

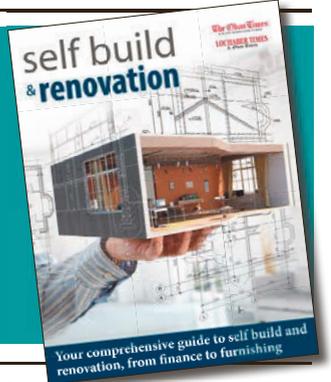


Stella goes on a voyage of Discovery – for over-50s



Toasting the Bard on Burns Night

FREE INSIDE
Self build & renovation supplement



Future of Oban outdoor centre hangs in balance

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk



Oban's Kilbowie Outdoor Centre is under threat again.

Last year the centre in Gallanach Road dodged being axed as part of owner North Lanarkshire Council's budget cuts, but its fate is again in the balance and is now back up for debate at the end of this month. If the 26-year-old centre was sold, the council, which is facing a forecasted £97 million budget deficit over the next three years, could put a price tag on it of around £680,000. Closing it would also save yearly running costs of up to £818,312.

When members of North Lanarkshire's Policy and Strategy Committee meet tomorrow (Friday January 31) they will be asked to agree to keep funding Kilbowie or close it, phasing out activities into next year.

This week a spokesperson for North Lanarkshire Council said the authority was 'fully committed to quality outdoor education' and that it had ambitious plans to develop

its own local assets should it be decided to close Kilbowie, adding: 'Pupils will still have opportunities for quality outdoor education.'

Currently all primary seven children in North Lanarkshire, about 100 miles from Oban, are given the opportunity to attend

'Many of the children [using Kilbowie] have never seen the sea.'

the centre every academic year. In 2018/19, visiting numbers were 3,655, and the centre also hosts a number of Oban community-based activities at weekends and in the holidays.

Listed among the potential advantages of shutting it was teachers not having to re-organise their home life for being away for four nights, being able to focus limited resources on 'higher priority areas of education', and reducing workforce in 'a period of austerity'. The centre has 16 full-time staff. Backlash from parents and depriving youngsters of

their first introduction to the great outdoors were listed as the disadvantages of shutting Kilbowie.

An appeal has gone out on Facebook through a Save Kilbowie Outdoor Centre page urging people to again fight to save it by calling and 'pestering' North Lanarkshire councillors.

Kathleen Murgatroyd from Taynuilt was an instructor at Kilbowie for 14 years. She told The Oban Times: 'For some children, a week at Kilbowie is the only holiday they have, and maybe for some, the only week they will have where they will have no worries about where the next meal is coming from. For others, it will be the start of a lifetime of outdoor sports.'

'For all the children, it is a chance to socialise with their peers, away from home maybe for the first time, and to learn a little more independence. Many have never seen the sea and their only forests are forests of buildings. Some don't even know the difference between a calf and a lamb. A week at Kilbowie can be life-changing in so many ways.'

Firefighter Kerrie blazes a trail on TV



Oban firefighter Kerrie McPhail will appear on prime-time TV after taking part in a driving challenge for the highly popular Top Gear show. Paired up with Freddie Flintoff, Kerrie competes against members of the police and ambulance services in an extreme driving challenge which will be aired at the beginning of March. For the full story, turn to page two.

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OT

Top girl Kerrie lands TV role

by Fiona Scott
fscott@obantimes.co.uk



Retained firefighter Kerrie McPhail will be blazing a trail in the latest series of Top Gear after being asked to take part in an emergency services challenge.

Kerrie's TV debut is due to be aired on Sunday March 1, the last episode of the current series, but the 45-year-old tyre fitter has already been down to the track at Dunsfold Aerodrome in Surrey where filming took place just before Christmas.

'It was all a bit last-minute really,' said Kerrie, who runs her own tyre supply and fitting service in Oban.

'The programme managers were looking for three representatives each from the fire, police and ambulance services to take part in an emergency services challenge.

'My watch manager thought I would be good for the job so put me up for it, and the next thing I knew I was travelling down to Surrey with two other boys from Scottish Fire and Rescue. It was all a bit surreal.'

Kerrie has been a firefighter in Oban since 2001 and has been an appliance driver since 2005.

Oban station manager John



The Top Gear boys – Paddy McGuinness, Freddie Flintoff and Chris Harris – are back.

Sweeney told The Oban Times: 'In that time, Kerrie has driven to over 1,000 incidents on some of the most challenging roads in the country, and it's this experience that made her the ideal candidate to represent the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service during this challenge. We all look forward to seeing the footage.'

Top Gear returned to our screens on Sunday night with hosts Paddy McGuinness, Freddie Flintoff and Chris Harris firmly in the driving seat for the show's 28th series.

In Kerrie's episode, each of

the emergency services teams up with one of the hosts to compete against each other in a variety of extreme driving games.

Kerrie's challenge was called Link-car during which she had to steer and accelerate a banger around a figure-of-eight course attached by a short chain to another banger containing Freddie Flintoff, who was responsible for braking.

'It was hard to do anything for laughing at Freddie,' said Kerrie. 'He was shouting at me to brake and I was shouting

back, I can't, you have the brake! The idea was to see how many times you could complete the figure-of-eight in 10 minutes. The first few circuits were fine but then I felt an almighty shunt and when I looked up to see what was happening we realised that the Stig car had joined us for the sole aim of throwing us off course. The whole thing turned into carnage but it was hilarious and I definitely think I had the best challenge.'

We won't reveal who won. Tune in to BBC 2 at 8pm on Sunday March 1 to find out.

Row looms over plan to site mast at heritage village

Controversy is rumbling over plans to site an eight-metre mast in the heart of a conservation village.

Arqiva want to put up the steel pole with antenna and other linked works on land at Seil Island Hall, but some villagers are branding it 'entirely inappropriate', saying the mast, intended for smart metering, would dominate the ruggedly beautiful area of Ellenabeich which has been an 'outstanding' conservation area since 1982.

Health and safety concerns have also been raised about the height and output from the telecommunications pole that would tower above a children's play area.

But Arqiva's project engineer Andrew Cottam has told planners the mast would comply with international radio frequency radiation protection guidelines and with EU recommendations on limiting the exposure of the public to electromagnetic fields. One objector said considering a green broadband cabinet had been rejected at Ellenabeich on the basis of conservation, the proposed pole should also be dismissed for the sake of consistency.

Another said the mast could blight the island hall's potential to attract revenue,

citing few people would want a wedding reception under an 8m mast.

And it was suggested approving the mast would be unfair on nearby property owners who are themselves bound by strict rules when it comes to development.

Some villagers have also claimed they were unaware of the planning application until just before the deadline of November 21 last year for having any say.

Community councillors were told at a November meeting that the island hall committee had been discussing the mast for several months and because the group was made up of 25 people, including representatives of all the user groups, it was thought all the relevant parties had been consulted.

The meeting was also told the pole, of similar design to the one at Balvicar BT Exchange but two metres shorter, would provide the hall with a rental income for three years.

Last week the developer's agent was in touch with planners seeking an update. No decision has been made yet.

To view Arqiva's planning application and linked documents visit Argyll and Bute's planning portal and search 19/02135/PP.



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POLICE FILES

Window smashed

Between Friday January 17 and Monday January 20, a minibus window was smashed, while the vehicle was parked at Longsdale car park in Oban.

Man arrested

About 12.40pm on Thursday January 23, officers attended reports of an on-going disturbance at an address in the Soroba area of Oban. A male was later arrested for multiple offences, including allegedly assaulting police, abusive behaviour and resisting arrest. A report will be submitted to the procurator fiscal.

Reported to fiscal

About 1am on Saturday January 25, officers attended reports of a male allegedly damaging a glass door on the Corran Esplanade, Oban. The man was subsequently arrested and a report will be submitted to the procurator fiscal.

Bar damaged

About 11pm on Saturday January 25 a window was damaged at the Corryvreckan, Oban Railway Pier.

Recorded warning

About 1.30am on Sunday January 26 a man behaved in an aggressive manner while being detained by police officers for the purpose of a search. He was arrested and later issued with a recorded police warning.

Vehicle hit bridge

Between the hours of 7pm on Friday January 17 and 8am on Saturday January 18, a vehicle allegedly collided with a bridge located on the Aros Mains Road on Mull, causing significant damage. Police are investigating the incident and are appealing for any witnesses or anyone with any information to contact PC Kevin Bonnar (Salen) on 101 or anonymously through Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

If any member of the public has information in relation to the above, or to any incident, they can contact their local Police Station on telephone number 101, or anonymously through Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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Talking a load of mince at the Mishnish



Tobermory RNLI's new world champion Tony Spillane. Photograph: RNLI/Sam Jones

Tobermory RNLI's deputy second mechanic, Tony 'Kiwi' Spillane, was proclaimed World Mince and Tatties Champion last weekend.

After the All Blacks' disappointing run in the Rugby World Cup last year, New Zealander Tony made his home country proud by emerging victorious as the 2020 World Mince and Tatties Champion at the Mishnish in Tobermory.

Tony has continued in a tradition of Tobermory RNLI world champions with lifeboat operations manager Dr Sam Jones winning the title in 2007 and former coxswain Phil Higson being champion in 2008 and 2011.

Competitors submit their best plate of mince and tatties to a

panel of judges with the winner being declared World Mince and Tatties Champion.

But there was controversy when it emerged that coxswain David McHaffie and Dr Sam Jones were two of the three judges...and members of the audience claimed that there had been 'a fix'!

Responding to the allegations, Dr Jones responded: 'Kiwi won his world title absolutely fair and square.'

'It was a blind tasting and none of us had any idea whose mince we were sampling.'

'We're hoping that at our next training night, Kiwi will cook up his championship dish to warm up the volunteer crew when they come back from exercise.'

Flood risk puts damper on holiday development

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk



Flood risk fears could see the plug pulled on plans for a new holiday development in Tobermory.

Despite more than 50 shows of support and a one in 200-year chance of flooding, a public hearing yesterday (Wednesday January 29) was due to hear that councillors have been advised to refuse Argyll Properties' plans for a retail unit, visitor centre and three self-catering units at land next to Taigh Solais and fire-gutted MacGochans.

Members of Argyll and Bute Council's planning, protective services and licensing committee considered the application at a hearing in Aros Hall, Tobermory.

In a report, planning officers described the proposed-build as 'high quality and well-designed'. If it had not been for the flood risk, the development would have been 'wholly compliant' with local and national planning policy.

According to flood mapping by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), the application site is classified as medium to high risk and is in the one in 200-year coastal flood zone.

SEPA has objected to the development because it would put new buildings on a previously undeveloped site, putting buildings and more people in flood danger. The council's

flood risk assessor has also objected to the proposals, following correct interpretation of local and national flood risk planning policy, although both he and officers have worked in conjunction with the developer to try to achieve a solution that would meet planning policy requirements and therefore satisfy SEPA.

'Regrettably, no such solution has been found or is available in this case,' says the report. It continued: 'The proposed development is not sustainable in terms of flood risk as a new building with a combination of commercial and residential units would be introduced into an area identified as being at medium to high risk of flooding.'

There were 51 submissions in support of the plan, including one from a member of the public who said: 'The proposal will provide much-needed additional visitor accommodation in the heart of Tobermory, strengthening the village's role as a key contributor to the tourism economy of Mull and the wider area. It will also deliver a retail unit, which will provide additional choice to residents and visitors, providing an alternative to the existing co-op. The location of the retail unit next to the main village car park will help to alleviate traffic congestion on Main Street caused by the existing co-op.'

'This will improve road safety on Main Street.'

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OT

Open doors for Rape Crisis help

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk



A town centre haven offering support for survivors of rape and sexual abuse is inviting people to an open day to spread word of its work and new location.

Argyll and Bute Rape Crisis has now moved to new premises in High Street and staff hope members of the public will call in on Tuesday March 10 between 11am and 7pm to find out more about the organisation.

Last year the centre supported 55 people, both men and women, from Oban, its surrounding area and islands, including Mull and Tiree.

The move from Campbell Street means the three workers who deliver the service can offer support from a number of ground-floor rooms. A £2,000



Support and advocacy worker Ailsa MacEachen at the door of Argyll and Bute Rape Crisis in Oban's High Street.

grant from the Oban Common Good Fund was used to turn one of the rooms at the back of the building into a cosy, confidential and welcoming space, said support and advocacy worker Ailsa MacEachen. 'We have nice lighting and a fire, it's a bit like a nice living room. It's quiet and sound-proofed.'

As well as the front reception

area and office, another rear room is used for groups, including the service's art therapy sessions.

'We're thinking of other uses for it. We'd quite like to be able to share the space with others,' said Ailsa.

She added: 'Everyone is welcome to the open day. Usually it's professionals with

connections to the service who turn up but we'd really like the public to come along as well so everyone knows where we are and what we do here.'

The service is finding that people wanting telephone and email support is becoming more common.

The workers are currently helping 30 to 40 people, a high caseload for the area.

'It's still predominantly women we support, but we are seeing more and more men, especially younger ones,' said Ailsa.

The service will soon be starting drop-in sessions on a Monday between 2pm and 4pm where the diary will be kept free during those hours for people who want to talk.

'It can stem from any sexual violence from any time in their life. Anyone over the age of 12 and of any gender can come to us,' said Ailsa.



Tobermory's new deputy coxswains, Iain Malcolm and Dave Underwood, after their pass-outs.

New deputy coxswains appointed at Tobermory

Tobermory RNLI was celebrating this week with crew members Iain Malcolm and Dave Underwood being passed out as deputy coxswains following months of rigorous training and assessments.

Iain Malcolm, who has been a volunteer crew member for 14 years, and Dave Underwood, who joined the Tobermory RNLI crew in 2015, both undertook a gruelling operational pass-out with one of the RNLI's assessor trainers, former

Stornoway RNLI coxswain, Murty Campbell.

The assessment included a written navigation exam followed by practical boat-handling tests, a search and rescue scenario and a series of emergency situations such as a fire on the lifeboat and a man overboard.

After Iain and Dave had been successfully passed out as his new deputies, station coxswain David McHaffie was able to remove the 'L' plate which he had placed on the aft of the lifeboat.

Public encouraged to have say at Oban harbour meeting

A public meeting is to be held next month to help steer the development of Oban Harbour.

Oban Bay Management Group (OBMG) and Oban Community Harbour Development Association (OCHDA) have been working together to explore creating a trust port for the town.

The meeting, on Tuesday February 4 at 7pm in the Argyllshire Gathering Halls, Breadalbane Street, Oban, will give people the chance to ask questions and find out more.

Representatives of the Northern Lighthouse Board,

CalMac, ferry pier owners CMAL, Argyll and Bute Council and the Stakeholder Group of Oban Bay Management Group will be there with OCHDA.

Updates on the latest developments will clarify proposals regarding the establishment of a new Statutory Harbour Authority, covering Oban Bay and its approaches, as an independent community venture.

OCHDA chairman John MacAlister said this is a vital opportunity for members of the public to find out what is being considered and make their voices heard.

He said: 'Previous public meetings have clearly shown the community of Oban wants to be involved in the running of the harbour. Many other ports on the West Coast are run as trust ports and these bring considerable benefit to the communities they serve.'

'That's what we want for Oban.'

'We are keen to see a good turnout to bring everyone up to date and to hear their views and help us plan the next steps.'

Anyone interested in joining OCHDA can contact them at ochda@obanharbour.scot

Islands' residents scoop lottery windfall

Scores of islanders in North Uist and Berneray are set to pocket cheques for a minimum of £10,000 each after it was revealed that HS6 5 is the winning postcode sector in January's Postcode Millions draw.

The full winning postcode will be revealed tomorrow (Friday) but players in the islands have already been told

they have won a minimum of £10,000 each.

The £3 million prize will be divided between each of the lottery's players in the postcode sector. Those playing with the full willing postcode will take home the biggest cheques.

North Uist and Berneray had a combined population of only around 1,600 at the time

of the last census in 2011. More than 60 per cent of the local population are Gaelic speakers. It is the first time the Postcode Lottery team has visited the Western Isles and a special event is being held at Carinish Village Hall tomorrow.

Former X Factor contestant Danyl Johnson will reveal the prizes.



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Cycle pilot scheme is on track for summer

by Fiona Scott
fscott@obantimes.co.uk



Designated carriages for bikes and large sporting equipment are to be piloted on the West Highland Line this summer, a first for the UK rail industry.

As part of the pilot, ScotRail is transforming five Class 153 trains to carry up to 20 bikes to enhance existing services, providing custom-designed racks to accommodate bikes, sporting equipment and large items of luggage as well as more seats for customers.

ScotRail project manager Tom Smith said: 'This innovative pilot is the first of its type in the UK and we're delighted to have come up with something truly bespoke for Scotland and the West Highlands.'

'The introduction of these carriages will be a welcome



An impression of the interior of one of the new carriages.

boost for cyclists and those in search of outdoor pursuits, as well as supporting tourism, and bringing wider economic benefits.'

To complement the scheme, BID4Oban, which will be working alongside clubs and cycle shops, has also secured funding towards the instal-

lation of a cycle tool (repair station) close to Oban Railway Station with a view to having similar facilities set up at suitable locations between Oban and Ballachulish.

The initiative is being welcomed by cycling enthusiasts across the area.

Steven Groom from North

Argyll Cycle Club said: 'This is excellent news. I saw one of these service stations a couple of years ago in Glasgow at the new Queen Elizabeth University Hospital and thought what a great idea.'

'It had a track-style bike pump bolted to the ground and various bike-related tools made from stainless steel on stainless steel wires to stop theft. I feel these stations would be an asset to the cycle/activity path. If you have ever had a puncture on a ride, you will know it can be very hard to get a good pressure back in a tyre without a track pump as a lot of bike tyres run up to 100 psi.'

'I hope the service stations will be well used and looked after, and well maintained.'

As well as accommodating cycles, the new carriages will also support winter sports in Scotland during the winter

months, accommodating large bulky items such as ski bags and rucksacks.

Modified by Brodie Engineering in Kilmarnock, forming part of the firm's expansion plans, the carriages will receive a full interior and exterior upgrade, including installation of free wifi, at-seat power sockets and a refurbished toilet with controlled emission toilet (CET) tank.

This project supports the Scottish Government's commitment to economic development through active tourism and improved transport connectivity, getting more people to make active travel choices and providing opportunities to do so.

The first refurbished Class 153 carriage is due for delivery this summer and will be rolled into service on completion of staff training.

Argyll MP signs memorial

Argyll and Bute MP Brendan O'Hara MP signed the Holocaust Educational Trust's Book of Commitment this week, pledging his commitment to Holocaust Memorial Day and honouring those murdered.

He also paid tribute to the extraordinary Holocaust survivors who work tirelessly to educate young people today.

This year marks 75 years since the liberation of the concentration camps of Europe and the end of the Second World War.

In the lead up to and on Holocaust Memorial Day, thousands of commemorative events will be arranged by schools, faith groups and community organisations, remembering the victims of genocides.

Mr O'Hara said: 'Holocaust Memorial Day is an important opportunity for people from Argyll and Bute to reflect on the darkest times of European history.'

It is time to call it a day for Oban playpark committee

Friends of Oban Community Playpark (FOCP) will continue running as a constituted group for one more year before disbanding, writes Fiona Scott.

Formed in October 2011, FOCP was made up mostly of parents who had one aim only: to extend the playpark outside Atlantis, with a toddler area, a older children's area and a sensory garden.

Nine years on, and more than a few added grey hairs discovered, the half a dozen or so like-minded mums have by far exceeded their original goal and, providing there are 'no more dramas' in the next year, feel it's time to rest and enjoy the fruits of their labour.

Speaking at last Saturday's FOCP AGM, chairperson Lyndsay Elliott said: 'We have done what we set out to do and then some so I feel it's time to take a step back.'

'There are a few loose ends to tie up. We will be looking at making a couple of improvements to the garden area, which is used by many members of the community, and sorting out a regular maintenance programme for



The current Friends of Oban Community Playpark committee will stay on board for one more year.

it, but apart from that there is nothing else for us to do.'

The motion to fold the group in a year was unanimously agreed, with discussion on how to manage the remaining funds ongoing.

'We will be looking to find a way of keeping the current funds safe so that if anything happens to the park in the future there will be some money there to help,' added Lyndsay.

'Hopefully, parents of future generations of park

users will pick up the mantle.' Through many varied and innovative funding projects, FOCP raised in excess of £300,000 to install the playpark in 2016, but the facility for the older children was closed in 2018 due to a fault with its flooring.

The group campaigned relentlessly to make sure someone took responsibility for the repairs and at the beginning of this year the 'big ones' park was reopened to the public.

Don't lock yourself away at home during the February School Break
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OT

Lots to inspire with town events

Around Oban

KAY MCDONALD

editor@obantimes.co.uk



We're almost there! The longest January ever is nearly over ... thank goodness!

Thank you to everyone who has added events to Oban Town Diary recently. It does help to know what's going on, when, and who to contact to find out more.

Looking at what's coming up in the near future, there's lots to inspire and get you ready for the year ahead, from Spanish classes to relaxation and mindfulness and everything in between – country dancing, coffee mornings, walking for health, hill walking, pool, discos and live music.

If you have a club that meets regularly, then it can go in the town diary, too. Let people know about you and what you get up to, whether it's weekly, monthly or every six months.

Writing that has actually made me realise I belong to two organisations which aren't advertised, so I'll

WHERE IS THIS?



have to sort that out today. I know it's hard to be motivated at this time of year and drag yourself out of a cosy house in the dark, but it's worth it to go along and meet like-minded people all enjoying something together. You'll enjoy it and feel better the next day.

This weekend is going to be slightly quieter for me, the Oban Inn quiz is on tonight (Thursday) and then on Saturday there's

a coffee morning in the Congregational Church Hall and a table top sale in the Corran Halls, which I'm really looking forward to. I think lots of our very talented local crafters will be there as well as all the usual stalls.

The photograph last week was taken at the Black Lynn in Stevenson Street. I was very impressed to see the lovely wee yellow flowers so early. This week's photograph is in the town centre.

String of bad luck pulls folk together

by Colin Cameron
editor@obantimes.co.uk

It started when floorboards mysteriously began to buckle, but now trustees of Craignish Village Hall are faced with a bill in excess of £10,000.

The close-knit community of Ardfern and the Craignish peninsula has, however, rallied round to support the popular community facility.

The distorted floorboards turned out to be the result of the underfloor heating not working due to the ground source heat pump having failed at some point in the summer of 2019.

Now reliant on gas, the hall was faced with an estimated £2,700 bill rather than the normal £900.

Then there was the broken pump. After 14 years, it had reached the end of its life and heating engineers recommended a new pump at an estimated cost of £10,000.

Half of the cost will be met by hall funds, but the intention is to take out an interest-free loan for the remaining 50 per cent.



Tiziana Tedoldi.

Hall costs come in at about £19,000 per year and it's run as a not-for-profit organisation, but since the loss of the local pre-fives unit and £6,000 of annual rent a number of years back, it has been running at a loss.

Craignish Village Hall chairperson Matt Walsh kept the people of the peninsula apprised of the hall's run of bad luck in a letter after the new year, telling them: 'Lots of initiatives, like the Big Ass Garage Sale, have helped and we are going to be working very hard not to get into a crisis.'

Hall manager Tiziana Tedoldi explained: 'The hall is doing really well and is used very well by locals, but it has to be busy just to cover our costs.'

'We want to keep it affordable, so we have to work harder as a committee.'

The hall also provides space for local small businesses to try out new ideas while contributing to hall revenue.

'We've been overwhelmed by the response,' said Tiziana. 'People have been offering to volunteer and we've had a number of contributions.'

And the first of a series of planned fundraisers – a ceilidh on February 22 – received a big boost when local band All About the Cake offered their services for free.

A few weeks later, Glasgow band Samson Sounds will return to Ardfern for a concert – and in May look out for a VE Day celebration, complete with swing band.

'We have a fabulous committee,' said Matt, 'and the community has always supported us, so thanks to everyone.'

Healthy response to school's Fruit Fridays

Staff at Kilniver Primary have introduced an ingenious way of encouraging pupils to eat more fruit and vegetables, while reducing the school's food waste at the same time.

Known as Fruit Fridays, any fresh fruit and vegetables left over from the week are prepared, attractively presented and shared out among the children on a Friday, encouraging them to eat more healthily and to try new things.

Head teacher Helen Daniels said: 'The children love our Fruit Fridays. We have noticed a huge increase in the amount of fruit and vegetables that pupils are eating.'

'This has had a really positive knock-on effect on the amount of food waste we are producing and helps raise awareness of our SHANARRI wellbeing indicators (safe, healthy,



Children at Kilniver Primary love their Fruit Fridays.

active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included). It is a win-win all round.'

Argyll and Bute Council's policy lead for education, Councillor Yvonne McNeilly, added: 'Our schools play a central role in

teaching our young people healthy eating habits, so it is great to see Kilniver taking this approach. It is also encouraging to hear that the school is making pupils aware of the impact of food waste and the things they can do to help. Well done.'



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Founder of Oban charity welcomes new Jack's Law

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk



A new law announced this week giving two weeks' paid leave to parents who lose a child has been welcomed by an Oban charity helping bereaved families.

The new entitlement to statutory leave will start on April 6 and is a world first, helping parents who suffer the loss of a child aged under 18 or have a stillbirth from 24 weeks of pregnancy.

Jack's Law was named after 23-month-old Jack Herd whose mum Lucy has been campaigning on the issue for 10 years since the tot drowned in the family pond.

Susan Simpson from the charity Anam Cara Fasnadh said: 'We gladly welcome the new legal right to paid bereavement leave. Each of us on our team knows the pain of



Oban charity Anam Cara Fasnadh co-founders Susan and Andrew Simpson.

having to return to work while still raw and grieving from the death of our child.

'We know the struggle of having to ask for sick leave when we are not coping with our work duties because of our grief. We know first-hand the

impact that having to use up sick leave while grieving can have. Bereaved parents are going through the darkest time in their life and the last thing they need is the heartache of having to swallow their pain and try to get on with their

job while all they can see is their child's death and funeral replaying in their mind.'

She said it was only right that bereaved parents are afforded the dignity and understanding that Jack's Law will give them and added: 'We understand

the importance of having that time to grieve, that space to breathe – that is why our core aim at Anam Cara Fasnadh is to gift bereaved parents and families a break away, a peaceful place to take stock of what they have been through.

'Jack Herd's mother, Lucy campaigned tirelessly on the issue. This is an incredible legacy that her son Jack has inspired, but it will be bittersweet for Lucy – Jack has achieved so much, will bring such comfort and relief to so many, but in a heartbeat Lucy would, I'm sure, change everything to have her wee boy here.

'As a charity, though, we are mindful that for parents who lose a baby under 24 weeks gestation are not covered by this law. We support families who gave birth at gestational under 24 weeks, who heard their baby cry, who watched their baby take their last

breath, but they will not have the right to parental bereavement leave.

'We know many individual organisations and businesses already support their staff and factor in leave for them following the death of their child, but we know first-hand that not all employers are so supportive and understanding.'

The statutory rights were announced by UK Business Secretary Andrea Leadsom, who said: 'There can be few worse experiences in life than the loss of a child and I am proud that this government is delivering Jack's Law, making us the first country in the world to do so.'

Around 7,500 child deaths, including around 3,000 stillbirths, happen in the UK every year. The government estimates that this new entitlement will help to support around 10,000 parents a year.

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SAT FEB
29

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SAT APR
25

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SAT SEP
05

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SAT JUL
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SAT OCT
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OT

Stella goes on a voyage of Discovery – for over-50s

by Fiona Scott
fscott@obantimes.co.uk



Since retiring from her job as a receptionist at The Oban Times, Stella McIver has certainly not been letting the grass grow under her feet – what with her dancing, running, walking, Zumba and Fitstep, it would not stand a chance anyway.

And last weekend the ultra active 66-year-old was presented with her Gold Discovery Award in recognition of her achievements over the past year and a half.

Not one to rest on her laurels, Stella now wants to complete another Gold challenge and is urging other over-50s from Oban and the surrounding area to join her in the quest.

'I did all my Discovery challenges on my own and thought it would be great to



Stella McIver receives her Gold Discovery Award from Highlands and Islands coordinator John Mackie.

15_T05_StellaMcIver
DiscoveryAward

get a group of like-minded people together so that we could meet up for coffee, support and encourage one another,' she said.

The Discovery Award was started in 1987 in collaboration with The Duke of

Edinburgh Awards Scheme. The award is open to all, regardless of status, state of health and level of ability. At present, the oldest participant is over 80, and providing you are over 50 years of age anyone is welcome to take up

the challenge. There are three levels – Bronze, Silver and Gold – all divided into four sections and each with an agreed timescale. Each level is rewarded with its own award certificate and badge.

Within each level there are

four sections to complete and for her Gold Award Stella completed more than 100 hours of service in the community over 52 weeks. This entailed volunteering at seniors' soup lunch, parkrun and Guiding.

In the hobby/interest section, she completed more than 150 hours, over a 78-week period, doing more challenging patterns in knitting, Scottish country dancing and playing the fiddle.

For her recreational pursuit, Stella joined the parkrun. 'I starting by walking it but now challenge myself to get quicker,' she explained. 'I also attend Zumba and Fitstep classes weekly, and, since retiring, if I can walk I do rather than take the bus or car.'

In doing this, Stella completed more than 50 hours during a 26-week period.

For her discovery challenge,

Stella planned a six-week holiday round the coast of England from west to east. She and her husband Stewart took their caravan.

'To be honest, we would have needed another six weeks to see everything but it was a great experience,' she added.

'I was introduced to the Discovery after seeing a flyer at a Guiding event and would recommend the challenge to everyone as my days are filled and the hours soon mount up.'

Stella was presented with her Gold Award last Saturday by Highlands and Islands coordinator John Mackie.

Contact Stella on stella.mciver@btinternet.com or John at j.mackie32@btinternet.com for more details.

MOREPHOTOS
www.obantimes.co.uk

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Seil residents await decision on planned treatment works

A majority of islanders who took part in a 'have your say' survey on a new £5.6 million treatment works for Seil were in support of plans, writes Kathie Griffiths.

But only 310 out of about 550 of the island's inhabitants were sent letters from the community council inviting their anonymous views as part of that, with just 94 responses were sent back.

A final decision on Scottish Water's proposal is still awaited and islanders' feelings were sought in the summer by the community council to help it give balanced feedback to Argyll and Bute planners.

A Scottish Water spokesperson said once it receives notice of the decision, it will be engaging with the community about the next steps.

Julie Ferris, who is the convener of Seil and Easdale Community Council, said in its final submission to planners 'every reasonable effort to consult with everyone', had been made. People had also been told the survey was not in place of any individual comments.

By law, the community council could only write to



Seil waste water works.

people who were on the open register, so word was also spread other ways, encouraging people to get in touch if they wanted to be part of the survey.

Mrs Ferris said: 'It has always been recognised that no one solution will please everyone. The community council hopes this survey has raised everyone's awareness of the proposals, has given everyone the opportunity to make their views heard, and can inform Argyll and Bute's response to this planning application.'

After years of discussions and consultations, Scottish

Water's application was eventually submitted in June.

Out of the 94 who did reply, 57 of them supported the application, 24 objected to it and the remaining 13 expressed no view either way.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) is a current objector but that could change.

A SEPA spokesperson said: 'We requested more information about the planned re-use of peat that would be excavated at the site. We have now received this and are reviewing the information. If we are satisfied with the information provided, we would expect to remove our objection to the planning application.'

Anyone wanting to see the community council's response can go online to Argyll and Bute Council's planning portal and search 19/01232/PP.

As well as the survey findings, the community council response shares concerns about traffic and general disruption and calls for work on the Clachan Seil site and the Seaview septic tank site to be phased – if the scheme is approved.

Health board dispute is a cause for concern

by Fiona Scott
fscott@obantimes.co.uk



The projected overspend by Argyll and Bute's Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) has fallen by nearly £700,000 – but a spectre, potentially worth millions, still looms.

A report has revealed that the HSCP is forecasting an overspend of £1.31 million by the end of the 2019/20 financial year.

The figure, accurate as of the end of December, is in contrast to the £1.99 million it was forecasting at its previous meeting in November when it reported figures as of September 30.

However, the report also warns that a dispute with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde over a service level agreement (SLA) is continuing.

The two parties cannot agree a sum for the purchase

of services from the Greater Glasgow board, and the document states that they are approximately £1.5 million apart in their valuations of the agreement.

Should no sum be agreed, it could potentially cost the HSCP millions more.

The HSCP's integration joint board (IJB) was due to discuss the financial situation at its meeting yesterday (Wednesday January 29).

Head of finance and transformation Judy Orr said: 'This [the forecast overspend] consists of an overspend of £1.310 million within social work delivered services and a break even position within health.

'This has improved by £366,000 in the month – £66,000 for social work and £300,000 for health.

'The improvement in health is largely related to new medicines funding where ad-



Judy Orr.

ditional funding was notified of £660,000, which was more than expected, partially offset by additional drug costs which relate, and a staff settlement payment.

'It should be noted that the dispute with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde continues. 'The gap between the payment being sought and what

we have offered is around £1.5 million and this is not reflected in the forecast outturn position or year to date expenditure reported.'

Ms Orr then said: 'We continue to have an outstanding dispute with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde regarding the value of the SLA for hospital services provided by them.

'We have offered payment of £55.085 million and they are seeking payment of £56.142 million.

'However, this gap of £1.057 million has now grown by £477,000 as further work has shown that our offer included services provided by WestMARC (West of Scotland Mobility and Rehabilitation Service) and theirs excluded this.

'There is therefore a disputed sum of £1.534 million which is outwith our reported position and is also excluded from our forecast outturn position.

'The additional cost pressures for the NHS GGC services, outwith the main SLA, are mainly for cystic fibrosis drug costs, and are largely accounted for within the forecast outturn position and covered by new medicines funding announced for this year and next year.'

The report also says that the HSCP's year to date overspend has increased slightly, by £54,000, since its November meeting.

It also says that nearly 60 per cent of planned savings have been delivered by the HSCP during the 2019/20 financial year.

Ms Orr added: 'The strategic leadership team continues to meet on a regular basis to gain grip and control of the financial position.

'It is hoped the financial position will improve over the remaining months of this financial year.'

MSP hails boost for veterans

An announcement that military veterans will qualify for cut-price rail travel has been warmly welcomed by Highlands and Islands MSP Donald Cameron.

The announcement, made by UK Transport Secretary Grant Shapps, will extend discounted train travel to the more than 830,000 veterans not covered by existing discounts. The new railcard will become available on Armistice Day.

Mr Cameron said: 'The Highlands and Islands has a long and proud tradition of contributing to the armed forces and we have many veterans living in our region.

'But, as we all know, travel costs can be very high here, so anything that helps reduce those costs and makes it easier for our former service personnel to travel is very welcome indeed. We owe our veterans a massive debt of honour and this is just one way in which we can help to repay that debt, as part of the armed forces covenant.'



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OT

Seil's annual pantomime is a work of Genie-ous

The year is 1920 and Seil is in trouble. Mobsters have moved onto the island and set up a protection racket selling pantomime insurance, and the new shop owner Abbie Nazar is in on the scam, writes Susan Windram.

A-lad-in-the shop (Aladdin/Al), who has lost his job at the turn of events, and his friend Jasmine (who is as beautiful as a princess) don't know what to do. So it's just in the nick of time that nanny – Mhairi Popsocks – mysteriously appears to look after Al's three younger sisters, Bonnie, Iona and Shona.

This year's Seil panto, *The Aladdin of Ardencaple*, written and directed by John Colston, was a great caper, with plenty of island jokes and name dropping.

The cast of local am-dram-



This year's offering from the young and not so young actors who took to the stage for the annual Seil panto was chock full of island jokes and name dropping.

some great one-liners, which she delivered with aplomb.

Youngsters Bonnie (Chaya Wesley), Iona (Daisy Dugdale) and Shona (Emma McDougal) had their lines and songs down to a tee, and Chaya in particular showed off some real comic talent.

The Italian mob, suitably led by the evil Godmother (Jan Wolfe), with her hapless sidekicks Nutella (Jan Fraser) and Nutello (Alastair Mill), played their parts to perfection, though I was not so sure about their Italian accents! And the baddies had a great ally in Abbie Nazar (Jakki Carter-Brown).

No staging of Aladdin would be complete without its genie, with Godmother's nephew Gino, who had bailed on the mobsters and was trying to help the islanders, played by Caroline Morgan.

The main characters were ably supported by 'Seil islanders', played by George MacKenzie, George Houston, Ernie Brittain-Dodd and Kneale Smith, Janette McDougall, Denise McLean and Mary Freer; announcer Peter Thorpe; Daisy the cow, who played herself; and the fantastic cast of children – Connor MacLean, Charley MacKechnie, Mollie Robertson, Christy Smith, Corey Wyllie and Murphy MacLean – who in the end

were the ones to save the day after cunningly disguising themselves as scarecrows. But the show would not have gone on without the dedicated individuals behind the scenes – musical director Maggie Thorpe, who also did a brilliant job on the piano during the show; set designers Maura Rae and Mary Macpherson; set construction Chris Dugdale, George Houston, Alastair Mill, Alastair Robertson, David Glennie, John McLean, Michael Carter, and James Fenton; stage management/props, David Glennie and Helen Glennie; costumes, Denise McLean, Helen Glennie, Else Melor, Jenny Bowles, Jakki Carter-Brown, Jan Fraser, Ruth Brittain-Dodd; make-up, Charlotte Rees; lighting, James Fenton; filming and sound, Gary Hamilton, Stuart Abercrombie, GH Productions Argyll; choreography Wendy Dugdale; prompt, Eileen Colston; programme, John Colston and Helen Glennie; and tickets Sue Fenton.

The Seil panto is an annual island tradition and I for one am wondering how the writer is going to top this next year!

YOURSTORY
sharewithus:editor@obantimes.co.uk
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mers gave it their all and were cheerfully egged on by audiences who provided plenty of booing and hissing.

All the cast did well, but there were a number of stand-out performances.

Aladdin/Al, played by John McLean, and Jasmine/Jazz, played by Rachel Smith had great chemistry, with Rachel also revealing she had a lovely singing voice.

Mhairi Popsocks, played by Wendy Dugdale, was a comic treat and had been given

RNLI boost from Betty's Pots



Ali MacFarlane hands over another giant Marmite jar and two Betty's Pots full of 5p coins to Oban Times deputy editor Martin Laing in the Forester's Arms at Cambusbarrow near Stirling on Saturday January 25. Ali has been leading the pub's campaign to support Oban's RNLI station under the Betty's Pots banner.

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Ordinary Cadet Kate Home and Ordinary Cadet Christopher Denheiger with their certificates.



Oban Sea Cadets scoop national awards

Two Oban Sea Cadets were celebrating this week after completing a qualification.

Ordinary Cadet Kate Home and Ordinary Cadet Christopher Denheiger were both presented with their Pearson BTEC certificate (SCQF level four) in teamwork and personal skills for uniformed youth organisations.

Oban Sea Cadets offer a wide variety of water sports and adventure for youngsters aged between 10 and 18 years, and adult volunteers aged over 18 – sailing, powerboating, rowing, canoeing – with additional opportunity for offshore crewing aboard training ships, which include

motor and sailing vessels. Members also compete in local and national competitions for rowing, sailing, swimming and football.

On top of this, cadet or adult volunteer training can result in gaining national qualifications – certificate or diploma level – in the following: BTEC Community and Teamwork Skills, BTEC Engineering, or Physical Training Instructor, Go Row Rowing Instructor, RYA Sailing Instructor, RYA Powerboat Instructor and much more.

The group meets every week in Oban, and if you would like further information call 07305 851541 or email: trainingobansea@gmail.com

Charity cash brings soothing therapy

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk



Oban Hospice is celebrating a £10,000 grant to help it provide special massage therapies to people with cancer.

The money to make life better for people with Lymphoedema has come from the Crerar Trust.

Oban Hospice Ltd will use the funding to sooth symptoms of the condition, such as swelling, which develops when the lymphatic system does not work properly after surgery.

The lymphatic system is a network of channels and glands throughout the body that helps fight infection and remove excess fluid.

Chairman of Oban Hospice Ltd David Entwistle said: 'We're delighted to receive this financial support from the Crerar Trust.

'It represents a significant



contribution to supporting individuals in the local community.'

The £10,080 means therapists at the hospice's hub at the Dove Centre in Stevenson Street will be able to help 12 people with Lymphoedema.

Crerar Hotels run hotels and inns based in Scotland and gives more than 50 per cent of its distributable prof-

its to charity. Over the past 18 years, its trust has awarded £8 million to more than 450 organisations.

Oban Hospice was one of 38 organisations to benefit from a share of £216,136 in the trust's latest funding round supporting health, education, and social inclusion for people of all ages.

Chairman of The Crerar

The cash will be used to offer therapies for people with Lymphoedema.

Trust and chief executive of Crerar Hotels, Paddy Crerar CBE, said: 'We are delighted to have made this award to Oban Hospice Ltd and look forward to hearing how this funding helps impact their work.

'Crerar Hotels is committed to giving back to the local community to help it grow and thrive and provide opportunities that may otherwise seem out of reach.

'For every stay our customers have with us, they are supporting other who really need it.

'It is great for our folk in the hotels to see their hard work and effort helping people in their communities as well as those from throughout the whole of Scotland.'



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OT

Toasting the Bard on Burns Night



Oban Bowling Club chef Patrick Freytag served up a wonderful creation.

The life and times of Scotland's National Bard Robbie Burns was celebrated with haggis and drams at the weekend.

Saturday marked the 260th anniversary of the poet's birth and the occasion was marked with suppers and get-togethers in honour of the poet.

Inveraray Burns Club held its annual traditional Burns Supper in the Inveraray Inn, piping in a massive haggis.

Club president John Burns chaired proceedings which started with a poignant

minute's silence for Inveraray legend Donald Clark, who recently died.

Michael Kidd addressed the haggis after piper Stuart Liddell did the honours. Kenneth Welsh, a guest from East Kilbride, carried it to the table with the Reverend Rodrick Campbell saying grace.

Liz Welsh, Kenneth's wife, proposed the loyal toast. Piper Stuart Liddell performed for the audience before the Immortal Memory, the main toast of the evening, was delivered by the Reverend Campbell.

Club treasurer Jim McMillan proposed a witty Toast to the Lassies, ably replied to by immediate past-president Sylvia Stark. Folk duo Beltherskyte entertained.

Michael Kidd recited A

Begotten Daughter, written by Burns to commemorate the birth of his oldest daughter, and the evening was rounded off with the singing of The Star of Rabbie Burns and Auld Lang Syne.

In Oban, the Dove Centre's Friday morning men's group held a version of a Burns Supper - closer to breakfast time. The celebration involved music, poetry, stories and history about the bard and reminiscing about Burns suppers from the past.

New members are always welcome to join the weekly group at the centre in Stevenson Street, starting at 10.30am.

The Burns Supper at Luing's Atlantic Islands Centre was a sell-out. A delicious meal, including clootie dumpling made by the island's home bakers, went down a treat,

as did the singing, music, poetry and Highland dancing performed by a young guest, Jess, from Lochgilphead.

A great time was had by everyone in Appin with the village hall packed full of people enjoying all things Rabbie Burns.

All from the village, the speakers were James Weir, Mike Storey, Duncan Mac-Corquodale, Jim Milligan, Grace McLeod, Rachel Mackenzie, Julie Weir and chairman Lindsay Muir. Highland dancers and Burns themed music from band Sutherland's Groove provided added entertainment to the evening which was organised by Appin Entertainments which arranges community events throughout the year.

Oban Bowling Club joined in the Burns Night fun, with Patrick Freytag cooking up a storm in his role as chef. More than 40 club members enjoyed a fabulous meal of haggis, neeps and tatties.

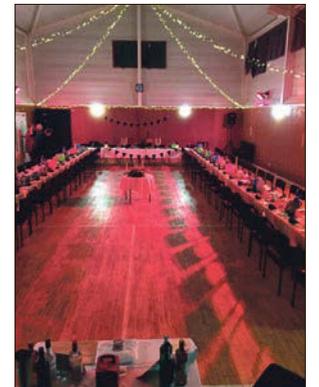
Iain Weir did the address, Peter Park performed Holy Willie's Prayer, Sandy Carr was awesome on the accordion and a wee sing song was enjoyed by everyone present.



Creating an atmosphere in Appin.



Members of the Appin community applaud the arrival of the haggis.



The scene is set for Appin Burns Night.

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SCOTTISH RURAL AWARDS 2020



The Friday men's group at Oban's Dove Centre marked the Bard's birthday.



Iain Weir, Patrick Freytag and Sandy Carr raise a glass to the National Bard at Oban Bowling Club's Burns Supper.



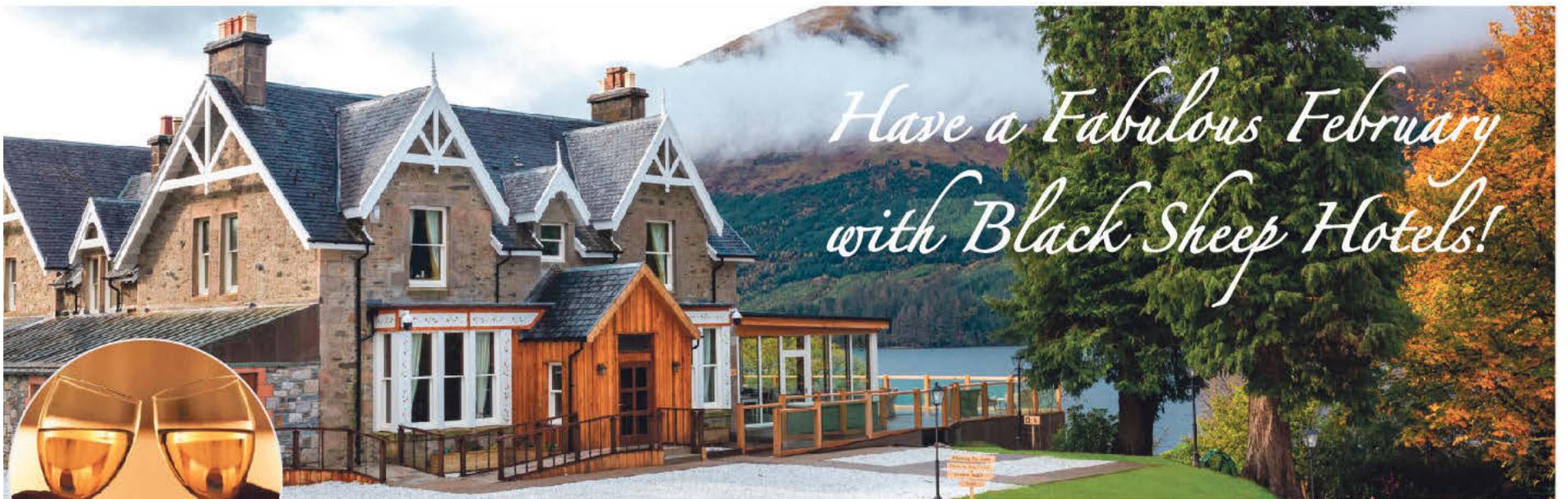
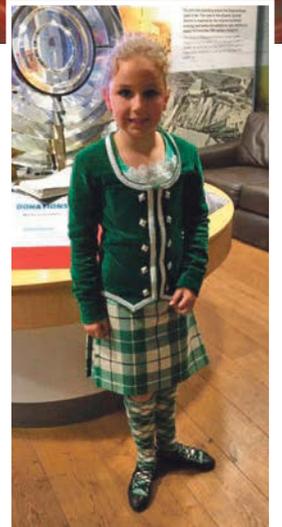
Guests enjoyed a traditional Burns Supper celebration at the Inveraray Inn.



The Appin Burns Supper menu.

Right: Luig's Burns Supper guests were entertained by Highland dancer Jess who travelled from Lochgilhead with her parents to be there.

Photograph: Atlantic Islands Centre.



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OT

Scottish Snowdrop Festival is blooming wonderful

Winter will soon give way to spring and snowdrops will bloom across Argyll and the Isles, carpeting the region with this popular flowering plant.

From now until March 11, 35 of Scotland's finest gardens, woodlands and estates will open their doors for the 14th year of this beloved festival.

Ardmaddy Castle Gardens near Seil will host walks, talks and activities to show off swathes of snowdrops to visitors until March 3.

Snowdrops first appeared in Scotland in the 18th century. The plant is not native to Britain, but its hardiness and adaptability allows it to thrive in the Scottish climate. Its botanical name is Galanthus, which means milk flower – an apt name for the dainty white flower whose buds look like drops of milk hanging from the stem.

Catherine Erskine, chair of Discover Scottish Gardens and founder of the Snowdrop Festival in Scotland, said: 'Snowdrops foretell the changing of the seasons and, for



Snowdrops will be the focus at Ardmaddy Castle Gardens.

many of us, they are a welcome indicator that spring is just around the corner.

'We are very lucky in Scotland to have such a fantastic climate for snowdrops, with many species flourishing here and creating magnificent displays.'

'Many of the festival venues are in the grounds of some of Scotland's most historic buildings and estates, creating a spectacular sight. We hope the festival will encourage people to go outdoors and discover this beautiful flower alongside the region's stunning gardens.'

David Adams McGilp, VisitScotland regional director, added: 'The Scottish Snowdrop Festival heralds the start of a new year, encouraging visitors to get out and about to enjoy Scotland's gardens.'

'I'm delighted Ardmaddy is taking part to showcase these beautiful flowers and their tourism offering during the traditionally quieter winter months. Our marketing is focused on sharing the tourism windfall in lesser known parts.' Go to www.visitscotland.com/snowdrop

MacPhail

ANGUS MACPHAIL

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Continuing from last week's fictional frolics of Robert Burns in present-day Oban, he carries on in his quest for romance, having been rebuked by three Ballet West dancers.

There are another 21 verses after what's in this column, taking Rabbie to many of Oban's famous nightspots and into some interesting encounters with many of Oban's finest lassies, but space won't allow their inclusion.

...So down the hill and feeling miffed

His tactics now he'd have to shift

If any hearts he were to lift
As was his plan.

To gee him up, he'd have a sniff

In Markie Dan's.

To heal his ego's recent scar

He'd rest a while and have a jar

Then charm the lassies with his Star

- Like winning ways.

A bonnie lassie by the bar,
She caught his gaze.

'Hello, ma lass, it's Rabbie here

'Ah'll mak ma feelins aw sae clear

'Till A' the seas gang dry, ma dear

'Ah'll love ye weel.'

She turned and laughed with mocking sneer:

'Are you for real?'

'As flattered as I maybe am

'You've clearly had too many drams

'The seas are fine and in safe hands

'And won't gang dry.

'You, see I'm an oceanography student out at SAMs

'So thanks, but, 'bye!'

Yet another knock-back taken

His pride was down, his charm forsaken.

His sense of self and vigour shaken

But not for long.

Some Eeusk oysters would re-awaken

His lusty song.

So down the pier to Eeusk he went

To gorge on oysters his intent

His favoured food and well he kent

They'd work for sure
And prime with lustre
heaven-sent
His man's allure.

In Eeusk there was a busy crowd

He entered to a welcome loud

From his host, the famous Calum MacLeod

Saying: 'Sorry, no seats sir.

'But go next door, we'll be very proud

'To serve you pizza!'

Not knowing what on earth that was

He chose haggis pizza just because

The lassie serving him was braw

And ah' sae fair

All was well until he saw
This strange affair.

'Fair fa your honest sonsie face

'But fit's been done tae you – disgrace!

'A flattened ugly muckle mess
'Ah've seen enough!'

And out the door with raging pace
In sic a huff!
...to be continued.

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Eye to eye with John Wallace

The Year of Vision

This is a landmark year for optometrists and all eye-care professionals. 2020 (twenty twenty) is significant as it the label given to the measurement of sharpness (visual acuity) for "normal" vision. The UK and European equivalent of 20/20 is 6/6. There are other ways of describing visual acuity (I use LogMAR which is now considered the gold standard for acuity measurement). Basically they all are the same measurement. For those of a mathematical bent 20/20 or 6/6 is the ability to see one minute of arc at 6 metres.

Visual acuity is a useful measurement because it provides a standard of measurement that is repeatable and used throughout the world. There are problems caused



by the choice of fonts (letter shapes) and the actual letters used as some letters are more easily recognised than others. What is does not do is give any information about the quality of your vision or how well your eyes are working together.

Regular readers of this column will recall I frequently discuss the importance of quality of vision. The problem from a professional

viewpoint is the difficulty measuring or quantifying quality. In many ways quality is actually more important when describing vision. We all know of children whose parents have been told their offspring has 6/6 or 20/20 vision and everything is normal yet they can barely read. Or there are drivers who have been told their vision meets the legal requirement for driving who cannot drive in bright sunlight or at night due to cataracts. I have patients who can barely see the letters at the top of my chart and are very happy with their vision and others who complain bitterly when they cannot read the bottom line of the chart. Most patients should have an eye examination every two years.

John Wallace BSc (Hons), FCOptom, DipCLP

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Behind the scenes at Atlantis



No sooner have we celebrated the arrival of a new year than we're looking back on the passing of its first month! The year is off to a flying start here at Atlantis, so here are some highlights of how 2020 got under way.

Centre life

Rolling out the green carpet and rowing back to health

Last year we told you about Atlantis becoming the first pool in Scotland to be awarded the coveted PWTAG poolmark award. We'd like to maintain the high standards that led to us achieving the award so we've added a number of projects to our planned maintenance schedule.

First up are some works to our small pool filtration sys-



tem. During February, we'll replace the filter itself as well as its glass media content. Don't worry, though, we hope to be mostly working outside normal working hours so that pool opening times are unaffected. Staying poolside, we'll also be renewing the flooring tiles in the spectator area. Atlantis floors have to endure significant traffic and tell their story of how well-

loved our centre is. The work to the spectator area is part of a centre-wide project, so watch out for the fresh new look coming soon.

One of the many benefits of being a community-run organisation is the flexibility to adapt and change to suit our community's needs. As part of this, this month we took delivery of three new rowing machines to benefit our Healthy Options and

StayActive members. The rowers sit slightly higher than our other machines which makes them easier to get on and off.

The technological brain that runs Atlantis behind the scenes has had an upgrade after two of our older computers both failed over the Christmas holiday period. This was the catalyst for a complete IT upgrade throughout the centre.

Plans are also afoot to redevelop the reception area later in the year. General manager Nick met with the architect earlier this month to progress key elements of the design. Works are hoped to take place in May.

Beth and the café team took delivery of a new oven and chilled display cabinet this month. The new kit will help to increase capacity and minimise time spent preparing food offsite.

Atlantis in the community

Making a difference beyond the centre

We were absolutely delighted to host Dunbeg, Achaleven and Kilchrenan primary schools on the swimming and cycling legs of their triathlon fundraiser at the end of the month.

Eighteen pupils took part in an event that raised money for their upcoming outdoor education week away and brought together a range of

communities, including the Ganavan Parkrun.

Coaches from Oban Fishing and Shooting Club alongside Atlantis archer Kyle Dods hosted Martyn's Monday Club earlier in the month. The evening ran through a general introduction to archery. It was fantastic to have them with us and to partner with the fantastic work that Martyn's do.

Staff news

The team behind the action

Kendra Clark gets the staff team training under way for 2020 as she pursues her RPM Les Mills qualification. With her new qualification, Kendra will be able to add her expanded skills on the bike to the fitness team's ever growing pool of expertise.

Elsewhere the Atlantis management team agreed the 2020 budgets just before Christmas. This paves the way for a wide range of exciting activities and events to come - watch this space!

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BUSINESS NEWS

Highlands and Islands to benefit from national bank

MSP Maree Todd, pictured, has said the new Scottish National Investment Bank will help encourage economic growth across the Highlands and Islands after the bill to introduce the body was formally agreed to in Holyrood last week.

A national investment bank is one created by a country's government which provides financing primarily for the purposes of economic development of the nation.

MSPs from all parties gave their backing to the Scottish Government's blueprint for the investment bank that will begin investing in businesses and communities later this year.

Supported by the £150 million Building Scotland Fund and a further £340 million in 2021, the bank will look to invest £2 billion in businesses and communities across Scotland in its first 10 years.

The financial institution will have an important role in helping Scotland meet its ambitious climate change targets – forming part of the SNP's Green New Deal to kick-start investment and build the momentum needed to reduce emissions and create high quality jobs in the process.

Ms Todd said: 'The Scottish National Investment Bank will help us reach our world-leading climate change targets while transforming communities here in the Highlands and Islands.'

'Small businesses are the backbone of our local economy. Individuals and small businesses the length and breadth of Scotland are set to benefit from this move.'

'I look forward to seeing the bank's impact in the Highlands and Islands.'



Argyll skincare firm is picture of health

Purdie's of Argyll, an organic skincare company based in Oban, has reported its first annual profit since launching in 2017, following strategic advice from Argyll and Bute Council's Business Gateway.

Director Gavin Purdie approached Business Gateway to support the development of a new strategy, with a focus on achieving profitability through an expansion in manufacturing capability and an expanded range of organic beauty products.

In addition, funding from the Business Gateway Local Growth Accelerator Programme helped Purdie's of Argyll to invest in new facilities at a new purpose-built manufacturing facility in Oban.

The Business Gateway Local Growth Accelerator Programme is funded by Argyll

'We are now in a strong position heading into 2020, with plans to expand'

and Bute Council and the European Regional Development Fund 2014-20 Structural Funds Programme.

Mr Purdie, owner of Purdie's of Argyll, said: 'As we embark on the next stage of our business journey, we've really appreciated having the Business Gateway team regularly on hand to provide support and advice to help us focus on the development of the business and ultimately achieve profitability.'

'They have signposted us to funding opportunities that have allowed us to significantly invest in our manufacturing facility and thereby expand our product range, both of which have contributed to our success over the past two years.'

'We are now in a strong position heading into 2020, with plans to expand further into the health and wellbeing market and continue building on our progress.'



Gavin Purdie is full of praise for the help he received from Business Gateway.

Purdie's of Argyll sells organic skincare products, using certified organic ingredients by the British Soil Association and the EU COSMOS (COSMetic Organic and Natural Standard), from its flagship store in Inveraray and via the company's website, which has been largely facilitated by e-commerce support from DigitalBoost.

In addition to one-to-one support from a business adviser, Business Gateway provided Purdie's of Argyll with access to an employer grant for a new member of staff, a marketing grant to publicise the product range in Glasgow, HR specialist advice and the development of an effective social media strategy via the DigitalBoost digital skills training programme.

Purdie's of Argyll has also expanded its product range, with the launch of a complete

skincare range, a men's range and a specialist podiatry range for the City Foot Clinic in Glasgow and there are plans to introduce an organic coconut oil-based cleanser in early 2020.

Angela Vernel, business adviser at Business Gateway Argyll and Bute, said: 'It can be a challenge to implement a bold new strategy for your business, but Gavin's clear focus and passion for the brand has been instrumental to its growth over the past two years and we look forward to seeing their continued success in 2020.'

Business Gateway offers a wide range of specialist services for both growth businesses and start-ups across Scotland.

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HIAL 'displaying gross lack of ambition for islands'

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has hit out at HIAL's 'lack of ambition for the islands' over plans for the centralisation of air traffic control services and that Benbecula Airport is to be downgraded.

Benbecula will be downgraded to an Aerodrome Flight Information Service (AFIS), resulting in a loss of jobs and an inability to grow air services on the island.

Together with a loss of jobs at Stornoway as a result of centralising air traffic control in Inverness, there could be a loss of up to 20 jobs in the islands, a significant number of skilled jobs in an island location.

The comhairle has called on the Scottish Government to intervene. Comhairle leader Roddie Mackay said: "This is not an attitude or approach we would expect from a Scottish Government-owned company."

Councillor Uisdean Robertson, comhairle chairman of trans-



Donald Cameron MSP at Stornoway Airport

portation and infrastructure, added: "It seems to me that HIAL is looking at Stornoway and Benbecula airports as burdens rather than assets. They are intent on running them down with the resultant loss of employment.

"This displays an incredible lack of ambition for the future of air services to and from the islands. We should be looking at how these assets can be grown and developed to best serve the communities of the islands.

"I will be writing to the minister highlighting that is against the principles of community empowerment and the Islands Act. Centralisation of services and jobs is entirely contrary to what island authorities have been working towards over the past few years and indeed is completely at odds with the Islands Act.

"I will be calling for an Islands Impact Assessment, in line with island proofing, to be carried out on the implications of these shortsighted measures for our communities.

"I will be calling upon ministers to ensure that agencies like HIAL grow their staff headcount in our islands not remove valuable jobs and families from our communities."

Politicians across the Highlands and Islands last week voiced concern over HIAL's plans, including Donald Cameron MSP, Angus MacNeil MP and Michael Russell MSP.

Council welcomes wind commitment

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has welcomed a commitment by the Scottish Government and Crown Estate Scotland to retain supply chain benefits from offshore wind in Scotland.

Historically, much of the primary supply chain content for Scottish offshore wind developments has come from overseas yards but this new commitment, enshrined in future seabed leases, should see more supply chain content retained in Scotland.

Comhairle chairman of sustainable development, Donald Crichton, said: "On the face of it, this is good news for Scotland and for our own offshore fabrication yard at Arnish. For many years, the comhairle has been concerned about the procurement practices of offshore wind developers and, for their part, Crown Estate Scotland appear to have been unable to demand economic opportunities for Scottish business in offshore wind procurement. That is one of the reasons the comhairle has sought more local control over seabed leasing by entering into a local asset management pilot scheme with Crown Estate Scotland."

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New artwork celebrates Gaelic culture and Mòd

A painting celebrating Gaelic culture in Glasgow has been unveiled. The distinguished painter Alexander 'Sandy' Moffat – who was artist-in-residence to the Royal National Mòd 2019 – has created an impressive artwork inspired by Gaelic culture at the festival and the vibrant health of Gaelic-medium education in the city.

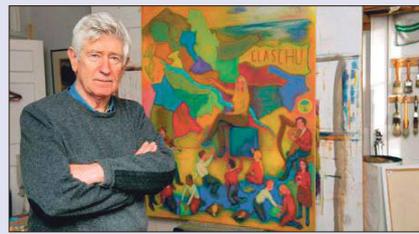
The painting was commissioned by Glasgow Life in partnership with The Hunterian and the University of Glasgow, to celebrate the Mòd's return to Clydeside for the first time since 1990.

As artist-in-residence during the festival, Moffat immersed himself in the atmosphere and events, and spent time researching the city's Gaelic past and present. He then spent several weeks working on a huge, 6ft x 5ft canvas, which includes references to Gaelic history and culture, both in Glasgow and across Scotland. The finished work was unveiled at the City Halls as part of Celtic Connections.

Moffat said: 'There were two starting points. The first was a dish towel I bought at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall during the Mòd. The design was based on a medieval map dating from when Glasgow was primarily Gaelic-speaking, showing the Gaelic place names for all the districts of the city.'

'The second influence was Gaelic education. After the Mòd finished, I visited the Glasgow Gaelic School in Berkeley Street, and was really impressed by the whole atmosphere of the school.'

The new painting also makes reference to William McTaggart's famous painting, *The Sailing Of The Emigrant Ship*, which reflected on the draining away of the Highlands and Hebrides population during the Highland Clearances.



A stone on the old s

Morvern Lines

IAIN THORNER

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When the last red deer lies dead on a Highland hillside, the victim of politically-driven blinkered conservationists, and what is left of their progeny in a few wildlife parks are being gawked at by tourists as the buffalo are in North America, not only will Scotland have lost one of its iconic and most important mammals, but they will take with them a unique and hardy race.

Few today are those men who were schooled and lived out their entire working lives in the same glen, revering the deer and hefted to the hill like some old ewe. They were naturalists par excellence, custodians of local history, experts in Gaelic place names and, above all, men with a sound practical knowledge of deer and their ways.

As one retired stalker put it: 'I never once went to the hill but the deer didn't send me to university.'

The late Eric Parker, the shooting editor of *The Field*, sums up one of the old school of stalkers as well as any man. 'He is take you up to one of those deer; what does he think of the day's work? Is it work or pleasure? Does he, too, look at the sun and the sky, as you do, and thank Heaven for such a day? Not exactly as you do. To him, the sun and the wind means something else besides. They will decide the plans, they will control the end of the day; and the end of the day he hopes will be a good stag saddled on a pony – a heavy beast for the larder, a great head for the lodge wall. And you, too, are something else besides his "gentleman"; you are either a good or a bad shot, a pleasant companion or not, you will be lucky or unlucky, and you will make or mar his day for him. You are out on a holiday. This is his day's work.'

'Not that he does not delight in it. To him, it is the supreme activity of the year, this business of stalking stags in the corries of this forest. There is the hind-shooting to follow in the winter, but it is only the stags that count.'

'And the stalking is but a short season. From the last days of August, when the heads are coming clean of velvet, to the middle of October, when the stags roar for the rut; and through those 10 weeks he is out day after day on the hill, with different plans for the approaching of different beasts, with different



paths up the hill to his beat, different weather, different winds.

'And how well he knows the ground! Since he was a boy he heard his father and other stalkers and ghillies talk of the forest and its deer; he has walked with the grouse-shooters on the low ground and the tops; he has learned the tracks of the shepherds and the lines of the fences along the march; he has found his way about the forest by day and by night, in mist and in snow, ever since he was first allowed to come out and help with the hind-shooting – hard work, that, with so many to be entered in the account books by February!

'And now that he is a man, and himself takes men up to deer, he is proud of his knowledge and his skills. He has bought both by experience, and how long and how various his experience has been you may guess when he has picked for you the stag you are to stalk, and

tells you how he means to bring you to him, and his hopes and fears of chances by the way.

'This is the "old stalker"; this is the gifted and tested hunter of deer, whom every young ghillie, every boy who is allowed to take the hill for the first time would wish to be.'

A little-known poem written in memory of a retired stalker by Angus Mackintosh, Saskatchewan, Canada.

*He sat by the door of his heather-thatched cot,
Unmurmuring bearing his frailty and lot;
Away in the distance he dimly could see
The bens that he trod when light-footed and free.*

*The eye that in manhood could see from afar
The stag in the corrie, the fox on the scaur.
Had dimmed, but bright visions that never
would fade*

Were his of the mountains, the forest and glade.

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Stalker's cairn



The last stag of the season and James Henderson, the retired Glen Quoch head-stalker. Photographs supplied by Iain Thornber



*O'er the grand panorama before you that lay;
The way would be rugged, the walk would be long,
But all the more fitting the fleet and the strong,
Your locks would be stirred by the wind of that day,
When the dappled dun quarry in Corrievreac lay;
And taking for cover each hummock and stone,
In fancy you pressed., with your tale-teller, on,
A low ridge of heather - the wind in your face,
Afforded ideal conditions and place;
For spotting and shooting the best of the herd,
As startled they sprang from their lairs of green sward.
Then bang went the rifle, and high in the air
A royal stag sprang to fall back in his lair;
Another one, wounded, is straining to make
His way to the low-lying birken fringed lake.
The hinds as they flee like a shadow of grey
Away o'er the heather, and moss of the brae,
Soon gain the far summit, the line of the sky,
And o'er it still fleeing, are lost to the eye.
And thus the old stalker would over you cast,
The spell of the mountains that held himself fast;
And uplift your eyes from the mirage of gold,
To bens everlasting, majestic, and bold.*

*When led to converse of the stalk and the chase,
The glow of past days would illumine his face;
The light would return to his flickering eye –
Like the cloud-piercing blue of an overcast sky.
And then he would take you over streamlet
and moor,
From the floor of the glen, to the crest of the
scoor;
And tell of each corrie and tarn by the way,
Some old-world story, some proverb or lay.
Then raising the dun deer that crossed the
divide,
No more to go browsing along the ben side,
He would take you, in fancy, that sport to
behold,
That glens have de-peopled, and hearthstones
made cold.
The lights and the shadows would glidingly
play*

DOWN MEMORY LANE

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



These bonnie lassies were photographed back in 1995. They were Skye Highland dancers at the Invergarry Games and were, back row: Sarah Naylor, Iona Connor, Karen Rankin and Joan Beaton; front: June Naylor, Danielle Tyler and Eilidh Nicolson.



There is little information in our archive regarding this photograph other than it shows pupils from the Young Engineers' Club on Barra in 1993. Do you recognise any faces?

What's your favourite recipe?

Try Spaghetti Carbonara

Method:

1. Cook the spaghetti according to the packet instructions. Drain well and return to the saucepan.
2. Meanwhile, heat a large non-stick frying pan over a high heat. Add the bacon and dry-fry for 2-3 minutes, then turn off the heat.
3. Lightly beat the eggs, season and stir in the fromage frais, 1 level tbsp Parmesan and most of the chives.
4. Add the bacon to the drained spaghetti and mix well over a low heat, then remove from the heat and stir in the egg mixture. Toss thoroughly so that the eggs thicken in the residual heat, making a sauce that coats the pasta.
5. Divide the spaghetti between 4 bowls, then divide over the remaining Parmesan and chives. Serve hot and enjoy!

Ingredients

- 400g dried spaghetti
- Small handful of fresh chives, finely chopped
- 4 eggs
- 4 tbsp fat-free natural fromage frais
- 6 back bacon rashers, visible fat removed, chopped (or Quorn bacon-style pieces – see tip)
- 2 level tbsp grated fresh Parmesan



Serves 4, Time: 20 minutes
Syns per serving: 1/2

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LETTERS

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ScotRail pilot project is a development to be welcomed

We have reported and commented at length in recent years on the booming tourism sector for Oban and Argyll and the Isles.

The area's economy relies in large measure on our ability to continue to attract visitors, so any developments which have the potential to enhance that are generally to be welcomed.

As we report this week, train operator ScotRail is to pilot a project to appeal to people travelling to this area on the West Highland Line for cycling and other sporting interests. New carriages will provide much better facilities for those with bikes and other equipment.

Given the area's importance as a centre for outdoor pursuits, this scheme is a positive development.

We will watch for the pilot project's results with great interest.

Fantastic windfall for hospice from Crerar

Crerar Hotels is a well-known business operating hotels and inns across Scotland, including in Oban, Craignure on Mull, Inveraray and Glencoe.

Perhaps a little less known is the fact that it also diverts more than half of its distributable profits into the Crerar Trust to support charities. Indeed, over the past 18 years, the trust has donated some £8 million to more than 450 organisations.

Now Oban Hospice has received an award of £10,080 to allow its Dove Centre in Stevenson Street to offer specialist massage therapies to people with cancer.

The Dove Centre does a brilliant job helping people with life-limiting illnesses and the Crerar funding will allow that work to continue.

Global warming? It is a familiar tale of woe

The Arctic Ocean, we are told, is warming up. Icebergs are growing scarcer and in some places the seals are finding the water too hot according to a report to the Commerce Department yesterday from the USA consulate in Bergen, Norway.

Reports from fishermen, seal hunters and explorers all indicate a radical change in climate conditions and unheard of temperatures in the Arctic regions. Exploration expeditions confirm that scarcely any ice has been met with as far north as 81 degrees 29 minutes. Soundings to a depth of 3,000 metres show the gulf stream is very warm.

Great masses of ice have been replaced by moraines of earth and stone, the report continues, while at various points many well-known glaciers have entirely disappeared.

Very few seals and no white fish are now to be found in the Eastern Arctic, though massive shoals of herring and smolts, which have never before ventured so far north, are being encountered in the old seal feeding grounds. Within a few years it is predicted that, due to ice melt, the sea level will rise and flood a number of cities.

(Information from the Washington Post, November 2, 1922 - 98 years ago.)

Iain Thornber, Knock House, Morvern.

SNP government has its priorities all wrong

At the UK general election in December, I voted SNP for want of anything better. I have two concerns regarding my choice.

The first involves the list of embarrassing fiascos under the oversight of the SNP: two unstable flagship hospitals; structurally dangerous schools; the failures of Police Scotland; the destruction of important sites of natural heritage by golf-mad US playboys; expensive tram disappointments and ferry provision; et al.

Such a litany indicates a lack of coherent management by our SNP controllers and I wonder if, instead of putting all their wits to the task of gaining independence, they might do better focusing their energies on tackling these dangerous and costly blunders.

My second worry is the urge for independence is also given priority at the expense of

YOUR PICTURES



We know our readers love to take photographs so we are happy to showcase these each week. If you have a photograph you would like to see published here, send it to editor@obantimes.co.uk, post it to The Editor, PO Box 1, Oban, PA34 4HB. Alternatively, hand it in to our offices in Crannog Lane, Lochavullin Industrial Estate, Oban, or to our office in High Street,

concentrating on the climate crisis. Glasgow will be hosting the UN climate summit in November.

Unless Glasgow intends to follow Madrid's pathetic stalemate, our representatives need to address ecocide with the verve and commitment currently being wasted on a sideshow.

J C Hanlon, Taynuilt.

Authorities are letting islanders down

It is about time that the Scottish Government reviewed SINA (Special Islands Need Allowance).

Using census figures, and excluding islands connected by road to Scotland's mainland,



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Fort William. This week's stunning photograph was taken by Craig Scott from Renfrew and 'is looking out over Castle Stalker from Castle Stalker View on the A828'.

Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles have around 75 per cent of the island population but, according to a press article, receive 85 per cent of the funding.

A 'very small island' has a weighting of 50 per cent in Factor A (the first part of the calculation) and is classed as an island with less than 875 residents. There is a huge difference between an island of 800 and one of 200.

The first gets a national chain as their local shop, and the economies of scale that come with that, thus keeping the prices lower. The other can only have independent shops that often get no bulk buy discount and have large delivery bills. One has several flights a day to Glasgow, the other is struggling to maintain an air link with Oban.

More concerning, the second part of the calculation, Factor B, gives additional funding to the three unitary authorities that have no mainland foothold - Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles. Orkney and Shetland have their own mainland. They even refer to it as 'the mainland'. Each has multiple high schools, a hospital, council offices, MOT centres, and more. In fact, residents of Orkney and Shetland mainlands may have access to a wider range of services than the residents of Coll can access even after taking a lengthy boat trip to Oban.

A recent TV programme showed how Shetland hospital can video link with Aberdeen hospital, allowing a consultant to provide a face-to-face diagnosis without the patient ever leaving Shetland. Even the Western Isles have access to better services than many of Argyll and Bute's islands due to high school education and several mainland flights per day.

The need to leave the island to access maternity services, MOT services, secondary education, affordable housing and a host of other public and private services should all be part of this calculation. These services are, after all, the difference between being able to sustain an island population or seeing the population go in to (possibly) irreversible decline.

It's not all the fault of SINA though. The council and the NHS are not using technology that is now readily available, and some of which they already have, to provide services more efficiently.

A number of council employees should be able to work remotely giving them the option to set up home on our isles. Our medical practices should have access to better diagnostic tools and video-conferencing appointments with consultants in hospitals, which could help avoid unnecessary trips off island (paid for by the NHS).

It's not rocket science. Let's move with the times, make genuine efficiencies (rather than creating highly paid jobs just to talk about it) and start serving the islands properly.

Alison Jones, Isle of Coll.

Beachd Ailein

ALLAN CAMPBELL

editor@obantimes.co.uk



Bho àm gu àm bidh mi a' cuimhneachadh air abairtean nach cuala mi bho chionn fhada. Thàinig fear dhiubh sin thugam is mi ag èisteachd ris a' bhan-lùdhach Rena Quint a thug a beatha air èiginn à campa iargalta Belsen nuair a ràinig arm Bhreatainn e air 15 Giblean, 1945. Nach ann oirre chaidh an gleidheadh! Leanabh mu shia bliadhna gu leth a bha air fàs cho èiseil is gun deach a tilgeil leis na gèaird air dùn chorp a bha gu bhith gan losgadh, agus sin far an deach a lorg nuair a shaoradh an campa! Chaidh a màthair 's a h-athair, is a dithis bhràithrean a mhurt aig campa Treblinka, far am bheileas a' tuairmeas gun deach eadar seachd agus naodh ceud mìle Pòlanach agus dà mhìle Ròmanach a chur gu bàs leis na Nàsaich. Gann seachd bliadhna a dh'aois cha robh duine aig Rena a bhuineadh dhi agus tha i air innse gun robh sia "màthair" fa leth a thug an aire dhi chun an robh i deich agus air a h-uchd-mhacachd ann an Ameireagaidh. Chunnaic is dh'fhuiling i uabhasan a tha cha mhòr do-chreidsinneach ach chaidh a gleidheadh gus

deagh bheatha fhada a mhealtainn eadar Ameireagaidh agus Israel. Aig aois ochdad 's a ceithir a-nise tha e cur dragh mòr oirre, nuair a thig bàs air a leithid-se, nach bi cuimhne neo creideas aig daoine mu na thachair aig àm an Dàrna Cogaidh.

Dh'fhàg an cogadh sin iomadh lot goirt ann an eachdraidh theaghlaichean feadh an t-saoghail agus còrr air seachd aig cho bìadhna air adhart tha cuimhne agus mothachadh air na thachair agus na dh'fhuilingear a' fannachadh. Ach tha e deatamach gun lean a' chuimhne air sgàth urram nam milleanan a chailleadh, agus cuideachd dòchas gun cùm fianais bacadh gu ìre air choreigin air a leithid tachairt a-rithist. Thug innleachdan borba an t-sabaid tinneasan ùra gu bith cuideachd agus 's e pàirt den dileab dhuilich a dh'fhàg an dà Chogadh againn gum bheil aillse a' sgrios dhaoine gu ìre nas miosa. Leis an sgiùrs seo a' bualadh dhaoine ann an leithid de chaochladh dhòighean tha dùbhlàn a dh'ionnsaigh leigheis tàireil gu ruige seo le cuingaidhean eadar-dhealaichte a dhith a

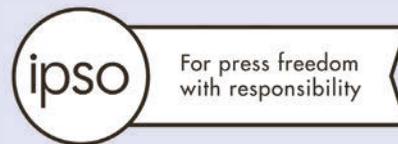
rèir gnè an tinneis. Ach tha deàlradh dòchais a-nise air tighinn à obair-rannsachaidh aig Oilthigh Cardiff, gum faodadh aon slànachadh a bhith ri lorg a dhèiligeadh ri iomadh seòrsa aillse. Thathas air gnè àraid de cheallan-T a lorg aig am bheil comas ceallan a th' air an gàn-rachadh le caochladh sheòrsa aillse a lorg agus a sgrios ann am bodhaig an euslaintich. Nan tigeadh sin gu bith gu cinnteach rachadh gleidheadh air milleanan feadh an t-saoghail!

Just six years old and at death's door, Rena Quint's rescue from Belsen in April 1945 is an extraordinary story of survival from the horrors of war. There is hope millions might survive worldwide in future if Cardiff University research into a unique form of T-cell can be developed into a 'universal' cancer treatment.

Ailean Caimbeul (Allan Campbell)

ailean@obantimes.co.uk

Allan Campbell is president of An Comunn Gaidhealach and a member of Bòrd na Gàidhlig.



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 or those supplied without a contact phone number 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. Fax: 01631 568001.

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THE HARBOUR GALLERY

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DISTRICT NEWS

ARROCHAR

An application to renew planning permission for a proposed development of houses and retail units on the shore of Loch Long has been approved.

The Arrochar Hotel initially received planning permission from the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority in July 2016.

The statutory three-year period for work to begin on the project has now expired, but the park authority's officials have approved an application to renew the previous permission.

A total of 18 accommodation units, with between one and four bedrooms, are part of the plans along with a 350 square metre retail complex.

Figures, though, are estimated, as the number of units and amount of floor space has yet to be finalised.

INVERARAY

Inveraray Primary School has earned a glowing report from education inspectors, with staff having acted swiftly upon recommendations for improvement.

Education Scotland made a follow-up visit to the school recently, having initially visited in October 2018.

The inspector's findings have now been published and it has been confirmed that no further visits will take place in the foreseeable future.

The report also states that parents have been very positive about the future for the school, and that new head teacher Jay Helbert had made a positive difference since arriving in June 2019.

The inspector also remarked that pupils who found it a challenge to learn and participate in class are now settled and coping well with learning.

MULL

Highlands and Islands Connections are running a free Learning and Sharing event on Wednesday February 5.

The event will take place in Craignure Village Hall and offers an opportunity for organisations to learn and share throughout the Isle of Mull. Refreshments will be provided.

On Thursday February 6, there will be a networking and connecting opportunity for organisations and the public at the same venue.

This is an informal event that organisations can book a stall space to network and also promote activities to the public. Stalls are free and so is tea, coffee and cake.

Contact ftompson@supportinmindscotland.org.uk for more information or to book a place at either event.

OBAN

Friday night is social night at Oban Bowling Club and this week, January 31, it's quiz night with OBC's very own Alec (BT) Carmichael in the quizmaster's chair.

Members are invited to take along friends and family, with teams of up to four people being encouraged to go along and enjoy themselves.

Friday February 21 is curry night, while the venue is also open on other Friday nights when dominoes, bowls or just a simple chat and a few refreshments are the options.

Why not go along and enjoy the social side of the club?

A table-top sale is being held in the Corran Halls on Saturday February 1, from 10am to 2pm.

Fee Shaw has organised the event and there are still a few tables available.

For more information, message her on Facebook.

KILMORY

Argyll and Bute Council's canteen at Kilmory Castle in Lochgilphead has been awarded Healthy Living Plus status for the first time.

Healthy Living Plus is the highest level of Healthy Living awards available, and rewards catering establishments that demonstrate a greater commitment to supporting

Village's new homes are opened



Councillor Donnie MacMillan, left, cuts the ribbon to open ACHA's new homes in Kilmartin, assisted by new tenant John Munro and ACHA chairman Jim Milne.

Argyll Community Housing Association has completed its first new build development in Kilmartin.

The official opening was carried out by Mid Argyll Councillor Donnie MacMillan BEM, who is thought to be Scotland's oldest serving councillor at 92.

The association, prior to building these four homes, only had one property for rent in the village. The development, in terms of design and mix, is semi-detached/

terraced and all properties are two-bedroomed.

The total cost of the project was £671,898, including the land acquisition with funding for the development coming from a three-way partnership involving the Scottish Government, Argyll and Bute Council and ACHA.

The construction period lasted exactly one year and the properties were built by MacLeod Construction of Lochgilphead.

Alastair MacGregor, ACHA's

chief executive, said: 'ACHA is committed to meeting housing need in small villages in rural Argyll. It is absolutely vital that affordable housing for rent is available in villages like Kilmartin and this handover today follows on from similar projects in Tarbert, Connel, Arinagour and Inveraray.'

Councillor MacMillan added: 'I am delighted with the progress ACHA has made over the years in building so many houses for so many housing needs.'

healthier eating through their menus; food and drink preparation; marketing and promotional activities; food presentation; and point of sale.

Council leader Aileen Morton said: 'The catering team at Kilmory Castle are committed to providing customers with healthy choices that taste great, and they

have worked tirelessly to achieve this award.

'The canteen is continuing to go from strength to strength and the food the team serves is to the highest standard.

They supply catering to a number of local business and organisations on a daily basis too, as well as catering at private functions – they

are gaining a growing customer basis outwith Kilmory.

'The criteria for achieving the Healthy Living Plus award is challenging so I am truly delighted, but not surprised, to hear that they have done it. It is very well deserved.

Congratulations to everyone involved.'

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At random

MARTIN LAING

mlaing@obantimes.co.uk



Great sports

I found myself chuffed to bits reading our sports pages last week.

If you want a blast of upbeat positivity, sport is often the place to turn to. Every page was full of great news and winners.

The back page had a story detailing the resounding success of the first Tyndrum 24-hour race which attracted more than 100 competitors, as well as top golfer Bob MacIntyre's return to the European Tour.

Turn inside and Oban Saints maintained their fantastic start to the league campaign with a thumping 7-1 victory away at Cambusnethan Talbot. Saints are still unbeaten in their new league.

On the same page as the Saints report was news of international call-ups for two rugby stars with local links, Erika Skofca for Italy and Helen Nelson for Scotland.

Sticking with rugby, we reported on Oban Lorne's win against table-topping Strathaven, a result that echoed the previous week's triumph for Lorne.

Then there was the celebration of members of Oban Sailing Club by the Royal Yachting Association. Murray MacDonald was recognised for his work to raise awareness of autism through sailing and the Monday Mayhem team for their efforts to provide sailing opportunities for people who would not normally take to the water.

We also had a full page on Oban squash players, who had been thrilled to welcome Scottish national coach Paul Bell to the town for top-flight training sessions, as well as 11 women from Oban Ladies' Squash Club who competed in the annual Scotstoun ladies' bronze event in Glasgow.

Finally, despite the shinty season not yet having started, our unrivalled coverage of the sport continued with extensive news of local teams' preparations for the 2020 campaign, previews of the pre-season friendlies (is there any such thing really as a 'friendly' in competitive sport?), word of the Women's Camanachd Association's final touches to its fixture list, and a nod to the 2020 Glengarry tournament and Gaelic Community Shinty Sixes.

Absolutely brilliant work from our sports team and contributors.

What do you think?

Write to me at mlaing@obantimes.co.uk or The Oban Times, Crannog Lane, Oban, PA34 4HB, or call 01631 568021.

Join the fight to put cancer on the run

Cancer Research UK's Race for Life is returning to Islay! Race for Life happens throughout the UK giving people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities the chance to come together and show cancer who's boss. They're not races, or runs, and everyone wins the Race for Life (except cancer).

The Islay 5k will take place on Saturday March 28 along the three distilleries path in Port Ellen, And, although not an official Race for Life, the run is recognised by Cancer Research UK and they are providing support and advice – and most importantly medals.

At just over three miles, the course is the perfect distance for families and people who haven't exercised much recently. The run should take about an hour to complete but there is absolutely no pressure to finish in a certain time.

There are two Jog Scotland groups on Islay if you would like some extra support and encouragement during your training. Jim Lutomski's group runs from Port Ellen on a Tuesday evening at 5.30pm and you will find the Bumpers assembling at 9.15am on a Saturday morning at Bridgend woods car park.

Anyone who wants to get involved – help with organisation, run or walk 5k, act as steward, first aider or enter a works team – please look out for the Islay 5K Facebook page or contact Kate Skinner on 01496 860296.



Runners of all abilities are invited to join in Islay's Race for Life.

MSP Allan hosts meeting over Barra ferry



Alasdair Allan MSP.

Na h-Eileanan an Iar MSP Alasdair Allan hosted a meeting in the Scottish Parliament between representatives of the community in Barra and Vatersay and Islands Minister Paul Wheelhouse.

The islands MSP requested the meeting with the minister, who has responsibility for ferries, to discuss the disruptions to the Castlebay-Oban service and the alternative arrangements made.

Dr Allan said: "This was a really useful opportunity for

community representatives from Barra to engage with the minister directly on the unacceptably frequent periods of disruption the island has suffered in recent months.

"I am grateful for the minister's attention to this issue. We discussed the need for CalMac to take a much more proactive approach when bad weather or technical issues arise, the total unsuitability of using a vessel like MV Isle of Arran to replace MV Isle of

Lewis on any route as long as that between Oban and Castlebay, and the need for more opportunities for community engagement with Transport Scotland.

"Barra's lifeline ferry service is the longest and most challenging in CalMac's network. Ultimately, there needs to be much wider recognition of that fact, and Barra needs to be treated on a much more equitable basis when it comes to future vessel re-deployment decisions."

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OUTDOORS

New police training on wildlife crime

New police training to detect and investigate instances of wildlife crime has been welcomed by Scottish Land and Estates.

Announced by Cabinet Secretary Roseanna Cunningham MSP, pictured, Police Scotland last week launched a new wildlife crime investigators course to enhance capability in this complex area of local policing.

Sarah-Jane Laing, chief executive of Scottish Land and Estates, said: 'We are fully supportive of increased resources to tackle wildlife crime alongside tougher penalties for those who are convicted so this is a positive announcement by government.'



'Equipping police officers with the specialist training and knowledge they need to investigate wildlife crime should aid detection rates and hopefully lead to more offenders being brought to justice.'

'The government's wildlife crime report published last month highlights that despite a decrease in the level of wildlife crime in Scotland over the past five years, there remains a clear need to maintain momentum on this issue.'

'For those found guilty of such reckless acts, we continue to call for longer prison sentences and bigger maximum fines for the most serious wildlife crimes.'

'We also believe that enabling police to use surveillance cameras under strict Regulation of Investigatory Powers Scotland Act 2000 procedures, where evidence suggests there could be wildlife crime, could act as a real deterrent and lead to more prosecutions. This would enable those police officers who are about to embark on their new training to work even more effectively in the future.'

Buyout of lighthouse is nearing completion

The Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Trust – a registered charity and community company limited by guarantee – has leased and operated the Ardnamurchan Lighthouse complex for more than 20 years.

Now, with support from the Scottish Land Fund, part of the National Lottery's Community Fund, and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the trust will formally assume ownership of the complex from Highland Council in February.

The lighthouse tower, designed by Alan Stevenson and completed in 1849, remains the property of the Northern Lighthouse Board.

'Your first encounter with Ardnamurchan Lighthouse is unforgettable' – Stephanie Cope



Ardnamurchan Lighthouse occupies the most westerly point on the UK mainland.

However, the wider infrastructure of the site will be managed by the trust on behalf of Ardnamurchan's community.

Ritchie Dinnes, chairman of Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Trust, said: 'The board is delighted to have secured the future of this iconic site for the community.'

'It intends to build on this by seeking further funding to convert the principal's building into the visitor centre, upgrade the keepers' cottages and improve visitor facilities at the site.'

The trust is presently undertaking emergency infrastructure repairs with further support from the Scottish Land Fund.

In preparation for the 2020 visitor season, an upgrade of the site's popular café is scheduled.

This will improve access for guests with restricted mobility, make better use of the available space and allow the provision of hot snacks for the first time, in addition to beverages, filled rolls and baked goods.

A project manager has been appointed to

deliver the trust's long-term plan to protect and enhance the site.

Stephanie Cope, pictured, who took up the post earlier this month, said: 'I'm proud to be part of this exciting new chapter for Ardnamurchan Lighthouse. This magnificent A-listed heritage asset is held in deep affection by the local community.'

'This iconic landmark commands a spectacular position, with so much to offer in terms of engineering, maritime heritage, archaeology and natural history.'

'Your first encounter with Ardnamurchan Lighthouse is unforgettable. The trust wants the site's amenities to augment the experience of visiting – sensitively, and in a way that doesn't detract from the wildness of this place. I look forward to helping the trust achieve that goal.'

Following emergency repairs and the 'meanwhile' improvement of the existing

café, the trust's plans for the site include the reconfiguration and extension of the principal keepers' building.

This utilitarian 1955 structure is not one of the original A-listed assets. Its renovation will improve access for guests with restricted mobility; allow for fresh, innovative interpretation; create space for group sessions, events and exhibitions; and include a glass-fronted dining area, with unparalleled views across the Hebridean seascape.

The original lighthouse lens – kindly loaned to the trust by the Northern Lighthouse Board – will sit prominently in this repurposed space. The lens is a fine example of the beauty that suffused Stevenson's cutting-edge design work, and a central part of the site's narrative.

Beyond this refurbishment, the trust looks forward to collaborating with heritage partners, interest groups and the local community to restore and utilise other areas of the complex.

Read Stephanie Cope's monthly column on this page next week.



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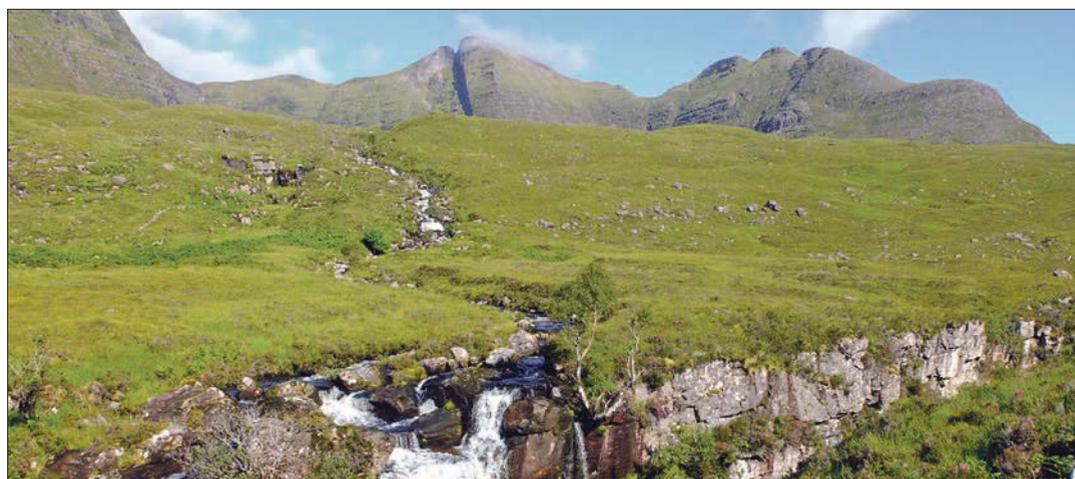
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This week's walks



The beautiful Highland landscape, above, but what lies on the other side of the hill? Below: developments such as these could be seen as damaging to the beauty of the landscape. Photographs: Dr James Fenton

SWT ponders beauty and the development beast

Members of the Argyll and Lochaber Group of the Scottish Wildlife Trust were treated to a thought-provoking talk by ecologist Dr James Fenton recently on the loss of the Highland landscape.

Dr Fenton said we've all seen the iconic pictures of the Highland landscape, the snow-capped mountains, the Scots pine forests, the hill lochs and the coastal villages, but the tourist offices rarely show the scenes on the other side of the hills.

Blanket forestry, wind turbines, hydro schemes, ski runs, car parks – the tracks which service all of these developments can be extremely damaging to the beauty of the natural landscape.

While all have their positive side, it is vital, Dr Fenton suggested, that a great deal more thought is given to which areas should or should not be developed.

The next evening lecture will



take place on Thursday February 13 at the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS), Dunstaffnage, at 6.45pm for 7pm. Dr Denise Risch will be speaking on Sounds of the Minke Whale. All are very welcome to join the group and enjoy the lecture, the lively chat and the homebaking.

There will be a small charge which will be used to support the

conservation work of the Scottish Wildlife Trust.

Directions to SAMS: Take the Dunbeg turning off the A85 and after 200m take a right turn into Kirk Road, which is signposted to the marine laboratory. Follow this road down to the centre. The car park is on the right, beyond the main building and visitors' car park.

LOCHABER AND LORN RAMBLERS

The walk leader should be contacted beforehand for meet-up and start times. Car sharing usually possible and people can try before they buy. Further information at www.lochaberand-lorn-ramblers.org.uk

Saturday February 1, Binnein Shuas, Glen Spean.

A delightful craggy hill with some route finding needed on the summit crags. Grand views of Creag Meagaidh and the Ardverikie hills'

Park at Moy Bridge NN433831. Cross the river Spean and follow the track SE for about 2km then turn right at the junction. After about a further 1km at NN447812, head NE up the hillside to reach the summit of Binnein Shuas, 746m. The summit slopes of this hill are quite craggy. To descend, negotiate the crags to reach the NE spur then walk down the more open slopes to the bridge at Lochan na h-Earba NN 487841. Cross the bridge to the E side, then follow the track SW to the head of the lochan. Continue on the track back to the start.

Grade: M. Distance: 18km. Height to climb: 500m. Maps LR42 EX401. Meet at: Fort William WM NN112742 at 0920 or Spean Bridge WM NN221816 at 0940 for start of walk 1000. Leader: Trevor Jones 07831437454.

Thursday February 6, Sutherland's Grove, Barcaldine.

This is a round walk meandering through the forest on good tracks. Starting and ending at the Sutherland's Grove car park (NM966421), it passes the Gleann Dubh reservoir and affords some views over Loch Creran. It is generally very sheltered, so is suitable for walking in all weathers.

Grade: L. Distance: 12km. Height to climb: 300. Maps: LR49/50 & EX376. Meet at: Ballachulish TIC 0845. Start of Walk: 0930. Leader: Ronnie Forbes 01866 822 611.

NEVIS HILLWALKING CLUB

Full walk details at www.nevis-hillwalking.club. If anyone would like to go on a walk, contact club secretary Suzanne Theobald on 01397 701783 or email enquiries@nevis-hillwalking.club

Sunday February 2, An Stac, Rois-Bheinn and Sgurr na Ba Glaise, Lochailort.

These three peaks are the highest points of a network of interconnected ridges affording outstanding views of the Inner Hebrides and the surrounding sea- and landscape. Start at Inverailort,

where ample parking is available N of a row of cottages at NM765816. Head ENE along a straight track for 450m and turn N at a group of small buildings. Continue on the deteriorating track for another 450m and join a hydro-scheme track leading E up the Roti Burn.

This turns S and climbs more steeply. At NM777813, leave the track and climb SW up the rough slope, to reach a small summit at 322m. Continue W across a col, turning SW up to the summit of Seann Chruach, 521m. Now head S, descending a little, and climb the ridge to the summit of An Stac, 814m. Descend S to the col between Coire na Cnamha and Coire a' Bhuiridh, 559m. Climb the steep buttress ahead to crest the ridge about 200m NW of Bealach an Fhiona (701m). A faint path may be found. Head SW up the ridge to the summit of Rois-bhein, 882m.

Continue W to reach the W summit, 878m for even better views*. Retrace steps E and continue to Bealach an Fhiona. Follow the ridge E, curving SE, along the rim of Coire a' Bhuiridh, then climb E more steeply to the summit of Sgurr na Ba Glaise**. The quickest descent is to retrace steps down to the col between Coire na Cnamha and Coire a' Bhuiridh, then turn E down into the latter corrie. Follow the Allt a' Bhuiridh N down to the dam at NM777810. Pick up the hydro-track to rejoin the outward route back to the start.

**If not intending to climb Sgurr na Ba Glaise, an alternative descent from the W Top of Roisbheinn turns NE across the summit plateau and descends the N ridge, steeply at first, to reach the floor of Coire Cnamha. Contour N across the slope, descending a little to cross the Allt Tarsuinnex at NM755798. Continue N to reach a track at NM754809. Follow the track NE to reach the A861 just E of Inverailort Castle. Return to start.

**If time permits, an interesting extension to the route from the summit of Sgurr na Ba Glaise continues E along a high-level ridge over An t-Slat-bheinn, N across Bealach an Fhalaigh Dhuibh, curving NE to the Corbett Top of Druim Fiaclach, 869m. Descend N to a col with a lochan, then continue NW down the undulating slopes of Meall Damh to reach the dam at NM777810. Cross the burn below the dam to pick up the hydro-track and rejoin the outward route back to the start.

19km, 1488m ascent
*14km, 1244m ascent
**21km, 1668m ascent

Suggested and coordinated by Toril Frantzen.

We think Fridays are for dramming...

Jim Irvine from Gordon MacPhail is joining us for our tasting on Friday 7th Feb.

As usual we will be tasting 6 drams. Really looking forward to this one as it is sure to be a memorable night. £20.00 per ticket. 7pm - 9pm, Ardshiel Hotel. Tickets available here: tickets.ardshiel.co.uk



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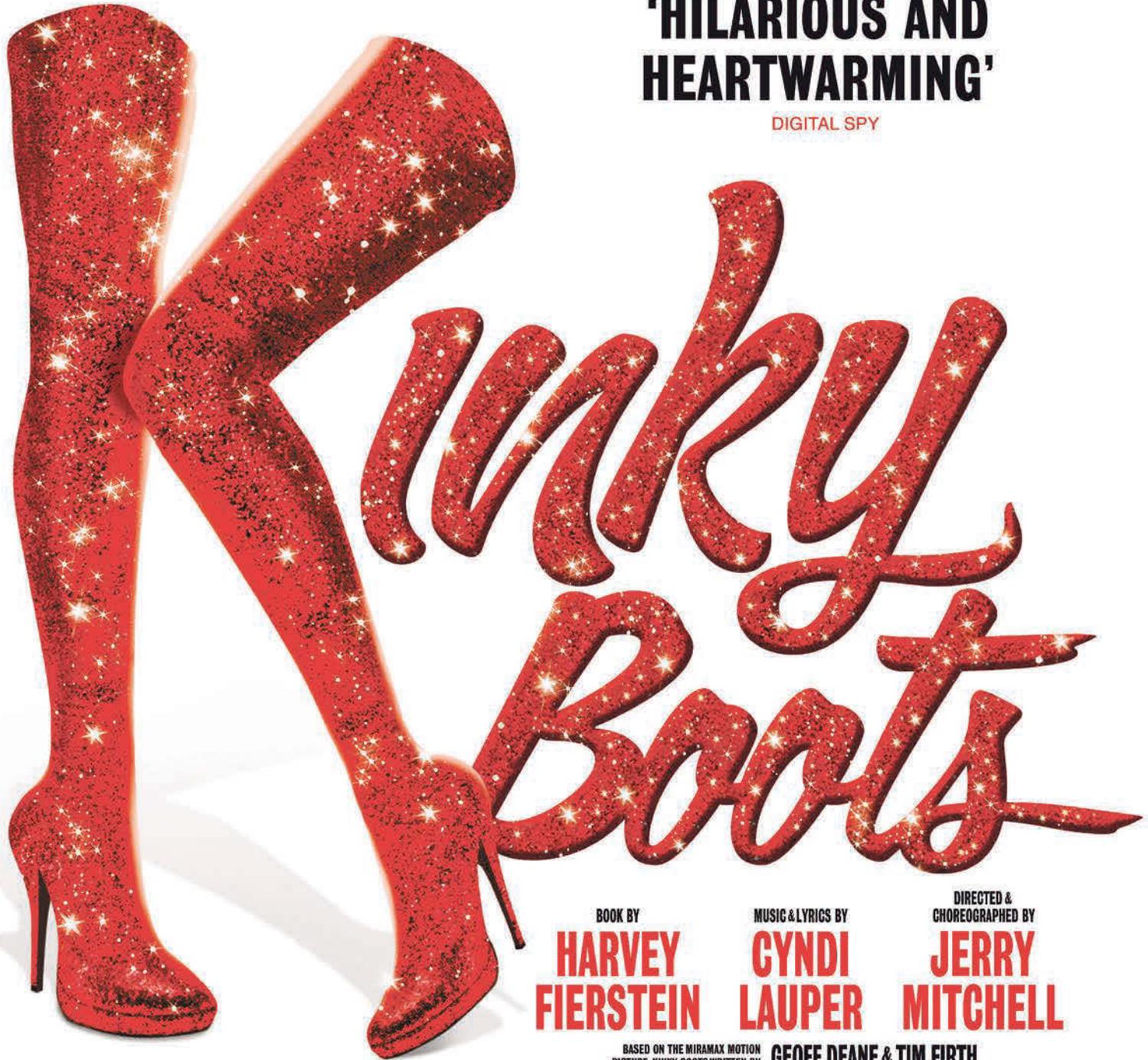


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Your comprehensive guide to self build and renovation, from finance to furnishing

Plan to succeed



E-planning system in Scotland has made planning easier

Applications are now easier than ever, so do not be daunted by the thought of planning permission.

A wealth of information about the subject is available online.

At its most basic, you need permission for a new building, or to make a major physical change to an existing one, like a change of use from industrial, commercial or agricultural into domestic or a large alteration to an existing property. This could be a complete renovation of a run-down home, a large extension, an extra storey or significant outbuildings.

'Permitted development' allows small alterations and extensions. It cannot be stressed enough that you need to make sure what you are doing falls under permitted development rights. Nothing is more costly or heartbreaking than being issued with an enforcement notice and being ordered to demolish.

Even if the work falls under the category of permitted development, it pays to get a Certificate of Lawfulness. This says the work has been carried out lawfully and is a significant help when you come to sell the property. A lack of this certificate can cause headaches when it comes to mortgages and insurance. If you are buying a property which has had permitted development work carried out, always check to make sure this certificate is there.

If you want to build new, extend or convert a listed building, in or out of a conservation area, you will also need extra consent. In some cases this also applies to the interior; anything that affects the fabric of an historic property.

Planning permission in principle - formerly known as outline planning permission - does what it says. It establishes that, yes, in principle, what you are proposing to build is

acceptable. Approval of matters specified in a condition then goes on to approve the conditions involved in the planning permission in principle. Work should only begin when this approval is in place. Pre-application advice offered by planning officers is available through your council. The best advice is always talk to your council first.

Need permission? The answer lies online

One of the biggest changes in planning - and a welcome one - is the move online.

Ninety per cent of all planning applications are now handled by eDevelopment.scot, the online service run by the Scottish Government. All the nation's local authorities and planning authorities use this service as does the construction industry, agents, home owners and self-builders.

The system can be used to make payments, submit extra information and amended and updated plans as and when needed. It also handles building warrant applications.

THINKING ABOUT A SELF-BUILD PROJECT?

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Your self-build plans need approval by your local authority planning department and will need to meet Scotland's energy efficiency requirements. For many this will mean home renewables.

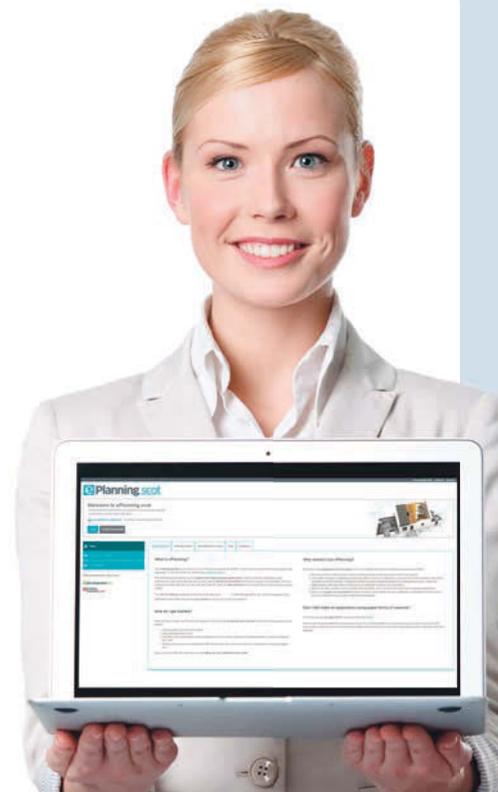
Home Energy Scotland's specialists are ready to give you tailored and impartial advice on suitable renewable technologies, typical running costs and available financial support.

Working with your plans, we'll provide bespoke modelling and compare the running cost of different technologies. Our advice covers a lot more too: maintenance costs, getting the best out of systems, Feed-in Tariffs, the Renewable Heat Incentive and accredited installers.

We also provide ongoing support to help you through the installation process, applying for funding and giving advice once your renewables system is commissioned.

To find out more call us free on **0808 808 2282** to speak to one of our advisors.

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How much of your self-build will you build yourself?

Turnkey v hands-on

For people who have never considered a self-build project for their new home, that phrase can be very misleading.

'What? You are going to build it yourself?' people ask you in horror.

If you are a tradesman or woman, then yes, you might well contribute your labours to the property, whether your skill is ground work, roofing, joinery, plastering or decorating.

It makes common sense to have some free labour on the project.

Or your skills might lie in administration and logistics and the idea of bringing together a team of specialist trades, sourcing supplies, handling the paperwork arranging the finance and having everyone and everything in place doesn't faze you.

If that is the case, then go for it!

Don't dismiss this part of the self-build.

The fine art of having the right people, materials and plant where you need them at the right time, helps to keep costs down.

The decision to project manage yourself is often based purely on financial circumstances, with self-builders choosing to take on the job themselves in a bid to save money.

But you are still a self-builder if you go for the turnkey option, just as much as if you were using a cement mixer on site.

A turnkey project, with everything from finding the land through to planning permission to garden landscaping, can be worth its weight in gold.

Any builder, contractor or trade will tell you the thing that drives them crazy the most is a client who drags their heels in getting back to them. They cannot carry the cost of this extra time and it will be added to your bill.

Often there will be decisions that have to be made there and then.

So if your work is demanding, you have to be out of contact due to this or have to travel, it makes common sense to go for the turnkey approach.

Or you could decide to appoint a main



contractor on a design and build basis.

At the heart of the self-build is a desire to have a unique house that you want, one that meets you and your family's needs and reflects your own personal tastes and desires.

The 'self' is still very much there in a turnkey project as you build the house that best reflects this.

Always remember, whatever route you decide - be it project-manage yourself or a turn-key project - it is vital you have an excellent system to store all paperwork and emails.

Building warrants

If you are fulfilling your dream of moving to Scotland and building your own home, be aware Scottish planning and building legislation differs from England and Wales.

Building Warrants apply here. The nearest England and Wales have is building control approval.

This is where people moving to Scotland can come unstuck because work cannot start on site until warrants are approved, thus showing compliance with regulations on new builds and alterations and any demolition work.



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DIGITAL PUBLIC SERVICE

Homepage of Scotland-wide system for making applications online; with links to your local council plus reassuring downloadable user guide and technical support desk.

e Building Standards.scot

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First of all build up your money



There is so much help and advice out there, so when you build your dream home don't think raising cash is a nightmare

Getting the right help is invaluable when financing your self-build.

You need an independent financial advisor and there are plenty who specialise in this market. What an architect is going to do with your ideas, your financial advisor is going to do with your money. Each of them takes your ideas and aspirations and turns them into workable plans – one for the building and one for the money to build it.

Not all lenders deal in self-build mortgages and you will benefit from having someone who knows how to hunt down those who do and those offering the best deals for your circumstances and ambitions.

The good news about building your own home is that you almost certainly get more house for your money. The bad news is you need more money for the house to begin.

Buy an existing property and the mortgage arrives in a lump sum. Build and the money will come in stages as work on the property progresses.

A house buyer's deposit is far smaller when compared with the initial lump sum a self-builder needs to buy the land and get the first stage completed on site before the mortgage kicks in and cash arrives to fund the next stage. That is why so many people sell their homes and live on-site in a static caravan; their old home is helping build their new one.

The self-build home buyer is always 'in arrears' though some 'advance' mortgages can be found where the cash arrives at the start of each stage of construction.

The self-build mortgage traditionally has six stages

- Land purchase
- Preliminary costs and foundations
- Wall plate level (brick and block) timber frame kit erected
- Wind and watertight
- First fix and plastering
- Second fix and completion

FACT CHECK

- **The insulation you install will not only save money on heating bills. It could save you money on your financial package. Remember to investigate building societies and 'ethical finance' where good deals are offered to people building eco-friendly properties.**
- **A self-build mortgage may also be suitable if you are taking on a renovation, conversion or extending your existing property.**
- **Many lenders, be they banks or building societies, will often only loan money on a fixed-price contract, or on an all-trades basis under the direction of a suitably-qualified project manager.**
- **Do not forget 'package deals' where you buy a kit house and building services from an existing company – and perhaps even the land – often offer, or source, financial packages. This can save a lot of leg work and grief.**



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Some building societies might loan up to 80 per cent of the total cost of the land and construction costs or valuation, whichever is the lower, making the build process more flexible.

Get the VAT back

Remember to keep on top of your paper work and claim back VAT where eligible.

The government has funds and grants for self-building and renovating some properties but make sure it is the government giving you the cash and not the other way round.

There are circumstances where you qualify for zero-rated VAT and a reduced VAT rate at source if any VAT registered business should supply labour or labour and materials.

Once the project is completed, you can reclaim any VAT paid on qualifying materials bought at 20 per cent VAT along with any five per cent VAT invoices. The rules and regulations can be daunting and there are specialists you can hire to help you.

Applying for a reduced rate VAT certificate helps.

There are plenty of experts out there who will help you.

Government help can secure your dream

The Self Build Loan Fund (SBLF) is a Scottish Government initiative, which will run until August 2021, to assist self-builders where they have been unable to obtain mainstream self-build mortgages

The Self Build Loan Fund operates across Scotland in rural and urban areas.

Those eligible can borrow up to £175,000, which they can draw down in staged payments similar to a traditional self-build mortgage. Borrowers must provide

a Professional Advisors Certificate at each stage of drawdown.

It funds the construction phase of a new home and, once this is completed, the borrower will repay the loan either via a mainstream mortgage or by using the equity from the sale of their existing home.

The Scottish Government has appointed the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust (HSCHT) to administer the SBLF on its behalf - after the trust ran a successful pilot scheme in the Highlands.

The fund cannot be used to buy house plots, as the plot must be in the ownership of the applicant to provide the Scottish Government with security for the loan.

When you apply, you must demonstrate you have been unable to obtain mainstream self-build mortgage finance.

You also need to show that:

- This will be occupied as your sole and only residence
- You own the house plot
- Have full planning permission
- Are ready to apply for a building warrant
- Have a defined build cost and construction programme
- Can demonstrate that you will be able to repay the loan upon completion

Conversions and extensions of properties cannot be financed by this grant.



Need finance to build a home?

What is the Self-Build Loan Fund?

The Self Build Loan Fund (SBLF) is a Scottish Government initiative to assist self builders where they have been unable to obtain mainstream self build mortgage finance. The fund is available Scotland wide to support additional housing provision across rural and urban areas.

Eligible individuals can borrow up to £175,000, which they can draw down in staged payments similar to a traditional self build mortgage. Borrowers must provide a Professional Advisors Certificate at each stage of drawdown. The SBLF is designed to fund the construction phase of a new home and, once this is completed, the borrower will repay the loan either via a mainstream mortgage or by using the equity from the sale of their existing home. The Scottish Government has appointed the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust (HSCHT) to administer the SBLF on its behalf and the Self Build Loan Fund Officer responsible for this is Neil Walker who has 33 years experience in the banking and financial sector and is well placed to provide assistance and guidance.

Who can apply?

A key purpose of the fund is to create additional, new homes for permanent residency. To apply you need to meet the following criteria:

- Demonstrate that you have been unable to obtain mainstream self-build mortgage finance for a new home - not a conversion or extension
- Intend to occupy the property as your sole and only residence
- Own a house plot
- Have full planning permission in place and be ready to apply for a building warrant
- Have a defined elemental build cost and construction programme
- Be able to demonstrate you will be able to repay the loan upon completion of your build.

Not ready to apply?

If you don't presently meet all of the criteria, or have any concerns, get in touch to discuss your case.

Further information?

For further information, please contact the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust;

e: neil.walker@hscht.co.uk

t: 01463 572 030

7 Ardross Terrace, Inverness, IV3 5NQ

THE SELF BUILD LOAN FUND

HERE TO HELP THOSE STRUGGLING TO SECURE SELF BUILD FINANCE

ABOUT THE SELF BUILD LOAN FUND



The Self Build Loan Fund (SBLF) was established by the Scottish Government to support and encourage the self build market at a time where securing mainstream finance can be difficult. The Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust administer the fund.

Now available across Scotland, self builders can borrow up to £175,000 to help them during their construction period.

 @SelfBuildFund

KEY FACTS

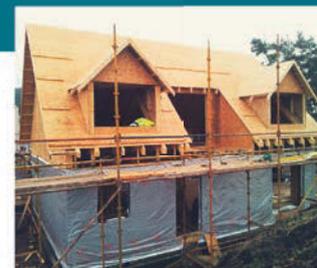
- Borrow up to £175,000
- Must be able to demonstrate that you have been unable to secure mainstream self build finance
- Used to financially support the construction of your home and then repay your loan with a traditional mortgage on completion
- Fees and interest apply
- Must own a house plot, with planning consent in place

For more information visit our website:
www.hscht.co.uk/scotland-self-build-loan-fund
Or get in touch:

 selfbuild@hscht.co.uk  01463 572030



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We have also recently launched a new website dedicated to providing self and custom build news and information. You can view it here: www.selfandcustombuild.co.uk.



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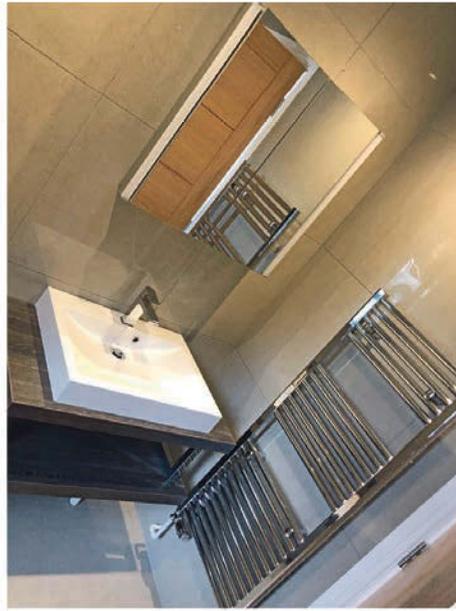
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Business Manager Greig MacLeod tells us 'We are a family run business and passionate about what we do. We offer a lot of services, but house building is our speciality. Our homes are stylish, spacious and affordable and can be customised to your exact requirements. Building a kit home is faster, easier and less wasteful than a traditional build. Our kits are highly insulated and come with double glazing



to help keep your heating bills down. All our kits have been designed to accommodate the latest renewable heating systems'.

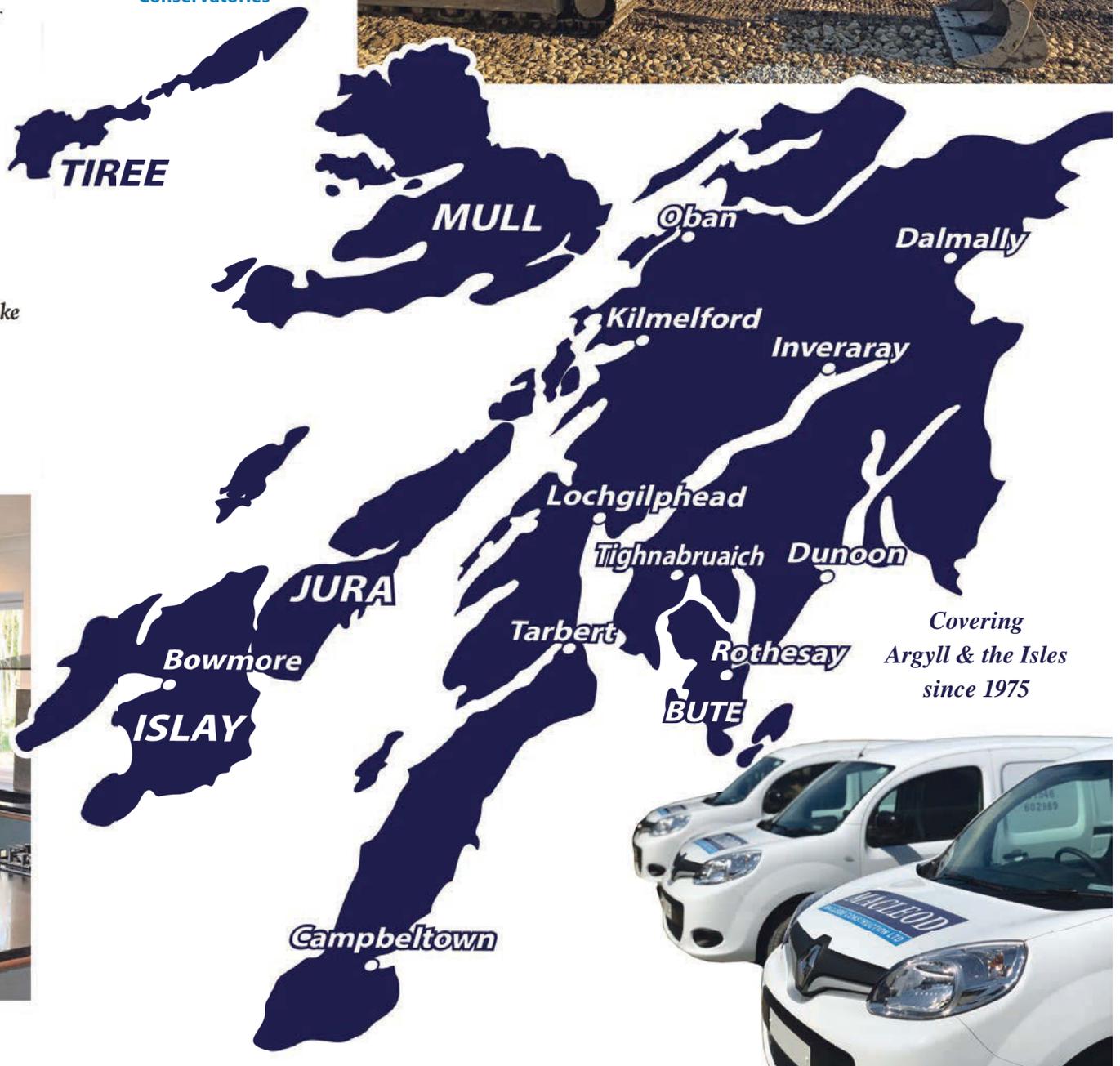
MacLeod Construction Ltd is able to offer a full range of services from obtaining planning permission and building warrants right through to completion.

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An architect listens first, then translates your dreams into reality

The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS) will tell you that when you hire an architect you get 'freedom from worry and value for money'.

And both of these mean a far less stressful self-build experience.

Using a building consultant or designer to draw up plans might be suggested as a way to save on costs, but hiring a chartered architect means you are tapping into the services of a professional who has studied for seven years, by far the longest training period within the building industry.

Only when qualified can they be listed with the Architects Registration Board and apply to the profession's chartered bodies to use the initials RIAS or FRIAS, the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, and RIBA, Royal Institute of British Architects.

You and your architect should decide in advance whether expenses will be included within the agreed fee or charged separately.

Calculating the cost architects' fees are part of the overall cost of any project and usually calculated in three ways.

Percentage is based on the total construction costs in the building contract including site works. Agreement is needed on the services provided, nature of the work and an approximate construction budget.

Lump sum fees work best when the project can be clearly defined from the start and there are no surprises for either side.

Time charged is the flip-side of that coin and best where the amount of work cannot 'reasonably' be seen. An agreed upper limit is needed and fees are often staged.

REMEMBER you need to reach an agreement with your architect whether expenses will be included within the agreed fee or charged separately.

Members must carry professional indemnity insurance and uphold the reputation of the profession.



An architect brings to your project:

- Seven years of studying - the longest training period in the building industry
- A member of a professional chartered body - RIAS or FRIAS, the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, and RIBA, Royal Institute of British Architects.
- Members must carry professional indemnity insurance and uphold the reputation of the profession.
- A professional who can steer you through planning and building legislation. A good architect listens to what you need the property to do for you and your family and how you want it to look. It is their professional experience that will make sure you get the best out of what you have; creating as much home as possible from a plot, materials and construction costs. This will save you money in the long term.



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Kit yourself out with a new home

Our favourite way to build in the West Highlands and islands

The kit home is the most popular way to build in the West Highlands and islands and some leading kits come from manufacturers in the region.

The kit emphasises ease of transportation with maximum time in the factory and minimum time on site before it is wind and water tight and ready for all trades to work alongside each other completing the project.

This is an added benefit in an area like the West Highlands and islands where the weather can be unpredictable and often very wet. Entire rooms can arrive, sealed, on site. The hard work has been done undercover in the factory and the time spent on site getting the property weather-tight is minimal.

Today's technology means a kit home is totally customisable.

Want to flip the interior lay out or think the porch would be better over there? No problem!

Today's kits have flexibility built in as standard and some kit home manufacturers can take your architect's drawings and use their production techniques to build your home from start to finish and give you a bespoke service.

The one proviso for a timber frame home design is making sure you know what you want at the design stage. Alterations once the kit has been constructed will be costly.

One advantage of having a kit home supplier build your home for you is they will have their own team of proven tradesmen and women who have worked together before and know the product inside out – literally! You are saving on time, but paying for expertise and experience.

You might decide to put the work in the hands of a building firm you know and trust. In the West Highlands the chances are that good building companies will have worked on all the big name company kits and have a proven knowledge and understanding of the product. Or you are in the building trade yourself and can put together your own team.

Kit homes came into the nation's consciousness in the aftermath of the Second World War but your grandparents and great-grandparents would not recognise the luxury kit homes of today.

This year the UK celebrates the 75th anniversary of VE Day, the end of the Second World War in Europe. The threat of bombing ceased, servicemen and women began to return home and the country slowly returned to a peace-time economy.

One big problem was housing or the desperate lack of it. The first kit home most people encountered was the 'prefab' a tiny, single storey utilitarian construction designed to fill a need. Photographs exist of Dunbeg, near Oban, showing rows of these houses., now all long gone.



Installing the heart of your home



When designing a new house, it makes sense to consider the heating system as early as possible since the SAP calculations can impact significantly on the overall design and cost of the building. Specifying a wood burning stove as part of your heating plan can help you achieve a worthwhile reduction of emissions for the SAP calculations. In practice this offers useful carbon 'credit' which can be traded off against other design aspects of the house.

A stove is an extremely efficient space heater that can be run economically in the super-insulated modern houses of today. It also provides a valuable and comforting source of heat during a prolonged power cut in an otherwise electric reliant system.

And, of course, it goes without saying a stove is a great looking visual asset which gives a 'heart' to the home and provides the

perfect focal point to gather family and friends around.

If you are building or renovating and are interested to know what benefits a stove could add as part of your heating mix then get in touch.

With more than 40 years experience, we can talk you through all the options available and work out what best fits your needs. Call us on 01631 720539.

Just a short note to say thank you for all the help choosing and installing our new Woodwarm stove. Your very professional and extremely helpful family service was second to none. We only wish we had fitted the stove years ago as it has made such a difference to our family home.

Mr & Mrs Scott, Oban



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You do not have to travel far to resource the best

Your new home has come to the point when the actual work begins. The plans, the finance and all the approvals are in place. Here comes the really exciting bit.

Nothing will compare with the feelings you get at the beginning and end of the self build journey.

The day the first hole is dug and the first time you walk through the front door of your completed home will stay with you forever.

The people who are going to make that happen for you are the tradesmen and women.

In an area of smaller, closely-knit communities like ours, word of mouth and personal recommendation really counts and chances are you will have gone into this project with the names of who you want to work on your dream already in place.

If you go for a turnkey build, your builder will have employees of their own and call on

specialist trades when needed. You will see the vans of well-known local businesses and self-employed contractors on sites all over Argyll and Lochaber.

Don't be surprised if people you hardly know come up to you and say, 'Oh I see you had . . . do your electrics. They did ours.'

When you decide to self-build you join a large, informal club.

Another good thing is the majority of these businesses, large and small, have apprentices who are going through college and working on their qualifications and are making a big contribution to helping grow the local economy and skill base.

They are making sure the next generation of trades are getting a good start.

The West Highlands and islands also have a good number of quarries dotted about the area which supply aggregate and stone. When it comes to sourcing aggregate and stone - and very high quality at that - you can be assured you are keeping your carbon footprint as low as possible.




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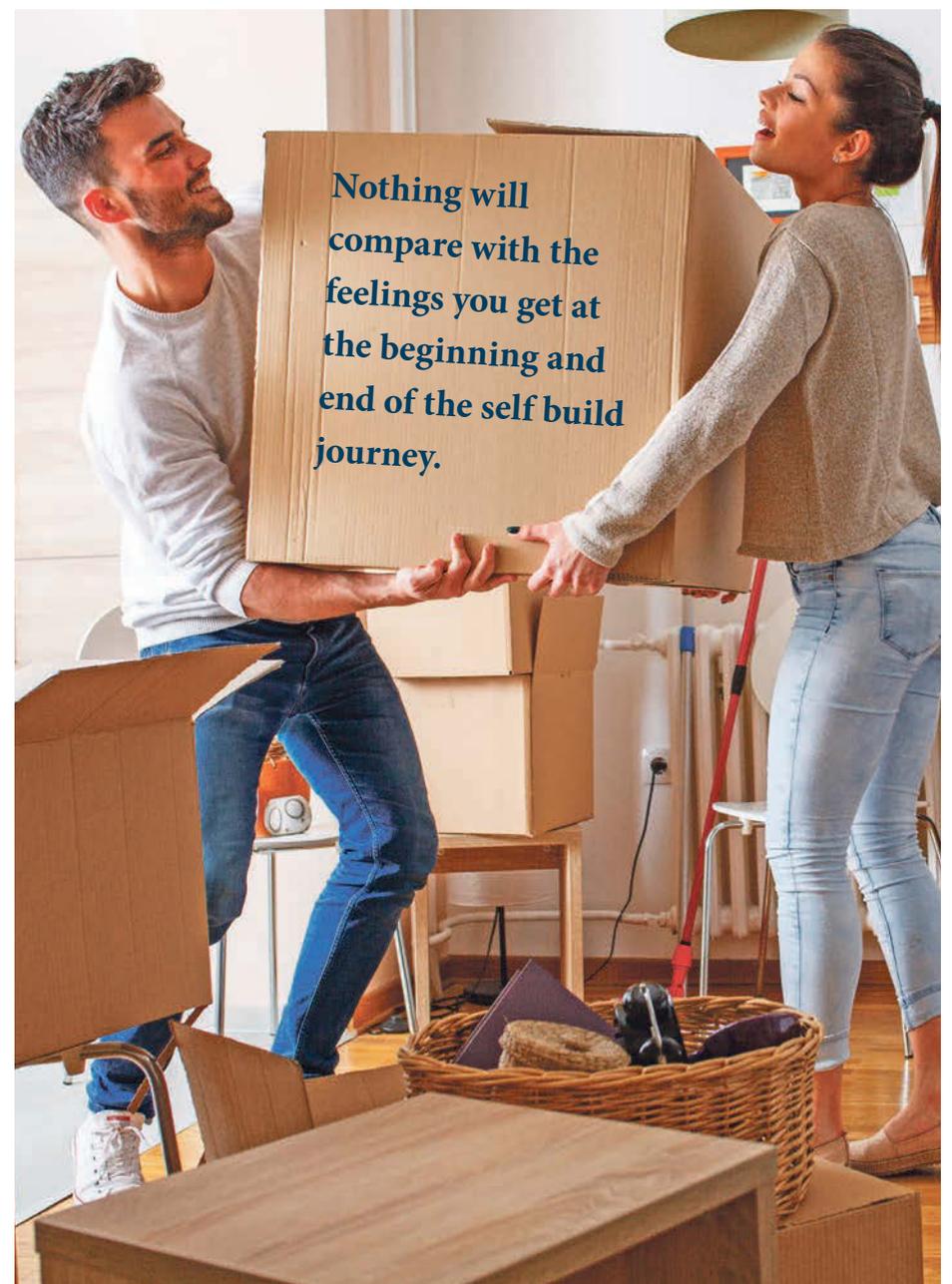
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Making your house a home

Time to start fresh and get comfy

For the majority of people, planning a self-build means living for a while in a small rental, with family or on-site in a caravan and that means the majority of your possessions are in storage.

This is a time to be ruthless. Storage is expensive. Ask yourself should I store, sell or scrap?

In the pre-build stage where you are planning and saving it makes sense to not replace major items.

When the time comes to store, ask yourself some tough questions: is it worth paying to store this mattress, divan bed, sofa or armchair or do we get rid and start afresh?

That can apply to all kinds of soft furnishings like rugs and especially lampshades; only glass

or metal seem to store well.

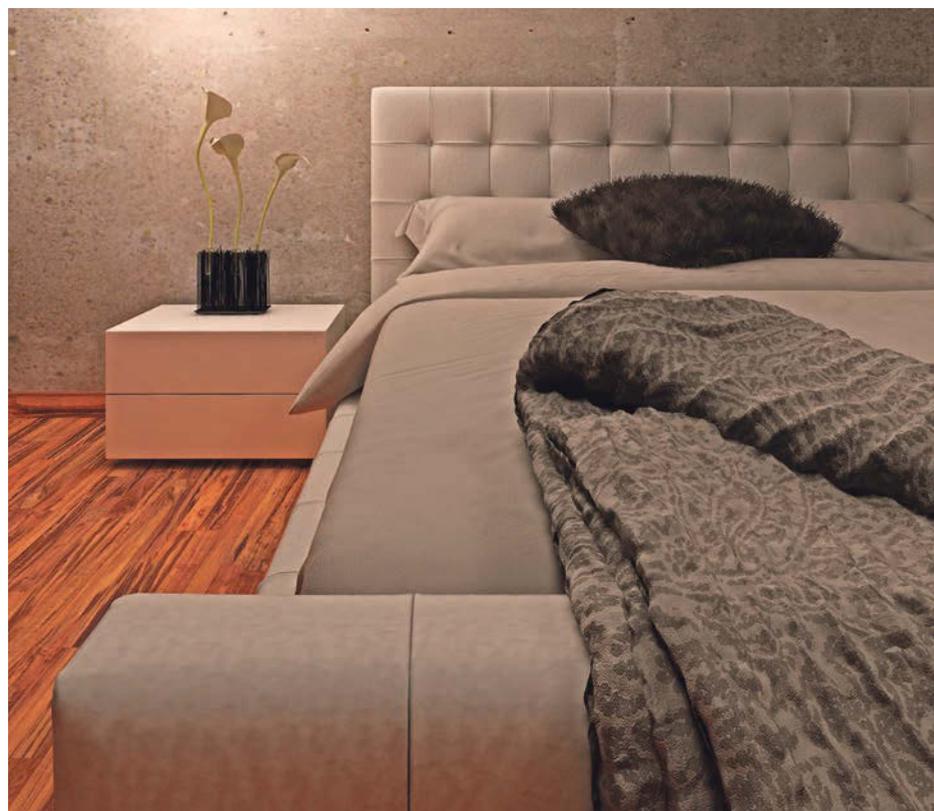
What worked in your old home might not fit in with the look you plan for your new one.

Everyone hates waste and we are all being urged to recycle. This is where our classified ads come in handy.

Your old stuff can make you money – or money for a good cause if you donate it to a charity shop. Someone, somewhere will thank you.

So now is the time to walk into your new home and look around you with a fresh eye and choose the new décor, carpets, furniture and light fittings you want.

Before you know it, it will all have been delivered and that new house is your home.



Highland BlindCraft

Wake up refreshed and with a spring in your step by updating your bed and giving your bedroom a new look

Highland BlindCraft makes beds to order in a factory above its large, bright showroom on Ardconnel Street, Inverness.

And it has fantastic new range of bedroom furniture.

Executive manager Denise Clark said: 'Your sleeping environment can really affect the quality of your rest. If you're not sleeping well or waking up with aches and pains, chances are you need a new mattress.'

To find the bed that's right for you, try out the various choices in the showroom including traditional springs, pocket springs and memory foam. Have a lie down, take your time to relax and feel the true support of each mattress, as there are different levels of firmness.

The friendly staff are fully trained in all the different types and fillings and are dedicated to finding your ideal bed. Because all its mattresses are manufactured

on site, the factory can also make non-standard sizes of beds and mattresses for almost every situation, including caravans or boats.

In the showroom on Ardconnel Street, customers can also try the mobility bed, which offers customers support, added comfort and independence.

Denise Clark said: 'The bed moves in sections to raise you up to a sitting position so you can read or watch TV or lifts your feet up – all at the press of a button.'

'It is suitable for a range of disabilities and can make it easier for people to get in and out of bed, as well as providing a comfortable night's sleep. The mobility bed is one of many products developed by the team at the onsite factory.'

They're not just the most comfortable beds you'll ever sleep in – as customers are happy to testify on Facebook. They're also elegantly stylish.

Denise said: 'We're working closely with a local textile manufacturer who produces a range of the most amazing wool and tweed fabrics. Customers can choose the fabric for their headboard and divan base – with perhaps a matching bespoke footstool.'

'Our beds work really well with our new furniture ranges.'

'And to help customers achieve the complete look, we have a large range of inspiring accessories including mirrors, pictures and bedside lamps, luxurious pillows and beautiful bedspreads.'

Prices are very competitive and because Highland BlindCraft's beds are manufactured in Inverness, they can guarantee delivery dates and ensure excellent high production standards and after sales service.

To find out more, visit Highland BlindCraft at 39 Ardconnel Street or www.highlandblindcraft.co.uk



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Opening Hours

Monday to Friday: 9am-5pm

Saturday: 9am-4pm

Sunday: Closed



Telephone: 01463 233662

Fax: 01463 710809 Email: sales@highlandblindcraft.co.uk

Address: Sales Office, Factory and Showroom,

39 Ardconnel Street, Inverness, IV2 3HB

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Beds & Bedroom Furniture



LEISURE & ENTERTAINMENT

YOUR GUIDE TO WHAT'S ON IN ARGYLL AND LOCHABER

Walk on the art side with Oban Phoenix Cinema

by Fiona Scott
fscott@obantimes.co.uk



Dismissed as a 'dwindling niche' on its inception at the start of the century, event cinema has become increasingly popular worldwide.

A night at the theatre has never been more accessible and Oban Phoenix Cinema is working on an exciting programme for 2020 bringing opera, ballet and live concerts.

The venue, in collaboration with National Theatre Live and Event Theatre, generated interest through its live streaming events last year and the cinema team are looking to build on that in 2020.

Phoenix marketing manager

Marco Pacitti said: 'Event Theatre brings so many benefits to a community such as Oban and the surrounding area. People can see all the latest productions and performances as they are happening from London and other parts of Europe in the comfort of their local cinema.'

'Rather than having to travel all the way there and pay a much higher ticket price, you can stay at home and pay an affordable price instead.'

The team at Oban Phoenix have been working hard to bring the latest blockbusters to cinema-goers in the area and their ongoing cultural programme is part of a new era for the George Street cinema.

'Event Theatre brings so many benefits to a community such as Oban. People can see all the latest productions and performances as they are happening from London in their local cinema.'

Manager Jennie Larney told The Oban Times: 'We have a great team at Oban Phoenix with everyone working hard to deliver a cinema experience that can be enjoyed by



Phoenix marketing manager Marco Pacitti takes a look at what's coming up at Event Cinema.

people of all ages and tastes. We have had some really positive comments relating to our new made-to-measure refreshments counter and are looking to upgrade the box office near the front entrance.'

Having closed in 2010, Oban Phoenix opened its doors as an independent community-owned cinema, one of very few in the world, two years later. It has been

thriving ever since and today it offers an eclectic mix of film including, but not limited to, arthouse, blockbuster movies and the live-streamed theatre.

Next up from Event Cinema is Kinky Boots the Musical on Tuesday February 4 at 7.30pm, while National Theatre Live present Cyrano De Bergerac, starring James McAvoy, on Thursday February 20 at 7pm.

Last year, National Theatre Live celebrated its tenth anniversary and audiences have grown from around 10,000 to millions.

Visit www.obanphoenix.com or call 01631 562905 for news and current releases.

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WHAT'S ON

In partnership with Oban Town
Diary BID4oban.co.uk

THURSDAY 30TH JANUARY

Oban Men's Shed

Salvation Army Hall
9:00am – 12:00pm

Oban Health Walks

Oban Congregational Church
10:00am - 12:00pm

Recovery Cafe

New Hope Kitchen, 12.30pm

Creative Writing Group

New Hope Kitchen, 2.30pm-4pm

Slimming World Fort William

Salvation Army Hall
3:00pm, 5:00pm & 7:00pm
Tel; Gillian 07796 040803

Entertainment @ Markie Dans

FREE JUKEBOX EVERY THURSDAY

FRIDAY 31ST JANUARY

Hope Kitchen Music Group

Salvation Army Hall, 1pm-4pm

Parsley's Cat Cafe

New Hope Kitchen, 2pm

Entertainment @ Markie Dans

Tweed
Open till 2:00am

SATURDAY 1ST FEBRUARY

Parkrun

Ganavan Sands, 9.30am

Coffee Morning

Oban Congregational Church
10.30am-12.30pm

Comunn Gàidhealach an Òbain

February Ceilidh

Masonic Hall, Oban, 7.30pm

Entertainment @ Markie Dans

Chunks
Open till 2:00am

SUNDAY 2ND FEBRUARY

Morning Service - Refreshments follow

Salvation Army Hall
11:00am - 12:00pm

Entertainment @ Markie Dans

QUIZ NIGHT at 9:30pm
£1 per person, max of 6 per team
Win £20 bar voucher

MONDAY 3RD FEBRUARY

Oban Men's Shed

Salvation Army Hall
9:00am – 12:00pm

Slimming World Fort William

Salvation Army Hall
9.30am & 11.30am
Tel; Gillian 07796 040803

Fellowship Meeting

New Hope Kitchen, 2pm

Slimming World, Lochgilphead

Union Street/Argyll Street
5:30pm & 7:30pm
Tel; Rhona 07880 878906

Martyn's Monday Club

New Hope Kitchen
7pm-9pm

TUESDAY 4TH FEBRUARY

Oban Men's Shed

Salvation Army Hall
9:00am – 12:00pm

Carers Coffee Morning

North Argyll Carers Centre
10.30am-12pm

Martyn's Monday Club Ladies

New Hope Kitchen, 7pm-9pm

WEDNESDAY 5TH FEBRUARY

Oban Men's Shed

Salvation Army Hall
9:00am – 12:00pm

Slimming World, Oban

Glencruitten Church Hall
9:30am, 11:30am, 5:30pm & 7:30pm
Tel; Gillian 07796 040803

Open Day

Greenshoots Garden
10.30am-3.30pm

Hope Kitchen Beach clean

(meet opposite the View), 10.30am

Knitting Group

New Hope Kitchen, 2pm

Support in the pipe line for dynamic quartet



Dynamic four piece band Gnos will be at the Victory Hall, Benderloch on Friday February 14.

February is music month on the Victory Hall centenary calendar and a traditional treat, with a contemporary twist, has been arranged to boost the birthday celebrations.

Hot off the stage from Celtic Connections, Gnos, a dynamic four-piece of fiddle, flute, guitar and percussion, will headline at the Benderloch venue on Friday February 14 with support from young pipers from the area.

With their energetic tunes and driving folk songs, Gnos have earned a reputation for their 'maturity of ability many of a greater age will envy' - The Living Tradition.

As current and former students of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Orcadians Graham Rorie and Aidan Moodie, Connor Sinclair, from Crieff, and Craig Baxter from Stirling,

have been tipped as 'ones to watch' by Songlines magazine.

'The Victory Hall has a great reputation for gigs on the folk circuit, so we're delighted to include our first visit on this upcoming tour,' said Graham. 'This is the first string of gigs we've done since we brought out the album last year. We can't wait to share it.'

With their latest release, Drawn From Deep Water, being nominated for Album of the Year at the MG Alba Scots Trad Music Awards 2019, all eyes are firmly on this young quartet.

Complementing the headliners will be a group of pipers, led by Kate MacPherson, who should not require any introduction. Tutored by world champion piper Angus MacColl, the youngsters will

be playing and sharing the stories of time spent in chanter and piping classes.

Victory Hall committee member Joy Cameron said: 'We are really excited about this performance for our centenary music-themed month.'

'Gnos have a tremendous reputation and we are delighted to welcome them to Benderloch while the pipers are known and appreciated by everyone in the area.'

'Angus (MacColl) has taught many children over the years through regular classes in The Victory Hall, so it is fitting they are to play a role in our centenary celebrations.'

Tickets are £15 on the door or £13 in advance and can be reserved by phoning 01631 720247. Doors open at 7.30pm with the performance starting at 8pm.

Events may charge. Please visit www.obanwhatson.co.uk for more details. To list your event, please call 01631 568000

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Glasgow Letter

ROBERT ROBERTSON

robert.d.robertson@hotmail.co.uk



I attended two wonderful gigs at Celtic Connections last week and, seeing as I cannot possibly write sufficiently about both of them within the confines of one column, I intend to write about The Big Fling (Scottish Dance Band Extravaganza) this week and then dedicate next week's column to Jamie MacDougall's wonderful performance of Lauder.

The Big Fling!

The Royal Concert Hall held the Scottish Dance Band Extravaganza on Tuesday January 21, which was a tremendous evening full of musical surprises.

The show began with Robert Black's Scottish Dance Band, with whom you have to expect the unexpected!

The tempo, time signature, or key signature never usually stay the same for too long within his set, which made for a very exciting start to the evening indeed.

Manus McGuire's Copperplate Sessions were next and, again, had the audience on the edge of their seats when the four fiddlers burst into

great harmony accompanied by vamping guitar and piano. Gary Innes (the MC for the evening) surprised us all by pulling a cracking Highland dance band out of the bag (with the legendary John Carmichael on second box) as opposed to the folk style he is better known for.

Ellie McLaren and Calum Cruickshank opened the second half with some precision playing and then Tom Orr's Mega Ceilidh Dance Band took to the stage and simply blew us all away.

Surprises were round every corner with the nine-piece dance band knocking out brilliant tunes while the four-piece brass section wove their jazz in and out of the dance music.

It was a night of music that I imagine took a lot of the audience out of our comfort zones and it is one that I very much enjoyed.

Celtic Connections

Thursday January 30: Session A9 and Johanna Juhola Trio at 7.30pm in the New Auditorium of the Royal Concert Hall.

Friday January 31: Kinnaris Quintet and Westward the Light at 7.30pm in the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, New Auditorium.

Tommy Smith and Brian Kellock with Kathleen MacInnes and Under the Surface at 7.30pm in the MacKintosh Church.

Friday January 31: Transatlantic Sessions at 7.30pm in the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall.

Friday January 31: Gnosswith Barry, Folan and McGowan at 8pm in the Tron Theatre.

Friday January 31: Fiona Hunter with The Trials of Cato at 8pm in the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall.

Saturday February 1: TMSA Young Trad Tour and Oban High School Trad School of Music at 1pm in the Strathclyde Suite of the Royal Concert Hall.

Saturday February 1: RANT with Sväng at 7.30pm in the MacKintosh Church.

Saturday February 1: Salsa Celtica 25th Anniversary Big Band and Project SMOK at 8pm in the Old Fruitmarket.

OBAN PHOENIX CINEMA WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

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FRIDAY 31ST JANUARY	COMING SOON IN FEBRUARY
Jojo Rabbit 12A	DOLITTLE
Jumanji: The Next Level 12A	PAW PATROL: READY RACE RESCUE
1917 15	THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS
A Hidden Life 12A	FROZEN 2: SING ALONG
Sorry We Missed You 15	THE RHYTHM SECTION
SATURDAY 1ST FEBRUARY	MONTHLY MUSICAL: AN AMERICAN IN PARIS (1951)
Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker 12A	BAD BOYS FOR LIFE
Spies In Disguise PG	SONIC THE HEDGEHOG
Little Women U	ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW
Jumanji: The Next Level 12A	OBAN PRIDE FUNDRAISER
Jojo Rabbit 12A	
A Hidden Life 12A	
1917 15	
SUNDAY 2ND FEBRUARY	
Jumanji: The Next Level 12A	
Jojo Rabbit 12A	
1917 15	
A Hidden Life 12A	
MONDAY 3RD FEBRUARY	
A Hidden Life 12A	
Jojo Rabbit 12A	
Jumanji: The Next Level 12A	
1917 15	
TUESDAY 4TH FEBRUARY	
1917 15	
Jojo Rabbit 12A	
Jumanji: The Next Level 12A	
A Hidden Life 12A	
Kinky Boots: The Musical 12A	
WEDNESDAY 5TH FEBRUARY	
Jojo Rabbit 12A	
A Hidden Life 12A	
Jumanji: The Next Level 12A	
1917 15	
Sorry We Missed You 15	
THURSDAY 6TH FEBRUARY	
The Amber Light 12A	
Jumanji: The Next Level 12A	
1917 15	
A Hidden Life 12A	
Sorry We Missed You 15	

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Please be advised, all films and showtimes are subject to change/availability with little or no notice. Booking is always recommended to avoid disappointment. Please check www.bffc.co.uk for more information about film certificates.

ADVERTORIAL

RUTHERFORDS ARE CURL EXPERTS



After spending time with Matt Surplice, owner of SPRING, the UK's first dedicated curly hair salon, Allan McKechnie at Rutherford's is the guy to see about taming and trimming your curly hair. Allan has more than 17 years experience in the hairdressing industry and has spent the last three perfecting the curl by curl technique he was taught and uses when cutting curly hair. Curly hair is a completely separate entity to straight hair therefore should be cut, coloured and handled differently, using the correct products and tools are essential. If there is a curl in there he will get it out, so for your personalised consultation give him a call.

Some top tips for curly hair

1. Always use sulphate free shampoo
2. Squeeze your hair dry after washing using a microfibre towel
3. Use plenty of conditioner
4. Leave a conditioning product in the hair and top with a styling product.
5. DO NOT USE A COMB OR BRUSH ON THE HAIR (even during a haircut)



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M'ALBA

MY ALBA

DIARDAOIN 30 An Gearran / THURSDAY 30 February

17:00 Prògraman Chloinne
Children's programming
19:00 Fuine (rpt)
19:30 Speaking Our Language (rpt)
19:55 Earrann Eachdraidh (rpt)
20:00 An Là – News
20:30 UR/NEW: Eorpa/
European Current Affairs
21:00 Sar Sgeoil: His Bloody Project (rpt)
22:00 UR/NEW: Mach a Seo!
22:30 UR/NEW: Concorde
23:15 Dhan Uisge (Cuan Sound) (rpt)
23:20 Belladrum – Cridhe Tartan (Highlights) (rpt)
23:30 Fonn Fonn Fonn (rpt)

DIHAOINE 31 An Gearran / FRIDAY 31st February

17:00 Prògraman Chloinne
Children's programming
18:35 Machair (rpt)
19:00 An Là – News
19:25 Fraochy Bay (rpt)
19:30 Leugh Mi (rpt)
20:00 Oran na Mna (rpt)
20:30 An Lot (rpt)
21:00 Opry an Luir (rpt)
22:00 An Klondike (rpt)
22:50 Dhan Uisge (Cuan Sound) (rpt)
23:00 Orain nan Gaidheal (rpt)

DISATHAIRNE 1 An Gearran / SATURDAY 1 February

16:00 Prògraman Chloinne
Children's programming
17:45 An Là – News
18:00 UR/NEW: Scottish Premiership – St Johnstone v Heart of Midlothian
20:00 Machair (rpt)
20:25 Fraochy Bay (rpt)
20:30 An t-Eilean/From Skye with Love (rpt)
21:00 Orain nan Gaidheal (rpt)
22:00 UR/NEW: Nochd
22:45 Ceol bho Perthshire Amber (rpt)

22:55 Scottish Premiership – St Johnstone v Heart of Midlothian (rpt)

DIDÒMHNAICH 2 An Gearran / SUNDAY 2 February

12:50 UR/NEW: Womens Six Nations Rugby : Ireland v Scotland
14:55 Na Worlds 2018 (rpt)
16:00 The Call Of The Isles (rpt)
16:45 An Là – News
17:01 Fraochy Bay (rpt)
17:05 UR/NEW: BBC Radio Scotland Young Traditional Musician 2020
18:45 Seachd La – News Review
19:15 UR/NEW: BBC Radio Scotland Young Traditional Musician 2020
20:00 Eorpa (rpt)
20:30 Mach a Seo! (rpt)
19:30 Alleluia ! (rpt)
21:00 Farpaisean Chon-Chaorach (rpt)
22:00 Sar-sgeoil: His Bloody Project (rpt)
23:00 An Klondike (rpt)
23:50 Dhan Uisge (Cuan Sound) (rpt)

DILUAIN 3 An Gearran / MONDAY 3 February

17:00 Prògraman Chloinne
Children's programming
19:00 Turas a' Bhradain (rpt)
19:30 Speaking Our Language (rpt)
19:55 Earrann Eachdraidh (rpt)
20:00 An Là – News
20:30 An Lot (rpt)
21:00 Trusadh – Acrach airson Atharrachadh (rpt)
22:00 Port (rpt)
22:30 DIY le Donnie (rpt)
23:15 Eadar Chluich (rpt)
23:20 Dhan Uisge (Cuan Sound) (rpt)
23:30 Mach a Seo! (rpt)

DIMÀIRT 4 An Gearran / TUESDAY 4 February

17:00 Prògraman Chloinne
Children's programming
19:00 Bailtean Fraoich (rpt)

19:30 Speaking Our Language (rpt)
19:55 Earrann Eachdraidh (rpt)
20:00 An Là – News
20:30 Dreach Ur (rpt)
21:00 Air a' Chanal (rpt)
22:00 Trusadh – Acrach airson Atharrachadh (rpt)
23:00 Oran na Mna (rpt)
23:30 Alleluia (rpt)

DICIADAIN 5 An Gearran / WEDNESDAY 5 February

17:00 Prògraman Chloinne
Children's programming
19:00 Turas a' Bhradain (rpt)
19:30 Speaking Our Language (rpt)
19:55 Earrann Eachdraidh (rpt)
20:00 An Là – News
20:30 An t-Eilean/From Skye with Love (rpt)
21:00 DIY le Donnie (rpt)
21:45 Belladrum 2016: Cridhe Tartan – Rachel Sermanni (rpt)
22:00 UR/NEW: Scottish Premiership – St Mirren v Hamilton

DIARDAOIN 6 An Gearran / THURSDAY 6 February

17:00 Prògraman Chloinne
Children's programming
19:00 Bailtean Fraoich (rpt)
19:30 Speaking Our Language (rpt)
19:55 Earrann Eachdraidh (rpt)
20:00 An Là – News
20:30 UR/NEW: Eorpa/
European Current Affairs
21:00 Sar Sgeoil: As the Women Lay Dreaming 2018/19 (rpt)
22:00 UR/NEW: Mach a Seo!
22:30 Fo Ghlas/ Worlds Toughest Prisons (rpt)
23:20 Dhan Uisge (Loch Maree) (rpt)
23:25 Belladrum – Cridhe Tartan (highlights)
23:30 Fonn Fonn Fonn (rpt)



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Sold-out Barnhill on second edition

Luing author Norman Bissell has sold 1,000 copies of his book Barnhill.

The success of the hardback novel about George Orwell's struggle to finish writing Nineteen Eighty-Four on the isle of Jura, means it is on to its second edition.

A paperback version will follow and interest has also been shown into turning it into a film, said Mr Bissell, who co-runs Luing Stores and was awarded a Creative Scotland Artist's Bursary to research and write the book.

People will soon have a chance to hear more about the book and George Orwell.

Mr Bissell, a director of the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics and former history teacher, will be at Oban's Corran Halls on Tuesday March 3 at 11am talking to the town's Oban U3A group.

On Thursday March 19 at 6pm he will be one of the authors taking part in the Aye Write! festival in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow. Then on Saturday May 30, from 10am to 4pm, Mr Bissell will be at an event in Rothesay called Dystopias, George Orwell and Scottish Islands, in Bank of Ideas. Tayvallich Village Hall will host a George Orwell on Jura talk on Sunday June 28 at 5pm.

More dates for the George Orwell on Jura show can

be booked by visiting The Touring Network Tourbook at tourbook.live/tours/george-orwell-on-jura-8673.

In July 1948, against doctors' orders to recuperate from tuberculosis in a sanatorium in the south, Orwell decided to go back to Jura instead, a decision that probably cost him his life, said Mr Bissell.

'His determination to meet the publisher's deadline of the beginning of December 1948 saw him reworking the manuscript, despite his deteriorating health.

'He insisted on being present while the manuscript was being typed, to ensure his copious notes were deciphered correctly and incorporated, but was unwilling to leave Jura.

'Despite his requests, no typist was willing to journey out to the island, so he typed it himself sitting up in bed.

'Resolving to have five copies to send out as required, he laboriously typed these up himself – a decision that really destroyed the last of his health,' he added.

The December deadline was met, but Orwell exhausted himself in the process and never recovered.

He was admitted to a sanatorium in Gloucestershire, then to London's University College Hospital where he died on January 21, 1950.

Debut

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk



Kilchrenan children's writer Mandy Sheridan tells the remarkable tale of a boy who communicates with cats in her debut book out in March.

A Wilder Quest is an adventure story suitable for 10-year-olds and upwards says Mandy, whose day job is a children and families social worker.

A sequel to A Wilder Quest and two other books are waiting in the wings if the adventure is a hit with young readers.

Although Mandy, who has five long-haired pedigree cats of her own, has previously self-published feline-themed stories for youngsters, this new book about a boy called Tabby will be her first to be published the traditional way, through SRL Publishing.

She said: 'It's a hobby and release. My day job involves heavy research and writing on some tough and often complex matters, so to be able to write something like this is delightful.'

Suitable for readers aged 10 and above, the plot brushes with some child protection issues.

Mandy continued: 'I started writing it when I was working as a social worker in Penrith. I don't mention the town in the book but it's where the story starts. Cats were on my mind because I had a rescue cat called

Guide to island bagging

For those who enjoy a challenge and thrive on adventure and the outdoors, Munro bagging has long been a popular pastime.

But a more recent phenomenon of island bagging is on the rise, particularly in Scotland where many islands can be reached relatively easily by hopping on a ferry.

With uncertainty surrounding Brexit and more people concerned about their carbon footprint, there has been a steady rise in stacations, nowhere more so than on the west coast.

To help the adventurous on their journey, experienced travellers Helen and Paul Webster are spreading their love for Scotland's stunning islands.

The couple, who have written numerous guide books and run the website Walking Highlands, have experience in this area of travel.

Their latest book, Scottish Island Bagging, focuses on 99 islands that have regular trips or means of access for visitors plus 55 others which have no regular transport but are still of significant size or interest, with the authors describing the best ways to experience each one.

As well as the popular islands of Skye, Lewis and Bute, the couple include St Kilda and more remote islands such as Sula Sgeir, which will be known only to a few.

When it comes to things to see and do, wildlife enthusiasts, foodies and those interested in geography and history are all catered for and Munro baggers can still bag a munro while also bagging an island.

The book is well laid out into geographical areas – from islands in the Firth of Forth to the Outer Hebrides and Orkney and Shetland –

with photographs the couple have taken on their own trips. Every island included features a brief introduction and information on how to access it and advice on how to get the most out of your visit. Islands featured that do not have a regular boat service are for information only.

This appears a well-researched book and using the Walking Highland website for routes, I'm looking forward to continuing my exploration of our stunning landscapes and communities with the help of this publication.

The book comes with a warning though – once you've started, there is no cure for Scottish island bagging. You have been warned!

Scottish Island Bagging, by Helen and Paul Webster, is published by Vertebrate Publishing.



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Andy & Sarah, 11am-3pm: Molly's Mix, 3pm-7pm: Drive time with Stephen, 7pm-9pm: Christine's Collection, 9pm-10pm: Anne's Ceilidh, 10pm-12am: Margo till Midnight
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SUNDAY: 9am-11am: Sunday Morning with Breege, 11am-1pm: Sunday brunch with Allan, 1pm-7pm: Clyde 2, 7pm-9pm: New Country with Dave & Murdo, 9pm-11pm: Drum & Bass with Graham Scott

book on wildside



Children's writer Mandy Sheridan with two of her cats at home in Kilchrenan.

at the time. I started thinking there have been no wildcats in England for a long time but what if they found one? I combined that thought with wanting to promote the preservation of wildcats and came up with the book idea about a boy who discovers he can understand cats and talk to them.
'Tabby, the hero of the story, makes contact with cats and they set him three challenges to see if he's worthy of a quest that involves his friends and taking the last surviving English wild-

cat to Scotland to find a mate. One of Tabby's friends comes from a broken home and there has been domestic abuse but it's kept low-key in the book. I just wanted to show support for people in that situation.
'Tabby and his friends pass the cats' test then have to get the last wildcat up from England to the Great Glen to meet his mate and preserve that line. Ironically, no one knew the wildcat existed until they tore down his home to make a wildlife park!
'Tabby's granddad is also in

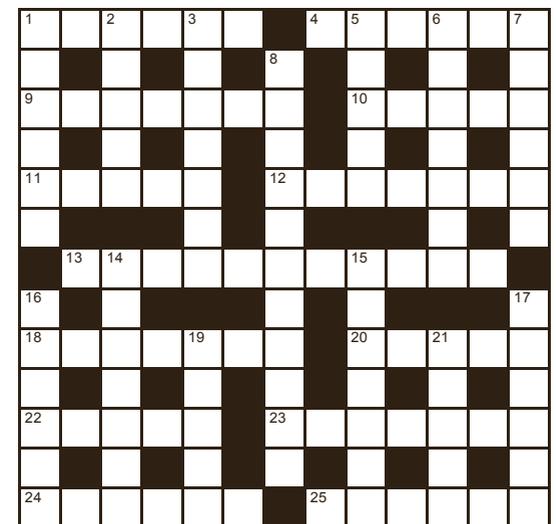
the story. He can talk to birds and keeps pigeons. They all set off in his 1960s VW van but encounter baddies on the way. There's the gamekeeper who thinks the only animals worth keeping alive are the ones he can exploit.
'The gamekeeper can also talk to dogs who are on his side. There are lots of adventures and encounters with him on the journey,' said Mandy.
A battle breaks out when they get to their destination but to find out how it all ends, you will need to read the book.

Shuffle up for Oban High School Dance Show

Oban High School will present its annual dance show on Wednesday February 5 and Thursday 6 in the Corran Halls.
Entitled Shuffle, there will be an evening performance on the Wednesday at 7.30pm and a noon matinee and 7.30pm show on the Thursday.
The Thursday matinee has become a firm favourite and will be attended by around 350 primary school children.
There will still be plenty of seats, however, for any members of the public who would prefer to attend the afternoon show.

Pupils have been rehearsing their dance and gymnastic routines since August, with senior dance leaders completing their leadership training in June last year. Sports coaches have designed posters and chosen the theme of the show and there will be a raffle during the intervals.
Shuffle features a mix of tracks and dance styles guaranteed to keep the audience entertained.
Tickets are on sale from the Corran Halls, priced £6 for adults and £4 for concessions. A £18 family ticket for two adults and two children is available.

Crossword



Across

- 1 Yellow fruit (6)
- 4 Wooper (6)
- 9 Angled extra buildings (4-3)
- 10 Ties (5)
- 11 They meet in the middle (5)
- 12 Stomach (7)
- 13 Cow's produce without the topping (7,4)
- 18 Old german coin (7)
- 20 Greek letter (5)
- 22 Manner of speaking (5)
- 23 It rises once a month (3,4)
- 24 Girls name, a form of one from Eden (6)
- 25 As much as one wants to see (6)

Down

- 1 Slight (6)
- 2 Woven fabric worn on the left shoulder (5)
- 3 Rare metallic element (7)
- 5 Turn topsy-turvy (5)
- 6 Warm (7)
- 7 Take offense at (6)
- 8 Seller of buildings (6,5)
- 14 Turkish viceroys in the late 19th century (7)
- 15 Move over (4,3)
- 16 Set of advantages (6)
- 17 Worldly (6)
- 19 Acronym for keeping things away from you (5)
- 21 Evidence..of alcohol? (5)

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION



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7.30pm
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Guest Artist: Hector MacFadyen Trio
Admission £4 • All Welcome!

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Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker (12A) 142 mins 31/01 at 8.30pm, 05/02 at 8.30pm, 07/02 at 8.30pm
Frozen 2 (U) 103 mins 01/02 at 2pm, 02/02 at 5.30pm, 03/02 at 5.30pm, 05/02 at 5.30pm, 08/02 at 2pm, 09/02 at 5.30pm
Little Women (U) 135 mins Four sisters grow up in 1860s New England. 01/02 at 5.30pm, 04/02 at 5.30pm, 06/02 at 5.30pm, 08/02 at 5.30pm
Knives Out (12A) 130 mins "fun whodunit worthy of Agatha Christie" The Telegraph 02/02 at 8.30pm, 04/02 at 8.30pm, 07/02 at 5.30pm
Jojo Rabbit (12A) 108 mins Satire about a boy in the Hitler Youth who starts questioning his extremist beliefs. 09/02 at 8.30pm

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Youthful energy key to Argyll's future

More than 60 members of the Argyll and Islands branch of NFU Scotland attended the group's annual general meeting in Tarbert, despite a dire weather forecast.

Delegates from across the region turned out on Friday January 10 to elect their new chairman Duncan McAllister from Glenbarr following the retirement of John Dickson from Scalpsie Farm on Bute, after four years of service.

John was warmly praised for his superb track record, in particular his championing

of women within the union as well his active engagement with politicians in furthering agricultural issues and farmers' needs.

His successor is looking forward to capitalising on his achievements, admitting: 'John will be a hard act to follow' but is determined to ensure the voice of rural and farming communities throughout Argyll and the islands will be heard in the corridors of power as well as by the general public.

As a thank you, John was

presented with a selection of local produce from the regional board. This included Springbank whisky, Loch Fyne salmon, Mull of Kintyre cheddar and three Scots Pine trees for him to establish his own woodland.

In another landmark, well-known NFU Scotland secretary Euan Warnock, based in Oban, was presented with a 25-year long service certificate and bottle of whisky by president Andrew McCornick on behalf of NFU Scotland.

Diversity, regional payments, veganism and, inevitably, Brexit were top of the agenda for many of the farmers who attend the AGM.

Outgoing chairman John Dickson urged colleagues to seek out and promote more women to take up union positions.

'There are many strong, well-informed and well-qualified women out there,' he said, 'but we must try harder to encourage them to come to our meetings and participate.'

There was much criticism of the current arrangements for the regional payment scheme, with some claiming it is 'unjust' and others lamenting its 'unintended consequences'. The meeting resolved to ensure the dissatisfaction of many farmers is brought to the urgent attention of the Scottish Government and that the union will work with officials to address its shortcomings.

The next generation was the switch in focus for the afternoon session.

Members heard over and over again how the passion, enthusiasm and energy of the younger generation can help farming and rural life in Scotland to flourish, become more sustainable and endure into the future.

Appropriately, the top panel gathered for this highlight of the day in Tarbert had a younger and more gender-balanced demography, not least as it was chaired by Ian Dickson, son of outgoing re-



Newly-elected chairman Duncan McAllister, left, and his predecessor John Dickson, with Argyll and the Isles gifts.

gional NFU chairman John. He was joined by Jenny Baillie, a farmer's daughter from Lanarkshire, who is currently full time manager of the Scottish Association of Young Farmers' Clubs East Region.

Another Jenny – Brunton – is a policy manager with NFU Scotland with specific responsibility for CAP schemes, environmental regulations and next generation. They were joined by Colin Ferguson, another young dairy farmer from Galloway, who chairs the NFUS Next Generation group as well as the NFUS Dumfries and Galloway regional board, and John McCulloch, chairman of SAYFC West Region Agri and Rural Affairs Committee

as well as Stewartry Young Farmers Club.

The panel was completed with the slightly more mature experiences of Ian Davidson, the current national advisor for the Scottish Land Matching Service and former head of the agriculture policy division at the Scottish Government.

In a no-holds-barred approach, the audience heard from the panel how they were an ageing profession. 'We need to fix that problem,' said Colin Ferguson. 'There is a huge requirement to upskill and to look elsewhere for ways to allow new entrants and greater diversity in our businesses.'

His words were echoed by Jenny Brunton who urged the

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Loch Awe-side farmer John MacPherson, left, chats with Ian Davidson.

union to embrace younger members, to encourage them to join and get involved, reminding everyone there was a family membership scheme allowing up to six family members to participate in union activities and meetings.

It was Jenny Baillie who mentioned the 'B' word, claiming 'Brexit can be seen as an opportunity', before going on to urge the audience to rise to the challenges and to get better at influencing each other as well as the next generation. 'We can all be influencers in our own way.'

This call for better and different communication was repeated by John McCulloch who said the problems facing the industry can be addressed by 'getting out and seeing what other people are doing.

Ask more questions, open more doors and, please, listen to the answers'.

With Ian Davidson rounding off the panel's thoughts by introducing the topic of land matching, the scene was set for a barrage of questions from the floor, many concerning how to make farming in Argyll and the Islands in particular more viable. Ian explained how land matching - bringing together farmers, crofters and land owners who might be thinking about retiring or giving up with younger or folk relatively new to the industry - works. He cited examples of how, with the appropriate legal, contractual and personal agreements in place, this can work to mutual benefit, revitalising tired old practices



John Earnshaw with daughter Rhona.

and creating more vibrant, flourishing businesses.

But he pointed out he receives many inquiries from people looking for opportunities to get into the business, but very few offering opportunities.

Mr Davidson urged the audience to think about succession planning, to discuss the future with family and to start taking action to ensure a productive future for farming in Scotland.

A call to Argyll and Islands NFU members by chairman John Dickson to 'bring a young person with you - maybe a son, a daughter, nephew, niece who is involved in your family business' did not go unheard.

There were at least three examples to the fore at

the meeting in Tarbert. John Earnshaw, who farms on Gigha as well as at West Darlochan near Campbeltown, brought his 20-year-old student daughter Rhona with him.

Catherine Ralston, who farms at the Rhoin near Campbeltown and teaches farming and rural studies, was accompanied by her son David. And John Dickson practiced what he preached, with his son Ian chairing the afternoon session as a leading light in the Next Generation initiative.

'We want to ensure young people have a bright future in the sector and we want them to become involved in agri-affairs, policy lobbying and NFU Scotland,' John told the audience.

Stalwart accolade for Donnie and Kate

Donnie and Kate McKerral of family haulage firm Peter McKerral & Co Ltd have been honoured by the Argyll farming community.

The couple were presented with the Argyll and the Islands region's coveted NFU Scotland Stalwart Award to mark their family haulage firm's long service to the agricultural community.

The award is made every year in memory of Mull farmers Bert Leitch and Lachlan MacLean to mark outstanding support for the farming industry in Argyll and the isles. The presentation was made by outgoing Argyll and Islands NFUS chairman Jim Dickson at the AGM in Tarbert Bowling Club.

Peter McKerral & Co Ltd was established in the mid-1970s with one lorry. It now has a fleet of more than 60 lorries and employs 80 people.

Newly-appointed regional chairman Duncan Mcallister said: 'It is an honour to present Donnie and Kate with the Argyll and the Islands NFU



Donnie and Kate McKerral.

Stalwart Award for 2020. Donnie and his family provide a personal first-class service to the farmers of Argyll, delivering our livestock to markets whenever we require. Of equal importance is the list of essential goods they bring back into the region.'

Mr McKerral said: 'Kate and I are shocked. It was totally unexpected, but we are delighted to receive the award on behalf of the family. I extend my sincere thanks to NFUS for excellent service and support.'

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www.stoddartsofoban.co.uk

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12 months initial contract
£12,000 per annum.

Potential employment opportunity at end of apprenticeship

Job Purpose - You will be working within our ICT team, providing first line ICT support and data services to staff and students.

Types of activities - Desktop support, installing Windows and Software, rebuilding computers, fixing and maintaining devices (e.g. printers), server room housekeeping.

Individuals will be expected to engage proactively with a varied workload to support requirements across the business, which include Scientific Research, Education and Commercial activities.

During this 12-month apprenticeship, you will work towards an SCQF 6 Diploma in ICT whilst also studying towards Microsoft Technology Associate certifications.

At the end of the apprenticeship, there will be a review of resource requirements. This may result in a future employment position.

Please read our job description for full job details.

Attributes required - The ideal candidate should have experience with computing, for example, as a hobbyist, and show enthusiasm for the subject area. You should be educated to at least National 5 level, preferably holding certificates in relevant technical, scientific or mathematical subjects. We are looking for someone keen to advance their ICT knowledge in what is a stimulating and diverse working environment.

It would be helpful if you also had some experience of working in a customer-orientated area and are used to dealing with people. You will be expected to help a range of people, including staff, students and visitors and help them with their ICT issues. Good online research/learning skills would be an advantage.

You will be well organised with the ability to multi-task and work well as part of a team that serves the wider research/business/educational community.

This is a great opportunity for those looking to progress their career whilst remaining in the Oban area. We are looking for individuals who bring enthusiasm to their work and are willing to tackle fresh challenges.

Further information is available online at www.sams.ac.uk. Alternatively, please write to: Human Resources, Modern Apprentice - ICT Support Analyst, Job Ref D18.19/SG, The Scottish Association for Marine Science, Scottish Marine Institute, Oban, Argyll PA37 1QA or e-mail recruitment@sams.ac.uk

The closing date for receipt of applications is 21st February 2020

SAMS is a registered Scottish charity (SC 009206), has an equal opportunities policy and welcomes applications from all sections of the community.

The Oban Times & WEST HIGHLAND TIMES **REPORTER**

An exciting opportunity has arisen for a bright, passionate and self-driven reporter to join The Oban Times' busy team.

The person we are looking for will have an NCTJ or similar qualification, including shorthand, and be multi-media literate.

We are passionate about good local journalism and like our reporters to get out into the local community, meeting people face-to-face, sourcing the best stories.

You should be bursting with ideas and have an eye for a good story, understand the importance of fostering great contacts and knowing your patch, and be capable of working on your own initiative as well as part of a team.

As the position will be based in Oban, knowledge of the area would be an advantage.

You should also hold a full driving licence.

As well as writing for the newspaper of record for Argyll and the West Highlands, you will be expected to take photographs on the job, as well as contribute to our social media channels and podcasts.

In return for all this we offer a competitive salary, great experience and training, as well as an enhanced pension.

Please apply by email, sending your CV, plus a covering letter and some examples of your work to: Alison Arden - ali@obantimes.co.uk

Make a difference every day

Join one of Scotland's leading social care and community development charities for a fulfilling and worthwhile career in social care.

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HIJOBS



**Couple Required for Seasonal Role
On leading West Coast Sporting Estate**

Ghillie / House keeper

Benmore Estate on the Island of Mull is looking to recruit a Ghillie and a Housekeeper to join our estate team for the coming season (May-Oct).

This opportunity would ideally suit a young couple who are looking for seasonal employment. Successful applicants need to be enthusiastic, hard working and totally reliable.

A competitive package which includes accommodation in a newly refurbished remote mountain bothy is available.

Interested parties should email a CV to julian@benmoreestate.co.uk

Further details of the estate are available on the estate website.

www.benmoreestate.co.uk www.hookedonmull.co.uk

Career opportunities



**CONSTRUCTION SITE
MANAGER – OBAN**

We are looking for an experienced Site Manager to join our team in Dunbeg Development in Oban. The successful candidate will be responsible for organising & monitoring progress, meeting deadlines and ensuring a safe working environment. This is a full time/permanent position 8am-5.30pm (Mon-Fri).

Please send CV to jobs@mkmacleod.co.uk or call 01546 602989 for further information.



We are a non-profit organisation with charitable status committed to providing a wide range of housing, care and support services to enable older people to make their own choices and lead independent lives. At Bield it is our firm belief that older people should have the freedom to make their own choices and be free to live as independently as possible. The right candidate will understand and support Bield's ethos of "free to be".



**New Assistant Opportunity in Oban
Torosay Court (PA34 4RW)**

£7,550 pro-rata (£17,695 FTE)

Are you considering a new career in social care or currently work in a domestic cleaning role? Either way we are interested in hearing from you!

Our Retirement Housing with Meals service, Torosay Court in Oban, is looking for the right person to be involved in the preparation and delivery of a flexible meals service to tenants in accordance with food safety and service standards. You will provide general and emergency assistance to tenants, as required. You will also contribute to the maintenance of a high level of cleanliness within all common parts of the development.

Hours of employment are 16 hours per week, organised as follows:
Friday and Saturday, 10 am to 7 pm with a 1 hour unpaid lunch break.

Role Requirements

An interest in working with older people and an understanding of their needs is essential. Although relevant experience in a similar post is desirable, it is not essential as induction and training (e.g. food hygiene) will be provided. A REHIS Elementary Food Hygiene Qualification is desirable.

The hourly rate for our Assistants is £9.07 and we offer excellent holidays of up to 34 days each year (pro rata for part-time employees), with the option to buy or sell holidays each year. We also pay the cost of Disclosure checks for employment opportunities.

New Cook Opportunity in Oban

£9,909 pro-rata (£17,695 FTE)

Torosay Court (PA34 4RW)

Do you love your current job as a Cook but would prefer more sociable working hours?

Are you interested in a more fulfilling role where the health and nutrition of older people is paramount?

Our Retirement Housing with Meals service, Torosay Court in Oban, is looking for the right person to prepare, cook and serve healthy, nutritious dishes and be responsible for menu planning, food purchase and the provision of high-quality meals and snacks for service users in a care setting.

You will ensure that all food hygiene and health and safety standards set by Bield and external regulators are met. You will also consult with service users to ensure individual dietary needs are met.

Hours of employment are 21 hours per week, organised as follows:

Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 10 am to 6 pm with a 1 hour unpaid lunch break.

Role Requirements

Experience of delivering a high standard of meal service with an understanding of nutritional and dietary requirements of older people. An intermediate Food Hygiene Certificate or equivalent is desirable. There are also opportunities to join our bank of casual workers.

The hourly rate for our Cooks is £9.07 and we offer excellent holidays of up to 34 days each year (pro rata for part-time employees), with the option to buy or sell holidays each year. We also pay the cost of Disclosure checks for employment opportunities.

If you are interested in applying for either role, please apply directly on our website www.bield.co.uk or contact our HR department for an application form at jobs@bield.co.uk. CV's will not be accepted.

These posts are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974) which means you must disclose all unspent and relevant spent convictions on your application.

Scottish Charity no. SC006878

We are an IIP Silver employer and Positive about Disabled People.



DISTELL INTERNATIONAL LTD

VACANCY: PROCESS OPERATOR

Applications are invited for the above mentioned position based at Tobermory Distillery, Isle of Mull.

Overall Purpose:

A Process Operators role responsible for carrying out all of the operations in the Distillery including goods receipt, mashing, distilling, operation of services plant and warehousing duties To ensure that all aspects of process operations are carried out to deliver best cost effective, efficient and quality results in line with corporate goals.

Application

For full job specification, additional information, or to apply for this position, please email:

HumanResourcesEurope@distellinternational.com

Closing Date: Friday 21st February 2020.

Career opportunities



**CONSTRUCTION SITE
OPERATIVE**

We are looking for a Construction Site Operative to join our busy team in Oban. The position is based at Dunbeg Development, Kirk Road. Forklift experience desired but not essential.

Please send CV to jobs@mkmacleod.co.uk or call 01546 602989 for further information.



**The Tayvallich Inn
We are recruiting
for 2020!**



We are looking for a Chef to join our team for the summer season (March - November 2020). We serve a range of bar and restaurant standard dishes, focusing on local seafood and fresh ingredients.

We are looking for someone who can work as part of a team, enjoys working in a busy kitchen and can support our existing experienced kitchen team.

Get in touch to tell us about yourself and to find out more.

40 hours/week, 2 days off per week, £20,000 per annum (pro rata), on duty meals, off duty meal discount, pension scheme available, tips.

Tel: 01546 870282

Email: info@tayvallichinn.com

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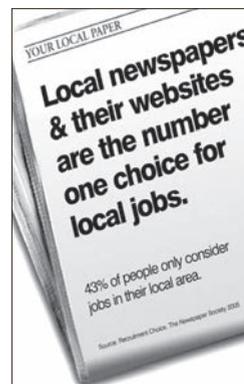


Network Rail is looking for Operatives at our Crianlarich Depot.

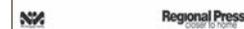
Out in all weathers, you will play a practical role in keeping Scotland moving. Across a range of manual tasks, the efficiency and safety of the railway is crucial.

These are hands-on roles, working outdoors in all weathers during the day, night and at weekends. If you've got what it takes, we'll provide all the training, protective clothing and support you need to succeed. Operative £24,406 (pay award pending) plus up to 25% premium depending of shift pattern.

For further information and to apply visit <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/careers/>



So, if you're looking for a new job or new staff, use the regional press, the best medium to get results.



PUBLIC NOTICES

FIRST REGISTRATION OF A CROFT

Mrs Ann MacKay has registered her croft known as 11 Dalnabreck, Arisaig & Moidart on the Crofting Register held by the Registers of Scotland.

Any person who wishes to challenge the registration may apply to the Scottish Land Court by the 22nd October 2020.

Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C6664.

KILCHOAN COMMON GRAZINGS

A meeting of shareholders for the above will be held for the purpose of electing a new Grazings Committee in Kilchoan Community Centre on Tuesday, February 25 at 7pm.

Signed: Hugh MacLachlan.

Oban Times PUBLIC NOTICES

Oban Times PUBLIC NOTICES

Argyll and Bute Council

DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

(MILL LANE, OBAN) (TEMPORARY PROHIBITION OF WAITING) ORDER 2020

On Monday 27th January 2020, Argyll and Bute Council made the above named Order under Section 14(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, as amended, which will make it unlawful for any person to cause or permit any vehicle to wait at any time on the lengths of road specified in the Schedule below.

SCHEDULE - PROHIBITION OF WAITING AT ANY TIME

Length of restricted road within Oban	Side of road
Mill Lane	
1. That length from a point 10 metres or thereby southwest of the extended southwest kerbline of Lynn Road, extending in a south-westerly direction for a distance of 130 metres or thereby.	Southeast
2. That length from a point 140 metres or thereby southwest of the extended southwest kerbline of Lynn Road, extending in a north-westerly direction for a distance of 5 metres or thereby.	Southwest
3. That length from a point 10 metres or thereby southwest of the extended southwest kerbline of Lynn Road, extending in a south-westerly direction for a distance of 131 metres or thereby.	Northwest
4. That length of branch road from a point 37 metres or thereby southwest of its junction with Lynn Road extending in a north-westerly direction for a distance of 17 metres or thereby.	Both
5. That length of branch road from a point 113 metres or thereby southwest of its junction with Lynn Road extending in a north-westerly direction for a distance of 16 metres or thereby.	Both

The restrictions imposed by this Order which are required because of the likelihood of danger to the public will be effective when indicated by signs from 0001 hours on Monday 10th February 2020 to 2359 hours on Sunday 8th August 2021, or until a permanent Order supersedes, whichever is the earlier.

Roads & Infrastructure Services 1A Manse Brae, LOCHGILPHEAD PA31 8RD

To find out more about living and working in Argyll & Bute visit us at:

www.argyll-bute.gov.uk

Comhairle Earra - Ghàidheal agus Bhòid



Quarry: Banavie Quarry

Date of Blast:

Monday 3rd Feb

Time of Blast:

12:00hrs - 14:00hrs

Argyll and Bute Council

Councillor Jim Lynch (E.W.4 Oban South and the Isles)

Councillor Lynch will be holding surgeries during the month of FEBRUARY 2020 as follows:

DATE	VENUE	TIME
Friday 14th February	Municipal Buildings, Albany Street Oban	2.00pm - 4.00pm
Tuesday 18th February	Soroba Community Centre, 8A Scalpay Terrace, Soroba	6.00pm - 8.00pm

He can be contacted by email - Jim.Lynch@argyll-bute.gov.uk and by telephone 01631 567893

Councillor Sir Jamie McGrigor (E.W.4 Oban South and the Isles)

Councillor Sir McGrigor will be holding a surgery on Friday 28th February 2020 in the Municipal Buildings, Albany Street, Oban from 10.00am - 12 Noon.

He can be contacted by email - Jamie.McGrigor@argyll-bute.gov.uk and by telephone 01631 567853

Councillor Kieron Green (E.W.5 Oban North and Lorn)

Councillor Green will be holding a surgery on Tuesday 4th February 2020 in the Municipal Buildings, Albany Street, Oban from 10.00am - 12 noon.

He can be contacted by email - Kieron.Green@argyll-bute.gov.uk and by telephone 01631 562 444

Councillor Elaine Robertson (E.W.5 Oban North and Lorn)

Councillor Robertson will be holding a surgery on Friday 28th February 2020 in the Municipal Buildings, Albany Street, Oban from 2.00pm - 4.00pm.

Councillor Robertson can also be contacted by email - Elaine.Robertson@argyll-bute.gov.uk

FIRST REGISTRATION OF A CROFT

Mrs. C. Wright has registered her croft Knockdhu, Kilchrenan and Dalavich 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 the 7th October 2020.

Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C6610.

FIRST REGISTRATION OF A CROFT

Iain Martin has registered their croft Lee 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 18 Sept 2020

Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C6578.

Argyll and Bute Council

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Community Empowerment Act (2015) Scotland: Allotment Site Regulations open from 24 January - 21 February 2020

Written comments can be made to the address below or submitted online <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/consultations/argyll-and-bute-councils-allotment-regulations-consultation>.

Any letter of representation the Council receives is considered a public document and may be published on our website. Anonymous or confidential marked correspondence will not be considered.

Argyll and Bute Council, Legal and Regulatory Support, 38 East Clyde Street, Helensburgh, G84 7PG

The Regulations can be inspected at the above address or on the Council website. https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/final_-_regulations.docx

To find out more about living and working in Argyll & Bute visit us at:

www.argyll-bute.gov.uk

Comhairle Earra - Ghàidheal agus Bhòid



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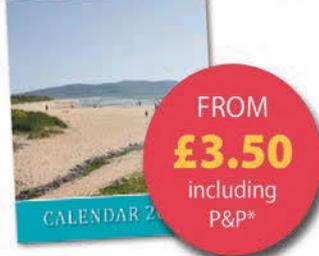
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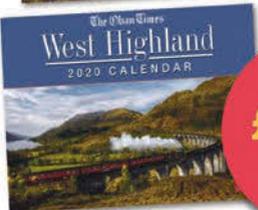
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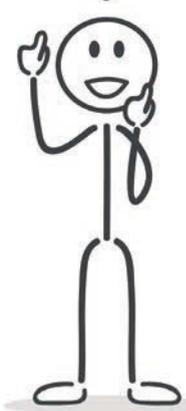
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www.highland.gov.uk



**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>; electronically at the AREA PLANNING AND BUILDING STANDARDS OFFICE, CHARLES KENNEDY BUILDING, ACHINTORE ROAD, FORT WILLIAM, PH33 6RQ; or electronically at your nearest Council Service Point. You can find your nearest Service Point via the following link https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory/16/a_to_z

Written comments should be made to the EPC at the contact details below within the time period indicated from the date of this notice. Anyone making a representation about this proposal should note that their letter or email will be disclosed to any individual or body who requests sight of representations in respect of this proposal.

Reference Number	Development Address	Proposal Description
20/00208/FUL	Land 40M SE Of Corner Cottage Acharacle	Erection of a house (amended design to 18/05763/FUL)
20/00104/FUL	Blackcairn House Spean Bridge	Change of use of vacant land to garden ground
19/04689/FUL	Post Office Caol Shopping Centre Glenloy Street Caol, Fort William	Change of use to Veterinary Surgery (Class 1 to Class 2).

Time period for comments is 14 days
ePlanning Centre, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, INVERNESS IV3 5NX
Email: eplanning@highland.gov.uk

**MARINE (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010
CAUSEWAY CONSTRUCTION
LOCH ETIVE, ARGYLL AND BUTE**

Notice is hereby given that Northern Lighthouse Board has applied to the Scottish Ministers of the Scottish Government, under Part 4 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, in respect of seawall and rock armour construction at:

Cost	£872,400	
Location	Latitude	Longitude
Corner 1	56 ° 30.267' N	05 ° 08.233' W
Corner 2	56 ° 30.266' N	05 ° 08.228' W
Corner 3	56 ° 30.210' N	05 ° 08.282' W
Corner 4	56 ° 30.209' N	05 ° 08.277' W

(WGS84)

Plans showing the position of the works may be inspected at Taynuilt Post Office, Main Street, Taynuilt, PA35 1JE.

Objections relating to safety of navigation or environmental issues in respect of the application should be made in writing to: Licensing Operations Team, Marine Scotland, Marine Laboratory, 375 Victoria Road, Aberdeen, AB11 9DB Within 28 days of the date of this notice or by email to: MS.MarineLicensing@gov.scot

Quoting reference: 06963 and Simec GHR Ltd.

Fair Processing Notice

The Scottish Government's Marine Scotland Licensing Operations Team (MS-LOT) determine applications for marine licences under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. During the consultation process any person having an interest in the outcome of the application may make representation to MS-LOT. The representation may contain personal information, for example a name or address. This representation will only be used for the purpose of determining an application and will be stored securely in the Scottish Government's official corporate record. Representations will be shared with the applicant and/or agent acting on behalf of the applicant, any people or organisations that we consult in relation to the application and, where necessary, be published online, however personal information will be removed before sharing or publishing.

A full privacy notice can be found at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Licensing/marine/PrivacyNotice>. If you are unable to access this, or you have any queries or concerns about how your personal information will be handled, contact MS-LOT at: ms.marinelicensing@gov.scot or Marine Scotland - Licensing Operations Team, Marine Laboratory, 375 Victoria Road, Aberdeen, AB11 9DB.

PROPOSED ASSIGNATION OF GRAZINGS SHARE

Kenneth MacDonald is applying to the Crofting Commission for consent to assign the common grazings share of the croft at 20a Lower Carnach, Lismore & Appin to Paul McFtridge of Tigh Na Hoige, Kentallen.

If you have an interest in this application you may submit comments on the proposal in writing or some other pertinent form to:- Crofting Commission, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness, IV3 8NW info@crofting.scotland.gov.uk within 28 days from the publication of the advert.

FIRST REGISTRATION OF A CROFT

Mrs Linda Bugar & Mrs Katherine Ramsay have registered their croft known as Killandrist, Lismore & Appin on the Crofting Register held by the Registers of Scotland.

Any person who wishes to challenge the registration may apply to the Scottish Land Court by the 21st October 2020.

Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C6655.

Argyll and Bute Council

PLANNING

These applications listed below may be inspected between 09:00-12.30 - 13.30-16:00 hrs Monday to Friday at Municipal Buildings Albany Street Oban PA34 4AW, 1A Manse Brae Lochgilphead PA31 8RD, your Local Customer Service Point and by logging on to the Council's website at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2013 REGULATION 20(1) ADVERT STATEMENT
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997 (AS AMENDED), RELATED PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997

Ref. No.	Proposal	Site Address
19/02637/PP	Erection of dwellinghouse, installation of bio-disc treatment plant and formation of vehicular access	Land East Of Corrie Farm, Craignure, Isle Of Mull, Argyll And Bute
20/00038/PP	Rehabilitation of ruinous outbuilding and associated works to form cafe	Ruinous Outbuilding West Of Dalrannoch, Connel, Oban, Argyll And Bute
20/00015/PP	Variation of condition 2 of planning permission 01/93/00610/DET (Change of use of hostel and steading to cafe, holiday apartments and owners flat) in relation to occupation of the holiday units during February and November	Argyll House, Salen, Isle Of Mull, Argyll And Bute, PA72 6JG
20/00049/PP	Renewal of planning permission reference 17/00107/PP (Erection of dwellinghouse, detached garage and formation of access)	Land North Of Ardnacross, Aros, Isle Of Mull, Argyll And Bute
20/00086/PPP	Renewal of planning permission in principle reference 16/01768/PPP (Site for the erection of 3 dwellinghouses)	Site East Of Sonachan Farm, Portsonachan, Argyll And Bute
19/02207/PP	Erection of telecommunications equipment compound with 25 metre high lattice tower and associated works	Land East Of Keeper's Cottage, Cladich, Dalmally, Argyll And Bute
20/00062/PP	Alterations and erection of single storey rear extension	13 Tweeddale Street, Oban, Argyll And Bute, PA34 5DD
20/00011/PPP	Site for the erection of dwellinghouse	Land North Of East Kames, Kilmelford, Oban, Argyll And Bute, PA34 4XT
19/02652/LIB	Internal and external alterations and erection of extensions (amended design to listed building consent 17/03121/LIB) addition of external stair and first floor door opening	Tigh An Truish Hotel, Clachan Seil, Isle Of Seil, Oban, Argyll And Bute, PA34 4QZ
19/02651/PP	Alterations and extensions to hotel (amended design to planning permission 17/02159/PP) deletion of external canopy and addition of external stair	Tigh An Truish Hotel, Clachan Seil, Isle Of Seil, Oban, Argyll And Bute, PA34 4QZ
19/02278/PP	Alterations and change of use of hotel to form 6 letting bedrooms for short term holiday use (retrospective)	The Bruce, Shore Street, Bowmore, Isle Of Islay, Argyll And Bute, PA43 7LB

Written comments can be made to the above address or submitted online <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/find-and-comment-planning-applications> within 21 days of this advert. Please quote the reference number in any correspondence. Any letter of representation the Council receives is considered a public document and will be published on our website. Anonymous or marked confidential correspondence will not be considered. A weekly list of all applications can be viewed at all Area Offices, Council Libraries and on the Councils website.

To find out more about living and working in Argyll & Bute visit us at: www.argyll-bute.gov.uk
Comhairle Earra - Ghàidheal agus Bhòid



FIRST REGISTRATION OF A CROFT

Mrs Ann MacKay has registered her croft known as 11 Dalnabreck, Arisaig (share), Dalnabreck, Arisaig & Moidart on the Crofting Register held by the Registers of Scotland.

Any person who wishes to challenge the registration may apply to the Scottish Land Court by the 22nd October 2020.

Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C6665.

Rectification of First Registration of a Croft

A rectification has been made to the Croft 1&26 Inverroy 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 18 September 2020.

Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.gov.uk/register/home. The Croft Registration number is C6576.

FIRST REGISTRATION OF A CROFT

Mrs June Currie has registered her croft known as 5 Keil, Benderloch (share), Ardchattan & 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 the 13th October 2020.

Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C6624.

CROFTING COMMISSION COIMISEAN NA CROITTEARACHD DE-CROFTING APPLICATION

P Sinclair Dalrannoch, Ardchattan & Muckairn 0.021ha - Existing development 103068

Written comments from any member of the crofting community within the locality of the croft and any expressions of demand for the croft (which may be made public), may be sent to the Crofting Commission by 28/02/2020. Crofting Commission, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness IV3 8NW - info@crofting.gov.scot

Our privacy notice is available at www.crofting.scotland.gov.uk/privacy-policy or on request. Full details at www.crofting.scotland.gov.uk

North Argyll Branch Blackface Sheep Breeders Association

AGM

Wednesday 4th of March at 8pm in the Falls of Lora Hotel, Connel

The annual stock judging will be held on Friday 14th February at 7.30pm at Dalmally Auction Mart (by kind permission of United Auctions).
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ANTIQUES AND COLLECTABLES

OBSERVER BOOK OF BIRDS EGGS - Rare, vintage copy, harder to find, good copy, G.EVANS, hardback with dust cover. 1972, details 180 eggs, 109 illustrations, HD SWAIN. Can post. C/ town, £10.00 Telephone 01586 554537

1945 OBSERVER BOOK, DOGS - Very rare, Vintage hardback, 1945, good condition, 300 breeds, 148 pictures. Can email photo, can post. Campbeltown, £10.00 Telephone 01586 554537

OBSERVERS RARE BOOKS (11) - Grasses, lichens, horses, ponds, insects, moths, birds, wild animals, fishes, cats, butterflies, 11 books, 1960's/70's, can email photos, can post. Campbeltown, £20.00 Telephone 01586 554537

HUNTING BIRD FROM WILD BIRD - By Lorant De Bastyai, a vintage classic, on training a wild hawk to hunt. 1968, 1st Edition. Good condition. Can email photo. Campbeltown, £8.00 Telephone 01586 554537

THE GOSHAWK, T.H.WHITE - Vintage, and rare edition of this classic falconry book. By

T.H.White. 1953, excellent condition for its age (67 yrs!). Can email photo. C/ town, £10.00 Telephone 01586 554537

SELECTION OF NEWSPAPERS - dated August 21, 2000. Free Telephone 07774 095657

BABY EQUIPMENT

BABIES HIGH CHAIR - Babystart "Delta" High Chair. In excellent condition. Only used when granddaughter visited, £20.00 Telephone 01546 605374

BABIES RISER CHAIR - Called "An Essential Booster" it gets strapped to a chair to lift the babies seating position. Perfect condition, rarely used by visiting grandchild, £5.00 Telephone 01546 605374

BOOKS

SEA TROUT RUN - By Peter Jarrams , First Edition, 1987, with dust jacket. Good. Can email photo, can post books. Campbeltown, £5.00 Telephone 01586 554537

GAME FISHING TACTICS - By Sydney Spencer, First Edition, 1974, ex-library copy. Good condition. Can email photo. Can post books. Campbeltown, £5.00 Telephone 01586 554537

FLIGHT IDENTIFICATION, RAPTORS - European raptors and identifying flight, by Porter, Willis et al. 1981, 3rd Edition. Can email photo. Campbeltown, £5.00 Telephone 01586 554537

THE ART OF FALCONRY - Brilliant classic falconry book, by Hon. Gerald Lascelles. 30 skillful drawings by G.E. Lodge, 1971, very good condition. Can email photo. Campbeltown, £5.00 Telephone 01586 554537

FALCONRY FOR YOU - 1960 Classic, and collectible book, by Humphrey Evans. Good condition. Can email photo. Campbeltown, £5.00 Telephone 01586 554537

FALCONS AND FALCONRY - Vintage and collectible book, By Frank Illingworth, 1975, can email photo. Campbeltown, £5.00 Telephone 01586 554537

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CAR SPARE WHEEL - full size spare wheel 205/55 R16 91V. Hankook tyre. Brand new never been used came with Dacia Sandero Stepway. Can deliver locally. Item in Tayvallich, £60.00 Telephone 07799 838958

DOMESTIC APPLIANCES

DYSON VACUUM CLEANER - Dyson upright vacuum cleaner, good condition, full working order, £10.00 Telephone 01586 830621

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BLACK DRESSAGE SADDLE - Reactor panel Avant Garde 16.5 inch, wide fit black dressage saddle, £1,500.00 Telephone 07834 806335

FURNITURE

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drawers, excellent condition. Local, £45.00 Telephone 01631 562802

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SINGLE BED - wooden frame with orthopaedic mattress, £50.00 Telephone 01631 570955 or 07845 766043

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GARDEN MACHINERY

QUALCAST ELECTRIC LAWN MOWER - cylinder type, suits small garden, £10.00 Telephone 07507 093239

ELECTRIC FLYMO - suits small garden, £10.00 Telephone 07507 093239

MOWER - Flymo electric mower, £80.00 Telephone 01586 552834

GARDEN

WOODEN GARDEN TABLE & CHAIRS - Octagonal teak table with 4 folding chair. Only been used inside therefore

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3 WHEELED WALKER - with attached bag. Great condition. £50.00 ono. (Ardrihaig), Telephone 07501 081203

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GRADUATION



JOHN COLIN KENNEDY

John Colin Kennedy graduated with a BSc Honours in Agriculture from SRUC Edinburgh in 2017. This was then followed by his Masters in Land Economy in Rural Surveying and Rural Property management from the University of Aberdeen in November 2019. John Colin is the son of Colin Kennedy and Lorraine Mackie, Isle of Coll and grandson of Bunty Kennedy and the late John Kennedy Isle of Coll. John is a former pupil of Arinagour Primary School, Isle of Coll and Oban High School.

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PERSONAL NOTICE

Catherine Murray

Congratulations on your 30th birthday Catherine. Have a wonderful day!
Love from Mum, Neil, Sharon, Martin and Ann.



DEATHS

AHMAD - Joyce. Suddenly at home on Monday, January 20, 2020, Joyce, aged 76 years. Much loved wife of the late Agha Ahmad and beloved mother of Sameena. Funeral service will be held on Monday, February 3, 2020 at Masonhill Crematorium, by Ayr at 2.00pm, to which all are welcome. Donations in lieu of flowers if desired to Alzheimer Society.

BINNIE - Peacefully on January 23, 2020 at Oban Hospital aged 79, Isobel Agnes, beloved wife of the late Alastair, devoted mother to Gordon and Lorne, mother-in-law to Kirsteen and Deborah and much loved Granny of Matthew, Lewis, Jensen, Brodie and Arden. Funeral service to be held at Oban Parish Church on Friday, January 31 at 1pm. Family flowers only.

FERGUSON - Peacefully, on January 25, 2020, at Etive House Care Home, Benderloch, Mary Ann, (née MacDonald), formerly of Lynn Court, Oban, sadly missed by Tina, Duncan, Carrie, Jamie, Rebecca and William, much loved mother, granny, sister and aunt and a dear friend to many.

MACDOUGALL - Donnie, Dalmally. Suddenly but peacefully, at Lorn and Islands Hospital Oban on January 24, 2020, Donnie, beloved husband to Morag, devoted father to Kenneth, Duncan and Sheena, grandad to Alasdair, Heather, Grace, Flora and Kirsty and father-in-law to Fiona and Louisa. Funeral service will be held on Tuesday, February 4, 2020 at 1.00pm at Glenorchy Parish Church, Dalmally.

MACFARLANE - Mairi (née MacKechnie). Suddenly but peacefully, on Saturday, January 25, 2020, at the Lorn

and Islands Hospital, Oban, with her family by her side, in her 84th year, Mairi, of 30 Morvern Hill, Oban, formerly of Easdale/Kilchoan, wife of the late Iain MacFarlane (Ting), much loved mother of John, Hugh, Ishbel and Helen, devoted grandmother of Mairi, Iain and Craig, dear sister, auntie, mother-in-law and a friend to many. Funeral service will be held at Kibrandon Church on Friday, February 7 at 1.00pm.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CLARK - Tosh, Tracy, Ian and their families would like to thank all relatives, friends, neighbours and work colleagues for the many kind expressions of sympathy, flowers, phone calls, cards and visits received following the recent sad loss of Margaret. Our thanks are extended to the staff of Glenaray Ward for their care and attention. Thanks also

to Father Ronald Campbell for a comforting and uplifting service; to Donald MacDonald for caring and compassionate arrangements, to Morna for beautiful floral tributes and to the Stag Hotel for lunch and refreshments. Finally, our thanks to all who attended at church and graveside to pay their respects. The retiral collection raised £450 for Glenaray Ward.

DUNCAN - Billy and all the family would like to thank relatives, friends, neighbours and colleagues for their overwhelming support, for the many cards, messages, flowers and kind expressions of sympathy following the sad loss of Isabel (Bibby). A special thank you to Ian MacInnes of D&A Munn for his care, professionalism and compassion and to Belinda Braithwaite (Humanist Celebrant) for the uplifting service. We would also like to extend our

thanks and gratitude to Dr Erik Jespersen, the Scottish Air Ambulance Service, the Neurosurgeons and dedicated nursing staff (Ward 61) at the QEUH, Glasgow, the Scottish Ambulance Service, and all staff Ward I at Lorn and Islands Hospital for their professionalism while caring for Bibby; to Barbara Milne and all at North Argyll Carers Centre for their wonderful support; to Amanda MacPhail and staff at the Argyllshire Gathering Halls for the lovely buffet and to A J MacColl for the beautiful piping at Pennyfuir. Finally, a huge thank you to all who attended Bibby's service and so generously donated £542 to the Scottish Air Ambulance Service.

MACDONALD - The family of the late Ewen MacDonald wish to thank most sincerely all relatives, friends and neighbours, who called, sent letters, cards and messages of condolence following the death of Ewen. Grateful thanks to the Nursing Staff of Ward 1, Belford Hospital, Fort William, and latterly the loving care and attention of the staff of Cradlehall Nursing Home, Inverness, during Ewen's last

weeks. Sincere thanks to the Rev. Dr. Malcolm Kinnear for his very comforting and thoughtful service in Kinlochleven Parish Church and at the graveside, which was so appreciated. To the many friends and acquaintances of Ewen who attended the church service and at Kinlochmore Cemetery we are humbled and grateful for your presence. We are indebted to William T. Fraser and Son, Funeral Directors, Inverness, for their kind, caring and very professional services throughout, thank you so much. Thanks are also due to Hugh and Kate of the Highland Getaway Inn, Kinlochleven for providing food and refreshments in a very pleasant environment. Finally our sincere thanks to John and Fiona for all that they have done during Ewen's illness and beyond, we are forever grateful. Thank you.

MARTIN - The family of William Martin (Billy) sincerely thank family, friends and neighbours for their kind expressions of sympathy. Special thanks to Dr. Caldwell and the staff of Ward I (Lorn and Islands Hospital) for their love and generous care of us all. To Rev. Dugald Cameron for spiritual comfort and Hamish Hoey and Sons for efficient funeral arrangements.

TIERNEY (SMITH) - Kerry, Tricia, Lindsay and family would like to thank everyone for their kindness and support on the sad loss of their mother Frances. Many thanks to all who attended the funeral. A special thanks to Father James MacNeil, for his support and Catriona from Hamish Hoey's for helping with the funeral arrangements. Thank you to Amanda at the Argyllshire for the wake. And lastly a huge thank you to Claire MacQueen Macmillan nurse, Keira and Helen Carers Direct and Lucy from the Dove Centre for their continuous support. Collection amount raised £601 to be divided by The Dove Centre and Macmillan day bed unit.

MEMORIAMs

KENNEDY - Remembering with love Angus, who passed away February 1, 2015.

Many a tear I've shed since you left
Many more continue to fall
You took my happiness with you
The happiest hours of all.
- Fiona.

MACCOLL - Margaret, who passed away at Kilmore 6 years ago.
Fondly remembered.
- Morven, Christina, Deirdre, Duncan and their families.

MACDONALD - In loving memory of my dear wife Catherine MacDonald, Churchfield House, Kinlochewe who passed away on February 1, 2007. Also remembered at this time my dear cousins Hugh MacDonald, Stronaba Farm, Spean-Bridge who passed away on February 1, 1984 and Robert MacDonald who passed away on January 17, 1990 at Maidstone, Kent. Rest in Peace, Rise in Glory.
- Malcolm MacDonald.

PORTER - Flora "Patsy" Porter died February 2, 2016. Although God took you away, In our hearts you'll always stay, We hear you whisper in the trees, Feel your love in the breeze and When we find we miss you most, In all our memories, we hold you close.
- Richard and Dixie.

POULTON - In loving memory of my dad Chris, who died so tragically on January 30, 2006. Loved and remembered always.
- Hannah, Tobermory.

SMITH - Precious memories of Angus, a much loved husband, father, father-in-law and adoring grandpa and great-grandpa, who sadly passed away on January 23, 2013. Forever in our hearts, always in our thoughts.
- Myrtle, Angus, Isobel, Calum and family.

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Taynuilt Primary School pupils enjoy adventure trip after receiving £1,500 from fish farm

Twenty Taynuilt Primary School pupils took part in an 'incredibly special' trip to Lochgoilhead last summer after an ambitious fundraising campaign received a £1,500 boost from Argyll-based fish farm company Dawnfresh.

Primary six and seven classes from across Argyll and Bute gathered at Lochgoilhead Outdoor Education Centre at the end of the summer term for an outdoor adventure week.

The annual trip aims to ease the transition from primary to secondary school by encouraging pupils to build their self-confidence and develop teamwork skills through a variety of activities alongside pupils from other



The Taynuilt children had a fantastic time on the activities trip to Lochgoilhead.

Alison Hutchins, farming director at Dawnfresh, said: 'At Dawnfresh, we consider ourselves to be a part of the communities that we live and work in. Most of us either live locally or grew up in rural communities and can sympathise with how daunting the move from a small primary to a huge secondary school class can be.

'We were thrilled to contribute and ease this big step for Taynuilt's pupils by donating £1,500 towards the trip and committing to do the same next year.'

Berni Macmillan, head teacher at Taynuilt Primary School, said: 'We are very thankful to Dawnfresh for its generous contribution and for committing to support next year's trip as well.

'This was an incredibly special trip for the pupils as they got to meet new people and make friends before they go to high school. Gathering enough funds is essential to provide this experience to our students. With this money, the school reached its £6,000 target in time for the trip.'

schools who will end up being their classmates.

During their stay at Lochgoilhead, the Taynuilt youngsters enjoyed a number of outdoor activities

and teambuilding exercises including kayaking, rock climbing and working on the high ropes, giving them the opportunity to have fun with their new friends.

Ferry service funding on agenda with Scottish Government

The Leader of Argyll and Bute Council got a 'sympathetic' response to the area's need for ferry funding when she took Argyll and Bute's case to the Scottish Government's Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands.

At a meeting on Tuesday January 28, Councillor Aileen Morton raised the funding and service issues affecting ferries across Argyll and Bute with Paul Wheelhouse MSP.

Councillor Morton said:

'Argyll and Bute has the highest number of inhabited islands of all of Scotland's councils. Ferry services therefore play a key part in keeping our communities connected and in ensuring Argyll and Bute can support the national economy.

'The Scottish Government provides support for ferry services in other parts of Scotland. Argyll and Bute deserves the same kind of support.

'This is a fantastic area, with award-winning busi-

nesses and people, and huge growth potential for local and wider economies.

'We are working hard to raise understanding, at all levels, of Argyll and Bute's challenges and opportunities.'

The focus of the discussion was the need for funding to support the ferry services currently operated by the council, including the need for capital funding to replace the Lismore ferry.

However, Councillor Morton and chief executive

Pippa Milne also raised other ferry-related issues including the wish for more sailings to Mull, increased capacity for Islay, improvements to the Dunoon town centre service and resilience for the main Rothesay service.

Councillor Morton sounded a cautious note after the meeting: 'We arranged this meeting as another opportunity to stand up for Argyll and Bute and I am pleased our case received a sympathetic hearing.

'What matters, however,

is action. The minister confirmed his commitment last year to finding a funding solution for Argyll and Bute's ferries. This is still to be identified.

'Similarly, it was announced last week there will be delays to the improvement works at the Rest and Be Thankful due to budget pressures. Argyll and Bute's transport connectivity is crucial to its success and we need to see our aspirations matched by the Scottish Government.'

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

There was a story on the news recently about courses reckoned to be able to increase one's happiness.

Some who have attended these courses were interviewed and it was claimed there was 'scientific' proof of the benefit gained.

Sceptics might say that since the only apparent measure was to ask participants whether they felt happier, and on a scale of one to 10 how much, that they would respond positively.

After all, who is going to say they committed themselves - I don't know whether money is involved - to something that was a waste of time.

On the other hand, I can believe it could work.

It is easy to focus on the negatives in life and maybe just the shift to more positive thinking will make a difference.

The apostle Paul wrote to early churches about the importance of giving thanks. I've been astonished and humbled by people in the most dire circumstances who have found themselves able to give thanks for something.

For some, it will be desperately difficult, but for many of us, if we can sit down at the end of the day and think about all we can genuinely give thanks for, it might make us feel happier.

Reverend Sandy Stoddart,
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Fort William back in the

Fort William is looking forward to a return to top flight shinty at An Aird.

After a three-year absence, they will stride into the Mowi Premiership with confidence following a season which saw the seniors secure the Mowi National Division with a 100 per cent record as well as winning the Liberty British Aluminium Balliemore Cup. National recognition followed as the club won five prizes at the Mowi National Shinty Awards. They were named Mowi club of the year and were the first recipients of the Gary Innes award for youth club of the year. The manager of the year accolade went to co-bosses Victor Smith and Adam Robertson and the player of the year in the same division was given to Arran MacPhee who was impressive throughout. The Mowi North Division 1 player of the year prize went to outstanding Fort William second team keeper Stuart Disher.

Fort William's second team also made their mark, winning the Strathdearn Cup and finishing runners-up in Mowi North Division 1.

There is also a rich vein of youth talent at primary, U14 and U17 level, whilst Fort William Ladies continue to make their mark in the women's game.

This has been no overnight success though and there's continuity at the top as Victor Smith and Addie Robertson continue as co-managers, with coach Henry Milne also providing a valuable insight from the touchline on a Saturday.

Victor Smith and Adam Robertson both shone for Fort William on the field and their formula works well on the touchline. There's a commonly held view the shinty manager's role is no longer a one-man operation and Victor Smith agreed saying: 'Addie and I both work long hours but we obviously know each other well and it just comes together, whether it's working with the boys during the week or on a match day. Henry plays his part too. He was a fantastic local league footballer and it's great to get a different perspective from him during matches.'



Inverness player Adam MacMaster, left, in a tussle with Kinlochshiel's Duncan DA Macrae during last Saturday's friendly at the Bught Park.

Photograph: Neil Paterson.



Fort William will be playing their shinty in the Mowi Premiership this season.

The saying 'fail to prepare, prepare to fail' certainly doesn't apply to Fort William as they have been training twice a week since early January.

There's running and stick work on the astro on Mondays, whilst indoor Wednesday sessions are dominated by circuits and small-sided games.

Four pre-season friendlies have been arranged. The first is against Kyles Athletic at An Aird on Saturday February 1 when the sides contest the Drew Ferguson Memorial Cup. Kinlochshiel provide the opposition on Saturday 8 February 8, with the venue to be decided, and there's a free day a week later. The final two pre-season matches are against Beaulieu on Saturday February 22 - the venue will be confirmed nearer the time - and against Newtonmore at the Eilan the week after as part of the home club's open day.

Fort William's success last season required a team effort. However, there are some individuals who have made major contributions.

Victor Smith said: 'First off, what you want in a captain is a leader on and off the park and James Tangney was that man.'

'When we lost James after his accident, Arran MacPhee took over as team captain and did an excellent job, skipping the side and scoring 29 goals in the process. James remains club captain though and

he's very much involved in things at Fort William. He's a great lad who is making a fantastic recovery and he's an inspiration to us all.'

'We also had the luxury last season of being able to move Lachie Shaw from midfield to attack. That helped the forward line as Lachie is a cracking player and we're looking forward to seeing what he can do in the premiership. Lewis Clark was a revelation at wing centre and had a really good season. Ruairidh Shaw and Ryan Boyle were also very good, as was Sean Cruickshank. However, family commitments mean he won't be available this season and that's a huge loss. He's only 30 though so hopefully we'll see him back in the future.'

'We went close to promotion a couple of times recently but maybe we weren't ready for it at that time.'

'What we also had last season was a great bench which is always a good indication of the strength of any squad. Pdraig McNeil is a great example. He couldn't get a start but came off the bench to good effect on many occasions. He has a great knack of finding space in a crowded defence and he scored some important goals.'

So at what point did Victor feel the title was won? 'I didn't feel we had it in the bag until it was confirmed,' he said. 'Glasgow Mid Argyll always had games in hand and we knew they were capable of going on a winning run.'

'There were a couple of early indicators the season could be good. We hadn't won at Beaulieu for a while but we beat them 5-4 at their place on the opening day of the season with Lewis Morrison getting the winner with just 11 minutes to go. Then, three weeks later, we were losing 2-1 to Skye at An Aird before Lachie Shaw and Pdraig McNeil gave us a

3-2 victory. It continued from there and it's credit to the players that they won the league with a 100 per cent record.'

It's been a long road back to the top flight for Fort William. After the halcyon days which saw five Camanachd Cup successes between 2005 and 2010, they dropped into the National Division at the end of the 2013 season.

'Things started to fall apart,' reflected Victor. 'The club were relegated in 2013, then secured promotion in 2014 but were relegated again in 2016. Everyone at the club needed to work harder. On the field, we went with the young boys and Alexander MacMillan and Calum Shepherd were two of the first of the current crop to come in.'

It was no overnight success though, as Victor acknowledged. 'We went close to promotion a couple of times recently but maybe we weren't ready for it at that time.'

Victor Smith knows exactly how difficult the premiership will be. 'Standards are different these days,' he said. 'In my day, our forwards would look for a weak link in the opposing defence and work on that. But these weak links aren't there any more. Defences are strong and you'll find most players can play in a number of positions.'

'Fitness, attitude and hitting will all be important to us next season. If you aren't fit in the premier league, then you are at a big disadvantage. We aren't the biggest side, but we are fast and we'll keep the ball moving.'

'The players showed good attitude last season. They were never complacent when we kept winning in the league and it's equally important this season that they don't let their heads drop should things go against us.'

'Hitting also plays a big part as one clean hit forward from a defender can turn defence into attack.'

'Scoring goals and avoiding silly will be key.'

'Don't try to be the hero. We don't want players making silly mistakes as they will be punished so we want to work, learn and improve.'

'We are looking forward to the fix-

ture list coming out and are looking to get some early points, something we struggled to do last time we were in the premiership, so we have something to build on for the rest of the season.'

'Having the Kilmallie game back will be a crowd pleaser and it will be good to play Kingussie and Newtonmore again. And I'm looking forward to playing Caberfeidh who have been building a good team.'

'A cup run would be nice too. The cups give you a break from the league. They keep you buoyant and give you something to look forward to during the season.'

Fort William are already a young team but are there others on the conveyor belt we can expect to see in the coming seasons? 'I hope we'll see more of young Victor Smith. He's getting back to full fitness and he's a natural goalscorer,' said Victor. Hamish Shaw is a great prospect, as are Rhys Kennedy and Cameron Stephen.'

There is clearly a lot of hard work going on in a number of areas behind the scenes at Fort William. Victor said: 'Youth coaches Bobby MacMillan, John MacLeod, Willie MacDonald and Richard Shaw deserve great credit as there are a healthy number of youngsters playing shinty at the moment.'

'I've seen us come down to An Aird last summer for training and the youngsters are out there on the pitch, playing 15-a-side, just like the old days. You feel guilty moving them on so we can train but we won't have to do so for long as our new field will be ready in July. It's floodlit and it's an unbelievable facility. This is where guys like Duncan MacPhee and Richard Gall come into their own. They had the notion and they stuck at it until they raised the money before seeing the project through.'

Treasurer Margaret Robertson and secretary Anne McIntyre also play key roles on the board.

'Margaret French has the An Aird clubhouse back up and running so well again and the club took over responsibility for the An Aird pitch four years ago.'

'Tommy 'Hotpoint' and Dondy Robertson have important roles there as does George MacKay who cuts the grass. What a difference they make and we now have a pitch which suits our style of play as we can pass the ball around with ease.'

'I remember a time a couple of seasons ago when George asked me what team we'd have available on Saturday. I said it was a young side but we had very good stick players. So, after cutting the grass during the week, George cut it again on Saturday morning so it would suit the players. It's that level of commitment that makes the difference.'

So, after all these years, is five-time Fort William Camanachd Cup winner Victor Smith, who has become a shinty quiz answer having scored in both Fort William's junior

big time

Sutherland and senior Camanachd Cup winning sides in 2009, still enjoying it? 'I'm just shinty daft,' he laughed. 'What else would I do? I love the craic and the banter on the sidelines, especially at places like Skye, and trying to help the players, which is the most important thing.'

Victor Smith's rapport with the players triggers many a tale such as a gem from a game at Kinlochshiel a couple of years ago when, as the squad gathered ahead of the pre-match warm up, he was approached by one of his players who asked: 'Where am I playing today Victor? If it's defence, I'll practice my hitting and if it's in the centre line, I'll practice my hit-ins.'

'If you play like you did last week, you should practice your excuses,' was his manager's curt response which sparked hilarity all round.

The Premiership can look forward to similar exchanges next season as the shinty world looks forward to finding out how Fort William's young guns handle the challenges ahead.

Skye win Johnstone tournament

Skye Camanachd Ladies won the Johnstone trophy at Glengarry's excellent annual indoor tournament at the Nevis Centre, Fort William on Saturday January 25.

There was a full house for this popular five-a-side competition as Badenoch defended the trophy they won last year.

Badenoch topped their group unbeaten before defeating Glengarry A 8-1 in the semi-finals to reach the final.

Skye, with new boss John Angus MacInnes in charge, qualified from the same group as runners-up and defeated Inverness 9-1 at the last-four stage.

Skye came from behind to beat Badenoch 5-4 after extra-time in the final to take the honours.

Goals from Rona Stewart and a Mairi Stewart double had Badenoch leading 3-1 at half-time but the match was tied at 4-4 at the final whistle with Kirsty Deans adding another for the holders and Jenna Beaton's double and efforts from Caitlin MacLean and Rhianna Kirk counting for Skye.

The final went to extra time and, with seconds to spare, Jenna Beaton got the winner to complete her hat-trick and give Skye, who won the event in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2018, a fifth tournament success.

Jenna Beaton's contribution throughout the afternoon earned her the player of the tournament accolade.

The Johnstone Trophy was donated to Glengarry Girls Shinty Club in 1998 - a year after the team was formed - by Mrs Ailsa Johnstone of DA Johnstone & Son Contractors, Invergarry, which have been loyal sponsors since.

Pre-season friendly

Inverness 0 Kinlochshiel 3

Kinlochshiel beat Inverness 3-0 at the Bught Park outside pitch as pre-season friendlies got under way on Saturday January 25.

The match was a 10.30am throw-up. Inverness were missing Michael MacMillan, the former Lochcarron player having joined the club, whilst Kinlochshiel were without Keith MacRae and Paul MacRae.

Kinlochshiel gave a debut to former Glengarry player Rhuairaidh MacDonald who started at wing centre. The game was played at a low tempo with John MacRae scoring twice for Kinlochshiel and Duncan 'DA' MacRae sending the other past Kenneth Loades in the Inverness goal.

The teams swapped players midway through the first half with Kinlochshiel trio Finlay MacRae, Mark MacDonald and Ali Nixon taking Inverness shirts.

Bullough Cup draw

The draw for the 2020 Bullough Cup competition was made at the Camanachd Association offices, Inverness, on Monday January 27.

First round - May 9

Glenorchy v Inveraray
Glasgow Mid Argyll v Bute
Kilmory v English SA

Byes:

Oban Celtic
SCOTS Camanachd
Lochside Rovers
Aberdour
Kyles Athletic

Second round - June 6

SCOTS Camanachd v
Kyles Athletic
Kilmory/English SA Shinty v
Aberdour
Glasgow Mid Argyll / Bute v
Lochside Rovers
Oban Celtic v
Glenorchy / Inveraray

Strathdearn Cup draw

The draw for the Strathdearn Cup was made at the Camanachd Association offices, Inverness, on Monday January 27.

Preliminary round - March 28

Lewis v Glenurquhart
First round - April 18
Kingussie v Boleskine
Skye v Kilmallie
Fort William v Lochaber
Newtonmore v Strathspey
Kinlochshiel v Aberdeen University
Caberfeidh v Lovat
Inverness v Lewis/Glenurquhart
Beaully v Strathglass

Second round - May 9

Beaully/Strathglass v
Caberfeidh / Lovat
Kingussie / Boleskine v
Kinlochshiel / Aberdeen Uni
Inverness / Lewis / Glenurquhart v
Newtonmore / Strathspey
Fort William / Lochaber v
Skye / Kilmallie

Continued on page 60.

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LAST WEEK'S SHINTY BALL WAS HERE...



The two entries who got nearest the ball and each receive £25 are:

A MacDonald
Oban
E Small
Lochgilphead

Continued from page 59 Lochaber seconds re-join league

Lochaber will field a second team in Mowi North Division 2 this season.

This is a return to league shinty for the Lochaber seconds after they took a year out in 2019.

The club has confirmed a number of pre-season friendlies.

The Lochaber first team take on Oban Celtic at Mossfield this Saturday with a 1pm throw-up.

And Michael Delaney's side will play Kilmallie for the BSW Cup on Saturday February 29, again with a 1pm throw-up.

The Lochaber second team will be tested against their Newtonmore counterparts on Saturday February 8, Throw-up 1.30pm.

The Lochaber Ladies first team travel to play Ardnamurchan Ladies on Sunday February 2 with a noon start.

The Lochaber Ladies host a double-header on Sunday February 9 as the seconds challenge Dunadd at 12.30pm whilst the first team take on Lovat at 2.30pm.

Next weekend's pre-season fixtures

A number of pre-season friendlies are scheduled for Saturday February 1, including Oban Camanachd and Inveraray's meeting at Ganavan. Throw-up is at 1pm.

Oban Celtic and Lochaber have a Mowi National Division match at Mossfield. Throw-up is at 1pm and Alex MacVicar will be the match referee.

Oban Camanachd and Lochside Rovers will play a mixed match at Ganavan. Throw-up 1pm.

Fort William and Kyles Athletic contest the Drew Ferguson Memorial Trophy at An Aird.



Kenneth Loades in goals for Inverness during their friendly match with Kinlochshiel. Photograph: Neil Paterson

New Newtonmore first team manager Orsten Gardner gets the first chance to see his squad in action as they travel to Blairbeg to face Mowi National Division side Glenurquhart.

The Newtonmore will play Inverness at the Bught Park, whilst Col Glen travel north to play Strathglass.

Col Glen host Strathglass, whilst Taynuilt will travel to the Winterton to play the Inveraray second team.

If the Winterton is unplayable, the match will be switched to Taynuilt Sports Field.

Donald Clark, Inveraray

Inveraray Shinty Club has paid tribute to one of their greatest supporters following the passing of Donald Clark senior on Sunday 19 January.

Donald Clark, known as 'Big D', was proprietor of the George Hotel and a great supporter of Inveraray having held various positions in the club throughout the years.

Donald did not play shinty, but was an accomplished rugby player, representing the West of Scotland in his younger years, and he used these skills to help coach the Inveraray team of the 1960s.

Donald Clark went on to become Inveraray chairman, a position his father held before him, and the George Hotel provided meals for visiting teams as far back as can be remembered.

His passion for shinty always lay with Inveraray and in 2002 he arrived at the Bught Park, Inverness, by helicopter to ensure he saw all of Inveraray's Camanachd Cup Final meeting against Kingussie which Kingussie won 3-2.

An Inveraray spokesman said: 'Donald will be sorely missed by everyone at Inveraray Shinty Club and we can only hope it is of some comfort to his sons Kris and Donald that he has provided us with great memories over the years.'



Oban Saints face a tough test against Wishaw HSFP to reach the last eight of the Scottish Cup.

Saints take on Wishaw for place in last eight of the Scottish Cup

The draw for the sixth round of the Scottish Amateur Cup has paired the D&K Lafferty sponsored side with fellow Central Scottish Amateur Football League opposition in the shape of Premier Division Wishaw High School Former Pupils.

The 2011 winners of the most prestigious trophy in Scottish amateur football kicked off this season's campaign with a comfortable 3 - 0 away win at Windlaw of the Strathclyde Saturday Morning Amateur Football League.

Amongst the goalscorers was Lee Hadden beginning a remarkable run of scoring in every round of the competition bringing him to the attention of Central Scottish Amateur Football League Select manager Colin Hamilton and National Select manager Colin MacLeod.

Wishaw were on the road again for their second round tie which took them to Falkirk to face Lothian and Edinburgh Amateur Football Association Lothian West Division strugglers Mill where an emphatic 6-0 win eased them through to the third round.

A third consecutive away draw gave Wishaw a shorter journey to Glasgow Green and a third round tie against Hampden of the Glasgow Colleges Football Association Premier Division. Despite succeeding where all others in the competition have failed in breaching the miserly Wishaw defence, the Saturday morning team were no match for their afternoon opponents and were brushed aside by six goals to one.

The fourth round draw set up an all Central Scottish Amateur Football League Premier Division tie between Wishaw and three time cup winners St Patrick's FP. Having already inflicted a

heavy away league defeat on their opponents, the much fancied Dumbarton men went into the tie as favourites, however, Wishaw had other ideas and produced their best performance of the season to progress by two goals to nil.

Due to delays in previous rounds for their opponents Glasgow Colleges Football Association Premier Division title hopefuls Singer, Wishaw were forced to wait until last week to play their fifth round tie.

After competing well for the



first 45 minutes on the newly-laid 4G surface at Clydebank High School, the hosts were stunned by two Wishaw goals in five minutes at the start of the second half. There was to be no way back for the home side and Wishaw added a third goal to put the tie beyond any doubt and set up this Saturday's sixth round clash with Saints.

Saints club secretary David Buchanan travelled to Clydebank to run the rule over Wishaw and was impressed.

He said: 'Wishaw are a well organised, hard-working side with some good players but I'm confident if we play the way we can, and all our boys are on form, we will progress to the last eight of the competition.'

Wishaw have experienced mixed fortunes in the other cup competitions, going out of the West of Scotland Cup at the third round at the hands of Ayrshire Amateur Football Association Premier League high flyers Glenburn

Miner's Welfare and exiting the Central Scottish Amateur Football League Bunrigh Trophy following a quarter final defeat against Division 1A promotion chasers Castlemilk Dynamo.

Saints progressed to this stage of the competition with a bye in the first round.

Round two saw the Oban side paired with Perthshire outfit Vale of Earn and it took two games and penalty kicks for Saints to march in to round three. The first game in Oban finished 4-4 with the replay in Crieff ending in a 3-3 draw, with Saints winning the penalty shoot-out 4-3.

There was no such drama in the third round tie at a damp Garscube Sports Complex where Saints recorded a comfortable 4-1 win over Westerlands.

Saints made the gruelling 410 mile round trip to the chilly north east for round four and a re-match with last season's conquerors Rothie Rovers. The Oban side progressed to the fifth round with a hard-fought 3-0 win.

In the fifth round Saints

FOOTBALL

were paired with Glasgow Saturday Morning side Renfrew Town with Saints running out 5-1 winners at the 3G pitch thanks to goals from Lewis Cameron (2), Craig MacEwan, Willie Gemmell and Dene Cassells.

Unlike almost every other cup competition in amateur football, the Scottish Amateur Cup still includes replays therefore a re-match will follow at Glencruitten in a week if the two sides cannot be separated after 90 minutes. In charge of proceedings is Donald McCallum of the Scottish Amateur Football League.

The match will be held at Wishaw Sports Centre 3G with a 2pm kick-off.

Saints will be without Myles McAuley, Kerr Newbigging and Matt Rippon who are injured and Donald Campbell, who is working down south, but Cammy Hill is available for selection for the club's most important game of the season so far.



The Scottish Amateur Cup.

High school pupils warm up for Warriors Championship

A record 1,215 school children from west, central and southern Scotland, including Oban High School pupils, are warming up for the rugby clash of the year at the 2020 SP Energy Networks Warriors Championship.

Glasgow Warriors' official community partner, SP Energy Networks, welcomed young players, teachers and coaches to their Glasgow headquarters last week to launch this year's competition.

Charlie Johnston of Oban High School girls team was present at the launch and said: 'I want to play for Scotland when I'm older and playing in this event helps me become a better player.'

'I scored quite a few tries last year and hopefully I can do the same again in 2020.'

The tournament will see 27 schools - up from 25 in 2019 - go head to head over eight weeks at Scotstoun Stadium, home of Glasgow Warriors, and battle it out to be crowned champions.

This is the third year SP Energy Networks has supported the championship that aims to raise awareness and improve access to grassroots rugby, whilst also promoting active and healthy lifestyles to young people.

The championship and important community engagement it generates also seeks to recognise sport as a valuable life tool as it teaches children about team working,



Oban High School's Charlie Johnstone joined representatives from schools across west, central and southern Scotland in Glasgow for the launch of the SP 2020 Energy Networks Warriors Championships. Photograph: Craig Watson.

leadership and communication skills.

Oban High School players will take part in a qualifying round at Scotstoun on Wednesday March 18, with an S1 and S2 boys team and an under-15s girls team competing for each school. St Paul's High School, Glasgow, Coatbridge High School, Douglas Ewart High School, Newton Stewart, and Balfron High School are also in the group. A new record of 405 girls are taking

part this year. Supporting women and girls on the pitch is mirrored in SP Energy Networks' support of women in the workplace through apprenticeships, women returners' programmes and its #NotJustForBoys campaign in partnership with the Scotland Women Rugby team.

Frank Mitchell, chief executive officer of SP Energy Networks, said: 'Our support of the championship has many benefits, not least help-

SCHOOL RUGBY

ing us reach out and support the communities we live and work in. It also gives us the opportunity to talk to many of the youngsters about a possible career in engineering - if they don't make it as rugby stars!

The final will be played before the Guinness PRO14 match between Glasgow Warriors and Ospreys on Friday May 15.

Oban smash it in annual Argyll Cup showdown

Badminton was the name of the game at Atlantis Leisure on Saturday as teams from Oban, Dunoon and Mid Argyll battled it out in the annual Argyll Cup.

Divided into A and C sections, five pairs from each club competed in each section with the hosts looking to retain the C Cup they won in Dunoon in 2019. The A team were out to stop Dunoon holding onto the A Cup.

The Oban C team were in dominating form, blowing away Dunoon and Mid Argyll to take the honours.

Bruce Aitken from Oban Badminton Club said: 'We had to work really hard for the cup last year in Dunoon so we were glad we were able to close out the C cup early on this year.'

Making her Argyll Cup

debut this year, 14-year-old Naira Clowes played really well with Bruce describing her as 'a very talented player

who will keep getting good results across the board in the various tournaments she plays in Scotland'.



Oban Badminton Club's A and C teams - winners of the 2020 Argyll Cup.

BADMINTON

The A team had to work a little harder in their section as Mid Argyll came with a strong team.

'We had to work to the end to get the result and the team gave it their all to get Oban over the finish line to lift a well-deserved trophy.'

'I'm so proud of the team. It was a nerve wracking when everyone knew it was going down to the wire.'

'All teams played really well and we look forward to the competition in Campbeltown in 2021.'

Organisers thank West Coast Motors for its generous sponsorship of £250 towards the cost of shuttlecocks for the event.

The prizegiving was held in the Perle Hotel, Oban.

Martial arts

IAIN RODGER
editor@obantimes.co.uk



BJJ/MMA

Oban MMA members are back after the festive break and getting ready for this season's competitions.

Beginners are concentrating on fundamentals and different guards.

The club is holding its first seminar of the year, with head coach Marcos Nardini, on Saturday February 1. Hopefully it be well-attended by students.

The Tuesday MMA class has re-started with members concentrating on basic movement and footwork.

Coach Coogie Potter said: 'We are always looking for new members so if you are interested in trying Brazilian Jiu Jitsu or Mixed Martial Arts contact the club or call in to academy.'

If you would like to try out BJJ or MMA, Oban BJJ can be found on Facebook or email coogiepots@gmail.com

Shukokai Karate

Classes are in full swing after the Christmas break.

Anyone looking for more information on the club can get details from Kenny Gray on 07884 183905 or email kenni.gray@btinternet.com

Kickboxing

Senshi Do Kick Boxing held its last session of the year on Sunday December 29 2019.

During the session, the student of the year trophy was awarded to Gracie Campbell-Hill for her significant progress and her can-do, never give up spirit.

The end-of-year session also had some contests, including a best kick competition. There was a handicap system in place so everyone had a chance of winning, regardless of age and experience.

Eden Simpson won 'best kick' with her roundhouse followed by spinning hook kick. Another competition was for Sumo King of the ring, where all the entrants are in a 7m x 7m square and have to get the others out of the area.

The younger age group was won by Ondra Carpenter with Lewis May winning for the older age group.

Sessions are on Sundays at 11am to 1pm for juniors, five to 15 years, and Wednesdays at 4.30pm to 6pm for juniors, five to 15 years, and 6pm to 7.30pm for seniors, 16 years and over. Find us on Facebook Senshi Do Kickboxing or email shihanwill@gmail.com



Kickboxing prizewinners, left to right, Eden Simpson, Lewis May, Gracie Campbell-Hill and Ondra Carpenter.

Kyokushinkai Karate

Coach Iain Rodger is organising the Scottish Open Knockdown Karate tournament which will take place in Glasgow on Saturday February 29 at the GCU Arc Fitness Centre. Entries are currently in from Scotland, England, Wales, Ireland, Sweden and Poland.

The club is taking on beginners so get in contact if this is something you would like to be part of.

For details about the Kyokushinkai Karate classes contact Iain on 07584 166542 or email iain@ikku.co.uk

The club can also be found and messaged on Facebook under Caledonia Kyokushin.

OT

YOUTH RUGBY



Oban Lorne's Joshua Lane under attack from Lochaber players. Photograph: Iain Ferguson. alba.photos

Double header for U-14s

Oban Lorne U14s played two back-to-back matches against Lochaber on Sunday January 19, at Oban, and Saturday January 25, at Banavie.

Both games were 60 minutes long, and were played on each club's main pitch, in perfect weather and underfoot conditions.

In the first match, a depleted Lochaber team endured a right old drubbing. In the second match on their home ground, Lochaber fared much better. Although beaten again, they never gave up, contested well, and towards the end, matched their opponents.

SWIMMING

Personal bests for Otters

Continued from page 64

McQueen swam a personal best in the 100m breast stroke and coach Lyndsay Elliott commented: 'Abby showed great resilience today by picking herself up after the challenging 100m fly and going on to get a 3.6 second PB. We're really proud of her gutsy performance.'

Ewan Dowd came home with personal bests in the 100m freestyle and 100m back crawl, and Edie Elliott took 1.5 seconds from her 100m back crawl time.

Andrew, Ewan, Edie and Tayler are also members of the Argyll and Clyde swim team and their performances at this meet will hopefully enable them to be selected for an Argyll and Clyde relay team which will compete at the Scottish Nationals.

The Argyll and Clyde swim team brings together six smaller clubs to train and compete against some of the largest clubs in Scotland. Rachel Carre is the fifth Oban Otter who is also part of the Argyll and Clyde swim team but was not available to compete at the MAGS meeting.

ADULT FOOTBALL

Results and fixtures

Last Saturday's results: Central Scottish AFL 1B - Oban Saints, no game; Greater Glasgow AFL - Oban Saints GG, no game; Scottish Amateur FL - Premier Division One - Campbeltown Pupils 0, Parkhall 1; Easthall Star 6, Lochgilphead Red Star 0; Glynhill Moorcroft 7, Dunoon 2.

This Saturday's fixtures: Scottish Amateur Cup sixth round - Wishaw HSFP v Oban Saints; Greater Glasgow League Division Three - Glenvale v Oban Saints GG; Scottish Amateur FL - Premier Division One - Campbeltown Pupils v Dunoon; Lochgilphead Red Star v Carlton YM; Premier Division Two - St Convals v Tarbert.

OBAN SAINTS YOUTHS

Results and fixtures

Last Sunday's results: Under 13s no game; Under 14s 0 v St Patrick's SA 5; Under 15s no game; Under 17s 5, Busby 2. Netting for Saints were Ross Campbell (2), Ross Higgins, Innes MacDonald and John Douglas.

Next Sunday's fixtures: Under 13s no game; Park Spots v Under 14s; Rutherglen Glencairn v Under 15s; Summerson v Under 17s.

Pattern developing into Paisley

Paisley	7
Oban Lorne	40
Tennent's West Division 2	

Dalziel are the visitors to Glencruitten playing fields this weekend and, if recent form is anything to go by, the home of Oban Lorne RFC is looking like a very formidable place to come.

A stunning 40-7 victory at Paisley last weekend saw Andrew Johnston's men jump up another rung on the West League Division Two table and, after losing November's clash 15-0, revenge is very much in their line of sight.

'This should be another fantastic game of rugby with nothing between the two teams and Oban looking to be the kingmakers for the league,' said the Oban Lorne RFC coach.

'No one is going to relish the visit to Oban with the team's current form.'

'Last week's victory at Paisley was down to a fantastic team performance and Oban remaining unbeaten so far in 2020.'

'The games don't get any easier though. Dalziel are firmly in the hunt for the league title having played a couple of games fewer than the top three so we will have to be at our best once more to stop them.'

Oban hit the road in confident mood last weekend following the recent winning run but Paisley had been experiencing some decent form and sat only a point behind Oban in the league table.

Some last-minute changes due to work and injuries saw a major reshuffle of the backline. With no Ferg McCoss or Craig Wright available, Graham Maceachen, who has been excellent at scrum-half in recent weeks, was moved to outside centre with David McLaughlin moving to fullback.

Straight from his coaching session with Oban Lorne Ladies on Saturday morning, Corrie Louw was also welcomed back into the squad. With Ben James and Daniel Broderick both carrying injuries and

RUGBY

Stanley Lister off skiing, it was great to see the big man back in the team.

George Ritchie made the most of his first senior start with a few good runs and tackles while Jonathan Shaw also made his debut for the Green Machine when replacing Robert McLaughlin.

Oban were 19-7 to the good by half-time thanks to tries by Crawford Brown, Robert McLaughlin and David McLaughlin and two conversions from Vasil Borisov. Lorne McLachlan touched down for the bonus point try after the restart and added another for good measure shortly afterwards with Owen McDonald sealing the match with a sixth. Vasil slotted all three second half conversions.

Oban Lorne's match against Dalziel kicks off at 2pm on Saturday with the 2nd XV taking on Bute at 12pm. The club is looking for a good support to cheer both teams on.



Crawford Brown barges through the defence for a try.



Robert McLaughlin races clear to score.

Young primary athletes tri hard for funds

Primary seven pupils from Dunbeg, Achaleven and Kilchrenan primaries have been hard at work fundraising for their upcoming school camp at Lochgoilhead next month.

As part of this they completed an epic triathlon on Saturday. The pupils started the day by pulling on their trainers and joining the weekly 5k parkrun at Ganavan Sands, then on to Atlantis Leisure for a joint cycle the distance to Lochgoilhead and back (178km) on static bikes

TRIATHLON

and doing a joint 5.55k swim in the pool.

A huge thank you to parkrun and Atlantis Leisure for helping the pupils achieve this. Thanks also to parkrunners and visitors at Atlantis who donated and parents and friends who have sponsored them.

If you have any extra change and want to help the children on their fundraising journey, you can drop donations into any of the three school offices.



Primary school children from Dunbeg, Achaleven and Kilchrenan kicked off their fundraising triathlon on the parkrun. 15_T05_PrimarySchoolTriathlonRun



Pedal power.



The youngsters in the pool at Atlantis.

as Lorne get torn

Rejuvenated Oban Lorne rugby ladies have appetite for plate



the Paisley defence before touching

Photographs: Stephen Lawson



Having had no competitive fixtures since the end of November, Oban Lorne Ladies have had time to re-group and recover following what was for them a disappointing league season.

And, with almost a full squad of players now championing at the bit for some action, the 2020 National Plate competition couldn't have come at a better time.

This year the tournament is being played in a round robin format with 10 teams being split over two pools. Oban Lorne face away trips to West of Scotland (this Sunday) and Kirkcaldy (Sunday February 23), and will play Kelso (Sunday February 16) and Annan (Sunday March 1) at their Glencruitten ground.

Head to head

The winners of each Pool will go head to head on Finals Day which will be played at Murrayfield in the spring.

Influential captain Laura (America) MacCormick suffered a knee injury at the start of the season but has started light training with the squad in the hope of being able to

join in the plate competition in the later stages.

'I feel great at the moment and I haven't had any problems with the knee but I'm trying to rein it in a bit just now to let it mend properly. Hopefully, I will get back on within the next couple of months.'

Captain America has already experienced Murrayfield success when she led the team to victory in the Bowl competition in 2018 and is keen for the newer members of the team to have that same chance.

The tournament kicked off last weekend, with Oban having their bye week. This weekend's opponents West of Scotland were beaten 33-15 by Annan while Kelso ladies ran in a 22-5 victory over Kirkcaldy.

After a league season blighted by player shortage and injuries, a rebuilding exercise has produced a positive outcome with a strong squad ready to take on the plate challenge.

Serial scorer Lucy Stewart is back from an injury due to

surgery, as is Beth Menzies after damaging ligaments.

Several of the new girls will also be bringing something to the party. Gill Rimmer, with her ability to draw in defenders and hit hard lines, Caitlin Hilder has speed and enthusiasm, while Caitlin Fowler has good knowledge and strength.

Committed

Rowan Sinclair from Queen Margaret University has also committed to playing with the Green Army this season after playing alongside one of Oban's finest, Selina Keppie, last season at the university.

Head coach Corrie Louw commented: 'There is no reason why we can't go all the way in this competition, it's all down to them now.'

Oban Lorne Ladies are always looking to sign up new team members who want to be part of their vibrant and friendly squad. No experience is necessary. For more details contact them through their Facebook page.

Thrills and spills at epic Strathpuffer race

The Oban area was well represented at this year's Strathpuffer 24-hour Mountain Bike Race held in the Contin area of Inverness, writes Frazer Inglis.

The challenge of a demanding circuit, a Scottish winter and 17 hours of darkness make the 'Puffer one of the most difficult mountain bike races in the world.

Every year it proves an extreme test of rider and bike and the local riders who made the long journey up to Contin proved to be up to the challenge.

Skilled and committed pit crews proved to be key to the teams returning home with some very creditable results.

In the men's pairs section, Fraser Inglis and Steven Groom, Legends 96, put in a very strong performance to gain fourth place out of 100 pairs. This was Fraser's debut at the Strathpuffer and he benefited from having the experienced Steven as his partner.

In the mixed pairs section,

Anja Powell, along with her partner Callum Gordon, came home with an excellent second place.

The load was spread over more riders in the quads section with Ronald and Sean Gordon joined by DJ Barr and Ian Macdonald in

the team NACC Help for the wounded. With all four riders completing six laps each it was enough to gain a very creditable 21st position out of 135 teams and in the process raise money for a very worthwhile cause.

Also in the quad section



Paul Knight (blue helmet) picked himself up and carried on after being involved in an accident at the Strathpuffer 24-hour Mountain Bike Race.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

were Blink and You're Gone made up of David Simcox, Robert Wilson, Rab Black and Paul Knight. Despite being one of the most inexperienced teams, the boys battled hard to gain a place in the top half of their section. A special mention must go to team member Paul Knight who only took up cycling recently.

Paul was involved in a painful crash during the race which saw him run over by other bikes. Despite this painful incident, he carried on and contributed to his team's result.

Also representing the area were Peter Martin and Graham McNee, who were both competing in the quad section but with different teams. The talented Graham had an unfortunate crash on the third lap and was unable to continue. Peter's team managed to complete 18 laps in the 24 hours securing a 77th place.



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WEATHER

Thursday

Gusty winds and light rain showers
Temperatures
6°C to 9°C.

Friday

Light rain showers and a moderate breeze
Temperatures
8°C to 10°C.

Weekend

Outlook

Saturday
light rain showers and a moderate breeze
Sunday
Light rain showers and a moderate breeze
Temperatures
6°C to 9°C.



FRIDAY

TIDAL INFORMATION

Tide tables for Oban during the week from Thursday January 30, 2020 are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

	02.58	1.3	08.51	3.7
Thur	15.24	1.6	20.54	3.5
Fri	03.31	1.5	09.26	3.5
	16.02	1.7	21.28	3.3
Sat	04.07	1.7	10.04	3.3
	16.47	1.9	22.08	3.1
Sun	04.52	1.9	10.52	3.1
	17.44	2.0	23.00	3.0
Mon	05.52	2.0	12.11	3.0
	18.50	2.0	***	**
Tues	00.19	2.9	07.04	2.0
	14.18	3.0	19.57	1.9
Wed	02.24	3.0	08.24	1.9
	15.26	3.2	21.01	1.6

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

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

Ferry Crossings/Sea States

Oban to Barra/South Uist	Moderate
Oban to Coll/Tiree	Moderate
Kennacraig to Islay	Moderate

Stop Press: New pontoons at Ulva Ferry and visitor moorings installed at Lochaline by North West Marine Ltd

Young primary athletes tri hard for funds

Thrills and spills at epic Strathpuffer race

Bob gets back into the swing in windy Dubai



Bob MacIntyre speaking to the press after finishing in eighth place at the Dubai Desert Classic. Photograph: Bounce Sports.

After the frustration of missing his season opener through injury, Oban's Bob MacIntyre got 2020 under way in style at the weekend with a fine eighth-place finish in the Dubai Desert Classic.

Bob's five-under-par finish left him four shots behind eventual winner Lucas Herbert of Australia who triumphed after a play-off with South Africa's Christian Bezuidenhout.

Understandably after a two-month enforced lay-off, Bob started the tournament a little slowly and, combined with the tough, windy conditions, he had to dig deep on the back nine on Friday to ensure he made the cut. He then followed up on Saturday with a brilliant 67 that pushed him well up the field going into the final round.

Unfortunately for Bob, he played in the worst of the very windy conditions on Sunday, but to his credit managed to

GOLF

keep his game together while others were being blown off course. The number of seasoned professionals who failed to break 80 on Sunday is testament to how tough the conditions were.

Bob's fine finish sees him climb a couple of places in the world rankings to 65th and also pocket around £60,000 in prize money. Considering Bob is still nursing an injury and hasn't played since the end of November, he can be rightfully pleased with his performance.

He now moves on to Saudi Arabia for the Saudi International which begins today (Thursday), where he is up against another incredibly strong field, including world number one Brooks Koepka and number five Dustin Johnson. Another strong finish will keep his top 50 hopes well and truly alive.

Argyll Rally cancelled

RALLYING

Organisers of the KNC Groundworks Scottish Rally Championship (SRC) have extended their sympathies to Mull Car Club who did all they could to ensure the Argyll Rally, due to take place in Dunoon on June 6, remained on the 2020 rally calendar.

The Argyll Rally has been a feature of the SRC calendar since it was relaunched in 2017, and has played host to some epic battles that proved decisive in the outcome of the championship on more than one occasion.

Utilising recent changes to the Road Traffic Act in Scotland that devolves power to close public roads from the government to Motorsport UK and rally organisers, the Argyll Rally was excitingly set to become a Tarmac rally for the first time in its history in 2020.

But, unfortunately, event organisers haven't been able to secure the relevant authorisations within the timeframe available, and they've had to take the difficult decision to cancel this year's event. However, plans are already under way for the 2021 event, which promises to be a proper challenge.

'Mull Car Club are disappointed to announce that the 2020 Argyll Rally will not be running,' a statement from Mull Car Club said.

Hard work helps Otters achieve personal goals

Six Oban Otters travelled to Grangemouth for the level 2 MAGs meet last weekend and returned with seven personal bests. Andrew Boyle, Ewan Dowd, Edie Elliott, Tayler Robinson, Abby McQueen and Joel Robinson all made the tough consideration times for their events and did both their club and the town proud in the process.

Head coach Amanda Coates said: 'I am delighted for the swimmers. The results are a

testament to all the hard work at training.'

Youngest swimmer Joel Robinson took four seconds from his 100m freestyle personal best, with sister Tayler also getting a personal best in the 100m back crawl, with a delighted dad cheering them all the way from the spectators' area.

Despite a knee injury, Andrew Boyle swam a personal best in the 100m front crawl, building on his recent

SWIMMING

success by taking 2.5 seconds from his 100m back crawl time at the West District long course championship at Tollcross.

Eleven-year-old Abby
Continued on page 62

Back row from left: Andrew Boyle, Ewan Dowd, Edie Elliott. Front: Tayler Robinson, Abby McQueen, Joel Robinson.



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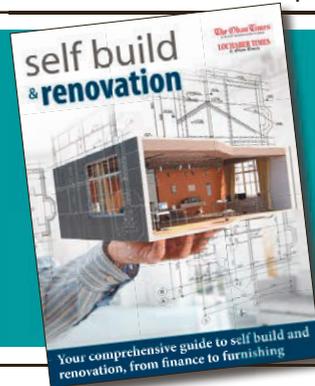
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Lochaber teams head to Scottish Lego league



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Smelter workers to vote over industrial action

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

Around two thirds of the 140-strong workforce at the Lochaber smelter in Fort William are to be consulted on whether to have a formal ballot on industrial action in a dispute over pay.

The move was agreed at a meeting at the Fort William plant last week, and is expected to take place in the first two weeks of February when a vote will be held on whether to proceed to the formal ballot on industrial action.

The decision was confirmed to the Lochaber Times this week by the Unite trade union which has some 90 members employed at the smelter.

When asked to comment, Unite Regional Officer Richard Whyte told us: 'Yes, the union members have asked to be balloted in the face of a zero pay rise.'

In December, the smelter celebrated its 90th year and CEO Douglas Dawson said that the company was in Lochaber for the long term

and would be investing millions. So the workforce is seeking a tiny investment from the company which will have a big impact in securing their family income from erosion by cost of living rises.

'The ballot result is expected in early February and is only the first of several steps before any industrial action could take place.'

'Union members have asked to be balloted over a zero pay rise.'

Unite claims this is the second year in which its members have had a zero pay rise, which means, in effect, workers have had a pay freeze during a period in which company bosses have trumpeted plans for a multi-million-pound alloy wheels plant and extensive other investment in the local area.

'That's why people are becoming frustrated,' added Mr Whyte, who claimed the amount of actual money

needed to give workers an acceptable pay settlement would be less than £200,000.

And he says the union and its members are '110 per cent committed' to the smelter and its future. 'We are happy to work with the company and the Scottish and UK governments to secure the future of the business,' said Mr Whyte.

Asked to comment, a spokesman for GFG Alliance which owns the smelter – now rebranded as GFG's Alvanca British Aluminium – told us: 'We are in constructive talks with the union over the future pay of our employees at the Lochaber smelter.'

'Since the GFG Alliance took ownership of the smelter and hydro plant in 2016, our employees have received a bonus every year and we hope to continue that. GFG is committed to creating and maintaining good jobs in Fort William. As well as saving almost 200 jobs at the time of acquisition, employment at the smelter and hydro plant has increased by 25 per cent.'

Burns celebrated in style in Lochaber



The Lochaber Burns Club held its annual Burns Supper in the Alexandra Hotel in Fort William on Friday night. It was the 121st Burns Supper since the club formed back in 1899 and saw 88 guests entertained by this year's speakers, including Donald Cameron (The Immortal Memory), Tom Uppington (The Land We Live In), Ali Smith (A Toast

to the Lassies), and Jim Sutherland (Holy Willie's Prayer). The ceremonial haggis was carried in by John Hutchison, pictured on the right, and addressed by Iain Robertson, left. Looking on is Bill Cameron. The assembled guests also enjoyed a fine selection of fiddle tunes by Angus Grant, as well as piping from James Rosie. Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos

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LT

Ex-soldier Ben sets his sights on smashing Cape Wrath Trail record

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

From roaming the Shropshire hills as a boy emulating his hero, bushcraft legend Ray Mears, to serving with the army in Afghanistan and climbing in the Himalayas, Lochside resident Ben Turner cannot get enough of the great outdoors.

In fact, after he left the army just under two years ago and then spent time in the Alps running and climbing, Ben, now 26, was so desperate to get back to the wilds of the West Highlands where he had often holidayed with his family as a youngster that he spent the first few months sleeping in his car in Tobermory while training for a biking adventure trip around Iceland.

When he returned from there, he bought a van and lived in that for a while in Fort William, working in the Wildcat cafe.

There followed a stint working as a gardener in Roshven to his present employment with the town's Cotswold outdoors store.

But speaking to Ben it becomes clear how driven he is to achieve his goals and that he is working to a carefully crafted masterplan as befits a former member of the army's Intelligence Corps.

Ben's dream is to one day soon become a full-time adventure athlete and coach/nutritionist/speaker and



'It's hard, it's remote and it's incredibly demanding ... but also spectacular.'

brand ambassador, with the next step along that path being his aim of smashing the record for the notoriously difficult 230-mile Cape Wrath Trail.

The current fastest known time stands at four days, nine hours and 43 minutes, but in April this year Ben intends to run the route in under 60 hours – less than three days.

Ben's run will be filmed for a feature-length documentary by McGrath Digital Media, fulfilling a long-held dream of his to create a high quality story around one of his crazy projects, to share a positive message and encourage people to

Ben Turner is looking to break the record for the Cape Wrath Trail.

do good. Premiered through social media, this project is centred on the beauty of the Highlands and showcasing evidence-based training and nutrition.

In addition, Ben has launched a #BreakYourOwnRecord campaign to encourage a million people across the UK to get outside and break their own personal sporting or fitness records.

On his website, he explains: 'As a student of sports nutrition and exercise science, I aim to change the interpretation of fitness and nutrition education to show people the evidence-based principles behind training and nutrition, so they may make their own methods and move forward empowered.'

He now also has a website set up to promote his expertise as an extreme athlete, coach, speaker and brand ambassador, and his ultimate dream is to win the Iron Man World Championships in Kona in Hawaii in 2022. He told the Lochaber Times: 'As an evidenced-based practitioner, I like to bring fact-based evidence about training methods and nutrition to help endurance athletes in running, cycling, rope climbing ...

whatever. Undertaking things like the Cape Wrath Trail is a way of providing that fact-based evidence – it's hard, it's remote and it's incredibly demanding, but also one of most spectacular places on the planet.

'For me, it is about far more than just running another trail, so I thought I'd also see how fast I can go. It will be the ultimate trail running adventure and breaking the record turns it into something really challenging.'

With an upsurge in the popularity of television programmes and books on extreme training and survival by people like former special forces soldier Ant Middleton, Ben acknowledges there is a developing market for people wanting to push themselves a bit further than normal fitness clubs might provide.

'I think people in those circles have a different way of operating and thinking and there is a market for people who want to be pushed further. When I was 17, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, but I definitely felt there was something more I had to give and it often takes an Ant Middleton type to bring that out.'

'You find very often that people are waiting to find their next level and want an easy way to it, but there is no easy way. It's all about upping one's game and often you need help to reach that next level – which is where I can and help.'



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No impact on smelter jobs from French move, says GFG

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

GFG Alliance has given a categorical assurance there will be no negative impact on local jobs at the Lochaber smelter in Fort William as a result of the company's consolidation of all its aluminium businesses into a single group to be headquartered in Paris.

Last week, Sanjeev Gupta, executive chairman of GFG Alliance, announced the creation of what he called a 'new global low carbon aluminium champion'.

The move follows the consolidation of the GFG Alliance's steel businesses into a single global entity, Liberty Steel Group, in October last year.

The new aluminium group, to be known as Alvanco Aluminium Group, will be headquartered in the



French capital and will bring together all of GFG Alliance's assets across the aluminium supply chain – from raw materials through to finished components.

Mr Gupta has also revealed that he is extending GFG Alliance's carbon neutral 2030 (CN30) programme to Alvanco. GFG subsidiary Liberty announced a commitment to make its Liberty steel business carbon neutral

by 2030 back in October.

As well as the Lochaber smelter, Alvanco's portfolio includes Europe's largest aluminium smelter in Dunkerque, France's only manufacturer of aluminium wheels in Chateauroux and engine cast part producers Alvanco Aluminium Technologies and Cast Products in Poitou.

Alvanco has also conditionally agreed to acquire

The Lochaber smelter, pictured, is now operated under the Alvanco British Aluminium banner in a switch from the Liberty branding. Photograph: Iain Ferguson.

Belgium's Duffel aluminium rolling facilities.

Mr Gupta commented: 'The creation of Alvanco highlights the global nature of our ambitions. We've made huge progress in both consolidating our steel network worldwide and delivering higher value-added products to our consumers.'

'Alvanco now aims to establish itself as a champion for "green aluminium". Extending our CN30 target to this part of the business is both a logical and necessary step in its development.'

'Given the rise in customer demand for stronger, lighter-weight, recyclable materials,

we see aluminium as a key opportunity for growth and sustainable profitability.'

'However, we operate in an international market that's both cyclical and under competitive pressure, and so by combining our businesses, we're looking to achieve greater synergies, increase efficiencies and ensure the business is fit to meet the challenges ahead.'

'In Scotland, we are seeking to extend Alvanco's aluminium investments in Fort William.'

Asked what all this means for the Lochaber smelter, now rechristened from British Liberty Aluminium to Alvanco British Aluminium, a GFG spokesperson told the Lochaber Times: 'With regards to the formation of Alvanco, reporting lines and business activities at the Lochaber smelter will remain the same.'

'This is intended to bring GFG's aluminium business units across France and Scotland closer together, drive synergies across all the units and enable the Alvanco management team to work effectively towards our goal of being carbon neutral by 2030. No job reductions at all to come from this.'

The news has been welcomed by Ross, Skye and Lochaber MP Ian Blackford, who commented: 'As a large employer in the Fort William area, the progress being made here is very encouraging.'

'There is a great importance in implementing and learning from a downstream production model and we will benefit from that here in the Highlands.'

'The ambitious and attainable commitment to carbon neutrality by 2030 is also a key target that I look forward to seeing achieved.'

MSP fears 'rates changes could cost Highland businesses £20 million'

Lochaber Chamber of Commerce has backed a call to Scottish politicians to ensure that proposals to devolve control of a range of rate powers to local authorities are scrutinised properly and reversed if necessary.

The appeal, part of a call from the wider network of 27 Scottish chambers of commerce, comes as the Scottish Parliament prepares to vote next week on a motion that could end rates schemes which benefit more than 11,000 Highland businesses.

Labour and Tory MSPs on Holyrood's Local Government and Communities Committee voted for a Green amendment to the Non-Domestic Rates Bill that would remove the ability of Scottish ministers to set the business rates poundage. Amendment nine, lodged by Green Party MSP Andy Wightman, sets out to scrap the uniform business rate and devolve powers to set business rates to councils.

This means the rates would



no longer be set nationally and business rates reliefs – including the Small Business Bonus and rates relief for hydro schemes, mobile masts, fibre broadband and nurseries – would end.

The Federation of Small Businesses, CBI Scotland and the Scottish Retail Consortium have all expressed concerns over the proposed changes, warning it will create added costs and deter investment.

Lochaber Chamber of Commerce chief executive officer Frazer Coupland told us: 'Lochaber Chamber of Commerce, as part of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce network of 27 chambers, calls on parliamentarians to put forward amendments to ensure the transformative, potentially damaging changes to business communities are given proper consideration and scrutiny, and reversed where necessary.'

Lochaber MSP Kate Forbes, pictured, says Highland businesses could lose almost £20 million of relief under

the plan – but this could be averted if MSPs including Labour and Tory representatives for the Highlands and Islands opposed the amendment on Tuesday.

Ms Forbes told the Lochaber Times: 'If Highland MSPs vote for this amendment again on Tuesday February 4, the Highlands will lose almost £20 million of crucial rates relief. Voters should be under no illusions – the SNP were the only party in committee at stage two to oppose the vote to abolish the small business bonus scheme and other reliefs.'

'Labour and Conservatives have one last chance to vote to reintroduce the small business bonus and scheme, and voters will be watching carefully, I am sure.'

But Highlands and Islands Greens MSP John Finnie told us: 'Devolving this important tax to local government will empower small business in a way currently unimaginable and ensure local councils can set rates that are appropriate for their own area.'

'Scottish Greens' proposals will ensure reliefs can continue to be paid as they are now.'

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LT

Islands' residents scoop £3M thanks to Postcode Lottery

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

Scores of islanders in North Uist and Berneray are set to pocket cheques for a minimum of £10,000 each after it was revealed that HS6 5 is the winning postcode sector in January's Postcode Millions draw.

The full winning postcode will be revealed tomorrow (Friday) but players in the islands have already been told they have won a minimum of £10,000 each.

The £3 million prize will be divided between each of the lottery's players in the postcode sector. Those playing with the full winning postcode will take home the biggest cheques.

North Uist and Berneray had a combined population of only around 1,600 at the time of the last census in



2011. More than 60 per cent of the local population are Gaelic speakers.

It is the first time the Postcode Lottery team has visited the Western Isles and a special event is being held at

Carinish Village Hall tomorrow to mark the occasion.

Former X Factor contestant and People's Postcode Lottery ambassador Danyl Johnson will be on hand to reveal the prizes and

Former X Factor contestant and People's Postcode Lottery ambassador Danyl Johnson, who will be on hand to reveal the prizes and present the cheques.

present the cheques. Danyl said: 'I thought this job had taken me all over Britain, but I have never travelled to the Outer Hebrides before.

'I have heard so much about the islands and I can't wait to get there. Handing out cheques will make the trip even more special.

'It's going to be a day to remember for everyone involved. I reckon there'll be a real party atmosphere at the village hall.

'Congratulations to everyone in North Uist and Berneray - I'll see you soon!'

People's Postcode Lottery

was created solely to raise funds for charities and players have now raised more than £500 million for thousands of good causes.

These include Maggie's cancer care centres, the British Red Cross and the Woodland Trust. A minimum of 32 per cent of the price of every ticket goes to charity.

Local good causes have also benefited from player support. Volunteering Hebrides recently received £19,861 to support people who are housebound due to physical or mental health issues. The project helped people who may otherwise have experienced social isolation to connect with each other.

The Postcode Millions draw was held on behalf of Postcode Animal Trust. It supports charities which promote animal welfare and conservation.

Regeneration group to meet next week

The next meeting of the Upper Achintore Regeneration Group will be on Monday February 3 at 6pm in the meeting room at Lundavra Primary School.

Current activities of the group include monitoring the progress of the 325-house development below Cow Hill and the 39-house school site; path restoration work on the Ross Place/Cow Hill circular link path; upgrading of the local kickabout pitch and a funding application for a community hub.

Group chairman Mark Linfield said: 'We have been successful in obtaining a grant for a Christmas event this year and we currently have funding applications lodged for a feasibility study for a community hub and for new benches in the area.'

'We are working hard to improve the environment and facilities for our community and I'm hoping for a good turnout at our meeting - we vitally need residents' support to achieve our aim of regenerating Upper Achintore.'

WHAT'S ON

■ Lochaber Sensory Care will hold an outreach clinic on Monday February 3, at Mallaig Medical Centre, from 1.30-3.30pm.

■ The Ben Nevis Hotel on Thursday February 6, at 8pm, is the venue for February's Lochaber Local History Society talk, which focuses on the story of Héloïse Russell-Fergusson (1896-1970), who was raised in Port Appin and was a pioneering, mischievous and fiercely independent clarsach player and singer who entertained audiences from Tallinn to Tokyo.

On her return to the UK, she startled the staid 1960s' clarsach community in Scotland by weaving aspects of world music into her avant garde recordings.

The speaker is Helene Witcher, her niece, who herself has an unconventional story and who wrote the biography of her aunt's life under the title, *The Life and Legacy of Madame Scotia, Madam Scrap*.

This will be a very different and interesting evening, which will include some of Madame Scotia's own recordings. All welcome.

■ Lochaber Environmental Group continues its bike

repair classes, which teach basic maintenance and repair, including how to keep your chain running smoothly, puncture repair, and adjusting and repairing your brakes and gears.

For more information and to register, email kate@lochaberenviro.org.uk

■ Lochaber Ladies will have a meeting at Marks & Spencer on Monday February 3 at 7pm. The meeting will consist of a tour around the store taking in behind the scenes and showing ladies the workings of the store.

■ Lochaber Transport Forum will hold an open public meeting in Duncansburgh Church Hall, the Parade, Fort William, at 11am on Tuesday February 4. Up for discussion will be local issues and concerns relating to buses/coaches, trains, ferries, walking, cycling and roads and pavements.

■ The Lochaber Probus Club will hold its next meeting on Thursday February 6 from 12.30-2.15pm. There will be a talk from Terry Lee about his life and career followed by results from his recent research into the activities of Probus Clubs in the New Forest. More information

can be found on the Lochaber Probus Club Facebook page.

■ The Fort William Baby and Children's Market returns to the Nevis Centre on Saturday February 8. The market is dedicated to pre-loved items for babies and children under-10. Entry is £1 per adult and the market will run from 2pm-4pm.

■ Lochaber Sensory Care will have two outreach clinics on Monday February 10, with one in Acharacle Medical Centre from 10.30-11.45am, then at Dail Mhor Care Home from 1-2.30pm.

■ Ever wondered what birds live in Glen Nevis through the winter and spring? You will be able to find out and see them up close at the next bird ringing event at the Ben Nevis Visitor Centre on Sunday February 16. An experienced and licensed BTO bird ringer, John Owen, will show you why and how wild birds are ringed before they are released. From 9am to 3pm.

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Community calls for buyout of peninsula

by Richard Mason
rmason@obantimes.co.uk

For the second time this month, Ballachulish residents packed the village hall and resoundingly voted against a large holiday development on the peninsula.

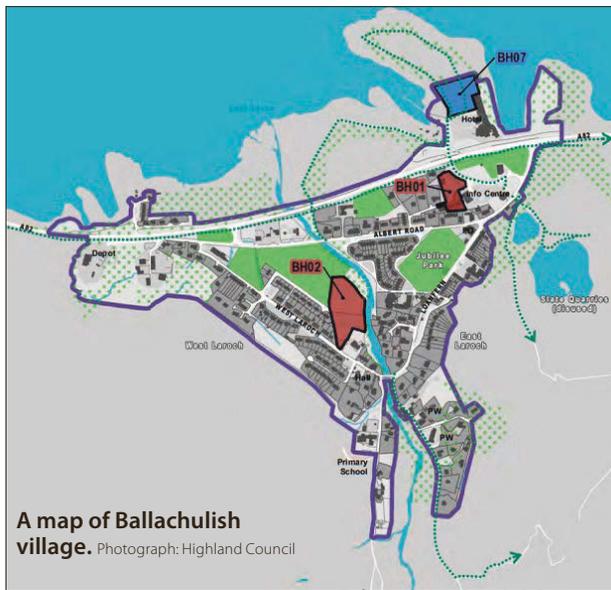
On Sunday (January 26) evening, developers Ossian, Crieff Hydro and Denholm Architects hosted a workshop to gain an idea of what the community wanted to do with the land.

Those in attendance were split into 10 groups that each discussed ideas for the area with the overriding opinion – which was met with a round of applause when suggested – was a community buyout of the land.

'I think there is absolutely a deal to be done. We would much prefer to have community support behind our commercial venture.'

Laurence Young, who runs Ossian and is leading the project for a development, told the meeting he is open to working with the community.

He told the Lochaber Times: 'I think there absolutely is a deal to be done. We would much prefer to have community support behind our commercial developments and coming together in



A map of Ballachulish village. Photograph: Highland Council

some compromise is where it should be.

'I say in my document we should find the 'win win'. The further point I make in the document and we got agreement to at the meeting – for a compromise there needs to be a good method of ongoing consultation and discussion.

'Our companies can't move things forward with meetings of 100 people. The suggestion from the meeting is that it's the community company who should be the negotiating group – and that all sounds good and logical to us.'

The Ballachulish Community Company works 'hand in glove' with the community council to enact ideas that the community want to see, according to the chairman of both, Kevin Smith.

The company is holding a meeting today (January 30).

Mr Smith said: 'Community Company will assist in a community buyout if that is the road the community decides. We would have to carry out a ballot of the community to gauge all the responses.'

'On the land purchase cost, if a nominal fee was paid at the time of acquiring the land, that should have a relevance to community purchase.'

While a small holiday development had some backing in the hall, most wanted the main area of the peninsula unspoiled and for the footpath to be maintained.

Crieff Hydro, which owns the Isles of Glencoe Hotel, was represented at the meeting by Patrick Diack, general manager for the area.

He told the Lochaber Times that, whatever happens, they will still want to develop some self-catering holiday

accommodation because of the increased returns.

He said: 'For this area, the average hotel stay is just over a day. With self-catering, that figure is almost double so it is somewhere that we are very much looking to get involved in.'

The group wants to build units that feel consistent and organic with the natural landscape, but others in attendance felt the group were trying to squeeze out smaller businesses offering the same thing.

There was also some confusion about how the land found its way into private ownership as Highland Council had been presiding over it.

Laurence Young, who took ownership of the land before selling part to Crieff Hydro, made clear how it changed hands.

He said: 'The reality is that

it was owned privately by the slate company for decades. It was only passed by Ballachulish estate company to the Scottish Development Agency in 1978. For the purpose of the regeneration, Highland Council sought a commercial developer for the site for many years.

'We submitted proposals, presented to a committee and were selected in a competitive tender. The offer was a long lease over the land, with an option to purchase inbuilt into the original lease.'

'After a number of years, we exercised the option to purchase, the land was valued and the company definitely paid a cash sum across to the council.'

'I can't recall the amount, but there must be records in Highland Council. It was certainly material – tens of thousands.'

Man dies in Upper Achintore

A 29-year-old man has died after police were called to Ross Place in the Upper Achintore area of Fort William on Monday.

A PoliceScotland spokesperson said: 'Around 10.50am on Monday January 27, officers were called to a report of a 29-year-old man having been found in Ross Place in the Upper Achintore area of Fort William.'

'Emergency services attended. However the man was pronounced dead at the scene.'

'Inquiries are ongoing to establish the full circumstances and a post-mortem examination will take place. A report has been submitted to the procurator fiscal.'

CONTACTUS
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New bike shelter for Onich side of Corran Ferry

Last week a new bike shelter appeared at the Onich side of the Corran Narrows and locals were confused as to how and why it got there.

It was installed by HITRANS (Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership) as part of their wider strategy to install secure cycle parking at transport interchanges, such as ferry crossings and bus terminals.

Active Travel officer for HITRANS, Vikki Trefler, said: 'There are some shelters going in at bus stops on Skye as well. The idea at Corran Ferry was that it would provide a sheltered place



The bike shelter at the ferry terminal at Onich will offer travellers secure parking for their bike.

for people to put their bikes while they wait for the ferry.

'We would have liked to put one in at the other side as well, but apparently space was an issue there. Our active travel

strategy identifies secure cycle parking as a priority action to facilitate journeys where more than one transport mode is used (eg, bike – ferry or bike – bus).'

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TripAdvisor Review, July 2019

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a green plaid jacket, looking out from behind the metal bars of a jail cell. She has her hands on the bars.

LT

Gin-makers' spirits to rise following awards

by Richard Mason
rmason@obantimes.co.uk

The small-batch distillery behind Devil's Staircase and Drookit Piper gins will be adding a larger still and producing a new rum by the end of 2020.

Following medals for their own gins and two they produce for Fyne Malts of Inveraray at the World Gin Awards, the distillery plans to expand its operations.

Craig and Noru Innes set up the distillery in October 2017 in the grounds of the Loch Leven Hotel, which they have been running since 2014.

When renovating the hotel, they decided they wanted to create a bespoke drink for their bar and the ability to make gin quickly meant that it was a great fit, so Pixel Spirits was born.

Craig said: 'The bar had big bottles of branded spirits when we came in and we wanted to make the area more



unique. A whisky would have been the obvious choice, but we decided to go with gin because of the lack of ageing necessary. We went out to distillers at the time but they were either quoting really ridiculous prices or were far too busy.

'With a bit more research, we found that it was something we could do ourselves with the former farm buildings we have out back.'

Currently, all the gin is pro-

duced from a relatively small 100-litre still, which requires almost daily refilling.

With the continued popularity of Pixel Spirits' gins, they are going to add a 500-litre still for these which will halve their workload.

Craig continued: 'We are going to keep the 100-litre still for smaller projects and making gin for other companies. Adding the 500-litre one will mean we can focus on the hotel and other projects.'

The gin-making classes take about three hours and people will leave with their very own craft gin.

'At the end of 2019, we got our approval from HMRC to start producing rum on site as well. The first batches are in oak barrels at the moment. We are hoping to release a spiced-style rum later this year and the following year a more aged-style rum.'

The bar now stocks a number of interesting gins for different seasons and occasions, and the couple are passing on that love and appreciation of the spirit to anyone who wants to learn, with gin-making classes.

They hope to continue their run of success in the Scottish Gin Society's Consumer Choice Awards 2020, where the public vote for their favourite Scottish gin.

The poll closes on February 7. Vote at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ScotGin2020.

Road safety barriers to be erected on A82 near Spean Bridge

A £75,000 project to improve safety on the A82 at Invergloyle near Spean Bridge started last week.

The project involves removing trees which have grown too close to the edge of the road and the installation of new safety barriers.

New trees will be planted in the surrounding area away from the road.

Ecological surveys were conducted prior to the work to ensure there is minimal impact on the environment. The safety barrier design will also help reduce the number of trees needing removal.

The landscaping is expected to take up to two weeks to complete. Teams will then begin installing the new safety barriers from February 3 for a further two weeks.

Temporary traffic lights

and a 30mph speed limit will be in place throughout the improvements.

Eddie Ross, BEAR Scotland's north-west representative, said: 'Road safety is a top priority at BEAR Scotland and Transport Scotland, and this scheme on the A82 at Invergloyle is part of our commitment to improving road safety on the trunk road network.'

'The removal of trees is essential to create space to install the new barriers and will also prevent falling trees from falling onto the road.'

'The new safety barrier will help protect road users from striking roadside hazards.'

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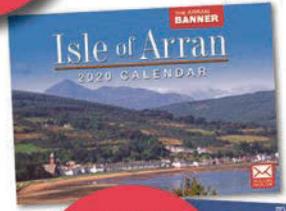
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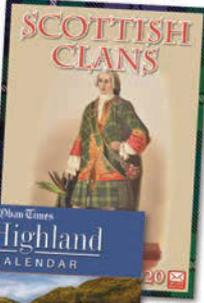
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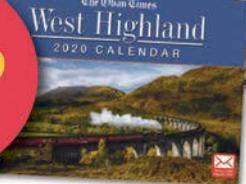


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Lochaber teams head to Scotland

Two schools from Lochaber have the chance to compete for Scotland at the First Lego League after doing well in the West Highland Tournament, writes Richard Mason.

Inverlochy Innovators (Inverlochy PS) came first and Universe (Glencoe PS) were second in the competition that has teams of pupils from ages nine to 16 put their STEM skills to the test.

This means the two teams will go on to the Scottish final in Perth on February 29. The three top teams from that will progress to international tournaments in the US, Brazil and Greece.

For the challenge, teams programme an autonomous robot to score points on a themed playing field, develop a solution to a problem they have identified, and must be guided by the FIRST Core Values. The event was coordinated at West Highland College UHI, Fort William, by Claire Thomson, course leader for construction.

She said: 'The teams are all given challenge sets and the missions, as well as a standard EV robot and Lego. They then need to think about how to adapt the robot to do the missions quicker since they have 13 missions and



The Kelpies team (St Bride's PS) in action, who won the Core Values Trophy. Photographs: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos



The team that organised the event, including Claire Thomson, centre, and Jim Brown, right.

only two and a half minutes. The theme for the challenges this year is Cityscapes and gets the kids thinking about

issues that arise in built-up areas and how to combat them. They're not just making a robot do things, but giving

Are you sitting comfortably? Let the storytelling begin

by Kirsteen Bell
fort@obantimes.co.uk

This Saturday sees the start of National Storytelling Week, an annual event initiated by the Society of Storytelling, encouraging the ancient art form of oral storytelling and which continues to this day as a vibrant part of culture throughout the world.

The oral tradition of storytelling, poetry and song has been a central part of Highland culture for countless generations. Sharing stories in this way creates a community around the giving and receiving of tales.

It is a tradition that Fort William Library encourages for all age groups, but particularly with their much-loved Bookbug sessions for babies and young children.

The library staff read stories, as well as singing rhymes and activity songs – much like



those attending a traditional ceilidh might have done in years gone by – bringing families together through dynamic, engaging and fun storytelling, and sparking a love of stories that can last a lifetime.

Fort William Library supervisor Sally Hughes compiled the library team's

top tips for sharing stories with the younger members of the family.

She told us: 'Books with bright pictures, lots of rhymes and a strong rhythm are always appealing to children. Some of our favourites are We're Going on a Bear Hunt, Moo Cow and The Highway Rat.

'Let your choice of book be guided by your child. Do they love animals? Try Dear Zoo. If they're interested in space, then Interstellar Cinderella might become a favourite. Don't get hung up on what you feel they should be reading. Nothing is too silly or "babyish" to enjoy together!

Fort William Library's Bookbug storytelling sessions are much loved by babies and young children.

'Experiment with using your voice to make stories more engaging. Can you read pages in a quiet voice, or a loud voice? Can you give characters different accents? Can you sing the book, or make animal noises (the sillier the better)?

'Let your child set the pace of reading by encouraging them to turn the pages as you read. You may find they want to spend a long time with a particular picture or want to read the same page over and over – this is a fantastic sign that your child is enjoying the story.

'Don't be afraid to repeat a book day after day if your child loves it. Repetition is a vital tool in helping your

child learn to read and they will continue to enjoy their favourite titles for years to come.

'Talk to your child about what you are reading. Did you find the book funny, silly or scary? Does it have a surprise at the end? Do you have a favourite character? If you didn't enjoy it, why didn't you enjoy it?

'Make regular visits to your local library. Encourage your child to pick out books they are interested in, attend Bookbug sessions, sign up to the Bookbug Library Challenge, and speak to staff about book recommendations they have. We love helping as many children as possible to enjoy stories.

'Sharing stories is fantastic fun for both children and grown-ups, so enjoy it!'

■ National Storytelling Week runs from Saturday February 1, to Saturday February 8.

British Lego league tournament



Inverlochys Innovators (Inverlochys PS), got the top spot in this round and will go to the second round with Universe.



Universe (Glencoe PS) came second in points overall and won the Innovation Project award for their idea to design a new community centre in Glencoe.

it a context to learn and think about issues that they could find solutions for.'

The teams must create a robot that can be programmed to move in specific ways and

also operate some Lego-based mechanical objects such as pulleys and levers.

The programming uses Lego's own simple system and the robots have to move

completely independently and complete tasks.

Event organiser Energy Skills Partnership (ESP) is holding 10 tournaments across Scotland with the best teams from each going to the Scottish finals.

The director of ESP, Jim Brown, helped out at the tournament and is enthusiastic about the competition.

He said: 'This competition means you need a team that has complementing skills. Someone who is good at the programming, engineering the robot, but also things like organisation to make sure things get done properly, and research skills for the innovation project.

'This is the first of time this tournament has been in Lochaber. Teams in the Scottish final will progress to the international tournaments rather than having to then go through the UK competition as they did before. The teams progressing will find largely the same missions but will be given advice on how to improve in the meantime.'

When the tournament returns, West Highland College UHI is hoping to have tournaments at as many locations as possible to bring in as many schools from the area.

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LT

World-travelled pipes find home in Lochaber

by Richard Mason
rmason@obantimes.co.uk

A set of bagpipes donated to Lochaber Schools' Pipe Band has had a long journey across multiple countries before they found themselves here.

The pipes belonged to David Bentley, who bought them when he lived in Warrington in the 1950s and began playing the bagpipes.

His interest in the instrument came out of trying to help a health issue and getting in touch with his roots.

David explained: 'As a youngster, I had very bad asthma and in my early teens decided I needed to strengthen my lungs. As my father's family were from Paisley, it was easy to decide on playing the pipes.'

'I joined the Warrington Pipe Band in 1954 when I was about 15 or 16 years old. After



an initial period learning the chanter and understanding the music, I decided to buy my own pipes. These were purchased second-hand from an elderly piper living in Warrington.'

Mr Bentley played with other bands such as the Liverpool Scottish Pipe Band

when the pipes would be transported on the back of a motorbike for some of their bigger duties.

He also had some experience with the Scouts which led to some interesting work.

'In 1957, I piped in a sub-camp of Scouts at the Jubilee Jamboree held in Sutton Park near Birmingham.

'I moved to Wales about 1962 and, while still attached to the Scout movement, I was greatly honoured to be piper to Sir Charles Maclean – who was Chief Scout at that time – during his visits to the principality.'

The Chief Scout was the 27th Chief of Clan Maclean and Mr Bentley would play the pipes at events when Sir Charles was in the north of Wales.

When David went to work in South Africa, the pipes came with him and he last

played them to welcome in the new year of 1987.

Later that year, he returned to the UK and now lives in Derbyshire with his wife.

The couple are passionate about Scottish country dancing and have recently returned from a trip to Tenerife where they were dancing with others.

These trips are where Mr Bentley met John MacDonald, who told him that the Lochaber Schools' Pipe Band always needed new equipment and – after a move of house that led to a clear out – the pipes were given from David to John.

After some refurbishment, the pipes will find a home with one of the dozens of pupils receiving piping tuition from instructors like Margaret MacMaster who accepted the pipes on behalf of the school.



Above, John MacDonald presents the historical bagpipes to Margaret MacMaster of Lochaber Schools' Pipe band. Photograph: Iain Ferguson; and left, David Bentley at a Warrington Pipe Band display about 60 years ago. Photograph: David Bentley

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VIEW FROM THE CHAMBER



From tomorrow, Friday January 31, the UK will no longer be a member of the European Union.

We'll be taking a new place in the global economy – and it's time to look outwards to new horizons and new opportunities.

Scotland is open for business and the Scottish Government is actively encouraging Scottish businesses to expand their international connections and global trading ambitions.

That's why it is an ideal time for smaller businesses to work with Scottish Chambers of Commerce to make connections into new overseas markets that you might have thought were beyond your reach.

Scottish Chambers of Commerce is delivering a wide range of international business visits for cross-sectoral groups over the coming year.

As part of this, Lochaber Chamber of Commerce will be helping to make business connections and collaborations for Scottish businesses in Nova Scotia, pictured.



Canada represents a fantastic opportunity for Scottish businesses – as well as benefiting from direct trade routes by air and sea, a compatible time zone and common language, the strong cultural and community links between our two countries gives us a head start in creating opportunities for trade and learning connections.

Food and drink, creative industries and merchandising, engineering, aquaculture, heritage and tourism are all key areas that Scottish businesses could explore in Nova Scotia.

As a smaller company, it's extremely hard to do this alone but visiting an overseas area as part of a Chamber of Commerce delegation makes it easy: we use our extensive international chambers of commerce network to reach the right people to talk to.

This ensures you get targeted business-to-business matching to make the most of your visit and will help you

get to know the companies and contacts that will be most beneficial to you.

You'll also get a real feel for the business environment and community at special events as part of the trip.

For a relatively small cost (for which there may be funding available), you can explore a whole new market, make valuable international connections and learn first-hand about how things work in Nova Scotia.

Nothing beats face-to-face business connections, a real handshake and first-hand experience of a new place.

What are you waiting for? Make your New Year's Resolution to broaden your business horizons and join us on a trade mission. It could transform your business.

Dip your toe in the water and explore new opportunities for your business in Canada.

To find out more, visit www.lochaberchamber.co.uk or call us on 01397 705765.

Environment project is helping children grow

The Lochaber Environmental Group (LEG) team are no strangers to delivering school lessons on renewable energy, active travel and composting throughout Lochaber.

However, last year, we did something slightly different as part of our Go Grow and Glow project, which is funded by the Climate Challenge Fund.

In 2019, Scotland's first community-owned school opened in Strontian.

Along with the new building, the school also has a new polytunnel, installed by LEG, to help the school to grow as much food as possible, to make local food growing core to the lessons, as well as introducing the pupils to carbon literacy and how we can help address the climate crisis.

It's been great to see the children so engaged and enjoying the rewards of growing their own food, reconnecting with the environment.

At Lundavra Primary School, the produce LEG



helped the pupils plant last summer has already made it onto the lunch menu.

It is important to engage with young people in this way, as the future of our planet depends on changing our approach to the resources of the natural world.

We can no longer take for granted and exploit our shared resources without considering the longer term implications and impact such



choices have. Figures show that many parts of Lochaber experience high levels of multiple disadvantage and poverty. Rates of childhood obesity are considerably higher in Lochaber than the Scottish national average.

And as poverty remains the most accurate predictor of avoidable premature death, with Scotland topping the UK's health inequality gap, the need for nutritionally superior locally grown food could not be higher.



Pupils from Lundavra Primary learning about growing their own food in their new polytunnel, above, and potatoes grown at the school have made it onto the lunch menu.



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LT

Open water swimmers take plunge to aid events' safety

by Nic Goddard
fort@obantimes.co.uk

On Saturday, I nearly drowned three times. I was alternately unresponsive, hypothermic and panicked. I lost the ability to swim, to navigate back to the shore, to communicate or to look after myself.

All around me in Loch Sunart were swimmers in similar distressed and perilous states. Some were struggling to breathe, a couple were injured and one or two were frantic to the point of upturning the kayaker trying to assist them so that they, too, ended up in the water needing help.

Anyone passing by the loch at Resipole would surely have wondered how quite so many swimmers had gotten into difficulties and why it was that so many kayaks and the



Hot soup and cake helped warm up the participants after the training. Photograph: Ady Goddard; right, Cameron Bungey and Andy Jackson in one of the rescue boats. Photograph: Simon Willis

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Highland Open Water Swim (HOWS) safety boat just happened to be on hand to help.

None of this was a coincidence, though, as it was a scheduled safety training day for the organisation in advance of this year's open water swim events.

There are 10 swims scheduled between February and October in the lochs and seas of the Highlands for all abilities – from gentle swims to super-challenging distances and routes.

To ensure swimmers are kept safe every stroke of the way, regular safety training for the team of volunteers who support the swims is part of the behind-the-scenes schedule.

All of the swims are supported by kayakers and canoeists monitoring the swimmers' progress and keeping everyone on track. In the unlikely event of anyone needing help, they will support the swimmer and raise the alarm to the safety boat which will come to their aid.

A whole host of scenarios were played out by volunteer wild swimmers to allow the team to practise a variety of rescues and predict potential issues in a training environment.

Jeff Forrester of HOWS told me: 'We organised the training day to ensure our safety team can rescue swimmers quickly and safely in case it is needed. The numbers of



participants in our events is steadily increasing. This was our first organised training session and we all learned a lot from it. We will now work on more in-depth training for our safety team to develop what worked best from the scenarios with the swimmers.'

HOWS, a registered charity since 2017, has raised thousands of pounds for brain tumour charities by organising events which hundreds of swimmers come from far and wide to attend.

Jeff explained: 'We started HOWS to help people get in the water, promoting open water swimming in this beautiful area, while raising money for good causes at the same time.'

'We have a fantastic team of volunteers who support the events to keep the swimmers safe.'

One of the newest members of the safety team is 14-year-old Cameron Bungey, who was part of the boat rescue team on Saturday. Cameron said: 'I went out in the HOWS rescue boat for some

training, familiarising myself with the power boat and how everything works. It was great to learn some new skills and I hope to volunteer with HOWS on the safety team for most of the swims this year. The volunteering will also go towards my Duke of Edinburgh Award.'

After all the rescue excitement, everyone returned to shore, with kayaks pulled clear of the water, swimmers getting into dry clothes and everyone gathering for hot soup, delicious cakes and to talk about their experience in the water, much like at one of HOWS events.

This time, though, it was to discuss how things had gone wrong and swap stories of how many times we'd had to shout for help, cling to our tow floats and wait for assistance or succumb to the cold water and swirling waves.

Thanks to training sessions like these, the safety of swimmers is assured for the events scheduled for this year.

Full details of HOWS events can be found on www.highlandopenwaterswim.com

MP Blackford marks Holocaust Memorial Day

Ross, Skye and Lochaber MP Ian Blackford this week signed the Holocaust Educational Trust's Book of Commitment, pledging his commitment to Holocaust Memorial Day on Monday and paying tribute to Holocaust survivors who work tirelessly to educate young people today.

'This year marks the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau,' he said.

'On Holocaust Memorial Day, we remember the millions of victims of the Holocaust and pledge to continue to work to ensure that anti-Semitism, hatred and bigotry of any kind does not prevail.

'Holocaust Memorial Day serves as a constant reminder that there is no room for complacency in tackling anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry, which are a stain on our society.

'As politicians and policy-makers, we have an important role in ensuring that whenever hate appears we act and we root it out.'

Ice hockey player swaps Alberta prairies for wilds of Lochaber

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

It is a long way from the Canadian city of Lacombe in Alberta to Lochaber – almost 4,000 miles to be precise.

And the time zones are not the only big differences, as Lacombe resident Matthew Bell has found out during his stay in Lochaber as part of his travels.

Matthew has been travelling around Scotland for the past four months, the last few weeks staying with a family in Lochailort.

'I got a five-year visa to the UK and have been travelling round Scotland, visiting different places, seeing what interests me and taking in the culture,' Matthew told the Lochaber Times.

'Lacombe is in the prairies, so it's little bit different. For example, where I'm from, a



cold snap is minus 40 or minus 50, although that's not to say the weather is not tough here also.

'I've been here for a few weeks at Lochailort, staying with Gary [Burton] and Katie, helping out. They put me up through an organisation that links volunteers with families that need a bit of help.

'They have like a small farm here and a B&B. So I've been

helping out with the chickens and the house. I'll be here for another few weeks and then kind of just going where work is.

'My line of work is environmental studies and there's not a lot happening here at this time of year. But it's been great. Gary and Katie have been great.

'I was hoping to get some skiing in. I don't have a car

Matthew has taken part in the indoor training sessions with Fort William Shinty Club. Photograph: Iain Ferguson

so I've been using the train and with a station here at Lochailort, it's been cool.'

As part of his stay in Lochaber, Matthew has been joining in some of the indoor training sessions at Fort William Shinty Club – an interesting experience for a Canadian ice hockey player.

He explained: 'The shinty's been great for meeting people. I'd heard about shinty when I was in other parts of Scotland and people said I should check it out if was ever up in the Highlands.

'I kind of had an idea to check it out and mentioned it to Gary. It's been great but it is not really similar to ice hockey.'

'The basic structure of the game is but that's about all. Ice hockey is faster and there's a different way of using your stick. The way they hit a shinty ball seems more like golfing to me.

'It seems a very Scottish game – very rough and gritty. Perhaps a bit more like the Irish game of hurling than ice hockey.

'But it's been a good way to meet people and folks at the club have been great and so welcoming.'

And Matthew laughed: 'I've taken part in indoor training sessions – going outside in this weather at night to play just seems like asking for trouble to me!'

And he concluded: 'But I am really enjoying my stay, seeing everything, meeting the people. It's been great – but it could have rained a bit less though!'



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LT

Portree and Kyle lifeboat crews delight at cash boost



Earlier this month, at the Kyle of Lochalsh Lifeboat Station, two cheques were presented to both Portree and Kyle RNLI crews. Rodger Harvey-Jamieson presented a very generous £10,000 cheque from his family to each station. Alfie Edwards, representing the Applecross Boat Pull Team, also handed over to each station, a cheque for £1,000. The team has been fundraising for local charities and the RNLI for several years which has led to several lifeboat stations receiving donations over that time. Thanking Mr Harvey-Jamieson and Mr Edwards were Hamish Corrigan (Portree coxswain) and John Ellis (Portree launch operations manager). Representing Kyle Station, were Emma Noble and Daniel Elliot. The photograph was taken in front of the Kyle lifeboat, Spirit of Fred Olsen, an Atlantic 85.

Nominations sought for Eilean à Cheò by-election

The Notice of Election and nomination forms for the Eilean à Cheò Ward 10 by-election have been published on The Highland Council's website.

The by-election is being held following the resignation of Ronald MacDonald (Independent), who was one of four councillors representing Ward 10.

The other ward members are Councillors John Finlayson (Independent), John Gordon (Independent) and Calum MacLeod (Non-aligned).

The deadline for nominations is 4pm on Monday February 10, and unless the by-election is uncontested, voting will take place on Thursday March 12 with the count taking place the following day.



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Comhairle puts itself in the frame

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has established a new Instagram page to complement the active Facebook and Twitter accounts which already see very good levels of engagement with the public.

Up until December, the total reach for the year on Facebook was 153,343 – which is an excellent achievement for a local authority.

'Reach' means the number of people who saw the content. The comhairle has just under 10,000 Twitter followers, regularly tweets in Gaelic and, during elections, is the only Scottish local authority to tweet bilingually as well as carrying the results live on Facebook.

The comhairle says it recog-



nises the importance of communicating effectively with members of the public, and the new Instagram account will add to that.

You can find the comhairle at www.instagram.com/cne_siar/ and you can follow it to keep up to date.

A spokesperson for the comhairle's communication team commented: 'It was important for us to establish the comhairle on Instagram

alongside other local authorities in Scotland.

'It gives us another platform to communicate with members of the public, staff and other stakeholders, and we recognise that many people are now spending a lot more time on Instagram.

'The Western Isles is a terrific place for people to visit and we would encourage members of the public to tag us in photos connected to the Western Isles using @cne_siar and #Wlplace2b and we will be sharing as many of these as possible.'

There is also a competition running in partnership with the Lewis Sports Centre for a year's free Slàinte Mhath Scheme membership worth £225. You will find details on how to enter on the Instagram page.

New works set to ease traffic jam in Fairy Glen

by Richard Mason
rmason@obantimes.co.uk

Highland Council has confirmed that a tourist hotspot on the Isle of Skye will soon see new infrastructure to cope with the number of visitors.

Following concerns from locals about congestion at the Fairy Glen, constituency MSP Kate Forbes convened a joint meeting last summer to address the problem.

Over the past months representatives from the council, Scottish Government and the local community have been working in partnership to move things forward before the main tourist season starts.

It is hoped by the end of April there will be a new 36-space car park, a further 20 spaces on the roadside adjacent, a turning area, passing place signs and additional road widening.

Local authority councillors



MSP Kate Forbes has been exploring solutions to tackle pressures caused by booming visitor numbers to Skye.

had already agreed to fund three passing places on the Shader Road, the main route to the attraction.

Ms Forbes said: 'This is an important step forward after a lot of hard work by the community, local council officials and others. Last summer, the community were at breaking point after another busy season which meant they couldn't leave home for

the sheer volume of traffic. Obviously, the critical thing is now to deliver all of these commitments as quickly as possible, but it's good to see meaningful progress.'

Gordon Willoughby, who lives near the Fairy Glen, added: 'After a three-year struggle to rectify the lack of infrastructure in the Fairy Glen, I am relieved to see work is now to go ahead with com-

pletion planned to be ahead of this year's tourist season.

'Although the agreed works are not perhaps the best solution for the residents, they should go a long way to improving the situation for both visitors and residents.

'I am very grateful to Kate and her team for all the help and support we have received.

'If gridlocks continue after all works are completed, I would hope further improvements would be considered.'

Skye Councillor John Finlayson said: 'It is encouraging to see positive solutions being planned at the Fairy Glen as a result of partnership working between our MSP, local residents, SGRPID and the Highland Council. Hopefully, this collaborative approach which we have seen working in other parts of Skye, will continue to be the model for the many improvements we all wish to see happen.'

MSP hosts talks with minister over Barra ferry

Na h-Eileanan an Iar MSP Alasdair Allan hosted a meeting in the Scottish Parliament between representatives of the community in Barra and Watersay and Islands Minister Paul Wheelhouse.

The islands MSP requested the meeting with the minister, who has responsibility for ferries, to discuss the disruptions to the Castlebay-Oban service and the alternative arrangements made.

Dr Allan said: 'This was a really useful opportunity for community representatives from Barra to engage with the minister directly on the unacceptably frequent periods of disruption the island has suffered in recent months.

'I am grateful for the minister's attention to this issue.

'We discussed the need for CalMac to take a much more proactive approach when bad weather or technical issues arise, the total unsuitability of using a vessel like MV Isle of Arran to replace MV Isle of Lewis on any route as long as that between Oban and Castlebay, and the need



Alasdair Allan MSP.

for more opportunities for community engagement with Transport Scotland.

'Barra's lifeline ferry service is the longest and most challenging in CalMac's network. Ultimately, there needs to be much wider recognition of that fact, and Barra needs to be treated on a much more equitable basis when it comes to future vessel re-deployment decisions.'

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Bitter row sparks new Gaelic pledge

The son of the chief of Clan Cameron has reiterated his long-standing support for the provision of Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in the wake of a bitter row ignited by comments from one of his fellow Tory MSPs at Holyrood.

Highlands and Islands Conservative MSP Donald Cameron issued a statement last Friday in support of GME after comments by Tory education spokeswoman Liz Smith triggered uproar.

Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch MSP Kate Forbes and SNP colleague Alasdair Allan, who represents the Na h-Eileanan an Iar constituency in the Western isles, have now both demanded an apology after Ms Smith claimed teaching pupils through GME was 'worrying' and could put them at a disadvantage following a decision by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar that all children starting school this summer will be taught in Gaelic, unless their

parents opt out. Mr Cameron, son of Donald Cameron of Lochiel, the 27th chief of Clan Cameron, of Achnacarry in Lochaber, said: 'I support the decision of the comhairle to change the default position to Gaelic at P1, not least because parents can still opt out.'

'As vice convener of the cross-party group on Gaelic, I've frequently argued for the need to depoliticise the language, given the ongoing threat to the existence of Gaelic.'

Ms Forbes, who made history in 2018 by becoming the first female MSP to give a plenary speech entirely in Gaelic in the current Holyrood chamber, welcomed Mr Cameron's comments: 'This is a welcome statement from Donald Cameron who has been unflinchingly supportive of Gaelic for years.'

On Ms Smith's comments, Ms Forbes, whose primary and secondary schooling was through GME, said she

had been offended by the suggestion it had put her at a disadvantage.

'These remarks aren't just ignorant, they are damaging. Gaelic speakers are citizens and voters like any other,' she added. 'I'd like to see the Tories distance themselves from these remarks and, at the very least, apologise to Gaelic speakers who've done nothing to deserve this groundless attack.'

Mr Allan was equally scathing: 'The level of ignorance on display in Liz Smith's comments is staggering.'

'Children educated in Gaelic, far from being 'disadvantaged', come out of school bilingual and evidence points to them having higher attainment in all areas, including English.'

'I would ask Ms Smith to withdraw and apologise for these highly offensive remarks which show a total lack of understanding of Gaelic medium education.'

MacPhail

ANGUS MACPHAIL

angusmacphail@yahoo.co.uk



Continuing from last week's fictional frolics of Robert Burns in present-day Oban, he carries on in his quest for romance, having been rebuked by three Ballet West dancers.

There are another 21 verses after what's in this column, taking Rabbie to many of Oban's famous nightspots and into some interesting encounters with many of Oban's finest lassies, but space won't allow their inclusion.

...So down the hill and feeling miffed

His tactics now he'd have to shift

If any hearts he were to lift
As was his plan.

To gee him up, he'd have a sniff

In Markie Dan's.

To heal his ego's recent scar

He'd rest a while and have a jar

Then charm the lassies with his Star

- Like winning ways.

A bonnie lassie by the bar,
She caught his gaze.

'Hello, ma lass, it's Rabbie here

'Ah'll mak ma feelins aw sae clear

'Till A' the seas gang dry, ma dear

'Ah'll love ye weel.'

She turned and laughed with mocking sneer:

'Are you for real?'

'As flattered as I maybe am

'You've clearly had too many drams

'The seas are fine and in safe hands

'And won't gang dry.

'You, see I'm an oceanography student out at SAMs

'So thanks, but, 'bye!'

Yet another knock-back taken

His pride was down, his charm forsaken.

His sense of self and vigour shaken

But not for long.

Some Eeusk oysters would re-awaken

His lusty song.

So down the pier to Eeusk he went

To gorge on oysters his intent

His favoured food and well he kent

They'd work for sure
And prime with lustre
heaven-sent
His man's allure.

In Eeusk there was a busy crowd

He entered to a welcome loud

From his host, the famous Calum MacLeod

Saying: 'Sorry, no seats sir.

'But go next door, we'll be very proud

'To serve you pizza!'

Not knowing what on earth that was

He chose haggis pizza just because

The lassie serving him was braw

And ah' sae fair

All was well until he saw

This strange affair.

'Fair fa your honest sonsie face

'But fit's been done tae you - disgrace!

'A flattened ugly muckle mess

'Ah've seen enough!
And out the door with raging pace

In sic a huff!

...to be continued.

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Eye to eye with John Wallace

The Year of Vision

This is a landmark year for optometrists and all eye-care professionals. 2020 (twenty twenty) is significant as it the label given to the measurement of sharpness (visual acuity) for "normal" vision. The UK and European equivalent of 20/20 is 6/6. There are other ways of describing visual acuity (I use LogMAR which is now considered the gold standard for acuity measurement). Basically they all are the same measurement. For those of a mathematical bent 20/20 or 6/6 is the ability to see one minute of arc at 6 metres.

Visual acuity is a useful measurement because it provides a standard of measurement that is repeatable and used throughout the world. There are problems caused



by the choice of fonts (letter shapes) and the actual letters used as some letters are more easily recognised than others. What is does not do is give any information about the quality of your vision or how well your eyes are working together.

Regular readers of this column will recall I frequently discuss the importance of quality of vision. The problem from a professional

viewpoint is the difficulty measuring or quantifying quality. In many ways quality is actually more important when describing vision. We all know of children whose parents have been told their offspring has 6/6 or 20/20 vision and everything is normal yet they can barely read. Or there are drivers who have been told their vision meets the legal requirement for driving who cannot drive in bright sunlight or at night due to cataracts. I have patients who can barely see the letters at the top of my chart and are very happy with their vision and others who complain bitterly when they cannot read the bottom line of the chart. Most patients should have an eye examination every two years.

John Wallace BSc (Hons), FCOptom, DipCLP

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Photographer takes top mountain prize

Fort William Mountain Festival organisers have named renowned landscape photographer Colin Prior the 12th recipient of the Scottish Award for Excellence in Mountain Culture.

Nominated by the public and his peers as a mountain hero who celebrates achievement, accomplishment and the spirit of adventure, Colin joins previous esteemed winners, including Andy Nisbet, Dr Adam Watson, Jimmy Marshall, Myrtle Simpson, Ian Sykes, Dr Hamish MacInnes and Cameron McNeish in the Excellence in Mountain Culture Hall of Fame.

A visionary of Scottish landscape photography, whose work has been showcased all over the world, artist and technician Colin expertly creates the illusion of three dimensionality in two dimensional images.

His majestic photographs of Scottish mountains capture sublime moments of light, colour and land.

Meticulous research, planning, preparation and skill, often involving repeated trips to the most inaccessible locations, go into finding the precise moment when weather and light conditions perfectly combine at the 'golden hour' of dawn or dusk.

Glasgow-born Colin once said of his photography: 'To know a mountain is to understand its rhythms and then become part of them. To photograph mountains successfully demands what the Arctic Inuit refer to as 'quinuutiq', which translated means 'deep patience' – literally waiting hours for one second or, in my case years, for one second.'

Colin's passion for and curiosity of the natural world has shaped all aspects of his

life. Through his photography, he communicates how Scotland's wild places make him feel, while inspiring people to appreciate the world outside of their own.

Throughout his career, he has produced seven books of his work, all published internationally. He has been commissioned by British Airways to photograph four corporate calendars and has exhibited his work in several solo exhibitions. He has also worked on a variety of television documentaries featuring photography, mountains and travel, and appeared on other TV and radio programmes.

His passion for mountains and wild places is shared with others through his regular photography workshops and tuition.

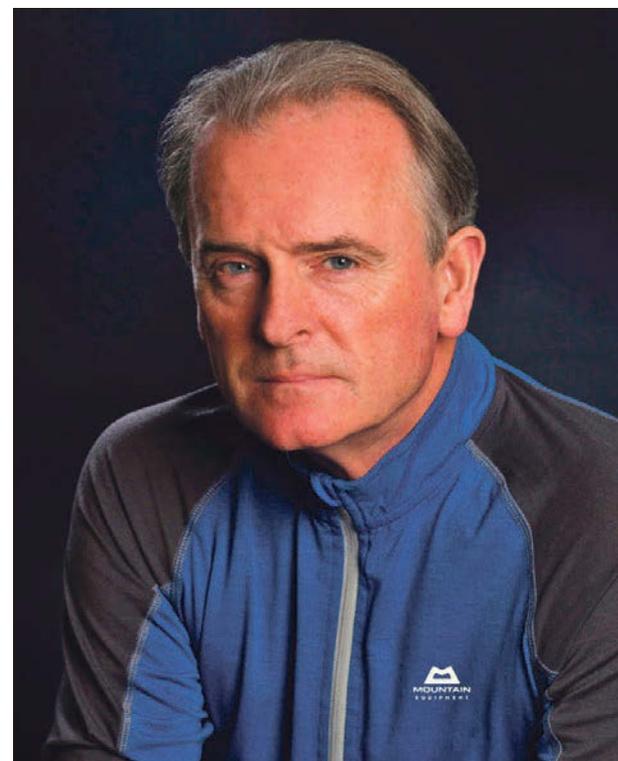
As a commercial photographer, he continues to work closely with the creative community and the corporate

sector with clients, including W H Malcolm, Hornby Hobbies, CalMac, Talent Scotland and Bowmore.

Rod Pashley, chairman of The Highland Mountain Culture Association, organisers of the Fort William Mountain Festival, said: 'You've only got to look at the breadth of stunning landscape work that Colin has produced over the years to know the visual impact he has made on so many who love and admire our Scottish landscapes and beyond.'

'Colin's work graces the walls of so many of our homes and allows us to feel and be a part of the outdoors where perhaps some are unable to go or once visited. We're proud to welcome Colin into the Festival Ambassador Hall of Fame family.'

Julia Stoddart MRICS, chief operating officer of Jahama Highland Estates which spon-



Colin Prior, winner of the Scottish Award for Excellence in Mountain Culture 2020.

sors the award, commented: 'Jahama Highland Estates greatly values the hugely significant impact Colin's portfolio has had on so many people who love the rural environment, particularly the mountains of Scotland. Colin's passion for the moun-

tains and his dedication to his art is exceptional, making him a worthy recipient of this award.'

The 2020 Fort William Mountain Festival runs from Wednesday February 19 to Sunday February 23 at venues in and around Fort William.

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LETTERS

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Assurances over smelter jobs are to be welcomed

There has been widespread and understandable concern over the potential impact on employment across Lochaber over the news that GFG Alliance is to consolidate all its aluminium businesses into a single group to be headquartered in Paris.

The company, which operates the smelter in Fort William, is to be known as Alvalance Aluminium Group, will bring together all of GFG Alliance's assets across the aluminium supply chain.

Changes of this kind have raised worries that jobs could be hit in Fort William, though a company spokesperson has issued a statement reassuring Lochaber people that there will be no loss of employment, saying: 'Reporting lines and business activities at the Lochaber smelter will remain the same.'

We welcome this news.

An astonishing sporting challenge faces Ben

There are many and varied sporting endurance events on the calendar, with marathons and triathlons now fairly commonplace.

However, one of the most extreme challenges anywhere on the planet is the notoriously difficult 230-mile Cape Wrath Trail.

That is the task facing Lochside resident Ben Turner. However, not only is the former Wildcat cafe worker about to undertake the ultra event, he is aiming to smash the record for completing the run.

Ben says he hopes to do the Cape Wrath Trail in 60 hours – an astonishing feat if he can achieve it given that the current fastest-known time is more than 105 hours. We wish Ben every success.

Global warming? It is a familiar tale of woe

The Arctic Ocean, we are told, is warming up. Icebergs are growing scarcer and in some places the seals are finding the water too hot according to a report to the Commerce Department yesterday from the USA consulate in Bergen, Norway.

Reports from fishermen, seal hunters and explorers all indicate a radical change in climate conditions and unheard of temperatures in the Arctic regions. Exploration expeditions confirm that scarcely any ice has been met with as far north as 81 degrees 29 minutes. Soundings to a depth of 3,000 metres show the gulf stream is very warm.

Great masses of ice have been replaced by moraines of earth and stone, the report continues, while at various points many well-known glaciers have entirely disappeared.

Very few seals and no white fish are now to be found in the Eastern Arctic, though massive shoals of herring and smolts, which have never before ventured so far north, are being encountered in the old seal feeding grounds. Within a few years it is predicted that, due to ice melt, the sea level will rise and flood a number of cities.

(Information from the Washington Post, November 2, 1922 – 98 years ago.)

Iain Thornber, Knock House, Morvern.

SNP government has its priorities all wrong

At the UK general election in December, I voted SNP for want of anything better. I have two concerns regarding my choice.

The first involves the list of embarrassing fiascos under the oversight of the SNP: two unstable flagship hospitals; structurally dangerous schools; the failures of Police Scotland; the destruction of important sites of natural heritage by golf-mad US playboys; expensive tram disappointments and ferry provision; et al.

Such a litany indicates a lack of coherent management by our SNP controllers and I wonder if, instead of putting all their wits to the task of gaining independence, they might do better focusing their energies on tackling these dangerous and costly blunders.

My second worry is the urge for independence is also given priority at the expense of

YOUR PICTURES



We know our readers love to take photographs so we are happy to showcase these each week. If you have a photograph you would like to see published here, send it to editor@obantimes.co.uk

obantimes.co.uk, post it to The Editor, PO Box 1, Oban, PA34 4HB. Alternatively, hand it in to our offices in Crannog Lane, Lochavullin Industrial Estate, Oban, or to our office in High Street,

concentrating on the climate crisis. Glasgow will be hosting the UN climate summit in November.

Unless Glasgow intends to follow Madrid's pathetic stalemate, our representatives need to address ecocide with the verve and commitment currently being wasted on a sideshow.

J C Hanlon, Taynuilt.

Authorities are letting islanders down

It is about time that the Scottish Government reviewed SINA (Special Islands Need Allowance).

Using census figures, and excluding islands connected by road to Scotland's mainland,


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DISTRICT NEWS



Pictured from the left are, president Clive Talbot and new Rotarian Jenny Cooper, with Burns entertainers, David Thomson, Sheana Fraser, Richard Baxter and past-president John Hutchison. Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos

Lochaber Rotary toasts the Bard in fine style

At its business lunch meeting on Wednesday of last week, Lochaber Rotary Club paid homage to Scotland's national bard with an excellent traditional lunch and an entertaining array of his poetry and songs.

Hosted by the Alexandra Hotel, members and their guests were welcomed by the Rotary's three musicians – David, Sheana and Richard – performing a medley of Scottish tunes.

Angela Nolan, depute manager of the hotel, carefully carried in the platter containing Robbie's 'great chieftain o' the puddin' race' into the dining room, and past-president John

Hutchison delivered a splendidly dramatic Address to the Haggis. Past-president David Thomson continued with the Selkirk Grace.

President Clive Talbot welcomed everyone to the event, describing Robert Burns as an '18th-century rock star who wrote amazing poetry in the Scottish vernacular style' and added that the whole world still celebrates this 'King of Scots poets' and, through their annual Burns Suppers, keep the Scots dialect alive and well.

The Burns lunch was also an extra special occasion for Jenny Cooper of the NHS, who was accepted as a Rotary member at the meeting.

Kinlochlovin' bids for pots of money

The social enterprise based in South Lochaber is looking to expand its offerings to keep youth activities free.

Set up in 2015, Kinlochlovin' began as a way to provide extra-curricular activities for young people when budget cuts stopped things like sports clubs and art tutorials.

A lottery grant allowed them to begin running premises in Kinlochleven and Ballachulish, but they are now looking for other ways to raise money.

They now want to offer a Paint Your Own Pottery service to allow youth activities to remain free, while offering a premium activity for locals and visitors that is fun and can be done indoors.

Anna McBride, a history teacher who helps to run Kinlochlovin', said: 'We need £3,000 for a kiln, wheel and pottery supplies, so we have decided to crowdfund this to get things started.'

'Making and painting your own pottery is a great activity for visitors and locals, and a way we can generate some income that will be put directly into providing free activities for young people and maintaining the two premises we already have.'

'Everyone who lives in Lochaber is aware of all the great outdoor activities we have right on our doorstep, but we are also aware of how much it rains.'

'Hiking, skiing or any other

outdoor pursuit is fun when the weather allows it, but when it rains all week, there needs to be something to do, and especially for younger children who might not be able to do these things.'

The group recently organised a ski trip for Kinlochleven High School pupils to Austria, led a trip to Auschwitz in the summer and regularly hosts arts and crafts activities for children and adults.

In addition to this crowdfunding campaign, the group will also be doing pop-up shops in the area where they will sell personalised mugs and t-shirts, along with their Kids Creation subscription boxes they sell through Etsy.



The Ballachulish Hub is where most of the arts and crafts activities happen and has been selected as the best place for pottery due to its accessibility. Photograph: Kinlochlovin'

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The event saw different locations across the peninsula, including the Sunart Centre at Strontian (pictured), used as venues for the quiz.

Big quiz is the answer to fundraising dilemma

A staggering 48 teams came together in five different locations across the Ardnamurchan peninsula recently to take part in the Big Inter-Village Quiz.

Village halls at Ardgour, Lochaline, Acharacle and Kilchoan as well as the Sunart Centre in Strontian were packed out for an evening of brain-testing competition.

The quiz was organised and the questions compiled by pupils from Ardnamurchan High School to raise funds for their upcoming World Challenge trip.

In all five locations, the event was hosted and questions read out by pupils too, with support and overall score collection from teacher Kate Rough in a feat of technology and co-ordination not dissimilar to the Eurovision Song Contest!

Ten rounds of really tricky questions including pictures, TV theme tunes, pop intros along with quiz classics such as sport, film, animals and flags. There was also a Disney round and a name the logo challenge.

Refreshments were on sale in the interval at each venue along with raffle tickets. There was a side challenge at Strontian of a Bop-it high



Ardgour's Katie-Emma Connolly presents Jo Herron with the winning village trophy.

score, which was won by Davies Goddard. Scores from all teams in each village were tallied with an average score for each location representing each village. This gave Ardgour, which had just six teams, the title of winning village. Ardgour host Katie-Emma Connolly presented the trophy there.

The average score of the 11 teams in Kilchoan gave them second place, with the average of the

14 teams in Strontian giving them third place overall. Much hilarity ensued as deputy head teacher Simon Patterson expressed his frustration with the lower scoring teams in the village bringing down the village average. A clear case of quality over quantity was needed for this event.

The highest scoring team was from Strontian – team 'My Personal Favourite' – who finished with a grand score of 82 out of 100. Second place for individual team was 'The Four Tops' from Lochaline, with 'The Bandits' from Strontian taking third place.

Ms Rough, who is organising the World Challenge trip and oversaw the pupils running the event, commented: 'What a brilliant night! We had such a great turnout at all the villages and everyone had a good time.'

'It was totally worth all the hard work it took to put the event on.'

'We'd like to thank everyone who came along and competed for their support and thanks to all who donated raffle prizes. The final tally of the funds raised is yet to be worked out but it was well over £1,000.'

Volunteers reveal full riverside path

The Kinlochleven Community Trust's Riverside Walk clear-up managed to get a significant portion of the path cleared in a few hours.

A group of 13 volunteers cleared half the path of general debris from overhanging trees and managed to widen it to its original size.

They were performing general maintenance that has not been done for about 20 years.

Diana Griffin, who organised the clear-up for the trust, said: 'We were able to do a lot of edging work, clearing moss and overgrown grass from the sides of the path and widen it from about a foot to around three feet.'

'In three hours we cleared from the fire station steps to the school and revealed the original tarmac path. We were also able to clear away the low hanging branches from surrounding trees.'

'The work makes it more accessible, especially for dog walkers who use it all the time and visitors coming to the village in the summer.'

The trust plans to clear the rest of the path at the same time on Saturday February 22, depending on the weather.



Volunteers after clearing the path. Photograph: Kinlochleven Community Trust

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CLIMBING



Members of the 3 Wise Monkeys Climbing Team that took part in the event.

Latest results from Scottish Youth Climbing Series 2020

The 3 Wise Monkeys Climbing team competed for the first time in the Scottish Youth Climbing Series first round qualifier staged at Transitions Extreme in Aberdeen at the weekend.

The results for Lochaber climbers were as follows:

Group A Male – Craig

Allott 4th; Owen Pescod 5th; Hamish MacKay 7th.

Group A Female – Tilly Knight 3rd. Group B Male – Archie MacIntyre 2nd. Group C Female – Shona Knight 9th. Group E Male – Aaron Tresidder 1st.

Archie has competed in the YCS before in another team. Craig and Aaron have competed in the YCS before themselves.

Tilly, Hamish and Shona only started lead climbing weeks before competing, so what a great achievement.

LADIES' SHINTY

Skye A win at Invergarry

The last Saturday in January is always blocked off in the diaries of ladies' shinty teams as the annual tournament organised by 'The Garry Girls' of the Invergarry Club.

Now in its 23rd year, the tournament, with sponsorship from Ailsa Johnstone, formerly of D A Johnstone and Son, Contractors, is so popular that it now has an upper limit of 12 places to fit the tournament into a five-hour slot in Fort William's Nevis Centre.

Teams were split into two leagues, picked by random number selection, with League A consisting of Glengarry 'A', Strathglass, Inverness, Skye 'B', Oban Lorn and Ardnamurchan 'B'.

League B comprised Badenoch, Glengarry 'B', Skye 'A', Ardnamurchan 'A', Aberdour and Lochaber.

Winners of League 'A' were Inverness, with Glengarry 'A' runners-up.

Badenoch won League 'B' with Skye 'A' as runners-up. In the following semi-finals, Skye 'A' beat Inverness 9-1 with Badenoch topping Glengarry 'A' 7-1, resulting in a Badenoch and Skye 'A' final.

After a thrilling match which ended in a 4-4 draw, another close-run four minutes of extra time brought another goal from Skye 'A' to take the much sought-after trophy.

RUGBY

Lochaber club lotteries

Fort William Golf Club Lotto - numbers for drawn on 23/1 were 1, 9 and 12. No winner so £600 available for draw on 30/1.

Ballachulish Shinty Lottery - Numbers for draw on 26/1 were 9, 11 and 19. No winners again so £800 draw next time.

Caol Regeneration Lotto - numbers for draw on 23/1 were 9, 10 and 19.

No winners so £200 jackpot for draw on 30/1.

Caol Community Centre Bingo Club Lotto - Numbers for draw on 26/1 were 10, 16 and 17. No winners so £700 next time.



Winners at Fort William Golf Club. Photograph: Abrightside Photography.

Golf club holds its trophy prizegiving

Fort William Golf Club held its trophy winners for 2019 event at the weekend with trophies handed out to the following.

Men's section: Connachie Cup (Men's Club Championship) - Paul Campbell; runner-up - Steven Jamieson. Lochy Bar (Men's Club Championship, H'caps 15 - 28) - Frank Sweeney. Clydesdale Bank Challenge Cup (Knockout Match-Play Handicap) - Galen Dalziel; runner-up - Willie MacDonald. The Royal Bank Cup (Two Rounds Stroke Play, Scratch) - Eric Wallace; runner-up - Steven Jamieson. MacIver Cup (Two Rounds Stroke Play, Handicap) - Eric Wallace; runner-up - David Martin. Jimmy Bruce Memorial Trophy (Greensome Knockout, Handicap) - Galen Dalziel and Padraig MccNeil; runners-up - Brian Stewart and Brian Stewart Jnr. Scottish Pulp and Paper Mills (Knockout Match Play, Handicap) - Henry MacDonald. Mairi MacIntyre Rose Bowl (Medal Final, Scratch) - Brian Stewart Jnr; runner-up - Dougie Duncan. Bank of Scotland Tray (Four

Ball Match-Play, Handicap) - Dougie Duncan and Keith Duncan; runner-up Ian Robertson and Stewart Duncan. Senior Four Ball (Four Ball Match-Play, Handicap, over 50s) - Keith Sangster and Robert McCover; runners-up - Ian Robertson and Stewart Duncan. Senior Club Championship (Over 50s) - Henry MacDonald; runner-up - Keith Sangster. Wolverton Trophy (Local Holiday) - John Byrne. 1912 Cup - Charles Luxton. Captain's Prize - Alex Stewart. Vice-captain's Prize - Brian Stewart. Neil Hardie Trophy - Brian Stewart Jnr. John Soutar Medal Final Trophy - Henry MacDonald; runner-up - Neil Henderson. Craig Paterson Memorial Trophy - Andrew Brown. Donnie Gillies Memorial Trophy - Andrew Brown.

Ladies' section: Ladies' Club Championship (Elliot Trophy) - Rosie Macintyre; runner-up - Kim Topping. Clydesdale Bank Trophy (Bronze Division Club Championship) - Ann Lovatt. MacNab Cup (Singles, Handicap) - Rosie Macintyre; runner-up - Kim

GOLF

Topping. E W B Howie Trophy (Three Best Net Scores) - Rosie Macintyre; runner-up - Kathleen Leitch. E Cameron Trophy (Stableford) - Kathleen Leitch; runner-up - Ann Lovatt. Ladies Summer Eclectic (Wolverton Cup) - Ann Lovatt; runner-up - Kathleen Leitch. Budget Rent-A-Car - Rosie Macintyre. Moorings Hotel Cup (Ladies Greensome Knockout) - Rosie Macintyre and Helen Brian; runners-up - Kathleen Leitch and Gina Hough.

Monthly medal winners: Senior - April - Kevin Ferguson; runner-up - Keith Sangster. May - David MacPherson; runner-up - Neil Henderson. June - Steven Jamieson. July - Stephen Howden; runner-up - D MacDonald. August - Paul Campbell; runner-up - Alan Ritchie. September - Steven Jamieson; runner-up - Robert McCover.

Ladies: April - Ann Lovatt. May - Rosie Macintyre. June - Kathleen Leitch. July - Kim Topping.

Glencoe's Clachaig Inn is set to host 35th annual winter mountain safety lecture series

Every year, on Tuesday nights throughout the month of February, you'll find a gathering of climbers, skiers and hill-goers gathered in the Boots Bar at the Clachaig Inn, right in the heart of Glencoe.

The series of Clachaig Winter Mountain Safety Lectures has run every year since 1985, and is intended to provide a last-minute reminder of some of the preparations and skills to have to hand before venturing into the Scottish winter hills.

The lectures were initially set up by then landlord Peter Daynes in conjunction with Andy Fanshawe, who was national officer at the BMC.

It was seen as an important measure to try to improve mountain safety, especially as

many people were arriving in the glen having travelled long distances.

With people keen to go out come what may, and without any immediate knowledge of local conditions (no social media back then!), the lectures were a great way to get key messages across.

Important

One of the underlying principles was that they must be delivered free at the point of delivery. The lecture series is still just as important today as, even in this age of technology, nothing beats good local knowledge.

Since the year 2000, the Clachaig Inn has raised over £26,000, with £13,500 of that coming in the past six years when it really stepped up its efforts with the 'big winter

raffle', with prizes kindly donated from the Clachaig's suppliers.

This money has predominantly been donated to the Glencoe Mountain Rescue Team though it has also gone to the Glencoe Avalanche Transceiver Park and multiple local community-based projects including defibrillators in South Lochaber.

In 2020, Rab Equipment is once again sponsoring the lecture series, now in its 35th year, supported on the night by Nevisport which will be showing off the Rab Equipment it stocks.

There are four very knowledgeable local lectures lined up.

They are Matt Groves MIC, a current lecturer at West Highland College, who is go-

MOUNTAIN SAFETY

ing to cover situational awareness in the winter mountains; Rich Bentley MIC, who is going to talk about how to plan your winter adventure in the Scottish mountains; Andy Spink MIC, will be going over the critical points in decision making when on the hill; and, last but not least, Graham Moss WML and lead forecaster for SAIS Lochaber, will be covering - you guessed it - avalanche safety.

A fantastic line-up and definitely not to be missed and, remember, it is free thanks to sponsors Rab Equipment so come along enjoy a refreshing beverage or two and listen to some very knowledgeable lecturers.

Under-14 players prove Oban are not invincible

Lochaber U14s played two back-to-back matches against Oban on Sunday January 19, at Oban and on Saturday January 25 at Banavie.

Both games were 60 minutes long, and were played on each club's main pitch, in perfect weather and underfoot conditions.

On both occasions, Lochaber could only muster 13 players, so the team was supplemented by Oban players (among them James McColl, Daniel Campbell-Hill, Finlay Greene, Duncan Cameron, Robbie Lockhart, Thomas Jackson, Innes Connell, Finlay Brown, James Campbell, and Malcolm McIntyre) to always make the contest 15-a-side.

In the first match, a depleted Lochaber team endured a right old drubbing. Right from the kick-off, the fitter, stronger, and in the main older Oban boys exerted severe pressure, and it wasn't long before they scored their first try.

Despite some brave and skilful play from individual Lochaber players, and some passages when the team managed to string together attacking phases, it was generally one-way traffic in Oban's direction, with the younger Lochaber players in particular being hesitant in the contact area.



Oban Lorne's Joshua Lane under attack from Lochaber players.

Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos

It wasn't until late in the match that Lochaber crossed the line, and the final score tells the tale of a hard day – Oban 15 tries, Lochaber two tries.

In the second match on their home ground, Lochaber fared much better. Although beaten again, they never gave up, contested well, and towards the end, matched their opponents.

Lochaber really regained their confidence at the end of the second quarter, when the team steadily worked their way into their opponents' 22 through a number of phases

by both forwards and backs.

Through this they earned a penalty 10m out. The tap, forward charge, and good rucking saw the ball come back, and Lochaber went over under the posts for what appeared to be a great short range try.

While unfortunately the try was disallowed, from this point onwards Lochaber began to match their opponents, tackle for tackle and charge for charge.

Notwithstanding that, they couldn't make up the deficit, and the final score was Oban eight tries, Lochaber

YOUTH RUGBY

two tries. Oban were good but certainly not invincible, as evidenced by Lochaber's improvement as the Banavie match progressed.

All the Lochaber boys, particularly the younger ones, will have learned much from these outings.

The team will no doubt be working hard in the coming weeks to rectify individual weaknesses and to develop team cohesion for a programme of potentially difficult upcoming matches.

Brave fightback but Lochaber lose to Birkmyre

Continued from back page way down the pitch aided by several penalties from the home side.

Lochaber kept ball in hand as they kept testing Birkmyre's defence. After working their way into the 22, Lochaber got the ball out

wide to Davy Duncan who had only just come on to make his debut.

Duncan showed his pace after beating several defenders and bounced/spun his way out of four tackles and when a hole appeared in the defence after the final attempted tack-

le, he managed to keep his feet after being knocked off balance to run in and score under the post with McCook adding the conversion to make it 45-14.

Birkmyre almost had the final say but some resolute defending kept them out and

RUGBY

held the ball up once again when they crossed the line.

A much improved second half had seen Lochaber win the half 14-12 but the damage had been done in the first period.

Lochaber now travel to Lanark on Saturday where they will be looking for a win in the first meeting between the two clubs to move them back into second place in their conference after a win for Hyndland moved them two points above Lochaber in the table; a losing bonus point for Cumbernauld was enough to also see them draw level on points with Lochaber but move ahead on points difference.

Lochaber, however, have three games in hand over Hyndland and a game in hand over Cumbernauld.



Lochaber on the attack against Birkmyre.



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WEATHER

Thursday
Gusty winds and light rain showers
Temperatures 6°C to 9°C.

Friday
Light rain showers and a moderate breeze
Temperatures 8°C to 10°C.

Weekend Outlook
Saturday
light rain showers and a moderate breeze
Sunday
Light rain showers and a moderate breeze
Temperatures 6°C to 9°C.



TIDAL INFORMATION

Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday January 30, 2020** are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

Thur	02.58	1.3	08.51	3.7
	15.24	1.6	20.54	3.5
Fri	03.31	1.5	09.26	3.5
	16.02	1.7	21.28	3.3
Sat	04.07	1.7	10.04	3.3
	16.47	1.9	22.08	3.1
Sun	04.52	1.9	10.52	3.1
	17.44	2.0	23.00	3.0
Mon	05.52	2.0	12.11	3.0
	18.50	2.0	***	**
Tues	00.19	2.9	07.04	2.0
	14.18	3.0	19.57	1.9
Wed	02.24	3.0	08.24	1.9
	15.26	3.2	21.01	1.6

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

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

Ferry Crossings/Sea States

Oban to Barra/South Uist	Moderate
Oban to Coll/Tiree	Moderate
Kennacraig to Islay	Moderate

Stop Press: New pontoons at Ulva Ferry and visitor moorings installed at Lochaline by North West Marine Ltd

Golf club holds its trophy prizegiving

Under-14 players prove Oban are not invincible

Second-half rally not enough for Lochaber

Birkmyre 45
Lochaber 14

Tennent's West Division 3

After a long winter break, Lochaber were back in league action with an away trip to Birkmyre.

Lochaber travelled without a full set of forwards and without a front row, meaning some of the backs had to play in the forwards.

Two former youth players, Davy Duncan and Ben Fulford, made the step up to the first team after recently turning 18 and a new player, Ally Banks, joined the team for his first ever game of rugby.

Callum Boyd also made his return to the team after suffering a broken fibula eight weeks ago.

The game started with a good intensity with big hits coming in early from both teams.

Birkmyre started to gain the territory and possession advantage and after 10 minutes broke the deadlock with a try though the conversion bounced back off the post.

The intensity in the match stayed high and when Lochaber had ball in hand they looked dangerous, running out of their own half with several breaks cutting through Birkmyre's defensive line, but a lack of support or a forced pass saw Birkmyre able to turn over possession and launch counter-attacks of their own.

RUGBY

After 25 minutes, Birkmyre scored again to make it 12-0. On the 30-minute mark, Birkmyre scored their third from a pinpoint crossfield kick during a penalty advantage.

Before the break, Birkmyre ran in two more tries to make it 33-0 at half-time.

Then, 12 minutes after the restart, Birkmyre kicked a penalty into the corner and from the lineout set up a driving maul five metres out that could not be stopped.

After 60 minutes Birkmyre got their seventh try to make it 45-0. After that, Lochaber started to come back into the game, finding holes in Birkmyre's defensive once again.

However, unlike the first half, there was plenty of support and those last passes were going to hand and, after some great play from the backs, the ball came back towards the forwards and Edward Murray John made a darting run towards the line.

As he was tackled he stretched out to get the ball on the line to score, with Jonathan McCook adding the extras to make it 45-7.

Birkmyre looked to hit back straight away and crossed the line twice but were held up on both occasions as Lochaber's defence showed new resolve.

After repelling Birkmyre's attack, Lochaber worked their

Continued on page 63

Lochaber tackle Oban in double-header



The second of two matches between under-14 rugby players from Lochaber and Oban took place at the weekend and it was a steep learning curve for the local players. However, in the second of the two games, played on home ground at Banavie, the Lochaber players showed they are improving all the time and made Oban work for the win. Our photographer Iain Ferguson captured this action shot of Oban Lorne's Joshua Lane tackling Lochaber's Callan Griffen. (Full report and photograph on page 63).

Alleycats cling to top spot despite dropping season's first points

10-PIN BOWLING

After week nine of the Lochaber Building Supplies 10-pin bowling leagues at the Nevis Centre in Fort William, Alleycats still remain at the top of the scratch division with 43 points after dropping some points for the first time this season to Council.

Team With A Bowling Problem remain in second place team with 31 points followed by Peaky Bowlers on 28 points.

The handicap division is now even closer at the top with six teams all within striking distance.

Peaky Bowlers retake top spot with 28 points, Alleycats drop to second place on 27 points after going down 5-0 to Council.

British Legion Fort William are in third place with 25 points; Council and Team With A Bowling Problem next both on 24 points, followed by Gutter Girls on 23 points who jumped onto the tail end of the leading group with a 5-0 win over Team With A Bowling Problem.

Individually this week, the best scratch game for the second consecutive week came from Gus Fraser (Council), this time with a 188.

The best team score this week came from Council with the top scratch game of 625.



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