



Balvicar's dancing queen goes viral



Volunteer mask makers to the rescue



Oban can cope with virus, but needs you to help

by Kathie Griffiths
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Oban is well prepared to fight off coronavirus thanks to frontline workers and community volunteers.

Argyll health board boss Kieron Green says the medical services have prepared well and the town has the facilities to care for people who become ill, but to help the authorities cope, he urged people to stick to the stay-at-home rules.

Councillor Green, who serves Oban and is chairman of the Health and Social Care Partnership's integration joint board (IJB), spoke to The Oban Times as two coronavirus assessment centres opened at Lorn and Islands Hospital in Oban and at the hospital in Craignure on Mull.

The triage-type hubs are only open to people who are given appointments through the NHS24 service. Staffed by clinicians, including GPs and advanced nurse practitioners,

the centres will not be providing testing.

Councillor Green said: 'A lot of preparations have been made to make sure our medical services locally can cope with the pressures that they are being put under and which are likely to get worse.'

'We are well prepared and we do have the facilities in Oban to care for people who are ill.'

'We are well prepared and we do have the facilities in Oban to care for the people who are ill. I hope as many people as possible will get through this.'

People who are given appointments at the new community assessment centres will receive treatment plans, including medication, and/or prescriptions and will be told to self-isolate. If people need to go to hospital, then that will be arranged at the centre.

'To help our health service

cope, people should stay at home wherever possible. This means undoubtedly there will be inconvenience but it's that disruption that will save lives,' said Councillor Green.

He added: 'I'm heartened by the way our community has come together to help the most vulnerable in the town. Our medical and care workers are doing a fantastic job, and this shows how reliant we are on them.'

'My thanks also go to the essential businesses, including food providers who are staying open to support us and also to The Oban Times for keeping us updated.'

Stories of people and groups coming to others' aid has not been in short supply.

A supply of unused masks, gloves and visors to help protect frontline NHS staff was delivered to Oban's hospital earlier this week from Oban Dental Care in Lochside Street after the practice closed for the

Continued on page five

Stephen on trail of Oban's black fox



Oban photographer Stephen Lawson is keeping a focus on wildlife in the hills between Ganavan and Dunbeg where a rare black fox has been spotted. Sightings of black foxes are so infrequent that some say they are just folklore. While the Ganavan black fox remains elusive, other creatures have not been so shy. Plenty of roe deer are out and about in the hills and feathered friends putting in an appearance include great northern divers and peregrine falcons winging their way into recent confirmed sightings logged by eagle-eyed spotters.

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OT

Jobs portal to help former tourism workers

A new free-to-use jobs portal to help workers from the tourism and hospitality sectors has been launched.

It comes as thousands of workers in both sectors have found themselves out of work as a result of the coronavirus, said the Scottish Tourism Alliance (STA). Backed by the STA and UK Hospitality, the portal is designed to help tourism and hospitality businesses point former staff in the right direction for at least temporary employment.

Tourism businesses wanting to find out more about how they can help staff they have laid off need to email hospitalityunite@harri.com

Sectors such as food retail and supply, healthcare and delivery require high volumes of staff to get through the crisis, said the STA.

Harri, a hospitality workforce platform, created the HospitalityUnite jobs hub free-of-charge. Pete Willis, director at Harri, said the venture had commitment from Lidl, Amazon, Planet Organic, Just Eat, Co-op, Waitrose, Care UK, Morrisons, Balhousie Care Group and logistics companies. They see skilled hospitality workers as 'ideal recruits', he said.

If businesses would like to send the link to the portal to employees who they have let go, they are asked to email HospitalityUnite@harri.com

Funding sows the seed for native tree nursery

Funding has sown the seed for a new native tree nursery on Mull.

Mull Native Woodland Group was so inspired after taking part in a Kew Garden seed bank project, it decided to find a piece of land to grow its own trees from seed. Thanks to £23,000 funding, the project has now started on former forestry land right next to Dervaig community orchard.

Last autumn the group was busy collecting tree seeds for Kew Garden's Millennium Project, banking them for posterity. Hawthorn, holly, hazel and alder all went into the seed bank from Mull but 2019 was the project's final year and Kew had what it needed.

'We thought it would be a good idea if we could carry it on,' said the group's Mike Shilson.

After a meeting with Stuart Findlay, area manager for Forest and Land Scotland, it was agreed the group could have a piece of land next to the already flourishing community orchard. And because the orchard was a former rubbish tip, the new nursery project next door ticked all the right boxes with landfill charity fund EB Scotland to secure a bid for £23,000.

The 0.5-hectare forestry site was covered in tree stumps and needed clearing but with the help of Mull-based TSL contractors the site is now ready

and waiting for the next stage, bringing in an 80 foot by 18 foot poly tunnel and building raised beds outside.

The poly tunnel will be used for more fragile seeds like silver birch and alder while the raised beds will bring on larger seeds like acorns and hazelnuts.

'TSL, which also made a generous donation to the project, has de-stumped the land, put in a road and levelled the land in just a week. We just need it deer-fenced now. We're not sure if coronavirus will stop our poly tunnel being delivered. We'll have to wait and see,' Mr Shilson added.

Mull and Iona Community Trust is a partner in the project.



At the site of Mull Native Woodlands Group new tree nursery are Moray Finch, Mull and Iona Community Trust, Andrew Mortley, John Nicolson, TSL, Mike Shilson and Ann Evans, Mull Native Woodland Group. Photograph: Richard Clutterbuck.



Breege with one of the masks.

Volunteer mask makers to the rescue

A community of volunteers is stitching together to help make much-needed masks to protect against coronavirus.

It started when Bonawe's Breege Smyth was contacted by Hope Kitchen in urgent need of masks to help keep safe its volunteers, and the people who use the Soroba Road-based service.

Breege put her design skills to work and came up with the easy-to-make masks, quickly recruiting an army of other sewers

to get involved by following a template and short video she put out on her Facebook page.

Although the masks, made of breathable fabric like calico, are not of surgical quality, they would help prevent germs from sneezing and coughing spreading and would stop people from touching their faces.

'People would touch the masks instead,' said Breege, who has rounded up volun-

teers from Oban to Taynuilt and Appin and even one in Australia.

'They are not for surgical use but they will help people feel safer. They can also be washed and used again. Anyone can make them, they are easy,' said Breege.

Some of the masks made by Breege's helpers, including a group of sewers from the Rockfield community hub, will also be given to taxi-drivers who have requested them.



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- All remote clinics cancelled

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Argyll dementia ward will close



RDA volunteer Gail MacGregor and one of the ponies at Argyll Carriage Driving Group.

Instant response to horse therapy charity appeal

An appeal to help keep ponies at the heart of a horse therapy charity fit and well has received an 'instant response' thanks to The Oban Times.

Argyll RDA Carriage Driving chairman Michael Hawke said the story resulted in 'wonderful promises' and money pledged.

'We have had an instant response of some wonderful promises with cheques to come. It is not just the funds but the expression of support and appreciation for the engagement we offer the less fortunate that this generosity shows.

'Great encouragement. What has been offered so far will set us in the right

direction, ready when we can restart our activities,' he said.

The charity desperately needs funds to pay farrier fees and other essential pony costs after coronavirus stopped all the activities it relies on for an income.

The Argyll Group has two ponies who support 18 carriage drivers living with disabilities.

As little as £2 will feed a horse for the day, £5 will provide bedding for a 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.

Plans to close Argyll and Bute's only in-patient dementia assessment ward have been approved – on the same day the ward was designated an emergency centre for COVID-19 patients, writes Kathie Griffiths.

The Knapdale ward, at Mid Argyll Hospital in Lochgilhead, was initially earmarked for closure in January as part of a redesign of dementia services in Argyll and Bute.

A consultation was held and this was discussed at a meeting of the integration joint board (IJB) on Wednesday.

Councillor Kieron Green, IJB chairman, wanted to delay making a decision due to the current coronavirus pandemic but a sufficient number of members were in favour of deciding on the day.

The board agreed the ward will not close until new facilities are established, while

the Health and Social Care Partnership will work with the families of current dementia patients to provide alternative care.

Councillor Green said in light of the operational update on the ward being designated for COVID-19 use, his opinion was that now was not the right time to be making policy decisions.

'I am in agreement with lots of the conclusions but I don't think now is the time,' he said.

Betty Rhodick, a public representative on the IJB, added: 'With Knapdale now allocated for COVID-19 patients, I feel it is right to delay the decision until this emergency has passed.

'We don't have a magic wand and can't tell how long these restrictions will continue.

'Argyll and Bute is a unique area and what works in the central belt will not necessarily

work here.' But Councillor Gary Mulvaney, Argyll and Bute Council's deputy leader, wanted to make the decision there and then.

He said: 'We took a decision in January to go out to consultation and I was sceptical as to how much consulting we would be able to do, but I am pleased our officers rose to the challenge.

Better care

'To me, the issue is we need to deliver better care, better service and better provision, from a clinical point of view.

'We have the operational decision that has been taken, meaning there will be no patients other than COVID-19 patients and having completed the consultation, we need to get on and deliver the changes we promised.

'It would be disappointing today if we did not make a decision as a board and give lead-

ership to our officers.' Council leader Aileen Morton added: 'I appreciate the situation with COVID-19, but if we take no decision today, that will not be helpful.

'There is a real need to get this to move forward and it will take a long time.

'Clearly the top priority is COVID-19 but I would prefer to approve, knowing this will be a lengthy process and will be delayed as a result of COVID-19.'

Councillor Green concluded the consensus was to agree to the recommendation to approve the planned closure of Knapdale to move to an enhanced community dementia model, noting the process may take more than a year to implement.

Ms Rhodick said: 'They must look at how Knapdale can be used in local services, as it will still need to be paid for.'

Argyll and Bute coronavirus helpline opens

A helpline has been set up for people across Argyll and Bute who need help during the coronavirus outbreak.

The Caring for People helpline brings together partner agencies and covers a wide range of issues including help for those who are experiencing difficulties accessing food or prescriptions, business advice including access to grants and anyone who has financial or personal concerns.

The number – 01546 605524 – is available Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. An answering machine will take messages outwith office hours and at weekends.

The helpline number can also be used by British Sign Language users through contactSCOTLAND-BSL and access to a browsealoud function for visually impaired and language translation is available through Argyll and Bute Council's website.

For health advice go to nhsinform.scot

Numbers of sick NHS staff will rise, warns First Minister

The number of NHS staff off sick because of coronavirus amounts to just over six per cent of the workforce.

They either have symptoms of the virus or are self-isolating at home because someone in their household does.

The First Minister said this week the number was 'relatively low' and the government expected the number of NHS staff to be affected to rise in the weeks to come.

By Tuesday, March 31, a further 13 people had died after testing positive for COVID-19 in Scotland bringing the total in the country to 60. The number of cases tested positive in NHS Highland region stood at 51. A total of 15,895 people in Scotland were tested by March 31. Out of those, 1,993 tests were positive and 13,902 were negative.

NHS Western Isles has confirmed the first two cases of COVID-19 in the Western Isles. A comhairle spokesperson said: 'This is not unexpected and for several weeks the comhairle has been preparing, along with partner agencies, for such an eventuality. It is more important than ever that everyone follows the government advice.'

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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OT

Oban can cope with coronavirus, but needs you to do your bit

Continued from page one
time being due to coronavirus restrictions.

And over the weekend a shout for help crossed the water from Mull when the island was urgently looking for transport to get its new doctor, travelling with two children and two dogs, from Glasgow to Oban while still sticking to isolation rules. 'The situation is beyond urgent,' said the Facebook post. However, within hours a solution had been found and is understood to have involved a minibus and a speedboat.

NHS Highland is reminding people if anyone, or someone you care for, develops symptoms of COVID-19 they should use the NHS Inform website at nhsinform.scot or call the dedicated information helpline on 0800 028 2816 in the first instance.

If symptoms worsen and cannot be managed at home, then people should call NHS24 on 111 where they will be asked a number of questions and,



People will only be seen at the hub by appointment.

if required, the NHS24 call handler will pass their call to a telephone community hub when a full telephone assessment will be carried out.

It is at that point, if necessary, that people will be given an appointment for a face-to-face consultation at their nearest Community Assessment Centre.

Holly brings slice of solace to Seil

by Kathie Griffiths
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Seil's Holly Wesley is bringing a 'pizza' solace to the island with her new business venture.

Pubs are shut and Saturday night socials are banned but the 23-year-old, who grew up on Seil, has returned from running a sweet-bakery in Glasgow to take over a wood-fired venture at Ardencaple and give neighbouring residents something to look forward to.

Holly, who has been busy fine-tuning bread recipes ready to supply restaurants, cafes and shops around the area, has now come up with a great way of comfort feeding islanders staying at home during the coronavirus outbreak.

She has called it Solace Bakery and to bring back weekend treats, Holly put out a Facebook message offering a Saturday night pizza delivery



Seil residents can order a pizza as a Saturday night treat from Holly.

service – much to islanders' joy. 'Whenever family or friends from Seil came to visit me in Glasgow and help me out at my bakery, I always thought how lovely it was, so when Sally Knight, who used to have the wood-fired bakery on the island, contacted me to see if I

was interested in taking it over, I said yes! Wood-fired ovens are not great for raising cakes so I thought I'd make bread to deliver to restaurants and businesses around Oban and Seil, but coronavirus has made that route difficult for now.

'Because I grew up on Seil I

really wanted to do something to serve the community to try to make this hard time a little bit easier so I came up with the idea of making weekend pizzas. More treats might follow.

'I want to do everything I can to make it work. I had hoped to start the bread business next month but for now it's pizzas,' said Holly.

Good news for pizza fans is that Holly has just had a delivery of flour and her supplier hopes to keep it coming.

The wood-fired oven she will be using was built from scratch about three years ago.

She continued: 'The pizzas will be ordered in advance with me and will be delivered house to house safely following strict food guidelines. I'll ring when they are leaving the bakery!'

'I know there will be some people out there who are struggling or worrying about making ends meets at the moment so if people private message me on Facebook I'll be happy to work something out – I don't want anyone to miss out.'

To help keep families at home busy, Holly is also supplying homemade pizza dough for DIY delights.

Third Sector community support

Argyll and Bute Third Sector Interface (TSI) is urging community groups to make use of the Third Sector Resilience Fund (TSRF) which opened for applications last week, writes Fiona Scott.

The primary intention of the £20 million emergency fund is to help third sector organisations to stabilise and manage cash flows over this difficult period.

Charities, community groups, social enterprises and voluntary organisations working in Scotland can all apply for support which has been set up to aid organisations that already deliver services and products but find themselves in financial difficulties directly as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

Jakki Spicer, engagement manager for Argyll and Bute TSI, said: 'We know how difficult this time is for many third sector organisations in the area, as they race to provide additional support to vulnerable members of the

community while maintaining social distancing measures, mobilise and manage resources and volunteers, and support their own staff.

'Meanwhile, revenue generating activities such as classes, group meetings, and outings have ceased.

'We have seen a tremendous response, but know that the added demands will mean that third sector organisations are going to struggle in the coming months, and the TSRF is an important tool to help sustain the work of these organisations and to keep them running, especially now, as they are so needed.'

The fund will be delivered by Firstport, Social Investment Scotland and the Corra Foundation, and will provide grants between £5,000 and £100,000. In addition, there will be up to a further £5m available in fully flexible, zero per cent interest loans starting at £50,000.

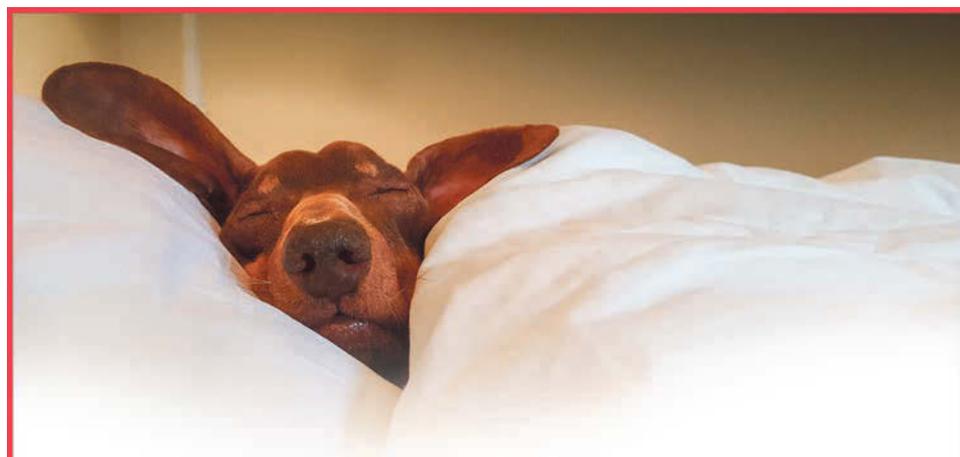
To be eligible, interested organisations must be a charity,

social enterprise or voluntary organisation based in Scotland and/or primarily delivering services/activities in Scottish communities; already delivering those products or services prior to March 2020; and needing funding to stabilise cashflows directly as a result of the impact of COVID-19, as opposed to pre-existing financial difficulties.

Interested applicants are encouraged to read the fund's guidance notes and FAQs prior to starting an application.

Argyll and Bute TSI is available to help third sector organisations navigate the application process for the TSRF, and also has a COVID-19 Resources section on the website (www.argylltsi.org/covid19.html), which includes information on available funding. Please call 0300 303 4141 or email: support@argylltsi.org.uk with any questions or concerns.

'We're here to help,' added Ms Spicer.



PET IDOL POSTPONED

We are really disappointed to have to postpone our Pet Idol competition until we are able to reopen our office. We simply don't have anyone in the office to count the thousands of votes that always come in, nor do we want to encourage people to come out unnecessarily to post votes through our letterbox.

Thank you to everyone who sent in pictures of their gorgeous pets. Rest assured, once this situation is over we will print them all and put a smile back on everyone's face.

Thanks for your understanding and stay safe

The Oban Times LOCHABER TIMES

Shuttle bus plan for shopping and medication

by Ellis Butcher
ebutcher@obantimes.co.uk



Buses are being drafted in to shuttle vital shopping and prescriptions to isolated communities during the coronavirus.

Argyll bus operator West Coast Motors has seen a dramatic fall in passenger numbers which has worsened since last week's official lockdown.

With shops, schools and workplaces shut and the message to stay at home backed up with new police powers, regular bus users are staying away.

Bus bosses have had to rip up regular timetables and temporarily 'furlough' a number of drivers, but have kept some 'key routes' going and are now in talks about how the company's fleet and drivers can help the area.

And in a double whammy for vital services, tourists are no longer coming to the area which has forced a radical rethink of the service model.

West Coast Motors confirmed this week it has been working with stakeholders such as local councillors to try to develop new ideas.

A company spokeswoman said it was working with Argyll and Bute Council to provide a service to those who most need it.

Talks are ongoing and she said there was a need to ensure that any idea closely observed safe social distancing and coronavirus preventive measures. Hand sanitisers have been put on buses and face masks made available to drivers.

She added: 'On Friday March 27, we announced free bus travel for all NHS workers. This is available by presenting a valid NHS card to our driver.'

'In some areas, such as Ardrishaig, we are working with local communities and offering a delivery service for those most vulnerable.'

'This is an area we expect to further develop as more people self-isolate and to reduce the growing pressure on local pharmacists and shops. We expect a more detailed coordinated plan will be agreed with the local council.'

'At this time, we would encourage community groups and local businesses to get in touch with our teams.'

Russell Dods, the Oban and Mull area manager, said on Friday the company was running a 'very limited timetable'. It still had daily Monday-Saturday return services between Dalavich, Bonawe, Easdale, Appin and Barcaldine, as well as a limited town service, he said.

He added: 'If there is anyone in these areas who is self-isolating, you could have someone put supplies on our vehicles and you could wait at your nearest bus stop for it to be dropped off. Please remember, anyone putting anything on the bus should keep their distance.'

Contacts for the various areas in the region are:

■ Clare Little, Campbeltown – 01586 554550

■ Russell Dods/Chris Hoon, Oban – 01586 555885
Adrian Fitness, Mull – 01680 812313

■ Graham Bryce, Dunoon – 01586 559139

■ Mike Green/Jamie McGuigan, Bute – 01586 559135

Bus times have been amended. Information is available at www.westcoastmotors.co.uk

Libraries remain open online

The closure of public libraries across Scotland has prompted an appeal for people not to give up on books but to get online, writes Ellis Butcher.

The Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) said there are many free online public libraries offering e-books, online newspapers, downloadable music, games and e-audiobooks.

Details of how to access services are often found on public library websites including Oban's which includes services at both argyll-bute.spydus.co.uk/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/MSGTRN/WPAC/JOIN and liveargyll.co.uk/borrowbox/

Online material is available for a range of ages and interests, from children's educational resources, to fiction and non-fiction, reference material and adult reader development resources, said SLIC.

Hundreds of librarians and library staff across Scotland are working remotely, with many offering an online membership application for those without a library card. Several library services are also offering support via telephone or social media.

SLIC said the digital switch is a good idea for children and teenagers not attending school as well as people who can use

reading to combat mental health issues linked to social isolation.

Kathleen Milne, libraries manager at Western Isles Libraries, has launched online book clubs on Twitter and Facebook to maintain contact with local library users.

She said: 'We've never hosted an online book club and we thought, now is the time to do it.'

'Good mental health is just as valuable as good physical health, and being mentally active and having a community connection during a time like this can be a real lifeline for some.'

Council pledges support for NHS Highland healthcare staff

Healthcare staff in Argyll and Bute will be fully supported during the current coronavirus pandemic, officers have promised.

During a meeting of the board which runs the area's health and social care partnership, convened via Skype on Wednesday, a motion was lodged to register thanks to workers.

Jane Fowler, head of customer and support services with Argyll and Bute Council, told the partnership's integration joint board (IJB) that efforts were ongoing to support staff during 'a challenge like nothing seen before'.

A report by Dr Nicola Schinaia, the Health and Social Care Partnership's associate director of public health, had previously advised of how the situation would be tackled.

Joanna McDonald, the HSCP's chief officer, said: 'We have stood up with resilience. Meetings have taken place with NHS Highland daily. In terms of Argyll and Bute Council, we are closely linked



Councillor Kieron Green.

there. I have heard the phrase "unprecedented times" a lot but I can't emphasise enough that we are living in unprecedented times. But staff are planning and pulling together in a way that is commendable around this issue.'

Judy Orr, the HSCP's head of finance and transformation, added: 'We have had assurances from the Scottish Government that additional costs will be reimbursed to us.'

'We have already submitted some initial cost estimates and will update these regularly.'

Ms Fowler then said: 'We have an integrated workforce and some of our services are

being shut down as they cannot be delivered in the current emergency situation.

'We have a good indication of priorities which will come under pressure and are looking at how best to redeploy our resources across the council and NHS.'

'This is going to be a challenge like nothing seen before. It is going to be a combination of people in communities and people who are retired, but we are working across both organisations.'

'It will have impacts and our responsibility is to ensure that staff do not become overwhelmed or exhausted.'

After talks on the HSCP's response, chairman Councillor Kieron Green made an addition to the recommendation to note the plans for the battle against coronavirus.

He said: 'I feel it would be appropriate to add our thanks for the ongoing dedication by all staff on health and social care locally, it people agree.'

The IJB members did agree to record their thanks.

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OT

Support your local paper – Cameron

Highlands and Islands MSP Donald Cameron has urged residents to support their local newspapers.

Mr Cameron, who has his constituency office on George Street in Oban, said: 'Our local media is indispensable, particularly during an emergency like the one we are experiencing, when up-to-date and reliable local news is at a premium, and many people are self-isolating at home.'

'Our local newspapers provide a vital public service not just by reporting local news but also by promoting social cohesion among our communities.'

'We owe a debt of thanks to the editors, journalists and their support staff who have continued to produce topical and relevant information for our local communities.'

'The Oban Times, for instance, has a proud track record, going back many generations, and it is reassuring to see that continues to report the local news across Argyll and also the wider Highlands and Islands, just as it did through previous national emergencies, including two world wars.'

'We have never needed local papers more than we do now.'

■ Please stay in touch with The Oban Times with your news, views and photos at 01631 568000 or emailing editor@obantimes.co.uk.

Puffer pub quiz is online hit

by Kathie Griffiths
kgriffiths@obantimes.co.uk

Question for starters: what do you do for entertainment when you live on the smallest full-time inhabited island of the Inner Hebrides and the pub shuts?

Keren Cafferty, landlady of The Puffer on Easdale, has got the right answer. You put heads together with others isolating on the same lump of rock and come up with a virtual pub quiz.

Using the Zoom app, and after a number of dummy runs over the past week or so, The Puffer pulled together a good home crowd on Saturday.

Islander and quiz master extraordinaire Steve Brown, known for setting quirky quizzes, put participants' IQs and local knowledge to the test with his expected off-the-wall questions – some including sound-effects familiar to Easdale residents' ears.

The pub now has about 30 people signed up on a WhatsApp group keen to join in future quizzes – the next is on Saturday April 4.

'We are planning a few surprise guests at other quizzes to come – they might be friends from far



Keren Cafferty, top left, and right, some of the islanders who took part in the online quiz.



away who don't get up to join us on Easdale so often. We have some part-time residents and people who'd been looking forward to coming here on holiday until coronavirus got in the way. Our quiz is a great way of still bringing people together and keeping in touch.'

'In fact, the virtual quiz has taken off so much that we might keep it going when the pub is back up and running!' said Keren, who has owned The Puffer for 12 years.

The Puffer, which also doubles up as a tearoom and restaurant,

is still open for takeaways. On Saturday, people could pre-order their quiz drinks and food to enjoy at home – there was even an option to have more refreshments delivered to their home during the quiz if they ran dry, although responsible drinking was being encouraged.

Everyone taking part in Saturday's quiz could be seen on the one screen at the same time and when one person was talking, the box highlighted in green.

'It's a great way of teaching people

to be respectful when someone else is speaking!' said Keren.

It was Easdale resident Samantha Payne who hosted Saturday's live quiz, and who already had the Zoom app subscription, and her IT whizz of a husband David helped Keren get the quiz off the ground.

Keren continued: 'We survived the winter and just as we were looking forward to Easter appearing through the gloom, coronavirus struck.'

'The quiz is our way of keeping the community together – there's a lot of people self-isolating and working from home. It's also helping to keep the pub ticking over.'

'We're thinking of having a go at karaoke next,' added Keren, who also has plans to replicate The Puffer's popular supper nights online to bring stay-at-home diners round the virtual table.

'I'll cook the food and we'll deliver it to them, ready for sitting down together online,' she added.

The Oban Times would love to hear what you are doing in your community to keep everyone safe and entertained. Call us on 01631 568023, email editor@obantimes.co.uk or message us on Facebook and send in your photographs.

SCOTTISH FIELD

April issue



OUT NOW

Aberdeenshire under the spotlight... Red kite conservation... Queen Victoria's Balmoral watercolours... Scotland's James Bond... Scotch & Wry comic Tony Roper... Hebridean seascapes... Stunning Borders interiors...

Tiree church converted into coronavirus ward for residents

A church on Tiree has been set up as a potential coronavirus ward, writes Kathie Griffiths.

Doctors on the island are hoping they never have to use Baugh Church, which has been equipped with a couple of hospital beds and supportive equipment such as oxygen, fluids and medicines.

The church is central to the island, just opposite the doctor's surgery, and until now has been used as a place of worship and a community hub.

The doctors behind the new ward said the island has limited medical staff so they are drawing up a list of volunteers who might be able to help keep it going if it is needed.

In particular, they are looking for people from carer or nursing backgrounds, but basically anyone who is keen to help and not in the 'at risk' group would be appreciated.

One of the doctors, speaking to The Oban Times on behalf of Tiree surgery, said: 'The hope is that we never have to use it. Most of the resources we needed for the ward were not NHS specific. We already had a couple of hospital beds, the rest are camp beds. Businesses on



The church has hospital beds and equipment in place should it be needed.

the island have come forward to help even before being asked.

'Most people will be able to look after themselves but there are some who would need help.'

A few families on Tiree are self-isolating but when The Oban Times went to press it was understood situation had not changed.

The doctors still want to hear from anyone who might have symptoms and are self-isolating so they can get a more accurate idea of levels of the virus on the island.

A big thank you from the medical team has also gone

out to everyone paying attention to advice to keep up social distancing and who are self-isolating.

'There has been an outstanding level of co-operation from people who are embracing social distancing and we are getting a good response from volunteers. Getting a list of potential helpers to run the ward if we need it is now in progress,' added the doctor.

Volunteers who are helping with prescription deliveries have also been thanked.

Louise Reid, who is administration and projects manager for Tiree Community Trust, said support on the island has been 'amazing'.

She said: 'There's no testing on the island yet so I'm not sure if there are confirmed cases but everyone is supporting and checking on each other.'

'No one will have to struggle. It's quite scary that coronavirus has taken everything over, life seems to have stopped as we knew it, but Tiree is rallying round. It's reassuring they have a ward set up if we need it. I really hope we don't.'

■ Watch the walk-through video at www.obantimes.co.uk

Animal charity still active as hunt for home goes on

by Fiona Scott
fscott@obantimes.co.uk



Argyll Animal Aid (AAA) is offering assistance to the most vulnerable pet owners within the community as well as others in need of help at this difficult time.

Having vacated its former base at Barcaldine in January, the charity is currently seeking a new permanent home and has been working hard in the meantime to ensure pets and their owners in Oban and the surrounding area are still receiving help should they need it.

'The COVID-19 virus is impacting on us all and we have decided that in order to protect others and to remain safe ourselves, we cannot do home visits and the checks required for rehoming and fostering,' explained AAA chairperson Nikki MacGillivray.

'This means that we are



sadly not able to help with the rehoming or fostering of animals at the current time.

'However, we are in a position to help with neutering costs, vet bills and costs related to feral cats, but this will follow a strict application procedure and each case will be assessed individually.'

The charity also has a stock of dog and cat food that they would like to offer to the most vulnerable in the community and those in need. Arrangements can be made to drop this off by contacting the charity through its Facebook page and website argyllanimalaid.org.uk/

Argyll Animal Aid committee (before social distancing was introduced) from left: Kristin MacKillop, Nikki MacGillivray, Carol and Stan Evans, and Ali Heaton.

'Our advice to the general public regarding your pets is if you are worried about them, then contact your local vet for advice,' added Nikki.

'We also advise you not to panic and part with pets during this time. They are part of our families and will be feeling your anxiety.'

'They are fantastic company, especially when we are spending so much time in our homes right now.'

As part of the restructure, the group has recruited its first member of staff, Ali Heaton, who will act as project manager and point of contact.

Ali told The Oban Times: 'I am delighted to be joining

Argyll Animal Aid at this exciting turning point in their 19-year history.

'Once we are in our new premises, there will be a recruitment campaign for people to look after our animals, volunteers, dog walkers - a whole host of back-up.'

Keep an eye on the Argyll Animal Aid Facebook page and website at www.argyll-animalaid.org.uk for further information and postings.

'We wish to thank everyone for their loyal and continuing support and urge them to join us in this new, exciting chapter of Argyll Animal Aid,' added Nikki.

One of the main priorities of the group is to find a permanent home. Anyone who knows of a plot of land, or premises close to Oban which they think might be suitable should contact Ali at info@argyllanimalaid.org.uk or call 07519 716823.

POLICE FILES

■ About 2.35pm on March 19, there was a collision on the A828 near Appin between an Audi car and a Honda scooter. The driver of the scooter suffered minor injuries. Subsequently the 29-year-old car driver was charged with careless driving and a report submitted to the fiscal.

■ About 1.30pm on March 23, at a supermarket in Oban, two teenage boys allegedly stole some alcohol. Police charged both youths and they will be referred for Youth Intervention processes.

■ About noon on March 26, in Combie Street, Oban, a woman, 40, allegedly assaulted another woman. She was charged and a report will be submitted to the procurator fiscal.

■ About 4.40pm on March 27, in Shore Street, Oban, a 24-year-old man was arrested for allegedly assaulting a woman. The man was charged and a report sent to the fiscal.

■ If you have information in relation to the above, or to any incident, call the local Police Station on 101, or anonymously via Crime-stoppers on 0800 555 111.

Coronavirus sparks council to create new committee

A special cross-party committee of councillors has been formed to make key decisions as the coronavirus pandemic spreads to Argyll and Bute, writes Ellis Butcher.

The lockdown restrictions imposed last week have caused the cancellation of public council meetings. However, continuity plans drawn up by council chief executive Pippa Milne were agreed during a special meeting on Tuesday conducted using Skype.

A temporary 'business continuity' committee served by a cross-party panel of just nine councillors has been agreed, with plans for it to be in place until the end of June.

It will be chaired by council leader Aileen Morton, the Liberal Democrat councillor for Helensburgh Central. It will also feature representatives from across the 36-member council chamber including Conservatives, Independents and the SNP.

Councillor Morton said the COVID-19 pandemic meant the council had to be ready to make changes quickly. 'Our decision-making process has to be flexible enough to deliver



Plans were drawn up by chief executive Pippa Milne.

decisions rapidly so that we are doing all we can to protect our employees and communities,' said Councillor Morton. 'The changes agreed on Tuesday make it easier to take urgent decisions when needed and to continue progressing the longer term business of the council.'

The committee will temporarily replace and do the work of the council's numerous committees. Agendas will still be published along with reports and minutes.

The council chief executive also has the authority through the council's existing constitution to make urgent decisions that would normally go to a

committee to be considered. Councillors agreed to widen the consultation required by the chief executive to now include the leader, deputy leader and leader of the opposition, where available.

The report said: 'There is a risk that, should council and committee meetings continue in their present form that the coronavirus will spread wider in the community. Council business, including decision making must, however, continue so that there is least impact on service provision.'

'By allowing greater flexibility in the decision-making processes, the council can be confident that it will be able to carry out its functions in a way that creates least risk to public health.'

Most council meetings are required by law to be open to the public. But government restrictions on public assemblies has closed public buildings.

It has meant that it would be 'impossible' for the public to be present at meetings of the new committee. It is 'almost certain there will be no public attendance at these meetings', said the council report.

A note to our local communities



Scottish Sea Farms

If you spot a few of our team going about their work as if everything is 'business as usual' please rest assured that, as with the rest of the country, things are anything but the norm.

Both the Scottish and UK Governments have outlined the essential role that food producers can play in the wellbeing of the nation as we unite against COVID-19. In the words of First Minister Nicola Sturgeon: *"We want you to keep going, if possible - and if you can operate your business in line with safe social distancing practice and of course your normal health and safety requirements."*

We're working hard to do exactly that, helped by our suppliers.

While much of this work can and is being done from home, a small number of our team can only carry out their key roles in a work setting: our farmers, for example, who have a duty of care to look after their livestock, and our processing staff who harvest and pack our fish for market so there is fresh farmed salmon for us all to enjoy.

In each case, we have overhauled normal business practices to ensure these key workers are operating in line with official guidance on COVID-19, and will continue to do so as guidance evolves.

It's our way of keeping our team, families and local communities safe and well, while also playing our part in keeping food supplies flowing.

Thank you for your understanding, from all at

Scottish Sea Farms

OT

First fines handed out under new laws

25 fined under COVID-19 'stay at home' rules

by Ellis Butcher
ebutcher@obantimes.co.uk



A senior police officer has thanked the public and businesses for complying with a new law designed to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

Officers were given new powers on Friday to fine people £30, which can rise to £60 if not paid within 28 days, being doubled for each repeat offence up to a cap of £960.

Across Scotland, 25 fixed penalty notices were issued over the first weekend of the lockdown, although there is no breakdown yet on where they were given out.

Nationally, people have been discouraged from driving to scenic areas to exercise or walk their dogs.

Deputy chief constable Malcolm Graham said: 'We've had high visibility patrols in place right across the country since we were given these enforcement powers.'

'It's clear the vast majority of people are complying with the measures.'

'But it's clear that the vast majority of people are complying with the measures. They know the message is to stay at home and, by and large, they're doing that.'

He said officers had been able to 'engage or educate' people why it is important to follow rules proposed by pub-

lic health experts. The aim is to save lives, halt the spread of the virus and protect the NHS from being inundated.

'There will always be people who refuse to comply, but the low number of penalty notices shows they are in the minority and in those cases we've had to use enforcement as a last resort,' said the deputy chief constable.

'This is a big change to the way people live their lives and they need to adjust.'

To enforce social distancing, people are being asked to stay at home and only go outside if they have a reasonable excuse.

This is limited to exercising for an hour either on your own or with your household, shopping for essentials as

infrequently as possible, collecting urgent medicines, or travelling to and from work but only if 'absolutely necessary' and if you cannot work at home.

The tough new regulations will be reviewed at least every 21 days to ensure they are still necessary, said Police Scotland.

Upbeat John helps Italy fight off coronavirus

Aid worker John Murphy is staying upbeat as he helps Italy battle coronavirus, writes Kathie Griffiths.



The self-employed maintenance man, who lives in Taynuilt with wife Louise, is volunteering in Cremona in the Lombardy region of northern Italy with Christian charity Samaritan's Purse where he is helping run an inflatable hospital in a car park.

Louise told The Oban Times on Tuesday: 'They have seen quite a lot of successes. Quite a few people have now come off ventilators which is great news.'

'There are still more people coming in but the situation is more level than it was.'

The couple have been Skyping and Facetimeing every night to stay in touch.

'He's very good, very upbeat. Everyone out there is mega-busy, John is tired but he has lots of stamina and will just keep on going to get the job done,' said Louise.

Mornings for John, who has carried out previous aid

missions with the same charity in the Bahamas after it was hit by a hurricane and in war-zone Iraq, start at 5.30am. If the job allows, he is in bed for 8.30pm to be ready for the next day.

'The shifts are long with busy days and he has had to work through some nights. Depending what needs doing, he has been working in the danger red zone and out of it. He is doing lots of practical stuff at the moment involving water, hygiene and sanitation, just anything hands-on that makes sure the hospital can keep running,' said Louise.

John was due to spend three weeks out in Italy but might have to stay for another fortnight because some of the charity's workers are now needed in New York where Samaritan's Purse has just built another 68-bed ward in Central Park.

To support the work John and others are doing with the charity, go to samaritans-purse.org.uk

KEEPINTOUCH

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

Keeping our community informed

What we are doing to help

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

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Thanks to everyone going above and beyond to help communities

Around Oban

KAY MCDONALD

editor@obantimes.co.uk



WHERE IS THIS?



I hope everyone is well and managing to stay safe and happy within the constrictions we have at the moment. It's hard being apart from family and friends, and a bit scary going shopping, but we are so fortunate to have such a range of shops available to us, all going above and beyond to make sure that we're kept safe and supplied with what we need to get us through this difficult time.

From the larger shops such as Tesco, Aldi, Lidl and Farmfoods, where we can get most things we need now that the panic buying seems to have tailed off, to places like Albany Stores, Hannah's, Soroba Shop and all the other fantastic wee shops looking after customers and going above and beyond to make sure everyone is taken care of.

We also have Taste of Argyll with fabulous local produce and our local butchers, Jacksons and Wynne's, and Watts Fishmongers

making sure we're well fed, with Millstone Wholefoods keeping us healthy just when we need it most.

The staff in all those places play such an important role just now, making sure everyone is taken care of, but even more importantly, at a time of isolation they provide a friendly face and a reassurance that there is some normality in the world and for that I'm sure we are all very grateful.

They are among the people, like NHS staff and carers, bus and lorry drivers, electricity, gas and BT workers, who all deserve our thanks

just now for being out there keeping everything going for those of us trying to isolate ourselves, not forgetting all the volunteers who have turned out in their droves to help those who're struggling.

Thank you all so much - words aren't enough.

Last week's photograph was of the beautiful Oban Chocolate Shop (I miss you), and this week's is up a side street - have you noticed it?

KEEPINTOUCH

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

Community out in force to support those who care

by Fiona Scott
fscott@obantimes.co.uk



In a national moment of thanks and togetherness, communities in Oban and the surrounding areas stepped onto their doorsteps last Thursday evening to salute NHS staff and care workers on the front line of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Clap For Carers initiative saw residents from all corners of Oban, Lorn and the Islands applauding the services from doorsteps, windows and balconies at 8pm, and, in true Oban style, members of the world famous Oban High School Pipe Band took up the mantle at 8.05pm when some prolonged hearty clapping was followed by the skirl of the pipes and the beat of the drums.

OHS Pipe Band pipe major Angus MacColl joined in from



Families on Seil's Main Street came out to clap their praise for NHS workers.

his family home at Keil Crofts along with his son Angus John and niece Fiona Crookshanks.

'It took a bit of frantic organising on Thursday afternoon but it was well worth it,' said Angus.

'All the band members were keen to do something to show their appreciation of all these

people who are charged with looking after us through this situation.'

Neighbours in Seil's Main Street came out from their homes to give a united round of applause to NHS workers as part of the Clap For Carers last Thursday night.

Others also took part in other

areas of the island - including some people who gathered, at a safe distance, on the golf course.

McCaig's Tower was also lit up in blue for the salute as part of the #lightitblue campaign.

A message from the NHS on social media described the tribute as 'emotional'.

Public urged to keep the tributes going

Members of Oban, Lorn and the Islands communities are being urged to step out onto their doorsteps once more on Thursday night and show their appreciation for NHS staff and carers.



Angus McColl, pictured, has decided on two tunes for this week's tribute - I See Mull (Chi mi Muile) and Donald MacLean's Farewell to Oban.

If you or a friend or family member play the pipes, please make sure they know about this. Or if you know or can contact your local pipe band please tell them.

In addition, people are being asked to light up the sky while the pipes are playing by shining their torches upwards.



Wendy Dugdale of Balvicar Store on Seil has been keeping customers entertained via social media with her singing and dancing in the aisles.

Balvicar's dancing queen goes viral

Keeping customers smiling on Seil isn't a nine to five job for Balvicar shopkeeper Wendy Dugdale, writes Kathie Griffiths.

A blonde Dolly Parton wig was all it took to get Wendy strutting her stuff in one of her latest Facebook posts that are going viral.

Her cover of Queen's I Want To Break Free, dressed as a nun, also got more than 1,000 hits.

And she has been dancing in the aisles of Balvicar Stores and Post Office with the family's pet dog called Star.

'It's just for a laugh. There are lots of people needing cheering up out there so I thought I'd do something to make them smile. I've always loved dancing,' said Wendy.

'Someone asked me how long I was going to keep up the daily dances and I said it would last as long as the requests for more keep coming in,' she grinned.

Wendy has been hailed a community hero for keeping Seil entertained and topped up with supplies during the coronavirus crisis but she says thanks should also go to all the volunteers, including the

'Seafari girls' who are helping drop off deliveries to the doors of those who are self-isolating and unable to get to the shop themselves.

Let us know who your community hero is. Call The Oban Times on 01631 568000, email editor@obantimes.co.uk or message us on Facebook.

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BUSINESS NEWS

Support Argyll and Skye hospitality industry with pre-pay cash vouchers

With Argyll and Skye's hospitality industry facing a particularly challenging period as the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis develops, many businesses are looking for ways in which to continue supporting local restaurants, bars, cafes and hotels through the difficult days and weeks ahead.

Many venues across the region are now offering pre-pay vouchers for people to enjoy a delicious meal or overnight stay at a later date. Take inspiration from our round-up of some of the best foodie destinations in Argyll and Skye.

Bridge of Orchy Hotel, West Highland Way

Valid for 12 months, Bridge of Orchy Hotel offers a range of monetary gift vouchers for guests to experience the bar, restaurant, dining room or overnight stay at their leisure, starting from £100.

Nestled amid the spectacular backdrop of the West Highlands, surrounded by five Munros and untouched nature, the Bridge of Orchy Hotel offers four-star luxury and the best of Highland hospitality. One of Scotland's iconic small hotels, it is located on the A82, a route recently crowned the 'Ultimate British Road Trip' and is the perfect base from where to explore the Highlands, Glencoe, Skye and beyond. The hotel is easily accessible by car, train or coach. A two-hour drive from Glasgow, two and a half hours from Edinburgh and a stunning two-hour train journey from Glasgow on the West Highland Line.

Call: 01838 400208, email: info@bridgeoforchy.co.uk, and visit www.bridgeoforchy.co.uk. Get social: www.facebook.com/boohotel, <https://twitter.com/BridgeOfOrchyH>, www.instagram.com/bridgeoforchyhotel



The Pierhouse Hotel and Seafood Restaurant at Port Appin makes the most of local produce and gives guests stunning views of the isles of Lismore and Mull.

Mull. This small hotel and renowned Scottish seafood restaurant is one of Argyll's most idyllic and romantic destinations. Food and drink are an integral part of the philosophy and experience at The Pierhouse, with menus showcasing local produce and giving a real sense of place. Dishes include the freshest langoustines and mussels harvested from Loch Linnhe and Loch Etive, as well as fine hand-picked oysters from Loch Creran.

The Pierhouse was purchased by Scots-born international hotelier Gordon Campbell Gray in 2019 as part of The Wee Hotel Company, which places an emphasis on authenticity, the magic of Scottish food and ingredients, hospitality and a warm welcome.

Treat yourself, friends or family with a Pierhouse Hotel gift voucher. With a choice of monetary amounts, The Pierhouse Hotel's gift vouchers can be used for hotel accommodation and food and drink in the restaurant and bar. Order your gift vouchers online and pay via the hotel's secure payment provider. Postal vouchers are presented in an attractive wallet in a colour of your choice with coordinating voucher enclosed and can be personalised with your own message. Call 01631 730302. Visit: www.pierhousehotel.co.uk. Get social: www.facebook.com/pierhousehotel, www.instagram.com/the_pierhouse_hotel, twitter.com/pierhousehotel

Terms and conditions apply for all gift voucher purchases. Please check with each individual business when booking.

twitter.com/BridgeOfOrchyH, www.instagram.com/bridgeoforchyhotel

The Three Chimneys, Isle of Skye

Serving the best of Skye, land and sea as part of The Wee Hotel Company, The Three Chimneys at Colbost has established itself as a multi-award-winning, destination dining experience for more than 30 years.

Stay overnight in one of six bedrooms in the House Over-By, adjacent to the restaurant and overlooking the Little Minch, towards the Outer Hebrides.

Head chef Scott Davies continually makes the most of the Isle of Skye's wonderful local produce. From working in collaboration with a local sea salt harvester to nipping over to Dunvegan harbour to choose his own lobsters, crabs and langoustines

from the fishermen before the start of service, Scott's commitment to using the finest ingredients and minimising food miles is second to none.

Book a gift voucher for a one- or two-night stay in the House Over-By, including breakfast, or alternatively opt for a monetary voucher to the value of your choosing (starting from £20), to be redeemed in the restaurant. Call 01470 511258. Visit: www.threechimneys.co.uk. Get social: www.facebook.com/thethreechimneysskye, www.twitter.com/3_chimneys, www.instagram.com/thethreechimneys

The Pierhouse Hotel and Seafood Restaurant, Port Appin

The Pierhouse Hotel and Seafood Restaurant is tucked away on the shores of Loch Linnhe, with breath-taking views to the islands of Lismore and



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Pet prestige makes tails wag at village inn

by Fiona Scott
fscott@obantimes.co.uk



Ben Cruachan Inn fought off some stiff competition to be voted Scotland's Best Pet Friendly Hotel at the national Prestige Hotel Awards, while Cameron Hill was highly commended in the general manager category.

These latest honours come as another great accolade for the Lochawe-based hotel, which already has awards for the Best Gastropub and Central Scotland, the Best New Food and Drink Business, and the Green Tourism Silver Award.

Owner Tracey Peedle said: 'We have always sought to be dog friendly – we love dogs and our customers love bringing their dogs with them when they come to visit.'

'We have run a dog of the month competition for the past 12 months, where customers post pictures of their four-legged



General manager Cameron Hill was highly commended at the recent Prestige Hotel Awards while the inn was voted the country's Best Pet Friendly Hotel.



friends enjoying a visit to the inn, and each month our staff team vote for their favourite.

'We have just awarded our dog of the year from the monthly winners to Mags – who gets to bring her owners for an overnight stay.'

'When dogs visit the Ben Cruachan Inn, they can expect

free doggy biscuits, water bowls and a lot of fuss from our staff. If they are really good, their humans might even buy them a doggy beer.'

'We are also delighted that our manager Cameron Hill has been recognised for his attentive, knowledgeable and professional

service, and for leading our fantastic team. He has brought lots of new ideas to the business, including making us super pet-friendly.'

Voted for by the public, Scotland's Prestige Hotel Awards were created to showcase and reward outstanding service within the hotel industry.

Fishing industry nets £5m support

The seafood sector is to receive an initial package of more than £5 million of support from the Scottish Government.

Around 650 seafood fishing companies are reportedly suffering from the collapse of markets for Scottish catches such as langoustine, prawns and crab.



Argyll and Bute MSP Michael Russell, pictured, said: 'There is a huge amount of worry and concern here given the near total collapse of markets as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. The industry is vitally important and this support is essential.'

However, John Robins of Animal Concern, commented: '£5m is not going to go very far. All we are asking is that this public money is spent wisely and used to support smaller, more environmentally-friendly members of the fisheries industry and not given to multinationals.'

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



Smallpox claimed seven workers on the Isle of Mull

by Valerie Forsyth
editor@obantimes.co.uk

Smallpox can be traced back to Pharaoh Ramesses V, who died in 1157 BC. When his mummified body was discovered there were traces of it on his remains.

The disease spread worldwide thanks to traders, and in the 11th and 12th centuries it reached Europe.

It was not until the 18th century that Edward Jenner, the English physician and scientist, carried out his experiment on eight-year-old James Phipps, contaminating him with cowpox from a milkmaid.

This was to be the first vaccination in the world. Milkmaids only ever seemed to get a mild form of cowpox and never contracted smallpox. He proved that contracting cowpox gave immunity to the smallpox virus.

Yet it was not until the late 1940s that vaccinations were available to everyone, and smallpox was eradicated worldwide by 1980.

However, during the late Victorian period, there was a curious case of smallpox on the island of Mull.

Dr Alfred Carpenter was staying in Oban when he was told by the medical officer of the town that there had been several cases of the disease on the island.

There had been a case on the south-west of Mull three years previously when the young man had died, and the cottage where he lived was abandoned. Eventually the roof fell.

In 1886, the estate was purchased, and the new landlord arranged to have new cottages built at the site.

A group of men were sent out from Tobermory to tear down the old cottage but seven of them contracted the pox.

Their thinking was that they had disturbed the mattress the boy had died on and the spores had lain dormant for the intervening years, only to enter the workers' systems when it was disturbed once again.

No other cases had been reported on the island, or on the mainland anywhere near Oban.

Calum of the Glen

Morvern Lines

IAIN THORNER

ian.thorner@btinternet.com



What's in a name? Names are more than just names if you are able to look into them as I found out when investigating one near Resipole on the north side of Loch Sunart a few miles from Salen.

Sinclair's Croft is not a place you will find on any map – it just happens to be remembered locally. Who was Sinclair, I wondered? He must have been an interesting character or did something unusual to have a spot named after him?

The question was answered when out of the blue I received in the post an unpublished manuscript from a colleague who was clearing out an office in Inverness and knew of my interest in local history. It was written some years ago by the late Alastair Cameron, known locally as 'North Argyll', whom I wrote about in these columns on March 22, 2018. Not only was he Calum Sinclair's next-door neighbour but also a friend and knew a good deal about his background. As Alastair was a regular contributor to The Oban Times for over 50 years, it is surely appropriate that what he had to say about him should see the light of day here.

I had heard about Calum Sinclair for his pranks and ready repartee before we ever met. It was thus. In his young days proprietors, or more correctly their ground officers, were very strict about the care of the woodlands and nobody was allowed to enter therein to cut a tree or shrub without permission. Breadalbane [1] was no exception. However, one day while one of the ground officers was speaking to someone at the road side at Dalmally, Calum, then in his teens, passed by barefooted and carrying in his hand a nice long straight hazel switch. As he passed the ground officer said to him "Where did you get that switch Calum?" Without as much as slowing his pace he replied, "Just where it grew". On hearing the story little did I think then, that for close on 40 years we would be acquaintances, and 19 or so of them neighbours.

'He was called 'Calum of the Glen' because he was brought up in Glenstrae in the Glenorchy district. He belonged to the Mac na Ceardadh, now Sinclairs, of Dalmally on the paternal side, but his mother, a Macleod, came from Skye, so that accounts for his Christian name Calum. [2] An early speech impediment kept Calum from attending school, with the result that he could neither read or write, but a vivid memory and keen powers of observation enabled him to exhibit a high degree of knowledge, so much so



that casual acquaintances hardly ever discovered that he was illiterate.

Though he finished his active working life as a gamekeeper he entered it more or less as a poacher and that at an age so young that after stalking a hind and taking careful aim he closed his eyes before drawing the trigger. Nevertheless, the bullet found its rightful billet, but disappointment and wonderment was to follow for the young huntsman, for when he proceeded to bleed and gralloch his kill after sticking the knife in the proper vein, not a drop of blood flowed. Consternation more than amazement struck him; the hind he thought could not be a natural animal, so he ran home to tell about it to his cousins. They being older and not such novices to the poaching art had heard that such a thing could happen so went off immediately to skin and bring the carcass home.

Later in life his keenness for indulging in this sport without permission led him on that memorable Christmas week of 1879 when the Tay Bridge

Calum Sinclair's Croft near Resipole (Photograph by Iain Thorner) and, inset, Alastair Cameron, 'North Argyll', the author of this article, addressing the Clan Cameron Gathering at Achnacarry in 1965. (Photograph supplied by Iain Thorner)

was blown down, in participating in an experience he told me he would not care to undertake again. Himself and a shoemaker acquaintance in the village of Dalmally decided to have a day's hare-shooting. After getting to the chosen ground they separated. Calum had just shot his seventh hare, when he noticed a keeper from a neighbouring estate making in the direction from which the shoemaker's shots had come. To escape capture immediate action was necessary, so Calum hid the hares in an old hill drain, shoved the gun into a snowdrift and went to look for his companion. He failed to locate him so made for Glenstrae where he remained until darkness came and then went

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- part one



around. He reached Kintyre the following day and stayed with friends for three weeks until he thought the incident had become less in the news. A thaw by then had set in and the stock of the gun was visible in the snowdrift when he went to get it. At that time an important feeing market [3] was held at Dalmally in April and the local keepers conjecturing Calum might be looking for a situation there approached all the farmers asking them not to engage him. All promised except Mr Campbell of Duileter whose reply was, "If Calum of the Glen is looking for a situation he will get it from me". So to Campbell he went, where he remained for a few years until he moved to Lochs at the top of Glenlyon, then tenanted by Mr John MacNaughton. Lochs must be among the highest farms in Scotland yet barley has been known to grow well there.

From Lochs he went to Moar and then on to Meggernie home farm as a shepherd. He got to know some of the personalities of the glen such as "The Blind Precentor" Peter Stewart, a Baptist and a composer of spiritual poems. An individual read the line and then Peter chanted it; the well known Baptist lay-preacher of the district, Donald MacLellan, whose son became Professor of the Baptist College in Scotland, and Alexander Stewart (Alasdair Ruadh) author of a Highland Parish - the History of Fortingall [4]

Continued next week.

Notes

1. The 9th Earl of Breadalbane (1889-1959)
2. Brigadier John Macfarlane, who lives at Taynuilt and is an authority on the families of the area, tells me these Sinclairs, to whom he is related, were for a number of generations tacksmen of Doire nan Saoir in Glen Kinglas. John states that there is a part of Muckairn churchyard called Lagan Cloinn na Ceardadh (Sinclair's Hollow) which is full of Sinclair graves and that the name is very much local being MacNokairds in 17th-century documents.
3. A feeing market was a form of employment fair, held all over Scotland but particularly in agricultural areas each May and November. Men and women in search of work would gather at the markets and attempt to catch the attention of farmers and other employers in search of labour.
4. A Highland Parish - a History of Fortingall was published in Glasgow in 1928.

to visit the shoemaker to find out the position. The news was not good. The keeper had caught the shoemaker and threatened if he would not divulge the name of his companion he would report the incident to the estate factor. The consequences for the shoemaker, who was a married man, if he did not do this was eviction, so Calum told him to give his name and as he was single he could leave the district immediately. On that fatal Sunday afternoon he left his home intending to pass the night with a shepherd relative at Barran near Kilmore. Crossing the moorland he had often when the gusts of wind would come, to throw himself flat on the ground and catch hold of a clump of heather. When he arrived at his proposed destination he found the house practically roofless, the wife of the shepherd and family huddled in the closet, and the husband gone for help to Duileter in Glenstrae.

Passing through some of the woodlands of the Duke of Argyll the following day the scene he told me was one of devastation - fallen trees all

DOWN MEMORY LANE

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



All the information we have with this photograph is that it is Islay pupils with officials. If you know when and why this photo was taken, and who is pictured, we'd love to hear from you. You can email us at editor@obantimes.co.uk



This picture shows the directors of National Boatshows Ltd with representatives of Argyll and the Islands Enterprise Company on completion of the contract for 1994 Earl's Court Boatshow. There are no names, so if you know who they are, please let us know.

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LETTERS

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Communities respond magnificently to the coronavirus pandemic

These unprecedented times continue to affect every one of us across Argyll and the Isles and the country as a whole.

There can be virtually no one who has not been impacted by the coronavirus, though some have been hit harder than others.

However, in times of crisis, heroes – that overused description but apposite in this case – will come to the fore and it has been evident during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A glance at the facing page will give a flavour of precisely this kind of heart-warming community heroics, though there are of course many other instances across the area.

From children helping elderly neighbours by delivering newspapers and walking pet dogs, to the Go Naked Veg company and Hope Kitchen, among others, ensuring the vulnerable are fed and watered, the community response has been magnificent. And we know that it will continue. Well done to all.

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.

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Open letter to Robin Currie

Dear Mr Robin Currie,
I am the chairman of Glenorchy and Innishail Community Council. We have been discussing the proposed Deposit and Return Scheme (DRS), particularly as it affects our local village shops and its outcome in rural areas generally.

We are sure the idea of DRS meets with approval throughout Scotland, but we are equally sure many are unaware of the potentially damaging effect the scheme will almost certainly have on rural communities, their livelihood and the rural economy.

DRS in Scotland is a very ambitious, wide-ranging scheme. It is unfunded and relies totally on the registration of the distributors of recyclable material with SEPA. The crucial details of how refunds will be reimbursed to retailers, the level of service charges and the frequency of materials being collected, not only seem vague but also are under the control of the distributors without government regulation or voluntary agreement.

We have met with Michael Russell MSP in our local shop, the Dalmally Stores, and raised ours and the shopkeeper's concerns. Mr Russell wrote to Roseanna Cunningham on our behalf, but the Scottish Government's response is clearly to proceed with the legislation with minimal amendment. It seems to be that the government's attitude is they are going to push on regardless and 'do it well'. It is our opinion that they are certainly not going to 'do it well'.

Mr Colin Harvey, our Dalmally shopkeeper, has made it clear that any effect of DRS on his cash flow or his inability to store material through lack of space will force him to close for good. We are sure this is reflected in many rural and island settlements in Argyll. It would be a positive step forward if the proposed exemption rules were changed allowing smaller businesses to be exempt, either by the size of community they serve, or by virtue of the size of premises from which they operate, both quite simple measures on which to legislate. We are also concerned to note that DRS is being promoted as a cash scheme, this has been dropped in all other countries in favour of cashless or voucher schemes to combat petty crime and addiction.

We would urge you to support our concerns.

John Kerr.

Open letter to CalMac

Dear Mr Drummond,
I have written to you previously regarding the winter overhaul programme, when the Clansman is away from our route for her annual maintenance and also covering the Hebrides.

Beachd Ailein

ALLAN CAMPBELL

editor@obantimes.co.uk

Nach tric a chluinnear gun tig math à olc, agus tha mòran a' fàs mothachail air mar a tha an im-pidh a th' oirnn uile fuireach aig ar dachannan a' toirt cothrom sealltainn ri rudan a bha sinn 's dòcha a' cur dheth bho chionn greise. 'S e firinn na cùise gum bheil beatha làitheil dhaoine, agus gu h-àraid feadhainn a tha fhathast a' cosnadh agus a' togail teaghlach, air fàs cho dripeil is nach eil iad ag amas air mòran a dh' iarradh iad a dhèanamh. Chuala mi fiù 's aon mhàthair ag ràdh gum bheil an fhèin-aonaranachd a' toirt cothrom luachmhor dhi ùine a chur seachad cuide ri a cuid cloinne. Anns an àbhaist tha a saoghal, mar a tha saoghal nam milleanan, air giùladair a tha ga lìonadh le uallaichean obrach agus dhleastanasan làitheil. Dè an seòrsa rudan ris am bheil cothrom againn sealltainn a-nise ma-thà? Leabhraichean sònraichte 's dòcha, neo sùil a thoirt air seann dealbhan teaghlach, neo 's dòcha ùrachadh eòlais a dhèanamh le fòndh gu caraid. Theagamh nach eil an dealbh a thug am bàrd Niall MacLeòid, le greis air sùgradh, greis air dannsa, greis air canntaireachd, is ceòl, cho coltach san là an-diugh ach gu cinnteach nì aighear feum agus togail inntinn. Theagamh gun cuir daoine cuideachd luach air ùine a bhith aca smaoineachadh air mar a thèid aca air taic is coibhneas a' nochdadh do dhaoine eile nach eil ann an suidheachadh cho cofhurtail riutha fhèin.

Nì gnìomhan beaga coibhneil atharrachadh mòr glè thrice agus tha fianais làitheil againn air

mar a tha daoine deiseil gus taic shaor-thoileach a thoirt nuair a tha cùisean duilich. Chan eil fios againn dè cho fada 's a dh'fhaodadh an suidheachadh seo mairsinn agus cha mhotha na sin a tha fios dè a' bhuaidh a bheir aonaranachd fhada air daoine. Bidh cunnart ann gum fàs cuid cho draghail le bhith air an cuingealachadh agus gum bris iad na riaghailtean a tha an riaghaltas air a chur oirnn. Dh'fhaodadh sin ciallachadh gun tèid poileas an sàs le làmhachas-làidir a bhios thar tòimhsean agus gum fàs eas-ùmhachd poblach. 'S e dealbh eagalach a tha sin agus mar a tha mi air a ràdh roimhe chan eil farmad sam bith agam ri luchd-riaghlaidh aig am bheil uallach stiùiridh chor na dùthcha aig an àm seo. Tha iadsan a' dèanamh an díchill a' leantainn na comhairle saidheansail a tha iad a' faotainn, agus buidheachas dha na mìltean de luchd-obrach sheirbheisean deatamach de gach seòrsa a tha gan cur fhèin ann an gàbhadh gach latha ag obair dhuinn uile!

Ach tha cor na dùthcha agus mar a gheibh i thairis air sgrios a' chorònbhioras gu bhith cuideachd gu mòr an urra ris an t-sluagh gu lèir, agus mar is motha feairt a bheir sinn dha na riaghailtean aonaranachd 's ann as luaithe a thèid an trioblaid seachad. Sùil eile air na seann dealbhan ud ma-thà!

Enforced isolation can allow time to tackle long-standing to-do lists!

Allan Campbell
ailean@obantimes.co.uk

This has always been a time of frustration for our island for various reasons, mainly that you allocate the wrong vessel to us during this period, an issue that in my opinion remains.

The reason for writing to you is that I feel I must make comment regarding the recent spate of severe weather conditions, especially during February when we endured many storms. This, of course, impacted on the proposed closure of the pier to vehicular traffic which was subsequently delayed to allow the delivery of essential goods. This situation was aggravated as the Clansman was absent and a smaller ferry was on our route.

I must put on record my admiration for the captain and crews for their dedication and indeed bravery during this period. It must be a very fine line between trying to deliver a service with all the added pressures of storms and pier

closure deadlines on the one hand, but keeping in mind the safety of the crew members, passengers, cargo and, of course, the vessel itself.

Coll and Tiree must surely be two of the most exposed piers within your network, bringing their own individual challenges. Cancellations are always a frustration but the final decision rests with the captain, as indeed it should. I do sincerely hope that this remains the case and to resist the temptation to put profit first.

It is on record that vessels operating on the Irish Sea, twice the size of the Clansman, were off service at times during these storms.

My thanks go to the crews of all your vessels but, in particular Lord of the Isles, Isle of Mull and, of course, Clansman as they were involved during this period.

Hector Neill, Balevullin, Isle of Tiree.

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DISTRICT NEWS

COMMUNITY SHOUT OUTS: REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

As lockdown reaches its second week, The Oban Times has been looking at some of the more positive stories arising from the coronavirus situation and are inviting our readers to join in. If you have a story about what people are doing to help in and around your own communities, please let us know so we can share the good news both on our website and in the paper. Contact us at editor@obantimes.co.uk or call 01631 568029.



Soroba's little ray of sunshine

An 11-year-old schoolboy is making good use of his downtime by helping out his elderly neighbours and spreading some joy in the Soroba community.

Fresh air fiend John Morrison was dismayed when his mum Josephine Mckay informed him that he had to keep his distance from his school chums and limit the amount of time he spent outdoors.

Furthermore, his big sister, Chelsey Mckay, and five-year-old niece Amy-Leigh are off limits too at their home in Glasgow.

Having digested the news, John quickly realised that many of his neighbours were in the same boat and set about trying to cheer them up instead.

On his to do list now are walking Rickson, an elderly neighbour's dog, delivering papers to those unable to get out, waving and chatting

through windows and designing artwork which he then gives to members of the community to cheer them up.

He told us: 'I know I would be fed up on my own all the time so I just wanted to do some things to make life better for people.'

'I am quite good at washing my hands and have my own sanitiser which I carry around with me so I don't catch or spread the virus around.'

John's rainbow art is becoming increasingly popular and is appearing in windows all around the neighbourhood. He has also made a poster and written a poem for the NHS and his 3D rainbow model has pride of place in the Soroba shop.

Benevolent businesses

Eco-friendly online shopping company Go Naked Veg has been working flat out during the crisis as more and more people require essential items to be delivered.

But the Dunbeg-based business is still doing its bit to help out in the community. Graham West and his fiancée Catriona Currie dropped off four fruit boxes, two donated by a customer and two from them, to Oban hospital and ambulance station last week to thank the NHS staff. The company is also running a Sponsor a Spud campaign during which anyone ordering can make as many 25p donations as they want towards veg for Hope Kitchen. Last week two big bags of potatoes, carrots and onions were delivered to the charity.

'We weren't quite expecting to feed so many just six weeks into starting up,' said Catriona. 'We will try to maintain that amount as a minimum for Hope Kitchen on a weekly basis. Graham is working flat out seven days, bless him. Please all stay safe and bear with us over the next wee while.'

Big thanks from self-isolators

Crossroads North Argyll worker Mairi MacGillivray is self-isolating with her daughter Shanna after developing coronavirus symptoms and wanted to send the following message: 'I would just like to say the community in Oban are amazing. I haven't been well, symptoms of the coronavirus, which affected my asthma. I

am beginning to improve. Hope Kitchen delivered food and healthy options staff delivered more fresh food. Amazing! One thing for sure is that Shanna and I will not starve while we are in isolation. Amazing sunsets have kept us going.'

Reaching out in Benderloch

Benderloch couple Joy and Campbell Cameron are taking part in a 212-day meditation after being invited to do so by one of the Bookends team, but Joy has taken some time out to let us know what the Ardchattan community have been up to over the past week.

'We've been phoning lots of folk to check how they are and usually they tell us who they've been phoning too, and we've also had calls to check how we are,' she told us.

'We are also writing letters to folk we know are on their own and hand delivering them so they have something newsy to read. There are folks doing shopping and collecting prescriptions too.'

'Our Facebook page Ardchattan Community Board, run by the community council, is our go-to page for up-to-date info and where we can offer and ask for help.'

'The famous Benderloch Pink Shop continues to have enough food supplies and they are taking all the precautions necessary despite the fact they are so shortstaffed. Everyone is so grateful to Campbell Munro and the team for such a sterling service.'

'Lewis at the garage, who retired over winter, opens Ledaig Leisure on a Saturday morning for fuel and gas supplies and the Lochnell Hotel is doing a carry-out menu.'

'We are grateful to all the NHS and emergency workers, many of whom live in our community and who the villages applauded last Thursday night to the strains of Oban High School Pipe Band members. It was a while since we'd heard Angus MacColl playing outdoors, and it brought back memories of the times years ago his music would be heard around Keil on summer nights. We'll be out this Thursday again.'

'The Bookends Facebook page is reaching out, too, to keep in touch, make recommendations for reading and sharing useful info.'

At random

MARTIN LAING

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Amazing response

I am astonished and amazed by the response from across the Oban area – and elsewhere – to the coronavirus crisis.

It seems that, despite the seriousness of the emergency, there is still room for humour, as evidenced by the cartoon below. Indeed, it is probably essential that people retain their sense of humour amid the tragedy of so many lives lost and people laid low by the disease.

As well as the humour, which has been markedly pronounced on social media, I have been struck by the fantastic sense of community spirit that has been manifest all over the country.

The good people of Oban have been pulling together magnificently to help each other, with selfless efforts to ensure those most in need do not want for anything.

Among the brilliant ideas was the one in last week's Oban Times for community alert flags. A green thumbs up poster in your window means everything is fine – or as near as it could be – whereas a red thumbs down flag being displayed lets friends and neighbours know that someone in the property requires assistance.

If you know anyone who could benefit from this, the posters are available to download and print off at home by emailing editor@obantimes.co.uk or on our Facebook page.

Spare a thought, though, for some unlucky souls. A friend of mine, Kenny Harper, is stuck in Thailand because all flights home have been cancelled. Like us here, Kenny tells me all the bars, cafes and restaurants have been closed but, in addition, there is a national 7pm to 7am curfew under which no one is allowed outside at all.

Now, I dare say there are worse places to be trapped, but if you're going into lockdown you would surely rather be at home.

Still, we've proved we are a resilient lot. As I said last week, let's all stay calm and follow the national guidelines to keep ourselves safe.

What do you think?

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Ingredients

- 5 sheets leaf gelatine
- 200g raspberries, reserving 4 berries to decorate
- Zest and juice of 3 unwaxed lemons, plus thin lemon wedges to decorate
- 3 large egg yolks, 4 large egg whites*

Method:

- Tightly tie strips of non-stick baking paper around 4 individual, straight-sided soufflé dishes (about 9cm wide x 5cm deep, or 200ml), leaving a 4cm collar above the rims. Then soak the gelatine in cold water for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, purée the raspberries in a food processor and set aside.
- Put the lemon zest and juice, egg yolks and sweetener in a large, heatproof bowl. Boil a pan of water, then turn off the heat. Place the bowl over the water, making sure the base isn't touching the water. Using an electric hand whisk, beat the lemon mixture for 5 minutes, or until pale in colour and slightly thickened.
- Heat 3 tbsp water in a small pan, so it just covers the base. Squeeze the water from the gelatine. Put the leaves in the hot water, take the pan off the heat immediately and stir until dissolved. Then whisk into the lemon mixture (still over water); set the bowl aside to cool completely.

- 4 level tbsp sweetener
- 500g fat-free, no-added-sugar vanilla yogurt
- *Pregnant women, the elderly, babies and toddlers are advised to choose eggs showing the British Lion stamp if eating raw or partially cooked eggs

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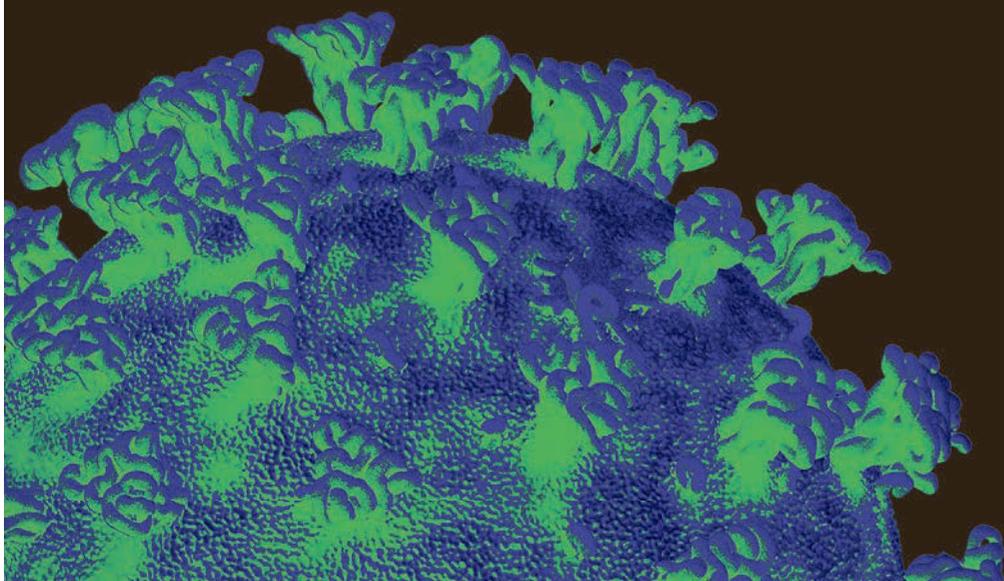
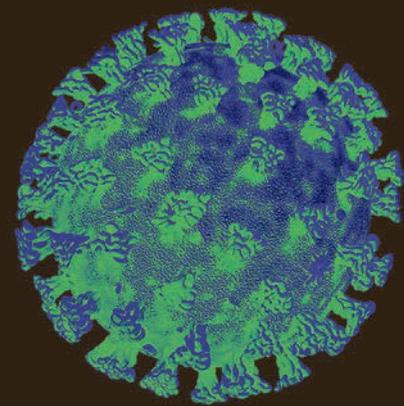
STAY AT HOME

SAVE LIVES

Anyone can spread Coronavirus.

The only reasons to leave home are:

- ✔ To shop for basic necessities or pick up medicine
- ✔ To travel to work when you absolutely cannot work from home
- ✔ To exercise once a day, alone or with members of your household
- ✘ Do not meet others, even friends or family



CORONAVIRUS

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PROTECT
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LEISURE & ENTERTAINMENT

YOUR GUIDE TO WHAT'S ON IN ARGYLL AND LOCHABER

Art society calls it a day as call for new committee fails

by Fiona Scott
fscott@obantimes.co.uk



Oban Art Society has made the difficult decision to dissolve the group and distribute any assets to other like-minded bodies over the next year.

The call was made at a special general meeting on Friday January 13, when it became clear that the society did not have the necessary personnel to continue, with previous committee's officers, all long-serving, having resigned and no nominees coming forward to take their places.

The group had hoped to put on one last exhibition but sadly, due to the current coronavirus pandemic, this too could not happen.

In a statement to members in the society's April newsletter, OAS chairman John Peterson, who had just began his term in office, said: 'It saddens me, especially as I am new to the area, to find these circumstances and I take over the chair as the society ends.

'However, I am very much aware that the society has



achieved a lot over the last 50 years and perhaps has achieved the aims behind its creation.

'No less, I'm sure the connections and friendships it has helped build will endure.

'I wish to express my thanks, which I'm sure you will all echo, for the work and commitment of all those who have

supported the society over the years in whatever way.'

Mr Peterson and the others present at the meeting agreed to oversee distribution of the society's assets, until exhausted, to a body (or bodies) that have similar objects to the society.

'Four will be in this new

panel, with me as chair, with three considered quorate to make decisions on the society's behalf,' added Mr Peterson.

'There is no reason to pay your subscription other than to potentially support the body or bodies who may apply for funding.

'It is too late to contact

everybody who pays their membership subscription by direct debit. If you wish to cancel then please do so and contact your bank.

'If you pay by cheque or cash; by all means do so as before. All monies will be accepted and used to support the object of the society until all funds

Oban Art Society has held many successful exhibitions in the past, with its annual show being particularly popular.

are allocated. It is very unlikely that you will be asked to or even be able to pay again as we expect the society to cease to exist during the next year.'

The new committee have been tasked with distributing the assets/funds of the society to a body (or bodies) with similar objectives to those of the society.

The object of Oban Art Society is stated in its constitution as: 'To encourage the study, practice and knowledge of the visual arts in Oban and the surrounding district, and other educational, artistic and cultural purposes connected therewith.'

With that in mind, the society is inviting expressions of interest from any such body, nominated by any existing member(s), in receiving a share of the funds.

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M'ALBA

MY ALBA

DIARDAOIN 2 An Giblean/ THURSDAY 2nd April

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 Robert Black – Coigeach Gun Chogais (rpt)
22:00 ÙR/NEW: Seoid a' Chidsin S4
22:30 ÙR/NEW: Bana- Churaidhean/ Warrior Women
23:20 Dhan Uisge (Loch Mhisteam) (rpt)
23:30 Func (rpt)

DIHAOINE 3 An Giblean/ FRIDAY 3rd April

17:00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming
18:35 Machair (rpt)
19:00 An Là – News
19:25 Binneas – Na Trads – Seumas O'Sullivan (rpt)
19:30 Fianais (rpt)
20:00 Togaidh Sinn Fonn (rpt)
20:25 Fraochy Bay (rpt)
20:30 Thar na Loidhne (rpt)
21:00 ÙR/NEW: Peat & Diesel – That's the way we do it!
22:30 ÙR/NEW: Peat & Diesel – From the Barrow to the Barrowlands
23:30 Seoid a' Chidsin S4 (rpt)

DISATHAIRNE 4 An Giblean/ SATURDAY 4 April

16:00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming
17:45 An Là – News
18:00 Spors – Scotland's Women's Six Nations 2019 (rpt)

19:00 Mach a Seo (rpt)
19:30 Fianais (rpt)
20:00 Machair (rpt)
20:25 Fraochy Bay (rpt)
20:30 Dreach Ur (rpt)
21:00 Peat & Diesel – That's the way we do it! (rpt)
22:30 FUNC (rpt)
23:00 Spors – Scotland's Womens Six Nations 2019 (rpt)
00:00 Peat & Diesel – From the Barrow to the Barrowlands (rpt)

DIDÒMHNAICH 5 An Giblean/ SUNDAY 5 April

16:00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming
18:15 An Là – News
18:30 Binneas – Na Trads – Tide Lines (rpt)
18:35 Sgeul Slainte (rpt)
18:50 Ar N-Aran Laitheil/ Spiritual Service (rpt)
19:30 Alleluia (rpt)
20:00 Eorpa (rpt)
20:30 Fuine S5 (rpt)
21:00 ÙR/NEW: Na Boireannaich a Thog Glasgow City
22:00 Peat & Diesel – From the Barrow to the Barrowlands (rpt)
23:00 Eadar na Dha: 1918-1935/Clash of Futures: 1918-1935 (rpt)
23:55 Belladrum – Cridhe Tartan (Highlights) (rpt)

DILUAIN 6 An Giblean/ MONDAY 6 April

17:00 Prògraman Chloinne – Children's programming
19:00 Turas a' Bhradain/The Salmon's Journey (rpt)

19:30 Beul Chainnt (rpt)
20:00 An Là – News
20:30 Kerry is Kirsty: A' Chomraich (rpt)
21:00 Trusadh – Gluais! (Healthy Body, Healthy Mind) (rpt)
22:00 Tìree Music Festival/ Feis Chiuil Thiriodh (rpt)
22:30 Craobhan na h-Alba/Scotland's Trees (rpt)
23:30 Seoid a' Chidsin S4 (rpt)

DIMÀIRT 7 An Giblean/ TUESDAY 7 April

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 An Lan – A' Tuigsinn an Lain/ Tide – Understanding the Tide (rpt)
22:00 Trusadh – Gluais! (Healthy Body, Healthy Mind) (rpt)
23:00 Fraochy Bay (rpt)
23:05 Togaidh Sinn Fonn (rpt)
23:30 Alleluia (rpt)

DICIADAIN 8 An Giblean/ WEDNESDAY 8 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 Farpaisean Chon Chaorach (rpt)
22:00 FUNC (rpt)
22:30 Tìree Music Festival / Feis Chiuil Thiriodh (rpt)
23:00 Na Boireannaich a Thog Glasgow City (rpt)



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Radio play makes it to small screen

by Fiona Scott
fscott@obantimes.co.uk



The Oban Times has teamed up with Benderloch and North Connel Drama Club to present a 'premiere' performance of John Finnemore's radio comedy Penguin Diplomacy.

The play, starring Mike Rowell and Sophie Caruana was recorded 'live' in the club's drama hut a couple of weeks ago by Stargate 42 Films just before the country went into lockdown. It will screen at 8pm tomorrow night (Friday April 3) on The Oban Times page – www.obantimes.co.uk/penguin

Penguin Diplomacy was performed in the Campbeltown Drama Festival in February when it won the Rex Trophy for first place overall, the Campbeltown Drama Club Trophy for best stage presentation and the Jenny Black Memorial Trophy for highest marks for acting.

Performed by Sophie Caruana and Angus Vajk, the play went on to represent Argyll and Kintyre in the Scottish Community Drama Association Western Divisional final, which was due to take place in Greenock at the end March.

Angus was unavailable in March and so the part of Søndergaard was taken by director Mike Rowell and the play was entered for the Lorn Drama Festival in Oban and the North Lorn Drama Festival in Appin.

Sadly, the coronavirus pandemic caused the cancellation of both, but a cunning plan was hatched by The Oban Times and the Lorn Drama Festival to record the play and stream it on the Oban Times YouTube channel.

Mike told us: 'We had been



Mike Rowell and Sophie Caruana star in Friday night's 'premiere'.

rehearsing the play for the festival anyway so when the festival was cancelled we made the decision to film it on stage.

'Things were changing by the hour though and when the cinema and theatres were also told to shut, we ended up filming it in our rehearsal space with just four of us present.

'It was an interesting project to say the least but we just wanted to give everyone a chance to watch and enjoy it.'

Penguin Diplomacy is set in 1948 on a rocky island in the South Atlantic. Bunning, a British diplomat arrives to claim the island for Britain, but the resident Dane, Søndergaard and some penguins, notably Lauren Bacall, have other ideas.

The original radio play was shortlisted for the Society of Authors Tinniswood Award in 2018. This is a highly respected award presented annually to the best original audio drama script.

A well-known name in Radio 4 households, writer John Finnemore is a regular contributor to classic series such as I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue, The Now Show and The Unbelievable Truth. He

is best known for writing and performing in Cabin Pressure, a sitcom set in a less than successful charter airline, starring Benedict Cumberbatch, Roger Allam and Stephanie Cole, and John Finnemore's Souvenir Programme, a multi-award-winning sketch show, now in its eighth series.

Everyone involved is really grateful to John, David Tyler of Pozzitive Productions and United Agents for allowing this video stream to go ahead in these unusual and unprecedented times and they'd like to remind everyone that this is an amateur production of Double Acts by John Finnemore, performed by a company of non-professional actors.

Benderloch and North Connel Drama Club and the Lorn Drama Festival hope you enjoy the play and in lieu of their normal ticket costs would welcome any donation you can give to Hope Kitchen in Oban.

Why not choose your favourite social media platform to discuss the play or join us on Twitter and tweet @BacallPenguin, or leave The Oban Times a message on our Facebook Page.

COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

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.



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Robert in lockdown!



ROBERT ROBERTSON

robert.d.robertson@hotmail.co.uk

Picture the scene: enforced self-isolation due to the coronavirus has caused the Park Bar to move its pub quiz to Facebook and Donnie 'Maroot' MacLeod is presenting it from quarantine in his Kelvingrove kitchen.

I find myself part of a virtual team (connected via video link) and consisting of three girls in Tobermory, one boy in Benderloch, and one boy in Tiree. Teams from all over the country (and further afield), all connected via social media, are commenting their scores for each round in the comments section of the video. We've had a geography round, a music round, and my team are in with a shout of the prizes. Onto the history round.

After a brief fall-out over whether Bonnie Prince Charlie landed in Moidart or Eriskay, we were doing just fine. The boy



Quiz master Donnie 'Maroot' MacLeod.

from Tiree (who shall remain nameless but who plays the accordion in Trail West and owns a gin distillery), had hitherto spent most of the quiz asleep on his couch. 'In what war was the battle of Balaclava fought?' asked Donnie from the screen – the legendary voice of Donald Macrae accompanying him from his Alexa. Those of us in the team who were still awake scratched our heads. Our man from Tiree rose immediately

from his slumbers and shouted: 'The Crimean war!' and fell back asleep as suddenly as he had awakened. It was a coronavirus miracle!

The Park Bar quiz was one tremendous example of people coming together through social media to get through this strange period. Many did so via a great new app called House Party. It works by allowing you to video call your contacts and your call will then be visible to other contacts who may want to jump in and join you.

On Friday and Saturday evenings last week, I sat chatting to friends in Fort William, Oban, Tiree, Mull, Inverness, Uist and even one in China! All from our own self-isolation. We were all able to share a beer together just as if we were in the Park Bar itself.

I know a couple of girls who actually looked out a nice

dress and did their make-up and hair just to go on the app! And I know a couple of lads who woke up in bed on Sunday morning with no recollection of having come home from the kitchen! So much for using this lockdown to get fit and healthy.

People are finding ways to get through this difficult period and social media is certainly a great help. Musicians playing live from their living rooms are experiencing greater social media interaction than ever before. A live video I did from our Tide Lines page managed to raise more than £6,000 last week for the Simon Community in Glasgow, thanks to the generosity of our fans. It was a stark reminder that, while we all complain about having to stay indoors, we must, of course, be thankful that we have somewhere to isolate because a great many people don't.

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Due to these unprecedented times, Oban Fm are operating on a scaled down basis to adhere to the social distancing and to protect their presenters. They are currently broadcasting only Breakfast and Drive times shows with Midday Covid 19 updates. Don't worry and keep listening for your favourites to come back

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

#COVIDceilidh proves a hit across the world

#COVIDceilidh is not just a new hashtag but a new online phenomenon winning new fans to traditional folk music during the coronavirus.

With venues shut, gigs cancelled and bookings up in smoke, traditional musicians are taking to social media to post impromptu gigs using the hashtag #COVIDceilidh.

The idea originated from one of Scotland's most recognised and accomplished fiddle players and composers, Duncan Chisholm, to connect musicians with new fans using the power of social media.

Duncan has been using his loyal following and influence to spotlight traditional musicians – known and unknown – with live music lovers around the world. He explained: 'We're encouraging musicians from around the world to post an acoustic tune or song a day using the #COVIDceilidh hashtag.'

The aim is to give stuck-at-home folks a lift during the lockdown and connect musicians with new fans through a thumping good tune.

Closer to home, Hannah Fisher and Sorren Maclean, on Mull, took up the invitation. The acclaimed pair quickly reached an international audience.

Before the lockdown was imposed, they donned wellies and woollies to play Cathal Hayden's appropriately-named Splendid Isolation, all framed by the beautiful Kilvickeon beach near Bunessan, Ross of Mull.



Professional musicians Sorren Maclean and Hannah Fisher making music on Mull.

Their performance has racked up in excess of 10,000 views and has attracted positive comments from as far afield as France, Bermuda, Florida and Oklahoma.

Hannah said #COVIDceilidh was aiming to bring 'lots of sunshine' to people, urging: 'Follow the hashtag, show your granny, join in!'

But there's a serious side to the issue, too, as many self-employed musicians are facing up to no gigs or income for the foreseeable future.

Fans new and old, where possible, can help by purchasing any albums for sale to help support the creative community during unprecedented times for live music the world over.

Let us know how you're beating the lockdown boredom by emailing editor@obantimes.co.uk or giving us a call on 01631 568000.

Coastal photo opportunities defeat coronavirus gloom

Wildscape photographer Margaret Soraya wants people to picture stunning scenery as a healing power.

Margaret, who takes small groups on workshops or retreats to some of the most remote beaches in the UK including Scotland's west coast, says the silence of nature could be just what people need as a mental and physical detox.

'I'm intrigued by the healing power of silence. While the quiet gives us mental respite from the busy chatter of social media, materialism and TV news, nature's unspoiled surrounds give us fresh air, night-time darkness for deep sleep, and a reason to move,' she said.

Before coronavirus struck, her courses, including one at Glencoe, were all sold out and now she is working on plans for more in November and next



Margaret Soraya.

march including Tiree, Mull, Islay and Jura – even if social distancing is still needed.

To view her work and find out more visit quietlandscapes.co.uk or email margaret@quietlandscapes.co.uk

If you would like to send your photographs to The Oban Times, we will publish as many as we can online and in the paper.

Seil VE party postponed

British Legion organisers of VE 75 celebrations on Seil says coronavirus has postponed the party – not cancelled it.

Retired Squadron Leader Lorraine Reynolds, who was administrator for a planned big event and swing band night on behalf of the Easdale branch of RBL Scotland has asked people to save a space in their diaries for later in the year.

'A lot of hard work and planning had already gone in

to it. We'd been overwhelmed by the generosity of people, had great prizes lined up for the raffle and invites accepted from local dignitaries but after much deliberation we had to postpone if for now.

'There's still a chance we could have it on VJ Day in mid-August but we're holding on to announcing a date for now. Let's just say when all this is over we'll be having one big party,' she said.

Crossword

1		2		3		4		5		6		7
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10		11				12						
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15				16				17				18
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22												
						23						

Across

1 Shrubs of the cashew family (7)

5 Maliciousness (5)

8 Replace in power (9)

9 Stage signal (3)

10 Club (5)

12 Asylum seeker (7)

13 The cable along which messages can be sent (9,4)

15 Summary (7)

17 Underground network (5)

19 Wreath (3)

20 Remove (9)

22 Era (5)

23 Contender in an election (7)

Down

1 Rope fibre (5)

2 World view (3)

3 Edging of pavement (7)

4 Attempt to injure the reputation of another (5,8)

5 Bundle (5)

6 Anonymous (9)

7 One who gives criticism of written work (7)

11 A sulphur-like element (9)

13 Small open pie (7)

14 Courage (7)

16 Clothe (5)

18 Vista (5)

21 Grass part (3)

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION

1	E	N	2	I	G	3	M	A	4	I	5	D	6	Y	7	L	8	S
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We are getting the job done

These are unprecedented times, but the job of farming does not stop. NFU Scotland director of policy, **Jonnie Hall**, looks at how the union is continuing its day job.

Right now, the weather is pretty much what many have craved through months of dirty wet stuff and named storms.

Spring work is full on – ploughing to sowing. Calving and lambing are getting into full swing against a backdrop of what looks like things turning green.

The job of farming is being done. Food is being produced. Scottish agriculture is doing its bit, as it always does.

But with the clocks going forward, we find ourselves in anything but ‘normal’ times. The word ‘unprecedented’ is

already well worn but remains spot on. The situation is fluid to say the least. What is said or done one day often changes the next. And that applies to us all. We are all having to adapt – and adapt quickly. It is not ‘business as usual’.

In practical terms, it is the union’s job to get key messages out so our members can respond and adapt to the situation right now – based on governments’ public health advice and instruction. Sometimes the advice and instruction can be ambiguous. Often it must change to reflect the here and now. As a



NFUS director of policy Jonnie Hall.

result, clarity and certainty are very scarce. At the same time, it is just as important that we do not get distracted by what might change as we go forward. As things stand, nobody

knows how this will play out. But just as with the annual cycles of farming and crofting, certain things will happen.

Take, for example, Common Agricultural Policy schemes to

which the UK remains wedded in 2020 and on which Scottish agriculture is so dependent – maybe this year more than ever?

The fact is that at some point SGRPID will make payments. What or when that might be is unknown, but it is clear is that any payment at any point starts with the data swept up by the Single Application Form (SAF). In that sense, there is nothing new.

While accuracy of data is not a new concept in the context of the SAF, as things stand every effort must be made to submit the information that is available at the time of competing the SAF. If this information needs amended, there are already processes in place to allow this.

Ultimately, it is vital that the information is available so that applications are processed and payments made.

It is also critical in these times of single imperative that any questions or issues we raise about SAF processes and the regulations and compliance surrounding schemes, or anything else for that matter, are directly in the context of COVID-19 rather than just an inherent dislike of existing requirements.

These are unprecedented times but sticking to farming and crofting’s age-old precedent of getting the job done is what we must all focus on. As I say so often, whether at work or play: ‘We will get there – wherever there is.’

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Coronavirus

How you can stay home and get fresh air safely.

We value everyone in our society – and we want you to stay safe and well. And that particularly applies if you are over 70, pregnant (in early pregnancy and after 28 weeks) or eligible for the flu vaccine for health reasons.

You can still get fresh air and stay safe. Got a garden? Make the most of it. A walk around the block is just as good.

Limit outings to once a day and please remember to stay 2 metres away from others to avoid putting yourself and other people at risk.

Older people or those who may be concerned can call Age Scotland for information, friendship and advice, FREE on **0800 12 44 222**.

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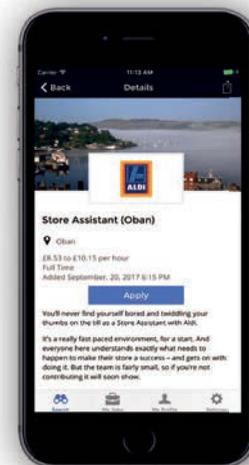
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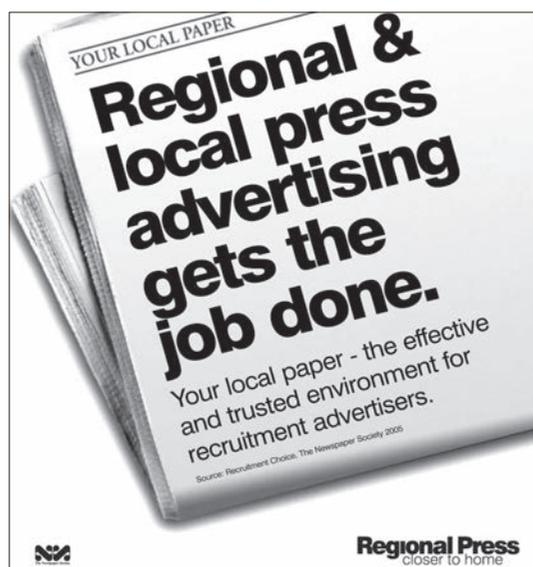
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The applications listed below, along with plans and other documents submitted with them, may be examined online at <http://wam.highland.gov.uk>; electronically at the AREA PLANNING AND BUILDING STANDARDS OFFICE, CHARLES KENNEDY BUILDING, ACHINTORE 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
20/01095/FUL	Site 160M SW Of the Pier Fort William	Extension to existing pontoons
20/01268/FUL	Bank of Scotland Station Road, Mallaig	Proposed external slopes and ramp and pavement dropped kerbs to create inclusive access into the bank
20/01328/FUL	Inverwallace Albert Road, Ballachulish	Erection of residential annex
20/00148/FUL	Land 320M SE Of Beinn Bhreac Acharacle	Installation of floating pier, formation of timber transfer area and access track

Time period for comments is 14 days
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PEUGEOT MAKES HISTORY BY WINNING THE PRESTIGIOUS 'CAR OF THE YEAR' AWARD FOR THE SIXTH TIME IN 2020

PRESS RELEASE

Peugeot has won Europe's most coveted automotive award, the 'Car Of The Year' title for the sixth time, becoming only the third brand to do so. The prestigious trophy was presented to the all-new Peugeot 208 after being judged by an independent jury of 60 European automotive journalists.

Peugeot has previously won the award five times across five different vehicles. These include the Peugeot 504 sedan (1969), 405 sedan (1988), 307 (2002) and 308 (2014) hatchbacks, and the 3008 SUV in 2017. The 3008 SUV was the first SUV to win the award since its creation in 1964.

The Peugeot brand's record reflects the outstanding design, technical innovation

and performance of its vehicles over the past 50 years.

The all-new Peugeot 208 has become the sixth Peugeot model to win Europe's most prestigious automotive award. With a sharp design, engaging driving dynamics and clever use of technology, the all-new 208 was awarded the 'Car Of The Year' title by more than 60 leading European automotive journalists.

With a choice of both efficient petrol and diesel engines, as well as a full electric variant, the all-new 208 forms a part of Peugeot's new strategy of 'unboring the future' by giving drivers the power of choice: 'choose your Peugeot, choose your powertrain.'

The all-new Peugeot e-208 represents a new leap in the world of electric mobility. With a range of 217 miles (under WLTP testing), its 100 kW (136 bhp) electric motor with 260 Nm of torque (available from 0mph) enables it to go from 0-62mph in just 8.1 seconds.

The all-new Peugeot e-208 also features three driving modes: Sport, Normal and Eco.

The all-new Peugeot 208 has already received 130,000 orders in Europe, including 15 per cent for the electric e-208 since its launch in September 2019. To find out more visit www.campbeltownmotorcompany.co.uk





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Property market adapts to social distancing measures

Guidance around property buying and selling during the COVID-19 outbreak from the government and relevant industry bodies is changing on a regular basis. Contact an ESPC solicitor estate agent for the most up to date information.

In the past couple of weeks, despite the new restrictions on daily lives, ESPC agents continue to report cases of buyers paying in excess of the Home Report valuation for a house or flat along with many properties going to closing dates. This indicates buyers are keen to secure property purchases despite the COVID-19 outbreak. Find out what ESPC agents are saying about the current market conditions below.

Demand from buyers

Jenna Spence, operations director at Neilsons Solicitors and Estate Agents, cited several cases of properties across Edinburgh going to closing dates in the past couple of weeks. She also mentioned they have received multiple offers over the Home Report valuation for properties. In total, Neilsons had ten closing dates for properties last week with 36 offers received.

Tzana Webster, sales and marketing manager at Warners LLP, said they have seen similar cases. This week, ten offers were accepted on their properties, none of which was below Home Report value. A property in Portobello did particularly well, achieving an offer which exceeded Home Report value by over 10 per cent.

Stacey Wilson, director at VMH Solicitors, also noted cases of properties in the past week continuing to receive significant interest from buyers. One of their properties in Abbeyhill went to a closing date on March 25 and received 'more than half a dozen offers and achieved a price in excess of 15 per cent over Home Report valuation'.

Amy Howard, head of estate agency at Deans Properties, said they have also seen many cases of properties sold at or over Home Report valuation in the past week and commented: 'We've still got inquiries coming in and our team are actively working from home.'

Graham White, head of East Lothian operations and estate agency at Anderson Strathern, also had a case in the past week that achieved an offer 10 per cent over the asking price. He



A word from Argyll Estate Agents

Let's turn a negative into a positive. There has never been a better time to prepare for the property market starting back up. Buyers, sellers and agents can all use this 'stay at home' time to get themselves in a prime position. Good housekeeping and carrying out the small jobs now will benefit us all in the long run. Current opinion is that the property market will bounce back significantly when this period of uncertainty ends. We do not need to go too far back to test this. Who remembers Brexit now? January and February 2020 were very buoyant months with record levels of sales and online traffic being reported by our major property website partners. We are expecting similar results, if not even better, this time around. Spring and early summer is historically the busiest time of year for home movers, and with the early spring buyers set to join the market at the same time, this can only lead to positive times ahead.

said: 'If both parties enter into sensible talks and agree that the process can be carried on with a flexible date of entry then deals can still be done.'

Michael Maloco, senior partner at Fife-based Maloco + Associates, said that while there had been a decline in market activity over the past week, the firm had set a closing date for a property and had submitted some offers as well.

Ron Hastings, director at Borders-based Hastings Legal, said: 'We have had recent successes with closing dates including a cottage in Ayton on the Berwickshire coast, which attracted multiple offers and a sale well over the Home Report value despite the closing date being set for Tuesday March 24.'

Homes coming to market

Some sellers are also still looking to get their homes on the market, with all the above firms listing more properties over the last couple of weeks.

Jenna Spence commented: 'Sellers seem keen to proceed to market if they have a Home Report, photography and floorplan in place to enable them to do so as they want to take advantage of getting seen.'

Due to surveyors not being able to visit properties, those properties who do not currently have a Home Report won't be able to come to market in the present circumstances. However, ESPC agents are proactively preparing these properties so that when the current restrictions are lifted they can be brought to market as soon as possible.



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BIRTHS

BUCHANAN - Hugh and Sara are delighted to announce the birth of their beautiful baby daughter Arlet Buchanan Casas, born March 12, 2020 at Raigmore. A second grandchild for Ann and the late Willie Buchanan, Connel and new cousin for Jack.

GOLDEN WEDDINGS

BIRCH - MACNEILAGE - At All Saints Church, Harrow Weald, Middlesex on April 4, 1970 by Rev. D Bond, Alan to Doreen.

DIAMOND WEDDINGS

MAY - MACDONALD - At St. Columba's Argyll Square Church, on March 29, 1960 by the late Rev. William MacDonald, Ivor to Betty.

DEATHS

CAMPBELL - Christine Ruby (née Matheson), passed away peacefully at home in White Cairn, Taynuilt on March 24, 2020 after a courageous fight against illness. Beloved wife of Alasdair and loving mum to Gemma and David. Loving mother-in-law to Charlotte, cherished granny to David, Poppy, Evan and Tommy. Dearest sister to John and loved and respected sister-in-law to Jane and Jennifer. A loving niece, aunty, cousin, cherished friend and respected colleague. Ruby will be greatly missed by all. In line with Government restrictions a family only funeral has taken place. All family and friends will be invited to a memorial service for Ruby at a later date.

LENNOX - Thomas (Tom), formerly of Dalrigh, Oban, passed away peacefully at Luncarty Care Home on Monday, March 23, 2020, aged 100. Beloved husband of the late Mary (née Munro) and dearly loved dad, grandfather and great-grandfather. Funeral private.

McLEOD - Suddenly at Struan Lodge Residential Home on Saturday, March 28, 2020, Kenneth, loving son of the late Kenneth and Mary McLeod (Strachur) and a much loved brother, uncle, great-uncle, brother-in-law and dear friend to many. Will be sadly missed by all. Due to the current restrictions there will be a graveside service for family only at Strachur Cemetery. Family flowers only please.

MACNEILL - Cathie, passed away peacefully at her home in Scarinish, Isle of Tiree on March 24, 2020, in her 94th year. Interred in Sorobay Cemetery, Balinoe on March 27, 2020. Sadly missed.

SCOLAR - Peacefully at home in Lochaline on Tuesday, March 24, 2020, Alistair, in his 93rd year. A loving husband to the late Katie, a dearly loved dad to Karen and Johnny, a special father-in-law to Teen, a treasured grandpa to Claire and David, and a very proud great-grandpa to Katie, Finlay and Calum. A dear friend to so many. Due to current circumstances, a private family funeral has been held, and a celebration of Alistair's life will follow at a later date. A life well-lived is a legacy of joy and pride and pleasure, a living, lasting memory our grateful hearts will treasure.

SIMPSON - (Kingswells/Strathglass). Peacefully at home on Saturday, March 28, 2020, David George Menzies Simpson, 2 Derbeth Manor, Kingswells, Aberdeen, aged 76 years, former Project Manager, avid shinty stalwart, also keen supporter of Aberdeen Football Club. Much loved husband to Kathleen, dearly loved father to Karen, Graeme and Calum, father-in-law to Ian and Jenny, treasured grandpa to Niall, Euan and Morven, dear brother, uncle and a great friend of many. Funeral service on Monday, April 6 at 12 noon in the funeral home of William T. Fraser and Son, Culduthel Road, Inverness, thereafter to rest in the tranquil surroundings of Fasnakyle Burial Ground. Due to Government guidelines family only.

WATT - Jeanette (née Fraser). Peacefully at home in Ballachulish surrounded by her family on March 29, 2020. Much loved wife of Robert and loving sister to Rosalind, beloved mother to Peter and Morag, mother-in-law to Alan and Joan, loving granny to Caroline and great-granny to Cian. Greatly admired and respected by many good friends.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CAMERON - Ewen and family would like to thank family and friends for their expressions of sympathy by way of letters, cards and calls. The family wish to relay our gracious thanks to Dr Flaven and Dr Lawler of Cill Chuimein Medical Centre and the health workers for

their kindness and support whilst nursing Catherine at home and during her stay in Raigmore. Special thanks to Glengarry Shinty Club players and friends who pulled together at short notice to make the funeral possible. Thank you to Alan Smurthwaite, Celebrant for his thoughtful kind words. Loch Oich Food Co. for the refreshments and Loch Duich Plants for the beautiful family wreaths. Many thanks to McLellan Funeral Directors for their help, support and kindness. Finally thank you to all who joined us to pay their respects and to those who were unable to attend due to the current restrictions but had us in our thoughts. We are overwhelmed to be able to donate £550, to Cill Chuimein Medical Practice from the collection.

MEMORIALS

CAMPBELL - Marie T. Campbell, taken April 5, 2019, much loved mother and gran to Marina, David, Davina and Iona.

Those we cherish never truly leave, for they live on in the love and kindness they showed us and the happiness they brought into our lives.

CAMPBELL - Treasured memories of our dear mum, gran and great-gran, Marie Campbell, who passed away April 5, 2019.

Always in our thoughts.
- Kenny and family, Inverness.

CAMPBELL - Marie, passed away April 5, 2019. No longer in our lives to share But in our hearts you're always there.

- From Diana, Mel, Gwen, Lorna and Jim.

CAMPBELL - Marie T., February 6, 1934 - April 5, 2019.

A year gone by, thinking of you often. Sleep tight.

- Mary, David, Maree, Hamish, Glenn and Drew.

CLARK - Remembering with love my fiancé George, who died April 7, 2006.

I will always love you.
- Jackie xx

CURRIE - In loving memory of a dear sister, aunt and great-aunt Agnes, who passed away on March 31, 2019.

Always in our thoughts
Forever in our hearts.
- Mary, Iona and Ashley.

CURRIE - In loving memory of our dear friend Agnes, who passed away March 31, 2019.

Sadly missed, always in our thoughts.
- Dave and Barbara, Bolton.

HEAP - In loving memory of a dear son and brother Edward Alexander (Eddie) accidentally killed at work on April 4, 1979, aged 18 years.

Deep in our hearts memories are kept
Of the one we loved and will never forget
Sadly missed by mum and all the family xx

McNICOL - In loving memory of our dear parents and grandparents, Janet, died March 24, 1986 and Duncan, died November 29, 1987.

Always in our thoughts and sadly missed.
- Nellie, Tommy and family.

McPHAIL - In loving memory of our dear mum Mary, who passed away on April 3, 2004 and our dear dad Charlie, who passed away on February 16, 2017.

Sadly missed.
Forever in our thoughts
- John, Sheona and Drew, Dalmally.

Love and miss you always granny and grandpa
- Elizabeth and Andrew. xxxx

MOYES - In loving memory of Flora, dearly loved wife of the late Ted Moyes, and treasured mum, mother-in-law and granny, who passed away on March 30, 1990.

Always in our thoughts
Forever in our hearts.
- Anne, Caroline, Ted and families.

SMITH - In loving memory of a dear husband and dad, Bernard Devlin Smith, died April 3, 2017. Time slips by and life goes on, But from our hearts You're never gone.

We think about you always,
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We have so many memories,
But wish we still had you.
- Margory, Ian and Bernie.

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A tribute: Donald Clark

Donald Clark was for 50 years the convivial, larger-than-life host at The George Hotel in Inveraray, a notable bon viveur and one of the most colourful characters in Argyll. He died aged 75 on January 19 after a short illness.

Latterly, his mobility hampered by a leg injury, he would sit in the corner of The George public bar on an oversized carved wooden stool. From his throne he dispensed news, advice and anecdotes – albeit not always historically accurate. His inimitable irony, perfectly-timed humour and the occasional reprimand to a wayward customer were all fuelled by a generous glass.

As former president of the Scottish Licensed Trade Association and Keeper of the Quaich, Donald knew the intricacies of the business intimately from personal experience. His taste was eclectic and his appetite substantial, extending from Dom Perignon and Saint-Émilien Grand Cru to Tennent's lager and GlenDronach single malt. On a hot day he'd have an icy martini or a gin and tonic, proportionately scaled up in a pint glass. Being asked if he had time for a quick 'small one', he would reply: 'I'll decide the size for myself, if you don't mind.'

Big D, as he was often called, was fastidious about standards in the little public bar, training his regulars to clear tables of empty glasses and plates promptly, and to keep the log fire stoked on winter evenings.

If one of his regulars turned up untypically well-dressed, Donald would raise an eyebrow in mild surprise: 'What's the occasion for the suit? A funeral? Your latest marriage? Or has your court case come up?'

In summer, an erratic stream of



foreign tourists would have their first encounter with a Scottish pub, standing in the doorway bewildered as to what happens next – fight their way to the mobbed bar or go to a table and wait for the non-existent waitress? Donald would call them over to his corner and was soon plying them with drinks, food and conversation, not infrequently paying the entire bill for his astonished guests.

When a tourist asked him about the quaint red telephone box in Church Square, he told them: 'We have the fastest modern communications here – telephone, teletext and tell Donald.'

Donald was a Francophile and loved his summers in Collioure, where "Le Grand Ecosais" was almost as well-known as in Argyll. A fixture of the local bars and restaurants, and frequently crossing the border to patronise Spanish hostelry, he revelled in the region's seafood, wine and culture.

His hobbies included cooking, opera, reading and lively conversation on a sweeping range of topics. His knowledge was genuinely wide, but when occasionally encountering

someone with a superior command of the topic, he would quickly change the subject and admonish: 'Och, you're showing off now.'

Donald Clark was born on July 18, 1944, in Glasgow. He was the youngest child of Donald Clark and Elizabeth Inglis, following by nine years his only sibling, Fiona.

His early years were spent in Inveraray where family life revolved around his parents' hotel in the little white-washed town. He was schooled at Inveraray Primary and Larchfield in Helensburgh, then Strathallan from 1958 to 1963 where he acquired his love of sports.

Contrary to what his dimensions in later life would suggest, he was athletic when young, excelling at rugby and playing for his school and West of Scotland First XV and the old boys' 4As. Donald also enjoyed curling, motor boating, snow skiing and water skiing, where his party piece was to mono-ski down Loch Fyne while drinking a pint of beer.

Although not a shinty player, he used his sports experience to coach the Inveraray team in the 1960s and, like his father, chaired the club. In 2002, he arrived in Inverness by helicopter for Inveraray's Camanachd final against Kingussie.

He started to pursue a naval career, perhaps influenced by the many raucous submariners that visited The George during sonar testing under the quiet waters of Loch Fyne, but his plans were cut short by the death of his father in 1964, and he returned to Inveraray to help his mother run the family business. He also took on the Loch Fyne Hotel in 1968 for 15 years.

He married Jennifer 'Jimp' Waddell in Glasgow, with British Lion Sandy Carmichael as best man. Sons

Donald John and Christopher were soon born. Although they separated when the boys were teenagers, the couple later resumed an amicable friendship. Donald cheerfully celebrated his 50th wedding anniversary in March 2019, remarking as a minor aside that he had been divorced for 35 of those years.

After several weeks of illness, Donald died in Oban hospital, where he slowly sucked his last mouthfuls of Dom Perignon from a sponge despite the notice that read Nil by Mouth.

His funeral was one of the biggest held in Inveraray. More than 600 mourners, all requested to wear something colourful, filled to capacity the Church of Scotland in Main Street, and overflowed into the church hall. The flags of Scotland, France and Catalonia flew from The George Hotel, piper Stuart Liddell played Leaving Port Askaig, and La Marseillaise accompanied the retiral of mourners.

Interment was in a gale at Glen Shira, with the A83 Rest and Be Thankful road ironically blocked by one of the landslides for whose solution he so vigorously campaigned.

Donald was the fifth generation of the Clark family to run the establishment, a baton which has now passed to the sixth. He leaves sons Donald and Kris, grand-daughters Anouk, Manon and Lola, his long-term partner Jane Somerville, and ex-wife Jimp Mitchell.

Certainly a man of large stature, he was a giant in so many other ways – personality, sociability, generosity, knowledge – and a friend, helper, adviser and host to many. To quote his own frequent remark upon parting: 'We'll see you around the parish.'

Ken MacTaggart.

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

Jonah – the one who got swallowed by a whale, or was it a fish?

Too often the only discussion is around the individual character and whether the story is or isn't literally true.

But what of Nineveh? Jonah eventually told them if they didn't change their ways they would die. They did change their ways, they put on sackcloth and ashes, and to Jonah's disgust they were saved. The Bible story ends with Jonah disgruntled and God asking him why he would not want all these people and animals to be saved.

'God so loved the world.' Across boundaries of religion, politics, race, class, gender, etc. Are we doing the modern equivalent of sackcloth and ashes but planning to go back to business as usual when this pandemic is over? I hope yes to the first and no to the second.

Of course we look forward to more freedom again but surely we now know that we can do things differently.

NHS workers are rightly praised to the full. Communities are pulling together in ways barely imaginable a few short weeks ago. People need to work and earn money but now we know the will is there to work differently if we have to.

Less is being wasted. Interest in growing food has shot up. We need to find a new normal – not what we are living just now but not what went before either. Otherwise climate change or another pandemic will be worse than this crisis.

Everyone agrees this is a key time but we have to genuinely 'be in it together' – what comes next is up to us.

Nineveh didn't survive long term. Perhaps we can if we hold onto the amazing flowering of care and cooperation going on. I don't believe God sent this crisis but I do believe God works through such a crisis to show us there is a better way. For now take care and stay safe.

Rev Liz Gibson, Isle of Mull.

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OT

EXERCISE

Exercising at home

What can you do to keep fit and healthy while heeding the new guidelines about staying at home?

There are plenty things you can do from your chair or sofa including squats, tricep dips, crunches, body work exercises.

If you have children at home, get them involved. Make activities fun, like running around or playing hide and seek. Just keep moving.

Exercise decreases stress and anxiety. Everyone is stressed at the moment and people aren't sleeping but if you are moving, you are likely to sleep better.

But how much you can do, depends on which type of household you fall into. If you are under 70 with no underlying conditions you can still be active outside for a short period as long as you stick to the government guidelines and stay at least two metres - three paces - away from other people. So walking the dog, or even your neighbour's dog, going for a run or going for a bike ride are all fine - provided you keep your distance.

If you are over 70 and self-isolating, pregnant or have an underlying health condition, but feel well, you can also go outside for a short while with the same caveat of keeping your distance from others.

Public spaces such as golf courses, tennis courts, swimming pools and gyms are now banned as are all team sports.

For older people, strength and balance exercises are particularly important as muscle strength starts to decline rapidly after our 30s. Tai chi, resistance training and seated exercises are recommended.

If you are self-isolating with symptoms, or someone in your household has them, you should not leave home but that doesn't mean you should stop moving. It's really important to use movement and activity as a way of breaking up your routine, if you feel well enough.

Cook, play active games, dance, go into the garden if you have one.

If you are unwell, use your energy to get better and don't try to be active. If you can get out of bed, do so but don't try to do too much.

Finally, if you are feeling better after having had the virus, return to your normal routine gradually. We don't know what the long term effects are but as far as we know, there is no reason why you can't gently return to normal activity.

Aim to minimise stress and try to use the time wisely. Read that book, do an online course, learn a new language, clear out the cupboards. It will all help.

FOOTBALL



Oban Saints.

Fitness programme for Saints

Oban Saints' coach Jamie Graham has posted a fitness programme on the club's WhatsApp page. It features exercises players can do at home to keep the squad in good shape during the enforced football shut down.

Saints secretary David Buchanan is keeping in regular touch with the Scottish Amateur FA and the Central Scottish AFL but no decisions have been made yet as to whether the present season will continue or be declared null and void.

Saints are presently sitting top of Division 1B having won all 12 games played and looked certain to get promotion to the Premier Division, but this might not happen if the season is declared null and void.

David said: 'Football becomes secondary at this difficult time and the club wishes everyone well and that they stay safe.'

Shinty preparing for the other side

The Camanachd Association is among those having to adjust its operations during these unrecognisable times as the consequences of the spread of COVID-19 continue to dominate everyday lives.

The game's governing body has followed all government guidance, advising all its staff to work from home at this time. Whilst the association's preference would have course been a short intermission, the likelihood is shinty will not return for some time and some competitions may be unable to run fully this year.

Staff, committees and the board of directors are working together on plans covering all potential outcomes, depending on the longevity of the COVID-19 sanctions.

The situation remains fluid through what has been a rapidly changing position but the association hopes to share these plans with clubs when there is greater clarity around the likely period of isolation.

As part of this, it is considering options that may or may not be used to ensure shinty is played again when it is safe to do so.

Any attempt to lay a clear plan at this stage is impossible but these options could include local midweek fixtures and/or Sunday fixtures and finals or shorter league programmes.

However, it is impossible to be specific or predict what may be practical at this time.

The Camanachd Association recognises some sports have said when they expect to return to competitive action but it believed to do so at this present time is simply guess work as no one can predict the volatility of the current situation.

However, that will not stop it planning for a number of eventualities.

During the intervening period, work will continue to pursue the best for shinty and the association has pledged to work closely with member clubs to ensure everyone is best prepared to come through this situation ready to return to sporting action once normality returns.

Pitches will benefit from rest

If there is a sporting benefit to come from the coronavirus pandemic, it's that pitches all

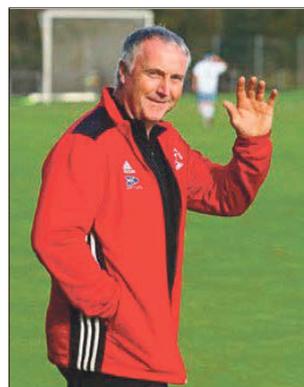


Mossfield Stadium in Oban.

over the country could benefit greatly from the rest.

In Oban, head groundsman Iain Hay's responsibilities include pitches at Mossfield, Ganavan, North Connel, three at Glencruitten as well as a new pitch where the former blaze pitch was situated behind the Mossfield stand.

Like many at present, Iain's involvement is limited by the current restrictions but he feels pitches will be the better from the break. The former Oban Camanachd manager and player said: 'The rest will definitely benefit the pitches and they will come in stronger. There is a wee bit of growth at present but when it really comes through, the rest means the grass will stiffen as the roots continue to grow. It must be said we've also just had what



Iain Hay, head groundsman seven grass pitches in the Oban area was a former player and manager of Oban Camanachd.

was a poor winter for pitches so there is a bit of catching up to do.

'I'm limited in what I can do just now in that I have to stay away from the pitches. That will be reviewed in a couple of weeks though and I definitely have plans if, say, I'm allowed to do lone working.

'I would like to do maintenance work such as verti-draining, spreading sand and gravel, drainage work and taking out any dips on the surface.

'As well as the usual maintenance, I would also normally carry out a programme of works at grounds like Mossfield during the season but I'll have to re-adjust my plans for that, maybe bringing them forward, as I imagine there will be a lot of games to fit in when the shinty season eventually does get under way.

'Not having any games at present certainly provides the opportunity to do a bit extra but it all depends on me being allowed onto the pitch in at least some capacity when it's right and proper to do so.

'It's similar with the rugby pitches. If I was to get confirmation their season was over, I could make an early start there as soon as I'm allowed to.'

Shinty pitch dimensions range from 128m to 155m wide and between and 64m to 73m wide which led to recent work to bring the North Connel venue into the equation.

Iain Hay explained: 'There has been a lot of work already carried out at North Connel. The pitch has been extended and it has good drying. The pitch extension takes it to around 133m by 65m which means shinty could be played there but it does need nets behind the goals to stop any stray balls.'

There is no doubting Iain Hay's keenness and enthusiasm to get going as soon as he gets the green light.

Making the best use of time

The suspension of the shinty season doesn't necessarily mean work at all shinty clubs should grind to a halt as there are still opportunities for clubs to progress off the field during this interim period.

The Camanachd Association has highlighted the benefits of its Clubmark accreditation scheme which its development team has run for the past four years, suggesting this would be a perfect time for clubs to engage with its development officer. It only requires one or two volunteers from each club to get matters moving.

A Camanachd Association spokesman said: 'We are delighted to announce 37 clubs across shinty have already started their journey toward enhanced governance, planning and provision of good

practice through Clubmark accreditation. We need to continue moving forward and would encourage all clubs to arrange a suitable date with their regional development officer to continue progression or, in some cases, to overcome some current challenges.

'One of the primary purposes of development staff is to support the development of increased membership and improved participation opportunities in clubs to enhance member retention. One of the tools to start this process is the Clubmark accreditation which contributes as one of our key outcomes of a well-organised club. The Strategy for Shinty provides further information.'

Funding streams are almost all still fully operational making this the perfect opportunity for clubs to use time that would have been used preparing for matches to apply for funds to help sow the seeds of success for years to come.

The Camanachd Association has made it clear it is determined to work in partnership with its members, clubs and sponsors to try and find solutions to the unique issues facing the game.

Consultant appointed for short-term working groups

The Camanachd Association has appointed independent consultant Neil MacDonald to lead the consultation phase of a new working group which has the specific remit of evaluating current provision of the sport in Argyll and Bute.

The group will gather feedback from members to identify opportunities for enhanced working in future.

New Camanachd Association director Roddy McCuish will lead the group, with development officer Euan McMurdo also playing a key role.

Anyone wishing to be part of the group should make direct contact with Euan McMurdo.

Meantime director and vice president Steven MacKenzie's competitions review will likely cover the options available for the remainder of the 2020 season as well as taking a longer term view.

All clubs will be consulted as part of the process and anyone wishing to be part of this online working group should contact Camanachd Association operations manager Astie Cameron directly.

Kilmallie roll back the years

With no action on the field, shinty clubs and the

Camanachd Association have taken to social media to give supporters a shinty fix.

Kilmallie Shinty Club has unveiled an interesting project where 14 former players recall their favourite on-the-field memories, including the best 12 players, in formation order, they have played with.

First up was club stalwart Trevor Jackson who selected Bochy MacNiven as keeper for his team. His defence was made up from James MacNicol at full back, wing backs David Neilson and Ian Robertson with the formidable Keith Blackhall at half back.

Wing centres Lachie Innes and Mark MacPherson flanked full centre Donald Lamont in the middle of the park.

Scott Rodger took up the half forward position with Liam MacDonald and John Stewart at wing forward and Totti MacNicol at full forward.

Trevor Jackson's best goal scored was his 30 second volley against Kingussie in a MacTavish Cup Final which Kingussie eventually won.

Ian Robertson's 'screamer' in a Sutherland Cup semi-final was the best goal seen, whilst winning the Sutherland Cup Final against Fort William in 2007 was his favourite shinty memory.

Totti MacNicol was given the honour of being nominated the best Kilmallie player in Trevor Jackson's opinion.

Discover more great moments and best teams as named by former Kilmallie players on the club's Facebook page.

Bute funding boost

Bute Shinty Club received a huge boost with the news it had been awarded £1,800 from CalMac's Community Fund.

The islanders dropped down from the Mowi National Division to Mowi South Division 1 at the end of last season, whilst their second team play in Mowi South Division 2.

Its first team will be one of the championship favourites this term. The club is also regarded as having a number of promising players throughout the youth age groups.

A delighted Alan Liddell from the Bute club said: 'The CalMac Community Fund is designed to help the under 25 age group who live on islands served by CalMac and we will use the money to support this group.'

The club pathway to first team shinty is evident as Alan Liddell explained: 'More than half of our current first and second team player pools consist of players aged under 20, whilst our ladies team have much the same age mix. We also have a thriving youth



A winner on the pitch and now a winner off it. Andrew 'Papa' MacCuish won the £500 in the Oban Camanachd March Superball draw.

system throughout primary and secondary schools and have supplemented that with around a dozen boys and girls of pre-school age playing shinty.

'As a club, we support all the age groups and will continue to do so. The CalMac award will help enormously with these aims.'

The CalMac Community Fund supports community led activity by funding non-profit organisations to deliver great projects for children and young people living across their network.

Having made more than 30 awards in 2019, they are in the process of making a further 30 awards ranging between £500 and £2,000, split between six regional areas across west coast communities.

The fund is specifically aimed at supporting projects that will involve and benefit the lives of children and young people aged 25 years and under as well as events which take place in the islands and mainland port towns within which CalMac operate.

Youth shinty survey

The Camanachd Association is undertaking a youth shinty survey aimed at gathering views from clubs and schools.

The survey will gather opinions on shinty's main focus at various age groups as well as exploring what changes could be introduced.

Views are also sought on last year's Tulloch Cup, the Camanachd Association Cup and MacKay Cup competitions as well the revamped 2019 London Shield format.

One key area in the survey surrounds whether restructuring shinty's U17 age group to become U16s would be a good thing for the game.

Other discussion points explore whether youth shinty

should be played over the winter months, whether fixtures should take place on a Sunday to avoid clashes with exams and senior training and whether games should be scheduled during the Easter and summer school holidays.

Views are also sought on whether cups and medals should be awarded at all youth shinty levels.

The full survey can be found on the Camanachd Association's website and social media pages.

Oban Camanachd Superball winner

Andrew 'Papa' MacCuish won the top prize in Oban Camanachd's March Superball draw. Andrew receives the £500 top prize with Donald MacDonald collecting the £100 second prize.

Oban Camanachd's Superball can continue as subscribers pay their £10 monthly contribution by standing order. New members are always welcome.

Like many other clubs, Oban Celtic has had to suspend its shinty lotto. This is an important fund raiser for many clubs but with shops closing and unnecessary travel prohibited, the continuation of such schemes is not practicable.

Kenny MacLeod, Strachur

Strachur and District Shinty Club was saddened to hear of the passing of one of the club's most staunch supporters, Kenny MacLeod, who died just a few days short of his 79th birthday.

One of the game's great characters and a man famous for his photographic memory of shinty matches dating back to the 1950s, Kenny played for Strachur and served in different voluntary roles including secretary and latterly honorary club vice president.

Failing health in later years failed to stop Kenny from attending home matches and he was regularly seen in his wheelchair watching games at Strachur thanks to the kindness and generosity of staff at Struan Lodge Care Home in Dunoon.

Always an enthusiast, Kenny in his heyday was first at the field on a Saturday morning to line and prepare the pitch and he played a hugely significant role in Strachur and District Shinty Club and within shinty in the south of Scotland.

Kenny's sister Fiona said: 'Kenny lived for shinty and he loved the club dearly.'

A memorial service will be held when the current situation allows.



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WEATHER

Thursday

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Temperatures 3°C to 8°C.

Friday

Light showers and a moderate breeze
Temperatures 3°C to 8°C.

Weekend Outlook

Saturday
Light rain and a moderate breeze
Sunday
Light rain and a moderate breeze
Temperatures 4°C to 9°C.



TIDAL INFORMATION

Tide tables for Oban during the week from Thursday April 2, 2020 are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

	06.01	1.9	13.20	2.7
Thur	18.41	1.8	** **	** *
Fri	01.02	2.9	07.53	1.8
	14.52	2.9	19.59	1.6
Sat	02.51	3.2	09.19	1.5
	15.42	3.2	21.07	1.2
Sun	03.45	3.5	10.13	1.1
	16.23	3.5	22.03	0.8
Mon	04.26	3.8	10.57	0.7
	16.58	3.8	22.51	0.5
Tues	05.06	4.1	11.37	0.5
	17.32	4.0	23.36	0.2
Wed	05.45	4.3	12.16	0.3
	18.07	4.1	** **	4.1

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

Ardrisaig	-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

Shinty
preparing for
the other side

Fitness
programme
for Saints



Supporters club help charities reach their goals

'It is good to see that a big football club can reach out to outlying communities in this time of need'

by Fiona Scott
fscott@obantimes.co.uk



Oban No1 Celtic Supporters Club are turning their attention towards local charities after receiving a £5,000 donation from the Celtic FC Foundation.

The money has been split between New Hope Kitchen and the St Vincent de Paul Society who will use it to help vulnerable members of the community through the current coronavirus situation. Supporters Club president John Neil MacInnes said: 'We are more than happy to do what we can to help local people who find themselves in a difficult situation, especially at this time.'

'It is also good to see that a big football club can reach out to outlying communities in a time of need.'

Formed in 1950, the Oban Supporters Club travel regularly to Celtic Park to watch their team perform on the pitch, but in between matches the group distributes funding to local and international charities through the Celtic FC Foundation.

Last year they sponsored a kitchen in Malawi through Mary's Meals while also donating to numerous other local causes.

This most recent donation saw £2,500 go to Hope Kitchen to enable the charity to distribute food parcels to various local families and individuals.

Catriona Petit, service manager for Hope, said: 'We are really encouraged by the amazing generosity of our community.'

'Celtic supporters club have helped us a lot in the past and at this difficult time for so many people it is so good to have their financial help.'

'This will enable us to go and do a weekly shop and get in all the essentials that we need to go with our other donations.'

'The speed of their response was also very useful as it has meant we can respond to people in crisis quickly too.'

The remaining £2,500 was given to the St Vincent de Paul Society which is a national charity run by the Catholic Church, with the local branch here in Oban helping families at this time of need.



Pictured from left are John Neil MacInnes (president of Oban No1 Celtic Supporters Club), Beth Campbell and Catriona Petit from Hope Kitchen.



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Teacher uses 3D printer to make visors



Output reduced at smelter and hydro plant



Vulnerable face three-week wait for deliveries

Plea to free up slots for rural communities

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

Vulnerable people living in self-isolation on Ardnarmurchan and in Moidart and Fort William are waiting three weeks to get home deliveries of essential food from big supermarket chains.

In desperation, they turned to MSP Kate Forbes, who has written to major supermarkets urging them to create more home delivery slots for rural communities to help ease the situation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch MSP said some of those who got in touch are self-isolating because of their age as well as others with underlying health conditions.

In some cases, Ms Forbes was able to direct people to com-

munity support groups set up to help those in need because of the coronavirus outbreak, with volunteers in turn delivering shopping to residents' doorsteps – while following social distancing and health and safety guidance.

'Obviously, lots of vulnerable constituents are now dependent on home delivery for their shopping anywhere but with the increased number doing so it means delivery slots are disappearing quickly,' Ms Forbes explained this week.

'People are understandably panicking and contacting me because they don't know where else to turn to for essential supplies.

'If you have an underlying health condition, or if you are showing symptoms of the virus, you should stay away from the shops and remain at home.

I am immensely thankful for the number of big-hearted volunteer groups which have offered practical help by way of delivery the shopping.'

But Ms Forbes warned: 'Not everyone has such assistance available on their doorstep, so against that backdrop I have written to the major supermarket chains to see if they can increase the number of home delivery slots for those doing online shopping in rural communities.'

'I recognise supermarkets are doing everything they can so we can all have access to essential items and fresh produce.

'But it would be great, particularly now the government has relaxed restrictions around delivery hours, if the big firms could increase provision for this highly valued and helpful service.'



Brothers' heartfelt display of 'lockdown' love for NHS

Tai MacEachern, seven, and his brother, Boden, nine, above, demonstrated the regard in which the NHS is held while completing a 'lockdown' school project.

Their instructions from teacher Linda Lees of

Inverloch Primary School were to make something using sticks and stones so the boys, who live near Caol foreshore with parents Louise and Jay, set about doing just that. With small boulders and driftwood

they laid out a six-foot-wide heart, filling it with branches washed up on the beach, spelling out the letters 'NHS' in tribute to the work NHS staff are doing during the COVID-19 crisis.

Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos

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LT

Arisaig Highland Games cancelled

Organisers of Arisaig Highland Games have announced the cancellation of this year's event due to the impact of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Scheduled to take place over two days in the last week of July, the popular event was also due to feature the 16th staging of the Clan Ranald Gathering.

In a statement this week, organisers said: 'We have been closely monitoring the current situation relating to COVID-19 and the related restrictions on events. After careful consideration of all the advice made available by the Scottish Government and of our obligations to our volunteers, sponsors, patrons and the local community, we have taken the decision to cancel this year's event.'

'While this is disappointing for everyone involved, we hope you will understand our decision and we will now turn our attention to returning in 2021. Thank you for your continued support of Arisaig Highland Games.'

Arisaig Highland Games and Clan Ranald Gathering attracts visitors from around the world and is a highlight of the Highland games calendar.

Teacher uses 3D printer to make hospital visors

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

A Lochaber High School computing and technology teacher is using a 3D printer to make much-needed protective visors for use by hospital staff treating COVID-19 patients.

After Belford Hospital consultant Patrick Byrne saw an online post describing how 3D printers could be used to manufacture the protective face visors, he contacted Lochaber high teacher Stephen Stewart.

Mr Stewart, faculty head for computing science, business and digital technology at the Fort William secondary, explained: 'I have a mate in the mountain rescue, Liam Jordan, who got in touch because he heard the hospital was needing visors as PPE [personal protective equipment] and one of the consultants had seen online they could be 3D printed.'

'He forwarded on my details to the consultant who got in touch and sent me a link to what kind of visor they need.'

Speaking to the Lochaber Times, he added: 'I looked online for some concepts and used a similar design but had to tweak it for my own 3D printer and try and reduce print time.'



Lochaber High School teacher Stephen Stewart with one of the hospital visors manufactured using a 3D printer.

Currently it takes two hours to print one but I am hoping to reduce that now the design is perfected. Since starting, I have printed five from one printer.'

Lochaber Mountain Rescuse Team also has a role, adding

the clear acetate screen to the visor. Mr Stewart described the reaction to the project as 'amazing and very positive'. 'So many people are saying it's great to see non-NHS staff helping out where they can,'



The 3D printer at the high school making a visor.

'It is something as a school we should be proud of, that we are able to help out at a time of need.'

he said. 'It is something as a school we should be proud of, that we are able to help out at a time of need. I think any school would do the same if it had the resources to do it.'

Mr Stewart has been at

Lochaber High School for eight years and recently led the Chromebook rollout that saw all pupils given their own personal learning computer.

'I am a huge supporter of digital learning and making use of digital tools to enhance learning and teaching, 3D printers being one of these digital technologies,' he said.

Dr Byrne has now tweeted his appreciation, saying: 'This guy and his team of teachers are not just shaping young minds for the future, they are helping save lives right now.'



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In view of the current Covid-19 emergency we have now closed all our offices and will not be carrying out any property inspections until it is safe and appropriate for us to do so. Our staff are still working remotely and are in a position to answer and advise on any property related questions or issues that may be of concern. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require such assistance.

In the meantime please stay safe.

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**CROWN
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**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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Fort William sex offender avoids jail after failing to notify police of new address

A 26-year-old Fort William sex offender who twice failed to notify police of his new address was given a chance to stay out of jail for the next six months.

Donald MacPhee, of High Street, also admitted a breach of his bail conditions when he appeared from custody at Inverness Sheriff Court last week.

Defence solicitor John MacColl asked Sheriff Eilidh Macdonald to accept his client made a mistake, saying MacPhee thought he had seven days, not three days, to notify police where he was staying after release from two prison sentences in January this year.

He also urged the sheriff not to jail his client and to impose an alternative while conceding it was difficult to decide on an appropriate punishment.

He said: 'In these troubled times, a restriction of liberty order (ROLO) is not a punishment because he should not be out anyway. He is in a position to do unpaid work but it is highly questionable if any can be carried out in the near future.'

Fiscal depute Robert Weir told the court that despite two warnings by police of the notification timescale, MacPhee still got it wrong.

Sheriff Macdonald said: 'You have a significant record but because of the current situation I will not impose a ROLO. But if you do not report your new address within three days, you will be brought back and go to jail.'

Historic coffin boat to go on public display

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

Loch Leven is rightly famous for its beautiful setting in south Lochaber, but perhaps less well-known for its 'Ports of the Dead'.

Now that tale is to be told by Glencoe Folk Museum in a new display organisers plan to open to the public once restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic are relaxed, hopefully later in the year.

The display, installed with help from community volunteers, features a 'coffin boat', one of three similar vessels used by local clans to transport bodies to the island of Eilean Munde in Loch Leven.

Eilean Munde, the 'burial island', is the site of a graveyard once used by the Stewarts of Ballachulish, the Camerons of Callart and the MacDonalds of Glencoe.

Each clan had its own port – the 'Ports of the Dead' – and shared maintenance of the island and graveyard even in times of conflict.

Among the MacDonalds said to be buried there is Maclain, 12th Chief of Glencoe, who was murdered during the infamous massacre of 1692. The last burial took place on the island in 1972.

The boat had been returned to temporary display in 2020 to coincide with VisitScotland's Year of Coasts and Waters.

These celebrations take place every two years and involve events, exhibitions, festivals and activities around the country highlighting the country's beautiful seas, lochs, rivers and beaches.

Museum curator Catriona Davidson said: 'This boat is one of our most significant objects in terms of local history and we are so excited to have it back on display.'

'Obviously there is uncertainty about what will happen over the next few months, but we still hope visitors will be able to come and see this fantastic exhibit later in the year.'

Helpers

'We want to say a huge thank you to our team of helpers, especially Chisholm's Recovery Specialists which transported the boat from our stores to the museum.'

Although the museum did not open yesterday (Wednesday April 1) as originally planned, the staff are still working hard behind the scenes.

As well as continuing working on an exciting re-development project, they will be cataloguing the museum's collection, dealing with research inquiries and keeping up their online presence.

People should keep an eye on the museum website and social media pages, where staff will be sharing archive photos, gems from the collection, blog posts and other information.



Helpers David Doogan; David Rounce, museum re-development manager; Sandy Coldwell; Jon Ure; John Poolman; Bill Strachan; Ewan Smith and William Stewart with the boat.

Distillery's helping hand

Isle of Harris Distillery has provided high-strength alcohol from the spirit-making process to businesses who can use it to produce much-needed hand sanitiser during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Those benefiting from the donation of the raw spirit include Amanda Saurin of A S Apothecary, who lives in the village of Northton in South Harris, and Essence of Harris in Tarbert.

Ms Saurin has produced 25ml bottles of hand sanitiser spray using the raw spirit, essential oils including rosemary and mint, and microbial ingredients. Lavender oil is included to help calm stressful minds.

A S Apothecary and Essence

of Harris' sanitisers are being distributed for free to care homes, vulnerable people, community shops, NHS workers and other vital services in Harris.

Although the sanitisers are intended for community use, a version of the A S Apothecary sanitiser is available to buy online at £5.25 from www.asapoth.com with proceeds used to cover manufacturing costs.

Quality

Ms Saurin said: 'As a maker of skincare products, we have years of experience of making gentle, effective preparations. We approached the hand sanitiser in the same way, thinking about which plants

would enhance its action and do minimal damage to skin. The alcohol from Isle of Harris Distillery is particularly good because it is excellent quality.'

'We are using the alcohol at 70 per cent ABV which our microbiologist suggests is the optimal level.'

Simon Erlanger, managing director of Isle of Harris Distillers Ltd, said he and his team were pleased to support the hand sanitiser initiatives.

'It is vital we all keep working together to protect our community at this critical time and we hope this donation of our spirit will play a small part in keeping our key workers and wider island family safe,' added Mr Erlanger.

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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Output reduced at Lochaber smelter and hydro plant

Alvance British Aluminium says it has developed a plan to keep employees safe while continuing to operate at reduced output at its Lochaber smelter and hydro power station.

Production at the smelter in Fort William has been reduced and is presently running at 75 per cent capacity, allowing staffing levels to be cut to an essential degree.

On the site, additional hygiene measures have been introduced, shift patterns have been adjusted and guidelines have been put in place to maximise social distancing.

Alvance considers maintaining a minimal level of operation at Lochaber – Britain's



The Alvance British Aluminium site. Photograph: Iain Ferguson, alba.photos

only aluminium smelter – is essential.

Aluminium from Lochaber is used to supply the food packaging industry and for blister packs to dispense medicines in the pharmaceuticals industry.

Continuous running of the smelter, and its associated power station, is critical in regulating water levels from the River Spean through operation of the Laggan hydro-electric dam.

Brian King, managing director of Alvance British Aluminium, said: 'The well-being of our people is our top priority so we are minimising the number of people required on site and taking every possible step to reduce any risk to health.'

'We are mindful of concerns around reducing non-essential business activity. However, the Lochaber smelter and hydro-electric dam are critical pieces of infrastructure which cannot simply be switched on and off.'

'A minimal level of activity will be required on the site to supply essential industries and to maintain water levels.'



Ewen and Janice on Rona, with the MV Seaflower in the background.

Skye's MV Seaflower ensuring vital lifeline to remote island continues

Skye couple Ewen Grant and Janice Cooney have had to stop their popular seafood cruises because of coronavirus but their second job remains vital – providing a lifeline to the neighbouring island of Rona.

Often described as one of the loneliest places in Britain, Rona only has four residents – current caretaker Bill Cowie and his wife Lorraine and another couple who were chosen out of scores of applicants to be inducted as the island's custodians and take over when Bill and Lorraine retire.

Ewen and Janice, who is also working as a nurse during the pandemic, usually run half- and full-day cruises for up to 12 people on their 40ft luxury catamaran Seaflower from Portree to Rona and neighbouring Raasay, serving freshly caught seafood on board.

In only its second year of operation in 2019, it was awarded 5 Star Visitor Attraction status by VisitScotland.

They also have the contract to deliver supplies to Rona, a one-hour boat trip from their base in Portree.

Raasay and Rona were once well-populated but during the 18th century Highland Clearances were denuded of inhabitants, many fleeing to a new life in the United States and Canada. At the end of the 19th century it had a devoutly Christian population of almost 200.

From the 16th century until late in the 18th century, Rona, now owned by

a Danish family and home to hundreds of deer, was a notorious haven for pirates operating out of its concealed natural harbour.

'Seaflower is the only way to get essential supplies to an almost deserted but magical island,' said Ewen. 'We're determined to continue to make sure the resident quartet have all they need during the pandemic.'

Ewen grew up in Portree, where his father is a fisherman, so Ewen has extensive experience on the water from years of assisting with the family business.

He left school and worked as a plant operator for a number of years around Scotland. In 2013, he decided to travel and left Skye. It was on these travels that he crossed paths with Janice, a nurse from Ireland.

After travelling together, they moved to Australia and lived there for almost three years. But Ewen admitted it took leaving Skye to realise how stunning the island is and after their three years away, they made the decision to move back.

In 2016, Ewen and Janice returned to Ireland where they worked for a year, until the opportunity of buying MV Seaflower and starting their business arose. They moved to Portree in late 2017 to found SeaflowerSkye.

The couple are both trained to Yachtmaster Standard in line with MCA/RYA regulations and are commercially endorsed to carry a maximum of 12 passengers, up to 20 miles from a safe haven.

College holds first virtual open day

West Highland College has announced plans to hold more events online during the current public health crisis following the success of its first recent virtual open day.

The college had invited potential students to its Fort William and Portree college centres for conventional open day events on March 20 and 21, including taster sessions across a range of courses. Faced with the prospect of cancelling the events amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the college instead showcased its long-standing reputation for online learning by creating a 'virtual' open day on March 20 to keep students and staff safe at home.

Applicants from across Scotland and the UK were offered the chance to switch to Skype to find out more from the college's course tutors about a wide range of subjects including fashion, digital media, childcare, computing and professional cookery.

Following the success of this new virtual format for engaging with future learners, the college said this week is now exploring ways to host other events – including Facebook Live sessions – which connect lecturers with prospective learners from the safety of their own homes.



PET IDOL POSTPONED

We are really disappointed to have to postpone our Pet Idol competition until we are able to reopen our office. We simply don't have anyone in the office to count the thousands of votes that always come in, nor do we want to encourage people to come out unnecessarily to post votes through our letterbox.

Thank you to everyone who sent in pictures of their gorgeous pets. Rest assured, once this situation is over we will print them all and put a smile back on everyone's face.

Thanks for your understanding and stay safe

The Oban Times LOCHABER TIMES

For Africa with love from Mabel and guild

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

Teenage mums in Zambia have been learning new skills including biscuit baking, card making and sewing thanks to a Lochaber woman.

Mabel Wallace spent a week on the Journeying Together project which supports 100 girls and their children.

She hopes the skills they shared with the young mothers will help them produce goods they can sell to support themselves.

Mrs Wallace, session clerk of Duncansburgh MacIntosh Parish Church, Fort William, is a member of the Church of Scotland Guild, which has raised £45,000 for the project.

It is run by the United Church of Zambia (UCZ) in Kanyama, a poverty-stricken township near the African nation's capital, Lusaka.

Mrs Wallace, 66, told the Lochaber Times: 'It was wonderful to see the project in Zambia first-hand. It was an emotional rollercoaster of a journey.'

'We were given a great welcome by the young women who walked from 60 to 90 minutes away to get to the project where they are trained in nutrition, parenting and sex education.'

'They are resourceful and we worked alongside them, baking biscuits, making scrunchies and a few other things, which they can hopefully sell at markets.'

'I was part of a group of 10 from Scotland. We also taught



A hundred girls and their children in a Zambian township near the country's capital Lusaka had smiles and a warm welcome for Mabel Wallace, right, session clerk of Duncansburgh MacIntosh Parish Church, Fort William, and Anne MacAskill of Dunvegan, Skye.



Mabel with one of the girls and her children.

them first aid and listened to their problems and ambitions. It was an inspiring experience and their singing was wonderful.'

Kanyama has a population of 365,000 people, of which 51 per cent are under 18. There are only five primary schools and one high school.

The project works to build confidence in the girls and challenge social injustice.

Training

The girls are given the opportunity to return to school to finish their education or provided with vocational training.

Mrs Wallace added: 'It is making such a positive difference in their lives and

throughout the week there were tears, laughter and joy.'

Karen Gillon, associate guild secretary, said UCZ is doing fantastic work to tackle the vicious cycle of poverty in Kanyama.

'This is a project the guild is proud to support and we now better understand the lives of the girls and the challenges they face and the opportunities they are missing out on because society thinks they should leave school and their lives are over,' she said.

'The project is helping ensure their lives are not over and they can be whatever they want to be with the right support and encouragement.'



Mabel chats with some of the teenage girls taking part in the Journeying Together project.

Support local newspapers, urges MSP

Highlands and Islands MSP Donald Cameron is urging residents to support their local newspapers.

'Our local media is indispensable, particularly during an emergency like the one we are experiencing when up-to-date and reliable local news is at a premium and many people are self-isolating at home,' said the Conservative MSP, referring to the coronavirus pandemic.

'Local newspapers provide a vital public service not just by reporting local news but also by promoting social cohesion amongst communities.'

'We owe a debt of thanks to the editors, journalists and their support staff who have continued to produce topical and relevant information for our communities. We have never needed local papers more than we do now.'

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Stay connected with your Chamber of Commerce

As Lenin famously said: 'There are decades where nothing happens and there are weeks where decades happen.'

Last week certainly felt like one of the latter, with a head-spinning rate of change throughout the country and world.

At Lochaber Chamber, the reality of our new national situation meant a hectic week dealing with member inquiries, lobbying government on behalf of our businesses, making sure all the current information was available and talking to our members about what they need.

If you are already a member, we're delighted to say any renewals due in or after March will not be charged until August and if you are

VIEW FROM THE CHAMBER



not currently a member, please consider joining now to gain access to a network of assistance. You, too, can defer payment until August 2020.

An important part of what we are doing is making sure businesses have a voice and representing their views back to government through the Scottish Chambers of Commerce network, the Scottish Tourism Alliance and

directly to ministers. We have had a large number of inquiries and requests for help from our membership. We were pleased to offer chamber members the opportunity to talk directly with the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Tourism last week, when we hosted a conference call meeting with Fergus Ewing MSP and a cross-section of our membership.

Businesses from a wide range of sectors put their main issues to the minister to help inform the Scottish Government's actions to help further. Key among the many topics discussed were the need for more

detail on how furloughing staff will work in practice and how it applies to those in seasonal and variable hours roles.

We have another meeting with the cabinet secretary scheduled for the week beginning Monday April 6 and once again invite member businesses to make sure their views are heard.

As well as online advice and information, conference calls and webinars with other chambers, we will be hosting an online 'employment webinar' meeting with expert employment lawyer Kirk Tudhope of Ledingham Chalmers Solicitors on Tuesday April 7.

The UK Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is a great help to businesses but there are naturally a lot of questions still to be answered.

We're looking forward to hearing from Kirk on the practicalities of the new assistance. If you'd like to join us, visit the events section at www.lochaberchamber.co.uk.

The chamber is working hard to keep our member businesses up to date with the latest information.

Our Coronavirus Business Advice page is updated daily and we are always available by email and phone if anyone has an urgent query.

Social distancing may have curtailed our physical events but we are still in it together and this week sees the start of our new online Chamber 'Cuppa and Cake' get-togethers.

This is new to the team and we are ready for hiccups along the way, but we value the chance to get our members together face to face, even if it is on a screen.

Now that we have to be physically distant, it's even more important to stay socially connected.

Check out our events section for dates and times. We've got useful business resources available on our website.

If you would like to download our business survival guide to financial assistance, please visit our website at www.lochaberchamber.co.uk where you will also find guides to working from home and managing teams remotely.



Oak buds.

Wild Words: the memory of light

Kirsteen Bell, from Duisky, is a regular freelance reporter and contributor to the Lochaber Times. This week she marvels at the wonder of nature.

The air has changed. Watery light trickles through the trees growing on the hill behind our house as the sun begins to skiff along their tops.

The earth has just passed the spring equinox, the side of the planet we live on now tilting towards the sun. Our days and nights are roughly equal and our biological memory carries the sense there are brighter days to come.

Trees and plants carry that same memory. The increase in daylight is a starting flag. The survival of every individual life on this planet depends on its ability to recognise and react to changes in its environment and the primary condition that plants need to survive is light.

The old oak growing out of the east stone wall has been around the sun many more times than I have. On one side of the wall its branches reach towards morning and on the other they point towards Venus. I can't wrap my arms around its full trunk. It is wrapped instead with silky moss, reaching up and along the thicker branches where the moss is joined by the filigree of oak lichen.

Only the slender outermost branches are completely bare, though already scored and gnarled in places, and tipped with this year's leaf buds.

The overlapping rose-brown scales of each bud are thick enough to hold the future safe and thin enough to let in the shining photons that tell the leaves when it is time to grow.

Somewhere in its cells, the oak knows its path around the sun. Year on year median temperatures change, weather systems change, numbers and types of predator change, but underneath it all the earth continues spinning on its axis, continues spinning around the sun.

The oak knows it has to get the timing right, has to align the moment when its leaves burst from their buds to give the tree its best possible chance of enduring, and so it waits. It waits for those reliable, unchanging rhythms of light.

The trees remember the pattern of light stretching out from east to west, they remember enough to know there will be a summer in which all their green will be released to convert light into energy.

The tiny embryonic cells in the heart of each bud are the starting point for another cycle, another growth ring, another year.

For now, though, the buds remain tight, holding the memory and promise of light within.

SCOTTISH FIELD

April issue



OUT NOW

Aberdeenshire under the spotlight... Red kite conservation... Queen Victoria's Balmoral watercolours... Scotland's James Bond... Scotch & Wry comic Tony Roper... Hebridean seascapes... Stunning Borders interiors...

Highland Bookshop launch switched to an online event



Mark Bridgeman.

by Mark Entwistle
mentwistle@obantimes.co.uk

After what can be years of research and writing, the launch of a new book is the climactic moment when an author finally shares his or her work with the world.

In the past few weeks, however, countless authors have had to cancel book launches, appearances and events as the population acclimatises to the threat of coronavirus. Instead, writers have turned to the internet.

Mark Bridgeman's collection of stories from Lochaber, *Blood Beneath Ben Nevis*, was one such case. Mr Bridgeman has created a fascinating collection of tales, events and folklore from around Lochaber, all focused around the uncanny, the disturbing and the downright odd – some of which have become particularly relevant

in recent weeks. Published by The Watermill in Aberfeldy, Mr Bridgeman's book was to be launched at an event at The Watermill's sister shop, The Highland Bookshop in Fort William.

As the need for social distancing became imperative, bookshop manager Sarah-Louise Bamblett realised the launch would have to take a different shape, with online activities at the forefront.

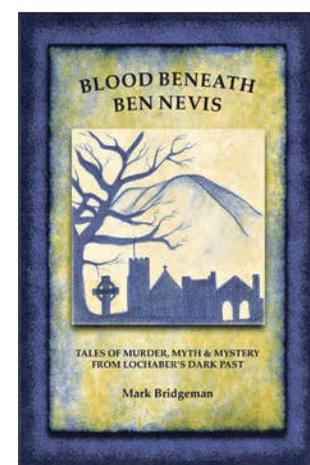
Ms Bamblett said: 'It's been a terrible and worrying time for authors due to publish new books as launch events are generally considered crucial to the success of new titles. Luckily, the book business is full of innovative and creative people and I've been impressed with the alternative social distancing ideas they have come up with, including online readings, book clubs and story time sessions.'

Mr Bridgeman told the Lochaber Times: 'As you can imagine, I was bitterly disappointed not to have a book launch at the Highland Bookshop. Instead, we've concentrated on posting on Facebook, revealing bits and pieces of what I would have said at the actual launch. I want to give those people who follow me online a little extra, just as if they'd attended a real launch.'

'It's obviously a tricky time for everyone at the moment. Authors are having to find new ways of promoting books and new angles to use. There is an absorbing chapter in the *Blood Beneath Ben Nevis* about the 1832 cholera outbreak in Lochaber. The story has so many parallels with the coronavirus situation. I think readers will find it shocking and fascinating, but ultimately encouraging when they read

about how quickly the human race learned and adapted.'

That ability to adapt and connect with stories is one of the saving graces of the 21st century pandemic, as the internet becomes a positive force by which authors and readers can continue to connect.



The croftless crofter

Experienced home educator and Lochaber Times contributor **Nic Goddard** talks chickens.

After eight years as a crofter on the isle of Rum, I returned to the mainland in 2019 with my husband and our teenage children.

Island life was no longer able to provide all the social and educational opportunities our family needed but, having fallen in love with the west coast of the Highlands, we wanted to retain as much of that lifestyle as we could.

We now live in a rented house with a fairly small garden in the middle of croft land and the Sunart oak woodlands near Strontian.

Once a crofter, always a crofter, though, and that way of life has stayed with us with a heavy emphasis on rural skills, countryside crafts, making and baking and spending time outside.

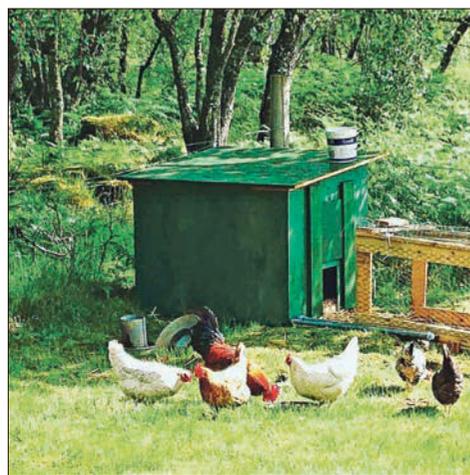
One of our first tasks once we had settled in – and got our landlord's permission – was to bring a small flock of our chickens across from Rum.

We had a large flock of poultry on our croft and selling our eggs to locals and visitors was one of our income streams.

Now we only need eggs for our own consumption but we missed having chickens roaming around the place so we constructed a house for them and bought them over. I attracted a lot of attention standing in Mallaig with a dog crate full of hens and a cockerel, with several people queuing for the Skye ferry taking photographs.

Our chicken house is more robust than the shelters on Rum needed to be as our chickens now have to deal with predators they had not met before – foxes, pine martens and badgers.

They are used to looking out for danger though. We lost birds to eagles and buzzards on



The family chickens roam free.

Rum so they are well used to keeping an eye on the sky while free ranging.

We cobbled the house together with donated off-cuts of scrap wood in one of the midgiest weeks of last spring. It turns out midge-induced rage is a great motivator for building projects.

The flock has happily adapted to mainland life. We had five chicks hatch last summer. The resulting three cockerels were rehomed across the peninsula once they were no longer so welcome to co-exist with their father.

And we are enjoying a great supply of freshly laid eggs which even continued through the winter.

A note to our local communities



Scottish Sea Farms

If you spot a few of our team going about their work as if everything is 'business as usual' please rest assured that, as with the rest of the country, things are anything but the norm.

Both the Scottish and UK Governments have outlined the essential role that food producers can play in the wellbeing of the nation as we unite against COVID-19. In the words of First Minister Nicola Sturgeon: *"We want you to keep going, if possible – and if you can operate your business in line with safe social distancing practice and of course your normal health and safety requirements."*

We're working hard to do exactly that, helped by our suppliers.

While much of this work can and is being done from home, a small number of our team can only carry out their key roles in a work setting: our farmers, for example, who have a duty of care to look after their livestock, and our processing staff who harvest and pack our fish for market so there is fresh farmed salmon for us all to enjoy.

In each case, we have overhauled normal business practices to ensure these key workers are operating in line with official guidance on COVID-19, and will continue to do so as guidance evolves.

It's our way of keeping our team, families and local communities safe and well, while also playing our part in keeping food supplies flowing.

Thank you for your understanding, from all at

Scottish Sea Farms

LT

Remembering the Lochaber POWs of St Valery 80 years on

The towns of Laufen in Upper Bavaria and Malbork in the Danzig Peninsula of Poland have little in common, separated as they are by a road journey of 1,200 kilometres.

But in July 1940, the two locations had in common their place in a network of prisoner of war (POW) camps established by Adolf Hitler's Third Reich.

There was also a family connection between the towns. Two of my uncles, Captain (Reverend) Kenneth Grant, RC chaplain to the 4th Battalion, Queen's Own

An updated version of an article which first appeared in the February/March 2020 edition of 'The Braes' magazine. **By Kenny Grant**

Cameron Highlanders, and his brother, driver Angus Grant, in the same battalion, had been among the 10,000 soldiers of the 51st Highland Division captured by German forces, under the command of

General Erwin Rommel, at St Valery-en-Caux, Normandy, on June 12, 1940.

After an arduous journey across Europe, Uncle Angus arrived at Stalag XXB in Malbork, which was known

at the time as Marienburg, following the German occupation of Poland in 1939. Uncle Kenny's journey took him to Oflag VIIC in Laufen.

Today, the contrast between the towns extends to the fate of the POW establishments. Nothing remains of the wooden hatted camp of Stalag XXB, but a commemorative monument was erected in 2009.

Oflag VIIC was housed in the former residence of the cardinal archbishop of Salzburg, originally built in the 15th century. It remains largely intact and today houses private apartments in addition to several medical and dental practices.

The 80th anniversary of St Valery takes place in June this year. To mark the occasion, the Highlanders Museum at Fort George, Inverness, and West Highland Museum, still hope to mount exhibitions commemorating the experiences of the St Valery POWs, from their capture in 1940 until their liberation in April and May 1945.

At the time of writing, it is not possible to say when these will take place, on account of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I have a reasonable, though far from complete, idea of the POW experiences of my two uncles. In common with many families with their roots in Lochaber and beyond, I learned of the extraordinary exploits of the three Ballachulish soldiers from the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders – Ginger Wilson, Willie Kemp and Sandy MacDonald.

However, despite extensive research in the archives, including those at Fort George, little evidence emerged of other Lochaber POWs from St Valery, who normally served as infantry in the Camerons or in the specialist corps, including the artillery, signals, transport and supply.

This situation prompted me to search for the missing information by writing articles for The Braes and Lochaber Life publications which, in turn, prompted a helpful response



Captain (Reverend) Kenneth Grant, RC chaplain to the 4th Battalion, Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, right, and his brother, driver Angus Grant.



POW camp gates.

from several individuals. I thank all of them for their assistance. Reading my Uncle Kenny's letters again also bore fruit because in several of them he mentions the names of fellow Lochaber POWs including Tommy MacKenzie, Angie MacLennan, Willie Andrew Fraser and a Fort William man by the name of Aitchison.

If anyone reading this article can provide with more information about these POWs, I would be delighted to hear from you.

Memories

While the vast majority of those taken prisoner at St Valery are no longer with us, I would be interested in meeting family members with memories of the stories recounted to them by St Valery POWs.

My Uncle Kenny died before I was old enough to ask him about the war. Fortunately, our family has, in addition to his letters, photographs and other items such as his POW identity tags. These have provided an intriguing insight into his life as a POW. If anyone reading this article is a family member of a former St Valery POW and has any of the memorabilia described, I would be grateful if you would consider letting me see it for research purposes.

In common with many war veterans, POWs were reluctant to say much about their experiences, but those who did have

left us with much on which we should ponder.

I would therefore welcome the opportunity to meet those of a younger generation who were family members or friends of POWs or knew them through business or local organisations.

Both my uncles came home in 1945 and are shown together in the photograph. Angus, having spent all of his years of captivity in Stalag XXB, survived the infamous Death March of January-March 1945, during one of the most extreme winters of the war.

Thousands of Allied prisoners were force marched by their captors away from Poland and eastern Germany in the face of the inexorable Russian advance.

To this day, we remain uncertain about the true number of those who died on the march. Kenny ended up where he felt his true place was – among the non-commissioned soldiers in Stalag 383, Hohenfels, Bavaria.

It was there he met up again with a Cameron Highlander comrade, Company Sergeant Major James Savage, the Beekeeper of Stalag 383, but that is a story for another time.

If anyone can help Kenny with his appeal for information, please contact the Lochaber Times (fort@obantimes.co.uk) and we will forward it to him.

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Islanders urged to volunteer to help

Islanders are being encouraged to volunteer in their communities during the coronavirus pandemic by SNP MSP for Na h-Eileanan an Iar Alasdair Allan.

A new Scotland Cares campaign has been launched to encourage people to volunteer. While the most important ask for the public remains to stay at home and follow the essential public health guidance, people who are healthy and not at risk can volunteer to provide practical or emotional help to those most in need.

Those wanting to volunteer

'I have been heartened by the number of people across the islands who are looking to make a difference.'

to support their communities have three options which are outlined on the Ready Scotland website:

■ Returning NHS workers will be directed to existing voluntary arrangements in NHS Scotland;

■ People wishing to offer their support to public services, including the NHS and local authorities, will be directed to a site co-ordinated by the British Red Cross;

■ And those looking for opportunities with other charities or community groups in their area will be directed to Volunteer Scotland for information.

Dr Allan said: 'The weeks and months ahead are going to be difficult, but I have been heartened by the number of people across the islands who are looking to make a differ-

ence in their communities. While not everyone will be able to volunteer, this new Scottish Government campaign will help people make a real difference.

'The Scottish Government is working closely with local government and partners to co-ordinate the volunteering effort across Scotland. Through the readyscotland.org website, people can be connected to where their contribution is most needed in their community. For some, that may involve roles responding to specific needs in health and social care. For others, it may be we draw on their skills, enthusiasm and energy in the weeks and months to come.

'It is important to remember the most helpful thing many of us can continue to do to help the NHS is to stay at home and follow all COVID-19 guidance.'

MSP says skeleton air service is necessary

Na h-Eileanan an Iar MSP Alasdair Allan has commented on the decision by HIAL (Highlands and Islands Airports Limited) to close its airports to all but a skeleton air service, a decision which will affect Stornoway, Benbecula and Barra airports in his constituency.

Dr Allan said he thinks people in the islands will understand why this decision by HIAL has been necessary.

'Although this is a drastic step - limiting connectivity in the islands in a way not seen for many decades - it is one that is needed in the present emergency,' he commented last Thursday.

'The news comes at the same time as CalMac publishes a 'lifeline' timetable with significantly fewer sailings to and from all islands, and transport limited to essential travellers.

'HIAL has announced Loganair will run a skeleton service from Sunday, aimed at ensuring health services continue to operate, people who are working in the oil industry get to work and the Royal Mail



Alasdair Allan MSP.

continues to function. These are very difficult times for Scotland, both in human and economic terms, and this will be felt in the islands.

'There is little alternative to today's announcements and I know the Scottish Government is committed to making sure full transport services are resumed whenever it is safe for that to happen.'

Military officers ready to help health services

Two military officers have been assigned to NHS Western Isles to help with vital planning and resilience.

Reporting directly to the health board's chief executive Gordon Jamieson, the officers are part of the ongoing UK Government response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Three RAF Puma helicopters are now stationed at Kinloss Barracks in Moray where they will work closely with a Chinook and a Wildcat helicopter based at RAF Leeming, North Yorkshire, to meet any requests for assistance from NHS boards and trusts

across Scotland and northern England.

The helicopters will support medical transport across Scotland and the rest of the UK. The new task force will also be available for general support including moving equipment and personnel across the wider UK.

The aviation support is in addition to a team of army medical, logistics, supply and humanitarian relief planners who joined the Scottish Government's Emergency Co-ordination Centre team in Edinburgh last week.

The team of military plan-

ners and liaison officers are now co-locating at St Andrew's House in Edinburgh. A wider team of military liaison personnel is being made available to every health board in Scotland.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said: 'The creation of these helicopter hubs is the next step in our armed forces' contribution to tackling the coronavirus outbreak throughout the United Kingdom.

'Our aircraft are ready to support emergency services and communities across the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.'

Ferry fares frozen to help islanders

Fares are being temporarily frozen on the Clyde and Hebrides Ferries Services (CHFS) network to help island residents and businesses during the outbreak of coronavirus.

With CalMac currently operating a reduced timetable for essential travel only, the planned fare rise has been postponed to assist businesses and remote communities which rely on the lifeline services.

Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands Paul Wheelhouse said: 'Supply chains to and from our island



Paul Wheelhouse.

communities are vitally important, so we must continue to support them during this outbreak of coronavirus. With

that in mind, I am freezing fares on the CHFS network until we are through this challenge.

'This will ensure businesses and hauliers are not placed under any further financial pressure. It also means islanders who must travel for work or medical reasons do not face additional costs.

'It remains the case people need to avoid all but essential travel by ferry to and from Scotland's remote and island communities, but this fare freeze will help those that have to make journeys at this difficult time.'

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LETTERS

Write to us: send your letters to fort@obantimes.co.uk
or The Editor, PO Box 1, Oban, Argyll PA34 4HBTourism businesses feel
the impact of COVID-19
more than any other

These unprecedented times continue to affect every one of us across the Lochaber region and country as a whole.

There can be virtually no one who has not been impacted by the coronavirus, though some have been hit harder than others.

Possibly the most severely affected in our area are the countless businesses and individuals operating in the hospitality sector.

Tourism is a vital element of the local economy so to have almost every business shut down is a bitter blow to the companies involved.

There is, of course, an even more pronounced impact for the hard-working individuals who find themselves unemployed through no fault of their own.

What is worse is that there is no sign yet of an end to the crisis or even the slightest indication of when life and our economy may return to anything resembling the normality we have been used to. We must hope that day is not too far off.

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.

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We will attempt to resolve your issue in a timeous, reasonable and amicable manner. However, if you are unsatisfied with our response, you can contact IPSO by email: inquiries@ipso.co.uk. We will abide by the decision of IPSO.



Open letter to Robin Currie

Dear Mr Robin Currie,
I am the chairman of Glenorchy and Innishail Community Council. We have been discussing the proposed Deposit and Return Scheme (DRS), particularly as it affects our local village shops and its outcome in rural areas generally.

We are sure the idea of DRS meets with approval throughout Scotland, but we are equally sure many are unaware of the potentially damaging effect the scheme will almost certainly have on rural communities, their livelihood and the rural economy.

DRS in Scotland is a very ambitious, wide-ranging scheme. It is unfunded and relies totally on the registration of the distributors of recyclable material with SEPA. The crucial details of how refunds will be reimbursed to retailers, the level of service charges and the frequency of materials being collected, not only seem vague but also are under the control of the distributors without government regulation or voluntary agreement.

We have met with Michael Russell MSP in our local shop, the Dalmally Stores, and raised ours and the shopkeeper's concerns. Mr Russell wrote to Roseanna Cunningham on our behalf, but the Scottish Government's response is clearly to proceed with the legislation with minimal amendment. It seems to be that the government's attitude is they are going to push on regardless and 'do it well'. It is our opinion that they are certainly not going to 'do it well'.

Mr Colin Harvey, our Dalmally shopkeeper, has made it clear that any effect of DRS on his cash flow or his inability to store material through lack of space will force him to close for good. We are sure this is reflected in many rural and island settlements in Argyll. It would be a positive step forward if the proposed exemption rules were changed allowing smaller businesses to be exempt, either by the size of community they serve, or by virtue of the size of premises from which they operate, both quite simple measures on which to legislate. We are also concerned to note that DRS is being promoted as a cash scheme, this has been dropped in all other countries in favour of cashless or voucher schemes to combat petty crime and addiction.

We would urge you to support our concerns.

John Kerr.

Open letter to CalMac

Dear Mr Drummond,
I have written to you previously regarding the winter overhaul programme, when the Clansman is away from our route for her annual maintenance and also covering the Hebrides.

Beachd Ailein

ALLAN CAMPBELL

editor@obantimes.co.uk

Nach tric a chluinnear gun tig math à olc, agus tha mòran a' fàs mothachail air mar a tha an im-pidh a th' oirnn uile fuireach aig ar dachannan a' toirt cothrom sealltainn ri rudan a bha sinn 's dòcha a' cur dheth bho chionn greise. 'S e firinn na cùise gum bheil beatha làitheil dhaoine, agus gu h-àraid feadhainn a tha fhathast a' cosnadh agus a' togail teaghlach, air fàs cho dripeil is nach eil iad ag amas air mòran a dh' iarradh iad a dhèanamh. Chuala mi fiù 's aon mhàthair ag ràdh gum bheil an fhèin-aonaranachd a' toirt cothrom luachmhor dhi ùine a chur seachad cuide ri a cuid cloinne. Anns an àbhaist tha a saoghal, mar a tha saoghal nam milleanan, air giùladair a tha ga lìonadh le uallaichean obrach agus dhleastanasan làitheil. Dè an seòrsa rudan ris am bheil cothrom againn sealltainn a-nise ma-thà? Leabhraichean sònraichte 's dòcha, neo sùil a thoirt air seann dealbhan teaghlach, neo 's dòcha ùrachadh eòlais a dhèanamh le fòndh gu caraid. Theagamh nach eil an dealbh a thug am bàrd Niall MacLeòid, le greis air sùgradh, greis air dannsa, greis air canntaireachd, is ceòl, cho coltach san là an-diugh ach gu cinnteach nì aighear feum agus togail inntinn. Theagamh gun cuir daoine cuideachd luach air ùine a bhith aca smaoineachadh air mar a thèid aca air taic is coibhneas a' nochdadh do dhaoine eile nach eil ann an suidheachadh cho cofhurtail riutha fhèin.

Nì gnìomhan beaga coibhneil atharrachadh mòr glè thrice agus tha fianais làitheil againn air

mar a tha daoine deiseil gus taic shaor-thoileach a thoirt nuair a tha cùisean duilich. Chan eil fios againn dè cho fada 's a dh'fhaodadh an suidheachadh seo mairsinn agus cha mhotha na sin a tha fios dè a' bhuaidh a bheir aonaranachd fhada air daoine. Bidh cunnart ann gum fàs cuid cho draghail le bhith air an cuingealachadh agus gum bris iad na riaghailtean a tha an riaghaltas air a chur oirnn. Dh'fhaodadh sin ciallachadh gun tèid poileas an sàs le làmhachas-làidir a bhios thar tòimhsean agus gum fàs eas-ùmhachd poblach. 'S e dealbh eagalach a tha sin agus mar a tha mi air a ràdh roimhe chan eil farmad sam bith agam ri luchd-riaghlaidh aig am bheil uallach stiùiridh chor na dùthcha aig an àm seo. Tha iadsan a' dèanamh an díchill a' leantainn na comhairle saidheansail a tha iad a' faotainn, agus buidheachas dha na mìltean de luchd-obrach sheirbheisean deatamach de gach seòrsa a tha gan cur fhèin ann an gàbhadh gach latha ag obair dhuinn uile!

Ach tha cor na dùthcha agus mar a gheibh i thairis air sgrios a' chorònbhioras gu bhith cuideachd gu mòr an urra ris an t-sluagh gu lèir, agus mar is motha feairt a bheir sinn dha na riaghailtean aonaranachd 's ann as luaithe a thèid an trioblaid seachad. Sùil eile air na seann dealbhan ud ma-thà!

Enforced isolation can allow time to tackle long-standing to-do lists!

Allan Campbell
ailean@obantimes.co.uk

This has always been a time of frustration for our island for various reasons, mainly that you allocate the wrong vessel to us during this period, an issue that in my opinion remains.

The reason for writing to you is that I feel I must make comment regarding the recent spate of severe weather conditions, especially during February when we endured many storms. This, of course, impacted on the proposed closure of the pier to vehicular traffic which was subsequently delayed to allow the delivery of essential goods. This situation was aggravated as the Clansman was absent and a smaller ferry was on our route.

I must put on record my admiration for the captain and crews for their dedication and indeed bravery during this period. It must be a very fine line between trying to deliver a service with all the added pressures of storms and pier

closure deadlines on the one hand, but keeping in mind the safety of the crew members, passengers, cargo and, of course, the vessel itself.

Coll and Tiree must surely be two of the most exposed piers within your network, bringing their own individual challenges. Cancellations are always a frustration but the final decision rests with the captain, as indeed it should. I do sincerely hope that this remains the case and to resist the temptation to put profit first.

It is on record that vessels operating on the Irish Sea, twice the size of the Clansman, were off service at times during these storms.

My thanks go to the crews of all your vessels but, in particular Lord of the Isles, Isle of Mull and, of course, Clansman as they were involved during this period.

Hector Neill, Balevullin, Isle of Tiree.

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COVID-19 halts work on Fort cinema and soap factory

Construction work on Fort William's long-awaited new cinema has stopped as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Developer Angus MacDonald confirmed to the Lochaber Times that work on the cinema and another venture he is involved with – the new factory for the Highland Soap Company – has stopped.

He said: 'Both our sites have had to close following Scottish Government instructions. I am sure it is the right thing to do. Hard for the many self-employed workers on the site who, as things stand, will only get sick pay.'

'We were only seven weeks away from opening, so it is incredibly disappointing – no more so than it is for everyone in the hospitality trade.'

'The five Highland Soap shops have closed but orders on the internet are being fulfilled and the online business is doing better than ever.'



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Retro Roamer

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More Roamerisms from the early 1990s

At precisely the same time as an audience of 126 were attending the Fort William premiere of 'Rob Roy', an estimated several hundred more – and fewer than half of them 'Fit Likers' – were having a fine Friday night final fling with 'Scotland The What'. And, in keeping with their own inimitable style, the stalwarts injected some Lochaber humour into their Auchterturra programme. 'It's a great pleasure and, indeed, a great thrill for us to be in Fort William,' they told us. 'This is our biggest occasion since being invited to Balmoral to do a show.' We were then regaled with an account of how the threesome had tried – in vain – to get booked in to the same hotel. 'I'm in the Milton,' said Stephen. 'And I'm in the Alexandra,' George told us. 'They've put me in Invernevis,' confided the impish Buff. 'And that explains why I was given medicine and a bed bath at six o'clock this morning!' Aye, a lot of the humour was well observed. 'Ochone! Ochone!' Buff declared. 'What does that mean?' Stephen asked. To which Buff replied: 'It's Gaelic, and nowadays you get a £20,000 grant just for saying it.'

A 'nameless one' appeared in the Lochy Bar on Sunday afternoon, nursing a sair heid. 'Boy, it must have been late when I left here last night,' he observed to the bar staff. 'You weren't in here last night!' he was advised.

Bob was out on the Anoch Mor ski slopes with the big snow groomer early this month – thanks to the April snow showers. As he was wending his way onwards and upwards, there was an almighty scramble a few yards ahead of him.

Three blokes emerged from a snow hole and dived to more secure cover so as not to be caught under the machine. 'I couldn't believe it,' Bob said later. 'They must have spent all night out on the piste!'

I wasn't far out with my comment that the arrival of BST last weekend was more appropriately British 'Snow Time' than British Summer Time. Aye, the gritters were out on Monday night.

A fair number of locals had a bet on 'For William' in the Grand National. Because, of course, the name was the nearest they could get

to Fort William. 'For William' completed the course – last.

Some interesting cameos have been revived to mark the forthcoming anniversary of VE Day thanks to Lochaber Local History Society's excellent publication 'Lochaber in Wartime'. Here are a few of them:

By April 6, 1940, locals were being warned – if you lose your gas mask it will cost you 2/6 to replace it.

Around 8am on a March morning in 1941, a German plane flew in low from the Spean Bridge direction, dropping bombs which exploded on the moorland and machine-gunning the Pilot Engine, driven by Jimmy Ness, as it crossed the Blar Mhor.

The army and special training schools were housed in the Granite House in Fort William High Street. The premises were, co-incidentally, taken over in later years by Jimmy's son Jim Ness.

David Niven was a special operations executive officer at Lochailort. He trained at Achnacarry and often helped out behind the bar at the Stage House in Glenfinnan.

The commander at Inverailort Castle, whose radio had broken down, went to the Lochailort Inn to ask how the war was going. The reply from Wilhelmina MacRae was: 'What war? There's been none since 1745.'

No-one from Dorlin House – where naval and army personnel were stationed – ever passed the Connachie household at Glentower in Fort William's Achintore Road without bringing in chocolate, chewing gum or cigarettes to thank Dr Charles Connachie and Mrs Frances Connachie for their continuing Highland hospitality.

JL Sydie, Old Cinema, Viewforth Place, received contracts from the Army and Navy to paint and camouflage all the Nissen huts dotted around Lochaber. JL Sydie's early mode of transport was a roofless Austin 12. We of the Viewforth Gang played in it when its wartime duty had been done.

Let's have some of the usual Roamer trivia, snippets and anecdotes. Aren't our Lochaber posties wonderful? A local black Labrador

certainly reckons so, having amiably tracked one of the lads on every step of the 'Hill Run', as they used to call it, even following him all the way back down to base. This resulted in the re-addressing of one black Lab with first class delivery home in a Royal Mail van.

Aussie Betty was waiting for the bus up Lundavra. Just along the road from the crescent she was, standing in the 'open air' section of the bus shelter – the bit where the perspex panel is missing. Betty felt something nuzzling her from behind. She whipped round sharpish, to be confronted by one and a half hundred weights of brown calf.

The new Japanese chairman of Ben Nevis Distillery's parent company, Nikka, was here last week. It was his first visit in that capacity, so the flags were flying. Side by side on the poles at the front of the premises were Saltire, Union Jack and the Japanese national flag. They were arranged so that the first one the chairman would see when he approached the distillery would be that of his own country. Unfortunately, however, instead of coming down the Inverness road from the airport, as had originally been arranged, he was chauffeured up from Glasgow with the result the Rising Sun was in third position and not pole position. It's an ill wind, however. As the flags continued to flutter in the breeze next day, the distillery's auditor arrived, on holiday, having completed the West Highland Way. 'Nice of you to put the flags out for me,' he observed to all and sundry.

Yet another European seafood exhibition with a Scottish pavilion. In Brussels this time, but without a Lochaber link. Inverness, of course, and Invergordon represented, along with Orkney, Shetland and Argyll. But Lochaber? No more, yet again.

The unstaffed station at Morar regained some of its former glory last week when it re-opened, officially, as the local newspaper office. Yes 'West Word', the 32 page community monthly paper was informally unveiled at a ceremony in what, formerly, was the station master's office. Around 750 copies of 'West Word' will be edited and produced in the booking office and waiting room.

Chilled raspberry-ripple lemon soufflés



1 Syn per serving | 1 hour | Serves 4

Ingredients

- 5 sheets leaf gelatine
- 200g raspberries, reserving 4 berries to decorate
- Zest and juice of 3 unwaxed lemons, plus thin lemon wedges to decorate
- 3 large egg yolks, 4 large egg whites*

Method:

- Tightly tie strips of non-stick baking paper around 4 individual, straight-sided soufflé dishes (about 9cm wide x 5cm deep, or 200ml), leaving a 4cm collar above the rims. Then soak the gelatine in cold water for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, purée the raspberries in a food processor and set aside.
- Put the lemon zest and juice, egg yolks and sweetener in a large, heatproof bowl. Boil a pan of water, then turn off the heat. Place the bowl over the water, making sure the base isn't touching the water. Using an electric hand whisk, beat the lemon mixture for 5 minutes, or until pale in colour and slightly thickened.
- Heat 3 tbsp water in a small pan, so it just covers the base. Squeeze the water from the gelatine. Put the leaves in the hot water, take the pan off the heat immediately and stir until dissolved. Then whisk into the lemon mixture (still over water); set the bowl aside to cool completely.

- 4 level tbsp sweetener
- 500g fat-free, no-added-sugar vanilla yogurt
- *Pregnant women, the elderly, babies and toddlers are advised to choose eggs showing the British Lion stamp if eating raw or partially cooked eggs

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EXERCISE



Emma Hebborn demonstrates an exercise.

How to exercise at home with Wolfhouse Gym

If you were a regular gym goer before the COVID-19 outbreak it is likely that you are going to feel a little bit lost without your normal range of gym equipment.

You might also feel worried about losing the muscle mass or fitness you had built up thus far. Please do not fret! Studies show that training periodically (ie. taking up to three-week breaks occasionally) has a minimum impact on your muscle growth and tensile strength.

Motivation for working out at home! Yes, this can be tricky. Especially with distractions such as social media and video streaming sites. My top tip: allocate 30 minutes of your day to 'home workout'. Write an itinerary for yourself if you need that extra structure.

During this allotted 30 minutes, switch off your mobile or turn it to aeroplane mode so that you do not get interrupted or distracted. Remember, you are likely to be awake and in your house for up to 15 hours per day so 30 minutes is nothing.

There are plenty of sources online where you can find home workouts which require little or no equipment.

But here are a couple of examples of my favourite ones: Warm up before your home workout. Before you start your circuit, it is best to make sure you are warmed up and all joints are feeling mobile.

Try this...

3 rounds at a good steady pace:

20 high knee sprints (on the spot and get your arms moving!)

5 burpees

20 mountain climbers

If you have a skipping rope try this – 30 seconds skipping 10 seconds rest for four rounds.

Beginner workout (Not a regular gym goer as such, but enjoys exercise):

Complete 10 rounds of the following exercises and reps:

5 Burpees

20 Mountain Climbers

5 Squat Jumps

20 High Knee Sprints

5 Reverse Lunges (each leg)

20 Side Raises (holding a tin of beans or small bottle of water in each hand)

*you might need a pen and paper to tally up your rounds!

Intermediate workout (New to the gym and/or exercises classes but proficient in a lot of movements): As many rounds and reps as possible of the following exercises in 8 minutes:

20 Reverse Lunges (holding small dumbbells/kettle bells/bottles of water/ tins of beans

10 Sit-ups

5 Push-ups

*set a timer on your watch/clock or phone

*keep moving without rest for the full eight minutes.

**Exercises at home by
Emma Hebborn of Wolfhouse Gym**

Shinty preparing for the other side

The Camanachd Association is among those having to adjust its operations during these unrecognisable times as the consequences of the spread of COVID-19 continue to dominate everyday lives.

The game's governing body has followed all government guidance, advising all its staff to work from home at this time. Whilst the association's preference would have course been a short intermission, the likelihood is shinty will not return for some time and some competitions may be unable to run fully this year.

Staff, committees and the board of directors are working together on plans covering all potential outcomes, depending on the longevity of the COVID-19 sanctions.

The situation remains fluid through what has been a rapidly changing position but the association hopes to share these plans with clubs when there is greater clarity around the likely period of isolation.

As part of this, it is considering options that may or may not be used to ensure shinty is played again when it is safe to do so.

Any attempt to lay a clear plan at this stage is impossible but these options could include local midweek fixtures and/or Sunday fixtures and finals or shorter league programmes.

However, it is impossible to be specific or predict what may be practical at this time.

The Camanachd Association recognises some sports have said when they expect to return to competitive action but it believed to do so at this present time is simply guess work as no one can predict the volatility of the current situation.

However, that will not stop it planning for a number of eventualities.

During the intervening period, work will continue to pursue the best for shinty and the association has pledged to work closely with member clubs to ensure everyone is best prepared to come through this situation ready to return to sporting action once normality returns.

Pitches will benefit from rest

If there is a sporting benefit to come from the coronavirus pandemic, it's that pitches all



Mossfield Stadium in Oban.

over the country could benefit greatly from the rest.

In Oban, head groundsman Iain Hay's responsibilities include pitches at Mossfield, Ganavan, North Connel, three at Glencruitten as well as a new pitch where the former blaze pitch was situated behind the Mossfield stand.

Like many at present, Iain's involvement is limited by the current restrictions but he feels pitches will be the better from the break. The former Oban Camanachd manager and player said: 'The rest will definitely benefit the pitches and they will come in stronger. There is a wee bit of growth at present but when it really comes through, the rest means the grass will stiffen as the roots continue to grow. It must be said we've also just had what was a poor winter for pitches so there is a bit of catching up to do.'

Making the best use of time

The suspension of the shinty season doesn't necessarily mean work at all shinty clubs should grind to a halt as there are still opportunities for clubs to progress off the field during this interim period.

The Camanachd Association has highlighted the benefits of its Clubmark accreditation scheme which its development team has run for the past four years, suggesting this would be a perfect time for clubs to engage with its development officer. It only requires one or two volunteers from each club to get matters moving.

A Camanachd Association spokesman said: 'We are delighted to announce 37 clubs across shinty have already

New Camanachd Association director Roddy McCuish will lead the group, with development officer Euan McMurdo also playing a key role.

Meantime director and vice president Steven MacKenzie's competitions review will likely cover the options available for the remainder of the 2020 season as well as taking a longer term view.

All clubs will be consulted as part of the process and anyone wishing to be part of this online working group should contact Camanachd Association operations manager Astie Cameron directly.

Kilmallie roll back the years

With no action on the field, shinty clubs and the Camanachd Association have taken to social media to give supporters a shinty fix.

Kilmallie Shinty Club has unveiled an interesting project where 14 former players recall their favourite on-the-field memories, including the best 12 players, in formation order, they have played with.

First up was club stalwart Trevor Jackson who selected Bochy MacNiven as keeper for his team. His defence was made up from James MacNicol at full back, wing backs David Neilson and Ian Robertson with the formidable Keith Blackhall at half back.

Wing centres Lachie Innes and Mark MacPherson flanked full centre Donald Lamont in the middle of the park.

Scott Rodger took up the half forward position with Liam MacDonald and John Stewart at wing forward and Totti MacNicol at full forward.

Trevor Jackson's best goal scored was his 30 second volley against Kingussie in a MacTavish Cup Final which Kingussie eventually won.

Ian Robertson's 'screamer' in a Sutherland Cup semi-final was the best goal seen, whilst winning the Sutherland Cup Final against Fort William in 2007 was his favourite shinty memory.

Totti MacNicol was given the honour of being nominated the best Kilmallie player in Trevor Jackson's opinion.

Discover more great moments and best teams as named by former Kilmallie players on the club's Facebook page.

started their journey toward enhanced governance, planning and provision of good practice through Clubmark accreditation. We need to continue moving forward and would encourage all clubs to arrange a suitable date with their regional development officer to continue progression or, in some cases, to overcome some current challenges.

'One of the primary purposes of development staff is to support the development of increased membership and improved participation opportunities in clubs to enhance member retention.

'One of the tools to start this process is the Clubmark accreditation which contributes as one of our key outcomes of a well-organised club. The Strategy for Shinty provides further information.'

Funding streams are almost all still fully operational making this the perfect opportunity for clubs to use time that would have been used preparing for matches to apply for funds to help sow the seeds of success for years to come.

Consultant appointed for short-term working groups

The Camanachd Association has appointed independent consultant Neil MacDonald to lead the consultation phase of a new working group which has the specific remit of evaluating current provision of the sport in Argyll and Bute.

The group will gather feedback from members to identify opportunities for enhanced working in future.

Mallaig FC benefits from CalMac cash boost



Mallaig Football Club are delighted to announce that they have been awarded £2,000 from the CalMac Ferries Community Fund in support of our 'Mallaig FC Youth: Here to Stay' project.

In the past 18 months the club have seen the emergence of the Mallaig FC under 18's team competing in the Skye and Lochalsh youth football setup and that is something we're immensely proud of.

Having young people playing football regularly under the Mallaig FC umbrella is something that we hope to see continue for years to come. With the help of this award

FOOTBALL

we can make steps towards ensuring the continuation and development of youth football in Mallaig.

Sharon's keeping Kinlochleven's fitness on track during virus crisis

As the world goes into lock down, many people have been struggling to keep their fitness regimes going, writes Peter Newman.

Some have turned to celebrities, such as Joe Wicks, for help with their children. But, at a more local level, Sharon Ashwell has been managing to run the classes she usually runs at the Kinlochleven's Leven Centre online.

Ashwell told us: 'When coronavirus struck a lot of people were worried about keeping up their exercise routines, which they had worked so hard to achieve.'

'I thought about recording just a couple of videos to help people out. It has gone down so well I am trying to do three to four per week. I have done a core class, high intensity interval training class, general circuit class and kettlebells class. Just things people can do in the house or garden with limited equipment.'

It has not necessarily been a seamless adjustment but Ashwell has found that it has been more enjoyable than she at first feared: 'I found it strange at first because I don't particularly like being in front of a camera and I love

the interaction with people in a class, which you obviously don't have when you just make a video.

'I have to keep talking and giving them different options and explaining because I can't see them, but I think for the people watching it's much the same as me being in front of them in class - (I just can't shout at them as much; I like to call it encouraging them!)

'The videos have gone down really well and everyone has been so, so kind and encouraging. The response has been fantastic and everyone seems to be loving them.'

'The videos are just on my own private, closed group (Kinlochleven Fitness Group) which I set up years ago and all the people on there come or have come to classes over the years, so I know most of their capabilities and where to pitch the classes. So I know they have an idea of what to do and won't be hurting themselves.'

'I am not a natural exerciser and found it quite difficult, so I can relate to people coming to classes who have never exercised before. I decided to give myself a goal and aimed for the Inverness half marathon to raise some money for

Diabetes Research for young people,' said Ashwell, who has had Type 1 Diabetes since she was nine.

'I have since done about 15 different runs, raising thousands for Diabetes Research. At the same time I decide to learn more about health and exercise and signed up with Lifetime Fitness to do my Level



Sharon Ashwell

2 Gym Instructor and Exercise to Music Instructor Courses.

'I continued to study and I have since trained to be a Circuits, Metafit, Spinning and Kettlecise Instructor.'

'I have done some private work with the local shinty club and a few classes in Ballachulish but the biggest thing was getting involved

FITNESS

with High Life Highland and the Leven Centre.

'Maria (MacDonald) and Ewan (Thorburn) at the Leven Centre have been fantastic and are so supportive, they encourage new classes and new ways of doing things. The centre has definitely thrived and is now a busy, hive of activity.'

With the immediate future of getting together to exercise still in doubt, Ashwell says she is finding this way of working as positive an experience as it could be.

'I will continue to do the classes for as long as everyone wants them, the feedback has been great. Possibly the next step will be to do some live classes, so I can get a bit of that interaction - although I'm not very technical minded! And our Internet connection is rubbish, so that may be a challenge, it took me hours the other day to upload a video!'

'Although we can't do it in person at the moment the social interactions have continued online and we are all supporting each other in any way we can. I love my job and hope to do it for many more years!'



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WEATHER

Thursday
Gusty winds and light showers
Temperatures 3°C to 8°C.

Friday
Light showers and a moderate breeze
Temperatures 3°C to 8°C.

Weekend Outlook
Saturday
Light rain and a moderate breeze
Sunday
Light rain and a moderate breeze
Temperatures 4°C to 9°C.



TIDAL INFORMATION

Tide tables for Oban during the week from **Thursday April 2, 2020** are listed below with differences for major ports listed on the right. All times are GMT (add one hour BST)

	06.01	1.9	13.20	2.7
Thur	18.41	1.8	** **	**
Fri	01.02	2.9	07.53	1.8
	14.52	2.9	19.59	1.6
Sat	02.51	3.2	09.19	1.5
	15.42	3.2	21.07	1.2
Sun	03.45	3.5	10.13	1.1
	16.23	3.5	22.03	0.8
Mon	04.26	3.8	10.57	0.7
	16.58	3.8	22.51	0.5
Tues	05.06	4.1	11.37	0.5
	17.32	4.0	23.36	0.2
Wed	05.45	4.3	12.16	0.3
	18.07	4.1	** **	4.1

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

Ardrisaig	-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

Shinty preparing for the other side

How to exercise at home with Wolfhouse Gym

Gary tries his hand at the loo roll challenge!

Take Gary Innes, a shinty stick and a precious toilet roll, add a bit of shinty skill and you have the recipe for a bit of Facebook fun, writes Mark Entwistle.

With the current lack of any shinty matches due to the COVID-19 pandemic, former Fort William and Scotland shinty champion, Gary, took to the hall of his home in Glasgow in a challenge to players across the world to see how long they could bounce one of the increasingly sought after toilet rolls using a shinty stick.

The choice of a soft toilet tissue came after Gary's wife, Hannah, wouldn't let him use a shinty ball in the house for fear of damage.

Undeterred, Gary launched a social media video, with a faultless performance, inviting others to hone their skills during their confinement at home.

This has not only gone viral among shinty teams, but has been picked up by other sports where 'keep up' can be prac-

ticed indoors. Among those trying their hand are local players from Lochaber football clubs, including Mallaig FC, who have been videoing their own efforts at keepy up football-style.

A spokesperson for Mallaig FC told the Lochaber Times: 'Having seen the trend going viral with lots of top professional footballers and clubs giving it a shot, we decided to have a go as well.'

'We saw it as a way of doing our small part reminding people of the reason behind it, to stay at home and listen to the advice at this time.'

'However, perhaps more importantly for us it was a way to give people a laugh and try and lift spirits in what has been a tough time for everyone and give ourselves something to do with having no football just now.'

A selection of the videos are now available on the Lochaber Times' Facebook page.



Gary Innes sets a loo roll challenge for shinty players and supporters.

Glengarry Highland Games cancelled

The committee of the Glengarry Games Association has regrettably announced that it has cancelled this year's game, which were due to take place on Saturday July 4.

A spokesperson for the committee told the Lochaber Times: 'We are one of the earliest of the Highland Games circuit and, given the likely timescale of the pandemic, we would always have struggled to be ready in time.'

'Moreover, it seems likely that the tourist visitors on whom we depend would not be around in any great numbers, if at all.'

'We have therefore taken the decision to cancel this year and come back bigger and better next year, and also prepare for Glengarry 50, the celebration of our 50th anniversary in 2022.'

Anyone wishing further information should contact Eric McKenzie on eric4457@yahoo.co.uk

OLD FASHIONED FUN

Alasdair and Olivia keep active with age-old game



Alasdair Greens and his four-year-old daughter, Amelia, enjoy some outdoor fun with a good, old-fashioned game chalked on the pavement in Caol. Photograph: Iain Ferguson

Youth shinty survey

The Camanachd Association is undertaking a youth shinty survey aimed at gathering views from clubs and schools.

The survey will gather opinions on shinty's main focus at various age groups as well as exploring what changes could be introduced.

The full survey can be found on the Camanachd Association's website and social media pages.



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