a two-year injury lay-off.

John MacLeod returns to the Skye Camanachd managerial hot-seat, replacing Willie Cowie following his 12-month stint.

Newly-promoted Skye are boosted by Steven Morrison's return after injury ruled him out of the 2017 campaign.

However, Gillesbuig MacDonal, who has shown great commitment travelling from his Glasgow base to represent Skye for more than a decade, has decided not to play this year. Neil MacVicar has left for Kyles so youngsters Connor Gilpin and Ruaraidh MacLeod should feature more, with the latter missing most of last season through injury.

Kingussie v Caberfeidh
Caberfeidh, also promoted from the Marine Harvest National Division at the end of last season, head for the Dell to take on Kingussie.

New Kingussie boss John Gibson can call on the services of Fraser Munro this season which is a boost. Sandy Elrick has also signed from Beaul, although he may start the season in the second team.

Rory MacKeachan is recovering from a tight hamstring but should play.

Caberfeidh manager Jodi Gorski is minus full back Ryan Symonds for this one as he is on holiday. Jamie MacIntosh has been carrying an injury, whilst key player Kevin Bartlett will have an enhanced role off the field.

Caberfeidh's Fraser MacArthur is banned.

Lovat v Newtonmore
Lovat open against Newtonmore at Balgait.

The sides also met on the opening day of the 2017 shinty season when an Iain Robinson hat-trick helped Newtonmore to a 4-2 win at The Eilan.

Lovat's Ryan Ferguson is unlikely to be involved with the senior side this term and Duncan Davidson has a hand

injury. Youngsters Scott MacKenzie and Mark Kelly are back in manager Fraser Gallacher's plans following long-term injury.

This is the first time Newtonmore haven't started the season as reigning champions since 2010 when Danny Macrae captained them to the first of seven successive title successes.

Kenny Ross takes over in goal from Norman Campbell. Defender Ackie MacRae has opted not to play this season but Neil Stewart will be in manager Paul John MacKintosh's plans.

Glen MacKintosh misses this one through suspension.

Lochaber v Kyles Athletic
Lochaber welcome Kyles Athletic to Spean Bridge.

New Lochaber boss Neil MacDonald has signed former Newtonmore player John MacKenzie. Keeper Callum MacDonald is sidelined after suffering an accident at work, whilst Brian MacDonald also misses this one as he serves a one-match ban.

Zandz Ferguson will not be available from the start of the season.

Kyles Athletic manager James Perlich would love to go one better than last season's second-placed finish. Defender Neil MacVicar has joined the club from Skye, but forward Sandy MacKenzie misses out through suspension.

Marine Harvest National Division

Fort William v Beaul

Fort William start their push for promotion back to shinty's top flight against Beaul at An Aird.

Fort William co-managers Victor Smith and Adam Robertson went through a transitional period last season as they lost the services of Niall MacPhee, Gordy MacKinnon, Steven Stewart and Daniel Stewart for different reasons. Youth has been to the fore, with Ally MacRae and Lachie Shaw now established in the senior side whilst Pdraig MacNeil has rejoined the club after 12 months with Inverness.

Beaul boss Alan MacRae has lost Sandy Elrick to Kingussie. His side had a morale-boosting pre-season win over Glenurquhart.

Kilmallie v Oban Celtic
Kilmallie also have their sights set on promotion and they have home advantage against Oban Celtic.

Kilmallie boss Mark MacPherson is delighted to have Liam MacDonald back after he missed almost the whole of last season and the Scotland forward will captain the side.

Liam Cameron and Robbie MacFadyen are also back after injury whilst Mark Graham, who was assistant manager last year, has indicated he wishes to concentrate on playing this year.

Experienced defenders Allan MacDonald and Peter Carmichael will not be available this term.

Kilmallie trio Craig MacIsaac, Martin Stewart and Michael Rodger all miss the start of the season through suspension.

Oban Celtic manager Kenny Wotherspoon has added Dylan Cooke from Glenorchy to his squad, as well as keeper David Martin and defender Calum MacLean, both from Oban Lorn, but David MacInnes won't be available.

Glasgow Mid Argyll v Inveraray
Glasgow Mid Argyll, relegated



Fort William's Alex MacMillan tackles Kyles' Robbie MacLeod during Saturday's Drew Ferguson Memorial Cup match at An Aird. Photograph: Iain Ferguson, Alba Photos.

from the premiership at the end of last season, have a tricky opener against Inveraray at Yoker.

GMA have signed Scotland U17 cap Jonny MacAskill from Kinlochshiel whilst Ewen Murray is free of injury. Ryan Harrison has told the club he won't be available this year, whilst Stuart Reid has relocated to Ireland.

Inveraray's Allan MacDonald is banned for his side's opening fixture, whilst the Winterton side have signed Craig Taylor from Kilmory.

Inverness v Strathglass

Inverness and Strathglass, who finished in the division's bottom two places last season, meet at The Bught Park.

Inverness have lost youngster Pdraig McNeil who has returned to Fort William after a season in the Highland Capital. Another promising youth, William MacKinnon, will play for Boleskine. Arran MacMaster sits this one out as he serves a one-match ban.

The Inverness first team will be managed by Callum McLeod this season with Drew McNeil taking charge of the seconds and youths.

Strathglass are bossed this year by Bruce Douglas, assisted by Roy MacKenzie. They will be without Hamish Myers for the early part of the season.

Marine Harvest North Division 1

Newtonmore v Aberdeen University

Champions Newtonmore reserves open with a match against Aberdeen University at The Eilan. The students were one of Newtonmore's biggest challengers last season so this is a tasty opening day fixture.

Orsten Gardiner takes the Newtonmore managerial hot-seat from Cammy MacDonald.

Former Boleskine and Aberdeen University forward Ewen Fraser has joined Newtonmore as he now works in the area, so he could play against his former club.

Glengarry v Kingussie

The Kingussie seconds, who finished third last year, are away to Craighard to play newly-promoted Glengarry.

Skye Camanachd v Kinlochshiel

There is a reserve west coast derby as Skye Camanachd and Kinlochshiel meet at Pairc nan Laoch, Portree.

This is the first of four meet-

ings between the sides this season as they have been drawn together in the first rounds of the Aberdeen Considine Sutherland Cup and the Strathdearn Cup.

Glenurquhart v Fort William

The Glenurquhart and Fort William second teams play at Blairbeg.

Both will field young sides this term.

Marine Harvest South Division 1

Taynuilt v Lochside Rovers

Lochside Rovers open the defence of their Marine Harvest South Division 1 title against Taynuilt at Taynuilt Sports Field.

The home side have signed former Lochside keeper Brian Logan who will replace Chris Parr between the sticks.

Lochside boss Gareth Evans is on holiday so his assistant Brian MacCallum will look after the side.

There will be changes with Steven Sloss unavailable and Daniel Sloss, Evan MacLellan, Chrissie MacMillan and Craig MacDougall moving up to the Oban Camanachd squad.

Inveraray v Ballachulish

Ballachulish are off to The Winterton where newly-promoted Inveraray seconds are the opposition.

Veterans David MacPherson and David Robertson will provide experience for Inveraray's young side.

Aberdour v Bute

Title contenders Aberdour and Bute meet at Silversands.

Aberdour will miss Roddy MacColl's goals after he retired at the end of last year but David McDougall will look to fill the void. Captain Cammy McCue has looked good during pre-season.

John MacCallum and Ian McDonald look after Bute who will be keen to get off to a good start.

Kyles Athletic v Kilmory

Kyles Athletic and Kilmory meet as Fraser Williamson takes over from Peter Mobeck in charge of Kyles. Kilmory will again rely on the scoring threat from Alex Cunningham and Hal Jones.

Tayforth v Col Glen

Tayforth have home advantage against Col Glen.

Ronnie MacVicar has taken over as Col Glen manager.

Celtic colts. James Craig takes the Bute seconds. Bute second team captain Neil McKirdy misses out through suspension as he serves the second game of a two-match ban carried forward from last season.

Strachur v Glasgow Mid Argyll

Strachur, who will be amongst the title favourites, welcome Glasgow Mid Argyll's second team to Strachurmore.

Glenorchy v Aberdeen

Glenorchy, relegated at the end of last season, meet the Aberdeen seconds at Mart Park.

There were rumours Glenorchy might not have been able to field a team this year so that is one battle the club has already won before the season gets under way.

Pre-season friendly results

The final round of pre-season friendly matches took place on Saturday February 24.

Fort William 0 Kyles Athletic 3

Fort William and Kyles Athletic played their annual challenge match for the Drew Ferguson Memorial Cup at An Aird with Kyles retaining the trophy.

Fort William were minus James Tangney and Jack Fraser, whilst Kyles travelled without Neil MacVicar, Cammy Keith, Gordon Whyte, Sandy MacKenzie, Colin MacDonald, Rupert Williamson and Donald Irvine. New signing Luke Thornton made his debut, getting 60 minutes at full forward.

The first half was scrappy but Kyles dominated the second period with their superior fitness giving them an edge.

Kyles started with Roddy MacDonald, Grant Irvine, Innes MacDonald and Scott MacDonald up front and they gave the Fort William defence of Sean Cruickshank, Ally MacRae, Ryan Boyle and Sean Cameron a hard time.

Kyles had to make a first half change when, during a goal-mouth scramble, Grant Irvine was whacked on the ankle by team mate Scott MacDonald who was trying to get a shot away. However Irvine, after treatment, was able to return in place of Innes MacDonald for the final third of the game.

Innes MacDonald came back on in defence for Ross MacRae for the final 15 minutes of the contest.

Grant Irvine scored twice, earning the man of the match accolade, whilst Roddy MacDonald got the other Kyles Athletic goal.

Kyles captain John Whyte accepted the Drew Ferguson Memorial Cup from Drew's mum Sheila Ferguson.

Fort William 1 Lochside Rovers 2

With the second team derby between Fort William and Kilmallie called off earlier in the week, and the Lochside Rovers meeting with the Newtonmore second team not going ahead, Fort William and Lochside quickly arranged a noon throw-up at An Aird.

Oban Camanachd had been due to face Kilmallie but with that game called off, Matt Rippon, Lorne Dickie, Willie Neilson and Scott MacMillan were included, with the last two starting on the bench.

Iain MacMillan looked after Lochside, as manager Gareth Evans was working, and his assistant Brian MacCallum was also unavailable.

Marine Harvest North Division 2

Beaul v Lochaber

The Lochaber second team, who finished second in the division last season, open with a trip to Braeview Park to play the Beaul second team.

Boleskine v Lochcarron

Boleskine have recruited several new players during the close season and their first league match is at home to Lochcarron.

The new Boleskine recruits include Ewen MacKinnon and his sons William and Ross, as well as Stuart MacRae, all from Inverness.

Murdo John Fraser has returned for another spell as Lochcarron manager.

Caberfeidh v Lewis Camanachd

The Caberfeidh colts await Lewis Camanachd at Castle Leod.

Kenny Murray will not feature for Lewis this season.

Strathglass v Inverness

The Inverness seconds make the short journey to Cannich to take on the Strathglass second team.

Drew McNeil will look after the Inverness seconds this season, taking over from Allan MacLeod who will play in goal for the first team and take over a number of the club's off-field administrative duties.

Drew McNeil also takes the lead with the Inverness U14 and U17 sides with a view to bringing through the club's youngsters into the second team providing continuity of coaching over these vital years.

Strathspey Camanachd v Kilmallie

The Kilmallie seconds open with a trip to Grantown Grammar School to face Strathspey Camanachd.

Darren Urquhart's Lovat second team do not have an opening day fixture in this eleven team league.

Marine Harvest South Division 2

Oban Celtic v Bute

An Oban Celtic second team, returning to league action for the first time since the 1999/2000 season, open at home to the Bute second team.

Former Oban Celtic player Alan Duffy and Les Kinvig will manage the newly-formed Oban

Camanachd Cup Macaulay Cup MacTavish Cup Celtic Society Cup

Sutherland Cup Balliemore Cup Strathdearn Cup Bullough Cup



Fort William took a first half lead when a terrific long-range shot from young Victor Smith nestled in the top corner of the net.

It was the only goal of the first half with Lochside unable to convert their pressure into goals.

Lochside brought on Willie Neilson and Scott MacMillan at half time and moved Matt Rippon from defence to attack.

Connor MacRae capitalised on some poor communication in the Lochside defence to make it 2-0.

Matt Rippon pulled a goal back, but Fort William stayed in front to win 2-1.

Lochaber 1 Lovat 4

Lovat beat Lochaber 4-1 in their all-premiership friendly match at Spean Bridge.

The new Lochaber manager was without keeper Callum MacDonald so 19-year-old Ally MacDonald took over in goal and did well. Brian MacDonald and Zandz Ferguson were also missing.

Former Newtonmore player John MacKenzie started at full forward for Lochaber and was joined in attack by Shaun Nicolson, Findlay MacDonald and Stuart Matheson.

Lovat also had a change in goal with manager Fraser Gallacher replacing Stuart MacDonald who was on holiday. Drew Howie and Lorne MacKay were also unavailable for the Balgait side, whilst Martin Mainland was injured.

Lochaber took the lead on 35 minutes when a clearance out of defence from Lovat goalie Fraser Gallacher went straight to Shaun Nicolson who struck the ball first time from outside the 'D' to make it 1-0.

Lovat levelled a couple of minutes before half time when Greg Matheson darted into the 'D' to turn home a ball across goal with Lochaber claiming for offside.

Greg Matheson put Lovat ahead for the first time in the game on the hour mark when he unleashed a 30 yard rocket-shot on his back-hand.

Marc MacLachlan made it 3-1 10 minutes later, netting from 15 yards to give Lovat a cushion.

A first senior goal for Bailey MacKay followed on 73 minutes. Wing centre MacKay seemed to come from nowhere with a late run at a corner, catching out the home defence. MacKay took a nice touch to take the ball down with his stick and he slipped it past keeper MacDonald only for the ball to come back off the post. However the rebound fell perfectly for MacKay who tapped it into the bottom corner of the net to make it 4-1.

Lochaber substitute Danny Delaney missed a late penalty, sending the ball wide of Fraser Gallacher's right post.

Beuly 0 Skye Camanachd 5

Skye Camanachd took the field for the first time this year, beating Beaully 5-0 in their 1pm throw-up at Braeview Park.

Whilst Beaully had already appeared pre-season, this was fourth time lucky for Skye as the wet weather had wiped out their pre-season programme.

Skye took the lead after six minutes when Jordan Murchison slipped in Ruaraidh MacLeod who finished well into the top corner from 15 yards for his first goal at senior level.

James Pringle made it 2-0 after 13 minutes.

Pringle went on a great solo run from half-way line and beat the keeper with a great finish.

The second half was just 11 minutes old when Iain MacLellan tucked a back-hand finish past Josh Grant, beating the keeper from 15 yards.

A great turn by Ross Gordon ended with a pass to Jordan Murchison on 76 minutes. Murchison juggled the ball with his back to goal before turning and smashing the dropping ball on his back-hand from 20 yards, past a helpless keeper.

A minute later, Ruaraidh MacLeod nipped in between a defender and keeper Josh Grant to make it 5-0.



Inveraray's Craig Taylor in action during last Saturday's pre-season friendly against Newtonmore.

Photograph: Stephen Lawson.

Inverness 0 Kinlochshiel 6

Inverness and Kinlochshiel have been drawn together at Kirkton in the first round of the cottages. com MacTavish Cup and they arranged a friendly at The Bught Park.

Kinlochshiel had Scott Kennedy back in goal but the other end of the park saw most of the action with Jordan Fraser impressing with four goals and Finlay MacRae and John MacRae getting the others.

Glasgow Mid Argyll 1 Kingussie 3

Glasgow Mid Argyll and Kingussie lined up for a 12.30pm meeting at Yoker.

Kingussie travelled south with a young squad but they had keeper Craig Dawson and Fraser Munro back in the side.

GMA were without full back Ryan Harrison who is unlikely to play this season.

Fraser Munro put Kingussie ahead five minutes from the end of the first half.

Munro found the net from left of the penalty spot, crashing the ball high into the roof of net.

Lee Bain made it 2-0 when, standing on the penalty spot, he turned sharply and with a half-swing sent the ball into the bottom corner of the goal.

Darren Hanlan hit Kingussie's third with a good drive into the top corner of the net from the middle of pitch around 20 yards out.

John McNulty netted for the hosts with literally the last hit of the game. McNulty's low shot from the right went across keeper Dawson and into the bottom corner of the net.

Kingussie's Fraser Munro was the game's stand-out performer, whilst Ewan Murray was best for GMA in a match refereed by Ross Brown.

Glenurquhart 3 Strathglass 0

Glenurquhart retained the MacDonald Cup when they beat Strathglass 3-0 at Blairbeg.

It was a good afternoon for Glenurquhart's Fraser Heath who scored all three of his side's goals.

Glenurquhart 2 Strathglass 0

There was a reserve team meeting between Glenurquhart and Strathglass at Blairbeg, with the Ali Bhan Cup at stake. This also went Glenurquhart's way as they won 2-0.

Bradley Sneddon and Ben Hosie grabbed the goals.

Newtonmore 5 Inveraray 1

Newtonmore and Inveraray met at The Eilan as part of the host club's annual open day. All the goals came in the second half.

Ewan Fraser, who has joined the club from Aberdeen University, scored twice, as did Ewan Menzies. Glen MacKintosh got the other.

Lewis MacNicol countered for Inveraray, who included new signing Craig Taylor.

Aberdour 1 Col Glen 2

A mixture of Aberdour first and second team players took on Col Glen at Silversands, with the visitors coming out 2-1 victors.

The Aberdour second team had been due to play Strachur but that game was postponed so coach Lisa MacColl was awash with players and she tried to give as many as possible a game.

This affected the rhythm of the match but the hosts went in front when David MacDougall slotted home a Kieran Burns ball from the wing.

It was a fairly even first half and Col Glen got their reward when Jamie MacVicar set up Donnie McDiarmid to equalise before half time.

Aberdour, with captain Cammy McCue having a fine game, continued to rotate their side and, just when it looked like the game would finish level, Willie MacVicar popped up to score a late winner for Col Glen, with Jamie MacVicar again the provider.

Kingussie 1 Caberfeidh 0

The Kingussie colts from Marine Harvest North Division 1 and the Caberfeidh colts from Marine Harvest North Division 2 met in a 2pm throw-up Dunbarry.

A Kevin Thain goal was the difference between the sides, giving Kingussie a 1-0 victory.

Glasgow Mid Argyll 3 Bute 3

The Glasgow Mid Argyll second team and the Bute second team drew 3-3 in their 2.30pm throw-up at Yoker.

Scott Anderson, Connor McLeod and Angus MacInnes were on target for GMA but two goals from Bute captain Neil McKirdy and a Chris McGowan goal ensured a share of the spoils.

Tayforth P Strathspey Camanachd P

The game between Tayforth and Strathspey Camanachd at Levenhall Links didn't go ahead.

Glenarry P Skye Camanachd P

The match between Glenarry and the Skye Camanachd second team at Craigarig was postponed on Thursday evening.

Boleskine P Lovat P

Boleskine's meeting with the Lovat second team didn't go ahead.

National First Shinty Festival

The National P5 and under and P7 and under First Shinty Festivals takes place in Fort William this Saturday, March 3.

The event is one of youth shinty's biggest days with teams from all over Scotland taking part.

The competing sides have all won their regional tournaments so a great day's shinty is guaranteed.

The P5 and under tournament takes place at Lochaber High School whilst the P7 and under competition will be held at The Nevis Centre.

WCA round-up

The Women's Camanachd Association Marine Harvest National Division got under way on Sunday February 25.

Fort William 1 Skye Camanachd 15

Champions Skye Camanachd got their season off to a great start, beating Fort William 15-1 at An Aird. Leah Maxtone scored for the Fort but Lorna MacRae and Jenna Beaton both netted five for Skye. Sarah Corrigan scored four and Katherine Dibble got the other.

Ardnamurchan 0 Lochaber 13

Lochaber, who finished second in the division last season, were too strong for newly-promoted Ardnamurchan, winning 13-0 at Strontian.

Kirsty Delaney scored six times whilst Rebecca Masson and Caitlin MacDonald bagged doubles.

Thea Robertson, Christy MacIntyre and Natalie MacDonald got the others for a Lochaber side who gave debuts to Caitlin MacDonald, Thea Robertson and Katie MacRae.

Badenoch 4 Aberdour 1

Badenoch were 4-1 winners against Aberdour at Dunbarry.

Goals from Eilidh Ross, Mairi Stewart, Klaudia Ordys and an own goal counted for Badenoch, with Catriona Chamberlain scoring for Aberdour.

Strathspey 2 Glasgow Mid Argyll 1

Strathspey were surprise 2-1 winners in their 1.30pm throw-up against Glasgow Mid Argyll at Grantown Grammar School.

After a goal-less first half, Jade Longworth gave Strathspey the lead soon after the re-start, quickly followed by a Jane Moodie effort which made it 2-0.

GMA pulled a goal back through Rachel McCafferty but Strathspey, with Stacey Hutton having a great game, stayed in front to win.

Scotland Development Squad announced

The Women's Camanachd Association has confirmed this year's Scotland senior development squad for the trip to London to take on the British camogie select on Saturday April 14.

The selection criteria for the development squad is that players cannot have participated in the 2017 international squad. It therefore allows anyone who missed out last year, either because they were unavailable or just below the level to be selected, the opportunity to be seen in a squad in a competitive setting.

Women's Camanachd Association president Lisa McColl explained: 'The WCA addressed the issue of representative shinty and player pathways above club level for all age categories. The aim was to create a suitable number of development opportunities that look not just

at player development but at introducing and up-skilling coaches interested in taking their coaching to a next level.

'At U14 level, there is opportunities for girls to play in mixed club teams, women's development and league teams. But, with increasing numbers coming out of primary school age groups, there was a need to look at opportunities above club level. The first rung on the representative ladder is the new U14 North v South representative squad which proved popular last October.

'At U18/U21 level, the WCA recognised North v South shinty was not working.

'These players can play mixed club shinty at U17 level and play with their women's club team but there wasn't an opportunity for those showing potential to play above club level.'

Lisa went on to explain the measures that have been introduced to fill the gap and said: 'The WCA has introduced an U18 elite development section for selected players. From this, they will have the opportunity to play as a squad against the senior development squad and then be selected for an U18 Scotland Squad.

'At senior level, there are plenty of opportunities to play women's club shinty. The next step on the ladder is the senior North v South representative matches which are always very successful and keenly contested.

'After this, there is the full Scotland squad. However, with a massively increasing number of players in this category, it has now become difficult for players to break into this squad.

'We felt there was a need to bridge the gap between club shinty and the full Scotland squad to allow more players exposure to the coaching and experience of playing with players of a similar ability, hence the introduction of the Scotland senior development squad.

'The players now have the opportunity to address any skill and fitness gap with a goal to strive for the next rung on the ladder later that season or in future years.

'Both the senior development squad and the U18 squad therefore address the gap we identified in our current player pathway.

'The new format also allows us to bring in coaches who can be supported and up-skilled as part of the process.'

Scotland Development Squad from: Elizabeth MacGregor, Hazel Hunter, Donna MacKenzie, Joanne Gillanders, Christy MacIntyre, Hanna Dougan, Mairi Stewart, Lucy MacMillan, Nicola MacSween, Zoe Smith, Katie Booth, Grace Drummond, Ilana Paterson, Sarah Corrigan, Elaine Wink, Missy Cameron, Aoife Tangney and Isabelle Law.

Reserves from: Katy Minard, Jenna Jackson, Shaina Archibald, Joanne Ford and Sarah Jane Ferguson.



Fixtures

Saturday March 3

Marine Harvest Premiership

Kingussie v Caberfeidh
Graham Cameron
Kinlochshiel v Glenurquhart
Innes Wood
Lochaber v Kyles Athletic
Archie Ritchie
Lovat v Newtonmore
Deek Cameron
Oban Camanachd v Skye
Lachie Wood

Marine Harvest National Division

Fort William v Beaully
Andy MacLean
Glasgow MA v Inveraray
Ross Brown
Inverness v Strathglass
John Angus Gillies
Kilmallie v Oban Celtic
Calum Girvan

Marine Harvest North Division 1

Glenarry v Kingussie
Des McNulty
Glenurquhart v Fort William
Brian MacKay
Newtonmore v Aberdeen Uni
John Wood
Skye v Kinlochshiel
Iain Kennedy

Marine Harvest South Division 1

Aberdour v Bute
David Mitchell
Inveraray v Ballachulish
Alex MacVicar
Kyles Athletic v Kilmory
Graham Fisher
Tayforth v Col Glen
Euan Pearson
Taynuilt v Lochside Rovers
Ronnie Campbell

Marine Harvest North Division 2

Beaully v Lochaber
Scott McNeil
Boleskine v Lochcarron
John Matheson
Caberfeidh v Lewis
TBC
Strathglass v Inverness
TBC
Strathspey v Kilmallie
Neil MacDonald

Marine Harvest South Division 2

Glenorchy v Aberdour
Euan Pearson
Oban Celtic v Bute
Jim Innes
Strachur v Glasgow MA
Ewan MacDonald

Throw-ups 2.30pm unless stated.



Glenurquhart's David MacLennan goes between Strathglass players Michael Stokes and Lewis Douglas. Photograph: Neil Paterson.

Oban Lorne head for Greenock

Rugby

BT West Division One Greenock Wanderers v Oban Lorne

OBAN Lorne make the trip to Inverclyde on Saturday to take on mid table side Greenock Wanderers. The teams have already met this season last October with Oban recording a thumping 30-0 win in the Green Machine's best performance of the season so far.

After a poor first half to the season, Oban will be looking to make amends for some poor performances and scorelines that see the team sitting in the relegation zone, only above league stragglers Helensburgh.

Coach Corrie Louw will be hoping for a strong squad to choose from for this Saturday's game including the return of scrum half Finlay Carmichael from a six week suspension.

For the past few weeks, the team has been training in the Isle of Eriska Hotel's games hall.

Without this space the club would have no alternative but to cancel training sessions such is the lack of available space in Oban.

A win on Saturday would lift the team out of the relegation zone, depending on results elsewhere.

The next home game for Oban Lorne is the visit of Kilmarnock on Saturday March 17.

Ladies can win title this weekend

Women's rugby

BT Women's National League 2 Kelso v Oban Lorne

Oban Lorne Ladies will win the National League 2 Championship this Sunday if they win or draw away to mid table side Kelso.

The Oban Ladies have been hugely impressive in the league so far this season, winning all nine of their fixtures, conceding only two tries.

The team have racked up some impressive scorelines including a thumping 103-5 win away to second placed Aberdeenshire Quines.

Even if the league title is decided on Sunday, the team still have two league fixtures remaining.

The first is at home to Royal Dick Vet College on Sunday March 11 followed by an away trip to Grangemouth on March 18.

The team will be looking to finish the season on a high with a potential Bowl Final place at Murrayfield at stake.

The Ladies take on Howe of Fife Women on Sunday April 8 for a place in the national final.

This semi final tie will be played at Glencruitten with a 2pm kick off.

In the other half of the semi final tie, Garioch Women take on Orkney.

Ten-goal Celtic win Robert Wylie Memorial Trophy

Oban Celtic	10
Ballachulish	1
Wylie Memorial Trophy	

OBAN Celtic beat Ballachulish 10-1 at Mossfield to lift the Robert Wylie Memorial Cup.

The Oban High School 3G pitch was booked as back-up for this 2pm throw-up but Mossfield was in great condition following good weather during the week.

Unsurprisingly, Oban Celtic started with the same forward line - Ross MacMillan, Daniel MacMillan, Andy MacDonald and Daniel Madej - who put 11 goals past Glengarry a week earlier.

There were only a couple of minutes gone when Daniel Madej put the home side ahead with a knee-high shot which beat the keeper on his left side.

Celtic added another five minutes later when a corner on the right was only cleared as far as Celtic full centre Ally McKerracher and although the keeper got a hand to McKerracher's shot, he could only palm the ball into the net.

The home side continued to press and extended their lead on 22 minutes when Daniel MacMillan did well down the left to pick out Daniel Madej who made no mistake, firing into the corner of the net.

Andy Hunt was playing well for

the home side on the wing as was Ally McKerracher in the middle of the park, whilst Fulton Ronald was mopping up at the back when called upon.

Ballachulish pulled a goal back on 28 minutes. Daniel MacLean floated the ball towards the Celtic 'D' and it seemed to deflect off Michael MacKinnon's heel, catching out keeper Jack Hill, and ending up in the back of the net, much to the angst of Celtic manager Kenny Woterspoon.

Oban Celtic responded instantly with Daniel Madej scoring almost straight from the re-start to complete his hat-trick. Madej rounded the goalkeeper to put his side in control.

There was still time for Celtic to add two more first half goals. A corner from the right wasn't cleared and fell to Ross MacMillan who pinged the ball home from 20 yards, high into the net to the keeper's right.

Daniel Madej was too hot to handle and he got a fourth goal as the first half drew to a close. The goal was similar to his third as he again rounded the keeper before netting to make it 6-1 at the break.

Kenny Woterspoon made changes with both wingers Andy Hunt and Dylan Cooke replaced by Kieran Carnie and George MacMillan. Daniel MacMillan also made way for Neil Carmichael.

A good Ross MacMillan run down the left on 51 minutes ended with MacMillan cutting the ball back to Daniel Madej and, with the aid of a slight deflection off Ballachulish defender Lorne Brown, the ball ended up in the roof of the net.

A tactical change by Kenny Woterspoon for the closing 20 minutes saw Neil Carmichael move back into centre and, for the second successive week, the impressive Ally McKerracher was switched into the forward



Oban Celtic played Ballachulish on Saturday, commemorating former Celtic player Robert Wylie. In the end, the Oban-side ran out 10-1 winners. Speaking after the match, Robert's sister Lorna thanked both teams for taking part. 'The day Robert died,' she said, 'Oban Celtic played Ballachulish. They lost, but he scored three goals.' Left to right: Oban Celtic manager Kenny Woterspoon, Robert's sister Lorna, mum Catherine and man of the match Daniel Madej, Oban Celtic.

line. These moves paid dividends almost immediately as Ross MacMillan made it 8-1 with a snap-shot from the edge of the 'D' following good work down the right from his brother Daniel MacMillan, who had come back on in place of Andy MacDonald.

Ally McKerracher made it 9-1 with a superb finish which flew past the keeper and McKerracher completed his hat-trick with a shot on his weaker left hand side to finish the scoring at 10-1 to

Celtic. The game was played in good spirits and was well refereed by Des McNulty.

The Robert Wylie Cup was presented to Oban Celtic club captain Daniel Madej by Robert's mother Catherine and Robert's sister Lorna.

It was no surprise that five-goal Daniel Madej was presented with the Robert Wylie (senior) award as man of the match.

Shinty

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Oban Celtic with the Robert Wylie Memorial Trophy. Photograph: Kevin McGlynn.

Narrow win for Earra-Ghaidheal

Oban Earra-Ghaidheal 1 Mull Thistle 0

A TIGHT game last Saturday ended in a 1-0 victory for Oban Earra-Ghaidheal against Mull Thistle, despite a couple of late scares from the travelling team.

Earra-Ghaidheal fielded a new player, Kevin Roy, in defence and he put in a fantastic performance.

Mull would have been happy going into the break level with some great work in the middle of the park preventing Oban from getting the ball to their wide men Kevin Keen and Marc Blair who both looked dangerous on the odd occasion they got the ball.

Despite the wide men not getting much service, the home team managed to muster half a dozen chances through the middle and only some inspired goalkeeping by Mull's Sean McGee kept them in it.

The half time team talk inspired Oban to get the ball out

wider and this was the catalyst for some brilliant attacking football.

Kevin Keen on the left wing was getting plenty service from man of the match David Smith and his midfield counterparts Aidan Campbell and Keith Astles and his balls into the box were causing all sorts of trouble.

With half-an-hour to go, Earra-Ghaidheal made two changes, Allan McKechnie replacing Marc Blair on the right and Murdo MacKenzie placing Keith Astles in the middle of the park.

McKechnie continued from where Blair left off, putting some wonderful balls in behind the defence. The clock was ticking and the game seemed to be heading for a draw when Alan Buchanan rifled a shot into the far top corner from the right hand side of the box.

Thistle came out fighting after this and were extremely unlucky not to score from a great passage

of play down the left which saw a close range effort from Shaun MacLean miss the target from a few yards out under pressure from goalkeeper Adam Mekler.

Loose play in the middle of the park allowed Shaun Fisher a clear run through on the Oban goal, only to be maliciously taken down from behind on the edge of the box by someone who he thought was a good friend, fellow Bunessan boy Stephen McCracken.

The resulting free kick was ultimately wasted by Daniel Watson who smashed it straight at the grateful Hungarian between the sticks.

Oban were happy to see out the final few minutes with no further scares. Special thanks to Calum Fox who marshalled the game superbly and to Soroba House for the great food and drink after the match.

Disappointing late call-offs

Expected Toulouse 9 Pique Blinders 6

THERE was a late start to the league proceedings because of several disappointing call offs.

However, the game between two of the league newcomers more than made up for the lack of games beforehand.

In a match where every player performed excellently, it was Toulouse who drew first blood after a cool finish by Joel Edwards who put the ball into the roof of the net after being put through on goal.

The youngsters of Pique Blinders fought back through an excellent Cammy Hill solo goal after a mazy run through the Toulouse defence. Between Hill's ability to control the game from the middle of the hall and his teammate Keir MacLean's ruthless finishing, the lead changed throughout a high quality first half and finished 3-3.

In the second half, the score was tied at 5-5 before a superb acrobatic finish from man of the match Shaun McIver put Expected Toulouse back in front. It was McIver again who scored another from distance to open the largest lead of the match.

A penalty opportunity presented a chance for Expected Toulouse to finish the match off, after a slack passback from Cammy Hill forced goalkeeper Tommy Hondros to come out from his area.

Robbie Johnstone hit the post with the penalty.

Encouraged by the miss, Pique Blinders scored and looked like they might just find a way to salvage something from the match, but McIver again struck to kill the game off and finish the match 9-6.

It was a superb game that both teams could have won.

Both teams were committed and fought hard, but at no point did the referee have to step in.

Glensanda 8 Atlantis Leisure 2

After another late call off from AC Milama, Atlantis Leisure stepped in to play the undefeated champions with only a few hours to get organised.

This meant AC Milama avoided forfeiting the game. It was Glensanda, though, who once again strolled to victory leaving Atlantis Leisure wondering how they're going to close the gap between the two sides.

Atlantis Leisure will rue the mistakes at the back that allowed several of the Glensanda goals to be scored. With the stand-in referee Kevin Roy unable to play this season, it left Atlantis exposed several times, and when you come against players like Jamie Graham and Craig MacEwen, who will again be one of the favourites for the player of the season award, you are going to get punished.

Due to having to put a team together at late notice, it was Ben Pollock who stepped in to save the day for Atlantis, who would have been without a goalkeeper.

Indoor football

Ben still hasn't fully recovered from a broken rib, but take nothing away from Glensanda, who put together some superb attacking moves.

It wouldn't have made a difference if there were two goalkeepers in goals for Atlantis at times. Glensanda were able to field almost a full team, with stand in goalkeeper James Scott proving to be in imperious form, earning himself man of the match.

You could have named any of the Glensanda players as man of the match, they were so efficient, seeing themselves 3-0 up at half time thanks to tidy finishes, one from Jonny Will who was finding himself marked by the much younger Gavin Forgievie who, despite some great effort, just couldn't match the strength of Will.

With the score at 8-1, Pollock had to retire from the game, unable to play on through his rib injury. Kevin Keen drew the short straw, playing out the final seven minutes in goals instead of Pollock.

Glensanda were good for their lead by this point and despite a goal back from debutant Peter MacMillan and a fine save from Keen to deny Craig MacEwen, it was the champions who emerged deservedly victorious.

With an extremely tough premiership this season it looks like they are the team to beat once again.

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WEATHER

Thursday Gusty winds and light cloud
Winds strong easterly
Temperatures 1°C to 3°C

Friday Gusty winds and light cloud
Winds strong easterly
Temperatures 2°C to 4°C

Weekend Light cloud and breezy
Outlook Winds moderate easterly
Temperatures 2°C to 5°C

TIDAL INFORMATION

Tide tables for Oban during the week from Thursday March 1, 2018 are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

Date		am		pm				
Thur	05.13	4.0	11.46	0.6	17.45	3.9	23.46	0.4
Fri	05.52	4.2	12.28	0.5	18.20	4.0	** **	**
Sat	00.29	0.3	06.29	4.2	13.08	0.5	18.55	4.0
Sun	01.11	0.3	07.06	4.2	13.46	0.6	19.29	4.0
Mon	01.50	0.4	07.40	4.0	14.22	0.8	20.01	3.8
Tues	02.28	0.6	08.13	3.8	14.58	1.0	20.33	3.6
Wed	03.06	0.9	08.46	3.5	15.35	1.3	21.07	3.4

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)

Ardrishaig	-5.35	Mallaig	+0.25
Campbeltown	-5.30	Portree	+0.55
Crinan	-0.47	Tobermory	+0.16
Islay Port Ellen	2.00	Dover	+5.30
Lochboisdale	+0.30		

Ferry Crossings/Sea States

Oban to Barra/South Uist	Moderate
Oban to Coll/Tiree	Moderate
Kennacraig to Islay	Moderate

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The Oban Times
bonnie babies
 Competition 2018
see page 15

Fort hotel owner wants the council slapped with ASBO

MARK ENTWISTLE
 mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

THE owner of Fort William's popular Lime Tree An Ealdhain hotel, restaurant and art gallery is taking legal advice about slapping Highland Council with an anti-social behaviour order over late-night disturbances from the town's nearby West End car park.

David Wilson says he has had enough of boy racers revving their car engines late at night and disturbing his guests, as well as the noise from people illegally camping overnight in the car park.

'The last straw was on Sunday night when someone was revving a car that had an exhaust modified to sound like gunfire - in fact, we did think at first it actually was gunfire and it was reported to the police,' Mr Wilson told us.

One of the guests at the Lime Tree on Sunday night echoed Mr Wilson's comments.

'The amount of noise was ridiculous - it was so loud the windows were rattling,' she said.

Mr Wilson says the problems have been going on for years and his patience with Highland Council, which owns the car park, is now exhausted.

'This is not just disturbing our guests at the hotel but probably a large number of residents in the centre of the town. Modified exhausts such as these are illegal but nothing ever gets done about them,' he said.

'But despite my numerous complaints, Highland Council is still not acting in accordance with its responsibility to manage this car park properly.

'We really can't put up with the levels of noise any longer and something also needs done about the illegal camping.

'Recently I was forced to go outside and ask someone to turn off an industrial generator that they had fired up



David Wilson has been driven to distraction by anti-social behaviour in the West End car park.

right in front of the hotel late at night, only to be attacked by the man while a woman standing nearby egged him on with shouts of, "Kill him!"

Mr Wilson, who has been at the Lime Tree for 22 years, said he was not injured in the affray and had not bothered reporting the assault.

'Because the council and police seem unable to tackle these two issues, I am taking legal advice about having the council served with an ASBO because it is responsible for what happens in its own car parks,' added Mr Wilson.

'Highland Council has been absolutely useless and is not acting responsibly in ensuring public safety and security.

'We even offered to pay for a barrier at the car park and to manage it for the council, but got nowhere. So enough is enough.'

Asked to respond to Mr Wilson's criticism, a Highland Council spokesperson said the local authority was introducing amendments to the traffic order to address issues relating to overnight camping for this season.

'Issues relating to public order or

moving traffic violations are matters for Police Scotland,' the spokesperson added.

And local Fort William police inspector Isla Campbell said she was happy to meet Mr Wilson to discuss his concerns.

'We are aware of reports of anti-social behaviour involving vehicles in the West End car park in Fort William,' Inspector Campbell said.

'Fixed penalty notices have been issued to drivers and officers patrol the area, engaging with drivers.

'Where drivers are found to be using

their vehicles anti-socially, they will be dealt with appropriately.

'I would also urge drivers using the car park to show respect for other road users, as well as taking care not to cause disruption for residents and businesses in the area.

'Anyone with concerns about anti-social behaviour of any kind should report this to us as soon as possible so we can take suitable action.

'You can call 101 or pass information to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 if you wish to remain anonymous.'

INSIDE YOUR LOCHABER TIMES THIS WEEK

Tour starts here

SCOTS Trad Music Awards winners Heron Valley are ready to set off on a mini-tour in Fort William ahead of playing in the United States. Full story - page two.

Stagecoach blasted

A LOCHABER transport group has blasted Stagecoach for its 'gun to the head' negotiating tactics after announcing a review its services in the area. Full story - page three.

Hydrogen ferry

THE world's first sea-going hydrogen-powered ferry could soon be serving communities in the Western Isles. Full story - page four.

BEAR slammed

BEAR Scotland has been told that its response to the problem of potholes and deteriorating road surfaces is simply not good enough. Full story - page five.

Museum award

GLENFINNAN Station Museum won a Heritage Railway Association award this month for its importance to West Highland railway history. Full story - page six.

Fort FC could go

HIGHLAND League secretary Rod Houston says he is extremely concerned Fort William FC are on the verge of crashing out of the league. Full story - page 32.



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Belford has highest mortality rate

BELFORD Hospital has the highest rate in Scotland of people dying within 30 days of being admitted, despite an overall reduction nationwide, writes Neill Bo Finlayson.

Figures released from the Scottish Government show that for the period July to September 2017, Belford Hospital had a significantly higher mortality rate than the national average and was the highest in the country.

Across Scotland, there were 6,084 deaths within 30 days of hospital admission during the 2017 period - 14 per cent fewer than predicted - while there has been a 10.6 per cent decrease in the mortality rate

overall since 2014. This means that the Scottish Government's target to cut the mortality rate by 10 per cent between 2014 and 2018 has already been met.

Belford Hospital in Fort William, however, is an exception to the trend, measuring a ratio that is almost double the national average.

The figures were compiled to reveal the Hospital Standardised Mortality Ratios (HSMR) in Scotland, giving an overall measure of the number of people dying within 30 days of being admitted to hospital.

The HSMR takes account of patients who die within 30 days of being admitted to hospital, including those who die in the

community, but does not include patients who die in hospital more than 30 days after they were admitted for treatment.

NHS Highland said that the high mortality rate in Fort William may be down to the number of beds at Belford Hospital and the lack of a community hospital or hospice in the area.

A representative of NHS Highland explained: 'Mortality ratios are calculated four times a year for all hospitals in Scotland.'

'A slight rise in actual mortality and a small decrease in the predicted mortality rate has occurred for Belford Hospital.

'This has caused a single data point which is higher than

usual but may simply be normal statistical variation, which can easily occur for a hospital with fewer than 40 beds in an area which has no community hospital or hospice.

'NHS Highland will be checking that all usual care and monitoring procedures are in place in the hospital.

'As a standard response in these circumstances, we will be reviewing all relevant clinical cases.'

The health watchdog Healthcare Improvement Scotland may now work with NHS Highland to investigate the Belford's mortality rate as part of the government's patient safety programme.



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FW

Heron Valley head for Fort gig

In a special interview for the Lochaber Times, Fort William's **RHIANNON MELROSE**, who is in her final year of a university media course in Glasgow, speaks to Heron Valley about their new tour, which kicks off in Fort William tomorrow night



Rhiannon Melrose.

THE nominated 'Up and Coming Artist of the Year' at the Scots Trad Music Awards 2017, Heron Valley, who brought us hit tracks *Pressed for Time* and *Home*, are ready to set off on a mini-tour around their home turf of the Highlands before embarking on a US tour later in the year.

The band have had an epic year of performances at more than 20 festivals across the UK and Europe, as well as the release of their debut album *Roam*.

Kicking off the tour at the Railway Club in Fort William tomorrow, I spoke to them ahead of their performance.

Q: Do you do anything to prepare yourself before going on stage?

'We all have our own routines for getting ready to go on stage, but the most important thing is warming up on our instruments. Abigail likes to have some tea and Euan spends a lot of the time double-checking his pipes and whistles but, as a band, we like to listen to the other acts and enjoy the atmosphere.'

Q: A lot of acts say that Scottish crowds give the best response. What has your experience of Scottish audiences been like?

'We have always found Scot-



Heron Valley's new tour kicks off in Fort William tomorrow night (Friday March 2). Picture: Ken Clark

tish crowds to be the most energetic. It's always great craic and everyone loves a good dance. There's a different feeling when you play a gig on your home ground.'

Q: Where did the idea for the diverse *Home* music video come from?

'The idea for the *Home* video came as most of us had moved to Glasgow from Argyll, so, as we were travelling back for whatever reasons, we would always drive through lots of beautiful scenery.'

'Alex had been doing some walking around the area and

figured it would be a nice place to film it. It just seemed rather fitting to shoot a video for our single on the hills we would pass by on our way home.'

Q: What are you looking forward to about your mini-tour in March?

'We are really looking forward to playing in front of home crowds and seeing the support we have from everyone makes these sorts of gigs really special to us.'

Q: Where do you feel you get the best response – at your own concerts where you are the headline act or a festival where

you share the bill with other bands?

'Sharing the bill is always great. It allows us to meet new people and introduce them to the band and our music, especially at a festival where everyone is so nice and up for having a great time. We went to Italy for a few festivals, which felt very surreal – the atmosphere and culture we experienced at these festivals will definitely stay with us forever.'

Q: Where did the band name Heron Valley come from?

'It's named after the village of Strachur, where we started the

band. It roughly translates as "Valley of the Heron".'

Q: Was it difficult finding your own sound?

'Our own sound came naturally to us over time. Playing as much as possible helps you learn new ways to create different sounds and work out what we all like. Listening to our favourite bands and trying ideas out in rehearsals allows us to keep progressing with our sound.'

Q: The first night of your tour is in Fort William. What has your experience been like playing here?

'Fort William has always been

great to play. It's big on traditional music and you can always expect a brilliant night.'

Q: Which other artists do you want to work with and who would be your dream collaboration?

'We all individually have our idols. As a band, we would really like to start incorporating other musicians into our new material. We played a tune with Jig Jam at the T'ree Music Festival, so it would be really cool to work with them again.'

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Email rhiannonmelrose@hotmail.com

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WHAT'S ON

□ The March meeting of the Lochaber Local History Society sees John Dye of Acharacle speaking on one of his many interests - vitrified forts.

The enigma of these constructions, found in a number of places locally, has baffled archaeologists and historians for a century or two. John will be shining some new light when he speaks under the title - Vitrified Forts of Moirdart: New Evidence for their Origin.

A compelling night is promised. Learn more at 8pm tonight, Thursday March 1, at the Ben Nevis Hotel. All welcome.

□ The World Day of Prayer Service will be held tomorrow, Friday March 2, in St Mary's Church, Fort William at 2pm. The service, called 'All God's Creation is Very Good' is written by the women of Suriname in South America. All welcome.

□ Lochaber District Gaelic Choir is hosting a fundraising ceilidh tomorrow, Friday March 2, at Caol Community Centre. Listen to the Lochaber District Gaelic Choir perform some of their Mòd-winning pieces, Mòd medallist solo singers and dance to the house ceilidh band. The evening starts at 7.30pm.

□ The Nether Lochaber Community Association is holding an event on Sunday March 4 to further progress the picnic site it is developing at Onich. The association need hands to do groundworks. If you would like to volunteer, for an hour or the whole morning, all are welcome. Join the team there at 10am. Weather permitting. Email netherlochaberca@btinternet.com or call 07923 675593.

□ Staff and volunteers from Caol-based Lochaber Sensory Care (LSC) for Sight and Hearing Support will visit Mallaig on Tuesday March 6. The LSC representatives will be based at Mallaig Medical Centre from 1.30pm to 3pm. The team will offer support and advice to those with a sight loss or hearing loss. They will also re-tube and maintain NHS hearing aids and supply NHS batteries for these if necessary. No appointment necessary.

□ The Emporium of Worldly Goods is hosting an informal, family-friendly event on March 9 in order to raise awareness of Fairtrade fashion during Fairtrade Fortnight 2018, from 7-9pm. An informal drinks reception will be followed by a brief talk about what Fairtrade actually means, who benefits and how you can be a conscious consumer when choosing what to wear.

Admission is free and ticketed due to limited space. Collect your tickets by Saturday March 3 at The Emporium of Worldly Goods, 1st Floor, 68 High Street, Fort William.

□ Two Lochaber village halls are hosting 'jazz in the village' concerts in March. Saxophone and piano jazz duo Ian Millar and Dominic Spencer will be performing at the Sunart Centre on Friday March 16 and Glenug Village Hall on Saturday March 17.

□ Lochaber Piping Society holds its annual youth competition on March 24, starting at 9.30am at Lochaber High School.

Arisaig concert tribute to brave nurse

A concert was held on Sunday in St Mary's Church in Arisaig to commemorate the sinking of the hospital ship *Glenart Castle*. Singers, a violinist, cellist, harpist and an organist from Scottish Opera performed Faure's Requiem to commemorate all those who died in the First World War, choosing this date to remember particularly Mary MacKinnon, from Arisaig, who died on the *Glenart Castle* when it was sunk on February 26, 1918.



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Performance plays a major part in life here at Strathallan, and we are constantly encouraging students to expand their horizons and open their minds to a world of creativity. Over 50 per cent of students play a musical instrument, and with more than 25 ensembles and lots of performance opportunities, from drama and musical theatre to informal concerts, every student has the chance to discover their own particular passion.

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to try out new things, which we highly recommend.

At Strathallan, we are committed to recognising and rewarding tremendous talent from across the globe. That's why, every year, we offer a limited number of prestigious scholarships across academics, sports and the arts. Successful candidates who demonstrate a high-level of achievement and potential will be honoured with a place and awarded a remission on fees. We also offer a number of means-tested bursaries giving every talented child the opportunity to access our education.

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View from the Chamber

Helping young people to make most of talents

DID you know that 2018 is the Scottish Government's Year of Young People?

This is a year of events that aims to bring generations together and celebrate our nation's young people. It is a platform to give young people a stronger voice on issues which affect their lives, showcase their ideas and talents and ultimately aims to challenge misconceptions and create a more positive perception of them in society.

At Lochaber Chamber of Commerce, it's a vital part of our work to help young people develop their talents and find meaningful work that meets their needs and aspirations and those of local employers.

We do this primarily through our Developing the Young Workforce West Highlands team. Based in our office in Fort William High Street, the dedicated team of three are engaged in helping pupils through a variety of initiatives run in conjunction with high schools across Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross.

Mock interviews, job fairs, setting up work placements and apprenticeships are all part of the work



that the team does in helping young people get ready to not just join the workforce, but get the best out of themselves and identify potential opportunities. They also work with employers to make sure that they understand what they need from their future workforce.

With Scottish Apprenticeship Week coming up from March 5-9, it's a great time to think about whether your company might be able to help someone's career get off to a flying start by taking on an apprentice. Find out more at www.dywwesthighland.org.

At Lochaber Chamber of Commerce, we're committed to helping members achieve their business goals. If you'd like to join us please give us a call on 01397 705765 or visit www.lochaberchamber.co.uk.

Transport group lambasts bus firm for service review

NEILL BO FINLAYSON
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A LOCHABER transport group has blasted Stagecoach bosses for their 'gun to the head' negotiating tactics after announcing a review of all its services in the area.

Lochaber Transport Forum has said it is 'concerned and annoyed' that Stagecoach is considering closing the Fort William bus depot and may withdraw its service 45 route in the area.

The issue is made worse for forum members as the news comes without any prior discussion with the travelling public.

Forum chairman Brian Murphy said: 'Unfortunately, this is the sort of thing we have come to expect from Stagecoach over the years. They rarely seem to have much concern for the problems that their decisions cause passengers - especially the elderly and disabled.'

In a shock statement issued by Stagecoach last week, the company revealed that since April last year it has been unable to cover the cost of running its local network due to a combination of tender losses, reduced passenger demand and higher costs, and the situation is no longer sustainable.



Stagecoach's depot in Fort William is now under threat of closure as part of a review.

Stagecoach - which runs eight vehicles and employs 16 staff in Fort William - said its alternative proposals for service 45, which takes in Middle Street, Caol, Lochside, Banavie and Inverlochy, was not acceptable to the Highland Council and the route is to be axed, with its final day being Saturday March 17.

The company says it is also considering further options, including what is termed the 'closure of the business'.

'Reading between the lines, it looks like a "gun to the head" negotiating tactic by Stagecoach

to try to screw more money out of the council,' Mr Murphy continued.

'Quite rightly, the council has not succumbed to this cynical ploy, but it does need to be aware that this is a very important service for the Fort William area and that a solution is required urgently.'

Stagecoach has operated the Fort William bus business since 2008 when it took it over from Rapsons. But a combination of rising operating costs and changes to tenders awarded by the Highland Council in April

2017 has impacted the financial sustainability of the business.

However, Stagecoach says its Scottish Citylink services to Glasgow, Inverness, Oban and Skye will continue to operate.

Mark Whitelocks, managing director for Stagecoach North Scotland, told us: 'We are a significant local employer and we understand the importance of bus services for the local community.'

'We also know that any change can be unsettling for our people. That's why we are working closely with both the trade union

to protect as many jobs and as much of the local bus services as possible. We're carrying out a consultation and will be working closely with staff during this process. However, the reality is that we simply cannot sustain the current operation.'

Lochaber MSP Kate Forbes spoke to Mr Whitelocks on Thursday last week and has urged Stagecoach to 'keep all options open'.

'I have spoken to the managing director of Stagecoach's operations in Lochaber to ask them to consider all options as they undergo a review,' she said. 'It is also important that staff are supported at every stage because not only are they facing uncertainty but it is often staff on the frontline who take the flak of changes in services.'

Given the infamous tailbacks during the tourist season across Fort William, Ms Forbes also said she was keen that more people were encouraged to use public transport.

She added: 'We should be getting more people out of their cars and into buses at a time like this, not reducing bus use.'

'There are already challenges of congestion in Fort William and improving public transport would get more people out of their cars.'

Ski-Scotland blasts report over fake snow

THE marketing group behind Scotland's skiing industry has hit back at a recent report which claimed the country's ski resorts were spending more than half their budgets on artificial snow.

A report prepared by the Priestley International Centre for Climate recently claimed three of Scotland's main ski resorts were spending more than half their operating budgets on artificial snow factories following the poor 2016/17 season.

Ski-Scotland has rubbished these claims, however, saying that the information is incorrect and the reporting of which 'undermines the reputation both of the ski companies involved and the Scottish snowsports industry'.

They claim the climate report has derived its figures from a Ski-Scotland press release, which formed the basis of a news story published by *The Scotsman* last year about the trialling of snow machines at Scottish ski resorts.

A representative of the snowsports group said: 'In neither the online report nor in Ski-Scotland's release was any mention made of the cost of these trials. However, both story and release did refer to funding support from Highlands and Islands Enterprise

for one ski resort and a crowd-funding initiative by another.'

'Certainly, the online story is not a credible source for the fanciful financial information quoted.'

'It is a matter of fact that only two Technoalpin snow factories have been brought to Scotland this winter. One, heavily subsidised by the manufacturer, was trialled early in the season at Cairn Gorm Mountain and is currently at the Lecht Ski Centre. The other was leased by Glencoe Mountain and may become permanent if the crowdfunding initiative proves successful.'

Ski-Scotland says that to its knowledge no researcher from the Priestley Centre has been in touch with any of the country's five mountain ski resorts.

'It is regrettable that the academics responsible for this report did not check facts before making such damaging assumptions about any investment made by the ski companies in this trial. It does perhaps also raise questions about attention to detail in other parts of the report,' the representative continued.

'The Association of Scottish Ski Areas and Ski-Scotland report all five Scottish ski resorts are enjoying an excellent season.'

Body of climber is found

POLICE in Fort William confirmed that the body of Lochaber postman Jim Stalker, 55, who had been missing for a fortnight, was found on Saturday in the area of Beinn a Chaorainn, Glen Spean, by mountain rescue team members assisted by a Coastguard helicopter.

Fort William police extended their condolences to Mr Stalker's family and friends, and thanked all who were involved in searching for him.

A report will be sent to the procurator fiscal.

It has been a busy and sad few days for Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team, which had three call-outs on Sunday, including having 38 team members on Beinn a Chaorainn.

'It was a day of fantastic effort by all the people involved in all the rescues, unfortunately tinged with more than a fair bit of sadness,' said a statement on the team's Facebook page.

'Our thoughts are with the families and friends of all the casualties we have had on Scottish mountains this winter.'

Walker dies on Glenfinnan peak with three still missing

POLICE confirmed on Tuesday that the walker who died in the Glenfinnan area was Christopher Fryer, 38, from Norfolk.

Mr Fryer died following a fall in the area of the mountain Sgurr Thuilm around 10.30am on Saturday February 24.

Three other walkers remained unaccounted for in the Highlands as we went to press.

Searches are ongoing for overdue hill walker Stephen Mitchell, a 57-year-old who was reported missing after not returning as planned from a walk

in the Strathcarron area at the weekend. He set off on Friday February 23 from close to the Strathcarron Hotel and intended to walk in the Bendronaig Lodge, Lurg Mhor and Bearneas areas.

He is believed to have been near Beinn Dronaig at about

9am on Saturday February 24. Marcin Bialas also remains missing close to the summit of Ben Nevis, despite numerous searches for the 36-year-old in the Observatory Gully and Gardyloo Gully areas since January 21.

Neil Gibson has been missing in the Achnashellach area since February 8. The body of Mr Gibson's brother Alan, with whom he was walking, was found on February 10 on Beinn Liath Mhòr. The body of the brothers' dog was found on February 22.

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FW

Public toilets to re-open on Portree Harbour

PORTREE and Braes Community Trust will be re-opening its public toilets in the centre of Portree next month.

The trust announced that the public toilets situated on Portree Harbour will be open from today (March 1). Funded mostly by revenue generated by the trust, the toilets will remain open all year round.

The trust first opened the public toilets at Portree Harbour in October last year after a short-term agreement was put in place with the Highland Council.

The initial funding for the toilets came from LEADER, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Highland Council Ward Discretionary Fund, and Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association. There were also contributions from Sea Breezes Restaurant, Brigadoon Boat Trips, Rosedale Hotel, the Pier Hotel, Lowerdeck Restaurant and P&BCT.

MSP Allan welcomes islands budget vote

NA H-EILEANAN an Iar SNP MSP Alasdair Allan has welcomed the passing of the Scottish Government's budget.

Dr Allan said not only was it a budget which will stimulate the economy, but will also work to progress a fairer society in Scotland, with increased funding for the NHS and protection for low and middle income earners.

'This budget is an investment in our islands,' he said. 'The budget will deliver lower income tax for 70 per cent of Scots – with every worker earning less than £33,000 paying less in tax next year – while protecting our public services with a modest increase for higher earners.'

'This budget brings an additional £400 million to NHS Scotland, delivers a pay rise for public sector workers, £756 million for affordable homes, a £4 billion investment in infrastructure, including in superfast broadband, as well as significant investments in research, education and childcare.'

'In the face of massive Westminster cuts, ongoing Tory austerity and a damaging hard Brexit, this budget provides investment to seize the opportunities of tomorrow.'

Study into Western Isles ferry powered by hydrogen

MARK ENTWISTLE

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THE world's first sea-going hydrogen-powered ferry could soon be serving communities in the Western Isles, if a new feasibility study shows such a vessel is viable.

A team comprising a Western Isles community energy wind farm, six leading private sector companies and a public sector maritime asset company has been awarded funding by the Scottish Government to carry out the study.

The hydrogen for the ferry would be manufactured using local community-owned wind power and, if the project is successful, it would be the world's first sea-going hydrogen ferry.

Point and Sandwick Trust, the UK's largest community energy company behind the award-winning Beinn Ghrideag community wind farm, is leading the project.

The other main partners include CMAL, which leases ferries to Caledonian MacBrayne; Ferguson Marine shipyard in Glasgow; Siemens-Gamesa Renewable Energy, the leading supplier of wind turbines to the UK; ITM Power, one of the



Project manager and development director for Point and Sandwick Trust, Calum MacDonald.

world's leading specialists in hydrogen manufacture through electrolysis; ENGIE, which is a specialist in the transport and storage of gas; Wood, a global leader in the delivery of projects, engineering and technical services to energy and industrial markets; and Johnston Carmichael, Scotland's largest independent firm of chartered accountants.

The funding has been awarded by the Scottish Government through its Low Carbon Infrastructure Transition Pro-

gramme, supported by the European Regional Development Fund, and will be used for an initial feasibility study, to be completed by June this year, to look at the technical and commercial requirements for a West Coast hydrogen ferry.

The feasibility project will look at the manufacture of the hydrogen using wind power, the challenges of how to handle, transport and store the hydrogen on local piers, and how the design of the ship and its engines needs to be adapted

to run on hydrogen fuel. Project manager Calum MacDonald, development director for Point and Sandwick Trust and the former MP for the Western Isles, said: 'We have a simple yet bold vision which is to harness the huge potential of community-owned wind power on the Scottish islands to power the lifeline ferry services by utilising the very latest in hydrogen energy technology.'

'Turning that vision into reality will be a world first and requires the very best expertise in both energy and shipping technology.'

'That is why I am delighted that the Scottish Government has agreed to fund the initial feasibility study to map out the technical, commercial and regulatory challenges to overcome.'

'We hope to produce this first report by the summer and, if it indicates that vision is feasible and practical, we can then move onto the development phase with a view to having a ferry operational in the early 2020s.'

Mr MacDonald added that he hopes the project will reinforce the message that community enterprise can be as entrepre-

neurial and innovative as the conventional corporate sector and also that the private and community sectors can work well together on the right project.

'Orkney already has a fantastic project using hydrogen to help power a local ferry. This new Hebrides project is aimed at going up in scale, both in ship size and in the difficulty of the crossing and I am sure that the two projects can learn from each other,' he added.

Point and Sandwick Trust has operated the UK's largest community wind farm at Beinn Ghrideag on the Isle of Lewis since 2015.

The £14 million project produces £800,000 a year in net income for the local community and is expected to generate a net £2 million a year once the capital costs have been repaid.

Whereas the Beinn Ghrideag wind farm is connected to the National Grid and sells its power to the mainland, the proposed new community turbines would not need a grid connection because they would be exclusively devoted to making hydrogen for use on the CalMac ferries which serve the Inner and Outer Hebrides.

Skye out-of-hours urgent care review begins

THE EXTERNAL view of out-of-hours urgent care services in Skye, Lochalsh and South West Ross was due to begin on Monday February 26, with Sir Lewis Ritchie spending four days visiting the area as part of an independent examination of local services provided by NHS Highland.

The visit follows an initial series of introductory meetings held in early February in Portree and Broadford with local community representatives, clinicians and managers.

Sir Lewis has been commissioned to carry out the work by NHS Highland chairman, David Alston, after significant concerns about the service were raised with him by local elected representatives and some members of the community.

A series of meetings were proposed during Sir Lewis's visit. This included offering to meet representatives from the SOS-NHS action group; elected members, representatives from community councils of North Skye, Glenelg, Raasay, South Skye and Lochalsh; and key relevant NHS Highland partner agencies, including Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS), NHS 24, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Police Scotland and the Coastguard.

Sir Lewis is also meeting a range of NHS staff providing health and social care across the area including GPs and hospital-based staff.

Commenting ahead of his visit, Sir Lewis said he was keen to meet as many people as possible.

'I have invited local councillors to kindly assist me to identify people who they feel it would be helpful for me to meet or speak with,' he said.

'I would also invite any individuals or groups to get in touch with me to share their views. They can email me at skye.outofhours@nhs.net or to write to me c/o Maimie Thompson, Head of Public Relations and Engagement, NHS Highland, Assynt House, Inverness, IV2 3BW.'

'While it may not be possible to meet everyone, I will endeavour to ensure there are mechanisms in place for people to have their views heard.'

'Alongside this, my colleagues and I are reviewing a range of information, reports and data. This is to help to understand in detail, urgent local health and social care provision in the area.'

Sir Lewis, who chaired the National Review of Primary Care Out-of-Hours Services in 2015 for the Scottish Government, will lead a small team of health professionals drawn from the staff of other NHS boards in Scotland that also may have remote and rural service delivery challenges.

This will include an out-of-hours urgent care clinical lead; a senior doctor; a senior nurse; a service manager; and representatives from SAS and NHS 24.

MP calls for reinstatement of West Coast emergency towing vessel for Stornoway

MP IAN BLACKFORD has written to the UK transport minister Jo Johnson calling for the immediate re-instatement of an emergency towing vessel (ETV) in Stornoway to better cope with emergencies in Scotland's coastal areas, writes *Neill Bo Finlayson*.

The calls come after two recent incidents on the West Coast.

Last weekend, Latvian registered CEG Universe suffered a stuck rudder in the Kylerhea Narrows. A disaster was only averted by the concerted efforts of Kyle and Mallaig lifeboats, which held it in tow against the strong current until a tug operated by the nearby BUTEC base was able to join them and provide the force needed to pull it to safety.

In December, Norwegian car-



The decommissioned oil rig Transocean Winner was being towed past the Hebrides in August 2016 when the tow line was lost in rough weather.

go vessel MV Fame suffered an engine failure off Taransay in gale force winds and eight-metre

waves. RNLI lifeboats from Stornoway and Leverburgh, together with the Coastguard

helicopter, were on scene quickly, but it was not until the next day that the ETV arrived from its base in Orkney, fighting through challenging conditions to reach the stricken vessel.

Luckily, MV Fame had drifted clear of the rocks in the intervening period and a line was secured allowing it to be taken under tow with no injuries to crew.

Three years ago this month another Norwegian vessel was not so fortunate, when in February 2015 it grounded off Kilchoan, spilling 25 tonnes of oil into the marine environment before being recovered two days later.

Mr Blackford said: 'On two occasions disasters have been averted by lifeboat and other emergency services putting in a tremendous effort and also by a

good deal of luck, with one ship drifting away from the rocks and in this latest incident being close to BUTEC facilities, who were able to provide a tug to pull the vessel to safety.'

'Had either of these ships been grounded, they could have caused tremendous ecological damage to already fragile marine environments. This is something we just cannot go on leaving to chance.'

'An emergency towing vessel, based within a short steaming time of the West Coast is vital and I will continue to make the case for this.'

There is also concern that as these waterways are used for the transport of nuclear material from Caithness to Barrow in the north of England that serious pollution could occur before the ETV was able to arrive.

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Award-winning dementia team wins £103,000 boost

THE ARORA Dementia Friendly Community Team at An Lanntair in Stornoway has been successful in its bid for a National Lottery award for £103,536 from the Big Lottery Fund to continue and develop its award-winning Dementia Friendly Community work for a further two years, writes *Mark Entwistle*.

The project will have a new name 'Cianalas' (meaning 'belonging' in Gaelic) and will move towards academic research to work with universities and communities, while retaining the core support events of the current Arora project.

This Big Lottery fund has been match-funded by £51,470 from Life Changes Trust,

which has been the project's core funder for the past three years. The Life Changes Trust was set up in April 2013 with a 10-year, £50 million endowment from the Big Lottery Fund. Since April 2015, the Arora project team has been building on An Lanntair's existing education and outreach work by supporting people living with dementia and those in their circle of care with cultural, arts and heritage work.

The project has been led by the people in the community, shaping the project work according to their interests and strengths, which has led to intergenerational working with nurseries and primary schools, care centres, day centres, hospitals and community groups.

The project will also be hosting a symposium at An Lanntair on April 23 and 24, including an exhibition, academic symposium and workshop series to celebrate the past three years' work, while looking ahead.

Paula Brown, Arora project co-ordinator, said: 'The team is thrilled with the opportunity to continue to develop our work with our community through culture, arts and heritage projects, and to inform the development of our work with academic partners.'

'Both of these awards are worth more than the essential funds and represent valuable acknowledgement of the value of our work together as a community.'

Cash boost for Gaelic education

COMHAIRLE nan Eilean Siar is to receive additional £330,000 from Scottish Government to support development of Gaelic-medium education.

Members of the education, sport and children's services committee recently noted a report on the Gaelic Specific Grant Application for 2018-19, with Councillor Angus McCormack, chairman of the committee, saying: 'The comhairle submits an annual application for the scheme of Gaelic specific grant for Gaelic education and has been in



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

receipt of Gaelic funding since 1986. The comhairle recently received an additional sum of £330,000 from the Scottish Government to support the development of Gaelic-medium education and this will continue to support the establishment of Gaelic schools, the extension of

provision for Gaelic pre-school education and the provision of an additional Gaelic teaching class in Tong School.'

The local authority receives £18,000 per annum to support the delivery of Gaelic language in the primary school.

The Gaelic advisory group meets on a termly basis to monitor progress with the departmental and comhairle Gaelic action plans and to discuss new initiatives that might support the development of Gaelic education.

The education and children's

services Gaelic plan links closely to the national Gaelic plan and to the comhairle's wider Gaelic plan. Specific Gaelic grant money is used to pay Gaelic-medium teachers' salaries.

In addition, a specific focus for the current plan will be on the development of secondary education, e-sgoil and the multimedia unit. Some funding is also awarded to schools and groups, working within the authority, to support the growth of GME (Gaelic-medium education) and the development of cultural and heritage initiatives.

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Spean Bridge chairman loses patience with BEAR Scotland inaction on roads

MARK ENTWISTLE
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THE CHAIRMAN of a Lochaber community council now believes the only solution to the problem of the never-ending saga of the potholes plaguing local trunk roads is for another roads contractor to take over maintenance operations.

John Fotheringham, chairman of Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge and Achnacarry Community Council, has now informed trunk roads operator BEAR Scotland that its response to the problem of potholes and deteriorating road surfaces is simply not good enough.

His furious letter to BEAR Scotland comes just weeks



John Fotheringham, left, and Robert Bryson, sweep up gravel scattered across the road in Spean Bridge due to road surfaces breaking up. Photograph: Iain Ferguson

after two senior managers from BEAR Scotland and Transport Scotland met with community councillors to hear

a long list of woes about the A82 and A86 roads.

And now BEAR Scotland has been told the community council has had enough of what Mr Fotheringham said was the organisation's 'constant procrastination' over the state of local roads.

In his letter he stated: 'Despite telling you months ago about the break up of the road surface at the junction of the A82 and A86, nothing has happened, not even sweeping up the residue, and every vehicle crossing the swathes of stones thrown up from the surface impacts on the B&B and restaurant business adjacent.'

'We are told that remedial action will take place on the A86, but no one explains what

that is and nothing about the A82 section which is beginning to disintegrate.

'We have been through this with your company before at Aonachan Crossroads - also scheduled for remedial work within four years of the last extensive resurfacing.

'Then there is the promise of a camera examination of the drainage culvert on the A82 which has led to the flooding of the woollen mill, but so far nothing.

'It surely isn't difficult to organise such an examination to alleviate the concerns of two businesses that are either drenched almost daily by spray, or flooded like the woollen mill was on Christmas Eve. 'When you conducted the

ill-fated resurfacing of the road in Spean Bridge four years ago you took the decision in consort with Transport Scotland to restrict the resurfacing to the south of the village.

'We were informed by Highland councillors that the south of the village would at last get the much-needed resurfacing this spring but it too appears to have slipped further.

'So I am afraid your company leaves us no option; our patience is exhausted, so we intend to ask Donald Cameron MSP to request a meeting with the Transport Minister and the chief executive of Transport Scotland.

'Maybe when we have put our case to them you may finally get your act together, but with

daily incidents where residents have their cars damaged by the ever-increasing number of potholes we believe the only solution is to find another roads contractor.'

Describing the recent meeting with community councillors as 'productive', a BEAR Scotland spokesperson added: 'We're doing all we can to complete a £4 million programme of urgent surfacing repairs across the network as quickly and safely as possible, with works planned on the A82 and A86 near Spean Bridge, as well as on the A86 west of Roy Bridge and at Cille Choire in the coming weeks. Our teams are also carrying out temporary repairs as required where possible.'

Public urged to engage in transport study

RESIDENTS, businesses, students and key stakeholders in the Fort William area are being urged to engage in a study being carried out to identify transport improvements in the area.

Engineering, consultancy and research company AECOM is working in partnership with the Highland Council, HITRANS, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Transport Scotland to identify local transport issues in and around Fort William.

AECOM is seeking the views of anyone who lives, works, studies or does business in and around Fort William via an online engagement tool, at Placecheck.info/maps/fortwilliam.

This tool gives the public the chance to tell AECOM what they like about the area, what they don't like and what they would like to see improved. Registration is quick and easy, and users can then add comment to the map. The tool will be open until Wednesday March 14.

Councillor Allan Henderson, chairman of HITRANS, the regional transport partnership, said: 'Using the latest online engagement tool, the local community have a great chance to shape the way this hugely important project for the Fort William area goes forward. We want to hear from as many transport users as possible.'

The deadline for the Placecheck inputs is Wednesday March 14. The aim is to complete the study by early summer.

Secrets of Glen Nevis Iron Age fort are uncovered in new book

A FASCINATING glimpse into the construction - and destruction - of an Iron Age fort in Glen Nevis are the focus of a new publication from the Nevis Landscape Partnership. Launched last week (Friday February 23) at The Highland Bookshop in Fort William, *The Archaeology of Dun Deardail* describes the recent excavations of the Iron Age fort and explores the ancient Celtic myth of *The Sorrow of Derrdriu*.

The hill fort was destroyed in a catastrophic fire in 310BC - but it is still unclear whether this was accidental or deliberate. The fire was so intense that it melted the stones of the rampart together, and large blocks of conglomerate stone can still be seen.

Lizzie Cooper, programme manager with the Nevis Landscape Partnership, said: 'The Dun Deardail project has been a great focal point for the community, with volunteers from near and far coming to help out and lots of interest from local schools. 'Everybody who has been involved in the project has played an important part on this journey into the past.'

'We've learned more about how the fort was built, the activities that took place here and even how it was destroyed and abandoned.'

'It is a fascinating location that deserves to be far more



Matt Ritchie, one of the book's co-authors, at the Highland Bookshop event.

widely known and this new publication is a great place to start.'

Co-author Matt Ritchie, an archaeologist with Forest Enterprise Scotland, said: 'The wonderful thing about archaeology is that for all the forensic investigation and laboratory analysis, we still need to use our imagination to recreate the past. Was Dun Deardail - Derrdriu's fort -

the home to an exiled Celtic celebrity, burned down when she returned home?'

As well as welcoming archaeological volunteers and schools to the site throughout the project, the team also arranged a well-attended annual heritage festival and open day, encouraging local people to engage with the project.

The wider Nevis Landscape Partnership also helped tackle

the issue of erosion resulting from visitor footfall by securing several million pounds worth of path repair on the Ben.

The Dun Deardail Archaeology Project, designed in line with Scotland's Archaeology Strategy, was funded by Forest Enterprise Scotland and the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the Nevis Landscape Partnership.

Controversial Ben Nevis 'human chain' rally is off

PLANS to create a 'human chain' on Ben Nevis in support of Scottish independence has been cancelled amid concerns over the environmental impact of the rally.

Campaigners had hatched an ambitious plan to create a 'human chain' of 9,000 people from the bottom of the UK's highest mountain to the top in a show of support for independence.

However, organisers announced last week that the event has been cancelled.

Event organiser John Tanock said: 'Sorry to everybody who had signed up for this but I can assure you that this is being

cancelled to concentrate on something the full Yes movement can get involved with. Several of us have been working on a project which we hope will be ready in a month from now.'

The event page on Facebook had garnered the support of more than 2,700 people who were interested in attending, with close to 300 saying they were going.

Nevis Landscape Partnership, which looks after the area, raised concerns over the 'logistical and environmental challenges which would need a great deal of very careful planning' if thousands of people were to scale the mountain at once.

Spean consultation event

RE CAMPBELL (Joinery) Ltd is inviting the public to a consultation event in relation to the proposed mixed-use development of the site opposite to the Bridge cafe, Spean Bridge.

The event is being held to inform people about emerging proposals and to gather feedback.

Information and plans will be on display and members of the

project team will be on hand to answer any questions.

The meeting will take place on Thursday March 8, from 2pm to 6pm at Spean Bridge Community Centre.

If you are unable to attend or require information on the proposals, please contact RE Campbell (Joinery) Ltd on 01397 712561 or at enquiries@campbell-homes.com.

Caol play park cash boost

PLANS to build a new play park in the centre of Caol were given a huge boost earlier this month after being awarded £100,000.

The team behind the project, Caol Play, is now hoping that the play park can be built by the end of this year thanks to the six-figure sum from WREN,

a not-for-profit business that funds community projects.

Damian MacDonald, who has led the project, said he was delighted with the news: 'The play parks in the area are not fit for use in Caol. All going well the new park will be getting built this year.'

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Pipe band prepare for New York visit

SGOIL LIONACLEIT Pipe Band (SLPB) is safeguarding its bagpipes with new cases as it prepares to represent the Western Isles at New York's Tartan Week in April.

The band is currently benefiting from Western Isles Lifestyle Lottery (WILL) tickets sale proceeds in Uist and is using this to buy bagpipe cases and host a homecoming event following Tartan Week.

John Daniel Peteranna, chairman of SLPB, said: 'We are grateful to the Western Isles Lifestyle Lottery for its recent award. We will be using part of the award to buy bagpipe cases for the band.'

'Bagpipes are fragile instruments and prone to damage. They are always being carried around, in and out of cars and buses. They are an awkward shape to pack and stow away. We have never had the luxury of bagpipe cases before and this will be a big asset to the band.'

'The remainder of the award will go

towards a homecoming event after the band return from New York.'

He added: 'The band is made up of talented and dedicated young musicians who deserve the best support we can give them. We wish them well in New York and look forward to seeing them on TV. They will be great ambassadors for Uist and the Western Isles.'

A spokesperson for the Western Isles Community Society, which operates WILL, said: 'We are delighted funding from WILL will enable the band to buy bagpipe cases and support their homecoming event for the Uist community. We wish them well with the trip as they showcase their talents on the international stage.'

Residents in all areas of the Western Isles and beyond can directly benefit projects by taking part in the lottery and be in with a chance of winning three guaranteed weekly cash prizes.

Tickets can be bought by visiting www.westernisleslottery.co.uk or calling 03003 020444.



The band has been able to use part of the lottery cash to buy bagpipe cases for their trip to Tartan Week in New York.

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Plockton

PLOCKTON and District Horticultural and Arts and Crafts Society held a pot-luck supper and quiz in Plockton Hall on Friday February 9.

Fifty school pupils attended and enjoyed the evening. Plockton and District Community Council (PDCC) met in Plockton Hall on Monday January 22. Among the items discussed were:

Grass cutting – There had been complaints about the standard of grass cutting last year. PDCC said it was short of money, but refused an offer of a donation from Plockton Harbour Association.

Roads – The state of the roads in Plockton was discussed. PDCC hoped more residents would complain to Highland Council about the many potholes, especially in Innes Street.

Bus shelters in Duirnish and Drumbuie – both need to be repaired.

Septic tank – The Scottish Environment Protection Agency would be contacted regarding complaints about raw sewage going on to the beach.

Paddock – This land opposite the primary school has been sold by the Church of Scotland.

Janitor's house – The house has been empty for over a year and PDCC will contact the high school to inquire about future plans.

Cows – The National Trust for Scotland has said it will not renew the 15-year contract with local crofters which prevented cattle coming into the village. However, as most people in the village oppose the return of the cows, PDCC has asked the crofters to organise a meeting with the village to discuss all the concerns.

The next meeting of the community council is on Monday March 12.

Weather at Plockton

During December there were seven inches of rain at Plockton, meaning there were 59 inches of rain in 2017, the same as 2016.

A total of 269 days had some rain, with only 96 dry days.

In January, there were five inches of rain but warmest day was only 10°C. The coldest dropped to -4°C, the coldest for several years.

Fort William



Fort William motorcycle enthusiast Chris Jones (left) with Alastair Alexander (centre), president-elect of the Vintage Motorcycle Club and president Rodney Hann at the exploratory meeting held in the Alexandra Hotel to discuss the setting up of a local branch of the organisation. Photograph: Iain Ferguson

Fort William

THE SOCIETY of Scottish Landscape Photographers is to host its annual exhibition of new work at the Lime Tree Gallery, Fort William.

This is the first time the society has held this award-winning exhibition in Fort William, giving locals and tourists a great opportunity to see some of the best new Scottish landscape work produced by the society.

Society president Davie Hudson said: 'We are delighted to be able to show our work in the heart of the Highlands in Fort William. Most of the more dramatic aspects of Scottish landscape are found in the Highlands and our members spend thousands of hours each year seeking out that special moment, that glimpse of light on a lochan or shaft of light bursting through dramatic clouds. The Highlands, no matter the weather, never fail to produce.'

The exhibition, which starts on Saturday April 7 and runs until Saturday May 5, is open daily from 10am to 10pm. Admission free.



Heritage Railway Association chairman Brian Simpson hands the award to John Barnes and Hege Hernæs, both of Glenfinnan, and Nick Jones, Caol.

Glenfinnan museum wins prize

GLENFINNAN Station Museum has won a Heritage Railway Association award for its importance to West Highland railway history.

In the company of 200 people from the heritage railway sector in the UK and Ireland, representatives of Glenfinnan Station Museum discovered they had won the annual award for small groups. The judging panel had visited Glenfinnan on April 1 last year.

Every February, the Heritage Railway Association and editors of the four leading railway magazines hold an awards dinner to recognise members who have performed particularly well over the year.

The Glenfinnan museum was presented with its prize at this year's awards ceremony at the Burlington Hotel, Birmingham, on Saturday February 10.

The award is a replica brass panel from a coach provided for Queen Victoria by the Great Western railway company. It was won by Glenfinnan Station Museum for its unique and hands-on introduction to West Highlands railway heritage.

Other nominees in the group were the Bahamas Locomotive Society Learning Coach at Ingrow station; West Lancashire Railway for its 50th anniversary celebrations; Rother Valley for the new connection at Roberts-

bridge; and Telford Steam Railway for its Polar Express event.

Accepting the award on behalf of the museum were John Barnes, museum founder, Hege Hernæs, museum curator, and Nick Jones, volunteer signaller and creator of the museum's pioneering 'virtual signalling experience'.

The Heritage Railway Association is an umbrella organisation representing the majority of the heritage and tourist railways, railway museums, steam centres and railway preservation groups in the UK and Ireland. The association represents its members' interests to government and provides professional advice to its members.

Glenfinnan

THERE are a number of dates for Glenfinnan residents' diaries this month, starting this Sunday March 4 at 3pm with an afternoon tea in aid of Diabetes Scotland at Glenfinnan House Hotel.

Then on Tuesday March 6 at 7pm, a community facility meeting to arrange a steering group will be held at the Marine Harvest Hut. On Sunday March 25 at 10.30am, Glenfinnan House Hotel will host a de-

fibrillator training session. Please see the Facebook page or reply if going.

The next meeting of Glenfinnan Community Council is on Monday March 12 at 8pm at Glenfinnan House Hotel.

Then next month will see Glenfinnan Angling Club hold its AGM on Friday April 6 at 7.30pm at Glenfinnan House Hotel, with the following day seeing the opening competition of the new season.

Glenug

THE GLENUIG Inn has been placed on the market for sale.

Selling agent Colliers International claim the Lochaber hotel is at the forefront of Scotland's green tourism business.

Originally believed to have been an 18th century drovers' inn, the current business is the culmination of 10 years' work by owner Steve Macfarlane, who put environmental sustainability at the forefront of his business.

Steve said: 'We've demonstrated that incorporating sustainability is sound business sense. Sustainability and profitability are parts of the same approach. Doing so has turned this into a more profitable, efficient and sustainable business, making us very different from other businesses and saving us money while reducing our environmental footprint.'

The estate agency is inviting offers of around £895,000 for the Glenug Inn.



The owners of Glenug Inn have put a focus on the environmental sustainability of the hotel.

Tulloch reaps benefits of Locheilnet

SCOTLAND'S largest community broadband network, Locheilnet, is expanding.

Next week, households in Tulloch will join 400 users across Lochaber in being able to access download speeds of more than 20Mbps thanks to this community service.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) supported the group's expansion with a second round of funding to help it upgrade and extend its core infrastructure.

The £42,000 award has already enabled Locheilnet to upgrade its core network and customers in Kilmalieu were connected in autumn 2017. Following the connection of Tulloch, the community company will focus on delivering to the south of Fort William via a mast at Treislaig.

Jackie Wright, chairwoman of Locheilnet, said: 'This is really great news. We already provide a robust, fast broadband service to more than 400 rural

householders and businesses. These expansions have been led by people in remote communities and I'd particularly like to thank Alan Renwick and Robert Wilson at Tulloch for their tremendous support in helping to make this expansion happen. We have also received significant support from local landowners.'

The project now reaches from Glenfinnan in the west, Kentallen in the south to as far north as South Laggan.

Bus user group's 1,000th ticket sale

GLENELG and Arnisdale bus user group has now celebrated the sale of the 1,000th ticket for its community run on-request taxi service.

Elizabeth Ralston, chairwoman of Glenelg and Arnisdale Bus User Group (BUG), said members were delighted to be celebrating the success of its on-request taxi service which works to keep the remote community connected with City Link buses to and from Inverness and Glasgow and Skye.

'We give heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported us: Highland Council for their grant; Glenelg Village Shop, which sells the tickets; Skyways, our transport provider; Christ-



Members of the bus users group.

pher Main for dealing with social media; all the members of the committee and the community, and their friends and visitors who have generously given their support,' she said.

David Summers, transport development officer with Highland Council, added: 'Highland Council has been

very pleased to support the Glenelg initiative, firstly as a pilot project and now as one of the 25 community transport schemes which we fund.

'The milestone of 1,000 tickets sold shows that the scheme has proved to be sustainable and it is a valuable local service.'

RETRO
Roamer

More memory lane items from the Roamer columns of 30 years ago

□ Campbell, from The Village, was partaking of a few drams at the BA Club on Saturday. When he got home, 'she who must be obeyed' was waiting – complete with speech. 'It would suit you better if you'd get out there in the garden and cut the grass!' said she. Undaunted, Campbell gets on the gardening gear and goes into the shed for the electric cables and spider boxes for his plug-in-and-drive mower. Out into the garden, switches on, with the first swathe just waiting to be cut. The motor's running, the apparatus is moving forward, but the grass remains as long as before, with Campbell scratching his head at this lack of productivity. The back door opens, and out comes Campbell's spouse. 'In the name of the wee man,' she shouts, 'what are you trying to do with my Hoover?'

□ Gus from Blarmafoldach was telling me the other day of the terrible wrestling he had with his conscience when he came upon the notice posted beside the excavations in Ainslie Lane – or Boni's Lane, if you prefer the 20th-century version – off the High Street. It read 'Pedestrians Only'. But, as Gus wasn't wearing his specs he made it out to say 'Presbyterians Only'. He shouted across to Mrs MacLeod who was coming out of Kennedy's shop. 'Here, is it all right for me to get across the street, with this notice saying Presbyterians Only?' Mrs Mac took one look at Gus, and another at the notice. 'Away back up to Blarmafoldach,' she rejoined, with a look to the heavens, 'and ask the missionary.'

□ Apple and grape salads have, apparently, taken over from fish and chips as the most popular dish in 350 school canteens in Derbyshire. The 'healthy menus' have been introduced there following a successful pilot scheme. Mind you, the salmon are so plentiful in Lochaber because of the number of fish farms, that fruit dishes might never get a look-in here. As one hotelier along the Road to the Isles, puts it: 'I give my coach parties salmon or trout for lunch or dinner, but that's because they're cheaper than mince.'

□ Have you seen the film cameras in Glenfinnan, Glen Nevis and Glencoe during the past few days? Apparently a car commercial for the New Honda XYZ is being made for Canadian TV. The shooting, of course, called for the motor to be driven on the right hand side of the road. So that's why there were more hold-ups at these locations while the Honda came out of its wraps and was put through its paces. The humorous aspect of the eventual advert was supplied by – a water tanker. It was on standby to hose the roads to make them look as if it had been raining, so the Honda's performance on the wet surface could be filmed. Imagine having a water bowser providing 'rain' in Lochaber – in June!

□ 'Wi' a Hundred Members an' a' an' a.' That's the signature tune of the new Lochaber Chamber of Commerce. Our omniscient organisation reached the century membership mark this week, in representing business concerns from Mallaig to Morvern and Glengarry to Glencoe. But the chamber wants more to sign on. However, our committee would settle for 101 at present.

Especially if the 101st member happens to be William Low & Co.

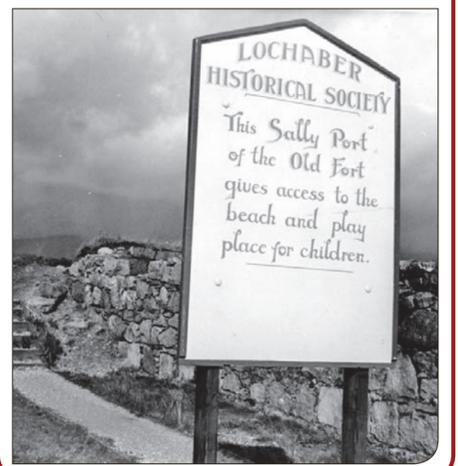
□ A Fort William delegate attended the annual Citizens' Advice Bureau conference in Glasgow. The guest speaker was a bit of a wag and took note of the Lochaber visitation in his address to the meeting. 'The three biggest lies in the world are these, in ascending order. 'I'm working late at the office', 'The cheque's in the post' and 'I'm from your local council and I'm here to help you.'

□ Then there was the Upper Achintore gent whose chip pan went on fire at the weekend. He landed in the Belford Hospital, suffering from smoke inhalation. When asked if he wanted anything brought in from home, he replied, 'Yes, please, my baccy tin and roll-up paper.'

□ Stevie Stafford was a bit bemused about the special offer on Aqua Fresh. It didn't do too well in Corpach at all. 'What do they expect?' was the local customer query. 'There's that much aqua fresh coming out of the sky these past three months, no-one needs to buy any!'

□ Cheeky canoecists who are baring all as they get in and out of their wet suits on the banks of the River Spean could be up the creek without a paddle if the local constabulary catches them. The canoecists are pouring into the area in search of 'white water' and, in pursuit of their hobby, are leaving nothing to the imagination.

□ Said the wife of one of the lighthouse keepers after the Queen and members of the royal family had been to tea at Ardnamurchan: 'These are the two glasses from which Peter and Zara had a drink of milk. And they're going straight into my display cabinet.' Meanwhile, we of the Highland press corps were making short work of the shortbread and scones kindly left over for us by the royal party.



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The Oban Times

& WEST HIGHLAND TIMES

Fort William is a popular destination for tourists, and our hotels and businesses depend on visitors enjoying a positive experience to ensure they continue to thrive.

So it is particularly galling to hear that anti-social behaviour and late-night disturbances at the town's West End car park have caused sleepless nights for some hotel guests, and forced one hotel owner to take legal advice in a bid to stop the problem.

David Wilson, the owner of Fort William's popular Lime Tree An Ealdhain hotel, restaurant and art gallery, says he is at the end of his tether over the problems,

which have been going on for years, and despite numerous complaints to Highland Council, which owns the car park, nothing has been done to stop the boy racers or overnight campers from using the car park.

Highland Council claims it is introducing amendments to the traffic order to address issues relating to overnight camping for this season. Let's hope that is the case and they are actioned soon. And if the police are aware of reports of anti-social behaviour involving vehicles in the West End car park, perhaps more needs to be done. It's about time this problem was sorted, and quickly.



Days gone by – 1995

We turn the clock back this week to 1995 and a very healthy turnout of martial arts students and instructors for an Argyll Shukokai course and grading.

MacPhail

ANGUS MACPHAIL
angusmacphail@yahoo.co.uk



Saturday Bloody Saturday, co-written by Alastair Campbell and Paul Fletcher. How wrong my forecast was!

All my football prejudices immediately disappeared as, from the first page, the language, the narrative, the characterisation, the tension and the excitement gripped hold of me and, until the book was finished, I felt like an addict unable to control the craving for the next chapter.

I have read some stinkers of books in the past year and it feels like such a frustrating let-down when you have given so much valuable time attempting to draw learning and/or pleasure from a piece of work that in the end does nothing to fulfil any desire.

What satisfaction to read something that turned my expectations upside-down and delivered, contrary to my predictions, one of the most satisfying reads of recent years.

Apart from the page-turning narrative, the main strength of this book is the clear characterisation. It frustrates me deeply when, as a reader, you are left unsure what the author's intentions are for the perception of a character.

In this book, the fault lines are refreshingly clear. The good guys are good, the bad guys are bad, and the complications

and contradictions of all are also given sufficient presence to maintain credibility.

The combined knowledge and experience of the two authors in the various threads of subject matter – football, politics, terrorism, internal team battles and potentially crippling personal battles – mean that the book is steeped in a realism and authenticity that can only be achieved by writers who really know their subject and have fully researched any cracks in between.

The combining of Campbell's political background, genius for clarity in message and overall flair as a writer with Fletcher's experience as a top professional footballer and stadium developer is a collaboration that has produced a piece of work far greater than either could have achieved individually.

It will not bring them a Nobel Prize for Literature, but it presents a rip-roaring and insightful window on worlds that most know little about. It will grasp your attention throughout and it delivers an ending of sheer brilliance to outflank the very finest of any page-turning best-seller.

Saturday Bloody Saturday may even convert me to becoming a football fan – and I am hoping for a sequel.



Social media

There was a mixed reaction to the details of Argyll and Bute Council's budget being passed last week, which included a three per cent rise in council tax as well as a pledge not to close any public toilets.

James Strang: '3 percent im happy to pay to keep services as long as they fix the roads in top 3 priority. Plus they can't close any public toilets in Oban because there is one I believe.'

Stuart Macdonald: 'Health & social care is top of my list. Happy to take a 3% hike if services are improved.'

Sue Sellar: There aren't any public toilets in Oban and you can't use the ones in the station unless a train is standing in the station!'

Jack Low: how about getting rid of councilors who dont work for the good of us jge public and claim expenses for the slightest thing.'

John McGee: 'Get awe the pothole's

fixed for a start.You's never seem to bother maintaining minor roads but the major route's on a lot of Islands are like driving through sink hole's.You don't know it your car will climb out the other side of the many 100's there are..I have had many puncture's as the many.A hope the fat cat's are taken a pay cut to fund such need's.'

Kevin Devlin: 'A council spokesperson said that "to fund the gap, green bin collections would now be made bianually out-with Soroba."

Stuart Macdonald: 'Any money for health care?...I would've thought that was a very high priority.'

Ron Morrison: Thought the roads in Glasgow were bad but just back from visiting Gigha and found the A83 virtually impassable! If Argyll wants to attract tourists and employment the Council really needs to get its act together.

Press policy

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

If you think we have made a significant mistake and you wish to discuss this with us, please

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We will attempt to resolve your issue in a timeous, reasonable and amicable manner. However, if you are unsatisfied with

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We will abide by the decision of IPSO.

Rewilding of Scotland will address damage

Sir, Iain Thornber bemoans the wacky characters and quirky schemes attracted to rural Scotland (Morvern Lines, February 15) and it is certainly true that some major landowners have inflicted a great deal of damage on Highland culture and ecology over the past 200 years or so.

However, he fails to understand that 'rewilding' is in part an attempt to redress some of that damage. He attacks the idea of rewilding by saying: 'At its most extreme, rewilding implies zero-intervention by humans, but no matter how hard anyone may try, it is almost impossible to find unaltered landscapes in Europe, including Scotland.'

He said it! I doubt if many serious conservationists propose rewilding 'at its most extreme' and if the landscape were 'unaltered', there would be no need in any case.

Wolves and bears wander freely in the Abruzzo mountains of central Italy, little more than 100 miles from Rome – a popular tourist area and hardly an unspoiled wilderness. And lynx are found in southern Scandinavia in farmed landscapes, as long as there is sufficient forest cover.

Mr Thornber refers to (presumably) these species as 'dangerous predators', but lynx attacks on humans are unheard of across Europe. And he worries that the deer which have been present for 10,000 years are to be 'sacrificed', but the deer coexisted with lynx (and wolves and bears) for most of that time and they now probably occur in higher numbers than at any previous time during that period.

The impact of lynx on deer numbers is likely to be modest and certainly wouldn't result in their eradication. They may even disproportionately impact the introduced forest-loving sika deer (result of past landowner follies and a hybridisation threat to native red deer).

As regards the Eigg stone, one could argue whether it depicts a non-indigenous lion, or a, possibly indigenous, lynx, but the Inchnadamph lynx (the identification of which he wrongly implies is in doubt) has been carbon dated to around AD180 and further fossil remains from Yorkshire have been dated to as recently as AD600. So depiction of a native lynx on a carving from the ninth century is not so improbable.

Given the low density at which lynx would naturally occur, the conditions needed for fossilisation, and the need to then find them, it is hardly surprising that fossil evidence is scarce.

I can find a little common ground with Mr Thornber in that the only serious suggestion for reintroducing lynx and other large mammals on the islands that I am aware of was from eminent mammalogist, the late Derek Yalden, back in 1986. He proposed a long-term attempt to re-establish the native fauna on the Island of Rum National Nature Reserve. However, Rum, at about 100km² is probably not big enough to sustain viable populations and Eigg certainly isn't.

Any serious attempt at reintroducing

lynx in Scotland would have to be on the mainland, but I get the sense that, whatever the evidence, Mr Thornber will still not think there's enough room for them.

Alex Farquhar,
by email.

The poor state of broadband on Mull

Sir, I live on Loch Scridain, which is lovely but means I'm connected to the Tioran exchange. It can only supply a broadband speed of 0.5mbps, 1/50th of the UK average and 1/20th of the average from a conventional BT exchange.

I remember when the exchange was upgraded to this limited form of broadband and it seemed wonderful, but now it's a real inhibition to the normal course of life. We can't access things others take for granted, such as catch-up TV, Netflix or even the music service on Amazon Prime, and local businesses have to warn residents not to stream things on their phones.

Those things are luxuries but it increasingly effects essentials. Micro-soft issues updates of 10gbs, a three-day download if everything is working OK, and more and more software companies no longer issue anything on disc. Some downloads are as much as 45gbs, which is just not practical for us. Businesses often find their credit card machines don't work.

Currently the government is recommending satellite broadband but a 10mb service costs about the same as a mobile data contract and you have to keep your landline because satellite isn't good for conversations, so that's an extra £40 per month - in other words, it's around £90 per month to get an average service from a BT exchange.

The collapse of Gigha Plus, the latest of many Scottish Government promises to improve our connection, should be the subject of an inquiry. Where was the due diligence in awarding a contract to a company on the brink of bankruptcy and why was all the money given to it before the work was completed?

Here is an alternative: upgrade the two local exchanges, Pennyghael and Tioran, so they are capable of coping with the Scottish Government's promise of fibre optic for all by 2021. A by-product would be they are also capable of giving residents up to 17mbps (the average from an ADSL exchange is 9.5mbps) right now.

It would cost less than the price of a new Mondeo – I checked.

Richard Warwick,
Tioran, Isle of Mull.

Damage is being done to the environment

Sir, The communications group EE is erecting numerous tall towers in Argyll.

Locally to me in Tayvallich, there are at least two major works in progress. The works are causing extensive dam-

age to the environment and wildlife.

There is litter everywhere, the single-track road is undermined and the works are causing mud slurry and flooding. Trees are being uprooted in a national nature reserve.

The towers themselves are not needed in such a sparsely populated area as existing networks are good. They are even bringing in contractors outwith Argyll.

This is a serious issue that is affecting communities all over Argyll and EE should answer our concerns, not least as to how these works were approved without local consultation.

Nick MacInneskar,
Tayvallich.

Patching roads will prove more costly

Sir, Highway engineering professionals have been predicting for decades that, without major investment, the terminal deterioration of our roads network was inevitable.

Only planned reconstruction work will prevent further decline in the network and continuing to patch potholes with sticking plaster or, in modern parlance, 'managed condition decline' is dangerous, not sustainable and in the long-term more costly.

Mike Rayworth,
by email.

Rise of anti-semitism in Britain

Sir, It's sad that in 2018 I write to you and express my concerns about the rise in anti-semitism in our country.

Attacks on Jewish people in the UK have hit record levels. In the past year, the charity that monitors anti-semitic abuse recorded 1,382 hate crimes.

That's a three per cent increase on 2016 figures and it is the highest figure since statistics were first recorded 34 years ago.

One of the reasons that it is rising is that extremists in taxpayer-funded universities can hold Israel Apartheid Week events. These events promote a message that Israel treats people differently because of their race. It is a lie.

In fact, it is the same type of lie that the Nazis spread in the 1930s that led to six million people being dehumanised and murdered.

The government has adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-semitism. That definition explains that describing Israel as a racist endeavour is anti-semitic.

Yet, in 2018, we are still having to fight what has been described as the world's oldest hatred - anti-semitism.

It's time for our government to act and finally fill the hole in our laws that allows this hatred to be publicly tolerated in our country.

I'd encourage all your readers to join the campaign to stamp out racism at www.israelbritain.org.uk/news.

Susan Wallace,
Corpach, Fort William.

Ailean Caimbeul

Beachd Ailein

ALLAN CAMPBELL
ailean@obantimes.co.uk



THAR NAM BLIADHNAICHEAN fhad 's a tha mi air a bhith a' sgrìobhadh a' chuilbh seo tha mi air tarraing a thoirt bhò àm gu àm air laghan casg astair air rathaidean na dùthcha, agus an-dràsta 's a-rithist tha mi air na riaghailtean sin a chàineadh.

Chan eil mi idir ag àicheadh a' chunnart a tha an lùib cus astair is cha mhòtha na sin a tha mi a' gabhail leigeil nan amadan a bhios gan cur fhèin agus dhaoine eile an cunnart am beatha.

Ach tha dà phrìomh argamaid a bhios gam leamhachadh. An toiseach an ìre 's gum bheil uile thrioblaidhean rathaidean na dùthcha gan "leasachadh" le casg astair, agus anns an dàrna h-àite nach fhaicear peanasachadh air luchd-siubhail a bhios a' cur maill air càch gu ìre 's gum feum iad sin gluasadann cunnartach a dhèanamh gus faotainn air adhart.

'S e deastanas an lagha leigeil le slughan na dùthcha siubhal cho luath agus cho sàbhailte 's a ghabhas agus chan eil mi a' creidsinn gum bheil casg

astair cruaidh air prìomh rathaidean, a chaidh a dhealbhadh gus siubhal luath a chheadachadh, a' coileanadh an amais sin.

Ged a tha argamaidean cuideachd ann a thaobh lughdachaidh air truaillleadh na h-àrainneachd, tha a' mhòr-chuid de dh'einneanan an-diugh air an togail air dhòigh a leigeas leotha siubhal nas luaithe gun mhòran cron a bharrachd adhbharachadh.

Bidh an fheadhainn agaibh a tha a' fuireach ann am bailtean mòra mothachail gum bheil a-nise casg astair fichead mìle san uair ga chur air barrachd shràidean anna sin, co-dhùnaidhean a th' air am bonntachadh sa mhòr-chuid air sàbhailteachd.

'S dòcha gum bheil an fheallsanachd sin ceart ach tha ceist daonnann mun ìre feart a tha leithid de lagh a' faotainn agus comas poileas a chur an gnìomh.

Saoidh mi gur e seo fear de na suidheachaidhean sin agus a rèir m' fhianais fhìin chan eil cus spèis ga thoirt dhan astar chheadaichte air na sràidean sin, agus tha mi den bheachd gum feum draibhear a bhith buileach mi-chiallach neo mi-fhortanach ma thèid a ghlacadh.

Ach tha innleachd ùr casg astair tur eadar-dhealaichte air feadh na dùthcha a-nise le staid nan rathaidean cho dona le tuill is nach gabh siubhal fiù 's aig an astar chheadaichte gun fhior chunnart millidh air carbad.

Ged a tha truas agam ris an fheadhainn a tha a' mineachadh mar a tha gainnead airgid is droch aimsir air seo adhbharachadh, cha ghabh gearraidhean anns t-seirbheis seo idir a sparradh air daoine mar a tha a' tachairt le seirbheis eile! Is fheàrr brèid na toll, ach 's uaisle toll na tuthag. Tha an seanfhacl gu cinnteach ceàrr san t-suidheachadh seo.

WHILE the Scottish people grumble, but are obliged to tolerate, about continuing cuts to public services, the desperate state of our roads network cannot be argued away by any political blaming.

Provision of safe travel networks is a fundamental responsibility of government and these roads must be repaired without delay.

Ailean Caimbeul (Allan Campbell)
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Your letters

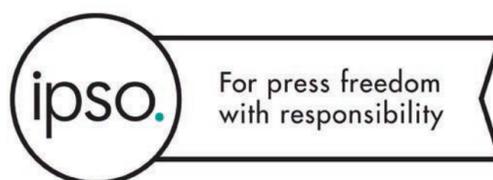
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The editor also reserves the right to shorten, to amend or to refuse to print them. Names and postal addresses must be supplied, including on emails, to indicate good faith.

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is also required for verification. Anonymous letters or those supplied without a contact telephone number will not be printed.

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Oban schoolboy launches his own eco-war on plastic straws

KATHIE GRIFFITHS
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk

SIX-YEAR-OLD 'eco-boy' Felix Hughes is on a superhero mission to save the world from plastic waste.

Felix, a pupil at Oban's Rockfield Primary School, has tackled giant milk supplier Müller Milk over the use of plastic straws it attaches to its drinks cartons.

The campaigning youngster, inspired to stop plastic pollution after watching TV hit *Blue Planet*, sent copies of his Müller Milk letter to Prime Minister Theresa May, the boss of Argyll and Bute Council, local politicians, Greenpeace, his head teacher and *The Oban Times*.

In his letter, he said: 'I like milk but I don't like the straw and the plastic wrapping it comes in. My school is quite big and we think there is around 1,000 straws going into the bin every week. I would like you to make paper straws or design something that you can drink out of that does not have any plastic in but can still break the carton lid.'

A Müller spokesman said its straws on milk cartons can be recycled into non-food products and it is working with its packaging supplier to identify potential alternatives.

He added: 'Our advice is to leave the straw in the pack and to ensure the pack is sent for recycling.'

Felix's mum Susannah said they had double-checked with Argyll and Bute Council and were satisfied Müller's advice was correct.

The youngster's school is following Felix's lead and is waiting for delivery of new recycling bins to help keep it green.



Felix with his one of his targeted Müller Milk cartons, complete with plastic straw. 16_T09_Felix Hughes03

His brother Rufus, nine, has also been joining in the eco-campaign and their head teacher, Caroline Fothergill, said: 'We are very proud of them for showing such leadership.'

Argyll and Bute MP Brendan O'Hara was so impressed by Felix's 'humbling' letter he told *The Oban Times* he had decided to join the all-party parliamentary group on plastic waste.

He said: 'I am so impressed that Felix has written to so many influential people. Plastic waste is becoming a huge problem. I hope Müller Milk and other producers take his views on board.'

The youngster was delighted to receive a reply from Downing Street which said: 'It was very good of you to get in touch and for taking the time and trouble to share your thoughts about this important matter. Your views were very well expressed.'

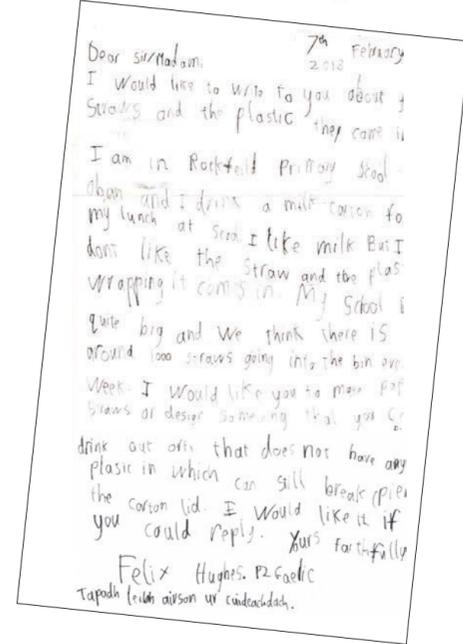
Meanwhile, Argyll and Bute Council chief executive Cleland Sneddon said he had spoken to its catering team who have already been working with Müller and other councils to come up with a different way of providing straws that are not made of plastic but can still pierce the carton. He said: 'It

might take a little time for the manufacturers to find a way of doing this but the company have told us they are keen to find a way to tackle the problems. I hope they are able to come up with a solution soon as I, too, am keen we reduce the amount of plastic we use.'

Oceans campaigner at Greenpeace UK Tisha Brown said they were 'honoured' to be included in Felix's campaign and added: 'We wholeheartedly support it and would advise Müller Milk to take it very seriously.'

Green MSP John Finnie was delighted to receive a copy of

The Oban Times / SUPPORTS
NO PLASTIC
FREE ARGYLL



Felix's letter and said: 'There has been a lot of action in recent months in Scotland with groups working to get rid of the ever-growing plastic waste problem we all face. I am especially delighted to see that much of this action is coming from young people, forcing

long overdue action from older people like myself.'

Argyll MSP Michael Russell said he was 'really keen to work with Felix' and was talking to a number of people in the area about how to make Oban a plastics-free town'.
Comment - page six.

Green light for Tiree campsite

A NEW campsite on Tiree was approved at a local hearing in Crossapol hall on Tuesday.

Karl Hughes applied to create a campsite, including 10 motorhome and 10 tent pitches plus toilets and showers, on land north of Sunset Cottage, Balevullin.

A council report recorded 12 supporters and 18 objectors.

Officers recommended councillors approve the campsite, because it would visually integrate with the landscape, contribute to Tiree's tourism economy, and reduce 'indiscriminate overnight sites'.

Given the size of the small crofting community, a local hearing was called on Monday, when councillors voted seven to two for approval.

Grass fire lights up Appin sky

FIREFIGHTERS were called to tackle a grass fire on a hillside above Appin on Monday night.

The fire near Inverhyme Farm lit up the night sky.

A spokesperson for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service said firefighters were alerted at 7.45pm.

She added: 'Operations Control mobilised two fire engines to the fire on the hillside near Inverhyme Farm where firefighters extinguished the fire.'

'Crews left the scene at 9.20pm after ensuring the area was made safe.'



Sexual assault man sentenced

A 59-YEAR-OLD man has been ordered to carry out 200 hours of unpaid work for sexually assaulting two women on Islay.

Ian McLellan, of 22 Crichton Street, Millport, inappropriately touched a woman in June 2012 before pressing his body against hers and seizing her arms, preventing her leaving a basement.

In March 2017, McLellan inappropriately touched and pressed against another woman.

He was sentenced to 200 hours of unpaid work and given a 12-month supervision order, as well as being subject to a notification requirement, when he appeared in Oban Sheriff Court on Tuesday February 27.

Sheriff Patrick Hughes said the offences fell at the lower end of the spectrum, but they would still have been 'deeply unpleasant' for the women.

Councillors back man's house plan

OBAN community councillors have backed a man's bid to build a house for himself and his family at Glencruitten.

The applicant, Duncan Blainey, was required to present a 'masterplan' to councillors at Monday's meeting as part of Argyll and Bute Council's planning approval process. The masterplan was prepared because of new technical guidance for any proposed scheme sited in a potential development area.

The application is to build the house on land south east of Achara.

Monday's meeting was told if the house goes up, there would still be sufficient ground for Glencruitten Golf Club to expand if the Oban development road ever went ahead. The community council agreed the masterplan was 'fine' and had 'no objection'.

Budget unanimously agreed

SANDY NEIL
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NO PUBLIC toilets will close, the roads safety unit will be kept and there will be a £5.5m cash injection for roads this year, in a budget unanimously agreed by Argyll and Bute Council last Thursday.

Councillors also did not accept a £725,000 cut to health and social care services and instead gave an extra £844,000 to address 'cost pressures'. Staff cuts to environmental health and the council's central education team were also not implemented.

However, the majority of savings options were passed, including a three per cent rise in council tax, losing two school janitor posts, changes to school

meal fees, increasing parking charges from £1 to £1.20 and introducing more in tourist destinations.

Fares will be increased across all council ferry services to Luing, Easdale, Lismore and Jura in three years and their management will be transferred from ASP to 'in house' to 'make the service more sustainable' by saving £55,000 per year.

Further changes are planned for the Jura to Islay ferry, including only running additional sailings when there is a minimum number of passengers and reviewing its 'on demand service (currently ferry runs over and above timetable) and the ferry fares to enable cost recovery'.

While the council abandoned plans to close 36 of its 57 public

toilets, it would 'progress sustainable models' by adding turnstiles and charges, franchising some as kiosks, or transferring others as community assets.

In the budget, councillors unanimously agreed to bridge a '£5 million funding gap in 2018/19' and build in 'protection for vital services against funding cuts in future years'.

Councillor Aileen Morton, leader of the Argyll, Lomond and the Islands Group, told the chamber on Thursday February 22 that investment in the council's roads and footpaths network would more than double over the next two years from £6.6m to £14.9m, with an extra £8m added to the roads capital plan.

Councillor Morton said: 'The

trunk road network in Argyll and Bute has now hit truly appalling levels with the A83, A82 and A85 all needing substantial investment. I call on the Scottish Government to invest in our roads now.

'We decided to allocate more than £1.5m to the Health and Social Care Partnership to deliver its vital social work services. This is more than was proposed in the budget pack. We've done as much as we can this year and over the past few years, and now it is time for the partnership to deliver sustainable change, resource transfer and integration.'

Councillor Gary Mulvaney, deputy leader, added: 'We need to re-shape what we do. An example of this is the one council property initiative agreed today.

We will be proactively managing our 1,700 buildings and parcels of land, which will be better for the council and for local communities.'

SNP opposition leader councillor Sandy Taylor thanked the council's leadership who welcomed their concerns, leading to their unanimous agreement.

Further savings are expected in the years to come, with estimated budget gaps of £4.124m in 2019/20, and £6.249m in 2020/21.

The council's last round of cuts, the budget report explained, saved £548,000 by reducing bin collections from fortnightly to every three weeks, £319,000 by removing school librarians from secondary schools, £50,000 in the mobile library

service, £39,500 by reducing street sweeping by 50 per cent, £100,000 by removing funding for Christmas lights, £120,700 by increasing cremation and burial charges by 20 per cent, £88,000 by removing 'school crossing patrollers', £58,000 by increasing piers and harbours berthing charges and £150,000 by increasing car parking charges from 80p to £1 and introducing year-round charges at other car parks, including on Mull.

Further savings have been delivered by reducing funding for events and festivals, arts development and third sector grants and reducing creative arts programmes and grounds maintenance in schools and primary school supply teacher cover.

SAMS students stand in solidarity with striking lecturers

SCOTTISH Association for Marine Science (SAMS) students are supporting their lecturers who are on strike over pension changes.

In a letter to their teachers, a group of students said they backed their decision to strike.

The staff are picketing over plans to end the defined benefit section of the Universities Superannuation Scheme pension scheme which could see lecturers £10,000 worse off per year.

Members of the University and College Union (UCU) at SAMS have joined 63 universities across the UK in the month-long strike.

In a letter to the lecturers, a group of students wrote: 'We want to let you know that, although we have remained mostly silent, we students are aware of the situation. As our education will also be affected by this strike, we would like to let you know what we think of



SAMS staff are picketing over plans to change their pension scheme.

the matter. We understand why strike action has been called for: the reform regarding your pension schemes is very alarm-

ing and done with a seemingly complete disrespect for the work you do. The predicted reduction of £10,000 in retirement income

that would come from such a reform is simply unacceptable. Therefore, going on strike to protect your pensions and live-

lihood is a wholly necessary in this case. We do not expect you to just stand by and watch your future quality of life be attacked so blatantly.

'To the lecturers that are members of the UCU and have decided to strike, we stand in full solidarity and support this industrial action. We believe it is important you fight for your pensions and livelihood.

'You shape our learning and upsetting reforms that affect your future will affect our education. But looking past the lecturer-student relationship, we understand the magnitude of what is happening and reiterate we care and we support you.'

Speaking to *The Oban Times*, senior lecturer Claire Gachon said: 'We are protesting against changes in pensions of academic staff. These changes are extremely unfavourable. We are paid by SAMS to teach students of UHI but when it

comes to pensions SAMS tells us they are powerless. They said they are supportive, but can't do anything. We are sad we can't teach our students, but they are very supportive of us.'

Student Kirsty Black said: 'It's unanimous support. Quite a few of us will go into academia, so it will effect us in future.'

Professor Nicholas Owens, director of SAMS, said: 'I understand the position of the union. In particular, I worry poorer pensions might make academic careers less attractive so UK academia could lose talent. Unfortunately SAMS cannot influence the employer position.

'As director of SAMS, I am also concerned about our students and alongside many colleagues have been working to reduce the impact the strike may have on their education. Many of our students are, however, supportive of their striking lecturers.'

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Fort football club's Highland League status at serious risk

Highland league makes it clear a deadline on the club's future is looming

HIGHLAND League secretary Rod Houston says he is extremely concerned Fort William Football Club is on the verge of crashing out of the league after a recent plea for new directors to come forward fell on deaf ears.

The current six-strong board of directors announced last month they would all be standing down at the end of this season, saying it was time for new faces to take on the challenge of keeping the Claggan Park outfit going.

But more than a month later and the board says there has been 'virtually no serious response whatsoever' from anyone prepared to become a director.

Director Ronnie Maclean told the *Lochaber Times*: 'It is bitterly disappointing that it appears no-one is interested in bringing new blood with fresh ideas and impetus to the club to keep

Football

Fort William in the Highland League. It is unthinkable that Fort William and Lochaber will not have a senior team in the Highland League after the end of this season, which will happen without people to take it forward.'

But Mr Houston says that is exactly what will happen if no new directors are found and soon.

'There is a real sense of urgency about this because we are starting to look at structures and arrangements for next season,' he said.

'There is a real sense of sadness that the community in Fort William does not seem interested in having a football club in the Highland League.'

Mr Houston stressed the league was not in the business



Claggan Park, home of Fort William FC, situated under the world-famous Ben Nevis, may not be hosting Highland League football next season unless new directors come forward to take over the club. Photograph: James Wire.

of throwing clubs out or telling them what they should do, but warned that time was running out for Fort William and a decision on the club's league future could not be put off indefinitely.

'The local community needs to get its act together and decide if it wants a local club in the Highland League or not,' he said.

'When you look at the efforts made by the current group of directors to keep Fort William FC going as a Highland League club, these have been nothing short of heroic.'

'And given that Fort William has one of the most respected youth set-ups in the league, it would be very sad if the senior

club did not remain in the league.' In a new statement this week, another member of the Fort William board said the Highland League was now making it crystal clear a deadline on the club's future was looming.

'If the club wishes to retain its place in the Highland League, we need a response from the

public almost immediately with proposals for the future,' they told the *Lochaber Times*.

And the board added a plea: 'There must be enough people out there who care enough to keep the club going.'

Please don't let Fort William Football Club go out of existence.'



Runners set off on the new Cow Hill circuit. Photograph: Iain Ferguson, the Write Image.

Lochaber runners top tough Cow Hill race

Athletics

FORTY-ONE runners took part in Lochaber Athletic Club's penultimate winter league race on Sunday in beautiful February sunshine.

The Cow Hill race route was a bit different this year because of works at Braveheart Carpark, but the race still provided a test for the runners as they climbed to the summit of Cow Hill via the peat track and the front of the hill in the five-mile race.

Lochaber's John Yells lead from the start and maintained his lead throughout on this short but tough Cow Hill circuit to finish in a time of 36.28. Denis Prikulis of Vegan runners finished second in a time of 37.17, while Tom Smith of Lochaber finished third in 38.28.

The ladies' race was won by Lochaber's Lisette Walter in a time of 44.50. Second place went to Inverness Harriers' Caroline Marwick in 47.53, while Lochaber's Vikki MacKinnon finished third with a time of 48.32.

Lochaber Athletic Club thanks all the helpers on the day. Ellen, Bruce, Debbie, Ray, Willie and Andrew for timing and marshalling Ian Adams for organising the event.

Double delight for Lochaber boxers



Cameron Whyte, Scottish junior 54kg champion, 2002 age group.

LOCHABER Phoenix Boxing Club enjoyed one of its most successful Scottish schoolboy and junior championships at the weekend.

The club returned from the event in Ravenscraig, Motherwell, with more champions than ever before.

Fifteen-year-old Cameron Whyte from Spean Bridge became Scottish champion for an incredible sixth consecutive year with convincing points decisions over his two main challengers.

Eryk Gnylewicz of Forgewood Boxing Club was Whyte's semi-final opponent. Upcoming Gnylewicz, who is creating a big stir in Scottish boxing and towers five inches over Whyte, presented problems for the Lochaber boxer.

Whyte, now closing in on

50 career bouts, used his experience to dominate the action from first bell to the last. Whyte's opponent in the final on the Sunday was Byron Boxing Club's Fawaz Aborode, the reigning Northern District champion. Smaller in height than Whyte, he possessed an incredible physical strength.

The opening round saw Aborode barrelling forward trying to engage with Whyte at close range with hooks. This round was fairly evenly contested but the Lochaber boxer's punches were always cleaner and more precise.

Whyte has had more bouts than any other junior boxer in Scotland and it showed in the final. He took possession of the centre of the ring and forced the powerful Aberdonian onto the back foot in the next round.

While this put Whyte in range of his opponent's powerful shots, it also enabled him to transfer his body weight with every punch, doubling the power on his punches.

Whyte turned the temperature up in the final round, controlling the centre of the ring and double phasing his attacks meaning Aborode lost his shape.

Whyte began to drill solid shots home and finished the round on the ascendancy to clinch another title.

Eleven-year-old Josh Dieguno was the only other representative from Lochaber in the championships and the youngster from Caol showed an aptitude,

will to win and tremendous attitude which isn't normally shown by a boxer of his age. Dieguno has found himself on the wrong end of points decisions in every important bout of his career, having been runner-up in two finals in the last year.

He has dusted himself off, however, and has moved down a division to enter the 2006 weight category at 34kgs.

Dieguno's opponent in his final, Brandan Clarkson, from Meadowbank Boxing Club, Edinburgh, was an all-action opponent who had an aggressive technique.

However, Dieguno displayed a lot of the fortitude and skill to produce the best performance of his fledgling boxing career.

The Lochaber youngster was very calm under pressure as he glided side to side and looked to land straight punches on his oncoming opponent.

While Clarkson showed a lot of determination, Dieguno matched this and displayed a lot of ring craft, honed through months of practice in the gym.

Towards the end of each round, the supreme fitness of Dieguno would be a feature as he attempted to press home an advantage and show no small amount of aggression.

Dieguno has never lacked desire and this coupled with everything he has learned from recent defeats at the final stages of competitions has moved him up to another level.

Coach Niall Clark said: 'At eleven years old Josh has

Boxing

become a perfect example to athletes of any age that defeat should not be the end but only a step towards your next victory. And while his final was hard fought, there was no doubt he was the superior technician in the ring and was fully deserving to walk out of the arena as the champion of his country.'

Both these boxers and many more will be featured in Lochaber Phoenix Boxing Club's next show in the Nevis Centre on Saturday April 28.

Tickets are available from the venue or from anyone connected with the club.



Josh Dieguno, Scottish junior 34kg champion, 2006 age group.



The top three teams in the overall standings: Lunadrava, third, at the front and joint first Inverloch and Caol teams at the back.

Pupils go the distance in cross country event

Cross country

RURAL Lochaber school pupils gave town schools a run for their money at last week's Lochaber Primaries Cross Country Running Championships, with some of the fastest times of the day coming from Strontian and Spean Bridge competitors.

Despite a last minute postponement, due to deep snow blanketing the ground on the original date two weeks ago, 14 primary schools entered this year's event.

Organised by Lochaber's physical education and Active Schools staff and sponsored by Samuel and Partners, the course winds its way through Leanachan Forest. All of the participants were cheered and encouraged round the course by senior pupils from Lochaber High School.

In the girls' event, Mya Carmichael, from Strontian Primary School, improved on her second place in last year's race to take the win in a time of

11.47, just ahead of Iona Dignin from Inverloch, who took second place in 11.48. Third was Sophie Knox, from Lundavra, 12.09. A special mention goes to Aimee MacLeod, from Ardgor Primary, who came in fifth, despite being a P4 pupil and the youngest in the field.

In the boys' race, the fastest runner and winner of the Rotary Cup was Sorley Swabey from Spean Bridge Primary School, who completed the 1.5 mile course in nine minutes 53 seconds. Second was Ben Corner, from Inverloch, in a time of 10.02, while third place was claimed by Dean Douglas from Caol in 10:10, just ahead of Daniel Parfitt from Inverloch.

Inverloch and Caol shared joint first place in the overall schools team standings, with last year's winners, Lundavra, pushed down into third place.

Lochaber club lotteries

Lottery numbers

THIS week's Fort William Golf Club lotto numbers were 2, 12 and 20. There was no winner so the jackpot for the draw today (Thursday March 1) will be £600.

Numbers drawn in the Caol Regeneration lotto were 13, 15 and 17.

There were no winning tickets so next week's jackpot will be £500.

Ballachulish Shinty Club's lottery numbers for this week were 8, 10 and 18.

There were no winners so next week's jackpot will be £600.

Caol Community Centre's bingo lotto numbers for this week were 2, 9 and 14. The only winner this week was E Cairns. Next week's jackpot will be £100.

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WEATHER

Thursday Gusty winds and light cloud
Winds strong easterly
Temperatures 1°C to 3°C

Friday Gusty winds and light cloud
Winds strong easterly
Temperatures 2°C to 4°C

Weekend Light cloud and breezy
Winds moderate easterly
Temperatures 2°C to 5°C

Outlook

TIDAL INFORMATION

Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday March 1, 2018** are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

Date	am	pm	Ardrishaig	Mallaig
Thur 05.13	4.0	11.46	0.6	17.45
Fri 05.52	4.2	12.28	0.5	18.20
Sat 00.29	0.3	06.29	4.2	13.08
Sun 01.11	0.3	07.06	4.2	13.46
Mon 01.50	0.4	07.40	4.0	14.22
Tues 02.28	0.6	08.13	3.8	14.58
Wed 03.06	0.9	08.46	3.5	15.35

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)

Port	Difference	Port	Difference
Campbeltown	-5.30	Portree	+0.55
Crinan	-0.47	Tobermory	+0.16
Islay Port Ellen	2.00	Dover	+5.30
Lochboisdale	+0.30		

Ferry Crossings/Sea States

Route	State
Oban to Barra/South Uist	Moderate
Oban to Coll/Tiree	Moderate
Kennacraig to Islay	Moderate