John Thomas Fraser

The Fraser family announces with great sadness the loss of their beloved father/brother/uncle/shen
John Thomas Fraser, aged 86, late of Parkend, and Kirk Care on April 4, 2020, at Blair Buidhe Care Home. Sorely missed by all the family.

With thanks
From all the Fasers, home and away.

We would like to thank all the nurses and doctors, care staff, undertakers and all who sent cards and letters on the passing of our father, John Fraser.

-----

Neil Gow

NEIL GOW passed away peacefully at his home in Balallan on Monday 15th June at the age of 70. He will be greatly missed by his family and friends.

Thank you to the brilliant nurses at Langabhat Medical Practice.

-----

Campbell family lightens lockdown!

By Annie Delin

Life during lockdown would certainly have been a lot gloomier without the Campbell family of North Tolsta.

Musician Willie Campbell started a family trend by joining up with best pal and bandmate Charlie Clark to provide the very first lockdown livestream on Friday 20 March, before ‘e-Cèilidh’ was even a thing.

On that night the band Astrid raised £1,055 for Eilean Siar Foodbank, setting in motion an idea swiftly followed up by many – that online performances might be the best way to keep our social and entertainment lives going while we couldn’t leave the house.

It wasn’t long before Willie was also hosting and performing on Comhairle nan Eilean Siar’s live music nights, with children Hope and John adding a popular late-night encore to the evenings.

Seven-year-old John turned out to be a natural entertainer even after he fell off his bike and broke his arm. An emergency flight to Glasgow with mum Michelle and surgery didn’t keep him down for long.

John was very soon back on our screens, plaster cast and all, singing a rousing chorus of ‘You are my Sunshine’ with dad Willie and sister Hope.

And even the plaster cast didn’t stay dull for long. John was very soon back on our screens, plaster cast and all, singing a rousing chorus of ‘You are my Sunshine’ with dad Willie and sister Hope.

-----

Top award for writer D S Murray

Writer and poet Donald S Murray won a major prize in this year’s Society of Authors Awards.

Donald, originally from north Lewis but now based in Shetland, won the Paul Torday Memorial Prize for his novel set amid the Iolaire tragedy, ‘As the Women Lay Dreaming’.

Sarah Waters, Paul Torday memorial prize judge, said: “Just a few pages into As the Women Lay it’s a book that’s big with beauty, poetry and heart.

“A wonderful achievement, a brilliant blend of fact and fiction, full of memorable images and singing lines of prose.”

Donald was among 32 winners announced on Thursday June 18. The awards – which are judged by authors – have a shared prize fund of £100,000, making it the UK’s biggest.

Donald’s award, for author’s of first novels who are over-60, came with a prize of £1,000. He said at the time of the announcement that he found it difficult to absorb that he had won such major recognition.

Society of Authors’ chair Joanne Harris said: “We’ve always said that receiving an SoA Award can be transformational for an author. They aren’t about promoting big corporate sponsors.

“They don’t seek out one big winner and say ‘this one’s best of all’. Each year, they reward the breadth and depth of books and words, and reward authors at the start of their careers as well as those well established.

“This year, as the health crisis makes authors’ precarious careers even more of a challenge to sustain, it is more important than ever to celebrate the work of today’s 32 winners.”

With the award ceremony cancelled because of the pandemic restrictions, there was an online presentation and a Live Facebook event that included music by Ceitlin Lilidh from South Dell and the paintings of Margaret Ferguson.

-----

HOW TO CONTACT US

Editor: Fred Silver
fred@hebevents.com

Design and layout: Andrew Jeffries
info@hebevents.com

accounts@intermedia-servicesstornoway.co.uk

General enquiries: info@welovestornoway.com

Annie Delin, senior correspondent
(Lewis and Harris):
annie@welovestornoway.com

Writers: Katie Macleod, Melissa Silver

Tel: 07867 861090

NEXT EDITION: The deadline for information and advertising is Tuesday 28 July. The newspaper will appear on Wednesday 5 August

EVENTS is published by Intermedia Services (Stornoway) Church House, 16 James Street, Stornoway HS1 2QN Tel: 01851 705743
New evidence of Neolithic life on Isles

By Annie Delin

S tornoway diver Chris Murray has produced extensive new evidence of Neolithic lochside life, on his very first dive since lockdown on Friday 19 June.

The former Royal Navy diver was ready for a dip as soon as open water activities were out of lockdown and relished the opportunity to explore one of the sites of crannogs, possible waterbound dwelling places of ancient Lewis people.

Within just a short time he’d amassed a veritable hoard of evidence, including dozens of sherds of decorated pottery and an astonishingly complete undecorated pot, verified as Neolithic and about 5,500 years old.

The undecorated pot is a particularly exceptional find, the only other similar bowl coming from Loch Olabhat in North Uist some years ago. Chris said: “And yes, I did take a sip of water from it. To drink of the watery Neolithic landscape of the islands and his latest discoveries are creating a buzz among prehistorians.

Duncan Garrow of the University of Reading and Fraser Sturt of Southampton University published research using Chris’s finds in November 2019 after their own exploration of the islands in Hebridean lochs.

Within a short time he’d amassed a veritable hoard of evidence, including dozens of sherds of decorated pottery and an astonishingly complete undecorated pot, verified as Neolithic and about 5,500 years old.

The undecorated pot is a particularly exceptional find, the only other similar bowl coming from Loch Olabhat in North Uist some years ago. Chris said: “And yes, I did take a sip of water from it. To think the last person to hold this and put it to their lips was thousands of years ago”.

His finds have been verified as Neolithic by Professor Alison Sheridan, specialist in Neolithic material culture, research associate and former curator at National Museums of Scotland and archaeologist of the year 2020. She’s also director of Urras nan Tursachan at Calanais.

Also fascinated to see the discoveries was Professor Jonathan Benjamin of Flinders University in Adelaide, South Australia. He’s a specialist in the archaeology of submerged landscapes and in maritime and underwater archaeology, and he also put a likely Neolithic date on the finds.

Chris’s dives have yielded much of the material which has brought archaeologists to the sites of the watery Neolithic landscape of the islands and his latest discoveries are creating a buzz among prehistorians.

They questioned whether the distinctive islets so typical of lochs and lochans throughout the Western Isles were really built as defences, or whether the trove of pottery fragments demonstrated both occupation and religious activity more than 4,000 years ago.

But deeper research they had planned in Lewis this summer has been put on hold due to Coronavirus restrictions. Chris, however, plans to continue his own investigations and to share any finds with the archaeologists. He said: “It was a single dive and it just goes to show the riches that there are, there to be found if we put our minds to it.”

The result is that, from July 1st for one week, cyclists of all ages and abilities are going to be encouraged to join the fundraising effort. People will be cycling loops on their home roads, cycling relays and even putting in the time on exercise bikes in their own garage.

Karen said: “We’ve sent up an event page at https://www.facebook.com/butt2barra.9 and we are asking people to show their interest, share the fundraising page at https://www.justgiving.com/ fundrasing/butt2barra2020 and then to share pictures afterwards of themselves during their ride.

“We’ve allowed a full week for everyone to get the miles in, because this is quite a different set-up from the usual three-day event. All we’re asking is that people observe the rules on social distancing and do their best to cover 165 miles somehow.

“Personally, I’m just going to do loops around my home area. I’ll wait and see which way the wind is blowing before I decide exactly where.”

By Annie Delin

One of the great charity efforts of the summer has found a new way to roll in 2020.

The team spirit and the craic of the Butt to Barra cycle ride has always been part of the appeal of the heroic 165-mile, three-day marathon along the length of the Western Isles.

But support vehicles and mass ferry bookings won’t be needed this year, as the committee has decided to go almost virtual and let every rider decide on their own way to achieve the miles.

Committee member Karen Wright said: “We were going to cancel the event entirely, but then the eight members of the committee thought we would just put the miles in anyway, using the roads around our home.

“It’s in aid of a fantastic cause, our own Bethesda Hospice, so then we thought ‘why not open it up?’”

But to Barra cycle ride goes virtual

The undecorated Neolithic pot found on Friday and dozens of sherds of pottery picked up by Chris last week from the loch bed

Photographs by Chris Murray
Hamish and Kirsty win Isles awards

This year’s Donald Stewart Memorial Trust awards have gone to Sir E Scott School and Castlebay Community School.

Hamish Scott, a 5th year pupil in Sir E Scott won the Award for Significant Contribution to Gaelic Development.

Kirsty MacInnes, a 6th year pupil in Castlebay Community School, won the Award for Outstanding Achievement.

The Trustees, who select the winners of both awards, were delighted to learn of a number of prestigious events Hamish had participated in. Amongst them were the Royal National Mod, Dradhad Gàidhlig Naiseanta nan Aird-sgoiltean (where the Sir E Scott team won through to the Final, which was held in The Scottish Parliament Debating Chamber) and Dilearb. He was also invited to the RAF Centenary event at the Glasgow Concert Hall where he was asked to perform one of his own pieces of poetry, “Misneachd na Pìobha.”

The Trustees were also extremely happy to learn of Hamish’s leadership qualities and skills in supporting younger members of the school, and in particular, his role in the school’s piping group. They were also impressed that, over many years he had shown much initiative and leadership qualities when asked to perform at various events both within and out with the school setting, for example participating in events held at the local war memorial to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Iolaire disaster, the annual Remembrance Day service, local weddings etc.

Current Trustees of The Donald Stewart Memorial Trust are Uilleam (William) Macdonald, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar; Marina Murray, Comunn na Gàidhlig; Lesley Graham, and Iain MacAulay, and it is chaired by Margaret Martin, Chair of the Western Isles SNP Constituency.

Aileen MacSween, Headteacher at Sir E Scott School said, “Hamish is a worthy winner of this award, having shown a strong interest in the Gaelic language, culture and heritage from an early age in primary right up to the present.

“Hamish is an excellent ambassador for Gaelic and has led by example in all the various activities and achievements he has successfully undertaken over the years and which he will undoubtedly continue to do in the years to come. Hamish is a credit to himself, his family, his school and the local community.”

As for the Award for Outstanding Achievement, trustees were highly impressed by Kirsty’s commitment to her studies, her outstanding achievements at local Mods over many years, and in particular, her voluntary work in the community.

Among the specific achievements which impressed the Trustees were her dedication to her academic achievements and her dedication to achieving fluency in Gaelic. They were also delighted to learn of the many qualifications she has gained over the years including awards in P.E, Culinary Skills, Woodwork and Gaelic. The

Hamish with Aileen MacSween Headteacher, Sir E Scott School

Trustees also expressed their congratulations to Kirsty on her track record at local Mods, where she has been successful in a number of competitions year on year.

But what really impressed the Trustees was her voluntary work in the wider community. Kirsty has been working at Cobhair Bharraigh, a local day centre for the elderly, and in the community shop, Bùth Bharraigh and has also been involved in many other volunteering and fund-raising activities both within the school and in the wider community over the years. And all of Kirsty’s achievements have been attained against a backdrop of personal health challenges.

Suzanne Forman, Headteacher at Castlebay Community School said, “Having known Kirsty from her primary school days in Eoligarry School, I have been astounded by her determination over the years to succeed. She has overcome many difficulties to become the lovely young lady that she is, achieving a wide range of qualifications on that journey. Kirsty is a credit to her family, both Castlebay and Eoligarry Schools, and to our wider island community.”

Because of pandemic restrictions, there were separate “Virtual Presentations” of the awards by Bernard Chisholm, Director of Education and Children’s Services at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

Kirsty MacInnes with Suzanne Forman, Headteacher, Castlebay Community School.
STORNOWAY MEDIA CENTRE

Church House, 16 James Street, Stornoway HS1 2QN

Vehicle Livery
Community Magazines
 Signs
Large Format Posters
Window Graphics and Stickers
Social Distance Signage

DESIGN PRINT PUBLISH

MEETINGS AND OFFICE VISITS
BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

E: print@hebeevents.com
T: 01851 705743   M: 07867 861090
Looking forward to 2021…and back over lockdown

Unsurprisingly this year’s Lewis Carnival is one of many events to be cancelled due to restrictions imposed by COVID-19, writes Victoria Silver.

Brought to Stornoway every year by a small team of dedicated volunteers ‘The Lewis Carnival’ officially became a Scottish regulated charity with OSCR (Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator) in October 2019.

Normally by now the committee would be running around organising stalls and venue hire, tables and banners, games and food, ahead of its traditional date on the first Saturday of August. Since we’re not, we wanted to take the time to promote those who normally help make the event happen. In particular we wanted to take this opportunity to showcase two of our key partners, local businesses and community groups without whom the Carnival would be lost!

Paul Matheson, the force behind community group Stramash, and Robert Sinclair, Manager of Heb Alpha, share their take on 2020 and looking forward to a better 2021.

From Paul Matheson at Stramash

We were really looking forward to helping out and getting involved with so many community events this year.

The Carnival itself is a very important date in the summer calendar, bringing so many people together for an amazing fun day out. It’s such a shame that this and so many events have been cancelled or postponed including ourselves with Stramash 2020.

We’re continuing through this, utilising the time to keep our equipment maintained and also adding new enhancements ready to present Stramash in 2021 and to support our local musicians and performers in the times ahead.

Along with Pointers, we’re revamping the annual “Battle of the Bands” with new and exciting features for next year, again using our lockdown time to plan this as best as we can.

We now have a 2021 calendar ready with dates when our volunteers can assist with events and we would ask any community groups, musicians and performers to get in touch with us if they need assistance next year.

All of us here at Stramash are ready to help out any way we can in the future, but our main hope is that everyone stays safe and that everyone affected by the lockdown manages to pull through for the brighter and better times ahead.

From Heb Alpha’s Robert Sinclair

Like everyone else I was watching the news as COVID spread across the world and quickly realised that Scotland and the Western Isles was not going to escape.

The changes were on the horizon but then they came very quickly. I was in Glasgow for a weekend break when all the football matches stopped, theatres closed and the cafes and city centre began to empty. Travelling home was a very different experience with an empty motorway from Edinburgh to Glasgow, the local community. This meant once a week we washed all the waste cardboard from key shops every week.

I stopped all window cleaning, power washing and gutter cleaning but we were still required to provide support to essential services in the local community. This meant once a week we washed all the Tesco dot com vans inside and out. We also continued to collect the local community’s waste cardboard from key shops every week.

By the beginning of May we started emptying our clothing banks again and we restarted our shore tidy between Cuddy Point and Lower Sandwich. This was too much for just one person and with the social distancing restrictions I couldn’t involve any volunteers… unless they lived in the same house as me. My wife and daughter were delighted to join me for an 8am start every Monday! That was the plan, anyway. It might not have been 8am but they did get the jobs done and supported the project for eight weeks until I could safely bring back my staff on phased returns.

I kept in touch with all of our service users every week to ensure they were ok and to provide practical support to them. Sadly, one of our service users died at the beginning of May, which was a real blow to us and very sad for his family, friends and work mates. He was a good worker, he was full of fun and he is greatly missed by all of us. His life would have made a very interesting and colourful book.

As we remind our service users regularly, we are only here for a short time, none of us is guaranteed to see tomorrow, no-one is likely to read about us when we’re gone, so it’s important to make the most of every day, looking to see how we can be a positive influence in the lives of those around us.

The town has been really quiet over the past few months and every day the streets have been almost empty. It must have been very confusing for the sea gulls! We approached the Lewis Carnival committee to ask if they would be interested in us putting the bunting up for them (which we usually do every Summer), as we felt it would brighten up the town and bring a wee bit of joy to folk as they went through the town. So we did that a couple of weeks ago and will take it down again at the end of the Summer.

One of our service users turned 60 this week and we would usually celebrate a milestone birthday by going out for lunch as a team at a local restaurant, but due to the lockdown, this wasn’t possible. So, we went on a socially distant team fishing trip instead and then went to Taste n Sea and enjoyed an amazing takeaway lunch and celebrated in style. A thunderstorm started about an hour after we got back to town. It wouldn’t have been much fun fishing in that!

As a social enterprise, we have been affected by COVID-19 as many of the businesses we usually provide a service to, are still closed. We have also lost some residential customers but we are optimistic that things will pick up again.

At times I did wonder that if after committing 13 years of my life to Hebrides Alpha, I would still have a job to go back to. I wasn’t sure if Heb Alpha would survive this. Similar to most of the other businesses in the country, we were awarded a £10,000 grant from the Government to assist us with the financial impact of the lockdown and we are very thankful for this. The kindness and support of customers has also helped us, as we do not get grants from anywhere else. It costs £200,000 a year to run the business and we earn all of that money through the jobs we provide in the local community. It makes for a very busy and varied week, but it is an honour and a privilege to be able to provide a safe place for individuals with addiction problems to come in to work and for them to be part of this community. As of 1st July, all the staff and service users are now back to work.

If anyone would like to book us in to do window cleaning, power washing, gutter cleaning, then please get in touch on (01851) 705054 or info@hebridesalpha.co.uk

Join the Lewis Carnival team for 2021!

Email: thelewiscarnival@gmail.com

Facebook: @thelewiscarnival Instagram: @thelewiscarnival

Get in contact now! Keep in touch
Change of guard at Salvation Army

By Annie Delin

Stornoway’s Salvation Army corps is about to see a changing of the guard, as Lieutenants Callum and Emma Newton take their leave after five years.

On Friday 26 June Callum and Emma were promoted to Captain ahead of their move to serve as the new officers at Aberdeen Citadel corps, one of the oldest corps in Scotland, established 140 years ago.

They’re due to start work in Stornoway in the last week of July.

Captain Callum and Captain Emma have had an eventful five years in the Stornoway corps and will carry with them a lifelong link to Stornoway, as their daughter Isla was born here just four months ago.

Callum said: “We have had the busiest time ever over the past few months and, although it’s sad for many people, it’s good to know we’re doing the right thing at the right time with our food and other support at Stornoway golf club.”

“It is the hallmark of the Salvation Army, doing what is most needed and we are seeing numbers rise all the time. On Wednesday (24 June) we had 82 people through the door to collect food support, the highest number we have ever had. I am pleased that we can help, but it’s also very sad.”

The Newtons’ service to Stornoway has been marked in other ways, such as with the setting up of a radio station with features like a 4X4 chassis so that it can cope on rough roads like peat tracks. It has two urns, a gas griddle and everything needed for catering, together with a generator and power sockets that include USB charging points, since our emergency services are so dependent on mobile communications.”

Callum and Emma’s time in Stornoway has seen innovations like this, but also the quiet daily work of the Salvation Army supporting those who need food, shelter and companionship for whatever reason.

The Salvation Army’s vital work will continue during the handover period, with volunteers running the twice-weekly service at the golf club and helping the new officers to settle in.

Callum said: “We have had a really good five years. It’s a beautiful place and we know when we came here that it would be for a limited time, so we have done our best to make the most of it.”

Flood rescuers praised

By Annie Delin

A Point woman has praised Stornoway fire crew after they rushed to her rescue.

Mary Golish of Sheshader didn’t know where to turn when she went to her home-based dog grooming business on Wednesday 17 June, only to find it under inches of water.

Mary said: “I had looked out of my window the night before and seen the yard was like a swimming pool, but both then and in the morning, I just thought it must have been raining really hard.”

“Then I went to open up my groom room ready for my first customer and water just came rushing out. The whole place was flooded.”

Mary’s two-room grooming parlour was awash because of a burst pipe under the floor. Furniture in the waiting room was saturated and the room was unusable.

“I couldn’t think who to ask. I tried ringing plumbers, but no-one was answering. In desperation I rang the police and they advised me to ask for the fire service, so I called them.”

It wasn’t long before a fire engine and a crew of eight from Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in Stornoway, carrying a water pump, were with her. Mary said: “I don’t know how they managed to get that massive vehicle into my driveway, because it’s a really tight turn, but they did. They were so helpful, so courteous and reassuring.”

Mary’s neighbour, Lain ‘Shocan’ Stewart, had spotted her in distress and waded in to find and turn off the stop-cock. The fire crew then sloshed and swept the water out of both rooms and returned her to a normal state – even if there had already been plenty of water damage.

“Luckily my electric sockets are high up the wall, and the floor is tiled, so that reduced some of the damage. It’s just the furniture really. My neighbour came in the next day and found the burst pipe under the cupboards, and he had it all fixed within the day.”

“I’m so used to doing things that I knew I had to continue. When I get up, the first thing I do is to switch on the oven and I get everything baked and packaged up ready for the day ahead. Then I go to bed every night thinking about what I’ll bake tomorrow.”

For twelve weeks individual cakes, scones, pancakes and trays of bakes have flowed out of Betty’s door. Packaged up in bags of two, the cakes are then popped into the box that’s become known locally as ‘Betty’s bun box’.

Dog-walkers, horse-riders and delivery drivers are among those who have spotted the tempting offer, while some neighbours on their daily walk or run have even tailored their route to make sure they pass her gate.

“I’ve only missed two days when it was really windy,” said Betty. “The cakes stay dry in the box and it’s easy enough for anyone to lift a bag out, so I thought I might start baking.”

“I’ve just done things that I knew I had to continue. When I get up, the first thing I do is to switch on the oven and I get everything baked and packaged up ready for the day ahead. Then I go to bed every night thinking about what I’ll bake tomorrow.”

Betty at the gate of her home on the final morning, with orange buns and pancakes on offer.
St Valéry remembered after 80 years

The Heroes of St Valéry were remembered on Friday 12 June on the 80th anniversary of the ‘other’ Dunkirk, at which the forgotten army of the 51st Division, including the Seaforth Highlanders, made their stand.

St Valéry was the rearguard action defending the retreating British forces as they escaped mainland Europe from the beaches of Dunkirk.

Pipers in Stornoway and at Kinloch were among those who joined an international tribute, with pipers in 16 countries playing the tune Heroes of St Valéry at 10am this morning.

The tune was written by Pipe Major Iain Maclean of Balranaldshul in Lewis, himself one of the 10,000 members of the 51st Division captured at St Valéry. They were subsequently marched through Belgium and Holland to East Prussia (now Poland) where those who survived the march were kept as prisoners-of-war.

Among the pipers playing on the day was Larry Ferguson, who took up his post at the Kinloch war memorial just before 10am. Larry said: “From my village of Laxay three men left to fight in the 2nd Battalion of the Seaforth Highlanders and all of them were captured at St Valéry. Thankfully all three of them returned after five years as prisoners of war."  

“From 30 Laxay my uncles Donald ‘Dolly’ and Angus Ferguson went to serve in the Seaforths. There was also John Polcaim, Macdonald of 19 Laxay.

“Angus was a piper who was been a regular soldier before the war and was on his way home, having decided to leave the army, when war was declared in 1939. He came off the boat at Stornoway and police Sergeant MacPhail ordered him to return to his unit immediately. He borrowed a bike to cycle home to Laxay and see his family. The police officer turned a blind eye, making him promise to report back before the boat sailed the next morning. Angus cycled the 15 miles to see his family and reported for duty the next morning."

After being captured at St Valéry on 12 June 1940, Angus played a pivotal role in the lives of many of the men who were being marched from France to Prussia. Over the years Larry has heard first-hand stories from veterans of the battle who returned to Lewis.

He said: “I was told by more than one person that it was thanks to Angus that they kept marching and survived, because he played the pipes and kept them going. Otherwise they would have fallen by the side of the road on the way to Poland.”

That was not the first time that Larry has played the tune Heroes of St Valéry as a tribute – ten years ago he was at St Valéry itself, piping before veterans of the actual battle.

At the same time students from The Nicolson Institute’s pipe and brass bands played the same commemorative tune at the Clock Tower in Stornoway.

And during the afternoon at Tarbert War Memorial the Lord Lieutenant of the Western Isles, Donald Martin, paid his own tribute to soldiers including his uncle, Private Donald Martin, after whom he was named. Pvt Martin was killed, aged 20, in action at Abbeville on 4 June 1940.

The event was co-ordinated by John Muro Morison and included prayers, and a playing of the Last Post by Karen Logue, as well as piping by Hamish Scott.

Donald Martin said: “Today’s low-key event, commemorating the 80th anniversary of the surrender of the 51st Highland Division at St Valéry, is a poignant and personal occasion for me.

“My uncle, Pte Donald Martin after whom I am named, was killed in action on 4 June 1940 during the 4th Battalion attack on the Abbeville bridgehead at Huichenhove. He served in B Coy of the Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders, whose commanding officer Captain Fincastle of Boove Lodge, Harris was also killed in the onslaught.

Several other Harris men were killed or severely wounded.

“My grandparents, Duncan and Mary Martin of Bunavoneadar – Donald’s parents - were not informed of his death until April 1941, some ten months after he was killed. They received a letter from Lt William R Robertson of Tarbert writing from a POW camp in Germany.

“Lt Robertson was the only surviving officer of B Coy and was taken to a Prisoner of War camp in Germany following the 51st Division’s surrender on 12 June. In his letter he explained that my uncle was severely wounded on the morning of 4 June 1940 and died in a Field Dressing Station as a result of his wounds.

He is buried in the London Cemetery Extension, Lourveule, Somme, France and in September 2013, I wrote Sonia and paid a very emotional visit to his grave – the first time any member of the family had the opportunity of visiting his grave. His headstone has the following inscription from the Book of Proverbs – Chap 4 v 3 …

‘For I was my father’s son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother’."

“Sadly, very few of the veterans of St Valéry are still alive to mark this 80th anniversary, which makes it all the more important that we and the generations that follow us never forget the sacrifice they made. We owe it to them that they will never become the forgotten Heroes of St Valéry.”

A point man was brought face to face with part of his family history last month as the 80th anniversary approached of the battle at Saint-Valéry-en-Caux, in France, on 12 June 1940.

On Friday 12 June the ‘forgotten army’ of Saint-Valéry-en-Caux, including many Lewismen, were commemorated with socially-distanced events including a tribute by over 200 pipers from 16 countries.

Saint-Valéry-en-Caux is near Dieppe on the French coast north of Le Havre and was almost totally destroyed in the battle between French and Scottish forces, and invading Nazi forces commanded by Erwin Rommel, later leader of the Afrika Corps.

The 80th anniversary had particular resonance for Donald M M Macleod of Aird, who now stays in Stornoway. He was born in 1946 and named after his uncle, Malcolm ‘Clicks’ MacKenzie, who died as a prisoner-of-war exactly two years before his own birth. His uncle was one of thousands taken prisoner after the battle.

Donald had only family anecdotes and a few historic documents to complete his story but for a recent contact from a Polish primary school teacher. Donald saw an enquiry on the Point Facebook noticeboard from historical researcher Magaidh Smith of Kinloch. She wrote an account of the experiences of Lewis men at St Valéry which led Sylvia Konuza, a teacher of English in a primary school in Miloradz, Poland, to contact her.

The Nazi Stalag XX2A and XXB work camps were in Poland (now Marienburg in East Prussia) and she set her

“Thanks to the internet, I met Maggie Smith and thanks to Maggie and Donald I have put the puzzles together. I think now I know the sad story of Malcolm ‘Clicks’ MacKenzie.

“The day before he died, Malcolm wrote in a day book about his last hours. ‘Comrades played the Last Post and Reville, flowers were laid, and his coffin was draped with his own flag.’

On 26 January 1945 Malcolm’s mother received formal confirmation of his death from the War Office. In April 1946 the War Office confirmed that he was buried in Marienwerden Cemetery. Subsequent correspondence in April 1949 showed that he was reinterred in Malbork Military Cemetery.

It was at Malbork war cemetery that Sylvia had found Malcolm’s gravestone, inscribed in Gaelic with the words ‘Gus am brìos an la agus na teich na sgàilean’ (Until the day breaks and the shadows flee). Donald has sent Sylvia a photograph of Malcolm, to be placed as a tribute against the headstone and complete the journey which began when the career soldier left Aird in 1939 to fight in the Second World War.

Donald said: “It is fitting…that we are able to record this story and others, and remember and sacrifice these brave young men made and the suffering they endured on the march to Poland and during five years of captivity.

“There is so little mention of St Valéry in war histories, compared to Dunkirk, and it’s good that more people now appreciate their sacrifice”.

Sylvia said: “Nothing is left of Stalag XXII – the last brick buildings were demolished in 2008. Today there is a memorial, and many POWs lie at the Commonwealth Cemetery in Malbork.

“Last year in June with a group of my friends we managed to put a memorial in Miloradz. It is dedicated to British PoWs who worked in Miloradz and those who died during the Long March 1945. We also started a Hall of Memory here.

“Thanks to the internet, I met Maggie Smith and thanks to Maggie and Donald I have put the puzzles together. I think now I know the sad story of Malcolm ‘Clicks’ MacKenzie.”

‘His love of justice cost him his life’
Five years as a prisoner-of-war

Here’s a chance to share the memories of John Macaulay, (Iain Tearlaich), Breasclete and Laxdale. He was captured at St Valery and was later interviewed by the BBC about some of his experiences. These details were supplied by Mairi Heenan and Iain Macaulay (the daughter and son of John).

"I was from Breasclete and joined the Territorial Army as there was a Battery of the Territorial Army in the village. War began in September 1939, I was 19 years old. I can’t remember the day I left to go to war, but the day before that, I went to Breasclete to say goodbye to my parents and I told them I would be back on leave very soon. It took five years before I got back to Breasclete.

We were sent to Newcastle, then went to France in 1940. After we joined up, we thought our Navy and Army will overcome them, but they showed that we were wrong. We had an anti-tank gun that wouldn’t even make a dent in their tanks. We just had to retreat and dig a trench, the next day we had to retreat again to escape. It was autumn and the oats were ready to harvest, so we hid in the oat field till the march passed by. Then we hid in the wood and the German guards were waiting with rifles. We thought he was going to offer more food. I was the first to come out of the wood and the German guards were waiting with rifles. We hid in the oat field till the march passed by. Then we hid in the wood and the German guards were waiting with rifles.

They fired at the truck in front and it went up in flames, we lost two of the men there. The next day we were walking on the pavement with our boots tied on our backs so that we would not make a noise. A torch shone on us. It was a German. He whistled to the others. We had to join the march of prisoners marching to Germany.

When we went to Holland we were put in bagnes – coal bagnes. We were crammed in standing and they closed the hatch. We were running out of air and banged on the top of the barge saying someone was ill. We would lift one person up to the hatch to ensure it was left open. You could hardly draw breath. We marched from there to Stalag 8b - that was my main camp. We were hungry and tired.

In Holland the Dutch people tried to give us food but the Germans would not let them. But they threw things like bits of bread and cheese, pack of cigarettes. We were thirsty. They left buckets of water for us, but the Guards would knock the buckets on the way past. When we got to Stalag 8b we were so thirsty, the first thing we did was put our head and face under the tap. There were taps in the barrack. We needed water. You can survive a while without food but without water. If you are hungry you will sleep, if you are thirsty you wouldn’t.

During our time on the March to Stalag 8b we tried to escape twice. One time we fell behind the other prisoners and then travelled at night and slept in a field. My cousin Neil MacLeod had a small Bible and I used to read it, it would pass the time through the days, then I would fall asleep, only to be woken up by the planes passing by. We were walking through a village at night and a German shone a torch on us and whistled to the others. We had to join the march of prisoners marching to Germany.

Rangers reportedly offered £45,000 to get him signed up to a three-year deal after he’d already been trialled at Liverpool and Manchester United, with Wolves also keeping an eye on him.

Sixteen-year-old James Graham played for the under-18 side in the Youth Cup quarter-final. He is a dynamic, quick and tenacious forward with excellent energy and finishing abilities.

"As a Rangers fan, I know James can’t wait to get started and we look forward to welcoming him to the Academy in the near future."

Highlands and Islands MSP Donald Cameron, who proposed a motion at Holyrood congratulating James, said: "I am sure everyone in Lewis will wish James well as he develops his career in professional football.

"Nurturing our young sporting talent is so important and it is tremendous to see someone from our area distinguishing himself so early."

"He could not have achieved so much so quickly without a great deal of hard work and commitment, and I wish him the very best of luck as he heads to Rangers to fulfil his undoubted potential."
Malcolm, the £65m man, retires

By Annie Delin

There's to be a major change in island infrastructure this month (Friday 3 July), as Scottish Water's Western Isles asset planner retires after 46 years of hard work across the isles.

Malcolm Macphail joined Ross and Cromarty County Council as a trainee technician in 1974. He began his apprenticeship in Lewis, planning civil projects from the ground up and working alongside qualified engineers.

Roads, bridges, street lights and all kinds of infrastructure projects gave him experience of the skills he would come to need. Malcolm said: “The work gave me a good grounding, even after I got my qualifications the experience was tremendous.

“I had to learn about surveying, design, quantities and all the job specifications — and when the jobs were approved you were on the site and you would soon know about it if you didn't get the quantities right. There was a lot of European Regional Development Fund money coming into these projects and you had to be as accurate as possible.”

Adding to his wealth of experience, in 1986 Malcolm changed to revenue or repair work. Road patching, ditches and coastal defences were all part of his daily routine for what is now Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

His first significant connection with water infrastructure came in 1988, when he started what he remembers as an enjoyable period on water and waste. Malcolm said: “I enjoyed that job. We had a new lab with microbiologists testing water and we also checked for physical elements like iron in the water.

“My remit was ensuring that the water and waste water supply complied with regulations. During that period, I had 42 staff in my department and so much was involved. We had maintenance workers, an electrical team, the lab, water treatment, waste water and water distribution works.”

From 1996 this field of work came under the remit of the North of Scotland Water Authority but, although there was a fleet of plant vehicles, it was still the Comhairle that operated them.

“When that changed to Scottish Water in 2001 there was a transformation. A lot of the old jobs disappeared, were amalgamated or were moved to central functions. At that time, I took over the operational support side of the business and, in 2002, I took over asset planning for water and waste-water.

“It was a completely different discipline. I no longer had the everyday problems like blocked ditches to deal with but was more strategic and business-orientated. It was a totally new function for the islands.”

Malcolm's role was now to make sure the whole island water and waste water infrastructure was properly maintained and able to perform to the high regulatory standards needed.

Scottish Water has to balance capital expenditure, so Malcolm’s focus shifted to building the case for investment in island infrastructure. He said: "My aim was to work towards nobody being without water. I didn't want people calling up and saying: 'we've got no water again'.

"But Scottish Water want to see value for money and I needed to show why we had to invest in assets like water treatment works, pumping stations and waste water treatment works. I had to show when it was time to replace mains. The investment came from Scottish Water, but I had to make the case – the justification had to be strong.

"We would review the performance and condition of all the pipes. If they're old or they're performing well, leave them alone, but if they aren't performing then we had to make our case and justification for investment.

"Once you've made the case, the central office will look into it and then, once the work has been done, the asset would come back under my control for me to ensure that it remained in excellent condition."

It's hard to get him to admit it, but the impact of that work on island life has been immense. Between 2010 and 2014 the business cases Malcolm made, brought around £65m million worth of investment into the Western Isles water network.

New water treatment works, miles of new mains costing £13.5 million and a whole raft of ancillary works brought the islands' water delivery systems up to a standard they had never before reached.

Having hit that high point, Malcolm's move towards retirement started two years ago. He went down to working four days a week by dropping waste-water from his remit – but gained responsibility for Coll and Tiree at the same time.

He said: “That was still very challenging. It's a similar island situation but I had to create an action plan for asset development on those islands.

"My team is down to one other now – Iain Matheson, who will take over from me in July as asset planner for the Western Isles, Coll and Tiree. I'm finishing work at a strange time after working from home throughout lockdown, but I am sure there will be some kind of retirement event some time when we're into phase three or four." From the beginning of July, Malcolm will have to learn to go with the flow in his own life, spending more time in his Nesmyarm home and thinking about a different kind of water – the sea under his boat's hull.

He said: "I have a boat and I am looking forward to going out on it when I would like to, rather than just when I can fit it in."

And what does he look back on with most pride? With characteristic modesty, he's not his own work he describes first. "I look back on all the changes and investment and I think about the tremendous teamwork it took to meet all our targets.

"It was a tremendous amount of money we were spending and it took the co-operation of local forums and teams to help build the business case.

"The Western Isles team worked so well together and achieved the maximum investment we could ever have expected, and then the local contractors played their part and did the work to a high standard. That co-operation, that teamwork – that makes me really proud."
Breakthrough in US

The Tarbert-based Essence of Harris enterprise is marking the latest milestone in their success story by launching their hand-poured products with American cosmetics giant, Anastasia Beverly Hills.

The company is showcasing its unique range, including soy wax candles and reed diffusers, at the ABH salon in Beverly Hills.

Each Essence of Harris product has been carefully developed to be as local, sustainable and natural as possible, and as part of its strong ethical stance, the business is committed to creating jobs on the Isle of Harris, where every product is hand-poured.

Jamie McGowan, founder of Essence of Harris, reached out to the team in Beverly Hills to introduce Hebridean products to the Californian cosmetics brand, offering to send samples to the US from their production facility in Tarbert.

To the excitement of the Essence of Harris team, the Beverly Hills brand agreed, and the journey to launch the products in the US began.

Jamie comments: “In the midst of Coronavirus retail worries, the launch of our products with a global giant like Anastasia Beverly Hills is a hugely positive boost for the team in Tarbert and marks another key milestone in the development of Essence of Harris, enabling us to not only showcase our Scottish products overseas, but to share the story of our island home to buyers in Beverly Hills.

“Knowing how Americans love the Scottish Isles, and have such an affinity with Scotland, we expect them to relate to the provenance and quality of the Essence of Harris range. Anastasia Beverly Hills is a brand we’ve admired for years, with their designed products and charitable ethos we are proud that our products from the Outer Hebrides will be showcased on the shelves of their prestigious salon.”

And on Monday June 29, Essence of Harris stated: “As Scottish retail spaces begin to reopen tomorrow, we wanted to keep you all updated with our plans. We have decided not to open our stores to the public, just yet.

“We have worked hard to ensure that when we do reopen, our stores will continue to be a soothing and safe environment for you all, and our warm Hebridean welcome will always remain. Although our shops remain closed for now, you can still enjoy a piece of Harris in your homes.

“We are fulfilling all online orders as normal and those of you on the island can choose the free “Pick Up” option at checkout to pick your order up from our Tarbert factory. Thank you for supporting us and staying in touch “virtually” over the last three months – we can’t wait to see you all again in person soon, when the time is right.”

Thumbs up for Mowi

A Harris resident has offered a huge pat on the back to fish farm company Mowi, after getting a positive response to her concern about beach debris.

Kate Lewis, manager of the Scaladale Centre in North Harris, regularly walks and kayaks around the shore at Huinisnis and was shocked recently when she spotted a 30-metre length of fish cage on the shore.

She said: “Lots of people moan about the rubbish on the shore but I decided to do something about it, and I discovered that it takes very little to get them to respond.”

Kate emailed representatives of both the companies that operate fish farms in the area, saying: “I am a resident of the island, involved with youth work and the outdoor industry. I would normally be taking visitors and young people sea kayaking and walking in the vicinity.

“This is the biggest single piece of fish farm debris I have personally seen, and it needs to be recovered before it gets smashed into ever smaller pieces and adds to the plastic toxicity already being endured by our marine animals.”

Mowi Scotland’s director of communications Ian Roberts put the message out to his local teams and arranged for the collection of the debris, before responding to Kate. He said: “Regardless of the source, our staff retrieved the 30m length of material and are preparing it for recycling along with other recyclable materials. Thanks again for making us aware of this.”

Ian said: “If aquaculture equipment washes ashore in areas where we operate we will take steps to remove the debris, regardless of source.

“We live and work in beautiful places and we intend to keep it that way. We share the same values as our neighbours and we appreciate the fact that one of our neighbours came to us with this request.

Steidhichte air an t-srath réidio shoirbheachadh, tha sguralachdan Dhòmhnull MhicLeòid a’ dealbhadh gu druidheach na chunnaic, na chuala is na dh’fhàrach na rèidh beag ann am Beàrnarach Leòdhais. Eadar moirbhìoil Chriosamus, uill-thrus na faing, bó air choach agus sith bhluith-bhuan Chìreabhaist, tha an t-igribhàchdar air blàth is gaire na coimhneachadh a thug uiread de buaideadh air a bheatha a thорт beò a-rithist.

Based on the successful radio series Donald MacLeod’s stories vividly portray the sights and sounds of his boyhood in Bernera, Lewis. Whether in the wonder of Christmas, the battle of the fank or the novelty of his first day of school, this writer brings the warmth, humour and sorrow of the community which had such an influence on him to life again £12.95
A major pro-life campaign to abolish the Abortion Act 1967 in Britain has been formally launched in Scotland. The **Abort Abortion Campaign** is aimed at lawmakers in the corridors of power at Holyrood, Westminster, Stormont and the Senedd.

In presenting the campaign’s evidence to all 929 contemporary British politicians – 129 in Edinburgh, 650 in London, 90 in Belfast and 60 in Cardiff – legislators are being urged to urgently begin the process of repealing the Abortion (1967) Act.

Part of this evidence is a 28-minute film called *The Silent Scream*, made in 1984 and narrated by Dr Bernard N Nathanson – the doctor who early in his career ran the world’s largest abortion clinic in New York, where he oversaw thousands of abortions.

His story is grisly and deeply disturbing: ‘I am personally responsible for over 75,000 abortions. This was the greatest mistake of my life, and legal abortion was the greatest mistake this nation ever conceived! Tragically I am one of those who helped usher in this barbaric age...’

The film graphically details the fate of a twelve-week-old foetus in a suction abortion. The doctor used the footage to describe the facts of foetal development and to make the case for the humanity and dignity of the child in the womb. At one point, viewers see the embryo draw back from the surgical instrument and open his mouth. ‘This’, says the doctor, ‘is the silent scream of a child threatened imminently with extinction.’

Politicians in Britain who are currently holding office, have never been formally presented with this DVD film for their serious consideration – so the time has now come to put this right.

**Please pray for this vitally important Abort Abortion Campaign, that our political leaders will finally face up to their responsibility of protecting and preserving the life of every unborn baby and their mothers. As we earnestly plead to God for His intervention, our greatest weapon in the fight to end abortion is prayer.**

*Mr Donald J Morrison – Organiser: Abort Abortion Campaign*
As it is unlikely that many people will experience the sunshine, cuisine and excitement of a foreign holiday this year, a culinary tour of these holiday hotspots is possibly the next best thing to a trip abroad.

In 2019, UK residents took over 72 million trips overseas, in total, with the number of excursion abroad increasing steadily in the last five years. The most popular destinations for British visitors were Spain, France, Italy, Ireland and Portugal.

The fastest growing destination for UK tourists, up until 2015, was Turkey, but then terrorism and internal political unrest and strife deterred British tourists from visiting that captivating country.

I visited Turkey twice before that and found it both fascinating and intriguing on many levels, a land with a long and rich history where civilizations and empires collided and created a melting pot of cultures, religions and ethnicities. It was part of the Ottoman Empire till it became a republic in 1923 with the immensely charismatic and visionary Atatürk as its first President.

Turkey spans two continents, Asia and Europe with its main city Istanbul (historically known as Constantinople) straddling the mighty Bosporus. The country has a population of 80 million with at least 30 languages spoken inside its borders. In size, Turkey is more than three times bigger than the UK so it’s no wonder that it abounds with many “Turkish delights.”

For a country of its size and diverse cultures it is no wonder that the traveller to Turkey can be overwhelmed by the extraordinary range of dishes inherited from different regions of the Ottoman Empire. In Istanbul and other large cities in Turkey, the ubiquitous fast food fare is found on every corner and every street, as in all advanced countries across the globe. Look a little further, in town and county and a huge variety of regional and national delicacies can easily be found. With a country of this great size it is only possible in a short column to have a quick taste of Turkish cuisine.

There are Turkish specialities that are not uncommon to many of us due to either visits to Turkey or sampling these dishes in Turkish restaurants in our own country. Possibly one of the ones with which we are most familiar is the Turkish hors d'oeuvres known as mezé. There are many varieties of hors d'oeuvres ranging from cold and simple ones such as white cheeses and salads to warm ones like fried pastries or croquettes with more substantial main dishes of fish or broiled meat. Egg plants or aubergines are often found at the mezé table with tomatoes, pickled stuff peppers and a variety of beans. Very often, “tahini” which is a strong alcoholic drink made of aniseed and grapes is served during consumption of mezé.

Pastries called borek are traditionally filled with meat, cheese, vegetables or fish but there are variations according to location. Dolma or vine leaves are also stuffed with a variety of fillings, including numerous types of vegetables, meats and flavoured rice. These rice dishes come under the generic term pilal or pilav. Broiled and roasted meat dishes, called kebab or kofte, are very traditional with lamb and mutton a key ingredient. Minced lamb, flavoured with traditional spices, has been part and parcel of Turkish cuisine since time immemorial and has been exported internationally in many forms. Vegetables cooked in olive oil, called zeytinyagli, are a staple fare on Turkish tables. Egg plant or aubergine in olive oil is worth mentioning as there is a famous story relating to this vegetable. The dish is called imambayildi and means “the imam fainted” but the legend does not clarify whether the imam, or holy man, fainted because of the tastiness of the dish or because of the great amount of olive oil used in it.

It would not be appropriate in a column on Turkish cuisine not to mention a sweet drink made of aniseed and grapes is served during consumption of mezé.

There are endless Turkish recipes which would be delightful and delicious for meat eaters and vegetarians alike but this is my favourite. It is a smoky aubergine dish called Baba Ganoush which is relatively easy to prepare.

### Baba Ganoush

They are ready when the flesh feels soft when you press it. This takes approximately 15 minutes. (Aubergines can also be prepared on a grill or with a blowtorch.)

1. In a blender blitz the garlic, lemon juice, tahini, olive oil and black pepper.
2. Mix the flesh with the Tahini mixture. Pour into a bowl.
3. Drizzle with olive oil and add the chopped parsley.

Serve with toasted flatbread. Delicious as a starter or part of mezé.

It is a type of concoction originating in Turkey in the 1770s. It consists of a gel of starch and sugar with a variety of additions such as pistachios, hazelnuts, dates and walnuts flavoured with rose water, lemon or orange. It is cut into small cubes and dusted with icing sugar, copra or cream of tartar to prevent it sticking. Mint and cinnamon are also common flavourings.

There are endless Turkish recipes which would be delightful and delicious for meat eaters and vegetarians alike but this is my favourite. It is a smoky aubergine dish called Baba Ganoush which is relatively easy to prepare.

### Turkish cuisine

**Focus on Turkish cuisine**

By John Dory

A culinary tour of these holiday hotspots is possibly the next best thing to a trip abroad.

In 2019, UK residents took over 72 million trips overseas, in total, with the number of excursion abroad increasing steadily in the last five years. The most popular destinations for British visitors were Spain, France, Italy, Ireland and Portugal.

The fastest growing destination for UK tourists, up until 2015, was Turkey, but then terrorism and internal political unrest and strife deterred British tourists from visiting that captivating country.

I visited Turkey twice before that and found it both fascinating and intriguing on many levels, a land with a long and rich history where civilizations and empires collided and created a melting pot of cultures, religions and ethnicities. It was part of the Ottoman Empire till it became a republic in 1923 with the immensely charismatic and visionary Atatürk as its first President.

Turkey spans two continents, Asia and Europe with its main city Istanbul (historically known as Constantinople) straddling the mighty Bosporus. The country has a population of 80 million with at least 30 languages spoken inside its borders. In size, Turkey is more than three times bigger than the UK so it’s no wonder that it abounds with many “Turkish delights.”

For a country of its size and diverse cultures it is no wonder that the traveller to Turkey can be overwhelmed by the extraordinary range of dishes inherited from different regions of the Ottoman Empire. In Istanbul and other large cities in Turkey, the ubiquitous fast food fare is found on every corner and every street, as in all advanced countries across the globe. Look a little further, in town and county and a huge variety of regional and national delicacies can easily be found. With a country of this great size it is only possible in a short column to have a quick taste of Turkish cuisine.

There are Turkish specialities that are not uncommon to many of us due to either visits to Turkey or sampling these dishes in Turkish restaurants in our own country. Possibly one of the ones with which we are most familiar is the Turkish hors d'oeuvres known as mezé. There are many varieties of hors d'oeuvres ranging from cold and simple ones such as white cheeses and salads to warm ones like fried pastries or croquettes with more substantial main dishes of fish or broiled meat. Egg plants or aubergines are often found at the mezé table with tomatoes, pickled stuff peppers and a variety of beans. Very often, “tahini” which is a strong alcoholic drink made of aniseed and grapes is served during consumption of mezé.

Pastries called borek are traditionally filled with meat, cheese, vegetables or fish but there are variations according to location. Dolma or vine leaves are also stuffed with a variety of fillings, including numerous types of vegetables, meats and flavoured rice. These rice dishes come under the generic term pilal or pilav. Broiled and roasted meat dishes, called kebab or kofte, are very traditional with lamb and mutton a key ingredient. Minced lamb, flavoured with traditional spices, has been part and parcel of Turkish cuisine since time immemorial and has been exported internationally in many forms. Vegetables cooked in olive oil, called zeytinyagli, are a staple fare on Turkish tables. Egg plant or aubergine in olive oil is worth mentioning as there is a famous story relating to this vegetable. The dish is called imambayildi and means “the imam fainted” but the legend does not clarify whether the imam, or holy man, fainted because of the tastiness of the dish or because of the great amount of olive oil used in it.

It would not be appropriate in a column on Turkish cuisine not to mention a sweet drink made of aniseed and grapes is served during consumption of mezé.

There are endless Turkish recipes which would be delightful and delicious for meat eaters and vegetarians alike but this is my favourite. It is a smoky aubergine dish called Baba Ganoush which is relatively easy to prepare.

### Baba Ganoush

They are ready when the flesh feels soft when you press it. This takes approximately 15 minutes. (Aubergines can also be prepared on a grill or with a blowtorch.)

1. In a blender blitz the garlic, lemon juice, tahini, olive oil and black pepper.
2. Mix the flesh with the Tahini mixture. Pour into a bowl.
3. Drizzle with olive oil and add the chopped parsley.

Serve with toasted flatbread. Delicious as a starter or part of mezé.

It is a type of concoction originating in Turkey in the 1770s. It consists of a gel of starch and sugar with a variety of additions such as pistachios, hazelnuts, dates and walnuts flavoured with rose water, lemon or orange. It is cut into small cubes and dusted with icing sugar, copra or cream of tartar to prevent it sticking. Mint and cinnamon are also common flavourings.

There are endless Turkish recipes which would be delightful and delicious for meat eaters and vegetarians alike but this is my favourite. It is a smoky aubergine dish called Baba Ganoush which is relatively easy to prepare.

**AFGHANISTAN STUDENTS’ LIVES DISRUPTED BY VIRUS**

If the current situation is confusing in the UK, spare a thought for those studying in Afghanistan.

The COVID-19 outbreak lockdown, imposed since March, has completely disrupted the studies of our students.

We support medical students studying at five universities and 40 students at Gawharshad. Five are providing online classes but many students struggle to access a computer with a good internet connection. It is unclear whether examinations will be held at the end of the semester, whether this will count towards their eventual graduation or how students adversely affected by lack of internet will be treated.

Rural Jaghoori, where we sponsor midwifery and nursing students has closed.

The six medical students who were undertaking practical post-graduation training in hospitals have all been sent home.

The whole situation is confusing, and we can only hope that things settle down before the start of the autumn semester.

Meanwhile, we are progressing the advertisements, applications and the selection of another batch of students to start in October.

At the beginning of the year our EVENTS article highlighted the help we were giving to an exceptional school in Rustam, Bamyan which had managed to get more than 90% of students, more than half of whom are girls, to college, despite the illiteracy of most parents.

The school was lacking a water supply and, after the thaw this winter, local men set to and excavated by hand over a kilometre of pipeline between a mountain spring and the school compound.

It’s now complete and the standpipe in the compound is a boon, allowing handwashing and drinking that was just not feasible before, an important issue in a school with nearly 500 pupils.

LFN’s contribution was just over £1000 – this represents good value for ourselves and the voluntary labour contribution will help build the community support for the school.
Sheepdog handlers embrace technology

Cut off from their trainer by the coronavirus crisis, Lewis crofters Kathleen Thomson and Sine Nicolson now access on-line sheepdog handler training via Zoom lessons and supported by Facebook groups.

Sine and Kathleen have previously travelled to the mainland and up to Caithness to train at Braehillor Sheepdog Handler Training Centre, in Dunbeath with Jasmine Grant.

In addition, they have trained in Lewis and Harris when Jasmine visited the islands in 2018 and 2019.

Delivered using a mixture of Zoom online meeting applications and the use of video clips and diagrams, Jasmine guides her student handlers through the steps to develop training strategies for their dogs.

In addition to 40 years of experience of training and working sheepdogs at both work and trial level, Jasmine also has a degree in Education and a Teaching Qualification. Developing her training courses into an online format has always been an ambition and Jasmine is particularly interested in finding ways of bringing like-minded folk together and reducing the social isolation that can occur with living in rural communities.

Sine and Kathleen have just participated in the pilot group to test out the technology and to give Jasmine feedback on their experiences as on-line learners. The strength of broadband connection can be varied throughout the Highlands and ways of reducing the availability required has been explored and implemented. The pilot was a tremendous success, and both have now signed up for the next course.

The online course gives participants the opportunity to learn how to train and work their dogs, from the comfort of their own home. Handlers are able to record short video clips on their mobile phones or other devices of their own dogs at a time convenient to them and send the clips on to Jasmine to give feedback. Each online group consists of six learners which ensures that everyone can participate and that they are supported both with the technology and the dog training element.

Kathleen Thomson is a full-time crofter and mum, from the village of South Gask. Brought up around sheepdogs, Kathleen started training her own dogs 10 years ago. However, she wanted to improve her technique and advance her handling skills so attended a course with Jasmine in Bragar in 2016 which was hosted and organised by Hannah and Norrie Mackay.

Kathleen then travelled to Braehillor, Dunbeath to train with Jasmine and then again in October 2019 in Bove, Isle of Harris where the venue and sheep were kindly provided by Richard and Lorna MacLean.

“The online course is really good and certainly motivates you into putting the time in to train. Also, the support and guidance from Jasmine is crucial to it all coming together. You learn from others and vice versa in your training group”, said Kathleen.

Part-time crofter, ambulance paramedic and dog trainer, Sine Nicolson from Sheshader, Point, is a sheepdog enthusiast who has had around working dogs all her life. She became even more interested in working dogs two years ago when she acquired a rescue working dog, Fly. She joined Kathleen on the courses when Jasmine visited the islands and she too has trained in Caithness on Jasmine’s course.

“The on-line course was fantastic; I’m not technical in the slightest – however, everything was explained so well I just couldn’t go wrong. I really enjoyed the course as it gave me something to look forward to and taking video clips is really good as you have them to look back on and can use the critique sheets from Jasmine to review your progress. “I could fully concentrate on what Jasmine was saying when giving feedback as I didn’t have to work fly at the same time. It’s also made me more confident to run in front of others – in fact it’s actually quite the confidence boost as your videos are done at home in my own time and then others watch once they are uploaded.

“I feel that has enabled me not to put so much pressure on myself. The course is particularly great for bringing like-minded people together to support and encourage each other. It has given me the confidence to aim to trial in the future, but most important, to enjoy my dog and get me through the challenges we have faced.”

The online courses run on a rolling basis so to book your place contact Jasmine via the Facebook page – Braehillor Sheepdog Handler Training or by email – braehillorsheepdogs@yahoo.com
Scottish Crofting Federation

The Brexit Crofting clouds are gathering

By Patrick Krause

The Covid-19 pandemic is uppermost in everyone’s minds, but we must not take our eye off the Brexit ball.

So much resources of the EU and UK governments is being taken up with fighting the pandemic that it is vanishingly unlikely a comprehensive trade deal between UK and EU can be concluded before the end of 2020, and impossible for the UK governments to develop robust contingency plans for an inevitable ‘no-deal’ crash out of the European Union.

It is, therefore, essential that the UK government agrees to ask the EU for a two-year extension to the transition period. Crofters will then be able to plan for 2021 and 2022 whereas, at the moment, we have no idea what rules will be in place for next year even, only six months away. This is too important, and affects the economic wellbeing of too many people, for the negotiations to be rushed and arbitrary deadline.

Exports to the EU underpin the market for many crofters so it is vital that these continue tariff free for both beef and lamb. We currently have exemplary high animal welfare, traceability and environmental standards. This is not only good for consumer, high animal welfare, traceability and environmental standards. This is not only good for consumer.

Imports that do not conform to our standards. The implications of these conditions are that we should continue to shadow EU standards if they change.

A number of areas crucial to the Scottish rural economy rely on temporary and permanent immigration – for example abattoirs, vet practices, fruit farming, machinery maintenance - and this has to be able to continue after the transition period, though so far it is unclear what will be in place.

Continuing support payments at a UK level have been signalled for the life of this parliament - this is vital, and Scotland must get its fair share. There will be need for a UK framework across the four constituent countries and this must be agreed between all four countries, not imposed by Westminster.

Scotland can then develop its own support systems to fit its own needs within the agreed framework, which will include a replacement for the Less Favoured Area Support Scheme (LFASS) based on Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) principles.

An agriculture bill is progressing through the UK parliament but as yet we have seen no clear strategy on what an agricultural and rural development policy for Scotland will look like.

Time is running out and expecting UK industries, including agriculture, to cope with Brexit with no deal with EU in place, having used up all reserves to mitigate Covid-19, is a mere fantasy.

Crofting Services

Join the SCF

Membership of the Scottish Crofting Federation is an investment in the future of crofting.

Your support will strengthen the voice of crofters & crofting communities

www.crofting.org

01599 530 005

hq@crofting.org

SAC Agricultural & Conservation Consultants combine local knowledge with extensive experience and are supported by our team of renowned specialists. We can assist crofters with business advice on a range of topics to improve profitability.

Contact your local SAC office: 01851 703103

Leading the way in Agriculture and Rural Research, Education and Consulting

Crofting Federation

views over tough sentences for dog attacks

Highlands and Islands MSP Donald Cameron is urging local people to submit their views on proposals to strengthen penalties on dog-owners whose pets attack livestock.

Mr Cameron said: “The Scottish Parliament is undertaking a consultation on proposals which include banning convicted persons of owning a dog, as well as the introduction of fines of up to £5,000 or six months imprisonment.

“I welcome this initiative as we have had some serious incidents locally of livestock worrying which has caused great suffering to the animals concerned, as well as a loss of income to local farmers and crofters.

“If you would like to voice an opinion you can do so via the following email address: rec.committee@parliament.scot

“The consultation is open until 28th August.”

The Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee had earlier issued a call for views on the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill, which aims to “strengthen and update the law” in relation to so-called “livestock worrying”.

The Member’s Bill introduced in the Scottish Parliament by Emma Harper MSP would provide additional powers for the investigation and enforcement of the offence and increase the maximum penalty to six months’ imprisonment, a fine of £5,000, or both.

It would also allow a court to make an order disqualifying convicted persons, for such period as the court sees fit, from owning or keeping a dog, or preventing them from taking dogs onto agricultural land on which livestock is present.

The Bill provides police and inspectors with new powers to seize a dog for the purpose of identifying its owner or gathering evidence, and further extends the definition of “livestock” to reflect a more up-to-date list of the species now farmed in Scotland, such as llamas, alpacas, ostriches, farmed deer, buffalo, and enclosed game birds.

Committee Convener, Edward Mountain MSP, said: “Dog attacks cause suffering to farm animals, resulting in distress and significant financial cost to farmers.

“Emma Harper believes the current law in relation to livestock worrying is out of date and that tougher enforcement powers and penalties are needed to act as a deterrent.

“The purpose of the committee’s call for evidence is to understand the need for further legislation in this area and to seek views on whether the additional powers and increased punishments proposed are sufficient and proportionate.”

Please send your views to rec.committee@parliament.scot by Friday 28 August 2020.

The Bill was introduced by Emma Harper MSP on 14 May 2020. It updates the existing law on “livestock worrying”, in the main, by amending the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953.

Polycrub®

- Designed in Shetland for the windiest weather – certified to withstand 120mph winds
- Eligible for community and agricultural grants as part of a planned programme
- COMING SOON! New range of multi-purpose Polycrub®

Want to hear more?
Contact Maree or Cynthia for info:

T 01806 544222
E info@polycrub.co.uk
www.polycrub.co.uk
www.facebook.com/polycrub
www.twitter.com/polycrub

notenergy, Ollaberry Hall, Ollaberry, Shetland

notenergy is a trading arm of Northmorse Community Development Company – Charity Number: SC039396

* All profits benefit our community in Northmorse, Shetland.
* Picture © Ronnie Robertson

* When built in strict accordance with construction documents.
In 1978, Ron Stallworth is the first black detective in the history of the Colorado Springs Police Department. Ron, aided by his partner Chuck, launches an undercover investigation of incredible audacity in the KKK. During his months-long investigation, Stallworth sabotages cross burnings, exposes white supremacists in the military, and even manages to deceive the KKK “Grand Wizard” David Duke himself - dodging danger and reprisal at every turn...

Black Klansman is an amazing true story and a rollercoaster of a crime thriller; a searing and timely portrait of a divided America and the extraordinary heroes who dare to fight back.

**What's happening at Western Isles Libraries**

While the library is closed, the eLibrary is open 7/24 for you to borrow and listen to or read the latest books. Here are our top ten lists, for adults and children, to give you a taster of what is available.

For more information on how to access these books, visit the Library from Home section on the Your Lockdown Library website – www.cne-siar.gov.uk/yourlockdownlibrary.

Enjoy!

**TOP NEW EBOOKS FROM LIBBY / OVERDRIVE**

- Adichie, Chimamanda: Purple Hibiscus (Fiction)
- Beesley, Dominic: Pure imagination (Junior Fiction)
- Burton, Sarah: The Strange adventures of H (Historical Fiction)
- Cowell, Cressida: Knock three times (Junior Fiction)
- Feldman, Deborah: Unorthodox (Autobiography)
- Jones, Sandie: The Half-sister (Thriller)
- La Plante, Linda: Buried (Crime / Thriller)
- Marks, Nadia: One Summer in Crete (Romance)
- Pichon, Liz: Spectacular school trips (really) (Junior Fiction)
- Tyler, Anne: Redhead by the side of the road (Fiction)
- Webb, Holly: The Midnight visitor (Junior Fiction)

**TOP NEW EAUDIO BOOKS FROM BORROWBOX**

- Beesley, Dominic: Pure imagination (Junior Fiction)
- Burton, Sarah: The Strange adventures of H (Historical Fiction)
- Cowell, Cressida: Knock three times (Junior Fiction)
- Feldman, Deborah: Unorthodox (Autobiography)
- Jones, Sandie: The Half-sister (Thriller)
- La Plante, Linda: Buried (Crime / Thriller)
- Marks, Nadia: One Summer in Crete (Romance)
- Pichon, Liz: Spectacular school trips (really) (Junior Fiction)
- Tyler, Anne: Redhead by the side of the road (Fiction)
- Webb, Holly: The Midnight visitor (Junior Fiction)

**EBook**

**Black Klansman** by Ron Stallworth

Adapted as a major motion picture by Spike Lee

In 1978, Ron Stallworth is the first black detective in the history of the Colorado Springs Police Department. Ron, aided by his partner Chuck, launches an undercover investigation of incredible audacity in the KKK. During his months-long investigation, Stallworth sabotages cross burnings, exposes white supremacists in the military, and even manages to deceive the KKK “Grand Wizard” David Duke himself - dodging danger and reprisal at every turn...

Black Klansman is an amazing true story and a rollercoaster of a crime thriller; a searing and timely portrait of a divided America and the extraordinary heroes who dare to fight back.

**eAudio**

**Burn** by Patrick Ness

“On a cold Sunday evening in early 1957, Sarah Dewhurst waited with her father in the parking lot of the Chevron Gas Station for the dragon he’d hired to help on the farm.”


**The Library may be closed, but the eLibrary is always OPEN**

**FREE eBooks to READ**

Download the Libby app for Android or iOS
Select Western Isles Libraries and put in your library card number and PIN

**FREE eAudio Books to LISTEN to**

Download the BorrowBox app for Android or iOS
Select Western Isles Libraries and put in your library card number and PIN

**We have eBooks and eAudio books for adults and children!**

Contact us if you would like to join the library or find out more about how to access our library.
3981 822704 / library.enquiries@cne-siar.gov.uk
www.cne-siar.gov.uk/library

**Study, Live, Play Hebrides**

Stay in the Hebrides to study

Move to the Hebrides to learn

Base your studies in the Hebrides

**University of the Highlands and Islands Lews Castle College**

Olligh na Gàidhealtachd agus hàn Eilean Colaisde a` Chaisteil

www.studyliveplayhebrides.co.uk
PLANNING APPLICATIONS DURING JUNE 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.

**ISLE OF HARRIS**

**New agricultural building, Northton**

Susan Ward of 24 Northton has given prior notification to erect an agricultural building at 24 Northton. The building is to be 11 metres long, 8 metres wide and 5 metres tall.

**Restore and extend building, Leverburgh**

Jan Visser of Whale House, 1 Strond, Leverburgh, has applied for planning permission to restore and extend a stone shell to form a detached house at 1 Strond Road, Leverburgh. Work is also to include the construction of a shed and creation of an access and parking spaces. An air source heat pump will also be installed. The house will consist of two bedrooms, a bathroom, a dining room and a kitchen.

**New polycrub, 23 North Shawbost**

Neill Mackay of 23 North Shawbost has applied for planning permission to erect a polycrub at 23 North Shawbost. The polycrub is to be 10 metres long, 4 metres wide and 2.55 metres tall.

**New polycarbonate tunnel, Tong**

Ronald Maclean of Tong Farm, Tong, has applied for planning permission to erect a polycarbonate tunnel at Tong Farm, Tong. The tunnel is to be 10 metres long, 4 metres wide and 3 metres tall.

**Demolition and extension, Tolstachoilais**

Mairi Macritchie of Tigh na Bruaich has applied for planning permission to demolish the existing porch and erect a sun lounge extension at Tigh na Bruaich, Tolstachoilais.

**Upgrade telecommunications apparatus, Lower Shader**

EE Ltd has applied for planning permission to upgrade the telecommunications apparatus at Communications Mast, Lower Shader.

**New agricultural building, Point**

Gordon Mackay of 9 Swordale, Point, has applied for planning permission to erect an agricultural building at 9 Swordale, Point. The building is to be 10 metres long, 8 metres wide and 5 metres tall.

**New access road and hardstanding, Sandwood**

Rosemary Macritchie of 19 Lower Sandwick has applied for planning permission to create an access road and a hardstanding for croft access at 19 Lower Sandwick.

**Extension of quarry, Lochs Road**

A & C Maciver has applied for planning permission to extend the quarry at Creed enterprise park.

**Polycrub, Tong**

Marina Maciver of 3 A'ird Tong has given prior notification of farm-related building works at 61 New Street, North Tolsta. The polycrub is to be 10 metres long, 4 metres wide and 3 metres tall.

**Change of use of building, Ness**

Monika Mayer of 23 Adabrock has applied for planning permission to change the use of the building at 23 Adabrock, Ness, from domestic garage to non-domestic residential accommodation.

**Change of use of building, Carloway**

Anna Mary Macleod of An Acarsaid, 2 Knock, Carloway has applied for planning permission to change the use of the former fish farm building at Carloway Pier, Knock, Carloway to a house.

**New house, Benaera**

Brenda Jones of 26 Rathadh a'Mhaoir, Plasterfield, Stornoway has applied for planning permission to build a house at 24E Vallasay, Benaera. The house is to have two bedrooms, two bathrooms and a kitchen/dining/living area. Work is to include the installation of an air source heat pump and creation of three parking spaces.

**ISLE OF LEWIS**

**New telecommunications mast, Lochs**

Willkinson-Helsby has applied for planning permission to erect a 20 metre telecommunications mast and associated infrastructure at Druim Nam Bacan Mast, Ranish. Work is also to include creating an access track.

**New dish antennae, Radio Station, Marybank**

Richard Griffiths of Pacifica Wireless Ltd has applied for planning permission to install integrated dish antennae on an existing BT Radio Mast at Radio Station, Bernadrome Road, Marybank.

**New polycarbonate tunnel, Uig**

Donella Macdonald of 10A Reef, Uig, has applied for planning permission to erect a polycarbonate tunnel at 10A Reef, Uig. The tunnel is to be 9.6 metres long, 4 metres wide and 2.6 metres tall and is to be used to grow vegetables, herbs and fruit.

**New access and hardstanding, Coll**

Seán Macleod of Kames House, Hill Street, North Tolsta, has applied for planning permission to create an access and hard standing at 47A Coll.

**Housing development, Barvas**

Calmac Construction Ltd has applied for planning permission to erect eight semi-detached houses in Barvas. Work is to include installing air source heat pumps and creating associated service connections and an access road. A footpath will also be created with nine lampposts to meet the existing footpath at the Barvas junction. There is to be four two-bedroom houses, two one-bedroom houses and two three-bedroom houses.

**New agricultural building**

Alison Jacques of 7 Carishader, Uig, has applied for planning permission to erect an agricultural building – a Nissen hut – at 7 Carishader, Uig.

**New agricultural storage building**

Mark Macleod of 11 Druim Na H-Athadh has applied for planning permission to erect a building for the storage of agricultural implements at 1 Dalmore. The building is to be 12 metres long, 12 metres wide and 5 metres tall.

**Comhairle approves Plan to aid economic recovery of isles**

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar approved a Recovery Plan at its meeting on 24 June to aid the economy of the Outer Hebrides.

The plan, developed in partnership with Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), focuses on three key areas that will be critical to the future of the islands – a community recovery, a green recovery and a digital recovery. Under each of these themes a range of actions have been identified with implementation of these actions being rolled out progressively over the next period.

The Recovery Plan sees collaboration with key sectors of the economy as being a critical component of the recovery and as such a series of economic forums will be established to gather industry intelligence and to allow the private sector to help influence and focus the direction of recovery efforts. A high-level Outer Hebrides wide economic forum is anticipated with forums in Barra, Uist and Harris to ensure recovery efforts are being prioritised across all the islands.

Councillor Roddie MacKay, Leader of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, said: “The public health crisis sparked by the Covid-19 pandemic has also resulted in an economic crisis due to the lockdown and related containment measures. Across the Outer Hebrides it has been and remains an extremely difficult time for many businesses and for the staff that work in these businesses. “The Comhairle and HIE have sought to be proactive in support of business by delivering the various Government support schemes and developing a local, tailored support package for any business that may have been ineligible for the Government schemes”.

Mr MacKay continued: “With the prospects of lockdown beginning to ease the time is right to begin thinking about the future and the recovery of the economy. I believe there is an opportunity for us to begin to rethink, to reimagine and to reform the economy of the Outer Hebrides. It will be important that the recovery is inclusive and that it seeks to grow stronger, more resilient communities across the Outer Hebrides. I think it will be critical that our recovery efforts seek to build capacity within communities and that the concepts of localism are at the forefront of what we do. We need to find new ways to positively prioritise local supply chains and local procurement for the benefit of local businesses and local communities”.

Rachel MacKenzie, HIE’s Area Manager for the Outer Hebrides, said: “The Recovery Plan is highly focused on areas that will be critical to the future well-being of the local economy and local communities. There is an opportunity in the economic recovery effort for a new kind of local economy. In our fragile economy, we are seeking to support the development of local economic recovery and reform our plans and ways of working. Our focus will also be on a “Green Recovery” seeking to maximise the Outer Hebrides utilisation of renewable energy resources, moving the Hebrides towards Net Zero Carbon, while simultaneously looking to develop a set of climate change mitigation and adaptations.

In the post-Covid economy working methods will change, with home-working, remote working and on-line delivery of services becoming more normal in all our lives. “Digital Recovery” is therefore critical to ensure that the Outer Hebrides have a level digital playing field from which to operate. We need to ensure high speed digital infrastructure is available to every domestic property and every business premises and that we are innovative in using that infrastructure to stimulate new business opportunity”.

Mrs MacKenzie also emphasised the essential role of the Economic Forums “I think the establishment of an Economic Forum and local Forums will be critical to the implementation of the overall strategy. We are keen to work with businesses in all our island communities to ensure the strategy is delivered in a way that works for each island area. The Comhairle and HIE are also keen to engage with all sectors of the economy – from tourism and construction through to primary sector producers – to ensure we fully understand issues as sectors emerge from lockdown and are developing policy and actions to make that transition as smooth and successful as possible.”

Finding the right number for your council services...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SWITCHBOARD</th>
<th>01851 600501</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CUSTOMER SERVICE</td>
<td>01851 600502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMERGENCY OUT OF HOURS</td>
<td>01851 701702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL WORK OFFICES</td>
<td>01851 822708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stornoway</td>
<td>01859 502367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarbert</td>
<td>01850 602425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balivanich</td>
<td>01857 810431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our essential friends...home carers facing up to Covid-19

By Annie Delin

The Coronavirus crisis has brought tremendous challenges to some of the quiet heroes of island life – the home care team who daily provide essential support to vulnerable adults, allowing them to remain living in their own homes.

But at the same time, according to experienced carer Dorothy Hall, it’s brought an even greater sense of satisfaction and reward from the work that they do.

Dorothy is one of a ‘double-up’ team of two who work in people’s own homes around Stornoway town – from Melbost to Newmarket is her daily beat.

When the crisis began to emerge, they were issued with new protocols from the Scottish Government and Public Health Scotland, giving them extra infection prevention and control guidance for their own safety and for that of their clients.

The guidance included following a home visit pathway, ensuring service users were symptom-free before giving support, sticking to social distancing where possible, and where not possible, using the right personal protective equipment (PPE).

Dorothy explained that so far, through the whole pandemic, none of her clients have displayed any symptoms that could be associated with Covid-19. She said: “In fact for the whole of this period we’ve had no colds, coughs, or snuffles. It’s as if everyone is actually healthier because of the isolation and shielding.”

Dorothy sees the regulations as safeguards she would practice anyway. “I usually wash my hands three or four times during a visit in any case, this just enhances what we do and makes us more conscious of it.”

“We have to wash our hands when we arrive and we have been issued with PPE including masks, gowns and aprons which we use regularly, and goggles and disposable thermometers which have not yet been required.”

Not everyone finds it easy when masks have to be worn for close contact tasks. Dorothy said: “People with dementia find it disorientating when they can’t see your face and many elderly people need to see your lips when you speak, to help with their hearing. In that situation I just have to step back to the two-metre distance, apologise and explain to them why we have to follow the rules.”

The home carer’s ordinary tasks of daily living support with food, hygiene, getting up and going to bed have not changed, but in some cases the relationship between Dorothy and her clients has deepened.

“All our clients are vulnerable adults and they are finding it difficult to cope with not seeing their families, their friends and their usual regular callers. They are already alone and it makes it much worse.”

“But I’ve also become much closer to them because their families aren’t around and I can spend some time with them. If a leaflet has come through the door explaining about the virus, or if they’ve had a letter from the doctor, I can sit with them and read it to make sure they understand.”

“Working through Coronavirus has made things very different for us. We’ve become more flexible and yet still very conscious of our professional responsibility. Our psychological workload has increased because we’re having to think about our clients, put ourselves in their position and think what we would want in their situation.”

“You don’t always know what you’re going to be asked to do, but I enjoy that because I am a multi-tasker. We have to respond to their wishes and, at the same time, to be aware of their dignity.”

“For myself, I’m finding that a job that was satisfying to begin with has become even more satisfying since Coronavirus. Clients always look forward to us coming in and we are as much friends with them as professionals.”

“The impact of Covid 19 on support services was significant, Day Services had to reduce to a support from home service and staff were redeployed through the care service to support other areas of care. During this time staff planned for the service to be able to operate safely following guidance set out by the Scottish government. This included emptying spaces to allow social distancing and new training and guidance on PPE.”

On the 16th of June, day services resumed on a shortened schedule to allow staff and service users to return safely and carefully. Staff and service users have been happy to get back to business even if it is in a slightly different way.

“Being in lockdown means that I haven’t had any visitors since the 20th of February and I usually have visitors every day. It’s been very strange not having any visitors and my home is unusually quiet.”

“However, I am very grateful to be in my own home with my Mum and Dad and my amazing Carers, something that people in the wider world who have kept me alive and well for over four years and they definitely make lockdown a lot easier to cope with. The Services also keep in touch with me via email regularly and I know if I need anything I always have to do is email them.”
Pupils in Uist have been writing letters to a number of befriending networks on the island to help support people during lockdown. The children were also aware of elderly community members and decided to write to them as they knew they would appreciate a friendly letter during the lockdown period.

The pupils of Sgoil Uibhist a Tuath, Sgoil Bhaile a’ Mhanaich, Sgoil an Iochdair and Sgoil Dhalabroig were encouraged to write letters to people living in care homes as part of the National Literacy Trust Dear New Friend initiative.

Executive Head of Uist Primary Schools Anne Graham said: "Inter-generational connections such as Armchair Athletics and Tagsa Sensory Garden project are something the Uist Primary Schools have developed over the last few years and we recognise it as one of the most valuable things that we have established here. We know that the receiving of a letter can really give someone a huge lift in their period of confinement and we endeavour to promote the skills of letter writing in every child.

A Sgoil Bhaile a’ Mhanaich pupil became aware of a Benbecula lady, Mrs MacSween, stranded in Australia. She was due home in April but is unable to travel due to restrictions. Due to her situation, Shonnie in PG4 decided to write a Gaelic letter to her knowing that this may be of a comfort to her to receive a letter in her mother tongue whilst away from home."
Harris Tweed connections in the modern world

**Hogarth tracked down an old school friend, Scott Mitchell, largest sporting festivals. However, creative director Mark golf and Harris Tweed? market but how could we revive the relationship between clubhouses all over the world. This was a highly desirable into golfing attire. Tweeds had vanished as functional wear reflected in pictures adorning the walls of Gleneagles Hotel ‘lost Old Tom course’ and now attracts visitors from all over to carve 18 holes from the machair at Askernish.

received a distinguished visitor, ‘Old’ Tom Morris - four times

performance sportswear of its day.

reflected in pictures adorning the walls of Gleneagles Hotel ‘lost Old Tom course’ and now attracts visitors from all over to carve 18 holes from the machair at Askernish.

More than a century later, the course - having undergone

wearing Harris Tweed.

The reason Blythswood Square had this distinction was

that its entire north face was home to the Royal Scottish

woven at Luskentyre by Donald John Mackay.

The colours are brighter and accessories more varied but

Meanwhile, Harris Tweed golf accessories remain very

the Ryder Cup Harris
tournament and would not move from their super fine
two-lightweight, dark blue tweed material.

agreement to produce an official Ryder Cup collection.

Harris Tweed Hebrides did, however, secure an

agreement to produce an official Ryder Cup collection.

Tuscany. Harris Tweed Hebrides did, however, secure an

August, 1960. That opportunity arose when Gleneagles was selected as

venue than the Blythswood Square Hotel? One memorable

Harris Tweed was back as the fabric of fashion, what better

showcase for the use of Harris Tweed as an interiors fabric

as a catalyst for their interest in Harris Tweed. It's now our turn to

Taylor-Cup’s Harris Tweed jacket, 4 0-2, two shirts, ‘tobacco’-tinted and
costumed and, of course, the media launch

agreement to produce an official Ryder Cup collection.

Tuscany. Harris Tweed Hebrides did, however, secure an

August, 1960. That opportunity arose when Gleneagles was selected as

venue than the Blythswood Square Hotel? One memorable

Harris Tweed was back as the fabric of fashion, what better

showcase for the use of Harris Tweed as an interiors fabric

as a catalyst for their interest in Harris Tweed. It's now our turn to

Taylor-Cup’s Harris Tweed jacket, 4 0-2, two shirts, ‘tobacco’-tinted and
costumed and, of course, the media launch

agreement to produce an official Ryder Cup collection.

Tuscany. Harris Tweed Hebrides did, however, secure an

August, 1960. That opportunity arose when Gleneagles was selected as

venue than the Blythswood Square Hotel? One memorable

Harris Tweed was back as the fabric of fashion, what better

showcase for the use of Harris Tweed as an interiors fabric

as a catalyst for their interest in Harris Tweed. It's now our turn to

Taylor-Cup’s Harris Tweed jacket, 4 0-2, two shirts, ‘tobacco’-tinted and
costumed and, of course, the media launch

agreement to produce an official Ryder Cup collection.

Tuscany. Harris Tweed Hebrides did, however, secure an

August, 1960. That opportunity arose when Gleneagles was selected as

venue than the Blythswood Square Hotel? One memorable

Harris Tweed was back as the fabric of fashion, what better

showcase for the use of Harris Tweed as an interiors fabric

as a catalyst for their interest in Harris Tweed. It's now our turn to

Taylor-Cup’s Harris Tweed jacket, 4 0-2, two shirts, ‘tobacco’-tinted and
costumed and, of course, the media launch

agreement to produce an official Ryder Cup collection.

Tuscany. Harris Tweed Hebrides did, however, secure an

August, 1960. That opportunity arose when Gleneagles was selected as

venue than the Blythswood Square Hotel? One memorable

Harris Tweed was back as the fabric of fashion, what better

showcase for the use of Harris Tweed as an interiors fabric

as a catalyst for their interest in Harris Tweed. It's now our turn to

Taylor-Cup’s Harris Tweed jacket, 4 0-2, two shirts, ‘tobacco’-tinted and
costumed and, of course, the media launch

agreement to produce an official Ryder Cup collection.

Tuscany. Harris Tweed Hebrides did, however, secure an

August, 1960. That opportunity arose when Gleneagles was selected as

venue than the Blythswood Square Hotel? One memorable

Harris Tweed was back as the fabric of fashion, what better

showcase for the use of Harris Tweed as an interiors fabric

as a catalyst for their interest in Harris Tweed. It's now our turn to

Taylor-Cup’s Harris Tweed jacket, 4 0-2, two shirts, ‘tobacco’-tinted and
costumed and, of course, the media launch

agreement to produce an official Ryder Cup collection.

Tuscany. Harris Tweed Hebrides did, however, secure an

August, 1960. That opportunity arose when Gleneagles was selected as

venue than the Blythswood Square Hotel? One memorable

Harris Tweed was back as the fabric of fashion, what better

showcase for the use of Harris Tweed as an interiors fabric

as a catalyst for their interest in Harris Tweed. It's now our turn to

Taylor-Cup’s Harris Tweed jacket, 4 0-2, two shirts, ‘tobacco’-tinted and
costumed and, of course, the media launch

agreement to produce an official Ryder Cup collection.

Tuscany. Harris Tweed Hebrides did, however, secure an

August, 1960. That opportunity arose when Gleneagles was selected as

venue than the Blythswood Square Hotel? One memorable

Harris Tweed was back as the fabric of fashion, what better

showcase for the use of Harris Tweed as an interiors fabric

as a catalyst for their interest in Harris Tweed. It's now our turn to

Taylor-Cup’s Harris Tweed jacket, 4 0-2, two shirts, ‘tobacco’-tinted and
costumed and, of course, the media launch

agreement to produce an official Ryder Cup collection.
Schools are out for summer...and back in August

By Katie Macleod

A fter three months of lockdown learning, staff and pupils across Scotland are enjoying a well-deserved break during their summer holidays – and enjoying it with the knowledge that schools will be returning as usual in August.

The announcement that schools would open at full capacity after the summer was made by Deputy First Minister John Swinney on 23rd June.

In the Western Isles, staff will return to school on 10th August for two days of in-service, and pupils will return from the 12th, with special provision made for new Primary 1 and S1 pupils who were not able to experience their usual transition activities.

August and September will be slightly different for our teachers and for our pupils, because staff will be settling children and young people into the routines of school again,” said Bernard Chisholm, Director of Education Services at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, during a live Facebook Q&A hosted by the department on 25th June.

Chairied by the Comhairle’s Media Coordinator Colin George Morrison, the Q&A panel was hosted at e-Sgoil in Stornoway, with some panel members joining remotely via video call. In attendance alongside Bernard were Western Isles MSP Alasdair Allan, Executive Head Teachers, and a number of education staff from throughout the islands.

Before the holidays started on 26th June, all parents received a copy of An Turas Air Ais, the Local Delivery Plan for the return to schools. The plans details for each phase of the return, from Phase 1, which covered staff returning to schools last month; Phase 2, which outlines the current summer holiday period; and Phase 3, which details the reopening of schools from 10th August as well as any risk assessments that have been put in place.

As outlined in the delivery plan and during the Q&A, different schools will have slightly different initial approaches to a full reopening, depending on their size, stage, and location. Secondary schools, for example, are allocating in school plans for new S1 pupils, and making provisions for senior pupils who need to make course changes after SQA results are announced on 4th August.

In the Nicolson Institute, new S1 pupils will be introduced to their new school before all pupils return. Sgoil Leacanait will run a similar induction, whereas at Castlebay and Sir E Scott Schools, Primary 7 pupils already engage in a longer-term transition period over their last year in primary school and will not be returning to classrooms early.

“The important thing to remember is that our secondary schools are very different from each other, and we’ll all be doing something slightly different, particularly in the bigger secondary schools,” said Dr Frances Murray, Executive Head Teacher at Tolsta High School, who outlined plans for the Nicolson Institute. “We’re very conscious of the fact that our Primary 7 pupils did not have their usual transition activities, and some may never have been in the school building.”

Primary schools will also open slightly differently, based on their class and school sizes.

“In the larger schools, it is planned that Primary 1 pupils will have a staggered start to the day, so they may come in small cohorts. That won’t be necessary in every school, particularly the smaller schools where they have smaller year groups coming in,” said Kathleen Macleod, Executive Head Teacher for Broadbay Schools.

“In addition to that there has been planning to have nursery staff available for the first couple of weeks, because transition activities did not happen as usual. Staff were very creative with virtual tours and we had some enhanced transitions, but it’s important that the pupils starting on Primary 1 also have contact with staff from their own nursery, so there’s provision being made for that.”

Nurseries will also resume normal opening hours in August for registered children, but staff will be allocated specific cohorts, as the national guidance requires them to be in small groups.

In addition to the practical elements of a full return to school, the Education, Skills, and Children’s Services department has organized extra support for children and young people in terms of their learning. Plans have been put in place to allow children to partake in additional online work at home if they need to “catch up” on work that has been missed during lockdown.

Extra support is also in place for pupils and parents in Gaelic Medium Education, particularly with the roll-out of the Comhairle’s Gaelic First policy, where pupils entering Primary One will be automatically enrolled in Gaelic Medium Education, unless their parents request otherwise.

“We are fully committed to our Gaelic First policy, and we will continue to support – and give extra support – those few months when we return to school in August,” said Senior Education Officer Mary Clare Ferguson, who added that parents had already been contacted about the support being put in place for both pupils and parents involved in Gaelic Medium.

“We need to emphasize the importance of the community in supporting children through our language, it’s part of our culture, and I think there are opportunities here,” added William Macdonald, Head of Service. “We’ll work with Multimedia, and With Community Learning and Development, to provide opportunities for parents and for children to enrich the language.”

Nationally and locally, however, this detailed planning return to schools at full capacity will only be possible if certain conditions are met regarding COVID-19 infection rates. “As the Deputy First Minister has said, going back to school in August on a full-time basis is only possible if the current progress is maintained and improved. Should there be at the moment, based on the information we’ve received from Cremhneachd, the summer provision back to Plan B, we have it ready. Staff have done all the preparation, and it has not been wasted,” said Bernard.

“All of the schools in the Western Isles have a robust plan that focuses on all the different measures that they will need to take to allow a partial return of pupils to schools,” said Donald Macleod, Senior Education Officer, during the Comhairle’s Live Education Q&A on Facebook on 25th June.

“We have constructed that plan with the intention - and we believe we can still make that commitment - that we will not require any of our term-time staff to cover the summer provision, which has been a founding idea of what we wanted to do.

“Our school-based staff have worked tirelessly and relentlessly since the beginning of lockdown, and we need a chance for them to have a break ahead of coming back in August.”

“It is based on the hub model that has already been running, but takes a smaller footprint, and safety checks, and the provision of PPE and hygiene supplies. Although current guidance is that all school staff will need to wear PPE or face masks, anyone who wishes to wear a face mask may do so.

CLEANING/HYGIENE PRACTICES:

School buildings that have not been used as hubs have been fully prepared for reopening. Plans and protocols have been devised for deep cleaning routines, health and safety checks, legionella water testing, fire safety checks, and for the provision of PPE and hygiene supplies. Although current guidance is that all school staff will need to wear PPE or face masks, anyone who wishes to wear a face mask may do so.

CnES to run activity hubs for youngsters during holidays

By Katie Macleod

A lthough schools across the Western Isles are now closed for the summer holidays, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is still providing childcare cover for vulnerable young people and the children of key workers, in the form of summer activity hubs.

Run by staff from Community Learning and Development and Active Schools, as well as Pupil Equity Fund Apprentices (funded by the Scottish Government’s Pupil Equity Fund grant), these new activity clubs run for five days a week and focus on fun activities, crafts, and games, all taking place outdoors whenever possible.

This summer provision forms Phase 2 of the Comhairle’s Return to Schools Local Delivery Plan, “An Turas Air Ais,” which covers the period from 29th June to 7th August.

While the Comhairle has provided school cover for eligible children during lockdown in 10 school hubs, the summer provision will be focused on six schools – Stornoway Primary, Laxdale Primary School, Sgoil na Taobh Siar, Sir E Scott School, and Balivanich Primary School – as well as three dedicated childcare provision hubs at the Childcare Centre and An Cotan in Stornoway, and Cothrom Og in South Uist.

“For us in the Western Isles it’s an unprecedented level of service to be provided, and it’s taken a great deal of careful planning and commitment and work from our school staff but also partners in Community Learning and Development, Active Schools, Sport and Health, and particularly our Pupil Equity Fund workers, who will form a core of that for the summer provision,” said Donald Macleod, Senior Education Officer, during the Comhairle’s Live Education Q&A on Facebook on 25th June.

“We have constructed that plan with the intention - and we believe we can still make that commitment - that we will not require any of our term-time staff to cover the summer provision, which has been a founding idea of what we wanted to do.

“Our school-based staff have worked tirelessly and relentlessly since the beginning of lockdown, and we need a chance for them to have a break ahead of coming back in August.”

It is based on the hub model that has already been running, but takes a smaller footprint, and safety checks, and the provision of PPE and hygiene supplies. Although current guidance is that all school staff will need to wear PPE or face masks, anyone who wishes to wear a face mask may do so.

For new Key Workers or those who are registered but have not requested summer access, the form to register for Phase 2 can be accessed online at the following link: https://bit.ly/CNESkeyworkers
New partnership offers e-Sgoil learning across Scotland

A new scheme announced on Thursday 25 June increases the availability of online learning across different subjects and supports digital inclusion across Scotland.

Education Scotland will expand its close working with e-Sgoil, based in the Western Isles, which will train a number of additional teachers from local authorities and schools, so that learners in the senior phase across Scotland can access via Glow. These online lessons will help to support and augment the work of classroom teachers across the country in their local arrangements for schools reopening on 11 August and also for reinforcing learning.

Deputy First Minister John Swinney outlined the partnership offer to develop a strong national e-learning provision in his update to Parliament on Tuesday 23 June. Under the plans, developed in partnership by e-Sgoil, Education Scotland, the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland and Scottish Government, all local authorities and schools in Scotland will be able to access live lessons on a range of subjects, and will take shared ownership for delivering these.

A rich and varied range of lessons will be taught live by these experienced and qualified educators and will be recorded to ensure that pupils have further opportunities to learn. This will increase the availability of learning opportunities for pupils, with a focus initially on lessons to help those following national qualification courses in the senior phase. Partners are working to ensure that a wide range of certificated courses in both English and Gaelic medium education and development a network of staff who are able to deliver online learning in all subject areas throughout Scotland, working with the current school and school closures, e-Sgoil extended its offer to schools across Scotland and many learners benefited. This new offer will build further on that development, involving more local authorities, schools and teachers.

Gayle Gorman, HLM Chief Inspector and Chief Executive of Education Scotland, said: “The learning provision we have offered on the Friday during school closures, e-Sgoil extended its offer to schools across Scotland and many learners benefited. This new opportunity will build further on that development, involving more local authorities, schools and teachers.”

Carrie Lindsay, Executive Director for Education & Children’s Services, Fife Council and President of the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) said: “It’s good to see the pioneering work that started in our island communities be able to support our work across Scotland, eSgoil has worked well in the more remote and Northerly parts of Scotland, it now has the opportunity to support far beyond any geographical parameters.”

Education Secretary John Swinney said: “The new national e-learning provision from eSgoil and Education Scotland will enable pupils in the senior phase to access a broad range of high quality lessons devised by qualified teachers trained in online learning.

“These new online lessons – as well as the 70,000 laptops we are giving to children and young people who need them the most – will help to support and augment the work being done by classroom teachers across the country.”

Dr Bill Beveridge, Director of SCHOLAR, said: “Using an approach refined through years’ of experience in supporting remote learners, e-Sgoil have demonstrated just how effectively, with access to high-quality online course materials, a thriving online learning community can be created. The techniques they have developed allow young people to take full advantage of the benefits that digital learning technology can bring while also placing a high premium on the importance of developing and maintaining supportive teacher–learner relationships.”

[SCHOLAR is the not-for-profit partnership between the Association of Directors of Education for Scotland and Herriot-Watt University that provides online learning resources to support blended and independent learning for over 150,000 learners attending schools and colleges throughout Scotland.]

Fhiona Mackay, Director of SCILT, Scotland’s National centre for Languages, said: “Working with e-Sgoil over the period of school closure has given SCILT the unique opportunity to support the learning of thousands of youngsters across the country from P1-6th. We’ve been able to provide them with high quality real time teaching that has either supported the work provided by their schools or encouraged them to use the time to learn a new, lesser-taught language that wouldn’t otherwise have been offered to them. It has been a very positive and rewarding experience, giving SCILT staff a new set of skills that we can share with the profession and a much deeper understanding of how effective teaching can be.”

Daniel Barrie, Education and Learning Manager at Keep Scotland Beautiful, said: “Lockdown has led us to completely transform our environmental education programmes and we have been delighted to work with E-Sgoil and other partner organisations to deliver online, real time, interactive teaching courses directly to young people and teachers across the country. We have been thrilled with the positive response and uptake for the courses we offered during term four. We look forward to building on this and supporting the return to school.”

Air Turas Air Ais – A Local Delivery Plan for Return to School

Preparatory Period: Lockdown (up to 8th June)
• Included development of risk assessments; implementation of health and safety measures; organisation of basic school day structures; communication with staff, students, and parents; and updates to the curriculum for early years, primary, and secondary pupils.

Phase One: Staff Return (8th to 26th June)
• Included planning for curriculum, training for online delivery and infection control, organisation of learning spaces, and completing risk assessments.

Phase Two: The Summer (26th June to 7th August)
• Summer hubs and early years provision operating in six schools for eligible children.

Phase Three: Learners Return (10th August onwards)
• All staff return on 10th August for two days in-service, and learners begin to return on 12th August, with emotional and wellbeing support for pupils returning to school.

Phase Four: Long-Term Delivery (Timescale to be confirmed)
• Full attendance has not been achieved, work towards that as soon as possible, alongside robust implementation of risk assessments.

Laxdale Primary School organised a virtual Sports Week for their pupils with the final taking place on Friday June 12.

School staff came up with the idea to try and make up for the children missing out on the Sports Week they would normally have.

Laxdale Primary School Teacher Lorraine Morrison said: “We, as a school, were so aware that the children have been working hard at laptops and missing out on so much of our planned sporting activities scheduled this term.

“We always have a Sports Week so as a staff Stephen Campbell, Kaye Anne Afrin and I were tasked with devising a ‘Virtual Sports Week’ for the whole school.

“In keeping with our ethos of a growth mindset, our emphasis was on individuals doing their best and trying to better themselves and learn new skills. We coined the slogan - Never give up, be your best, you’re a champion! It is also in Gaelic. We devised challenges based on the Active Schools model but we added extra activities and devoted a day to each theme.

“We have encouraged lots of photos and videos to be shared of participation and it has been lovely to see them all making such an effort. The creative elements and activities have ranged from making podiums, medals, race numbers to flags and it is hoped to have them all on display together on the Friday when the children will hold their very own sports day, selecting 2 challenges from each previous day and trying them all with finishing with an awards ceremony.

“The school’s website and Facebook page show the efforts the pupils have made.”

Virtual Sports Week at Laxdale
Gaelic arts organisation continues to offer range of Gaelic education activities for all ages

Since putting all its usual classroom based lessons and activities online, Gaelic arts organisation, Fèisean nan Gàidheal (FnG) has provided free lessons to 1,718 people across Scotland and further afield.

Activities on offer have included Gaelic song and game sessions, drama tips and games, Gaelic conversation classes, ELIP training for teachers, and fiddle and accordion lessons, with participants from all over Scotland and even a few from Canada.

FnG, the formal education strand of FnG, reorganised several aspects of the service to ensure youngsters across Scotland were still benefitting from the Gaelic tuition usually provided in the classroom. Through the service it organises music tuition through the Youth Music Initiative and teacher Gaelic language to support GLE and 1+2 language. Organisers have been overwhelmed at the response to some of the Fèisgoil activities, with demand exceeding expectation and have fully embraced the Bòrd na Gàidhlig hashtag #cleachdiaigantaigh with most of the focus on the GME sector and supporting families with direct access to live interactive sessions.

The Hùb Hàb early years theatre-in-education project is one of those delivered through Fèisgoil. Aimed at the 3-5 year age group but also suitable for young primary school children, during lockdown, the theatre production focuses on lending a helping hand at home, including Gaelic action songs all sung by Ellen Macdonald (singer with Sian and Dàimh), all written by Fèisgoil staff. These were offered to Gaelic Medium Education classes and have been extremely well received, with all slots booked out within a few hours. Around 150 children and their parents are benefitting from one of the 10 online session every week for 8 weeks.

One of the main projects delivered through Fèisgoil, is Blasad Gàidhlig. Blasad Gàidhlig, meaning a taste of Gaelic, was developed to support the 1+2 language part of the Curriculum for Excellence and supports local councils in delivering their Gaelic language plan in nurseries and primary schools. During lockdown, in a bid to encourage speaking the language at home, particularly in those homes where Gaelic is not normally spoken on a daily basis, children in GME have been enjoying song and game sessions with Fèisgoil’s tutors. Children from Glasgow to Barra and Inverness to Lewis have taken part. Demand was so high for the sessions, additional tutors had to be brought in to meet demand. Similarly, a waiting list was opened almost immediately following the launch of a brand-new initiative, Càidheal na Comhairleàin (Càidheal na Comhairleàin) (Belther Buidhe). In response to comments made by several parents, Fèisgoil has undertaken to lead a conversation-based project for groups of friends of primary-age children. These friendship groups are paired with a young adult Gaelic speaker for informal conversation.

Fèisgoil is also collaborating with the National Youth Choir of Scotland (NYCoS) on Wee Summer Sing, a series of song sessions every weekday morning for the next five weeks, culminating in the Gaelic Wee Summer Sing from 29th June – 3rd July, led by Eilidh Mackenzie.

And it hasn’t just been children who have benefited from the new free online offering from the organisation. Glasgow City Council is also engaging with experienced Fèisgoil tutors in one-to-one support for GLPs teachers, ELIP (career-long professional learning) sessions have been running for the past 8 weeks with teachers who have been involved with the Blasad Gàidhlig sessions in their schools, in order to continue their learning of the language.

Fluent secondary pupils and young adults have been able to engage with Gaelic speakers on an international platform through Cafe Bheairteis. Held every Friday afternoon online, each week there is a new guest to start the conversation and share their stories. Past guests, all fluent Gaelic speakers, have included professional footballers Roddy MacGregor and Calum Ferguson, BBC weather presenter Kirsteen Macdonald and husband, James Graham, CEO of An Comunn Gàidhealach, wild adventure and filmmaker Calum Maclean, Commonwealth cyclist Kerry Macphee, female singing trio Sian and fiddler and presenter of BBC Alba upcycling show, Dreachd Úr, Shona Masson. Upcoming guests will be announced with Niteworks closing this first term of the online Café and organisers are delighted to have been joined in the Café sessions by young folk living on both sides of the Atlantic. There is also a more formal strand of the project, Beairteas, which sees presentations and Q&As on different topics, offering young learners the rare opportunity to hear in-depth talks from all walks of life. To date this has included sessions as varied as the role of Gaelic speaking Highlanders in the First World War, led by Skye man Murdo Beaton and couturier Sandra Murray talking through the processes involved in high-end fashion.

These sessions have not only provided valuable learning experiences for a wide range of age groups across Scotland but have also provided much needed income for many freelance tutors and musicians across Scotland, one of the hardest hit groups of individuals during this pandemic. No indication of where musicians will be able to get back to work, or when visiting specialist tutors will be able to get back into classrooms, the online work provided by organisations such as FnG, has been very welcome.

Eilidh Mackenzie, Fèisgoil manager, commented: “Every change in circumstance brings new opportunity and at Fèisgoil we have been keen to embrace the potential partnership between not just schools and Fèisean nan Gàidheal but also families themselves.”

“We fully appreciate the difficult circumstances in which many families and individual young people now find themselves and we are determined to help engagement in the Gaelic Arts continue and even flourish through these unusual times. We are very grateful to the continued support we receive from some Local Authorities as well as our tutor group and individual schools.”

Steven Kellow, Projects and Funding Officer, Bòrd na Gàidhlig added: “We are delighted to see the overwhelming response to Fèisean nan Gàidheal’s online sessions, as part of the #cleachdiaigantaigh initiative and to see so many young people engaging in the Gaelic language and culture during this time. These types of sessions are crucial to young people with Gaelic and who may not have the opportunity to use the language at home or out with school hours.”

Other activities offered by Fèisean nan Gàidheal have included song sessions with Calum Maclean, workshops on the history of songs with Margaret Stewart and learning Gaelic expressions with Alec ‘Bhaltos’ Macdonald.

Above, Hùb Hàb drama tutor, Ellen Macdonald, in action online

Below, female trio, Sian, who have been involved in the Gaelic conversation classes for teenagers and young adults.
Tha Urras an Rubha agus Shanndabhaig a' nis air lìbhreachd sgàilean-dìon aghaidh don h-uile taigh-cùraim agus ospadal anns na Comhairle nan Eilean Siar airson na sgàilean seo – sgàilean-aghaidh le bhith a' cuir duilleagan a bhith air an cruthachadh ag an toirt seachad.

Ionad Ùr-Ghnàthachas le tabhartas de £20,000, cheannachd nuair a sponsair PST leasachadh den a’ cholaiste. Chaidh am priontair sònraichte seo a ann am priontair 3D aig Ionad Ùr-Ghnàthachas diòin le bhith a' dèanamh bannan-cinn plastaig luchd-obrach aig Colaiste a' Chaisteal na sgàilean-tuathanas-gaoithe air ais don choimhearsnachd.

"Buannachdan le bhith a' cuir prothaidean bhon com-pàirteach – anns an àite seo eadar PST leasachadh an tuathanas-gaoithe robh e math a bhith a' fheicinn am buaidh a than an Iar agus a leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an tuathanas-gaoithe coimhearsnach.

"Coinneam poblach a bha aig a' bhuidheann mhòr 15 bliadhna chun an là as dèidh a' chiad innleadaireachd PST, na sgàilean-dìon mu na Faoghla, agus Barraigh, agus na trì ospadalan ann an Steòrnabhagh, Beinn a' Chomhairle, trì taighean-cùraideach thoirt do na seachd taighean fo stiùireadh Tachtanachd Western Isles.

As previously reported, PST and staff at Lews Castle College have created the protective visors by producing plastic headbands in a 3D printer at the college’s Innovation Centre. This special printer was bought when PST sponsored the expansion of the college’s Innovation Centre with the donation of £20,000 and around 500 of these headbands have now been produced and distributed.

The headbands are turned into visors by the addition of disposable plastic sheets which clip on to the headbands to form face shields. PST and the College worked with NHS Western Isles and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to make these visors – the headbands plus many packs of disposable sheets – available for all frontline health and care workers in the Western Isles.

Calum Macdonald said the response to the pandemic had demonstrated the wind farm has delivered a new community resilience.

"Everybody recognises that Beinn Chridhe has been a great success in financial terms and well worth the decade of effort that went before, building the farm.

"But what’s also obvious now is that the community has gained in many other ways, in terms of general confidence and capacity.

"The self-belief in the community has been boosted and a good proof of that is the terrific work that we did with the Lewis Castle College in producing the PPE visors for all the hospitals and care homes in the Western Isles. Not only did we have the 3D printer available, which we had funded, but we also had the organisational capacity to use it to provide essential kit for the whole of the Western Isles."

"We would never have dreamed of organising something like that before, but now we have the confidence and the capacity to step into the breach ourselves when something like the coronavirus pandemic happens and not just wait for official agencies to do something."

"Ach tha e 's seolail cuideachad-a-nis gu bheil an coinneachadh agus ospadh na sgàilean-dìon fhìughinn ann an dòigh deilte, a thaoibh measneachd agus comas.

"Tha mi dìreach brònach gu bheil PST, chan eil le leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an Rubha agus Shanndabhaig aig Beinn Chridhe, gu robh e math a bhith a' fheicinn am buaidh a than a thoradh bhuail sheallachd a' bhith a' cruthachadh agus a' toirt seachad.

"Chà bhiodh sin a riamh air maìneachad air mar seo a chuir a' chaidicean coimhearsnach an ìdean aig an Iar agus a leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an tuathanas-gaoithe coimhearsnach.

"Buannachdan le bhith a' cuir prothaidean bhon com-pàirteach – anns an àite seo eadar PST leasachadh an tuathanas-gaoithe robh e math a' fheicinn am buaidh a than an Iar agus a leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an tuathanas-gaoithe coimhearsnach.

"Buannachdan le bhith a' cuir prothaidean bhon com-pàirteach – anns an àite seo eadar PST leasachadh an tuathanas-gaoithe robh e math a' fheicinn am buaidh a than an Iar agus a leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an tuathanas-gaoithe coimhearsnach.

"Buannachdan le bhith a' cuir prothaidean bhon com-pàirteach – anns an àite seo eadar PST leasachadh an tuathanas-gaoithe robh e math a' fheicinn am buaidh a than an Iar agus a leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an tuathanas-gaoithe coimhearsnach.

"Buannachdan le bhith a' cuir prothaidean bhon com-pàirteach – anns an àite seo eadar PST leasachadh an tuathanas-gaoithe robh e math a' fheicinn am buaidh a than an Iar agus a leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an tuathanas-gaoithe coimhearsnach.

"Buannachdan le bhith a' cuir prothaidean bhon com-pàirteach – anns an àite seo eadar PST leasachadh an tuathanas-gaoithe robh e math a' fheicinn am buaidh a than an Iar agus a leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an tuathanas-gaoithe coimhearsnach.

"Buannachdan le bhith a' cuir prothaidean bhon com-pàirteach – anns an àite seo eadar PST leasachadh an tuathanas-gaoithe robh e math a' fheicinn am buaidh a than an Iar agus a leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an tuathanas-gaoithe coimhearsnach.

"Buannachdan le bhith a' cuir prothaidean bhon com-pàirteach – anns an àite seo eadar PST leasachadh an tuathanas-gaoithe robh e math a' fheicinn am buaidh a than an Iar agus a leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an tuathanas-gaoithe coimhearsnach.

"Buannachdan le bhith a' cuir prothaidean bhon com-pàirteach – anns an àite seo eadar PST leasachadh an tuathanas-gaoithe robh e math a' fheicinn am buaidh a than an Iar agus a leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an tuathanas-gaoithe coimhearsnach.

"Buannachdan le bhith a' cuir prothaidean bhon com-pàirteach – anns an àite seo eadar PST leasachadh an tuathanas-gaoithe robh e math a' fheicinn am buaidh a than an Iar agus a leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an tuathanas-gaoithe coimhearsnach.

"Buannachdan le bhith a' cuir prothaidean bhon com-pàirteach – anns an àite seo eadar PST leasachadh an tuathanas-gaoithe robh e math a' fheicinn am buaidh a than an Iar agus a leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an tuathanas-gaoithe coimhearsnach.

"Buannachdan le bhith a' cuir prothaidean bhon com-pàirteach – anns an àite seo eadar PST leasachadh an tuathanas-gaoithe robh e math a' fheicinn am buaidh a than an Iar agus a leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an tuathanas-gaoithe coimhearsnach.

"Buannachdan le bhith a' cuir prothaidean bhon com-pàirteach – anns an àite seo eadar PST leasachadh an tuathanas-gaoithe robh e math a' fheicinn am buaidh a than an Iar agus a leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an tuathanas-gaoithe coimhearsnach.

"Buannachdan le bhith a' cuir prothaidean bhon com-pàirteach – anns an àite seo eadar PST leasachadh an tuathanas-gaoithe robh e math a' fheicinn am buaidh a than an Iar agus a leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an tuathanas-gaoithe coimhearsnach.

"Buannachdan le bhith a' cuir prothaidean bhon com-pàirteach – anns an àite seo eadar PST leasachadh an tuathanas-gaoithe robh e math a' fheicinn am buaidh a than an Iar agus a leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an tuathanas-gaoithe coimhearsnach.

"Buannachdan le bhith a' cuir prothaidean bhon com-pàirteach – anns an àite seo eadar PST leasachadh an tuathanas-gaoithe robh e math a' fheicinn am buaidh a than an Iar agus a leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an tuathanas-gaoithe coimhearsnach.

"Buannachdan le bhith a' cuir prothaidean bhon com-pàirteach – anns an àite seo eadar PST leasachadh an tuathanas-gaoithe robh e math a' fheicinn am buaidh a than an Iar agus a leasaich tuathanas-gaoithe Urras an tuathanas-gaoithe coimhearsnach.
Western Isles Dental Services
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I've read that dentists are opening up again. Why did they close in the first place?
A: When Coronavirus arrived in Scotland it was clear the virus could be passed through close contact. The treatment means patients and staff get very close, with a high risk of infection. It was felt safer to close the dental care units.

Q: Are we going back to a normal service then?
A: Not yet. Coronavirus has been controlled by lockdown. If the 600 dental practices in Scotland re-opened now, it would mean thousands of extra trips and face-to-face contacts overnight. The service will be limited for a while to Urgent and Emergency care to keep up the valuable work of social distancing.

Q: But if Coronavirus is still around how can I go to the dentist safely?
A: A range of measures are in place. We have reduced numbers of staff and patients to allow social distancing. Patients attend by appointment only after a Covid risk assessment by phone. This is alongside full infection control measures, and provision for patients shielding.

Q: What is a Dental Emergency?
A: Swelling affecting the eye or swelling, Bleeding, Trauma (tooth knocked out or badly broken). Pain that pain-killers can’t help.

Q: I lost a filling. Does that count?
A: Lost fillings and broken teeth aren’t true Emergencies, as we can often cope with them for some time. Think of these as ‘urgent’ conditions.

Q: So if it’s ‘urgent’ I’ll be seen?
A: With limited numbers of appointments we will always prioritise Emergencies. The dental staff might take your name and details, and will offer appointments to Urgent cases where there is demand. In short, Emergencies first and Urgent if there are appointments unused.

Q: I’ve had an ulcer (or lump) for a month which isn’t healing. It isn’t sore though. Shall I wait a bit longer?
A: Call your local clinic today.

Q: I’ve broken/lost my dentures/can I get new ones?
A: Many dentures can be repaired, though they might be in the workshop for a couple of days. We’ll try to help with lost dentures, but can’t (for example) make a new set because you have a special occasion coming up. Sorry.

Q: My crown is out, can I put it back?
A: In some cases, yes. Unfortunately crowns and bridges sometimes come out because the crown (tooth level) has failed, and just can’t be fixed. Call your local clinic for advice on an individual basis.

Q: I go to the General Practice in town in Stornoway. Does that mean I go to the dentist in town?
A: No. The emergency service is for all patients, whoever they see.

Q: I’m overdue for my check-up. Prevention is best, so can I come to the dentist?
A: In doubt, please call your usual clinic for advice on your own particular problem.
Healthcare appointments

NHS Western Isles would like to remind patients and their carers that Infection Prevention and Control restrictions remain in place at each of its hospital sites, with patients being requested to enter hospital buildings unaccompanied, unless absolutely necessary.

Carers and family are welcome to walk patients to main entrances but, unless critical to patient care, they will then be requested to return to their vehicle to wait for the patient to exit the building.

Anyone attending healthcare appointments must ensure they follow social distancing guidance (maintaining a 2 metre distance from others), and adhere strict hygiene (using hand sanitiser on entry and/or washing their hands with soap and water often for at least 20 seconds) to reduce the risk of infection.

Contact Tracing - scam prevention

NHS Western Isles and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar are raising awareness of important scam prevention advice across our communities, in relation to the Scottish Contact Tracing Programme.

The NHS Scotland Contact Tracing Programme is extremely important in the fight against coronavirus and it’s vital the public get on board with it.

Unfortunately, criminals will exploit every opportunity they can to defraud innocent people of their money or steal their personal details.

Health boards have a variety of mechanisms in place to reassure people that Contact Tracers are legitimate, including call back options, visible numbers, and specific location and date information.

To help protect yourself from any such scam be aware that contact tracers WILL:

- get in touch by phone call or text message.
- introduce themselves, state the reason for their call, and will always identify the call recipient by name.
- only ask for information about your movements and the people you have been in close physical proximity to.
- ask you to dial a premium rate number to speak to them.
- ask you to make any form of payment, including a charitable donation.
- ask for any details about your medical history.
- ask for any details about your bank account.
- ask for your social media identities or login details, or those of your contacts.
- ask you for passwords or PINs, or ask you to set up any passwords or PINs on the phone.
- ask you to purchase a product or attempt to sell you anything.
- ask you to download any software to your device or ask you to hand over control of your PC, smartphone or tablet.
- if you are in any doubt, hang up and contact your local Covid Response Team directly as they will be able to answer any queries you may have.

If a patient is experiencing any symptoms of coronavirus (high temperature, a new, continuous cough and a loss or change to sense of smell or taste), they must contact their clinician to reschedule their appointment.

Anyone experiencing coronavirus symptoms must not attend their GP/ pharmacy or hospital.

Instead they are expected to stay at home for 7 days from the start of their symptoms even if they think their symptoms are mild. All other household members should isolate as a household for 14 days even if they don’t have symptoms themselves. The 14-day period starts from the first day the person had symptoms.

For further information visit: http://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus or contact the local COVID Response Team on 01851 601151 or email: wi-hb.covid1@nhs.net

Cancer fear? Don’t delay

Coronavirus has changed lots of things but if you are at all concerned about a cancer sign or symptom, NHS Western Isles is encouraging you to contact your GP for advice as soon as possible.

Latest research has found individuals are less likely to contact their GP at this present time, with many concerned about their safety, or unsure what to expect if they do go.

NHS Western Isles would like to reassure islanders that it’s normal to feel anxious, but that contacting your GP can be the best way to get any potential cancer symptoms checked - as the earlier cancer is found, the easier it is to treat.

Dr Frank McAuley, NHS Western Isles Medical Director, said, ‘The NHS is here for you, so don’t ignore the warning signs. You are not being a burden; you are looking after yourself and our NHS by seeking help. Please don’t put your health at risk. Your community pharmacy, ophthalmologist, and your GP are open, please contact them for advice or with concerns that are not COVID-19 related. If you notice a deterioration in your health or the health of someone in your household, call your GP in normal hours, 111 out of hours, or in an emergency dial 999.

Some symptoms to look out for include: breast or lumps; and weight gain or weight loss for no reason; fatigue that is severe and lasts; fever or cold for more than 10 days; continuing cough for more than 2 weeks; or lumps or bumps; persistent loss of appetite; unexplained or persistent blood in the stool or urine; sores that do not heal; and unexplained pain.

In order to be tested, you or your household member should be displaying symptoms (a new continuous cough, fever, or loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste) and be aged five or over.

To access testing in the Western Isles, contact the COVID-19 Response Team on 01851 601151 or email: wi-hb.covid1@nhs.net (phone line staffed from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5.30pm, with an answering machine available outwith those hours). You can also complete the COVID-19 Testing Programme Referral Form, which is available from the NHS Western Isles coronavirus website www.coronavirus.wi.nhs.scot

Test & Protect advice

NHS Western Isles is asking people to play their part in helping stop the spread of coronavirus, as information leaflets on the Test & Protect service are issued to local households.

People with symptoms - which include a new, persistent cough, high temperature or loss or change in taste or smell – are being urged to book a test immediately. Those who test positive will be asked to confidentially provide information to NHS Scotland contact tracers on the people they’ve been in close contact with. Those then contacted will be asked to isolate for 14 days to reduce the risk of the virus spreading and told how to request a test if symptoms develop during this time.

Research shows there is a high level of support nationally for testing measures to control the spread of the virus, with 90 per cent of respondents stating they’d be willing to isolate for 14 days if someone they had come into contact with had symptoms of the virus, 90 per cent stating they’d be willing to undergo testing if asked, and 80 per cent stating they’d be happy to provide details of people they had been in contact with if they developed coronavirus symptoms.

Dr Maggie Watts, NHS Western Isles Director of Public Health, said: “Test and Protect plays a vital role in protecting all of us by helping to break the chains of coronavirus transmission and it can only work if everyone plays their part.

“Please keep the leaflet handy and follow the step-by-step guidance. It’s important to think about the practicalities of you and your household needing to isolate immediately. So please make a plan now.

“For this to work, we need your help. Taking these steps, along with physical distancing, good cough and hand hygiene, and wearing a face covering in enclosed spaces, will help keep the virus under control and allow us to continue to emerge from lockdown.”

People can book a test at nhsinform.scot/test-and-protect or, to access testing in the Outer Hebrides, contact the local COVID-19 Response Team on 01851 601151 or email: wi-hb.covid1@nhs.net

The phoneline will be staffed from 9am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday, with an answering machine available outwith those hours.

Alternatively you can complete the online COVID-19 Testing Programme Referral Form at: www.coronavirus.wi.nhs.scot (within the ‘COVID-19 Testing - Test and Protect’ section).

Patient Travel Offices

Members of the public are reminded that are NHS Patient Travel Offices across the Western Isles remain closed to the public – but bookings can be made by contacting them by email or phone.

Telephone contact can be made from 9am-1pm and 2pm-4.30pm, Monday to Friday.

Lewis & Harris Patient Travel Office
Tel: 01851 700821 patienttravel.whib@nhs.net

Uist Patient Travel Office
Tel: 01870 603606 patienttravel.uist@nhs.net

Barra Patient Travel Office
Tel: 01871 810431 patient.travel@cne-siar.gov.uk

Travel documents can either be emailed or posted to patients.
Local businesses encouraged to sign-up to NHS Staff Voucher Scheme

NHS Western Isles supporting local businesses throughout the Outer Hebrides to sign up to a NHS Staff Voucher Scheme, to enable its staff to purchase items from their businesses.

During the COVID-19 pandemic NHS Western Isles has received many generous cash donations from local and national organisations, including a £40,000 donation from Point and Sandwick Trust and a £39,000 donation from the NHS National Charities Together. This has allowed us to provide a number of comfort items to frontline staff and patients including toiletries, electrical goods and comfortable seats for break areas.

A questionnaire was distributed to staff seeking their views on how to spend the monies. Following feedback it has been decided that a portion will be used to give all NHS Western Isles staff a £20 voucher, to be redeemed at any local business that supplies approved goods or services and has signed up to the scheme. Staff feedback showed they are keen that as much of the money as possible is spent supporting local businesses. The vouchers, which will be distributed to staff and retailers/businesses who sign up, will then be reimbursed by NHS Western Isles.

The Donations Group are asking businesses to get in touch and sign-up to the scheme. Any staff member who has a preferred business they would like to use their voucher with, can ask the business to get in touch so they can be added to our approved supplier list.

If you are based within the Outer Hebrides and would like to be included in the scheme, please email the Donations Group at: wi-hb.hpadmin@nhs.net for further details. The scheme is open to all goods and services, with the exception of items such as alcohol, tobacco products and any prohibited goods. Further details can be provided by email.

The Donations Group would like to thank everyone who has donated to NHS Western Isles staff. The generosity and kindness of our community has been overwhelming.
Thank you to volunteers

NHS Western Isles celebrated their wonderful volunteers during Volunteers Week in June and would like to thank each and every one of them for the support they have provided over the years.

NHS Western Isles has 70 volunteers serving across the organisation, an increase of around 50 per cent in just two years.

Some examples of volunteers include: a group of Paths To Health Walk Leaders that are now in place in all of the rural districts; experienced and keen gardeners who have come forward to volunteer in the Hospital Garden, in partnership with the Stornoway Rotary Club; and our outstanding League of Friends volunteers who present a friendly and welcoming face at the Western Isles Hospital Teabar.

We also have volunteers who support our patients within their own homes, for example, a group of Breastfeeding Network Peer Supporters who were trained in the autumn last year in conjunction with the Health Visitors and Breastfeeding Network UK. This excellent service has continued, using remote access, during this period of lockdown.

NHS Western Isles Vice Chair Gill McCannon said: “We at NHS Western Isles are grateful for the dedication and hard work of all of our volunteers. Volunteering is about working side by side with others, connecting with your community and making a difference, which you certainly do.”

VOLUNTEER FOCUS: SPIRITUAL CARE

Spiritual Care volunteers are skilled and trained in listening and responding to the needs of patients in acute care in NHS hospitals across Scotland. They offer support to people of all faiths and those of no faith.

Morag Duncan, a native of Benbecula, has been living in Stornoway for 28 years and is a Spiritual Care volunteer at the Western Isles Hospital.

Morag explains: “I love being around people and I’m involved with many organisations in a volunteering capacity.”

Morag has been engaged in volunteering activities, in all types of settings, since she was a young woman. She has been a befriender for most of her adult life and said that the feeling of being able to help someone is unlike any other.

Morag volunteers in a specific and very important role within the Western Isles Hospital in Stornoway, and has been part of the volunteering team for five years. She supports patients every Sunday to attend the hospital chapel Sunday service.

Children asked to draw pictures of lockdown experience

Children asked to draw their lockdown experiences to help researchers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the COVID-19 pandemic lots of things changed very quickly for everyone. We have all been asked to stay at home and most children have stopped going to school. Staff from NHS Western Isles, and researchers from the University of the Highlands and Islands and Newcastle University, are interested to find out how children aged between 5-10 years have experienced the recent changes in their life.

Dr Tushar Banerjee, NHS Western Isles Consultant Paediatrician, noticed that children were drawing pictures about the lockdown, and wanted to find out more. He said, “Younger children have been expressing what lockdown has been like for them in their drawings. This has been a unique time for everyone, and we want to learn from children about how they have been coping.”

Engaging children in a creative activity during the current pandemic could help them communicate feelings safely and this is recommended by the World Health Organisation. “Making images is a wonderful way to describe a new unfamiliar experience without words, which is often preferred by younger children”, says Dr Amin Zabala from the University of the Highlands and Islands.

Dr Simon Hackett, Consultant Art Psychotherapist, said “It is so important that we learn from the children themselves about how they have been coping during the lockdown”.

Children’s pictures can be submitted in a short online survey at the following link: 
https://www.uhnlscsu.serveus.ac.uk/covid-19-childhood-drawings

Study information can also be found within this link.
Speech and Language Therapy Service - Continuing to be here for you during these difficult times

In these non-huggable times, we have all had to think of new ways to communicate our love, affection, interest, or care and support for our family, friends and colleagues. We have had to give each other virtual hugs using new and creative ways of communicating. We have all embraced technology using phones, tablets, Zoom, Teams, or, if this is unavailable, then we have made contact by sending cards and letters.

However, imagine if you couldn’t communicate. How would you feel if you weren’t able to tell your children or grandchildren that you love them, or tell your friends how you are feeling, or what is worrying you?

Good communication skills are really important for life. If you have difficulty with communication, then this will have an impact on your education, social life, life opportunities and your mental health.

The NHS Western Isles Speech and Language Therapy Service offers personalised assistance by responding to requests for help from anyone who has a speech, language, communication or swallowing difficulty. The team is spread across the Outer Hebrides, with bases in Benbecula and Stornoway.

Christine Lapsley, NHSWI Speech and Language Therapy Service Manager, explained, “Many people experience difficulties with their communication at different stages of their lives and for different reasons. In fact, in the early years of life, speech and language problems can occur for no apparent reason. On the other hand, they might be associated with a general developmental delay, or with a specific condition such as autism.

‘Later in life, communication might be difficult as a result of an acquired condition such as a stroke or Parkinson’s. These patients are helped by the Speech and Language Therapy Service, which also help those with eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties, which can affect people of any age.’

Whatever the reason, Christine is keen to remind those living in the Outer Hebrides that the service is here to support people towards meeting their own personal goals. Usually the service will also work with carers, family and friends, by offering them advice and training.

The service has recently issued a variety of video clips, which are available on NHS Western Isles social media and Vimeo channels, to give individuals some ideas about things they can do to help develop and support their children and family’s communication skills, and to tell you about the ways the service is collaborating with its service users during the current coronavirus pandemic.

For further information contact the Speech and Language Therapy Service team on 01851 708282 (Lewis/Harris), 01870 603241 (Uists/Barra), or email: wi-hb.SLT@nhs.net

Success for Maternity Care Assistants

NHS Western Isles is delighted to congratulate four of its Maternity Care Assistants - Mary McWilliams, Dolina Macleod, Becky Thornton and Charlotte Rowe - who have each successfully completed their Maternity Care Assistant course with the University of the West of Scotland.

Awarded the Certificate of Higher Education in Midwifery by the Subject Exam Board, the staff have demonstrated their ability to recognise and understand the role and responsibilities of the Midwifery Care Assistant (MCA) in relation to caring for women, their babies and their family adopting a woman centred approach.

Catherine MacDonald, NHSWI Head of Midwifery, said “I would like to congratulate each student for their very hard work. The course was quite comprehensive and challenging at times - this is a fantastic achievement!”

As part of the course, they undertook training in cannulation and venepuncture, blood spot screening of newborns, and many more aspects relevant to maternity services. In addition, they were introduced to ethical, legal and professional responsibilities in relation to communication, confidentiality, consent, accountability, conflict and professional behaviour.

Catherine added, “They currently manage the ultrasound clinics with supervision from the midwifery staff, they are all trained in hearing screening of the newborn and we look forward to them adopting their new knowledge and skills into the maternity workforce.”

The students have successfully passed their programme with an excellent set of academic achievement and will shortly be getting to work within the local communities, to support and complement the existing maternity service being offered across the Outer Hebrides.

NHS Western Isles Nurse & AHP Director/Chief Operating Officer, William Findlay, stated: “This new measure is important because it is recognised that some people are unaware that they have the virus and do not have any symptoms. The use of face masks in clinical areas will help to prevent transmission of the virus from the person wearing the face mask to other people.”

Mr Findlay added: “There will be occasions when staff may have to remove masks in clinical areas when communicating with patients who have a cognitive impairment, or people who require to lip read. In these cases, physical distancing will be maintained.

“There will be also be certain exemptions in terms of those who will not have to wear masks, such children; or anyone with a physical or mental illness or impairment, or a disability that means you cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering.”

There will be prominent signage around NHS Western Isles premises providing information about hand hygiene, physical distancing requirements and departments where there is controlled access e.g. maximum number of people in the department at a time.

NHS Western Isles says it is constantly monitoring guidance and will ensure compliance with new measures, recommendations and best practice to protect our patients and staff.

“We would like to thank our local communities…for their ongoing support and compliance with new ways of working, to help ensure the safety of our local communities and our NHS staff.”

Above, (Clockwise from left) Dolly Macleod, William Findlay (NHS Western Isles Nurse and AHP Director/Chief Operating Officer), Catherine MacDonald (NHS Western Isles Head of Midwifery), Beckee Thornton and Charlotte Rowe. Missing from the photo is Mary McWilliams. Left, Charlotte Rowe, Mary McWilliam, Dolly Macleod and Beckee Thornton. Photo taken prior to coronavirus/social distancing at the University of the West of Scotland.
Play-bricks boost for youngsters

It was a first for Scottish Islands as national charity ‘Fairy Bricks’ donated £2000 worth of LEGO® sets to Western Isles Hospital, Uist & Barra Hospital and St. Brendan’s Hospital, for children attending hospital.

The generous donations will help children find moments of playful joy with their families when they attend hospital appointments or are having to stay in hospital themselves.

Fairy Bricks, a charity which donates LEGO® sets to children’s hospitals and hospices and hospitals, is a long-standing partner of the LEGO Group who, alongside other donors, provides the charity with sets to brighten the lives of sick children. Each year, Fairy Bricks donates more than 40,000 LEGO sets to hospitals in the UK and internationally.

Kevin Gascoigne, CEO of Fairy Bricks, said “Play is a vital part of the recovery process when children are in hospital. It provides comfort, distraction and is even used as an educational tool by play specialists to assist children with procedures they have to endure.”

Lachlan McPherson, NHS Western Isles Hospitals Manager, said “It cannot be underestimated how the simple pleasures of play can help and relax a child in a hospital setting, which can understandably be stressful for both the child and their family. In fact, children who have been admitted to hospital recently have already begun playing with the LEGO® sets and were delighted with the variety that was available.”

The generous donations will help children find moments of playful joy with their families when they attend hospital appointments or are having to stay in hospital themselves.

Distillery plan – ‘investment in future’

By Annie Delin

A new bonded warehouse to store casks of Harris whisky as they mature is a statement of commitment to future generations, according to the managing director of the Isle of Harris Distillery, Simon Erlanger.

“The distillery opened in October 2015, distilling whisky began in 2016 and then we made sure the spirit was just right before starting to fulfil orders for privately-owned casks, stored at the distillery itself. It was June 2016 when the first casks went into the warehouse at Ardbhasaig and that’s where they have stayed since.”

Quiet and slow is exactly how things go inside the bonded warehouse, located right by the shore on crotch 2, Ardbhasaig. Simon said: “It’ll be ready when it’s ready. We didn’t even taste it for the first three-and-a-half years, but let’s just say at a recent broad tasting across a range of casks, we were pleasantly surprised. The whisky is maturing gently, here, it’s doing well and we’re not desperate to put it into a bottle.”

Isle of Harris Distillery has applied for planning permission to build three more bonded warehouses on land close to the rocky shore, but the intention in the immediate future is to actually build just one.

Simon said: “We had anticipated that one warehouse would be adequate for the foreseeable future, because we expected that by the time it was full, we would be selling bottles of mature whisky, so there would be casks leaving as well as casks going in.

“What we hadn’t reckoned on was the popularity of Harris Gin, which has been so successful that it enabled us to put in extra fermentation tanks, and later to change our shift pattern and to appoint the Hebrides’ first distillers’ apprentice, all of which meant that in 2019 we were able to ramp up production.

“Now we can project forward and we realise that we have the high-class challenge of getting a new warehouse ready by June 2021, because by that time the first one will be full.”

Choosing the location for the new warehouse – and for those that may follow after – has been governed principally by practicality. As Simon said: “Finding a piece of land flat enough to build a warehouse in Harris is a challenge in itself. Our survey work shows that the location we have is reasonably buildable, although we never know until it starts.”

Staying at the same location means maintaining the same ‘terroir’ – the climate and location where the whisky is matured. The site at Ardbhasaig bears the full brunt of the Atlantic storms and that will definitely have an effect on the finished taste. Simon said: “Wind and rain increases penetration into the casks which makes great maturation. It extracts maximum flavour from the oak and loses the youthful, raw edge of the spirit.”

Also beneficial to the final product which will bear The Hearach label is Harris’s low variation in temperature year-round. That’s something we may not love, but whisky does. Relatively high humidity also affects the way that moisture passes in and out of the casks within the warehouse, creating what Simon calls ‘the magic’ of maturation.

Despite choosing to place the next warehouses in the same location, consistency of flavour is not necessarily what the distillery is after, according to Simon. “There’s part of us which would like to see what the whisky would taste like if it was matured in a different part of the island. Variety can be really interesting.

“A single malt whisky needs a signature, but every cask will have a slight variation and the time of maturing, the decisions made by the distiller, the barley crop that was used – all of these make a difference and we celebrate that diversity. We might look at acquiring land in other parts of the island for the future just for that reason.”

Simon said: “At this time of massive uncertainty and volatility it’s wonderful to be thinking ahead to creating a warehouse that will house casks holding the lifeblood of the future, of this distillery and those who work in it.

“We’re focused on remembering that we’re here for generations, not just for now, and we must be aware that all our decisions have to be the right ones not just for the future of the company, but for the island.”
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.

Please follow us on Facebook for the most up-to-date COVID-19 information https://www.facebook.com/BusinessGatewayOuterHebrides/

Digital Boost

Give your business some digital muscle with our digital health check. It only takes minutes!

Find out where technology could fit into your business and improve your performance, profits and people. Find gaps in your business’s digital performance. Get the advanced support you need to take the next step. For more information, contact us at Business Gateway on businessgateway@cne-siar.gov.uk.

COVID-19 Local Business Support Scheme

The Comhairle has established this fund to assist businesses in hardship with ongoing costs if their normal trading has been affected by COVID-19. The scheme cannot cover cashflow and day-to-day expenses but can potentially help with expenses such as maintenance of plant and equipment that would otherwise become obsolete, interest payments on business borrowing and some utilities and insurance costs.

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

Bounceback Loans

The government has announced plans to offer Bounceback Loans up to £50,000 to support small businesses during the recession. The loans will be interest free for the first 12 months and 100% government backed. Applications will be open as of 4th May. You can find out more by visiting www.gov.uk/business-coronavirus-support-finder.

Support Finder

The UK Government has launched an online business support finder tool which shows some of the supports available to you and your business. Please note, this service mainly focuses on UK Government support schemes. Your business may also be eligible for support schemes operated by the Scottish Government or other agencies.

The business support finder tool can be accessed at https://www.gov.uk/business-cornavirus-support-finder.

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.

Murdo MacIver, Tech Mobile

Between lockdown restrictions and the need for us to remain socially distanced has been key to our ability to continue trading despite the pressure COVID-19 has placed on almost every aspect of running a business.

“The DigitalBoost programme is a useful package filled with free support services including one-to-one digital consultancy, digital health check, access to webinars and guidance with switching current services online.

“At a time where human interaction is limited, it’s rewarding to be able to help the team at Tech Mobile adapt their services and continue trading during the pandemic.”

To find out more about Business Gateway and its services, please visit their website at https://www.bgateway.com. For support and advice on critical business issues during the pandemic, visit our dedicated Coronavirus Hub which is updated with new information daily: https://www.bgateway.com/coronavirus-business-support-across-scotland.

Keep the Western Isles connected during a pandemic

A n Isle of Lewis-based IT service has adapted its offering in a bid to keep the Western Isles connected throughout COVID-19.

Launched in 2004, Tech Mobile is widely recognised as a reliable IT supplier across the region and is the only gaming high street outlet in the Outer Hebrides.

Despite challenges posed by COVID-19 including loss of income due to clients being placed on furlough, with support from Business Gateway, founder Murdo MacIver has been able to offer alternative ways to provide services to customers.

Prior to the pandemic, Tech Mobile accessed DigitalBoost, the Scottish Government’s leading digital skills programme delivered by Business Gateway to improve the company’s social media presence. Thanks to these resources, the business has responded to the ‘new normal’ by increasing social media activity as a communication tool and has adopted new online platforms such as Amazon Marketplace to sell products.

Lockdown restrictions mean the need for effective IT systems and technology has never been greater. Fortunately, Tech Mobile has been able to respond to the significant uplift in demand for services and despite the initial loss of income, the business has experienced a surge in sales of laptops and printers, as well as repairs and serving since lockdown was enforced.

Murdo MacIver, founder, Tech Mobile, said: “Business Gateway’s DigitalBoost programme has been fantastic and undoubtedly, the resources have helped us navigate through what has been a very challenging period for the business.

“We have been able to adapt and connect with our customers through social media to provide crucial IT support and services to the community during this time. Identifying opportunities to stay connected while we remain socially distanced has been key to being able to continue trading throughout this difficult period.”

Find us on Facebook – search for Business Gateway Outer Hebrides
CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19

Business Support from Business Gateway Outer Hebrides

Business Gateway 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 have put 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 the 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
• Coronavirus funding and grant support
• Business news and official updates

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 808240
email outerhebrides@bgateway.com
visit bgateway.com/coronavirus-support