

Highpoints

Sàr Phuingean



Inside this issue: Family Firm - River Connections - Stranger Smart

Contents

- 1 Foreword
- 2 Being a Corporate Parent
- 4 Council services online
myaccount Customer Portal
- 5 River Ness flood alleviation
scheme
- 6 Stranger Smart
- 8 Recognising our staff
- 10 Getting Involved:
engaging Council tenants
Junior wardens
- 11 River Connections
- 12 Cycling championships
Big support for Small
business
- 13 Building better offices
- 14 Opportunities in the family
firm
- 16 Responding to antisocial
behaviour in Highland
- 17 The Albert Roux Kitchen
- 18 Recognising the signs of
child sexual exploitation
- 20 Reduce - Re-use - Recycle
- 21 Working towards a carbon
CLEVER future
- 22 Staying safe online
- 23 Inverness Summer Festival
- 24 Giving children the best
possible start in life
- 25 Alternative payment
arrangements to help
Universal Credit claimants

Contact us

Write to:

**Corporate Communications
The Highland Council HQ
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness IV3 5NX**

Email:

**corporate.communications
@highland.gov.uk**

Phone:

01463 702020

Highpoints will be published online and some hard copies will be made available in service points and libraries.

Welcome

I am delighted to present the first edition of our new magazine Highpoints (Sàr Phuingean).

The aim of this new publication is to bring you news about the various work and initiatives of the Council. There is such a lot of good news and there are many fantastic successes which are seldom heard or celebrated.

Our staff deserve to be recognised for the excellent work they do, day in and day out, and this issue highlights three of the staff who were nominated by community councils and commended in the last Quality Awards. We will shortly be looking for nominations for this year's round of Quality Awards.

The River Ness Flood scheme is an example of a major project which demonstrates a tremendous feat of design and engineering. The scheme not only gives us protection from flooding, but has delivered quality space for people to walk, linger and enjoy the river side and leaves a legacy for many years to come.

I am proud to announce I am a new parent to 458 young people in the Highlands. My fellow councillors, Council partners and I have been learning about our new role and joint responsibilities as corporate parents of our looked after children.

We all enjoyed a recent seminar, where some of these young people had the chance to meet us and talk to us about their experiences. Parenting always has its challenges and also many rewards. I look forward to being a part of helping to improve life's opportunities for these young people.

I hope you enjoy reading this first issue of Highpoints, which is set to become a regular publication of the Council.

“ there are many fantastic successes...” ”



Steve Barron
Chief Executive
The Highland Council

Foreword

by New Leader of The Highland Council, Cllr Margaret Davidson

We are on the brink of an exciting time for the Highlands. We are an Independent Administration and whilst we may be a minority Administration, this is not unusual across Scotland.

Our aim is to work collaboratively with other Members to achieve the best outcomes for the Highlands.

Without being bound by party politics, we intend to take a fresh look at community planning with a renewed emphasis on empowerment. We want to work in partnership with our communities and provide them with real local decision making powers.

We will take time to review the Programme and consider where we want to focus our efforts and resources. This is a particularly challenging time for Local Authority budgets and we

will take a fresh look at where we can best deliver value for money. However, I would like to emphasise that, contrary to what has been reported this week in the press, we will continue to maintain the Council's commitment to avoiding any compulsory redundancies, wherever possible.

Our strategic priorities include a programme of investment in our roads, which I believe will be widely welcomed across the Highlands.

We will work with our partners in NHS Highland to review of the Partnership agreement and place a renewed emphasis on Shifting the Balance of Care into the community.

We will have a much more ambitious commitment to work with partners towards enhanced Broadband and improved mobile



connectivity for across Highland. This will help form the basis for a strong economy and empowered communities.

The Council has a good record of performance, but we need to improve our scrutiny. We will transform our Audit, Scrutiny Committee, and form an Audit, Scrutiny and Performance Board with enhanced powers and responsibilities.

Those who know me will know that I will do my very best to promote the interests of the Highlands and I am committed to leading an Administration that serves our communities and delivers real local power across the region.



Being a Corporate Parent



What does parenting mean to you?

What does being a parent mean to you?

To provide for children; to be a good role model; to support them through their worries; to spend time with them; to provide security; to cheer them on and praise them when they succeed?

So what does being a corporate parent mean?

The Children & Young People's Act, which defines corporate parenting, was passed in February 2014, and the new Corporate Parents and their associated duties will take legislative effect from April 2015.

The Council is the corporate parent for all looked after children in Highland, and there are new corporate parenting responsibilities for other community planning partners, including The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, The Scottish Police Authority (and the chief constable of the Police Service of Scotland), The Scottish Qualifications Authority, The Scottish Legal Aid Board, and Creative Scotland, among many more.

In Highland, 458 children and young people are looked after, with 316 of these children looked after away from home, in children's units, foster care or kinship care.

As a Corporate Parent, The Highland Council and our partners are jointly responsible for making sure that looked after children and young people in Highland are given the very best of care. Corporate Parents must work together, and share information and responsibility, to support looked after children and young people.

Duties include assessing the needs of children and young people and providing the kind of opportunities other children have.

Some of our young people visited the Council's headquarters in Inverness to meet their new Corporate Parents, including representatives from Police Scotland, The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Skills Development Scotland.

Director of Care and Learning, Bill Alexander, said: "Corporate parenting is not only a responsibility, but a real opportunity to improve the futures of Looked After children and young people, recognising that all parts of the system have a contribution to make.

One challenge of being a good corporate parent is to support young people through the many changes in their lives, giving each individual child or young person a sense of stability and striving to give them the same opportunities as any parent would want for their child."

One teenager from Inverness is challenging negative perceptions of young people in care and encouraging others not to judge. Caitlin Gibson wants to tackle the misconception that young people in the care system are destined to fail in life, after she first went into care aged ten.

"I went into care when I was ten. I was confused and angry and felt as though people were judging me to be inadequate. At the time I didn't understand what was happening to me and I felt quite lonely being on my own in such an unfamiliar place. I was angry and acted up so people just presumed I was a bad person. They had no idea that I could turn my life around. Most thought I wouldn't amount to anything.

I want people to hold their judgement on somebody before knowing anything about them. It also encourages people to steer clear of stereotypes by understanding that each individual has a story to tell. Describing a song she wrote, Caitlin said: "I have always used music as an outlet to vent my emotions because it makes me feel better about myself. I wanted the song to help people see beyond our past and understand we have feelings like anybody else."



She went on to say, "Being in care can be a tough experience for many young people which can cause them to feel isolated and angry. Maybe if I'd have seen a video like this growing up it would have helped me realise I wasn't alone.

All we want is a chance. So, I've decided I want to challenge the negative perceptions some people have of others like me.

"Just because you've grown up in care, it doesn't make you a bad person – or someone with limited prospects. Raising awareness of this is what my campaign is all about. I want to encourage people to think twice before judging those in care, especially if you don't know anything about them."

Caitlin has written a song and made a video, which was recently viewed by Highland Councillors.

Her video can be seen on the website:
<http://bit.ly/1BdvrwV>

“ “ *One of the greatest titles in the world is parent.* ” ”

Manauz Semwal

Council services online

Report
Apply
Request
Pay

Access to all our services will continue to be available at service points and on the telephone, if customers find online access difficult. Support in using our online forms is also available.

Every day in the UK, 36 million people access the internet. The ability to use services online is an expectation of everyday life in the 21st century and Highland Council is looking to make the most of this opportunity to provide better access to council services.

Highland Council has launched a new suite of online forms on the Council's website www.highland.gov.uk/online

These forms allow users to make applications, requests and payments online, using forms that are easy to use, consistent and available wherever, whenever and however you choose.

Benefits of using online forms include:

- Access to Highland Council services anytime, anywhere, on any device (desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile).
- Improved customer service and the ability to track applications and requests.
- A smoother customer journey from application to resolution.
- Increased use of email and SMS communication with customers.
- Key questions at the beginning of the forms reduce the amount of information you need to provide and tailor the forms to your requirements.

The new Highland Council website and online forms have been built to function on all types of devices, including desktops, laptops, tablets and smartphones. This means you can access services at a time and place that suits you. Public access computers are also available in local libraries.

myaccount Customer Portal

myaccount Highland Council's new customer portal, is now available on the Highland Council website

Customers with a National Entitlement Card or those who have already signed up to mygovscot will already have an account set up. Other users can create an account using a simple process and have their details verified with Scottish Government records.

Sign in with

mygovscot
myaccount

The new portal allows customers to:

- Have a single sign on for all council online services.
- Automatically populate forms with their details.
- Use the same login for local public services when they move to a new part of Scotland.
- Get trusted access to council services that require evidence of identity.
- Save forms for completion later.
- Track the progress of requests.
- Sign up to be alerted of council news from our website.

The portal is accessed through **Myaccount** which appears on the top right of the homepage of our website:
www.highland.gov.uk/myaccount

River Ness flood alleviation scheme



The flood alleviation scheme protecting the city during the rising waters of early March 2015

The River Ness Flood Alleviation Scheme in Inverness is already proving its worth as this year we have witnessed circumstances which may have, in the past, caused flooding in the city.

The scheme includes a number of elements but at its most basic consists of the construction of walls or embankments, higher than ground level, which prevents river or sea water from flooding adjacent properties. The catchment area of the River Ness is substantial (approximately 2000km²), and produces a lot of water which passes through Loch Ness and the heart of Inverness, before reaching the Beaulieu Firth. The river is also influenced by the tide, the impact of which can extend beyond Ness Bridge to Ness Islands. For this reason, the scheme should be more accurately described as combined flood protection scheme - from both the river and sea.

How does it work?

The flood wall is generally one metre high, however this depends on the ground level of the area the wall is in. The material finish of the flood wall is relevant to the area setting, for example a sandstone finish has been used in Inverness city centre areas as this is a Conservation Area, while a concrete finish has been used in more industrialised settings.

The geology of Inverness is highly permeable. This means that when river levels rise with the tide, surrounding groundwater levels also rise as a result. To prevent this 'seepage' beneath the flood wall potentially causing flooding during an extreme high water level event, interlocking steel sheet piles were installed to approximately 7m below the flood wall to prevent water from running beneath the flood wall.

In areas where sheet piling was not practical, such as on Bank Street where the riverside trees and their roots were protected, concrete piles were used. In these areas, a combined seepage collection and drainage system was built below ground to prevent flooding from above and below ground. This system drains to a pumping station that pumps this water back into the river.

The scheme protects approximately 800 residential properties and 200 businesses and is designed to protect against a 1-in-100 year return period event. It also includes allowances for increases in water levels due to climate change and wind and wave action.

The narrow footpath along Huntly Street has been expanded and re-shaped to help create an attractive area suitable for shared use by pedestrians and cyclists along the riverbank.

This project received funding from sustainable transport charity Sustrans Scotland and will also help Inverness to continue to lead the way in being an environmentally friendly city.

The flood works attracted a grant from Scottish Government – who contributed 80% towards the costs of the construction.



Stranger Smart a first for Scotland

Young people and children in the Highlands can learn how to stay safe on their way to and from school thanks to a new project "Stranger Smart" developed in collaboration between The Highland Council and the Northern Division of Police Scotland.

The aim of the new initiative is to ensure that children, young people, parents, carers, teachers and Police are all working together to ensure that children know how to stay safe if approached by strangers and that everyone knows exactly what to do if an incident is reported.

Highland is one of the safest places to live in the UK, but everyone needs to remain vigilant to ensure that all our children and young people feel and remain safe. A number of reports of stranger incidents around schools over the past year, once investigated, turned out to be false alarms with good intent. **It is essential, however, that any concerns are reported as early as possible, by phoning 101, so that the police can start enquiries.**

There was a need for clear guidance for children, parents, teachers and anyone else involved. A joint project group was formed to develop this guidance and, as a result, the "Stranger Smart" idea was born. Head Teacher, Elspeth Mackenzie who took part said, "We didn't want strangers to be associated with danger and fear, but wanted children to be smart and confident and aware, while out and about without adults."

The group produced a simple short leaflet that outlines how to keep children and young people safe and how they can be 'Stranger Smart' and gives clear guidance to children and families on what children should do if approached by a stranger.

The leaflet was designed in consultation with Crown Primary school Parent Council and 'Safe Strong and Free'. Teachers can use the leaflet in class discussions, and parents and carers of all primary-aged school children are encouraged to talk through the leaflet with their child.

The group also worked together to develop a clear protocol for Highland schools, the Council and Police on how they will deal with any reports.


Divisional Commander Julian Innes is keen to roll out the protocol and leaflet to the Highlands. He said: "This could also be rolled out as best practice elsewhere in Scotland. While incidents involving suspicious persons are rare, it is important that we all work together and quickly to make sure that we get it right. It is important that Police are notified at the earliest opportunity if an incident occurs; and it's everyone's responsibility to keep children and young people safe."

The Stranger Smart leaflet and Joint protocol can be found on the council's website at:
www.highland.gov.uk/strangersmart



Crown Primary parent, Mrs Michelle Hardie, said: "You always hope these kinds of situations will never occur, but it's really helpful to know what to do in the unlikely event something does happen. It's not an easy conversation to have with your child as you don't want to frighten them, but it's best for everyone to have discussed how to react if your child is approached, and this leaflet provides useful guidance. It's also reassuring to see how the schools and the police are working together to make sure children in the Highlands stay safe."





Stranger Smart

Keeping children and young people safe

All children and young people in Highland have the right to feel safe.

On a rare occasion if a child/young person is approached by a stranger there may be no cause for concern. However it is important that everyone knows what to do.

Remember: **SAFE**

S **Someone they trust**
Ensure your child knows to share their worry with someone they trust.

A **Act early**
Don't delay. Contact the Police.

F **Feel safe**
Children, young people and their families should feel able to talk to someone they trust to make sense of their worries and feel safe.

E **Everyone's responsibility**
It's everyone's job to make sure that we get it right for children and young people.

On the way to school

What your child should do:

- Never talk to strangers when not with a grown up. Stay back, stay safe.
- If your child/young person is approached by a stranger, ensure they know to tell a trusted adult immediately on arrival at school.

What the school will do:

- Contact Police Scotland so that they can make relevant enquiries without delay.
- Contact you, the parent/carer.

On the way home from school or out and about

What your child should do:

- Never talk to strangers when they are not with a grown up. Stay back, stay safe.
- If your child/young person is approached by a stranger, ensure they know to tell you and/or another trusted adult as soon as they can.

What you should do:

- Contact Police Scotland so they can start making enquiries as soon as possible. Phone 101.
- Contact your school as soon as possible.

Councillor Alasdair Christie welcomed the initiative saying: "This is an excellent example of partnership working. The group have come up with a really simple and practical solution. Often, "stranger" reports turn out to have innocent explanations, but this new Stranger Smart advice and protocol will hopefully help to ensure that everyone works together in a coordinated way if any concerns are raised."

Chief Supt Julian Innes, Cllr Alasdair Christie and Elspeth Mackenzie with Jo and Gemma from Crown Primary.

Recognising our staff

An important part in our annual staff Quality Awards is when Community Councils from across the Highlands are invited to nominate individuals and teams they feel deserve recognition for their work. We always get a great response from Community Councils, so we thought you would like to know a bit more about the stories behind the people that were successfully nominated and received awards in 2014. Strathglass Community Council put forward Michael Taylor and Mike Howlett, for their outstanding service in providing the weekly refuse collection service in and around the Strathglass area.

Heather Redmond from the community council said: "In this day and age when recycling and waste management are so important it is truly reassuring to have such a good crew providing this vital service. These days it is so easy for members of the public to criticise the service received from any provider and it is often the humblest jobs which are not noticed until they are not done."



Michael Taylor and Mike Howlett receiving their award from Councillor Jimmy Gray and Ian MacDonald

“ It is often the humblest jobs which are not noticed...”

Our 2015 Quality Awards will take place later this year so we'll be inviting all Highland Community Councils to nominate more Council staff who they feel make a special contribution to their local communities. If you have any suggestions of individual or teams from the Council who you would like to see put forward for an award, please contact your local Community Council.

Environmental Health Officer Gregor MacCormick was nominated by Kilmorack Community Council which covers the Beaulay area. Gregor has been working closely with the Community Council since July 2013 to address the serious noise issues from the Wester Balblair sub-station.

Chairman Steve Byford said: "Gregor has continually kept us in the loop and up to date with progress, working with us to identify those affected by the noise issue and make sure that their concerns are addressed. We feel that he has made a commitment well beyond what we would be entitled to expect and in a manner that gives confidence in both his department and himself."

The third nomination was made by Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra Community Council who put forward David Charnley, who was a teacher of technical subjects at Farr High School.

They nominated David for devoting his time, skills and energy to creating a strong technical hub at the school, where every pupil is given the chance to learn design and practical skills. Thanks to his efforts and encouragement teams from the school have had considerable national success in

the Young Enterprise programme, winning the Highland/Moray heats on every occasion they've entered. They've also won the Scottish finals twice, and represented Scotland at the national finals.

Secretary Jim Johnstone said "Top quality technical education is of great importance to the young people of our area given that we live in a place whose main product is its young people and one of the surest ways of finding employment, either within the area or outwith it is in the world of service, such as trades and engineering."

He added "Mr Charnley has provided an entire cohort of pupils with the opportunity to experience first class technical education and, in addition, has played a major part in ensuring that a significant number of them went on to attain highly in universities all over Scotland.

He has raised the profile of the school within Highland Council area, boosted the self-confidence of the entire school population and gave those directly taking part a tremendous advantage for their future careers, by taking them out of the periphery and proving that they could function on a par with pupils from anywhere in Scotland."



Gregor MacCormick



David Charnley

As well as the Community Council nominations, our Quality Awards recognises the work of staff across the whole service.

Here's the full list of successes:

Employee of the Year

Lauren Clark
Care & Learning Service

Trainee of the Year

Ashley Handley
Learning & Development Team

Team of the Year

The Housing Debt Team
Community Services

Working Together for the Economy

Delivering Strategic Developments
Development & Infrastructure

Working Together for our Children and Young People

Resilient Kid Project
Care & Learning

Working Together for Caring Communities

Highland Helping Those In Need,
Finance

Working Together for Better Housing & Infrastructure

Carbon CLEVER Initiative
Chief Executive's

Working Together for Strong Safe & Empowered Communities

Dingwall Academy S1 Cross
Curricular Deaf Studies Course,
Care & Learning

Working Together for Efficiency & Service Improvement

Delivering the best used and most cost-effective library service in Scotland
High Life Highland

Chairman's Award

Delivering a Quality Planning Enforcement Service for the 21st Century
Development & Infrastructure

Getting involved engaging Council tenants



“Getting involved” is a strategy developed in partnership with tenant volunteers and sets out how the Council seeks to improve information and provide opportunities for tenants to get involved in services.

The strategy was developed by a review group consisting of volunteer tenants and housing staff over the past year.



The tenants attended workshops, consultation and training events and reviewed good practice which could be adopted locally.

Director of Community Services, William Gilfillan explained: “We want to include tenants when considering issues affecting housing services and to enable them to take part in influencing decision making about housing policies, housing conditions and other related services. Our aim is to improve the standard of housing conditions and services as part of a two way relationship between landlord and tenant.”

Councillor Graham Mackenzie added: “The Council spends over £48m a year on its housing services with over 99% of this funded from tenants’ rents. The services we provide have a direct impact on the quality of life of over 13,500 tenants and other customers. We are absolutely committed to providing the highest standards of service. This strategy is about listening to and learning from what tenants tell us about their housing service, and encouraging them to get involved in shaping those services in a range of ways, from volunteering to putting forward ideas.”

Junior wardens

Young people get involved in junior warden scheme

Children in Golspie High School have been taking part in a project which looks at the role of the Community Wardens within communities and supports and encourages young people to get involved.

The 12 week scheme gave pupils the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of housing and wider community services, including the work of partner agencies such as Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Balmore Animal Rescue service. The aim is to examine issues relating to anti-social behaviour, fly tipping, estate management, recycling, waste awareness and helps raise awareness of the role of the Housing Officer.

First year pupils attended a presentation on the Junior Warden initiative and those who volunteered to get involved then had to go through a formal interview, which was a new learning experience for them. Twelve pupils were successfully recruited to the programme.

For most of the pupils, it has been their first opportunity to volunteer and all have signed up to the national Saltire Awards volunteering scheme. They also gained a useful First Aid certificate.

The Junior Warden scheme, which was first piloted in Ormlie, Thurso, has been very successful and it is hoped that it will be rolled out to other areas of Highland in the future.

The Junior Warden scheme, which was first piloted in Ormlie, Thurso, has been very successful and it is hoped that it will be rolled out to other areas of Highland in the future.

The Golspie initiative was led by High Life Highland, through Jennifer Taylor in conjunction with youth worker Tracey Campbell and local Community Warden, Gordon McDonald. Fifth year pupil Isla MacLeod and local youth support worker Sasha Campbell also came along to the sessions as volunteers. Development of the programme was provided by Lorna Simpson, Tenant Participation Officer.



Golspie High pupils role-playing

River Connections

Art & The River Ness

A £756,000 public art project was launched in Inverness on 28 May by The Highland Council's Inverness City Arts group. Members of the public are invited to have their say on the proposals for 'River Connections' (Art & The River Ness) which can be viewed on the council's website at: www.highland.gov.uk/rivernessart

The project is being led by the Inverness City Arts (ICArts) working group to enhance the riverside and complement the River Ness Flood Alleviation Scheme. Ideas from public consultation, local residents, river users, school pupils and students will assist commissioned artists in taking a creative approach to integrating high quality artwork into the flood scheme. The project is funded by The City of Inverness Common Good Fund, Creative Scotland, The Highland Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE).

Chair of ICArts, Councillor Ken Gowans described the project; "This is an exciting opportunity to make a lasting impression on the future cultural and artistic landscape of our city centre. We want people to look at the proposals and make their views known on what they would like to see developed, and where they would like this to happen along the River Ness."

The artists' proposals were introduced at the launch:

- River Connections by Mary Bourne
- Sculptural Destination by Annie Cattrell
- Rest Spaces and The Trail by Dress for the Weather
- Gathering Place by Sans façon and KHBT



The projects are:

River Connections :

a series of interventions along the river, including seating areas and poetry set into the stones and copes which refer to the natural history and other river stories.

Sculptural Destination :

an iconic landmark to visit and interact with on the riverside or to view from some distance away.

Rest Spaces :

relaxation areas for individuals or small groups who might informally gather along the river's edge.

The Trail :

mapping the river to create a trail from the Ness islands to the river mouth including local stories, environmental knowledge and other practical information accessed through a traditional paper map or digitally by mobile phone.

Gathering Place :

a special place for people to come together to enjoy the River Ness.

Children's Riverside Feature :

Five secondary schools in the Inverness area have the opportunity to be involved in the process to design an interactive play space.



Cycling championships

Each year the UCI Mountain Bike World Cup arrives in Fort William and we are delighted to support this event which is jam-packed with fierce competition, daredevil tricks and possibly some mud too.

In June, the 'Outdoor Capital of the UK' welcomed hundreds of the world's best riders from over 25 nations, each of them eager to tear their way down some of the steepest slopes in the Highlands.

The loud, enthusiastic crowd is a massive part of the event's atmosphere, cheering on favourites! Dramas unfolded on wide screens, while biking demonstrations, competitions and stalls showed all the latest MTB goodies at the World Cup Village.

© Andrew Tryon

Big support for small business

Highland Opportunity – the business support arm of Highland Council – awarded nearly £1.5 million in business loans and assisted thousands of businesses to start-up, grow, employ, and export, over the last three years.

Business Gateway is delivered locally by Highland Opportunity on behalf of the Council. Since April 2012, it assisted 1,004 start-up businesses and 2,578 existing businesses. Its 566 workshops and growth programmes attracted 5,640 delegates. A specialist Recruitment Advisory Service was added in 2012, funded by The Highland Council and ESF. It provided 840 businesses with practical help to employ people, creating 410 new jobs.

Enterprise Europe Network services are delivered by Highland Opportunity. During 2013/14, this team handled 417 enquires and helped 2,440 businesses to access international trade opportunities through their online partnership services.

Highland Opportunity is also a local agent for the Prince's Trust Enterprise Programme and operates Ness Horizons Business Centre. All its services work together to provide coordinated and comprehensive business finance and advice.



For more information call:

01463 228340

or visit

www.highland-opportunity.com

Building better offices

Fort William

Design on the new Fort William Council offices is progressing well, with a planning application imminent. The planning submission reflects the majority of comments made by the public during both a public drop-in session held in mid-March and an ongoing display exhibited in the town's Service Point until mid-April.

Meetings with the Community Council have also been very positive and the community is looking forward to seeing new life being brought to this most attractive building. If planning permission is granted, work on tender documentation and appointment of contractors will get underway.

Wick

The new Wick Office project is nearing completion and once a moving in date is confirmed, staff will be looking forward to welcoming people into Caithness House. The new facilities, which will house 140 members of staff, include a Service Point, meeting rooms and the Council's registration service.



Kingussie

Work is now underway on the Kingussie Office Project. Contractors Morgan Sindall are on site and preliminary works are well in hand with the design scaffolding in place. Patrick Johnson, Senior Site Manager, has advised that he will be contacting both Kingussie Primary School and Secondary School to involve them in the project. The Primary School will be asked to get involved in designing art work for the timber hoarding at the front of the building, and the Secondary School will be offered opportunities for site visits and work experience.

The project is expected to complete toward the end of the year with staff moving in early in 2016.

Opportunities in the family firm

The Highland Council has recently interviewed and offered Family Firm positions to nine young people who have been in care. The young people have been employed as Care Experienced Development Assistants and will act as champions for looked after children and young people and care leavers in Highland.

When asked why he applied for one of these positions, Calum Smith (aged 17) said: "I applied for the job because I believe that I can use my experience to help others in the same situation as me."

Linda MacLennan-Shareef, Resource Manager in Looked After Children & Child Protection, who was at the forefront of creating these positions said: " I was extremely impressed with the talent and confidence displayed by the young people we interviewed, and I am very excited about taking this role forward to see lots of benefits for young people across our care services.

These Development Assistant posts, through our Family Firm scheme, will provide us with an opportunity to identify the real issues, and improve the outcomes, for our care experienced young people both in Highland



and across Scotland. As Corporate Parents, we are also providing the training and experience for these young people to develop skills for their futures."

The interviews involved them making presentations to prepare them for the kinds of duties they will have in their new jobs. The new employees will get involved in campaigns, training and presenting ideas about how services can be developed.

It is clear that the young people are just as positive about these jobs as Linda is. Emma Edmonds, one of the young people who was awarded the job said:

*"Dreams are only dreams until you make a stand.
How else can you make them come true?
This post will help us make dreams come true."*



Rebecca Denoon agreed:
"This Family Firm opportunity gives young people who have experienced living in care, a voice and a chance to influence and change the care system. The post will also help young people who are still in the care system feel better in their homes and with themselves."

Jemma Macdonald added:
"Children who are in care are our future."

*Photograph shows:
The nine successful candidates with the interview panel of staff from various Highland Council services, as well as staff from Barnardo's Children's Charity and Who Cares? Scotland.*

For more information see:
www.forhighlandchildren.org

Responding to antisocial behaviour in Highland

Antisocial behaviour can have a huge detrimental impact on people's lives where they live.

A pilot project was set up in Inverness in September 2014, to respond more effectively to reports of antisocial behaviour across the seven Inverness Wards. The Inverness Response Team involves key partners participating in a daily conference call to discuss and agree actions to tackle antisocial behaviour that has been reported in the previous 24 hours.

The core partners who participate are Highland Council, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Police Scotland. The following partners participate on a case by case basis; Albyn Housing Society, Cairn Housing Association, Street Pastors, Inverness BID, Apex, VSS, NHS Highland, Care and Learning Service and Addiction Services.

The multi-agency team aims to identify problems and can jointly agree action plans and deliver the service to the community. Emphasis is placed on working together and relevant and proportionate actions are identified to ensure a dynamic response to deal very quickly with community concerns. This approach proves to be a more effective use of resources, avoiding the duplication of effort for agencies who previously worked in isolation. And as a consequence, the solutions are more sustainable.

There is clear evidence of some excellent partnership working, with improved communication, information sharing and intelligence gathering between the partners.

The project was evaluated after 6 months and because of the success of this early intervention initiative, this approach will continue in Inverness and partners are considering extending the same approach to all areas of Highland.

“ A dynamic response to deal very quickly with community concerns. ”



The Albert Roux Kitchen



The official opening of the Albert Roux Kitchen at Charleston Academy in Inverness has opened a world of gastronomic opportunities for local pupils and the community. The state of the art kitchen was installed in a refurbished part of the Home Economics department at Charleston Academy and is available for use by Inverness schools and the community. Twelve Home Economics pupils, supervised by Mr Roux, prepared and served canapés at the formal opening to a gathering of dignitaries, sponsors and supporters.



Declaring the semi-industrial quality kitchen officially open, Mr Roux said: "I am highly delighted that the dream of Charleston Academy, has come to a marvelous fruition. This state of the art kitchen will serve as an inspiration not only to students of Charleston Academy but will also be open to other students within the City and elsewhere. It will allow youngsters to come to a place of learning and embrace a professional kitchen."

Funding for the £278,000 project was provided by The Highland Council; Inverness Common Good Fund; Inverness West, Inverness Central, and Aird and Loch Ness Wards Discretionary Budgets; and through private donations to, and fundraising by Charleston Academy. Education Scotland, through their Food for Thought programme were also supporters of the project.

Councillor Alex Graham welcomed the opening of the kitchen, he said: "We are extremely grateful for the time, energy and enthusiasm that Mr Roux has committed to the creation of this magnificent resource and for his support that he has given to Charleston Academy over many years."

Rector of Charleston Academy Chris O'Neill added: "This project with Mr Roux has been very beneficial for the educational and work experiences of our pupils. The new Albert Roux Kitchen will exemplify equal opportunities for pupils of all abilities. It will ensure that vocational hospitality courses are firmly embedded in our curriculum. It will also hopefully encourage more boys and girls to pursue careers in hospitality."



Bookings for
or enquiries about the
Albert Roux Kitchen
can be made by contacting
**Charleston Community
Campus**
on
01463 220128

Recognising the signs of

The Highland Council and Police Scotland aim to prevent child sexual exploitation in the Highlands by working together to raise awareness of the signs of abuse.

Awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation became more widespread following a high profile report on cases in Rotherham in 2014, where an estimated 1,440 children were sexually exploited over many years, highlighting the need for authorities to work together to identify and prevent abuse.

One of the ways to protect children is to raise awareness in the wider community about possible risks, and the signs to look out for. Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse, in which a young person is manipulated or forced into taking part in a sexual act by someone who has power over them. This could be as part of a seemingly consensual relationship, or in return for attention, affection, money, drugs, alcohol or somewhere to stay.

Bill Alexander, Chair of the Highland Child Protection Committee explained that it is not a new phenomenon, but there is a wider appreciation of what it is, the extent of it and the impact it has on children and young people. "The young person may think that their abuser is their friend, or even their boyfriend or girlfriend, but the abuser will put them into dangerous situations, forcing the young person to do things they don't fully understand or want to do.

"Young people can be exploited through use of substances or by being tricked, or through the use of technology such as social media sites and instant messaging. This could involve getting young people to post sexually explicit images or take part in sexual activity or sexual conversations using technology.

"The abuser may be male or female; they may physically or verbally threaten the young person, or be violent towards them. They will control and manipulate them, and try to isolate them from friends and family.

This is not a lifestyle choice by young people. This is coercive and abusive behaviour by others who have power over them. Nor is it an equal relationship.

“ They will control and manipulate them, and try to isolate them from friends and family. ”

Any child can be a victim, boys and girls; but children who are already vulnerable, are more likely to be vulnerable to child sexual exploitation. This includes children who are struggling at home or at school, or who are experiencing social isolation or bullying and it certainly includes children who are, or have been, looked after. Many of them will have low self-esteem and insecure attachments.

Significantly, young people will rarely describe their experiences as exploitation, or recognise that this is what is taking place. What we are seeking to do is provide support and interventions for young people to understand and disclose the exploitative nature of their relationships."



child sexual exploitation

Detective Inspector Vince McLaughlin described the challenges that agencies face. "The rise in online child exploitation, in its many forms, is down to increased access to mobile devices, improved download technologies and the development of sophisticated software to conceal activities. Undoubtedly, this creates a challenge for all agencies and partnership working is absolutely essential, as we are committed to tackling this issue."

Cllr Linda Munro, appealed: "If you're worried about any young person who you suspect might be in this kind of situation, please try to speak to them to share your concerns and to persuade them to take steps to protect themselves."

If you're still concerned please contact the Police or the Council's Care and Protection services without delay."

Potential signs of child sexual exploitation:

- Staying out late or episodes of being missing overnight or longer.
- Multiple callers (unknown adults/older young people).
- Evidence of or suspicion of physical or sexual assault; or the disclosure of assault followed by withdrawal of a reported incident.
- Unplanned pregnancy and/ or Sexually Transmitted Infections.
- Peers involved in sexual exploitation.
- Drugs/alcohol misuse.
- Isolation from peers/social network.
- Exclusion or unexplained absences from school or college.
- Relationships with controlling adults.

“ **The abuser will put them into dangerous situations, forcing the young person to do things they don't fully understand or want to do.** ”



Reduce - Re-use - Recycle

Recycling is an everyday part of our lives today and the Council's Waste Aware Team work with the public, schools and businesses to minimise the amount of material sent to landfill.

Encouraging waste reduction and re-use is also an important aspect of this work and the Team recently promoted 'Pass it on Week' encouraging schools, workplaces and community groups to plan re-use events. However, the Waste Aware Team wants people to think about the re-use throughout the year. Too often, we bin still serviceable items which, with a bit of thought, could be passed on. The Team encourage reuse through donations to charity shops of clothing, books, toys CDs, DVDs and household goods. Furniture and homeware can be donated to charities such as New Start Highland and Blythswood, either directly, or via the reuse containers at many Highland Council Recycling Centres.

Food is another enormous area of waste and the Waste Aware Team work alongside "Love Food Hate Waste Scotland" to help individuals and businesses waste less food, save money and help the environment. It is estimated that we throw away a fifth of the food we buy without it even reaching our plates – much of it still perfectly usable.

Visit:

<http://scotland.lovefoodhatewaste.com>

for lots of ideas about reducing food waste and using up left overs.



“ we throw away a fifth of the food we buy..”

LOVE FOOD - Hate Waste

Household waste collected (2013-14)
126,565 tonnes

45%
of household waste is recycled or composted

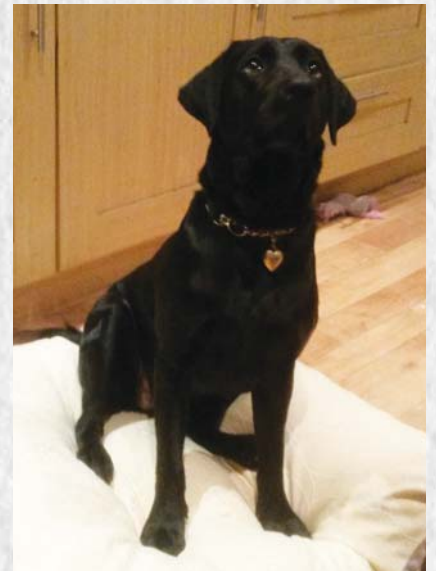
Maximising recycling at Recycling Centres is another important aspect of the work of the Waste Aware Team, encouraging the public to separate items for recycling before making a trip.

For more information about recycling and the work of the Waste Aware Team visit the Rubbish and recycling pages of The Highland Council website:

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/recycle>

Blythswood's reusable dog beds make 500 dogs waggy happy

Highland dogs are wagging their tails to celebrate Blythswood's 500th sale of their upcycled dogs' beds, using duvets and old curtains where the bedding used is not saleable in Blythswood Care's charity shops.



The dog beds play their part in Blythswood's focus on maximising reuse. In an average week, staff and volunteers at Blythswood Care, process over 40 tonnes of donated goods, with the majority being reused.

All this work plays its part in Blythswood help to those in crisis at home and abroad.

Working towards a carbon **CLEVER** future



*The Council's Climate Change team – from left to right:
Daniel Greig, Gemma Cassells, Stephen Carr & Keith Masson*

A carbon neutral Inverness in a low carbon Highlands by 2025 is the bold ambition of the Highland Council-led Carbon CLEVER initiative.

Carbon CLEVER aims to build on the excellent progress already being made in the Highlands to reduce carbon emissions, and to coordinate and accelerate the region's transition towards a low carbon future.

Achieving a Carbon CLEVER Highlands will require the combined efforts of a wide range of organisations across the public, private, and third sectors, as well as the residents and communities of the Highlands.

Businesses are showing their support through the Carbon CLEVER Declaration. This recognises the actions Highland businesses are taking to reduce their carbon emissions and their commitment to help the Highlands become Carbon CLEVER.

Almost 70 local organisations have signed up to the Declaration, including Tomatin Distillery, Inverness Caledonian Thistle FC, Inverness College UHI and Sureclean. Kenny Cameron, Chairman of Inverness Caledonian Thistle, said: "The club recognises the important role it can play in helping reduce carbon emissions across the region, and we look forward to working with other signatories to promote and encourage action to tackle climate change."

The Council is also working with the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) to create a Low Carbon Institute in 2016 which will lend academic support to help the region to become low carbon. This facility will work with, and build on research conducted by other UHI research teams. Dr Jeff Howarth, vice principal for enterprise at UHI, said: "The whole image of Inverness and our other communities as knowledge economy hubs, and the outstanding environmental credentials of the wider region, make Carbon CLEVER highly significant for the future economy and quality of life for our region."

Communities will play an important role in the success of Carbon CLEVER. To support communities in their ambitions, a £200,000 Carbon CLEVER Community Grant Fund has been set up by the Council.

The fund has been designed to help finance exciting and innovative capital projects, such as energy efficiency improvements and low carbon transport options, which help tackle climate change across Highland.

If you'd like to find out more about Carbon CLEVER
or how you can get involved, why not visit:
www.highland.gov.uk/CarbonCLEVER
Follow us on Twitter: @Carbon_CLEVER
or
Email the team: carbonclever@highland.gov.uk



Staying safe online

We are all aware of how the Internet is a constructive tool which helps us in all sorts of situations during our daily lives. However, we are all also aware of how the internet can easily be used for the wrong reasons, such as cyber bullying and the theft of personal information.

The growing popularity of portable technology such as smart phones and tablets means that it is now easier than ever to access the World Wide Web and its many benefits and dangers. For this reason, we have compiled a list of some "top tips" recommended by Louise Jones (chair of the Highland E-safety group) on how to stay safe online.



Top Tips on how to stay safe online

- **Treat your passwords like your toothbrush: never share them and change them often!**
If you use the same password for every website account you use, if someone manages to find out this information they would potentially have access to a great deal of your personal information.
- **Make sure you know who people are before adding them as "friends".**
People may not be who they say they are. Do not give personal information out to anyone you do not know and trust.
- **Don't post your personal information (such as date of birth, email address, phone number and location) on your profile, in a status update or post, or in a tweet.**
If you publish any of this information online and someone can put it all together, they may be able to steal your identity. This means that someone could take out loans or get credit cards in your name – racking up debt which will lead back to you. Sharing any personal information online can fall into the wrong hands and can lead to SPAM emails (which may contain viruses) and unpleasant phone calls.
- **Don't rely on "privacy" settings to safeguard your personal information or posts.**
You may be able to change your privacy settings on social media, but you cannot control the privacy settings of others. This can all become very confusing and you cannot guarantee that your posts and information that you have shared with "friends" online may not reach people that you don't know or trust.
- **Think before you post anything online:**
Be it a photo, video, or even a comment about yourself or others. Once you post it, it will be out of your control. Think carefully about any photo, video or comment and what this would say about you when viewed by someone else. Also remember that the things you post online will stay there for a very long time and may be found well into the future. In a way, each time you contribute online, you are creating a "digital footprint" that can be traced back to you. Even if you do decide to delete something you have posted, it is possible that someone has already seen it and taken a "screenshot" of it (a photo of it using their computer) and therefore you will have no control over what they choose to do with that information.
- **Make sure you log off when you have finished using a website, app or device**
Although remaining logged in saves time when you want to access a website, app or device quickly, logging off means that other people cannot log in to your account.

Your account can contain personal information so you do not want to let someone else access this.

- **If it looks too good to be true - it probably is!**

It is only too easy to get caught up in scams, when links claiming you have won something are sent to your email address and are plastered all over social media websites. You should be wary of clicking on links sent to you in emails and messages and should never open email attachments which are unexpected or suspicious.

- **NEVER meet with someone you met online; or in the case of adults, without telling a friend or family member who you are meeting and where you are going to meet them.**

- **If you are concerned about anything you witness online, or if you are concerned for a child, report this.**

Adults can report any concerns about children to a teacher, doctor, police officer, social worker, school nurse, call: **01463 703488**

or email enquiries to: **CPAdmin@highland.gov.uk**

Children should report concerns to their parent, carer, social worker or teacher. You can also do this online by clicking the CEOP "Report Abuse" button found on www.thinkuknow.co.uk or by adding the CEOP Panic Button app to Facebook.

For more information visit:
www.thinkuknow.co.uk
or
www.highlandesafety.wordpress.com

Inverness Summer Festival

The 2015 Inverness Summer Festival begins on Saturday 27th June with a Riverside Party to celebrate the completion of major flood defence construction work on Bank Street and Huntly Street. This will give the Council and the local business community the opportunity to use the event space that has been created by this work for the first time.

The Inverness Common Good Fund sponsored festival programme contains a fantastic line up of exciting events, which help to showcase our wonderful city. For locals and visitors alike, there will be something for everyone!

The Festival helps to draw additional visitors to our City and this year's expanded programme looks set give people an experience to remember, as well as give our local economy a significant boost. Additional city centre entertainment is planned for Inverness Castle, and around the stage in Church Street, to make the experience of the thousands of participants and spectators more memorable.

*The Festival is organised by The Highland Council
in partnership with
Inverness BID, Eastgate Shopping Centre,
Eden Court Theatre and Inverness Hotel Association*

Festival Programme

JUNE

27 Riverside Party
27 ZOMBIE-NESS

JULY & AUGUST

4 Armed Forces Day
5 Highlands Strongest Man

Inverness Gala featuring:

18 Inverness Highland Games
18 Clan Village
18 - 19 Bubble Football
18 - 19 Horne's Funfair
18 - 19 Craft Fair
19 Bught Park Orienteering
19 Forge Gym Combat Tent
19 MFR Walk of Courage
19 July Inverness Harriers 10K
19 Highlander Challenge
19 Highlands Strongest Women

31 to 7 August
World Orienteering
Championships

SEPTEMBER

5 - 7 Salmon Fishing Competition
11 - 13 Highland Military Tattoo
13 Kirking of the Council

Other dates for your diary

OCTOBER

30 - 31 Halloween Show

NOVEMBER

5 Civic Bonfire and Fireworks
11 Remembrance Day 11am
Ceremony

DECEMBER

22 Christmas Lights Switch On
11 - 13 Winter Wonderland
31 Wee Hot Highland Fling
31 Red Hot Highland Fling

For more and detailed information please visit:
<http://www.invernessfestivals.com>

Giving children the best possible start in life

Do you remember your first two or three years of life?

Many of us don't. But what we now know is that our earliest experiences affect us throughout our lives. Recently, scientists proved that early experiences can impact on brain growth and development. Evidence shows that what happens in the first few years of a child's life has a huge impact on the rest of their life and their life chances.

This includes:

- How we will do at school and throughout our working lives.
- How we behave and get on with others as teenagers and adults.
- How healthy we are as adults.
- Our mental health throughout our life.
- How long we will live.



Talk to me before I am born – I can already hear you.

Make your talking tuneful and I will listen.

Pause and wait – I need time to talk back.

Hold me and talk to me – it makes me feel safe.

I need quiet time every day.

Getting it right, from the start, is a priority for the Council. We want to make Highland to be the best place to grow up in. We are doing this by improving our services for children and families. Here are some of the improvements we have been making.

- Providing parenting support opportunities, such as 'Incredible Years' which helps parents to manage their toddler's challenging behaviour better.
- Regular reviews as children are growing up make sure that any issues are identified early so that help can be offered at the right time.
- Making sure that parents-to-be can easily access income maximisation advice to help with costs of providing for a growing family.
- Increasing the amount of free childcare that families can get – and making sure that 'new' eligible families are aware of the help they can get.
- Setting up new family teams which are focused on meeting the needs of children and their families better.

A child's earliest years is the best time to make a lasting impact on their life. Giving a child a good start is the most important thing we can give them to help their future. From the beginning, children are developing the skills they need to communicate.

Skills such as: making eye contact; listening; taking turns; making sounds and turning these into words. This is one of the most complex things that children do. To do it successfully needs a loving, supportive and responsive environment.

Alternative payment arrangements to help Universal Credit claimants

Highland Council are working with the DWP to assist those who need additional support.

The Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) Universal Credit is available to single claimants across the Highlands and also to couples and families in Inverness. This benefit replaces a number of benefits, including housing benefit and is paid as a single monthly household payment. This is a significant change to the way most benefits are currently paid.

The DWP's Alternative Payment Arrangement is available to help claimants who are identified as needing additional support and involves:

- Paying the housing element of Universal Credit direct to the claimant's landlord.
- Making payments on a more frequent basis than monthly.
- Providing a split payment of an award between partners.

The claimant, their representative, their caseworker or their landlord can request an Alternative Payment Arrangement. To safeguard the claimant's home, a landlord can notify Universal Credit of a build-up of rent arrears and request that the housing costs element of Universal Credit be paid directly to them, where a rent arrears 'trigger' has been reached.

The Highland Council, as the only local authority in the UK, has been piloting a new application process that enables landlords to electronically submit an Alternative Payment Arrangement to support vulnerable tenants.



Benefits and Welfare Manager
Sheila McKandie said:

Initial results have shown that the time taken to introduce an Alternative Payment Arrangement has greatly reduced and is therefore of benefit to both the landlord and the tenant. The pilot is continuing and may be rolled-out across the UK.

For further information or
advice contact the money
advice team on:
01349 886606

Tell us when things change

If you receive Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction, the amount you receive can be affected by changes in your life. We call these 'changes in circumstances'.

You must tell the Operations Team of these changes immediately. This is so we can be sure we are paying you the correct amount. If you do not tell us about a change you may lose any extra benefit you are entitled to or, if we pay too much benefit, you will have to pay it back.

If you tell us about your change in circumstances quickly, we can recalculate your claim and ensure you receive correct payments without delay. This will make it easier to budget and avoid getting into debt because of overpayments.

You can report a change

By telephone on
Freephone 0800 393811

By writing to the
**Operations Team
PO Box 5650
Inverness, IV3 5YX**

Visit your nearest
Service Point

Tell us online from July
www.highland.gov.uk

We Need You

Age Scotland provides vital services and support at a national and local level to inspire, enable and support older people in need.

We are recruiting volunteers in every region of Scotland, to help raise funds and awareness of our charity's vital work in supporting older people. Can you help?

Collecting Can Coordinators – will source new collecting can placements in small businesses, managing the cans in their own time.

Event Helpers – will help us at a variety of events, such as information stalls, sporting events and public collections.

Fundraising Committees – will organise their own events in the community, with support from Age Scotland.

All roles require a degree of commitment but are also very flexible to suit your lifestyle and other commitments. You will also receive training, materials and ongoing support.

Volunteer for Age Scotland and together we can help everyone make the most of later life.

For more information contact Fundraising on 0333 323 2400 or fundraising@agescotland.org.uk

www.agescotland.org.uk



 **ageScotland**
Love later life



• **COMMERCIAL** •
• **DOMESTIC** •
• **INDUSTRIAL** •

RAINBOW INTERNATIONAL PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:-

- CARPET & UPHOLSTERY CLEANING & MAINTENANCE
- FURNITURE REPAIR AND RESTORATION
- HIGH ACCESS CLEANING
- BUILDERS CLEAN
- COMMERCIAL KITCHEN CLEANING
- COMMERCIAL WINDOW CLEANING
- VOID & EXIT CLEANS
- FIRE RESTORATION SERVICES
- FLOOD DAMAGE RESTORATION
- ESCAPE OF WATER RESTORATION
- ACCIDENTAL DAMAGE RESTORATION
- HIGH NET WORTH PRIVATE CLIENTS
- CHEMICAL, BIO-HAZARD, TRAUMA SCENE CLEANS & NEEDLE SWEEPS
- GRAFFITI REMOVAL
- HIGH PRESSURE CLEANING
- ODOUR CONTROL & AIR MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS
- BACTERIAL AND VIRAL CONTROL
- HARD FLOOR CLEANING & MAINTENANCE



Rainbow International is a local family run operation, supported by an international organisation.

For a **FREE, NO obligation quote** contact us on Tel: **01349 880701** Mob: **07977 222919**

Email: t.cox@rainbow-int.co.uk Website: www.rainbow-int.co.uk

YOU CAN ALSO FOLLOW US ON  AND 