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**D.R. MACLEOD**

**Thursday April 2nd to Wednesday May 6th**

**FRE EVENTS**

in Lewis and Harris

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**Food from the NHS in Stornoway went on camera to drum home key messages on staying safe during the Coronavirus pandemic. Above, staff from Stornoway’s Group Practice at Springfield Road health centre, with important messages we all need to remember.**
Stornoway RNLI are following national RNLI guidelines and our shop is closed until further notice.

The RNLI said in the current COVID-19 situation: “The welfare of our volunteers, supporters and staff, along with our ability to maintain our world-class lifesaving service, is our priority.

“We have taken the decision to close all RNLI shops, museums and visitor centres with immediate effect. Our lifeboat stations remain operational but will not be open to visitors.

“Our lifeboats will continue to launch to those in peril at sea – and they need your support more than ever. Donate at: www.rnli.org”

“Never in a career spanning more than 40 years - and several countries - have I been involved in the production of a newspaper in circumstances in any way like these.

I am hugely grateful for the efforts of all the staff and writers involved – themselves based in several countries – as we have reported on the coronavirus emergency.

We have tried – both through our on-line sister welovestornoway.com and in this edition of EVENTS – to bring you news, information and ideas from across the world as well as from our own home area.

Wind farm charity to set up Pandemic Community Fund

Community wind farm charity Point and Sandwick Trust has announced it will use all its free cash for this year to set up a pandemic support fund for the local community.

The former MP for the Western Isles, Calum Macdonald, who is also the development manager for Point and Sandwick Trust, said: “The Point and Sandwick Trust Board have decided to devote all the income that isn’t already committed to key local organisations like Bethesda to support the community effort we are going to need to get through the pandemic.

“We are very lucky that there have been no reported infections in the island as yet and we pray that it remains that way. But whatever happens, we will have to pull together to help each other and also to help the fantastic health and care workers we have in these islands to tackle this virus.

“That is why the Board have decided to use all its spare cash in 2020, or at the end of the emergency, to set up a Pandemic Community Fund. We will have discussions with local organisations including Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and NHS Western Isles to work out how the fund can best be used. We also hope to have discussions with other funding partners and intend to support work being done locally by Point, Sandwick and Stornoway Community Councils and others.

“The full impact of the pandemic in those countries worst affected has been traumatic. We have to be ready for it coming here, when it will be all hands to the deck.”

Community Council chairs welcomed the announcement of the emergency fund.

Bob Walker, chair of Sandwick Community Council, said: “Never since the end of World War Two has our island and nation seen such potential devastation to our society and we must all come together and support and help one another.”

Chris Tom Mackenzie, chair of Point Community Council, said: “With services already stretched and struggling this will provide a much-needed lifeline to many in our community during this difficult time for our island. I would hope that this will also encourage other organisations to also help their communities where they can.”

Joan Muir, chair of Stornoway Community Council, said: “Although there have been no confirmed cases in our community there are many affected by the current crisis. By working together, supporting each other in a co-ordinated response we can help our community get through this unprecedented situation.”

And we are incredibly grateful that DR Macleod Ltd and Woody’s Express Parcels have both been prepared to support us in getting this edition out.

Thank you so much!

And – overall – as our articles from France, the USA, Canada, Australia and elsewhere remind us, we really are all in this together.

Stay safe!

Editor, Fred Silver
Lews Castle College, a constituent college of the University of the Highlands and Islands, has announced the formation of an Education Hub to bring together teaching, research, and scholarship.

Based at the Stornoway campus, the new unit will dovetail current teaching activities in the delivery of the online Masters degrees in Education (M.Ed.) and in Digital Pedagogy, along with teacher training awards and supervision on doctoral research. The success of the M.Ed. programme, which is led from Stornoway, demonstrates a growing interest from education professionals in schools, colleges and universities to enhance their skills. This has encouraged demands for progression to advanced postgraduate degrees such as the taught doctorate (Ed.D.) and doctoral studies by research (Ph.D.)

Announcing the initiative, Principal Iain MacMillan said, “There is clearly a demand out there that is ideally satisfied by part-time and online study. The demands of modern lifestyles and careers mean that busy professionals need to keep up to date but are finding less space to do that through ‘conventional’ routes. We are pleased to see registrations for our degree modules being recognised across the globe as well as in the national educational sectors.”

Although research projects and Ph.D. supervision have been undertaken at Lews Castle College UHI for more than two decades, this new initiative will lead to the discipline of Education being recognised in its own right. Previously, education was studied as part of another main disciplinary area. The new unit will provide a consistent and continuous platform for learners to progress in their studies and will further enhance the role of Lews Castle College as a key provider in the University of the Highlands and Islands.

UHI Programme Leader of the Masters in Education, Dr Gareth Davies, added, “This is a natural progression in the education awards that we already offer. Increasingly we are seeing teachers and lecturers asking to be upskilled in the theory and practice of using technology to improve educational opportunities. One of the benefits of the new Education Hub is that we will be able to respond incredibly flexibly to the needs of individual learners, both in the content that they want and the manner of delivery that they require.”

The Education Hub will work with the UHI Learning and Teaching Academy and continue to expand in the activities that are delivered from the Stornoway campus, as well as the productive partnerships with other staff throughout the UHI and in other university networks.

UHI Vice-Principal of research, Professor Neil Simco, welcomed the initiative and said, “This is another significant step in the university developing its regional strengths to the benefit of the university as a whole. The critical mass of our recent achievements in the delivery of education awards is now attracting educationalists from across the world and we hope to reach out even more students with this new Education Hub.”

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Spirit of the Hebrides bottled against virus

By Annie Delin

More than 1,000 bottles of essential hand sanitiser have now (Monday 30 March) been delivered across the islands of Lewis and Harris by Tarbert-based Essence of Harris after the company repurposed its entire operation to provide emergency supplies to island people.

Business-owner Jamie McGowan put on his thinking cap as soon as the crisis began and saw an urgent need that could be met locally – the need for hand sanitiser to protect front-line workers from the spread of infection.

The company immediately switched equipment, staff and some existing supplies to manufacture alcohol-based gel and rub, both designed to clean hands quickly for busy workers who still need to be in contact with others.

Jamie collaborated with Simon Erlanger at the Isle of Harris Distillery to use their alcohol. He also had support from Graphite Signs, who printed the labels, additional glycerine supplied by Stag Bakeries and extra bottles from the Hebridian Soap Company.

The recipe was one recommended by the World Health Organisation and the result, Spirit of the Hebrides hand sanitiser, was coming off the production line within a week.

It’s been described as ‘truly an island project’ and is already in use by organisations from Western Isles Police and island care homes to the families of vulnerable people living at home.

Jamie said: “In the first week we distributed over 1,000 bottles, including to police, fire crews, coastguards, the hospital and to Post Offices. Some organisations have also had 5 litre, 10 litre and 12.5 litre top-up cannisters delivered and we are hoping to operate a weekly refill service in Stornoway for all the major organisations.

“On Friday and Saturday (27 and 28 March) we individually delivered bottles to more than 100 elderly and vulnerable people throughout the island, and we hope to continue providing that service.

“As we’re prioritising our front-line services and essential workers, we are giving out the sanitiser for free – a gesture we hope can improve the safety and well-being of our wonderful key workers throughout the Hebrides.

“This is not a project for financial gain. It’s something we want to do for the Highlands and Islands, which have supported us with our business for so long. It is so important that we look out for each other and support one another through what can seem like very uncertain times.”

Simon Erlanger, Managing Director of Isle of Harris Distillers Ltd, said: “The Harris Distillery team is very pleased to support this important local initiative which requires high-strength alcohol as a key ingredient.

“It is vital we all keep working together to protect our community at this critical time, and we hope this donation of our spirit will play a small part in keeping our key workers and wider family safe while we face the challenges which lie ahead.”

The initiative has been warmly welcomed by the general public as a whole, and by na h-Eileanan an Iar MP Angus Brendan MacNeil, who said: “Both companies are to be commended for this further example of the community working together to enable everyone to follow the guidelines about hand washing and social distancing. This hand gel will be available to public facing workers whether in shops, care settings or other places where it is needed.”

You can contact Essence of Harris at info@essenceofharris or 01851 502768.

Monday Market

The Veggie Box

The Veggie Box

The Veggie Box

The Veggie Box

The Veggie Box

The Veggie Box

The Veggie Box
Kaami wreck brings risk and work to Isles

By Annie Delin

A cargo vessel which grounded on rocks in the middle of the Minch between Lewis and Skye has brought unexpected business benefits to Lewis and Harris, but it also poses a threat of potential pollution.

The Norwegian-owned general cargo vessel MV Kaami ran aground on rocks known locally as Sgeir Graidach or Eugenie Rocks in storm winds and high seas in the early hours of Monday 23 March.

Eight Russian crew members were winched to safety from the pitching deck of the vessel by Stornoway’s Coastguard helicopter, R948, immediately after the initial impact. They were returned to Stornoway, where they were kept in isolation at a town hotel before seven of them returned to the Baltic port of Kaliningrad on Friday 27 March.

Although the ship is expected to remain in position for some considerable time, local resources are being called into play to complete survey work and plan cargo salvage ahead of any future retrieval of the vessel herself.

The ship’s chief engineer has remained in Stornoway, from where he is helping a specialist team of salvors from salvage company Resolve Marine Group. A series of air and sea-level surveys have been carried out by the Maritime and Coastguard Authority (MCA) to assess the condition of the vessel and to help put together a salvage plan.

Resolve’s team of seven specialist salvors and other support staff have based their operation in Uig, Skye, but the resources to support the operation are not readily available there.

And the operation has been made more challenging because of movement and proximity restrictions in force during the Coronavirus epidemic.

As a result, businesses in Lewis and Harris, with experience based on the 2016 salvage operation for the grounded drilling platform Transocean Winner, are helping to locate the materials and resources needed and to transport them to the site.

Among those helping out with the operation are Stornoway Shipping Services, Tarbert-based Kilda Cruises and Seatrek of Miavaig, who have provided the dive vessel enabling inspection of the damage to the grounded ship.

The MCA – on Monday 30 March –released an updated bulletin on the progress of the operation.

It said: “A specialist salvage team, supported by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, began removal of fuel and contaminated seawater from the tank on Friday (March 27). The removed fuel and oily waste is to be taken to Uig in Skye for onward disposal.

“Plans are being developed for the safe removal of the vessel’s cargo, including the hire of suitable barges.

“A seabed topography survey was completed at the weekend. The survey results will be used to accurately assess the grounding conditions of MV Kaami and to develop plans for removing the ship from the rocks once the cargo has been discharged.

“A temporary exclusion zone of 500 metres remains in place around MV Kaami to all but those vessels directly involved in supporting the response. The Maritime Accident Investigation Branch is carrying out an investigation remotely with assistance from the salvors. A fixed wing aircraft, provided by the MCA, continues to provide pollution surveillance patrols.”

The 90-metre general cargo vessel has reportedly been damaged in several places, not only by the initial impact on the rocks, but by additional movement over two days of stormy seas immediately after the incident. An exclusion zone of 500 metres is being patrolled around the ship.

It’s expected to be some weeks before the operation to repair, refloat and tow the ship away can be successfully completed under the supervision of maritime authorities including the UK’s chief authority on salvage and wreck, the Secretary of State’s Representative for Maritime Intervention and Salvage (SOSRep) Stephan Hennig.
Looking after your mind and well-being during self-isolation

By Terri McGeoghegan, March 23, 2020

"COVID-19, self-isolating and social distancing were not words that were in my vocabulary four months ago. If someone had put them to me at the start of December and asked what they were in relation to, a feasible answer would have been that they were part of a script from an apocalyptic Hollywood film, starring Tom Cruise or some other well-known co-star. We watch these types of films as a source of entertainment and escapism – because they are as far away from the real and far from real life. I’m sure you’re the same as me right now, and wake up each morning with an unsettled sleep, and remember that this isn’t a film we’re watching on a screen or dreaming about. It’s real life.

I closed the door on my beauty business after ten years of trading last night, as did thousands of other businesses both local and nationwide. In normal circumstances that would have been my worst nightmare, but in this case, it is the least of my worries. My biggest worry is not singular; it is endless, surreal and at times haunting.

I have lain awake most nights for the last fortnight fretting about my grandparents who have both survived cancer, not to mention World War Two. Now their new reality is that they can’t walk beyond their front path and must stay away from their family for upwards of 12 weeks. I have watched scenes on the news from Italy which I wish I could unsee, while knowing it’s important to watch in order to grasp the severity of the crisis. I have seen elderly people walking around the supermarkets with empty baskets, looking hopelessly at their shopping list and back to their empty shelves.

We are seeing both the coming together of people and the unravelling of humanity, all at the same time.

Before all of this, we were in the midst of a mental health crisis. Depression and anxiety levels were at an all-time high. It’s safe to say that this will not have helped matters! People will possibly be experiencing anxiety for the first time. When things feel out of control, like they do now, it’s important to focus on the things that we can control. There are many actions we can be taking to help our mental and physical health as well as following the guidance from the government to do our bit to help stop the spread of the virus.

1. Get out in nature

Yesterday I went to the Castle Grounds for a long walk, and focused on all of the things that were unchanged in an otherwise rapidly changing world – the trees, the river and the singing birds, to list a few. It was comforting to be surrounded by this familiarity, in contrast to the unnatural atmosphere in the ever-quietening Stormoway town centre. I’ve never felt more comforted by nature, and we have an abundance of it on our doorstep in the beautiful Outer Hebrides. If you can’t get out and about then simply step outside and look up to see the things that are unchanged in the sky – the rising sun in the morning and the stars at night.

2. Step away from the phone

It wasn’t long before my phone would be glued to me right now, even more than usual. I feel like I’m missing some vital piece of news if I don’t refresh my newsfeed on Facebook regularly. But it is precisely this type of behaviour that enforces negative thoughts and behaviours. Why don’t we reduce this unnecessary stress? Try to limit your exposure to the news and social media to a couple of times a day instead of constantly hitting refresh. Or better yet, have a social media break for a day or two. Your head will thank you for it!

3. Find your inner child and laugh

Bear with me on this one. Something I’ve realised in the last couple of weeks is how much enjoyment I get out of things I did as a child. Board games, playing cards, chess, tumbling down sand dunes, hide and seek, playing pranks and jumping out of closets on my poor suffering boyfriend are my personal favourites! All of these things were even more enjoyable in the daily lives, and we soon crave it once it’s gone – it gives us certainty as well as a sense of security. Try to still get up at a set time, eat your meals in your normal algorithm and plan your day. Routine is especially important if you have little ones at home for their home-schooling, meals and bedtime.

4. Keep to a routine

Repeat after me – this is not Christmas. If you are in the majority and are stuck in the house for the coming weeks, then try not to treat this time like the Christmas holidays where you wake up at weird times, eat too much junk food and drink too much Pinot Grigio! Eventually these routines leave us feeling sluggish and unmotivated. Routine can be a surprising anchor in our daily lives, and we soon crave it once it’s gone – it gives us certainty as well as a sense of security. Try to still get up at a set time, eat your meals in your normal algorithm and plan your day. Routine is especially important if you have little ones at home for their home-schooling, meals and bedtime.

5. Prioritise your sleep

It is well known that our mental health suffers more when we are tired and are functioning on too little sleep. I am finding it incredibly hard to sleep at the moment and am constantly waking in the night thinking about what is happening to our precious world.

Try to practise good ‘sleep hygiene’. Turn off your devices a good hour before bed and try to do something calming, like reading or having a bath. Don’t do what I’ve been doing and read the latest news then expect to fall into any sort of blissful sleep!

Another great thing to try is sleep stories (like bedtime stories for adults). I use the Calm app’s sleep stories if my monkey mind is active, which is most of the time at the moment. My favourite is Matthew Corcoran’s sleep story “Wonder”.

9. Look at the positives

How can there be positives in this sorry saga? There are positives in everything, you just have to look a little harder with this one. I saw a funny Facebook meme the other day, that read, "I kind of feel like the Earth just sent us all to our rooms to think about what we’ve done." Despite the humour, I thought this touched on something a bit profound. While COVID-19 is blazing its trail through each country across the world as if, mother nature is healing. Recent pictures of the air above China showed how two months without production cleared the skies, dramatically reducing pollution and their carbon footprint on the world. The virus is showing us that by slowing down life and travelling less that a better environment can quickly emerge, which could be pretty groundbreaking on a large scale.

In the last 50 or so years we have been pushed along by the idea that a life well lived is one of travel, possessions and big homes, bigger, better, more, more, more! As a result, we have more or less destroyed our planet. We have more things, but has ruining the earth been worth the sacrifice? Are our lives actually richer? Materialistically, yes. But in our values and our principles I think we’ve become poorer, and lost sight of some of the most important things – such as family, as well as looking after the elderly and vulnerable more. I truly think we can come out of this as better people and with a more considerate society.

Whatever the coming weeks bring, know that we will get through this. To echo Harriet Beecher Stowe, “When you get into a tight place and everything goes against you, till it seems as though you could not hang on a minute longer, never give up, for that is just the place and time that the tide will turn.”

Take care, stay safe, and as always - wash your hands!

Air support for virus fight

By Annie Delin

Helicopter support from the Royal Air Force is in place to help with emergency transport and medical evacuation across the Highlands and Islands during the Coronavirus emergency.

Three RAF Puma HC MK2 craft were deployed to RAF Kinloss on Friday March 27 to help provide additional cover to the north of Scotland. The air support is in addition to a team of Army medical, logistics, supply and humanitarian relief planners who joined the Scottish Government’s Emergency Co-ordination Centre team in Edinburgh last week. There are now two military officers based at NHS Western Isles in Stornoway.

The RAF Puma can carry up to 16 passengers or up to two tonnes of freight. Their deployment follows the use of an RAF A400M transport, working with the Scottish Ambulance Service, to evacuate a critically ill-patient from Shetland to Aberdeen for intensive care.

This activity comes under the heading of MACA - Military Aid to the Civil Authorities – which allows the armed forces to give help and support to authorities like the Police, NHS or local authorities. The government can call on the military to assist in times of need, to share the burden on civil organisations, or to help with urgent work of national importance such as responding to emergencies, maintaining supplies and essential services.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said: “The creation of these helicopter hubs is the next step in the UK Armed Forces’ contribution to tackling the coronavirus outbreak whenever it appears throughout the United Kingdom. Our aircraft are ready to support emergency services and local authorities wherever needed across the highlands and islands of Scotland – the Armed Forces have always got your back.”
**Finding out about what the ‘Trouble Is’...**

By Roz Macaskill

There was a recurrent theme, this Lewis-based group found.

- ‘The trouble is, we haven’t got a bass player.’
- ‘The trouble is, we haven’t got a venue.’
- ‘The trouble is, £1,000, doubling their day’s profit.

As far as I am aware, we’re the only ones in Scotland who play them,” Phil relates. ‘I heard that a lot of early blues players in the 1920’s couldn’t afford proper instruments and made their own out of old cigar boxes.

I fancied one quite a while ago and I thought I would take the plung last year. They are so much fun to play. You can virtually sound good on them with just one finger – that’s how easy they are!

The trio released an album in November called Killing Time. Recorded at the Wee Studio in Stornoway, the album is an easy-to-listen-to, American-flavoured, gravel-voiced celebration of the blues.

‘We are looking to play more gigs, locally and on the mainland,’ Ken says. ‘Two of the tracks in Killing Time made the top 40 of the Scottish new music local charts.’

‘Killing Time was also Album of the Week in the Isles and Cuillin FM. Our band has been described as one of the hardest working bands on the island and that’s how we want to keep it!’

Phil, who writes the band’s songs, describes the process, saying: ‘I don’t know where the songs come from. I can go for months without writing anything, but then I sit down and try I can’t manage it!’

honestly don’t know how I do it, because when I sit down and try I can’t manage it!”

That was all we ever heard,” jokes Trouble Is... frontman, Phil Young. “I thought we might as well call ourselves ‘Trouble Is...’ since we were told that every and the hard work they had all done to make their event a success. The Lottery Team responded to an application from the committee by presenting the cheque to the ‘Trouble Is’ Festival, but not had the day confirmed yet.”

Plans are also in place to release a second album. ‘Phil can leave a gig, jump in the car and have written another song by the time he gets home,’ laughs David. ‘We’ve already got enough material for another album and I think it will be a very exciting one.’

**Lottery team surprise Tarbert centre**

The committee of Harris Mutual Improvement Association held a successful “Swishing” Event in the Tarbert Community Centre on Saturday, 14th March, to help raise funds to replace the roof of the Centre.

Over recent months, the group have been able to significantly upgrade the interior of the valued Community Centre, which depleted their available funds. They are now urgently attempting to raise enough to lever match funding which will allow them to fully replace the roof and safeguard the works already carried out well into the future.

The Lottery Team responded to an application from the committee by making an un-announced visit to the Event, and presenting delighted members with a cheque for £3,188. “That was all we ever heard,” jokes Trouble Is... frontman, Phil Young. “I thought we might as well call ourselves ‘Trouble Is...’ since we were told that every and the hard work they had all done to make their event a success. The Lottery Team responded to an application from the committee by presenting the cheque to the ‘Trouble Is’ Festival, but not had the day confirmed yet.”

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**Donald Macleod piping competition postponed**

The P/M Donald Macleod MBE Memorial Piping Competition, supported by Point and Sandwick Trust, has been postponed until later in the year due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The prestigious competition was due to be held in Stornoway on Friday, 3 April but has also been postponed until the autumn, with the exact date to be confirmed later.

A junior Donald Macleod competition, due to have been held for the first time this year, has also been postponed until further notice. It was to have taken place on the Thursday evening.

Community wind farm charity Point and Sandwick Trust sponsors the competition to the tune of £5,000 and will also be sponsoring the inaugural junior competition, by donating commemorative quaichs to all participants, when the time comes.

Dr John Smith, chairman of the Lewis and Harris Piping Society, said: “The Lewis and Harris Piping Society has decided to postpone the Donald Macleod competition which was due to be held on the 3rd of April.

“We had become increasingly concerned over the national situation over the past weekend and yesterday sought the advice of the Western Isles Health Board’s public health department and their advice was that the competition should be postponed if at all possible. The advice was further reinforced by the advice by government yesterday that unnecessary social contact should be avoided.

“We are naturally very disappointed as all the arrangements had been in place and the pipers had been given their tunes and were all set to come to Stornoway for the 3rd of April.

“We are also disappointed for the youngsters who had been selected to take part in the inaugural Pipe Major Donald Macleod junior competition on the Thursday evening.

“Our provisional plan is to look at a suitable date in the autumn – possibly late September, perhaps even late November.”

The P/M Donald Macleod Memorial Piping Competition commemorates the musical legacy of Pipe Major Donald Macleod, one of Stornoway’s most famous sons. He was an outstanding piper and won all the major competitions, but it was for his prolific composition that he is best remembered, including his piobaireachd. The tune Lament for Donald Macleod was created to celebrate his music and is split into two sections – piobaireachd and march, strathspey and reel – and it is compulsory for competitors to play both sections having to be cancelled but that cannot be avoided.

It is particularly disappointing because of the junior competition and highly prestigious as it mostly Donald Macleod tunes. It is an invitation-only competition and highly prestigious as it always features eight of the current best pipers in the world and who are invited based on their success elsewhere on the piping circuit during the year.

Point and Sandwick Trust has committed £25,000 to the competition over a three year period to ensure it can continue to be held in its home-town. Before this sponsorship was secured there were fears the competition will have to be cancelled.

Gordon MacDonald, HMIA Chairperson said, “Replacing the ageing roof tiles on the Community Centre is the final stage in an ambitious programme of refurbishment and redevelopment taken forward by our hard working committee and we are all incredibly grateful to all at Western Isles Lottery for their generous support towards our funding target!”

You can join in at www.westernisleslottery.co.uk
Islanders across the world take a look at coronavirus and its impact

Report compiled by Katie Macleod in New York

March 29th, 2020: As I write this, I’ve been “social distancing” inside the flat for 18 days. From our living room window, I can see the skyscrapers of Manhattan in all their glory. If I were to walk to the end of our street, I’d be able to see the Javits Center, the conference centre where I interviewed the team from Essence of Harris just a few weeks ago at America’s largest wholesale trade show. It’s now a makeshift field hospital, with emergency beds lined up in rows by the National Guard, created to cope with New York’s 53,000 COVID-19 cases.

My husband and I live on the border between New York and New Jersey, so the actions of both states affect us. Our neighbourhood has a police-enforced curfew between 10pm and 5am, and the local park has been locked to prevent people from gathering. All schools and non-essential businesses are closed, and the restaurants that are surviving are only allowed to offer takeaway and delivery. Although I’m working from home – I usually spend my work week on the 22nd floor of an office building on Broadway – my husband still has to physically be at work in Queens, which is currently the worst-hit borough of New York City, with almost 10,000 cases.

It’s all very surreal and being away from home in times like these makes the experience even stranger. What has it been like for other islanders abroad? I spoke with some of them, and those with island connections, to find out what the situation is like both across the USA and around the world. Here’s what they had to say.

Eleanor Barca, from Lower Bayble, lives in Maine, USA.

In Maine, it’s starting to affect all of the 16 counties, with the county I live in being the worst affected. Sadly, we just had our first death reported and have more than 160 positive cases. As a result, all non-essential businesses are closed, and a couple of cities have issued stay-in orders for residents. All of the state’s parks and most of the beaches have also been closed to stop people from gathering in large groups. All the small business stores in our town have closed, and it now looks so empty, as a result.

The experience has been very surreal. It’s an anxious time for everyone and each new situation it brings presents new challenges for the local government, health officials, and us as individuals. I’m staying home as my husband is high-risk. Right now, I’m using my vacation time to still get paid, but soon my leave will be unpaid, as it was my choice to stay home. The hubby is working from home, so we keep each other company but you start to soon lose track of which day of the week it is, so keeping a routine or structure has really helped. Everyone here is really good about keeping their distance even outside.

I took two pictures when walking today, the one of the street is usually filled with parked cars and many cars at the lights with customers and workers of the local businesses in town. The second is a local restaurant window where they’ve put messages of hope from local kids. I can see them from my apartment and it’s really nice to see.

Lynsey MacRitchie-Mackenzie, from Steinish, lives in Calgary, Alberta.

We are not in official lockdown here in Calgary but it feels like it. Everyone is taking social distancing very seriously so nobody I know is being social in any way and almost everyone is working from home. The roads are quiet and to my knowledge, nothing but the supermarkets are open. We can still go to the provincial parks (which is amazing) but the National Parks have been closed which brings lots of mixed emotions. On one hand it’s sad to not be able to spend this time outdoors in the beauty of the National Parks, but I also completely respect their closures. The smaller towns within the parks don’t have the infrastructure to deal with big outbreaks. Like I said, we still have provincial parks so we are very lucky. There is so much wide open space here it’s easy to escape the claustrophobic feelings even if you just head out for a drive.

I think this has been the strangest experience that anyone of our generation (or others!) has lived through, but living so far from home has definitely added an element of stress/worry/ fear (I’m not quite sure what the feeling is) that I don’t think some people can understand. On one hand I want to jump on a plane right now but on the other, I’m so aware of the risks that brings not only for our wee family, but for everyone we encounter on our travels and for the entire island upon our arrival there.

It really is a time full of mixed emotions and feelings. Feeling happy to have time in our home together versus feeling scared that we are so far from everyone we love. Worrying about money versus realizing money really isn’t important. Being sad we can’t get out to national parks versus the awareness that people are losing loved ones because of this, that children in abusive homes can’t escape to school because of this, that people are hungry and homeless and can’t access help because of this. Our problems feel so small and insignificant and really, the most important thing this whole situation has done is make us grateful and more compassionate.

Above and below...views from Katie’s windows in New York/New Jersey

Empty streets in Maine

Eleanor Barca, from Lower Bayble, lives in Maine, USA.

Hopeful messages in Maine

A empty street view in Calgary

A view from Lynsey’s Calgary window
Trudy MacIver Marr, from Carloway, lives in Warrnambool, Australia.

At the time of writing (28th March) in Australia we have just under 3,500 cases... but we are seeing a consistent rise each day. I live in a city on the coast, Warrnambool, and we have five confirmed cases here. Across the county we have a shutdown of non-essential services and social distancing in place. But each state has its own rules and measures. Here in Victoria, schools closed about a week early for Easter holidays, but the government are talking about opening as usual after holidays at this stage. NSW and VIC are the hardest hit so we are anticipating further lockdowns in the next day or two. But the general rule is, stay home unless you have to go out. Parks and beaches and restaurants are closed, but shops are still open (other than those who have chosen to close). Take away is still available from most restaurants.

You can be in groups of no more than 10 people gathered outdoors and you can have people in your home as long as you have room for one person per four square metres. Most people are going a step further and just not inviting people round though which is great to see. I work in a hospital and I still go to work each day so I am still around people in a socially distant type of way. There is a travel ban in place for all Aussies and most of the borders between states are now closed.

It's a bit surreal and probably hasn't completely hit me yet. Because I am still at work, I don't think I feel it as much as those who are home all the time. We have put some things in place at home to make sure we are all doing well, including using technology to keep in touch with friends and family. My daughter, who is almost four, really gets it. She has been really good at understanding hand hygiene and why we can't see her friends or go to her dance class etc.

We try to fill in time with activities and she loves using things like FaceTime and Marco Polo anyway because we use it all the time to keep in touch with family in Scotland. We made the decision this week that the kids can't see their grandparents, which was hard for both sides but it was the right decision to make. We are seeing what's happening around the world, and it feels like I'm watching it escalate here in slow motion. I'm praying that the measure we have in place now will truly "flatten the curve" for us, but only time will tell. Little things make it a bit harder, like my sister and her husband were supposed to come to visit in June but that's now on hold.

Bobby MacGillivray, from Benbecula, lives in Orlando, Florida.

Each state and county follows different guidelines, which is strange. Our county was 'locked down' from March 27th to April 9th, while friends in other counties have been locked down much longer. Folk are still allowed to walk their pets, exercise, and go to the grocery store.

From a business perspective we have been closed down since March 23rd until April 13th. No youth or adult soccer is happening at the moment. Thankfully we have maintained payroll and not laid anyone off, although many companies are doing so. For example, a competitor just laid off around 75 per cent of their staff nationwide which is terrible to hear.

Around the area we are actually seeing MORE people out than usual. People out walking, cycling, running. Folk out as families. Which is nice to see, but strange timing. Personally we are coping just fine. I am working remote and checking in with our staff twice a day. As Head Coach I am using the time to fine-tune our curriculums and I am interacting with our students on a daily basis, setting them daily challenges and homework which they are responding to greatly.

It's really nice to see the parents working closely with their children too. My girlfriend is a nurse at the Cardio Vascular Intensive Care at a local hospital, and they are experiencing relatively low numbers of COVID-19 Patients, but it seems to be increasing rapidly. They are seven to eight days away from tough times.

I was actually due to fly to Spain today where I was meeting my entire family for my mother's 50th celebration, so we are sad that couldn't happen but completely understand.

Eric Wojchik, from Minnesota, USA, lived in Lewis for six years.

The State of Minnesota entered our ‘shelter in place’ order this Friday (March 27th), at midnight. At the time of writing, our State has 398 cases of COVID-19, but testing has been slow to ramp up, so the true number is likely much higher. For context, the State of Minnesota has roughly the same population as Scotland. Our governor has announced that Minnesota will reach our peak in June, most likely, so we have a little bit of time to enhance hospital capacity and obtain more necessary equipment for healthcare workers.

I work for the regional government, and we run the transit system and wastewater services, so I've been fortunate enough to be able to work from home during this time. All the schools have transitioned to online learning, so working from home has been a challenge for some of my colleagues.

My wife, Katie Anne, from Tolsta, works as a nurse, so we make sure to travel with necessary paperwork during the ‘shelter in place’ order when I take her to work. While the whole experience has been an adjustment, I think that our State is dealing with this well, with science-based decision-making and clear guidance to our residents.

There are many challenges ahead, so we will have to innovate as we go. We've taken the opportunity to focus on growing vegetables and flowers for the summer months.

Eric’s home office space in their plant room.

Muriel MacLeod, from Eagleton, is currently in Hong Kong visiting family. Hong Kong has been through all this since the end of January, and many feel the West didn’t realise what was happening. Now they do! People here wear masks and sanitise all the time. Our temperature is taken when we have to go out, arrivals on last flights in are quarantined. Life goes on, but there is an acute awareness of sanitising, door handles, toilets, cashpoints are all regularly cleansed.

I feel, like most over here, very intent on doing what has to be done for us all. Sure, I’m missing my visits to Hong Kong’s marvellous art scene, and socialising in its wonderful bars and restaurants, but I can settle down into this, because we must. Wish everyone back home a peaceful time during this, in many ways it’s brought us a certain sense of a more compassionate reality.

The picture is from my apartment window. I rather like it because this is the building of a new marina, to remind me each day of the one in progress at Goat Island. My flights have all been cancelled so I’m on this side of the world till we get back on track. Perhaps both marinas will be completed by then and people can get back to enjoying this wonderful world.
Isolated but not alone in a French forest

Between deep silence and bright sunlight...Sophie Vaudoux, who worked for EVENTS newspaper in 2009-2011, looks at the coronavirus crisis in rural France and asks: «Will patients be dying of the greed + austerity cocktail or of coronavirus?»

Not a soul in sight, not a child riding its bike, not a dog running after a cat, not a cow staring. Only birds and insects. There are cobwebs keeping the dew between newly sprung plants; primroses waking from the cold night.

Violets, dozens of timid little faces, huddling in the fresh grass, bring azure scents to the orange morning light. The sun sends me my shadow back, obscure on the silent road.

I am walking alone through the deserted village of Menou, there is not even the sound of a plane, southbound. This is part of the Nièvre, an ancient district attached to Nevers, bordered by the Loire River in the recently created and somewhat resented Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region. The sea of trees, mainly oak forests that provide casks for whisky, stretches for hundreds of square kilometres in a purple hued landscape.

An old-fashioned perfume springs up. What old lady has been walking here? Were it later in the day, it might be that old neighbour on the road to the nearby village of Menestreau, so pretty in her garden that is growing thick and wild with dandelions and fruit trees in bloom. She worries that no one can cut her grass now. An archway and old white painted gates keep her from danger. Her picture should be taken. Her children would like that. Maybe tomorrow, if it is safe to knock at her door.

The walk is longer than allowed, more than 1km from my house, but at least there is no curfew here. I struggle myself out early on little paths than no gendarmes will ever catch me on.

During the Second World War, my ancestors from both sides of the Rhone must have done the same in a sunny, sleepy France. An archway and old white painted gates keep her from danger. Her picture should be taken. Her children would like that. Maybe tomorrow, if it is safe to knock at her door.

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The 2000-year-old city of Auxerre on the Yonne riverThe road from Menou to Menestreau
Orpierre’s last hurrah was its black pudding festival (fête du boudin) on March 14th, 2020.

That very evening social distancing measures were announced, schools and non-essential businesses ordered to close and the public clearly instructed to stay at home.

Trips to the shops are permitted provided that they are made by a single person in possession of a signed and dated document stating the purpose of their trip.

A friend in St Tropez was challenged by a gendarme for carrying flowers, which he deemed inessential. She protested that the flowers came from the same shop as the food she was also carrying, and reason prevailed.

Locally there is no visible increase in police presence, my wife reporting that the only obvious abnormality, today (Monday March 23rd) was that the pharmacy was dealing with sales and prescriptions from a table outside the premises.

On Monday March 23rd that great institution, the French open market, was also ordered to close, although mayors may over-ride this ruling if they deem their market to offer the closest access to essential foods.

Trivial puzzles and paradoxes appear: my car will shortly need to take its biennial MOT test, for which it needs new headlights. The garage has the parts but is not allowed to open. The MOT station is also closed but its helpful proprietor told me that the government has set back all deadlines for three months. He was concerned not only for his present loss of income but by the prospect of a life of 12-hour working days to clear the inevitable backlog in the future.

In terms of daily life it seems that the quiet of winter will extend into the summer. Orpierre is normally transformed when its tiny population is swamped by those staying on its expansive campsite and mobile home park. While its closure will badly affect the summer trade of its one convenience store, the owners say that their local trade has been boosted as people prefer to shop locally. Its shelves are full.

Accidenté is the word the French often use to describe the landscape in which I live. It might translate as battered or fragmented. A series of pre-Alpine mountain ranges, running from east to west, lie between the vineyards of the Rhone valley and high peaks of the real Alps. Life has never been easy here. On the hillsides a sparse clay soil clings to folded or crumbled rock and vegetation has to cope with seasonal extremes of temperature falling between minus twenty and the scorching forties. Local communities are used to tightening their belts and carrying on.

Some 15 years ago the normally hardy lavender crop failed disastrously, sending family members in search of whatever town work they could find. So far, though, the Covid 19 outbreak seems to have had little effect on agricultural life here. The farms are small and family run and, of course, the nation needs to be fed. But what of the parallel tourist industry?

Too high for ‘winter sun,’ and yet not high enough for winter sports, the area has a short season running, for most providers, between Easter and All Saints on November 1st. Since this is an area in which the dusty charms of Provence are clinging by their fingernails to rising hillsides, the tourist industry cannot sit idly by awaiting a surfeit of eager visitors. It is, though, home to resourceful specialists offering holidays to hang gliding and paragliding enthusiasts, sailplane pilots, rock climbers, cyclists and mountain bikers and even amateur astronomers. With a small population and little industry, its roads and tracks are quiet and its sky clear and unpolluted. In the weeks, and many feel months, to come this entire industry will be closed down unconditionally.

Some of these businesses, notably the larger hotels and campsites, run on a business model involving very high volume in the season and, in effect, hibernation in winter. Those who have borrowed against the season they are now unlikely to enjoy will be worried. The smaller providers, because the season is so short and their investments are fewer, will be able to survive the coming summer in the same way that they do the winter. They tend not to rely entirely on the season but are either semi-retired or have other income.

Of one thing we can be sure, though. None of us here, whether in agriculture or in tourism, would trade places with those forced to endure social distancing in city apartment blocks. Our hardy, back-country environment is, this time, making life very easy indeed for its inhabitants.
Autism week at home

Autism Eileanan Siar is a parent-led support group offering monthly drop-in sessions for parents, carers and adults affected by autism and any additional support needs. We organise a range of activities, outings and events for children of many different age groups. This gives children the opportunity to experience everyday activities in a quieter environment to encourage socialisation and promote inclusion, and we offer support when required. We strive to give children affected the same opportunities in their childhood as everyone else.

Autism is a lifelong condition that affects individuals very differently, from those who need little support to those that need a lifetime of specialist support. Autism affects how a person perceives and experiences the world around them and how they interact with others, so for individuals with autism they see, hear and feel the world differently.

April is Autism Awareness Month and normally Autism Eileanan Siar would be doing their part in raising awareness locally, however with the ongoing pandemic sadly we will not be able to do that. Various activities that had been arranged for Autism Awareness Week have all been cancelled, including an evening at soft play, a fun session at Sandwick hall using sensory toys and equipment and an Easter egg hunt, and it was hoped as we have had the last two years, a relaxed cinema showing at An Lanntair on World Autism Awareness Day on 2 April.

Pin badges have been made which portray a map of the Western Isle in jigsaw pieces to represent autism in the Western Isles. Some local businesses and organisations agreed to help raise awareness in April, by allowing us to have them on sale in their premises, Stornoway Airport; Artizan; Spurs Nis; Harris Tweed Shop, Harris, and the Council Office, Balivanich all got on board to help. These will be out in shops and organisations when life returns to normal.

For Autism Eileanan Siar, April World Autism Awareness Day is a time for us to celebrate achievements and unique talents and show our support to all those affected in our community, but I am sure all members will do this in the safety of their own home this year as well as using our Facebook page Autism Eileanan Siar too. #autismawareness.

Harris images top shots

By Annie Delin

Pictures taken on the Isle of Harris have helped an Inverness doctor take the top slot in the Scottish Landscape Photographer of the Year competition.

Winner Dr Kenny MUIR works at Raigmore Hospital in Inverness and has other things on his mind just now, so news of the win late last week (Thursday 19 March) came as a welcome diversion.

He said: “As a hospital doctor I will be taking a break from photography to focus on current events, but really appreciate receiving the award.”

Dr MUIR’s picture ‘Seilebost Gneiss’, pictured above, was the overall winning image. Photographer Bill Ward was also a winner, in the seascape category, with his image ‘Incoming Storm, Luskentyre’, pictured below, while two other views of Luskentyre were named among the competition commendations.

The Scottish Landscape Photographer of the Year – Collection 6 by Breeze Media is available to pre order at www.slpoty.com/ price £25.
The doors to An Lanntair building may be closed by Corvid 19, but we’re still busy working behind the scenes from home to help keep connected with our community and our artists and musicians during this time of distant socialising…

Our Arts and Education teams are investigating online solutions to ensure artists and musicians remain engaged and motivated with virtual Artist Gatherings and Music Sessions being planned. Please do keep an eye on An Lanntair’s social media channels for updates on this.

For our young creatives missing Full Circle – and parents and carers looking for some activities to keep young ones entertained in isolation! – we host a series of Full Circle Family Music song words and tunes available on our website, as well as downloadable activity sheets designed by Alice Mac Prints. And we’re working on more to come…

Please do also check out the ‘Children and Families at An Lanntair’ Facebook page for continued ideas for creative activities and updates as we go forward.

The team at An Lanntair look forward to emerging from this current situation, to pick up where they left off and continue to provide a strong and vital service to our many audiences, participants, and to our community.

Stay safe everyone, and see you all again on the other side!

www.lanntair.com
www.facebook.com/anlanntair
www.instagram.com/anlanntair
Twitter: @anlanntair
Trust faces a perennial challenge on income

Roz Macaskill looks at the work of Barvas Estate Trust/Urras Bharabhais

“We are one of the few community trusts that don’t have an income from renewables,” says Business Development Manager, Ivan Brown. “We tried working with a local company to supply energy directly to them, but we couldn’t get the funding required to install this.”

With plans to generate income through renewable energy falling through, the Trust rely heavily on the income from their salmon hatchery. “We lease it out to a salmon company and get an annual income from that,” says Ivan. “That gives us enough funds to cover our expenses, but in the back of your mind you always know you don’t want all your eggs in one basket.”

In spite of the ongoing battle for funding, the Trust has already stacked up multiple developments since the estate officially became community owned in 2016.

“Back in 2004, a steering group was set up to purchase the land from Lower Barvas to North and New Shawbost,” says Ivan. “The process took some time to complete but in 2010 communication started to flow and the steering group was formed into a Trust. We looked for funding through the Scottish Land Fund and in April 2016 we purchased part of the estate, although not the rivers and lochs.”

“What projects has the Trust taken part in so far?”

“We recently were involved in an energy efficiency project, where we partnered with The Energy Advisory Services (TEAS) in Stornoway,” says Ivan. “We visited just over 90 households with energy advice within the community and also gave energy advice to the community groups and primary school children.”

The Trust distributed over 900 LED lightbulbs and 74 slow cookers, a Crooker recipe book was produced and was distributed free of charge at the local agricultural show. “If anyone would like a copy, they can be picked up from the Trust’s office in Shawbost.”

“That’s another project we would like to continue in the future, but, once again, we need further funding to do that,” concludes Ivan.

How has community ownership proved beneficial? Ivan comments: “It really helps the community to feel far more involved. We regularly hold community consultations and they continually come up with great ideas as to what they would like to see in the area.”

The Trust has plans in the pipeline to tackle the issue of affordable housing. “We have seen a decline in population,” admits Ivan. “Currently, we have around 1,000 people in just over 500 homes in the area. A lot of people end up moving to town as that’s where the majority of the affordable houses are.”

The Trust is working with contractors and Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP) to obtain planning permission for houses within Barvas and will be looking next year at further houses on a different part of the estate. “At present an application for permission to build eight to 12 houses is in with the planning department,” explains Ivan. “There is also another plot with another contractor where planning permission is in for four houses.”

“HHP and CNES have already set out their plans for the next five years in their Strategic Housing Investment Plan so hopefully by this time next year, some of the homes will be up and ready to go!”

“The Trust’s developments don’t end there. Currently, talks are ongoing with the Comhairle for the transfer of disused land from the council to the Trust. Located in Barvas, the area in question is around three acres. “This land was never developed, so rather than de-croit working land, the council agreed to transfer this over to us,” says Ivan. “We are in the process of finalising this and then we will be looking to the community to see how they want to develop the land. This will hopefully be fairly soon and will really benefit the community.”

The Trust is involved with the Peatland Actions Project Officer, Ben Inglis-Grant, in identifying areas of peatland that can be restored, and is carrying out feasibility studies on these areas at present. The Trust is also a member of the Lewis & Harris Deer Management Group, which has set out a plan to manage the deer on the island. This plan can be seen on the Association of Deer Management Groups’ website http://www.deer-management.co.uk/dmgs/deer-management-
groups/deer-management-group-map/harris-and-
lewis-dmg/

Community Fund

Through saving small amounts of income over the last four years the Trust has now been able to create a Community Fund for organisations within the community to apply to. “For the first year there is approximately £20,000 in this fund so the Trust has decided to accept applications for up to £500. Each application will be considered on its own merits. If an organisation within the community would like to apply they can request an application by emailing admin@urras-bharabhais.org where one will then be emailed out.”

“Although the Trust faces challenges in funding for its projects, the small amounts of income that are coming in, we are looking at the best way to use these to benefit the community and help make the community a better place” Ivan concludes.

First day of online hospital

By Annie Delin

Western Isles Hospital had a successful first day of remote consultations on Tuesday 24 March, with outpatient appointments operating using the NHS NearMe video system. All GP Practices, hospitals and other care settings across Scotland have been asked to increase use of remote consultations by telephone or video. It will mean most people can receive urgent health care and advice from their own home – a crucial step to help reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

NHS NearMe operates from your home, so there is no need to visit the surgery or hospital. NHS Western Isles Quality Improvement Coordinator, Elizabeth Fowler, said; “This scaling up of Near Me services, as part of the COVID-19 response, offers our patients quick and easy access to health care and advice from their own home – a crucial step to help reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).”

“I already had an appointment fixed for the respiratory clinic on Tuesday and, as the date approached, I was convinced it would be cancelled because of the current situation. I even considered cancelling it myself, as I’ve already been in self-isolation for 10 days.”

“Instead I was told that Dr David Ross would conduct the clinic using NearMe. I was told to follow the link from the NHS Western Isles home page (and at https://www.wihb.scot.nhs.uk/attend-anything/index.html) to start my appointment.”

“You need to be at a computer or with your tablet set up to face you. The software on your own computer asks permission to use the camera and microphone. Make sure the volume is on so that you can hear what is being said.”

“At the appointment time, I clicked on the ‘start video call’ button. You fill in your name and date of birth and the name of the doctor you are expecting to see (it’s on your appointment letter) and then you wait, looking at your own face on the screen. At least that gives you time to fix your hair and move the screen around to get a clear picture!”

“After a short wait, a nurse/receptionist appears on the screen and checks who you are to see and at what time. She’s a real person and she is at the hospital in Stornoway. She puts you into a ‘virtual waiting room’ and some music is played with a message on the screen to show that you are waiting.”

“Dr Ross appeared on screen. To my relief my own picture disappeared into a small box in the corner, so I could stop feeling self-conscious. And luckily the first question he asked was ‘what do you do for a living?’.”

“That allowed me to say that I was a journalist and hoped to write up this experience. I asked permission to take a picture and he agreed.”

“My only negative comments were around the uncertainty of how the whole thing would work. None of us are familiar and easy with remote technology and it’s reassuring, once you’ve done it, to know what will happen next time.”

“That’s why I wanted to share how it worked with readers, so you know what to expect and how it will work. In these difficult times, we’re all going to have to learn new tricks. If I can do it, anyone can.”
Scottish Crofting Federation

Getting help on the croft

By Patrick Krause

This month’s column will of course be dominated by one thing as it affects most of what we do now.

May I start by saying that I hope that you reading this are well and that all your loved ones are too.

Crofting is not easy at the best of times and there are always issues that have to be overcome – crofters are good at this. But this current situation is exacerbating any usual problems and creating more.

SCF will be sending out a survey to members asking for information that we feed into Scottish Government contingency planning, so please look out for it and let us know what you are experiencing.

So far animal feed seems to be getting to all areas and it is hopefully not too long before some will be seeing the green shoots coming up. Lambing is imminent and help is probably of major concern to many; relatives and friends who usually come to muck in not being able to travel. We are talking to Scottish Government about lifting restrictions on travel for those who can do it safely and who are going to assist in lambing or other help on the crofts. Animal welfare and food production are at stake here.

The situation can become critical if you the crofter falls ill. The urgency of this is appreciated and work is being done on a central government run ‘hub’ that can be contacted to get help.

Also, whilst department local offices (SGRPID) are no longer occupied, a phone system is in place to take calls on an answer system, and someone will get back to you to help with any issues you have.

Many crofters will feel the lack of income mostly from empty holiday accommodation. There is a scheme being set up whereby self-employed people can claim 80% of lost revenue. Information on this can be found on the UK government website. You do not need to apply for it, HMRC will contact you if you are eligible.

Crofters are experiencing difficulties with animals that are ready for slaughter by abattoirs are no longer taking private kills. This is being raised with Scottish Government as it too will rapidly become a financial and welfare issue.

Everyone will be suffering the anguish and anxiety the virus is causing. Our mental health is often overlooked in a situation like this as we tend to focus on the danger to our physical wellbeing. But our mental wellbeing is just as important, and we are currently being put under an abnormal amount of strain. RSABI supports people from Scottish agriculture emotionally, practically and financially in times of need. They provide an essential service in real support, both material and in having someone to talk things through with. Don’t be shy to contact them on 0300 111 4166 If they can’t directly provide the support needed, they generally know someone who can.

And crofters are very good at helping each other, something that is essential for living in crofting areas. There has never been a time more important to show the spirit of a good neighbour.
As the COVID–19 cloud hovers menacingly over the world, causing death and despair wherever it settles, it is not even possible to write a cookery column without reference to this rampant, international, life-threatening menace. As Coronavirus ravages our world, many commentators have likened the virus and its impacts to the challenges of WW2 but there is a huge difference between events in 1940 and 2020 and it is in that this war we are fighting an invisible enemy. This is a viral war fought not with guns, bombs or rockets but with medical advice, national self discipline, new social behaviours and, hopefully soon, a breakthrough vaccine. This is not a war between nations, as most were in the past, but a world pandemic war taking in all humanity with inculcable economic, social and psychological fall out. As panic buying grips a selfish sector of our community almost like an insane, hoarding virus, it is inevitable that there will be some food shortages in the weeks to come. Bizarrely, supermarket shelves first of all were emptied of toilet rolls as if one could use them as an ingredient in any recipe. How would these toilet roll grabbers have survived WW2 when servicemen were rationed to three sheets per day? As the WW2 analogies with Coronavirus roll over us, it is interesting to reflect on how communities in Britain coped with a food rationing regime 80 years ago. As food production and food supply chains became detailed all around us, some essentials will become scarcer in the next few weeks or even months. Rationing was introduced in Britain on 8 January 1940 and continued, well after the end of the war for some items, until 1954. During this time a new government department was set up called the Ministry of Food and it effectively monitored food production and supply until it was disbanded in 1958. Initially, only bacon, butter and sugar were rationed but by 1942 many other food products were also rationed including scarcer meat, milk, cheese, eggs and cooking fats. The typical weekly food ration for an adult included the following and could only be obtained using ration coupons. Bacon and ham 4 oz (114g) Other meat might amount to the equivalent of two chops. Butter 2oz (57g) Milk 3 pints Sugar 8oz (228g) Preserves 1 pound (455g) Every two months. Eggs 1 plus an allowance of dried egg powder. Sweets 12oz (342g) every four weeks. Eventually, most food was covered by the rationing system with the exception of fruit and vegetables although there were huge shortages of fruit in winter. Extra rations were given to key workers such as underground mine workers, members of the Women’s Land Army and the Armed Forces. There were no freezers or frozen foods in these days as we have today which made it harder to cope with food shortages. It was easier to supplement basic rations in rural and island communities where people kept their own stock. In our own islands, in these far off days, most households would have a cow and usually hens so dairy produce was not so difficult to obtain. Sheep were killed in the autumn and, occasionally, a bolt of sugar was slaughtered and shared out amongst all those in the village. Those living close to sea had access to fish. Salt herring, stored in wooden barrels, was the traditional winter staple and most crofters grew their own potatoes so hunger was kept at bay due to their self sufficient efforts. Many weird and wonderful concoctions were created using the minimum of ingredients. Dishes like potato milk puddling, Lord Woolton’s vegetarian pie in pastry and the National Wholesome loaf which used all the grain including the husks were all staples in the battle against hunger. We might all need to tighten our belts more in the coming weeks and store cupboard produce will come in very handy to create cheap but tasty meals. Here are three simple meals that can be thrown together using basic store items.

**Tomato and Lentil Soup**

- 2 onions, chopped and peeled.
- 2 carrots, chopped and peeled.
- 1 tin of chopped tomatoes
- A large mug of lentils, rinsed. (The lentils could be soaked overnight in water.)
- 3 oz vegetable oil.
- 2 stock cubes made up to 1.5 litres with water.
- Small pinch of dried chilli flakes (Optional).
- Salt and pepper to taste.

Sauté the onions without browning for about 10 minutes. Add all the other ingredients, including the stock cubes and water. Bring to the boil and simmer for an hour or until the lentils are fully cooked.

**Lentil Curry / Jarka Dahl**

- 8oz/250g rinsed and drained lentils, green or red.
- 1.5 pints/850ml water
- 8oz/250g finely chopped onion.
- 1 teaspoon chilli powder or more if you like it spicier.
- 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil/ 60g ghee.
- 1.5 pints/850ml water
- 8oz/250g rinsed and drained lentils, green or red.
- 1 teaspoon cumin powder.
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander. (If you don’t have these spices in the store cupboard, just use curry powder.)
- 1 teaspoon salt.
- For extra bite, you can add a green chilli, with or without the seeds.

Place the lentils in a large saucepan with the water, chilli, salt and half the chopped onion.

Bring to the boil. In the meantime, fry the remaining onion with the ginger and sliced chilli if using for a few minutes until golden brown. Add the garlic at the end as you don’t want to burn it as it turns bitter. Add the mixture to the lentils, stir through, add the curry spices and continue to cook slowly until the lentils are soft.

If necessary, add more water, or, if there is too much liquid, raise the heat and boil it away but watch for the lentils sticking to the bottom of the pan. It’s better to cook them gently, but thoroughly. This makes a delicious supper on its own.

**Baked Apples**

This is a simple, traditional but delicious dish to end a meal.

- 6 eating apples. Cut a shallow lid from the top of the apple with a sharp knife.
- A handful of sultanas.
- 2 tablespoons light Muscovado sugar.
- 1 teaspoon sugar.
- 2 oz butter.
- 2 teaspoons Demerara sugar.

Turn the oven to 200C/180 fan. Remove the “lid” from the apple top and then remove the core of the apple with a corer. Mix the sultanas, Muscovado and cinnamon in a bowl. Stand the apples up side by side in a baking dish. Stuff each apple with the sultana mix and replace the “lid.” Add a little slice of butter to the top of the apple and sprinkle a little of the Demerara sugar over each apple.

Bake in the oven for around 20 minutes or until the apples are soft. Serve with custard or ice cream.

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**Coronavirus Cookery**

By John Dory

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It’s an inescapable fact of life that, whatever your situation, there will always be someone doing better than you and many doing worse.

As I write this, we’re ‘locked down’ in our house in Ug. We remain within the spirit of the new rules although not exactly following the detail as, unlikely to be within two metres of another when we go outside, we can roam the clifts and moors at will. City dwellers are more constrained. We have a health service which is struggling but will probably cope imperceptibly. Food is available.

In Afghanistan things are not the same. Many Afghans work or have refugee status in Iran which has experienced one of the most extensive outbreaks of Covid-19 yet. Every day now, thousands of returnees are pouring across the common border with Afghanistan and a severe outbreak can’t be avoided. There’s no NHS. Hospitals are small and only in the main cities, which isn’t where most Afghans live. We have 28 doctors per 10,000 people; they have 2.7. Nurses are rarer than hen’s teeth and so are respirators.

It seems certain that many more will die than in UK. It’s cress to think that this is acceptable because it’s the ‘third world’. The death of a parent or grandparent is a very similar experience to us all and isn’t dependent upon our wealth or nationality. Family bonds are closer there than in UK.

We know that it isn’t unusual that some of our students regularly go hungry because they can’t afford basic food necessities – many exist with a food budget significantly less than £1 a day. We have some shortages but, so far, very few are suffering in the same way as those in Afghanistan where shortages have led to food prices rising rapidly, around 30% in the last month.

So LNF Trustees have agreed that we will help our students over the next few months with their day-to-day living expenses. The details have to your situation, there will always be someone doing better than you and many doing worse.

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Library Update!

Our branch libraries may be closed and the mobiles are off-road at the moment, but we are still working in the shadows to make sure you get access to some great books to read and listen to help while away the hours!

If anyone has a library book or other item out at home, worry not! These can stay with you until we are open again and there will be no charges or overdues.

If you have any queries, or would like to join the library to access our eResources, please get in touch.

We are unable to visit households to deliver books at the moment, but if any volunteers would like to collect Book Parcels for neighbours, please get in touch!

01851 822744
library.enquiries@cne-siar.gov.uk

Ideas for Parents & Families

There are loads of terrific resources out there for early years and school children of all ages! We will soon be working on guidelines of what you can do throughout the day, so keep tabs on this page and our social media!

Collins Big Cat—FREE resources for ALL ages to help learning from home. eBooks, quizzes, activities, learning cards, maths and revision. For children from 3 years to secondary school age.

collins.co.uk/pages/support-learning-at-home

Family Zone from the National Literacy Trust—FREE reading and writing resources, audio books, videos, activities and competitions. For children from birth to 12 years.

literacytrust.org.uk/family-zone/

The Bookbug Song & Rhyme Library for Babies, Toddlers and Pre-schoolers

The Scottish Book Trust has gathered an amazing collection of Gaelic and English rhymes together. You can find songs and rhymes to suit different moods, occasions or different times of the day. Download the app to help you play and sing with your wee one!

www.scottishbooktrust.com/songs-and-rhymes

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Encyclopedia Britannica
Britannica Images
PLANNING APPLICATIONS DURING MARCH 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

Repositioning of the existing feed barge, Lochs

The Scottish Salmon Company has applied for planning permission to re-position the existing feed barge at Marine Site Meò Na Ceannabhàin Fish Farm, Loch Oidhchain, Gràvir, Lochs.

New agricultural building, Lochs

Donnie MacLeod of Crosswinds, Gavryard, has applied for planning permission to erect an agricultural building at 9 Gavryard Lochs. Work is to include creating an access. The building is to be 13.7 metres long, 6 metres wide and 3.8 metres tall.

Change of use of land, Lochs

Alex Healey of Mo Dhachaidh, Cleasrock Road, Lueboith, Lochs, has applied for planning permission to change the use of the agricultural land at 1 Cleasrock Road, Lueboith, Lochs, to extend the curtilage of the existing dwelling.

Four new houses, Barvas

Alex Murray (construction) Ltd has applied for planning permission to erect four single-storey detached houses at Loch Street, Barvas. The houses are to have two bedrooms, a kitchen/dining room, a living room and a bathroom and a porch. Work is to include creating an access, parking suitable for eight cars, and installing four air source heat pumps.

Change of use of barn, Valtos

Margaret Knight of 38 Cliff, Valtos, has applied for planning permission to change the use of the barn at Studio 36, Cliff, Valtos, to an artists studio.

New house, Coll

Andrew Maclean of 10 Tong Park has applied for planning permission to build a house at 418 Coll.

New steel building, Stornoway

Angus Campbell Ltd has applied for planning permission to erect a steel building at Cannery Road, Stornoway. The building is to be 12.2 metres long, 6.1 metres wide and 4.5 metres tall and is to be used for storage.

Extension to building, Barvoe

Derek MacLeod of 36 Barvoe has applied for planning permission to extend the building at 36 Fivepenny, Barvoe. The extension is to be 5 metres by 4.2 metres and is to be covered in block roughcast. The roof is to be made of box profile, and the windows and doors are to be plastic.

New house, Laxdale

Kirsty MacLeod of 2a Guershadher, Laxdale, has applied for planning permission to build a house at 2 Guershadher, Laxdale. The house is to consist of three bedrooms, a kitchen/dining area, a living room, two bathrooms, a study and a utility room. Work is to include creating an access and parking suitable for two cars.

New polycrub, Barvas

Allan Kerr of 13 Upper Barvas has applied for planning permission to erect a polycrub at 13 Upper Barvas. The polycrub is to be 12.8 metres long, 4.2 metres wide and 2.6 metres tall. It is to be constructed from wooden boarding and clear polycarbonate sheeting.

Change of use of mill, new office, Stornoway

AMK Plant Hire has applied for planning permission to change the use of the former mill site at 28-40 Inaclete road to a haulage yard with vehicle repair shop. Work is to include erecting a new office building with air-source heat pump and creating two new accesses onto Bells Road.

New shed and access, Point

Calum Macritchie of 8A Aignish has applied for planning permission to erect a shed and create an access at 14 Aignish, Point. The shed is to be 13 metres long, 10 metres wide and 4.7 metres tall. The shed will have three rooms inside and is to be used for implements and food storage. Work is to include creating a new access and parking suitable for two cars.

New polycarbonate building, Barvas

Jo-Ann McCannachie of 8 Loch Street, Barvas, has applied for planning permission to build a polycarbonate building at 8 Loch Street, Barvas. The building is to be 12 metres long, 4 metres wide and 3 metres tall. The walls and roof are to be made of translucent polycarbonate and the building is to be used as a polycrub for growing produce.

Replacement of 11kV voltage regulators

Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution plc has applied for planning permission to replace the 11kV voltage regulators (overhead line of less than 132kV) at Overhead Line, Melbost, Barvoe.

New house, Uig

Jen Topping of 25 St Philips Road, London, has applied for planning permission to erect a new house at 8A Timsgarry, Uig. Work is to include creating a new access.

New house, Coll

David Mackenzie of 8 Lower Sandwick has applied for planning permission to erect a house with attached garage at 46A Coll. The 1.5 storey house is to consist of five bedrooms, a kitchen/dining/living area, a lounge, utility room, three bathrooms, a gallery sitting area and a dressing room off the master bedroom. Work is to include creating a new access and parking suitable for two cars.

Agricultural feed and equipment store, Sandwick

Andrew Mackenzie of 17A North Street, Sandwick, has applied for planning permission to build an agricultural feed and equipment store at 17A North Street, Sandwick. The store is to be 12.19 metres long, 9.14 metres wide and 4.75 metres tall.

New house, Uig

Roderick Macdonald of 90 Fauldburn, Edinburgh, has applied for planning permission to erect a house at 6 Crowlista, Uig. Work is to include creating an access.

New sun room and balcony, Lochs

Luca Baserga of Cromore Old School, Cromore, South Lochs, has applied for planning permission to build a new sun room and balcony at Cromore Old School, Cromore, South Lochs.

New Fence, Stornoway

Douglas Shaw of 17 Perceval Road, Stornoway, has applied for planning permission to erect a two-metre-high timber post and rail boundary fence around the private dwelling at 17 Perceval Road, Stornoway.

Renovation works, Callanish

Ms Emma Rennie has applied for planning permission to renovate the house at 18 Callanish. Work is to include removal of the existing room structure, internal partitions and fittings, removal of concrete lintel over kitchen, and the replacement of timber lintels at doors/windows with doors and windows made secure.

New house, Tong

Daniel Duffy has applied for planning permission to erect a house at 13A Tong.

New polycrub, Uig

Sarah Taylor-Gerloch of 3A Aird Uig has applied for planning permission to erect a polycrub at 1 Enaclete, Uig. The polycrub is to be 12 metres long and four metres wide and is to be constructed of polycarbonate sheeting.

HARRIS

Demolition of Tarbert Stores

Mrs Chirsty and Mr Angus Macleod of Hotel Hebrids have applied for planning permission to demolish Tarbert Stores, a listed building, at Pier Road, Tarbert. The Assessment of the Existing Condition demonstrates that Tarbert Stores is incapable of meaningful repair. The report demonstrates that the necessary structural safety repairs and required upgrading of the building structure and fabric to comply with current building regulations cannot be achieved without significant alterations, which would result in the complete reconstruction of any original fabric at Tarbert Stores.

Two new EV charging points

Paul Finnegan of Seafall, Scalpay, has applied for planning permission to install two EV charging points in the car park at Isle Of Harris Distillers Ltd Distillery, Tarbert.

New storage warehouses, Ardhasag

Isle of Harris Distillers Ltd has applied for planning permission to construct three new storage warehouses at 8 Ardhasag. Work is to include creating parking spaces for twelve more cars, bringing the total number of spaces to sixteen.

Finding the right number for your council services...

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Major Investment Projects | 01851 822656 |


[www.ione-siar.gov.uk](http://www.ione-siar.gov.uk)

[www.ione-siar.gov.uk](http://www.ione-siar.gov.uk)

Automated Payment Line | 0300 323 0090 |

Ag Oibar Càmhla airson na h-Eileanan Siar
Working Together for the Western Isles
Coronavirus (COVID-19) is the illness caused by a new strain of coronavirus first identified in Wuhan city, China. It can cause a cough and/or a fever/high temperature.

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. This is a rapidly changing situation which is being monitored carefully.

**People at higher risk of severe illness**

Some people are at higher risk of developing severe illness with COVID-19. These people should strictly follow social distancing measures. Their household and other contacts should also strictly follow social distancing advice.

### Higher Risk Groups

This group includes people who are:
- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 with an underlying health condition, including anyone given the flu vaccination each year on medical grounds
- pregnant

Underlying health conditions include:
- chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
- chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
- chronic kidney disease
- chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
- chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson’s disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), a learning disability or cerebral palsy
- diabetes
- problems with your spleen – for example, sickle cell disease or if you have had your spleen removed
- a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy
- being seriously overweight (a BMI of 40 or above)

### Extremely High Risk Groups

This group includes people who:
- have had solid organ transplants
- have cancer and are receiving active chemotherapy or radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
- have cancers of the blood or bone marrow, such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
- have severe chest conditions such as cystic fibrosis or severe asthma and severe COPD
- have rare diseases that significantly increase the risk of infections such as SCID and homozygous sickle cell
- are receiving immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
- are receiving other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- are receiving immunosuppression therapies that significantly increase risk of infection
- are pregnant with significant heart disease (congenital or acquired)

I'm not sure if I fall into one of the more vulnerable groups - what should I do?

If you have an underlying health condition or take medicines regularly but you’re not sure whether or not you fall into one of the more vulnerable groups, you should call your GP practice and say you want advice about your underlying condition or your medicines.

People who are considered to be extremely vulnerable to severe illness will receive a letter giving them further advice, but if you remain unsure, contact your GP.

**Symptoms of a COVID-19 infection**

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are a new continuous cough and/or a fever/high temperature (37.8°C or greater).

- A new continuous cough is where you:
  - have a new cough that's lasted for an hour
  - have had 3 or more episodes of coughing in 24 hours
  - are coughing more than usual

If you have a new continuous cough, you should contact your GP practice and say you have concerns about your symptoms. They will help you to decide what to do next. You should also self-isolate for 7 days.

If you have a fever/high temperature and any of the other symptoms of COVID-19 or you are at high risk of severe illness, you should call your GP practice or NHS 111 for advice.

Find out more at nhsinform.scot/coronavirus
Coronavirus

Isolate your household
Stay at home

If you or anyone in your household has a high temperature or a new and continuous cough – even if it’s mild

☑️ Everyone in your household must stay at home for 14 days and keep away from others.

❌ DO NOT go to your GP, hospital or pharmacy.

☑️ Go to nhsinform.scot to check your symptoms and follow the specialist medical advice. Only call NHS 24 (111) if you can’t get online or your symptoms worsen.

☑️ Protect older people and those with existing health conditions by avoiding contact.

Find out how to isolate your household at nhsinform.scot/coronavirus
A high temperature is feeling hot to the touch on your chest or back (you don’t need to measure your temperatures). You may feel warm, cold or shivery.

Some people will have more serious symptoms, including pneumonia or difficulty breathing, which might require admission to hospital.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19
If you’ve developed a new continuous cough and/or a fever/high temperature in the last 7 days, stay at home for 7 days from the start of your symptoms even if you think your symptoms are mild. Do not go to your GP, pharmacy or hospital. Read our stay at home guidance for households with possible coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

You should phone 111 if:
• your symptoms worsen during home isolation, especially if you’re in a high or extremely high risk group
• breathlessness develops or worsens, particularly if you’re in a high or extremely high risk group
• your symptoms haven’t improved in 7 days

If you have a medical emergency, phone 999 and tell them you have COVID-19 symptoms.

Do the people I live with need to take any action?
If you live with other people and have symptoms, they’ll need to stay at home for 14 days from the start of your symptoms even if they don’t have symptoms themselves.

If they develop symptoms within the 14 days, they need to stay at home for 7 days from the day their symptoms began. They should do this even if it takes them over the 14-day isolation period.

Your whole household should follow our stay at home guidance for households with possible coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

Get an isolation note to give to your employer
You can send an isolation note to your employer as proof you need to stay off work because of COVID-19.

You don’t need to get a note from a GP.

Can’t get an isolation note
You need to contact your employer if you require to shield from COVID-19 due to underlying conditions but are currently well.

Please don’t phone 111 or your GP.

Is there anything I can do to prepare?
You should start planning now for how you would manage a period of self-isolation just in case everyone in your household needs to stay at home.

Your plan might include:
• talking to your neighbours and family and exchanging phone numbers of household contacts
• making a plan for those in your home who are considered vulnerable
• creating a contact list with phone numbers of neighbours, schools, employer, pharmacist and your GP
• setting up online shopping accounts if possible
• ensuring adequate supplies of any regular medication, but do not over order
• talking to any children or young people in your household as they may be worried about COVID-19

Testing for COVID-19
Generally, you’ll only be tested for COVID-19 if you have a serious illness that requires admission to hospital.

How COVID-19 is spread
Because it’s a new illness, we don’t know exactly how the virus spreads from person to person. Similar viruses spread by droplets in coughs and sneezes.

How to avoid catching COVID-19
• You can reduce your risk of getting and spreading the infection by:
  • avoiding direct hand contact with your eyes, nose and mouth
  • maintaining good hand hygiene
  • avoiding direct contact with people that have a respiratory illness and avoiding using their personal items such as their mobile phone
  • covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing with disposable tissues and disposing of them in the nearest waste bin after use
  • following the stay at home guidance for households with possible coronavirus (COVID-19) infection if someone in your household has symptoms
  • making sure everyone in your household follows the Government advice to stay at home as much as possible and to stay away from other people
  • following the stay at home advice if someone in your household has symptoms
  • making sure everyone in your household follows the social distancing advice, especially anyone in a vulnerable group
  • helping those at extremely high risk of severe illness with COVID-19 to follow the shielding advice

Wash your hands regularly
Wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol hand sanitiser before eating and drinking, and after coughing, sneezing and going to the toilet.

Treating COVID-19
Currently, there’s no vaccine and no specific treatment for the virus.

Ibuprofen
There is currently no strong evidence that ibuprofen can make coronavirus (COVID-19) worse.

But until we have more information, take paracetamol to treat the symptoms of coronavirus, unless your doctor has told you paracetamol is not suitable for you.

If you are already taking ibuprofen or another non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) on the advice of a doctor, do not stop taking it without checking first.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) helpline
If you don’t have symptoms and are looking for general information, phone our free helpline on 0800 028 2816.

The helpline is open from 8.00am to 10.00pm each day.

Further information can be found online at www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus

CORONAVIRUS Help us to help others
If you call 111 with mild symptoms you will be stopping us from helping the most unwell and vulnerable patients

Advice for mild symptoms and isolation notes are available at www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus

Only very unwell people with coronavirus should call 111

Your GP can help with non coronavirus matters, as normal

Coronavirus: Can you help?

HEALTHCARE
• Are you a recently retired healthcare professional?
• Has your registration recently elapsed?
• Do you have the skills, knowledge and experience needed?
• Would you be willing to help out if required?

If you answered yes to any of these questions then email: wi-hb.HR@nhs.net or call 01851 762009 with your details.

SOCIAL CARE
• Do you have experience of working in the social care sector?
• If you do not have experience, do you have strong values, dedication and a willingness to learn?
• Would you be willing to work if required?

If you answered yes to any of these questions then email: human.resources@cne-siar.gov.uk or call 01851 822606 with your details.
Stay at home guidance

Stop the spread of coronavirus

- **Plan ahead** and ask your employer, friends and family to ensure that you can successfully stay at home.

- **Stay at least 2 metres** (about 3 steps) away from other people in your home whenever possible.

- **Use separate facilities** in your home as much as possible. Sleep alone and use a separate bathroom, if available.

- **Have food, medication and other supplies delivered to you.**

- **Do not share** cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding or other items with other people in your home.

- **All waste**, including used tissues, should be put in a rubbish bag and then placed in a second bin bag and tied.

- **Stay away from vulnerable individuals** such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions as much as possible.

- **Do not have visitors** in your home.

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**Wash your hands more often and for 20 seconds**

**Use soap and water or a hand sanitiser when you:**

- Get home or into work
- Blow your nose, sneeze or cough
- Eat or handle food

**Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue away straight away.**
HNS Western Isles has produced a useful factsheet offering helpful advice on managing anxiety as a result of the ongoing coronavirus situation.

Dr Maggie Watts, Director of Public Health, said “Health boards have understandably been focusing on ensuring hospital and community services are prepared for our response to coronavirus, but we are keen, alongside our mental health services to remind people of the importance of looking after our own and others mental health during this time.

“The first thing is to say is that it is normal to feel feeling stressed and anxious right now. The vast majority of us have never experienced anything like this before but there are steps we can all take to help us cope much better in what is an anxious time.’

Alison Robertson, NHS Western Isles Clinical Psychologist, said “The uncertainty in our lives at the moment can be very hard to cope with and whilst it is hard to switch off, there are some simple steps we can take to keep ourselves mentally well and resilient - and that can make a big difference. It is important we all take time to look after ourselves and each other.”

**How to manage our anxiety about coronavirus (COVID-19)**

This factsheet offers useful advice for anyone who may be feeling anxious about coronavirus.

Firstly know that what you are feeling is totally normal.

Most of us have never experienced anything like this before in our own lives, our communities or our workplaces. That is true for everyone right around the world. But know that it is normal to be feeling stressed, anxious and scared right now.

Most of our anxiety can be attributed to the uncertainty, especially in a world where situations seem to change so fast. We as human beings hate uncertainty and are looking for security and answers. Because we cannot get this our anxiety is likely to be high. Again this is normal and it’s ok to feel like that.

Anxiety can often make us physically feel different too – and it’s important that we take time to acknowledge that. We may worry that these physical symptoms are coronavirus and that is normal too.

NHS Inform offers the most up-to-date information on coronavirus and to view, visit: www.rhsinform.scot

**What CAN we control? And what CAN’T we?**

- Allow yourself to feel what you are feeling. It’s ok not to feel ok.
- Different people will feel different things and that is OK too. It’s important just to be able to be honest with those around us and acknowledge that we each have our own ways of coping.
- It is tempting to look to social media or the TV for help, and for hope. However we know that this can often make things worse. So if you are going to do this, limit the time you watch the news.
- Find out what people in your local community are doing to ask for help or support one another. Try facebook or WeLoveStornoway.
- Use trusted sources such as www.rhsinform.scot which have latest information and help support.
- Seek out good news stories and consider how you might be able to support or keep in touch with others.
- We cannot switch off our anxious thoughts and feelings but remember you are in control and you can find ways to cope with them.

**How to look after your own mental health**

- The key thing is to be kind to yourself and recognise that your body and your mind need that right now.
- Eat well, for mind and body. Take exercise when and where you can, at a distance from others. Keep a routine, pace yourself. Look after yourself.
- If you are not coping, recognise that that is ok and do not feel bad. Talk to others about your experience and how you are feeling. Be open and honest. Others are probably feeling the way you are too.
- Be kind to others.
- Use this time to do things that you enjoy doing, think of all the projects you have put off, all the books you have not had time to read, the box sets you’d like to watch, the garden if you have one. This is a great time to do all the things you have not had time to do for yourself before.
- Be in touch with people you like and trust - use the time to be with those you love and focus on how you can make the time feel positive together.

The following are some free websites, online therapies and Apps you can also use to help you manage your feelings...

When in self-isolation affected by coronavirus

- www.mind.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak
- www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaville/mental-health-considerations.pdf?

**Useful apps**

- Mind Shift
- SAM (Self Help for Anxiety Management)
- Happily
- Headspace
- Calm
- Smiling Mind

**General self-help about managing your own mental health and sleep**

- www.samaritans.org/about-mental-health/self-help-and-wellbeing
- http://mentalhealthsupport.co.uk/hs/

**Online self-help programs you can access to help support your mental health and sleep**

- www.beatingtheblues.co.uk
- www.sleepio.com/
- And for help with more severe anxiety and depression from an on line therapist:
  - www.iesohealth.com/en-gb

**There are many other apps you could try which could be helpful but these are some suggestions to try or you may find your own that you like better.**

**There are also many organisations which can provide support which you might find helpful.**

**NHS Western Isles NHS Board**

**Bòrd SSN Nan Eilean Siar**

**Western Isles NHS Board**

**Version 1**

**Date produced: March 2020**

**Produced by: Consultant Clinical Psychologist, NHS Western Isles. Disclaimer**

The content of this factsheet is intended to augment, not replace, information provided by your clinician. It is not intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Reading this information does not create or replace a doctor-patient relationship or consultation. If required, please contact your doctor or other health care provider to assist you to interpret any of this information, or in applying the information to your individual needs.
**By Katie Macleod**

Scottish Apprenticeship Week, held this year from 2nd – 6th March, is an annual celebration of the diversity which makes work-based learning beneficial for individuals, employers, and the economy. In the Western Isles, the celebrations were launched with the Applied Learning Awards Ceremony on 2nd March, recognising the successes of learners in the islands.

“The Applied Learning Awards Ceremony celebrated the achievements of all our learners,” says Dolina Smith, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar’s Apprenticeship Manager. “There were learners from Employability, Opportunities for All, First Steps, Modern Apprenticeships, our Graduate Apprenticeships, and our generic apprenticeships, as well as any member of staff who has completed a qualification – either for registration, if they’re in childcare or health and social care – or those doing workforce development.”

The event at Stornoway Town Hall included a prize giving, cake cutting, and speeches from Bernard Chisholm, Director of Education, as well as Councillors Angus McCormack and Alasdair Macleod. Angus Maclennan, Head Teacher at e-Sgoil, acted as MC, and local MSP Alasdair Allan presented the learners with their certificates and took photos with prize winners.

Of the nearly 300 participants who completed an employability certificate or qualification in the last year, 125 attended the ceremony on the day. They included the two young people who received the Inverness College course award – Nathaniel Wicks, Mechanic of the Year, and Elena Macintyre, Hairdresser of the Year – and Hannah Macleod from Sir E Scott School, who won the Donald Stewart Memorial Trust Award for achievement and overcoming difficulties to achieve her personal goal of completing a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) Level 2 in Childcare.

Also on stage were two young people from the Syrian Resettlement Project who the Comhairle has supported through their employability programme: Mohammad Edris, who completed an apprenticeship and moved into self-employment; and Ahmed Dliwati, who joined the Repographics Service after also completing an apprenticeship.

And cutting the celebratory cake alongside Dolina, Angus, and the Councillors were Eilidh Jayne Macleod and Kirsty Laing. Eilidh is the first Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) Apprentice to complete a degree, and is now going on to start teacher training, while Kirsty Laing completed her Masters in Business and Finance with a distinction in less than six months.

The awards ceremony was a snapshot of the broader picture of applied learning in the Western Isles, which has seen the Comhairle’s apprenticeship programme expand rapidly. The programme offers apprenticeships in multiple industries, and are a mix of Modern Apprenticeships, which are funded by Skills Development Scotland, and Comhairle funded apprenticeships run independently from SDS. Qualifications are available at a wide variety of levels, from SVQ to post-graduate degree, and all apprenticeships offer a structured Gaelic tuition programme at either Beginner, Intermediate, or Advanced levels, thanks to GLIAF Funding from Bord na Gaidhlig.

“The work we’ve been doing over the last few years has very much been centred around workforce development,” explains Dolina. “We’re now working closely with the private sector to ensure that they’re getting the support and the information they need to ensure that they take on apprentices, and that they accredit their own workforce.”

Five priority industries in the islands have been identified in recent months as having a skills gap, partly due to an aging workforce, and partly due to difficulties in recruitment. To assist businesses in the Food and Drink and Hospitality, Social Care, Childcare, Construction, and Motor Vehicle industries, working groups have been set up locally to “ensure that we’re not going to end up with a skills gap in the future and that we’re reacting early to the needs of the community.”

On the recruitment side, the Accredited Training and Skills team are working with schools to make sure information about these and other industries are readily available. “We’re doing a lot of work with schools to make sure young people have the information they need, and know the value there can be for their future CV when they’re working in these industries,” says Dolina. “We’re trying to ensure that everyone’s got as much information as they have to make the right decision for themselves as an individual, but at the same time really supporting our growing industries.”
Councillor Roddie Mackay, the leader of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has spoken about the ongoing work being carried out by the Comhairle and other agencies across the Western Isles in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

“I am full of admiration for the ongoing response work being carried out by our staff and those in other agencies, including - but not limited to - Public Health, Department of Work and Pensions and Hebridean Housing Partnership.

“This is likely to be the most challenging set of circumstances that most of us have ever faced in our lives. However, by working together and following advice - particularly to stay at home unless absolutely essential - I am confident that we are well prepared and that we will come through this stronger as a community.

“No one is complacent, as no one knows what extent we will be affected, but all our work last week, this week and next week is about effective preparation.

“My main message to each and every one of you, is that you look after yourselves, and look after each other.

“The following are just some of the key steps that we have undertaken in response to the crisis.”

Volunteers

We have launched an online form and Contact Centre (01851 600 501) to collect details of individuals and community groups throughout the Western Isles looking to provide volunteering support during COVID-19.

The Contact Centre will operate Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm and enable the Comhairle to match volunteers against the needs of individuals and families in our communities.

We would also urge anyone in need of help or support to contact our Customer Services team in the usual manner on 01851 600 501. We are anticipating a high number of calls, therefore we would ask for your patience

Education & Children's Services

Education & Children's Services are pleased to report that out of 313 teachers, 160 have volunteered to be deployed anywhere across Comhairle. The EIS have been - and continue to - be very supportive of the work of the Comhairle. We are working alongside them to ensure that the necessary support is available to our children’s families.

We are anticipating a high number of calls, therefore we would ask for your patience.

Provision for Key Workers

It is currently expected that the period of closure announced by the Scottish Government will extend into term four. It is not clear at this time how long closure restrictions will last. We will review how the hub approach to provision operated during the holidays and are likely to continue that approach in term four.

Vulnerable Pupils

The Scottish Government has made provision to allow councils to continue to allow children and young people with complex ASN needs and other vulnerabilities to continue to attend schools and centres where their needs are best met.

Comhairle officers have worked with schools to identify and support vulnerable young people and make provision for them.

The following are just some of the key steps that we have undertaken in response to the crisis.”

Home Care

The Home Care Service has been indirectly affected by COVID-19, in that a number of staff have had to self-isolate due to underlying health issues. Remaining staff have assumed additional hours allowing the Service to continue much as before. We are also in the process of training additional, new staff who have responded to Mr Culley’s public appeal.

“We are anticipating a high number of calls, therefore we would ask for your patience.”

Free School Meals

The Comhairle has made a commitment to make a payment of £154 to the parents of every child in P4-5s who qualify for Free School Meals, covering the period from now to 30th June 2020. In P1-3, the same payment has been made to all those in receipt of School Clothing Grants.

Education Maintenance Allowance

We recognise the importance of these payments to the young people who receive them and have made a commitment to make a single advance bulk payment to all eligible pupils to cover the time from now to 5th June. The situation will be reviewed after this date and a further payment up to 30th June 2020 may be made.

Provision will be discussed with each individual family and confirmed by the HT or senior HT.

From Tuesday 14th April, identified vulnerable pupils who have been attending at their local school will be able to access provision at the hubs unless it’s been agreed with parents to provide bespoke provision elsewhere. The provisions for vulnerable pupils are the same as the ones described above for key workers.

Business Support Grants

The Comhairle has been accepting applications since Wednesday 25th and there has already been a significant number of applications received. Staff are working through these as quickly as possible and would request that applicants do not submit multiple emails seeking updates, as we are dealing with these in the order we received them and will contact applicants as these are processed. The first payments under the scheme will be made today. This will provide support to 30 businesses.

Queries about support for businesses that are not eligible for this scheme should be directed to Business Gateway.

An online form is now available for Council Tax Reduction applications. Members of the community who experience a reduction in income, and who have capital of less than £16k, can apply.

Partnership

The Comhairle and NHS Western Isles continue to work closely in a joint response to the Covid-19 crisis. The Pandemic Resilience Group, which is multi-agency, also continues to meet regularly and is attended by the Comhairle Chief Executive and chaired by the NHS Western Isles Chief Executive. In addition, all NHS Western Isles local news updates - as well as our own - are on the special section of the Comhairle website. Rest assured will continue to work in close partnership with a range of agencies across the Western Isles and particularly our colleagues in Public Health.

Where there is demand for it, we will open additional hubs, with provisional plans to do so at Daliburgh School and Spoil an Rubha. Any changes will be communicated to key worker parents in good time.

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We have launched an online form and Contact Centre (01851 600 501) to collect details of individuals and community groups throughout the Western Isles looking to provide volunteering support during COVID-19.

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Education & Children's Services

Education & Children's Services are pleased to report that out of 313 teachers, 160 have volunteered to be deployed anywhere across Comhairle. The EIS have been - and continue to - be very supportive around this issue. 268 pupils and staff in schools over the Easter Comhairle. The EIS have been - and continue to - be very supportive of the work of the Comhairle. We are working alongside them to ensure that the necessary support is available to our children’s families.

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Comhairle officers have worked with schools to identify and support vulnerable young people and make provision for them.

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‘My main message to each and every one of you, is that you look after yourselves, and look after each other’
Introduction

As we approach the end of the first week of school closure and the imminent start of what should be the start of the Easter holidays, we wish to provide to children, young people and their families, a comprehensive briefing about the work we are undertaking to provide continuing education and support services. At this time of unprecedented challenge, we work to balance our public service duty against the public health requirements that the Coronavirus outbreak has caused.

We would like to thank all our children, parents and families for their continued support and patience as we work to build critical service provision in our schools for key workers and the most vulnerable pupils as well as implement a range of approaches to support children and parents in continuing learning remotely and online from home. We also continue to support other providers of critical public services at this time of crisis, with many education staff volunteering to deliver services to our community wherever they are required.

It is our aim to provide timeous, reliable and accurate information to parents and carers about the services and support we are offering and, if you have any further questions, contact details have been provided at the end of the briefing.

Provision for Key Workers during Easter Holidays

• During the first week of the Coronavirus school closures, the Department of Education, Skills and Children’s Services has kept a provision available for the children of key workers across our whole school estate. All our schools could be accessed by those who need them.

• The schools in the Western Isles were due to close for the Easter Holidays on Friday 27th March and reopen on Tuesday 14th April. We know, however, at this time, that many key workers will still need to access care services for their children whilst they go to work in critical roles, keeping our communities safe, healthy and functioning.

• With the information gained from our Key Worker Registration database and attendance data from this week, demand indicates that we will move to a hub model for the school holiday period. For details, please see separate display on Page 25.

• Registered key workers who need to access provision for their children should go to the identified hub for their normal school (e.g. A parent of a child from Back School should report to Laxdale School for provision during the holidays).

• In addition to the above hubs, there will be childcare provision for their own registered users at Stornoway Childcare Centre, An Cotan Nursery and Cothrom Òg.

• We would remind parents that there are three conditions to accessing key worker provision at the above schools/hubs:
  1. You can only send your child to school if you have absolutely no other childcare available and your child not attending school would mean you could not go to work.
  2. The provision can only be used for the hours that you are attending at work.
  3. You must be pre-registered to be able to use the provision (except in circumstances of emergency).

• Hub schools will issue a weekly booking form to registered users to allow you to indicate what your critical childcare needs are for the week ahead. Schools will accommodate emergency and short-notice changes to these bookings.

• There is a presumption that key workers will provide transport to and from the hub school themselves but, if there is a critical need for transport support, you can call 01851 822729 and request assistance.

Support with Entitlements and Services for Pupils and Families

• Free School Meals: The Comhairle has made a commitment to make a payment of £154 to the parents of every child in P4-6 who qualify for Free School Meals, covering the period from now to 30th June 2020. In P1-3, the same payment has been made to all those in receipt of School Clothing Grants.

• Education Maintenance Allowance: We recognise the importance of these payments to the young people who receive them and have made a commitment to make a single advance bulk payment to all eligible pupils to cover the time from now to 5th June. The situation will be reviewed after this date and a further payment up to 30th June 2020 may be made.

• Access to Free Sanitary Products: Movement restrictions and social distancing requirements mean that our young people may be unable to access free sanitary products normally available in schools. This is compounded by shortages and challenging access to supermarkets at the moment. To address this, the Comhairle has prepared packs of sanitary products that will be distributed by post to any female pupils in receipt of Clothing Grants.

• Accessing Social Work, CLD and Other Support Services: The services of social work and Community Learning and Development continue to be available to support families but they are likely to be delivered in different ways due to social distancing rules. If you are a regular user of these services, workers will be in contact with you to offer support.

SQA Exams – National Qualifications and Awards

• The Scottish Qualifications Authority has announced that there will be no exams in the summer of 2020 and that young people expecting to take examinations for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses will now not be sitting them.

• The SQA released a statement on Tuesday 24th March and it can be accessed at www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/93658.html

• A Groupcall message was issued to the parents of all pupils in S4-6 on Wednesday to provide more information.

• In the absence of exams, it is our expectation at this time that qualifications and awards will be based predominantly on estimates made by teachers about completed course work, prelims and any other assessments as well as the student’s previous attainment.

• We strongly advise that pupils in S4-6 register for a My SQA account where they can get the latest SQA information and track their qualifications. Your school office will be happy to provide your Scottish Candidate Number (SCN) if you don’t know it.

• We expect at this time that the results of qualifications will still be available as planned on 4th August 2020.

• For those planning to apply for a university place, UCAS has indicated that, at the moment, the application process is expected to the same as in previous years but updates will be circulated as they become available.

Remote and Home Learning – Continuity of Learning

• The extended period of school closure means that, for the vast majority of our 3100 school pupils in the Western Isles are now going to be learning at home with families and remotely online with their teachers.

• Where possible, schools have made available a selection of home learning materials to support the start of the home learning journey for pupils and parents.
• Schools also provide a range of online and digital resources to allow parents and pupils to participate in interesting and engaging activities. In addition, a number of schools are using platforms such as Class Dojo and SeeSaw to keep up communication with parents.

• Where possible, teachers will keep up communication with pupils by e-mail and may be able to use video conferencing technology to make face-to-face contact.

• To support Gaelic Medium pupils and parents in primary and nursery, the Comhairle, alongside our Multimedia Team, has collated a list of online resources to support learning, particularly if parents don’t speak Gaelic themselves. www.cne-siar.gov.uk/news/2020/march/gaelic-resources-for-nursery-and-primary-school-children/. There’s also access to excellent GME resources on the GME Western Isles Facebook Page.

• The Comhairle recognises that the period of school closure may go on for a long time and we are developing plans to provide broader access to the core curriculum as term four progresses.

• We also recognise the importance of music and culture in our curriculum and are developing plans to offer online music sessions, performances and ceilidhs as part of a programme of fun and interesting events for pupils and parents at home to join in with.

• Importantly, during this time, it is important that pupils get time to play outside and enjoy time in the outdoor environment, whilst observing social distancing guidelines. We will also provide guidance to parents in the weeks ahead about ways that children can use and apply their learning in interesting ways at home.

Coronavirus - Information, Support and Guidance

• We understand that this is a very worrying time for parents, families and, particularly for children themselves. Many of our staff share these same concerns and we are here to help.

• The following links offer resources and support to help you talk to your children about Coronavirus and Covid-19.
  - www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-51734855
  - young.scot/campaigns/national/coronavirus

• If you want to keep up-to-date with the latest information and advice about Coronavirus, these links will help:

• If you are concerned about how you or your child are feeling about the Coronavirus outbreak, please make contact with a staff member at your child’s school or hub and we will do what we can to support you.

Social Distancing at Schools and Learning Settings

• Whilst our schools are working with pupils, we must all comply with social distancing advice from Scottish Government wherever possible to reduce the risk of infection for pupils, our staff and for you as parents.

• If you are dropping off or picking up children at a school, you should not enter the building.

• Contact can be made with staff by telephone.

• Avoid gathering with other parents outside the school.

• As much as is possible, we will observe the required distances of 2m (6ft) when that can be enforced.

• Pupils attending may be asked to have staggered breaks and lunch times to reduce the number in an area at any one time.

Schools as Resilience Centres

• We recognise the critically important role that our schools play as hubs in our communities across the Western Isles and the Department of Education, Skills and Children’s Services is prepared to make buildings available to support our community, should they be required.

• The hub schools identified in an earlier section will likely become the focus of critical learning provision and other buildings will stand ready to be used if they are needed.

• Our catering and cleaning teams have been initiating deep cleans of Comhairle-owned schools and our facilities management partners, FES, are working to complete similar deep cleans in the schools that they manage.

We’re Here to Help

• Comhairle Education, Skills and Children’s Services staff continue to prioritise the delivery of our public services and we are here to help you.

• During term-time, teachers will continue to make contact with your children and will be available to you for advice and support to help with home and online learning.

• Your Headteacher will keep communicating regularly with you to let you know what the school is doing and what events and activities you can take part in from home.

• As well as continuing to support your children at home or with in schools, where they can attend, our staff are volunteering in high numbers to help deliver other critical community services such as social care and infrastructure services.

• Our Children’s Services support staff continue to be available to you and you can request help via the following contacts:
  - Main Council Switchboard: 01851 600501
  - Out-of-Hours: 01851 701702
  - e-mail: enquiries@cne-siar.gov.uk

HOLIDAY HUB PROVISION FOR KEY WORKERS

During the school holidays, provision for the children of key workers will move to area hubs across the Western Isles. From Monday 30th March, registered key workers can present their children at their allocated hub school.

The hub schools are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hub</th>
<th>Participating Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hub</td>
<td>Castletown, Faogartal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davidich School</td>
<td>Davidich, Sgoil Uibhist a Tuath, Lionacleit, Iochdar, Dailiburgh, Saoghal Beag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir E Scott School</td>
<td>Sir E Scott, Leverhume Memorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgoil nan Loch</td>
<td>Sgoil nan Loch, Parc, Breasclete, Uig, Bernera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sgoil an Taobh Siar</td>
<td>Sgoil an Taobh Siar, Lionel, Shawbost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stormsay Primary</td>
<td>Stormsay Primary, Nicolson Institute, Sgoil an Rubha, Stormsay Playgroup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laxdale School</td>
<td>Laxdale, Back, Tong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, Stornoway Childcare Centre, An Cotan and Cothrom Og intend to provide pre-school childcare for existing registered children under the same terms as above.

The operation of area hubs will be reviewed at the end of the holiday period and may be retained or extended for term four. Parents will be informed of any changes planned for key worker provision from 13th April.

Preventing Fraud During the Coronavirus Outbreak

We are supporting public agencies across the country in raising awareness of the risk of fraud and criminal activity during the Coronavirus outbreak. Reported scams include parents being contacted by fraudsters to say they are entitled to Free School Meals and to provide bank details. The Comhairle will not contact you by telephone to request bank details and please do not respond to any such request and be vigilant of any other unusual contact, be that e-mail, telephone or doorsteping. Please use the three-step guide below:

Stop: Taking a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information could keep you safe.

Challenge: Could it be fake? It’s ok to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.

Protect: Contact your bank immediately if you think you’ve fallen for a scam and report it to Police Scotland.

British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us directly by using contactSCOTLAND-BSL

Main Council Switchboard: 01851 600501 | Out-of-Hours: 01851 701702 | e-mail: enquiries@cne-siar.gov.uk
Community wind farm backs airidhean’ local history project

A project is underway to capture the history of the sheilings in one area of Lewis before they pass out of living memory.

The main part of the project, backed by community wind farm charity Point and Sandwick Trust, will involve interviews with people who remember going to the sheilings (the ‘airidhean’) belonging to the Point and Sandwick area, and collecting old photographs.

The researched material will form the basis of an exhibition by the Comunn Eachdraidh, off the Pentland and Beinn a Bhuna roads, and identify their ownership.

He added: “It’s about the community ties to the sheilings – the airidhean – specifically the ones that were used by the community in Point and Sandwick. Hopefully it will eventually take the shape of an exhibition at the Comunn Eachdraidh and also a report or booklet which would be online as well, maybe even going towards a short book.

“The idea is that it involves a lot of research. Initially it will be looking at written material but also doing interviews with people who have first-hand experience, so time is a factor.”

Andrew is hoping to speak to as many people as possible with memories of the sheilings. “This could be at any sort of stage. I’m interested in older people who would have had the experience of travelling to the summer grazings as part of the actual routine of life but also people who would have had holidays because I know people who did that. Any experience at all.”

Andrew will be taking an audio recording of the memories and collecting photographs at the same time. Copies will be made of all photos so that originals can be retained.

He added: “If people have knowledge of whose sheiling was whose, we’re interested in hearing that as well, because part of the project will be doing a map of the sheilings and showing which sheiling corresponded to which croft or family.”

Andrew is keen to hear these accounts first-hand. “It is a very important part of the community history and it’s a way of undertaking a Foundation Apprenticeship.

The Foundation Apprenticeship live stream followed on from an equally successful one on 23rd January about the benefits of Gaelic Medium Education. Coming in the wake of the Comhairle’s announcement that a “Gaelic first” policy will be applied to school enrolment from June, the panel offered an opportunity for parents to put forward questions to a group of language experts, teachers, and former Gaelic Medium pupils themselves – including local celebrity Innes Scott of Peat & Diesel – and has since been viewed more than 500 times.

The Gaelic-first policy is part of a national initiative first launched in 2018 by Deputy First Minister John Swinney. Gaelic: A Faster Rate of Progress aims to increase the rate of Gaelic growth both locally and nationally, and includes organisations such as the Scottish Government, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Skills Development Scotland, and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, as well as the Comhairle.

To meet this growing demand for Gaelic Medium Education provision, both now and in the future, strategies are being discussed to increase Gaelic Medium teaching capacity. “We do have a window of opportunity here to encourage pupils to look at not just

The GME panel, that was live-streamed by e-Sgoil on 21 January

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Back Home to Barra was the Key Ingredient for Harris

Now more than ever, it’s important for SMEs that rely on face-to-face transactions to access online business support. Business Gateway has a bank of online sources available to tackle the impact of coronavirus on businesses across Scotland including webinars and one-to-one appointments via video call or telephone calls.

One local business that has benefited from Business Gateway’s digital support is Café Kisimul, run by Harris Bari. Barra local Harris is no stranger to the kitchen. He grew up immersed in the hospitality industry after his parents, Pauline and Rohall Bari, moved to Barra in 2004 to pursue their dream of opening a restaurant.

Nestled at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean with views over Kisimul Castle, Café Kisimul is the home of Barra’s famous scallop pakora. Hailed for its use of local produce in traditional Indian and Italian cooking, the business employs 16 members of staff and has been a hit with locals and visitors for 16 years.

Local produce is at the heart of the business and the Bari family has built strong supplier relationships over the last 16 years. All seafood is locally sourced either from Barra申atick or a local diver they have been working with for over ten years, the house pork is Barra Gift and local butcher, Maclean’s, supplies all meat and baked goods.

Following an engineering degree at Glasgow University, Harris moved home to Barra to take over the restaurant from his mother and late father. At just 21, he launched himself back into hospitality industry, developing a newfound appreciation for his hometown and the opportunity a career in the Islands could bring.

After year-on-year success, which saw the café fully booked weeks in advance during peak season, Harris contacted Business Gateway for support to improve the brand’s online presence. He was signposted to Business Gateway’s DigitalBoost programme, which supports small businesses with a website, digital marketing and a more streamlined approach to e-commerce.

For one-to-one Skype sessions, Harris also took the opportunity to educate himself on cybersecurity, helping him to grow. Customers who receive my maps often put my work up on their social media, or share it with their local Facebook page. A friend suggested I get in touch with Business Gateway, who were very quick to set up a meeting and put me on the right track.

Demand for Café Kisimul’s beloved family recipes increased with the increasing popularity of the Hebridean Way tourist route, which spans from Barra to Lewis, means the business has expanded its offering to make freshly prepared meals. Following DigitalBoost support for its online profile and website development, Café Kisimul now operates weekly deliveries to local shops on the route to cater for those travelling beyond the beautiful isles of Barra and Vatersay.

Coronavirus Support

Business Gateway is here to help you and your business through this difficult time. Our advisers are working remotely and continue to be able to offer support and guidance. The Business Gateway website is regularly updated with a wide range of relevant advice and information on things like business contingency, digital platforms, trading online, working from home, HR and more. All this useful content can be found at www.bgateway.com where you will also find helpful webinars and the latest updates on the Government financial support for businesses.

The Comhairle’s website also contains up to date information on the Coronavirus situation. Please visit www.cne-siar.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/coronavirus/ to see the latest updates.

To find out how Business Gateway can support your business, please contact us on businessgateway@cne-siar.gov.uk or 01851 822775.

OhYESS

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.

To find out more, please contact Business Gateway on 01851 822775 or businessgateway@cne-siar.gov.uk.

*Key Sectors - renewables & 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)
CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19
Business Support from
Business Gateway Outer Hebrides

Business Gateway Outer Hebrides is very conscious of the scale of the impact that the pandemic is having on businesses, and the wider community, and is here to support you as much as we can.

We are putting in place actions to allow us to deliver a virtual advisory and online tutorial service to you wherever you are. Our local advisers are still very much available, by phone, email or online to offer free support on a wide range of business matters including continuity planning, managing cashflow and dealing with suppliers.

Our website offers a range of free resources to help you during this pandemic. Some key information that may be of use includes:

- Official guidance for business owners in Scotland
- Actions for businesses to consider during the pandemic
- Universal Credit for Self Employed
- Statutory Sick Pay

And our online tutorials and webinars are being developed to cover topics particularly relevant to the crisis e.g. digital marketing, PR in a crisis, email marketing and trading online.

Contact your local office on 01851 808 240,
email outerhebrides@bgateway.com
or visit bgateway.com/coronavirus-support