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Merry Christmas

to all our readers and advertisers

Wishing you a merry and safe Christmas

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk



Covid survivor James Scott is wishing everyone a merry and safe Christmas.

The 64-year-old's festive message to his hometown and surrounding communities is to make the best of celebrations as far as coronavirus guidelines allow but keep yourselves and loved ones safe.

Mr Scott, who spent 38 days in hospital in Oban and in critical care at Glasgow's Queen Elizabeth University, says this Christmas will be a bitter-sweet one for him as he will miss his mum Jessie Scott who passed away from coronavirus while he was in an induced coma unaware she had even contracted the disease.

'People should enjoy themselves this Christmas and make the best of it but please stay safe. Keep washing your hands, keep your social distances and keep your loved ones well,' he said.

Thanks to the NHS, Mr Scott

'This virus is not going to go away anytime soon. It's going to be with us for quite a while yet...'

is feeling almost as fit as he did before the virus struck and is back at work. X-rays that once showed his lungs were almost 100 per cent deprived of oxygen are in the past and he has built back his strength. He said: 'I'm one of the lucky ones and am thankful for that every day.

'This virus is not going to go away anywhere soon. It's going to be with us for quite a while yet but we have to keep going and follow the rules to look after ourselves. I think Oban is doing a good job of that.'

Mr Scott recently had his flu jab and will be waiting his turn to be called for a Covid vaccination.

Continued on page eight.



Santa welcomes youngsters at drive-thru grotto

Oban firefighters raised spirits and funds with a drive-thru Santa's grotto at the weekend. More than 200 cars passed through the station's magically transformed bay area on Saturday to see Santa with his elf helpers and post a letter to the North Pole in time for Christmas Day. Money raised will go to the Fire Fighters Charity. KG_T53-drive-1

Covid clampdown over festive break

Planned easing of festive Covid restrictions will now be limited to Christmas Day only and, from Boxing Day, all of Scotland will have Level 4 restrictions applied for at least three weeks, including the closure of non-essential retail and hospitality.

The only exceptions will be Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles which will be put in Level 3.

Speaking at a special briefing on Saturday, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon informed the nation restrictions had to be tightened to stop the spread of a new, highly contagious strain of Covid-19.

'Scotland needs to act now,' she said.

A maximum of eight people from three households can still meet indoors on Christmas Day but official advice is to keep the numbers as low as possible.

From Boxing Day, in line with existing law, travel across local authority boundaries will not be allowed unless for essential work, care and medical appointments.

All measures will be kept under regular review.

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OT

Has the drone been yet? Parcel delivered to Mull in UK first

by Ellis Butcher
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A drone has been used to deliver a parcel to a lighthouse on the Isle of Mull in a ground-breaking UK trial.

It means the Royal Mail has become the first UK parcel carrier to deliver post by drone. The package was delivered to Alexa Kershaw of Rubha Nan Gall Lighthouse and Keeper's Cottage near Tobermory.

A consultation with islanders will take place in 2021 about using drones to deliver to some hard-to-reach addresses on Mull.

As the second largest island of the Inner Hebrides, the technology aims to help support postmen and postwomen.

Tom Nunn, a postman for the Isle of Mull, said: 'I am very pleased to be involved in this fantastic trial. It is an exciting opportunity to test out new ways of working to support us posties that deliver in some of



Royal Mail postman Tom Nunn with a drone and the what3words address.

the most remote areas of the UK.

'Some of the houses on the Isle of Mull include a 30-minute walk to the front door so the use of drones will be a huge help!'

The trials saw the Royal Mail team up with drone companies DronePrep and Skyports.

The latter has already been in Oban this year helping Lorn and Islands Hospital and NHS

Scotland use drones to deliver to Mull as part of the response to Covid.

The trial used 'what3words' address technology. That involves every three metre square in the world labelled with a unique address of three words. Currently, all Royal Mail deliveries across the UK sees parcels routed to their general destination by postcode.

Where it could differ in

future for remote locations on Mull, local posties could use drones for specific addresses.

In next year's consultation, interested residents will be invited to use the 'DronePrep' platform to assess the viability of their property for a drone delivery. They would then be required to pinpoint a suitable landing location within their ownership using what3words.

It would only apply to parcels sent via Royal Mail and delivered by Royal Mail van.

Nick Landon, chief commercial officer at Royal Mail, said of the project: 'Delivering the first live parcel in the UK by an unmanned drone was a landmark day for us.'

'We are incredibly proud to be working with DronePrep, Skyports and what3words to trial new ways to support the more remote and isolated communities we serve.'

'This is part of our constant drive to incorporate the best innovative technologies into

our network. We've seen a huge increase in parcel volumes this year and this is just one of the ways we are looking at to support our front line delivery staff and deliver fast, convenient and green services for all of our customers.'

Gareth Whatmore, chief executive officer of DronePrep, said: 'In the last couple of years, drone technology has matured and with it the industry's ability to solve real world challenges.'

'Our collaboration with Royal Mail, Skyports, what3words and Isle of Mull residents is a huge opportunity for us all to learn more about how drones can complement and supplement existing Royal Mail delivery services.'

Chris Sheldrick, co-founder of what3words, added: 'By labelling every three metre square in the UK with three words – a what3words address – recipients are easily able to communicate their desired

drone delivery location. Our technology perfectly complements traditional addresses, but adding a layer of accuracy when needed. What3words is a perfect tool to assist Royal Mail on their mission to continue to innovate.'

Duncan Walker, chief executive of Skyports, said: 'We are delighted to contribute our experience of flying delivery drones for the NHS around the Isle of Mull to this exciting project. Delivery drones are already proven as a fast and reliable solution for transporting packages to poorly connected rural communities.'

'This trial with Royal Mail, what3words and DronePrep has the potential to lay the foundations for a future service to complement the one provided by Royal Mail's hard-working posties that we rely on today.'

For more on what3words, visit [what3words.com/daring-lion.race](https://www.what3words.com/daring-lion.race)

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Man who kicked car injured his foot

COURT

A man kicked out at a car and injured his foot, Oban Sheriff Court has been told.

Anthony Murray, aged 41, of 6 Bay View Caravan Site, Ledaig, pleaded guilty to causing damage to the wing mirror of a Peugeot parked at Lochside Street, Oban.

David Glancy, procurator fiscal, told the court on Tuesday December 15 that the incident happened in a side street by Tesco car park on March 30 2020.

The accused had been walking with companions and had lost his temper, kicking

out at the parked vehicle. The nearside wing mirror became detached and was left hanging only by a wire, said Mr Glancy.

An eyewitness saw what happened and stopped a passing police vehicle and gave a description of Murray and the group was found nearby.

Other members of the group were initially hostile to police officers but Murray admitted he had injured his foot having kicked out at the car, said Mr Glancy.

Ruben Murdanagium, representing the accused, said his client had offered to settle the cost of the damage but had not been able to do so.

He had suffered from a spinal condition from the age of four for which he received treatment and medication.

On the day, he had been feeling 'very bad' and his mind was 'not right', with him feeling very upset about his condition, said Mr Murdanagium.

As a result, Murray had taken his sheep out on the vehicle, he added.

Sheriff Simon Fraser said he accepted it was a complicated matter but the damage would have caused inconvenience to the car owner.

Murray was fined £150 with a £33 compensation order and a £10 victim surcharge.

Father given 'behind bars' warning

A father-of-four has been warned he will end up behind bars if his 'unacceptable' behaviour continues.

Alan MacCuish, 27, of 43 Lochnell Road, Dunbeg, appeared at Oban Sheriff Court on Wednesday December 16 and was fined £250 plus a victim surcharge of £20 after pleading guilty to shouting and swearing and causing distress at the family home on Saturday December 5 this year.

The court heard how an argument broke out after MacCuish's wife and her

mother came home to find he had been drinking.

Procurator Fiscal David Glancy said MacCuish was 'acting strangely' and his speech was slurred.

He started to shout at the complainer.

Swear

He was asked to leave but refused, continuing to shout and swear.

He then left on his own volition with the complainer locking him out and dialling 999, the court was told.

Police arrived to find the

family in distress, officers traced him nearby and arrested him.

Jane McLaren, representing MacCuish, said: 'He had been drinking that afternoon and that led to the argument. He apologises for that.'

Summing up Sheriff Simon Fraser told MacCuish: 'This is completely unacceptable behaviour.'

'This is your second conviction for this kind of thing. Continue to do it and you will undoubtedly end up behind bars.'



Look who visited First Steps Nursery!

Youngsters at Oban's First Steps Nursery had a big surprise when Santa paid a visit.

Keeping a safe social distance, Santa took a break from overseeing the elves in their North Pole workshop to call in and say hello to the excited children.

Senior practitioner Millie Griffiths said: 'Thank you Santa for taking time away from your busy workshop in the North Pole to come and see us. We hope the elves behaved.'

YOURSTORY

share with us: editor@obantimes.co.uk
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Oban shellfish firm's pledge as live produce faces ruin

by Ellis Butcher
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An Oban businessman who could be facing losses in excess of £200,000 because of the UK-French border crisis has pledged to pay local fisherman.

Paul Knight owns PDK Shellfish Limited at the South Pier, which buys shellfish and exports it throughout Europe.

Yet lorries from Scotland loaded with thousands of pounds worth of live produce could see the seafood ruined after the border was closed to accompanied UK freight for 48 hours bringing the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel to a standstill.

It followed an announcement by the UK Government on Saturday that London and the south east would move



into tier four due to the spread of a virulent strain of the coronavirus.

Mr Knight said fortunately three lorries from PDK in Oban, carrying produce worth £350,000, managed to get through before the deadline.

At the time of going to press, drivers remained on the other side of the channel trying to get back, with an outgoing lorry also caught up in the snarl-up at Portsmouth.

PDK Shellfish Limited is just one of many companies

Scallops from the North East Atlantic can be found in fish markets in Europe, including Venice.

Photograph: Joanne Simms.

which relies on being paid on an 'alive when it arrives' deal with its European buyers.

Mr Knight, originally from Mull, employs 18 people in Oban, and set up with a van as a teenager in 1998.

Mr Knight said: 'Can I take a £200,000 hit and not fold – yes, I can. It will be paid for. I will not let the company fold. The fisherman will be getting paid regardless of what happens. My view is that they sold in good faith and my job now is to get it to market.'

However, he also said that he could not pay out indefinitely

as the company could not keep absorbing continual losses of that magnitude. PDK is responsible for every kilo of shellfish it transports and at Christmas the prices per kilo rises 'four to five' times.

The money helps fisherman from the islands and the West Coast survive the New Year months when demand for shellfish plunges and fishing is curbed by the weather.

Mr Knight said: 'We buy the shellfish from pretty much all over the islands and transport it back to Oban to be packed and loaded onto lorries for the customer and then sent to France and Spain.'

The company intends to make more deliveries this coming week but may miss the crucial Christmas period. Mr Knight said he was making every mitigation possible.



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OT

Seil lights up for garden pa

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk



When Covid meant curtains for this year's official panto on Seil, islanders pulled together to put on a show out of the ordinary - and outdoors.

With help from the drama group and its wardrobe, a plot was improvised by fun-loving volunteers to transform the stunning garden at An Cala in Ellenabeich into an open air theatre, lit by twinkling fairy lights and lanterns.

To keep everyone safe under Covid guidelines, children and their families on Seil, Easdale and Luing were invited on Facebook to book a time slot and visit the Cinderella Glow Trail.

A shout out for donations of festive lights soon saw the stunning grounds festooned with colour and hand-painted glow in the dark stars and shells hanging from the trees.

Armed with torches, families followed a light trail

down the garden's paths, over bridges and passing a waterfall meeting characters from the fairy tale on their way round ending up at a firepit for toasted marshmallows.

From Cinderella in her rags, to the bickering Ugly Sisters and the Fairy Godmother who finally saved the day, the panto tale was brought to life in fun-sized social distanced chunks.

Glow trail organiser Rachel Smith said: 'I'm so proud of our wee community for bringing some panto magic to life for our islands' children. The beautiful An Cala was lit up and populated with wonderful characters to tell the story of Cinderella, socially distanced. It started as an idea swimming in the sea with a friend and ended as a wonderful magical night - even the stars came out for us. I love it when a plan comes together. There's too many people to thank for making it possible but



they all know who they are.' Oban photographer Lauren Fair of Ljfp photography at www.ljfp photography.co.uk

also volunteered her time to take photographs of the event for Seil to have as a keepsake and firefighter Chris

Thompson organised the firepit. A bucket for donations from the free event made more than £80 for playgroup funds.

The Ugly Sisters were Mary Freer and Alastair Robertson, and below, wicked stepmother, played by Jan Fraser.

Photographs: Lauren Fair of Ljfp photography



TURKEY, HAM AND LEEK PIE (FROM CHRISTMAS DINNER LEFTOVERS)

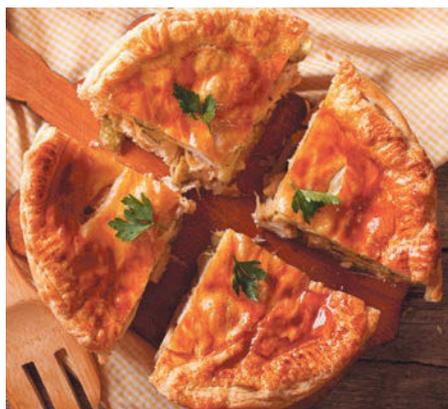
Recipe

Brought to you by BID4Oban

At the time of reading this you will probably not have cooked your turkey or ham yet! This week's recipe provides a solution for any leftovers.

Ingredients

- 1 pack ready rolled puff pastry
- 2 large leeks roughly chopped.
- 3 tbsp plain flour
- 500ml chicken stock
- tsp wholegrain mustard
- 600g leftover turkey meat cut into small chunks
- 250g leftover cooked ham cut into small chunks (or substitute more turkey)
- 2 tsp dried tarragon
- 1 tsp mixed herbs
- 200ml cream
- 1 egg
- salt and pepper
- some butter for cooking leeks
- Splash of white wine (optional)



Method

Melt butter in large frying pan and add the leeks. Cover and cook for about 5 minutes but do not allow to brown. Sprinkle flour over the leeks and stir. Increase the heat on the pan and gradually add in the stock and keep stirring until you have a nice, thickened sauce. Add the turkey, ham and mustard and continue to stir. Switch off the heat and stir in the tarragon, cream, splash of wine and mixed herbs. Set aside and allow to cool for about an hour.

Pre-heat the oven to 200C/180C fan. Place the filling into a 1.5L pie dish. Roll out pastry. Beat the egg and brush the edge of the pie dish with egg. Place the rolled-out pastry over the dish and seal to the edges. Trim the pastry and if you have some left over this can be used to shape in to leaves to decorate the top of the pie. If you have a pie funnel place this in the centre or alternatively an upside-down ceramic egg cup works well. Place a couple of slits in the pastry to allow steam to escape while cooking. With the remainder of the beaten egg, brush the top of the pie. Place in oven for 35-40 minutes until golden brown. Enjoy!



George MacKenzie and Caroline Morgan as mice at An Cala's glow Trail making a gown for Cinders to go to the ball.



Kathie Griffiths was forever blowing bubbles as guardian of An Cala's waterfall.



Jackie Carter-Brown was purr-fect as the naughty cat.



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antomime



Above, Cinderella and her Prince Charming was played by Daisy Dugdale and her mum Wendy who runs Balvicar shop; and above right, Alastair Mill was Buttons; while centre, Jan Wolfe was under cover as Daisy The Cow.



Above, Claudie Layden White was the wonderful fairy godmother, with Helen Glennie, right, taking on the part of the white unicorn.



Organiser of the Cinderella Glow Trail, Rachel Smith was Cinderella in rags.



Even a white rabbit, alias Chris Bennett, hopped into the storyline.



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OT

Around Oban

KAY MCDONALD

editor@obantimes.co.uk



I can't believe it's Christmas Eve already. Where has this year gone?

It's been a strange one and I, for one, am going to be glad to see the end of it as I'm sure most of you are but there have been highlights.

As always in Oban, these have been about the people. From the pleasure in watching our sporting heroes like Bob MacIntyre and John MacPhee doing well, to the initial efforts by volunteers when the pandemic started to make sure everyone was safe and fed, we've had a lot to be thankful for.

This year is nearly over and although I don't want to count my chickens, next year has all the signs of being a year we can look forward to. One of my relatives in Eader Glinn has already had her first dose of the vaccine with the second due in the middle of January, which gives me hope it may not be too long before something like normal visiting can be resumed. The workers in care homes and those who visit people at home are some of the unsung heroes

WHERE IS THIS?



of this pandemic. They've worked harder than ever to keep our older and less able members of the community safe in really difficult circumstances and they deserve huge thanks.

Let's look forward to a New Year where we remember all the things that were important to us this year and made life bearable, even as we start to return to normal.

There is such a lot I don't want to take for granted again, like being able to hug people or have people visit me at home. We'll all have something different that mattered and it's up to us to remember what's important even as we look forward.

Last week's photograph was of the windows beside the door at the Perle Hotel, which are beautiful. This week's involves a wee walk along the front.

Song for Brian raises MND cash

by Kathie Griffiths

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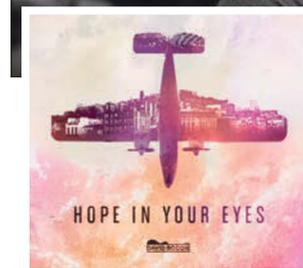
Lockdown musicians have released a fundraising song in tribute to Oban's Brian MacDonald who battled Motor Neurone Disease.

The retired firefighter was just 43 when he died earlier this year and is sorely missed by his family and many friends.

Friday saw the release of a song and video in his memory by David Roddie, a singer songwriter pal of his from Glasgow, with all proceeds going to MND Scotland.

David called on other musician friends, including Taynuilt accordionist and BBC broadcaster Gary Innes, during lockdown to make a social-distanced recording of Hope In Your Eyes.

Inspiration for the song came from 'a magical moment' Brian experienced when his brother



John-Bruce, also a firefighter and based at Oban Airport, took him up on a flight over Scotland's West Coast.

'That day of the flight really lifted Brian's spirits,' John-Bruce told The Oban Times and added: 'David was a very good friend of Brian's from when he lived and worked in Glasgow. When David called me to put his idea forward and ask for permission from the family, we were all overwhelmed.'

'It's such a beautiful song and Brian would have loved this. This kind of thing keeps Brian alive, knowing money is

still being raised in his name to help others who suffer from this horrible illness.'

David wants to raise as much money as he can through the song and has already made hundreds of pounds with it to help MND Scotland carry on its research work and support others like Brian and his family.

The song lyrics remember Brian's beaming smile, fearlessness, strength and the hope he clung on to that a cure might be found. Until Covid struck, he had been hoping to take part in the largest ever pioneering clinical trial of drugs tackling motor neurone disease, signing up to it with the likes of rugby legend Doddie Weir.

During his firefighting career in Glasgow, he attended some of the Scottish Fire and Rescue

David Roddie recorded the track in memory of Brian with some musician friends, with all money raised going to MND Scotland.

Service's biggest incidents, including being part of the emergency response sent to the Clutha bar on November 29 2013 after a police helicopter plummeted through its roof. He also responded to the George Square bin lorry crash in December 2014, which killed six and injured 15 others just days before Christmas.

'The man was a hero on and off duty. He was always helping someone, it wouldn't be uncommon to see him helping change a complete stranger's tyre. He was just that kind of guy. I hope my song helps the charity that helped him,' said David.

The song is available to buy now on all major streaming platforms from Spotify to iTunes.

To make a donation go to justgiving.com/fundraising/hope-in-your-eyes

Other musicians who added their support included vocal harmony group The Little Acres, guitarist Conor Smith, bassist Colin Cunningham, and drummer Audrey Tait who, with Lauren Gilmour, helped David mix the track.

Woman cleared of obstructing police

A 38-year-old woman has been cleared of attempting to obstruct police during a drugs raid at her Oban home.

Sheriff Simon Fraser found the charge not proven when Rita Gatner of 9 Quarry Road appeared on trial at court in Oban on Wednesday December 16.

Miss Gatner was also found not guilty of possessing cannabis.

The court heard how a pungent smell of cannabis raised suspicions when a police officer knocked at the address on March 16 2019, carrying out door-to-door enquiries about an earlier unconnected disturbance in the street.

The constable had reported it back at the police station and six officers returned to the property a couple of hours later with a drugs search warrant.

Miss Gatner was accused of



Oban Sheriff Court.

repeatedly shouting to alert two other people who were in the flat at the time and also to a caller who came to the door that police were present and searching for drugs, but she told Sheriff Simon Fraser it had not been intended as a warning to ditch drugs. She said she

was simply announcing their arrival, 'just shouting the obvious' as if it was the 'coalman at the door'.

During the police search, an amount of drugs and paraphernalia including a pipe and a bong was discovered. Cannabis was also found on a coffee table and nine wraps of heroin were found in jeans belonging to Miss Gatner's now former partner Daniel Guy.

Miss Gatner told the court all the drugs belonged to Guy who was an addict, controlling and 'a bit of a bully', with whom she had been in an on-and-off volatile and difficult relationship for about two years, until she threw him out following the incident.

She told the court there would have been 'consequences' if she had got rid of his drugs.

'I was living under duress at the time,' she said.



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Biggest UK vaccine roll-out brings hope of a brighter and better future for all of us

The UK's biggest roll-out of a vaccine in a generation is well underway, bringing hope to all for protection against COVID-19 as well as the prospect of a brighter, better 2021.

FROM DELIVERY drivers to doctors, warehouse workers to care staff, there is now a dedicated army of heroes involved in the UK Government's nationwide roll-out of virus vaccinations.

Inoculations have already begun with elderly patients as well as hospital and care staff among the first to receive first phase jabs across the nation.

Experts from the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency have already approved Pfizer/BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine for use.

Its introduction follows months of clinical trials and analysis of the data by the MHRA, which confirms the safe, free treatment meets stringent safety standards.

NHS England and NHS Improvement, NHS Wales, NHS Scotland, Health and Social Care Northern Ireland, all of which



have decades of experience delivering large-scale vaccination programmes.

This is a vaccine that is now available for the entire UK. When it's your turn, you will receive a notification.

Vaccines are free at the point of delivery and remain the best way to protect us all from the harmful effects of coronavirus.

■ *This article is part of a paid-for partnership with the UK Government*



VIRUS VACCINATIONS: Inoculations have begun for elderly patients and care staff.

VACCINE STATISTICS

- The UK Government invested £88 million into research and development
- So far 357 million free vaccine doses have been purchased for UK citizens
- The UK Government invested £230m-plus into manufacturing vaccines
- Vaccines annually prevent 2-3 million deaths globally, potentially millions more
- Vaccines are tested on 20,000 to 30,000 people before being made available to the public
- Hundreds of thousands of people signed up to trials, thousands more continue to be recruited
- Over 600 clinical trials take place every year for other medicines
- Additional £100 million will fund UK Government's vaccine state-of-the-art mass production
- The UK Government has established 'rapid deployment facility' thanks to an extra £38 million manufacturing investment
- An extra £93 million will see UK's first dedicated Manufacturing and Innovation Centre open a year earlier than planned

'Fear virus more than injection'

Kit Gow's advice to anyone fearful of having the vaccine is "the fear of contracting the virus must be greater than having the injection".

The 83 year-old trained at Dunfermline College of Physical Education, and was a student in Aberdeen during the Asian Flu pandemic of 1957.

"My main memory of that was



taking medication and food to those lying in bed.

"Most of those in the residence were affected," she

recalls. Commenting on the lockdown, she continued: "My really big miss is seeing the family although we speak and email.

"I will have the vaccine as soon as it is offered."

'The vaccine spells hope to me'

Retired actress and teacher Sue Herdman will "most certainly" have the vaccine "as soon as they call me".

Says the 81 year-old: "I am an aged person, classed as vulnerable. I think the knowledge of having the vaccine will instil faith in me. It spells hope. That means a great deal to all of us."



And her advice to anyone offered the vaccine - "go for it".

Sue, who "hasn't coped well with the second lockdown", added: "Life may gradually return to a semblance of normality once more.

"COVID, and the fear it brings, makes prisoners of us all - if not in the confines of our own home, in the fear it breeds."

'It's little short of miraculous'

Retired Advice NI debt adviser Adam Harbinson believes the vaccine "is little short of miraculous".

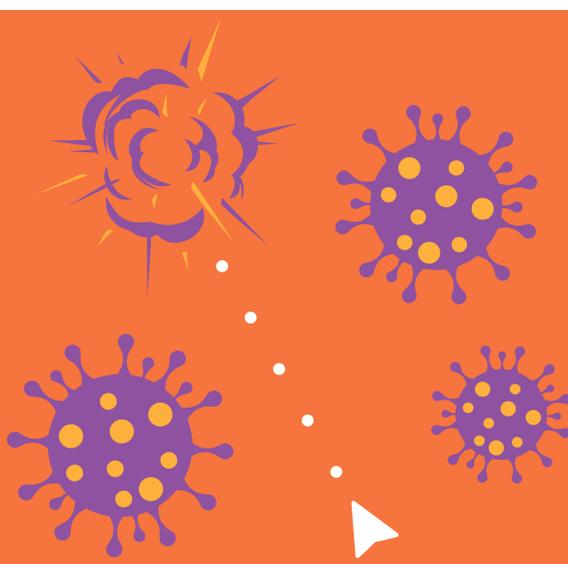
Apart from concerns for his family, the 73 year-old misses the freedom of visiting the theatre and cinema as well as dining out.

He welcomed the news of the vaccine saying: "The best that most

of us expected was that we would have a vaccine in a couple of years. "And now the first vaccine is being rolled out across the UK.

"Perhaps the main benefit for me and society, apart from the obvious benefit of protecting us from the

dreaded disease, is that it infuses a sense of hope into an otherwise hopeless environment."



Fight COVID-19

Learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine.

nhs.uk/covidvaccine

All together >

OT

Delivery delays sees Royal Mail staff in Oban abused

by Ellis Butcher
ebutcher@obantimes.co.uk



Under pressure Royal Mail staff in Oban have suffered 'abuse' because of delayed post, it has emerged.

The issue was raised via the community Facebook page Information Oban and has led to an outpouring of support for workers at the Albany Street delivery office.

A combination of Black Friday sales, Christmas post and a surge this year in gifts and cards being sent by people unable to see each other, has led to a mountain of mail across the network at the end of a tough year.

In a message issued on behalf of the staff in Oban, residents have been urged to understand the pressures they face this Christmas.

It said: 'The problems with the mail service is a



nationwide problem due to the sheer amount of mail that is being generated due to the pandemic.

'All mail delivered to the

Oban sorting office is cleared daily. Any backlog further away is completely out of their hands. Staff are going out of their way to travel to Glasgow



Royal Mail staff in the Oban office have had to deal with abuse this Christmas.

at weekends to help with this backlog.

'Please stop abusing the Royal Mail staff - they are under enough stress without members of the public shouting abuse at them.'

Residents have sent supportive messages - praising the Royal Mail locally for its 'brilliant' service and name-checking individual mailmen and women for their cheery attitudes and hard graft.

A spokesperson for the Communication Workers Union added: 'Our members have been under tremendous pressure - not just now,

but since the start of the pandemic.

'Despite this, they have done an incredible job keeping the country connected. We ask the public to recognise the tremendous job our members are doing under incredibly difficult circumstances.'

The support from the community has also been extended to Post Office staff in Oban who are facing a busier Christmas than usual with long queues at counters.

One said: 'My sister-in-law works for the Post Office and me and my wife and kids have barely seen her in the last week because of the crazy hours she's working to support your postie.'

With social distancing rules in force, the Post Office has warned customers that the usual service may take a bit longer.

A Post Office spokesperson

said: 'Our staff are working hard to serve customers as quickly as possible.'

'Due to the coronavirus there is increased demand to send parcels and cards to family and friends and to process online shopping returns, especially after Black Friday.'

'Some days and times are busier than others and customers may find it quieter at the start or the end of the day.'

'Many of our branches are open at the weekend or extended hours, visit www.postoffice.co.uk/branch-finder for full details.'

People are being urged to post early this year to avoid the rush.

HAVE YOUR SAY
email us at editor@obantimes.co.uk

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Wishing you a merry – and safe – Christmas this year

Continued from page one.

He said: 'I'm not being prioritised because I've already had it. I've not been tested again to see if I still have the antibodies either but I'll just wait my turn to be called.'

Meanwhile, more donations are still needed to fund a special infection control room at Lorn and The Islands Hospital in Oban.

A crowdfunding appeal he launched earlier this year smashed his £15,000 target to help save lives at Oban hospital, but more money is needed from well wishers to go towards the project and make it a success.

Doctors at the hospital described the project as 'complex' because of the huge amount of planning and research required, but it is making progress.

As well as individuals donations to Mr Scott's Justgiving page, contributions towards the £15,000 plus that was raised came in from Mr Scott's bosses at Glensanda, from Zeus engineering and MacQueen Bros Charitable Trust.

Funds raised will help buy a



Covid survivor James Scott with his wife Sandra; and inset his mum Jessie Scott who passed away from coronavirus while he was in an induced coma.

special machine that pulls air into a controlled room then filters it before moving the air back out infection-free, keeping others safe.

The negative pressure room would help patients not just with coronavirus but other airborne diseases being treated in Oban.

Although these special

rooms are a standard fixture in bigger hospitals with a dedicated infectious disease unit, it is not common to find them in hospitals the size of Oban.

Anyone wanting to make a donation can email local area manager for Oban and Lorn Islands Hospital Caroline Henderson at caroline.henderson@nhs.net

Mr ACHA Clause makes a special delivery in Oban

A Santa impersonator in the form of ACHA's Alastair MacGregor dropped in on Valerie Weight from Oban with a surprise Christmas hamper, writes Fiona Scott.

Every year ACHA does a draw for four hampers for ACHA members who are £1 shareholders in the charity.

Ms Weight said: 'I was really happy to win the hamper which was a lovely surprise.'

'It is important for me to be a member of the association as it gives me the opportunity to vote for the tenant members on ACHA's Board of Management.'

Alastair MacGregor, ACHA's Chief Executive added: 'I am delighted to give Santa a hand and pass on the hamper to Valerie.'

'ACHA's members are the lifeblood of our democracy and our links to communities



ACHA chief executive Alastair MacGregor drops on Valerie Weight.

throughout Argyll and Bute.

'In these most difficult of times, I want to pass on our best wishes to members and our tenants and hope the new year gives light at the end of the tunnel.'

Walk-through testing centre opens in Oban

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk



A new walk-through coronavirus testing centre has opened in Oban at Mossfield car park.

The UK government-run centre will stay in the town as long as needed, open seven days a week from 8am to 8pm, and is part of the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities in British history.

Tests must be booked in advance online via nhsinform.scot/test-and-protect or by calling 0800 028 2816.

Only people who have coronavirus symptoms can book and are being told not to travel to the testing centre on public transport or in a taxi.

Masks must be worn and tests at the centre are self-administered, involving taking a swab of the nose and the back of the throat.

The Oban facility is one of 22 in Scotland. Countrywide there



are also six drive through sites and 21 mobile units with samples being sent to the Glasgow Lighthouse Lab where staff are working round the clock. Some commercial labs are also being used to create extra capacity.

Baroness Dido Harding, interim executive chairperson of the National Institute for Health Protection, added: 'Walk through sites offer communities better access

to coronavirus testing, so everyone with symptoms can get a test. This new site is part of our ongoing work to expand our testing network across the UK which now has the capacity to process more than 500,000 tests a day. We will continue to expand capacity to improve test turnaround times and make sure anyone who needs a test can get one.'

Coronavirus symptoms in-

Mossfield car park site being set up for the new walk-through coronavirus testing centre last week.

clude a new continuous cough, a high temperature and a loss or change in sense of smell or taste.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart said sites like the one in Oban are not possible without the hard work of many people.

'I would like to thank everyone involved for their incredible efforts at this difficult time,' he added.

Anyone testing positive will be contacted by NHS Scotland tracers. Close contacts of those testing positive will also hear from contact tracers, asking them to stay at home for 14 days to prevent them from unknowingly spreading the virus. They will be advised to also book a test if they develop symptoms.

facebook

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Seasons Greetings from The Wee Hotel Company

The Wee Hotel Company is currently taking an extended period of winter hibernation to relax and refresh so we're ready to welcome our guests back to The Pierhouse at Port Appin and The Three Chimneys at Colbost on Skye early in 2021.

It is our intention and hope that we will re-open the doors to both of our venues towards the end of January. In the meantime, we'll be keeping a watchful eye on progress and will update you on the precise date when it can be certain.

Behind the scenes, we will be stoking up our real log fires, preparing our heart-warming winter menus and plumping up our pillows for travellers in search of a seasonally snug, wee winter getaway. Authenticity, the magic of Scottish food and ingredients, hospitality and a warm welcome is always assured at our two unique coastal retreats.

As always, the entire team at The Pierhouse and The Three Chimneys want to again thank our wonderful guests from across Argyll, the rest of Scotland and beyond, who have supported us through these turbulent times. We're extremely appreciative and are all so looking forward to having the opportunity to welcome you back in 2021.

May we wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a very happy New Year.

THE WEE HOTEL COMPANY

OT

Community groups end 2020 on funding high

As a difficult year draws to a close, four community groups in Argyll and Bute are ending 2020 with some good news – a £300,426 cash boost from The National Lottery Community Fund.

They are among 161 projects across Scotland sharing in £3,931,314 for a range of activities, many of which will help people to support each other through the Covid-19 crisis and beyond.

Friends of Dervaig Primary on Mull, mentioned on this page, were among the four to receive money. Also receiving funding is Rhinns Playing Field Association which will use its £7,500 to improve access to the community-owned field in Portnahaven on Islay, while Kilmore and Kilbride Village Hall Committee plans to build an extension, incorporating a new kitchen and meeting place for the community, also thanks to £7,500.

In addition Crossroads Young Carers Cowal and Bute will receive an award of £280,330, over three years. The group, which supports young carers aged five to 24 with a wide

range of activities, will now be able to support 185 young carers through after school groups, lunchtime school drop-ins, one-to-one sessions, advocacy and advice, holiday activities and residential.

Announcing the funding, The National Lottery Community Fund's Scotland chairperson Kate Still said: 'At the end of what's been a very difficult year for everyone, I am delighted that groups across Argyll and Bute have some celebratory news to end 2020. They are all working so hard to ensure their communities thrive during these difficult times and now, thanks to National Lottery players, they can continue their amazing work.'

National Lottery players raise £30 million every week for good causes in the UK. The National Lottery Community Fund in Scotland is currently focusing its funding on those projects that supporting organisations and communities to respond to the challenge of Covid-19.

To find out more visit www.TNLCommunityFund.org.uk

Parents' lottery bid bears fruit

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk



An orchard project in Dervaig on Mull is celebrating a lottery windfall.

Friends of Dervaig Primary School, working with the village's community orchard put in a bid for help from the National Lottery Community Fund and have just been awarded £5,096.

Back in 2017 when the first fruit trees were planted in Dervaig Community Orchard, it was always hoped that in time it would be possible to provide a space to be used by all ages visitors and locals alike, said Tracy Mayo who is current chairperson of Dervaig Parent Council.

The primary school and a new local toddler and parent group called Wee Forest Folk have already been using the orchard for some of their outdoor learning and play,



Dervaig Primary School pupils enjoying outdoor learning in the community orchard.

and that was the inspiration behind the lottery bid which was a joint effort by the parent council with the assistance of the orchard committee.

The bid asked the lottery for support to buy more outdoor learning equipment to go among the trees.

Now the new funding 'will perfectly complement' the work already being done by

the orchard committee and its Apple Store project providing a covered area for the whole community to use. The additional funds will buy extra educational resources, as well as building raised beds and more outdoor playthings.

Some of the money will also go towards some forest school training, which in turn will build on what the school is

already doing. The Dervaig community is known for its intergenerational projects and has always been inclusive and supportive of the school. This project continues this tradition and the experience gained from this application will hopefully lead to future successful projects.

'At the end of a very different year, it's great to be planning and working towards this in 2021. The Friends of Dervaig Primary are very grateful for the award of The National Lottery Community Fund and would like to thank Peter Watson of the lottery for all his support through the application process.

'Finally, we would all like to thank the community and the Dervaig Community Orchard committee without their support this could never have happened,' said Tracy on behalf of all the community groups involved.

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TROLLEY



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Winner must be at Tesco, Lochside, Oban, PA34 4HP for 9.30am January 18th. Excludes tobacco, lottery, baby food, non-food items and alcohol. Quantity limited to two per item. The winner will be given a hand held scanner to monitor spend to the value of £200. We will protect your personal data. We only gather what we need for the requirements of this competition. Entry data will be deleted/disposed immediately upon the competition entry deadline and in a manner appropriate to GDPR regulations. Entrant's details will not be used for any other activity.

DIGITAL SUBSCRIBERS
Digital subscribers who have an active subscription covering the period from December 11, 2020, to February 1, 2021, can enter the competition by sending their name, address and email address that they subscribe with to Oban Times Trolley Dash Competition, Crannog Lane, Lochavullin Industrial Estate, Oban PA34 4HB by 10am Thursday January 7. Only one entry per subscription permitted. Entrant must be able to attend the trolley dash in Oban on the January 18, 2021.

We all spend far too much money over Christmas and New Year, so how great would it be able to fill your shopping trolley COMPLETELY FREE OF CHARGE in January?! Courtesy of our friends at Tesco in Oban, one lucky reader will win the chance to fill their trolley with up to £200 worth of goods (see T&C's for exclusions). All you have to do is collect 4 tokens over four weeks starting on 10th December, get them to us by 10am Thursday 7th January and you will be entered into a prize draw to win this fantastic trolley dash. What are you waiting for, banish those post-Christmas blues and start collecting your tokens!

All 4 tokens must be sent in a single envelope to Oban Times Trolley Dash Competition Crannog Lane, Lochavullin Industrial Estate Oban, PA34 4HB.

One token from each week is required, multiple entries are allowed, but must be submitted in separate envelopes. Photocopied tokens will not be accepted. Winners must agree to take part in publicity, Employees of Wyvex Media Ltd and their immediate family are not eligible to enter. The editor's decision is final.



Merry Christmas and thank you from Atlantis

Christmas is looking very different this year to what we all expected.

As we look ahead to the turn of a new year, Atlantis continues to make changes to cope with the unpredictable situation. Read on to find out how the restrictions are having an impact on Atlantis' operations over the festive season:

Christmas Break

Atlantis normally closes for a spell over Christmas and New Year each year. To comply with updated guidance, this year we'll close on the evening of December 23 and reopen as and when the government allows us to do so.

Pool Closure

Reopening the pools at Atlantis has been a double-edged sword. On one hand it has been fantastic to be able to welcome swimmers back and we have heard from many people how helpful swimming has been for them during this difficult time. On the other hand, heating, staffing and maintaining the safety of two swimming pools is very costly.

The occupancy restrictions brought by Covid-19 have made the high costs even more difficult to manage than normal. Without careful management and funding, Oban risks losing its pool altogether.

To help us manage the cost of the swimming pools, they will stay closed a little while longer after the rest of the facilities reopen after the Christmas break.

Reopening Atlantis

We've been so encouraged by the enthusiasm and support from our customers throughout this year.

Since reopening in August,

we've had more than 10,000 visits from nearly 1000 separate users.

Without your patience and understanding, the many changes we've had to make in reaction to the daily changing situation would have been so much harder.

The Sports Hall is helping to bring back that 'Atlantis buzz' we all love so much. It's become a hub of activity with badminton, basketball and table tennis happening in and around the rhythm of the gym.

Customers continue to fill our Fitness Class programme, with new classes filling up soon after they're listed. This is important for us as it allows us to support our team of instructors and get creative about how we satisfy demand but still keep everybody safe.

Staff Team

Some of the staff team remain on flexible-furlough.

Furlough has been an important lifeline for many local businesses and without it, Atlantis would not have been able to survive this year. The extension of the scheme to March allows us to further protect the business well into next year.

The staff that remain have continued to keep busy in the run up to Christmas.

Some of the team recently completed their RLSS pool lifeguard upskilled training. Continuous training like this is all the more important during Covid times as it ensures Atlantis is ready to react as and when restrictions change.

Merry Christmas

From everyone at Atlantis Leisure: thank you to the community of Oban for your ongoing support this year. We wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year.



Learning support workers enable youngsters from Oban High School to take a swimming lesson.



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gov.scot/coronavirus

OT

Rockfield school 'rocks' Christmas jumpers

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk



Pupils and staff at Oban's Rockfield Primary School had that warm, fuzzy feeling when wearing Christmas jumpers helped them raise hundreds of pounds.

Festive sparkle and cheer filled the classrooms and corridors on the Oban campus when one Friday earlier this month was declared official Christmas Jumper Day.

Depute head Laura Fawdry said: 'What a wonderful array of designs and colours appeared in school!

'The pupils, teachers and

support staff have gone out of their way to come up with ingenious ideas for decorating their class doors for Christmas!

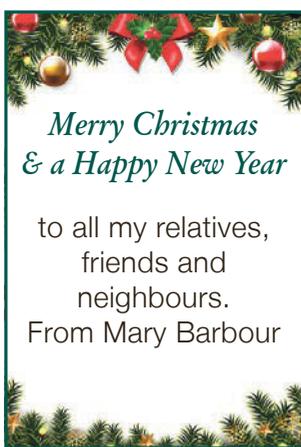
Snowmen and even the Grinch were just some of the ideas youngsters came up with as excitement for December 25 builds.

The £275.27 made from Christmas Jumper Day will be added to more funds to come from the school party day and the PTA raffle.

Ms Fawdry added: 'A huge thank you to everyone who was able to contribute to this and the money will go to the school fund.'



Your personal
Christmas
messages for
2020



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'Full house' for virtual panto

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk



Spotlight Theatre reeled in lots of bookings to see its virtual panto at Oban's Phoenix Cinema.

About 180 seats were snapped up by festive funsters earlier this month who enjoyed the musical theatre group's three socially-distanced screenings of its 2015 filmed version of Puss In Boots over one weekend.

Although the community-singing had to be edited out of the film-version to stay within Covid safety guidelines, Puss In Boots and other leading characters put in a personal appearance with ushers dressed as elves.

Spotlight's Kevin Baker said: 'With about 180 seats filled over the weekend, and keeping social distancing in mind, we were very nearly at full capacity.'

'Obviously it was a shame that not more people could get in to see it but at least we managed to find a way



Puss In Boots characters put in a socially distanced appearance with some helpful elves at the Phoenix Cinema screening of the 2015 Spotlight Musical Theatre group panto; right Screen star Sue Baker as Puss In Boots.



of bringing some panto joy to Oban. It was a great partnership between ourselves and the cinema, thanks to everyone who made it possi-

ble. It was well worth doing.' And he added: 'Back to live theatre next year we hope! It may well be that a pantomime will be the first show we stage

as rehearsals usually start in August, fingers crossed by that time life will have got back to some kind of normality!'

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LETTERS

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or The Editor, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HB

Christmas disappointment

Everyone will have been left gutted by the Scottish Government's announcement on Saturday that it is having to tighten restrictions over the Christmas holidays, leaving many people unable to travel to see family – unless you can get there and back in 24 hours.

It's a bitter blow so late in the day, but in light of this new, faster strain of Covid causing rising rates of infection, there will have been real fears that so many people travelling from higher risk areas to the Highlands to see family over the festive period would be a ticking timebomb.

Most of us are struggling with not seeing the people we love, but everyone's safety has to be the over-riding factor here.

With our communities having done so well in keeping infections rates low, the last thing we want to see is an explosion of the virus in our area, affecting our most vulnerable and overwhelming the dedicated medics in our GP surgeries, hospitals and care homes.

It may not be the Christmas you wished for, but hopefully the hardship this year will ease the way to many more Christmases with the people we love.

Merry Christmas everyone from us all at The Oban Times. May it be safe and peaceful.

The editor welcomes letters of approximately 300 words in length for publication on this page. However we reserve 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 phone number is also required for verification. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Please email: editor@obantimes.co.uk or write to: Letters page, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll, PA34 4HB.



The views expressed on our letters page are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of The Oban Times.

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Merry Christmas to Oban Times team from Manhattan



Thanks to generous family members, I recently received some much-needed tattie scones, whisky, and an Oban Times at my current home in New York (picture attached of me trying to look relaxed with the OT, in front of a fog covered Manhattan down-town skyline).

Admittedly, it did initially bring back a slightly painful memory: I remember when I got my first direct quote in the New York Times (one of not very many at all), and proudly telling my mum, for her to instantly reply, "well, your father is on the front page of the Oban Times this week" – a feat I am still working towards on one day achieving!

All this to say, congratulations on keeping a successful local newspaper thriving during such a challenging year. It is a testament to the hard work of local journalists. Half way across the world, it brought me a real sense of warmth and happiness to enjoy an Oban Times again. Thank you.

Best wishes for a great 2021 for the Oban Times team.

Michael McCuish, Manhattan

Covid survey plea

I would be very grateful if you would please allow me to use your columns to draw readers' attention to an international study currently taking place, which is seeking to find out more information on how Covid-19 affects different people and what measures they are taking to avoid contracting the virus.

In the UK it is being co-ordinated by Richard Clarke of the University of Southampton on behalf of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). You don't need to have had the virus to participate: I have completed the survey and I think it is very important and well

Beachd Ailein

ALLAN CAMPBELL

ailean@obantimes.co.uk

An oidhche ron Nollaig agus 's neònach mur eil othail shònraichte anns gach oisean sam bheil an òigridh, le fadachd fios fhaotainn air dè dh'fhàg bodach na feusaige dhaibh!

'S cinnteach gum bi cuimhne aig a' mhòr-chuid agaibh a tha a' leughadh seo air àm Nollaige nuair a bha sibh fhèin òg, agus mar a bhiodh sibh air bhioran le dùil agus dòchas. Tha deagh chuimhne agam fhìn air na h-ùineachan a chuireamaid seachad a' coimhead catalog JD Williams neo Oxendale, agus mar a bhithte a' taghadh na dh'iarramaid. Saoilidh mi gun robh tomhas làidir de mhòthachadh againn aig aois gu math tràth, ged 's dòcha nach robh làn- thuigse againn carson a bha cùisean mar sin, nach b' urrainn dhuinn a h-uile dad a mhiannaicheamaid fhaotainn, agus bha sin a' cur fiù 's barrachd faobhair air ar boil agus mi-fhoighidinn!

Toiseach caogadan na linne mu dheireadh, cha robh an Dàrna Cogadh fada seachad is bha cosnadh agus airgead gann, is bidh mi tric a' smaoinichadh air cho doirbh 's is fheudar a bha bith-beò phàrantan theaghlachan òga an uairsin gun iomradh air cosgais Nollaige air uachdar. Nach minig a chuala sinn inbhich ag aithris mar a bhiodh iadsan cho sona ubhal agus 's dòcha bonn sia-sgillinn fhaotainn san stocainn Latha na Nollaige nuair a bha iad fhèin òg! 'S i a' chuimhne a th' agam gum biomaid glè shona leis na thigeadh às na stocainnean, ged a bhiodh farmad againn aig amannan ri caraidean a fhuair tiodhlac a bha sinne cuideachd a' dùrachdainn.

Gun teagamh sam bith bha a h-uile teaghlach nan sgàthan air suidheachadh eaconamach na coimhearsnachd agus gu nàdarra bha pàrantan aig amannan ag àicheadh cofhurtachd dhaibh fhèin gus rudan a thoirt dhan chloinn.

Cha do dh'atharraich an suidheachadh sin mòran gu mì-fhortanach, agus far am bheil teaghlachan a' fulang ann am bochdainn fhathast tha iomadh pàrant gan cur fhèin ann am fiachan fad mhiosan gus sonas Nollaige a bhuileachadh air teaghlachan. Aig an àm, agus sa choimhearsnachd san robh mise a' fàs suas, bha na h-uile car aig an aon ìre agus cha robh cus adhbhar farmaid ann, ach an-diugh ged nach biodh ann ach na chì an òigridh air TBh tha e nàdarra dhaibh a bhith ag iarraidh beagan de na tha iad a' faicinn aig comhaoisean.

Chuir e bròn orm bho chionn beagan bhliadhnaichean nuair a bha mi a' leughadh mu phàrant dam b' fheudar dèideagan fhaotainn air iasad bho "leabharlann dhèideag" ach an d' rachadh aice air rud a chur ann an stocainnean a cuid cloinne. Nach bu mhath an tiodhlac e dhan dùthaich nach biodh feum air leithid sin tachairt gu bràth tuilleadh!

Tha mi a' guidhe spiorad dòchais na Nollaige dhuibh le làithean sona, soirbheachail, agus gun tig gach maitheas a mhiannaicheas sibh gu bith anns a' Bhliadhn' Ùr!

May the hope and joy of Christmas be with you and may all your good wishes for a new year be realised!

worth doing – the bigger the data the better the results! So do please join in, and spread the word. Hopefully it will go viral!

It takes about 20 minutes to complete. To participate go to rtocovid19.com

John Gosling, Barcaldine.

A82 issues are obvious

If the powers that be don't know by now where the worst bits of the A82 are, they obviously haven't been paying attention to what they've been getting told for decades!

We do not need any more surveys on which parts of the A82 should be fixed up: we need those responsible simply to get on with doing it. I've been using the A82 off and on as driver and

passenger for over 70 years now, and it seems to me that the easy bits to fix are repaired but the difficult bits are ignored: I seem to recall that it took about 40 years to get rid of the "temporary" traffic lights at Pulpit Rock!

My vote (and I strongly suspect that of many others) for the worst part would definitely go to the Tarbet-Inverarnan section, which is nothing short of a national disaster.

I did hear the rumour that the original plan was to upgrade all of Loch Lomondside, but they were working northwards from Dumbarton and ran out of money when they got to Tarbet: would anyone care to confirm or correct that rumour?

Davie Kerr, Ferry Reach, Onich.

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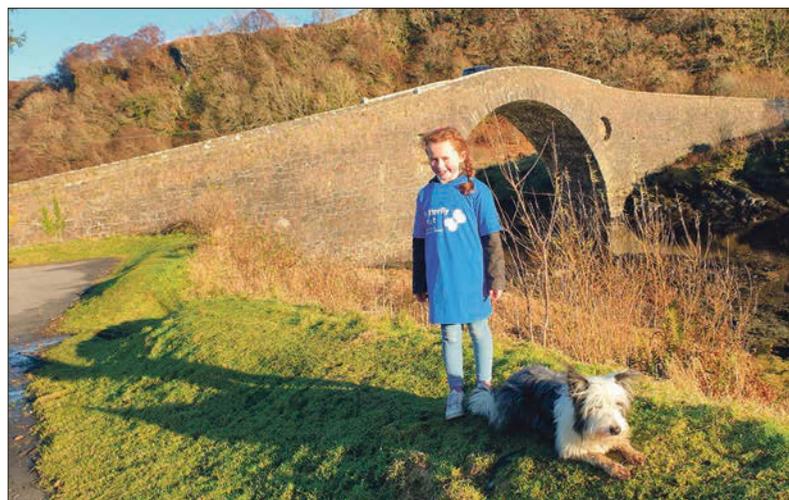
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DISTRICT NEWS



Isla Murdoch, seven, with dog Fearn on their hike in aid of a cystic fibrosis charity – The Butterfly Trust.

Isla goes the extra mile for charity

Seven-year-old Isla Murdoch from Seil has raised more than £1,200 for a cystic fibrosis support charity.

The Rockfield Primary School pupil, who lives in Balvicar, set out on a walk from the Atlantic Bridge to Cuan Ferry, matching her age in miles, in aid of The Butterfly Trust, but walked a total of 8.4 miles instead.

Isla, who walked with her proud mum Jennifer McLuckie and their dog Fearn, completed the road hike in an impressive three hours and 27 minutes.

The youngster's online Rainbow pack had taken on a fundraising challenge for Children In Need to earn a badge but were given the option of choosing their own charity. Isla opted for The Butterfly Trust because her mum's partner Niall Menzies has cystic fibrosis.

'Isla wanted people to hear more about the condition because it's not something that gets mentioned a lot. We think it was a lovely thought and we're very proud of her,' said Jennifer.

'We measured the distance on Google first and it said seven miles but on the day it was actually 8.4 miles!' she added.

So far a Justgiving page at [justgiving.com/fundraising/jennifer-mcluckie1](https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/jennifer-mcluckie1) and sponsorship forms have brought in £1,240.

At random

MARTIN LAING

editor@obantimes.co.uk



Take the job

My daughter Joanna is a front line NHS health-care worker. She is, in fact, a dietitian toiling in Glasgow.

Jo has worked at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital and Glasgow Royal Infirmary but is now earning her crust as a community dietitian in constant contact with her patients across a fairly expansive area.

Why am I telling you this? Because Jo was offered – and jumped at – the chance of a Covid vaccination. It was a complete no-brainer for her. Exposed as she is to an area of high incidence of the virus, Jo had no qualms about taking the medication.

I am telling you this in case anyone in the Oban area is offered the jabs but has concerns about taking them. The medical teams at Lorn and Islands Hospital and elsewhere across Oban and Argyll are fantastic and will be keen to roll out the vaccination programme as swiftly as they can.

We will only get on top of this appalling plague by immunising vast swathes of our population. Take the job if you are given the opportunity. Please.

Health service stars

We reported last week on Oban FM's new campaign to reward someone who has gone above and beyond during the coronavirus crisis this year. The radio station is rewarding a Christmas Angel with £50 of LoveOban vouchers.

There are countless people one could nominate, but for me it would be Cheryl Howe (and I bet she will hate me for saying so).

I've mentioned before that I have Parkinson's Disease and Cheryl is the Parkinson's nurse specialist based at Lorn and Islands Hospital. During this year she has had periods of being reassigned to the Covid ward but has maintained contact with us Parkinson's patients throughout.

I was diagnosed nearly three years ago and Cheryl has been such a great help, with advice and medical expertise. She has referred me to others who have also helped, including physio Christine Calder, occupational therapist Tricia Beaton and the teams at Lorn and Oban Healthy Options and Oban Hospice.

All of them have been great but Cheryl would be my nomination.

What do you think?

Send your comments to editor@obantimes.co.uk

A gift in Gaelic from Oban Mod Academy

Youngsters from Oban Mod Academy (OMA) are spreading some festive cheer around the local care homes this year by sharing their pre-recorded Gaelic Christmas carol concert, writes Kathie Griffiths.

Despite Covid, the Academy has managed to keep running with tutors delighted that both parents and children were enthusiastic about continuing learning on Skype.

'It wasn't for all our singers but a good number attended and took part in local and national virtual Mods working very hard under very difficult circumstances,' said a OMA spokesperson.

The children would normally be involved in many local events in the run up to Christmas such as ceilidhs, the winter festival and the Rotary carol concert. This year due to Covid however, and with everything cancelled, it was decided the children would work on learning Gaelic Christmas carols that would then be recorded in their own homes and turned into a concert.

The link to that concert is being shared to the local care homes in time for the big day in Oban and surrounding areas as a Christmas gift from the local children.



Luing's 'creelmas' tree

Luing is wishing everyone a merry 'creelmas'! Wanting to cheer the island up after such a hard year due to Covid, a group of residents got together to come up with a creative way of sending out their festive message.

Creels and electric were provided by L, J & H MacLachlan and helpers were James Williams, Hazel Cruickshanks, Fiona Cruickshanks, Rachel Cruickshanks and Ailsa MacLachlan.

The creelmas tree has taken pride of place at the island's only crossroads.

WELL DONE TO EVERYONE THIS YEAR

Wishing festive greetings to all. Remember to check for Festive Slimming World recipes on the website.

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BUSINESS NEWS

Call for tourism compensation

The Scottish Chambers of Commerce has called for more financial compensation for the tourism and hospitality trade.

It follows the sixth review of the lockdown restrictions by the Scottish Government.

Eighteen local authority areas across Scotland remain at level three, while Argyll and Bute remains at level two but is poised to drop to level one when an announcement is expected on Tuesday, December 22.

People in level three areas are not allowed to travel out unless for essential reasons, and visitors are not supposed to travel in.

But Dr Liz Cameron, chief executive of the SCC, said businesses across Scotland are facing the 'worst possible' situation with many visitors banned from travelling.

She said: 'Hampered by the stop-start implementation of yet more lockdown restrictions, together with the continued travel ban effectively cutting off the majority of Scotland, is not the news we were hoping for.'

She said the restrictions would be 'devastating' at what would have been a time of hope for vital trading in the lead-up to Christmas.

Dr Cameron said: 'Compensation has not been enough to keep our doors open. The Scottish Government needs to substantially increase the level of financial compensation for the increasing loss of trade for businesses and our employees. This is needed even more urgently than before and paid out now. The longer this continues the more jobs are potentially placed at risk...behind every job loss or business closure are real people and families.'

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said in addition to existing packages of support, the government has provided a further package of business support intended to provide extra help to businesses over winter.

She added: 'Travel restrictions continue to be absolutely vital. No one who lives in a level three area, should travel outside their local authority unless essential. And people from other parts of the country not travel in.'

Oban pupils create a 'shop local' video

by Ellis Butcher
ebutcher@obantimes.co.uk



Senior pupils from Oban High School have created a new video to underline the importance of shopping locally.

Ten S6 students took part in the project which is being shared across social media channels to underline the value of shopping locally and how it helps keep jobs and vital retailers in Oban.

The cast and crew - all members of the school's senior pupil leadership team - are part of a dedicated bubble which allowed them to safely work together.

The video tells the story of pupil Bethany collecting her wages from Jackson Brothers butchers in George Street and then preparing for a friend's birthday dinner at Piazza on the North Pier.

It shows her journey as she uses local businesses, including The Sports Shop, Roxy's Coffee and Tea House; Button Nose Boutique and Fat Face.

Pupils were accompanied during filming by Peter Bain, executive head teacher of the high school, and Alan Nicol, IT technician.

Mr Bain said the video aimed to promote not just those business directly featured but the 'wealth' of shopping opportunities Oban offered and its strong community spirit.

He said: 'BID4Oban approached us and asked us if we would like to get involved in an initiative to promote locals keeping their business in the town and supporting local businesses, which in turn, helps to support the school and other community ventures.'

'We were obviously very keen to support BID4Oban because they are a keen supporter of the school itself. When we spend our money in the town, the local businesses obviously employ local people in the town, which is beneficial for the populace.'

Andy Spence, chief executive of BID4Oban, said: 'It's about raising awareness that if we don't



Above, pupils from Oban High School get set to record their film; and Freya, left, and Bethany, right, appear in the video at The Sports Shop, Oban.



shop locally and support local services they may not be there in the future.'

Pupils involved in the project said they used a range of local shops to buy gifts at Christmas, as well as trying to support them at lunch times

and when meeting up with their friends.

To watch the video head to www.facebook.com/loveoban/videos/2853522691572971. Or visit the school's channel on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihF643J7Q_U

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It's be-GIN-ning to look a lot like Christmas...

A Hebridean distiller has been spreading some festive cheer by giving a free bottle of local gin to every islander on their native Tiree, writes Ellis Butcher.

Tiree residents are being treated to a free miniature of Tyree Gin or Hebridean Pink Gin as distillery bosses add some unexpected joy to what has been a difficult year.

The island is home to around 650 people but only those aged 18 or over are allowed to fill out a form on its website to claim their festive tittle.

Owners Ian Smith and Alain Campbell teamed up with the island's local shop, Buth a' Bhaile, so that lucky residents can collect from the store in Crossapol on the island.

Ian Smith, owner of Tiree Whisky Company, said: '2020 has been a challenging year for most people so we wanted to inject a bit of festive cheer into the lives of everyone in Tiree and give them a small gift.'

The company is delivering until December 23. 'Together, as a community, we can reflect on 2020 and raise a glass to the New Year.'

The island has a fascinating distilling heritage which Tiree Whisky Company Ltd resurrected in recent years.

Their distillery is the first on the island in over 217 years.

The company's first product, Tyree Gin, was launched at Tiree Music Festival 2017.

The product reflects the landscape in which it is distilled, incorporating kelp harvested from the icy waters, coastal salty flavours and a range of botanicals from the machair.

Earlier this year, the small spirits producer launched Hebridean Pink Gin, which comes in a striking pink bottle and is distilled using juniper berries, raspberries and sweet peels.

Despite the challenges of 2020, the company recently invested in new stills and equipment for future production in 2021 as they look ahead to a positive year.



Ian and Alain of the Tyree Whisky Company Ltd are helping islanders enjoy a tittle of festive cheer this Christmas by offering a free miniature of Tyree Gin or Hebridean Pink Gin to everyone living on the island that is over 18.



UK move may be good for whisky

Highlands and Islands MSP Donald Cameron has said the announcement by the UK Government that it is taking an 'independent' approach to longstanding trade conflicts between the EU and the US could spell good news for the local whisky industry.

The Scottish Conservative MSP said: 'The prospect that the UK will suspend retaliatory tariffs resulting from the Boeing/Airbus dispute could mean that the US drops the retaliatory tariffs on Scotch whisky.'

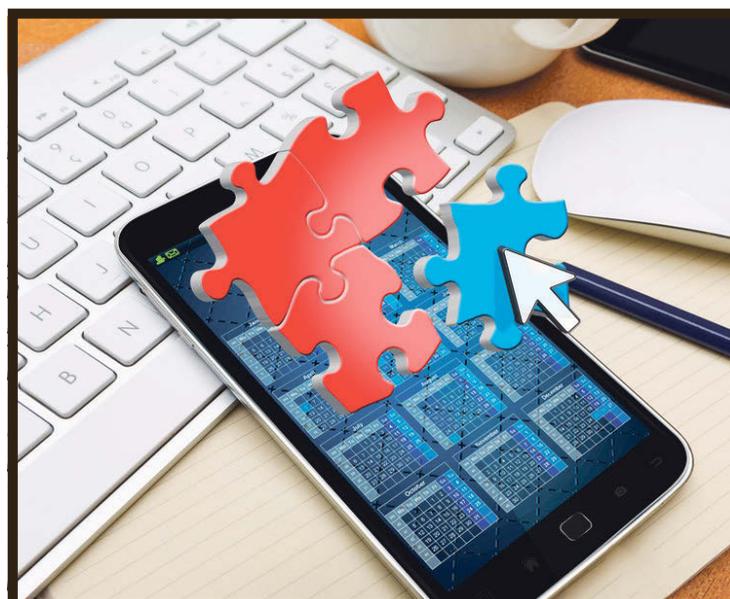
'Given that Scotch Whisky exports to the US fell by over 30 per cent in the past year, that would spell extremely good news for jobs and investment across the Highlands and Islands where our distilleries make a major contribution to the local economy.'

The EU and the US have been engaged in a protracted dispute over subsidies to airlines, with outgoing US President Donald Trump imposing charges on imports including Scotch whisky and cashmere. In return, the EU has placed tariffs on \$4billion worth of US products.

UK Secretary of State for International Trade Liz Truss has said the UK will suspend retaliatory tariffs resulting the Boeing/Airbus dispute. The move is an attempt to bring the US towards a reasonable settlement and show the UK is serious about reaching a negotiated outcome.



Donald Cameron MSP at Bowmore distillery, Islay.



Wylie & Bisset giving free business advice to steer Scottish businesses through the Coronavirus crisis

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Continued from last week

George Herbert Strutt of Kingairloch (1854-1928) who bought the estate in 1902, is commemorated in a finely carved double granite seat near the graveyard. He belonged to an old Derbyshire family and was a descendent of Jedediah Strutt (1726-1797) cotton spinner, inventor of the Derby Rib, and who, along with Sir Richard Arkwright, founded the cotton manufacturing industry. This helped make Britain, and the Strutts, very wealthy.

Strutt was born in Belper, Derbyshire on 21 April 1854 and died of pneumonia on 17 May 1928 at the Invercauld Arms Hotel, Ballater while on a fishing expedition. During his ownership of Kingairloch he demolished part of the old Forbes mansion-house replacing it with a large three-storey building in the Scottish Baronial style. At the same time he also built a corrugated-iron ballroom beside the main house, a new gardener's cottage, post office and dairy; made many miles of pony paths to assist with the deer stalking and a huge concrete dam in Glengalmadale to improve the salmon fishing.

Arthur Strutt (1908-) who is commemorated on a small granite block set in a dry stone cairn by the graveyard, was the second son of George Herbert Strutt and his second wife Emily. He inherited Kingairloch following the death of his mother in 1949. Educated at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge, he married Patricia, youngest daughter of Cecil Kebell of Te Hoe, New Zealand and died 27 June 2000. They had two sons and a daughter. In 1965 he demolished most of his father's 1903 additions to Kingairloch House reducing the building to its present bland size and shape. On 21 September 1977, Arthur Strutt mysteriously disappeared while on holiday at Kingairloch. Despite many intensive searches by the police and the Lochaber Mountain Rescue Team and their highly trained search dogs, he was not seen again until his remains were discovered by some foresters five years later in a plantation less than



Kingairloch House 1903 after it was altered by Mr G H Strutt. Below, Mr George Herbert Strutt who made the Strutt family and Great Britain very rich Both photographs supplied by Iain Thorner.



half a mile from Kingairloch House. His ashes are scattered beside his memorial cairn.

Barbara Peddie died 1880. Mother-in-law of Robert MacGregor, estate gamekeeper born in 1799 at Logiealmond, Perthshire. The MacGregor family came to Kingairloch sometime between 1861 and 71. By 1881 Robert combined his duties of gamekeeper with that of postmaster – the Kingairloch post office had been opened in 1834.

One of the last funerals to take place at Kingairloch carried out in the old style was that of Mrs Christina Cochran, nee Blacklock, who died in Fort William on Christmas Day 1924. As the Blacklock family had tenanted the farm of South Corrie for more than 100 years it was only natural that Mrs Cochran should be laid to rest among her forebears in the local graveyard. Her 80-year-old grandson, the Rev Henry Dyall, recorded the event in his personal diary which is

unusual in that there are not many accounts of Lochaber funerals of that period.

'I was too young to go to the funeral but I have heard vivid accounts from my father and a cousin who did. I don't know what the capacity of the Corran Ferry was in these days but it was inadequate for the number of mourners who were going to attend. So the coffin and the ladies who were going to see to the refreshments went that way leaving the main party, who were awakened before dawn, to travel to Kingairloch by charabanc [car]. The party left Fort William in the pitch dark and went by the 'Road to the Isles' to Kinlocheil. By then it was daylight. It was understood that no similar vehicle had done the journey by Garvan and Trislaig to Ardgour. I walked it just before the Second World War and it was a gravel road then even although it calls itself the A861 now, and it was worse in 1924.

'Expecting difficulty (the weather was atro-

cious) the party travelled with axe and saw which were needed on more than one occasion to clear the way of fallen trees. The road from Ardgour to Glen Tarbert was not too bad as far as the surface went, but the stretch from Inversanda to Camusnacroise was considered the worst. In the church at Camusnacroise there was a full funeral service after which the procession to the graveyard formed up. It was led by a piper playing laments followed by the coffin, not carried shoulder high but waist high on wooden staves.. It had been augmented by Blacklocks and those locally who had known my grandmother, not so many because she had been gone from Kingairloch for more than 20 years.

'The procession, all male, was very orderly, two and two, moved out on to the main road, over the spur of the hill and down to the Kingairloch graveyard and the laments continued. In the

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Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday December 24, 2020** are listed below with differences for major ports listed underneath. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

Thur	01.15	2.9	07.23	1.8
	14.07	3.2	20.07	1.9
Fri	02.18	3.0	08.36	1.8
	14.55	3.3	20.59	1.8
Sat	03.04	3.2	09.33	1.7
	15.36	3.5	21.43	1.6
Sun	03.46	3.4	10.16	1.6
	16.15	3.6	22.23	1.5
Mon	04.25	3.5	10.53	1.5
	16.54	3.7	23.01	1.3
Tues	05.04	3.7	11.30	1.4
	17.33	3.8	23.38	1.2
Wed	05.41	3.8	12.07	1.4
	18.09	3.8	***	**

Tidal Constants: (Add or deduct from High Water at Oban)

Ardishaig	-5.35	Islay Port Ellen	2.00	Portree	+0.55
Campbeltown	-5.30	Lochboisdale	+0.30	Tobermory	+0.16
Crinan	-0.47	Mallaig	+0.25	Dover	+5.30

WEATHER

Thursday
 Light rain and a moderate breeze
 Temperatures 5°C to 6°C.

Friday
 Light rain and a moderate breeze
 Temperatures 5°C to 7°C.

WEEKEND OUTLOOK

Saturday
 Light cloud and a gentle breeze
 Temperatures 5°C to 7°C.

Sunday
 Heavy rain and a moderate breeze
 Temperatures 7°C to 8°C.

FRIDAY FORECAST

HIGH 7 LOW 5 10 MPH

pass by...



Modern memorial cairns to the Strutt family, Kingairloch. Photograph: Iain Thornber.

procession you gradually found yourself propelled to the front. When you reached the coffin the form was to insinuate yourself between the coffin and the stave holder until you took his place only to be edged out in your turn. In this way everyone took a part in carrying the deceased to her last resting-place.

'There was a committal service at the graveside. My Father had a cord. Then the procession reformed and went back to Camusnacroise, but now the piper did not play laments, he played the dance tune, "Happy we've been all the gither". At the schoolroom there was a meal. By that time the short winter day was over. The return journey had to be made in the dark over those bad roads lit only by charabanc kerosene lamps. After many alarms and excursions they made Kinlocheil and, sometime later Fort William, where divesting themselves of their wet clothing they fell exhausted into bed in the wee sma' hours.'

The Blacklocks featured large in the history

of Kingairloch not because they lived there for a long time but by the manner in which, as Lowlanders, they integrated with the local Gaelic culture and kept interesting records. James Forbes, the estate proprietor, wanted to try a new type of farming and estate management and parachuted in Adam Blacklock, an experienced sheep manager from near Moffat, and Robert Valder, a stone-mason of Dutch extraction from Banff, who were to be responsible for supervising the building and repairing houses, field walls, sheep fanks and other structures necessary for his new agricultural policy. South Corry had been a public house but not during Adam's time as the family were teetotal. The Rev Henry Dyal's mother told him that when the shepherds and other estate workers wanted a dram they walked over the hills to Strontian. Quite an undertaking. She also said that whatever state they were in when they left Strontian they were dead sober by the time they got back to Kingairloch!

DOWN MEMORY LANE

We delve into The Oban Times archives to bring you faces and places from yesteryears



Both these photographs were taken in 2003, and we love all the smiling faces. If you recognise yourself we'd love to hear from you. As always, you can email us at editor@obantimes.co.uk



Fort photograph makes a splash

Last week Dave Wilson of Caol contacted us about the River Race photograph we ran a couple of weeks ago. It seems it is a popular choice, with this latest outing being the third time it has appeared in the paper.

He told us: 'The 'ladies' are my brother-in-law David Speirs (the bearded one) and Dave Wilson (me).

'We entered the race that year as The Three Old Maids, with another friend - all our airbeds burst en route as can be seen in the picture, so we had no chance of winning. We did, however, win the better prize, in my opinion, of a bottle of whisky for the best outfits!!!

'Happy days indeed. My family moved to Fort William from Leeds in 2001 when I got a job at Nevisprint and our two children Ashleigh and



Ross went to Caol Primary and Lochaber High School. We still live in the town to this day.'



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LEISURE & ENTERTAINMENT

YOUR GUIDE TO WHAT'S ON IN ARGYLL AND LOCHABER

Plucking at the harp strings earns Rebecca trad award

Lever harpist Rebecca Hill was one of five winners originating from the Highlands and Islands at the recent MG ALBA Scots Trad Music Awards and the 24-year-old from Connel could not have been more delighted.

'I am so honoured to have won this year's Up and Coming Artist of the Year at the MG Alba Trad Music Awards,' she told the Oban Times.

'Even being nominated was a huge surprise and I am very grateful for everyone's support and encouragement throughout my music career so far.'

From a young age Rebecca was always encouraged to participate in ceilidh events in north Lorn that were regularly organised by her great uncle and auntie, Neil and Sheila Sinclair, as well as her cousin

Sileas Sinclair. Constant encouragement from them coupled with a very strong sense of community linked to traditional music meant that 'my interest was captured', she added.

'Another influential person was my first clarsach teacher, Toni Russell, who encouraged a wave of young harpists in Oban at the time to take up individual and ensemble lessons.

'Coming from Oban I was also inspired by many of the other artists from the local and surrounding area who were playing professionally.'

Rebecca is no stranger to the award circuit. In 2016 she was a semi-finalist of the BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Award and reached the finals of the Princess Margaret of the Isles Senior Clàrsach Competition



in 2019. Earlier this year she made it to the semi-finals of the BBC Radio Scotland Young Traditional Musician of the Year 2020.

Rebecca's musical interest

was initially sparked at Fèis Latharna, then in 2013 she was drawn to Glasgow's vibrant folk scene.

In 2017 she graduated with a First-Class Honours degree

from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's Traditional Music programme and released her debut EP The Airing at Glasgow's Celtic Connections 2020.

Rebecca Hill from Connel scooped the MG Alba Traditional Music Award for Up and Coming Artist of the Year.

The MG ALBA Scots Trad Music Awards was broadcast on BBC ALBA on Saturday, December 12 at 9pm in a special programme named Na Trads 2020.

The programme is available on the BBC iPlayer until January 11.

Three trad-rock band Skerryvore (Original Work of the Year), three-piece sensations Peat and Diesel (Trad Video of the Year) and singer/songwriter Josie Duncan (Music Tutor of the Year), all from Lewis, along with online ceilidh Tunes in the Hoose (Community Music Project of the Year), co-founded by Oban accordionist Martin MacLeod, also lifted one of the 12 honours announced during the special Na Trad 2020 programme.

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MacLeods are in tune with online music community

Oban accordionist, and Capercaillie founder Martin MacLeod and his son, Martin, were also dancing a jig last week when their Online Ceilidh, Tunes in the Hoose, won the Community Project of the Year at the BBC ALBA Scot Trad Awards.

The online music community born out of lockdown was created by the MacLeods and family friend Peter Wood in March and has now become a worldwide phenomenon.

Using the power of music and social media, the project has united musicians across Scotland and beyond in more than 500 productions that have reached 2.5 million households in more than 75 countries.

Speaking about the award Martin Jnr said: 'Not in a million years could I have seen this one coming.'

'Amongst all the doom and gloom, the Scottish music community has cut right through, a testament to the raw talent, hundreds of dedicated hours to the project and ultimately proving how alive and fired-up this scene really is, hungry to return to live gigs.'

'We are delighted to not only be nominated but to have won Community Music Project of the Year at the BBC ALBA Scots Trad Music Awards.'

Of course, we share this award with all of our supporters, followers and most of all,



Martin MacLeod junior and senior get to work on Tunes in the Hoose.

our contributing musicians. 'It is all thanks to them, that the tunes have been played loud and proud from living rooms to kitchens around the globe.'

'I'm honoured to have played just a small part in uniting these musicians and helping to raise the spirits of many throughout what has been a very challenging year for us all.'

Tunes in the Hoose is currently offering its Ceilidh in the Care Home, a free virtual

show, to every registered care service in Scotland.

'The show features the very best of Tunes in the Hoose, alongside special guest performances and a dozen 'weel-kent' faces who have all banded together to wish a very Merry Christmas to those who deserve it the most,' added Martin.

For more information and a full list of award recipients for 2020 go to <https://projects.handsupfortrad.scot/scotstradmusicawards/>

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Robert in lockdown

ROBERT ROBERTSON

robert.d.robertson@hotmail.co.uk



It is always the case, isn't it? You think you're all ready for Christmas; but you ultimately end up in a mad rush to finish something off before the festivities begin.

Sometimes it's shopping; sometimes it's work. Usually it's my Oban Times article!

This year, for Tide Lines, it was an EP. Our Lockdown Mixtape, to give it its Sunday name. Some weeks ago, we began re-recording a few pop covers we had filmed for social media away back in the spring. The idea was to package them as a stream-only, free, festive release: essentially a 'thank you' to everyone who has followed us virtually in 2020 and supported us throughout a challenging year.

It all seemed fairly straight forward. We're fortunate that all four of us have the ability to record in our flats in Glasgow, so we can remotely produce tracks fairly quickly. Before too long, we had pulled together new lockdown versions of Deacon Blue's Dignity, Joni Mitchell's Big Yellow Taxi, and (surely the song of 2020) that massive TikTok dance anthem, Blinding Lights. If you haven't heard of this song, ask your kids or your grandkids!

It was all a bit of a laugh and not something we were taking too seriously. At some point during the process, we decided we should attempt a Christmas song to add to the collection. We chatted through some covers over a Zoom meeting but nothing jumped out at us. Around this time, a melody and some lyrics started coming into my head for an original. I put pen to



The things you do when you're recording a Christmas song!

paper and came up with a new song called This Christmas Time. The only problem was - we had just over two full days to record it, mix it, and master it before the looming deadline for submitting to Spotify.

With a Christmas rush surpassed only in Lapland, we put the track together, sent it off, and thankfully, managed to release it (with a hastily filmed video) last Friday. I had originally intended a good old-fashioned, happy clappy, let's kiss below the mistletoe, Christmas song. Sticking to the plan, however, has never been a particular strong point of mine. What transpired was a bit slower paced and more reflective.

December (for me and I imagine for most Highlanders or islanders) is always an emotional month as we spend

most of it dreaming of getting home to family and friends. This seems particularly true this year when travelling home or being with loved ones will not be possible for a lot of people. That is the basis of This Christmas Time.

Perhaps somebody somewhere will listen on Christmas Day and it will help remind them that, while they may not be around all the people they love, they are certainly not alone.

Perhaps not. Either way - it was a good adrenaline rush trying to finish it in time for Christmas! Wherever you are, and whoever you're spending time with, take care of yourselves and have a lovely Christmas.

To listen to This Christmas Time, visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zxgs4e8DrBM

Key to Scotland's future

years Rob won best politician in The Scottish Green Energy Awards 2012 and politician of the year in The Nature of Scotland Awards 2013. These recognised his leading role in two inter-related fields.

Rob said: 'I was determined to see more diverse land ownership and sustainable energy uses that empower local communities.'

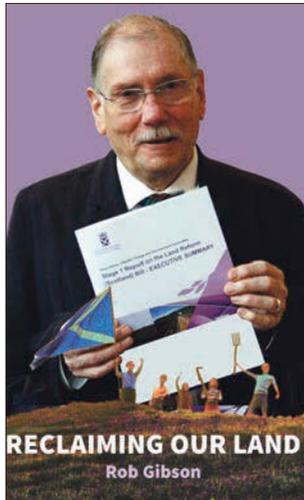
'To that end, my involvement in land reform issues continues since my retirement from Holyrood in 2016. This book reflects on these decades of homing in on our goal.'

Reclaiming Our Land by Rob

Gibson published by Highland Heritage Educational Trust, (HHET) c/o Gibson, Tiran Oran, 8 Culcairn Road, Evanton, Dingwall IV16 9YT. Email robgibson273@btinternet.com.

Paperback, 324 pages include land reform timeline, references, 20+ illustrations and full index. Price: £11.99 plus £2.00 postage per copy.

Former MSP, Rob Gibson delves into land reform to embrace the idea that to succeed, first you must remember what has created the problem.



M'ALBA

MY ALBA

<p>DIARDAOIN 24 an Dùbhlachd THURSDAY 24 December</p> <p>17.00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming 18.55 An Là – News 19.00 Mod 2020 (rpt) 21.00 NEW Cinema Gaelica (rpt) 22.00 Func (rpt) 22.30 NEW Air Iomall – Music from the Edge 23.00 Binneas na Trads (rpt) 23.10 NEW Alleluia na Nollaige</p> <p>DIHAOINE 25 an Dùbhlachd FRIDAY 25 December</p> <p>17.00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming 18.55 An Là – News 19.00 Mod 2020 (rpt) 21.00 NEW Cearcall Ceo 22.00 NEW Tide Lines 2020 22.30 NEW Charley Pride 23.40 An t-Inneal Espresso (rpt)</p> <p>DISATHAIRNE 26 an t-Samhain SATURDAY 26 December</p> <p>16.00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming 17.55 An Là – News 18.00 NEW Scottish Premiership - Kilmarnock v Livingston 19.45 NEW Spors na Bliadhna 2020 20.45 Port-Druthag Bheag Eile (rpt) 21.00 NEW Mach a Seo: Na Fir-chlis 22.00 An Taistealaiche (rpt) 23.00 Func (rpt) 23.30 Charley Pride (rpt) 00.40 Port-Druthag Bheag Eile (rpt)</p>	<p>DIDÒMHNAICH 27 an t-Samhain SUNDAY 27 December</p> <p>16.00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming 17.55 An Là – NEWS 18.00 NEW A' Bhliadhna 2020 19.00 Alleluia na Nollaige (rpt) 19.55 Celtic Connections (rpt) 20.00 Spors na Bliadhna 2020 (rpt) 21.00 Cearcall Ceo (rpt) 22.00 Tide Lines 2020 (rpt) 22.30 Twin (rpt) 23.15 NA Tuinichean Mi-thoilichte (rpt) 23.25 Julie Fowlis - Ceol Aig Baile (rpt)</p> <p>DILUAIN 28 an t-Samhain MONDAY 28 December</p> <p>17.00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming 18.55 An Là – NEWS 19.00 Mod 2020 (rpt) 21.00 NEW Poaching - Trusadh 22.00 An Taistealaiche (rpt) 23.00 Opry le Daniel (rpt) 23.50 Dhan Uisge (rpt)</p> <p>DIMÀIRT 29 an Dùbhlachd TUESDAY 29 December</p> <p>17.00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming 18.55 An Là – News 19.00 Mod 2020 (rpt) 21.00 NEW Dystonia: Beatha air Fhiaradh 22.00 Poaching – Trusadh (rpt) 23.00 Air Iomall - Music from the Edge (rpt) 23.25 Fonn mo Bheatha (rpt)</p>	<p>DICIADAIN 30 An Dùbhlachd WEDNESDAY 30 December</p> <p>17.00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming 18.55 An Là – News 19.00 Mod 2020 (rpt) 21.00 NEW NY25Y 22.10 NEW Scottish Premiership – Livingston v Aberdeen</p> <p>DIARDAOIN 31 an Dùbhlachd THURSDAY 31 December</p> <p>17.00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming 18.55 An Là – News 19.00 Ceolas - A Cheilidh Mhor (rpt) 19.30 NEW An Gobha – The Last Blacksmith 19.50 Celtic Connections (rpt) 20.00 Oidhche Challainn le Robert Robertson (rpt) 21.00 NEW Ceol na Loidhne 22.00 Cinema Gaelica (rpt) 23.00 NEW 'Siud agad e! 2020 23.30 Ceilidh na Bliadh'Uire 2020</p>
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* Only schools authorized by the IB Organization can offer any of its four academic programmes: the Primary Years Programme (PYP), the Middle Years Programme (MYP), the Diploma Programme (DP), or the Career-related Programme (CP). Candidate status gives no guarantee that authorization will be granted.



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Nollaig 2020 | Christmas 2020



Cinema Gadelica

Diardaoin 24 Dùbhlachd, 9f | *Diardaoin 24 Dùbhlachd, 9f*

Tha Cinema Gadelica a' sealltainn mar a bha a' Ghàidhealtachd is na h-Eileanan a' tarraing stiùirichean film airson an cuid sgeulachdan a thoirt beò.

Cinema Gadelica reveals why film-makers have been drawn to the spectacular scenery of the Highland and Islands.



Alleluia na Nollaig *Alleluia at Christmas*

Diardaoin 24 Dùbhlachd, 11.10f | *Thursday 24 December, 11.10pm*

Cuir fàilte air an Nollaig le ceòl is leughaidhean ann an cuideachd Iain MacFhionghain is sàr luchd-ciùil. Nam measg Màiri Anna NicUalraig is Joy Dunlop.

Iain Mackinnon with readings, thoughts and carols celebrating Christmas. Amongst the singers you will hear Mary Ann Kennedy and Joy Dunlop.



Lena – An Croitear Òg *Lena – The Young Crofter*

Dihaoine 25 Dùbhlachd, 6.35f | *Friday 25 December, 6.35pm*

Sealladh air beatha croitear òg às na Hearadh aig a bheil amas sònraichte.

A documentary portrait of a young Hebridean crofter on a special mission.



Cearcaill Ceò *Burning Rubber*

Dihaoine 25 Dùbhlachd, 9f | *Friday 25 December, 9pm*

Sùil spòrsail air cultar chàraichean-railidh Leòdhais anns na 70an is na 80an.

Affectionate look back at the rally-inspired Lewis car culture of the 70s and 80s.



Mach à Seo: Na Fir-chlis

Disathairne 26 Dùbhlachd, 9f | *Saturday 26 December, 9pm*

Tha Ramsay MacMahon air dùbhlán a chur roimhe fhèin - gum faicheadh e na Fir Clis mus biodh an geamhradh seachad.

Having failed so far in his pursuit of the Aurora Borealis, Ramsay MacMahon sets himself a challenge – to see the elusive Northern Lights before the winter is out.



Dystonia: Beatha air Fhiaradh

Dimàirt 29 Dùbhlachd, 9f | *Tuesday 29 December, 9pm*

Airson faisg air dà fhichead bliadhna, tha DK Mac a' Phì air a bhith beò le dystonia. Seallaidh am prògram seo an strì a tha e fhathast ris.

For almost 40 years, DK MacPhee has lived with dystonia – This documentary gives an insight into the impact this has on his daily life and his ongoing battle to find treatment or relief.

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Around the markets

Dingwall & Highland Marts Ltd, December 16: sold 33 MV accredited pedigree females at its annual sale. In lamb gimmers: Beltex sold to 1,500gns from Lochend Farm, Denny. Texel sold to 1,000gns (twice) from Lower Reiss Farm, Wick. Millennium Blue sold to 800gns from Muirfield, Cuminstown. In lamb ewes: Suffolk sold to 600gns from Cairness, Fraserburgh. Other leading prices: Beltex: In-lamb gimmers – Lochend Farm, 1,400gns, Muirfield, 1,300gns. Texel: In-lamb gimmers – Lower Reiss Farm, 800gns. Millennium Blue: In-lamb gimmers – Muirfield, 600gns.

Lower Reiss, Texel gimmers 1,000, 722 (10 sold). Huna, Texel gimmers, 480, 452 (6 sold). Wester Moy, Texel gimmers, 450, 433 (4 sold). Aviemore, Beltex gimmers, 1,300 808 (5 sold). Aviemore, Mill Blue gimmers, 800, 735 (2 sold). Mortons, Beltex gimmers, 1,500 1,092 (5 sold). Cairness, Suffolk ewe, 630, 630 (1 sold). Caledonian Marts Ltd, December 15: sold 2269 Prime Lambs, Ewes & Tups at their Christmas Show & Sale. With all export lambs meeting again a strong trade with heavy lambs again been the hardest to sell. The Show was kindly sponsored by A A Oils, Stirling and D McKenzie, Plant Hire & Contractors, Gartocharn. The following were his awards: Overall Champion and 1st Prize Beltex went to Mike Simpson, Berrydyke, Braco weighing at 44kg £190 (432p per kg) purchased by R Stewart on behalf of We Hae Meats, Girvan, Ayrshire. Reserve Champion and 1st Prize Texels went to Ben Imrie, Hillhead, Torrance going over the scales at 38.3kg £120 (313p per kg) purchase by Robert Alexander, Butchers, Port Glasgow.

National Farming Union responds to Holyrood's climate change vision

NFU Scotland has responded positively to many of the elements included in the Scottish Government's updated Climate Change Plan 2018-2032 published last week. The 250-page document includes chapters on Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry, as well as Agriculture. Recommendations in the report will shape Scottish agriculture and land use and include recognition of the support Scotland's farmers and crofters will need as they continue to take action to tackle climate change. NFU Scotland President Andrew McCornick said: "The Scottish Government's update to their Climate Change Plan



NFUS president Andrew McCornick.

sets out a vision for supporting efficient, high quality food production through the sustainable use of Scotland's natural capital to deliver on

climate and biodiversity goals. That is a vision which NFUS shares and has been outlining consistently for several years. "There is welcome inclusion of key messages around the importance of agriculture, food and drink to the Scottish economy and the need to avoid off-shoring greenhouse gas emissions. "NFUS agrees there is a clear need to introduce further measures to allow farmers to invest in new technology as well as promoting the uptake of those for increased productivity and reducing emissions. "We would encourage the expansion of targeted capital spending, however, accessibility and relevance of the

scheme can be improved. We need fresh options that would see greater engagement from all sectors, in particular arable. We also need to support those who have been 'early adopters' of green technology to continue on that path and advice should form part of the package to ensure those investing in technology make the most of their investment. "All stakeholders are acutely aware of the challenges ahead, but we remain keen to work in partnership with Scottish Government to develop the many policies outlined in this plan update and promote their delivery to guarantee benefits for the economy, climate and wider environment."



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The system is easy to move and erect where required and can be easily modified to suit your requirements

MAIN FEATURES:

- Made from high-tensile steel
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- All hot-dipped galvanised finish
- 3000mm (3m) long
- Includes all joining pins/stakes

OPTION 1
10-foot race and 8-foot holding pen
£1695 + VAT

Comes with an 80-foot holding pen and 10-foot race, 2x 2 feet swing gates and all joining pins/stakes included. Our system will safely hold 100 fully grown sheep (approx.)

PARTS LIST:

- 10 x 3m (8 railed) sheep hurdles
- 12 x Joining pins/stakes
- 2 x 2 feet swing gates



OPTION 2
20-foot race, 100-foot holding pen
£1975 + VAT

Comes with a 100-foot holding pen and 20-foot race, 2 x 2-foot swing gates and all joining pins/stakes included. Our system will safely hold 150 fully grown sheep (approx.)

PARTS LIST:

- 14 x 3m (8 railed) sheep hurdles
- 12 x joining pins/stakes
- 2 x 2-foot swing gates



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The system is easy to move and erect where required and can be easily modified to suit your requirements. Also ideal for TB testing and the cattle sliding gate gives full control of the livestock from outside the race and stops the race from spreading out.

MAIN FEATURES:

- Made from high-tensile steel
- All hurdles are 6 railed x 1.75m high
- A funnel is incorporated into the race-way
- All hot-dipped galvanised finish
- 3000mm (3m) long
- 20-foot race
- 60-foot holding pen. Includes all joining pins/stakes
- Total 200-feet of penning

PARTS LIST:

- 10 x 3m (6 railed) cattle hurdles
- 12 x joining pins/stakes
- 1 x sliding gate

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Argyll and Bute Council

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR REFUSE AND RECYCLING ARRANGEMENTS

Oban and Lorn
Refuse and recycling collections due on Friday 25th December will be collected on Saturday 26th December.
Refuse and recycling collections due on Friday 1st January will be collected on Saturday 2nd January.
Commercial glass collections due on Friday 25th December will be collected on Sunday 27th December.
All other days will be collected as normal.
Moleigh recycling and civic amenity site will be closed on 25th/26th December and 1st/2nd January.

Mull and Iona
Refuse and recycling collections due over the festive period will be carried out on the normal scheduled day(s).
Glengorm recycling and civic amenity site will be closed on 25th/26th December and 1st/2nd January.

Tiree, Coll and Colonsay
Tiree glass collections due on Friday 1st January will be carried out on Wednesday 30th December.
All other refuse and recycling collections due over the festive period will be carried out on the normal scheduled day(s).
Gott Bay recycling and civic amenity site will be closed on 25th/26th December and 1st/2nd January.
Coll refuse collection due on Saturday 26th December will be carried out on Sunday 27th December.
Colonsay refuse collection due on Saturday 26th December will be carried out on Wednesday 23rd December.
Information is also available on the Council website.

To find out more about living and working in Argyll & Bute visit us at:
www.argyll-bute.gov.uk
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**CROFTING COMMISSION
COIMISEAN NA CROITEARACHD
DECROFTING APPLICATION**

1. D MacNeill, Drumclagh, 0.366 ha, site for a dwelling house and workshop (104014)
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 22/01/21 at info@crofting.gov.scot / Crofting Commission, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness IV3 8NW.
Full details at www.crofting.scotland.gov.uk

**CROFTING COMMISSION
COIMISEAN NA CROITEARACHD
CREATE A NEW CROFT DECISION ISSUED**

Application by C McIntyre has been Approved.
Brackletter Croft 1 & Brackletter Croft 2 – Case No 104661
Any person with an interest in the application may appeal against the decision to the Scottish Land Court within 42 days from the date of this advert.

FIRST REGISTRATION OF A CROFT

Sheila Helen MacQueen Ogilvie has registered the croft known as and forming 1 Airds Bay, Ardchattan and Muckairn on the Crofting Register held by the Registers of Scotland.
Any person who wishes to challenge the registration may apply to the Scottish Land Court by 13 August 2021.
Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C7291.

FIRST REGISTRATION OF A CROFT

Mairi Holmes has registered the croft known as and forming 1 Upper Carnach, Lismore and Appin on the Crofting Register held by the Registers of Scotland.
Any person who wishes to challenge the registration may apply to the Scottish Land Court by 23 August, 2021.
Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C7321.

**Oban Times
PUBLIC NOTICES**

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PUBLIC NOTICES

Argyll and Bute Council

PLANNING

The applications listed below together with the plans and other documents submitted with them may be viewed electronically through Argyll and Bute Council website at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk. Having regard to Schedule 6, Part 3, s10 of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020, documents are only available to inspect electronically at this time. Customers requiring assistance can contact us by e-mail: planning.hq@argyll-bute.gov.uk or tel. 01546 605518.

**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
20/02185/PP	Change of use of land to form extension to garden ground (retrospective)	Soroba Lodge, Oban, Argyll And Bute, PA34 4SB
20/02101/PP	Erection of dwellinghouse	Former Quarry Garage Site, Kilchrenan, Argyll And Bute
20/02104/PP	Erection of dwellinghouse, domestic garage and shed and installation of septic tank	Plot 21 Kilvaree, Connel, Argyll And Bute
20/02015/PP	Erection of agricultural shed with associated access and handstanding	Croft 16 Kilvaree (Birchbank Croft), Connel, Argyll And Bute
20/02059/PP	Installation of ground mounted Solar PV array	Langamull, Calgary, Isle Of Mull, Argyll And Bute, PA75 6QY

Written comments can be submitted online <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/find-and-comment-planning-applications-or-to-argyll-and-bute-council-development-management>. 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 on the Councils website. Customers are requested to use electronic communication where possible during the coronavirus pandemic as our ability to process postal mail is restricted.

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**Water Environment And Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003
Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011**

Application for variation of authorisation Isle of Rum Marine Pen Fish Farm
An application has been made to the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) by Mowi Scotland Limited to vary water use licence number CAR/L/1152362 authorising the carrying on of controlled activities at, near or in connection with Isle of Rum Marine Pen Fish Farm, as follows:

Description of change to controlled activity reference	Waters affected	National grid
Change to the discharge of trade effluent arising from the production of salmon at an existing cage fish farm.	Sound of Rum	NG 41247 02759

SEPA considers that the above change(s) to controlled activities may have a significant adverse impact on the water environment and on the interests of other users of the water environment.

The application may be viewed on SEPA's website at: <http://www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/consultations/advertised-applications-under-car/>. If you are unable to access the website you can email SEPA at registry@sepa.org.uk to request a copy of the application. Please note that due to the current Covid -19 restrictions it is not possible to view the application at a SEPA office.

Any person affected or likely to be affected by, or having an interest in, the application may make representations to SEPA in writing within 28 days beginning with the date of this advertisement, either by email to registry@sepa.org.uk or to the following address, quoting reference number CAR/L/1152362.

Written representations received by SEPA within 28 days of this advertisement will be taken into consideration in determining the application. Any such representations will be placed in a public register unless the person making them requests that they should not be. Where such a request is made SEPA will include a statement in the register indicating that representations have been made which have been the subject of such a request.



**VIRTUAL
COMMUNITY
MEETING**

NEW ISLAY VESSEL

Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited (CMAL), in partnership with CalMac and Transport Scotland, is holding a virtual community meeting to engage island communities in design and planning for the new vessel to service Islay and Jura.

To participate, please register via Eventbrite at www.islayvessel.eventbrite.co.uk. The meeting will be hosted on Microsoft Teams, which is free to download online.

Thursday 14 January 2021, 6.30pm – 8.30pm

The meeting will provide an update on the new vessel feasibility studies, which have been ongoing throughout 2020. Options for vessel capacities will be presented based on the outcomes of the feasibility studies. Attendees will have the opportunity to share their views and comments and ask questions.

Questions or any other queries regarding the project can be emailed to islayvessel@cmassets.co.uk or write to Jim Anderson at CMAL, Municipal Buildings, Fore Street, Port Glasgow PA14 5EQ.

CMAL | cmassets.co.uk | 01475 749920

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>;

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
20/04327/FUL	Breacan-Beithe, Spean Bridge	Erection of house, amended design
20/04856/FUL	Taigh Sa Gheann (Left) Achintee, Fort William	Change of use of garage to additional self-contained holiday letting unit
20/04862/FUL	Quoich Overhead Lines	Construction of temporary bellmouth to public road, and access tracks
20/04923/FUL	Luiblea Tulloch Roy Bridge	Relocation and erection of new enclosure to electricity sub-station forming part of the Estate's hydropower system.
20/04920/FUL	The Estate Office Moy, Tulloch Roy Bridge	Electrical substation forming part of the Estate's hydropower system to be relocated with new timber fence enclosure.
20/04657/FUL	Land 135M NE of Ardnambuth Lochailort	Erection of storage shed

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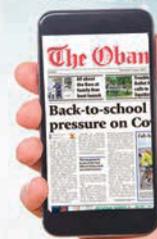
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DEATHS

MACDONALD - James (Jimmy). Peacefully at Inverclyde Royal Hospital on Saturday, December 12, 2020 James (Jimmy), beloved husband of the late Diana, much loved dad of Jacky, dearly loved father-in-law to Catherine and a loving grandpa and great-grandpa.

MACEACHERN - Peacefully at the Mid Argyll Hospital, Lochgilphead on 20th December 2020. Isobel MacEachern, nee MacGillp in her 77th year, of Seaview Ormsary, Lochgilphead. Beloved wife of the late Donald (Donnie) MacEachern. Dearly Loved Mother of Donald and David. Much respected mother in law of Lorraine and Val. Adored Nana of Chris, Jenny, Elizabeth and Elaine, and a very proud great-nana. A dearly loved and respected friend to many. A private family funeral service will be held today, Wednesday December 23, 2020, at South Knapdale Parish Church, thereafter to Ormsary Cemetery.

MACLEAN - Mary Isabella 'Ishbel,' aged 90 years, originally from Kenovay, Isle of Tiree, died at Northwood Care Home, Helensburgh on December 16, 2020. Beloved wife of the late Angus, loving mother of Leslie and Jeanette and much loved grandmother of Nicole. A beautiful person with a beautiful singing voice, she will be greatly missed by all.

MACLEOD - Ann, formerly of Dorus-Uaine, North Connel, passed away peacefully at Etive House Care Home with her family by her side on Thursday December 17. Much loved wife of Ken, loving mother of Gordon, Bobby, Eleanor, Jennifer and Shiela. Loving mother in law, granny and great granny. Sadly missed.

MUNN - Peacefully at Homestead, Heanish, Isle of Tiree on December 16, 2020. Nella, aged 90 years, beloved wife of the late Angus Munn, loving mother of Janice and son-in-law Donnie and much loved sister of Moira. Sadly missed.

PAINE - Irene, (née Orr), of Great Missenden, Bucks, at Austenwood Nursing Home on Thursday December 17, 2020, aged 84. Beloved wife for sixty one years of Chris, and mother of Alasdair, Fiona and Katie. Daughter of Jimmy and Bunty Orr of the Moorings, Oban, and sister of Sandy. Grandmother to Tom, Mark, Lucy, Emma, Alice, David, Emily and James. She and Chris loved their West Highland roots, to which they often returned, building Ardshellach, North Connel in 1970. We thank God for her.

TANKARD - Peacefully at home surrounded by her loving family, on December 17, 2020 aged 74 years, Jean, beloved wife of James/Ally, much loved mum to Hazel and Karen, mother-in-law to Paul & Keran and loving granny to Erin, Brooke and Enes.

WALKER - Henrietta (Argyll/Edinburgh). Peacefully at Adams House Care Home, Elderslie on Friday December 18th, 2020. Henrietta, aged 100, loving wife of the late Hamish. Due to current restrictions a private funeral will be held.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

YOUNG - Eilidh and family of the late Wallace Young wish to thank all family, neighbours and friends for their amazing support and kindness following the recent sad loss of Wallace. Telephone calls, cards, flowers and facebook condolences were of great comfort to us all. Special thanks to the doctors and nurses at the Mull Community Hospital who cared so well for Wallace and went the extra mile to support the family. Sincere thanks also to the district nurses and ambulance crew for their unfailing attention and the Macmillan Nurses for their support. Thanks to Billy McClymont, Funeral Director, for his efficient and sensitive handling of the funeral arrangements and finally thank you to Rev Liz Gibson who bravely conducted the funeral in such adverse weather conditions and also to all those who came to pay their last respects to Wallace.

MEMORIALS

CAMERON - Cherished memories of my dear sister and our loving aunt Morag, who passed away December 25, 2013. Time is swiftly passing by But love and memories never die - Inserted by Chrissie and family, Caalmojo, Kilmory.

CAMPBELL - In loving memory of my dear wife Liz, who died so suddenly on December 26, 1998, age 43. Loved and remembered always.

- Cammie, Fort William.

CAMPBELL - Remembering Liz, who died so suddenly on December 26, 1998.

Gone but never forgotten. - Love Simmo.x

CAMPBELL - In loving memory of our two Iain's.

Our shared yesterday are our treasures of today

You are with us wherever we go - Seonaid, Annmarie, Marion and families.

CLARK - In loving memory of Alexander Clark (Tom), who died December 26, 2012.

Forever in our hearts. - Morag and family.

CLARK - Kirsty. This Christmas we quietly remember a wonderful mum and granny, who passed away on December 22, 2012. Also Graham, a beloved dad and grandpa, who passed away on August 7, 2006.

So greatly missed by us all. Such happy memories.

- Alison, Rhuaidh, Katie and Coll.

GIBSON - In loving memory of a dear mother, granny and great-granny, Jenny, died December 12, 2003, also remembering loved ones gone before and since then.

Forever in our thoughts. - Tommy, Nellie and family.

GRANT - In loving memory of my dear mother and our granny Morag, who passed away December 25, 1999.

Never more than a thought away

Loved and remembered every day - Elizabeth, Julie and Steven.

MACCOLL - Archie (Kilmornaig). Nam chridhe gu Siorraidh - June Anne. x Love and miss you grandpa - Archie, Jessie, Kate and Freddie xxxxx

MACGILLIVRAY - Christina MacGillivray (Chrissie).

Remembering my Gran who passed away on December 24 2009, always thinking about you, so many fond memories of a wonderful Gran. Also remembering

my Mum Katherine MacGillivray, miss you always Mum.

- Paul MacGillivray.

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MACPHAIL - Treasured memories of a dear husband, dad and shesh, John, Ardmay, Tiree, who passed away December 26, 2004. Also remembering loved ones gone before and after. Time and years slip gently by But love and memories never die.
- Jean x Tiree
Resting where no shadows fall
Loved, missed and remembered by us all.
- May, Irene and families.

MAITLAND - In memory of James, a much loved husband, dad and senair, who died December 23, 2012. Loved and missed every day, In our hearts forever.
- Teeny, Marie, Ross and families.
MAITLAND - In loving memory of a dear brother-in-law James who died December 23, 2012. Remembered with a smile.
- From all the family.

NICOLSON - In loving memory of our dear mum and grandmother Christina Stewart, who died December 19, 1985, also Mima McAulay who died December 30, 1989 and Mary McTaggart, who died August 23, 2011, our dear sisters and aunts. Too dearly loved To ever be forgotten - Sadly missed by all the family.

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Another level of crazy for 'gym guy' Innes

by Fiona Scott
fscott@obantimes.co.uk



Having completed half the distance in 12 hours last year, 'gym guy' Innes Hughes, is now challenging himself to run from Oban to Fort William and back in 24 hours in aid of mental health support charity Martyn's Monday Club.

The run will begin at 5pm on December 29 in Station Square when the 23-year-old personal trainer will head for Connel before joining the cycle path route to Fort William. Having only trained for his challenge for four weeks, Innes will also complete a loop around Creagan Loch on the way there and back to reach his 100-mile target. He will be joined by client Garry Mcivor for the first 30 miles or so.

'I thought I'd set the challenge of doing it both ways because I remember thinking how crazy it was after completing it going one way, so to complete it both ways in one go would just be another level of crazy,' said Innes.

'It's an almost ridiculous challenge that most people would think isn't possible in the time frame given and I want to prove it is possible.'

Challenges are what Innes thrives on. As a pupil at Oban High School he admits that fitness didn't really figure in his life until he reached fifth



Runner Innes Hughes knows how important it is to have somewhere like Martyn's Monday Club to go to for support. Photograph: Kevin Mcglynn.

year. Then, with some help from science technician David Ferguson, the youngster went through a physical and mental transformation that he has never looked back from.

'It was during the 6am workouts before school with Davie that my mentality began to change from someone who would always give up as soon as it got hard to someone who liked to challenge themselves,' he told The Oban Times.

'Over the years that inner challenge has just gotten bigger and bigger, and I believe if it wasn't for Davie, I don't know if I would be where I am today.'

'I believe we should always be challenging ourselves, whether it be mentally or physically. I believe we should always be striving for that next level.'

'One of my favourite quotes is "be uncommon amongst uncommon people" from ex-navy seal David Goggins. It's all about becoming the very best you can as human being and being able to do things others cannot. For me, physically challenging myself and pushing myself to the absolute limit is the best way to build mental

strength and character among other attributes.'

Innes's focus on mental strength is one of the reasons behind him choosing Martyn's Monday Club to be the recipient of his fundraising efforts.

'I chose Martyn's as I've had my own past issues and although I'm not one to sit in a room and talk about it all the time, I know that there's a lot of people out there that really benefit and rely on groups like this to listen to them in their time of need.'

'Having gone along, I have seen first hand that there is much need for Martyn's Monday Club to continue to be available for both men and women who need it. I've seen just how much it has helped people. I have known what it's like to be in bad place, I know what it's like to know you have someone there to help you get through it and so having such a close connection to the club I felt it was the clear choice.'

To donate towards Innes's challenge visit his 100 miles? Just Giving page, www.just-giving.com/crowdfunding/innes-hughes-100miles



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Pressure rising to nail down Belford timetable

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

Health chiefs at NHS Highland are coming under growing pressure to firm up a timetable through to the start of construction of the replacement for Fort William's ageing Belford Hospital.

On Thursday, another virtual meeting of the steering group was held, involving NHS Highland chief executive Pam Dudek and other senior staff members, as well as community representatives and Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch MSP Kate Forbes.

The Lochaber Times understands that the figure of six years until the new hospital opens its doors to patients was mentioned as a possible 'worst case scenario' at the meeting.

On Friday, the day after the meeting, Ms Forbes wrote to Ms Dudek asking for clarity on the proposed timescale for the new hospital as soon as possible.

Ms Forbes told the Lochaber Times: 'The meeting last week,

'I refuse to believe that it will take a long time if we get agreement on the clinical plan... and enough momentum'

attended by the chief executive, was an important next step. I don't think anybody expects a hospital to be built overnight, but they do expect strong evidence of commitment by senior leaders at NHS Highland, alongside a clear and robust plan.

'There is still work to be done in drawing that plan together and I hope to see such a plan soon, with clear milestones. There was some discussion about how long it might take to build a new hospital.

'I refuse to believe that it will take a long time if we get agreement on the clinical plan, capital funding and enough momentum.'

Continued on page two.



Glencoe welcomes Santa with a ho, ho, ho

Santa and two of his elves braved the rain instead of snow when they toured Glencoe village on Saturday with Christmas music and smiles at the invitation of Glencoe Resilience Group. Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos

Forbes: Highland virus numbers remain low

MSP Kate Forbes has moved quickly to reassure her constituents that Covid-19 case numbers in the region remain low, despite the decision to tighten restrictions from Boxing Day.

Commenting on social media, the Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch MSP said she was sure many were 'still reeling' from the announcement.

'I know people will be frustrated, worried and angry. I want to offer some explanation,' added Ms Forbes.

'Firstly, this isn't so much about Christmas or about the case numbers in the Highlands, which are low.

'Due to falling cases, we had hoped to get through the next few weeks, at least in many parts of the country, without more severe restrictions being necessary.

'What it is about is the rapid spread of the new strain of Covid-19 which is leading to a rapidly deteriorating and worsening situation in Wales, London and the South East.'

She said the latest action was aimed at preventing things getting worse – potentially very quickly.

'If we act now, we have a chance of keeping this situation under control while the vaccination programme continues to make progress.'



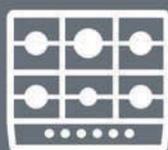
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New Lochaber police recruits sought to boost area ranks

Police Scotland has confirmed it is actively recruiting in Lochaber in 2021, writes Mark Entwistle.

Inspector Megan Heathershaw, from Police Scotland's Recruitment team, based in Aberdeen, is now promoting current opportunities to join the Police Scotland team as a Police Constable.

She told the Lochaber Times: 'Our police officers are outstanding people with great values. They truly believe in making a positive impact for others. We focus on looking for people with a genuine passion for and interest in serving others along with a well-defined set of core values.'

'In the increasingly complex societies we are sworn to protect, Police Scotland is seeking to recruit people to reflect the diverse communities. We are therefore recruiting in Lochaber because we believe there is a huge advantage to you having lived or worked or gone to school in the area

There are a number of vacancies coming up in Lochaber for new police recruits.



as far as 'getting' Lochaber is concerned.

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Anyone interested in

finding out more can visit the Police Scotland website: www.scotland.police.uk/recruitment/ where details of the new national recruitment process and online application form are available.

Alternatively, if you wish to find out more about the role, Police Scotland is holding a virtual drop-in session between 6pm and 8pm on Wednesday January 6 2021. If you wish to attend, you must pre-register with your name and email address at Policerecruitmentaberdeen@scotland.pnn.police.uk

Twelve cold days of Christmas for Dean

by Iain Ferguson
fort@obantimes.co.uk

We may all be familiar with the festive song Twelve Days of Christmas, but for Fort William plumber Dean Cameron each day will feature the sound of splashing in a chilly Loch Linnhe.

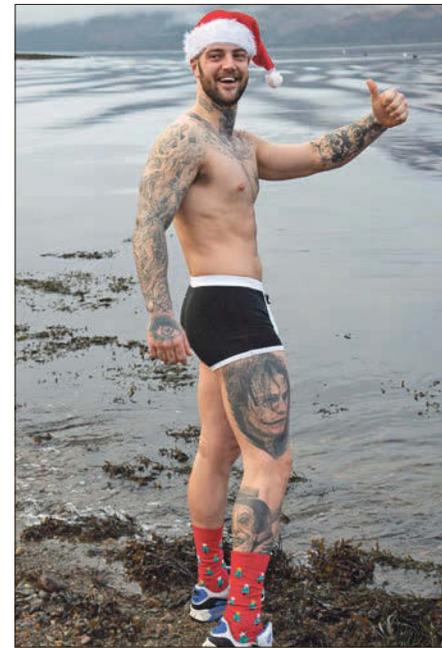
A martial arts enthusiast and well-known Facebook inspirational podcaster, Dean took up his Twelve Cold Days of Christmas challenge – starting on Monday of last week – to promote awareness of mental health while raising money for related charities.

Wearing no more than a pair of festive pants, socks and trainers, Dean is going for a swim after work each day for 12 days in water temperatures of between six and 10 degrees centigrade, hail, rain or snow.

He has invited local business sponsors to join him for a quick dip in the loch so they can be fully involved in the challenge, with six already signed up to get cold and wet for a good cause.

Aware of the many risks of swimming in such inhospitable conditions, Dean has been preparing for a few months to the point of taking nothing but cold showers, even after training at the boxing club gym.

He has also been practicing breathing exercises as part of conditioning his body to cope with the 'thermal shock'



Dean Cameron prepares to set off on the first swim of his '12 Cold Days of Christmas' challenge to help raise awareness of how a positive attitude can help mental health.

Photograph: Iain Ferguson, The Write Image.

of cold loch water. Dean told the Lochaber Times: 'I'm very aware of the risk and dangers of cold water exposure which is why I have spent time working through a physical and mental programme to make sure I am ready to cope with it.'

'I've also asked each of the volunteers to make sure they are fit and healthy enough to join me. While I fully intend to carry this through to the end, I'm not going to be stupid about it.'

'A bit of rain or even snow won't stop me, but obviously if it's a gale force wind and water conditions are considered

dangerous, I will postpone it to another day. As I work through the challenge I'll be talking more about the great benefits of cold water exposure as well and keeping people updated through social media, not to encourage them to do it themselves, but to show what can be achieved by adopting the right mindset.'

Local mental health charities will also feel the benefit of Dean's 'exposure' through his fundraising efforts from sponsors and online donations, which can be made through his Facebook page at www.facebook.com/Deancameron1994

Pressure rising over Belford build timetable

Continued from page one.

Steering group member John Hutchison, who attended the meeting, said there were welcome elements.

'We are pleased that greater momentum will be introduced by meeting monthly rather than quarterly and that a new executive team has been identified to drive things forward,' he told the Lochaber Times. 'We also have the impression that there will be a stronger mental health focus in the service redesign and welcome NHS Highland's acceptance that they must pursue a direct road link between the health centre and the new hospital.'

But Mr Hutchison also warned: 'On the other hand, we haven't had the chance to consider the proposed review of the project management

structure and it will be another three months before the firm timetable will be published.

'The firm timetable through to construction is the crucial and only thing that will settle the anxiety in the community.'

Asked to comment this week on the situation and whether six years was a figure touted at the meeting, NHS Highland did not refer to any specific length of time for the project.

Instead, it told the Lochaber Times that it has outlined a new leadership structure for the redesign of health and social care services in Lochaber.

The project will be headed by Louise Bussell, chief officer for community services, with support from the health board's new director of estates Alan Wilson.

Ms Bussell said: 'The group was advised on the new leadership structure, which will also include senior NHS management from the Lochaber area, and will facilitate monthly steering group meetings.'

'These meetings will ensure local feedback and discussion are at the heart of key issues such as a conclusive timeline for a replacement Belford Hospital. The group heard from Emma Watson, NHS Highland's deputy medical director, about the work already well under way in terms of a clinical model for the service and it was agreed that once the team has had the opportunity to review the current position, we will be able to provide a more detailed project plan and realistic timescales.'

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MacLeod chief defends £1M Skye tree planting grant

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

The chief of Clan MacLeod says he does not want to respond to criticism from the country's national crofting federation over a government decision to award his estate on Skye £1million to plant trees.

A total of 372,000 trees are to be planted as part of the scheme to create a new native woodland at Dunvegan on the island with the money coming from the Scottish Government and EU earlier this month.

But the Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) has slammed the award of the money to MacLeod of Skye as 'pandering to green tokenism with public money that could be better spent'.

'This is a considerable award for the government to make,' said Yvonne White, chairperson of the SCF. 'A million pounds of public money given



The MacLeod Estate on Skye is to have another 372,000 trees planted.

to an individual laird for his 'rewilding' project, planting trees on what could be productive agricultural land.

'It prompts the question as to whether this is the best use of public funds and of agricultural land in what could well be quite challenging times ahead regarding food security.

'Planting trees is good on the whole and Scotland needs a lot more trees, but they should be planted in appropriate places. Surely there must be other areas on the 42,000-acre estate

suitable for trees, rather than sacrifice a farm?

'Skye is very short of good land so it seems a waste of a scant resource. And a farm – or indeed the division of a farm into crofts – means people, young families, which are also a scant resource.'

Asked if he was aware of the SCF's attack on the government's award of the money to his family estate, Hugh MacLeod told the Lochaber Times: 'No, I was not aware of it, have no comment either

way, other than this new local woodland scheme is a very positive bit of news for Skye, the environment and the local community in a year of relentless bad news.'

But Ms White said, having consulted members in the locality, the issue raised many questions.

She continued: 'Was the possibility of alternative use of the farm even considered – for example the creation of crofts and the community benefit this brings with new entrants?'

'Were local people asked if they thought changing the land use from food to forestry was a good thing? Will there be any public benefit, apart from simply there being trees? What impact will the trees have on the surrounding grazing, on deer management for example? The Scottish Government carries out an assessment before allocating a grant, but we question whether

one million pounds of public money has been spent in the most effective way to achieve the best results.

'Or is it simply government ticking a box in trying to achieve a national tree-planting target? Is it pandering to green tokenism with public money that could be better spent, that could achieve so much more for the local people?'

The project is being overseen by Scottish Woodlands Ltd, which will plant the scheme on the estate's behalf by the end of 2021.

This first phase focuses on transforming the marginal land of Dunvegan's former home farm, Totachocaire, into a 240-hectare (593 acre) native woodland area.

A total of 372,000 trees will be planted with different species mixtures to suit the land's terrain and ecology. The carbon offset is estimated

to exceed 40,000 tons over a 65-year period. When news of the £1M grant became public at the start of December, Mr MacLeod told the Lochaber Times that he was 'thrilled' that the estate had been awarded the money.

'I had the idea over 10 years ago, when I decided to stop farming at the estate's Totachocaire Farm, which is not only marginal land, but was also loss making for almost every year of its operation since it was revived by my late father in the 1970s,' he explained. 'This is the first phase of our nascent rewilding plans and once the woodlands are established, this will create an extensive and biodiverse habitat to support a number of native species.'

The scheme has been welcomed by environmentalists, as well as by John Laing, chairman of Dunvegan and District Community Council.



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Isles MP calls for talks on HIAL jobs

Na h-Eileanan an Iar SNP MP, Angus B MacNeil has called for a round-table meeting to discuss the upheaval projected by Highlands and Islands Airports (HIAL) for Stornoway and Benbecula.

Mr MacNeil wants the Scottish Government's Transport Minister, Michael Matheson, HIAL, the Civil Aviation Authority, the trade union and other interested parties to hold discussions to find out exactly what is going on with the projected removal of jobs from the islands by the Scottish Government agency.

'This issue is becoming very acute, causing a lot of anxiety to many people, therefore I am calling on interested parties and experts to get around the table to discuss this early in the New Year, he added.

'HIAL employees cannot live with this uncertainty - the communities deserve better and need these jobs to be retained in the islands, we cannot have government agencies recklessly damaging island communities.'

Praise and a plea from Zena litter warrior

by Fiona Scott
fscott@obantimes.co.uk



A Fort William woman who has been clearing litter from verges and hedgerows since the start of lockdown has praised the people who refrain from throwing their rubbish out of car windows.

Litter warrior Zena William, 49, has also made a plea to fast food outlets, planners, the council, police and individuals to make a collective effort to solve the problem once and for all.

'I don't have all the answers but I'm sure someone could come up with something to deter people from doing this,' she told us.

'Putting cameras up would be one thing but I was told that would be costly. Surely though if they fined the people who are throwing their litter



then that would cover the cost of the cameras. Implementing a fine would also serve as a warning to other idiots who just don't seem to care about our countryside.

'Parental education would help a bit also. If parents get

their children into the habit of not throwing litter from an early age it is a lesson that will last a lifetime.'

Zena began her crusade at the end of March when she noticed what a mess the embankments and hedgerows on

Zena has been out in all weathers cleaning up the roadside rubbish in and around Fort William.

the A82 south of Fort William had got into.

Regular visits along the route - which stretches all the way down to the Corran Ferry - from March to July made a difference but because traffic has picked up again she feels as though she is fighting a losing battle.

'I did it up until the end of July and it was looking not to bad but with traffic picking up again and another large fast food place opening up it's just as bad,' said Zena who suffers from anxiety.

'I decided to start clearing it again last week and thought it would be a doddle this time around. I had filled six bags after only a mile and a

half. It makes me want to cry sometimes.'

Although Zena clears the litter herself she has had plenty of support on social media and is assisted by David Kerr, who runs the A82 Roadwatch Facebook page, who controls the traffic and helps with the bags when required.

'I don't want any praise, I do this to keep out of trouble and it puts a smile on people's faces,' she added.

'I want to praise and thank the drivers who DONT throw litter out of their car.

'I also want to thank David, the people who support me on Facebook, especially Janice, William MacLean for his patience and cleaning my car afterwards, the bin men for the black bags and litter picker and my therapist Paul Kelly from PKG Coaching for helping with my anxiety, it has made a huge difference.'

TURKEY, HAM AND LEEK PIE (FROM CHRISTMAS DINNER LEFTOVERS)

Recipe

Brought to you by BID4Oban

At the time of reading this you will probably not have cooked your turkey or ham yet! This week's recipe provides a solution for any leftovers.

Ingredients

1 pack ready rolled puff pastry
2 large leeks roughly chopped.
3 tbsp plain flour
500ml chicken stock
tsp wholegrain mustard
600g leftover turkey meat cut into small chunks
250g leftover cooked ham cut into small chunks (or substitute more turkey)
2 tsp dried tarragon
1 tsp mixed herbs
200ml cream
1 egg
salt and pepper
some butter for cooking leeks
Splash of white wine (optional)

Method

Melt butter in large frying pan and add the leeks. Cover and cook for about 5 minutes but do not allow to brown. Sprinkle flour over the leeks and stir. Increase the heat on the pan and gradually add in the stock and keep stirring until you have a nice, thickened sauce. Add the turkey, ham and mustard and continue to stir. Switch off the heat and stir in the tarragon, cream, splash of wine and mixed herbs. Set aside and allow to cool for about an hour.



Pre-heat the oven to 200C/180C fan. Place the filling into a 1.5L pie dish. Roll out pastry. Beat the egg and brush the edge of the pie dish with egg. Place the rolled-out pastry over the dish and seal to the edges. Trim the pastry and if you have some left over this can be used to shape in to leaves to decorate the top of the pie. If you have a pie funnel place this in the centre or alternatively an upside-down ceramic egg cup works well. Place a couple of slits in the pastry to allow steam to escape while cooking. With the remainder of the beaten egg, brush the top of the pie. Place in oven for 35-40 minutes until golden brown. Enjoy!

Lochaber NHS 24 call handler nominated for national awards

Sophie Ross, from Arisaig, has been named as a nominee in the Delta Rising Star category for The Prince's Trust and TK Maxx and Homesense Awards.

The national awards recognise the achievements of young people who have succeeded against the odds, improved their chances in life, and had a positive impact on their local community.

The Delta Rising Star award celebrates young people who have overcome barriers and are in sustainable employment.

Sophie, who grew up in Arisaig but now lives and works in Glasgow, lost her mum in 2013 which had a devastating affect on her life. Recently moving to the big city, she felt alone and began to suffer from depression. She turned to unhealthy coping methods and lost all faith in herself.

After being unemployed for six years, she began to volunteer to try and build her CV and after seeing a Prince's Trust, Get into Healthcare course with NHS24 advertised on Facebook, she decided to apply.

Sophie told us: 'The course came at the right time for me -



Sophie Ross, an NHS call handler from Arisaig, has been nominated for a national award.

my family had previously tried to push me to work but it had to be my decision. Working for NHS24 was something I never thought I could do as a job, but after the four weeks, I realised I had a passion for this career.

'It gave me a routine back, which helped my health and mental health, and when I secured an interview at the end of the course, I knew it's what I wanted to do, so I was ecstatic when I got the job.

'I've been working as a call handler for NHS24 for over a year now and couldn't imagine

working anywhere else. I love it. It's given me pride and a passion - something that was lost to me for years.'

The winners of The Prince's Trust and TKMaxx and Homesense Awards will be announced in early 2021.

Speaking about the awards, Louise Greenlees, president, TJX Europe, added: 'We're delighted and very proud to continue to partner with The Prince's Trust to sponsor these awards, and to recognise those young people who, with the help of the Trust, have beaten the odds to turn their lives around. We're humbled by their achievement and grateful for the opportunity to share in their celebration.

'Since 2013, our partnership with the Prince's Trust has enabled us to bring over 1,000 young people into our stores through the Get Into Retail programme, and more than 700 have gone on to find employment with us in TK Maxx and Homesense.

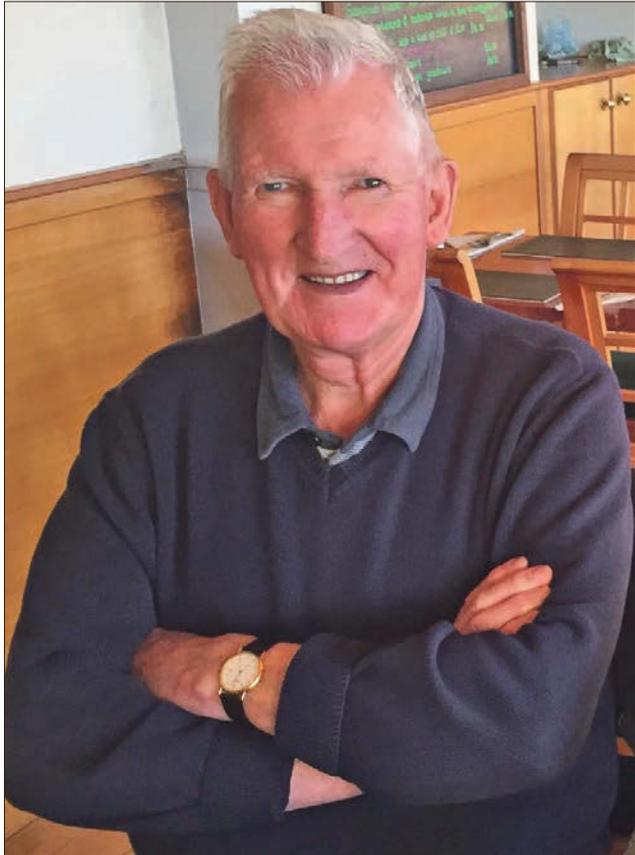
'We believe that the trust helps to make a huge difference to the lives of young people across the UK, and we are privileged to be able to support them in this work.'



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Domhnall Padruig has been instrumental in many ways to the delivery of music teaching in the Barra school.

Fond farewell as Barra's popular piping tutor retires

Last week there was a fond farewell to Domhnall Padruig Nicholson as he 'retired' from his role as Castlebay School's volunteer chanter and piping tutor, writes Mark Entwistle.

Domhnall Padruig has been instrumental in many ways to the delivery of music teaching in the Barra school.

He has dedicated his time weekly over many years to teach children the chanter and pipes, including trips to join the Sgoil Lionacleit Pipe Band and mainland excursions such as the School Pipe Band Championships and Celtic Connections: Dileab.

Head Teacher for Castlebay Community and Eoligarry Primary Schools, Suzanne Forman said: 'I have had the pleasure of working with Domhnall Padruig over many years and been amazed by the progression and talents of his many students.'

'As a member of the wider school staff, Domhnall Padruig was also there to support us during the more challenging

times. I very much hope that he will continue to visit us once things return to normal!'

Castlebay Community and Eoligarry Primary Schools Piping Tutor, Donald 'Ban' MacDonald said: 'As the school's piping tutor, I would like to thank Domhnall Padruig very much indeed for all his hard work and assistance to me.'

'This he did on a purely voluntary basis over the past few years. I would like to wish him well as he retires from his school role.'

Martin Sinclair S6 pupil said: 'I feel very fortunate to have been taught the pipes by Dòmhnall Phàdraig. I'd like to thank him for his patience and all his encouragement over the years.'

'On behalf of the pupils, staff and parents, the school presented Domhnall Padruig with a Blair chanter which is fittingly engraved with 'Ceud Mile Taing bhon a h-uile duine ann an Sgoil Bhàgh a' Chaisteil.'

Plumber Stephen helps cash flow in for Lochaber Hope

Fort William plumber Stephen MacTavish who ran the West Highland Way to raise money for Lochaber Hope, hands over a cheque for more than £5,500 to Alyson Smith of Lochaber Hope.

Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos



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Trans-Atlantic rowers proudly sport new Skye flag

The Isle of Skye's flag is making its first crossing of the Atlantic, being proudly borne on the stern of a trans-ocean rowing challenge boat.

Force Genesis, a mixed quad of rowers from England, is carrying the newly launched Isle of Skye Flag across the Atlantic as part in the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge, following the success of the row around Skye in August.

The winning design for the flag was announced in August after a public vote that attracted almost 400 entries.

It was Calum Alasdair Munro, aged nine, who came up with the triumphant design depicting's design features including a Birlinn, a wooden boat used around the island's coast during the Middle Ages.

Its five oars represent five areas on Skye – Trotternish, Watnish, Duirinish, Minginish and Sleat.



Replace cable between Skye and Harris set to go ahead

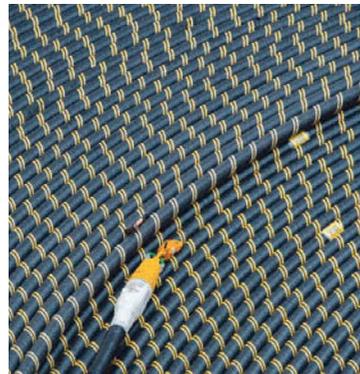
A new replacement subsea electricity cable linking Skye with Harris will be operational by the end of August next year, according to the power distributor.

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) Distribution confirmed on Friday a decision to proceed with the replacement of the 33 kilovolt (kV) cable which runs from Ardmore on Skye to Beacravik on Harris following the recent subsea cable fault in mid-October.

The damage to the cable saw local renewable electricity generators such as community wind farms cut off from sources of revenue, leading to a number of charities and local organisations in the Western Isles having vital funding suspended.

Some 13,600 customers on Lewis and Harris were temporarily cut off until engineers restored supplies from Battery Point Power Station, with power restored to all homes and businesses later that day.

But following analysis of procurement, cable manufacture and licens-



SSEN plan to have the new sub-sea cable running by next August

ing considerations, it is expected that the replacement cable will now be operational by end August 2021.

The replacement 33kV cable, which will provide increased capacity of between eight and 10MW compared to the existing link, is expected to arrive in the UK in late May.

Following extensive consideration, including engagement with local

stakeholders and affected parties, the company says the decision in favour of a 33kV replacement has been made to protect against further security of supply risk to customers on Lewis and Harris and to limit environmental and community impacts.

Detailed analysis of alternative solutions, including a new 132kV link, presented replacement timescales of February, 2023, at the earliest, leaving customers and communities exposed to undue risk over three winters as well as being unable to resume renewable electricity export.

The decision to proceed with the replacement 33kV also avoids up to 200,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions from the back-up stations during the timescale projected for a larger cable.

Mark Rough, director of customer operations, SSEN Distribution, said that faced with considering replacement options in an emergency scenario, the power company had to balance the opportunity to progress whole system solutions with the need to restore Lewis and Harris to normal

supply and generation conditions in reasonable timescales, limiting impacts where possible.

'We recognise from our engagement with the community there are a range of views about the optimum solution, each with its own trade-offs,' added Mr Routh. 'In exploring options, it became clear the conditions and timescales related to a larger solution posed a number of challenges which could not be reconciled without leaving customers and network users exposed to significant risk.'

'Our priority as distribution network operator remains to ensure a safe and secure supply of electricity to homes and businesses on the islands whilst limiting any risk to supply wherever possible. Today's decision supports that outcome.'

Whilst SSEN said it acknowledges recent calls from some stakeholders for a larger capacity cable to be installed and ringfenced for community renewable schemes, it is important to note that this is not permitted under industry rules and regulations.

VIEW FROM THE CHAMBER



At Lochaber Chamber of Commerce, we've been working hard to ensure that our member businesses find access to the assistance and advice they need. We've been supporting them to adapt to drastically changed circumstances and cope with the challenges of keeping business going through this awful rollercoaster of a year.

As we head into the last few days before Christmas, it's a real shame that we're now facing tougher restrictions from Boxing Day and changes to the rules around Christmas celebrations.

The announcement on Saturday of much-tightened restrictions in Lochaber, moving from level one to level four on Boxing Day, will have huge impacts on businesses throughout our area.

Lochaber Chamber of Commerce is here to help local business in whatever ways we can. No matter what size and type of business, we know that access to the right help at the right time is crucial.

If you're in business, make



sure you know what help is available by getting in touch with Lochaber Chamber of Commerce and checking our regularly updated Covid-19 business info at www.lochaberchamber.co.uk

We expect to hear more very soon about additional help and advice for Scottish businesses and will make sure that our members are kept up to date with the information on help they need.

Did you know that the Government's Covid-19 Job Retention Scheme (furlough) has now been extended until the end of April 2021? This means that the UK Government will continue to cover 80 per cent of furloughed employees' wages, up to a maximum of £2,500 pcm.

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

(CBILS) has also now been extended until the end of March 2021. It supports term loans, overdrafts, invoice finance and more.

Businesses have been through the wringer this year and we are full of admiration for the resilience and adaptability that our business community continues to show in the face of extremely challenging circumstances.

Despite the restrictions, disappointments, and adjustments we're all having to make at the moment, we hope that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy a peaceful Christmas. Lochaber is a fantastic place to live and work – our community has pulled together with kindness and generosity.

Here's to a better year for us all in 2021.

Wishing all our customers a

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

and a happy new year...

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Child poverty plan approved

The Outer Hebrides Anti-poverty Strategy Group has approved its draft Local Child Poverty Action Plan for further public consultation, writes Fiona Scott.

The plan was approved by the board of NHS Western Isles, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership in autumn 2019 and its rollout then began.

The impact of Covid-19 on the delivery priorities for the 2019-20 plan has been considerable in terms of the needs of communities, families and individuals, as well as the service priorities for the comhairle, health board and all community partners. The delivery update considers the impact of Covid-19 on child poverty.

Around 3,100 residents, or 24 per cent of the working age population, in the Outer Hebrides were furloughed on 21 August 2020. In addition to this, 700 people in the islands had made claims to the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme, with the claims amounting to an estimated total value of £1.7m.

Applications for Universal Credit in the Outer Hebrides had initially increased three-fold (from 350 to 870) as a result of Covid-19.

Fuel poverty is another area of specific concern. The most recent Scottish Government figures (Scottish House Condition Survey 2016-2018: Published 2020) show that 36 per cent of all households in the Outer Hebrides are in fuel poverty (approximately 3,000 houses). This is the highest figure in Scotland – the average figure is 25 per cent.

In addressing food poverty, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has confirmed eligible families will receive free school meal payments for the holidays and an additional new hardship allowance. Backdated payment of £20 for the October holidays and a payment of £25 for the Christmas holidays for each child in receipt of free school meals will also be issued.

The comhairle welcomes applications from parents who have not applied for free school meals before November 30 and especially from parents of P1-P3 pupils who receive free school meals through 'univer-

sal provision' but think they may be entitled due to income. New successful applications for free school meals before the second week in January will receive the £100 hardship payment.

Councillor Angus McCormack, chairman of the Poverty Action Group said: "These payments come at just the right moment to help families. Covid-19 has added additional burdens for us all and despite the hard and extensive work of officers associated with the Poverty Action Group in supporting those in difficulty.

"Families are now in need of help who would not normally have found themselves attending food banks. I hope this payment will assist in making life more bearable.

"I should like to thank all those in our community who have risen to the challenge of offering support to those in need."

The Outer Hebrides Local Child Poverty Action Plan can be accessed at www.cne-siar.gov.uk/media/16475/ohcppoverty-plan-updated-december-2020.pdf.



Labour candidate John Erskine, right, and Labour's Westminster leader, Sir Keir Starmer.

Labour's Lochaber candidate aiming for fifth time lucky

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

Scottish Labour Party activist John Erskine is hoping it will be fifth time lucky at the ballot box, with news that the ex-adviser to former Holyrood party leader Kezia Dugdale has been selected as Labour's candidate to fight the Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch constituency seat at next year's Scottish parliamentary elections.

It was announced last week that members of Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch Constituency Labour Party (CLP) had unanimously selected Mr Erskine as their candidate after a virtual hustings and selection meeting before voting online.

In the 2019 General Election, Labour Party members in the equivalent Westminster constituency selected Mr Erskine to take on the ultimately victorious SNP Westminster leader, Ian Blackford. However, Inverness-born Mr Erskine took fourth place out of seven, trailing Mr Blackford by almost 17,000 votes.

Prior to that, Mr Erskine stood as Highland Labour's youngest candidate at the 2012 local government elections, narrowly missing out on election to the Dingwall and Seaforth ward, before standing for Scottish Labour at the 2015 General Election in Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross,

followed by the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections for the Highlands and Islands Regional List.

This time round, he is also seeking to be selected as Scottish Labour's top regional list candidate for the Highlands and Islands Region ahead of next May's poll.

Mr Erskine currently works for retiring Highlands and Islands MSP David Stewart, Iain Gray MSP and the Co-op as a Member Pioneer for the Dingwall area supporting local good causes.

Asked why he thought he would be successful at the polls this time round given his lack of success to date, Mr Erskine told us: "2019 was the Brexit General election, fought along constitutional lines which played into the hands of the SNP and the Tories.

"Next year's Holyrood elections will be an opportunity to highlight the SNP's 13-year record of failure in government, the scandal of Covid-19 care home deaths, the chronic underfunding of our local services, our failing education system and their centralising agenda has been so damaging to Fort William and Lochaber.

"Under the new leadership of Keir Starmer, the Labour Party is now credible again and able to present a genuine alternative to the SNP's obsession with independence and the Tories

damaging welfare and Brexit policies.

"It's all to play for and I'm determined to hold the SNP to account and oppose another divisive referendum at a time when we should be coming together."

Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch Constituency Labour Party chairman, Les Hood, added: "I am delighted John Erskine will be challenging Kate Forbes for Scottish Labour as our candidate for the Holyrood elections.

"John is an excellent local candidate and campaigner, grounded in the constituency and he will challenge the SNP and Tories at every turn, always putting the Highlands and Islands first above party politics and constitutional turmoil. Local members and I will look forward to campaigning with him over the coming weeks and months."

Raised in Ross-Shire, Mr Erskine attended Maryburgh Primary and Dingwall Academy before studying for a BA (Hons) in Philosophy and Politics and a Post-Grad in Strategic Public Relations from the University of Stirling.

After university, Mr Erskine worked for Highlands and Islands Scottish Labour MSPs Rhoda Grant and David Stewart. He left his job with the Law Society of Scotland last year to stand as a candidate against Mr Blackford.

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Ben Nevis Holiday Park unveils new £500,000 facelift

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

The owners of Ben Nevis Holiday Park are hoping their £500,000 refurbishment of the site at Camaghael, just outside Fort William, will help them bounce back from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic in time for the 2021 tourist season.

While this year's season might not have been as expected, Andrew and Emily Campbell, who took over the Ben Nevis Holiday Park site in March and launched Highland Holidays just three months later, have been using the lockdown period to develop their plans and ambitions before welcoming their first guests in July.

With breath-taking views of Ben Nevis, and just 10 minutes from Fort William, the couple have transformed the existing



Andrew and Emily Campbell at their Ben Nevis Holiday Park on the outskirts of Fort William. Photograph: Alison White

Photography

we saw visitors from all over the UK as they were tempted by the beautiful scenery that surrounds us and fresh Scottish air.

'The Highlands and Fort William in particular are high on travellers' bucket lists and we've been inundated with enquiries from Scotland, the rest of the UK and internationally as people start to plan their 2021 trips.'

Originally from Lochgoilhead, the couple both have a passion for Ben Nevis and the Highland lifestyle, and hope to weave Highland Holidays into the fabric of the local community around Fort William and Glen Nevis, by

allowing holidaymakers to experience the magic of Great Britain's 'Outdoor Capital' for themselves.

The couple were determined to support the local community as much as possible and used many local companies to redevelop the existing site, including Leith's Quarry, Lochaber Building Supplies, Michael Faryma Joinery, Highland Industrial Supplies and Hugh Fitzsimons & Son.

'Fort William is a very close-knit community and we've received a warm welcome and great support from locals,' added Mr Campbell.

'We wanted to repay that by working with as many local businesses as possible. Many of our colleagues are from the area and as we further establish ourselves as a destination, we want to ensure the community can benefit as much as possible.'

The newly refurbished holiday park includes the introduction of glamping-style Highland Pods, and a series of high-spec two- and three-bedroom Nevis Lodges, available with and without hot tubs.

Alongside this, an increased number of pitches have been created, to accommodate guests with touring motorhomes or those who prefer to pitch a tent and be 'at one' with nature.

The couple's plans for 2021 include the addition of further pods and lodges, as well as the regeneration of the reception area, to include a bistro-style café and shop stocking essentials, with a projected spend of an additional £750,000 in order to facilitate these upgrades.

Highland Holidays is located at Ben Nevis Holiday Park, Camaghael, Fort William PH33 7NF.



Seasons Greetings from The Wee Hotel Company

The Wee Hotel Company is currently taking an extended period of winter hibernation to relax and refresh so we're ready to welcome our guests back to The Pierhouse at Port Appin and The Three Chimneys at Colbost on Skye early in 2021.

It is our intention and hope that we will re-open the doors to both of our venues towards the end of January. In the meantime, we'll be keeping a watchful eye on progress and will update you on the precise date when it can be certain.

Behind the scenes, we will be stoking up our real log fires, preparing our heart-warming winter menus and plumping up our pillows for travellers in search of a seasonally snug, wee winter getaway. Authenticity, the magic of Scottish food and ingredients, hospitality and a warm welcome is always assured at our two unique coastal retreats.

As always, the entire team at The Pierhouse and The Three Chimneys want to again thank our wonderful guests from across Argyll, the rest of Scotland and beyond, who have supported us through these turbulent times. We're extremely appreciative and are all so looking forward to having the opportunity to welcome you back in 2021.

May we wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a very happy New Year.

THE WEE HOTEL COMPANY

LT

Funding for new Skye school confirmed

Two of Skye's elected representatives have expressed their delight after funding for a new-build primary school in Broadford was confirmed by the Scottish Government.

The crumbling state of the existing primary school in the village has been well-documented, and has been the subject of years of campaigning from parents, the wider community as well as Councillor John Finlayson and Kate Forbes MSP.

The project is expected to cost in the region of £9.5-£11 million and will also include a library, nursery and council service point.

On Friday, Deputy First Minister John Swinney – who has previously met with some of the Broadford parents – announced the good news.

Ms Forbes said she was delighted at the news: 'A few years ago I met with the parent council to discuss the dire condition of the current Broadford Primary.

Some of the parents had themselves been pupils at Broadford Primary and were determined to see a new school built for their children.

'With resolute determination, we met regularly, collectively raised awareness and ensured that Highland Council bid for funding,' she added. 'Community Councillor Hamish Fraser and Councillor John Finlayson have been resolute in their support, through the highs and the lows of the past few years.'

Councillor Finlayson added: 'The fantastic news about Broadford's inclusion in the next phase of the Learning Estate Improvement Programme is a fantastic early Christmas present for pupils, staff, parents and the wider community.'

'Getting to this stage has involved lots of hard work and the promotion of strong team ethos amongst all the key stakeholders and I would like to thank everyone for their efforts.'

Invergarry man wins global animal welfare award

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

Invergarry resident Malcolm Johnstone has received a prestigious award at the Global Aquaculture Awards 2020.

Mr Johnstone, who has lived in the area for 36 years, was announced the winner of the Animal Welfare Award at the recent annual ceremony of the Global Aquaculture Awards, hosted by Aquaculture UK.

The award recognises success in improving the welfare of farmed fish and their subsequent impact on the wildlife they interact with. An international panel of judges announced the decision at the adapted virtual event.

With more than three decades of experience in the aquaculture industry, Mr Johnstone works for RSPCA Assured as its aquaculture manager, a position he's held since 2007. He said: 'Over the years, my work at RSPCA Assured has made a difference to the lives

of millions of fish. To get recognition from peers in the industry was a humbling moment for me. Typically, there would have been a conference in Aviemore, Scotland, with a dinner, dance and speeches. Due to Covid restrictions, I thankfully I didn't have to get up in front of a crowd. But, it was still nice to raise a glass of something special on behalf of our efforts.'

RSPCA Assured, the RSPCA's ethical food label and farm assurance scheme, aims to improve the lives of farm animals. With Mr Johnstone's support, the scheme has helped to implement higher welfare standards throughout the salmon and trout farming industries. These standards – which must be met for salmon and trout to be labelled RSPCA Assured – ensure the fish are healthier and less stressed.

They cover all aspects of the fish's lives, including health, diet, environment, care and handling.



Malcolm Johnstone, who has lived in the Invergarry area for 36 years, was announced the winner of the Animal Welfare Award.

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DIGITAL SUBSCRIBERS

Digital subscribers who have an active subscription covering the period from December 11, 2020, to February 1, 2021, can enter the competition by sending their name, address and email address that they subscribe with to Oban Times Trolley Dash Competition, Crannog Lane, Lochavullin Industrial Estate, Oban PA34 4HB by 10am Thursday January 7. Only one entry per subscription permitted. Entrant must be able to attend the trolley dash in Oban on the January 18, 2021.

We all spend far too much money over Christmas and New Year, so how great would it be able to fill your shopping trolley COMPLETELY FREE OF CHARGE in January?! Courtesy of our friends at Tesco in Oban, one lucky reader will win the chance to fill their trolley with up to £200 worth of goods (see T&C's for exclusions). All you have to do is collect 4 tokens over four weeks starting on 10th December, get them to us by 10am Thursday 7th January and you will be entered into a prize draw to win this fantastic trolley dash. What are you waiting for, banish those post-Christmas blues and start collecting your tokens!

All 4 tokens must be sent in a single envelope to Oban Times Trolley Dash Competition Crannog Lane, Lochavullin Industrial Estate Oban, PA34 4HB.

One token from each week is required, multiple entries are allowed, but must be submitted in separate envelopes. Photocopied tokens will not be accepted. Winners must agree to take part in publicity, Employees of Wyvex Media Ltd and their immediate family are not eligible to enter. The editor's decision is final.



Musicians on song at Scots awards



Stornaway sensations Peat and Diesel won the Video of the Year Award for Calum Dan's Transit Van. To watch the video go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4cOZ-zSdMs

by Fiona Scott
fscott@obantimes.co.uk



Stornaway superstars Peat and Diesel along with Lewis singer songwriter Josie Duncan were two of five winners originating from the Highlands and Islands at the recent MG ALBA Scots Trad Music Awards.

Trad trio Peat and Diesel scooped the award for best video for Calum Dan's Transit Van produced by Keith Morrison at Wee Studio.

'We are delighted to have won Video of the Year,' stated the band which comprises of Calum 'Boydie' MacLeod, Innes Scott and Uilly Macleod.

'A big thanks to our label, sound engineer, friend, guide, janitor, organiser and now award-winning video creator Keith, who was willing to stand in the middle of a scrapyard with an expensive camera and pretend to be a road cone while Calum Dan was broadsides in the Transit!'

Keith commented on Twitter: 'So it turns out I'm an award-winning video creator along with my best pals. Worth risking my life after all. Very proud indeed.'

The band were also nominated for Album of the Year, for Light My Byre, which was won by Hamish Napier Music with The Woods.

'A massive thank you to everyone that supports not just us, but all the other musicians,' added the band. 'It means the world and hopefully next year we will all put on a real good session to show our appreciation to you all because that's

the way we do it in the Western Isles.'

Josie Duncan was awarded the title of Music Tutor of the Year. Having been immersed in Glasgow's fast moving traditional music scene for the past few years, where she studied at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Josie's crystal clear voice is equally at home in Gaelic, Scots or English.

In 2017 Josie was awarded BBC Radio 2's Young Folk Award alongside guitarist Pablo Lafuente. Josie is also the singer in Inyal, an innovative band combining intricate traditional instrumentation and Gaelic song with subtle electronic loops and beats.

'Coming from the Isle of Lewis, I was encouraged from an early age to learn traditional songs. My mum conducted (and still conducts) a fantastic Gaelic choir and growing up around this music is something I will never take for granted,' said Josie.

The MG ALBA Scots Trad Music Awards was broadcast on BBC ALBA on Saturday, December 12 in a special programme named Na Trads 2020 and is available on the BBC iPlayer until January 11.

Three trad-rock outfit Skerryvore (Original Work of the Year), Harpist Rebecca Hill from Connel (Up and Coming artist of the Year) along with online ceilidh Tunes in the Hoose (Community Music Project of the Year), co-founded by Oban accordionist Martin MacLeod, also lifted one of the of 12 honours announced.



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Josie Duncan, Music Tutor of the Year.

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LT

Warmest Christmas greetings to a

Kate Forbes, MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch



This year has been strange and uncertain – and Christmas is likely to be equally unprecedented. I realise that so many people have made sacrifices. We've been unable to celebrate special occasions with our loved ones. We've been separated from friends and family. Businesses have struggled and jobs have been lost.

The daily challenges of living in lockdown have continued for longer than any of us hoped. At the same time, too many families are grieving the loss of relatives to Covid-19, or to the wider health impacts of lockdown.

In light of that, Christmas takes on even greater significance either as a time to stop and reflect or to spend some precious time with family.

Perhaps this year more than other years the message of Christmas is essential.

It is a message of peace – peace when the world is a worrying place, when we don't have all the answers and when we long for some semblance of normality.

The first Christmas happened in a tremendously uncertain world, when nothing happened as it should have.

Despite that, we sing the words 'Peace on earth' in the carol Hark the Herald Angels and read the following words at traditional carol services, 'For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'

This year of all years, we need the wisdom of a Counsellor, the strength of a Mighty God, the comfort of a Father and the

Peace that rises above our circumstances.

I hope and pray that you know all of these in this festive season, and that they give you hope as we enter a new year with loved ones near or far.



Donald Cameron MSP

As well as being a time of celebration, Christmas can also be a poignant moment, and this Christmas will, I am sure, be an especially poignant one for many people.

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed so many things, but none more than the links between families and friends. And, especially, those precious ones between the generations. How many

grandparents have missed out from seeing their grandchildren? How many vulnerable people, who have had to "shield", have found, and continue to find, themselves living in isolation?

Somehow this hits harder at Christmas, and this year in particular.

So my thoughts are with all those people who contemplate a Christmas without their loved ones near to hand.

And also with those who have suffered illness or bereavement. And those who have had their lives turned upside down, perhaps through the loss of their livelihood or some cherished ambition foregone or postponed.

This is also a time when we think of all those people – NHS workers, care home staff, teachers, emergency service personnel, council employees, shopworkers – in short, everyone in our communities who have directly coped with the pandemic

and kept our society functioning.

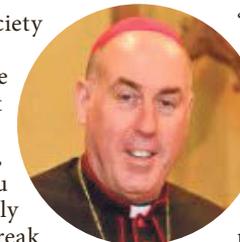
You all deserve our warmest appreciation. And, of course, for many of you there won't really be a Christmas break at all.

But let us also remember that Christmas is a time of hope. That, really, is what the Christmas story is all about. And that, I sincerely hope, is something we can all celebrate whatever our faith or beliefs. May I wish you a peaceful Christmas.

Bishop Brian McGee, Bishop of the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles

There has been a lot of talk recently about Christmas being cancelled. Of course, we know that would be impossible.

It is certainly true that unfortunate circumstances have forced many of our customs to be cancelled. This disappoints us since we enjoy them. However, perhaps the



'stripping away' of Christmas can actually help us enjoy its deeper meaning.

The central, beautiful truth of Christmas remains: God loved us so much Jesus

took on our human nature and redeemed us. Although divine the child Jesus knew vulnerability: no home, poverty, his life endangered, seeking safety abroad. Jesus was born, not because we were perfect and strong, but because we are weak and frail.

May this 'unusual' Christmas remind us that the Saviour is greater than our weaknesses, trials and worries and that he was born to set us free. Merry Christmas!

Reverend Richard Baxter, Moderator of Lochaber Presbytery

Well, that was all a bit unexpected, wasn't it? Coronavirus was a faraway



Your personal Christmas messages for 2020

Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year
to all my relatives, friends and neighbours.
From Mary Barbour

SEASONS GREETINGS
Wishing my Oban friends, family and colleagues a very merry Christmas and a happy, safe, new year.
Love to mum, Eric, Neil, Amanda, Georgia and James.
Nicky, Scott and the Girls
xxx

Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year
Sandy Watson would like to wish friends and neighbours a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year





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Ritchie and Sue would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and look forward to seeing you all in January when Government guidelines allow



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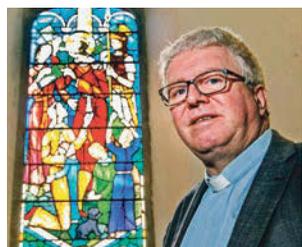


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all Lochaber Times' readers



lots of cancelled plans, frustrating new technology to master, and the unexpected challenge of adding film-making and video-editing to the essential skills of parish ministry. I am thankful my own challenges were minor compared to so many.

blip on the horizon back in January.

This year we were all affected by assorted hurts, problems and challenges.

Mixing with others, going where we please, and doing what we want have all been curtailed. For those who were ill, separated from family, or faced with loss, it was painful. For those who were struggling to keep businesses running or livelihoods intact, it has been challenging.

Yet the most surprising thing of all is that we are still surprised.

While change and surprise are constant, somehow we keep expecting life will fall into our expected pattern.

For me, 2020 involved

Yet Christmas started out with disruption – an unexpected pregnancy, an inconvenient political decision causing an unwelcome journey, a night's work interrupted by, of all things, singing angels, and quiet academic study shattered by the appearance of a new star. Everyone was surprised – except God.

His promise to be with us always is what gives me hope and confidence facing 2021. I don't have any idea what might lie ahead. However, I know who's on the journey with us, and He can always be trusted.

Whatever 2021 might hold, we have the offer of a friend to travel with us on the way. Happy Christmas, and a

good (if sometimes surprising!) New Year. **Ian Blackford MP** As this year draws to a close – a year like no other, with hardship and misery for so many – I would like to send my best wishes

to all constituents and hope a healthier, happier future awaits us all in 2021.

There can be no doubt that the health, economic and social crisis that coronavirus has brought into our lives has created chaos worldwide.

But it has also brought out the best in people - the kindness of individuals and communities who have been looking out for their fellow citizens in a time of great need has been much in evidence throughout this constituency.

The first vaccines against Covid-19 have now been administered in Scotland – a milestone we have all longed for, which offers hope that we may now be



at the beginning of the end of this pandemic.

However, as the vaccination programme rolls out across the country, the NHS will be coping

with other winter pressures while the virus, and the risks it poses to health and life, remain with us.

We can expect the winter period ahead to be especially tough, and I want to send my heartfelt thanks to the emergency services for their truly heroic efforts this year. We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to them – and all front line workers – for showing bravery, hard work and ingenuity in the face of unprecedented challenges.

Arrangements have been put in place to enable a short period of contact with family and friends over the Christmas period. For many, contact with friends and family is crucial during this time as isolation and

loneliness can hit people especially hard over the festive period. But we cannot ignore the fact that any relaxation of the restrictions carries additional risk.

The 'bubble' approach proposed by the Scottish Government aims to reduce this risk but it is imperative that people continue to act carefully and think about who, and how, they might meet – and, indeed, whether the opportunity to mix is necessary at all.

We must continue to do everything we can to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe, so please, continue to be very cautious in the weeks and months ahead.

I know many of you will be feeling uncertain and this festive season will not be quite the same as usual. However, by working together, sticking to the rules and being sensible, we can all still enjoy a happy Christmas and New Year.

Please have fun, stay safe and take care of yourselves and your loved ones.

Cameras focus in on young Harris crofter Lena

Ten-year-old Lena MacKenzie from Leverburgh on the Isle of Harris in the Western Isles of Scotland knows exactly what she wants in the present and her future – to work with her beloved sheep.

As part of its festive scheduling, BBC Alba is showing a documentary about Lena, on Christmas Day at 6.35pm.

The programme explores how the future of the family croft is in safe hands with this passionate young crofter, who likes to be at the heart of any crofting work her father has to do. With an intrinsic, deep connection and bond to the traditional way of life on their island and to the land, culture and, of course, their animals, Lena will provide a glimpse of what life is like for young Scottish island crofters who are continuing the proud and traditional way of life of generations of Hebrideans.

Lena – An Croitear Òg (Lena – the Young Crofter), is produced by Stornoway-based independent MacTV, and is its first film in a prestigious scheme overseen by the European Broadcasting Union.

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LETTERS

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or The Editor, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HB

Christmas disappointment

Everyone will have been left gutted by the Scottish Government's announcement on Saturday that it is having to tighten restrictions over the Christmas holidays, leaving many people unable to travel to see family – unless you can get there and back in 24 hours.

It's a bitter blow so late in the day, but in light of this new, faster strain of Covid causing rising rates of infection, there will have been real fears that so many people travelling from higher risk areas to the Highlands to see family over the festive period would be a ticking timebomb.

Most of us are struggling with not seeing the people we love, but everyone's safety has to be the over-riding factor here.

With our communities having done so well in keeping infections rates low, the last thing we want to see is an explosion of the virus in our area, affecting our most vulnerable and overwhelming the dedicated medics in our GP surgeries, hospitals and care homes.

It may not be the Christmas you wished for, but hopefully the hardship this year will ease the way to many more Christmases with the people we love. Merry Christmas everyone from us all at the Lochaber Times. May it be safe and peaceful.

The editor welcomes letters of approximately 300 words in length for publication on this page. However we

reserve 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 phone number is also required for verification. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Please email: editor@obantimes.co.uk or write to: Letters page, The Oban Times, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll, PA34 4HB.



The views expressed on our letters page are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of The Oban Times.

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Merry Christmas to Oban Times team from Manhattan



Thanks to generous family members, I recently received some much-needed tattie scones, whisky, and an Oban Times at my current home in New York (picture attached of me trying to look relaxed with the OT, in front of a fog covered Manhattan down-town skyline).

Admittedly, it did initially bring back a slightly painful memory: I remember when I got my first direct quote in the New York Times (one of not very many at all), and proudly telling my mum, for her to instantly reply, "well, your father is on the front page of the Oban Times this week" – a feat I am still working towards on one day achieving!

All this to say, congratulations on keeping a successful local newspaper thriving during such a challenging year. It is a testament to the hard work of local journalists. Half way across the world, it brought me a real sense of warmth and happiness to enjoy an Oban Times again. Thank you.

Best wishes for a great 2021 for the Oban Times team.

Michael McCuish, Manhattan

Covid survey plea

I would be very grateful if you would please allow me to use your columns to draw readers' attention to an international study currently taking place, which is seeking to find out more information on how Covid-19 affects different people and what measures they are taking to avoid contracting the virus.

In the UK it is being co-ordinated by Richard Clarke of the University of Southampton on behalf of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). You don't need to have had the virus to participate: I have completed the survey and I think it is very important and well

Beachd Ailein

ALLAN CAMPBELL

ailean@obantimes.co.uk

An oidhche ron Nollaig agus 's neònach mur eil othail shònraichte anns gach oisean sam bheil an òigridh, le fadachd fios fhaotainn air dè dh'fhàg bodach na feusaige dhaibh!

'S cinnteach gum bi cuimhne aig a' mhòr-chuid agaibh a tha a' leughadh seo air àm Nollaige nuair a bha sibh fhèin òg, agus mar a bhiodh sibh air bhioran le dùil agus dòchas. Tha deagh chuimhne agam fhìn air na h-ùineachan a chuireamaid seachad a' coimhead catalog JD Williams neo Oxendale, agus mar a bhithte a' taghadh na dh'iarramaid. Saoilidh mi gun robh tomhas làidir de mhòthachadh againn aig aois gu math tràth, ged 's dòcha nach robh làn- thuigse againn carson a bha cùisean mar sin, nach b' urrainn dhuinn a h-uile dad a mhiannaicheamaid fhaotainn, agus bha sin a' cur fiù 's barrachd faobhair air ar boil agus mì-fhoighidinn!

Toiseach caogadan na linne mu dheireadh, cha robh an Dàrna Cogadh fada seachad is bha cosnadh agus airgead gann, is bidh mi tric a' smaoinichadh air cho doirbh 's is fheudar a bha bith-beò phàrantan theaghlachan òga an uairsin gun iomradh air cosgais Nollaige air uachdar. Nach minig a chuala sinn inbhich ag aithris mar a bhiodh iadsan cho sona ubhal agus 's dòcha bonn sia-sgillinn fhaotainn san stocainn Latha na Nollaige nuair a bha iad fhèin òg! 'S i a' chuimhne a th' agam gum biomaid glè shona leis na thigeadh às na stocainnean, ged a bhiodh farmad againn aig amannan ri caraidean a fhuair tiodhlac a bha sinne cuideachd a' dùrachdainn.

Gun teagamh sam bith bha a h-uile teaghlach nan sgàthan air suidheachadh eaconamach na coimhearsnachd agus gu nàdarra bha pàrantan aig amannan ag àicheadh cofhurtachd dhaibh fhèin gus rudan a thoirt dhan chloinn.

Cha do dh'atharraich an suidheachadh sin mòran gu mì-ghortanach, agus far am bheil teaghlachan a' fulang ann am bochdainn fhathast tha iomadh pàrant gan cur fhèin ann am fiachan fad mhiosan gus sonas Nollaige a bhuileachadh air teaghlachan. Aig an àm, agus sa choimhearsnachd san robh mise a' fàs suas, bha na h-uile car aig an aon ìre agus cha robh cus adhbhar farmaid ann, ach an-diugh ged nach biodh ann ach na chì an òigridh air TBh tha e nàdarra dhaibh a bhith ag iarraidh beagan de na tha iad a' faicinn aig comhaoisean.

Chuir e bròn orm bho chionn beagan bhliadhnaichean nuair a bha mi a' leughadh mu phàrant dam b' fheudar dèideagan fhaotainn air iasad bho "leabharlann dhèideag" ach an d' rachadh aice air rud a chur ann an stocainnean a cuid cloinne. Nach bu mhath an tiodhlac e dhan dùthaich nach biodh feum air leithid sin tachairt gu bràth tuilleadh!

Tha mi a' guidhe spiorad dòchais na Nollaige dhuibh le làithean sona, soirbheachail, agus gun tig gach maitheas a mhiannaicheas sibh gu bith anns a' Bhliadhna 'Ùr!

May the hope and joy of Christmas be with you and may all your good wishes for a new year be realised!

worth doing – the bigger the data the better the results! So do please join in, and spread the word. Hopefully it will go viral!

It takes about 20 minutes to complete. To participate go to rtocovid19.com

John Gosling, Barcaldine.

A82 issues are obvious

If the powers that be don't know by now where the worst bits of the A82 are, they obviously haven't been paying attention to what they've been getting told for decades!

We do not need any more surveys on which parts of the A82 should be fixed up: we need those responsible simply to get on with doing it.

I've been using the A82 off and on as driver and

passenger for over 70 years now, and it seems to me that the easy bits to fix are repaired but the difficult bits are ignored: I seem to recall that it took about 40 years to get rid of the "temporary" traffic lights at Pulpit Rock!

My vote (and I strongly suspect that of many others) for the worst part would definitely go to the Tarbet-Inverarnan section, which is nothing short of a national disaster.

I did hear the rumour that the original plan was to upgrade all of Loch Lomondside, but they were working northwards from Dumbarton and ran out of money when they got to Tarbet: would anyone care to confirm or correct that rumour?

Davie Kerr, Ferry Reach, Onich.

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DISTRICT NEWS

ACHARACLE

Acharacle Community Company awarded asset transfer funding

Acharacle Community Company has announced that it has been awarded funding by the Scottish Land Fund for the proposed asset transfer of the community centre in Acharacle into community ownership.

Posting on its Facebook page, the company said the funding would allow both the purchase of the community centre from the Highland Council and also to employ a project officer to work alongside the board to promote and develop the role of the community centre.

It is working with both the Highland Council and the Scottish Land Fund on the terms of the asset transfer and will then be asking community company members to vote on the proposal to transfer the asset to community ownership.

In the statement, the community company said: 'It is really important to the company that as many of the people in the local area vote on this – the transfer of the community centre is hopefully something that can benefit the whole community. Those who are not already members of the community company can become members by getting in touch with us – only members will be able to vote on the proposal.'

'The board wants to ensure that as many people from the community are given the opportunity to vote. We will keep you posted on our progress and when we have the terms to put to the community to vote on we will ensure this is made publicly available.'



Corpach Co-op spreads a little festive lighting cheer

Stephen Scott, manager of the Corpach Co-op, presents a cheque for £250 from the Co-op Community Fund to Dougie Dykes, treasurer of the Kilmallie Christmas Lights Fund.

Paul Brian, chairman of KCLF, commented: 'This is a very generous gesture on behalf of the Co-op. We would like to thank Stephen, his staff and all customers of the store. This donation will help to relieve our financial pressures and will allow us to concentrate on the ongoing maintenance and repair of the lights. It is greatly appreciated.'



Martha Hall during her wet and windy fundraising walk.

LOCHABER

Canal bank walk raises £2,610 for the MS Society

Lochaber resident Martha Hall raised the fantastic sum of £2,610 for the Multiple Sclerosis Society with a recent sponsored walk from Gairloch to Banavie recently. Martha did the canal bank walk as a way of marking her 70th birthday and picked the MS Society as the beneficiary as two of her family have the condition. 'I would like to take this opportunity

to thank everyone for being so generous and also the family and friends who walked with me and supported me on what was a wild and wet Lochaber day,' she told the Lochaber Times.

Lochaber councils alliance

Representatives of Glenfinnan Community Council recently took part in an online Zoom meeting with their opposite numbers from community councils covering Ardgour, Caol, Nether Lochaber, Kilmallie, Fort William, Inverlochty and Torlundy. The result of the initial session was agreement to take a united, more

supportive, approach to common/rural issues where appropriate. The Lochaber Community Alliance will meet three times yearly.

MORVERN

Christmas Eve clapping

At Morvern community council meeting last week it was agreed the area's residents should all try and celebrate the festive season by coming out in front of their houses and clapping for each other and the community of Morvern on Christmas Eve at 5pm.

WELL DONE TO EVERYONE THIS YEAR

Wishing festive greetings to all. Remember to check for Festive Slimming World recipes on the website.

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SLT captain Martin Munro streaks past the Rhu keeper to put away his second goal; above right, a sliding tackle on SLTs Keiran Lopez by Callum Smith; and below right Martin Munro is tackled by Gordon Brodie. Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos.

Kinlochleven edge win in end-to-end friendly game

Kinlochleven finished their first game in over a year with a win in a topsy turvy thriller against Nevis Range at the Kinloch Astro.

A well taken Mark Maclean opener saw the visitors take an early lead but the home side soon drew level through an exceptional, arching, long range strike from Mikey Maclean.

The hosts then nudged themselves into the lead as Maclean finished comfortably to edge ahead. However, Nevis Range were not to be down heartened and they soon equalised through a powerful header from Ryan Boyle.

It was then the turn of the visitors to take back the lead, with Paul MacInnes showing brilliant movement to outfox the defence and steer in a deft finish sliding finish to move the score to 3-2.

After the break, Kinloch really stepped up the pressure. Long-range efforts from Lewis Moran, Ally Banks and Sam Moffat all went high or wide before Dan Maclean followed in a Mikey Maclean shot and put away a coolly taken finish level the scores once more.

What turned out to be the winning goal came as the home side continued to press forward. Another Maclean shot fell to Banks who made no mistake with a powerhouse finish to settle the scores at 4-3.

Despite several chances falling for Nevis Range in the last 10 minutes, the rock at the centre of Kinloch's defence, Scott Didsdale, keeper David

Wilson and midfield general Ross Maclean proved equal to the task.

Manager Matthew Prosser said: 'We wanted to extend our thanks to Donald Macneil and Nevis Range for coming down for this friendly and for getting the lads some football.'

'We're a young team with debuts for Neil Minnis and Ellis Nicolson tonight and it's just great to see boys getting the chance to play. We played some good stuff and the match was played in a good spirit. We're looking forward to the rematch in the New Year.'

Fort William blow at Brora

Brora Rangers showed their ability by beating Fort William 10-0 at Dudgeon Park in Brora in the first Highland League game of the season

Goals came from Bjorn Wagenaar (four), Jordan MacRae (two), Andrew Macrae (two), Tom Kelly with a back post header and a stunning free kick from Gregor MacDonald.

Fort were also reduced to 10 men, with Gabriel Veringa receiving a red card in the first half.

Fort are scheduled to face Huntly at Christie Park on January 2.

Jags hit Rhu for six

by Peter Newman
fort@obantimes.co.uk

South Lochaber Thistle ended the year with some festive cheer, in the form of a comprehensive friendly victory over Rhu Amateurs.

The Jags' line up were certainly full of Christmas spirit and this soon lead to 1-0 lead.

A dainty dinked ball over the back line by Jack Copland allowed skipper Martin Munro to open his account for the day as he beat the Rhu centre half to the ball and chipped the keeper.

Munro was involved again as the Kinlochleven outfit fashioned chances using the quick interplay favoured by captain, club founder and veteran Dace Forbes and new comer Copland.

Several chances were well

foiled by the Rhu keeper. However, this was only a temporary reprieve. With 25 minutes on the clock, Munro latched onto a through ball, stayed on his feet despite being clipped as he entered the box and then took it round the keeper to coolly slot home and double the home side's advantage.

Ten minutes later it was the visitors who opened their account for the day as the referee awarded a penalty. Douglas Black made no mistake and reduced the deficit to 2-1.

But Munro was not in the mood to be denied. Three minutes later, the scampering winger sealed his first-half hat trick with a well taken finish to restore the two goal cushion.

After the half time break, Rhu showed their determination not to be overwhelmed.

Pushing the ball onto his left foot, Jack McLaughlan fired a screamer into the net within under a minute of the restart.

Midfield field maestro Forbes then stepped up. Bringing the ball down with supreme control, he dipped his shoulder to send the defender the wrong way and send a snap shot into the bottom left hand corner.

The Jags were not to be denied at this point and were determined to press their advantage. Forbes's midfield partner, the dynamo Cameron Bolton, slipped a cultured pass into former impish winger Sean Noble who surprised those who think of him as only a defender, by dinking a delicious chip over the helpless keeper.

The final score duly arrived via Munro. Towering midfield-

er Andrew Maclean played ball into Munro inside with no one within 10yards of him.

The skipper's first touch took the keeper down, his second wrong-footed the recovery before he tapped in to move the score to a conclusive 6-2

Manager Alan Gray said: 'We played some excellent football today. Marty was rightly awarded the Man of the Match award for his four goals but Forbes, Bolton and Maclean were all outstanding.'

'We want to thank Rhu for making the trip possible. At this time of year, in this year especially, the mental and physical health benefits of sport can't be overstated.'

'As a club, we want to thank everyone for their help and support this year and wish everyone a very Merry Christmas.'

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Thanking all customers for their support this year and wishing everyone an enjoyable festive season

Festive Opening Hours

24th December : 8am-12noon

25th to 28th December : Closed

29th to 31st December : 8am-12noon

1st-5th January : Closed

Reopen as Normal from 5th January

