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**WOMEN’S CANCER CHALLENGE GOES VIRTUAL!**

See more on page 3

Tony and Kirsty Wade getting into practice for the Women’s Cancer Challenge.

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If you would like to advertise changes with us online, get in touch by phone on 01851 701199 or email at info@welovestornoway.com
Womens Cancer Challenge goes virtual!

This year's Womens Cancer Challenge on 16 May has gone virtual – by popular demand from the people taking part.

Organisers offered participants a chance to register their opinion on what to do about the annual fundraiser, running an online poll on whether to cancel or go ahead with a virtual event.

“Go virtual” was the overwhelming response – by 84% of those who voted. So this year Cancer Research UK will benefit from 30 minutes of walking, running, cycling or indoor fitness – and even from those who want to just walk up and down the garden path.

The idea is that everyone chooses their own form of exercise, following the Scottish Government guidelines about social distancing and group sizes, and registers to participate on Saturday 16 May.

You'll get a printable sign emailed to you in pin on your shirt, showing that you are taking part, and you'll be asked to send a picture of you in action to post on the Women's Cancer Challenge facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/WomensCancerChallenge/ You can find all the details there, including how to register.

Organiser Tony Wade said: “Cancer Research UK is struggling like all the other charities because of a loss of income from the fundraising which is usually done. We hope we can do a little bit to keep some cash coming in to the amazing Lewis branch of CRUK.”

£69,000 success for Bethesda fundraising

The final amount raised in the online campaign organised by Sandwick Bay Candles for Bethesda Home and Hospice was £69,293…and that was the total on the cheque seen here when ‘candle blone’ Megan Macdonald and her family visited the establishment on Springfield Road, Stornoway, on Friday May 1.

On the success of her event - which raised more than 34 times the original target - Megan said it was: “An amazing response from the community and certainly shows how fabulous the community spirit is on the island.”

The funds were raised from an appeal via Justgiving Page attracted a total of 3695 supporters from across the world and around 120 prizes were on offer from local firms.

Western Isles MP Angus Brendan MacNeil commended the venture and the community for all they are doing. The high levels of volunteering by the people of Na h-Eileanan an Iar is making a massive difference as the region copes with the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, he said.

In 2017 figures showed that 35% of islanders were volunteering formally through an organisation or group, compared to 28% across Scotland. This figure is now expected to be much higher as communities come together during the pandemic. He said: “The people of the islands have always gone out of their way to help others within their own communities and beyond. This cannot have been highlighted any clearer than in the current pandemic.

Learning carries on at Christian school

As with all other local primary schools, Providence Christian School, which operates from the Ceans Community Centre, Cern Shulasgeir, Stornoway, has had to adapt to the threat from Coronavirus, in order to continue to provide the biblical education that our school is known for.

In short order our staff team put together a very manageable and productive alternative to traditional lessons for learning from home. Trialled for a week before the spring break, and now in full swing, the pupils all had individual learning packs prepared for them and sent to their homes. This pack includes all the needed information, worksheets and outlines for the children to access each day. Lessons begin at 9am with the now-famous Joe Wicks exercise regime, and then move on to Bible, maths and language. During the morning the staff ‘drop-in’ for a “Zoom” teleconference visit to each pupil for 30 minutes of every school day. This allows them to check on past work, lay out new learning goals, and catch up on their news!

“Each Friday we have an ‘Assembly’ - without actually assembling of course! This gives time for a brief Bible lesson to be drawn from the week, and when that is completed, the children all enjoy catching up with their pals.”

Headteacher, Mark Musty, said, “This has been a great challenge for us all at PCS, but the teamwork between parents, staff and pupils, is allowing us to provide some imaginative and productive schooling, that remains true to the core values of a Christian education.”

A sustainable community-funded Trust to assist pupils of The Nicolson Institute with mainland travel expenses

The newspaper will appear on Wednesday 3 June

NEXT EDITION: The deadline for information and advertising is Tuesday 26 May. The newspaper will appear on Wednesday 3 June
Islanders and island visitors have united in a pictorial appreciation of Hebridean Life, after the Facebook page Western Isles Weather unleashed an unexpected outpouring of affection with a simple request.

Western Isles weatherman Richard Cooke had responded to the many visitors who were disappointed not to be able to visit their favourite spots this year, with a call for images that would show the best of Hebridean Life.

Over 300 images were posted on his Facebook page within 12 hours – and have continued to come in ever since – showing aspects of island life from the tranquil to the comic.

Richard’s been prompted to create a virtual gallery of images and said: “It’s really amazing to see people’s love for the islands and I was chuffed with the huge response. It totally made me smile. Hopefully people found it useful to see the familiar places to which they will one day return.”

A Hebridean Gallery from Western Isles Weather
Firms join hands to sanitise

By Annie Delin

Since the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic, supplies of hygienic commodities like cleaning fluid, disposable cloths and tissue paper have been flying off shop shelves across the Western Isles.

But island companies have stepped up to fix the chronic shortage of one virus-busting essential with a true community effort, using initiative, ingredients, packaging and printing that are all locally supplied.

The result is that the Western Isles have become virtually self-sufficient in one of the most important protective products for front-line staff and home-workers – hand sanitiser.

North Uist Distillery are keeping their Downpour gin in production, while at the same time partners Jonny Inglodew and Kate Macdonald are turning out hundreds of litres of hand sanitiser.

Jonny: “There was a story in the news just as the epidemic started about a Bristol distillery that was producing hand sanitiser, and we started to get enquiries locally to see whether we were going to do some. There was an obvious local problem in that no-one could get access to this vital product and, as we have the ingredients, we felt an obligation to make it. We had the alcohol and we had hydrogen peroxide and glycerine too. The bottles were ex-stock from another company and they also helped us to get labels printed.”

The result was 1,000 bottles given away to front-line staff including care workers, posties, delivery drivers and CPs surgeries across Uist and Barra.

Jonny – who is working alone at the distillery now – is also filling 10 and 20-litre jerry-cans for shops throughout the Uists. That cuts down on the use of plastic containers, which are anyway in short supply.

And in Harris, Essence of Harris has joined forces with the Isle of Harris Distillery to make a hand sanitiser they’ve called ‘Spirit of the Hebrides’. It’s been supplied free of charge to Western Isles Hospital and emergency workers like ambulance crews and police officers, as well as being personally delivered to the homes of those caring for at-risk individuals at home.

The Harris duo have been joined in Lewis by the luxury salon cosmetics brand Ishga. Providing some of the base ingredients, Ishga joined Essence of Harris and the Isle of Harris Distillery to create a sanitizer for frontline service staff while their hand cream is also being supplied to NHS Western Isles Hospital and to local hospices and businesses in Stornoway.

Ishga director Malcolm Macrae said: “We’ve been supplying both the sanitiser and the hand cream free of charge to people like home carers, supermarket staff and hospital workers. A lot of them have been telling us that their hands are in bits after all the handwashing and we wanted to give them something to help their skin recover as well as to protect them from infection.

“The recipe we have been using for the sanitiser is the one supplied by the World Health Organisation and it has been checked and approved with trading standards at the Comhairle.”

Meanwhile CalMac has teamed up with family-owned ARANN Sense of Scotland to keep West Coast communities safe.

The ferry operator has signed a deal that will see the home and body care brand switch production from its usual soaps, shower gel and home fragrance collections to manufacturing 50ml bottles of antibacterial Hand Cleansing Gel.

CalMac is initially purchasing 10,000 bottles, two-thirds of which will be supplied to its front-line staff on vessels and in ports. The remaining bottles will be given out free of charge to the NHS, Police Scotland and the RNLI for use in their premises up and down the West Coast.

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Donald Wilkie, who died in mid-March in the Western Isles Hospital at the age of 84, following a short illness, was a yachtsman who was well-known all around Scotland and beyond.

Donald, or ‘Wilkie’ as he was almost universally known, was a Yorkshireman and proud of it – but he had spent around the last 40 years of his life based in Stornoway. For much of that time he ran his beloved Sanfriz 40 yacht, Annag, as a yacht charter business, though latterly he skipped yachts for other people as far afield as the Caribbean.

A man who could be either brusque or charismatic, in almost equal measure, he was renowned for his skills of fearless seamanship. At a stage of his life which most might describe as ‘elderly’, he thought nothing of taking Annag across the much-loomed Bay of Biscay in an unfriendly season. He could achieve this matter-of-factly and without mishap. His skill, when it came to handling any yacht, of any size, was widely acknowledged.

Wilkie came originally from the small town of Yarm, near Middlesbrough, where he grew up around farm animals and race horses. His uncle was a race horse trainer and he was later to own a race horse himself. His son Ross, who lives in Keyscin, Skye, remembers his skill with animals and that, for a while Wilkie and his then-wife owned and ran a farm. Later, on the Isle of Lewis, Wilkie would sometimes participate in judging at local horse shows.

At the age of 16, in the difficult post-WW2 years, he joined the Royal Navy, which was where his love of sailing was first nurtured, says Ross. He was a Cadet who served on destroyers and left with the rank of Chief Petty Officer.

When he left the Navy, he remained as a civilian instructor for the Navy for several years, based at Rosyth and teaching engineering skills to cadets.

It was after this that he came to Lewis, having been employed by a double-glazing company initially and then on his own account, fitting windows all over the isles.

At about this time he also bought Annag, then a small boat just two years old. When the window business became unsustainable he turned to yacht charter with Annag.

One of his ‘rants’ was out to St Kilda, which he did with commendable regularity, given the difficulty of anchoring there and the fickle weather patterns.

To anyone who ever had any boat dealings with Wilkie, the breadth of his knowledge was deeply impressive; he knew every element of a yacht and its construction, inside-out. His generous advice and help was always gratefully received. But he was not, on the whole, a good teacher – being impatient of those who could not pick up and retain boat-related skills as speedily as he could. I remember failing miserably to construct the ‘Spanish Windlass’ that he had and retain boat-related skills as speedily as he could. His generous advice and help was always gratefully received. But he was not, on the whole, a good teacher – being impatient of those who could not pick up and retain boat-related skills as speedily as he could. I remember failing miserably to construct the ‘Spanish Windlass’ that he had.

Wilkie says: ‘He was not, really, a good teacher, I found that myself – he was too impatient!’ Like many people who appear to be almost innately skilled in their craft, he failed to understand why others could not attain his own high standards.

A measure of his Seamanish is the fact that, for several years, Gordonstoun public school, whose Alumni once included the Duke of Edinburgh and Prince Charles, employed him as a skipper for their pupil Sail Training school.

It became a running joke that I wanted to go out to St Kilda (to where I still have not been, 10 years later!) and would cook for him on Annag and work a passage – but somehow it never happened. My seafarer partner and I had him down on one point though, a young man fresh out of Lewis College Catering department and I well remember Wilkie’s puzzlement about that. Commenting on our choice of chef, he said: ‘Oh aye, the lad can cook – he can cook in quite a sea, while everyone around him is throwing up. But I lost my rug with him,’ he said – not entirely to my surprise, ‘he’d cook fried eggs in a big pan, one-at-a-time while there were six folk waiting for breakfast. And I lost it and told him: ‘With you would that do!’

Wilkie in a ‘grump’ was a thing to behold, but he could also be great company and was known for his very generous hospitality, both on Annag and in his flat in Cromwell Street, Stornoway.

For example, he was a wfty and entertaining raconteur. Right up until the end, he had the sharp wits and keen intellect of an autodidact.

Only last summer, Wilkie’s slight, wiry frame could be seen breezing on his horse to visit friends around the isles. Many of his fellow yachtsmen and friends would sometimes participate in judging at local horse shows.

But he was not, on the whole, a good teacher – being impatient of those who could not pick up and retain boat-related skills as speedily as he could. I remember failing miserably to construct the ‘Spanish Windlass’ that he had.

Wilkie left his sons Ross and Mark and five grandchildren, to all of whom we offer our sincere condolences. His friends found it particularly sad that he was one of the first ‘lockdown’ funerals, so there was only a Minister along with close family and friends at a brief graveside service in Sandwich on Friday March 20.

A number of friends have suggested to Ross that there should be a Memorial service for Wilkie at some point in the future. It is undoubtedly true that anyone who ever crossed paths with him will have many tales to tell as a result!

Contributed by SBS

21 jobs go as arts centre cafe firm fails

An Lanntair Trading Limited, which operated the cafe and shop at An Lanntair Arts Centre in the centre of Stornoway, has gone into liquidation.

Gordon MacLure, restructuring partner at Johnston Carmichael, has been appointed liquidator.

The business closed due to Covid 19 restrictions in mid-March, which had been placed into liquidation on April 28. All 21 staff who worked for the company have been made redundant.

The company was a subsidiary of the local charity, An Lanntair Limited, which runs the arts centre. The board of the arts centre is already exploring plans to reopen the business as a community facility, with hopes to create new jobs for local people once social restrictions are eased.

Liquidator Gordon MacLure said: “The unprecedented strain on the business, caused by the enforced closure of the restaurant due to the Covid-19 pandemic, has proved too great and the directors concluded that the business was no longer viable.

‘Our immediate focus is to ensure that all the staff receive their entitlements as soon as possible. We will be liaising with the various government agencies, including PACG LTD, to ensure these employees receive all possible support at this difficult time.

“Unfortunately, as long as the Covid-19 restrictions remain in place it can be expected that businesses throughout the Western Isles, and the UK as a whole, will find ongoing trading increasingly challenging meaning further business failures are almost inevitable.

“An Lanntair itself is now looking to the future of the arts centre and all its charitable work across this community. In the coming weeks, it will look at options for establishing a future catering offer from its centre and will look at ways to create crucial new employment for local people once the centre can again open its doors.”

Founded in 1936, Johnston Carmichael has grown to become the largest independent firm of Chartered Accountants and Business Advisers in Scotland. It is one of the UK’s top 20 accountancy firms and is the PKF member firm in Scotland, a family of legally independent member firms with over 400 offices, operating in 150 countries.
Looking back at life of Deirdre Macdonald

Deirdre Macdonald, formerly of Lewis Street, Stornoway, died in early April at the age of 92.

Her father, Thomas Babington Macaulay (1896-1984) was the son of Donald Macaulay, draper, of 28 North Beach Street and his wife Christina (née Maclean). Donald was born in Uig. (Her father's name echoes that of the noted early 19th Century British historian whose father's ancestors also came from Uig.)

Deirdre married Alexander Macdonald from Newton. He was better known as "Alasdair Ghiail". Alexander was the headmaster in Aird School on Pinn for many years until he retired in 1982. They had three children, Tom, the late Tim and (Alison) Morag. Nowadays Tom lives in Bernera and Morag lives on Lewis Street.

Deirdre's parents, Thomas and Christina also had a wool shop around the corner on Bank Street where a takeaway pizza outlet is nowadays. With the Macaulay family shop situated on North Beach, and her other grandparents, Mr and Mrs K.D. Henderson running Henderson's shop on Bayhead, Stornoway town centre was a playground for young Deirdre. "With grandparents living at either end, I was quite familiar with both ends of the town," Deirdre told EVENTS newspaper during an interview in 2017. "I remember spending a lot of time at the playground on Bayhead, and there were so many kids around that end, hundreds of folk used to live on Stag Road so it was always a busy place to be."

Educated at The Nicolson Institute's primary and secondary departments before later securing an honours degree in Literature from the Open University, Deirdre worked for a number of years in various roles at Lews Castle College, a time she recalled with 'a great deal of affection.'

Having witnessed changes to Stornoway during her lifetime, it was the tragedies of World War II that left the greatest impact on island life.

"The war changed everybody and everything," Deirdre said. "Before the war was one thing, after it was totally different; but that was the same all over the other islands. The men went away to war and they came back completely different people. The experiences they had altered their lives forever, they were changed by it and I think it took a while for most of us at home to realise the changes, and then to adapt to them."

Her father was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) for conspicuous gallantry in action while serving with the Royal Naval Division in France in WWI. Her husband Alexander was severely wounded in the stomach when evacuating a blazing Sherman tank in 1944. Her childhood friend John McGuckin who lived at Perceval Road so it was always a busy place to be.

The Historical Society is preserving history, remembering things that without it wouldn't be remembered. It preserves the history of the town, that's exactly what it does. Before we started, nothing did that," Deirdre added.

Deirdre also helped develop the town's cultural outreach with local drama group Stornoway Thespians. Deirdre is remembered by many budding island actors through her long involvement with the Thespians, who have entertained island audiences with plays, performances and pantomimes over decades.

Deirdre said: "Drama was always my main interest and the Thespians started off as just a fun experience, but when it ended up playing a very large part of my life really, I was glad."

Starting off, the Stornoway 'am-drams' presented two plays a year – a one-act play early on in the year as part of a national competition, followed by a three-act play later in the year. And many of the plays and dramatic works performed over the years by Stornoway Thespians were both written and produced by Deirdre. "We had a lot of good actors, but not so many producers and it was a role I was happy in. The group gave a lot of people an experience they wouldn't normally have got, the chance to perform, and it was a great thing to be involved in."

The Thespian's repertoire expanded when Donnie Maclean, from Back, introduced the idea of performing a pantomime. "We'd just never really thought it a pantomime before, but when Donnie suggested it, we couldn't think why we hadn't!" said Deirdre. "It widened the scope of the Thespians and that was necessary at the time, I think," she continued. "The first one was put together by Donnie on his own and it was a success, but we learnt that it was too much for one person to run.

"The next year we put a team together of half a dozen with people in charge of the acting, the production, costumes, set design and so on, and from then on the pantomimes really took off," she recalled. Deirdre was also hugely involved at the outset of An Lanntair arts centre. She was on the founding board of directors and went on to become one of the early chairs of the board. She had great creative energy and was very supportive of other initiatives in other art forms.

Deirdre's sister Kirsty, who lives on Church Street, Stornoway, was married to the late Malcolm Maciver (Skate), a banker with the Bank of Scotland. They have a son Finlay who is married to Lynne Maciver, the Iolaire Centre Project Manager and a daughter Amanda Jane who is a business consultant. Another daughter died a few years ago, Lynne Maciver now has her offices above the family's former North Beach shop with an entrance from Bank Street.

The interment of the late Deirdre Macdonald took place in Ardmore Cemetery on Tuesday April 14th 2020, under the extreme restrictions of the coronavirus pandemic with only immediate family present.

Rev Malcolm Maclean remembered

At their meeting by teleconference on 14th April, the Presbytery of the Outer Hebrides of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) recorded their sadness at the death of their senior member, Rev. Malcolm Maclean (retired), which occurred on 18th March.

Mr Maclean was born in 1931 and brought up in Shawbost, Isle of Lewis.

After his studies at the Free Church College, he was ordained by the Presbytery of Lochcarron in 1965, Lochcarron being his first charge.

In 1973 he was translated to North Tolsta in the Presbytery of Lewis, where he remained until his retirement from the pastoral ministry in 1996, living thereafter in Shawbost.

Mr Maclean remained active, preaching God's Word throughout the Western Isles and beyond, and overseeing a weekly prayer meeting in Bragar on the west side of Lewis.

"We are thankful for Mr Maclean's labours in the Lord's vineyard for more than fifty years," said the Presbytery statement.

"Our condolences are with his widow, daughters and grandchildren and also his surviving brother and sisters.

"May Jesus Christ, the great King and Head of the Church, raise up other men who will also serve Him faithfully in proclaiming the glorious Gospel.

Murdina Macleod dies at age of 106

The sad loss has been reported of Murdina Macleod from Carloway.

She passed away on Wednesday 29th April and was one of the oldest women on the island of Lewis – probably the oldest.

She was aged 106 and still lived in the family home in Carloway.

Her interment at Dalmore Cemetery took place under the coronavirus emergency restrictions on Saturday May 2.

The photograph of Murdina was taken only last year at her Carloway home.

Her interment at Dalmore Cemetery took place under the coronavirus emergency restrictions on Saturday May 2.

The photograph of Murdina was taken only last year at her Carloway home.
Intergenerational volunteering in the community

Due to COVID-19, our volunteering has adapted and changed. We are encouraging home-based volunteering unless essential. To carry on building our intergenerational links, we have worked with the Stornoway Primary hub class and Trust Housing in Lewis Street and Matheson Road to bring some entertainment to residents.

The children from the Stornoway Primary went on their exercise hour to sing Gaelic songs and dance for the residents to bring some fun to everyone’s day!

Adhering to guidelines, residents watched from open windows or sat in the courtyard from a safe distance.

Volunteer Centre Western Isles has also organised an intergenerational pen pal system between the Stornoway Primary, Faileite Centre and Trust Housing, where letters are sent to Volunteer Centre staff and scanned and sent between older and younger pen pals to encourage letter writing skills and to build relationships between pupils and older generations.

For more information, please contact lewis@volunteercentrewi.org.

Volunteering and COVID-19

So many people are helping their communities across the Western Isles by volunteering on a day to day basis and right now, the response from people has been amazing. So amazing, in fact, that some local charities are not needing any more volunteers right now, but this may change as the Coronavirus situation changes.

More volunteers will be needed over the coming weeks and as these opportunities become available, we will advertise them through our website www.volunteercentrewi.org and our facebook page Volunteer Centre Western Isles (Lewis).

If you would like to help, there are lots of ideas below. If you would like to register to volunteer, please contact info@volunteercentrewi.org for details.

If you would like to volunteer:

If you are not currently volunteering but would like to help out then thank you, that is fantastic. Our advice is very simple: Think local and act locally! Basic neighbourliness is absolutely vital in a crisis, whether it is extreme weather or coronavirus, and it is often the little acts of kindness that have the most impact.

We have received a huge number of volunteer requests through Ready Scotland and Volunteer Scotland which have supported people into a wide variety of volunteering, both in their community in essential roles and in home based volunteering to support the COVID-19 response.

We have information on a wide range of home-based volunteering that you may be interested in, such as sewing, knitting and home crafting for local care homes, including making scrubs and telephone crafting for local care homes, including making scrubs and telephone hotline support for those with Cystic Fibrosis who are classed as extremely vulnerable to severe illness from infection with COVID-19.

We have information on a wide range of home-based volunteering that you may be interested in, such as sewing, knitting and home crafting for local care homes, including making scrubs and telephone hotline support for those with Cystic Fibrosis who are classed as extremely vulnerable to severe illness from infection with COVID-19.

The London Marathon didn’t happen when planned this year but that didn’t stop island resident Chris Whittington completing his own marathon in a church car park near his home on Point.

Regular runner Chris Whittington had set himself the challenge of running the London Marathon but due to the current Coronavirus pandemic, his plan was on hold until he came up with an alternative.

He took on Marathon Lunainn on Saturday April 25, running 26.2 miles/218 laps of the car park in Garrabost in just over 3 hours 47 minutes, breaking his personal best time and raising more than £1800 for the Leanne Fund.

Chris provided live video updates on his Facebook page while running and put many cheerful voices from some musical performances from the community making it an extra special event.

Chris said: “It was nice to be doing something worthwhile on a weekend when I would have been disappointed about not running London, and The Leanne Fund is such a worthwhile cause, and one that is clearly of great importance locally.

“I’m overwhelmed by everyone’s generosity, I couldn’t have anticipated it would raise the amount that it has - I think it’s pretty much at what the Point 5/10k raised last year which is fantastic.

“I decided to fundraise for the Leanne Fund because it is a local charity that does great work and directly supports so many people within our close-knit community - particularly during the pandemic. The London Marathon have been advertising the ‘two point six challenge’, in an effort to get individuals to support the UK’s charities at a time when large sums of money would normally be raised by various running events.”

Chris admits Marathon Lunainn was a challenge even though he has taken on marathons before, the first while on deployment in Afghanistan and Marathon Hebrides in Harris last year.

He powered on with many distant cheers from local families which kept him going to the end. “On the day, Marathon Lunainn was pretty hard work. It was hard on parts of the body I wasn’t expecting due to the number of turns and was quite mentally tough. What got me through was the fantastic support of a few socially distanced families that came down to cheer me on and got me to a marathon PB of 3 hours 47 minutes and 12 seconds.”

“I have run two marathon distances prior to this. My first marathon was on deployment in Afghanistan six years ago with a friend – very flat but very hot! My second and official marathon was the Marathon Hebrides in Harris last year.

“I still hope to run London on the rescheduled date on October 4th as I’ve been trying for 11 years to get it!”

Christetta Mitchell, Leanne Fund said: “We are so grateful to Chris for completing this amazing challenge and raising vital funds for the Leanne Fund.

“While all our planned fundraising is postponed or cancelled we really appreciate this funding boost as we continue to provide lifeline services to individuals affected by CF and their families.”

The Leanne Fund is continuing to provide vital support to those affected by Cystic Fibrosis and their families across the Highlands and Islands, Grampian and Tayside regions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The charity, which relies heavily on fundraising and donations, is currently working extremely hard to continue assisting those with Cystic Fibrosis who are classed as extremely vulnerable to severe illness from infection with COVID-19.

If you would like to contribute to Chris’ fundraising, you can donate here: https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/Chris.Whittington

£13,580 boost to South Harris ‘hub’ hopes

The dream of a new Community Hub for South Harris and beyond has moved a step closer to reality, thanks to a grant of £13,580 from the Scottish Land Fund.

The Leverburgh Community Hub Steering Group have worked for more than four years with the aim of securing the purchase of the “Old Black” building at Leverburgh Memorial School.

The Group’s vision, derived from a widespread demand for services locally, is to create a multi-purpose community facility, which will provide a range of services. Plans include a café, charity shop, launderette, gym and Post Office.

It had been hoped to open Phase 1 of the Hub this summer, with the building on lease, but the Covid19 Pandemic means that it will not be possible. The Steering Group are, however, looking forward to a bright future and the news of the SLF money means they will now aim to secure the purchase of the building by the end of the year.

Prior to the Covid 19 emergency, the Stage 1 application was made to the Scottish Land Fund for funding to assist with the costs of the documentation that is needed to support a Stage 2 application (which will cover the purchase of the building).

The Stage 1 grant of £13,580 was approved on 16th April. This means that works to complete the business plan and the physical plans for the building can now go ahead, albeit under the terms of our “new normal”.

Over the coming weeks the Hub Committee and their advisers will be working to draw everything together for a deadline of 12 June when they plan to submit a Stage 2 Scottish Land fund application.

The outcome of this will be known on 27 August. Government restrictions mean the Steering Group cannot currently arrange meetings to consult and inform people of plans but other ways of doing this are being looked at, to ensure that as many people as possible have the chance to be informed about developments.

The Steering Group will be using a range of different ways of keeping people informed and giving them a chance to have their say. Followers of the project are urged to keep an eye on the Group’s facebook page, the local magazine, De tha Dò! and other local press.

The Committee says it is delighted to be working with Sandra Macaskill of CaskieCo, who has a great deal of experience with communities buying land and buildings, to prepare the business plan. The aim is to have as much local input as possible to inform and approve this when the time comes.
Top award for Scottish Salmon Company

The Scottish Salmon Company (SSC) has become the first salmon producer in Europe to be recognised with a 4-star ‘Best Aquaculture Practices’ (BAP) certification.

The prestigious certification is a reflection of SSC’s commitment to Scottish provenance and sustainability, using the very best practices at each stage of the supply chain to consistently deliver the highest quality salmon.

With operations based across the West Coast of Scotland, SSC says it takes great pride in producing the finest sea loch fresh salmon. Dedicated to industry leading standards, all of its salmon is fully traceable from farm to shelf with the BAP certification providing further recognition of the producer’s robust supply chain integrity.

The Company already held two stars for its processing sites at Locheal and Hebrides. Last year, SSC was awarded a third star for sourcing its feed from BAP certified suppliers. SSC has been awarded the fourth and final star for its freshwater operations. Four stars is the highest designation in the BAP third-party certification programme.

Su Cox, Director of The Scottish Salmon Company, said: “Scottish provenance is sought after the world over – consumers want to know where their food has come from and that it is produced sustainably. To be awarded a 4-star BAP certification is testament to the care and commitment that goes in to responsibly farming our Scottish salmon at every stage of the supply chain. “The BAP seal of approval means our customers can buy our Scottish Salmon with the confidence and reassurance that it is of the highest quality and integrity.”

Mike Berthet, BAP’s Market Development Manager for Europe, said: “The Scottish Salmon Company has proven its determination to have a fully BAP-certified operation by reaching four-star status. “This certification recognises that SSC is contributing to a safe and nutritious product that is enjoyed all around the world, while enhancing the reputation of aquaculture as a responsible and sustainable industry.”

The world’s most comprehensive third-party aquaculture certification programme, BAP is administered by the Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA) and is compliant with the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), Global Social Compliance Programme (GSCP) and Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative (GSSI).

The Scottish Salmon Company is the leading producer of quality Scottish Salmon with operations exclusively in Scotland, with 60 sites across the West Coast of Scotland and Hebrides. The company is fully engaged in all stages of the value chain from smolt production through freshwater and marine farming to processing. They are dedicated to producing the highest quality Scottish Salmon, exporting globally to 26 countries from North America to the Far East.

The Scottish Salmon Company supports the development of sport in the local communities where its staff work and live.

The company’s total staff number over 650 people. The main office is in Edinburgh.

For more information on The Scottish Salmon Company, visit: www.scottishsalmon.com

Collaborating for remote tastings

A company which sources ‘wild water’ from the Isle of Lewis for whisky drinkers to enjoy with their dram is uniting remote island communities in a digital collaboration.

James McIntosh, the founder of wild water brand Larkfire, is launching an online ‘Whisky & Wild’ tastings series together with whisky expert Matt Chambers and Jura single malt whisky, produced on the island of Jura nestled off the West Coast of Scotland.

Larkfire is sending free tasting packs of its wild water and samples of 12, 18 and 21-year-old Jura single malt whisky to islanders with the aim of keeping spirits high while businesses and communities are on lockdown and tourism is on hold.

Whisky blogger and awards judge Matt Chambers will be hosting the live whisky tastings on Instagram, encouraging islanders to connect and communicate during lockdown.

James McIntosh, whose Larkfire business already supports local initiatives through a partnership which donates a percentage of sales to The Stornoway Trust, hopes that the new digital initiative will support communities.

He said: “We’re keen to support communities and businesses on the islands and were mulling over what we could do to help, just to raise spirits a little. “We heard about Stornoway start-up business, the Island Spirit Whisky shop, having to postpone its opening because of the current situation, and it gave us the idea of doing something virtually. We contacted owner Iain Faller and he’s put us in contact with other businesses. “What sounds like the start of a joke about a bar – a wild water for whisky, a whisky shop and a distiller start working together – is happening, ironically, because there are no bars open.”

“We launched the first ‘Whisky & Wild’ tasting on 1 May, inviting islanders to join a free online session hosted by Matt. We hope to unite many people in raising a glass during lockdown, supporting each other and promoting local businesses across the islands and beyond.”

Kirsteen Breston, Head of International Malts at Whyte and Mackay which owns the Jura brand, said: “We are delighted to support this creative initiative of bringing together fellow island communities.”

Larkfire – a natural ‘wild water’ that brings out the full flavour of whisky – is stocked by prestigious venues including Roisdale Group sites in Mayfair, Belgravia, Canary Wharf and Bishopsgate. Soho Whisky Club also uses Larkfire for its tasting events, and Islington restaurant Frederick’s offers Larkfire alongside its range of world whiskies. It was named Best Premium Drink at the World Beverage Innovation Awards.

Stag rescues lockdown birthdays

Birthdays celebrated in lockdown are turning out to be low-key affairs, with children disappointed if there can’t be a party and big landmark birthdays being celebrated in small ways.

But Stornoway company Stag Bakeries is making sure there’s one essential that won’t get missed from the special day – the birthday cake.

Among the specials they have made over the past couple of weeks there have been 30th, 60th and 90th birthdays as well as cakes for three and four-year-olds and lockdown 18th and 21st birthdays.

Stag’s general manager Kathryn Graham said: “Despite the difficult circumstances at present we are still taking orders for birthday cakes as normal, after all your birthday is always your birthday! You may not be able to have a party, but you can still have a cake.”

Production is still going full pelt at the Stornoway bakers, who even stepped in to help out home bakers with supplies of flour while supermarket shelves are empty.

And all that effort isn’t going to waste – as the pictures show, not only is Stag adding a special touch to birthdays at home, but they’re getting messages from customers like Liam and Euan, who made this thank you card for the good baking fares at Stag.
EVENTS SECTION ONE - Page 10

A growing movement to create greater spiritual consciousness, through prayers for all humanity, through elevated conversations and through serving others.

Calling all who are interested in uplifting, spiritual and elevated experiences; acts of service, artistic expressions for young and old, please call 07798 700443

Although all of us have had to change many arrangements – and our usual pattern of meetings and activities has radically altered – nevertheless the work has continued apace, with innovative and creative ways being found to bring Baha’u’llah’s message of hope to many.

Rather than slowing down, the current situation has provided many opportunities for people everywhere to connect together – albeit electronically – to take stock of their lives, and to consider the question of material means and what is truly important in life. Conversation themes are naturally emerging out of the concerns of this time on many subjects, including global governance, science and religion, the importance of community, environment and the fact that a fundamental change is needed in the world’s economic and social system.

An unprecedented number of people have come forward to share prayers at Devotionals, to discuss a path of service, through the study of Ruhi Institute materials, to hold virtual Children’s classes and junior youth programmes, using online platforms. Sharing prayers have been the most popular activity during the lockdown, with many new devotionals opening up online, within families and homes. Hopefully these efforts could be sustained in the weeks and months ahead as the health crisis eases.

Devotionals for the month of May will be on topics of Patience, Hope and Friendship

“Let the darkness of this gloomy night shall pass away…

Have patience, wait but do not sit idle; work while you are waiting; smile when you are wearied with monotony; be firm while everything around you is being shaken…”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

If you are interested in any of the online activities for adults, children or junior youth programme please call

07798 700443
Bahaiteachings.org
www.bahai.org.uk

Virtual 3k inspires runners

By Annie Delin

Stornoway Running and Athletics Club found a way for runners to maintain their social distance while getting their fix of competition running on Saturday 11 April.

Nearly 60 runners turned out for the SRAC Virtual 3k, run by individuals and family teams on the roads closest to their own homes, from Barvas to Aignish and from Europie to Marybank. There were even two runners from much further afield – taking part in the event in Horsforth in Leeds and in Shap in Cumbria.

Fastest on the day was 14-year-old Charlie Morrison from Barvas, posting a time of 10 minutes and 24 seconds, with 15-year-old Rachel Murray of Cross Skigersta not far behind on 10:58.

Just as impressive as the age range of the runners – the youngest was just five years old and the oldest 73 – was the imagination on display as runners designed their own bibs and event colours for the virtual run.

An SRAC organiser posted on Facebook afterwards: “A huge well done and thanks to everyone that took part. It was great to see the effort some of you went to with the bib numbers, face paints etc. If we have somehow missed anyone out, then please get in touch and we will add you to the results. As you can imagine it was a bit chaotic pulling the results together.”

Keep your exercise levels up

A new challenge was launched on Monday 4 May aimed at getting movement, social contact and motivation into ‘lockdown life’.

Volunteering Hebrides launched the Paths for All ‘Step it Up’ challenge as part of the Embark programme, designed to keep people moving.

Teams of five workmates, whether separated by lockdown or not, are being asked to make movement count by walking, cycling, dancing or doing whatever movement will add on steps.

A spokesman for the Volunteering Hebrides Embark project said: “We want to keep people connected and keep them moving, perhaps while they are furloughed or isolated due to Coronavirus. It will give people more opportunities to get talking to each other – by text, phone or face-to-face – at the same time as totting up their total steps through the month of May.”

Every work team of five to register at https://www.stepcount.org.uk will be entered into a local prize draw to win a cash prize of £100 – which they can donate if they wish or share between them.

The prize is not dependent on how many steps you’ve counted, just on taking part, so get with your colleagues and get stepping!

More information also comes from https://www.facebook.com/ VolunteeringHebrides/
All about Coronavirus – in Gaelic

By Annie Delin

A free online children’s book explaining all about Coronavirus is being produced in Gaelic by Stornoway publisher Acair.

This book was initially released in English on April 6 by the award-winning independent digital children’s publisher Nosy Crow, who partnered with Gruffalo illustrator Axel Scheffler and medical experts at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, to get the title available in record time.

The authors of the text were Nosy Crow staff members Elizabeth Jenner, Kate Wilson and Nia Roberts, taking advice from Professor Graham Medley, two head teachers and a child psychologist.

The book answers key questions in simple language appropriate for five to nine-year-olds, tackling common queries such as how the disease spreads, whether there’s a cure and how children can help during the pandemic.

Kate Wilson, managing director of Nosy Crow, said: “We were very aware that many parents and carers are struggling to explain the current extraordinary situation to children, many of whom are frightened and confused. We thought that the best thing we could do would be to use our skills to produce a free book to explain and, where possible, reassure children.

“We asked Axel, whose work is so familiar and so loved, to illustrate it. He was happy to do it and did it extraordinarily quickly. We hope it helps answer difficult questions in difficult times.”

Acair has previously translated Axel Scheffler and Julia Donaldson’s ‘An Gruffalo’ and stepped in to produce the Gaelic version of ‘Corona-bhìoras’ and Julia Donaldson’s ‘An Gruffalo’. Acair manager Agnes Rennie said: “We have worked with Nosy Crow to produce many co-editions over recent years and were so pleased to produce the Gaelic version of ‘Corona-bhìoras’ as soon as they were approached.

“Acair manager Agnes Rennie said: “We have worked with Nosy Crow to produce many co-editions over recent years and were so pleased when they approached us to see if we wanted to create a Gaelic version of this new book.

“The spirit of the original book, the Acair version is the product of a generous team approach and we are particularly grateful to Dolina Macleod, one of our regular freelance translators, who volunteered to create the Gaelic text which was then turned into the Gaelic book by Acair – all working from home.

“I never imagined that Acair would be involved in producing a book for children about the Coronavirus!”

Axel Scheffler, illustrator of The Gruffalo, said: “I asked myself what I could do as a children’s illustrator to inform, as well as entertain, my readers here and abroad. So I was glad when my publisher, Nosy Crow, asked me to illustrate this question-and-answer book about the coronavirus.

“I think it is extremely important for children and families to have access to good and reliable information in this unprecedented crisis, and I hope that the popularity of the books I’ve done with Julia Donaldson will ensure that this digital book will reach many children who are now slightly older, but might still remember our picture books.”

Professor Graham Medley, Professor of Infectious Disease Modelling at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, said: “This pandemic is changing children’s lives across the globe and will have a lasting impact on us all.

“Helping children understand what is going on is an important step in helping them cope and making them part of the story – this is something that we are all going through, not something being done to them. This book puts children IN the picture rather just watching it happen, and in a way that makes the scary parts easier to cope with.”

You can find the free, downloadable Gaelic version of Corona-bhìoras at Acair’s Facebook page here https://www.facebook.com/acairbooks/ and via their Twitter feed.

The English version is here https://nosy-crow-coronavirus.s1-wnwest-1.amazonaws.com/Coronavirus_ABookForChildren.pdf

It’s suggested that families who find the book helpful might make a donation to help our health service at https://www.nhscharitiestogether.co.uk/
Wind farm and college step in to provide PPE to local NHS

Staff from Lewis College and wind farm charity Point and Sandwick Trust have worked together to produce PPE (personal protective equipment) locally for NHS doctors and nurses, using facilities at the Innovation Centre sponsored by the community wind farm charity.

Visors to help protect frontline staff from contracting coronavirus have been made in the college’s new Innovation Centre using their 3D printer and were delivered to the health board’s Chris Anne Campbell in April by Point and Sandwick Trust’s engineering consultant, Tony Robson.

Six visor headbands, and packs of disposable clear plastic sheets to form the faceshields, were handed over after college staff, working in partnership with Tony Robson and Point and Sandwick Trust’s development manager, Calum Macdonald, came up with the PPE solution.

The visor headbands are being produced on the 3D printer used for plastics at the Innovation Centre. Clear plastic sheets are then attached to the visors and replaced after use. Although it takes one hour to print out each headband, 100 of them have been pledged to NHS Western Isles. They are being made using an approved design downloaded from the internet and are designed to help protect health and social care staff from contracting the virus from people who are positive for Covid-19, including those who may be asymptomatic and undiagnosed.

The see-through plastic sheets clip on to the headbands and are easy to source – being an everyday office item – but the headband components are much more difficult to obtain. It was the production of the headbands that college staff, helped by Tony and Calum, had focused their attention on and all the materials are being funded by Point and Sandwick Trust.

Gordon Jamieson, NHS Western Isles chief executive, said: “We would like to thank all those involved in producing these visors. We are extremely grateful for these pieces of important PPE which will help ensure our staff are kept safe over the coming weeks and months. “Again we would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has offered donations, support and assistance during this time. We are grateful beyond measure and appreciate the continued thoughts and kindness of our local community.”

Tony, who had learned that such protective equipment was in short supply locally, was delighted to give the first box to NHS Western Isles.

He said: “We are supplementing what’s available to ensure that everybody has the opportunity to use a protective visor if they want. Staff seemed quite keen on it; they seemed to like the design, so that’s good. There can’t be enough of these things and staff feel a bit more reassured if they have a visor, rather than just a mask. It’s a common sense solution – made locally.”

He explained: “They use the 3D printer to cut a mounting, a band that you then clip a sheet of plastic to, for the visor. The plastic shields are disposable and we aim to produce 100 of the plastic headbands, which can be reused endlessly. We have given them the first six… so that’s six people who will now be protected.”

Rody Fergusson, head of technology at Lewis College UHI, said: “Engineering staff at the college were very keen to do their bit to support the local health and social care sectors during the current Covid-19 crisis by utilising the 3D-prototyping equipment from the college’s Innovation Centre to produce safety visors suitable for those working in the frontline against the spread of coronavirus.

“Working with the National 3D Printing Society and Point and Sandwick Trust, staff identified an innovative design for face-shield frames which they have now been printing at the college, and with the help of funding from Point and Sandwick Trust and Outer Hebrides LEADER, they hope to continue to produce significant numbers of the safety visor frames in the coming weeks.”

Earlier Point and Sandwick Trust this week made the biggest one-off donation in its history to NHS Western Isles, in recognition of the heroism of frontline staff and to support islanders suffering during the coronavirus pandemic.

The charity, which owns the largest community-owned wind farm in the UK in terms of output and reinvests all its income back in the local community, made a donation of £40,000. It is the first grant awarded from Point and Sandwick Trust’s newly set up pandemic community fund.

The money is to be mainly used to support frontline staff and covid-19 patients and will hopefully also benefit cancer patients. Frontline staff are to be consulted about ideas and a member of staff within NHS Western Isles has been tasked with leading the decision-making process.

Initial ideas include therapeutic pamper packs for frontline staff, including some local products so the money can be reinvested in island and island emergency items for patients who are admitted in a rush, without personal belongings and without the possibility of receiving them later on from a friend or relative, due to the ban on visitors. Emergency admission items could include nighttime, underwear, toiletries, phone chargers and other essentials.

Consideration is also being given to upgrading rest areas for frontline staff and to funding access to external counsellors for staff struggling with the impacts of the pandemic.

If funds allow, some money could also be used to bolster the budget for cancer patients, including island patients in hospitals on the mainland who have been cut off from the family visits that would normally be a source of emotional and physical support.

However, these are all preliminary ideas and NHS Western Isles stressed staff would be very much involved in the decision making.

NHS Western Isles chief executive Gordon Jamieson said: “We have been overwhelmed and humbled by the generosity of businesses, organisations and individuals across our local communities, who have demonstrated such kindness and have pulled together to help at the toughest time we have faced in the history of the health service.

“The donation from the Point and Sandwick Trust was completely unexpected but so incredibly generous. I would like to thank the Trust on behalf of our staff and the health board. We will be involving our staff in deciding how to make the best demonstrable use of this very kind gesture.”

Point and Sandwick Trust board member Agnes Munro – a retired Accident and Emergency nurse, pioneer of an innovative system of nurse-led A&E care, and former winner of the Scottish NHS Manager of the Year award – spoke about the decision to award the money to NHS Western Isles.

Agnes said: “The PST board are delighted to be able to help in this way, in what is an awful time of crisis. We’re aware that there are situations where patients are admitted to hospital unexpectedly and don’t have the essential items that would normally be considered required for hospital. We’re also conscious of the huge pressures the staff are under and it would be good to think that some of the funds could be channelled towards helping maintain their physical and mental health, and of course there are also non-covid patients such as cancer patients who will also have needs.

“These are all situations the Point and Sandwick Trust board considered when deciding to award the money to NHS Western Isles but of course it will be entirely at the discretion of the health board to use this money as it sees fit.”

Lewis man in PPE rescue team

By Annie Delin

A former Newmarket man is one of a team of volunteer engineers who set up a speedy production line for Personal Protective Equipment in the north-east of Scotland.

Aberdeen-based Duncan Macleod grew up in Newmarket and went to Landseer Primary School and the Nicolson Institute, before moving to the faculty of computing technologies and science at NESCol in Aberdeen, where 3-D printers are just part of the department’s kit.

The potential of the equipment interested Duncan so much he decided to set up a small company. He discovered that, as he said: “There’s so much that can be made from a spool of biodegradable plastic filament.”

Coronavirus lockdown found the 3D printing community looking to help out, so Duncan jumped at the chance to produce a simple face visor, designed in Sweden and easy to make on a small printer.

His efforts coincided with a call for help from Joe Skinner, who had just set up a Facebook page called ‘protecting essential workers in the north-east’. Duncan became his fifth volunteer and, within a few weeks the group were hard at work supplying health and social care workers with face visors and protective visors while working to hold back the spread of the virus.

Duncan said: “There are now more than 15 people in the group – nine printing and four supporting, plus Joe and his partner Nikki doing both at the hub in Peterhead. We can produce 150 visor frames each day and to date have manufactured and supplied over 2,000 units.

“There’s been weekly collection and Nikki Mandok, Joe’s partner, has been great at coordinating supply and demand, and dropping fresh filament spools to people when the donations allow. They intend to expand the printing when donations allow.

“Until official production and logistics can meet demand, there are many groups across Scotland and the world carrying out similar community projects.”

Peterhead Hospital’s casualty and dialysis units have been among those to benefit from the team of volunteers, as have pharmacies, care homes and other community organisations in the north-east of Scotland.

Joe Skinner said: “We have had tremendous support from my employee IJS Fabrication, also from AM Campbell, CNOC and had the premises supplied free of charge by Peterhead Area Community Trust (PACT). Aberdeen Marine Surveyors Ltd have volunteered to sterilise all the units and we have had support from the public on the GoFundMe site (https://www.gofundme.com/protecting-essential-workers-in-the-north-east ).”

Duncan Macleod’s parents, Duncan and Catherine Macleod and his brothers Grant and Colin Macleod still live in Lewis.

Chris Anne Campbell and Tony Robson with the first batch of visors
As lockdown continues there is inevitably a growing craving for our old normality and reassuring patterns of familiar activities. The exceptionally dry and sunny weather which we experienced in the Islands throughout most of April certainly helped to lighten the gloom of the dark COVID-19 shadow.

It was reassuring to hear the chirpy, uplifting song of the skylark and welcome back from foreign climes the wheatear, the swallow and the stonechat. Even the return of the Arctic Tern, perhaps not a welcome sign for the local bird population, was a sign that Nature is operating as normal. It was also very encouraging and heartening to see the peat cutters back on the moor, eager to make the most of the good weather and start the long process of turning the black, squelchy peat into tinder-dry blocks to create the magic of the peat fire flame.

I still haven’t made the first sortie to peat bank with the tairgair as I have been busy attending to Duke of York, Golden Wonder, Cara, Gernon, Anya and, even Désirée. For those readers who don’t know their Duke of York from their Golden Wonder, these are all varieties of potatoes and my challenge for the last few days has been to get my potato plot ready for planting. As I do not have access to a rotovator, my two companions on the potato patch were my ancient trusty spade and an amazing gardening tool called, “The Claw,” which breaks up compacted soil without breaking an old cropper’s back. Personally, it would be a sad and strange spring if I hadn’t been able to plant my six varieties of potatoes and anticipate a bumper yield come autumn. Super optimism is essential in the Covid psyche.

Potatoes are an incredibly versatile vegetable and can be used in a huge number of recipes. On average, each person in Britain eats three potatoes every day and we consume around 6.7 million tonnes per annum. We eat them baked, mashed, boiled, sautéed, as chips, as crisps and a myriad of recipes as diverse as Dauphinois and Hasselback potatoes. The list is endless and growing as creative chefs strive to prepare potatoes in even more unusual and exotic ways.

Here are three recipes in which potatoes take centre stage.

The first is Boulangere potatoes and lighter than that other French favourite, Dauphinois potato.

BOULANGERE POTATOES WITH BACON ( FOR A VEGETARIAN VERSION, JUST LEAVE OUT THE BACON)

- 100g butter and extra for greasing.
- 100g smoked bacon cut into lardons.
- 2kg peeled potatoes such as Roosters very finely sliced.
- 300g white onions, peeled and very finely sliced.
- 500ml chicken or vegetable stock.
- Salt and freshly grated black pepper.

In a large bowl, mix the potatoes and onions together. Add the egg and cheese mix and stir everything together.

Pour the mixture into the four dishes. Grease 4 large ramekin dishes. Make sure the soufflés don’t stick. Pour the stock over it. Bake in the centre of the oven for 1 hour 45 minutes. Cover the potatoes with foil after an hour so they don’t get too dark.

This dish can be used as an accompaniment to a roast joint of meat or roast chicken.

THE FIRST IS BOULANGERE POTATOES AND LIGHTER THAN THAT OTHER FRENCH FAVOURITE, DAUPHINOIS POTATO.

CHEESE, LEEK AND POTATO TORTILLA

- Large knob of butter.
- 1 large leek, white part only, thinly sliced.
- 225g new potatoes, cooked and cooled, then sliced thinly.
- 6 eggs.
- 100g mature cheddar cheese. Use 85g in the leek and egg mix and the remaining 15g when you put it under the grill before serving.
- Salt and freshly grated black pepper.

Pour the stock over it. Remove from the oven and allow to cool.

The cheese and leek have softened. Squeeze all the water out of the spinach and dry on kitchen towel. Chop roughly.

Drain and mash well with the two egg yolks. Stir in half of the Gruyere cheese and all of the flour. Mix well. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Grease a large casserole dish.

Grease a large casserole dish. Melt the butter in a large frying pan and cook the bacon for about 5 minutes until golden brown. Set aside to cool.

In a large bowl, mix the potatoes and onions and then add the cooked bacon. Season to taste.

Stir in half of the Gruyere cheese and all of the flour. Mix well. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Stir in half of the Gruyere cheese and all of the flour. Mix well. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

When cooled, cut in half then cut into slices about half centimetre thick.

Melt two thirds of the butter in a medium non stick frying pan.

Cook the leek on a gentle heat without browning for about 5 minutes or until softened. Remove and set aside.

The cheese and leek have softened. Squeeze all the water out of the spinach and dry on kitchen towel. Chop roughly.

Fold a little of the egg mixture to loosen it slightly. Using a large spoon, fold the remaining egg white into the mixture.

Grease a large casserole dish. Melt the butter in a large frying pan and cook the bacon for about 5 minutes until golden brown. Set aside to cool.

In a large bowl, mix the potatoes and onions and then add the cooked bacon. Season to taste.

Stir in half of the Gruyere cheese and all of the flour. Mix well. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

When cooled, cut in half then cut into slices about half centimetre thick.

Melt two thirds of the butter in a medium non stick frying pan.

Cook the leek on a gentle heat without browning for about 5 minutes or until softened. Remove and set aside.

Beat the eggs and season with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Add 85g cheese to the eggs. Add the remaining butter to the pan with the sliced potatoes and heat for a couple of minutes.

Add the egg and cheese mix and stir everything together.

Add the cooked leek and mix everything well.

Turn heat to low and cook for about 10 minutes till set.

Add the remaining cheese and place under a hot grill for a few minutes till the cheese melts. Remove from grill and cut into wedges and serve with green salad.

Covid-19 outbreak is huge threat to Afghans

Whilst we isolate with few Covid19 cases in the Western Isles and a functioning health system, in Afghanistan the infection is spreading.

Many Afghans, who had been living and working in neighbouring Iran for decades, have been forced out of that country which has been badly affected by the pandemic itself.

Some reports say that a quarter of a million have returned across the border within the past couple of months, many carrying the infection.

Most urban, working-class Afghans have no savings and are paid by the day. When they stop work, they starve, so self-isolation isn’t a realistic option.

Although the government is trying to contain the outbreak, they are struggling. Amongst their many problems is that test kit chemicals are in short supply worldwide, having been bought up by wealthier western nations.

Against this background, we are funding the staff of a private school in Kabul to search out 75 particularly needy families in an extremely poor district for whom groceries, masks and cleaning materials will be provided.

The school is closed just now, and the teachers are donating their time and all administration and transportation costs.

We all know that it’s a proverbial drop in the ocean, but it won’t appear that way to the families. For them it’s a month of food, less worry and the possibility of things improving afterwards.

Their expectations are less than ours.

The Linda Norgrove Foundation
MP in plea to crofters

Iles MP Angus MacNeil is reminding crofters to submit their Single Application Form (SAF) as the closing date for submission is last approaching.

The closing date for submission of Single Application Form (SAF) is Friday 15th May.

The Single Application Form is the form you need to fill in to qualify to claim payments under the following schemes:

- Basic Payment Scheme (including Greening and Young Farmer payments)
- Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme (Mainland and Islands)
- Scottish Upland Sheep Support Scheme
- Less Favoured Area Support Scheme
- Agri-Environment Climate Scheme – annual recurrent options
- Forestry Grant Scheme – annual maintenance and management grants
- Beef Efficiency Scheme
- Rural Development Contracts – Rural Priorities annual recurrent options

The date for submitting the SAF application is less than 2 weeks away, Friday 15th May, and we want to remind crofters that they haven’t already done so to submit their application.

The easiest way to complete the Single Application Form is online. To do this, you must be registered with Rural Payments and Services.

“Area Offices are currently operating an answer machine service. If you require assistance, you are asked to leave your name, contact number and brief details of your query and you will be contacted as soon as possible.”

Office details are: Benbecula - Tel: 0300 244 9600 - SGRPID.Benbecula@gov.scot

Stornoway - Tel: 0300 2448501 - SGRPID.Stornoway@gov.scot

‘Hardship fund’ grants for community councils

Community wind farm charity Point and Sandwick Trust has given grants of £5,000 each to the community councils in its immediate area, to be used as ‘hardship funds’ to help residents suffering amid the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown.

Point, Sandwick and Stornoway Community Councils received the money which is to be spent at their discretion, and was directed to the community councils in recognition of “their vital role as grassroots organisations”, in touch with their communities and able to co-ordinate aid efforts.

Donald John MacSween, general manager of Point and Sandwick Trust, said: “Point and Sandwick Trust were very pleased to make substantial grants to the community councils, recognising their vital role as grassroots organisations who know their communities well and are well placed to co-ordinate efforts to help people cope with the difficult circumstances we are experiencing.

“The special grants we have provided are to be used by the community councils at their discretion. The only caveat is that the fund has to remain strictly in the control of the councils – they are not to be handed over to a third person, party or organisation, or used to fill funding gaps created not to be handed over to a third person, party or organisation, or used to fill funding gaps created instead by austerity cuts.

“PST will be working closely with local community councils in the months ahead, and we hope to make further announcements on community support in the next few weeks.”

Responding to the grants, Alex John Murray, newly appointed as chair of Point Community Council, warmly welcomed the fund “to meet with the needs that might arise” and stressed the community council would be having discussions, with the guidance of Point and Sandwick Trust, about how to distribute the money.

Joan Muir, chair of Stornoway Community Council, said: “Sincere thanks from Stornoway Community Council to Point and Sandwick Trust for the generous grants provided not only to NHS Western Isles but also to our community council. The financial gift will help us to provide much-needed support direct to those who need it during these unprecedented times.”

Sandy Morrison, deputy chair of Sandwick Community Council, said: “We were very happy to hear that Point and Sandwick Trust offered a £5,000 grant towards our local community use, in light of the current covid-19 crisis.

“We have not met as a committee to fully discuss a direction for these funds. But having the funding in place would allow the committee to move quickly in any required direction.

“These funds could be used towards some social events to help rebuild our community spirit after the restrictions are eased. But also if the crisis worsens in the coming weeks/months we have a substantial cash pot to direct at any crisis within the community.

“Once again, Point and Sandwick Trust are showing how a well run community organisation, by the community, for the community benefits us all.”

An Cotan Childcare Centre stays open

When the Government announced that schools and nurseries would close from Monday 23 March, they also advised that some will stay open to provide care for a limited number of children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response, and cannot be safely cared for at home.

An Cotan Childcare Centre at Lewis Castle College UHI has remained open during the lockdown period providing a much-needed service for many currently at the heartbreak of this response to the virus.

Manager Erica Granty says: “The children have adapted well to the situation and staff have also got into the routine of half working from home and the other half being in, which we rotate weekly.

It is still concerning for all but we have strict guidance and protocols in place to minimise risks, we are also being supported by the College, Council and Care Inspectorate with regular contact.”

One of the parents, Gordon Jameson, who is chief executive of Western Isles NHS, said: “An Cotan stepped forward at the very outset of this pandemic, and has allowed a number of key workers to carry on, and expand their efforts to keep our community safe.

“Our workers are extremely grateful and have been able to continue working in the knowledge that our children are in safe and trusted hands.”

An Cotan is still open Monday to Friday.
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

Crofters in crisis due to Covid-19

By Patrick Krause

The responses from a survey put out to crofters by their representative body the Scottish Crofting Federation (SCF) reveal access to cash-flow, labour, contractors, supplies and veterinary care as the main problems faced due to Covid-19.

There has been a very good response to the survey and the statistics are stark with more than a third of the respondents citing cash-flow as a major worry. Many crofters supply food and accommodation to the local market. Abattoirs have not been taking private kills, hotels and restaurants are closed and on-croft accommodation bookings are cancelled. This would normally be the time of year to start seeing money coming back in after the long winter, but it is not materialising.

One respondent said, “The closure of some abattoirs to private kills is a death knell to us small producers. If abattoirs stay open, they cannot exclude private kills as cumulatively the resulting produce will be a substantial contribution to food supplies in rural areas.” The good news is that most abattoirs have resumed taking private kills and crofters can continue to help with the provision of high-quality meat to local markets.

Another crofter, who supplied hotels and restaurants, said, “I am giving away all egg production free as there is such a reduced market for the eggs here; 250 hens, the alternative is throwing them away when they go out of date.”

Asked what would help, crofters said financial support is lacking, is confusing, or crofts fall between the cracks. For example, the loss of holiday-let income is a devastating interruption to cash-flow but as this is not the main occupation there is no help. “There needs to be a greater understanding by the government of the variety of crofting enterprises, as well as seasonality – we need to make enough money during the summer to last through the winter.”

Additionally, the shortage of help on the croft from contractors, volunteers, students and family was cited by well over a third of respondents. It is apparent that contractors are heeding the government directive – ‘stay at home’ – despite food production being part of our critical national infrastructure. Many respondents said they feel the government advice is not clear enough – many people could be carrying on with croft work without posing any threat but feel they cannot due to the message going out that any movement is restricted. This has all been fed back to the Scottish Government and they will take steps to address the issues, we are told.

If you are experiencing a lack of labour, you can make this known by contacting the Scottish Government funded Skills Matching Service which connects those who have agriculture skills to those needing help. To find out more visit www.scotland.lantra.co.uk/skills-matching-service or contact Lantra Scotland on 01738 310164 or email SMS@lantra.co.uk.

The survey is still live and is open to all crofters, whether SCF members or not. We need the information to feed into Scottish Government policy as we attempt to keep up Scottish food production in this very difficult time.

It is obvious that crofters are suffering financial hardship due to the situation; RNIB supports people from agriculture emotionally, practically and financially in times of need. Don’t be shy to contact them on 0300 111 4166. If they can’t directly provide the support needed, they generally know someone who can.
The March murder mystery, held at Stornoway Library in partnership with Alzheimer Scotland Western Isles, is one of the most popular library events of the year. This year there was sadly no play, but instead we have held a number of other successful and hugely entertaining murder mystery evenings, all penned by Ann Cleeves.

Since that first performance, the library – with Alzheimer Scotland Western Isles, have held a number of other events to promote books and encourage new people to visit. 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.

**Library service launches murder mystery play competition**

The March murder mystery, held at Stornoway Library in partnership with Alzheimer Scotland Western Isles, is one of the most popular library events of the year. This year there was sadly no play, but instead we are announcing a great opportunity for aspiring writers to come up with the script for a new play, to be performed in the library in 2021.

The competition, for ages 16 years and up, is for a play for 4 or 5 characters and entries must follow the particular format the crime writer, Ann Cleeves, created for the very first play performed at Stornoway Library in 2012. Ann wrote The Body in the Library, among other murder plays, especially for libraries so that they can hold entertaining events to promote books and encourage new people to visit.

Since that first performance, the library – with Alzheimer Scotland Western Isles, have held a number of other successful and hugely entertaining murder mystery evenings, all penned by Ann Cleeves.

Marion Macdonn, Locality Leader for Alzheimer Scotland Western Isles said:

“We look forward to this event every year, but this year thought that it was the perfect time to give someone the opportunity to create a new play script and a competition seemed to perfect way to go. It may be murder, but the plays we have held are always fun and intriguing. It’s the perfect way for the audience to test their little grey cells and raise much-needed funds for the service.”

The writer of the winning entry will receive a £50 prize and the great honour of their play being performed at Stornoway Library – and maybe at other libraries – next year. Entries must be submitted by 31 October.

Details for the competition can be found on the Join in from Home section of the Your Lockdown Library website of the Comhairle – www.cne-siar.gov.uk/yourlockdownlibrary.
Comhairle continues to provide library services online through ‘Your Lockdown Library’

In spite of having to close all libraries and pull the mobiles off the road, the Comhairle has continued to provide a full and vibrant service online. A new section of the website, Your Lockdown Library, has been created to help to gather all the resources together and highlight the range of activities and opportunities available digitally through the library and free to library members.

The library welcomes new members and anyone wanting to join up can get in touch and their membership can be arranged over the phone or via email.

**eBooks and eAudio Books**

The great news is that we still have lots of books and talking books available, even though they are all online. The library provides access to eBooks via OverDrive – these can be read on your computer or via the Libby app on your phone or tablet. Talking books are perfect for the whole family as well, or even to listen while cooking, exercising, ironing or doing DIY! eAudio books can be accessed through the library library.enquiries@cne-siar.gov.uk

**LEGO, Coding, Competitions, Stories and More**

As well as weekly storytimes and LEGO challenges for the family, the library is also launching two new exciting coding activities for children to join in with from home; Moonhack and Scratch That! In 2020, Moonhack is coming back to earth and into your home! Moonhack is an international event bringing together kids from across the world for a week of fun coding, from the 25th to the 31st of May. There is a Moonhack project for everyone, from first-time coders to whiz-kids. All the info needed to download the step-by-step instructions, code your own planet-saving solution and share it online with us is now available on the Your Library Lockdown library website www.cne-siar.gov.uk/yourlockdownlibrary.

The library is also launching a new virtual code club, called Scratch That! Children will be invited to join in with weekly coding fun and games with the new initiative which will encourage children and young people to create and share stories, games and animations. Each Tuesday, the library will post the details of a project, and children will have until the following week to complete. The projects will then be shared online on the Scratch website.

These new initiatives, along with the library’s regular online activities are highlighted on the Your Lockdown Library website (look out for the Join in from Home section).

For further information, contact the library at 01851 622744 or library.enquiries@cne-siar.gov.uk www.cne-siar.gov.uk/yourlockdownlibrary

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**LEWIS**

**New Polycrub, Barvas**

Jo-Ann McConnachie of 8 Loch Street, Barvas, has applied for planning permission to erect a polycarbonate building at 8 Loch Street, Barvas. The polycrub is to be 12 metres long, 4 metres wide and 3.5 metres tall and is to be constructed of translucent polycarbonate.

**Demolition and replacement of garage, Bragar**

Angus Morrison of Springfield, North Bragar, has applied for planning permission to demolish the existing garage at Garage, Springfield, North Bragar and erect a new steel frame garage. The garage is to be 9.144 metres long, 9.144 metres wide and 4.815 metres tall.

**New Polycrub, Barvas**

Allan Kerr of 13 Upper Barvas has applied for planning permission to erect a polycrub at 13 Upper Barvas. The polycrub is to be constructed of concrete, wood and polycarbonate sheeting, and is to be 12.765 metres long, 4.204 metres wide and 2.612 metres tall.

**Change of use of building**

Iain Maciver of 20 Bluie has applied for planning permission to change the use of the premises at 74 Kenneth Street from offices to dwelling house. The house is to consist of two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a kitchen, a dining room and a living room. Work is to include making improvements to the exterior of the building.

**New Streetworks pole, Lochs**

Arqia Ltd has applied for planning permission to erect a 10 metre streetworks pole on a new foundation at Telephone Exchange, Laxay, Lochs.

**New house and garage, Barvas**

Joanne Maciver of 6 Pier Road, Aultbea, has applied for planning permission to erect a house at 28 Upper Barvas. The house is to have three bedrooms, a kitchen/dining room, a lounge, a study and three bathrooms. Work is to include creating a new access, parking suitable for four cars and building a detached garage.

**New agricultural building, Point**

John Macleod of 68 Lighbill, Back, has applied for planning permission to build an agricultural building at 22 Melbost, Point. The building is to be 13 metres long, 4 metres wide and 3.5 metres tall and is to have walls clad in horizontal shiplap timber cladding and a roof made of translucent polycarbonate.

**New agricultural building, Uig**

Alistair McVean of 20A Valtos has applied for planning permission to erect an agricultural building at 20A Valtos. The barn is to be a steel framed building that is 6 metres long, 4.5 metres wide and 2.897 metres tall. The walls and roof are to be green metal.

**New conservatory, Arnol**

Dudley Conway of Park Cottage, 21 Arnol, has applied for planning permission to erect a conservatory at Park Cottage, 21 Arnol.

**New house with integral garage, Newmarket**

Broadbrand Homes Ltd has applied for planning permission to build a new house with integral garage at 46D Newmarket. The house is to consist of four bedrooms, two bathrooms, a kitchen, a living room, and open plan family area / kitchen, a utility room, a porch and an integral garage. Work is to include creating a new access, parking suitable for two cars and installing an air source heat pump.

**Redirection of overhead line, Lochs**

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks has applied for planning permission to redirect the existing 132 kW overhead line on the Lochs road to facilitate the use of the new transformers at Stornoway substation.

**New garage, Tong**

Stuart Macdonald of 10 Tong Road, Tong, has applied for planning permission to erect a new garage within the existing property boundary at 10 Tong Road, Tong. The garage is to be 12 metres long, 7 metres wide and 3.817 metres tall.

**New agricultural building, Lochs**

Ben Martell of 57A Leurbost, Lochs, has applied for planning permission to erect an agricultural building at 57C Leurbost, Lochs. The building is to be 13.716 metres long, 9.144 metres wide and 4.9 metres tall. Work is also to include extending the existingcroft access and creating parking suitable for two cars.

**New house, Sandybost**

Hugh Maclellan of 21 Lower Sandwick has applied for planning permission to build a house at 21A Lower Sandwick.

**HARRIS**

**Three camping pods and parking, Luskentyre**

Luskentyre Leisure has applied for planning permission to erect three camping pods at 1 Luskentyre. Work is to include creating parking suitable for six cars. The pods are to be 8.798 metres long and 3.212 metres tall.
In such challenging times with our concerns understandably closer to home, we may also feel closer to the nature that surrounds us. With a quick, online survey, the Seas of the Outer Hebrides project is seeking your views on how we might best manage our seas for the benefit of people and nature once we have returned to a more normal situation within our communities.

We’d like everyone who lives in the Outer Hebrides to have a say in the future of their seas. By completing our survey you will help us better understand how you and your community values the sea, what the key issues are, and how we might collectively come up with new ideas and opportunities for its stakeholders and fundraisers.

Speaking about the different face of Mayday 2020, Alison Byers, Engagement Lead for Scotland, said: “The Coronavirus has had a serious impact on all charities and their ability to fundraise. The RNLI is no different. We hope that not only will Mayday help raise funds for our crew, but that it will also help raise spirits and give people something to plan for, to look forward to and enjoy with friends, even if it is just online.”

The charity therefore is calling on the public to help raise funds for its vital lifesaving service by taking a tea break, joining a step count challenge, or ditching their favourite tipple for its online Mayday appeal.

There are fundraising ideas and downloadable materials for the RNLI’s ‘Fundraise at home, save lives at sea’ Mayday appeal available at www.rnli.org/mayday. Check it out for more information on our Mayday 2020 fun fundraising challenges…

**Step To It For Mayday** – Supporters can choose different step targets to complete each day for the month.

**Lifesaver Quiz** – Using a video-calling platform, supporters can host a quiz with their loved ones, with all involved making a donation.

**Cuppa for the Crew** – A tea/coffee morning inspired idea where supporters can join family and friends virtually, donating the amount they would spend on a hot drink (£2-£3).

Anyone wishing to support the RNLI can find more information at RNLI.org/mayday. Once the country starts to exit lockdown there will also be plenty of opportunities for people to join the organisation’s volunteer fundraising team, those interested in getting involved with the RNLI should keep their eyes peeled on the charity’s website.

And keep an eye also on the Stornoway RNLI and RNLI Facebook pages – with live events such as a WaterSafetyWednesday taking place during these self-isolating times!

The RNLI’s 46 lifeboat stations in Scotland remain operational and ready 24/7 to assist anybody finding themselves in difficulty in the water. If you or someone else is in danger in or around water, you should call 999 and ask for the coastguard.

We’re always ready to help, but the RNLI is urging everyone to follow Government instructions to stay home, protect the NHS and save lives. We do not recommend that you take your exercise on or in the sea. Our lifeboat service is still available, but every time a lifeboat crew is called to an incident, it puts additional pressure on RNLI volunteers and other front-line emergency services, as well as potentially exposing them to COVID-19. Thank you.
How our community joined together against Covid-19

By Jack Libby,
Head of Community Care
DATELINE: MONDAY MAY 4

I write this at a time where we have had no confirmed COVID -19 cases in any of our Residential, Day Care or Home Care services.

Whilst the timing of lockdown was in our favour, as is our geographical location, we would not have avoided sustained transmission in our community without the remarkable compliance with the social distancing rules. As a community we have been so fortunate in this regard.

It is also four days on from the day on which we remembered the 75th anniversary of VE Day and staff elsewhere who have died as a result of coronavirus. This could just as easily have avoided sustained transmission in our community without the remarkable compliance.

The media has brought home to us the impact that COVID -19 has had on the elderly and those with underlying health issues.

As readers will know, residents of Care Homes have been particularly vulnerable to COVID -19, with some care homes in the UK, losing between 30% and 50% of their residents to COVID-19. From the outset, a significant challenge we faced as a Care Provider was that we have a significant number of our staff aged 60 plus, a number of whom have underlying health issues themselves or live with someone who has underlying health issues. We also had staff of a younger age who were in similar circumstances. Almost overnight, we had between a 20% and 30% staff reduction in our Home Care and Residential Care services. Services critical to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable in our community.

What occurred next confirmed for me what I knew about our workforce and what you know about your community, that we came together at a time of crisis, rising to any challenge. That we were prepared to do anything we needed to do about ourselves. Employees from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar volunteered to be redeployed into other services, family members of service users, who normally were unable to care for their loved ones stepped in, we had over 100 applications from the community to join our Social Care workforce and over 250 members of the community volunteered.

In addition to this, we have had to close Day Care services, where adhering to the social distancing measures was not possible. We have also had to cease all non essential visits to Care Homes. This was an essential action to take to reduce the possibility of COVID – 19 entering a Care Home. We are very grateful to those family members and residents affected by this decision for their understanding and support.

More than ever we are immensely proud of our employees at this time.

Seeing the doctor by video – new for care homes

By Annie Delin

Residents of nursing and care homes in the Western Isles were some of the first to feel the effects of the Coronavirus lockdown, with concern about their wellbeing leading to an early decision to restrict, then prevent, relatives and friends from visiting.

The same concern has led to concentrated attention on ways to ensure residents get the healthcare they need, without being exposed to unnecessary risk either by travelling to the doctor’s, or by having too many health professionals in and out of residential settings.

GPs in Lewis and Harris have been working with social care teams to build up more extensive use of video consultations, using the Attend Anywhere and Near Me schemes. These allow medical professionals to ‘meet’ patients via video link on a tablet or laptop computer.

Dr Antonio Uceta of Broadhead Medical Practice said: “The current Covid-19 pandemic has suddenly made us more aware of the potential uses of video in health and social care. We had already some experience with Attend Anywhere with homes and care homes. We have now assigned a care/nursing home to each of the GPs in Lewis and Harris.

“For the patients, especially those who have the ability to operate the system with minimal support, it allows them to speak to the doctor themselves, effectively to have their own private consultation.

“It has personalised the GP care everyone receives. Before COVID-19 we would have spoken to the GP about a patient, but the Attend Anywhere scheme has opened the avenue of the resident speaking directly to the GP and, even if they can’t communicate well, we can make sure the GP can see them and see anything that we may be concerned about.”

Dr Uceta-Perez is also enthusiastic about the effectiveness of the remote technology as a tool, as long as it is used with an awareness of contextual issues. He said: “In the context of modern health and social care, video conferencing/consultation requires a good understanding of the concepts of mutual trust, consent, confidentiality, safety and accurate recording by all parties involved. It also requires a degree of practical awareness of the use of the modern technology available to facilitate communication.

“Family, carers and social care workers can assist in many ways between the clinician and the patient – with connection arrangements and technical challenges, clarification of questions and answers and also with basic observations like colour of the skin, mood or quality of the speech, temperature, pulse or blood pressure.

“Video has taken, by its own right, a place amongst the different ways to interact with patients and carers. At the consultation or at a meeting, video adds valuable information like facial expression, awareness of mutual surroundings, the possibility of multiple attendees and the invaluable chance to assess visually signs of illness or health.”

PEOPLE WHO CARE...

A chance to care

By Annie Delin

O f the things we have all learnt over the past few weeks is that the key-workers in health and social care, in the shops and in essential services like delivery and post – deserve applause and thanks during this crisis.

For some, the upheaval of Coronavirus has actually provided a new opportunity and motivation to get involved in the care of other people.

Kelci Smith of Tong was just 15 years old when she went along to Stornoway library for a recruitment day in which jobs in different care settings were explained and help given with applications.

She had already done work experience at the Grianan Centre and she knew she wanted to work with people. Once school closed for the Coronavirus shutdown, she applied for and got one of the temporary jobs available at Ardsheilach centre for adults on Macdonald Road.

Kelci said: “I had turned 16 since I made my application and am due to go into SS to study for my Higher, but with school shut down, I wanted to be doing something.

“I was going to apply here anyway, but it all got fast-tracked by Coronavirus. I enjoy working with people, helping and caring for people and I find that everyone here is really helpful. If you ever have any questions they’ve got no problem helping you out.”

Kelci is working day and back-shifts – either 8am to 3pm or 2pm until 10pm – and she fully intends to continue doing weekend supply shifts even when school returns.

Her longer-term aim is to study criminology and sociology at university, with a view to working with people with learning disabilities who may have committed crimes. “I think that would be really interesting,” she says.

School closure made Kelci look for her new occupation and meanwhile, in Lasay, South Lochs, former councillor Annie Macdonald was seeing her tourism business hit hard by the onset of the pandemic.

Annie said: “We have a minibus tour business called Love Hebrides which had only started last summer, with a good first season, but then the cancellations started, and I realised that there was no way people were going to be coming here this season.”

“I applied for home care in response to the Comhairle’s appeal for extra carers in March. It’s good to be useful at a time like this and the work situation made it obvious there was going to be no tourism work this year.”

Annie went through the necessary clearance checks and then tried training in lifting and handling, medications and other essential learning, before being asked to show experienced carers for a couple of weeks.

Now she’s working in people’s homes across North and South Lochs, occasionally in other locations, and she’s finding the work enjoyable and stimulating.

She said: “The shadowing with fellow carers was really useful, because there was a lot to learn and because the people I went to see were going to become my clients anyway. It’s good to get to know people because you are going to be a guest in their home, even if only for a short time.

“There’s a lot of common sense involved as well as the acquisition of knowledge, I can see myself continuing to do this kind of work, because I am finding it enjoyable.”

Annie’s view, as someone with long experience of community contribution, is that most people have responded well to the sudden change of circumstances.

She said: “I think there’s been a good response in the islands – people like to be useful in a time of need. If you can do something to help, then do. I’d much rather be doing something than not – in fact, doing nothing is not an option for me.”
Flying high with e-Sgoil, teaching the world

By Katie Macleod

In the space of a few weeks, the global Coronavirus pandemic has ushered e-Sgoil, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar’s digital learning service, into a new phase.

Since its launch in 2016, e-Sgoil has helped put teachers in front of classrooms via VScene video calling software both locally and nationally. With everyone able to see and engage with one another face-to-face, it’s an example of remote teaching that has been used for emergency cover, specialist input into classrooms, and even pupil-leavers learning. Now it’s the service through which education is continuing not just in the Western Isles, but in authorities across Scotland.

With schools back in session after the Easter Holidays, pupils and teachers are returning to learning in a new normality – as they work and study at home. “The aspiration is to use the technology that we have – in our case, Glow, Office 365 and V’Sceen – to deliver live, interactive lessons,” explains Angus Maclean, Head Teacher at e-Sgoil.

The new e-Sgoil curriculum offer will include increased use of live interactive teaching; further development of collaborative local resources; and access to national support through partnerships with a variety of educational organisations. This process of rolling out live teaching to all pupils will be a gradual one. “We’re looking for a gradual expansion of the five sessions, as the pupils and staff become more confident with the systems and teaching approaches,” says Angus.

In addition to formal training in the use of digital software and the educational approaches needed for remote teaching, some teachers are opting to “ghost” e-Sgoil colleagues. “Ghosting”, in this case, involves sitting in on colleagues’ classes to see the theory of online teaching in action. As Angus explains, “they can pick up the dos and don’ts of remote teaching by observing, and once they’re confident enough, they can go on their own with their classes.”

But in some cases, remote teaching is already in action. The classroom portion of Foundation Apprenticeships – industry-recognized qualifications which combine classroom learning with work placements – were already taught online through e-Sgoil, and are continuing as normal. Modern Studies and Gaelic Medium classroom portion of Foundation Apprenticeships – industry-recognized qualifications which combine classroom learning with work placements – were already taught online through e-Sgoil, and are continuing as normal.

Modern Studies and Gaelic Medium History are also being taught to Senior Phase pupils (S4-S6) using work placements – were already taught online through e-Sgoil, and are continuing as normal.

As stated, modern studies and gaelic medium classroom portion of Foundation Apprenticeships – industry-recognized qualifications which combine classroom learning with work placements – were already taught online through e-Sgoil, and are continuing as normal. Modern Studies and Gaelic Medium History are also being taught to Senior Phase pupils (S4-S6) using work placements – were already taught online through e-Sgoil, and are continuing as normal.

Scotland already has links with locally, as well as others the organisation has worked with in the past. Alison is also supporting Keziah Winlow, Who Cares? Scotland’s Care Experienced Participation Assistant, to shape her role and develop new skills in what are unusual circumstances.

As part of her role, Keziah is now part of the national planning group for a ‘Digital Festival’ hosted by Who Cares? Scotland. Scheduled to take place in early June, the festival is designed to ‘fill the gap’ for the many Who Cares? Scotland’s members who would, in ordinary circumstances, be looking forward to the organisation’s summer camp. With Alison, she has worked to create local links with the Shetland poet Jen Hadfield, with a number of young people in the Western Isles finding ways to respond to the current situation through creative writing.

The Young Islanders Group, which focuses on creating a sense of belonging among secondary-age care-experienced young islanders and their friends, also continues to meet via weekly video group sessions. For the younger Kickin’ Klub group there are plans to combine virtual opportunities with postal connections, sending out fun tasks and creative challenges to help provide a sense of a collective tangible project even while physically distanced. “We are very keen to remain at the heart of the network of support that is there for all the children and young people from Eilean Siar who will be facing particular challenges at this time,” says Tom, adding that Alison continues to work closely with partners in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar’s Education, Skills, and Children’s Services department to provide group opportunities and support.

“Alongside the range of online participatory opportunity, the offer of individual, independent advocacy support from Alison can be all the more important at this time – given how difficult the current circumstances can be for young people already facing challenges in their lives.”

• For any young people who might benefit from one-to-one support during this time, more information can be found at

https://www.whocaresscotland.org/get-involved/get-advocacy/,

or by contacting Alison for advocacy support directly at 07764 290 921 or afrizzell@whocaresscotland.org.

• Details on urgent financial support and the First Responder Service can also be found at https://www.whocaresscotland.org/coronavirus-support/
School hubs are centre of learning wheel in pandemic

By Katie Macleod

By the middle of March, all schools in Scotland were closed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, and education now looks very different for pupils and teachers across the country.

In the Western Isles, select “hubs” are currently open to provide care for children whose parents are key workers, as well as pupils who are vulnerable. For everyone else, learning and teaching is taking place at home.

“Our teachers are working tirelessly at the moment to make sure that there is regular contact and regular content of learning being distributed through online platforms to children working at home,” says Donald Macleod, Senior Education Officer at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

For Early Years and Primary pupils, parents are being reassured that regular daily activities around the home – like baking, playing outside, and helping with chores all help indirectly with literacy, numeracy, and health and well-being. Primary pupils throughout the islands are also engaging in home learning provided by their teachers, accessed through their Glow email accounts, and on video calls using e-Spoil’s VScene technology. For Gaelic Medium Education pupils, plans are also in place to record teachers speaking in Gaelic, so they can continue their listening and speaking exercises remotely.

Secondary pupils are also working from home and learning online. As Dr. Frances Murray, Rector at The Nicolson Institute, said in an Education Q&A Livestream held online in April, “it’s very important to make sure that while we cannot replicate a school day exactly, that there is learning going on, and there is contact being made, and pupils are getting the opportunity to keep on learning.”

This is happening in a myriad of ways, from remote teaching using VScene, to individual study tasks provided by teachers. The new e-Spoil National Programme, launched on 4th May, also offers a mix of introductory courses run in conjunction with SCILT (Scotland’s National Centre for Languages), and the environmental charity Keep Scotland Beautiful. And for Senior Phase (S4-S6) pupils whose SQA exams have been cancelled, work is underway to allow them to begin their national certificate courses earlier than usual.

For vulnerable children and those whose parents are designated key workers, this type of home learning is done at the designated hubs. The Comhairle is currently operating ten school-based hubs, and one childcare centre, while three partner nurseries are continuing to offer key worker care for their registered children.

Laxdale Primary School is one of these hubs, covering care for children who normally attend Laxdale, Back School, and Tong School.

There, pupils are split across two classrooms, all while social distancing, and are helped by support staff while teachers are at home preparing work for their pupils. “The children take in their home learning packs and log onto their email account when they come in, and they can look and see what their teachers have set for the day,” explains Head Teacher Mairi Macleod. “The morning is quite structured, and after lunch it’s more relaxed; if they’ve got outdoor activities or tasks to do they tend to do those.”

Teachers are also adjusting and making the most of the situation. “It’s been challenging for them, but they’ve risen to it, and they’ve been working with what they’re provided at the moment,” says Mairi. “We’ve all had to learn so many new skills, like having our staff meeting on VScene, but the more we’re doing it, the more we’re getting used to it.

“It’s certainly a new experience with many challenges,” adds Stephen Campbell, a teacher at Laxdale School. “There are a wealth of materials and resources available for pupils online, but without the structure and organisation of the classroom it can be a bit overwhelming for some.”

“Not being able to access resources such as colouring pencils, paper, paint, etc., is limiting the pupils in what they’re able to do at home, but they’re doing their best. Pupils are engaging, as much as they can and are enjoying sending photos of themselves working at home to their teachers. I think families are doing a really good job of adapting to this new way of learning. Engaging with pupils by email is going well and we’re all getting used to it now. I hope we’ll be back in school with our pupils sooner rather than later, but no earlier than it is safe to do so!”

It is an unprecedented situation, and everyone is being encouraged to focus on their mental wellbeing. “We’re trying to give the message ‘Do what you can,’” says Mairi.

The Unfinished 6th Year at The Nicolson

By Vice Captain, Calum MacLennan

On that fateful day, we were sitting at our usual table in the middle of the canteen, thinking we still had at least a month of this left, when one of my pals glanced at his phone only to see that Nicola Sturgeon had announced that all schools in Scotland would be closing the coming Friday.

This was great, right? So, you would think! Under normal circumstances, there is nothing teenagers love more than getting time off school. However, this was not the case for us, the Sixth Years of 2020. Having gone through seven years of primary education and nearly six years of secondary school, we were not going to be able to finish things off properly. It was like writing a great book and concluding it on a terrible cliff hanger.

I had enjoyed all my time in school, not only sixth year, although it was undoubtedly the best year. The whole social side of it, seeing my friends, yarning with the staff, and so on, were things I loved. This meant I was gutted that we were not getting to conclude school life in the way we had anticipated. We did not have enough time to properly say goodbye to everyone, have our leavers’ ceremony, get our hoodies and yearbook published before leaving, and of course, our parties on the beaches.

As a year group, we went through some tough times in school due to some unforeseen situations. However, we always stuck together, and I think the vast majority of us did enjoy our time in school. Of course, there will be complaints, and nobody enjoys the work and exams that come with being a pupil. Nevertheless, I got the impression throughout sixth year that everyone who was there wanted to be there.

There was even real disappointment about not being able to sit exams, especially from those for whom the Prelims had been a real wake-up call and who had got their studying act together over the past few months. You could sense the mixed feelings in the Sixth-Year area in our last few days in school and a lot of it was disappointment.

When you are coming to the end of your school career you have developed many great relationships, not only with pupils in your own year group, but with teachers, canteen staff, members of the Senior Management Team, sports coaches and so on. It is a big change to then rarely see any of these people and come out of the routine you have gotten so used to over the years, without preparing yourself for it. I for one, would have happily done sixth year all over again.

Not knowing what the future holds in terms of employment, college or university prospects is also a major concern for us.

The year came to a very abrupt ending, although it was necessary in these unprecedented times. Looking at it now, it was a blessing in disguise as the situation is under control on the islands, at least for the time being. We did manage to quickly arrange our party at Bayble Beach on our last ever ‘Friday after school’ which we thoroughly enjoyed, even if there was a bit ofittersweet feeling. There is also the consolation that we did have our leavers’ Dinner Dance at Christmas time, as there are many unfortunate Sixth Years on the mainland who had to cancel their proms and parties.

However, despite this, many of my friends and I are living in hope that once this all passes, we can have our graduation day and maybe even a final dance with the teachers!

The teachers and staff at The Nicolson Institute deserve a big thanks for the help and guidance they have given us over the years, and for making our years at school and especially Sixth Year, as good as they possibly could.
New self-employed support

The Leader of Comhairle nan Eilean Sìar, Councillor MacKay, has welcomed additional business support announced on April 30 by the Scottish Government. This fund, to be administered by the Comhairle, is open to the recently self-employed who started trading between 5 April 2019 and 31 March 2020, and who are excluded from the other forms of business support relating to COVID-19 disruption and are currently suffering hardship.

Councillor Mackay said: “This is another welcome addition to the raft of business support schemes available. Inevitably some businesses have been slipping through the net and this will help plug another gap in our efforts to support our economy.

“The Comhairle and its partners in HIE and COSLA have lobbied for additional support and today’s announcement is very welcome. I would also take the opportunity to remind members of the business community of our own Local Business Support Scheme and the other source of support available.”

Grants of up to £2,000 are potentially available through the scheme, which will remain open while limited funds permit.


Business advice is available from Business Gateway on businessgateway.cnesiarp.gov.uk.
Làrach-lin ùr Gàidhlig do luchd-ionnsachaidh òg ga chur air bhog tràth

Tha dùil gun lìon seo am beàrn a dh'adh bharùc duinn chòrasglean ‘s go leòd ris ri linn tinnse a' Chorhâmbhais.

Phuairadh a’ chaidh sealladh de Gàidhlig nan Òg an-uirlidh aig cùl-choimheas. An Alltán do luchd-obrach ann a mògh fhìrnil cùis airson an fhàilteachd na Gàidhlig.

Tha dhùil gun chogaidh an t-àirì a’ chur bhog tràth.

Tha an goireas air a roinn na cùis-eilean mar an t-sàdarn agus a bhòhradh, áirreamh, dathan, gnìomhaíocht làthair, an t-sìde, baisteachainn agus peataisach. An bhiodh airson do dh’fhaireadh an iomradh. Tha sinn taingeil seachdaine-an ri teachd.

Chaidh a’ chlachtadh òg a bhith air an fheàrr air an dìon a-nis. Tha sinn taingeil dha-rìribh airson smuaintean agus coibhneas ar coimhearsnachd a thoirt dhuinn aig an àm seo. Tha sinn taingeil seachdaine-an ri teachd.
Student nurses join fight against COVID-19

Nursing students have joined NHS Western Isles nursing teams to help in the fight against coronavirus.

A total of 18 student nurses from the Department of Nursing and Midwifery (University of the Highlands and Islands) have been welcomed by NHS Western Isles during April. The nurses are all ready to help NHS Western Isles manage during potentially challenging times, and are working in a variety of areas.

The students are contracted by NHS Western Isles as Band 4 Students until September 30, 2020. Their education and assessment continues whilst on placement, with the support of our experienced mentors and registered nurses, preparing them to qualify as Registered Nurses in September.

The students are no longer supernumerary and in that respect bring a wealth of experience and skills to our workforce, at a crucial time, in preparation for COVID-19.

NHS Western Isles is also employing three students from the islands, who are studying at mainland universities and have come home during lockdown; one Second Year Robert Gordon University Midwifery student, one Second Year Robert Gordon University Nursing student and one Second Year Queen Margaret University Nursing student.

In June 2020, the Second Year students in the Western Isles will also follow this process. They will be employed as Band 3 Student Nurses until August 31.

The Western Isles Psychological Wellbeing Hub launches. A total of 18 student nurses from the Department of Nursing and Midwifery (University of the Highlands and Islands) have been welcomed by NHS Western Isles in partnership with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, with the aim of helping people struggling to think about how we can really look after our NHS and social care workers.

The Western Isles Psychological Wellbeing Hub will be supported by more than 30 people all trained in providing Psychological First Aid. Psychologists, social workers, education, mental health and wellbeing workers, and trained counsellors will be at the end of a phone to help people using the service. If you are not currently getting support for your mental or psychological health and you or your child are experiencing increased emotional distress, or if it’s all just getting too much, you can contact the Western Isles Psychological Well Response Hub.

Alison Robertson, Clinical Psychologist for NHS Western Isles, said “This service is for people who notice that they are experiencing continuous anxiety or distress due to their situation just now, or feel that they are needing some extra support. ‘People might feel particularly anxious if they know someone who has the virus or is ill, and those who have had mental health or psychological difficulties before might feel those symptoms heightened or worse during this difficult time.’ David Gibson, Head of Children’s Services for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, added ‘Feelings and emotions can become overwhelming and relationships strained. Children can have worries, amplified by being away from the supportive routines of school and interaction with friends, or they may be worried about someone in their family. They may have lost direction.’

Our emotions can fluctuate more than in ‘normal’ times, but it’s important to know that it’s okay. Our role is to help you or a member of your family find ways to cope. This service will complement the existing 24-hour counselling service for young people offered by Counselling and Family Mediation. The Wellbeing Hub will it is by offering advice and techniques that can help and additional support by a telephone appointment’.

The Western Isles Psychological Wellbeing Hub will operate in the normal working hours of 9am-5pm Monday to Friday. Referral to the hub can be made at downloading the referral form at https://bit.ly/3eYa3RQ and then emailing it to wi-hb.PsychologicalSupportForCorona@nhs.net. For those without internet access, a referral or self-referral can be made by phoning the Community Navigator Team on 01851 708022 or the NHS Western Isles COVID-19 telephone line on 01851 601151.

NHS Western Isles in partnership with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar launched their new Psychological Wellbeing Hub service on 2 May to help local staff in the fight against COVID-19.

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Two charities are set to benefit from the goodwill of NHS Western Isles staff who, despite the lockdown, are taking on an impressive (and weighty) challenge to raise funds.

Staff from the NHS Western Isles Radiology Department are raising money for two charities: Crossroads Lewis and the Royal Osteoporosis Society.

The aim is for each member of the department to walk the equivalent of a 26-mile marathon in their lunch break, wearing a lead apron, over the course of a month. This equates to 1408 lengths of the x-ray corridor each. Lead aprons weigh approximately eight kilograms but can vary with size.

NHS Western Isles Radiographer, Ciara MacKenzie, said: “We were inspired by the ‘2.6 challenge’ that was created after the London Marathon was cancelled. The public were encouraged to do some fundraising starting on the 26th April (the day the marathon should have been), incorporating the number 2.6 or 26 into it (26 miles in a marathon).

“We remembered that some years ago a radiographer ran a marathon in a lead apron, and that is where we adapted our fundraising activity from.”

There are 14 Radiology staff members taking part in the current challenge. This includes radiographers, sonographers and admin staff; full-time, part-time, bank staff, and locums. The team’s four part-time/ bank staff are in teams of two, as together their working hours make up a full-time staff member. A total of 12 marathons should be completed between the staff by the end of May!

The two charities being supported are Crossroads Lewis and the Royal Osteoporosis Society. NHS Western Isles Radiographer, Shuna McAligon, said: “The Royal Osteoporosis Society has supported our Radiology department a great deal over the past six years, first in setting up our bone densitometry service and then in establishing our Fracture Liaison Service. Like many charities, their funding sources have been reduced considerably during the COVID-19 crisis so we wanted to do something to help them and repay the work they have done to support us.”

Ciara added: “Crossroads are working hard in our local community during the coronavirus crisis, supporting the most vulnerable and helping to keep them safe. With the current lockdown, Crossroads are unable to do any of their usual fundraising events while still providing a crucial service with depreciated staff. We felt that supporting them at this time would benefit the community.”

https://www.justgiving.com/team/xraywesternisles

Charity tests out flying link-up

The United Kingdom Civil Air Patrol (UKCAP), an air support charity that uses volunteer pilots and crews, has undertaken an operation related to routine COVID-19 testing activity on behalf of NHS Western Isles.

The flight, undertaken on Tuesday 28 April by a twin-engined aircraft with an experienced pilot, Des Hart, involved the distribution of test consumables between Stornoway, Benbecula and Barra.

It had been requested on Monday by liaison planners currently based in Stornoway as a test of CAP capability and response times, with a view to more widespread UKCAP airborne support in the coming weeks.

UKCAP national Chairman and Chief Pilot Archie Liggat said: “This week’s operation was a very straightforward flight for this aircraft. It follows a significant amount of planning in the background between the UK Civil Air Patrol nationally, local resilience forums and NHS planning teams.

“This flight once again highlights the UKCAP’s ability to augment our established public services in times of crisis and to undertake essential operations quickly, safely, effectively and at no cost to the public purse. This is only possible because our crews donate their aircraft and time for free.

“We are now discussing what additional support may be required by NHS Western Isles on an ongoing basis and refining our plans to support this. These include the UKCAP potentially basing aircraft in Stornoway on a rotational basis to deliver support as required.

“it’s important to note that all UKCAP flying activity involves a high degree of preparation and planning, with all crews and aircraft appropriately certified and insured. This is especially true of our current very limited operations in reflection of the national lockdown. As a result of this, today’s operation was also specifically agreed in advance with the Civil Aviation Authority and involved additional safety measures.”

NHS Western Isles Chief Executive Gordon Jamieson, said: “As we face the unprecedented challenge of COVID-19, we have had to rapidly develop and implement new ways of working. UKCAP is another fine example of one of the many organisations and individuals stepping forward to assist us in managing and defeating this virus. We have a long way to go, and will face new challenges along the way. It is reassuring to know we have the support and input from UKCAP. I thank them on behalf of our communities in the Western Isles.”

The purpose of the UKCAP is to provide occasional airborne support to first responders, agencies, groups or individuals who would otherwise not have access to such a facility or who may need to temporarily extend the reach of their own established capability. Its role is strictly humanitarian and voluntary.

The UKCAP has aircraft, pilots and observers based all over the country operating from permanent airfields and farm strips. This ensures maximum flexibility and reduces transit time by air to the scene of assistance. The organisation also has an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) capability.
Routine immunisations continue

Immunisation appointments for children and pregnant women are continuing during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Scheduled immunisations are an important and legitimate medical reason to leave your house, and people who have an immunisation appointment should attend as planned. If an individual with an upcoming immunisation appointment – or a member of their household – is showing symptoms of COVID-19, then they must not attend, but should call the number on their invitation to rearrange the appointment.

Dr Gregor Smith, Interim Chief Medical Officer, said “We’re grateful to everyone for heeding our Stay Home Save Lives message during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the NHS is still open, and the routine vaccination programme is an important way to protect you and your family’s health.

“It is important we continue to protect children and other vulnerable groups against serious vaccine-preventable diseases. Routine immunisations for children and pregnant women are a crucial way we can help keep people safe and healthy at this time.

“We know members of the public will have protecting their family’s health from coronavirus, by following guidance on social distancing and not travelling unnecessarily, at the forefront of their minds. But receiving an immunisation is one of the important medical reasons for which you should leave your house, and it will help protect you or your child from other serious diseases.”

Dr Maggie Watts, Director of Public Health for NHS Western Isles, said “We are encouraging all parents and guardians of children, and all pregnant women to attend their scheduled immunisation appointments at their GP practice. If you cannot attend because you or your family are showing symptoms of coronavirus, please call your GP practice to rearrange this appointment.”

All scheduled immunisation appointments in the Outer Hebrides are continuing and we would encourage all children and pregnant women to attend. If you cannot attend because you or your family are showing symptoms of coronavirus, please call your GP practice to rearrange.
Patients with mild coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms are being reminded not to call NHS 24 if they are able to manage their symptoms at home.

Those who are unable to manage their symptoms, or if symptoms do not improve after seven days, should contact NHS24 on 111, day or night.

We are also urging local communities across the Western Isles: please do not call your GP or go to the surgery with regard to coronavirus.

This system provides patients with a straightforward dedicated route to clinical advice and support, as well as freeing up GP practices to treat and care for all non-coronavirus health conditions.

Under the new arrangement introduced at the end of March, calls to the 111 helpline will be assessed and, if necessary, transferred to a local community assessment hub. There are assessment hubs, staffed by local clinicians, in Lewis, Uist and Barra, to ensure patients get the best possible advice at the right time. You will receive directions to the Hub as appropriate.

Depending on their assessment, patients may be given advice over the telephone to help them continue self-isolating at home or be given an appointment to attend their local assessment centre for further treatment.

Where symptoms are manageable and for people who have access to the internet, NHS Inform’s coronavirus webpage is the fastest way for people to get the latest health advice and information.

There is also a free NHS 24 helpline for people without symptoms looking for general information on coronavirus - 0800 028 2816.

For patients who do not have any coronavirus symptoms, but need to see a doctor, they should continue to telephone their GP when open and not call NHS 24. In the out of hours period, when displaying symptoms other than coronavirus, you should only call 111 if you need urgent assessment and cannot wait until your GP is open.

**Background**

NHS Inform’s coronavirus webpage: www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus is still the fastest way for people to get the latest health advice and information.

If you need a sick note due to coronavirus, don’t contact your GP or NHS 24. You can download an isolation note directly from NHS Inform: https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note.

Common symptoms of coronavirus include:
- high temperature or fever
- cough
- shortness of breath

**Patients should only call NHS 24 (on 111) if their symptoms:**
- have not improved after 7 days
- are severe or they have shortness of breath
- worsen during home isolation

For any other health related concerns, make NHS Inform your first point of contact or call your GP during opening hours. If your GP practice is closed and your query can’t wait you can still call NHS 24 (on 111).

If you don’t have symptoms and are looking for general information on coronavirus, call NHS Inform’s free helpline: 0800 028 2816.

### NHS Western Isles wishes to express its sincere thanks to the following groups, businesses and individuals for their generosity and offers of support during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

- Abhainn Dearg Distillery
- Agnes Munro
- Anthony Pidcock
- Michael Pokorniecki, Aladdin’s Cave
- Ali Whiteford
- Alison Morag Smith
- Bernard Edwards
- Bridge Centre
- Caledonian MacBraynes
- Caladh Hotels
- Carinish Hall
- Catherine Macleod, Scalpay Harris Tweed
- Claire Ritchie
- Copper Kettle
- Corinne Maclean, Ionaid Stoolie
- Dane Miller
- Daniel Mackenzie
- Dark Island Hotel
- Debs Beauty Buy Offers
- Delights Shop
- Donald Campbell Motors
- D.R. Macleod Ltd
- Duncan Kennedy
- Essence of Harris
- Fiona Froud
- Fraser Macleod
- Gavin (Home New Build)
- Graham MacLellan
- Accommodation
- Heb Holidays
- Hebridean Solutions
- Ishga
- Jane Twelves
- Jemma Bowen, Porkies
- John MacDonald
- John Macleod
- John Taylor
- Julie Child, Callanish Alpacas & Mollans Cafe
- Katie Gallagher
- Katrina Craig
- Kenneth Macphail
- Kirsty MacCormick, Cothrom, South Uist
- Laura Macleod
- Lewis Castle College
- Loganair
- Lynsay Mackay, Quarniers
- Malcolm Macdonald
- Margaret Ferguson
- Mary Lou Stilwell
- Mary Margaret Maclean
- Mike Bailey, CLCA Assistance
- Mike Feeham
- Mo Eilean (Air BnB)
- Morag Duncan
- Murdo Macmillan
- Nana Maclean
- North Uist Distillery
- O’Mac
- P.J. Hair Design
- Point & Sandwich Trust
- Pointers Youth Club
- Police Scotland (Western Isles)
- Public Library
- Resilient Group
- R.J. Macleod, Tarbert
- Robert Sinclair, Hebrides Alpha
- Scottish Salmon
- Scottish Seaweed
- Shena Dawn Morrison
- Shona Main Macleod
- Stillwell
- Stonemay Golf Club
- Tony Robson
- Willouglen
- Yorkshire Aero

**A massive ‘thank you’ to local communities**

NHS Western Isles has been inundated with incredibly kind donations from across our communities of various items, including monetary donations, hand sanitizers and creams, personal protective equipment, offers of accommodation, vehicles, snacks, and offers of assistance.

We are incredibly grateful for all these donations and are thankful to our local communities for their kindness and thoughtfulness at this difficult time. Each donation means a lot to our staff, who remain at work so you can stay at home.

Our intention as an organisation is to ensure that your kind donations reach the right individuals within NHS Western Isles, including our community staff and support staff such as domestics, porters, catering staff and pharmacy. For this reason, we would ask that any future donations are made through a central point by emailing Colin Gilmour who is coordinating donations colin.gilmour@nhs.net and we will ensure they are fairly distributed.

Should you wish to specify where you would like your donation to go within the organisation, we will of course ensure that your wish is honoured.

Whilst donations are hugely appreciated at this time, NHS Western Isles would also remind members of our community that the main thing our frontline staff need above all else from you is for you to stay at home and follow social distancing rules. This is the one thing you can do to help that will help keep our frontline staff safe and will ultimately protect the local NHS and will save lives.

NHS Western Isles Chief Executive Gordon Jamieson said: “I am lost for words in terms of how generous individuals, businesses and groups have been. Our community has pulled together in an incredible way, and has helped demonstrate to our key workers that we are all in this together and that we are here for one another.

“I would thank each and every organisation and individual who has offered help, assistance and goods to our staff.”

He added: “Clearly, the greatest gift you can give our frontline workers at this time is the gift of health, and we continue to ask you to do this by following government rules, in particular staying at home. By staying at home, you are helping to reduce and slow down the spread of this awful virus and you are protecting our NHS staff and our local healthcare services and without a doubt saving lives. On behalf of our staff, I continue to ask you to stay at home. The safest place for you to be is in your own home. To keep our staff safe, please stay at home. To protect our local community, please stay at home. Thank you.”
**Virtual Visiting keeps patients in touch**

Bringing families together in the Western Isles amidst a worldwide pandemic was one of the NHS Western Isles’ objectives over recent weeks.

With visiting suspended, NHS Western Isles has re-united families via ‘virtual visiting’ and has supplied wards with iPads to enable them access to their loved ones.

One family to benefit already from virtual visiting is Louise Sullivan’s, keeping her in touch with her elderly mother who is an inpatient in Western Isles Hospital in Stornoway.

Louise lives locally, and since her mother, Ella Barbour, was admitted to the Western Isles hospital, herself and her father, Billy Barbour, had been visiting her mum on a daily basis. However, following implementation of the lockdown, this has not been possible.

Louise said: “My mum has been an in-patient since February this year. Since my mum’s admission, either myself or my dad have visited my mum every day. Therefore, although the visiting restrictions were completely understandable they presented a personal challenge in relation to keeping connected.

“Having the opportunity to use the Virtual Visiting instead has meant the world to us as a family. My parents have been married for over 50 years and have hardly spent a day apart and I know my dad really appreciates the chance to see my mum most days via the virtual link. It’s been equally important for my mum to keep connected with her family to aide her recovery.

“For me one of the most precious moments has been seeing my mum’s face ‘light up’ when she saw her grandsons on the video. At this challenging time we have been very grateful of this service and all the effort from staff to make this work for us and other families.”

The Virtual Visiting facility is continuing to grow across the hospitals and care homes have also introduced a similar facility, enabling vital face to face conversations to happen between patients and the people that matter most to them in their lives, which is inevitably going to be instrumental in their recovery.

NHS Western Isles Chief Nurse and AHP Director/Chief Operating Officer, William Findlay, commented: “We are very pleased with how well this service has been received and the positive difference it has made to our patients. This is an extremely challenging time for inpatients who are in an unfamiliar environment, at a time of illness and, are not able to see their friends and family.

“This is why we took the decision to develop this service for our patients who do not have their own mobile phone, tablet or laptop to use, to connect with others. Keeping in touch with those important to us is clearly beneficial in terms of patient wellbeing.”

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**Scrub are the new capes!**

Our local frontline NHS staff in the Western Isles are our superheroes: it’s as simple as that!

And to let them know how much we appreciate them and all they do for our local population, NHS Western Isles is running a ‘Scrubs are the new Capes’ social media campaign, with some eye-catching posters of some of its local NHS frontline staff in superhero poses.

The campaign also helps strengthen NHS Western Isles’ message to the public: ‘We go to work for you, please stay at home for us’.

From domestics to senior charge nurses, catering to community, all members of NHS Western Isles staff are busier than ever in their efforts to continue delivering high quality NHS services to the local population.

Gordon Jamieson, NHS Western Isles Chief Executive, said: “We are currently facing the biggest public health crisis of our lifetime with the Coronavirus pandemic. The simplest thing that the public can do to help the NHS and each other, is to stay at home. This is the message from us as an organisation and from each and every one of our staff. Help us to protect you by protecting us.”

He added: ‘While these messages are tongue-in-cheek and presented in a light-hearted way, we do hope they will help to get the message across. I’d also like to state that never have we been prouder of our frontline workers than at present.’

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**IF IT’S URGENT, IT’S URGENT**

Call your GP surgery or 111 out of hours.

For emergencies phone 999.

We are still here to help!

During these extremely challenging times, we would like to remind members of the Western Isles community that your Health Service remains available to you when you need us.

We are acutely aware of the national and local position, with reduced attendances at Emergency Departments, GP Practices and people not wanting to bother health service staff with issues that they would, under normal circumstances, seek help for.

Whilst NHS Western Isles staff are working hard to prepare and plan for potential pressure on our services as a result of COVID-19 over the coming weeks and months, we would urge the local community to continue to access services as and when they need to. We are still open; we are still here for you.

Nobody should suffer in silence and nobody should try and cope alone if they are in need of health service support.

NHS Western Isles Medical Director, Dr Frank McAulay, said: “For the past number of weeks, we have all been constantly overwhelmed on a daily basis with information on COVID-19 and we are constantly aware of what has happened on how we all live our lives and on the NHS. Normality for us all has become something very different in a rapid space of time, which causes alarm and confusion.

“What has not changed, however, is the issues that members of our community still continue to experience. Whilst so much has stopped as a result of COVID-19; issues with our physical, non physical and social wellbeing do not just stop. Coping or simply accepting health issues at this time is not necessary and not something we would advise.”

Whilst non urgent procedures have regrettably been cancelled across the country, health services are still available for communities to access; whether it be cancer services, mental health, emergency care or chronic disease management. These services remain available and, whilst we appreciate all people are doing to help the NHS during this time, it is vital those with non-coronavirus health concerns still seek help as they would have before the outbreak.

Some services may be provided differently – for example some services being delivered virtually by a video link system called ‘Near Me’ – but the normal routes to access the services themselves has not changed.

Dr McAulay continued: “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 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.

“Please do not be frightened to attend healthcare premises. Whilst physical distancing continues we are all very aware of the advice to stay at home, there are very legitimate and important reasons that people have to leave the house – one of those being for issues relating to your health. We would also reassure you that those displaying COVID-19 symptoms are being treated separately to patients attending for other reasons.”

NHS screening services for breast, bowel and cervical cancer have been paused during COVID-19 but if you’ve noticed symptoms and are concerned, your GP practice is open and ready to help. Getting checked early is one of the main reasons why more people are surviving cancer. For further information visit www.getcheckedearly.org.

If you are experiencing mental health issues, please do not delay in accessing your local mental health service by contacting your GP (Community Psychiatric Nurse) or your local GP Practice.

If you or your child has an immunisation appointment, make sure you attend, or reschedule if you’re showing symptoms of COVID-19.

If you have a regular appointment for a chronic condition such as asthma or diabetes you should contact your GP and they will advise you. If your hospital appointment has not been cancelled you should still attend.
Free access to Sleepio online app

NHS Western Isles in partnership with Big Health Ltd. is pleased to offer access to the clinically tested insomnia App Sleepio for residents of the Outer Hebrides experiencing sleep difficulties or insomnia.

The pilot is supported by the Scottish Government Technology Enabled Care programme and began on 27th April 2020 for a period of nine months initially.

NHS Western Isles appreciate that more people than ever are likely to be facing sleep difficulties at this time as they cope with the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic. It is hoped that providing online access to psychological support for sleep this will help while people face social restrictions during the ongoing pandemic.

The Sleepio service adds to a range of existing online psychological support tools that may help people to cope with range of psychological stresses they may be having during the current pandemic. These digital tools include iESO which people may access themselves via website or online CBT which is available via their GP.

Martin Malcolm, NHS Western Isles Head of Public Health Intelligence and Project Lead, said “NHS Western Isles has been working on a project to test access to online CBT for insomnia. We realised how this could help people increasingly struggling with this problem in the current coronavirus pandemic particularly as they face restricted access to traditional psychological services. As a result we have been able to quickly make the Sleepio online CBT programme available across the islands supported by our mPower Community Navigator service so avoiding need for people to visit their GP to gain access.”

What is Sleepio?

Sleepio is an online sleep improvement programme based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).

Participants learn techniques and strategies to help improve sleeping patterns naturally, that may allow them to avoid the need for sleeping pills (any changes to medication would only be done in discussion with a patient’s GP).

Those taking part in Sleepio pilot will have access to the online app 24/7 over an initial period of six weeks while they complete the programme and thereafter for up to a year if they feel it is helpful. The Sleepio app uses daily sleep diaries and weekly 20-30 minute tailored sleep guide sessions based on personalised sleep scores and CBT techniques.

The aim of the Sleepio pilot is to see whether using the digital ‘Sleepio’ app can provide people with a tool that improves their sleeping patterns naturally while potentially also avoiding the need for sleeping pills. Further information on the online Sleepio App is available at their website- https://go.bighealth.com/sleepio_nhs

How can people access the Sleepio programme?

To use the Sleepio app you must be over 18 and a resident in the Outer Hebrides. You will also need a digital device (a tablet/PC or Laptop – a Smartphone is not suitable) with access to the internet. As part of the pilot project there may be support offered to those who do not have access to the required digital equipment.

Those interested in using the Sleepio service can do so by getting in touch with their local mPower team by emailing wi-hb.mpower@nhs.net or telephoning (01851) 708022.

The Community Navigator will then contact those who have expressed an interest at a convenient time to provide a code for accessing the online Sleepio service, and check they have the required digital device setup.

They will also be able to give further information on Sleepio as well as offer wider mental wellbeing support and help participants progress through the online programme with follow-up calls. The mPower service was set up to assist people with both accessing digital health support and wider support for managing their health conditions.

For further information on the NHS Western Isles mPower service please visit: https://western-isles.mpowerhealth.eu/

Anyone experiencing sleep difficulties are asked to contact their local mPower Community Navigator if they wish to discuss using the Sleepio app, who will contact them by email or phone.

Make home addresses clear, please!

Over the coming weeks and months, a proportion of NHS staff who do not normally visit patients in their own homes to provide care or treatment, may require to be deployed into the community setting, says NHS Western Isles.

“We are aware in certain areas that addresses/croft numbers are not clearly visible from the road, and often cannot be accessed on Satellite Navigation systems. NHS Western Isles is therefore asking members of the public to ensure that their addresses (numbers/names, etc) are made as clear as possible on properties, gates, or walls, so that healthcare staff are able to find properties as quickly and easily as possible. This will help us to ensure that care and treatment can continue to be delivered in as quick a timescale as possible.

Get to the root of your poor sleep

The NHS Western Isles have partnered with Big Health to offer Sleepio, a clinically proven digital CBT programme for sleep problems and insomnia, to all residents. To start the programme follow these three steps:

1. Contact your local mPower Community Navigator at wi-hb.mpower@nhs.net

2. Ask for more information about Sleepio and you will be given a special access code

3. Using a desktop, laptop or tablet visit sleepio.com/redeem and enter your code to start
**A big lift for crofter**

*By Annie Delin*

Celebrity crofter Donald ‘Sweeney’ MacSween is to get a huge lift on his croft in Ness, after winning a year’s use of a big tractor designed to move over a ton in weight.

Sweeney was announced on Tuesday 28 April as one of three winners of the Up to Speed scheme run by New Holland Agriculture, together with the Prince’s Countryside Fund. He’s to have the use of a New Holland telehandler for a year, an enormous boost to his business.

The Up to Speed scheme provides cutting-edge machinery to young people, new entrants, or those who will make a difference in their local community but would otherwise not have access to this type of farm machinery.

Early this year the Prince’s Countryside Fund entered into a partnership with New Holland, a major British tractor manufacturer. Nearly 50 farmers across the UK applied to the scheme for one of three items of big business equipment on offer for a year’s loan.

Now a full-time crofter with a sideline in TV appearances – both on his own croft and as a presenter for sheep dog trials – Sweeney said he was ‘over the moon’ at the news that he was one of those picked as a winner.

He said: “I have been looking at having a telehandler for a while now because I need something that can lift a ton. When Lewis Crofters delivers feed and other supplies we have to manhandle it, which has not been ideal during the Covid-19 crisis.

“On my own I couldn’t afford anything other than a tractor and the one I have is a 40-year-old Massey Ferguson which can lift smaller quantities.

“This couldn’t have come at a better time. With no football and no tourists this year I am going to have much more time for improving the croft, spreading hen manure and sand from the beach to raise the Ph of the land.

“The longer the lockdown goes on, the more key crofting becomes to our local economy. I’m producing eggs and meat for the local market and this will make such a difference to me and my neighbours.”

**No gap in dementia support**

*By Annie Delin*

Alzheimer Scotland’s Western Isles services have determined to keep support for people with dementia and their families going, even though they had to close the Solas day centre early in the Coronavirus crisis.

The centre closed on 13 March but, says locality leader Marion Macinnes, the team quickly sprang into action to see what could still be done to support people.

Marion said: “We looked at what could be delivered via technology to continue therapeutic relationships and activity. After whistle-stop staff training sessions in technology like Attend Anywhere we were soon able to start offering support on digital platforms, such as for dementia advisor one-to-one and peer group sessions for carers and families.

“We’ve got new services coming online all the time – such as a full programme of activities being rolled out soon on Zoom and we have worked with Western Isles Library service to organise the loan of IT equipment support, plus set-up where that is needed.”

Not everything the team are doing relies on technology. Staff are keeping in very close contact with people and families to monitor any changes, issues arising, or new support needs and they’re also working closely with health and social care colleagues, looking out for the same issues.

Practical offers of support came in the shape of goody bags delivered to carers, each containing hand soap, hand sanitiser and a wee treat, while activity packs were also developed for non-internet users.

Marion said: “We are aware that many communities are offering vital local practical support, so we have been actively supporting these amazing networks. Some people have felt overloaded with information and have needed support to navigate this – although it’s a great problem to have, as the offers of support have been tremendous.

“Our ongoing work as a national organisation is to continue to work with Scottish Government highlighting themes which may emerge around the human rights and support needs of people with dementia and their carers, as well as more practical issues.”

In the midst of all the changes everyone is having to contend with, Alzheimer Scotland in the Western Isles is working hard to continue with local fundraising, a huge concern as they, like so many other charities and volunteer groups, will struggle to maintain support for individuals without vital funds.

Luckily members of the community have stepped up there, too. As Marion said: “Currently we have a couple of personal challenges under way and we’d love if people could support us if they can. The support of the local community has always been so amazing to help us make sure no one faces dementia alone.”

https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/marion-macinnes

https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/karenmacruncslo

**Fire crews battle garage blaze**

*By Annie Delin*

Firefighters found themselves battling a blaze on two fronts on Thursday 30 April when a garage caught light in New Tolsta.

Numerous emergency calls from residents alerted Scottish Fire and Rescue Services in Stornoway to the developing emergency at 3.15pm, when two appliances from Stornoway were immediately despatched to the scene at speed.

The crews found that a garage containing vehicles and flammable materials, including LPG gas canisters, was well alight and that the blaze had ignited grass and heather, spreading towards hedgerow and moorland.

A third crew were called from Shawbost and Stornoway police also attended to ensure safety at the scene and to maintain road access. A crew from Scottish and Southern Electricity monitored the safety of the electricity supply, which was threatened by the spread of the inferno.
CORONAVIRUS SUPPORT

Business Gateway is here to help you and your business through this difficult time. Our advisers are working remotely and continue to be able to offer support and guidance. The Business Gateway website is regularly updated with a wide range of relevant advice and information on things like business contingency, digital platforms, trading online, working from home, HR and more. All this useful content can be found at www.businessgateway.co.uk, 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.

Self-employment Income Support Scheme

This scheme will support self-employed individuals (including members of partnerships) whose income has been negatively impacted by COVID-19. It will provide a taxable grant worth 80% of profits, up to £2,500 per month. HMRC will work out the grant based on your average trading profit over the last three tax years. HMRC will use their existing information to check eligibility. If you are eligible, they will contact you by mid-May and invite you to use their claim services.


Business Support Fund

This fund provides businesses with a rateable value up to £18,000 and registered for non-domestic rates, including those in receipt of the Small Business Bonus Scheme relief, with grants of £10,000. Businesses with a rateable value of between £18,001 and £51,000 in the hospitality, leisure and retail sectors can apply for grants of £25,000.

Self-catering businesses may be eligible if they are registered for non-domestic rates, if they provide a primary source of income for the owner (a third or more) and if the property was let for at least 140 days in 2019-2020.

If you have multiple eligible properties, you may be eligible to apply for a grant for each one from 5 May. This means you may be able to get a £10,000 or £25,000 grant on the first property. Then each additional property may be eligible for either a Small Business Support Grant of £7,500 or a Retail, Hospitality, Leisure Support Grant of £15,000. For more information, visit www.cne-siar.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/coronavirus/coronavirus-business-support-fund.

Newly Self-employed Hardship Fund

If you are ineligible for the UK Government’s Self-employment Income Support Scheme, you can apply for support through this fund. It is anticipated that the scheme will be open from early May and will be managed by the Comhairle. Contact us on businessgateway@cne-siar.gov.uk for further details on the eligibility criteria and application process.

Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund

Vulnerable SMEs that are vital to the local or national economic foundations of Scotland can apply to this fund. It will be managed by Highlands and Islands Enterprise and is expected to be open from early May.

Open Fund: Sustaining Creative Development

A £7.5m fund which aims to enable creative organisations to explore ways of working that will help them to adapt and respond to the current changing circumstances.

Funding for Individuals
- Freelance and self-employed artists and creative practitioners in Scotland can apply for projects supporting the development of their practice.
- You may apply for funding to work with others if your practice is collaborative.
- You must have a UK bank account.
- Apply for funding between £1,000 and £50,000

Funding for Organisations
- Organisations and groups based in Scotland whose work or project involves the arts, screen and creative industries.
- All applicants must have a UK bank account.
- Apply for a grant between £1,000 and £50,000

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/government/news/small-businesses-boosted-by-bounce-back-loans.

Enterprise Relief Fund

A £5 million fund from the Prince’s Trust and NatWest offering grants to self-employed people aged 18-30.

Grants can be used to maintain core business operations during the crisis, as well as meet any existing financial commitments, such as paying for essential equipment or settling invoices from suppliers. Grants will also support young people to diversify their business to respond to opportunities created by the crisis.

You must be a business owner aged 18 to 30, who set up their business in the last four years and don’t have any other source of income during the crisis. If you set up your business with support from The Prince’s Trust in the last four years, you are still eligible for the fund if you were aged 16-30 at the time you received the support.


For more information on these schemes, and others available locally and nationally, visit www.cne-siar.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/coronavirus/business-resilience/ and open the PDF document.

Business Gateway Webinars

A programme of locally organised webinars is due to run throughout May. Topics will include:
- Developing a Short-term Cashflow to Meet Immediate Needs
- Financial Crisis Planning
- Developing a Post-COVID-19 Plan of Action
- Adapting Your Business Model to Survive Challenging Times
- Expenses and What you can Claim Working From Home
- Demystifying the Complex COVID-19 Financial Packages and Highlighting the Most Beneficial Programmes.

Visit www.businessgateway.co.uk/events for details on timings and on how to book a place.
CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19

Business Support from
Business Gateway Outer Hebrides

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

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

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

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

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

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