Alasdair Allan MSP/BPA
Surgery Notice

Alasdair Allan, Member of the Scottish Parliament for Na h-Eileanan an Iar, will be holding the following advice surgeries in his constituency office at 20 Kenneth Street, Stornoway should any constituent wish to meet with him:

Monday 16 March, 2pm
Monday 23 March, 1pm

If any constituent is unable to make the surgery, or would like a home visit with Alasdair, please call the constituency office on 01851 700357 or email alasdair.allan.msp@parliament.scot

www.alasdairallan.scot

School welcomes John Swinney

Stornoway primary had some high-ranking visitors last month.

On Thursday 13 February, the school was delighted to have a visit from Mr John Swinney, Deputy First Minister of Scotland and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, and Dr Alasdair Allan, MSP. They listened to presentations from Ms C Macleod, headteacher, and from Mrs Maciver, G1-2 teacher, which described the school’s approaches to promoting Gaelic Language and Culture.

Alasdair Allan was the Scottish Government’s Minister for International Development and Europe from 2016 to 2018. He speaks Scottish Gaelic and Norwegian in addition to English. Pupils from Gaelic Medium classes described their experiences of Gaelic, drama and music. Alice Read also impressed Mr Swinney with her superb fiddle playing.

Mr Swinney was presented with a gift from Stornoway Primary School before he and his support staff, as well as representatives from the Education Department, were given a short tour of the new nursery facilities being built adjacent to the existing buildings.
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The Woodlands Centre

Mothering Sunday - 22nd March

Order Online Gifts from £7.50 Outdoor Planters from £15 Indoor Plant Bundles from £25 Bouquets from £30

Mothering Sunday - 22nd March

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9 Kenneth Street, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis HS1 2DP Tel 01851 704040
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The Islands’ Premier Estate Agency Service
Cancer group raises £79,000

Members of the Cancer Research UK Isle of Lewis committee celebrated after it was revealed that the total for their fundraising efforts in 2019 was £78,766.

About 25 committee members were at the Annual General Meeting at Western Isles Hospital on 12 February to hear the announcement that nearly £79,000 had been raised in Lewis and Harris to fund cancer research.

The total is down on last year’s record, but still well in excess of the previous annual average, which used to be between £60k and £65k, according to chair Amy Macasad.

Amy said: “Last year was exceptional, but this year is still fantastic. We worked hard on our events and held some that were new and different, including two events in Harris for the first time.”

The Harris events were Here Come the Hearachis, a ladies’ lunch at Talla na Mara in October, following on the successful formula of the Harris Ladies’ Lunch which is a regular fixture in the Stornoway calendar.

Also new were a sponsored Postman’s Walk in Harris and a sponsored four-legged walk in Stornoway, Hounds in the Grounds, which brought dog-walkers out for the cause.

Still the most successful fundraiser of the year was the annual house-to-house collection in August, which brought in £17,102.

Amy said: “People’s generosity is not diminishing. The topic of cancer is now so close to so many people and that is coming through in the amount they are giving. Research into cancer is so important and people feel they want to do their bit.”

The committee has already started their 2020 fundraising, with three events in the first six weeks of the year, including joining the island’s other cancer charities on World Cancer Day on 4 February, for a sponsored walk with candles to symbolise both remembrance and hope.

Bustle for hub opening

Flags, speeches and a hubbub of activity marked the opening of the new Who Cares? Scotland hub and office, named Ar Cridhe in Gaelic, which translates to Our Heart, at Stornoway Town Hall on Friday 21 February.

Young islanders joined politicians and officials to open the doors on a new home for island youth, with a promise of activities that they choose and which help them to realise their potential.

Tom Boyd of Who Cares? Scotland said the hub, supported by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, reflects the importance of creating spaces that young people feel they can shape. It is planned as a place where they can develop skills and confidence and build a sense of belonging and ownership.

The committee and supporters are pictured at the soup and pudding lunch in the MA MacKedod Memorial Hall on 1 February, which raised over £1,000.

“We try to have different kinds of events to cover the island, bring in all age groups and attract all kinds of people.”

The committee has already started their 2020 fundraising, with three events in the first six weeks of the year, including joining the island’s other cancer charities on World Cancer Day on 4 February, for a sponsored walk with candles to symbolise both remembrance and hope.

Thinking about Fostering?

At Comhairle nan Eilean Siar we are looking for foster carers to meet the needs of those children who are unable to live with their birth families

If you want more information then please contact Fiona or Anne on 01851 822748

e-mail: anne.mackenzie@cne-siar.gov.uk

We are waiting to hear from you

Plea over ferry costs for young

An appeal has gone to Kate Forbes MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Finance; Michael Matheson MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity; and Paul Wheelhouse, Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands, for action to cut costs for young people using ferry crossings.

The independent CalMac Community Board representing users of ferries across the Clyde and Hebrides Ferries Network told the Ministers: “We were pleased to note the very positive proposal to provide free bus travel for young people under 19.

“We are also supportive of the intention to encourage more young people to use public transport whilst opening up the opportunity for young people in all areas to have equality of access regardless of their geography or financial status.

“This also brings into focus the position for young people for whom the ferry trip is their connecting bus trip, their way of accessing services and we believe all young people of the same age should be afforded the same rights and opportunities for free travel.

“The agenda for fairer fares for our youth is not a new one for the Community Board. As part of the Year of Young People 2018 we proposed a revision of the fares charged to minibuses taking young people to extracurricular activities between and off our Islands.

“This would remove the anomaly of such minibuses being charged significantly higher rates than an equivalent length motorhome and actively encourage educational and sports travel for island pupils. The Community Board worked hard to have this initiative accepted as good practice by CalMac, the David MacBrayne board, local authorities, elected representatives and, we believed, Transport Scotland. We demonstrated no cost to the public purse and reluctantly accepted the use of a pilot on two routes to prove the case.

“Almost 20 months on we still have not even got the introduction of a pilot through the bureaucracy of approval within the CHFS2 contract. You will understand therefore how positively we welcome the speed of introduction of your proposals but underline our hope that island youngsters receive the equal benefits and opportunities by extending the scheme to include ferry crossings.

“As a Board we will do all we can to do positively support such initiatives and are happy to do what we can to shape or facilitate proposals,” said Angus Campbell who chairs the independent CalMac Community Board.

Lewis Sports Centre
Tel: 01851 822800

Harris Sports Centre
Tel: 01859 502944

There are also sports centres in Ulst – Linclaire Sports Centre 01870 603693 – and Barra – Castlebay Sports Centre 01871 80129

The Harris Tweed Hebrides Mill Shop

Opening Times: 10:00 - 5:30pm, Monday - Saturday
HebCelt’s 25th fest brings in top line-up

This year’s Hebridean Celtic Festival’s 25th anniversary celebration is promising to be another top-quality event with major local and international performers being signed up.

The latest international star to join the line-up alongside previously announced Scottish pop rock heavyweights Texas is Led Zeppelin’s Robert Plant.

“Robert Plant is a legendary name in the music scene and it is so exciting that he and the other highly accomplished musicians in Saving Grace will be joining us for such a significant event.”

Skerryvore will end a whirlwind tour at HebCelt on Saturday 18 July.

Robert Plant and Saving Grace

Robert Plant and his latest musical collaboration, Saving Grace, will appear on the HebCelt stage on Thursday 16 July.

“Robert said of performing at HebCelt: “I have a deep and charged connection with those faraway islands and look forward to returning to the beautiful machair and to bring a different slant to my charged connection with those faraway islands and look forward to returning to the beautiful machair and to bring a different slant to my...”

HebCelt director Caroline Maclellan said: “Our 25th anniversary festival is a very special occasion and the programme reflects that.

“Robert Plant is a legendary name in the music scene and it is so exciting that he and the other highly accomplished musicians in Saving Grace will be joining us for such a significant event.”

Lin-up so far

Robert Plant’s Saving Grace, and Skerryvore will join Texas, Sealsick Steve, Tide Lines and Julie Fowlis as some of the star names on the bill for the milestone festival. Also announced for the anniversary line up are Skipinnish, Colin Macleod, Mischa Macpherson, Sean Harrison, Rusty Shackles, Inyal, Hecla, Ryan Young & Jenn Butterworth, Scott C Park, Nicky Murray and James Nicol, Trail West, RURA, Kinnaris Quintet.

The 25th anniversary HebCelt will be held from 15-18 July in Lewis and Harris.
New steps for footpath round Point

The second phase of the Point and Sandwick Community Coastal Path project is about to begin, after Point and Sandwick Trust (PST) pledged the final piece of funding.

The community wind farm charity, which runs the Beinn Ghrideag wind farm, is to donate £9,000 towards work on the historic Shulishader steps – the 88 steps which lead steeply down to the geodha (Gaelic for cove), an old landing site for fishing boats which is enjoying renewed popularity as a wild swimming spot.

To improve safety, the steps will be cleaned up and restored and a hand rail will be installed. An access path of around 300 metres is also to be created.

The work at Shulishader is part of a £1 million project to create a clear walking route from Stornoway along the Braighe and all the way round the peninsula of Point.

Once complete, it will be 40km long, and form part of the legacy of Point and Sandwick Trust’s community wind farm, which is one of the key funders.

Point and Sandwick Trust’s community consultants, Alasdair Nicholson and Tony Robson, have been working with the Point and Sandwick Coastal Community Path committee on the phased project and are pleased to be embarking on phase two, which will also include marking out the walking route from the Braighe to Swordale – a distance of around 2km – with marker posts, and putting in a number of gates for access.

Alasdair Nicholson said: “I am pleased that we are able to have put the funding together for this next step with support from PST, the Landfill Trust and a contribution from the grazings committee. These developments help responsible public access but also create new opportunities for crafting townships to diversify economic development.”

Tony Robson added: “It’s great to see this gem of a place being made more accessible.”

Work on the Shulishader steps and access track is likely to begin at the end of February and take around a month, with the handrail being made separately.

In addition to Point and Sandwick Trust, a number of other groups and organisations have helped fund phase two of the coastal path. They include the Scottish Landfill Fund, which committed £7,000 and is administered locally by Third Sector Hebrides, and the Shulishader and Newlands Grazings Committee, which donated £4,000.

Erica Geddes, administration manager for Third Sector Hebrides, said: “Third Sector Hebrides is approved by SEPA to administer their Scottish Landfill Community Fund, which distributes money from landfill taxes to support Scottish projects. This has enabled us to fund local community groups such as Point and Sandwick Coastal Community Path SCIO group with eligible projects such as Shulishader steps and community access pathway.”

The reaction from all parties involved has been so positive and we are now able to carry out the maintenance and improvement works needed to allow better access.

Donald Taylor, a resident of Shulishader, also welcomed the project, having campaigned for it for years. He also hopes to see a bench erected at the top of the steps in the future, in memory of a Aird primary teacher Chrissie Murray, whose croft ended there, and a picnic area down at the cove itself.

Donald, who spent a lot of time out in his uncle’s boat as a youngster, said: “I’m pleased to see this work… and I’ll be more pleased when I see it finished.”

To mark the occasion, a photocall was held at the steps recently.

Wild swimmer Colin S Macleod, who runs the Hebridean Sea Swimmers Facebook page, came along with some friends to take a dip in the bay to celebrate the news.

Colin said: “I’m really pleased to hear that the 88 steps are going to be cleaned up and a safety handrail put into place in this historical sheltered bay.

“I’ve been wild swimming there a few times. It’s such a beautiful place with a fantastic coast to be viewed from sea level. We’ll definitely be back there again.”

The photocall was also attended by Donald MacSween, secretary of Falmadair, the North Lewis Heritage Sailing Trust, which endorsed the coastal path committee’s funding bid and hopes to hold future events in the bay, especially during the Year of Coasts and Waters 2020. As a community land trust, Falmadair has sgothean in its curation similar to those that would have been in use when Shulishader was a working bay.

Matt Bruce, chair of the Point and Sandwick Coastal Community Path committee, said: “I am delighted the plans to carry out more works to the community path can be put into place so quickly. The reaction from all parties involved has been so positive and we are now able to carry out the maintenance and improvement works needed to allow better access.”

Year of Coasts and Waters 2020. As a community land trust, Falmadair has sgothean in its curation similar to those that would have been in use when Shulishader was a working bay.
Since its launch a year ago, The Space @ Stornoway Library has become an invaluable social, creative and learning space for the community. The makerspace has seen over 50 organisations and groups making use of the area, with well over 3,000 people attending a variety of learning sessions, charity events, code clubs, creative writing classes, book launches, film clubs, Lego clubs and much, much more.

When it is not booked for special events, The Space is open to all to read, meet, make and create. There are a range of digital resources available free to library members (and the library is free to join!), so they can access different devices and software.

The Space has facilities with 3D scanning on offer, along with an iMac and PC with Adobe Cloud, Affinity Design and a host of additional art, animation and design software available for use.

Along with the computers, the makerspace also has an animation kit, Lego, Arduinos and BBC micro:bits for people to try out and explore. There are even a few Arduinos and micro:bits available for loan as well.

The Space has supported a real range of activities and projects in its first year, and is still growing. One of its most special community events, Let’s Talk Local, has become a regular Tuesday event, and offers a fantastic opportunity for people to visit, get a cup of tea and chat about any concerns or queries they may have, from heating costs and health to finance and more.

Another project that has been a huge success is STEAM Ahead, a partnership with Lews Castle College UHI and the Innovation Centre at the Lewis Campus to provide STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art & math) activities for primary school children. The Space is also looking forward to hosting activities as part of the library’s comic convention, OH!Con, taking place on Saturday 25 April.

Follow the library’s Facebook page to find out more @westernisleslibraries

Marsali Macleod (Western Isles Libraries), Helene Lagrange (Digital Champion, Western Isles Libraries), Dr Christopher Macleod (UHI Lews Castle College), Murdo Smith (Lews Castle College UHI) and Ann Murray (Assistant Principal, Business and Technology, Lews Castle College UHI) pictured at a STEAM Ahead session with participating children James, David, Kirsten, Isla, Eilidh and Isla.

STEAM Ahead is an exciting new project that was made possible through funding from Digital Xtra and a partnership between the Comhairle’s library service and Lews Castle College UHI.

Delivered primarily through The Space @ Stornoway Library, the project offers a series of STEAM activities for primary and early secondary school children, from Nursery and P1, right through to S2s. Classes have the opportunity to take part in sessions exploring coding and robotics, gradually increasing their skills and knowledge, while having great fun at the same time.

Dr Christopher Macleod of Lews Castle College UHI Innovation Centre said, “The college and library have been successfully working together on STEM projects for quite some time and have an excellent relationship. This new project focuses on the vital area of digital technology and allows us to pool our resources and deliver important but fun activities to primary school children to help prepare them for current and future developments in computing and communications.”

STEAM Ahead will be launched to schools shortly and any interested teaching staff are invited to get in touch with the library to find out more!

steamahead@cne-siar.gov.uk / 01851 822744
HEALTH and wellbeing

How Terri changed my life... by lightening me!

By Fred Silver

It’s so easy – as you get older – to let your weight drift upwards. And it becomes a cycle of decline…the extra weight literally weighs you down, making you less able to take exercise. However, eating too much is the main problem. And in the summer of 2016, I found that I really had to confront the reality of weighing almost 100kgs! I knew that in 1988, after living in China, I had been perfectly healthy at 73kgs – or eleven-and-a-half stone.

I also knew that my self-discipline was a fragile creature…especially when it came to desserts. And I was absolutely certain there was no way I could get involved with a dieting class or group.

So I turned to Cambridge Weight Plan consultant Terri McGeoghegan who had, in her previous work as a masseuse, transformed my life by sorting out my back.

The Cambridge Weight Plan is now renamed the 1:1 Diet to emphasise the key role of the consultant. You have to commit to turn up each week…to talk through progress with your consultant and to collect the meal substitutes which help you make yourself lighter.

I had been weighing 102kgs or more… I’d managed in several months to get that down by a steady 10kgs. Starting with Terri on November 8, 2016, at 95.5kgs. I was down to 85.4kgs by February 1, 2017. That’s 10kgs (1.5 stone) in 13 weeks.

And I finally went on to self-maintenance at 79.9kgs in June 2017. That was 18kgs less of me to carry around, so much less fat formed around my vital organs, like heart and liver.

My feet were one whole size smaller; my jackets hung off my shoulders…who knew that shoulders carried fat!

The first stage is to admit you weigh too much. The second is to acknowledge that you eat too much. And the third is to admit that someone else knows better than you do what you need to do about it.

After that it’s easy…being lighter is logical and transforms your life. Try it with the 1:1 Diet!

The Embark Project

Delivered by Volunteering Hebrides, the Embark Project exists to inspire community activity by providing opportunities where sometimes no opportunity exists. Members and volunteers in the islands are invited to join the Embark Projects activities, which include: the “Going Places” Walking Group, The Embark Community Cycling Project, Embark Woodland Adventures and the Blue Moon Community Rowing Club. There’s a place for everyone at the Embark Project and all activities are led by qualified staff and volunteers for everyone at the Embark Project and all activities are led by qualified staff and volunteers for everyone at the Embark Project.

The Blue Moon Community Rowing Club

With our own skiff rowing boat and a fleet of over 40 mountain bikes, e-bikes and e-trikes – everyone can get involved regardless of age or ability. To learn more about the project, email info@embark.org.uk or tel 01851 702632.

Befriending Lewis & Harris

Delivered by volunteering Hebrides, the service exists to tackle loneliness and social isolation experienced by people in our community. The service also helps nurture to lessen them to get connected to other people and their community again. The project “Befriending Bella” offers Group activities for small groups to enjoy the company of others as well as the opportunity to socialise, understand, group activities and to events, and “Befriending Monthly Activity days” run throughout the year to break out of the routine and to make friends along the way, service. Email info@befriendinglewis.org.uk or tel 01851 702632. There’s a place for everyone!
CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

A coronavirus is a type of virus. Typical symptoms include fever, a cough that may progress to a severe pneumonia causing shortness of breath and breathing difficulties.

Generally, coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan City, China. This is a rapidly changing situation which is being monitored carefully.

What are the symptoms of coronavirus?

Common symptoms include:

- high temperature or fever
- cough
- shortness of breath

Which areas are affected by coronavirus?

Certain areas where people are at higher risk of getting coronavirus have been identified.

Details of these are updated here: https://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus for details of risk areas?

If you have any of the symptoms above (high temperature, cough, shortness of breath) within 14 days of travel to Wuhan City or other parts of Hubei province, get immediate medical attention by contacting your GP or NHS24 (phone 111).

You should not go to your GP practice in person, but should telephone for advice from home.

Do not enter THE SURGERY if you have travelled to affected countries in the 14 days before you got sick and have:

- a fever
- cough or shortness of breath

INSTEAD, GO HOME AND CALL YOUR GP OR NHS24 ON 111.

Further information on Coronavirus can be found at: www.nhsinform.scot

Will wearing a mask help to prevent spreading coronavirus?

There is currently insufficient evidence to support the use of face-masks as a useful preventative measure for the general public.

How long can coronavirus survive outside the body?

Coronavirus is a newly emerging virus so there haven’t been any studies on how long it might survive outside the body. Other coronaviruses have been shown to survive on hard surfaces for at least 48 hours, so proper cleaning is very important.

If you have been in contact with someone who has returned from any of the risk areas in the last 14 days People who have been in any of the risk areas are being given specific advice to reduce the possibility of transmission.

As cases arise in the UK, health professionals will aimed to contact anyone who has been in close contact with the infected person.

If you have not been contacted, be reassured you are extremely unlikely to catch coronavirus.

Treatment for coronavirus

Currently, there is no vaccine and no specific treatment for the virus.

If you have been told to self-isolate to reduce the risk of spread of coronavirus, please follow this advice:

Like when you have the flu, you should remain at home and should not go to work, school or public areas. Where possible, you should avoid having visitors to your home, but it is OK for friends, family or delivery drivers to drop off food. You should not use public transport or taxis until 14 days after your return from risk area last exposure to a case, if advised to self isolate.

You should monitor your symptoms and call NHS 24 or your GP if you develop any of the following symptoms – fever, cough, or shortness of breath. You should not attend your GP practice in person, but should telephone for advice from home.

Why do I need to self-isolate if I have no symptoms?

This is a changing situation and the advice is based on recent information from China about the number of cases and spread of the infection from person to person, so this is a highly precautionary measure to limit the potential spread of infection.

Am I at risk if I returned from a risk area more than 14 days ago?

If you returned more than 14 days ago from a risk area but developed symptoms within 14 days and still feel unwell then telephone your GP or NHS 24 (111). Contact with someone who has been confirmed as having coronavirus

If in the past 14 days you have been in contact with someone who has been confirmed as having the coronavirus infection, please remain at home and call your GP or NHS24 for further advice.

You should not attend your GP practice in person, but should telephone for advice from home.

How is coronavirus spread between people?

Because it’s a new illness, we do not know exactly how coronavirus spreads from person to person, but similar viruses spread by droplets generated in coughs and sneezes.

How long do you need to be in contact with someone to pick up coronavirus?

If you are a contact of someone who is identified as a confirmed case of coronavirus infection, a health professional will be in touch with you to undertake an individual risk assessment covering a range of factors including the level of contact you have had with the case.

How soon after contact with coronavirus do people become unwell?

Because this is a new virus, we do not know enough to have a precise incubation period. Experience of other similar viruses suggests symptoms are likely to develop within a few days of exposure. Based on current information, public health advice is that anyone potentially exposed should be alert to any symptoms for 14 days after their last known exposure to a case.

What can be done to prevent infection with coronavirus?

Advice has been issued for people who have recently been in any of the risk areas so that the possibility of them passing on the virus is minimised. This advice includes self-isolation for people who have recently been in Wuhan City or other parts of Hubei province even if they have no symptoms. Anyone who has recently been in any risk area, and who is unwell is being managed with someone who has been confirmed as having the coronavirus infection, please remain at home and should not go to your GP practice in person, but should telephone for advice from home.

If you have been in any other risk area apart from Hubei province, and you have no symptoms then you can go about your normal activities. If you become unwell within 14 days of your return, please follow the advice above.

Is there any way to reduce your risk of acquiring and spreading respiratory infections by practicing good respiratory hygiene, such as:

- avoiding direct hand contact with your eyes, nose and mouth
- maintaining good hand hygiene - washing hands with soap and water or alcohol hand sanitiser, after coughing or sneezing, after going to the toilet, and prior to eating and drinking
- wherever possible avoid direct contact with people that have a respiratory illness and avoid using their personal items such as their mobile phone
- when coughing or sneezing cover your nose and mouth with disposable tissues and dispose of them in the nearest waste bin after use

The credit union is run differently from traditional high street banks. Anyone who joins becomes a member and has a vote and, each year at the AGM, a Board of Directors is voted in from the membership. “Every one of our Directors is a HI-Scot member,” David said. “And each one is voted in by the wider membership. They all carry out their roles in a voluntary capacity, meaning that HI-Scot is run for the members, by the members.”

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HI-Scot credit union is on a mission – to get the Highlands and Islands saving in 2020.

“As we enter our 14th year of business, we’ll be spreading the word about the benefits of saving with the credit union,” said HI-Scot’s General Manager, David Mackay. “HI-Scot is member-led and member-run and we offer a range of services.”

HI-Scot’s aim in 2020 is to raise awareness across the whole of the Highlands and Islands, highlighting their services which include accessible loans, online banking and payroll deduction. Payroll deduction, for example, allows members to save directly from their salaries. This service is currently available to tens of thousands of employees in the Highlands and Islands – all they need to do to access it is to become a member of HI-Scot. There are over 430,000 people saving with credit unions across Scotland and 3200 of those are members of HI-Scot credit union.

“In the Western Isles, where HI-Scot started out, we have just over 8% of the population saving with HI-Scot and we aim to raise the level of our membership across our common bond area, which incorporates the Highlands, Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands and the Western Isles.”

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A dip on the wild side for Lewis

By Annie Delin

Lewis Mackenzie is on a mission – to harvest the culinary riches of the Minch and to run a diverse, satisfying and year-round business built on the sea.

Unafraid of hard work, Lewis has been building his popular boat charter, Hebrides Fish 'n' Trips, at the same time as diving for scallops, cutting seaweed by hand and carrying wildlife surveyors out on carefully planned research trips.

Now he's seeing success with the latest addition to his portfolio, Hebridean Wildfoods Ltd (HWL) – and it's taking him into the kitchens of Michelin-starred restaurants and into the company of world-renowned chefs.

The business started with two realisations – that any boat charter company is going to see the peak of its work in the summer, and that there is a new and growing interest in the flavour of sea vegetables.

Lewis said: "I have always wanted to work at sea year-round, but wildlife watching, photography, and fishing trips are only going to be comfortable for visitors in the summer."

"At the same time, I realised that, although there was a growing awareness among chefs that seaweed has potential as an ingredient, they were using sources in the Far East to get their supplies."

"A couple of foraging companies had started up in Cornwall and chefs cottoned on. That's when I realised that I had a perfect new opportunity right on my doorstep."

Lewis set out to convince the chefs of London, hand-picking the ones he would approach and investing quite a lot in sending samples of different types of seaweed for them to try.

"Some of them liked what I sent and wanted to meet me. I went to see some of them, and others wanted time up here to see the source and the conditions I worked in."

After hosting visits, providing accommodation and taking chefs out on boat trips, Lewis had his first orders. Now there's wide and growing interest in a range of his hand-harvested products, including sea spaghetti, which is used like noodles in upmarket kitchens, and sugar kelp – one of the earliest products to be taken up, as the defining botanical in Harris Gin.

Lewis said: "Now there's an increase in the number of vegetarians and vegans it has spurred on the chefs to try more products. After all, seaweed is a vegetable at the end of the day."

"The growing business is helping feed the island economy too – the sugar kelp needed by Harris Gin is dried at the Hebridean Seaweed Company in Arnish, and fresh produce is packed up in polyboxes made at Marybank before being shipped by DR Macleod and Woody's."

The latest link is with Islander Shellfish on Cromwell Street Quay in Stornoway. They're beginning to order wholesale quantities of the harvest from Lewis for supply to local chefs, and he hopes soon to have seaweeds in season retailed to the public from their fish shop.

That means that we could all be getting a taste of Dabberlocks – a strap-like frond of seaweed ideal for making a pastry-free spring roll – or of the exotic bright purple Pepper Dulse, with Christmas-tree shaped sprigs tasting of pepper, Indian spices and vanilla.

And it also means that Lewis can fulfil his dream of working year-round in the wet and cold, bringing shellfish, seaweed and other great taste experiences to tables near and far.

Awards for innovation for engineer Alick, 40

Everything the Innovation Centre at Lewis Castle College UHI was set up to achieve – helping would-be inventors and entrepreneurs turn their good ideas into marketable products – can be seen in the students who are using its facilities to make their mark on the world.

More than so far Lewis Mackenzie – 40-year-old engineer student from Ranish, Lochs, who won two awards at the University of the Highlands and Islands Business Competition in Inverness during February.

Alick, who is in the final year of his BEng (Hons) Mechanical Engineering degree, won the Best Engineer Award and Best Design Award for a new design concept of boat trailer. His trailer uses components thought to have never been used before in trailers, to make it much easier to load and unload boats from the trailers without the need for so much manpower.

He designed the trailer for his third year project and made a model of it using the 3D printer at the Innovation Centre – a machine funded by the centre's £20,000 expansion grant from community wind farm charity Point and Sandwick Trust, which levered in further investment from LEADER.

Point and Sandwick Trust said they were delighted to have been able to support islanders in making the most of their good ideas. Andrew Mackenzie, a Point and Sandwick Trust board member and also Alick's lecturer in renewable engineering at Lewis Castle College, said: "Alick showed that with a great original idea, support from Lewis Castle College staff, hard work and access to the Innovation Centre, award-winning performance can be achieved."

Dr Chris Macleod, founder of the Innovation Centre, added: "Alick is an excellent student and has won several prizes for this idea while he has been at college. He is a good example of how anyone, regardless of age, can retain an exciting new career in engineering and technology."

Alick is one of around 30 current users of the Innovation Centre's facilities. The centre, which was significantly expanded in 2018 thanks to Point and Sandwick Trust's investment, acts as a hub for high technology development, advice, expertise and training for college students, businesses, charities, schools, local people and entrepreneurs.

In addition to the large-scale plastic 3D printer which Alick used for creating the model of his trailer concept, the Innovation Centre recently purchased two large metal printers as a result of the investment from Point and Sandwick Trust and LEADER. These machines can create movable metal components and could be used to make a whole range of pieces, including parts for Harris Tweed looms.

Chris said: "We have now seen a number of innovative and entrepreneurial ideas go on to the next stage of their development. It is a great boon for the local community and wouldn't have been possible without our founding sponsors, Point and Sandwick Trust. Their initial faith in the concept also allowed us to unlock further funding from agencies like Western Isles LEADER."

Alick said it was "fantastic" to win – twice – at the awards. His name was the first one read out for a prize – the design award – and Alick thought: "Great – I've won something. I'll just sit down now and relax."

Then a few minutes later my name was called out again. "I was completely shocked. I thought, 'what? Are you sure this isn't a mistake?'

Alick's design is for a new concept of boat trailer which should work for various sizes of boats, and shapes of hull. The next steps will be checking patents and finding the money to build a prototype – to check it's a workable idea rather than a nice idea" and then fine-tuning.

The idea was a case of necessity being the mother of invention as Alick was fed up struggling to get his own boat – a 16ft used for fishing – on and off a trailer and into the sea. He was having to drive the tractor into the sea "up to its belly" and described the process as "awkward and difficult".

He explained: "If it's a shallow shore, you can't get enough depth without having to reverse right out into it, till the boat is almost floating and even then you've got to get your shoulder against it. If you had a big heavy boat, it must be an absolute nightmare."

Alick had done a year of engineering at the Glasgow Nautical College after going to see for a year as part of cadetship training. Due to personal circumstances he left engineering and had no plans to return until relatively recently. He admitted that, due to a lack of confidence from his time at sea, it was only in the third year of his degree – and after good results – that he started to "believe that I knew engineering". He had taken, he said, "years of rebuilding".

Alick is the second Lewis Castle College student to hit the headlines for their accomplishments with the help of the Innovation Centre.

Matthew Murray made the news last summer after his undergraduate paper about a new engine concept for supersonic jets was published in a prestigious peer-reviewed journal.

And, similarly to Alick, Matthew had ‘not seen himself as academic’ until he began to see success in engineering with the help of the college and the Innovation Centre.
Debut album from SIAN

SIAN is the self-titled debut album from three of Scotland's great Gaelic singers - Eilidh Cormack, Ceilidh Lilidh and Ellen MacDonald.

Since the band's 2016 inception, the young all-female vocal group SIAN have established themselves in venues across Scotland and now present their first record, a celebration of female Gaelic bards. Originally formed by Fèisean nan Gàidheal for some of Scotland's great Gaelic singers - Eilidh Cormack, Ceilidh Lilidh and Ellen MacDonald.

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Debut album from SIAN
Millions of £s of capital spending projects on the Isle of Lewis are expected to go ahead following approval from the Government in Edinburgh during February.

The Government spending is expected to attract £4.5m of additional funding from private and public sources.

Co-ordinator of Eilean Siar said that it “welcomes the successful applications to the Scottish Government’s Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (RCGF).

Four major infrastructure projects have been recommended for approval at Stage 2 of what is now the 7th year of successful applications made to the Fund by the Comhairle’s Economic Development Officers.

- The Stornoway Regeneration Programme - Phase 2 (Newton Gateway) will provide ‘enabling works’ to transform vacant and derelict land in the Newton Industrial Area of Stornoway, facilitating further private sector investment and small and medium business growth.

- A refurbishment of the former Knock school, ‘Aras an Rubha’ - which now contains a shop, cafe, museum and offices - will transform the building into a vibrant community hub providing services, employment and vocational opportunities, and act as a centrepiece of a food culture that supports the local and external food market.

- The Stornoway Gateway (‘An Eilean Gobha’/Newton Gateway) will act as a gateway to the external world with two new buildings, a new café, museum and offices - will transform the building into a vibrant community hub providing services, employment and vocational opportunities, and act as a centrepiece of a food culture that supports the local and external food market.

- Solar na Mara in Carloway will see refurbishment of the community centre and former schoolhouse; the creation of a community kitchen, sports changing room facilities and office accommodation; and refurbishment of the annex building into a community shop and laundry.

- In Great Bernera, a marina hub will transform the neglected and underused harbour at Kirkibost through remediation work and development of shoreline areas. The onshore development involves site consolidation, along with demolition and infill, with improvements to walkways and access.

The total funding of £2.5m towards projects totalling £7m in Lewis will safeguard and create new jobs, transform vacant and derelict land and buildings and create new infrastructure in the respective communities.

Applications by officers from the Comhairle’s Economic Development Service have secured money consistently from the RCGF over seven consecutive years. Total project costs are over £35m and £10.5m has been secured from the Fund.

The Comhairle’s Chairman of Sustainable Communities, Donald Crichton said: “This is an excellent result again for the communities of the Western Isles. The RCGF, together with significant funding from Highlands and Islands Enterprise, local and external funders, will see significant projects delivered - established that the certain communities and drive growth in these areas.”

HIE’s Area Manager for Inner Hebrides, Rachel Mackenzie, said: “We are delighted with CNES’s continued success in obtaining support from the Scottish Government through the Regional Capital Grant Fund.”

Funding boost for local food network

The Outer Hebrides Food Tourism Strategy is one of 21 projects awarded funding to promote locally-sourced food and drink. The projects will share £95,350 from the Connect Local Regional Food Fund. Rural Affairs Minister, Mairi Gougeon, announced the funding on a visit to IJ Mellis Cheesemonger in Carloway in the Outer Hebrides - three years ago to help promote local food on the islands. This funding will allow us to take a step in strengthening this network, and grow on the profile of local food to better meet visitor needs.

We wish to maximize the opportunities for our visitors to engage with our food by improving the information available to them, creating events for them to sample local produce and looking into the market for opportunities of food & drink experiences on the islands, some of which may already be woven into our culture.

“We also aim to strengthen the network of food producers and outlets on the islands by linking buyers and suppliers, and to improve on the understanding on visitors’ needs and wants.

Ms Gougeon said: ‘I have been hugely impressed by the standard and range of food and drink initiatives across Scotland.

‘Innovative projects like these not only help local economies grow, they also promote the importance of locally produced food and drink and the environmental benefits of sourcing produce close to home.’

St Kilda project

The team behind plans for an ambitious new St Kilda visitor centre in Uig has admitted that scaling back plans could be the only way to get the delayed project off the ground - 10 years after the idea was first publicly aired.

Speaking ahead of a documentary to be broadcast on BBC Alba on Tuesday, 3 March, chairman and director of Iolar Na Hebrid, Iain Buchanan, reportedly said: “I believe passionately in the concept designs for the St Kilda Centre, but I also realise this project was never going to be straightforward.” The planning team believe that a phased approach could make it easier to attract funding for the project at a difficult time.

Norwegian architects Reinfjord Ramstad have been engaged to work up designs for the centre, working with Stornoway-based Dualachas architects. They’ve come up with a phased approach which could allow some aspects of the proposed visitor centre to be built initially, with more following at future dates.

In principle planning permission for a first phase visitor centre was granted by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar in June last year. At that time the isle of Rapa, which involves important discussions are continuing. We should know by late autumn whether our first round of funding applications are successful.”

The first phase offers a ‘remote access’ visitor experience with a year-round research centre, toilets, parking and improved road access. It is anticipated that the next phase planning will include walkways, trails and viewpoints to explore the external environment.

Deputy First Minister John Swinney opened an exhibition in Stornoway on 13 February detailing the creation of a powerful art installation commemorating the Iolaire disaster.

The widely praised and much-visited Sheol an Iolaire/The Iolaire Sailed was commissioned by Stornoway Port Authority and installed on the South Loch Stornoway ahead of the 2019 centenary of the tragedy.

The sculpture, designed by Torcuil Crichton and Malcolm Maclean, was envisaged as a temporary installation, but in response to enormous public demand, the Port Authority has applied for planning permission to leave the installation in place as a permanent reminder of one of the worst maritime tragedies in United Kingdom waters.

The exhibition in the ferry terminal comprises photographs, time lapse film, aerial films, posters and paintings of Sheol an Iolaire from its conception to its installation. Malcolm Maclean thanked all of those whose work was on show in the exhibition and the many hundreds of others who were too numerous for inclusion. He went on to commend the ferry terminal as potentially a great new venue for Stornoway and hoped this project could be the first of many exhibitions, music performances and other events that could be held there in the years to come.

Mr Swinney also met Inverness-based businessman Stewart Graham who is driving plans to establish a world class Iolaire Visitor Centre not far from the art installation.

The HAY Iolaire struck rocks outside Stornoway harbour on 1 January 1919 when it was taking WWI veterans back to the Isles of Lewis and Harris - 201 of the 280 men on board perished.

The 189-foot-long installation reproduces the dimensions of the ship and is located in the wall where it was due to berth. It features 280 wooden posts – one for each of the men on board the fateful voyage – with 79 painted white to represent the survivors.

Each post is lit with a waterproof footlight and at night, and covered by the tide, the outline of the ship can still be seen beneath the waves.

It formed a highly visible part of the Iolaire centenary commemorations last year and has become a hugely popular site for both residents and visitors, while online images have attracted thousands more to the Iolaire legacy. There has also been a tremendous artistic response, some of which has been curated into an exhibition in the Stornoway ferry terminal.

Sheol an Iolaire has been recognised by the Stornoway Amenity Trust’s Community Public Service Award for the individual or group which has done the most to promote the town in 2019. It has also featured in exhibitions around the Imperial War Museum and has been listed for a John Byrne award.

Murdo Murray, chairman of Stornoway Port Authority, said: “We are extremely grateful to Mr Swinney for opening the exhibition telling the story of Sheol an Iolaire which is a poignant and innovative commemoration of an event that had a huge impact on our community.

“We feel it should now remain as a permanent memorial alongside the new visitor centre as a legacy of the centenary events. Together they will tell the powerful and moving story of this terrible tragedy which should never be forgotten.”

Torcuil Crichton paid tribute to fellow artist Malcolm Maclean from Uig, as well as Stornoway Port Authority and their engineers, Wallace Stone and Stornoway Trust, who quickly grasped the potential of the idea.

“The Stornoway is still standing, is testament to their skill and ability to turn a concept into a real construction”, he said.

He added: “Sheol an Iolaire tells the whole story of the tragedy in the simplest way possible, we brought the ship home.

“But on such a sensitive subject people bring their own memories and emotions to the site which changes with every visit. The incredible artistic response, some of which is in the walls of the ferry terminal, is part of that. The public response has been amazing and shows what can happen when people are left to make up their own minds.”

The Port Authority and Mr Graham, as well as the Stornoway Trust, An Lanntair arts centre, Museum nan Eilean, local historical societies and others, are part of a working group that has proposed the visitor centre.

Stewart Graham, founder of the international Gaedh Force Group which began life in his home town of Stornoway, said: “The Iolaire Centre will mark the maritime disaster at Stornoway’s Number 1 pier.

“Following consultation with the community in 2018, there was strong support for a visitor experience to commemorate the tragedy and its impact on the islands in the following period. The vision for the centre is to create a space that tells, not only the Iolaire story, but that of the wider context of the island’s maritime history and war involvement.

“The centre will seek to tell the story sensitively and with due respect, over a century after the tragedy. It is expected that the centre would be a lasting commemorative introduction and a world class visitor experience that supports a major, transformational, economic boost for the islands.

“Music at the opening was provided by singers from the Dileab project and William Campbell who sang My Time Was Not At Hand, one of the songs performed when Mr Swinney was among the audience at Celtic Connections recently. Mr Swinney spoke at the opening event about how moving he had found the original Dileab event in December 2018 which he watched online and the entire Iolaire memorialisation as it developed.

The event in the Stornoway Ferry Terminal building is also seen as pioneering the use of the terminal as a venue for performances and exhibitions with the audience being impressed by the excellence of the acoustics.

John Swinney (centre) with artist Malcolm Maclean (left) and local MSP Alasdair Allan
Racing the Snowman for island honour

By Annie Delin

The first week of March sees a crack team heading off the islands to tackle the first event of the rallying season.

Driver Ali ‘Nomie’ Macleod from Tong and co-driver Thomas Jefferson of Stornoway will be throwing everything they’ve got at the Coogie Unsparked Snowman Rally, run by Highland Car Club.

The rally means 43 miles of road and gravel racing that roars away from a start-point in Inverness on Saturday 7 March. There are forest tracks and roundabouts, all selected to test the car and its drivers to the max.

Behind them is a team of mechanics, logistics planners and sponsors, building up excitement for an event that everyone knows could come crashing to a halt at any second.

That’s happened to Ali and his car before. It’s a rare kind of car – a rear-wheel-drive Escort MK3 – to a halt at any second.

Ali’s support team of five are also with him for every mile, and are ready to laugh with him when he leaves his car teetering at the top of a bank just two miles in.

The team includes Domnie, Morris and Janie Ferguson, Derek Beaton and Angus ‘Gogrie’ Maclean, who act as mechanics, plan each stage, respond to the logistical challenges the organisers throw their way and drive the chase car, following him round the route to be sure he gets where he needs to go.

“Rallying isn’t just about driving the course, it’s logistics, timing and complicated calculations,” says Ali. “You get a text at 10.30pm telling you your start time tomorrow is 10.15am, and you have to be there to the minute and be ready to race.”

The Snowman Rally turns 65 years old this year. In 2020 it runs over five scenic stages around Inverness-shire, the Black Isle and Cromarty and is the first rally of the Scottish Championship season.

This year Ali intends to compete in the three rallies that make up the North of Scotland Championships, starting on March 7th and continuing in April with the Spyside Stages and in August with the Grampian Stages.

Shifting a car and seven team members from Lewis around Scotland doesn’t come cheap and that’s where the background team members – the pamphlet – come into their own. Principal sponsor Autoparts Stornoway joined this year by the Home Improvement Centre, K’s Stitches and Isleblast and Powder Coating, with Nomie’s Bodyshop.

Their support means the accommodation, car transport, support car and essentials like tyres and fuel can be covered, leaving Ali and his team free to actually do the planning and driving.

And if he ends up in a ditch, well, there’s still the experience of being part of the team. Ali said: “It’s all part of rallying. The craic you get with the boys and with other competitors is all part of it. They had a laugh at my expense and I was able to laugh with them.

“They’re going to be waiting for me at every stage to change oil and tyres, driving miles to be at the end of the stage by the time I get there and putting their commitment into getting me round the course. That’s what it’s all about – the teamwork and the craic.”

The scrutineering is at Autovation Vauxhall on Harbour Road, Inverness from Friday 4pm and cars will be starting from Fairways Leisure, Castle Heather, Inverness from 6.30am Saturday.

Young musicians step up

The 2020 Western Isles Young Musician of the Year competition is here, on Friday 6 and Saturday 7 March.

And the organising committee say that this year’s competition has expanded to create equality across musical genres, with new categories and awards planned.

Committee chairman Gavin Woods said: “We have experimented over the last few years and found that some instruments can be judged against each other, while others don’t work so well when you compare them to each other.

“So this year we will have three competitions – Young Classical Musician, Young Singer of the Year and, new for this year, Young Piper of the Year. We hope next year to introduce a further competition, for Young Traditional Musician of the Year.

“An ensemble competition for small groups of up to six players will be judged at primary, junior (S1-S3) and senior (S4-S6) level and there’ll be a classical competition for primary pupils only.

“T’ll be a composition prize for youngsters who have composed their own music, similarly judged at primary, junior and senior age groups.

“The timetable for the competition is intensive, with the ensemble competition to be judged on Friday 6 March from 7pm at the Nicolson Institute.

On Saturday 7 March piping will be judged at the Nicolson, with the rest of the competitions at Stornoway Primary School, before a grand final in the ballroom of Lewis Castle on Saturday night. It’s open to the public for an admission price of £5 on the door.

Last year’s winner of the overall title Western Isles Young Musician of the Year was tuba-player Calum Pousie. The committee have been supporting his fundraising for a new tuba, at a cost of nearly £7,000, by applying to the EMI music fund for a contribution towards the cost.

Gavin Woods said: “Western Isles Young Musician of the Year has been working in partnership with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and the Rotary Club of Stornoway to provide a platform for talented young musicians across the Western Isles.

“Our association with Rotary means that winners of the senior singer competition and the young musician of the year are eligible to go forward to the Rotary national final – Ceilidh Mackenzie competed there in 2018 and Calum Pousie in 2019, both in Perth.

“That competition gives them more experience of playing in the public eye and allows them to take part with other young musicians from beyond their own area, so they can judge themselves against a wider standard.”

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES) has approved a budget for Council spending in 2020-2021, including a Council Tax rise of 4.84%, which, for 9 in every 10 households on our islands will be no more than £1.01 a week.

Amendments for a standstill and a 2% rise were defeated.

Council Leader Roddie Mackay said: “Despite the suggestion that austerity is behind us it remains to minimise the effect on services and offset the impact on our economy.

“The two biggest projects in our programme, the Lewis Residential Care Development and Castlebay Campus are flagship projects that show what can be delivered through partnership working. However, we must not lose sight of the need for investment our roads and infrastructure.

“Noneetheless I am recommending that we use the additional flexibility that the Scottish Government has given us to raise Council Tax by 4.84%, which, for 9 in every 10 households on our islands will be no more than £1.01 a week.

“There remains a risk we may need to revisit our budget following the Scottish Government and UK budget announcements in early March.

“However, for the meantime this budget represents a reasonable and responsible continuation of the journey we started in 2018 and I recommend that we continue to work together to implement these recommendations.

“The amendment by SNP Councillors to have a freeze on the Council Tax was lost by 19-5; and a separate amendment for a 2% rise was lost 16-8.

SNP Group Leader Gordon Murray said they were ‘hugely disappointed’ that other councillors had not supported the Group’s amendment.”

Airpor firm wins court case

The Court of Session in Edinburgh, Scotland’s highest civil appeal court. This followed a ruling from the Scottish Land Court on Thursday 7 February last year in favour of Melbost and Branahuie Grazings Committee and against HIAL, over land at Stornoway Airport.

HIAL claimed crofting rights at Stornoway Airport had been extinguished when the land was requisitioned during World War Two to enable an RAF station to be built. HIAL wants to sell some of the ground to a developer to build 94 new homes but the grazings committee of Melbost and Branahuie objected. However, the Court of Session disagreed. Lord Carloway’s judgement said crofters received compensation eight decades ago for giving up the crofting rights.

The HIAL appeal was heard in late January at the
RURAL YOUTH PROJECT

The Rural Youth Project (RYP) invite you to join them for a Stakeholder meeting on Monday 16 March 2020, from 9.15am – 11am in Committee Room 3 in the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar offices in Stornoway. Video Conferencing facilities will also be available at the Comhairle offices in Balivanich and Castlebay.

RYP aims to outline how you and your organisation can get involved in the long-term programme of the Rural Youth Project that will enable young people (18 – 28 years of age) across rural Scotland to participate and become the next generation of leaders.

Outer Hebrides LEADER is one of five LEADER Action Groups (LAGs) supporting the Rural Youth Project, which aims to provide opportunities for young people aged 18 to 24 to develop their leadership, business and enterprise skills to help them play their part in making rural places attractive and viable and connects a rural youth community online.

The RYP will also be hosting a residential Big Ideas workshop in the Outer Hebrides from 29 – 31 May for individuals and/or groups with a project, business, enterprise, social or community idea that they wish to develop. The RYP team will facilitate participants to develop their idea, covering leadership, financial advice, communications, community building and visiting a business in action.

Further details about the venues and agenda will be released soon. However, only 12-15 places will be available at the Big Ideas workshop and young people (16-28yrs) wishing to attend are encouraged to register their interest by visiting www.ruralyouthproject.com/.

If you or a delegate are available to attend the initial Stakeholder meeting to find out more about the Rural Youth Project and how you can get involved then please contact the local LEADER team on outerhebridesleader@cne-siar.gov.uk or 01851 600501.

THE PRINCE’S TRUST SUPPORT FOR NEW BUSINESSES

Through The Prince’s Trust, free advisory and business planning support is available to anyone aged up to 30 thinking of starting or developing their own business. There is discretionary grant and loan assistance available to those within the 18-30 age group, with special concern for anyone who is particularly disadvantaged. Anyone who accesses funding is also provided with an allocated advisor to assist with developing the business through its first two years. The local branch is based with the Business Gateway team in Stornoway.

Rachael Mackenzie of Eilean Siar Hampers has recently accessed a range of business support through Business Gateway and The Prince’s Trust. Rachael makes up hampers and gift boxes containing a wide range of products and is really passionate about including as many products as possible from throughout the Outer Hebrides. The Hampers cater for any occasion and are suitable for a wide range of budgets.

Rachael is keen to speak to as many local self-catering property owners throughout Lewis and Harris as possible to discuss the welcome hamper options for their guests. The business also offers bespoke wedding gift boxes which include a personalised service for names, dates and any other required information, so it is worth contacting Rachael to discuss the various options.

Rachael is keen to support as many local businesses as she can so, if you would like to discuss having your products included in these gift hampers or if you would like to buy a gift hamper/gift box, then please contact Eilean Siar Hampers on 01851 600501 or eileansiarhampers@outlook.com. Rachael would love to hear from you.

HARRIS TEXTILE FIRM WEAVES PATHWAY TO SUCCESS WITH BUSINESS GATEWAY SUPPORT

A South Harris-based textile business has used Business Gateway’s one-to-one business support and funding advice to renovate new premises and increase on-island production.

Founded by Carol Graham and Rob English in 2017, Borrisdale Tweed specialises in the design, manufacture and retail of exclusive, high-quality homewares and accessories using locally woven Harris Tweed. From cushions to caps, all of Borrisdale Tweed’s products are made in the UK, with the majority made on Harris itself.

After a short break on Harris they led them to fall in love with the island and eventually make it their permanent base. The couple gave up their corporate jobs to launch Borrisdale Tweed and Sound of Harris, its sister business of two distinctive self-catering units which showcase Harris Tweed in their interiors.

Rob and Carol combine their previous industrial and academic experience in textile engineering and colour chemistry, a long term interest in interior design, plus their passion for the Outer Hebrides to create high quality products that have been a hit with both locals and visitors to the island. From a modest start as a pop-up shop next to their weaving shed, the business has doubled its turnover year on year and also significantly exceeded its projected turnover for 2019, following its recent relocation.

Business Gateway was able to help Borrisdale Tweed with one-to-one sessions from a business adviser, funding advice and an introduction to Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Business Gateway also supported the textile firm’s successful application to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Grants for Growth Funding, which is part funded by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. As a result, Borrisdale Tweed was awarded £20,000 in grant funding and was able to renovate a dilapidated building in a key location in the south of Harris.

Rob English, director of Borrisdale Tweed, commented: “Business Gateway’s support has been invaluable to our business. Although I was successful with ERDF funding in my previous academic roles, the input provided really helped clarify our strategy to expand our manufacturing through a move to a larger premises in Leverburgh. This included a focus on training and sustainability, to the effect that I now have a site management qualification and we were able to project manage the renovation ourselves. We are now also almost zero waste with regard to use of cloths in the manufacture of our products.

“The grant enabled us to turn the former post office in Leverburgh into bespoke premises, which ultimately helped us to achieve our main objective of providing exclusive, high quality products made in the Outer Hebrides.”

Derek Maclean, business adviser at Business Gateway Outer Hebrides, added: “In addition to one-to-one support, strategic advice and networking opportunities, we were able to connect Borrisdale Tweed to the Grants for Growth scheme and fill its funding gap. It is fantastic to see how the ERDF grant funding has enabled Carol and Rob to create beautiful business premises and support our traditional textile industry by increasing their on island manufacturing.”

For information on how Business Gateway can help your business, contact us on businessgateway@cnr-siar.gov.uk or 01851 600501.

ABOVE, Borrisdale Tweed Premises
Right, Rob English, Borrisdale Tweed

Photographs by Encompass/Harris Tweed Authority

BUSINESS START UP GRANT FUNDING

The OHYESS scheme is financed by Highlands and Islands Enterprise and administered by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

Grant funding for entrepreneurs, based in the Outer Hebrides with businesses in key sectors that have been trading for no longer than two years. The funding will be used towards capital costs only.

• Full time businesses—up to £2,500 grant
• Part time businesses—up to £1,250 grant
• Level of support—up to 50% of eligible costs

For more information, please contact Business Gateway on 01851 822775 or businessgateway@cne-siar.gov.uk.

“Key Sectors - renewable & energy related activity, recycling, tourism, creative and other culture-based industries, food & drink, information technology, life, health and other sciences, research & development, innovation, manufacturing & processing, traditional industries (indigenous to the Outer Hebrides)”

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Harris Tweed in Vietnam

By Taylor Edgar

The Vietnamese are often called the "Italians of Asia," perhaps due to their penchant for Vespa mopeds and labels. Today, with a booming economy, Vietnam may, surprisingly, be ripe for the allure of the Orb Trademark.

While it may not be the most obvious emerging market for Harris Tweed, Vietnam has, since the 1990s, a burgeoning wealthy middle class with significant disposable income they like to spend on luxury goods and status symbols to signal their success.

The "cold" north

Unlike popular perceptions of Vietnam as a land of sweaty jungles as framed by so many war movies, the north has four distinct seasons, with winter temperatures being described locally as "cold". Even in the tropical south, last November one of the leading news websites described overnight temperatures of 19 degrees in Hoi Chi Minh City as "frigid". Technically, this would be "taps aff" weather in Scotland.

The local definition of cold in Hanoi, as I can attest after living here for the past four years, is somewhat different from the Outer Hebrides. Here, a cold day is when the thermometer heads south of 25 degrees. If I had a fiver for every time I was asked, "Are you not cold?" while wearing shorts and a T-shirt, I would be a Vietnamese Dong millionaire.

The British Council has already been experimenting with the Cli-Mör, especially for men's suits. Indeed, some of the capital's top fashion tailors have already been experimenting with seasonal lightweight Harris Tweed in the northern region, particularly Hanoi, the port city of Hai Phong. Leading stylist and Hanoi fashion expert, Hoang Minh Chau, is confident there is potential for Harris Tweed collectively in bulk.

"Harris Tweed is very niche and has a very, very British heritage. If the British Council could step in and host a fashion show, talks at fashion colleges, I feel it could work. The British Council has already been doing certain programmes and initiatives to support the fashion industry in Vietnam and also bringing more awareness about British fashion and studying fashion in Britain.

Drawing on her extensive marketing experience with some of Europe's top labels, Ms Hoang recommends that any major Harris Tweed marketing initiative should firmly be a collaborative effort between the brand and the British Council in Vietnam in order to give any launch the necessary scale and prestige required to gain significant traction, as well as being a nod to the history of British tailoring.

"I think what drives Vietnamese people these days is a sense of status. They are keen on foreign, international quality stuff not only from Britain but also Japan, Korea, Italy, and France because it is all associated with culture, status and the prestige of being able to afford them," she adds.

Harris Tweed would not be an overnight success, there would be a long lead-in time to build awareness and gain popularity. If momentum could be built there would be nothing to prevent Harris Tweed from being "the next big thing" in Vietnam's fashion world.

Plans for Vietnam

The potential in Vietnam has certainly taken the interest of the Harris Tweed Authority. Chief Executive, Lorna Macaulay told EVENTS that Vietnam is already a key destination for the manufacture of finished Harris Tweed products, which are then largely exported back to the UK, Europe, and Japan.

Until now, though, Harris Tweed's marketing efforts for the cloth have been focused on China, Vietnam's giant neighbour where there is a tremendous opportunity.

Says Ms Macaulay: "Our focus here at the Harris Tweed Authority is to ensure our portfolio of trademarks is as robust and extensive as possible to protect our industry in China.

"Likewise, we are seeing a rise in the number of enquiries from Taiwan and Malaysia. South Korea is a strong market and, of course, continues to be a very important premium market for our industry."

Vietnam is not being discounted, and the Harris Tweed Authority would be happy to explore an awareness event to introduce the Harris Tweed story to Hanoi and Vietnam more generally.

Sales opportunities in Vietnam and other emerging markets in the Far East are firmly on their radar and have been for some time. Harris Tweed Hebrides confirmed. The company has an extensive established sales network in South East Asia, including showrooms in Shanghai and Hong Kong, South Korea, and Japan and exhibits widely at a number of international trade fairs in these key locations.

Harris Tweed Hebrides say they are committed to exploring and investing in new sales opportunities in order to maximise the opportunities for Harris Tweed fabric in locations like Vietnam where economies are growing, and are actively expanding their portfolio of marketplaces in the east including Russia and across mainland China.
Salt and pepper squid

INGREDIENTS
- 1 tablespoon Szechuan peppers
- 1 teaspoon chilli flakes
- 1 teaspoon sea salt flakes
- 4 tablespoons of plain flour
- 4 tablespoons of cornflour
- 400 g squid cleaned
- Groundnut oil
- Lemon wedges

METHOD
- Crush together the peppers, chilli flakes and sea salt in a pestle and mortar until quite fine.
- Mix with the two flours.
- Open the squid pouch by cutting down one side.
- Score lightly in a criss cross pattern.
- Cut into bite sized pieces.
- Add enough groundnut oil into a wok to deep fry the squid.
- Heat the oil and test it with a cube of bread which should brown in 30 seconds.
- Dust off excess flour from the squid pieces.
- Fry for 1-2 minutes until golden brown but do not add too many pieces to the pan at the one time.
- Serve with lemon wedges and garlic mayo.

Monkeyfish

By John Dory

I don’t suppose that many EVENTS readers are familiar with the Monkeyface Prickleback fish but this fish could soon be as common as cod or haddock as the world seeks a new source of protein for human consumption.

Living in rocky waters off the west coast of the UK, the fish can grow to three foot in length and prefers to lurk around shallow reefs and tidal pools. When fully grown it can weigh up to six pounds and live up to eighteen years but its appearance is not overly attractive as it has two small fins hanging like floppy ears near its head, and a dorsal fin down its back.

A vegetarian fish

What is hugely significant is that the Monkeyface Prickleback is a vegetarian fish and is among the five per cent out of 30,000 fish species that is vegetarian. It can also live on land for 37 straight hours because of its ability to breathe above water as well as under. No wonder that the Monkeyface has been described as, “the new white meat”, that could help to feed the world due to its enormous aquaculture potential. Despite its looks it has become a delicacy on the menus of trendy Californian restaurants where it can cost in excess of £12 per pound.

Fish farming crisis

The growing global urgency for sustainable food products is increasing by the day. The salmon farming industry was once thought to hold the key to sourcing protein for human consumption on a relatively, low cost sustainable basis. However, it now finds itself locked in an increasingly bitter war with environmentalists across the world.

In autumn last year, the fish farming industry was rocked by the decision of the Danish government announcement that it was putting a halt to any further development of fish farms at sea in a bid to protect the environment. The Danish government also introduced curbs to halt the growth of existing fish farms.

The Danish initiative could possibly have repercussions for Scotland as well, maybe some time down the line. With Scotland’s salmon farming sector contributing over £200 billion to the economy and sustaining over 10,000 jobs it would take a brave politician to follow the Danish government’s decision.

Squid on the menu

Although it is unlikely that we, in this country, will be tucking into Monkeyface and chips anytime soon, there is no shortage of another seafood that has become increasingly popular in the UK. This is squid which is technically not a “fish” but a cephalopod and is a close cousin of the octopus and cuttlefish.

Squid and fish that thrive in warmer waters, such as sardines and anchovies, are caught around the North Sea according to fisheries data. Squid are now being caught in sixty per cent of fish survey stations in the North Sea compared to only twenty percent in the 1980’s.

Usually, the squid is not the most attractive of sea creatures but it is now commonly found on many restaurant menus across the UK.

Probably most Britons came across squid whilst on holiday in Mediterranean countries like Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece. Deep fried squid or calamari is a specialty of Mediterranean cuisine but it can be cooked in a variety of ways. It is best to cook it quickly, flash fried or deep fried, or alternatively cooked slowly in tomato sauce or braised in its own ink.

The Japanese also have a huge passion for squid and consume an estimated 700,000 tons per annum. I recently saw deep fried squid rings in batter on offer at a fish and chip shop in Stornoway so that tells its own story.

Baha’is celebrate Naw-Ruz...a Feast at the end of the Fast

Naw-Ruz is the Bahai new year and falls at the spring equinox. The celebration is often combined with a Feast as the sunset before NawRuz signals the end of a 19-day Fast.

A Feast of Vegetarian Curry & Rice

On Saturday 21st March, 6pm
At The Falité Centre, Bayhead, Stornoway
BahaTeachings.org
www. Baha.org.uk
Call/text 07798700443 Admission: FREE All are welcome!

The Fast of Naw-Ruz will be commemorated by the Bahais on Saturday 21st March at 6 pm, at The Falité Centre, Bayhead, Stornoway, with uplifting, soul inspiring spiritual programme, music and delicious vegetarian curry and rice with all the trimmings.

...This is the beginning of the spring. When the sun appears at the equinox it causes a movement in all living things. The mineral world is set in motion, plants begin to sprout, the desert is changed and tidal pools. When fully grown it can weigh up to six pounds and live up to eighteen years but in appearance is not overly attractive as it has two small fins hanging like floppy ears near its head, and a dorsal fin down its back.

In Hindu religion, individuals observe different kinds of fasts based on personal beliefs and local customs. Buddhists fast during times of intensive meditation, such as during a retreat; keeping away from eating animal products, but they do allowisking.

In Western Christianity, the Lent is a 40-day partial fast to commemorate the fast observed by Christ during his temptation in the desert. Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are nowadays emphasized by Western Christian denominations as the days of fasting within the Lent season.

Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan, rotating round the year according to the lunar calendar. It is abstaining from food and drink from dawn to dusk and promotes good behaviour by the believers, abstaining from any indecent speech and action.

In the Bahai Faith, the Fasting is seen as a period of spiritual preparation and regeneration for the new year ahead and abstaining from food and drink from sunrise to sunset between 2nd and 21st March.

"It is essentially a period of meditation and prayer, of spiritual recuperation, during which the believer must strive to make those necessary readjustments in his inner life, and to refresh and reinvigorate the spiritual forces latent in his soul. Its significance and purpose are, therefore, fundamentally spiritual in character. Fasting is symbolic, and a reminder of abstinence from selfish and carnal desires." Bahai’ Writings

You are kindly invited to a joyful Feast of Naw Ruz in Stornoway which will be celebrated on Saturday 21st March at 6 pm, at The Falité Centre, Bayhead, Stornoway. No admission or collection will be taken and everyone is welcome.
Helping women learn to save their lives

The Linda Norgrove Foundation, based on the Isle of Lewis, raises funds to help disadvantaged women and children living in Afghanistan, a country that has been at war for the last four decades.

The main focus of the Foundation is to sponsor young Afghan women to train to become doctors or to study law, economics, IT or business administration at university in that country.

However, they also give small grants to a variety of projects ranging from education for children to healthcare for mothers and kids, training for women, many of whom are widows, to help them earn a living, and environmental projects.

Most recently the Foundation has funded sewing classes for a group of women, a part of which includes production of cloth bags which will be sold on the market at a subsidised rate and so reduce plastic bag usage, a big problem in Kabul.

John Norgrove says, “In the scale of things, this might not seem important but this offers us a chance to help marginalised women obtain training and supplement their family income afterwards. Also, it helps the environment, change attitudes, and allows us to engage with a local charity run by politically active women.”

Women in Afghanistan are not encouraged to work outside of the home, to be in public without a male relative, or to have a political voice.

Lorna Norgrove adds, “There is a growing trend among the younger population for this to change and I feel that it is crucial for women to become educated, to have the right to earn a living and to voice their opinions if peace is to come to Afghanistan.

“Mostly we help clever young women from poor backgrounds study for a degree, but this project extends that help to those who haven’t managed to become educated.” For more information about the work of the Foundation see their website: www.lindanorgrovefoundation.org
Families gathering around the kitchen table to conduct science experiments might not be what immediately comes to mind when you think of homework, but homework has looked a bit different for pupils at Sgìol Bhàile a’ Mhànaich in Benbecula recently, and it’s all thanks to the school’s family learning programme.

Each year the school issues a Parental Engagement Calendar for parents and carers of pupils, providing an overview of ways in which they can get involved in their children’s learning – and this year’s Primary 4 “Science Bag” homework kits are a result of just that, as they were originally introduced after parental feedback and then trialled at a family workshop.

“We were looking to engage parents and carers in their children’s learning and make it more meaningful for them, so it’s not just a case of coming to parents evening and things like that. We created a parental engagement calendar, which provides them with an overview of ways in which they can be involved in their child’s learning,” explains Depute Head Teacher Kirsty Brennan.

“We’ve got an open-door policy where parents and carers are encouraged to come into the school and take part in family and parental workshops. This is complemented by a variety of different events throughout the year.”

First introduced in 2017, the family engagement calendar changes each year depending on the School Improvement Projects – this year the focus is on raising attainment in literacy and numeracy and Science Kits for homework are just one of many initiatives taking place during the 2019-2020 school year.

Other home learning activities which encourage parental engagement have included Maths Home Learning Kits and Topic Homework Grids, both at the end of each term pupils take home Criorranagan or “Snapshot” Jotters, which highlight the learning taking place in school and offer parents and other family members the opportunities to comment on the child’s work. Nursery children also have family books which are updated in partnership with parents and carers and shared on a regular basis.

Pupils are not only taking learning home, but parents are going to the school to “learn too.” February saw the first Digital Learning Parental Workshop, which gave an overview of resources that can be used to enhance learning, and the school offers a Cafe Drop-In session which helps parents and carers understand the school’s curriculum on a weekly basis, and focuses on different aspects of learning in another informal environment.

Over the course of the school year so far they’ve practised phrases in British Sign Language; learned about Emerging Literacy; and heard advice from a Speech and Language Therapist. Similar opportunities are available for nursery parents; the “Stay and Play” Sessions allow parents to sit in on nursery sessions and cover a range of themes that support a child’s learning and engagement.

Families whose first language is not English are also supported through the family engagement programme, with parents visiting the school to discuss resources that support both their child’s English language acquisition as well as their own. One parent who attended an English as an Additional Language (EAL) class reported that watching how the teaching and learning was carried out in the classroom not only helped them understand what their child was finding difficult, but allowed them to support their child at home in the same way, too.

Staff at Sgìol Bhàile a’ Mhànaich also work with the community and local organisations in their parental outreach. Ceoras, for example, have been providing community Gaelic classes alongside the school’s own Sradagan sessions after school, where parents of children who attend Sradagan (Gaelic Medium Education nursery) can come along and take part in Gaelic classes themselves.

Then there are all the regular school fundraisers and events, like Family Quiz Nights, Bingo, Fun Runs, and Sports Day. Digital newsletters and the school’s social media accounts also help keep parents, carers, and relatives in the community up to date with what’s happening within the school, but allowed them to support their child at home in the same way, too.

“It’s about engaging with the community and our families, asking what their needs are and what they’d like to see and be involved in with regards to school life,” says Kirsty. “Research has shown that when parents are involved in their children’s learning, it does have a positive effect on pupils’ learning.”

As for the science homework kits, they’ve gone down as well with parents as they have with pupils. In the words of one parent: “we all really enjoyed doing the science experiments as a family – they taught us all a thing or two!”

Family science learning at Balivanich School

By Katie Macleod

Dìleab: Àir a’ Chuain (Legacy: On the Ocean) is part of a larger project that emphasises culture, connection, and community in the Outer Hebrides. But one of the Spòil Lionacleit performances during the recent Dìleab concert at Celtic Connections in January had more than a community connection – it had a direct family link, too.

Sixth year pupil Marion MacCorquodale performed the local Uist song Turas san Lochmor, which was written in 1950 by Peter Morrison, the grandfather of local Grimsay musician Padruig MacLeod, who was acting as MC for the night. Floraidh Gray on bass guitar; Calum Macmillan of the Year award and is a member of the Beinn Dubh Ceilidh Band, explains that he first became involved with Dìleab at Sgoil Lionacleit in July last year. “I was approached...about getting involved with a new arrangement of Cearcall a’ Chuain with pupils from Sgoil Lionacleit. I jumped at it – it was a great idea. It was a delight for me to get back into my old school and to work with the talented young musicians who are there at the moment, some of whom I knew already, but others I didn’t. They were all very helpful, active group, and they all learnt the music really well.”

For Cearcall a’ Chuain, Marion MacCorquodale was singing alongside Ruairið Gray, with fellow pupils Anna Maclean on clarsach; Alana Brown on whistle; Joanna Macdonald on fiddle; Floraidh Gray on bass guitar; Calum Macmillan on banjo; Ryan Macintyre on bauzouki; Lee Macdougall on accordion; and Molly Perkins and Abby MacPherson on percussion.

“It’s a tricky task to arrange a song that’s so well known, and ones such as Cearcall a’ Chuain, where it’s not just the verses that are known, but so many folks (including all the Gaelic choirs) know and perform the introductions and interludes too,” says Padruig. “I wanted to try and give it a new lift, and when working with the pupils, I didn’t want it to be slow and drawn out – I wanted it to have more motion than is usually in the song.”

“One of the groups I worked with was the Sgoil Lionacleit Sea Medley, which saw traditional sea-related songs arranged for solo voices, choirs, and strings. The Glasgow concert was the most recent incarnation of Dìleab, the Comhairle’s multi-generational bilingual project, which covers a programme of work undertaken by the young people of the islands and local musicians, all designed to draw on language, history, and culture as a bridge between generations.

“It was a night of celebrating the islands’ rich connection with the waters which surround them, and the talents of the islands’ young people. As Rhona says, “the whole trip was a fantastic opportunity for the pupils involved to take part in such a world class festival and they all had a great time.”

Dìleab: Àir a’ Chuain was watched live online by 3000 people and has now been viewed by more than 50,000 in 22 countries, ranging from Australia to Brazil.

While there is more to come from Dìleab in 2020 and beyond, for those who missed the event or the live stream online, the edited playlist of the performance is now available to listen to or watch on the “Dìleab Eilean Siar” YouTube channel.
Building our communities

Daliburgh School...outdoor learning from crofts to canoes!

By Katie Macleod

From crofting to kayaking, the pupils at Daliburgh School in South Uist have been making the most of their island environment to supplement their classroom learning experience. “In order to promote resilience and confidence in our pupils, as well as helping them to improve their skills and develop their own ability to manage risk, we have focused on using our natural environment to enhance our learning environment,” explains Head Teacher Jane MacIntyre.

For the past two years, the outdoor learning programme has involved a variety of learning sessions both on land and on water. 14 kayaks, two Canadian canoes, camping equipment, and an “outdoor classroom” - as well as all the necessary safety equipment - were purchased using over £10,000 of funds raised from Awards for All, part of the National Lottery Fund, and local bodies such as the Community Council and local councillors. “Through various outdoor sessions, our pupils could be seen to gain confidence, and by the end of their kayaking block last year, all the P7s were able to demonstrate how to capsize confidently,” says Jane.

Also part of the outdoor learning experience was the inter-house triathlon held in June 2019, which saw pupils from Primary 1 to 7 take part in a competition which covered racing on the cross-country track, paddling in kayaks, and cycling on school bikes. The triathlon was such a success that this year, Primary 7 pupils from other Uist schools will be invited to join in the fun at a transition event that will include camping, climbing, mountain biking, kayaking, and another inter-house triathlon.

And it’s not just outdoor sporting events the pupils are involved in; they’re learning the importance of looking after and cultivating the land, too. “We are encouraging pupils to make links between their community, their culture, and the curriculum in a way that is relevant to their lives,” explains Jane. Over the past few months, this has included community activities such as local beach clean-ups; outdoor learning visits to different environments, like beaches, forests, and hills; and learning about crofting and growing local produce. Staff from TAGSA Uibhist have also worked with the school to improve and develop the outdoor growing area.

“The children have been learning about the links between sustainability, crofting, and local produce through the work and development of our Crofting Committee, which is made up of pupils from P4-P7, and our Gardening Masterclass (one of the activities offered on a Friday afternoon). Through this, pupils have been cultivating and harvesting their own produce, some of which was turned into chutneys and sold at our Christmas Fayre,” says Jane. The pupils are also responsible for the school’s hens, and the school Crofting Committee is working with local crofters to identify which other animals could be cared for on the school premises in the future.

Pupils are also going to be learning how to develop the school grounds to provide more opportunities for imaginative play, creativity, and problem-solving activities, and a “wild area” is already in development. This learning was enhanced by a training session given as part of the February in-service by Learning Through Landscapes, a UK-based charity dedicated to enhancing outdoor learning and play for children. The charity visited the school the Local Schools Nature Grant, which included £500 worth of outdoor equipment in addition to the training session.

Outdoor learning of the kind that is taking place at Daliburgh School is a key component of the national curriculum; the Curriculum for Excellence states that “integrating learning and outdoor experiences, whether through play in the immediate grounds or adventures further afield, provides relevance and depth to the curriculum in ways that are difficult to achieve indoors.”

And as Jane explains, Daliburgh School is putting this ethos into practice by “enhancing the pupils’ learning experiences by taking advantage of the benefits that island life gives us: our beautiful environment, close community, and rich culture and heritage.”

Stickleback science work at Sgoil Uibhist a Tuath

By Katie Macleod

There’s a big question currently on pupils’ minds at Sgoil Uibhist a Tuath in North Uist: why are the local stickleback fish losing their spines? It’s an investigation that’s seen the school recently receive a grant of £24,541 from the prestigious Royal Society, the world’s oldest independent scientific academy, for equipment to aid them in their research.

Dr Carl Smith, Reader in Natural History at the University of St Andrews, has spent a decade researching why the stickleback fish population in North Uist are completely losing their distinctive bony armour of spines and plates.

Since October 2019, he’s been the STEM Partner for Sgoil Uibhist a Tuath, with pupils from Primary 1-7 helping him with his research on the island and increasing their own knowledge of natural history and science terminology along the way.

“This is real research that is happening at scientific level, and we’re involving our children in looking at the types of things that these scientists are actually examining,” explains Head Teacher Sarah Jane MacSween.

In terms of science education, the goal is to introduce pupils to ideas about evolution, natural selection, and how the environment shapes these processes, particularly in relation to their local surroundings. And the pupils are not only taking part in scientific activities – such as formulating hypotheses about the fish, collecting samples and data, making observations, and drawing conclusions – but learning the terminology behind the activities, too.

“Although the vocabulary is very extensive, the students are using that kind of terminology now within science, because of the input that we’ve had from Dr Smith. He works from P1-P7 and he can come right down to their level, but he doesn’t dilute the language for them, he still gives them all the scientific terminology,” says Sarah Jane.

Dr Smith made an initial visit to Sgoil Uibhist a Tuath in November 2018 and discussed the topic of stickleback evolution with teachers, met with pupils, and visited a local loch with them. Pupils’ involvement in the research then began in October 2019, when Dr Carl Smith first visited the school to introduce them to the project. As well as familiarising them with the scientific ideas behind the project, he accompanied staff and students on a visit to a local loch to collect sticklebacks, and helped the pupils make entries in their new field notebooks – just as real scientists would.

In April, Dr Smith will be returning to the island to continue his research and update the pupils. The funding from the Royal Society is going towards a new aquarium which will house sticklebacks and other local fish species. Pupils will be able to monitor their behaviour and any visitors to the school can see examples of the learning that’s been taking place.

Dr Smith will return again in June to help the pupils investigate and analyse their findings, and the project is due to continue into the next school year, with pupils presenting their findings to Dr Smith and their peers from Sgoil Bhaile a’ Mhanach in September. To cap it all off, they’ll attend a prize giving for the best scientific reports, drawings, presentations, and notebooks.

The science project has been such a success that pupils are bringing their learning home: they’re pointing out sticklebacks in local lochs to family members, and some are even developing ambitions to one day become scientists themselves. “There are now about six of children who would like to be scientists because they’ve been working alongside Dr Smith, doing the fieldwork that he would be doing with his students, and with other professors from around the world,” says Sarah Jane of the impact of the project.

The calibre of the project has also been recognised not just by the grant from the Royal Society, but also in the positive feedback they offer the school; it was described as a “very impressive” investigation, one that is unique “whilst still fulfilling scientific rigour.” The judges commented that the pupils’ search for answers to the evolution of the sticklebacks “will stimulate their thinking and develop scientific skills for all pupils as they move up the primary school and which can be utilised in secondary education.”

“In terms of developing the young workforce, it’s really been at the chalk face in terms of the work that’s been done,” says Sarah Jane. “We’re eternally grateful to Dr Smith for allowing our children the opportunity to get that experience. It’s an exciting project that will have a lasting effect on all who participate and will give them a greater understanding of what it means to be an islander, living in a unique environment.”
Roots of Empathy...what it is like to be as little children

By Katie Macleod

What can a baby teach us about empathy?

For local school pupils taking part in the Roots of Empathy programme, the answer is everything from empathy to emotional resilience and even responsible citizenship.

Roots of Empathy – which originated in Canada in 1996 – works by taking a volunteer or “teacher” baby and their parent into a primary classroom for nine visits throughout the school year. A trained instructor then leads the sessions, which help pupils learn to label the baby’s emotions and bond with the child through playing, singing, and reading – all with the ultimate goal of making the pupils more empathetic, emotionally literate, and less likely to engage in bullying.

Since it was first introduced in Scotland in North Lanarkshire by Action for Children in 2010, the programme has expanded to every local authority in Scotland, with Uist and Benbecula receiving their first programme in 2011. Michelle Macrury, Social Work Assistant for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar’s Education and Children’s Services and a trained Roots of Empathy Instructor, has so far delivered nine different programmes in different island schools, and is currently delivering Roots of Empathy to the Primary 1-3 class at Iochdar School in South Uist.

“The children see how the baby has developed, they see all the milestones and developmental stages, and they become so attached to him,” says Michelle. She explains that there are nine themes in each programme, beginning with “Meeting the Baby” and going on to cover topics such as “Caring and Planning,” “Emotions,” and “Communication.”

Three separate school sessions – a pre-family session, a family session with the parent and baby, and a post-family session – then take place for each theme, with the post-family session reinforcing the teachings around feelings and empathy.

Roots of Empathy also brings in skills from other areas of pupils’ education, including maths skills while working out the weight of the baby; literacy skills while reading stories about communicating; and art skills as pupils draw and paint to express their own feelings. “I’ll read stories as parts of the programme, and the children do quite a bit of artwork, drawing pictures of their feelings. It might be ‘How I felt when my first tooth came out’,” explains Michelle. On top of developing the ability to understand their own feelings and those of others, Roots of Empathy also aims to prepare pupils for responsible citizenship and parenting in the future.

“We were delighted when our P1-4 GLE children were invited to participate in the Roots of Empathy programme last session,” says Sarah Jane Macmureen, Head Teacher at Sinag Uibhist a Tuath. “I think this programme would provide an ideal context for developing vocabulary in the Gaelic Medium Education early years setting and hope to introduce this next year.”

“Once every three weeks, our neighbour, baby Moses MacIsaac and his mother, Marion MacIsaac, came to visit our school and worked with our children and class teacher, Mrs Ellwood, in their classroom. Michelle Macrury lead the sessions as our children observed the signs of how baby Moses was feeling. There were nine baby visits lasting 40 minutes per session, and our children engaged and interacted very positively during all the sessions.”

More than 500,000 children around the world have taken part in the programme since it began, and in 2013 Scotland was the first country to roll Roots of Empathy out to every council area, thanks to £1.2 million in Scottish Government funding. In the next school session, Roots of Empathy will also be delivered locally entirely in Gaelic, when Michelle’s colleague Anne Marie Johnstone completes the Roots of Empathy training in Glasgow. As Michelle says, “the schools have enjoyed it and thought that it has been very beneficial to the pupils,” and the addition of Gaelic sessions will expand its reach.

After nearly a decade of the programme, Roots of Empathy is starting to come full circle in the islands, and the bonds with the baby “teachers” remain long past the sessions have ended. Jenna Macdonald, who was herself a Roots of Empathy baby in Stornoway, is now a pupil in Iochdar School, learning to look after the current volunteer baby, Seonaidh MacRury, who is visiting the school with his mother Karen Currie.

“We were very excited about welcoming Moses and his mother Marion and the programme was a great success,” says Sarah Jane of Sinag Uibhist a Tuath’s experience with Roots of Empathy. “Our children and school community now have a very positive relationship with Moses’ family, and we look forward to welcoming Moses as pupil in four years’ time!”

Leabhradh dà-chùmnanach de dhualban-camara sònraichte an dhubh ’s an geal de cheàrnadh an t-soisgeil – Seòras ann an Canada agus na Stàitean Aonaich, agus Dòmhnall ann an Loch Carrann agus Crosbost.

NÁDAR DE
Some Kind Of

Peter MacKay

“S’e leabhar bàrdachd a tha seo a tha a’ putadh air crochan ’or’dubh nàdarra chuisearn, agus a’ sugradadh mar a bhios sinn a’ cur an cèilidh eòlais, cuimhne agus feasail-dhà ann ann am fasan.

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Proseach Fhior Àite

Challadh reat de chèilidhean co-chomhairleachd na Gàidhealtachd san Eileanan na Hùrraidh, a' toirt cothruithe eile do choimhearsnachdaidh pàirt a ghabhail ann an leasachadh Proseach an Fhior Àite (The Great Place project).

Tha an t-àiteanan à co-threabhachadh na h-Eileanan le oifigeachd an t-samhradh budhail annsan sa Ghàidhlig le tuath alainn, agus tha an t-àitean an t-samhradh a' stiùireadh a' stiùireadh a' stiùireadh. Tha a' phròiseact air a mhaoineachadh le Maoin air a' stiùireadh bho astar le buidheann stiùiridh Eilean (HIE). Turasachd Innse Gall, An Lanntair, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar a’ tabhann nn an co-bhonn le Bòrd na Gàidhlig, tha a’ stiùireadh le Comhairle nan Eilean Siar le com-air feadh nan eilean.”

Sgeama, an lìon thu a-steach am foirm iarrtais dh’oileanaich nach robh air sgeama ron seo. Tha a’ phròiseact an Fhìor-Àite (Great Place Project) a bhàil mar bhàis in the application form available from each partner organisation. The project is funded 

The purpose of the Proseach an Fhìor Àite (Great Place Project) is to develop for the Outer Hebrides a Place based Heritage Strategy with a ten year vision and an accompanying Action Plan. Central to the work is identifying strategic approaches to support and deliver appropriate heritage-led economic development, infrastructure, requirements and priorities.

The ‘ceilidhs’ saw members of the community contribute ideas and opinions to the project’s strategy and action plan, while enjoying the talents of local musicians and singers. The team delivering the ceilidhs included Great Place Project manager, Catherine MacLean and Highlands and Islands-based consultancy, StrategyStory, which has an office base in Stornoway and has been co-founded by Professor of Strategy Donald MacLean and former BBC Senior Producer, Kate Hooper.

Kennedy MacLeod, Chairperson of Harris Development, who attended and introduced the ceilidhs to the Hotel Hebrides, in Tarbert, Harris, said: “What a fantastic idea – a consultation that is also a ceilidh! So good to have such a wide representation and to hear all the talking at the various stations. Actually asking people for their views and getting them to shape the discussion – such a refreshing approach… and some beautiful singing and box playing as well! An enjoyable evening with a productive outcome.”

Catherine Maclean, Great Place Project Manager at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, said: “Heritage is inherent in all that we do as islanders. On every island and in each community there is a wealth of knowledge, talent and cultural richness – each area and community has its own distinct story to tell – this came through loud and clear in our consultation throughout the different communities across the islands. What is truly impressive is the amount of passion and commitment of individuals in the communities towards the work of preserving and sharing our cultural heritage. Traveling through the islands – even in January – has been really important to do as it meant that we were able to experience and learn more about what is happening in each area. We had good engagement across the islands and feel we have a much deeper understanding of the breadth, scope of work, aspirations and potential held within our heritage across the islands.”

The two-year project is led by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and partners include Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Outer Hebrides Heritage Forum, Scottish Natural Heritage, Outer Hebrides Tourism, An Lanntair, Taigh Chearsabhagh, Urras Nan Tursachan and Historic Environment Scotland, the project is overseen by a steering group with representatives from each partner organisation. The project is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.
Dè th’ ann an LUACH?

’S e fèis ùr a th’ ann an LUACH a bhios a b’ deanaidh fèil aig gach ri Gàidhlig.

IOMADH

Maclennan Trio and support from Còisir Ghàidhlig Chàrlabhaigh.

in the community by Dr Alasdair Whyte, followed by a ceilidh with the Graham

Tiocaidean £5 aig an doras. BYOB.

le taic bho Chòisir Ghàidhlig Chàrlabhaigh. Tha fhios gum faigh sinn òran no dhà

Thèid LUACH fhosgladh le hòro-gheallaidh mhòr ann an Talla Chàrlabhaigh. Bheir

Cèilidh Fosglaidh LUACH

bodies and community groups.

The festival is organised in cooperation between a number of public

participate in LUACH 2021.

LUACH is a new festival, celebrating all things Gaelic in Gaelic.

Tha Alasdair gu bhith fosgladh LUACH le òraid mu chudromachd na Gàidhlig sa

choihearnaich, cho math ri bhith an sàs ann an dòlar thachartasan eile den fhais.

Alasdair Whyte, Gaol Ambassador for 2019-20, will be opening LUACH with a

lecture about the importance of Gaelic in the community as well as being involved in other events.

Obair na Mònadh

Bidh an tachartas seo stèidhte air seanchas is beul-

barrachd ionnsachadh mu dè buileach a tha an luib obair na mònadh.

Tascadh: Eòs a’ Mhuilinn, Findballan

13:00-15:00

Oidhche nan Sgeulachdan Taisbeanadh Còcaireachd

Tnull & 4mh

Feumair clàradh ro làimh tron làrach-lìn aca.

Leigh na Seinn le Linda

Bàid seisearan Leigh na Seinn a’ Deas a toirt cothrom dha chinneag air an sàs aoch Gabhlaigh agus a chumail an tobhas a dhèanamh pàinteach ann an clàrail in Àrd-choimheasraich, am reasaimh a chur air an clàrail a cheumachd gach an t-Òib.

To aithris na sgìre. A bharrachd air na comasan ciùil aige, rinn e ceum dotaireachd ann an ainmean-

ß eil cosgais ann agus bidh teatha, cofaidh is cabadaich ri dhaoine coinneachaidh is cabadaich ri dhaoine coinneachaidh.

Chomunn Eachdraidh Sgìre a’ Bhac

thathar ag amas air cloinn nan Trath-bhliadhneachan.

An t-Òib Muir beudachadh còmhla tro dhaoine coinneachaidh a’ dhaoine coinneachaidh laonachd.

A bharrachd air na comasan ciùil aige, rinn e ceum dotaireachd ann an ainmean-

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Now that we have officially left Europe and entered the transition phase it is for our two governments, UK and Scottish, to put in place provision for all eventualities arising from this separation.

The big one for Scottish agriculture and crofting is of course resilience of crofting, post-Brexit. I was thinking about how not being in Europe will affect the islands. A huge one will be the drying up of European structural funding. Much of our infrastructure, especially on the islands, has come from European funding. Will the UK government see islands as a priority and maintain structural funds – especially when most of the UK’s islands are not in the field of vision of Westminster?

But closer to crofting, there is the reliance on ferries. Let’s just hypothesise for a bit. Some ferries have European crew members. Perhaps our not being in Europe will not effect this if there are work-force agreements that are attractive to Europeans to stay with UK companies. But if not then we have a serious problem, for, as skilled workers. Most of the skilled abattoir workforce are Europeans, including many vets. The central theme here seems to be whether we have access to a skilled work-force for ferry crews, marine engineers, abattoir workers and vets. We certainly don’t have enough of our own and there is an assumption that our leaving Europe will force many skilled Europeans who work here now to leave. Will they?

A critical lifeline is animal winter feed which comes in by ferry, critical in that there is a very short window in which to deal with hungry livestock when the feed has run out. What does a crofter do if there is no feed for the livestock? Then there is getting the grown livestock off the islands for sale and slaughter and, again, what if you cannot?

In the past this system was more resilient due to local abattoirs that could relieve the pressure of livestock bottlenecks, but local abattoirs are a rarity now, the model adopted by government having been large-scale centralised abattoirs. We have long promoted the need for local abattoirs to facilitate the production of local meat for direct sale of meat with a clear origin and ‘provenance’. Now there is even more need for local abattoirs to increase the resilience of the livestock chain. And whether local small-scale abattoirs or large-scale centralised abattoirs, both need skilled workers. Most of the skilled abattoir workforce are Europeans, including many vets.

By Patrick Krause

EVENTS focus on Crofting

Local abattoirs are key to resilience of crofting, post-Brexit

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All profits benefit our community in Northmaine, Shetland.
Picture © Ronnie Robertson
Lambing is the most important time of the shepherd’s year. The sheep’s too. So, it’s important to be prepared. Preparations include managing and feeding the sheep properly, getting the lambing facilities ready, and gathering necessary supplies.

Scanning took place mid-February on the island and by all accounts a fair lambing percentage was achieved by many, with a lot of ewes scanning twins and a greater number of triplets. All very exciting but if you are not prepared for multiples and your ewes are not fed adequately then lambing can often turn in to a very stressful period.

Preparation of the ewes

Feeding and management of ewes during the late gestation can determine success of the lambing season and sheep enterprise.

Approximately 70 percent of foetal growth occurs during the last 4 to 6 weeks of pregnancy. Most of the ewe’s sudden growth is occurring during this period. Rumen volume is restricted by the unborn lambs and the ewes appetite drops by approximately 30%. The energy concentration of the diet therefore needs to be increased as lambing approaches. The primary reason is the need for increased feed, primarily a more nutrient-dense diet.

Extra nutrition will prevent the occurrence of pregnancy toxaemia ketosis. It will ensure the birth of strong, healthy lambs that aren’t too big and aren’t too small. Birth weight is highly correlated to lamb performance at grass.

The energy concentration of the diet therefore needs to be increased as lambing approaches. The primary reason is the need for increased feed, primarily a more nutrient-dense diet.

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Feeding in late pregnancy

Ewe condition should be carefully monitored and handled should be restricted in the latter stages of pregnancy. As scanning takes place in the majority of areas in February, using this activity to also check ewe condition, litter size and age will allow you to gauge the nutritional requirements for the expected level of production.

Correct ewe feeding throughout pregnancy has a huge influence on the lamb’s viability at birth. Inadequate nutrition may result in conditions such as pregnancy toxaemia and sudden changes in diet should be avoided particularly in the final 3 weeks. Although most problems relate to thin ewes, over fat ewes provide similar difficulties. Fat ewes are more prone to pregnancy toxaemia and prolapses of the uterus. Overfeeding can result in oversized foetuses that the female cannot deliver on her own.

Remember it costs extra money to make ewes fat. Local vets have accounts a fair lambing percentage was achieved by many, with a lot of ewes scanning twins and a greater number of triplets. All very exciting but if you are not prepared for multiples and your ewes are not fed adequately then lambing can often turn in to a very stressful period.

The following practical points can help reduce dietary problems:-

- Always have sufficient trough room for concentrates so that all animals can feed at the same time and avoid bullying.
- Where home mixes are used replacing 20% of the barley with sugar beet pulp makes diets less likely to cause acidosis.
- When supplementing low quality diets with home mixes make at least 30% of the diet a concentrate of high quality fibre type e.g. sugar beet pulp, distillery by-products
- Ensure animals receive adequate supplementary minerals and vitamins
- Even with the amount of rain we have had ensure the animals have access to clean water

Vaccinations and parasite control

Pregnant ewes should be vaccinated for clostridial 4 to 6 weeks prior to lambing. Vaccinated females will pass antibodies in their colostrum to their newborn lambs. Ewes that have never been vaccinated or whose vaccination status is unknown will require two vaccinations during late gestation, 4 weeks apart. Ewes should not be vaccinated within two weeks of lambing. This is not enough time to get antibodies in the colostrum.

Pregnant and lactating ewes suffer a temporary loss in immunity to intestinal worms as a result of the hormonal changes that are occurring around the time of lambing. It is the primary source of parasite infection for the newborn lamb crop whose immune systems are still naive. De-worming with an effective anthelmintic will help the ewe expel the worms and reduce the exposure of newborn lambs to infective worm larvae.

Lambing supplies

It is important to be prepared and a range, but not exhaustive list, of useful supplies to have in the barn or lambing box may be: OB Lubricant, nylon rope or snare, heat lamp or warming box, colostrum supplement, lamb milk replacer, calcium, docking and castrating equipment.

This may all seem daunting but this March SAC are running a Farm Advisory Event at the Marybank Mission House on Friday 6 from 10am-3pm covering basic ewe nutrition, animal health issues to be aware of and lambing skills. A compact course with a practical session on handling stock is also part of the course. It’s FREE and a light lunch is provided. Either go to www.fas.scot and click on the calendar date and book your place or alternatively phone Stornoway SAC on 701103.

Iain M Macmillan
Agricultural consultant
SRUC, Stornoway

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Take the stress out of lambing
By Roz Macaskill

Raising awareness of climate change, restoring peatlands and celebrating the local community – those are just some of the past and ongoing projects orchestrated by Urras Oighreachd Chàrlabhaigh (Carloway Estate Trust).

From Our Land and Sea

Last August saw the Trust celebrating four years of community ownership with an event called From Our Land and Sea.

Development Officer, Sally Reynolds, explains: “The idea was to celebrate all that comes from our land and sea in one big event. We had a number of demonstrations including a young local butcher cutting up a wedder from a croft on the estate and a well-known, local chef who baked sourdough bread.

There were samples available from all the demonstrations and all the food served on the day was produced on the estate. This included honey, eggs, local lobsters, food from the Scottish Salmon Company and Stornoway Smokehouse, as well as delicious local beef burgers, made by Sandy Granville. We had displays including soap, tweed, alpaca wool, fruit, vegetables and herbs all from the estate area.

“Our estate produces an unbelievable amount of produce across its 11,500 acres! It was fantastic to see local businesses connected to the land and sea with both polycrubs and wild swimming represented.”

The event also featured the work of a local photographer, artist and jewellery-maker, all inspired by the surrounding sea and landscapes. Sally enthuses: “Over 100 people came to just enjoy an evening together and celebrate what we have here. The event was open to everyone, so we also had a couple of tourists join us and they loved it!”

River development

The estate runs from Callanish to the Carloway bridge and includes over 200 crofts and a salmon river.

The river is the subject of an ongoing development project. Sally reveals: “We have seen a reduction in fish stock over the last couple of years and we want to know if that’s a national pattern or something we can change.

“We have someone coming out to assess the health of the river and advise us on what we can do. We are also looking into the possibility of a platform to allow youngsters or those with reduced mobility access to the river.”

Carloway Broch

Another main project involves the Carloway Broch. “We have had a feasibility study carried out on how the broch works for the community,” explains Sally. “We want to see what improvements can be made to ensure a better visitor experience and protect the broch and our heritage for the future.

“We own the structure but not the visitor centre or the car park, so we are working in partnership with the current owners to evaluate the next steps.

“There will be car park improvements carried out this summer which should help with the flow of traffic and parking congestion. We are working with Historic Scotland to ensure the community are kept up to date on the current remedial works required for the Broch.”

A meeting has been scheduled for the end of March to provide an update to the community on the remedial work and its impact.

Peatland ACTION project

The Trust also collaborates on the Peatland ACTION project, which aims to restore damaged peatlands in Scotland. Funded by the Scottish Natural Heritage, the project sees Benjamin Inglis-Grant working on peatland restoration work throughout the Outer Hebrides.

“This is an example of an external agency looking for us to host the project, and we really see the benefits of Benjamin being based here and able to advise on peatland restoration,” comments Sally.

“In addition, we have an energy efficiency project where we go out into the community and give advice on ways they can save energy and make themselves more sustainable long-term. It’s been really hands-on and offered practical improvement for people.

“The Trust works very hard to have a door-always-open policy for anyone to contact us at any time. We are a sounding-board for the community to tell us what they would like to see happen. We work with a lot of other groups in our active community and we are all here to add strength to the area.”

The Trust celebrated all that comes from our land and sea with an event called From Our Land and Sea last August. Photograph courtesy of Iain Macarthur

Carloway Estate Trust loves a Friday Photo! Every Friday a photo from/connected to the estate is posted on the website https://www.carlowayestatetrust.co.uk. This is one taken by Chair Kenneth J Maclennan of the bridge built by young people as part of their John Muir Award. It is on the Bonnet Laird Walk – which is a moorland walk from Callanish to Carloway and well worth trying in the summer.
465 island families get baby boxes

A total of 465 families in the Western Isles have benefitted from a Baby Box, the latest figures show.

Na h-Eileanan an Iar SNP MSP Alasdair Allan has hailed the success of the Scottish Government Baby Box scheme.

Each box contains a selection of clothes, as well as everyday must-haves, like a bath towel, a travel changing mat, muslin cloth squares, a bib, a digital thermometer, and books.

The box now also includes a reusable nappy voucher, which dozens of families in the Western Isles have taken advantage of.

Alasdair Allan MSP commented: “Every child, regardless of their circumstances, should get the best start in life.”

“At the heart of the Baby Box is a message about tackling inequality, improving health and supporting new parents - which is why I’m delighted to see that 465 have been sent to families across the islands.”

NHS Western Isles was delighted to secure sponsorship again from Loganair as part of its Don’t infect. Protect. staff influenza vaccination campaign.

With any strain of influenza being dangerous for people who are more vulnerable, specifically those aged 65 and over, pregnant women and those with a serious health condition such as diabetes or heart disease, NHS Western Isles was keen for all its healthcare staff (particularly frontline staff) to take up the offer of the free influenza vaccination this winter. When NHS staff take the free vaccination, they not only help protect themselves and their families and friends, but they help protect patients and service users too.

Influenza is more than a bad cold and can make people very unwell. It’s highly infectious and service users too.

Influenza is more than a bad cold and can make people very unwell. It’s highly infectious and can hit anyone. In the most serious cases, influenza can bring on pneumonia, or other serious infections which can, in extreme cases, result in death.

In order to help further encourage NHS Western Isles staff to receive their influenza vaccination, Loganair provided two return air flights and the lucky member of staff who won the flights, which can be taken from any airport in the Outer Hebrides to a Scottish mainland airport, was Laura MacLeod, NHS Western Isles Healthy Weight Practitioner and Hannah Campbell, Loganair Marketing Assistant.

Dr Maggie Watts, NHS Western Isles Director of Public Health, said: “Loganair is once again supporting the NHS Western Isles’ policy for the prevention of transmission of influenza, we want to ensure those who are most vulnerable to influenza.

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Laura said: “I’m so pleased to have won these flights and will be using them to take a friend who has had a very difficult time away for a well deserved break. I chose to have my free flu vaccination as I have seen how dangerous the flu virus can be. A close friend once became critically ill with flu, she was flown to Glasgow and was in intensive care for several days. Thankfully, she recovered, but in my own role I meet patients and members of the public regularly, many are vulnerable with various health conditions, so anything I can do to reduce spreading the risk of flu, I’m happy to do.”

NHS Western Isles Director of Public Health, Dr Maggie Watts, said: “As part of NHS Western Isles’ policy for the prevention of transmission of infections including influenza, we want to ensure those in our care are safe and protected, especially those who are most vulnerable to influenza. Healthcare workers are more likely to be exposed to the influenza virus. The influenza vaccine is the safest and most effective way to protect our staff and those around them.”

Hannah Campbell, Loganair’s Marketing Assistant, said: “Loganair is once again supporting a very important campaign, Don’t infect. Protect. and we are pleased to assist NHS Western Isles in giving people better access to healthcare services. Congratulations to Laura. We are looking forward to welcoming her and her friend onboard their Loganair flights.”

For further information about influenza and the influenza vaccination, please visit www.nhsinform.scot
**SIAN Wed 11 Mar, 8pm £12/£10**

SIAN, meaning ‘storm’ or ‘the elements’, have been making their harmonious mark on the Scottish traditional music scene since 2016. And singers Ceilidh Lillid, Eilidh Cormack, and Ellen MacDonal bring their new works to An Lanntair to kick off our month-long Gaelic arts fest Mìos na Gàidhlig (11th Mar-11th Apr).

**BENSIDER Sat 14 Mar, 8pm £10**

Bensider was originally intended to be a solo project by singer/songwriter Graham Maciver, but developed into a collective of talented musicians who provide an exhilarating backdrop to Graham’s songs. Much of Graham’s material is inspired by his upbringing in Benside, Isle of Lewis – hence Bensider!

**Sùil air Am Màrt March at a glance...**

**Shona Maclellan, Dualchas na Mara Project Officer, spoke to P2-4 classes about the Herring Girls.**

**P5-7 Classes thoroughly enjoyed ‘Lifeboat’ performance from the National Theatre of Scotland.**

Gillian Pettigrew - Group Community Engagement Coordinator - McLaughlin & Harvey Construction worked on STEM activities with P4-7 classes.
The Alzheimers Western Isles group received a funding boost of £750 in February from the Western Isles Lottery to enhance their current services across the West Side area of Lewis.

Marion MacInnes, who heads the local branch said: “We have various activities in the area including the Dementia Café in Borve, drop-in information sessions at Carloway Day Centre and our Ceiling@Home project which covers 1-1 therapeutic activity at home for people living with dementia in advanced stages. Our Dementia advisor also makes regular home visits in the area.”

An application was submitted to the local Lottery for £750 to purchase a new 12.9-inch iPad Pro Wi-Fi and a number of personal headset phones. The equipment would be used to support activities by accessing information for people living with dementia and their carers.

Marion MacInnes welcomed the funding and said: “We very much appreciate the support of the Western Isles Lottery to purchase this equipment which will make a huge difference.”

£750 boost to Alzheimer group

Taigh Dhonnhchaidh celebrated recently after receiving a £800 boost from Western Isles Lottery. The funds will be used to purchase new instruments to expand the range on offer to young people in the area.

Taigh Dhonnhchaidh once belonged to Duncan ‘Major’ Morrison who taught music across the Isles and bequeathed his home to Ness Historical Society in 1991. Each Easter, Féis Taigh Dhonnhchaidh, a Gaelic Music and Cultural Festival, offers tuition in a multitude of instruments for a week during the Easter holidays as well as Gaelic singing, drama and art. In addition, various ceilidhs, storytelling evenings and other community events are held throughout the year and it is also the base for the Ness Melodeon Band.

Mary Dufl, Secretary of Taigh Dhonnhchaidh, said: “We are delighted and grateful to receive this funding from Western Isles Lottery. The funds will enable us to update our musical equipment and help us to provide even more opportunities for our young people. Having a facility like this, which relies entirely on volunteers, is essential that we gain funding throughout the year.”

PLANNING APPLICATIONS DURING FEBRUARY 2020

The following planning applications are pending consideration by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. All information and accompanying documents are publicly available on the CnES website.

LEWIS

New agricultural building, Achmore

Mrs K. Macleod of 17 Swordale, Point, has applied for planning permission to build an agricultural building at 168 Achmore. The building is to be 1.4 metres long, 5 metres high and 9 metres wide.

House extension, Ness

Innes Groves of 121A Cross, Skigersta Road, Ness has applied for planning permission to alter and extend the house at 121A Cross, Skigersta Road, Ness.

Site steel container

Derek Macleod of 36 Borve has applied for planning permission to site a steel container at 36 Frewenny, Borve. The container is to be 6.1 metres long, 2.43 metres deep and 2.59 metres tall and is to be used for agricultural purposes.

New agricultural building, Uig

Derek Scanlan of 5 Mangerra, Uig, has applied for planning permission to commence farm-related building works at 5 Mangerra, Uig. The building is to be 13.7 metres long, 9.1 metres wide and 4.8 metres tall.

New house, Carloway

Donna Kumar of 7 William Childerhouse Way, Norwich, has applied for planning permission to build a house at 30 Greatnagareen, Carloway. Work is to include creating a new access.

74 new houses, Newmarket

Hebridean Housing Partnership has applied for planning permission to erect 74 houses in Blackwater, Newmarket. Work will include creating associated parking and accesses and the installation of air source heat pumps and other associated infrastructure.

Change of use of building, Stornoway

Engebost Ltd has applied for planning permission to change the use of the commercial garage at Garage 26, Inaclete Road, to a vocational training workshop.

Temporary retention of accommodation unit, Uig

Jim Halbert of 10A Ardruil has applied for planning permission to temporarily retain the accommodation unit at 10A Ardruil for the duration of the house build.

New house, Uig

Tom Hill of 4 Rosedale Terrace, Newtoltte, Houghton-Le-Spring, Sunderland, England, has applied for planning permission to erect a house and create an access at 4A Crowlista, Uig. The house is to consist of an open-plan kitchen/dining/living area, two bedrooms and a bathroom. Work is to include creating a new access and parking suitable for two cars.

Demolition and erection of extension, Carloway

Neal Ingram of 15 Knock, Carloway, has applied for planning permission to demolish the existing single-storey rear extension at 15 Knock, Carloway, and erect a 1.5-storey extension.

Storage building for community use, Point

Point Agricultural Society has applied for planning permission to build a storage building in Upper Aird, Point. The building is to be for community use, specifically for storing agricultural equipment and livestock feed and bedding. The building is to be 12.2 metres wide, 18.3 metres long and 5.1 metres tall.

New house, Newmarket

Mr & Mrs Morrison of 27H Newmarket have applied for planning permission to erect a house at 64C Bakers Road, Newmarket. The house is to consist of four bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a kitchen/dining/living area. Work is to include creating an access, parking suitable for two cars, and installing an air source heat pump.

Demolition and new house, Uig

Matthew Daitziel and Louise Scullion of 9 Norrie Street, Broughty Ferry, Dundee, have applied for planning permission to demolish the Mission Hall at Mangersta, Uig, and build a new house. The house is to consist of one bedroom, one bathroom and a kitchen/dining/living area. Work is to include creating a new access.

New house, Tong

Raymond Mackenzie of 16 Ford View, Tong, has applied for planning permission to build a house at 4b Tong. The house is to consist of three bedrooms, one bathroom, a sitting room and a lounge/kitchen/dining area. Work is to include creating an access, parking suitable for three cars, and installing an air source heat pump.

New agricultural shed, Breasclete

Angus Macdonald of 14b Breasclete has applied for planning permission to erect an agricultural shed at 14b Breasclete. The shed is to be 13.72 metres long, 9.14 metres wide and 4.7 metres tall. The shed is to be used as a lambing shed and feed store.

HARRIS

Variation to Marine Licence, Tarbert

Planning permission is sought to construct temporary rock intill bund to the north of the existing pier in order to facilitate access for plant and materials for the pier reconstruction and extension works, at the ferry terminal, Pier Road, Tarbert.

Change of use of shepherds hut, Scaristavore

Mr. and Mrs. D. Mackenzie of 4 Scaristavore have applied for planning permission to change the use of the shepherds hut at Sandy Bay Croft Wigoave, Na Bothain, 4 Scaristavore, to holidaylet accommodation. Work is to include building a replacement utility shed and creating two additional parking spaces, bringing the total number of parking spaces from two to four. The utility shed is to have walls constructed of green painted board on board timber cladding and a black profiled metal roof.

New signpost, Horgabost

West Harris Trust has applied for planning permission to erect a standalone signpost at Tall Na Mara Paire, Nisaelaist, Horgabost. The facilities building is to be 2.79 metres wide, 7.47 metres long and 2.44 metres tall. Work is to include creating parking for seven cars, installing a new treatment tank sized for up to 18 people, and erecting signage.

Holiday unit, Meavaig

Paul Finnegon of Seafield, Scalpay has applied for planning permission to erect a 30-square-metre wooden cabin in South Meavaig. Work is to include creating parking suitable for one car.

New house, Maraig

Brendan Hulme of 17 Blenheim Court, Stirling, has applied for planning permission to build a house at 3c Maraig. Work is to include creating new access and parking suitable for three cars, building a garage and constructing a polycarbonate tunnel. The house is to have three bedrooms, three bathrooms, an open-plan kitchen/living/dining area downstairs and a second living area upstairs.

New pool, Maraig

Mr Andrew Bartlett of 5a Maraig has applied for planning permission to site a Lesko pool at 5a Maraig. The single-storey structure is to be 6.8 metres long and 4.5 metres wide, and it is to contain two bedrooms, one bathroom and a kitchen/dining/living area.

Change of use of building, Tarbert

Akerum Uil-Haug of 88 Parkmanor Avenue, Glasgow, has applied for planning permission to change the use of the Uil-Haug Ferry Terminal House, East Tarbert, to a store for commercial use. No physical changes would take place.

Finding the right number for your council services...
National Lottery funds for Island projects

Volunteering Hebrides received an award of £330,000 on Thursday 27 February to continue and expand their Befriending programme as part of the £3.5 million of National Lottery funding being shared across Scotland.

Projects helping to reconnect isolated or lonely people in communities throughout Scotland are benefitting from the lottery funding and, with an increase in referrals, Volunteering Hebrides can now reach out to more people across Lewis and Harris.

“The service will benefit more people like 43-year-old Robert Wernys from Stornoway who has had a Befriender for the last two years. He said: “As an autistic male adult, Befriending Lewis has been a godsend for me. Before I became involved with the organisation, I was very socially isolated and rarely went out to busy places.”

“This award will help lots of other people like me, who crave social connection and companionship and give them the chance to make wonderful new friends.”

Welcoming the news, Tina Macleod, Service Manager said: “This money will help us tackle the devastating effects that loneliness and social isolation can have on the lives of people in our remote island communities.”

Also in the Islands, Advocacy Western Isles received £100,000 from The National Lottery Community Fund. This group will recruit a Learning Disabilities Advocacy Worker (LDAW) with additional administrative and managerial support, to support people with learning disabilities in Lewis and Harris. The LDAW will support The Speak Out Group (SOG), a group of 18 adults with learning disabilities based in Lewis.

Stornoway RNLI celebrates 130 years of volunteer crew services

A total of 130 years of voluntary service to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution was celebrated recently at Stornoway RNLI as six members were awarded RNLI Long Service Badges.

Stornoway RNLI Coxswain DI Murray, along with volunteer crew members Tony Morrison, Kenny Macarthur, Norman Smith and Donnie Mackinnon, were all presented with RNLI 20 Year Long Service Badges by Stornoway RNLI Branch Chair, John J Maclennan.

Mr Maclennan also presented Stornoway RNLI Lifeboat Operations Manager (LOM) John MacDonald with his RNLI 30 Year Long Service Badge.

Speaking of the crew service award presentations, Stornoway RNLI LOM John MacDonald said: “This is an amazing achievement and it is down to their commitment and dedication to both the service and the Stornoway station itself.”

Stornoway RNLI Branch Chair John J Maclennan added that was a privilege to present the Long Service Badges, and said: “There is no abiding success without commitment and dedication, and without that commitment and dedication the lifeboat won’t launch – it is the glue that holds the fabric together.

“There is a great tradition in Stornoway Lifeboat of crew coming down through the generations; that continuity and experience being handed down, and the ongoing commitment of crew even after twenty years, it is something as a station we can all be proud of.”

Stornoway RNLI Branch Chair John J Maclennan is pictured presenting the RNLI Long Service Badges to six of the service’s members.

Crew member Kenny Macarthur receiving his RNLI 20 Year Long Service Badge

LOM John MacDonald receiving his RNLI 30 Year Long Service Badge

Crew member Tony Morrison receiving his RNLI 20 Year Long Service Badge

Crew member Norman Smith receiving his RNLI 20 Year Long Service Badge

Crew member Donnie Mackinnon receiving his RNLI 20 Year Long Service Badge

Coxswain DI Murray receiving his RNLI 20 Year Long Service Badge

Thank you to Co-op staff and customers

Stornoway RNLI Coxswain DI Murray was delighted to receive a donation on behalf of the local station of £1,000 from staff and customers of the Co-op store, Macaulay Road, Stornoway.

Store Manager Steven Cooper and Co-op Area Manager Danny Simpson recently presented DI with the donation cheque, raised through a raffle, bag-packing, and in-store collection buckets.

Thank you to staff and customers for the fantastic donation!

And further thanks to the Macaulay Road Co-op store for hosting the Stornoway Lifeboat Fundraisers for three days in January, as they held the annual RNLI SOS Raffle.

A magnificent total of £1,074.50 was raised for Stornoway RNLI.

Thank you again to staff and customers - Stornoway RNLI can’t do what they do without the funds raised by you! Thank You!

Date for your Diary

It’s that time of year – get your thinking caps on and your brainy mates beside you for the Stornoway RNLI Quiz Night!

Taking place at Stornoway Golf Club on Friday, 20 March, at 7.30pm, teams of four (£5 per person entry) are invited to join us for our annual quiz.

Look forward to seeing you all there!

How to Help

You can keep up to date with the RNLI charity at www.rnli.org – and why not ‘Like’ the Stornoway RNLI Facebook page to keep up with the local Lifeboat crew.

And please don’t hesitate to contact Stornoway RNLI, or the Stornoway Lifeboat Fundraisers, via the Facebook page if you wish to make a donation or help raise funds through an event.

A New Year wreath-laying ceremony to be held at the Iolaire monument. Holmes, was cancelled in January 2020 due to bad weather.

At the beginning of February, during a full in the recent storms, Stornoway RNLI laid their wreath at the monument.