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Ferry to operate from Troon for 18 months

Service to be relocated during Ardrossan harbour redevelopment work

by Hugh Boag
editor@arranbanner.co.uk



Troon harbour will be used as an alternative berth for the Arran ferry service during the £35 million upgrade of Ardrossan harbour, it was confirmed this week.

The recommendation, which will see services resume from Ardrossan once works are completed, was agreed at a meeting of the project's Ministerial Taskforce on Wednesday.

The Arran ferry will operate from Troon for around 18 months from September 2022 until at least the spring of 2024.

The Taskforce's decision, which followed a review of all potential options, was guided by the community requests to

maximise the reliability of the alternative service for ferry users.

Further work will also be undertaken to look at potential measures to support the community in Ardrossan during the construction works.

The use of Troon harbour for the duration of the works was backed by 79 per cent of respondents to a survey carried out earlier this month by the Arran Ferry Committee.

There had been concern at the number of sailings which may have to have been cancelled while the MV Caledonian Isles was using the Irish berth during the works. The MV Glen Sannox is also due into service in late 2022 and would be unable to use the Irish berth,

Continued on page 2.



Islands minister Paul Wheelhouse, seen here with the MV Caledonian Isles at Ardrossan last year, made the Troon announcement on Tuesday. 01_B29minister01

More vaccines to be given next weekend

Two thirds of the population of Arran will have received their first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine by the end of the month.

Arran High School is being used for the mass vaccination campaign, with more than 1,400 doses having been administered already, and a further 1,450 doses planned next weekend.

NHS Ayrshire and Arran say they have delivered the first dose of vaccine to all those aged over 70 on Arran and now moving on to the next cohort of residents, including all those over 60, as well as those with a pre-existing medical condition.

Ruth Betley, senior manager Arran Services for North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership, said: 'With more vaccines due to be delivered by the end of this month, we are able to start vaccinating the next cohort of Arran residents.'

'The next sessions will take place at Arran High School February 27 and 28. The practice team at Arran Medical Group have been contacting eligible residents

Continued on page two.



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More residents to receive vaccine next weekend

Continued from page one.

this week by telephone and not letter as in other areas of the country. This may be from a 01292 or mobile telephone number.

'We are asking residents to not call the practice, so that we can keep the telephone lines free for other medical matters. Don't worry, be patient and we will call you.'

'I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those on Arran who have helped to ensure the vaccine programme runs smoothly. In particular, I would like to thank our colleagues in North Ayrshire Council, for allowing us to use Arran High School for the vaccination programme.'

NHS Ayrshire and Arran chief executive John Burns added: 'Our teams have been working round the clock to pull together all the elements of this programme which is the biggest vaccination effort the country has ever seen. The vaccine offers protection against Covid-19 and I would encourage everyone to take the



Ruth Betley, senior manager Arran Services for North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership.

opportunity to be vaccinated when offered.

'Remember though we must still continue following the FACTS guidance to help protect our communities from the spread of the virus - even after vaccination. I want to thank everyone for their continued support and patience as we do our best to protect those most vulnerable from the negative impact of coronavirus.'

School testing unveiled as youngest back in class

by Hugh Boag

editor@arranbanner.co.uk



The youngest pupils on Arran will be heading back to school next week as the island's primary schools open their doors to resume classes.

From Monday primary 1 to 3 pupils, and those at pre-school will return to face learning. Other age groups will continue to learn from home, apart from some secondary pupils who need to complete coursework.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said it was unlikely that any other pupils would return to school before March 15 at the earliest.

Meanwhile, an asymptomatic testing programme is being introduced across North Ayrshire schools, including Arran.

All schools will have access to asymptomatic testing kits



Time to try again. Pupils arriving back at Lamlash primary last August.

following the February half-term break, in bid to stop the spread of Covid-19 and to keep schools open.

All staff (early years, primary, secondary and ASN) and senior phase pupils in S4 - S6 will be asked to take test kits home, and twice weekly, following clear instructions for use, perform the tests on themselves or with the support of a parent or carer. They will then register positive or negative results on a web-based portal, with the results shared with NHS Test

and Protect. The voluntary home testing programme aims to contribute to the reduction of Covid-19 related risks in schools and help keep teachers, staff, children and young people as safe as possible. The testing programme will help to easily identify people within schools who are not showing symptoms and ask them and their close contacts to self-isolate to help stop the spread of the virus.

In coming days, schools will arrange to distribute the test

kits to consenting staff and senior phase pupils.

Councillor John Bell, cabinet member for education, North Ayrshire Council, said: 'We want to do everything we can to ensure our schools are safe for everyone, the introduction of asymptomatic testing will help us to break the chain of transmission.'

'This widespread testing programme is voluntary for all staff and senior phase secondary pupils; however, we are strongly encouraging school staff and senior phase pupils to participate, in order to contribute to the wellbeing of our school communities.'

'I must emphasise that regular testing is only for people without symptoms. Anyone with symptoms must continue to follow national guidance and book a test at a test centre.'

Arran to Troon on the ferry for 18 months

Continued from page one.

further prompting the switch to Troon.

Minister for energy, connectivity and the islands Paul Wheelhouse said: 'This is a significant step forward for the Ardrossan Harbour Project and I'd like to thank the members of the taskforce for their contributions in coming to this decision. We had to take particular account of the potential for significant disruption had services switched to the Irish berth, given this would be more difficult to access in rough conditions than the Arran berth. We know this ferry link is a vital lifeline for the Arran community and critical to the tourism sector on the island, so using Troon harbour on a temporary basis will offer the most resilient option possible during the works. We will also look at potential measures to support the community in

Ardrossan during the works. The next stage will be further community engagement on the development of the ferry timetables themselves. This will look at issues like transport integration and connectivity with other modes.'

'The Scottish government is fully committed to providing a robust and resilient ferry service between Ardrossan and Arran and I look forward to, in the near future, finalising proposals for a significant programme of capital investment in the Arran Berth at Ardrossan harbour to provide the improved service that passengers deserve.'

Ferry committee chairman Iain Thomson said: 'Arran Ferry Committee welcomes the decision which will allow this important project to move forward with clarity. We welcome the investment and will continue to work with other

partners to support delivery of these long awaited upgrades to our lifeline services which will improve the island's economy and quality of life for the residents.'

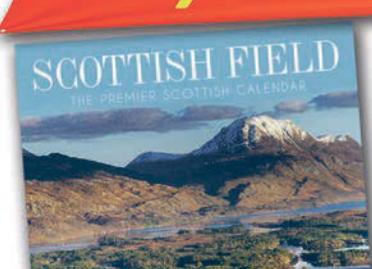
Leader of North Ayrshire Council Joe Cullinane said: 'This decision has been guided by the need to ensure a reliable and consistent ferry service for Arran during the construction works at Ardrossan harbour and has clear support from the islands community.'

'From a North Ayrshire Council perspective, we recognise a temporary shift to Troon during the construction phase will have some impact on local businesses, some jobs and those individuals who commute to the island for employment. We are committed to working with the Scottish Government, its agencies and partners to mitigate any impact during this period.'

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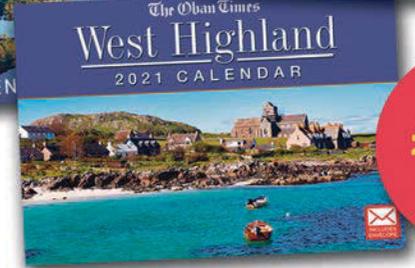
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Bitter Easter blow for tourist trade

by Hugh Boag
editor@arranbanner.co.uk



The tourism industry on Arran was dealt a crushing blow this week when first minister Nicola Sturgeon advised against booking holidays, even in Scotland, over the Easter holidays.

Many in hospitality and tourism-related businesses had hoped to kick-start the summer season at Easter after much of the 2020 season was wiped out by the pandemic.

Giving her Covid update statement to MSPs on Tuesday the first minister said it was 'highly unlikely' that hotels or self-catering accommodation would be open by the start of April – the traditional start of the summer season on Arran.

However, she said that 'staycations' might be possible by the summer, although it would depend on Covid data nearer the time.

The first minister announced details of the review of current lockdown restrictions, telling the Scottish Parliament that 'our room for manoeuvre remains very limited'.

'Even a slight easing of restrictions could cause cases to start rising rapidly again,' she said, adding that 'because of the new, more infectious variant, our exit from lockdown is likely to be even more cautious than it was last summer'.

Ms Sturgeon said that the Scottish Government was preparing a revised strategic framework, which will set out in more detail when and how the country might gradually emerge from lockdown.

It will 'aim to set out how we will use and balance all the tools at our disposal – restrictions and advice, vaccination, test and protect, and travel restrictions – to restore, on a phased basis, greater normality to our everyday lives'.

There was some relief for the tourism industry as, following



Marc Crothall ... 'losing Easter is a crushing blow'.

the announcement of £1.1bn of consequential funding from the UK government, finance secretary Kate Forbes MSP has confirmed the extension of 100 per cent business rates

'It is absolutely critical that the tourism industry is given as clear an indication as possible around reopening'

relief for another year for retail, tourism, hospitality and aviation businesses.

The move builds on the three-month rates relief extension announced in the Scottish budget and will be taken forward provided the Scottish government receives the funding already assumed from the UK budget on March 3, and that requisite funds are available to maintain existing support into 2021-22.

Ms Forbes said: 'When I presented our budget last month I guaranteed to extend non-domestic rates relief further if I was given the necessary resources. I can now deliver on that promise, providing the UK budget in March delivers the funding we require.'

Marc Crothall, chief executive of the Scottish Tourism Alliance, said: 'The STA welcomes the first minister's announcement that the Scottish Government's strategic framework is under review and that the updated route map will hopefully be published next week.'

'It is absolutely critical that the tourism industry is given as clear an indication as possible around reopening, given the sheer reliance on the domestic market as a result of the Scottish government's extension of quarantine and the need for businesses to start trading again.'

'Many businesses have already rolled over bookings from last year to this year and there can be no guarantee that those customers will maintain their commitment given this level of uncertainty'

'Since the first minister's announcement this afternoon, we have had an influx of correspondence from tourism businesses extremely anxious at the first minister's indication that an Easter reopening is highly unlikely and that a question mark has been placed over domestic travel this summer.'

'The STA board will meet with the first minister in the coming weeks and take the

opportunity to update Ms Sturgeon on the desperate state that the industry is in.

'I know of numerous businesses which are wholly reliant on being able to trade again at Easter in order to stay solvent; the indication that this is highly unlikely will, I know, serve as a crushing blow to many.'

'On a positive note, I know that our industry is breathing a huge sigh of relief as a result of the finance secretary's announcement that she will extend 100 per cent business rates relief to the sector for another year.'

'Scotland's tourism industry continues to be 100 per cent aligned to the health agenda; our businesses are committed to opening in a safe and secure way, giving customers confidence as a result of the level of financial investment which has been adopted across the sector,' he added.

Arran Banner example as Holyrood debates newspaper rates relief

The work of the Arran Banner has been highlighted at Holyrood as opposition parties united to call for more help for newspapers.

MSPs voted for the Scottish Government to extend business rates relief for newspapers for another year amid warnings the sector could face collapse due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

And West Scotland MSP Maurice Golden, who spoke during the debate, referenced the Arran Banner, pointing out it featured in the Guinness Book of Records for having the most saturation of any newspaper in the world.

It appeared in the book for achieving a readership level of 97 per cent of the island in 1984.

Mr Golden, who is the party's shadow economy secretary, said 3,000 jobs across Scotland depended on the newspaper industry, not to mention the vital role they played in upholding

democracy in Scotland. During his speech, Mr Golden said: 'Notable examples of journalism excellence include the Arran Banner, which once achieved a Guinness World Record for reaching 97 per cent of Arran's population.'

The Scottish Conservative MSP added: 'It should be a priority for this SNP government to help bring these papers back from the brink before they are lost forever.'

'There are 3,000 people directly employed in the newspaper industry in Scotland, all of whom face a threat to their job because of SNP inaction.'

'The industry is on its knees, with advertising revenue crashing as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. This is about saving jobs and protecting a vital part of our democracy, and the SNP government should never have let it get to this stage.'

The rates relief will also apply to newspaper offices.

Lockdown support for island B&Bs welcomed by Arran's MSP

Arran's MSP Kenneth Gibson has welcomed a Scottish Government announcement that B&Bs will be eligible for a lockdown grant.

B&Bs can receive a £2,000 grant for every four weeks they have been in lockdown if they do not pay non-domestic rates but do pay council tax.

The grant will be allocated by North Ayrshire Council and business owners

are encouraged not to apply, as the local authority will contact them directly. Mr Gibson said: 'Lockdown restrictions have been incredibly difficult for the tourism industry, including B&Bs, and so I warmly welcome this Scottish government grant.'

'NAC will identify and invite eligible businesses to register for payment and, thereafter, work to ensure funds are in their accounts as soon as possible.'



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No end in sight to Arran's fer

With the recent spate of ferry cancellations the Arran Ferry Action Group thought it would be a good time to provide a potted history of Arran's ferry problems. Some old, some new and some possibly still to come. All in all they add up to a rather large mess which is unlikely to improve any time soon.

The Arran run is the busiest on the network and also the most unreliable. This is due to the vulnerability of Ardrossan to westerly gales and an inexplicable reluctance to use the port of refuge, Gourock. However, this has now been compounded by the unreliability of the ageing fleet and the hopelessly compromised new harbour at Brodick.

So for a greater understanding of what is going wrong let us look at the various problems individually.

Gourock

For many years the ferry plied the waters between Ardrossan and Brodick with frequent diversions to Gourock as Ardrossan is vulnerable to westerly storms. For it not to sail at all was highly unusual. The service wasn't perfect but you knew you would get at least one sailing a day.

Then, approximately 15 years ago it stopped going to Gourock. No explanation was given, the boat merely remained tied up in harbour 'due to adverse weather conditions'.

Written enquiries to CalMac (same boat, same harbour, what's the problem?) were answered with platitudes such as 'we will use Gourock where it is appropriate to do so taking into account the conditions at the time'.

What had actually happened,

although never admitted, was that with the vehicle service to Dunoon being discontinued there were no longer any ticket sellers or pier hands at Gourock and the link-span had been repurposed for the passenger service to the Cowal peninsula.

It wasn't that our ferry couldn't go to Gourock it was just a logistical problem which CalMac didn't want to solve (and which never occurred to it until it was too late). In fact it did very occasionally make the voyage up the firth but only when there was no other excuse, such as the day

'The boat remains resolutely tied up although weather conditions are little more than moderate'

another vessel broke down in the berth at Ardrossan.

Taking Gourock out of the equation was disastrous for the Arran service. Ardrossan is widely regarded as the most difficult harbour in the network. Entering the berth requires making a sharp right hand turn in the mouth of the harbour on a rolling sea with the stabilisers retracted.

With no readily available port of refuge, unsurprisingly,

the boat tied up on a regular basis.

People now have to leave in advance for important appointments – in the event of an uncertain forecast several days in advance. For an island that is heavily reliant on tourism and with an ageing population who need to get to hospital this is not acceptable.

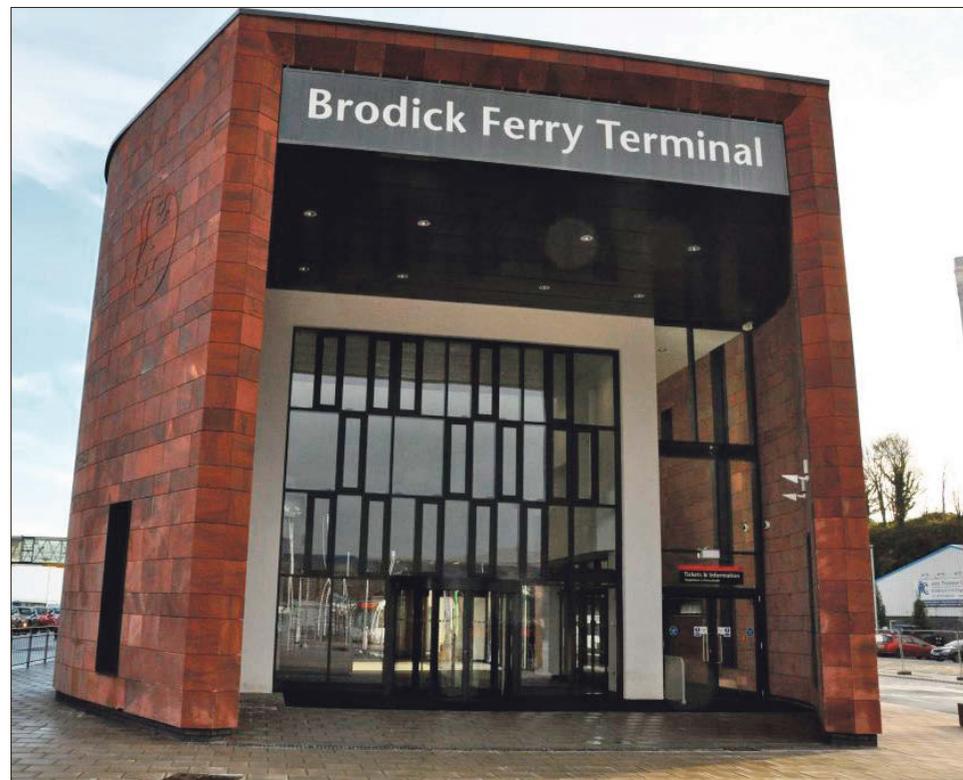
Around 2018 CMAL announces that the Gourock link-span is in poor shape and needs to be weight limited and repaired (not that it has been much troubled by Arran traffic).

In 2019 it admits that it is beyond repair and cannot be used, but no decision regarding replacement is made.

Moving forward to New Year 2020 and hundreds are left stranded on Arran after the holidays. The boat remains resolutely tied up although weather conditions are little more than moderate.

An enterprising BBC reporter films the chaos at the port on her phone and Reporting Scotland picks up the story. The next morning AFAG is interviewed on Good Morning Scotland and questions are asked in Holyrood.

Shortly after CMAL announces the replacement of the Gourock link-span. A win for Arran maybe, but work is not yet complete and it remains to be seen if the Caledonian Isles



The new Brodick ferry terminal has been described as a white elephant.

will be allowed to berth there. And the new Glen Sannox? It won't be heading for Gourock at all as it doesn't fit the berth.

Brodick harbour

Some £30 million was spent redeveloping Brodick harbour (it started out at £18 million).

The new terminal building is some three stories high with

steep stairs and a passenger access system (PAS) some 200 metres long.

It is widely regarded as a white elephant, more akin to an airport departure lounge, with passengers segregated from friends and family like cattle and even the obligatory 'unattended luggage will be removed and may be destroyed'

message on the tannoy (on Arran one would have to ask how).

Some older residents who previously travelled independently now need a wheelchair to access the ship. Some simply don't want to travel at all.

The high-tech docking section of the passenger access

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ry fiasco even after 15 years

ARRAN FERRY ACTION GROUP

system (PAS) only allows passengers to disembark one by one rather than two by two as previously, with the result that the less fleet of foot now miss the connecting bus. More significant is the re-alignment of the berth by 90 degrees.

The old pier was exposed to westerlies but relatively unaffected as the ship lay stern on to the waves. The ship now lies beam on and rolls in the berth in anything more than a moderate easterly. Result, more cancellations.

Whilst Ardrossan used to be the weak link in the service we now have two vulnerable ports. This realignment is the cause of much of the recent disruption.

Ardrossan harbour

As previously mentioned the harbour requires alterations to allow the Glen Sannox to berth (it won't be able to access the Irish Berth even after the works are complete).

The figures being bandied about are between £30 million and £50 million and the start date has been continually delayed. Now slated to start in

autumn 2022 it won't be complete until sometime in 2024. We are concerned that this will be another white elephant with little done to improve reliability. The berth is being realigned but, without significant alteration to the harbour entrance, Ardrossan will continue to be badly affected by strong westerly winds and no such alterations are planned. Reliability is key. Everything else is window dressing.

A new terminal building or improved railway station are desirable but must take second place to ensuring the harbour is accessible to ships in all weathers. It has also become evident that the project has become a political football with North Ayrshire Council and Kenneth Gibson MSP jumping on the bandwagon by hanging Ardrossan regeneration on to the project.

More worrying, the views of the residents of the town are being given equal weight to those of the people of Arran (we have this in writing from Transport Scotland).

This seems somewhat strange as only a small number of Ardrossan residents are regular travellers to Arran and none are dependent on the ferry for their everyday needs.

The new boat

As with Lewis what Arran needed were two simple, medium-sized manoeuvrable ferries allowing for redundancy in quiet periods and a continuing service in case of breakdowns.

What we have got is a lumbering slab-sided behemoth that will require expensive alterations to Ardrossan harbour to allow it to berth.

Virtue signalling by the add on of LNG capability will do little for its green credentials by the time the gas is trucked from Kent but much for its cost and complexity.

Alterations to the berth at Ardrossan weren't mooted until several years after the boat began construction and are unlikely to be finished before the Glen Sannox enters service, which begs the question 'Why not and what happens then?'

CMAL has admitted, only after asked, that it won't fit the berth at Gourock either and the plans to upgrade the harbour there are only at the nebulous stage.

If you want more, we would direct you to the work of the Mull and Iona Ferry Committee which is published on the AFAG website.



The beleaguered MV Glen Sannox tied up at Greenock, awaiting completion.

Conclusion

All of these issues could have been avoided.

The masters warned against the reorientation of Brodick pier, but were overruled.

Residents stated plainly that the proposed terminal building at Brodick was unsuitable, but were ignored.

Now the damning conclusions of the government inquiry into the procurement of our new ferry are being refuted by the very people responsible for making such a mess of it.

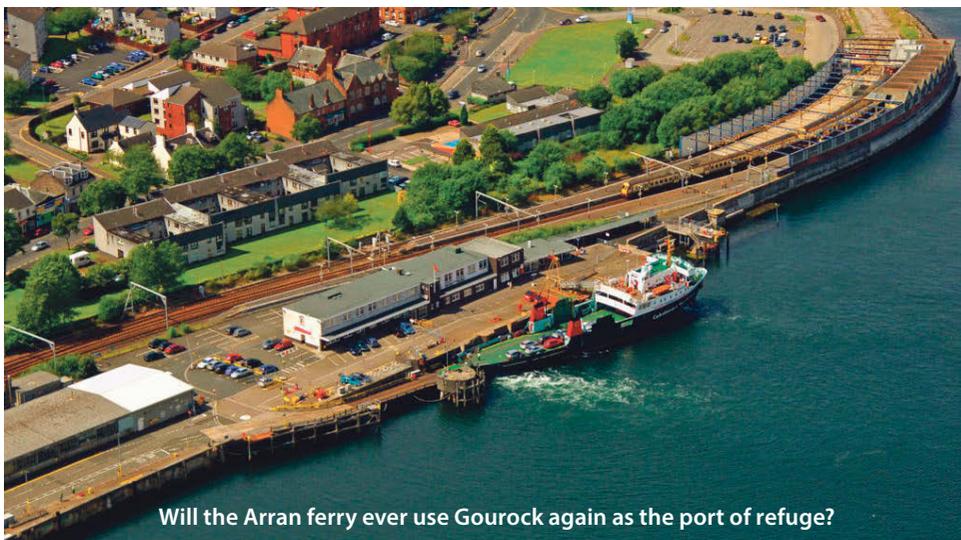
Since the formation of the Arran Ferry Action Group nearly two years ago, we have consistently tried to point out these

shortcomings to the relevant authorities, wherever possible offering cost-saving alternatives.

In almost every instance, our participation has been refused, the status quo has been defended and our suggestions refuted.

As a result, improving the reliability and resilience of our lifeline ferry service at this stage will now cost a great deal of additional public money, entailing expensive alterations or enhancements to infrastructure.

It will also be necessary for the current shortcomings to be acknowledged by those responsible.



Will the Arran ferry ever use Gourock again as the port of refuge?

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LETTERS

Write to us: send your letters to editor@arranbanner.co.uk
or The Editor, Arran Banner, Brodick, Isle of Arran KA27 8AJ**Loss of Easter on Arran is bitter blow to businesses**

Just when the hospitality industry thought the worst of the dark days were behind them they were hit by another devastating blow this week.

The fact that Arran's hotels, B&Bs and self-catering accommodation are now unlikely to be open at Easter gets this year's promise of a brighter summer season off to a very bad start indeed.

Everything seemed to be going so well. By the end of the month two third of the population on Arran will have had their first Covid vaccination and with numbers on the mainland also rapidly rising it seemed only a matter of time before the lockdown restrictions could start to be eased.

But First Minister Nicola Sturgeon is cautious and, like all through the pandemic, is likely to take things at a slower pace than Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Ms Sturgeon says 'staycations' might be possible in the summer but this will depend on the Covid data nearer the time. And while all this may be prudent, it is of little comfort to those in the tourist industry desperately trying to get things going again.

Tourist bosses have made it clear that the loss of Easter is 'a crushing blow to many' and it will certainly be felt across Arran.

The announcement that business rates relief for retail, hospitality, leisure, and newspapers, is to be extended for a full year is welcome news for all of us, but more support may be needed if businesses are not going to be able to trade viably for months to come.

We can only hope that the end of lockdown can come soon enough to the give summer tourism on Arran a shot in the arm as well.

Thought for the week

'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.' **Romans 15:13**

Time for crucial decisions

Sir,
Coming out of lockdown in Scotland and with the impending Scottish Government elections in May, we find ourselves at a point where crucial decisions upon the future of Arran's ferries must soon be made.

In the post-pandemic world financial resources will be very strained.

Perhaps the way forward could be to recover the Arran ferry service as it used to operate, as described in the AFAG article [see pages four and five] and avoid the massive further investment into Ardrossan and Troon harbours, solely for the sake of the Glen Sannox.

This could involve provision of two highly manoeuvrable medium-sized ferries of existing designs, compatible with both the existing Ardrossan and Gourock harbours, only upgrading the passenger access and link-span mechanisms plus the Whiteford pier fenders at Ardrossan and the link-span at Brodick 'old' pier for use in bad easterly swell conditions.

The Glen Sannox would continue to completion for use on the Uig triangle and Hull 802 scrapped.

Finally, the recommendations of the RECC should be adopted by the Scottish Government so that the mistakes made in arriving at the current dreadfully unreliable and unresilient Scottish ferry situation can be avoided.

Yours,
**John Ford,
Lochranza.**

Fair weather only service

Sir,
The recent spell of wintry weather has emphasised the weaknesses and unreliability of the Arran ferry service.

There should be a prefix on the timetable

emphasising 'fair weather only service'. Over the years we have become acclimatised to this situation (it will pass).

The future has always been a 'Jam tomorrow' attitude.

Whether it be new ferries (this will be the third), new terminals (such as Brodick), better fendering, better berth alignment etc.

Result is the same – long-term failure (it wisn'y me!). The negativity of CMAL and ultimately Transport Scotland is predictable.

Crossing the firth is not the problem – other services operate in similar weather.

The difficulties centre on lack of proper weather protection at the terminals.

Modern car ferries (unlike passenger ferries of old) need properly sheltered terminals to operate reliably.

The answer is known, but not accepted, because the 'elephant in the room' as it were, is seen as expensive.

There is no PR kudos in breakwaters – properly done, they just work!

We are all familiar with experience elsewhere of offshore rock breakwaters (not elaborate stone constructions of old) but simple rock construction (wildlife sanctuaries).

Design and execution of such work would need to be undertaken by organisations with a track record (due diligence).

Probably Scandinavian or Dutch origin, with expertise in rock handling.

Existing terminals such as Ardrossan and Brodick would then be protected against conditions which presently create such difficulty.

Yours,
**Robert Kerr,
Lochranza.**

Consideration for Hunterston

Sir,
I notice from the latest issue of the Banner that

it has been suggested that the decision to retain Ardrossan as the mainland port for the CalMac ferry should be reconsidered.

As a former shipbuilder and native of Arran, I wholly concur.

I have, as many will have noted, been in print over this subject in recent times.

The lack of suitability, both in the design of the vessel and Ardrossan as a safe harbour, is extremely unlikely to be satisfactory.

Glen Sannox is unlikely to meet its contract speed, due to the very high block coefficient (underwater shape) necessary to meet cargo carrying capacity, which in turn will not lead to a sea-kindly ship.

I may have missed it, but has the former ore terminal at Hunterston been considered? Despite the recent incident there, it ticks many of the boxes of ideal requirements.

Deep sheltered water, rail head and car parking. (Remember the days when the steamer as a matter of course, was rerouted in wintertime to Fairlie, stopping at Keppel pier on the way?)

With only a modest increase in speed over that of the Caledonian Isles, the crossing could be achieved in the same time as to Ardrossan.

Yours,
**Norman Brown,
Former director and general manager,
Ferguson Shipbuilders Ltd,
Largs.**

Maths test for ministers

Maths test for Primary 6/7 and Scottish Government ministers – in line with current education policy ministers, answers may be moderated upwards to avoid embarrassment.

This is MV Alfred, Pentland Ferries' newest vessel. Alfred, with a capacity for 98 cars, was built at a cost of £17 million.

If a comparable CalMac ferry would cost circa £55 million how many 'Alfreds' could you obtain for the cost of one CalMac ferry. Answers to the nearest complete vessel please.

CMAL is excused from answering as it is not expected to understand the question.

Yours
**J Patrick Maclean,
Oban.**

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PRESSPOLICY

The Editor welcomes letters for publication on this page. The Editor reserves the right to shorten, amend or to refuse to print them. Names and addresses MUST be supplied to indicate good faith, although these details can be withheld from publication. Telephone numbers, if available, should also be included. Anonymous letters will not be considered. Please write to: Letters, The Arran Banner, Brodick, Isle of Arran, KA27 8AJ. Fax: (01770) 302021. Email editor@arranbanner.co.uk Emailed letters can only be considered if they have a name, full address and phone number.

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Vaccines vital to defeat COVID-19

AFTER BECOMING the world's first country to approve a vaccine for use, the UK Government has bought jabs on behalf of all the UK, distributing them around England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

The government has invested over £300 million in securing and scaling up the UK's manufacturing capabilities to be able to respond to this pandemic.

We already have several authorised vaccines combating COVID-19 ... more than any other country in the world.

The priority is to save as many lives as possible, as quickly as possible, while also reducing

A multi-million pound vaccine programme is being rolled out at a fast rate across the UK with over ten million people having already been immunised. We focus on how jabs are being distributed and the many people working together to ensure everyone receives the vital vaccine.

hospitalisations that create pressure on the NHS. The UK is vaccinating more than double the rate per person per day than any other country in Europe.

This success has been made possible by many people from the scientists developing the vaccine and forces personnel setting up vaccination centres to delivery drivers and remote

doctors vaccinating the elderly within their community, all working together across the whole nation. Vaccination is the best way to protect people from coronavirus and is the best route back to normality.

The vital vaccine works by teaching your immune system how to defend itself against viral attack.



PROTECTING THE PUBLIC: Vaccines will help save as many lives as possible, as quickly as possible.

'ESSENTIAL TO BEAT THE BUG'

PROF SAUL FAUST
ENGLAND



The vaccine rollout is proving "brilliant", confirms Professor Saul Faust, director of NIHR Southampton Clinical Research Facility, University of Southampton.

During this pandemic he is focusing on delivering COVID-19 Janssen vaccine trials, stressing the jabs are "absolutely essential" in beating the bug.

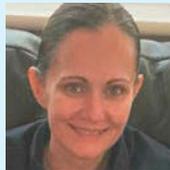
"Without the vaccine and NHS deployment, we will not be able to prevent further waves and impact on the NHS. Even if the infection becomes a condition like 'flu, the vaccine will stop people dying and most people becoming so ill they have to go to hospital," he assured.

Urging everyone to have the vaccine, and not worry about delay between doses, he added: "The vaccination programme is being rolled out in the way that is best for the UK population to try to ease pressure on the NHS and stop people dying.

"It is better to give one dose to more people and then top it up."

'I'M DESPERATE TO DO MY BIT'

LT CDR RUTH FLEMING
WALES



"Really proud to do her bit" is a mum of two involved in the UK's largest peacetime operation to support the UK Government's COVID-19 response.

Swansea University scientist by day, Royal Navy reservist Ruth Fleming is key to vaccine roll-out as part of Operation Rescript.

"I was desperate to do my bit. We had a chat about it and, despite having two young kids, knew my husband would support me," said the 46 year-old, whose furloughed husband Nick, 52, remote teaches their seven year-old son and daughter, aged four.

"I was working really long hours," explained Ruth, the Joint Military Command Wales Operations Officer. "Each of the vaccines have got different requirements around how they can be distributed and utilised, as well as who can give the vaccine, and the training required." She added: "I will be at the front of the queue as soon as I get the opportunity to get the vaccine myself."

'VACCINE IS SAFE AND EFFECTIVE'

CFO DAVID LAWRENCE
SCOTLAND



A finance chief's work developing a unique vaccine in Scotland is enriched by "phenomenal" public support.

Working daily with the vaccine task force, father of two David Lawrence leads discussions with the UK Government around manufacture and roll-out of his biotech company's "inactivated adjuvante" COVID-19 vaccine that saw Livingston-based Valneva "take a different approach".

He commented: "We'll ensure absolutely we've got a safe and effective vaccine. I think people should feel very encouraged. They should be very confident the safety profile will be absolutely fine."

The CFO's 14 year-old daughter Sophie is remote learning while son Cameron, 18, is a university student. "In terms of the support from my family and friends, it's been phenomenal," he said.

"You see neighbours and they say 'great job, keep up the good work' and that's all very supportive.

"I feel very blessed to be involved, being some sort of partner in the overall solution."

'WE REALLY NEED UNSUNG HEROES'

NURSING DIRECTOR
DEIRDRE WEBB
NORTHERN IRELAND



Porters, cleaners and drivers are among "unsung heroes" according to someone at the sharp end of the vaccine rollout. "They deliver everything to us and help with the logistics of the operation. They've done a massive job and we really need them," confirmed Public Health Agency Northern Ireland Director of Nursing Deirdre Webb.

"Then we have a huge volunteer workforce helping people get to clinics. They are all the unsung heroes of this," added the Belfast 57 year-old.

"We hope to see promising results in the springtime. We have small teams helping to deliver the vaccine in patient's homes.

"Then vaccinations are also being given at GP surgeries and mass vaccination centres."

"Everyone has been so enthusiastic and very keen to help out," continued Deirdre, herself set to be trained as a vaccinator. I've been in nursing for 40 years and this has been the biggest vaccination programme I've ever been involved with."



Working together to vaccinate the UK

Across the UK, people are working together to deliver the COVID-19 vaccine. Learn more at gov.uk/coronavirus

All together >

New Scottish Child Payment starts this month

Social Security Scotland can now issue decisions regarding applications to the Scottish Child Payment.

This new benefit, unique to Scotland, will give qualifying parents and carers £40 every four weeks for each child under six.

More than 77,000 Scottish Child Payment applications have been received since Social Security Scotland started taking them on November 9, with 1,810 coming from North Ayrshire. The first payments will arrive later this month.

Arran's MSP Kenneth Gibson said eligible families – those on Universal Credit and HMRC tax credit databases – were being contacted asking them to apply, adding: 'Those who have already applied will now be paid, whilst parents and carers who do so now will have their payment calculated from the day they apply, so I encourage anyone on Arran who may be eligible and hasn't yet applied, to take 10 minutes to do so by visiting mygov.scot/benefits or calling: 0800 182 2222.'

North Ayrshire council tax frozen for 2021/22

by Hugh Boag
editor@arranbanner.co.uk



Council tax in North Ayrshire will be frozen next year when the council sets its budget early next month, the Banner can reveal.

It follows an offer of £2,182,000 from the Scottish Government to the council to enable it to deliver a council tax freeze for financial year 2021/22, which begins in April, and it will provide some relief to tens of thousands of households during these tough times.

The Scottish Government previously froze the council tax for nine consecutive years from 2008 to 2017, whilst it rose year on year in England.

The average Band D council tax is now £1,818 per year in England but £480 less – £1,338 – in Scotland. It is £1,343

in North Ayrshire. Under the Scottish Government's 2021/22 draft budget plans, a majority of taxpayers will also continue to pay less income tax than they would if they lived elsewhere in the UK.

'We will take up the option to freeze council tax next year'

North Ayrshire Council leader Joe Cullinane told the Banner: 'It's no real surprise that the SNP has chosen to prioritise a council tax freeze that will disproportionately benefit those in the largest houses, rather than a redistributive policy such as a £13 increase to the Scottish Child Payment that would take families out of poverty and cost the same amount.'

'That said, we will take up



Leader Councillor Joe Cullinane

the option to freeze council tax next year.

'However, we will be joining COSLA in demanding that the Scottish Government include the funding to freeze council tax into the base settlement for local government going

forward. If it doesn't do so, councils will face an even bigger financial gap next year which could lead to higher council tax increases then.'

Arran MSP Kenneth Gibson said: 'We all know the financial impact the Covid-19 pandemic

has had, on families, couples and people living alone. This is why the Scottish Government is keen to help.

'The decision whether or not to increase council tax lies with North Ayrshire councillors, and if they choose to do the right thing and freeze their rates this year, NAC will be fully supported to the tune of £2,182,000, equivalent to three per cent of council tax income.'

'In these tough times, the Scottish Government has proven that where Scotland has the powers, we will take a different approach to give Scots the fairest deal in the UK and I hope our councillors will choose to accept these funds rather than levy additional taxes on to residents of Arran and across North Ayrshire.'

The council meets on Thursday March 4 online to set its 2021/22 budget and council tax.

SCOTTISH FIELD

— February/March —



Exclusive
How to plan
the perfect
wedding

Treasure trove...
Dunrobin Castle's attic auction revealed...
Flora Shedden's Bake Off recipes... Kirsty Wark... Wedding planning... Swona's feral cattle... Stunning interiors... Snowdrops in Fife...
The reluctant West Coast laird...

MP promoted to front bench team

North Ayrshire and Arran MP Patricia Gibson has been promoted to the SNP's front bench team in Westminster, writes Hugh Boag

Mrs Gibson has been appointed as the party's spokeswoman for housing, communities and local government and will join three other promoted MPs to the front bench team.

They are Angela Crawley MP, Richard Thomson MP and Stephen Flynn MP.

The promotion is part of a reshuffle of the front benchers in the House of Commons ahead of the upcoming Scottish Parliament elections which are to take place on Thursday May 6.

Ian Blackford, leader of the SNP in the House of Commons, said: 'Team working and cooperation are key to ensure results and this reshuffle will give us a strong team to take us forward.'

'We have an incredibly hard-working group of MPs – I thank them all for their



Patricia Gibson MP, SNP spokeswoman for housing, communities and local government.

commitment and congratulate those in new positions.'

Speaking about the promotion, Mrs Gibson said: 'I am delighted to join the Westminster SNP front bench team as spokesperson for housing, communities and local government, as well as continuing my work as spokesperson for consumer affairs.'

'Front Bench responsibility allows MPs even greater opportunities to ask questions of UK Ministers on a wide range of issues affecting my island and mainland constituents and beyond.'

'I relish those opportunities and have already begun making full use of them, as constituents can see on my website and Facebook page.'

Increase to care allowances

The Scottish Government has announced a 7.5 per cent increase in the personal and nursing care allowances for people who pay for their residential care.

The increase takes into account the rising cost of care, particularly for people with dementia, and will come into effect in April.

Scottish legislation ensures that adults of any age, no matter their condition, capital or income, assessed by their local authority as needing personal and nursing care, are entitled to receive it free of charge.

Care home residents with monies above the Capital Limit (currently £28,500) are known as self-funders.

Local authorities make payments, directly to the residential care provider on a weekly basis, to cover personal care (currently £180 per week) and nursing care (currently at £81 per week) fees.

Welcoming the news, Arran's MSP Kenneth Gibson

said: 'I'm pleased that allowances paid to people who self-fund their residential care will increase by 7.5 per cent.

'Care home costs have risen above inflation and I know how welcome additional funding will be to islanders with relatives in residential homes.

'I'm also pleased that The Independent Review of Adult Social Care was published on February 4 as part of the Scottish Government's wider reforms to the way residential care is funded and delivered.'

Each year, taking into account inflation, the allowance for personal and nursing care has increased, by 1.57 per cent in 2019 and 1.84 per cent in 2020, which would have meant an increase of 1.94 per cent for this year.

This announcement will now bring the amount up to £193.50 for personal care and £87.10 for nursing care, an increase of 7.5 per cent and four times higher than previous years.

Fairtrade choices for a better world

Online festival fortnight encourages people to make a difference

'Choose the world you want' sounds like a great idea. And starting on Monday, February 22, that's what Fairtrade Fortnight 2021 is all about.

During those two weeks everyone is being asked to make choices that will make the world a better place: better for us in North Ayrshire and Arran and better for people who grow food for us, and make other things we buy.

Want evidence? You are cordially invited to the 'Choose the World You Want' festival which will be running throughout the fortnight at the Big Co and Convenience store in Brodick. Just have a look at

www.fairtrade.org.uk/choose-the-world-you-want-festival/ and you'll see how Fairtrade producers in developing countries are struggling with the climate crisis and Covid-19 not to mention the turmoil in trade relations generally.

Jan Macgregor, of Arran, chairperson of the North Ayrshire Fairtrade Zone Group, said: 'In 2014 I visited the Volta River Estates banana plantation in Ghana and saw how the community benefited from Fairtrade: but when attending a recent online meeting of the Scottish Parliament's cross-party group on Fairtrade I discovered that



Jan Macgregor with Councillor Timothy Billings at a previous Fairtrade Fortnight event. 01_B10Fairtrade01

because of new trade regulations resulting from Brexit, they could end up being very badly disadvantaged.'

Choosing even one Fairtrade product in our shopping every week makes a difference and telling others why we do it helps to spread the word. And that's not the only thing because fairtrade goods are

produced by sustainable farming methods so they are also good for the planet. If you can't see any Fairtrade coffee, tea, chocolate – or bananas in your shop or supermarket, try asking somebody where they are – that helps to spread the word as well. And maybe this time next year we'll be able to have a big coffee morning.

Could helicopter club be the answer to Arran ferry woes?

An Arran businessman is proposing to form a helicopter club to be based on the island if there is enough interest...and deep enough pockets.

Arran Brewery managing director Gerald Michaluk, a licensed helicopter pilot, is behind the proposal which, if it takes off, would see a single engine Robinson R44 clipper being leased by the syndicate with flight training to private pilot's licence on offer to members.

The four-seat helicopter is equipped with floats and can offer syndicate members travelling with their friends and family quick, if expensive, travel to the mainland in a fraction of the time of the ferry and in a much wider weather envelope. The helicopter, which will cost £450 per hour to fly, has four seats and limited space for luggage.

Members would pay for 10 hours of flight time (£4,500 pa) plus a club members' fee of £500 pa and pay £450 for each additional hour they need over and above, the allocated 10 hours.

If two members fly together then the price is £225 each



A Robinson R44 helicopter, similar to the one which would be leased by the helicopter club.

and four works out at £125 per seat per hour. A typical flight to the mainland would take 15 minutes and cost around £31.25 per person.

Members can study for and get instruction towards their private pilots licence so they can fly themselves, but a pilot will be on hand to fly owners, by appointment, to and from the mainland when required.

The club needs around 10 members, if it is to go ahead.

The helicopter would be used to provide tourist flights and conversion training in the summer months in addition to member use, but only members, their friends and family travelling with them will be able to use the helicopter to hop across to the mainland and back.

If anyone is interested in becoming a member of the club please email gerald@hjs helicopters.co.uk

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NAME

NUMBER.....

The Co-op stores are excellent suppliers of Fairtrade goods, and all their own label tea, coffee and chocolate carries the Fairtrade mark. During this Fairtrade fortnight, they are generously offering a Fairtrade hamper full of delicious goodies, so do cut this out and pop it in the box on the Fairtrade stand in the store.

Dance fitness class steps it up for Red Nose Day funds

by Hugh Boag
editor@arranbanner.co.uk



A dance fitness class on Arran is holding a Red Nose Day fundraiser and would love as many people as possible to join in.

Fiona's Fitsteps is holding the event on Tuesday March 16 from 6pm to 7pm and it will be on Zoom, filmed from Corrie and Sannox Hall.

The group will be joined online by former Strictly Come Dancing professional Ian Waite, who created Fitsteps, the world's only ballroom and Latin dance fitness programme, with fellow Strictly dancer Natalie Lowe and world champion swimmer Mark Foster.

Arran organiser Fiona Rodriguez told the Banner: 'As a former professional dancer and now teacher and choreographer, I am passionate about the classes, teaching the graceful steps of the ballroom and the up-tempo Latin steps to give a full body workout.'

'As a group and due to Covid

we have been dancing outside at the Lamlash tennis courts following social distancing regulations, which was absolutely fantastic to see all the smiling faces and feel the freedom of dancing in the fresh air, which is excellent for our mental and physical health.

'We had up to 18 participants at a time. We even had a great turnout on Christmas Eve and January 2. Now with lockdown we are staying connected and dancing on Zoom.'

'On Friday March 16 for RedNose Day our theme is Happy Feet - all upbeat happy music and steps: disco, jive, salsa, samba and more. There is no charge for the class but we the group asking for donations to: www.justgiving.com/fit-steps-rednoseday21'

Ian Waite will hand over the cheque from all the Fitsteps instructors live on TV on RedNose Day, Friday March 19.

The class is suitable for all ages and abilities and there is no need for a partner. For the Zoom Link and information email: fionita0704@yahoo.com



An outdoor class of Fiona's Fitsteps at Lamlash tennis courts.



Fiona leads the class in the shadow of Holy Isle.



Fiona Rodriguez, who runs the Arran group.

Organ and tissue donation law change coming

A new law on organ and tissue donation will come into effect next month as Scotland moves from an opt-in to an opt-out system.

The Human Tissue (Authorisation) (Scotland) Act 2019 set out that from Friday March 26, if you die in circumstances where you could become a donor and have not recorded a donation decision, it may be assumed you are willing to donate your organs and tissue for transplantation.

This is commonly referred to as an 'opt-out'



The new organ donor card.

system, however, the law also requires that families are consulted in order to ensure that

donation does not proceed where it is against the donor's wishes. Organ donation is a personal choice and you do still have a choice if you want to be a donor or not when you die.

You can record your donation decision by registering it on the NHS Organ Donor Register at www.organdonationscotland.org.

NHS Ayrshire and Arran medical director, Dr Crawford McGuffie, said: 'Organ donation isn't something that comes up in everyday conversation, but ahead of the law changing we're

encouraging people to make time to think about what they'd want to happen, and share it. Your name will not be on the NHS Organ Donor Register until you record a decision. Everyone has a choice about whether or not they want to donate, and the best way to make it known is by recording it on the register and telling those close to you.'

For more about the law change, or to opt in or out, visit organdonationscotland.org or call 0300 303 2094.

LOOK HIM IN THE EYES

AND TELL HIM THE RISK ISN'T REAL.

Tony Covid-19 patient

Around 1 in 3 people who have Covid-19 have no symptoms and are spreading it without knowing. Are you absolutely positive you're not one of them? Only go out if essential. Sticking to the rules stops the spread.

STAY HOME ▶ PROTECT THE NHS ▶ SAVE LIVES



Far left, a message set in stone in Hilary's garden on Arran; left, Arran's Savvy Traveller Map is available from Bay Stores; below, painted stones are helping to get the message across; and bottom, an art drop of stones along Kelvin Way in Glasgow. The route has been closed to traffic, creating more space for people to exercise and enjoy, and helping to drastically reduce car pollution.



Showing the love for eco-travel on Valentine's Day

by Hugh Boag
editor@arranbanner.co.uk



On Valentine's Day locals on Arran twinned with Greenpeace Glasgow to show love for sustainable travel, a critically important area in reducing pollution and meeting carbon targets to mitigate the climate crisis.

In Glasgow and on Arran, communities were invited to paint and place pebbles showing appreciation for sustainable travel at Ormidale Park and at the Kelvin Way cycleway which is closed off to cars.

Danielle Banks from Kelvinbridge said: 'It's wonderful that the Kelvin Way has been closed to cars. Over lockdown it's always packed with walkers and cyclists. It's outstandingly beautiful

and a great example of how a low traffic neighbourhood in Glasgow, that's properly cared for, incorporating nature, might create more space for people and drastically reduce car pollution.'

Eco Savvy trustee Hilary Maguire, who brought the two organisations together, said: 'I loved this Valentine's Day action and loved even more to see two of my favourite environmental organisations working together to express such an important message.'

Showing love for sustainable travel on Valentine's Day resonated with many on Arran who have been involved in the Sustainable Island Life Project, a two-year project funded by the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge fund which allows Eco Savvy to work with the community to improve

travel behaviours using eBikes, volunteer lift share networks, Arran's first green travel map, maintenance workshops, the Arran rEcharge network, film clubs and much more.

'Work is still continuing on Arran Green Travel Map which is set to be an excellent tool to inform active travel...'

This focus of the project has been a great success so far; engaging more than 450 residents, reducing 207 tonnes of CO2e and clocking up over 16,000 eBike miles. However, even though many residents are making positive changes,

the project continues to highlight areas that dissuade and negatively impact full uptake of sustainable travel, namely through lack of active travel infrastructure to nurture safe cycling. Twinning with Greenpeace Glasgow has given us a fantastic opportunity to appreciate the sustainable efforts made so far, whilst encouraging further action to make our island safer and more appealing to lower carbon travel alternatives.

Emma Tracey, Eco Savvy's Sustainable Travel Coordinator said: 'Work is still continuing on finalising Arran Green Travel Map which is set to be an excellent tool to inform and encourage active travel on the island by featuring routes within and between villages.

However, creating the

map has highlighted the lack of accessible user-friendly infrastructure especially on the west side of the island. The eBike project demonstrates the great enthusiasm and desire to change the way we travel, now we just need our physical landscape to catch up with the mindset of Arran residents.'

Encouragingly, feasibility studies and development work are still in progress for cycle paths both from Brodick to Lamhass, and Brodick to Corrie, commissioned and managed by North Ayrshire Council (NAC). NAC will also be updating the local transport strategy this year, after seeing delays to this due to Covid in 2020. This will be an opportunity for the local community to get involved in shaping the future of travel and transport on Arran and we will work to

ensure that sustainable travel is at its heart.

Although the travel and transport issue continues to be a leading one for the island, recently suggested as the highest priority for future planning in surveys conducted by Arran Recovery Group, there is lots of community action to celebrate and congratulations to all who have made sustainable travel their daily norm. We will continue to work with the community towards our vision for Arran to be an island where inclusive, accessible, affordable active travel and low-carbon transport is the norm, not the exception.

If you would like to help with route suggestions pick up a free Savvy Travel draft map at the Big Co-op in Brodick or pop an email to Emma at emma.ecosavvy@gmail.com

THE ARRAN BANNER 20 YEARS AGO

Saturday February 17, 2001



Bringing some Gallic flair to weaving on Arran is Antoine Foucher, a business studies student from Laval in the Pays de Loire region. Whilst visiting, Lynn Ross from Arran Textiles taught him a few new skills. 01_B08tweYAY02



Arran children and senior dancers from the Janice Marshall School of Dance took part in a dance performance as part of a workshop and international project known as Around the World in a Day. 01_B08tweYAY06



Beavers and Cubs in Shiskine re-started recently after a gap of many years. Enjoying the fun and games were eight new Beavers, aged 6 to 8 years, and eight new Cubs, aged 8 to 10 years. 01_B08tweYAY05



Arran Dancers give an ethereal representation of Scotland in the Day of Dance at Lamlash Community Centre. 01_B08tweYAY01



Island officer Gus MacLeod sets up a video link between Lamlash and Cunninghame House to enable Arran to participate in a budget presentation for council members and officials. 01_B08tweYAY04



Left: Work on the 'new Auchrannie' in Glencloy is moving ahead rapidly. On the right is the accommodation block, while the sports hall has been started on the left. The present hotel is visible through the steel structure. 01_B08tweYAY03

Right: Giving it laldie at the Cameronia karaoke are Kirsty Watson, Lisa Cummings and Angie Haggarty, who were letting it rip with their version of Daydream Believer by the Monkees. 01_B08tweYAY07



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PUBLIC NOTICES

Jamie Greene – MSP for West Scotland region

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ARRAN FARMERS' SOCIETY

host of the annual Arran Show

VACANCY

SECRETARY / ARRAN SHOW EVENT ORGANISER

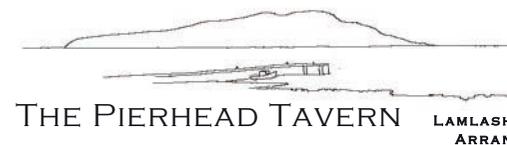
In this role you will supporting the Committee with secretarial
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Previous experience is not required but good computer,
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Expressions of interest and CVs to secretary.afs@gmail.com



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ARRAN

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Charity Number: SC014005
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**BANNER
ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Arran's Ewe Camp squeezes into top 100 football venues

A new book called British Football's Greatest Grounds has ranked Northend Thistle's Ewe Camp as one of the top 100 must-see football venues in the UK, writes Hugh Boag.

The Lochranza pitch, affectionately known as the Ewe Camp as it is regularly used as a grazing field for sheep, has been ranked number 99, just after the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium.

Author Mike Bayly described the Ewe Camp, after visiting in 2019, as: 'an astonishingly beautiful football setting. Located adjacent to a whisky distillery and surrounded by the sunlit hills of Torr Nead on three sides, it is the very essence of Scotland in miniature.'

Ewe Camp is featured over three pages and includes photographs of Northend Thistle playing a match against Southend.

Northend Thistle manager Chris Traill said: 'It's a fantastic coffee table book for all football nerds like myself.'

He was, however, less optimistic about the future of the Arran Dairies League and the long-term future of the club, adding: 'I doubt very much the Arran football league will come back in the short term and certainly most of my team will be retired by the time it does. So I think it's probably a fitting way to bow out for the



12 British Football's Greatest Grounds ONE HUNDRED MUST-SEE FOOTBALL VENUES



13 Iodine Park MILHAM FOOTBALL CLUB

Milham is a village on the outskirts of Camforth in Lancashire. The area has two notable claims to fame: George Washington's family hailed from neighbouring Warton and are believed to have helped fu village's St Oswald Church. Every 4 July, the stars-and-stripes flag is mounted on the church tower. Independence Day. Secondly, Camforth station - lovingly restored in 2003 - served as the training and club Johnson in David Lean's Brief Encounter.

Above: The article features comments from Northend Thistle FC manager Chris Traill and some interesting details about the club.

time being. I will no doubt continue to turn up for the odd 'over age' five-a-side every now and again.'

British Football's Greatest Grounds by Mike Bayly is available at Amazon, Waterstones and other online stores and bookshops.

ARRAN BANNER GOLF

Lamlash Golf Club

Thursday February 11, Yellow Medal (back nine twice).
1. Billy O'Connor 83-24=59;
2. Colin Richardson 80-16=64.
No magic twos recorded.

Sunday February 14, Glenburn Cup. One and scratch Ian Bremner 76-8=68.
No magic twos recorded.

Fixtures: Sunday February 21, Glenburn Cup, 9am and noon starts. Thursday February 25, Yellow Medal, 11am draw.

Whiting Bay Golf Club

Sunday February 14, Winter Cup Round Five. Nine played in the latest round of the Winter Cup. Dave Hackett continued his recent good form in the competition to win by five shots from Neil 'Sonic' Lucas.

Result: 1. Dave Hackett (14) 64; 2. Neil 'Sonic' Lucas (12) 69; 3. Neil McKechnie (15) 70. Jamie Macpherson carded the lowest gross with 72 blows, while Nicol Auld and Neil McKechnie bagged the only magic twos of the day, both at the 17th.

Fixtures: Casual play only. No draws for partners and all games to be socially distant and Covid compliant.



Machrie Bay Golf Club

Tuesday February 16, Lochranza Hotel Cup. 1. Alex Morrison-Cowan 35 points; 2. Willie McNally 34 points; 3. Reuben Betley 30 points.

Fixture: Tuesday February 23, Winter Cup, tee-off noon.

Shiskine Golf Club

Thursday February 11, ladies 12-hole medal. One and scratch Jenni Turnbull 69-11=49 BIH; 2. Fiona Scott 64-15=49, 3. Ruth Hardie 71-17=54.

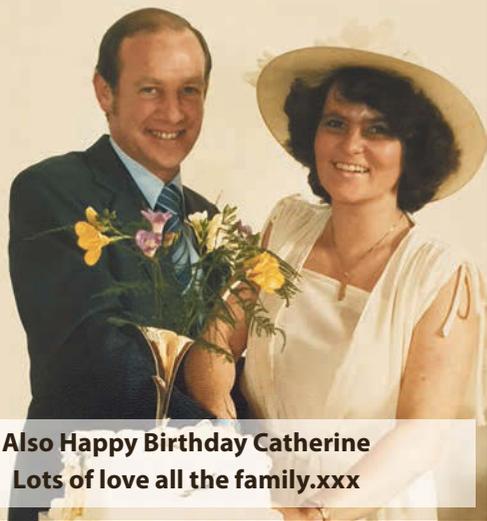
Brodick Golf Club

Fixture: Sunday February 21, Brandon qualifier.

GETINTOUCH
email us at editor@arranbanner.co.uk
telephone 01770 302142

PERSONAL NOTICES

**Happy Ruby wedding anniversary
to Catherine & Ian McAdam**

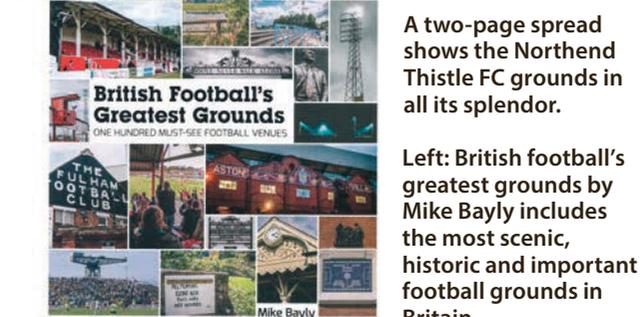


**Also Happy Birthday Catherine
Lots of love all the family.xxx**

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A two-page spread shows the Northend Thistle FC grounds in all its splendor.

Left: British football's greatest grounds by Mike Bayly includes the most scenic, historic and important football grounds in Britain.

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Shiskine named in top third of golf courses in Scotland

by Hugh Boag

editor@arranbanner.co.uk



With just 12 holes, the course has been ranked 33rd in the country

Shiskine has been named one of Scotland's top golf courses.

The 12-hole Arran course, has been ranked 33rd in the Golf World top 100 Scottish golf courses.

This is a great achievement of which the club is very proud, especially as there are 560 golf courses in Scotland, 64 of which are 'royal'.

Shiskine is up 20 places to 33rd in the new list published in this month's Today's Golfer. The course is described in the magazine as 'varied, interesting, dramatic, beautiful and, above all, good'.

Club captain Fiona Henderson said: 'We are

delighted to see Shiskine Golf Club has jumped 20 places and is now 33rd in the Top 100 Golf Courses in Scotland.

'Not only does this recognise the uniqueness and beauty of our course with its magnificent 12 holes and stunning scenery, but it is a great compliment to our greenkeeping team, starters and all those involved in the smooth running of the club.'

The magazine continues: 'When a 12-hole golf course ranks among the best golf courses in Britain, it gives you

some indication of the quality of those 12 holes.

'Shiskine is easily Arran's most famous course and successfully blends tremendous entertainment with a dash of more 'normal' golf.

'It's generally fantastic fun though and despite having a third fewer holes with which to impress our panel, is well worthy of its place in our Scottish Top 100. Laid out in 1896, Willie Park is credited with shaping such a compelling course in such a spectacular location. It starts with a

straightforward hole along the beach that is not a portent of the high jinks to come.

'A blind approach at the second, and its accompanying views of heather, gorse and sea, is the cue for the feast to start.

'Next it is a 128-yard blind par three played up a steep hill decorated with a fusion of bracken, gorse and heather, with Shiskine's signature rockface beyond the green. You come back down to the beach with another short hole that in many other courses would be the hole. Here it is actually relatively fairly mundane. Images of the green taken from the beach, with the rockface behind, are those you will have seen frequently. Arguably the best run of holes now begins.



One of the greens at Shiskine in the shadow of Drumadoon.

The fifth plays along the shore, a sporty par four of humps and hollows with a fairway divided by a runway of bracken infused with heather and marram.

'The sixth continues beachside and ends with a shot towards a marker post indicating a sunken green in an amphitheatre of heather,

bracken and gorse. Very possibly the very best of Shiskine. Still along the beach, you then fire over the mound that is the sixth backdrop to play the totally blind seventh and then use the ingenious way to signal the green is clear.

'Seven holes in, this is good enough for a Scottish Top 100 berth, even if the remainder is relatively less explosive. Simply a 'must play'.'

The top three courses in Scotland are Old St Andrews, the Ailsa course at Turnberry and Muirfield. Dunaverty, a popular course at the southern tip of the Mull of Kintyre, is new on the list at 48th.



Golfers on a challenging section of the course.



The course has a spectacular seafront location.



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