



Self-isolators urged to place alert flags in window

see page 20



Coronavirus measures halt Brian's 'cure' trial



REMEMBER

to put your clocks forward 1 hour this weekend

PM puts country into lockdown

by Martin Laing and Ellis Butcher
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Britain was put on a state of emergency on Monday night when Prime Minister Boris Johnson brought in unprecedented new measures to combat the coronavirus.

Mr Johnson ordered everyone to stay at home unless going out for a handful of essential purposes, with those flouting the order at risk of being fined by the police.

Ordering the vast majority of the population to remain in their homes, the prime minister said in an address to the nation on Monday night that people would only be allowed outside to buy food or medication, help the vulnerable, exercise alone once a day or to travel to work if absolutely necessary.

The message was echoed by Scotland's first minister Nicola Sturgeon.

She said those who work in care or have 'caring responsibilities' should continue to do

so, but should also implement social distancing and hand hygiene at all times.

'The overall message is very clear,' said Ms Sturgeon, speaking on Tuesday lunchtime. 'People must stay at home. I know how hard this is for everyone but people should not be meeting friends, they should not be meeting family members who live outside of the home.'

'I'm confident the vast majority of people will abide by the rules'

'For all of us right now, life should not be feeling normal. If it is, then you are almost certainly not sticking to the rules we are asking people to abide by. I am confident the vast majority of people will abide by the rules.'

Later this week, the Scottish Parliament will bring forward emergency legislation to help with enforcement.

The first minister added: 'I

want to be very clear, we will use these powers if necessary.'

The new restrictions mean people will only be allowed to leave their homes for:

■ Shopping for basic necessities, as infrequently as possible.

■ One form of exercise a day – for example, a run, walk, or cycle – alone or with members of your household, not in groups.

■ Any medical need, to provide care or to help a vulnerable person.

■ Travelling to and from work, but only where this is absolutely necessary and cannot be done from home.

Police will have the powers to enforce the rules, including through fines and dispersing gatherings. To ensure compliance, the government will:

■ Close all shops selling non-essential goods, including clothing and electronic stores and other premises including libraries, playgrounds, outdoor gyms and places of worship.

■ Stop all gatherings of more

than two people in public – excluding people you live with.

■ Stop all social events, including weddings, baptisms and other ceremonies, but excluding funerals.

■ Parks will remain open for exercise, but gatherings will be dispersed.

The prime minister explained: 'Without a huge national effort to halt the growth of this virus, there will come a moment when no health service in the world could possibly cope because there won't be enough ventilators, enough intensive care beds, enough doctors and nurses.'

'And as we have seen elsewhere, in other countries that also have fantastic health care systems, that is the moment of real danger. To put it simply, if too many people become seriously unwell at one time, the NHS will be unable to handle it, meaning more people are likely to die, not just from coronavirus but from other illnesses as well. So it's vital to slow the spread of the disease.'

Charity calls for help



A therapy charity has put out an urgent plea for help so it can keep its two ponies fit and well. Argyll RDA Carriage Driving Group desperately needs funds to pay farrier fees and other essential costs after coronavirus stopped all the activities it relies on for an income. To find out how you can help, turn to page two.

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OT

Horse charity pleads for help

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk



A therapy charity forced to close because of coronavirus is pleading for help to keep its two loyal ponies fit and well.

The volunteer-run carriage driving charity that supports people with disabilities said it had no choice but to shut for now because of the virus.

Argyll Riding for the Disabled Association Driving Group was looking forward to moving to a new home after a successful Oban Times appeal but coronavirus has forced it to suspend all its activities until further notice.

Although discussions are continuing about which of the three shortlisted sites, out of 15 offers, will become its next base, the wellbeing of the people it helps and its volunteers has to come first, said group chairman Michael Hawke.

'We support and work with many people who are more vulnerable to infection so we have made the decision to close our doors until the situation with coronavirus improves.'

'This comes at a big price for us, as without drivers we have no income. Our loyal ponies will still need feed, hay and to see a farrier – possibly even care from the vets – which all

adds up. With no clear idea of when we will be able to start activities again, it is difficult to know if we will have enough money to support our horses until driving resumes.'

The Argyll group has two ponies who support 18 carriage drivers.

Research shows carriage driving is more than fun as it helps the drivers boost confidence, improves communication skills and helps them build relationships.

Mr Hawke added: 'The impact this closure will have on some of our drivers, who gain so much from attending our sessions, is huge – physically and mentally.'

Fit

'It has never been so clear just how much the time they spend with our ponies helps. In a bid to ensure these sessions can continue as quickly as possible, we need to keep our ponies well cared for, in work and fit.'

'At this difficult time, we plead with the community to help.'

As little as £2 will feed a horse for the day, £5 will provide bedding for one horse for a week and £75 pays for a horse's farrier fees.

If you can offer support, email the group treasurer at gail.macgregor50@btinternet.com or call 07741 635840.



MS Centre donates birthday cake to Hope Kitchen

Oban's MS Therapy Centre had hoped to celebrate its 30th anniversary at a special event in the town's Argyllshire Gathering Halls on Saturday March 21.

But the coronavirus crisis led to the event being cancelled.

Plans for the party had been at an advanced stage and a birthday cake had arrived.

No-one wanted the cake to be wasted so the centre's trustees donated the cake to Oban's Hope Kitchen.

Centre trustee Claire Hoey, left, is pictured presenting the cake to Hope Kitchen's service manager Catriona Petit.

Routine dental treatment and check-ups cancelled

Routine dental treatment and check-ups are being cancelled after new coronavirus guidelines from the British Dental Association.

Principal dentist Fearghas Lafferty at Oban Dental Care in Lochside Street, Oban, said the practice would be

contacting patients to let them know. 'We have been told we should not be seeing any patients at all unless it's an extreme emergency. At the moment we are cancelling all routine treatments and check-ups as we try to minimise face-to-face contact so

we can protect our patients, staff and community,' he said.

There will be staff on 01631 563006 answering calls to help patients, added Mr Lafferty.

Other dentists in Oban are Mydentist at Shore Street on 01631 563006 and Oban

Dental Clinic at Lorn and Islands Hospital on 01631 571125. Opticians in Oban are also acting on government advice and dealing with emergencies only. Anyone needing that help should call their optician first because of social distancing measures.

Buses scaled back after fall in passenger numbers

Bus operators are scaling back services after a fall in passenger numbers because of the coronavirus.

Campbeltown-based West Coast Motors, which runs many key routes, is among the companies making changes.

It said: 'Following the announcements of school closures and the sharp drop in

bus use, we will operate a reduced non-school day service from Saturday March 21 on all West Coast Motors bus routes. A non-school day means reducing the level of service. We shall also be making reductions to some evening journeys.'

The company said more detail regarding routes would follow shortly.

Argyll and Bute Council added: 'Services 918, 926 and 976 will operate to a reduced timetable as of Monday March 23. All other local bus services across Argyll and Bute will operate to a school holiday timetable from that date. Further details can be found via the individual bus operator's website and social media.'

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- All annual vaccine boosters cancelled (low risk to go 3 months overdue)
- All routine neuters, dentals, nail clips, pet health checks, weight checks cancelled
- All remote clinics cancelled

If we haven't yet contacted you about a pre-existing appointment please accept our apologies, we are working through a long list!

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Coronavirus measures halt Brian's 'cure' trial



Brian MacDonald when he worked as a firefighter saving lives in Glasgow.

Oban's Brian MacDonald is 'gutted' coronavirus has put a halt on the largest ever trial of drugs tackling motor neurone disease.

The retired firefighter, diagnosed last year with the devastating condition, had signed up with the likes of rugby legend Doddie Weir to take part in it.

He had been given April 6 as a starting date but was given the heartbreaking news last week that recruiting for the MND-SMART programme had been paused and they would be delaying the opening of trial centres.

The difficult decision was also to make sure all medical and nursing staff involved in the trial would now be available to be redeployed in the fight against coronavirus.

Brian, whose health is deteriorating and who now

'It was something to look forward to. To say I'm gutted is an understatement.'

needs a hoist to get in and out of bed, said coronavirus was 'a nightmare'.

'I thought it was magic when I heard back from the trial and got a date in April. It was something to look forward to but now it's been cancelled. To say I'm gutted is an understatement,' he told The Oban Times. Brian has opted to stay registered for the trial and hopes it will restart as soon as possible.

The 42-year-old, who officially retired earlier this year from the fire service after 13 years of life-saving service in Glasgow, said taking part in it

would have been 'massive' for himself and others with the potential of finding a cure.

In the past fortnight Brian has also been recording a voice-bank, funded by the Fire Fighters Charity.

'If the worst case scenario happens and I lose my voice, I will have it banked so I can speak through a computer. Here's hoping it won't come to that,' added Brian, who moved into a one-level cottage run by Scottish charity Bield just before Christmas.

MND causes muscle wasting and loss of nerve cells that control movement, speech and breathing.

Hundreds of MND patients were due to take part in the MND-SMART clinical trial and it was planned the first participants would be seen in Edinburgh at the Anne Rowling Regenerative

Neurology Clinic with other clinics across the UK joining during the year.

The trial had been developed to find effective medicines more quickly, allowing more than one treatment to be tested at the same time and meaning patients were more likely to receive an active drug.

As well as trying out new drugs, medications already licensed for other conditions such as anxiety, depression or Alzheimer's were to be tested.

The clinical trial was a collaboration between University College London, the University of Warwick and the Euan MacDonald Centre for MND Research at the University of Edinburgh.

Funding had come from the Euan MacDonald Centre, MND Scotland and the My Name's Doddie Foundation.

Servings of hope and comfort

Hope Kitchen volunteers are serving up comfort to those in need.

The project is reaching out to the community by delivering food parcels to people who are self-isolating or in financial difficulty.

Volunteers with Protecting Vulnerable Groups checks are being used to help get support to where it is needed most and coronavirus safety guidelines will be followed.

Although the food parcels and deliveries are free, Hope Kitchen's service manager Catriona Petit is hoping people who can afford it will make a donation - if not now, in better future times.

Donations can be brought round to Hope Kitchen, using the back door, between 10am and 5pm Monday to Friday or left in the baskets at the end of the checkouts at Tesco.

Urgently needed are dried or UHT milk, tinned or dried potatoes, individual meals or tinned meals but not fridge or frozen, carrier bags and nappies of all sizes but especially



Hope Kitchen manager Catriona Petit.

five and six sizes. Also needed are vegetables from onions and carrots to potatoes, broth mix, tinned vegetables, baby food - not milk - and boxes of cereals.

Collected

Food parcels can also be collected from the back door of the charity's Soroba Road hub on behalf of others by those not showing symptoms of the virus or who are not

in the vulnerable group. If people want to help but cannot get to the supermarket, donations of money would also be appreciated either by making a bank transfer to Hope Kitchen account number 06017077, sort code 80-17-99 or via Paypal using obanhoekitchen@gmail.com or by sending a cheque to Hope Kitchen, 2 Soroba Road, Oban PA344HU.

All the team send wishes of goodwill to all of our visitors and patrons during this difficult time.

We look forward to seeing you all when we are able to open our doors again.

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OT

Surreal times but stay positive, urges group

Essential businesses remain open in Oban despite the 'surreal' lockdown, the town's Business Improvement District group said this week.

Andrew Spence, chief executive of BID4Oban, said: 'It goes without saying that the safety of our local population is of the utmost importance.'

'We still have essential businesses open including butchers, supermarkets, chemists, petrol stations and small shops across Argyll and Bute.'

'We would urge everyone visiting these facilities to show respect and consideration for the staff and comply with social distancing.'

Mr Spence said the surreal situation was very different to three weeks ago when the group was actively planning events to take place this summer.

'We still have essential businesses open including butchers, supermarkets, chemists, petrol stations and small shops across Argyll and Bute.'

He added: 'I know at this stage it is easy to type stay positive, but we need to look out for each other and get through this.'

'Looking to the future, we will come out of this and when we do we need to work hard to bring everyone back together, plan to bring our

visitors back and promote everything that is great about Oban and Argyll.'

In a live television address last night, Prime Minister Boris Johnson appealed for all shops selling 'non-essential goods' to close, and there was similar advice on Tuesday from First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

Mr Johnson said playgrounds and places of worship are also being shut and police given powers to fine people or disperse any gatherings, with people advised to take only one form of outdoor exercise a day.

People have been told to stay at home and only shop for the 'basic necessities' as 'infrequently as possible', said Mr Johnson, who added that travelling to and from work should only be done 'when absolutely necessary'.



BID4Oban chief executive Andrew Spence.

Volunteers warned

Volunteers coming forward to help in the wake of coronavirus are being warned not to unwittingly spread the highly-contagious bug.

Argyll and Bute Council has produced a new eight-page 'community support guide' offering advice about collecting repeat prescriptions, getting shopping for people and exchanging money, among others.

The guide can be found at the 'volunteering safely' section on the council's website at <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/coronavirus/help-for-communities>

It warns volunteers not to touch other people and to wash their hands after touching surfaces.

Before volunteering, people are also asked to consider if they are well enough.

The council said: 'One of the strengths of Argyll and Bute is our community spirit. We expect that many are naturally already checking in on neighbours and looking out for each other.'



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Islanders hope to house people in former manse

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk



Resourceful islanders on Colonsay are looking at turning a former Baptist manse into temporary housing.

There are currently 11 families on the housing waiting list. Some without a roof of their own are having to rely on the goodwill of others and living in caravans.

The Baptist Union of Scotland put the manse on the market and agreed to sell it to Colonsay Community Development Company (CCDC) if it got the money.

The first round of funding has come through from the Scottish Land Fund (SLF) and the project is now waiting for the second level.

The idea is the manse could be used as a stop-gap by giving people a three- to four-month lease.

Plan B, if the funding does not come through, could be to get a mortgage, said CCDC development worker Roz Jewell.

The start of a long-awaited and much-needed new community-led housing and

'Had it not been for a community-led social housing project nearly 20 years ago, it's unlikely we would have had the opportunity to stay here as children.'

business unit development has also been announced by CCDC after the Scottish Land Fund awarded £395,000 towards buying land.

A substantial award from Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) also helped towards the total amount needed and industry partner MOWI, which operates a salmon farm off the coast of Colonsay, also made a significant contribution.

HIE and the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust have supported CCDC for the past two years to help buy land at Scalasaig from Colonsay Estate, making way for a phased construction of new, affordable mixed tenure



Liam McNeill is one of the islanders on Colonsay hoping to get a roof over his head when the new houses are built.

homes and business premises.

A survey showed an immediate requirement for 11 new homes just to meet existing housing demand but more are needed to build a sustainable community.

Land towards the south of the public road that runs between the harbour and the church was identified for the housing as well as extra business space to add to the units near the village hall and shop.

'Having been born and raised on the island, I've grown up watching a community of volunteers working so hard to sustain and protect the island for the likes of myself and my brother.

'Had it not been for a community-led social housing project nearly 20 years ago, it's unlikely we would have had the opportunity to stay here as children.

'We know first hand the difference projects like this make.'

And Alex Howard from Colonsay Estate added: 'It is vital for the continued economic success of the Colonsay community that there is adequate modern affordable housing available for those seeking to make their lives on the island.

'The inward investment onto Colonsay will benefit the

wider community. The estate is now able to complete the development of five industrial units which will be available to small businesses on the island.

'The estate looks forward to continuing to work together with CCDC in the future for the benefit of the Colonsay community.'

One of those hoping to get a new home is fishfarm worker Liam McNeill who has already had to leave the island once because of no accommodation. He is now back on the island living with his dad.

'Being away from the island was not great. I was working two weeks on and two weeks off at the fishfarm.

'When I wasn't here working, I had to live in Stirling because there was nowhere here,' he said.

Aid worker helps build hospital in Italian coronavirus epicentre

Taynuilt aid worker John Murphy is helping build and run a 68-bed coronavirus hospital in Italy.

Self-employed maintenance man John flew out to the virus epicentre on Saturday, taking three flights to get to Milan via Amsterdam and Munich.

Although he arrived safely to take on the role of logistics manager for Christian charity Samaritan's Purse and its hospital project, his bag with all his clothes and other personal belongings went missing.

But he is carrying on with his mission regardless, says wife Louise.

Samaritan's Purse uses funds pre-supported by Christian-giving to get volunteers out to where they are needed when disasters strike.

The inflatable-type hospital was flown out and set up in a hospital car park in Cremona, Lombardy – the epicentre of



John Murphy.

the coronavirus outbreak. 'It's a modern version of a MASH-type field hospital, like they had in the old TV show.

'We also have a pharmacy, a male ward, female ward and an intensive care ward,' said John before he left Scotland.

In the past five years, he has served with Samaritan's Purse in hurricane-struck Bahamas, Nepal after an earthquake, war-torn Iraq

and in the Greek Islands helping refugees.

'I'll be supporting the field hospital. It could be anything from organising people, supplies, pillows, more beds, moving staff and supplies out.

'When I was sent to Iraq, it was dangerous but I felt I would be okay.

'This mission feels different. The risk of getting coronavirus is so high. I'm not scared I'm going to die but I'm nervous in a different way,' he said.

John will be out in Italy for four weeks before returning to Taynuilt for two weeks' self-quarantine. To support the work of Samaritan's Purse, go to samaritans-purse.org.uk to make a donation.

'It is an incredible charity but it's not so well known in the UK. They do great things and getting more support means more work they could do,' added John.

Braised Brisket & Oyster Pie with Kilpatrick Oysters & Isle Mull Cheddar

I can not think of a better way to spend an evening than gathered round a table with family. Oysters were originally used in Victorian pies as a meat substitute, however these day they add a hint of luxury to any pie.



Shortcrust Pastry
450gm Plain Flour
100gm Butter
100gm Lard
Large pinch Of Salt
1 Egg (whisked for glaze)

Kilpatrick Oysters
200gm Smoked Bacon (cooked & finely chopped)
10gm Butter
100gm Shallots (finely diced)
5ml Worcestershire Sauce
Good dash Tabasco
5ml Tomato Ketchup
1 Lime Juiced
50gm Chopped Flat Leaf Parsley
100gm grated good cheddar (I use Isle of Mull MAture Cheddar)
4 Oysters

Braised Brisket
2kg Brisket (Diced into large chunks)
800gm Shallots (peeled & halved)
100gm Celery (1cm Diced)
2 Large carrots (1cm Diced)
1 Garlic clove (crushed)
1tbs Tomato paste
1 Bay leaf
1 bottle Red wine (montepulciano / tempranillo)
4 Oysters

Brown brisket in a heavy bottomed casserole dish, add shallots, celery, carrots till they gain colour. Add tomato paste & bay leaf, cook out the tomato paste then deglaze the casserole dish with wine. Cover then place in a low oven at 130 degrees c for 5 to 6 hours.

For pastry rub into flour butter & lard, till it resembles bread crumbs. Then using a table knife cut in a tablespoon of water the mix forms a ball. Flatten the ball into a disk wrap in clingfilm & rest for 1 hour before rolling.

For Kilpatrick oysters, in butter fry bacon & shallots till crisp. Take off the heat and combine rest of the ingredients. Shuck 4 of your oyster & retain the meat in the concave half of the shell top with Kilpatrick Mix & cheddar.

Once the brisket is tender strain off cooking liquid & reduce in a separate pan, till it forms a rich gravy. Mix back through stew mix & cool.

Preheat oven to 180 degrees centigrade

Fill a pie dish with chilled mix and add the meat from the other 4 oysters. Roll out your pastry to ½ cm thickness and cover the pie dish. Cut a steam hole in the center of the lid & glaze your pie with egg.

Place pie in the oven after 20 mins in the oven add your kilpatrick the top of the pie and cook for a further 5 to 10 mins till oysters are cooked and pie filling is hot.



Port Appin, Argyll www.pierhousehotel.co.uk

OT



Building suppliers MKM get on board the Big Spring Clean. From left: Sandy Cameron, MKM managing director; Claire Rizos, Keep Oban Beautiful; Iain Hunter, MKM managing director, and Maurice Wilkins, Keep Oban Beautiful. Photograph taken before social distancing was imposed.

Big Spring Clean put on hold

The Oban Big Spring Clean has been postponed to keep in line with the latest government directives.

Due to take place over the course of the week, before culminating this weekend, the event had become a popular fixture on the community calendar, heralding the official start of the tourist season.

Keep Oban Beautiful spokesperson Maurice Wilkins said: 'In view of coronavirus worries and advice from the government

to stay at home other than for specific, essential reasons, Keep Oban Beautiful has postponed the Oban Big Spring Clean which was to be held this weekend. We'd like to thank MKM for donating litter pickers, hi-viz jackets, bags and gloves, and can assure them, and everyone, as soon as it becomes possible we'll organise another Oban Spring Clean.' Keep an eye on The Oban Times for news of when the Big Spring Clean will take place.

Rescue mission after panic buying hits Coll deliveries

Panic buying on the mainland almost left cupboards bare on Coll until a rescue mission set in.

Dougie Brown, who runs the island's only shop, was raging when suppliers were left struggling to complete his weekly order for residents relying on him.

At one stage, a £1,700 order to Booker Wholesale in Oban only made it to £4 in the trolley, said Mr Brown when he contacted The Oban Times last week.

But once word got out, team-work among Argyll and Bute Council and suppliers kicked in to make sure deliveries could get to Coll.

'People were just going crazy on the mainland, freaking

'People were going crazy on the mainland, emptying the shelves leaving us with practically nothing.'

out, emptying the shelves leaving us with practically nothing. It's not a dig at the suppliers. We go week to week with our orders for the shop. We don't have the capability of holding a lot of stock.

'What we turnover we order back in the next week. This panic buying could be disastrous for us and other smaller islands who don't have fran-

chises like the Co-operative,' said Mr Brown. 'Coll has a lot of older people who are vulnerable. In the back of our minds we are worried about what could happen if the ferries can't get to us. It's very fragile here,' he added.

Mr Brown raised concerns with Oban South and the Isles Councillor Roddy McCuish. The community resilience team at Argyll and Bute were involved and suppliers including Booker Wholesale ramped up efforts to get food and produce together.

By the end of last week, two orders had made it to Coll.

Councillor McCuish said he would like to see CalMac consider running freight-only ferries to some of the islands

to make sure they have supplies. 'Bigger islands like Mull have the Co-operative chain but Coll has nothing like that. I think it slipped under the radar. We have to make sure that doesn't happen again.'

A relieved Mr Brown said: 'I would like to reiterate how wonderful MacLennan Motors, Booker, Breckenridges, Oban Milk, Argyll Free Range eggs at Balvicar and Roddy McCuish have been in helping keep the island supplied.'

'It's important these companies and people are recognised for going above and beyond. All of them are wonderful people helping supply the fantastic community of Coll.'

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Courts face 'months' of disruption

Court leaders have warned of a 'significant impact' on the Scottish justice system in the coming weeks and months.

The Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS) has announced major changes to clamp down on coronavirus.

The requirement to physically attend court and hearings will now be reduced 'whenever possible' said the SCTS in a statement this week. Courts will remain open but business will be radically scaled back.

The SCTS said: 'The Lord President and Lord Advocate have agreed to a programme of changes to criminal court business, tribunal hearings and the work of the Office of the Public Guardian, will provide a sustainable response during this outbreak.'

'The offices of the courts and tribunals and the Office of the Public Guardian will remain open to ensure essential business can still be dealt with. However, unless individuals are required for proceedings, they should not attend courts or tribunal premises. These arrangements will be reviewed regularly.'

Oban Sheriff Court and Justice of the Peace Court are on Albany Street.

Lifeline for pet owners as virus crisis deepens

by Fiona Scott
fscott@obantimes.co.uk



Kennel owner offers pets a free temporary home

A Barcaldine woman whose boarding kennels business has been devastated by cancellations as a result of the COVID-19 situation is offering her services free of charge to people who need a temporary home for their pets due to the virus.

Fiona Woodhouse has run Lochandubh pet boarding for the past 30 years and was a joint founder of Argyll Animal Aid, erecting a block especially to house neglected, sick and injured animals at her family premises and playing an active role until January this year when the charity decided it needed larger premises.

An animal lover all her life, Fiona has decided to help dogs and cats whose owners are unwell with the virus or in hospital.

'I don't know what will happen to the business because of this. We have no bookings left at all,' she told The Oban Times.

'These are worrying times for all of us. However, I am in a position to help other

people who may be worried about what will happen to their beloved pets should they have to go to hospital or are too sick at home to look after them.'

Current guidelines from the SSPCA state: 'COVID-19 is not zoonotic. It cannot be transmitted from human to animal or vice versa.'

'If an animal is touched by someone with the virus then there is the potential it can be spread should someone else come in to contact with that animal, in the same way as touching any infected surface. We ask that you are mindful of hygiene practices at all times, especially when handling animals.'

For further information on looking after your pet during this unprecedented time go to <https://www.scottishspca.org/coronavirus-and-caring-for-pets>

Having sought advice from local vets and SSPCA officers, Fiona has acquired suitable personal protective equip-

ment (PPE) to enable her to wash the animals when they come in.

'As far as we are aware, so far animals can't catch COVID-19 but the virus can still live on them for a certain amount of time as it can on most surfaces. Once they are washed properly the virus will no longer be present so I will be doing this with all the animals that come in to me.'

Set in secluded woodland Lochnadubh offers heated kennels and cats chalets with heated beds.

This is a free service for the foreseeable future. Collection may be possible. Please phone Fiona on 01631 720311 or 07738 032589 for more information.



Fiona Woodhouse, right, and her daughter Anna-May with their three black labs, Kyah, Zara and Time.

Oban community pulls together

Around Oban

KAY MCDONALD

editor@obantimes.co.uk



Oban this week is a very different place from the town we know and love. The only time I usually see it this quiet is at Christmas and New Year.

Our household is going to try to treat this time as half holiday/half a chance to do the things we keep putting off - which are many.

Work in the morning then, for the rest of the day, fun stuff, which for me includes watching films and crafting.

I'm sure everyone has lists of things they would like to do and this is our chance, within the current restrictions, to take the time to learn a new language online, read the books you've always said you would when you had time, tidy the loft or the

WHERE IS THIS?



cupboard everything falls out of. If you put your mind to it, three weeks won't be long enough to do all the things on your list - it certainly won't be for me.

I am missing my friends already but we are lucky enough to have the technology to stay in touch, which I think will save my sanity in the coming weeks.

We all know someone who could benefit from a call now and again, just to check they are doing okay and have a

wee blether. Isolation and loneliness will be a major problem for lots of people in the weeks ahead but I know from the fantastic community spirit in Oban already everyone will be doing their best to ensure no-one is left out.

The photograph last week was of the church in Argyll Square on the Albany Street side.

This week is somewhere I will miss for the next wee while.

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Housing chief in pledge to tenants

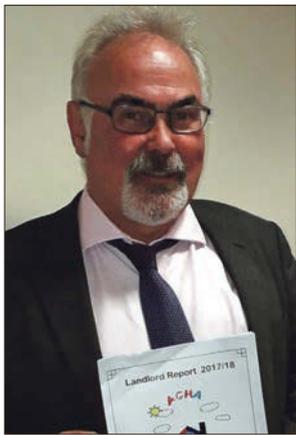
Housing association tenants will not be evicted if they hit financial hardship during the coronavirus crisis.

Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA) chief executive Alastair MacGregor has backed a statement issued last Friday by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) which has reassured people no tenants should be evicted.

Mr MacGregor said: 'We will certainly not evict any tenant who has a financial impact as a result of the coronavirus crisis.'

However, the Scottish Government needed to recognise a fall in rental income for housing associations would affect their ability to maintain properties and carry out essential repairs, he added.

Sally Thomas, chief executive of the SFHA, added: 'Rental income is vital for housing associations and co-operatives as social not-for-profit businesses. It allows them to provide support and services for tenants and to



Alastair MacGregor.

carry out essential repairs and maintenance.

'We will work with the Scottish Government to ensure our members and their tenants can cope with any negative effects of the coronavirus outbreak. This will include working together to ensure there is financial support for social landlords that experience income loss as a result of coronavirus.'

Mull group's plea to island visitors

Mull Crisis Management group has taken unprecedented steps to protect the island.

MSPs and tourist board chiefs have already urged anyone planning to visit some of Scotland's most remote locations to stay away while they prioritise the health and wellbeing of their residents.

In light of this, Mull Crisis Management Group, which consists of Mull Community Council, Mull and Iona Community Group, Tobermory Harbour Association, Argyll and Bute Council and the newly-formed COVID-19 Crisis Preparation Group, issued the following statement:

'Please don't travel here and put our community at risk. We have limited medical staff and resources. For now, treat our island as closed to all but essential travel. When this is over, you will receive a warm

island welcome. Cancel all appointments with trades and services from outwith our island unless they are working remotely.

'If you need a job done, use a local and try to minimise contact.

'From today, Sunday March 22, please self-isolate as much as possible. Do one shop per week.

'Clean your hands according to recommended practice before entering the store and as soon as possible after. We have confirmed information the virus can remain active on some surfaces for days.

'If your business is non-essential can you now close? Is it really worth the risk staying open?

'If your profession is high risk and involves close contact with customers, get the correct safety equipment, for example, masks if you

work within two metres of customers.

'Every home must have a "contactless" drop-off point for deliveries.

'There are two tried and tested ways of slowing this outbreak: voluntary self-isolation and people tracking to inform contacts you need to isolate immediately for two weeks to protect others.

'On Mull we are probably the finest experts in knowing everything about everything. From now on could you try and keep a short record of who you make personal contact with every day?

'If by chance you get any symptoms this will give an immediate history to be traced.

'Your contacts can then be followed back and advised they need to isolate.

'The information you give could save a vulnerable per-

son's life. We can do this on Mull, where others cannot. We are only 3,000 people. Working together, we can beat this.'

In an email to his friends, family and business associates, group spokesperson Douglas Swinbanks said: 'After much difficult talk and time-consuming preparations, we have today taken the decision to close the island.'

'What a past couple of months it has been. Such a difficult balance between a person's disbelief and the slow realisation of how serious the situation is.'

A link to the full statement can be found at <https://mullhealth.com/how-we-can-best-stop-covid-19-on-mull/>

Up to date information on the COVID-19 situation on Mull can also be found at <https://mullhealth.com/>

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Flowers bring a little cheer for NHS staff and elderly

Shopping timeslots introduced

Supermarkets in Oban got a 'blooming' good reaction after giving out free flowers to NHS staff and senior customers on Mother's Day.

A spokeswoman for M&S Foodhall said: 'A few of our familiar faces were moved by the gesture which just goes to show how much these little acts of kindness can bring us all together right now.'

On Mondays and Thursdays, the first hour of trading between 8am and 9am is now reserved for the over-70s at the Lochavullin retail outlet.

'NHS workers and primary emergency service staff can top up their shopping too between the same hours on

Tuesdays and Fridays,' the spokeswoman added. Tesco customer and NHS Highland nurse Kirsten Shevlin said: 'It was a lovely gesture by the supermarket and really cheered us up on Sunday morning. I gave mine to my gran who is self-isolating in Benderloch.'

To ensure vulnerable and elderly customers can shop, Tesco has prioritised one hour every Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning between 9am and 10am while NHS workers can make use of an exclusive browsing hour before checkouts open at 10am giving them dedicated time to shop for their essentials.

'We want to help everyone through these uncertain times, especially those who need extra help,' said Zoe Evans from the Tesco customer engagement team.

Colonsay moorings boost on horizon

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk



A mooring project with room for 10 yachts is sailing ahead on Colonsay.

Island residents hope the 10 two-ton blocks at Queen's Bay will bring a much welcome tourism boost to their shores.

Seafood company MOWI paid half of the funding needed and carried out depth surveys for the scheme.

Colonsay Community Development Company (CDDC) is now submitting its application for a marine

licence to get the full approval which could potentially see the installation work being carried out in April or May.

Funding from the Paths For All organisation has also come through for signs to lead visitors from the scenic spot at Queen's Bay back to the main settlement of Scalasaig.

Choppy

Yachts can already call in at the pier but the waters there can be choppy.

The mooring would give island-hopping guests a smoother welcome.

'The pier tends to catch



Roz Jewell is working on Colonsay's moorings project. 16_T13-RozJewell

south-easterlies which is why Queen's Bay was chosen,'

said Roz Jewell, CCDC development officer. The island is also working on a scheme that could see Colonsay's first campsite open.

CCDC are landlords of five crofts near Port Mor and have been working with one of the crofters about the new site.

With lots of holiday houses already up for rent, the camping option would open the island up to even more people, said Roz.

'People like to get their tents out.

'It would give people the option of more budget accommodation,' she added.

Supporters thanked as Oban cinema forced to close doors

Oban's only cinema has closed its doors to guard against any possible spread of the coronavirus.

Oban Phoenix Cinema manager Jennifer Larney said: 'No-one knows for

sure when things will go back to normal but we will endeavour to keep everyone informed as best we can.

'The staff and board of Oban Phoenix regret we have to close our beloved cinema.'

In a message to supporters, she added: 'As ever, we thank you and are grateful for your continued support. Look after yourselves and each other.'

Cinemagoers who require

refunds for tickets are asked to visit the website www.obanphoenix.com or go to its Facebook page.

They can also email cinema@obanphoenix.com or call 01631 562905.

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reward you in the long term by prolonging its life and costing less in spare parts. Check your stove over thoroughly for any problems. The internal parts are most prone to damage. Pay special attention to the door and glass seals, baffle/throat plate which sits above the fire, grate bars, and glass for cracks. Externally fire cement round the flue pipe

may require replacing if it has disintegrated over time. Clean your stove inside retaining at least an inch of ash to cover the grate bars if you burn wood. Clear any debris that may have settled on top of the baffle plate as this can prevent heat from dissipating properly causing it to buckle. Replace fire-bricks if they are badly worn or disintegrating. Your chimney should be swept at least once a year. To ensure that it is kept safe and clear and we recommend professional chimney cleaning. Most importantly, burn the correct fuel in the first place and you will avoid many common problems. Take care, keep warm and stay safe! Telephone: 01631 720539 / Email: sales@backwoodsman-stoves.co.uk

BUSINESS NEWS

Distiller switches from gin to make hand sanitiser

Mull's Whitetail Gin distillery has switched production to making hand sanitiser.

The family-run business at Tioran, which opened last year and was the first on-island distillery in 220 years, made the difficult decision to postpone opening its shop and running its free distillery tours because of the coronavirus but is now turning its alcohol resources to helping the community keep safe instead.

Whitetail Spirits founder Jamie Munro says the health, safety and wellbeing of its customers, neighbours and family on beautiful Mull has to come first and is 'paramount'.

The distillery is in the process of creating its own anti-bacterial hand sanitiser using the 65 per cent plus alcohol it has on hand and helpful at killing viruses.

The Whitetail hand sanitiser will be using the World Health Organisation (WHO) recipe and the first batch will be available imminently.

In the first instance, it will go out to the island community's most vulnerable free of charge or in return for donations.

The distillery shop and tours will open up as soon as it is safe and correct to do so, said Jamie. And he added: 'We love welcoming so many of you, whether you are residents, frequent and new visitors. We look forward to seeing all of you in much more jovial circumstances in the future.'

For more information, email info@whitetailgin.com or call 01681 705163.

Trainee from Isle of Skye wins at Lantra awards

Portree apprentice John MacPherson was celebrating recently after winning the Aquaculture category at Lantra Scotland's ALBAS (Awards for Land-based and Aquaculture Skills).

The 23-year-old from the Isle of Skye has been doing a Modern Apprenticeship in Aquaculture with Grieg Seafood Shetland Ltd through Inverness College UHI and is now working as an assistant manager. He plans to continue his role at the Isle of Skye site while progressing onto the next level of apprenticeship.

He said: 'I'd like to thank my employers at Grieg Seafood Shetland Ltd and tutors at Inverness College for all their help and support. To be nominated for an ALBAS award was great but to win it is something else.'

The ALBAS, which took place in Glasgow on March 5, were hosted by farmer and stand-up comedian Jim Smith and organised by Lantra Scotland, the sector skills council for the land-based, aquaculture and environmental conservation industries.

According to Lantra's Scotland director, Liz Barron-Majerik, the awards are a very effective way of recognising the success of trainees in Scotland's rural sector, as well as getting employers involved in growing the next generation of talent.

She said: 'The ALBAS showcase the many incredible people who have joined Scotland's land-based, aquaculture and environmental conservation industries and who are getting



John received his award from Jim Smith at the awards earlier this month.

their careers under way. I know our judges were very impressed again with the quality of the nominations, so I would like to congratulate all of the finalists, as well as the winners. They were all of a very high standard indeed.

'We are, of course, very grateful to have the support of a range of people and organisations who make holding an event like this possible, including our main sponsor Skills Development Scotland, and Aberdeenshire Council, British Agricultural and Garden Machinery Association, Elspeth Watson, Equido Horsemanship, Marine Scotland, Royal Highland & Agricultural Society Scotland, Rural Skills Scotland, SAOS, Scottish Aquaculture Innovation Centre, Scottish Forestry, Scottish Land and

Estates, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Qualifications Authority, Scottish Salmon Company and SRUC.

'Thanks also to the independent judging panel, which is comprised of: journalist Erika Hay (chairwoman of the panel); Scottish Salmon Company's Jennifer Allison; vice-president of RHASS Jimmy McLean; learning and development manager with Forestry and Land Scotland Keith Paterson; Fellow of the Royal Agricultural Societies and farmer Keith Redpath; the Scottish Salmon Company's Lisa Connell; Jane Craigie; marketing team member Rebecca Dawes; and fisheries manager with Stirling Council Fisheries Scott Mason.

www.scotland.lantra.co.uk/learner-year



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Around Lochaber

ANGUS MACDONALD

fort@obantimes.co.uk



How to manage a business in a crisis

There is no point in wringing our hands and telling everyone 'we are doomed' – we must try to handle this economic crisis in a collaborative and systematic way.

I do think that our governments are doing a good and decisive job to support business owners and their staff. As the Financial Times wrote last Saturday: 'No government has ever intervened in such a way, even in wartime.'

I've had more than my fair share of business drama. My former financial publishing company in London sold roughly £100,000 in advertising a week to investment banks etc, and when the dot-com bubble popped in 2000, that advertising stopped dead immediately. Within a week our £12 million annual turnover business lost £5 million. Years later, I bought a bust recycling company, which due to past deeds couldn't renew its

environmental permits and its site was about to be closed. The online education company I co-owned nearly lost the certification to teach lucrative online personnel courses. These crises were handled carefully and resolved.

Every business has an almost fatal event, but before now never in my time have almost all businesses had a crisis at once: 1974, 1981, 1991 and 2008 were the major recessions and 1929-33 the Great Depression, all took years to recover from. These recessions were marked by the economy declining for more than two quarters, a dramatic spike in unemployment, and a collapse in both stock markets and property prices.

Regardless of the size of your business, the tenets of how owners should react are the same.

My standard course of action in a severe downturn is as follows: firstly, look at every single line of costs on the profit and loss account. This is about survival – cut first, reinstate later. Subscriptions, unnecessary travel,

flowers at the reception, all must go. Take your biggest procurement items and get companies to tender, make sure you are paying on 60 days rather than 30. Yes, you can show loyalty to favoured suppliers but make sure they are benchmarked.

Business rates are being waived for many smaller and medium-sized businesses at the moment – fantastic. Quite a few companies have already stopped their direct debits while they wait to see how the council is going to handle the rates holiday. After all, in a crisis, cash is king.

What about rent? Probably your second biggest cost. An owner of a business told me that a local landlord of many of the properties in the Fort William High Street has been visiting his tenants and is offering a rent holiday. Isn't that great? It's a real example of people working together for the common good.

At the Highland Bookshop and other businesses that I'm involved in, we have asked the landlords if they would share the pain and grant us

a three-month rent holiday. Their response has been positive.

This brings me to staff, almost certainly your biggest cost but also the future of the company. You don't want to let the expertise go. Leadership is key here. If you are the boss you must take the biggest hit, so go to zero pay if you have the savings to afford it, or 50 per cent at the least. Everyone must know that 'we are all in this together'. Impose a 33 per cent pay cut on managers, while staff should take a 20 per cent cut. Obviously you cannot and would not want to cut those on basic pay: they need every penny of that to survive.

When I have carried out this horrid cost-cutting in the past, I have made it clear that should business recover within 18 months, I would pay a bonus to make up their loss of income. The Westminster government's announcement of income support of 80 per cent will mean survival for many businesses that were certain to fail during the COVID-19 crisis.

If you carry out this exercise, you

may well cut your cost base by 30-40 per cent without damaging your business in the long term.

Next, refocus your business. Where can money be made using your expertise during these troubled times? At my publishing company, we moved our salespeople to selling subscriptions rather than advertising, and we ended up with far better quality of earnings as a result. I read that car part companies are manufacturing ventilators, and you can see it locally – restaurants are now offering takeaways and gin companies are manufacturing sanitisers.

If you don't have enough work for your staff, don't just tell them to go sit it out at home. Ask them to suggest how they can help others, do deliveries for older people, chop logs, do a litter sweep in their local community. I'll bet they are surprised how satisfying it is to give.

We are in for a depression quite possibly. Cut costs dramatically, refocus your business and protect your workforce as well as you can.

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ST. JAMES'S PLACE
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John Dewar's lost photo

Morvern Lines

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The gentleman in the photograph is George Douglas Campbell (1823-1900) eighth Duke of Argyll who was a Scottish peer and Liberal politician.

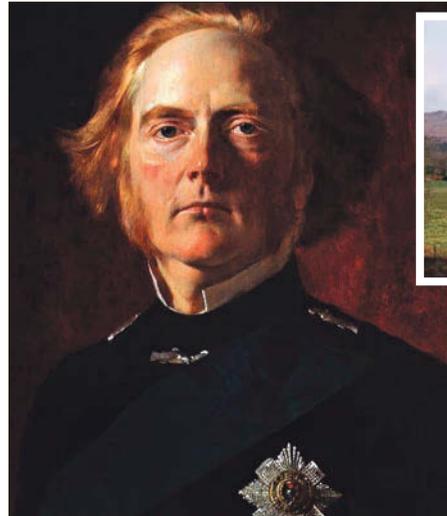
In his day he was Postmaster General for the UK and largely responsible for the 1872 Education Act of Scotland making primary school education mandatory for children between the age of five and 13. He was also Secretary of State for India and helped to establish the Royal Indian Engineering College based near Egham, Surrey, to train civil engineers for service in the Indian Public Works Department.

In 1871, his son and heir, Lord Lorne, married Princess Louise, one of Queen Victoria's daughters. He made a significant geological discovery in the 1850s when one of his tenants told him he had seen some leaves embedded in basalt lava on the Isle of Mull. Duke George helped to popularise ornithology and was one of the first after Leonardo da Vinci to give a detailed account of the principles of bird flight in the hope that man might take to the air. He published many erudite papers on science and religion.

Although no doubt trampled by the responsibilities of state and high office and perforce absent from Inveraray for much of the year,

the Duke never turned his back on his home county and did a particularly wonderful thing for Argyll and Scotland. In 1862, on the suggestion of his cousin, John Francis Campbell of Islay, he commissioned one of his employees, John Dewar (1802-72), a wood-cutter and Gaelic-speaking native of Arrochar in Dunbartonshire, to go round Argyllshire, Arran, West Dunbartonshire, West Perthshire and Lochaber gathering and writing down the traditional tales, historical stories, poems, songs, and the genealogies of those districts. When he died 10 years later Dewar, who was a storyteller himself, had collected a colossal 5,000 pages of information ranging from the time of Robert the Bruce to the Jacobite Rising of 1745 which might otherwise have been lost or forgotten.

What the Duke did was unique on two counts. Firstly, because very few big landowners in the Highlands during the Victorian era took much interest in local history or the Gaelic language, and, secondly, through Dewar, he established the first oral history project ever conducted in Scotland – 89 years before the School of Scottish Studies was founded at the University of Edinburgh. Dewar's monumental work still exists and is contained in 10 large manuscript volumes. Seven are at Inveraray Castle and three in the National Library of Scotland. Also at Inveraray are 20 volumes of English translations of Dewar's handwritten notes made for the Duke and Lord Lorne by Hector Maclean an Islay schoolmaster at Ballygrant in 1879-81, which



are bound together in six thick tomes.

Very little of what John Dewar collected has been published and what has appeared in print is not considered satisfactory. All this is changing. Torquhil Ian Campbell, the 13th and present Duke of Argyll, has magnanimously opened to the public his voluminous and nationally important private archives through the recently formed Friends of Argyll Papers. The archivist is Alison Diamond, who for eight years created, managed and delivered the National Records of Scotland education service to learners of all ages.

The Dewar Project has been established. This



George Douglas Campbell, 8th Duke of Argyll from a portrait by Baron Heinrich von Angeli, 1876. Photograph: with permission of His Grace the Duke of Argyll. **Inveraray Castle.** Photograph: Iain Thorne

is a collaborative undertaking using voluntary help worldwide aimed at transcribing, translating, editing and publishing his work.

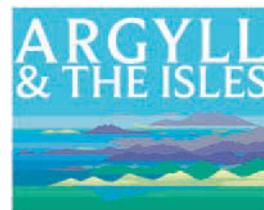
All the manuscripts have been digitised, allowing images of pages to be sent to volunteers anywhere for transcription. The project is directed by Ronald Black, who is acknowledged as one of the greatest living Scottish Gaelic scholars, and Dr Christopher Dracup, who graduated from Sabhal Mor Ostaig College on Skye with a First Class Honours degree in Gaelic Language and Culture and was the recipient of the prestigious Highland Society of London Award for the best Highlands and Islands themed dissertation in the Humanities and Gaelic subject network, (*The Oban Times*, October 20, 2010). With such a doughty leading team, historians are in for a treat.

The proposal is to divide the material into 10 volumes as follows: 1. Appin and Lorn; 2. Arran; 3. Cowal; 4. Glencoe, Lochaber and the North; 5. Inveraray, Mid Argyll and Knapdale;

Coronavirus

BID4Oban are working to provide information to the business community of Oban as regularly as possible.

We are working with our Key Partners Argyll & Bute Council, Business Gateway, AITC and OLTA on a daily basis.



To enable us to keep in touch, please follow BID4Oban on **Love Oban Facebook page** and website **www.bid4oban.co.uk** for regular updates.

Email **info@bid4oban.co.uk**



Oban Business Improvement District

www.bid4oban.co.uk



Photographs

6. Islay, Jura and Colonsay; 7. Kintyre; 8. Mull, Coll, Tiree and Morvern; 9. Perthshire and Loch Lomond; 10: Texts with no geographical location. The material for each volume is drawn from different parts of all 10 manuscripts. The transcription and translation for number six is now complete; those for numbers two, seven and nine are progressing well. Publication dates are: 6/2021; 9/2023; 7/2025 and so on. A Scottish publishing company have expressed themselves well aware of the value of the project, and have agreed to take on the publication of the whole series, hardback. The stories will be given with parallel translation, i.e. Gaelic on left and English on right.

An intriguing possibility is that Dewar may have carried a camera. In 1862, he mentions that he had an injury when he was a sawyer and was looking for another form of employment. He must at least have got round to purchasing one and mastering the tricky technology of exposing film in the field, because later he tells that he had left it and equipment in a house in Cowal. Although he never mentions photography again, it is just conceivable photographs taken by him in the form of black and white glass plates are still stored in someone's attic.

If Dewar had combined collecting and taking photographs of his informants, it would have been wonderful as there isn't a known likeness of him, never mind the people he met. Inquiries round Arrochar and Cowal have not produced a result nor can his name be found in the electronic

catalogues of the Scottish National Photograph collections before 1872. Photography was well on its way in Scotland by 1862 therefore their existence is technically possible.

The Argyll Papers at Inveraray Castle are the family and estate archives of the Campbell family, dukes of Argyll. They date from the 13th century and consist of documents relating to Inveraray; Rosneath; Kintyre; Campbeltown; Tiree; Mull, Iona, Morvern, Lismore and Scammadale. Included are accounts, rentals, tacks, correspondence and other papers relating to administration and rural industries (kelp, salt, wool, lint, coal, quarries, woods) and infrastructure. There are name lists, such as the Argyll Estate Census of 1779 (recording the names and ages of every person living on the Argyll Estate) and smaller scale census for Tiree (1776), and Campbeltown and Kintyre (1792). A large volume of maps, plans and written surveys also forms part of the estate archive.

The Friends of the Argyll Papers is a registered Scottish charity dedicated to supporting the development of the archive, financially and through volunteering.

The archive is usually open to the public, by appointment, for research, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm. However, given the current circumstances, the archive is now closed to volunteers and researchers but at the time of going to press, the archivist was still taking calls. For further information about access and membership, email archives@inveraray-castle.com

DOWN MEMORY LANE

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



It's March 8, 1993, and selling red noses for charity has brought a smile to the staff at Woolworth's Oban store. Getting into the mood for the day are store manager David Doolan, assistant manager Marjorie McKinney and sales supervisor Emily Ellis.

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If you want to get the "page turner" version of the newspaper and can't get to the shops we have halved the price of our digital edition for the next 3 months. We will review this on an ongoing basis.

Stay safe, we're in this together

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OT

LETTERS

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

Life has changed but we will get through this together eventually

There is, of course, only one real story in town, as the saying goes, and it is called coronavirus.

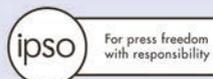
Our newspaper is full of items about the impact this infectious pandemic is having on people across the country.

Even on these two pages, there are accounts of events which have been cancelled or postponed, including the Colonsay Book Festival and always excellent fundraising initiatives such as the Oban and Lorn Lions Charities Day and Raft Race, and the Oban Rotary Club annual Am-Am golf competition.

However, while these postponements are disappointing, our newspaper is also replete with accounts of the astonishing willingness of local people to help their neighbours and others who are isolated and at risk from this dreadful medical condition.

It is a testament to the sense of community spirit in the area. We echo the official advice: stay at home and stay calm and we will get through this together.

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.

At the Oban Times we endeavour to ensure that all our reports are fair and accurate and comply with the Editors' Code of Practice set by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO). We realise, however, that mistakes happen from time to time. If we have published anything that is factually incorrect, please email: editor@obantimes.co.uk; telephone on 01631 568000; or email editor@obantimes.co.uk. We will attempt to resolve your issue in a timely, reasonable and amicable manner. However, if you are unsatisfied with our response, you can contact IPSO by email: inquiries@ipso.co.uk. We will abide by the decision of IPSO.

Time to strengthen community resources

Last week's uplifting letter from John Maitland encouraging us to focus on good news sat well with your report on the various COVID-19 support groups that are springing up, the Ballachulish initiative in particular.

The Kilmallie Community Council will this week issue similar house signs and help-slips with their Community News, distributed free to every house and business in the area.

But Ballachulish is no stranger to caring initiatives and we always need to remember the pioneering work and evidence given to the 'Dewar Report' of 1912 by Dr Lachlan Grant, GP at Ballachulish, who set out a bold vision for a National Health Service. The subsequent Highlands and Island Medical Service became the pilot for the National Health Service, implemented in 1948.

When I was involved with the Rural Parliament, the Scottish Government surveyed community councils about being given more powers but were very disappointed with the response rate, learning that many community councillors were scunnered by their poor resource allocation as set against responsibilities. As a result, no additional powers were given; all negative.

In Scotland, we have around 1,200 community councils for a population of 5.5 million but Switzerland have around 50 per cent more, pro rata, with more budget and powers.

While the Ballachulish folk taking forward this initiative won't necessarily be the community council of course, they deserve our congratulations but highlight the related need to strengthen community resources of all types in whatever way we can.

John C Hutchison,
Fort William.

Letter from area committee

I write to you and all the people and communities in Oban, Lorn and the Isles on behalf of the Area Committee members.

These are unprecedented and very strange times, and over the next few days and weeks, all our lives may become even more restricted.

The Area Committee wish to convey our heartfelt appreciation of the overwhelming response from community groups and voluntary bodies willing to assist the elderly and vulnerable within our communities. The essential NHS staff, our nurses and doctors,

Beachd Ailein

ALLAN CAMPBELL

editor@obantimes.co.uk



Air an t-seachdain a chaidh thug mi iomradh air na bha ag ràdh gum biodh an saoghal againn uile gu math eadar-dhealaichte mun àm a bhios suidheachadh èiginneach a' chorònbhiorais seo seachad. Uill gu ire tha sin air tachairt mar-thà, taobh a-staigh seachdaine! Chan fhacas riamh riaghaltas a' cur uimhir de mhaoin poblach an sàs gus cosnadh agus gnìomhachas na roinne prìobhaidich a dhion, gun ghuth air gur e riaghaltas Tòraidh a tha a' dèanamh sin!

Tha an riaghaltas cuideachd ag aithneachadh nach eil làn-bhuaidh an tinneis seo fhathast air sgaoileadh feadh Bhreatann agus gum feum e 's dòcha riaghailtean fìù 's nas teinne a chur an gnìomh gus feuchainn ri smachd a ghleidheadh air an astar aig an sgaoil a' bhioras. Tha sin gu bhith deatamach gus dìon a thoirt air comas sheirbheis na slàinte dèiligeadh ri meud na h-uallaich a bhios air. Chan fhacas riamh leithid de dhùbhlann tinneis a' bualadh feadh an t-saoghail aig aon àm agus tha dìth banachdaich

a' ciallachadh gum faodadh dùbhlann a' chorònbhiorais a bhith na thrioblaid airson còrr math air bliadhna romhainn. Chan eil teagamh nach eil an saoghal againn ann an Alba air atharrachadh ged nach bi-odh ann ach gum bheil sgoiltean uile dùinte agus casg air deuchainnean airson a' chiad turas ann an 132 bliadhna.

Mar a bhiodh dùil 's dòcha tha cuid nach eil a' gèilleadh ri comhairle oifigeil a thaobh a bhith a' dol an cuideachd dhaoine eile, agus gun teagamh tha diorrasachd aineolach nan daoine sin dol a chur beatha chuid eile ann an cunnart. Theagamh gun tig an tuilleadh bhacaidhean air saorsa gluasaid mar mheadhan air dèiligeadh ris an fheadhainn nach gabh comhairle agus bidh sin tàmailteach dhan mhòr-chuid a tha gu bhith ciallach. Gun teagamh sam bith tha daoine a' gabhail an eagail far am bheil uimhir de mhì-chinnt, agus a dh'aindeoin comhairle chiallach a thaobh leithid ceannach bidh tha cuid a' call smachd orra fhèin nuair a chì iad feadhainn eile a' càrnadh

gun adhbhar. 'S dòcha gum feum barrachd smachd a ghabhail air sin cuideachd. Chuala mi aon neach-labhairt a' nochdadh beachd gum bheil eachdraidh a' sealltainn gum bi cuid de riaghailtean a thig ann an leithid seo de shuidheachadh uaireannan a' leantainn an dèidh dhan trioblaid falbh. Bidh sinn an dòchas nach tachair sin! An dèidh dìreach beagan làithean de na h-oghaichean againn a' gabhail ris a' chomhairle seann daoine a sheachnadh tha sinn ga fhaotainn gu math annasach, agus ag ionndrainn an cuid cuideachd is crac. Cha tig crìoch air leithid sin de sgaradh luath gu leòr dha seann-phàrantan uile!

Cha tàinig làn gun muir-traigh na dèidh, agus feumaidh sinn misneachd a ghleidheadh. Ma tha gàrradh agaibh theirigibh an sàs ann, mur a bheil gabhaibh tlachd à sineadh làithean earraich agus cuimhneachain air àm buain mhònadh, cur buntàta, is corc! Agus cumaidh sàbhailte!

Allan Campbell
ailean@obantimes.co.uk

the food providers, the businesses willing to provide takeaway meals, and deliver essential supplies, the Third Sector voluntary groups and housing agencies. Employees of the council and statutory bodies are all working under very challenging circumstances to ensure essential services are maintained for everyone's safety.

The council and the NHS have established a website, www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/coronavirus/help-for-communities.

This website gives information on who to contact in your area. The site is being regularly updated to ensure the information is current to each community. I would ask you to forward any information to your local members, and

we will forward to our officer mapping this site. If you have difficulty accessing the website or perhaps are not familiar with using websites, please contact a member of the Area Committee for assistance or the council headquarters on 01546 605522, but please be aware that this line could be very busy and it may take some time to respond. We are all happy to help.

A phone call and a friendly voice can make all the difference between feeling totally isolated and feeling people care. If you hear or know of anyone who may be frail or alone, give them a call. Please take care, follow the national guidelines and stay well.

Councillor Elaine Robertson, Oban.

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DISTRICT NEWS

COLONSAY

Organisers of Colonsay Book Festival have taken the decision to cancel this year's event.

A spokesperson for the festival said: 'We hope that by this time next year, we will again be able to welcome all those who were planning to join us in 2020 for Colonsay's famed literary lock-in.'

Ticket holders will be contacted and re-funded directly as soon as possible.

OBAN

Beach cleans on George Street in Oban have stopped after a weekly tidying spree of almost three years. The clean-ups via Hope Kitchen have been cancelled indefinitely due of advice from the World Health Organisation.

Oban and Lorn Lions Charities Day and Raft Race have been cancelled.

Organisers are saddened they have had to make the decision but are following advice, said Lions president Jim Edge.

More than £8,000 was raised at last year's charities day in June supporting 40 good causes.

Mr Edge said: 'We have some ideas for later in the year. It will be an indoor event and will be in a similar vein but we need to firm things up first.'

'We are really conscious how much charities rely on this day for help.'

Uncertainty among businesses has also put paid to the raft race in August.

Although golf is a non-contact sport and Glencruitten Golf Course will remain open, the Rotary Club has decided to cancel the Am-Am event for this year.

David Mudie from the club said: 'The loyal businesses and competitors who have supported us will have enough to do managing the coronavirus crisis.'

'Hopefully, next year will see a brighter outlook and this great fundraiser and fun day can return.'

Family-owned Oban bar Markie Dans has given away its stocks of free food to the struggling. The Victoria Crescent pub announced on Friday that it was happy to

open up its larders to those finding food hard to come by. Pubs, restaurants and cafes have been directed by Prime Minister Boris Johnson to shut their doors to help curb the spread of coronavirus.

Markies offered to give away burgers, buns, fish, pies, sauces, mozzarella, pepperoni and cheese, among others.

The family-owned bar said it was important for people to look after each other with all that is going on. 'Due to the current situation we are facing in the hospitality service regarding COVID-19 we want to give something back to the community,' the bar said in a Facebook post.

The Waterfront Fishhouse on Railway Pier was also making the most of staff down time this week, before the lockdown, by delivering soup and other food items to elderly residents in the town.

TAYNUILT

Muckairn Church services have been suspended until further notice. Written prayers and prayer prompts along with a message from the Reverend Tom Telfer will be available each Saturday in the local Post Office and online at kdmparishes.co.uk/

MULL

The partnership which runs the award-winning Mull Eagle Watch project (Mull and Iona Community Trust, RSPB Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry and Land Scotland, and Police Scotland) has taken the decision to postpone indefinitely the opening of this year's Mull Eagle Watch in light of government advice regarding the current coronavirus pandemic.

The situation will be kept under regular review and if anything significant changes or improves, the project might be able to reconsider how best to adapt the season to allow responsible eagle viewing while ensuring visitors and staff stay safe.

The decision was taken in consultation with the project's host site at Craignure Golf Club and its booking partners at VisitScotland Craignure.

Stay tuned to Twitter @MullEagleWatch and @skyeandfrisa for all the latest news on how the sea eagles are faring this breeding season and any other updates regarding the project.

RSPB Mull officer Dave Sexton said: 'Thank you to everyone for their support and we hope to be back with you and open for business at some point in the future.'

CALMAC

The independent CalMac Community Board very much welcomes the announcement by the Scottish Government to restrict ferry travel to those for whom travel is essential.

It is important we do not add extra pressure to the delivery of health and other services to already fragile communities at this crucial time. The demographics of our islands demonstrate a significantly higher proportion of our population in the 'at risk' categories. Let us collectively do all we can to protect them.

The Community Board would also like to put on record its appreciation for the already considerable efforts of CalMac's front line and head office staff. All of us who travel on ferries should recognise the extra pressure they are under and show support and understanding.

The Oban Times is aware that there are many groups, clubs and organisations in and around Oban who are helping our elderly and vulnerable communities through this time. If you have a good news story or photo to share about your community stepping up during the coronavirus crisis, please email editor@obantimes.co.uk with your information and contact details, including a telephone number.

KEEPINTOUCH

emailusateditor@obantimes.co.uk
telephone 01631 568000

At random

MARTIN LAING

mlaing@obantimes.co.uk



Coining it in

I make no apology for returning yet again to the Betty's Pots fundraising campaign for the RNLI and the somewhat unlikely reach of The Oban Times in inspiring people far from Argyll to support the Oban lifeboat.

I have, as regular readers will know, written before about the big-hearted regulars of the Forester's Arms in the landlocked village of Cambusbarron, near Stirling, especially Ali MacFarlane who has donated hugely.

Then last weekend I met an old friend and former colleague, Stuart McKinlay, who gave me a tube full of 5p coins, a Waitrose Vitamin C container, to be precise.

Now Stuart, splendid fellow that he is, lives in the West End of Glasgow and has no connection whatsoever with Oban other than our friendship.

Yet he has been caught up in the enthusiasm generated by this newspaper to back the campaign to donate 5p coins in mini jam jars.

Incidentally, I was in the Forester's Arms recently and collected another three Betty's Pots as well as a large Marmite jar filled by Ali MacFarlane.

Ali, by the way, is planning to visit Oban in September and is genuinely excited by the prospect of visiting the town's lifeboat station.

Stay safe and well

I wrote last week about the foolishness of panic buying, which sadly seems to be continuing.

However, the concern around the coronavirus pandemic has grown rather than diminished, including some of us at The Oban Times having to work from home to follow medical advice to maintain social distance.

It is testament to modern technology that we are able to carry out our professional duties from our kitchen tables rather than having to go into the office.

It's just as well that I have work to occupy my time as I would be going stir crazy if I had to remain in social isolation with nothing to do.

And while I'm on the subject of coronavirus, I hope the panic buying settles down and that all you wonderful readers stay safe and well.

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.

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Big Daddy burger



When only the biggest burger will do, bite down on the Big Daddy burger! Two juicy beef burgers and loads of salad in a toasted bun – and we've thrown in a fried egg for good measure. Make the whole family happy and put the Big Daddy burger on the menu!

Ingredients

- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1kg lean beef mince (5% fat or less)
- 2 tbsp Worcestershire sauce

Method:

1. Preheat your grill to high.
2. Put the onion, garlic, beef and Worcestershire sauce in a bowl, season lightly and combine using your fingers. Divide the mixture into 8 equal portions and shape them into burgers.
3. Spray the burgers with low-calorie cooking spray and grill for 10-12 minutes or until cooked through, turning halfway.
4. Meanwhile, spray a non-stick frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium heat. Add the eggs and fry to your liking.
5. Split and toast the rolls, then fill with the tomato, lettuce, red onion, burgers and ketchup. Top with the eggs, season lightly and hold it all in place with a cocktail stick if needed.
6. Serve hot with Slimming World chips and salad.

- Low-calorie cooking spray
- 4 x 60g wholemeal rolls
- 4 eggs
- Sliced tomato, lettuce leaves and sliced red onion, to serve
- 4 level tbsp reduced-salt-and-sugar tomato ketchup

6½ Syns per serving | 25 minutes | Serves 4

NB: Deduct 6 Syns if using Bread rolls wholemeal as a Healthy Extra 'b' choice

PLEASE NOTE:

ALL CLASSES ARE CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE



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OUTDOORS

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Gamekeepers postpone protest due to coronavirus

Scotland's gamekeepers have postponed their planned Holyrood protest against Scottish Government's 'death by a thousands cuts' but have promised to rearrange when it is safe to do so.

The demonstration, organised by the Scottish Gamekeepers' Association (SGA), was due to take place yesterday (March 25) outside the Scottish Parliament.

SGA members say the government has abandoned them on key rural issues, placing increasing strain on workers and their families and heightening fears over job losses in remote areas.

However, the organisation moved to cancel their 'defence of our jobs' protest on Friday as major events such as sporting fixtures and other gatherings were halted by coronavirus response plans.

SGA chairman Alex Hogg said a new date will be announced in future so gamekeeper, stalker and ghillie members can get the opportunity to make their views known to Scottish Government.

'It is the right thing to do to postpone at this time. When it is appropriate to do so, we will take advice on another suitable date but, for the time being, public health and safety are paramount.

'Additionally, people were organising buses to travel to Edinburgh, from the Highlands to the Borders, and it is only right they can now make alternative arrangements with their employers and with travel companies.

'What our industry is witnessing is a death by a thousand cuts. We have a lot of members who have shown support for the government's stance on rural policy but, as said, that well is running dry.

'They want their voices to be heard loud and clear and we – as their representatives – will be ensuring that this will happen, hopefully when the country emerges from the situation it finds itself in.'

Double boost for Scotland's fresh water pearl mussels

A watercourse survey carried out ahead of work to replace culverts has uncovered a previously unknown colony of freshwater pearl mussels in north Highland.

The habitat improvement work – supported with a £170,000 Biodiversity Challenge Fund grant from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and managed by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) – will see 8,000 native broadleaf trees planted in groups along 6.5km of water course and the removal of six barriers to fish passage from tributaries.

The discovery was made as a survey was being carried out by Alba Ecology's Pete Cosgrove.

Freshwater mussel populations depend upon these fish (Atlantic salmon, brown/sea trout) to support the larval stages of their lifecycle, when they latch on to gill filaments and grow until they detach themselves the following

'Species conservation is a huge part of what we do and includes looking after over a quarter of all Scotland's pearl mussel watercourses.'

spring. They need to land in clean sand or gravel in order to grow.

Suzanne Dolby, FLS environment forester, said: 'Our reputation rests mainly on our forestry expertise – but this entails a whole lot more than just knowing about trees. Species conservation is a huge part of what we do and that includes looking after over a quarter of all of Scotland's pearl mussel watercourses.

'This is a significant responsibility for a species that has declined by 95 per cent in central Europe and is classified by the IUCN as being critically endangered in Europe.

'We take practical action to meet these responsibilities and discoveries such as this



highlight the importance of sustainable forest management and the type of work that we continue to build on to improve in-stream habitat for fish and pearl mussels.' The new culverts restore the natural river bed, allow for a more natural flow of water and allows fish to pass freely along the tributaries to access additional spawning areas on the outskirts of the forest.

As the pearl mussels hitch a ride on the gills of young fish, this also allows for larval-stage mussels to colonise new stretches of a watercourse and replenish existing populations.

Iain Sime, SNH freshwater and wetlands advice manager, said: 'Freshwater pearl mussels can live to well over 100 years old, but the species is critically endangered in Europe.

'These rare molluscs are found in fast-flowing, unpolluted rivers and streams – often in catchments that are partially or wholly forested – and prefer a stony, well-oxygenated sand or gravel bed that is free from siltation.

'The sustainable management of forests – including the careful harvesting and restocking of trees – can therefore play a crucial role in their survival, alongside managing any barriers on the river bed.

'This work funded by the Biodiversity Challenge Fund will restore this vital habitat to help ensure that this rare species will have more than a fighting chance.'

The work is an example of how Biodiversity Challenge Fund projects are helping to improve our biodiversity. The next round of successful projects is due to be announced this spring following a £2m increase to the fund announced by the Scottish Government in its 2019 Programme for Government.

The fund encourages applicants with innovative projects that improve biodiversity and address the impact of climate change, increasing the resilience of our most at-risk habitats and species and creating large areas of brand new or restored habitat.




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Book 'Bafta' shortlist for small publisher Sandstone

by Ellis Butcher
 ebutcher@obantimes.co.uk



An independent book publisher is celebrating after winning a 'monumental' national award.

Sandstone Press in Inverness was crowned Scotland's Small Press winner in the recent British Book Awards, a the 'Baftas' of the industry.

The new prize comes hot on the heels of winning the Saltire Society Scottish Publisher of the Year award last November.

Sandstone has seen the plaudits flood in after publishing the 2019 Man International Booker Prize winner - Jokha Alharthi's critically-acclaimed Celestial Bodies.

Judges of the British Book Awards said Sandstone 'capitalised superbly on the print, distribution, publicity and rights opportunities that followed'.

Sandstone said it produces inspiring books by innovative authors, publishing thoughtful fiction, gripping crime and adventurous non-fiction such as outdoor, biography and memoir.

Managing director Robert Davidson said: 'We threw our collective hat in the air when the news came through. The awards are not merely iconic but monumental in British and Irish publishing.'

'Such a win has been a secret ambition for a long time. We are all delighted to reach this milestone and I, in

particular, am proud of our talented young publishing team who have grown so much in such a short time.

'All this comes with thanks to our many supporters (and readers), respect to our fellow publishers everywhere, and thanks to The Bookseller.'

Along with eight other regional and country winners, Sandstone Press is now in the running to win the British Book Awards Small Press of the Year 2020.

It has been shortlisted as the Scottish entry for the event which has been scheduled to take place in London at the end of June - an amended date following the coronavirus outbreak.

It will go up against the best publishers in England and Ireland.



The Sandstone team are delighted with being shortlisted for this latest award.



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M'ALBA

MY ALBA

DIARDAOIN 26 A' Mhairt THURSDAY 26 March

17:00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming
 19:00 Vets: Gach Creutair Beo (rpt)
 19:30 Beul Chainnt (rpt)
 20:00 An Là – News
 20:30 ÙR/NEW: Eorpa/European Current Affairs
 21:00 Dennis Nilsen – Gradh a' Bhais?/In Love with Death? (rpt)
 22:00 ÙR/NEW: Seoid a' Chidsin S4
 22:30 ÙR/NEW: Bana- Churaidhean/ Warrior Women
 23:20 Dhan Uisge (Loch Morlich) (rpt)
 23:30 Func (rpt)

17:15 Ceol bho Perthshire Amber (rpt)
 17:45 An Là – News
 18:00 Diary of Britain : Men and Iron (rpt)
 18:40 Cuirm@Celtic – Moving Hearts (rpt)
 19:30 Fianais (rpt)
 20:00 Machair (rpt)
 20:25 Fraochy Bay (rpt)
 20:30 Dreach Ur (rpt)
 21:00 Manran aig Barrowland (rpt)
 22:00 Bana- Churaidhean/ Warrior Women (rpt)
 22:50 Belladrum 2016: Cridhe Tartan – Bella Hardy (rpt)
 23:00 Opry an Luir (rpt)
 23:50 Beo air Bord Steisean-Fanaís/ International Space Station (rpt)

17:30 Beul Chainnt (rpt)
 20:00 An Là – News
 20:30 ÙR/NEW: Thar na Loidhne /Crossing the Line
 21:00 Trusadh – Tiodhac Ghosta(Gosta's Gift) (rpt)
 22:00 Tìree Music Festival/ Feis Chiuil Thirioidh – We Banjo 3 (rpt)
 22:30 Uisge ar Beatha (rpt)
 23:30 Seoid a' Chidsin S4 (rpt)

DIMÀIRT 31 A' Mhairt TUESDAY 31 March

17:00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming
 19:00 Vets: Gach Creutair Beo (rpt)
 19:30 Beul Chainnt (rpt)
 20:00 An Là – News
 20:30 Fuine S5 (rpt)
 21:00 Clann Pheter Roraith (rpt)
 22:00 Trusadh – Tiodhac Ghosta(Gosta's Gift) (rpt)
 23:00 Fraochy Bay (rpt)
 23:05 Togaidh Sinn Fonn (rpt)
 23:30 Alleluia (rpt)

DIHAOINE 27 A' Mhairt FRIDAY 27th March

17:00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming
 18:35 Machair (rpt)
 19:00 An Là – News
 19:25 Earran Eachdraidh (rpt)
 19:30 Fianais (rpt)
 20:00 Togaidh Sinn Fonn (rpt)
 20:25 Fraochy Bay (rpt)
 20:30 Thar na Loidhne (rpt)
 21:00 Opry an Luir (rpt)
 21:50 Dhan Uisge (Loch Morlich) (rpt)
 22:00 ÙR/NEW: Eadar na Dha 1918-1935/Clash of Futures:1918-1935
 22:50 Belladrum 2016 – Cridhe Tartan – Bella Hardy (rpt)
 23:00 Seirm – Celtic Connections (rpt)

DIDÒMHNAICH 29 A' Mhairt SUNDAY 29 March

16:00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming
 18:15 An Là – News
 18:30 Seachd La – News Review
 19:30 Alleluia (rpt)
 20:00 Eorpa (rpt)
 20:30 Fuine S5 (rpt)
 21:00 A' Suathadh Ri Iomadh Rubha/The Campbell Family Story (rpt)
 22:00 Manran aig Barrowland (rpt)
 23:00 Eadar na Dha : 1918-1935/Clash of Futures :1918-1935 (rpt)
 23:55 Belladrum – Cridhe Tartan (Highlights) (rpt)

DICIADAIN 1 An Giblean WEDNESDAY 1st April

17:00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming
 19:00 Turas a' Bhradain (rpt)
 19:30 Beul Chainnt (rpt)
 20:00 An Là – News
 20:30 Dreach Ur (rpt)
 21:00 Craobhan na h-Alba (rpt)
 22:00 FUNC (rpt)
 22:30 Tìree Music Festival – We Banjo 3 (rpt)
 23:00 ÙR/NEW: Eadar na Dha: 1918-1935/Clash of Futures:1918-1935
 23:55 Earran Eachdraidh (rpt)

DISATHAIRNE 28 A' Mhairt SATURDAY 28 March

16:00 Mallachd an Fhir-Rabaide/Wallace & Gromit in The curse of the Were-Rabbit (rpt)



BBC.CO.UK/ALBA | BBC.CO.UK/IPLAYER

Co-bhanntachd eadar MG ALBA agus am BBC | A partnership between BBC and MG ALBA

Argyll author shares memories of sea and spider silk

'Marram is a story about love – love for a string of windswept islands, for their people and wildlife, for a couple of shaggy ponies and for a lost parent,' said John Keay, writer and historian.

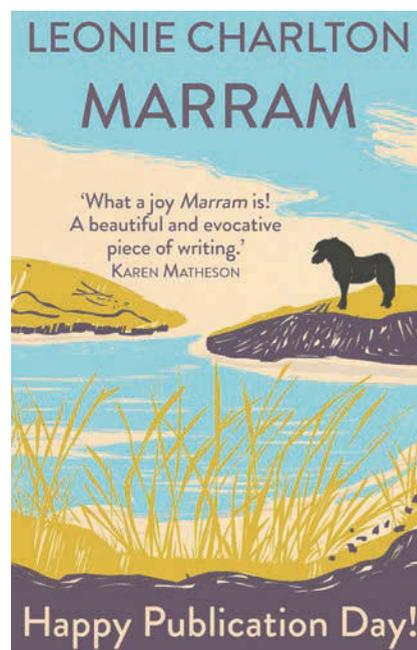
From the southern tip of Barra to the ancient stone circle of Callanish, Leonie and her friend Shuna ride off the beaten track on their beloved Highland ponies, Ross and Chief.

In deeply poetic prose, the narrator not only describes the beauties of the Hebridean landscape, its spare, penetrating light and its people, but also confronts the ghost of her mother and their deeply fractured relationship.

Leonie Charlton travelled extensively as a child, living in England, Ghana, Wales and Scotland.

She has worked as a cowgirl in Australia, an English teacher in Japan, and her degree in Hispanic Studies took her to Catalonia for two years.

In 1998, she settled in Glen Lonan, Argyll. Marram is



her first full-length book although her fiction and poetry have appeared widely in magazines.

Signed copies of Marram will be available to buy online from Waterstones – who will be sure to share information on availability across social

media – but in the meantime, you can pick up an unsigned copy by ordering from www.waterstones.com.

Publishers, Sandstone Press would like to say a huge thank you to Waterstones and Oban Distillery for all their support for Leonie's book.

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Robert in lockdown!

ROBERT ROBERTSON

robert.d.robertson@hotmail.co.uk



The sweeping of the coronavirus across the nation has brought about so many unprecedented events and circumstances – many of which none of us expected to see in our lifetimes.

The Prime Minister making daily, and often war-like, addresses to the nation; shops and small businesses shut; the football being cancelled; and our streets now all but emptied by lockdown.

Perhaps most unprecedented of them all, however, is the temporary suspension of the Glasgow Letter! With the residents of the city confined to self-isolation, every single event has been cancelled and, therefore, there is nothing for me to preview or report. It is a situation that I can't imagine many of my predecessors ever encountered. And so it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this new-look, temporary column: Robert in lockdown!

Like many Highlanders and Islanders, I am absolutely desperate to head back up the road for the duration of this social distancing policy.

Isolating with a view of Ben Nevis and a chance of fresh air has much more



Robert's neighbour Amina joining him in song.

appeal to me than isolating in my tenement flat. For fear of infecting my parents, however, I am locking myself away for a week or so before I head home. People my age can carry the virus without having any symptoms. Whether I make it home now with the country in lockdown remains to be seen but, for the time being, I have found various means of getting through the trials and tribulations of

self-isolation in Glasgow. I awoke one sunny morning over the weekend and saw on the television that Italians, French and Spanish urban dwellers had been singing to each other from their balconies in the streets. I immediately thought: that's exactly what we need here in Partick!

I opened my window, closed my eyes, thought of the Park Bar, and belted out the chorus of the well-known

cèilidh classic Teann a-nall 's thoir dhomh do làmh.

As luck would have it, my Gaelic speaking neighbour across the street (Amina Davidson) was on hand to lean out her window and join in with me! As our impromptu chorus came to an end, a round of applause arose from a few tradesmen in the street below.

I had filmed the whole thing on my phone to send to a couple of mates but, given that Amina had joined in, I thought it was worth a post on my Instagram account. I flung it on the Tide Lines account too while I was at it.

Within an hour, Reporting Scotland, STV News, BBC Radio Scotland, and Glasgow Live (among many other media outlets) had been in touch asking to use the footage. Our Tide Lines social media interaction shot up by over 1,000 per cent.

This was all a bit of good craic but, more importantly, it made me realise that (throughout this difficult period) we can all still have a smile.

This is going to be an incredibly tough few months for everyone. But we're going to get through it.

Ceòl an Aire gig at The View is a livestream success

Oban trad band Ceòl an Aire livestreamed their EP launch gig on Saturday and notched up 22,000 Facebook views.

The group were due to unveil their new release Doubles at The View, Oban, to a bustling crowd but coronavirus meant the musicians had to come up with a plan B.

Instead of an audience, they still performed the tracks from the new EP with the same lighting and sound set up as if people were there so fans could enjoy it from the comfort of their sofa or dance around their living rooms.

The gig was livestreamed on The View and The Oban Times' Facebook pages,



and received 126 shares on Facebook and 391 likes.

Ewan Macdonald from Ceòl an Aire said: 'We're so glad we went ahead with

the launch. It was a bit of a gamble but the response has been amazing!

'It was totally surreal playing a gig to an empty

Ceòl an Aire were due to release Doubles with a gig at The View but opted to livestream via Facebook.

room but seeing the response online after we came off stage was totally overwhelming.

'The video has had more than 25k views and we really appreciate all who tuned in and ordered a CD. Big thanks also to the local groups and businesses, including The Oban Times, for supporting us by crossposting the live-stream and The View, Oban, for letting us use the venue.'

Visit ceolanaire.com to find out more.

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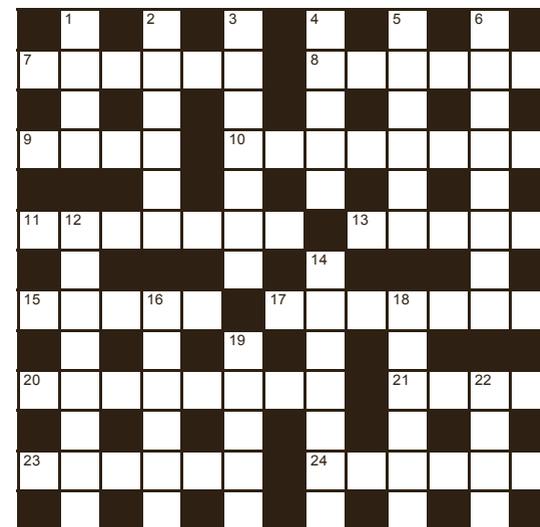
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MONDAY: 8am-12pm: Breakfast with Stephen, 12pm-3pm: Sounds of the '60s with Bob G, 3pm-5pm: Clyde 2, 5pm-7pm: Drive time with Marcus, 7pm-8pm: Rosie's Highland Fling, 8pm-9pm: John McLuckie Show, 9pm-10pm: David Cullen Show, 10pm-12am: Clyde 2
TUESDAY: 8am-10am: Breakfast with Stephen, 10am-1pm: Ken Hunter, 1pm-3pm: Macky on Fm, 3pm-5pm: Mental Health, Musings with Mer, 5pm-7pm: Drive times with Bob G, 7pm-8pm: Highest Praise with Stuart Chalmers, 8pm-9pm: Sounds Scottish with Archie Cameron, 9pm-12am: Clyde 2
WEDNESDAY: 8am-10am: Breakfast with Stephen, 10am-1pm: Comfort Zone with Lesley, 1pm-3pm: Doug Carmichael lunch show, 3pm-5pm: Clyde 2, 5pm-7pm: Drive time with Campbell, 7pm-9pm: Country meets Rock and Roll with Ken or Len, 9pm-11pm: Gordon's Grooves, 11pm-12am: Clyde 2
THURSDAY: 8am-11am: Breakfast with

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
FRIDAY: 8am-10am: Breakfast with Laura, 10am-1pm: Teeny and Tiny, 1pm-5pm: Clyde 2, 5pm-6:45pm: Drive time with Jim Lynch, 6:45pm-7pm: Sports View, 7pm-8pm: Country meets country with Jackie Craig, 8pm-10pm: Peter Rainnie, 10pm-12am: Clyde 2
SATURDAY: 8am-10am: Breakfast with Stephen, 10am-1pm: Saturday morning live with Linda Crosher, 1pm-6pm: Clyde 2, 6pm-7pm: Sports view with the dream team, 7pm-8pm: Sounds Scottish with Archie, 8pm-10pm: Dave Lewis, 10pm-12am: Margo till Midnight
SUNDAY: 9am-11am: Sunday Morning with Breege, 11am-1pm: Sunday brunch with Allan, 1pm-7pm: Clyde 2, 7pm-9pm: New Country with Dave and Murdo, 9pm-11pm: Drum and Bass with Graham Scott

Crossword



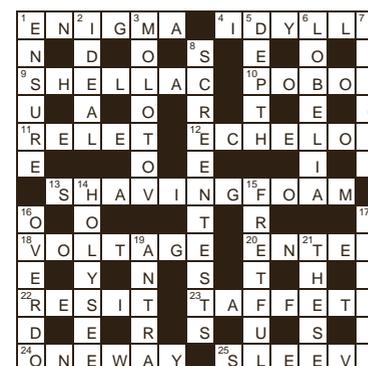
Across

- 7 Take over what isn't yours (6)
- 8 Hate (6)
- 9 Action word (4)
- 10 Tipsy visits to many places (3-5)
- 11 Downright (7)
- 13 Parting word (5)
- 15 Standing (5)
- 17 Time off school (7)
- 20 Hypocrite (8)
- 21 Whip (4)
- 23 Mosaic gold (6)
- 24 Ministry of church (6)

Down

- 1 Vitality (4)
- 2 Mix up (6)
- 3 Support in snow (3,4)
- 4 Cover (5)
- 5 Blessed (6)
- 6 Conclusive confrontation (8)
- 12 Summer wear (3,5)
- 14 In control while sovereign is absent (7)
- 16 Within a bone (6)
- 18 In good order (6)
- 19 Give out (5)
- 22 Breathe out (4)

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION



COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

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If you are self-isolating and need practical support please contact Hope Kitchen on 01631 565730 between 9am and 5pm Monday – Friday as we may be able to help.

Self-isolators urged to place community alert flags in window

by Fiona Scott
fscott@obantimes.co.uk



The Oban Times has teamed up with Oban, Lorn and the Isles area committee to encourage people to use a community alert initiative to help vulnerable self-isolators to communicate with the world outside.

A simple idea, which has already been deployed successfully in other communities, the initiative involves asking members of the community to display a poster, or use the template on this page, in the most prominent window of their house which will signify their general wellbeing to their neighbours.



Councillor Julie McKenzie and her fellow councillors on the area committee are urging communities to make use of the posters.

A green thumbs up with a tick will mean that everything is OK, while a red thumbs down with a cross will indicate that the person in the house needs

non-medical assistance in some way.

Councillor Julie McKenzie commented: 'My colleagues and I on the area committee are working together and wanted to provide some reassurance to everyone in our community at this really difficult time, and we know that this initiative is already working well in other places.'

'We want to appeal to as many people as possible to take part by displaying a thumb in the window, and in particular reach out to the most vulnerable in the community, who must be feeling particularly isolated at the moment, to give them a wee bit of reassurance by providing a visual method

of communicating a need for support.

'We hope the community will get behind us on this and would like to thank The Oban Times for assisting us to make it happen.'

'We will also make sure that further thumbs are provided free of charge for anyone who wishes to take part.'

OLI area committee want to make it clear that the initiative is a community assistance one and is not to replace a call for medical support.

'Hopefully, by doing this it will mean that anyone who is feeling particularly vulnerable or isolated will be more visible to others in the

community in which they live,' added Ms McKenzie.

Posters are available to members of the community to download and print off at home by emailing editor@obantimes.co.uk or check out our Facebook page.

KEEPINTOUCH
email us at editor@obantimes.co.uk
telephone 01631 568000

Coronavirus warning for volunteers

Volunteers coming forward to help in the wake of coronavirus are being warned not to unwittingly spread the highly-contagious bug.

Argyll and Bute Council suggests people 'spread the kindness, not the virus' and has recommended a 'clean, clear and contactless' approach.

It warns that the COVID-19 strain can survive for up to 72 hours on untreated hard surfaces such as plastic and stainless steel.

It can also 'live' on money for up to 24 hours.

The council has produced a new eight-page 'community support guide' offering advice about collecting repeat prescriptions, getting shopping for people and exchanging money, among others.

It wants to provide community groups, organisations and local people with advice to manage any potential spread.

The guide can be found at the 'volunteering safely' section on www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/coronavirus/help-for-communities



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Around the markets

OBAN: United Auctions, Tuesday March 17, sold 63 Store Cattle and 363 Sheep of all classes. Bulls averaged £660.47 per head (+£14.18), selling to £900 for 2, 449kg LimX from J Jackson & Son, North Ardnach and heifers averaged £660.50 (+£75.25) selling to £900 for a 492kg, SimX from D Lewis, Drimnin Estate. Bullocks averaged 225.64p/kg (+4.83p) to 255p/kg for 6, 266.70kg Limx from I Campbell & Son, Aird Farm, Ardfarn and heifers averaged 200.55p/kg (+5.37p) to 240.8p/kg for 3, 245kg Limx also from I Campbell & Son. Ewes averaged £60.28(+£37.55) and Hogs averaged £64.69(+£26.93). A small, but mixed show of cattle sold at levels comparing well to principal centres. All classes of sheep continued to sell at high rates.

Leading Prices per Head

BLKS - AAX - £700, Dalrannoch. BRBx - £750, Annat. LIMx - £900(2), £850(2), North Ardnach. SIMx - £840, Aird Farm; £700(3), Ardencaple Farm.

HFRS - LIMx - £855(2), £730(4), North Ardnach. SIMx - £900, £880, Drimnin Estate.

Leading Prices per Kilo

BLKS - AAX - 245p(2), Dalrannoch. LIMx - 255p(6), 239p, Aird Farm. SIMx - 254p, Aird Farm; 250p(3), 246p, Ardencaple Farm; 244p(3), Scammadale Farm.

HFRS - LIMx - 241p(3), 221p(2), Aird Farm.

Sheep per head

HOGGS - TEXx - £101, £90, £84, Lusragan-beag; £83, Glenshellach. CHEV - £94, Kilbride; £64, Traigh Farm; £60, Antuim Farm. MULE - £94, £76, Glenshellach. BF - £90, Kilbride Farm; £88, Soroba; £86, Balliemanoach; £70, Kilbride. EWES - TEX - £140, £128, £93, Barcaldine HF; £80, Caddleton Farms; CHEV - £95, £94, Caddleton Farms; £90, Cailaich Farm. CROSS - £83, Glengorm. MULE - £90, Glenshellach. BF - £76, Glenshellach; £74, Hayfield Estate; £72, Ederline Estate; £71, Glengorm.

Caledonian Marts, Thursday March 19: Caledonian Marts Ltd sold 201 Cattle comprising of 94 Bullocks, Heifers and Young Bulls, 89 OTM

Cattle and 18 Young Calves & Stirks.

Prime Heifers sold to 262ppkg on two occasions for a Limousin from A A & J Brand, Nethermyres, Auchtermuchty and for a Limousin from D S & R C Taylor, Easter Ochtermuthill, Muthill purchased by T Johnston, Butchers, Falkirk and G Kirk & Son, Butchers, Denny and to £1650 for a Limousin from A A & J Brand, Nethermyres, Auchtermuchty purchased by T Johnston, Butchers, Falkirk.

Prime Bullocks sold to 255ppkg for a Limousin from W Dandie, Learielaw, Broxburn purchased by T Johnston, Butchers, Falkirk and to £1694 for an Aberdeen Angus from Ferguson Bros, Gillandersland, Linlithgow purchased by H Black, Butchers, Stirling.

Bulls (over 16 months) sold to 205ppkg for a Limousin from J McAdam, Callendoune, Helensburgh and to £1893 from J Burnett, Upper Spittalton, Blairdrummond.

Other Leading Prices

Bullocks per kg
245p Rathillet & Nethermyres; 238p Learielaw, Nethermyres & Balquharrage (Twice); 235p Nethermyres; 230p Balquharrage; 222p West Shirva; 10p Easter Ochtermuthill; Heifers per kg

255p Rathillet, Learielaw & Nethermyres
252p Moorfield; 250p Rathillet & Learielaw
245p Rathillet; 242p Faskine
240p South Millmain (Stranraer), Rathillet (Twice), Moorfield, Kenmuir (Stranraer) & Upper Spittalton; Bulls per kg (All over 16 Months)

195p Drumflower (Stranraer)
190p Hardiston (Twice), Drumflower (Twice) & Easter Clune; 188p Drumflower
Bullocks per Head
£1607 Rathillet; £1565 Nethermyres;
£1555 Learielaw; £1548 Easter Ochtermuthill
£1518 & £1514 Nethermyres; £1502 Gillandersland

Heifers per Head
£1575 Learielaw; £1570 Rathillet
£1547 & £1531 Easter Ochtermuthill
£1523 & £1507 Rathillet

Union launches employment service

NFU Scotland links farms needing labour with those looking for jobs due to coronavirus

Scotland's farming union has launched a service to help Scottish fruit and vegetable growers recruit workers who have lost their jobs or are on unpaid leave due to coronavirus.

The web-based service can be found at: www.nfus.org.uk/coronavirus/employment-opportunities-on-farms.aspx

For those businesses looking to recruit, there is a labour requirement form to complete and return to NFUS allowing details to be added to an interactive map of employment opportunities. For those looking for employment, they are asked to apply using the contact details provided by each farm on the website.

NFU Scotland President Andrew McCornick said the agricultural industry was facing a shortage of seasonal migrant labour due to the pandemic and this was one



NFU Scotland President Andrew McCornick

tool to help secure the staff needed on Scotland's farms.

Mr McCornick said: 'These are extremely challenging times for many different sectors and industries. In a bid to come together as community, NFU Scotland has launched a portal on our website which allow farmers who need labour to advertise their positions to those within the Scottish workforce who have suddenly found themselves out of work.'

'Many farmers and growers are going to be badly affected by a lack of foreign workers

available due to COVID-19, just when they are needed for planting and harvesting of fruit and vegetable crops.

'This shortfall of workers is coinciding with a number of Scottish and UK workers being laid off indefinitely.

'In these unprecedented times it is important that we work together to help provide jobs for those needing them while at the same time maintaining the flow of the home-produced, healthy food which Scotland's farmers, crofters and growers are known for.'

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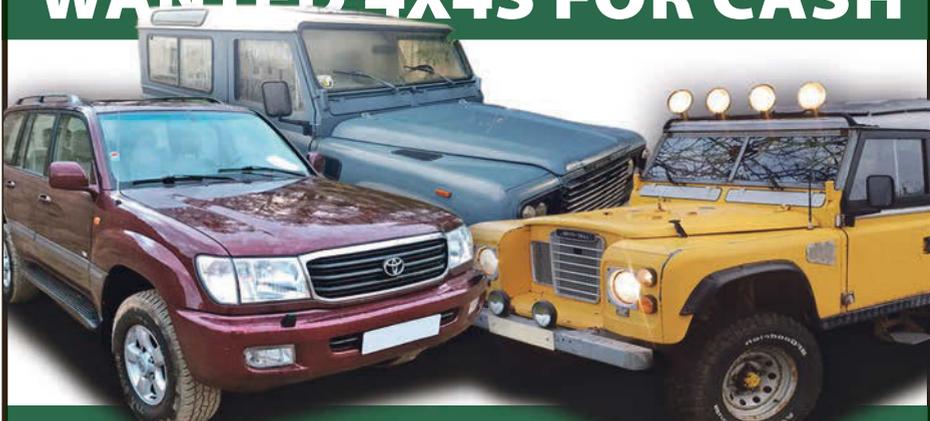
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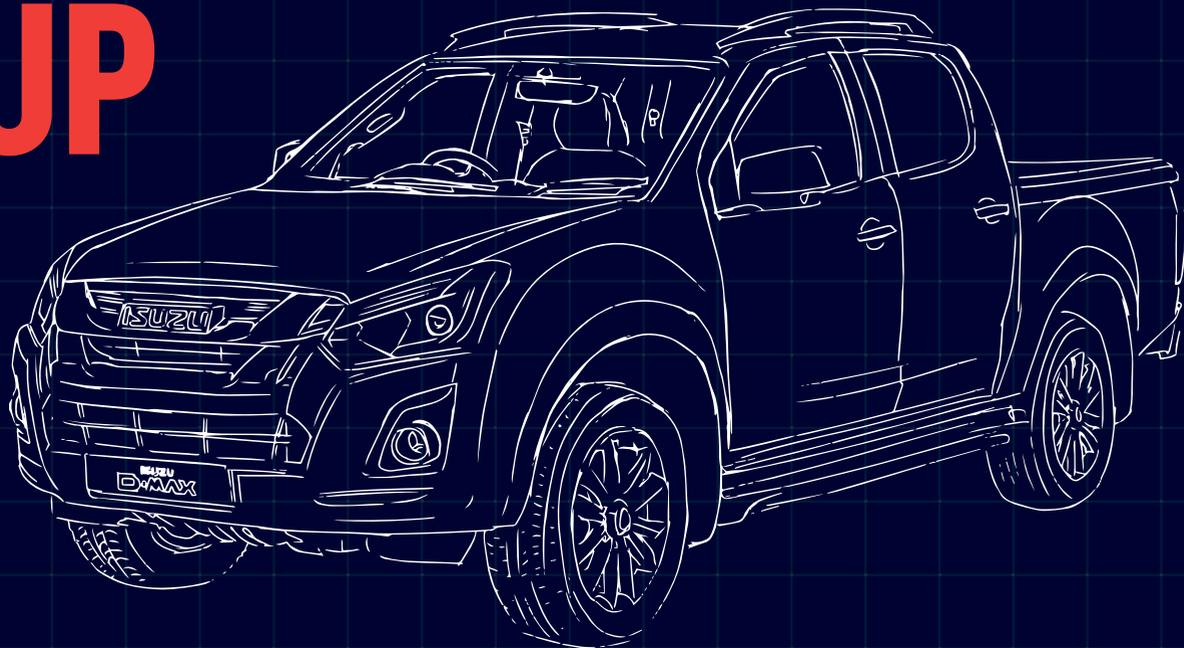
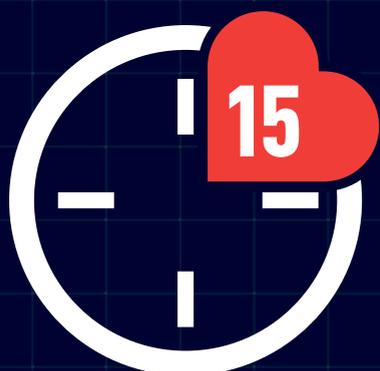
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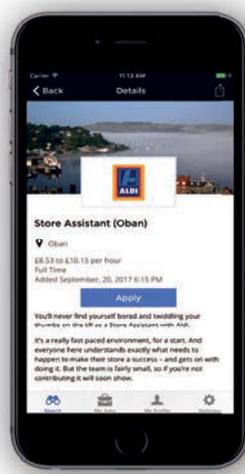
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Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997
PLANNING (LISTED BUILDING AND CONSERVATION AREAS) (SCOTLAND) ACT 1997**

The applications listed below, along with plans and other documents submitted with them, may be examined 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
20/01194/FUL	Tomdoun Lodge, Invergarry	Erection of 2 No. Holiday Cottages & Garages, renewal of 16/05113/FUL
20/01271/FUL	Arisaig Hotel	Erection of 6no. letting units
20/01153/FUL	Innisfree, Glenfinnan	Siting of pod, access path and parking

Time period for comments is 14 days
ePlanning Centre, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, INVERNESS IV3 5NX
Email: eplanning@highland.gov.uk

First Registration of a Croft
Iain Henderson and Mrs Sandra Mary Henderson have registered their croft, 1B Achadafail, Achadafail, Kilfinichen & Kilvickeon, in the Parish of Kilfinichen and Kilvickeon 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 9 September 2020. Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C6903.

Proposed Assigment of a Croft
David Rodgers is applying to assign the tenancy of the croft at Railway Croft Kilmallie to Billy Rodgers of 35 Lochiel Road Inverlochty. Written comments from those with a relevant interest (which may be made public) to: Crofting Commission, Leachkin Road, Inverness IV3 8NW, info@crofting.gov.scot by 18 Apr 2020.

First Registration of a Croft
Iain Henderson and Mrs Sandra Mary Henderson have registered their croft, Knockan, Kilfinichen & Kilvickeon, in the Parish of Kilfinichen and Kilvickeon 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 11 September 2020. Details of the registration can be found at www.crofts.ros.gov.uk/register/home. The croft registration number is C6917.

Oban Times PUBLIC NOTICES | Oban Times PUBLIC NOTICES
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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
20/00418/PP	Siting of 2 modular buildings (one to form Early learning centre and one for kitchen storage)	Dunbeg Primary School, Etive Road, Dunbeg, Oban, Argyll And Bute, PA37 1QF
19/02519/PP	Erection of building to accommodate the processing and production of oysters	Site Approx 0.78km South Of Toberonochy, Isle Of Luing, Oban, Argyll And Bute, PA34 4TZ
20/00499/PP	Site for the erection of dwellinghouse	Land East Of Achara, Glencruitten, Oban, Argyll And Bute
20/00124/PP	Alterations and extension including installation of flue	44 Dalavich Chalet Park, Dalavich, Taynuilt, Argyll And Bute, PA35 1HS
20/00511/PPP	Renewal of planning permission in principle reference 17/00492/PPP - Site for the erection of a dwellinghouse	Land North Of Croft 5 Kilvaree, Connel, Argyll And Bute
20/00323/PP	Erection of croft house, installation of septic tank and formation of vehicular access	Land South Of Bayview House, Ardtun, Isle Of Mull, Argyll And Bute
20/00183/PP	Erection of dwellinghouse, installation of septic tank and formation of vehicular access	Site South East Of Inverlussa, Lochdon, Argyll And Bute
20/00244/LIB	Installation of additional ground floor window to match existing and installation of replacement carved feature to north elevation	Duart Castle, Lochdon, Isle Of Mull, Argyll And Bute, PA64 6AP
20/00527/PP	Erection of 5 dwellinghouses (affordable housing)	Land South West Of Baile lochdrach, Lower Kilchattan, Isle Of Colonsay, Argyll And Bute, PA61 7YR
20/00003/PP	Erection of agricultural shed (retrospective) and erection of polytunnel for use as sheep shelter	Croft 24, Airds Bay, Kirkton, Taynuilt, Argyll And Bute

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.

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Property industry to provide buildings for key workers

Organisations representing thousands of professionals across the surveying, architectural and planning specialisms have written to the Prime Minister to offer their help in fighting back against the growing coronavirus epidemic.

Led by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), both the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) have signed a letter to the government also calling on ministers to extend emergency measures to include property professionals as businesses strain to deal with the impact of the virus.

With RICS members representing hundreds of clients across the built environment, many with vacant rooms and buildings, the move could see hundreds of empty hotel rooms, flats or commercial space repurposed to temporarily house key workers such as NHS staff so they can be located closer to hospitals and workplaces.

The letter also makes clear that the property sector, a key part of the British economy, is straining under the pressure of the corona-

virus – with effects not seen since the financial crash in 2008. To help firms cope in these tough times, the letter asks the Prime Minister to act now to ensure thousands of surveyors, architects and planners can continue to work, including:

- Seeking the introduction of emergency loan funding for all firms in the built environment sector.
- ‘Fiscal support’ to aid in consultancy firms to invest in work from home technology, allowing people to stay at home and reduce the burden on transport services.
- Support for lost wages of employees now on reduced time or who face being made temporarily redundant.

Matthew Howell (RICS UK Managing Director) said: ‘Whether you’re a chartered surveyor, architect or town planner, the growing coronavirus pandemic is one of the biggest threats to the property industry since the financial crash, and we need serious action now to



prevent job losses and businesses shutting down.

‘RICS has been supporting its members, including keeping them

updated on the changing advice from government, but we are hearing more support is needed. That’s why we’re joining with RTPI and RIBA to call on the Prime Minister to open up a range of emergency measures to help property professionals deal with the effects of this virus, including support for firms to allow staff to work from home and wage relief for individuals on reduced hours or facing temporary redundancy.

‘We also stand ready as a profession to do our part to aid the UK in getting through this together. Our professionals and firms working across the built environment sector have access to a wide range of buildings that could be utilised by the NHS or other key workers for various purposes. We would be keen to meet with government to discuss this and ensure the space and any vacant beds are put to good use.’

Alan Vallance (RIBA CEO) said: ‘This is a critical time for the built environment.

‘Without financial measures to help preserve cash flow and clarity on how the planning system and development control systems will continue to operate, our sector remains

at risk. We also need assurance that the government will do everything it can to make sure construction projects are able to progress safely.

‘We appreciate the close engagement with civil servants and ministers to ensure the voice of the built environment is heard and that the right actions are taken.’

Victoria Hills (CEO at RTPI) said: ‘Town planners stand ready with all built environment professionals to do what we can to help mitigate this pandemic, and help our country get back to social normality and economic productivity afterwards.’



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DEATHS

DOWNIE - Marion Agnes (nee Boni). Formerly of Drummore Road, Oban, passed away at home in Hampshire on March 1, 2020, surrounded by family. Wife of the late Robert (Dick) Downie, mum to Robert and Elizabeth, dearly loved granny and a friend to many.

MUIR - Jean Nisbet Richardson. Peacefully on March 23, 2020, at the grand old age of 98, Sheena (Auntie Sheenac), much loved wife of the late Ian Muir, beloved aunt and eldest child of the late Allan and Mary Maclean, ex Tigh-an-Eas, Oban. A really lovely lady. At her VERY firm insistence, there will be no funeral, and Allan (as ordered!) will scatter her ashes in the sea off Ganavan Beach in Oban.

NICHOLSON - On March 21, 2020, peacefully at Lorn and Islands Hospital, surrounded by his loving family, Ian, aged 86 years, beloved husband of Margaret, much loved dad of Andrew, Alasdair and

Iain, dear father-in-law to Rosalyn and Pamela, much adored grandpa to Oliver, Isabella, Selena, Tommy and Meroula. Due to current circumstances, a private family funeral will take place. A celebration of life to be announced in better times.

OSWALD - Robert, (Bobby - taxi driver) aged 66, died peacefully on Sunday, March 22, 2020 at Queen Elizabeth University Hospital. He was a much loved husband to Janis, father to Claire and Fiona, father-in-law to Aidan and grandfather to Mark, Cameron and James. Sadly missed by all. A celebration of his life will be held at a later date.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CARMICHAEL - The family of the late Hector Carmichael would like to thank all family and friends for the many kind expressions of sympathy extended to them at this sad time. Sincere thanks to Rev Dugald Cameron for a thoughtful and comforting service, thanks also to Ian

of D & A Munn for his kind and professional service, and thanks to the staff at the Royal Hotel for refreshments after the funeral. The sum of £414 was raised for Oban Senior Soup Group.

MACKINNON - The family of the late Donald Kennedy, 1 Hough House, Tiree, would like to thank all who paid their last respects at the funeral which took place at Heylipol Church on Saturday March 7, 2020 and thereafter at Sorobay cemetery, especially everyone who travelled from the mainland. Many thanks for the nurses and doctors for their care and support. Mr Patrick Boyd for a moving service and Rev Alan Millar for his comforting words and Tiree Co-op Funeral Services. The retiring collection raised £500 for Tigh a Rudha and Tiree Parish Church.

McDIARMID - (Portree). Margaret, Hannah, Steven and family wish to thank relatives, friends, neighbours, Royal Mail work colleagues and the entire community for the many cards, flowers and

expressions of sympathy on their recent sad loss of Mike, much loved husband, father, uncle and friend to many. Grateful thanks to those who helped Mike, paramedics and medical staff at Portree Hospital; to the Reverend Donnie G MacDonald and the Reverend Gary Wilson for the heartfelt, special service and comforting prayers; to the wonderful staff at M & D MacLeod Funeral Directors; to Flowers by Carole for all the lovely floral tributes; to Ian Ruairi Finlayson for piping at the graveside; finally thanks to all who came to pay their respects and generously donated to the Leanne Fund in aid of Cystic Fibrosis. Donations will be counted at a later date.

MEMORIAMs

BOGLE - Treasured memories of Mary Bogle, died March 24, 2018, also Mary Kate Phillips, died April 19, 2011, dear sisters, sisters-in-law and aunts.

In our hearts and minds forever, with all our love. - All the families.

CLARK - Effie. Remembered with love, today and every day, my dear aunt Effie, much loved and loving sister of the late Alasdair, Mary and Tommy and much loved aunt, who died March 26, 2009.

"God will link the broken chain as one by one we meet again". - Niece Mary and her husband Bobby.

DEMPSTER - In loving memory of a dear mother and nana Morag Scoular, who died March 24, 1986. Also her husband Kenny, who died December 1, 1989. Fondly remembered by Hugh and her grandchildren.

MACLELLAN - In loving memory of a dear brother and uncle Peter MacLellan (South Uist), who passed away on March 27, 2019. R.I.P.

Our family chain is broken And nothing seems the same But when God calls us one by one The chain will link again. - Sister Jean and family, Ballachulish and away.

ROSS - In loving memory of our mum Mary (Maimie), who passed away on March 27, 2019.

In our hearts you will always stay Loved and remembered every day.

- Kay, Susan, Craig and families.

ROSS - In loving memory of my dear sister Mary (Maimie) Ross, who passed on March 27, 2019.

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XpoNorth announce Heritage HangOuts

Due to the unprecedented situation that we are in with the outbreak of COVID-19, many heritage organisations now find themselves looking for alternative ways to connect with their audiences.

XpoNorth has been working hard behind the scenes to offer quick and effective responses to support these organisations to investigate how more innovative use of new technologies could allow them to launch fresh products and services and engage with their networks using more dynamic models.

The Heritage HangOuts series will offer specialist advice on how heritage organisations can package up new remote offerings, articulate their stories, look at what technology can be used and leverage high-value digital experiences for their customer base.

XpoNorth's Heritage HangOuts will offer 30-minute slots for heritage organisations across the Highland and Islands to discuss how technology can be used most effectively to engage with new and existing audiences; discuss how to better articulate the richness of your stories, package and distribute digital experiences for remote consumers; develop new and immersive



online interaction; and discuss ways to monetise your assets. These slots will be allocated on an individual basis, allowing maximum time for our heritage and digital specialists to offer tailored advice built around the specific needs of your organisation in these challenging times.

XpoNorth heritage specialist Nicola Henderson said: 'These are extraordinary times and the heritage sector, like many others, is going into a battle for survival over the coming months. This is a first step in supporting museums to look

for new ways of working, utilising digital technologies to engage with their audiences and identify new potential income strands.

'We will be working with the sector going forward to identify the best mechanisms of support we can offer to help them come out the other side stronger.'

Heritage HangOuts will be building on the XpoNorth Heritage programme that was launched in February 2020 and is supported by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), Museums Galleries Scotland, Creative Scotland, Historic Environ-

ment Scotland and Museums and Heritage Highland.

Museums and heritage organisations in the Highlands and Islands are offered the chance to work with creative industries businesses to help bring forward innovative ideas.

Led by HIE, this new pilot programme will help groups tell their fascinating stories to visitors while creating new revenue opportunities.

They will be introduced to networks of creative businesses who can help take the ideas to market and help open new ways for visitors to experience history by

The Heritage HangOuts series will offer specialist advice on how heritage organisations can package up new remote offerings.



THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

Interesting times!

We really don't know what will happen next, unknown implications of the disruption to normal life. Beyond medical symptoms of coronavirus, feeling panicky, tearful and weary – honestly, that's normal now, part of the disease happening around us.

Jobs threatened, or lost, financial worries, how to entertain and feed hungry children home from school, to actually be with a partner and family 24 hours a day! In such intense and prolonged situations, under the spotlight now are worries normally ignored and covered over by the day-to-day busyness of life and the distractions of Netflix in one room, X-box or Sky sports in another.

Self-distancing brings relationships and inter-dependence into focus. How to deal with all the implications; the cracks in relationships with partners and children; neighbours who can't be ignored any more; how can something that started in remote China make such a difference to life here!

How will I get through this, or perhaps, how do we get through this? Coronavirus has brought into focus the disease and sickness in relationships individually and in society.

Is it time to face the challenge of resetting values? It's painful now but perhaps, more importantly, in the long term community will re-emerge and we'll realise we really are all in this together.

People of faith have always accepted we are part of something much bigger than ourselves; living is about 'we' and not 'I'. Even at the most difficult times we are not alone. 'God', however defined, is with us through those standing alongside us, today, tomorrow and always.

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Youth hostels temporarily close

Following the latest government guidelines to prevent the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), Hostelling Scotland has announced the temporary closure of all 33 youth hostels within its network across the country with immediate effect; and until further notice, including Oban.

Margo Paterson, chief executive of Hostelling Scotland, said: 'The current situation is difficult for everyone and if ever there was a time for communicating with mutual understanding, this is it. We will keep in touch with you through our monthly e-newsletters and social media channels. Further information is always available on our website www.hostellingscotland.org.uk. We really appreciate the hard work being carried out by all healthcare workers and those on the front line.'

OT

GOLF

Bob makes the most of temporary grounding

Golf ace Bob MacIntyre is enjoying an unplanned break with his family as the sporting world goes into lock down.

But the 23-year-old from Oban is under no illusion about the monumental effect the coronavirus outbreak will have at home and for his 2020 European Tour bid.

'This is bigger than sport, it's bigger than anything, so my priority at the moment is to enjoy unexpected time with my family and to do whatever I can to keep everyone safe at home,' he told The Oban Times.

'Golf, as in all other sports, has been shut down and we don't know how long it will remain like that.

'There's no point trying to guess what will happen for the rest of the season as things are changing on a daily basis so in the meantime I will work on getting myself ready for when the phone call comes to say we can start up again.

'I love my down time so over the past week I have been relaxing and having some good games of golf with my mates. Nothing too stressful,' he added.

'From now on though I will be trying to get myself a bit fitter to help my golf and reach certain speeds.

'I had down time at the end of last year because of a hand injury. I am fit and healthy now and just wanted to get going but unfortunately I can't.

'Because of the injury, I have had to adjust a few things in my game so I now have extra time to work on that.'

Bob was made an ambassador for Martyn's Monday Club last week and pledged to do what he could to support the Oban-based charity.

BOWLS

Bowlers put season on hold

Oban Bowling Club (OBC) has this week set out its stall in light of the current coronavirus pandemic.

At what is a difficult time for everyone, OBC committee held an emergency meeting last Wednesday, March 18, to discuss possible arrangements for the coming season.

A statement sent out to members on Thursday March 19 read: 'Oban Bowling Club has a duty of care to its members and we want to ensure we put the health and welfare of all our members first.'

Obviously decisions made by the committee at this meeting may have to change as a result of government guidelines.

The following measures were agreed at the meeting:

- The clubhouse, kitchen and green would be closed.
- All activities including bingo, quilts and Friday social evenings would be cancelled until further notice.
- The joker would be suspended and re-start when the club opens.

■ A provisional opening date of Saturday June 6 was set but obviously this depends on government guidelines.

■ Members would be asked to pay half their annual fees by Friday May 1 so the club can continue to meet its running expenses including electricity, water and green maintenance.

Fees would be:

Ordinary members £60.

New members - first year only - £30.

Junior members under 16 years on April 1 2020 £5.

Junior member over 16 years in full time education on April 1 2020 £30.

Social members £5.

To minimise social interaction, it would be appreciated if people would either pay by cheque or make a bank transfer to the club's bank account.

Anyone wishing details on where to send payments or further information should contact Anne Stewart, OBC secretary, by telephone on 01631 563373 or email obanbowlingclub@gmail.com or Iain Boyd, president, on 07483 234955 or 01631 710722.

TSL are new Oban Camanachd sponsors



Oban Camanachd were given a huge financial boost when it was confirmed TSL Contractors will be their new main sponsor starting from the 2020 shinty season.

Whilst concerns surrounding the spread of coronavirus have brought the new shinty season to a halt after just one round of fixtures, this three-year sponsorship deal gives the Oban side a financial boost in the form of a significant sum which will help towards their on-going commitments running Oban Camanachd and Lochside Rovers as well as their two youth sides.

Oban Camanachd president Pat Steeman said: 'This is brilliant news for our club and we're so happy to seal this deal with TSL. This is the biggest sponsorship deal in Oban Camanachd's history and TSL's support will benefit the club from top to bottom.'

Oban Camanachd clearly want to play their part in this partnership with Steeman saying: 'As well as having TSL on our Oban Camanachd and Lochside Rovers shirts, we'll have their logo displayed on pitchside advertising at Mossfield and Ganavan and their support brings wider benefits to the club.'

'TSL's support will help us invest more in training facilities as offering more sessions comes at a cost, as well as helping towards major cost areas such as travel and equipment - camans and helmets - whilst the purchase of a club mini-bus is a longer-term aspiration.'

Pat recognises many clubs are on the lookout for sponsorship in Oban.

He said: 'Securing sponsorship in Oban and the surrounding area is a competitive business. We are competing with sports including football and rugby which are generally better funded but we have so much to offer and TSL recognise that.'

'I must also mention Naomi Knight and Iain Lumsden from TSL. They have been so helpful and supporting each time we met throughout this process and they came across as being so keen and positive with their support for what we do.'

TSL Contractors are a family company based in West Central Scotland providing



Daniel McCuish and Evan MacLellan show off the new Oban Camanachd strip provided by TSL.

Photograph: Kevin McGlynn.

building new homes, schools, health care facilities, industrial and commercial premises as well as infrastructure, utility and renewable sector civil engineering.

As well as being committed to their local community, TSL has around 130 employees who cover a range of trades and professions.

TSL Contractors were delighted to be awarded 'The Fastest Growing SME300 Company' Award 2018, by Business Insider.

TSL managing director Iain Lumsden was also pleased with the new arrangement. He said: 'TSL Contractors are delighted to have the opportunity to be the shirt sponsor for Oban Camanachd and Lochside Rovers over the next three years.'

'We hope our contribution will not only support the club continue in its development to be consistently the top team in shinty, but also in its growth as one of the key focal points in the community for the engagement and encouragement of the youth from in and around Oban to take up outdoor sport and maintain a healthier lifestyle.'

'Oban Camanachd really fit our bill with all they do in the

community, including promoting a well-being message and their role with youths, so it is nice to give something back and get behind them.'

'Finally we would wish the team the best of luck for the season when it is re-established.'

TSL also see opportunities to offer their clients corporate hospitality at Oban Camanachd matches and it is an experience Iain Lumsden is sure those involved will enjoy.

'I've always found shinty to be an enthralling sport to watch,' he said.

'Corporate hospitality could bring something different and we may be able to bring shinty to new supporters who perhaps haven't seen before just what a cracking game it can be.'

'So it's something that is win-win for ourselves and Oban Camanachd. We entertain clients and they get more supporters.'

Pat Steeman thanked the Oban Inn which supported the club as main sponsors for the last three seasons.

Other businesses also back Oban Camanachd through pitchside banners whilst the club's monthly Superball al-

lows supporters to contribute £10 monthly for the chance to win £500 and £100 each month.

With the ramifications of the spread of coronavirus taking effect, most shinty clubs have been forced to suspend their money spinning Shinty Lotto fund raisers but Oban Camanachd's Superball draw can continue as payments are made each month by standing order rather than individual cash collection.

Craig MacDougall signs for Oban Celtic

Oban Celtic manager Dougie MacIntyre has boosted his attacking options after securing the services of Craig MacDougall.

Craig has previously played for Oban Lorn and Lochside Rovers and had broken into the Oban Camanachd, squad.

However, his availability for Mowi National Division side Oban Celtic this season will be restricted because of work commitments.

Player insurance clarification

With the shinty season showing no sign of emerging from its current coronavirus suspension, the Camanachd Association has provided clubs with further clarification surrounding playing status, particularly in relation to insurance.

The association has sent a bulletin to clubs confirming their primary concern is the health and well-being of their members and the communities in which shinty operates and this is the reason why shinty cannot be played at present.

As a result, and having discussed the current situation with their insurers, the Camanachd Association say they have been advised no shinty - either playing or training - will be covered by their insurance scheme until further notice.

Clubs have been taking heed, announcing a suspension of their regular group training sessions although players will try to keep their fitness up on an individual basis within government guidelines.



Oban Lorne RFC.

Rugby players line-up to lend a helping hand

Oban Lorne RFC players and members are refusing to let the grass grow under their feet during the recent unprecedented sporting lay-off.

In fact, if you ask them nicely they may even cut it for you.

With all Scottish rugby fixtures postponed until further notice, the Green Machine is motoring on in another direction and offering to help any vulnerable members of the community, and those self isolating, with any chores that need doing.

Copied

Oban Lorne RFC secretary Murray Hamilton explained: 'We have unashamedly copied this idea from Stewarts Melville and have had a really positive

response from players and members who are willing to help others in our community. Folk can email or message us via Facebook and we will rally some players to help in any way we can. We have players as far as Tyndrum who have put their hand up to help all the way down to one lad from Lochgilphead.

Vulnerable

'If you are in a vulnerable group or are self isolating we have players ready and willing should you need any help with your groceries, medication or even taking your dog for a run.

'We cannot guarantee toilet roll but we can help each other. Please do not hesitate to ask.'

Meanwhile bean counters at the Glencruitten-based club

are looking into the financial repercussions of the unforced shut-down.

Last week Scottish Rugby announced a new £500,000 club hardship fund to offer assistance to grassroots rugby clubs facing cashflow and immediate financial challenges caused by coronavirus through lack of fixtures or pressures on other revenue streams.

'We received the info about the fund and we have a meeting scheduled for the end of the month to discuss the issue,' said Murray.

'In between then and now we are going to look at the fund and check to see if we would qualify for any support.

'The only obvious loss we will suffer is the revenue of

RUGBY

the clubhouse. We are lucky to have such a great clubhouse, but with that comes running costs. There are no bookings during the suspension period, so we haven't had to cancel anything but we are also not getting any footfall for home games.

Weekly revenue

'Weekly revenue, keeping the clubhouse open covers our costs is essential to us

'I expect many sports clubs will be in the same position, and it is great the SRU have recognised this and set money aside to help clubs.'

Email obanlornerfc@gmail.com or message via Facebook to let the club know what they can do for you.

BJJ/MMA

Oban BJJ hosted a seminar on Saturday March 7 with multiple BJJ champion and pro fighter Craig Macintosh.

Craig has built a reputation of finishing fights and BJJ contests with a choke called a Peruvian neck tie that he has renamed the Scottish neck tie and has perfected it for his game.

This seminar was a game changer for the eager students who gained the knowledge of this choke. The move was dissected into small understandable chunks, then the students were given different options if your opponent tries to escape different ways. Craig has promised to return to Oban soon to teach more of his specialities and it was pleasing to see this seminar so well attended by students.

Unfortunately, due to the current coronavirus situation, Oban BJJ classes are on hold until they are advised it is safe for everyone to return.

If you would like to try out

Martial arts

IAIN RODGER
editor@obantimes.co.uk



Members of Oban BJJ who attended the recent seminar.

BJJ or MMA, Oban BJJ can be found on Facebook or you can email using coogiepots@gmail.com

Shukokai Karate

Unfortunately due to the current situation the Shukokai classes are on hold until they are advised it is safe for everyone to return.

Anyone looking for more information on these clubs can get details from Kenny Gray on 07884 183905 or

kenni.gray@btinternet.com

Kickboxing

Unfortunately due to the current situation the kickboxing classes are on hold until they are advised it is safe for everyone to return.

Sessions are normally on Sundays at 11am - 1pm for juniors (5 to 15 years) and Wednesdays at 4.30pm to 6pm for juniors (5 to 15 years) and 6pm to 7.30pm for seniors (16 years and over).

Find the club on Facebook as Senshi Do Kickboxing or email shihanwill@gmail.com

Kyokushinkai Karate

Unfortunately due to the current situation the Kyokushinkai classes are on hold until they are advised it is safe for everyone to return.

For details about the Kyokushinkai Karate classes: contact Iain on 07584 166542 or email using iain@ikku.co.uk

The club can also be found and messaged on Facebook under Caledonia Kyokushin.

Wado Kai Karate

Unfortunately due to the current situation the Wado Kai classes are on hold until they are advised it is safe for everyone to return.

For Park School classes contact Mike Faulkner - m.faulkner6@btinternet.com for more details.

For Dunbeg classes contact Chris Bruce - crb999@btinternet.com for more details.



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WEATHER

Thursday
Light cloud and a gentle breeze
Temperatures 4°C to 11°C.

Friday
Sunny intervals and a moderate breeze
Temperatures 2°C to 9°C.

Weekend Outlook
Saturday
Sunny and a moderate breeze
Sunday
Sunny intervals and a moderate breeze
Temperatures 2°C to 9°C.



FRIDAY

TIDAL INFORMATION

Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday March 26, 2020** are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

Thur	01.02	0.8	06.56	4.0
	13.18	0.9	19.00	3.8
Fri	01.29	0.9	07.23	3.9
	13.45	1.0	19.26	3.8
Sat	01.52	1.1	07.49	3.7
	14.08	1.1	19.51	3.7
Sun	02.11	1.3	08.15	3.6
	14.34	1.3	20.20	3.5
Mon	02.36	1.4	08.45	3.3
	15.09	1.5	20.54	3.3
Tues	03.11	1.6	09.24	3.1
	15.59	1.7	21.38	3.1
Wed	04.05	1.8	10.22	2.8
	17.15	1.8	22.42	2.9

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

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

Ferry Crossings/Sea States

Oban to Barra/South Uist	Moderate
Oban to Coll/Tiree	Moderate
Kennacraig to Islay	Moderate

Stop Press: New pontoons at Ulva Ferry and visitor moorings installed at Lochaline by North West Marine Ltd

Craig MacDougall signs for Oban Celtic

Rugby players line-up to lend a helping hand



Some of the Oban Saints Football Club members prepare for the food drop. Story and photographs: Derek Black.

Oban Saints go shopping

Volunteers from Oban Saints Football Club's first and second teams, led by first team manager Willie Gemmell,

coach Jamie Graham and second team manager Donald Black arranged a food drop last Saturday for people in the

community less able to get out and about.

Following an 8am rendezvous at Glencruitten and a talk

from commander-in-chief Gemmell on hand sanitising and social distancing, the 12 split into smaller groups and departed for supermarkets to put their highly questionable shopping skills to the test.

Probably amazed to discover supermarkets don't just sell sweets and alcohol, the Saints shoppers went trolley to trolley with people who actually knew what they were looking for in the already packed shopping aisles.

Volunteers

Forearmed with information from their mothers or better halves on what would be useful purchases and, observing anti bulk buying protocol, the willing volunteers stacked their trolleys with sensible amounts of essential items before heading to the

check-outs where purse string holders Gemmell, Graham and Black waited with money collected from player donations and club funds.

Sheltered housing

After dividing the haul and packing it into boxes the Saints' battle weary old minibus was pressed into action for a food parcel drop to the day rooms of sheltered housing complexes.

Oban's Dunmar Court, Lynn Court and Torosay Court were all visited as well as Dunbeg's MacCallum Court and Ford Spence Court in Benderloch.

Also in receipt of grocery boxes were Hope Kitchen in Soroba Road and Blue Triangle in Shore Street.

The club is delighted to have given something back to the

FOOTBALL

community which supports it so well and, for as long as it remains possible to do so in these trying times, Oban Saints management, players and officials will continue to make themselves available to assist those in need of a helping hand.

The club can be contacted through its social media channels or by phoning Willie Gemmell on 07455 260175 or Jamie Graham on 07882 331998.



Jamie Graham, Willie Gemmell and Donald Black with one of the food drops.



What we are doing to help

- We are continuing to bring you accurate and trustworthy news in-paper and online
- We are working with our wholesale and retail partners to make sure that your newspaper is still in the shops

Keeping our community informed
All the information on our website is available free - you don't have to log in

If you want to get the "page turner" version of the newspaper and can't get to the shops we have halved the price of our digital edition for the next 3 months. We will review this on an ongoing basis.

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95p



Kindness of locals praised following accident



Glencoe ski centre boss calls for unity



REMEMBER

to put your clocks forward 1 hour this weekend

Blackford pleads for visitors to 'stay away'

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

MP Ian Blackford has condemned several tourism accommodation providers for actively encouraging people to flock to Lochaber and elsewhere in the Highlands to 'self-isolate' during the current coronavirus emergency.

The MP for Ross, Skye and Lochaber has already pleaded for tourists to stay away from the region.

He has now turned his wrath on accommodation providers he accuses of flouting advice about 'essential travel only' and roundly condemned them for their 'unacceptable behaviour' which, he said, risked the potential spread of Covid-19 and putting pressure on the health services in rural areas.

Welcoming the UK Government's decision on Monday to effectively 'lockdown' the UK, the SNP's Westminster leader said: 'The new guidance is that everybody must close down

today if they have not done so. The need to control the spread of Covid-19 is the greatest challenge facing us all at this time.

'There has been a rapid acceleration in the number of cases reported and it is vital we all do the right things now so we can reduce the impact of coronavirus and save lives.

'If we don't, we face the stark reality many more people will die.'

'If we don't, we face the stark reality many more people will become ill and die.'

Echoing government statements that essential travel does not include visits to second homes, campsites, caravan parks or similar, whether for isolation purposes or holidays, he called out what he said were 'recent examples of completely unacceptable behaviour'.

A furious Mr Blackford told the Lochaber Times:

'We are not like a city where you can travel to the next hospital if one is already under pressure. As there is a lack of an ability to accept responsibility, it has been necessary to take action to force providers to shut down.'

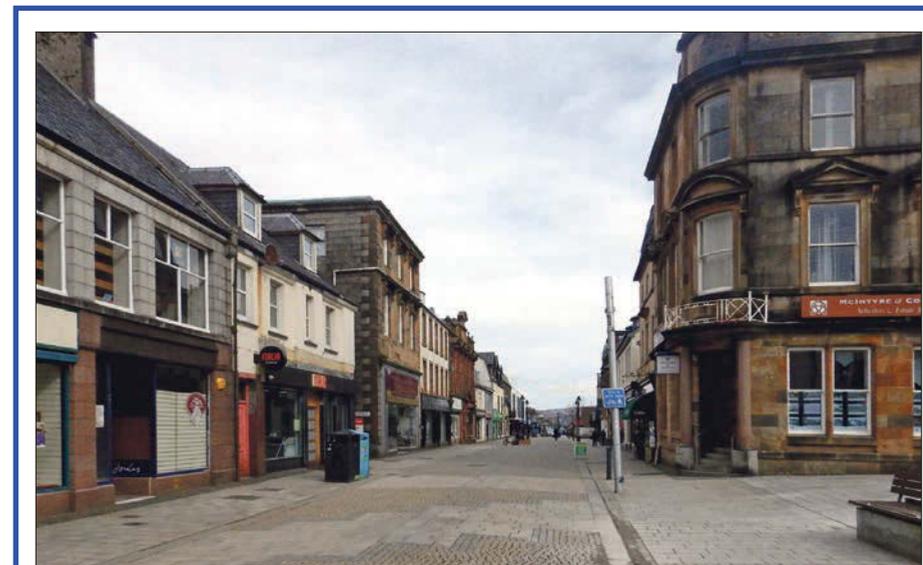
Mr Blackford said he had received more than 1,000 emails over the weekend from constituents concerned by the number of campervans in the area despite government advice telling people to avoid non-essential travel.

'We have been inundated in my constituency with visitors who have shown no concern for the local population,' Mr Blackford told Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock in the House of Commons on Monday.

'This is a dangerous situation, imperilling the lives of constituents.

'They must go home and stay home. People should remain in their primary residence.

'Not taking these steps



High Street deserted ahead of lockdown

Before the lockdown came into effect, Fort William High Street was already quiet, with many pubs, restaurants and shops on the street closing their doors.

This photograph was taken on Saturday March 21, after all pubs and restaurants were required to close and many other businesses

had done so for the safety of staff and volunteers. Now, all non-essential shops have closed, meaning only food retailers, pharmacies, hardware stores, corner shops, petrol stations, post offices, banks, newsagents and pet shops can remain open.

Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos

puts additional pressure on communities and services that are already at risk.'

And Mr Blackford told the Lochaber Times: 'I appreciate most people are making every effort to act responsi-

bly and follow the advice on social distancing provided by government experts.

'However, there are those who appear to think the advice applies to everyone else and who have chosen

to head to the Highlands to self-isolate. This is putting local residents at risk and is not acceptable.

'For those visiting the Highlands just now, please leave.'

What we are doing to help

- We are continuing to bring you accurate and trustworthy news in-paper and online
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LT

Tourist praises kindness of locals following accident

by Iain Ferguson
fort@obantimes.co.uk

A German tourist who lost everything, including her pet dog, in a freak road accident is praising the many people who have helped in her time of need.

Zookeeper Carla Greszies, 54, from Reddinghausen, 100km east of Cologne, had just left her campervan in Glen Etive to take a few pictures, only to see it roll away backwards and fall 30 feet into a storm-swollen river.

Carla rushed to try to grab the van, which contained her pet dog, Holly, but was unable to do anything to stop the plunge.

A horrified Carla had no signal on her phone to call for help, but flagged down a passing car and asked them to drive back to the main road from where they would be able to contact the emergency services.

She said: 'A young couple stopped to help and wanted to stay with me, but I told them instead to find a signal and call for help.'

Within 15 minutes, Glencoe Mountain Rescue Team were on site, followed by the Coastguard, who



Left, searching the crashed vehicle in the River Etive for Carla's dog Holly, right; above Carla and Leah from Caol.

Photograph, Iain Ferguson, The Write Image

braved the torrent to search for Holly, but were unable to get inside the submerged vehicle.

While tragically unable to recover the body of the dog, Ms Greszies's passport was recovered when her handbag floated out of the van.

A regular visitor to Scotland, Ms Greszies ultimately plans to move here, an ambition bolstered by the

kindness and help she has received since the accident.

She said: 'I love coming to Scotland and have visited five times in the past two years and I really want to move here.'

'Everyone has been so good to me - from stopping at the accident just to comfort me, giving me somewhere to stay, providing clothes, toiletries and even large cases to help

me return to Germany with what belongings I still have.'

'I am so upset by the loss of Holly and would like especially to thank Mr Stevenson, who owns the recovery company, who came immediately to try and find her.'

'He could not get my van out until the next day, but when he did, his priority was finding her and bring her out

to me. He was so kind and asked if I would like to bury her on ground at his home in Spean Bridge where his own dogs lie. We did this and were able to say goodbye.'

'With such caring, now I know I definitely want to live in Scotland.'

During her ordeal, Carla stayed with Leah Whyte in Caol, whom she first met through Lochaber Rocks,

where people of all ages decorate small stones and leave them in different locations, putting a message on social media to say where and when they found them, before placing them in a new location.

Leah was one of the founders and responded to Carla's message about finding a stone two years ago. They have remained in touch ever since.

Leah also used social media to ask people to look out for Holly, just in case she had been swept out of the vehicle. In response, the A82 Action Group shared it on their Facebook page and a Glen Etive resident spent five hours walking the river bank looking for the dog.

She said: 'I was shocked to hear about the accident. Carla and Holly had been for dinner only the night before. Literally, all she had was what she was wearing and after I put a bit on social media, people just turned up on the doorstep with clothes and other things for her. She was really touched by everyone's genuine concern and willingness to help.'

Carla plans to return to Germany at the weekend.

crown
vets

Coronavirus
update



In order to better protect our staff and clients from Coronavirus we have started with the following measures

- All annual vaccine boosters cancelled (low risk to go 3 months overdue)
- All routine neuters, dentals, nail clips, pet health checks, weight checks cancelled
- All remote clinics cancelled

If we haven't yet contacted you about a pre-existing appointment please accept our apologies, we are working through a long list!

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Locheilnet's plea to customers over excess broadband usage

by Richard Mason
rmason@obantimes.co.uk

Community broadband provider Locheilnet has put measures in place to maintain the vital service for many but has said this is not 'business as usual'.

Locheilnet provides broadband services to many who have no other option such as those on the western side of Loch Linnhe, Glenfinnan and many other areas of Lochaber.

Its engineers will still be able to work on anything that requires attention as telecommunications staff have been deemed as Category 2 key workers by government guidance.

Jackie Wright, chairwoman of Locheilnet, said: 'As an internet provider, our staff and volunteers are key workers which means that, in this lockdown situation, they will be able to attend breakdowns and installations. Our team have Locheilnet ID and are recognisable by their cheery smiles.'

'We would simply ask customers to be sensible in their use of data - it is not unlimited!'

In a message to customers, they recognised how important having an internet con-



nection now is, but will now require further information if a call out is requested. The need for a visit will be established by some questions; any time spent in customer homes will be kept to a minimum and all surfaces touched by engineers will be cleaned; customers will be asked to keep their distance from engineers and any of-

fer of drinks will be politely declined.

The company expects peak times to change from evening to around early afternoon as residents face full days at home.

Customers will know that Locheilnet plans are not unlimited and the company is asking that people are mindful of not overloading

Locheilnet said: 'We would simply ask customers to be sensible in their use of data - it is not unlimited!'

the system with multiple people streaming video, playing games or doing video calls at the same time.

New installations will be done only in exceptional circumstances, such as an elderly customer moving to a location that has no internet.

Anyone new to the area will not be able to start a plan. The company is prioritising the safety of its workforce.

For more information, visit locheilnet.co.uk.

YOURSTORY
sharewithus:editor@obantimes.co.uk
telephone 01631 568000

Small island firms now available in one place

A Tiree woman who recently started her own small business, Tiree Tea, selling island-inspired teas, was counting on this summer to get things properly up and running, writes Richard Mason.

But when it started to become apparent that people would not be able to get out to shops, Rhoda Meek began to think of what other small island businesses would be doing at a time when they do not have the resources to compete with national brands.

Using her experience as a product manager for a software company, she developed a website where other businesses can post a link to their website and a short description of their service.

In a tweet, Rhoda put the idea out there on Tuesday March 17, and hundreds of likes and retweets later, the isle20.com directory was born.

She said: 'The site now has 117 island businesses on there with almost every is-

land in Scotland represented, but I am chasing up the ones who are not yet represented.'

'There are so many people selling a great variety of unique products on Scottish islands and many rely on tourism to survive. We are now into the thousands of hits on the website, just within a few days.'

'The most popular search on the site so far has been gin. We did have one search for toilet paper, but unfortunately there isn't a business selling that on here yet.'

The name is a play on words between the singular word for island and a shopping 'aisle', and the year of inception.

If you want to support a small island business, head over to isle20.com and browse the wide selection of unique products available.

Financial costs of the enterprise, such as hosting the website, have been taken on by the Scottish Islands Federation and Rhoda wanted to thank them for their support.

VIEW FROM THE CHAMBER

At this time when we need to keep apart, we also need more than ever to work together - supporting each other, caring for each other and helping to make sure that we all get through this most challenging time in the best way we can.

At Lochaber Chamber of Commerce, we're hard at work supporting Lochaber's businesses - from guest-houses and self-catering apartment owners to restaurants, activity providers, manufacturing and food production. We're here for all our members, whatever the industry and whatever the size.

Frazer Coupland, our CEO, is working closely with the wider Scottish Chambers of Commerce network, the government, VisitScotland, Highland Council and industry partners to help make sure our businesses get the vital support they need



to make it through this most difficult of times.

We're providing daily reliable business support information, up-to-date guidance and assistance, guidance webinars, and access to free tax, legal and HR assistance. We're in touch with business to answer their questions, find out their needs, share offers of assistance from members and support our members and the wider community in any way we can.

We want all of our local businesses to benefit from the help of our team and the support of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce network to help them through the tough coming months - if your business is not currently a member of the Chamber, you

can join now and defer your subscription until August.

There's never been a more important time for businesses to be part of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce network - you'll be joining a supportive network of 30 member chambers across Scotland, which speaks up for the needs of more than 12,500 businesses throughout our country.

We listen to what our businesses tell us, lobby government on behalf of your business needs, and help you access the assistance you need. Businesses of all types and sizes are facing unprecedented challenges but you're not alone. Let us help you get through it.

Call the Chamber team on 01397 705765 to join the Chamber today. Find out more at www.lochaberchamber.co.uk, where you'll also find up-to-date coronavirus business information.

All the team send wishes of goodwill to all of our visitors and patrons during this difficult time.

We look forward to seeing you all when we are able to open our doors again.

Let's all do what we can to lock up the Coronavirus for good and throw away the key!

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Cruise ships visits to Fort now on hold

The first cruise ship scheduled to arrive in Fort William this year will not be sailing at all.

The Hebridean Princess was meant to be arriving in Loch Linnhe yesterday, Wednesday March 25, but operator Hebridean Island Cruises will not be sailing anywhere.

Two ships scheduled to arrive in April have been cancelled altogether and it is unclear when the first one will arrive.

Hebridean Island Cruises' managing director Ken Charleson said: 'Hebridean Princess will not be visiting Fort William this week or anywhere else. The ship is currently in Greenock and out of service due to the coronavirus outbreak.'

'We are unsure as to when we will resume cruising as this will be under government guidelines.'

The Hebridean Princess is scheduled to come to Fort William in September. The company hopes normality will resume by then but is strictly following government guidance.

Glencoe ski centre boss calls for unity

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

The boss of Glencoe Mountain Resort no longer intends complaining to the SNP over the actions of its local councillor Niall McLean, after the latter mounted a protest at the centre's car park when it remained open for business on Saturday.

Mr McLean had posted a video online on Saturday in which the Fort William and Ardamurchan councillor said it was 'ridiculous' the resort was still open when there was a public health crisis due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Speaking to camera from the ski centre's car park, Councillor McLean said alarmed and distressed constituents had contacted him about the centre still being open.

'We've had reports of cars



being in the ski centre this week with Italian registrations. What I would urge everyone to do if they see things like this happening in a time of emergency is to grip it. Tell people they are doing something wrong - whether it be something as ridiculous as this or somebody simply

not washing their hands or elderly people out exposed in places they shouldn't be,' said Mr McLean.

Resort managing director Andy Meldrum said the centre had been scheduled to close after the weekend anyway and that he had intended lodging a formal

Glencoe Mountain Resort boss has urged everyone to work together as a community.

complaint with SNP party bosses over what he said was Mr McLean's 'unnecessary' behaviour.

But this week Mr Meldrum had changed his mind and said he would prefer his message to be one of 'moving forward together'.

Mr Meldrum told the Lochaber Times: 'While everything did not happen the way we might have wanted, we are closed now and want to build bridges with the community.'

'I do not think it is right at this time to be dwelling on something that was quite divisive and really did not need to be. We need to come together as a community.'

'We have manpower and heavy machinery available should the council need assistance clearing roads or what we have can be used in any other way.'

Asked for its view of Mr McLean's call for people to speak those they felt were not adhering to guidance on coronavirus, Police Scotland told the Lochaber Times: 'We wouldn't recommend people confront others.'

Fellow Fort William and Ardamurchan councillor and leader of Lochaber Area Committee, Andrew Baxter, would not comment on Mr McLean's video, but did urge people to adhere to advice for no non-essential travel and that included holidays in the area.

'This will be putting extra pressure on already stretched services, particularly in rural areas like ours,' he said.



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Councillor McLean by the Co-op's handwashing station outside its Ballachulish store.

Ballachulish residents install handwashing station at Co-op

Councillor Niall McLean has been doing all that he can to support people in his local community of Ballachulish, writes Richard Mason.

A group of residents managed to build this wash station at the local Co-op, where everyone from the village does their shopping. It was made in six hours

from scrap metal and has two places for people to wash their hands.

The sinks were installed last Wednesday (March 18) and the work of volunteers has been widely praised by residents of other local communities and across the UK.

The Ballachulish Community Support Group has been

doing what it can to also offer information on things children can do to cope with the strain self-isolation can put on some people's mental health.

Ballachulish Co-op opening hours are now 7am-8pm and number of people in the store is restricted to five at any one time.

Lochaber Hope offers online services for mental wellness

The group that offers a variety of services to help with mental wellbeing for the people of Lochaber is now taking these online.

Staff at Lochaber Hope are now working remotely from home and will be checking in with all clients via phone calls to make sure they are doing okay.

Counselling and mentoring are still taking place almost exclusively by phone or secure video conferencing services like Skype or Zoom. Counselling will be done with trained counsellors to ensure confidentiality.

Where possible, all group meetings are being conducted via online video conferencing services and, from yesterday (March 25), there will be a daily virtual chat held from 2pm.

This chat is available to absolutely everyone in the community and can accommodate up to 100 people at a time. More details can be found on Lochaber Hope's Facebook

page. A message on behalf of the whole team said: 'We are taking heed of guidance from the government, NHS and COSCA (our governing body), and will do all we can to provide the same support as we always have; it will just look a bit different to how it was before.'

'Our mentors and counsellors are working remotely, we have customers and volunteers contact numbers to keep a check on everyone, our groups are in contact via social media and we are starting the virtual community chats.'

'Who knows?'

'Maybe we will learn a lot about what we do and what is important over the next few weeks and months. But what we've always known is that this wonderful community will come together, support each other and come through even stronger than before. Rest assured, we are here for you.'

Their office is now closed.

Corran Ferry restricted to essential travel

Use of the Corran Ferry will now only be for those who live on the peninsulas and nearby islands, and who have an essential need to travel to or from the mainland, said Highland Council this week.

A local authority spokesperson told the Lochaber Times this week: 'The First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, announced on March 22 that ferry travel across Scotland must be for essential travel only.'

'From now on the Corran Ferry will be for those who live on the peninsulas, and nearby islands, who have an essential need to travel to or from the mainland, and for essential supplies or business. Nothing else.'

'At present the return of non-residents back to the mainland will also be deemed essential travel.'

KEEPINTOUCH
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Fort William smelter donates protective face masks to Belford

Following a meeting with management from Belford Hospital earlier this week, Alvanche British Aluminium has provided the hospital with around 250 disposable FFP3 face masks.

These masks are not typically used in day-to-day activities at the smelter and could, therefore, be made available

to the hospital instead. It is understood that the Belford has a steady supply of these types of protective masks and the donation will only be used in extreme circumstances.

General manager of the Fort William smelter Tom Uppington said: 'Everyone is aware of the pressures that national and local health

authorities are under at the moment so we were keen to support our brave healthcare workers with whatever useful gesture we could at this time.'

'In a close-knit community such as ours, we know how critical Belford Hospital is to the wellbeing of our employees, their loved ones and friends.'

Scottish rail timetables change to keep essential services moving

A revised timetable was introduced on Monday March 23 to help provide transport for people delivering essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new timetable has a specific focus on delivering an effective public transport service for key workers.

Reducing the number of trains in service creates opportunities for additional cleaning on trains, and in depots, and allows more targeted cleaning at stations.

With more railway staff being affected by the impact of the coronavirus, revising services also accommodates infrastructure changes, and allows safety critical roles to be performed across the country.

The service level will deliver more than enough seats to meet the current demand and the timetable will be kept under regular review to react to any further developments.

David Simpson, ScotRail operations director, said: 'The

revised timetable will help to provide a critical service for the key workers across the country.'

'Our staff are absolutely committed and are working flat out on the front line to help keep the country moving, while also keeping themselves and customers safe.'

'The railway has an important role to play during this crisis and we will work closely with the Scottish Government to do all we can as the situation develops.'

Braised Brisket & Oyster Pie with Kilpatrick Oysters & Isle Mull Cheddar

I can not think of a better way to spend an evening than gathered round a table with family. Oysters were originally used in Victorian pies as a meat substitute, however these day they add a hint of luxury to any pie.



Shortcrust Pastry
450gm Plain Flour
100gm Butter
100gm Lard
Large pinch Of Salt
1 Egg (whisked for glaze)

Kilpatrick Oysters
200gm Smoked Bacon (cooked & finely chopped)
10gm Butter
100gm Shallots (finely diced)
5ml Worcestershire Sauce
Good dash Tabasco
5ml Tomato Ketchup
1 Lime Juiced
50gm Chopped Flat Leaf Parsley
100gm grated good cheddar (I use Isle of Mull MAture Cheddar)
4 Oysters

Braised Brisket
2kg Brisket (Diced into large chunks)
800gm Shallots (peeled & halved)
100gm Celery (1cm Diced)
2 Large carrots (1cm Diced)
1 Garlic clove (crushed)
1 Tomato paste
1 Bay leaf
1 bottle Red wine (montepulciano / tempranillo)
4 Oysters

Brown brisket in a heavy bottomed casserole dish, add shallots, celery, carrots till they gain colour. Add tomato paste & bay leaf, cook out the tomato paste then deglaze the casserole dish with wine. Cover then place in a low oven at 130 degrees c for 5 to 6 hours.

For pastry rub into flour butter & lard, till it resembles bread crumbs. Then using a table knife cut in a tablespoon of water the mix forms a ball. Flatten the ball into a disk wrap in clingfilm & rest for 1 hour before rolling.

For Kilpatrick oysters, in butter fry bacon & shallots till crisp. Take off the heat and combine rest of the ingredients. Shuck 4 of your oyster & retain the meat in the concave half of the shell top with Kilpatrick Mix & cheddar.

Once the brisket is tender strain off cooking liquid & reduce in a separate pan, till it forms a rich gravy. Mix back through stew mix & cool.

Preheat oven to 180 degrees centigrade

Fill a pie dish with chilled mix and add the meat from the other 4 oysters. Roll out your pastry to 1/2 cm thickness and cover the pie dish. Cut a steam hole in the center of the lid & glaze your pie with egg.

Place pie in the oven after 20 mins in the oven add your kilpatrick the top of the pie and cook for a further 5 to 10 mins till oysters are cooked and pie filling is hot.



Port Appin, Argyll www.pierhousehotel.co.uk

Church keeps caring though virus crisis

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

Reverend Richard Baxter, minister of Fort William Duncansburgh MacIntosh and Kilmonivaig, sat down this week to give his thoughts on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on local church life in Lochaber.

He said the whole community is affected by coronavirus, and everyone has to do their part in stopping its spread by minimising social contacts and following all the health advice we are given.

'We owe that to health service and care staff and to our neighbours,' said Rev Baxter. 'Our congregations, in common with all other churches and faith groups, have suspended all our regular activities, including Sunday services. That's a huge gap in the lives of many people.'

'We have been taking steps



Reverend Richard Baxter

to make sure people can still engage in worship, even if they are alone at home.'

Question: are churches closed for worship now?

'The church buildings are, the church communities are not! We're keeping going in several ways. First, we sent out some materials for prayer and reflection for the period up to Easter to all our members, because we know many people will not have access to or use social media.

'Copies of that can be emailed to anyone else who wants them. Secondly, we are doing much more by internet and social media. Our website www.thedmac.com has links to worship resources and a library of talks on a wide range of subjects.

'However, our Facebook pages have been a great resource. For example, materials on the Facebook pages last Sunday were watched by many times more people than would come to our services - about four times our Sunday congregations at the last count.

'As well as people in Lochaber, video messages have been viewed across Scotland, in Northern Ireland, the south of England, Liverpool, the Lake District, Malawi and Australia, to name but a few, so we're reaching much further than usual.

'We'll keep putting up new reflections each week, and

responding to comments that come back. We're also sharing in wider initiatives like last Sunday's national day of prayer, shared across the country through social media and candles in windows.'

Question: what is happening about other events such as funeral services?

'The hardest change we're having to make is around funeral services. In Lochaber, most services take place in churches and we're no longer allowed to use them for that or any gatherings of family and friends as we would.

'We can still carry out committal services for immediate family at the graveside, but we're trying to do other things as well. Of course, we'll have appropriate memorial events when the coronavirus crisis is over, but we can also email copies of services to families so they can pass those to family and friends.

'It may be possible to write services and deliver them by video, so people who can't come in person can still be part of them. We have to be creative in finding ways to allow people to remember and celebrate their loved ones, when the normal avenues are closed off.'

Question: what things can churches still do?

'This may be a crisis for the whole of society, but it is making us look at better and more imaginative ways of providing pastoral care and worship. It's also an opportunity for individuals to find their own creative ways of helping neighbours and serving their community and we're encouraging those who can to take those steps.

'Finally, we continue to provide a listening ear for anyone who wants it. Even without face to face meetings, we can use phone calls, email, Facebook, WhatsApp and all sorts of

means to offer help and support to anyone who wants it, whether they are connected to a church or have a faith background or not.'

Question: can you sum up your thoughts in one message?

'I suppose I'd say the most often repeated words in the whole of the Bible are "Do not be afraid".

'In critical situations for communities and individuals, those words are repeated over and over.

'We have a God who made us and loves us and put us here for a purpose. Even when life is hard he won't give up on us, and we can ask for his help. Quite simply, by working together, by acting sensibly, by putting our faith into practice, we'll get through all this.

'It will be hard, there will be sad times in the midst of it, but we'll learn and grow and find out something about the kind of people we really are.'

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Lottery cash set to make difference to Skye project

As World Water Day shone a focus on ocean health and marine environments last Sunday (March 22), the National Lottery Heritage Fund is supporting five new projects helping address the sustainability of Scotland's waters.

The organisation has announced National Lottery funding of £1.3 million so that important initiatives, from increasing people's ocean literacy through a new Dynamic Earth immersive experience to the community restoration of native oyster beds, can go ahead.

Caroline Clark, Director Scotland of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: 'As we celebrate Scotland's Year of Coasts and Waters, there has never been a better time to raise awareness of the important role our marine heritage has in the future of



Youngsters get the chance to test their bushcraft skills on Skye.

a sustainable environment. Not only is the direct conservation we fund vitally important, but we hope that through our projects, there will be increased awareness of how and why we need to change our behaviours in order to protect our future.'

Locally, plans to develop

the Plock parkland in Kyle received £196,100 to improve this important green space for the wellbeing of the community.

The three-year project will combine volunteers' activities, such as grassland conservation, wildflower planting and clearing ditches

so that otters can move more freely, with physical works such as renovating the former Skye Toll office into a community hub and creating a benchmark trail to promote fitness.

Working with health partners, this recreational green-space will support the most

vulnerable in the remote community and host many activities including a large green-health event for the Year of Coasts and Waters.

A further £216,400 is going towards the restoration of native oyster beds at a sea loch on the mid-Argyll coast.

Up to one million native oysters are expected to be grown there over five years to create a self-sustaining population in what will be Scotland's first community driven rewilding project.

The 'Discovering the Deep' installation at Dynamic Earth, is focusing on educating people of all ages about Scotland's deep water marine heritage through focus on the work of unsung hero, Charles Wyville Thomson whose pioneering exploration of Scotland's marine environment in the 19th century launched the modern science

of oceanography. This project received £430,000 to educate over 250,000 people annually at the Dynamic Earth centre in Edinburgh.

The Gateway to the Hebridean Whale Trail received £250,000 to develop a centre in Tobermory at the former Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust Centre.

The Trail links 33 locations across the west coast of Scotland and the centre will have new facilities in both English and Gaelic for visitors.

Finally, the Gateway to Gigha project received £228,100 to increase active travel options for tourists to the island located three miles west of the Kintyre peninsula. Increasingly popular with visitors, locals want to decrease the impact cars have on the natural environment of the island.

A Cry For The Wild

HOLLY GILLIBRAND

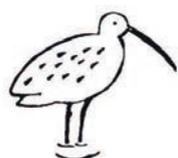
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The coronavirus has caused something extraordinary.

The Highland Council has said it is 'no longer business as usual'. Organisers are cancelling events and face-to-face meetings. Carbon emissions are plunging and economic activity is slowing down. People are self-isolating in an attempt to limit the spread of the virus. Italians are singing from their balconies amid a countrywide lockdown to boost morale. Many members of the school strike movement have moved online to prevent large gatherings in public spaces, because all crises must be treated as crises. People are looking out for one another.

Despite the scariness of this, it gives me hope that we have the ability to change and join together in a time of crisis. If only people could do that for the other crisis that is threatening billions of lives and may become uncontrollable in a very short space of time, destroying countless species, ecosystems and human livelihoods.



While the coronavirus is on everyone's lips, climate and ecological breakdown continues unabated, but with even less attention than before the outbreak.

Strangely, recent headlines indicate that the COVID-19 lockdown may actually be saving more lives by reducing air pollution than by reducing infection. The World Health Organisation estimates that seven million people die every year from air pollution – nobody is panicking about that.

Stranger still, things that people say are not realistic in order to limit climate collapse, such as not flying, seem easy in the face of a pandemic. What makes us willing to act on coronavirus, but so apathetic when it comes to the greatest crisis humanity has ever faced?

To be clear, I am not underestimating the virus's severity. I am merely frustrated that environmental breakdown does not get the same focus and attention. If the media covered the environmental crisis

the way they are covering the coronavirus, everyone would actually understand the issue and there would be mass mobilisation. But we have a long way to go before that happens.

It may not seem obvious at first, but disease and the environment are linked. Sixty per cent of emerging diseases are zoonotic – they are passed from animals to humans, as was the coronavirus. While humans encroach on and exploit the natural world, we expose ourselves to diseases that we have no immunity to. Coronavirus is a medical and an environmental issue.

Once the pandemic is under control, we must not return to business as usual (ie, planetary destruction). Instead, we need to tackle the climate and ecological emergency.

The compassion and community strength that people are showing towards one another at this time will be crucial, especially since we are discovering just how vulnerable our society is.

Who knows, maybe the coronavirus is a wake-up call for humankind?

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Lockdown learning...

In the first of a new regular column recounting personal experience, handy tips and support, experienced home educator and Lochaber Times contributor **Nic Goddard** gives parents facing months of having their children at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic some helpful pointers.

My son, aged 19, and daughter, 17, have never been to school.

They have been home educated all their lives. For the first decade we lived in a busy seaside town, an hour's train ride from London with access to museums, art galleries and theatres. We spent a year travelling the UK living in a campervan and volunteering on farms, and then spent seven years on a remote Hebridean island living off grid on a croft.

Our home education adventures have taken place in all manner of weird and wonderful locations, with and without access to modern technology.

Neither my husband nor I are teachers or have ever been to university. Our children did not do any formal study or follow a curriculum. They are now successful young



Nic Goddard home-schooled her children, now 19 and 17 years old.

should be doing from home, this could be a daunting time for parents – on top of all the other uncertainty to be feeling the weight of responsibility for education too. My first message to you is: Don't panic!

We are all learning, all the time. Every single one of us is in possession of a whole new understanding of new words just this week. OK, they are all virus and pandemic-related but that reassures us that our brains never stop soaking up new information, learning new things, grasping concepts which previously felt beyond us.

We will all have been doing

research this week too – using the available resources to satisfy our need for knowledge and information.

Children's brains are even better at learning new things than adults'. A break of weeks away from school will not harm their ability to learn and may well offer an opportunity to learn new things in new ways.

So how will home-based learning look for you and your child? Will you replicate school at home or have a more relaxed approach?

Depending on your family routine, you may need to have set times for learning. If you are working from home yourself and need to keep regular working hours or if there are specific times for your child to be online attending virtual lessons, then build your day around this.

If the upheaval of not having

a structure to your day will be hard for you or your child, then stick to a timetable.

If, on the other hand, you are able to be more relaxed with your day then do so – one of the great joys of home education for us was being able to enjoy flexibility around when we chose to do things.

If your school holidays are usually filled with enjoying not knowing what day of the week it is and using how dark it is outside to decide whether it's bedtime or not and you are able to do that now, then celebrate it and do school work at the time of day that best suits you.

Talk to your child and make a plan together about how your day will look. Be sure to factor in breaks, exercise and time to talk about what they are learning and any spin-off questions about it.

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Ferries to islands closed to all but essential travel

On Sunday March 22, the Scottish Government made the decision to close ferries to all but essential travel by islanders and suppliers.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced that only those who live on islands would be allowed to use ferries for 'essential supplies or business'. Visitors to the islands are allowed to leave in order to reduce pressure.

She went on to say that all hotels, B&Bs and other holiday accommodation should not be accepting new visitors, but making themselves available for emergency services.

Residents of Alasdair Allan's Outer Hebrides constituency (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) have been pushing for this ban to

come into place following articles painting the islands as a perfect place to isolate.

Dr Allan said: 'Scotland's islands are communities, full of families and people - many of them in groups particularly at risk due to coronavirus. They are not refuges from coronavirus and it is frankly outrageous that articles in some newspapers like the Daily Mail should try to paint them as such.'

'I have spent much of this weekend speaking to constituents, Scottish Government ministers and CalMac about this issue, and I am grateful for the swift action and the announcement from the First Minister.'

'While this should help to

limit the spread of coronavirus to the islands, we cannot allow any room for complacency. People need to behave as it is already here and follow the advice from the Scottish Government and public health officials on hand-washing and social-distancing. This is a matter of saving lives.

'The Western Isles have achieved a well-deserved reputation for our hospitality, and for welcoming people from all over the world. We will still be here once this pandemic has subsided and tourists will be very welcome to visit then.'

This is a developing situation and information about ferry timings and changes can be found on calmac.co.uk



The current board members of DYW West Highland, from left to right: Matthew Jackson, Oliver Stephen, Chris Vind, Sandra Milne, Angela Coburn, Lydia Rohmer, Frazer Coupland and Donald Waring. Photograph: Abridge Photography

New board for DYW West Highlands

Developing the Young Workforce West Highlands has announced a series of appointments to its board, diversifying and strengthening the reach across the region's key sectors, writes Richard Mason.

The new members are Donald Waring of MOWI; Sandra Milne from Crieff Hydro Family of Hotels; and Angela Coburn of TSL Contractors. This means the board now has representatives from

aquaculture, tourism and construction - important industries for the region. Chairman of the board Matthew Jackson said: 'I am pleased to welcome Donald, Sandra and Angela to the team.'

Council premises on Western Isles to close to the public - but staff are still on hand to help

Offices of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar throughout the Western Isles closed to the public from 5pm last Thursday, March 19, as part of the measures to reduce

the risk of the spread of COVID-19.

Offices will remain open for employees and any enquiries should be done by phone via the customer service line on

01851 600 501 or by email on enquiries@cne-siar.gov.uk.

Face to face meetings will be arranged, where appropriate, but wherever possible, members of the public are encour-

aged to use the online service via the comhairle website: www.cne-siar.gov.uk.

A spokesperson said: 'It is important to reiterate that these are precautionary meas-

ures which are being taken in order to follow Scottish Government guidelines.'

All comhairle related information can be found at CnES Coronavirus (COVID-19).

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Many of us in the West Highlands use our stove all year round | it's important to take some time to carry out annual maintenance |

Backwoodsman would like to take this opportunity to reassure our customers that, wherever possible, we will continue to supply emergency spare-parts for all Woodwarm, Charnwood, Morso, Jetmaster and Rutland appliances so that your essential heating needs are met. Due to the very fast changing COVID-19 situation we ask that you contact us by phone, email or Facebook in the first instance so we can advise you best on your requirements. Although many of us in the West Highlands use our stove all year round it's important to take some time to carry out annual maintenance. This is generally something that can be easily carried out as a DIY process and regular TLC for your stove will



reward you in the long term by prolonging its life and costing less in spare parts. Check your stove over thoroughly for any problems. The internal parts are most prone to damage. Pay special attention to the door and glass seals, baffle/throat plate which sits above the fire, grate bars, and glass for cracks. Externally fire cement round the flue pipe

may require replacing if it has disintegrated over time. Clean your stove inside retaining at least an inch of ash to cover the grate bars if you burn wood. Clear any debris that may have settled on top of the baffle plate as this can prevent heat from dissipating properly causing it to buckle. Replace fire-bricks if they are badly worn or disintegrating. Your chimney should be swept at least once a year. To ensure that it is kept safe and clear and we recommend professional chimney cleaning. Most importantly, burn the correct fuel in the first place and you will avoid many common problems. Take care, keep warm and stay safe! Telephone: 01631 720539 / Email: sales@backwoodsman-stoves.co.uk

LETTERS

Write to us: send your letters to fort@obantimes.co.uk
or The Editor, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HBLife has changed but
we will get through this
together eventually

There is, of course, only one real story in town, as the saying goes, and it is called coronavirus.

Our newspaper is full of items about the impact this infectious pandemic is having on people across the country.

Even on these two pages, there are accounts of events which have been cancelled or postponed, including the proposed litter-pick at Kinlochleven and the reopening of Glenfinnan House Hotel, which has now been rescheduled putatively until Saturday April 25.

However, while these postponements are disappointing, our newspaper is also replete with accounts of the astonishing willingness of local people to help their neighbours and others who are isolated and at risk from this dreadful medical condition.

It is a testament to the sense of community spirit in the area.

We echo the official advice: stay at home and stay calm and we will get through this together.

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. At the Oban Times we endeavour to ensure that all our reports are fair and accurate and comply with the Editors' Code of Practice set by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO). We realise, however, that mistakes happen from time to time. If we have published anything that is factually incorrect, please email: editor@obantimes.co.uk; telephone on 01631 568000; or email editor@obantimes.co.uk. We will attempt to resolve your issue in a timely, reasonable and amicable manner. However, if you are unsatisfied with our response, you can contact IPSO by email: inquiries@ipso.co.uk. We will abide by the decision of IPSO.

Time to strengthen
community resources

Last week's uplifting letter from John Maitland encouraging us to focus on good news sat well with your report on the various COVID-19 support groups that are springing up, the Ballachulish initiative in particular.

The Kilmallie Community Council will this week issue similar house signs and help-slips with their Community News, distributed free to every house and business in the area.

But Ballachulish is no stranger to caring initiatives and we always need to remember the pioneering work and evidence given to the 'Dewar Report' of 1912 by Dr Lachlan Grant, GP at Ballachulish, who set out a bold vision for a National Health Service. The subsequent Highlands and Island Medical Service became the pilot for the National Health Service, implemented in 1948.

When I was involved with the Rural Parliament, the Scottish Government surveyed community councils about being given more powers but were very disappointed with the response rate, learning that many community councillors were scunnered by their poor resource allocation as set against responsibilities. As a result, no additional powers were given; all negative.

In Scotland, we have around 1,200 community councils for a population of 5.5 million but Switzerland have around 50 per cent more, pro rata, with more budget and powers.

While the Ballachulish folk taking forward this initiative won't necessarily be the community council of course, they deserve our congratulations but highlight the related need to strengthen community resources of all types in whatever way we can.

**John C Hutchison,
Fort William.**

Letter from area committee

I write to you and all the people and communities in Oban, Lorn and the Isles on behalf of the Area Committee members.

These are unprecedented and very strange times, and over the next few days and weeks, all our lives may become even more restricted.

The Area Committee wish to convey our heartfelt appreciation of the overwhelming response from community groups and voluntary bodies willing to assist the elderly and vulnerable within our communities. The essential NHS staff, our nurses and doctors, the food providers, the businesses willing to

Beachd Ailein

ALLAN CAMPBELL

editor@obantimes.co.uk

Air an t-seachdain a chaidh thug mi iomradh air na bha ag ràdh gum biodh an saoghal againn uile gu math eadar-dhealaichte mun àm a bhios suidheachadh èiginneach a' chorònbhiorais seo seachad. Uill gu ire tha sin air tachairt mar-thà, taobh a-staigh seachdaine! Chan fhacas riamh riaghaltas a' cur uimhir de mhaoin poblach an sàs gus cosnadh agus gnìomhachas na roinne prìobhaidich a dhìon, gun ghuth air gur e riaghaltas Tòraidh a tha a' dèanamh sin! Tha an riaghaltas cuideachd ag aithneachadh nach eil làn-bhuaidh an tinneis seo fhathast air sgaoileadh feadh Bhreatann agus gum feum e 's dòcha riaghailtean fìu 's nas teinne a chur an gnìomh gus feuchainn ri smachd a ghleidheadh air an astar aig an sgaoil a' bhioras. Tha sin gu bhith deatamach gus dìon a thoirt air comas sheirbheis na slàinte dèiligeadh ri meud na h-uallaich a bhios air. Chan fhacas riamh leithid de dhùbhlann tinneis a' bualadh feadh an t-saoghail aig aon àm agus tha dìth banachdaich

a' ciallachadh gum faodadh dùbhlann a' chorònbhiorais a bhith na thrioblaid airson còrr math air bliadhna romhainn. Chan eil teagamh nach eil an saoghal againn ann an Alba air atharrachadh ged nach bi-odh ann ach gum bheil sgoiltean uile dùinte agus casg air deuchainnean airson a' chiad turas ann an 132 bliadhna.

Mar a bhiodh dùil 's dòcha tha cuid nach eil a' gèilleadh ri comhairle oifigeil a thaobh a bhith a' dol an cuideachd dhaoine eile, agus gun teagamh tha diorrasachd aineolach nan daoine sin dol a chur beatha chuid eile ann an cunnart. Theagamh gun tig an tuilleadh bhacaidhean air saorsa gluasaid mar mheadhan air dèiligeadh ris an fheadhainn nach gabh comhairle agus bidh sin tàmailteach dhan mhòr-chuid a tha gu bhith ciallach. Gun teagamh sam bith tha daoine a' gabhail an eagail far am bheil uimhir de mhì-chinnt, agus a dh'aindeoin comhairle chiallach a thaobh leithid ceannach bidh tha cuid a' call smachd orra fhèin nuair a chì iad feadhainn eile a' càrnadh

gun adhbhar. 'S dòcha gum feum barrachd smachd a ghabhail air sin cuideachd. Chuala mi aon neach-labhairt a' nochdadh beachd gum bheil eachdraidh a' sealltainn gum bi cuid de riaghailtean a thig ann an leithid seo de shuidheachadh uaireannan a' leantainn an dèidh dhan trioblaid falbh. Bidh sinn an dòchas nach tachair sin! An dèidh dìreach beagan làithean de na h-oghaichean againn a' gabhail ris a' chomhairle seann daoine a sheachnadh tha sinn ga fhaotainn gu math annasach, agus ag ionndrainn an cuid cuideachd is crac. Cha tig crìoch air leithid sin de sgaradh luath gu leòr dha seann-phàrantan uile!

Cha tàinig làn gun muir-traigh na dèidh, agus feumaidh sinn misneachd a ghleidheadh. Ma tha gàrradh agaibh theirigibh an sàs ann, mur a bheil gabhaibh tlachd à sineadh làithean earraich agus cuimhneachain air àm buain mhònadh, cur buntàta, is corc! Agus cumaidh sàbhailte!

**Allan Campbell
ailean@obantimes.co.uk**

provide takeaway meals, and deliver essential supplies, the Third Sector voluntary groups and housing agencies. Employees of the council and statutory bodies are all working under very challenging circumstances to ensure essential services are maintained for everyone's safety.

The council and the NHS have established a website, www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/coronavirus/help-for-communities.

This website gives information on who to contact in your area. The site is being regularly updated to ensure the information is current to each community.

I would ask you to forward any information to your local members, and we will forward

to our officer mapping this site. If you have difficulty accessing the website or perhaps are not familiar with using websites, please contact a member of the Area Committee for assistance or the council headquarters on 01546 605522, but please be aware that this line could be very busy and it may take some time to respond. We are all happy to help.

A phone call and a friendly voice can make all the difference between feeling totally isolated and feeling people care. If you hear or know of anyone who may be frail or alone, give them a call. Please take care, follow the national guidelines and stay well.

Councillor Elaine Robertson, Oban.

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KINLOCHLEVEN

Walkers are Welcome litter-pick is cancelled

The litter-pick that was due to be a collaborative effort between the Kinlochleven Community Council (KCC) and Kinlochleven Community Trust (KCT), has been cancelled due to COVID-19 advice.

It was due to take place on Saturday March 28, but the national Walkers are Welcome group have cancelled the event that was due to take place in 57 towns and villages across the UK.

Volunteers from the KCC were due to take on clearing litter along both roads coming into Kinlochleven as volunteers from the KCT would be dealing with common areas and roads within the village.

A statement on behalf of both groups said: 'Due to the current circumstances with the COVID-19 pandemic, the KCT and KCC have decided that it would be in the village's best interests to cancel the village and loch side litter pick planned for Saturday March 28.'

Village residents were then encouraged to join the Kinlochleven Village Resilience and Support page on Facebook to support vulnerable members of the community.

Public events in the village have either been cancelled or – like the Kinlochleven Past and Present event – have been pushed to April/May.

STRONTIAN

Strontian publisher celebrates

Garmoran Publishing, a new Lochaber publishing venture based in Strontian, is celebrating the successes of its inaugural two titles.

Only Fools and White Horses, by Colin Skeath, has already hit #1 in the Amazon chart for 'Hot New Releases' in books about canoeing.

It is a thrilling memoir based on

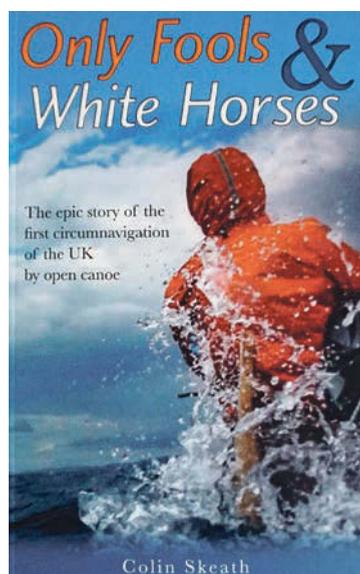
the adventures and challenges faced by Colin and his nephew, Davis, as they made the first circumnavigation of mainland UK in an open canoe, in which Colin illuminates for the reader the highs and lows of an epic journey shared with a close family member.

Deleted, by Sylvia Hehir, is a contemporary Young Adult (YA) romance and was winner of the T C Farries trophy. Deleted was recently listed in the Scottish Book Trust '30 Scottish novels to look out for in 2020'.

Fans of Sylvia's first YA novel, Sea Change, published last year by Stirling Publishing, are currently placing their pre-orders of Deleted ahead of its release in May 2020.

An accessible read with a narrative that embraces small town prejudices along with themes of identity and belonging, Deleted joins Sea Change in bringing a fresh voice exploring the universal issues facing young people today in a West Highland setting.

Both authors live in Strontian and are members of the Sunart Writers' Group. With distribution by Vine House Distribution, their books are available through all usual book-sellers, in stores and online, and directly from the authors' websites.



Glenfinnan House Hotel postpones reopening in light of COVID-19

Glenfinnan House Hotel has announced that, regrettably, it will not re-open as scheduled tomorrow (Friday), due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In an online statement, the hotel said: 'We believe that this is the responsible decision to make in the current unprecedented situation to minimise the risk of the coro-

navirus being spread. We don't feel that it is right to encourage people to travel unnecessarily or to gather in a group situation at this time.

'We will hopefully be aiming to reopen the hotel by Saturday April 25 and will review this regularly in accordance with government advice.

'As a business, as a team and as

individuals, we are all concerned about the health, safety and well-being of others.

'We hope you, your family and friends are all safe and well at this moment in time and continue to keep well, as we all work together to get through this worrying time. We hope to be able to welcome you all again soon.'

ACHARACLE

COVID-19 support initiatives set up and ready to implement

Acharacle Community Council has issued some help and support information for local residents during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Acharacle Keystore has offered to deliver shopping to homes in the Acharacle area free of charge – please call them to place an order (01967 431257).

The West Lochaber Hospital

Transport Project has advised that the vehicle can now be booked to undertake other necessary journeys, including for shopping. Please contact Jane Gaze, Project Officer (07749 613468 / 01967 431411).

The community council added: 'Please check that friends, family and neighbours are receiving any assistance they require.

'This might include otherwise fit, active and healthy people who don't usually need any help, but whose movements are restricted. Simply offering to drop their daily newspaper into them, might be all the support they need.

'We are all likely to be feeling a little isolated over the next few

weeks, so please try to keep up with contact by telephone and internet. We are fortunate to be surrounded by the great outdoors, so take the opportunity to get out and enjoy it!

'If anyone is struggling with anything as a result of this situation, and you don't know who to turn to, please let us know and we will try to help.

'If you are aware of any situations which aren't being dealt with adequately, please let us know and we will try to help. We will post updates as necessary.

'Please post messages on our Facebook page or contact Joanne Matheson on 07976 439190 – joanne@ballardmackenzie.co.uk.'

Big Daddy burger



When only the biggest burger will do, bite down on the Big Daddy burger! Two juicy beef burgers and loads of salad in a toasted bun – and we've thrown in a fried egg for good measure. Make the whole family happy and put the Big Daddy burger on the menu!

Ingredients

- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1kg lean beef mince (5% fat or less)
- 2 tbsps Worcestershire sauce

Method:

1. Preheat your grill to high.
2. Put the onion, garlic, beef and Worcestershire sauce in a bowl, season lightly and combine using your fingers. Divide the mixture into 8 equal portions and shape them into burgers.
3. Spray the burgers with low-calorie cooking spray and grill for 10-12 minutes or until cooked through, turning halfway.
4. Meanwhile, spray a non-stick frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium heat. Add the eggs and fry to your liking.
5. Split and toast the rolls, then fill with the tomato, lettuce, red onion, burgers and ketchup. Top with the eggs, season lightly and hold it all in place with a cocktail stick if needed.
6. Serve hot with Slimming World chips and salad.

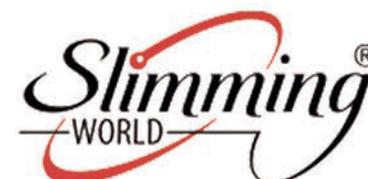
- Low-calorie cooking spray
- 4 x 60g wholemeal rolls
- 4 eggs
- Sliced tomato, lettuce leaves and sliced red onion, to serve
- 4 level tbsps reduced-salt-and-sugar tomato ketchup

6½ Syns per serving | 25 minutes | Serves 4

NB: Deduct 6 Syns if using Bread rolls wholemeal as a Healthy Extra 'b' choice

PLEASE NOTE:

ALL CLASSES ARE CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE



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A healthy attitude to Covid-19

BEN TURNER
fort@obantimes.co.uk

With headlines dominated by developments of COVID-19 and the distortion of social media and the desolation of the supermarkets, it's understandable to be in a position of panic and disillusionment.

NHS guidelines and government recommendations are clear and well advertised.

Social distancing does not mean you cannot get outside and enjoy being in nature. Numerous studies have clearly shown the benefits of getting outside against depression and feelings of helplessness.

This does not mean you have to get out for a training session, unless of course you want to. With aspects of our personal, mental, financial and professional 'health' coming under strain at this time, it is likely to be more harmful to enforce a large calorie deficit or thinking you have to train.

If you don't want to do home workouts or measure calories, don't. Keep your mind busy. A busy mind does not boredom eat, a busy mind does not sink into negativity, a busy mind stays active.

There are those in the world who will try and monetise global tragedy and today we are not immune from this. There are those who claim to have the 'diet hack', the 'nutrition secrets' or the 'health cure' to COVID-19. Let me make one thing clear these do not exist.

People who are claiming these are doing so with no evidence to support their claims and are preying on the vulnerable. Please, beware of social media and do not give your money to these people. Science will develop to this illness and the answer will not be broadcast on a Facebook comment before anywhere else.

Ultimately, there are no nutritional secrets for this virus. The body does not know yet how to fight the infection and eating 'spirulina infused tofu kale shakes' will not help.

Exercising basic healthful practices will ensure you maintain healthy habits, act positively for your immune system and stay mentally happier.

It is important to be sensitive to those at risk and those who are vulnerable. However, if you do have the chance to get outside, to go for a walk away from people, out in nature, this is a great time to do so, ensuring you maintain social distance or isolation.

If you know someone who cannot get outside, walk past their house, give them a wave, skype while outdoors, bring the outdoors to them.

Please understand the strain on emergency services, this is not the time to be pushing into unknown terrain or pushing extreme sports. WE not ME. This is a time to read more, connect with families and friends, socialise online and learn more.

I would be remiss here not to mention the local businesses who are facing a very real financial threat. The high streets of the Highlands are adapting to the changes faced (Fort William has been inspirational), while respecting social distancing, please do not forget about these establishments, they need us now more than ever.

We are in uncertain times, but this is not the time for mass panic. Please respect the guidelines, remain sensitive to those at risk and do not be selfish with your socialising or activities.

I am here to offer any nutritional and fitness support to anyone who needs it in the Lochaber area. Details can be found on my website at www.athleteadventure.com

I will do everything I can to help those who are worried about their health or want any evidence-based advice.

LOTTERY NUMBERS

Ballachulish Shinty Lottery: This week's (22/3) shinty lottery numbers were 7, 17 and 19, there were no winners this week. The draw will now be suspended until further notice due to the current situation.

Caol Regeneration Lotto: Numbers for draw on 19/3/20 were 6, 13 and 15. Winner of the £300 jackpot was C Garrick. Next draw postponed until after Easter.

Fort William Golf Club Lotto: Numbers for draw on 19/3/20 were 8, 17 and 20. One winner of £1,300. The lotto draw is now postponed until further notice. Thanks to everyone who buys tickets.

Fort ends football season bottom of league despite eight games in hand

The Highland League have brought their season to an early end and awarded the title to leaders Brora Rangers.

Scottish football is currently in shutdown due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The lack of action has created problems for a number of clubs, who are seeking

clarity over when, or if, the season will be completed.

The Dudgeon Park side - who had six games still to play - are 13 points clear at the top of the table.

At a league management committee meeting in Lossiemouth last Saturday, member clubs opted to end the season now and

name Brora Rangers as champions. This means Fort William FC will finish bottom of the league despite having eight games in hand over the team above them, Lossiemouth, and with Fort only being three points behind the Moray side.

The Highland League decision sets an intriguing

FOOTBALL

precedent with the Scottish football authorities still trying to determine how to resolve the major issues up and down the SPFL if, as many are predicting, the current campaign cannot be played to a conclusion.

TSL are new Oban Camanachd sponsors

Oban Camanachd were given a huge financial boost when it was confirmed TSL Contractors will be their new main sponsor starting from the 2020 shinty season.

Whilst concerns surrounding the spread of coronavirus have brought the new shinty season to a halt after just one round of fixtures, this three-year sponsorship deal gives the Oban side a financial boost in the form of a significant sum which will help towards their ongoing commitments running Oban Camanachd and Lochside Rovers as well as their two youth sides.

Oban Camanachd president Pat Steeman said: 'This is brilliant news for our club and we're so happy to seal this deal with TSL. This is the biggest sponsorship deal in Oban Camanachd's history and TSL's support will benefit the whole club from top to bottom.'

Player insurance clarification

With the shinty season showing no sign of emerging from its current coronavirus suspension, the Camanachd Association has provided clubs with further clarification surrounding playing status, particularly in relation to insurance.

The association has sent a bulletin to clubs confirming that their primary concern is the health and well-being of their members and the communities in which shinty operates and this is the reason why shinty cannot be played at present.

As a result, and having discussed the current situation with their insurers, the



Daniel McCuish and Evan MacLellan show off the new Oban Camanachd strip provided by TSL.

Photograph: Kevin McGlynn.

Camanachd Association went on to say that they have been advised that no shinty - either playing or training - will be covered by their insurance scheme until further notice.

Clubs have been taking heed, announcing a suspension of their regular group training sessions although players will try to keep their fitness up on an individual basis within Government guidelines.

The Camanachd Association, who have followed Government advice and advised all their staff to work from home, has assured clubs that they will endeavour to provide due notice to clubs ahead of the resumption of

any future shinty matches so as there is adequate time to restart training.

Bught Park feasibility study

The Camanachd Association has made progress in its aim to direct resources to support the development of the Bught Park in Inverness.

As detailed in the association's Strategy for Shinty, a request from members was made to direct CA resources to support the development of the iconic Bught Park to host international fixtures, major cup finals as well as regular participation.

Following a number of partnership meetings with the Bught Park User Group, Highland Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise; the Camanachd Association has secured confirmation of funding for a feasibility study to take place to identify next steps for the Bught Park.

Inverness shinty club has also been particularly active in this area.

Catherine Cameron, Glengarry

There was shock and sadness from throughout the shinty world when news broke last week of the passing of Catherine Cameron, Glengarry.

In a club statement, Glengarry shinty club said: 'Glengarry Shinty Club is saddened by the passing of our long standing secretary Catherine Cameron after a short illness. There was a strong shinty representation when Catherine's funeral took place at the Craigard shinty pitch at Invergarry on Monday March 23.

Janet Emery, Glenurquhart

Glenurquhart shinty club offered their sincere condolences to the family of Janet Emery who died last week.

Her son David was a long serving goalkeeper at Glenurquhart whilst grandson Lewis MacLennan was for many years one of the Glen's top players. Janet's daughter Helen MacLennan runs the youth section and much else besides.



Lisa Mitchell-Harding starts the cycling challenge in Glen Nevis. Photographs: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos



A strong and happy finish from Gina Gordon and Bryan Allam. Photographs: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos

No Fuss Events triathlon attracts bumper entry field

One of the last mass participation sports events to take place before the new guidance was issued concerning the current coronavirus pandemic was No Fuss Events' recent triathlon.

The event earlier this month

attracted a bumper entry field of 169 starters, much to the delight of No Fuss Events' Frazer Coupland.

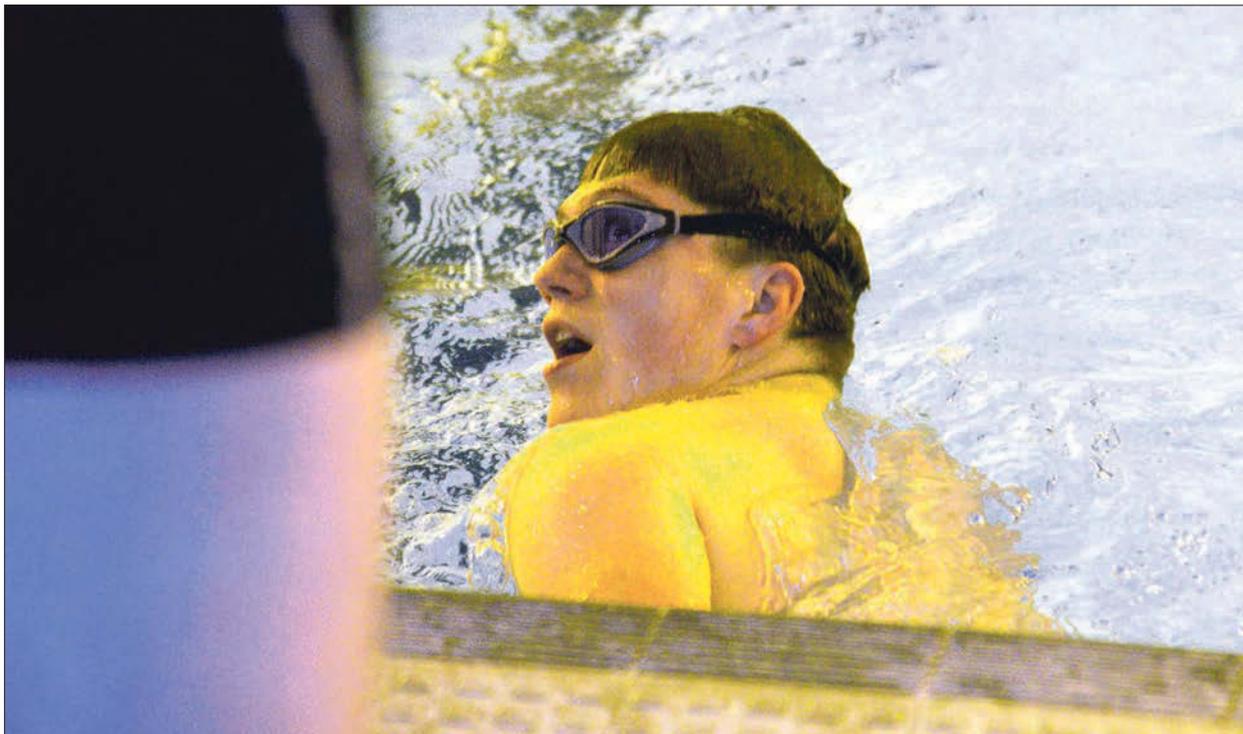
'It was an exceptional turn out, really excellent and was a very successful event,' he told the Lochaber Times this

week. The swim section took place at the leisure centre in Fort William, with both the cycling and running segments held in Glen Nevis.

First male home was Lewis Fyfe, followed in second place by Matthew Jones and,

TRIATHLON

in third spot, Gavin Blainey. First woman home was Ruth Jeays, with second spot taken by Deborah Ferns and Julie Corner in third.



A competitor in the swim section.



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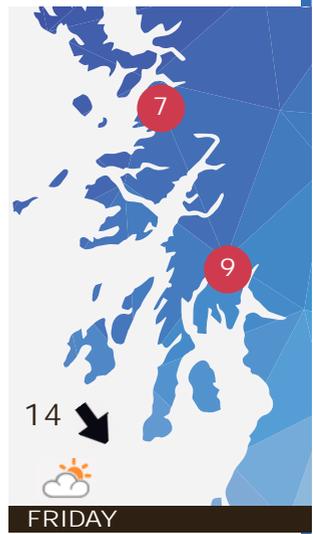


WEATHER

Thursday
Light cloud and a gentle breeze
Temperatures 4°C to 11°C.

Friday
Sunny intervals and a moderate breeze
Temperatures 2°C to 9°C.

Weekend Outlook
Saturday
Sunny and a moderate breeze
Sunday
Sunny intervals and a moderate breeze
Temperatures 2°C to 9°C.



TIDAL INFORMATION

Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday March 26, 2020** are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

Thur	01.02	0.8	06.56	4.0
	13.18	0.9	19.00	3.8
Fri	01.29	0.9	07.23	3.9
	13.45	1.0	19.26	3.8
Sat	01.52	1.1	07.49	3.7
	14.08	1.1	19.51	3.7
Sun	02.11	1.3	08.15	3.6
	14.34	1.3	20.20	3.5
Mon	02.36	1.4	08.45	3.3
	15.09	1.5	20.54	3.3
Tues	03.11	1.6	09.24	3.1
	15.59	1.7	21.38	3.1
Wed	04.05	1.8	10.22	2.8
	17.15	1.8	22.42	2.9

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

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

Ferry Crossings/Sea States

Oban to Barra/South Uist	Moderate
Oban to Coll/Tiree	Moderate
Kennacraig to Islay	Moderate

Stop Press: New pontoons at Ulva Ferry and visitor moorings installed at Lochaline by North West Marine Ltd

TSL are new
Oban Camanachd
sponsors

Triathlon
attracts bumper
entry field



Alasdair Nicholson with young Point FC players and representatives from the club and Point and Sandwick Trust. Photograph: Sandie Maciver of SandiePhotos

Virus forces postponement of strips for Africa journey

A plan to take football strips from youngsters of Point FC to a school in Africa has been disrupted at the 11th-hour due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Development consultant Alasdair Nicholson, who regularly goes to Tanzania to help develop skills in community enterprise, was in Edinburgh ready to fly to Africa recently but decided to cancel the trip in the light of the UK warning against

all non-essential travel. Mr Nicholson, who also works as a community consultant for community wind farm charity Point and Sandwick Trust, had collected a bundle of junior Point FC strips, as well as science textbooks, to take with him to a joint primary and secondary school at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro.

He was taking the strips out to Northern Tanzania after Point and Sandwick Trust sponsored new kit for the

young players of Point FC. Point and Sandwick Trust had also provided a couple of footballs for the school and Mr Nicholson had spoken of what a difference it would make to the children there.

Anticipated

He had anticipated great 'glee and happiness' at the gifts and had told the Wee Reds in Point that children in Africa were often without strips or boots - sometimes even footballs.

'Sometimes they make footballs from rolled up banana leaves' he said.

He also told the youngsters: 'I'm just the carrier of these strips. You are the ones who are donating them.'

However, he decided against making the journey and plans to go back later when the situation has settled down.

Mr Nicholson said: 'Things are moving so fast with coronavirus in the last few days that it is uncertain what

borders will be closed or flights cancelled.

'This is a postponement rather than a total withdrawal but I would not want to be an accidental vector from any casual contact in passing through Amsterdam or from a crowded African bus.

Risk

'Yes I'm disappointed but there will be vulnerable people who are at risk and any problems I have encountered are nothing compared with

FOOTBALL

the anxiety they will have so our thoughts should be with our neighbours and community.'



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