

Highpoints Sàr Phuingean

Celebrating staff achievements

Pg6



Fort William
office move

Pg22



West Link opened by
school pupils

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Modern apprentices
start their career Pg15

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Listening ~ Open ~ Valuing ~ Improving ~ Supporting ~ Partnering ~ Delivering

Welcome

This issue of Highpoints shines a light on the talent and skills and hard work of staff across the council, with a focus on the Quality Awards which took place on 30th November.

The strapline for these Awards is – Encouraging Improvement, Recognising Achievement – and the individuals and teams you will read about are shining examples of the ground-breaking work that goes on across all services of the council. There will also be examples highlighting our close partnership with High Life Highland, the NHS, Police Scotland, the business community and the voluntary sector across the length and breadth of the Highlands. Everyone is working together to ensure local communities are as strong and resilient as possible and the Highlands continues to be a desirable place for people to live and work in, and for visitors from around the globe.

There is no way to gloss over the fact that the next few years are going to be particularly challenging. It is therefore more important than ever that we continue to deliver services efficiently and to be innovative. Redesign is an example of how staff, who are experts in their own fields, are central to identifying ways of doing things differently, more efficiently and enabling real improvements.

On behalf of the Council, I would like to publicly thank every member of staff for the outstanding work you do. There is a lot of excellent work taking place which is not only achieving significant financial savings to the Council, but is leading the way nationally and reinforcing our reputation across Scotland as a forward-thinking and very pro-active local authority. Your energy, professionalism, skills and the great enthusiasm for the work you do is greatly appreciated by us all.



Bill Lobban Highland Council Convener

Recognition for Town House project



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Jason Kelman, Principal Project Manager, was recognised for his role in the refurbishment of The Town House, Inverness at the Council's Quality Awards.

He was presented with a Civic Medal and a framed chisel used by stonemasons working on the project.

The result so far is stunning and Inverness can be proud of such an architectural jewel in the city centre.

The Town House was built in 1882 to a design by prominent local architects Matthews and Lawrie. It is a Category A listed building of national significance with a blend of Gothic, Flemish and Scots baronial styles.

Jason described the project challenges. He said:

“Over the years, the building experienced widespread deterioration of the elaborate stonework facades and this reached the point where there was a risk to the public of falling masonry.

The work has had lots of challenges, not least the very constricted site and the logistics of preparing, delivering and handling huge quantities of stone and maintaining traffic movement throughout the contract.

Over two years, the project has seen the replacement of some 3700 stones, weighing over 400 tonnes with thousands of hours spent conserving those stones which could be retained. In addition, over 100 stained glass

panels have been refurbished and all of the roofs re-slatted.

The two stone dogs which went missing many years ago, were rediscovered in the nick of time and they have been conserved and reinstated to their former rightful place on the roof. Interior decoration has also been carried out and the main hall has been restored to its former glory.”

The contractor LTM has used teams of very skilled masons and five new local apprentices have served their time with LTM, starting with the steeple project and ending on the town house. Additional masons and conservators were brought in from overseas for the specialist work.

So far the Inverness Common Good Fund has invested £3.6 million in the work including a very welcome £800,000 grant from Historic Environment Scotland. Further restoration in Phase 3 is expected to be completed in 2019 at a cost of a further £2.3 million.



© Ewen Weatherspoon

West Link opened by school pupils from Holm and Kinmylies

WEST LINK

Connecting our communities
A' ceangal ar coimhearsnachdan

The West Link distributor road was opened to traffic on Monday 11th December. The completion of the first phase of the project was marked by a convoy of vehicles opening the link between the A82 and the Dores Road.

A ribbon on the new Holm Mills bridge was cut by pupils Roddy MacLennan P7 (Holm Primary) and Kelsey Campbell P7 (Kinmylies Primary), assisted by Provost of Inverness Helen Carmichael.



“ ...delivered, on time and on budget ”

Six more pupils from the two local schools attended and rode on the open top bus, with their Head Teachers Janine Webb and Fiona McKellar and senior members of the Council.

Provost of Inverness, Helen Carmichael said:

“ It is a very important day for many who have been involved in the decision-making, planning and delivering of this very significant project for Inverness and the Highlands.

“ It was very exciting to open the road and it will bring so many benefits, including reducing congestion and pollution in our city centre. My thanks to everyone involved in getting us to this special day. ”

Vice Convener Allan Henderson said:

“ The West Link project dates back to the late 1960s when the concept of peripheral route on the south side of Inverness was first tested. Now at long last, after many decades, the West Link is now a reality – delivered, on time and on budget!

“ As with any major project, developing community, political and statutory consensus on the route - and funding - is a large part of the battle. Success was in part down to cross-party support, extensive public consultation, an innovative working group and an enthusiastic Consultancy design team who managed the process, developed the final route and producing the detailed designs that have transpired into the wonderful bridge, roads and sporting facilities here today. ”



© The Highland Council

The West Link will bring numerous benefits to the area, including reducing journey times and distances for many – for example, children from Holm Primary now have a much shorter route to get to the Aquadome or the Ice Rink. People from Lochaber with hospital appointments can get to Raigmore Hospital much more easily, without going through the centre of Inverness. Students from Kinmylies will be able to get to the college at the Inverness Campus in a much more direct way.



The route will therefore significantly reduce congestion and pollution in the city centre.

The scheme is also enabling housing development and associated developer contributions. In fact, the Benefit to Cost Ratio of the West Link project is 3.86, which represents nearly £4 of benefit to every £1 of public investment.

Stage 2 of the West Link project is programmed to commence in 2019 and will be completed in 2020 following the relocation of the golf course and building of a second swing bridge.

The £55 million West Link project forms part of the Inverness and Highland City-Region deal which is a joint initiative supported by up to £315 million investment from the UK and Scottish governments,



The Highland Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and the University of the Highlands and Islands, aimed at stimulating sustainable regional economic growth.



2017

The Highland Council's Quality Awards took place in the newly refurbished Town House on 30th November.

Council Leader, Margaret Davidson praised all the award winners. She said:

“Congratulations to each and every one of you, individuals and teams, for all your tremendous work. It really has been heartening to hear how everyone is pulling together and putting such energy, expertise and enthusiasm into their jobs.

“Tonight has been the ideal opportunity to shine the spotlight on the high quality services delivered by you all. I strongly believe that we are one of the most inventive and efficient Councils in Scotland and the strength of our performance lies in the quality of the people who work for us. Your commitment, skills, experience and good-will makes things happen and the Council, and our communities, are all the better for your hard work and drive.”



© Ewen Weatherspoon

Admin Assistant Alana is Employee of the Year

Alana Brown, an Administration Assistant with the Council's Care and Learning Service working as part of the Multi-Agency Public Protection team (MAPPA) was awarded Employee of the Year at The Highland Council's 2017 Quality Awards.

Alana has faced a great deal of change in her job over the last few years and has fully embraced new opportunities. VISOR is the national database used to keep up to date information and intelligence on registered sex offenders and serious violent offenders. Alana is currently one of only four trained VISOR trainers for the system in Scotland.

Alana's colleagues praise the way in which she deals with the pressure and confidential nature of her work, how she resolves issues and sets an example for others to follow. They particularly highlight her positive and focused attitude, her initiative and commitment and her dependable way of dealing with complex procedures and policies.

The Council's MAPPA Co-ordinator Ron Lyon, who has worked with Alana for nine years, highlights the special personal and professional qualities Alana brings to her role. He said:

“Alana is dependable, efficient, and I have never



© Ewen Weatherspoon



worked with a person who gives as much attention to detail as she does. She also projects a warm, cheerful attitude to our partner agencies who fully endorsed her nomination. We have all seen her resolve conflicts and handle difficult situations with remarkable patience and admirable tact. I believe these characteristics represent all that is good in our council, and I am delighted on behalf of the whole MAPPA team she has the honour of being Employee of the Year 2017. ””

Chair of MAPPA, DCI Vincent Mclaughlin adds:

”” Alana has strongly supported me in my role as Chair with her administrative diligence, patience and ability to co-ordinate and manage multiple tasks. She plays an integral part of the full MAPPA team. Nothing is ever too much effort for her and she is always willing to assist above and beyond her role, especially when significant issues arise. ””

James Maybee, The Council's Principal Officer for Criminal Justice also praised Alana, saying:

”” Her dedication and professionalism shine through. ””

The Awards, sponsored by Viridor, Zurich Municipal, Tusker, E-On Energy and Hub North Scotland, were hosted by Highlands & Islands reporter for STV news Nicola McAlley.

Also short-listed for Employee of the Year for their outstanding contributions were Linda Smith, an Administration Assistant based in Inverness Town House and Roads Inspector Yvonne Low.

Linda is the link between the Housing Service and the Council's Legal Department, in particularly in relation to court actions. As well as checking and collating complex and detailed information, Linda prepares court paperwork, ensuring it all complies with the Housing (Scotland) Acts and also co-ordinates discussions between many third party organisation and council services.

Roads Inspector Yvonne Low was nominated by colleagues who praised her conscientious approach to work, the professional way she carries out road inspections and completes reports and her diplomatic and approachable manner when dealing with the public.

Community Awards

Communities across the Highlands were invited to nominate Council staff who they felt deserved special recognition and the first Community Award of the evening went to Liz Robertson who was nominated by Kirkhill and Bunchrew Community Council.

In 1997 Liz started work at Kirkhill Nursery as an assistant and now, 20 years on, she is working as an Early Years Practitioner with the next generation of children.

Karen Young from the Community Council said:

”” Liz has a wonderful way with children and treats each one as an individual. She makes them feel inspired and creates an atmosphere they love. She is a truly inspirational person who we feel deserves special recognition for her role within Kirkhill Primary and our community. ””



© The Highland Council



Team of the Year

Engineer Colin Ross was nominated by Strathnairn Community Council for his support during the B852 road improvements through Farr and the surrounding countryside.



© The Highland Council

The Team of the Year award went to the Council's Election Team. Aply assisted by staff from across all services and colleagues from the Electoral Registrations and Assessor's office, the team have had an exceptional year during which they've demonstrated outstanding professionalism, determination, commitment and enthusiasm that has allowed them to meet the challenge of delivering two major elections in the space of just five weeks.

The announcement of a 'snap' General Election in April meant the team had just 5 weeks to cram in what would normally be 5 to 6 months of preparation on top of the Council election work. This presented a huge logistical challenge to staff already fully stretched, but the team rose to the challenge and with minimum notice all arrangements were in place and both elections successfully delivered.

They said:

“We have great admiration for the effort Colin has put in from attending public and community council meetings, to making sure people have been fully informed as the proposals developed. He has been instrumental in understanding our aspirations and delivering improvements to the road with the minimum of impact to road users.”

The third Community Award went to Assistant Ward Manager for Lochaber, Emma Tayler. Company Secretary of Voluntary Action Lochaber Flora McKee said:

“Emma goes the extra mile to support our Board and her support and guidance has greatly helped many of us. She is organised, knowledgeable empathetic, friendly and has a good sense of humour. We class ourselves as lucky to have someone with her qualities in a key role in Lochaber. She is a true ambassador for The Highland Council.”



© The Highland Council

“...the best in Scotland.”

The team's preparation and approach for the Council elections in May drew particular praise from the Electoral Commission for the attention to detail and the publication of a count booklet that was described by the Commission as 'the best in Scotland'.



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in partnership with





Trainee of the Year

The 2017 Trainee of the Year is mechanic Kyle Dempster from the Council's workshop in Fort William, where he works as part of a team keeping the fleet of heavy vehicles on the road.

Kyle's enthusiasm and potential has impressed his colleagues. Speaking on behalf of everyone in the Fort William workshop, Foreman Sandy MacDonald, who himself started as an apprentice mechanic with the Council 39 years ago, said:

“Kyle is very courteous to all members of staff and the public. He is a keen conscientious worker who can work on his own initiative and clearly understands the role of the team. We all enjoy training Kyle as he is eager to learn and practise his new skills. He is a real asset to us and we wish him well for the rest of his apprentice training.”



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Projects delivering the Council Programme

Teams of Council staff were invited to enter projects into four categories and all short-listed entries were assessed by an independent judging panel. The winning projects were:

Enabling a Community-led Highland



© Ewen Weatherspoon

Listening to community bodies on how to support more community-run services.

This project, led by the Chief Executive's Service is all about finding out what needs to be done differently to support community-run services in Highland.

Delivering for a well-served Highland



© Ewen Weatherspoon

Public Wifi (Ness Wifi & High-fi)

This project has designed and delivered free, fast, reliable and safe internet access across Inverness city centre – Ness Wifi. It is led by the Council and funded by the Inverness and Highlands City Region Deal. The project team is also working on extending the free Wifi scheme (High-fi) to 14 town centres across the Highlands over the coming months.

2017

Achieving a fairer Highland



Peddiston Poly Tunnels Project

Launched last year, the project works with ex-offenders to improve their employability prospects by teaching new skills and fostering a positive work ethic, with learning taking place in the outdoors.

Delivering Efficiency, Income & Service Improvement



Digital First

This project aims to increase the number of customer transactions carried out online, improve efficiency and provide a better experience for customers. The project has delivered over 100 online services to date and saved over £1 million.

Outstanding Partnership Award

The Outstanding Partnership Award went to ASPIRE - Autism Strategies for Parents to Improve Relationships and Experiences – which uses Video interaction to deliver a unique evidence-based training programme to parents of autistic children. This ground-breaking partnership between the Council's psychological services, The Pines autism team, parents and their children means ASPIRE is unique, effective and can be delivered in-house to families across the Highlands.



The Convener's Award

An Environmental Advice and Consultancy Team from the Development and Infrastructure Service won the Convener's Award. In the team's first 12 months they have created a fully operational in-house consultancy service that has advised on over 900 planning applications. As well as being in high demand, the team is providing a high quality, efficient and cost effective service. Its income target has been exceeded by 60%.





Young Musicians shine

During the Awards Ceremony guests were treated to musical performances by groups of talented young musicians.

Piper Louis Peteranna, a pupil at Culloden Academy gave a rousing welcome as guests arrived.

First on stage was the Dingwall Academy Senior String Ensemble – a group made up from pupils in S3-S6, all of whom are members of the Highland Young Musicians Regional Groups. The Ensemble are regular prize winners in the Inverness Music Festival.

They were joined by their Director and The Highland Council music tutor Rachel Farmer to perform arrangements of "Titanic", "Odyssey" and "Highland Cathedral".

Next to perform were Baile an Or - a group of young musicians from Sutherland who love to perform traditional and folk music. The performers receive tuition as part of the Council's Instrumental Tuition Service and joining them on stage were tutors Mhairi Mackinnon and Louise Douglas.

The musical entertainment drew to a close with a Highland Regional Youth Orchestra woodwind ensemble featuring Abigail Innes on flute; Anna Flugel and Summer Bayliss on clarinet and Rudi Paul on bassoon. These pupils all currently play in the woodwind section of Highland Regional Youth orchestra and were joined by tutors Judy Kyle (Oboe and piano) and Anna Aalders (flute).

The Provost of Inverness, Cllr Helen Carmichael said:

“It has been a privilege to be serenaded by such talented young musicians. Their performances really set the scene for a terrific night and all the guests I spoke to were so impressed with their confidence on the stage and the high standard of their playing skills. It was a real treat to start our evening in such an inspiring and enjoyable way so I would like to thank all the musicians. They are a credit to themselves and the hard work of their tutors so well done.”



Free WiFi is rolled out

City-Region Deal investment means that Inverness can now be branded a digital city.

Ness WiFi, a free WiFi service, which was successfully piloted earlier this year, has now been rolled out across Inverness city centre, extending to and including areas such as the High Street, the Castle, Eden Court, and the bus and railway stations.

The Ness WiFi network is free for all users and has no restrictions on time, providing access to fast, efficient internet connectivity.

The first phase of the Inverness City WiFi project, branded Ness WiFi, provided fast internet coverage in a pilot area including the Victorian Market, Falcon Square and surrounding streets and saw up to 800 people per week sign up and use the service. The Pilot has helped shape the main city WiFi rollout by providing useful data and user engagement and analytics.

There has been a very positive response from the public with some users saying:

“It’s the best public wifi I have ever used.”

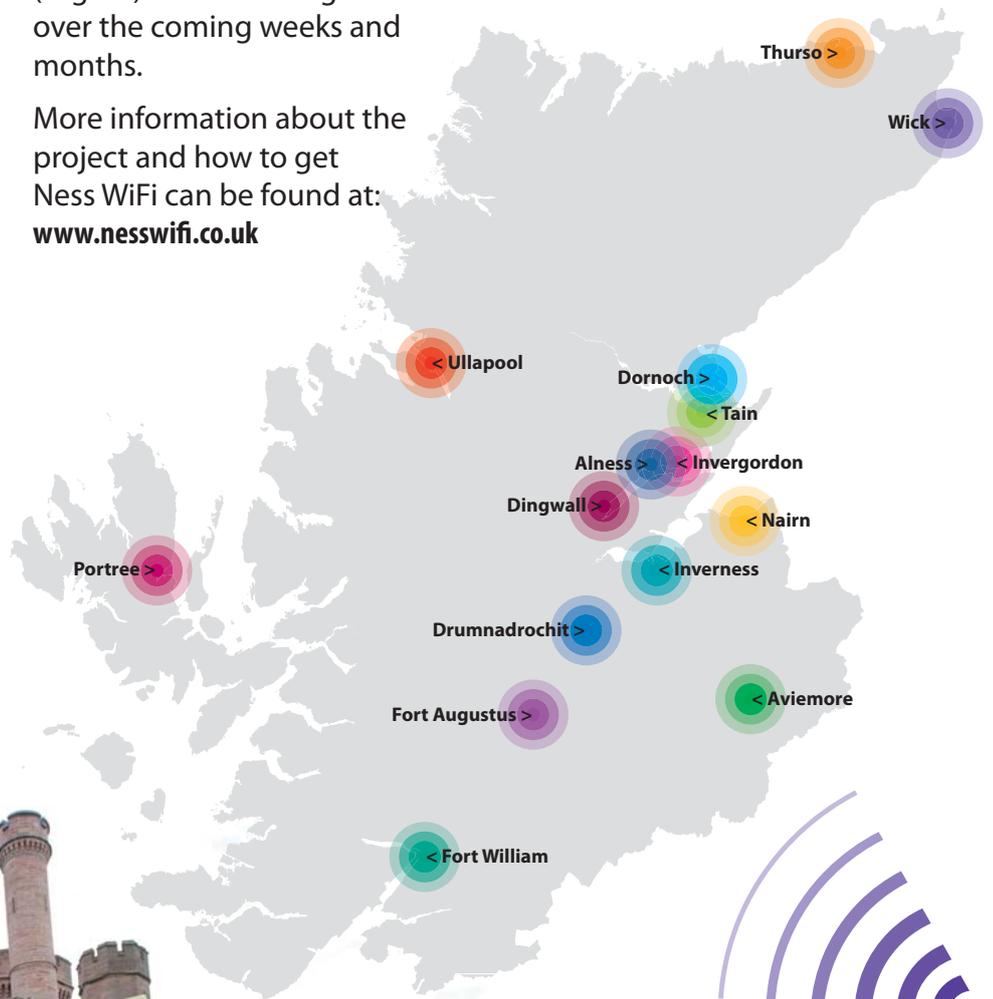
and:

“it is better than my home broadband.”

The free wifi project, led by The Highland Council (in partnership with Rapier Systems Ltd.) and funded by £500,000 of £53 million UK Government investment, aims to benefit businesses, residents, students and tourists, and encourage visitors to the city.

The free wifi scheme will now be rolled out to another 14 towns (High-fi) across the Highlands over the coming weeks and months.

More information about the project and how to get Ness WiFi can be found at: www.nesswifi.co.uk



Map does not depict actual wifi coverage.

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Tain and Easter Ross community cash

Residents in Tain and Easter Ross are being invited to apply for funds if they have an idea to help improve their local community.

Tain and Easter Ross local Highland Councillors have set aside £15,000 – made up of £6,500 from the local Ward Discretionary Budget topped up by £8,500 Scottish Government funding - and they want to put locals in control of how it is spent. This money has been set aside for projects aiming to improve the community that could benefit from a grant of up to £1,500 each.

The fund is open to any local community or voluntary groups based in Tain and Easter Ross (Ward 7). Projects can be large or small, add value to existing projects or be something completely new.

Applicants will be invited to present their ideas at a community event at the Duthac Centre in Tain on Saturday 24th February 2018, where members of the public will vote to decide the projects that they think best meet community needs and priorities.

Application forms can be downloaded from The Highland Council's Website at:

www.highland.gov.uk/tainpb

The deadline for applications is **Friday 22 January 2018**

Lochaber Gaelic Primary School record festive 'stocking filler'

A brand new Gaelic Christmas CD has been recorded by Lochaber Gaelic Primary School which went on sale in December.

Partially funded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the making of the CD was part of a project to raise money for school funds, but also to release some new Gaelic Christmas material for listeners far and wide.

The CD provided a great opportunity to learn through music and business enterprise, while providing a fabulous festive stocking filler for family and friends and raising school funds.

The CD includes a new arrangement of 'Silent Night' composed by Peter MacPherson, a new translation of 'O Holy Night' translated by Flora MacPhail and an Irish version of the well-known

hymn 'Away in a Manger'.

Children from across the school have recorded a range of tracks. The CD also includes tracks by award winning duo Iain MacFarlane and Ingrid Henderson, Gold Medal Winner

and Singer - Rachel Walker, and Traditional Gold Medal Winner and Lochaber Gaelic School Head Teacher, John Joe MacNeil.

The CD is available by going to www.bsgla.co.uk and following the link on the home page.



Ardnamurchan adding up to success



Photo: The team pictured at the national competition at the Glasgow Science Centre

Ardnamurchan High school have become the first Highland School to win The Scottish Mathematical Council - Enterprising Mathematics in Scotland Final.

The team of four pupils – Bethan White, Dugald MacIntyre, Alistair Tait and Ben Gregg - competed against 70 top schools in Scotland at the Glasgow Science Centre.

Competitors spent an intensive day solving puzzles and mathematical conundrums, and the team from Ardnamurchan were crowned triumphant winners at the end of the day.

The team competed in the national competition, having won the 'Highland Enterprising Maths' trophy this autumn for the

second year running.

Head Teacher Christopher Millar-Craig said:

“This is a huge achievement for such a small school and congratulations go to Bethan, Dugald, Alistair and Ben who were able to perform so well under pressure. Their hard work preparing for the competition paid off and in bringing the top trophy home, they made history in becoming the first Highland school to do so! We are all really proud of them.”

Ardnamurchan High School is located in Strontian and serves the wider areas of Sunart, Morvern and Ardnamurchan and has a roll of 107 pupils.

Double Gold School Sport Award for Portree Primary School

It's a 'double whammy' for Portree Primary School as they received their second Gold School Sport Award from Garry Reid of sportscotland.

As part of the school's celebrations, Ronald Ross visited and led shinty training for the pupils.

Sara Matheson, Portree Primary Depute Head Teacher added:

“All of us at Portree Primary School are delighted to receive our second Gold Award and to be the first school to achieve this. Thanks to the dedication of coaches, parents and volunteers, our pupils have access to over 40 extra-curricular activities each week. With support from



Active Schools, our own pupils have become young leaders themselves and have engaged their peers in games and dance with huge success.”

She added:

“All of these experiences offer invaluable opportunities for our young people to achieve and

succeed beyond the classroom walls and to develop skills and a passion for activities that will stay with them beyond their primary school years.”

Portree Primary was the first school in the Highlands and Islands to receive the Gold Sport Scotland Award from sportscotland in June 2015.

Modern Apprentices start their career with The Highland Council



Photo: Councillor Margaret Davidson, Leader of The Highland Council and Steve Barron Chief Executive meeting with the first intake of Modern Apprentices (MA) under the new MA Programme.

The latest Modern Apprentices started their career at The Highland Council this autumn with a corporate induction and had the chance to meet and talk with both the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

In welcoming the new recruits to the team the Leader of the Council, Margaret Davidson described how their contribution and fresh ideas would be integral to the future Highland Council. Steve Barron thanked them for choosing The Highland Council

and looked forward to seeing them flourish as new employees.

Among the new recruits were seven Business Administration apprentices, one Civil Engineering Technician apprentice and four Mechanics who have already completed their first year. The Highland Council has a team in place to manage the programme and envisages a number of opportunities being created in the coming months across several different occupational groups. Positions in Child Care, Finance, Business Administration, Engineering and traditional Trade appointments are all likely to be on offer. Modern Apprenticeships

in The Highland Council will be open to existing staff as well as new recruits thereby helping to secure the future workforce and provide public services.

The creation of a new Modern Apprenticeship Programme in The Highland Council, which will aspire to create 150 new apprenticeships within 2 years, was approved by Members of the Council's Corporate Resources Committee in August.

The starting salary for an apprentice is £15,488. As the opportunities are identified, application forms and full details of the posts can be found on the MyJobScotland website:

www.myjobscotland.gov.uk/councils/highland-council (external link)

Spending safely



Buying by internet, phone or mail order or on the high street this Christmas.

UK consumers spend billions of pounds when shopping for Christmas gifts for family and friends. However, how many of us know our shopping rights or what to do if things go wrong?

Consumers have extra protection when they shop online. These rights also apply if you shop over the phone; or from a mail order catalogue; or from a TV shopping channel.

Here are a few tips from The Highland Council Trading Standards to ensure that you are a savvy shopper this Christmas:

Consumers can talk to an advisor for help and advice from Citizens Advice Consumer Service on **0345 04 05 06** or by going to: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/get-more-help/if-you-need-more-help-about-a-consumer-issue/

For further information on your rights go to Highland Trading Standards news page at: www.highland.gov.uk/tradingstandardsnews

Buying online (distance sales contracts)

The Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013 were introduced on 13th June 2014 and require traders to give you certain information, as well as give you cancellation rights, when shopping at a 'distance'. These regulations have since been their introduction to include "off-premises sales" contracts.

Off-premises sales contracts include sales away from trader or business premises (e.g. a consumers home) as well as distance sales contracts.

• Contacting the retailer

Online retailers have to give details of who they are and provide a geographical address and an email address at which to contact them.

• Read terms and conditions before you order!

Check out terms and conditions regarding special price offers and sale items to ensure you are getting the price advertised. Also check for extra charges such as 'delivery charges' which may not be added on to your final bill until you confirm your order.

• Cancelling your order

You can cancel your order for goods ordered online anytime from the moment you place your order up to 14 days after you receive it. However, traders can withhold a refund until goods are returned.

• What you can't return

There are some items you can't return if you simply change your mind, such as CDs, DVDs or software if you've broken the seal on the wrapping, perishable items such as food and flowers, and tailor-made or personalised goods.

• Returning goods

If an online shop doesn't explain who pays to send returned goods back, then they must pay. Otherwise it is the consumers' responsibility to return the goods to the trader no later than 14 days after cancellation. A business can deduct money from a refund if goods have been used beyond reasonable handling.

• Refunds

No fee may be charged for reimbursement of a refund and all payments should be made using the same means of payment, unless the consumer has agreed

otherwise. Reimbursement must be made without delay and no later than 14 days after the trader receives the goods back or has supplied evidence of having sent the goods back.

• Provision to prevent hidden costs

The new requirements offer further protection from potential hidden costs in that they:

- Prohibit excessive surcharges for payment methods.
- Trader telephone helplines consumers must not pay more than basic rate of call.
- Traders must obtain consumers active consent for any additional payments (no tick boxes allowed!).

Remember: If the trader does not provide you with information on your cancellation rights, the cancellation period can be extended by up to 12 months depending on if / when the information was provided.

Further advice and information for consumers can be found at: www.highland.gov.uk/distancecontracts

Buying on the high street and online

Returning faulty goods

New provisions are now provided under the Consumer Rights Act 2015 for both purchases you make 'off-premises' (e.g. online) or on premises, in that not only must the seller have the right to sell the goods but the goods must:

- Be of satisfactory quality
- Be fit for a particular purpose
- Match the description, sample or model
- **NEW** Be installed correctly – where installation has been agreed as part of the contract.

Remedy for breach - Goods (Full Refund)

- **NEW** short term right to reject (30 day time limit). If goods do not meet statutory requirements consumer is entitled to reject the goods within 30 days. (The 30 days starts from purchase; delivery or completion of contract - whichever is later).

- **NEW** - A full refund must be given without delay and within 14 days of trader agreeing that the consumer is entitled to a refund.

Burden of Proof:

A consumer can also choose (as a remedy) a:

- Repair OR
- Replacement OR
- Price Reduction OR
- Final Right to Reject

If the fault is discovered within 6 months of delivery, it is assumed that fault was there at time of delivery unless the trader can prove otherwise or unless there are signs of excessive wear and tear or misuse. If you are claiming repair or replacement more than six months after purchase, the burden of proof is back to YOU, the consumer.

Delivery of Goods – Failure to deliver on time

A consumer can treat the contract

as at end if:

- the trader has refused to deliver the goods;
- delivery of the goods within the time was essential, taking into account all relevant circumstances;
- the consumer has told the trader that delivery within the time was essential;
- in all other circumstances the consumer can make time of the essence and then bring the contract to an end.

Delivery times - Where there has been no agreement about when the goods will be delivered, the goods must be delivered 'without undue delay' and in any event 'not more than 30 days' after the contract was entered into.

Remember: If the goods that you have bought are faulty or not what you ordered or the goods you have ordered do not arrive or do not arrive on time, you have rights against the seller!

Be safe paying online this Christmas

Don't fall foul of online scams or fraud this Christmas - take a few simple steps to protect yourself:

Update your browser

Make sure you're using the latest version of your browser, and have it set to the highest security level and install updates when prompted. Have good virus protection, anti-spyware software and a firewall.

Avoid dodgy links

Don't navigate to sites by clicking links in emails or from adverts.

Buyer beware

Be aware that if you buy goods from a private individual and not a business that you do not have shopping rights.

You can only reject goods and ask for refund from a private individual if the goods you receive are '**not as described**'.

It's always worth looking at the seller rating and feedback.

Do some security checks

Secure sites will display a locked padlock or key symbol in the browser window. They will also have an address that begins 'https' instead of the usual 'http'.

Choose your payment method wisely

Make your payment either through Paypal or by debit/credit card. Under Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act 1974 (as amended) you have extra rights if you pay for single items which cost £100 or over, as both your credit card company and the retailer could be equally liable for goods which turn out to be either faulty; mis-described or do not arrive.

Be savvy about your password

Avoid using passwords that you've used before.

Affordable new homes to be built in Drumnadrochit

Work has commenced on the construction of five new affordable homes at Drumnadrochit which will be earmarked to help retain local young people in the community.

Celebrating the start of works by Compass Building and Construction Services, Local Councillor and Leader of The Highland Council, Cllr Margaret Davidson was joined by project partners from the Scottish Government, Highland Housing Alliance and Albyn Housing Association at a turf cutting ceremony held in November on the construction site.

The 5 homes in Drumnadrochit form the first phase of an overall wider housing development which includes 23 homes for social rent (including community care housing) and 4 for low cost home ownership.

The project has been assisted through loan funding made available to the developer utilising the Infrastructure Loan Fund set up with funding



provided by the Scottish Government and The Highland Council. The project forms part of the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal, aimed at stimulating sustainable regional economic growth.

The Highland Housing Alliance, based in Inverness, is a not-for-profit development company that builds private houses for sale and rent and facilitates affordable housing for families and people living in Highland communities. Further information on allocation of the 5 new homes is available from the Highland Housing Alliance on 01463 251132 or www.highlandhousingalliance.com

Invergordon tenants welcomed into their new homes

Nineteen new council houses in Invergordon are the latest new homes to be completed by The Highland Council.

The houses have been built at the newly named Dewdale Court, formerly the derelict Victoria Garage site on Invergordon High Street. The development is a mix of wheelchair, varying needs, and general needs flats and houses built around a courtyard just off the High Street at the Seabank Junction, which was also improved as part of the Housing works.

The project was funded by The Highland Council as a part of the agreed Council House Build Programme with grant assistance provided by the Scottish Government.

The houses were designed by Trevor Black Architects, built by O'Brien Homes, and are all for affordable rent.

The development has been selected as a pilot for an exciting new collaboration between the Highland



Photo: welcoming Karen and Andrew Sutton to their new home are L to R: Principle Housing Manager Derek Manson; Cllr Maxine Smith; Housing Options Officer Kay Odell and Cllr Pauline Munro

Council, NHS Highland with Birchwood Highland.

All the houses have now been rented to tenants who are either existing council tenants who are transferring to a new home or are applicants from the Highland Housing Register.

Success at national Awards for Council's Planning Service

The Highland Council have achieved one of the highest rates of electronic submission for planning and building standards applications in Scotland (over 90%) and been praised by the Scottish Government as a great example of success.

The Highland Council received two awards at the 2017 Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning.

The first Award was in the "Process" Category for the Highland eDevelopment project. This has delivered a transformation with over 6,000 planning and building standards applications and enquiries submitted, assessed and determined electronically, avoiding significant printing costs and delivering an enhanced service for customers.

The second Award was in the "Place" category for the Nucleus Building in Wick. In early 2015 planning permission was granted for a building for archives of

the UK civil nuclear industry and the historical archives of Caithness and the "Nucleus", opened in February this year.

The Judges felt this was a wonderful, strong and robust piece of architecture which was delivered on time due to the planning team working so quickly and effectively.

The proposal was subject to pre-application discussions with relevant consultees, coordinated by the Council. The pre-application facilitated a partnership approach and professional knowledge sharing at the outset. Matters identified were addressed by the applicant, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

The Council's management of the application process is an excellent example of facilitating development from pre-application stage to completion on the ground in a tight timescale.



Forever Families Wanted

Families needed for Highland children of all ages for adoption or permanent fostering

We are looking for families who can support children through the challenges as well as the rewards of adoption or permanent fostering.

There is a particular need to recruit parents who can care for children with:

- Disability
- Developmental delay
- Brothers and sisters – keeping them together

We need families from a variety of backgrounds who can make a lifelong commitment to Highland children. You don't need to own your own home or be married to adopt or be a permanent foster carer. You must have the ability to offer a stable loving home for a child or children who, for whatever reason, are unable to remain with their own family.

Can you be a forever family?

For more information contact us now at:

fostering@highland.gov.uk • or phone: 01463 703431



Community Reserve Volunteers initiative

The Community Reserve Volunteer is a new volunteering role with the Red Cross, supported by the Council. This initiative aims to recruit a pre-registered reserve force of volunteers who will be able to assist their community in the event of a major local emergency.

By pre-registering, members of the public will be contacted as soon as extra help is needed when a large-scale emergency occurs. Volunteers can choose on a case-by-case basis whether they wish to help out, and are fully insured and managed by the Red Cross.

Leader of the Council Margaret Davidson said:

“Community resilience is particularly important in the Highlands where we have many small, isolated, rural and island communities. There is already significant good will and capacity in our communities across the region, where our culture is to help each other and pull together in a crisis.

“This new scheme by the Red Cross is an excellent idea which will enable people to help others and themselves in an emergency situation, in an organised and practical way, supporting our public agencies and emergency services to do the jobs they are trained to do. I would encourage everyone to sign up to this volunteer initiative as it will make all our communities more resilient in times of need.”

It only takes ten minutes to sign up online at redcross.org.uk/reserves. People are required to watch a short training video, and fill in an online application form. In the event of a local emergency they will be mobilised at the appropriate time by the Red Cross, via text message.

When deployed, community reserve volunteers will be supervised by trained personnel from the Red Cross, never working alone. They will carry out practical tasks, such as filling sandbags, or preparing food for a flooded community, allowing emergency services and existing Red Cross volunteers and staff more time to concentrate on the more specialised tasks they have been trained to perform.



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£16m Highland innovation boost

A new £16 million initiative is to be launched in the Highlands to boost innovation.

The Northern Innovation Hub will focus on four key industry sectors. It will encourage the adoption of new technologies and create more opportunities to attract and retain young people.

The initiative forms part of the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal (CRD) and is being led by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE).

The Hub is a set of carefully targeted projects to strengthen innovation and increase competitiveness among businesses across The Highland Council area.

Over a seven year period it is expected to support more than 500 jobs and boost the Highland economy by around £26m a year.

Rather than a physical entity, the Northern Innovation Hub will be dispersed and designed to benefit both small and emerging enterprises, reflecting the geography and business make-up of the area.

It will focus on life sciences, tourism, food and drink and creative industries, as well as delivering a technology and young people strand. The young people emphasis will include the creation of new 12-month graduate placement opportunities in technology for small businesses, and 12-week summer student placements.

There will be support for 30 high-growth young or start-up companies each year and a 'coding academy' to train and develop a new generation of industry ready programmers and software developers.

In tourism the emphasis will be on digital and adventure tourism. This includes helping businesses embrace and exploit opportunities through digital enhancement across all aspects of their business. The initiative will also help adventure tourism operators accelerate their growth through collaboration and capitalising on the natural advantage of the Highlands.

An XpoNorth digital project will help creative industries test new products, access funding and increase their profile. There will be projects to help life sciences firms accelerate innovation towards commercialisation, attract inward investors and provide physical space for collaboration.

Food and drink projects are also being developed to support innovation and increase collaboration between industry, academia, research institutes and the public sector.

The Northern Innovation Hub will receive £11m of CRD funding, along with £3m from the European Regional Development Fund and £2m from HIE.



Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Iomairt na Gaidhealtachd 's nan Eilean

David Oxley, HIE's director of business and sector development, said:

“The Northern Innovation Hub is a great opportunity to support business innovation in a way that will deliver transformational change in the Highland economy. It will complement our other forms of innovation support and help address challenges facing the region such as geography, population and opportunities to collaborate.”

Councillor Allan Henderson, Chair of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee of The Highland Council, added:

“The Northern Innovation Hub will be a fundamental part of establishing the Highlands as a region of opportunity and growth with an emphasis on harnessing digital technologies, growing new business and developing relevant opportunities for young people.”



Extension to better Broadband Scheme

Ministers have confirmed that the Better Broadband Scheme will continue through 2018.

This will allow premises which are unable to access speeds of more than 2Mbps to continue to gain access to a basic broadband service in advance of them benefitting from superfast coverage or implementation of the Universal Service Obligation.



www.scotlandsuperfast.com/where-when/the-programme/alternative-solutions

You can check your broadband download speed over the BT Openreach network using the ADSL checker at: www.dslchecker.bt.com

Highland Council office move to Charles Kennedy Building

Some services will be moving from Fulton House to the new offices in Charles Kennedy Building from December.

The Charles Kennedy Building was the former Fort William Secondary school B-listed building, which has been regenerated and modernised with an extension to accommodate the Department of Works and Pensions and Job Centre Plus on the ground floor. The new name for the building is in tribute to the work of the late Charles Kennedy MP who attended Lochaber High School and represented the Highlands from 1983 until 2015.

The project has breathed new life into the listed building which has lain empty for twenty five years, transforming it into new Council offices to serve not just Fort William, but the whole of Lochaber.



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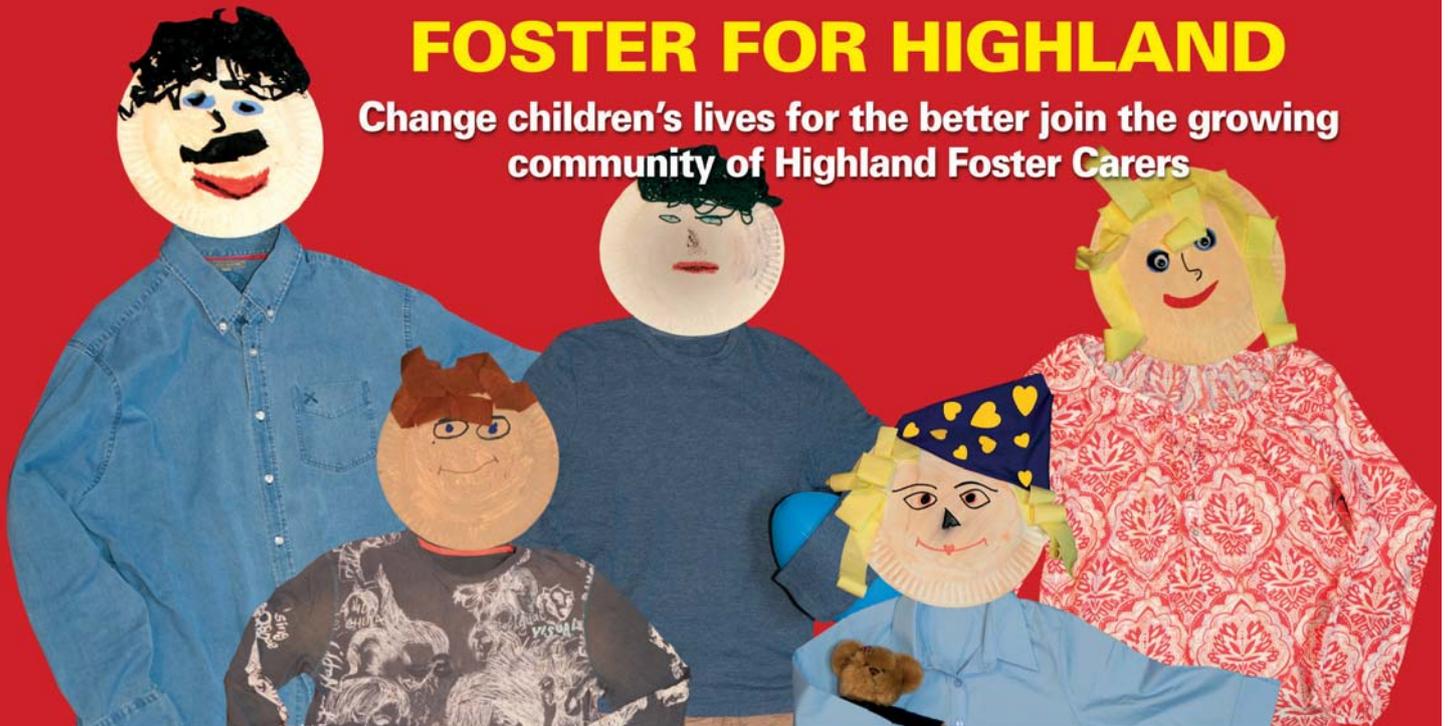
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fostering@highland.gov.uk – or phone: 01463 703431

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Service

The Highland
Council
Comhairle na
Gàidhealtachd

Highland Climate Challenge

A project to use an energy game with schools, in a ground-breaking initiative has been very successful and popular with children and teachers, as well as earning a “Highly Commended” in the category of Most Inspiring Energy Saving Project of the Year 2017 at the Energy Management Association Awards.

The game, “Highland Climate Challenge”, was developed in conjunction with the Scottish Sustainable Cities Alliance and a Scottish start-up company, Twenty Squares, and The Highland Council has rolled out the game as an extensive pilot which brought very positive feedback from participating schools and teachers.

At its most basic children attempt to build a carbon neutral island and protect it from the effects of global warming (rising sea level) by spending points they earn for logging energy efficient behaviours and learning about sustainability. The game is split into three main activities: the carbon diary, the learning hub and the island.

The carbon diary is where activities are logged such as walking to school instead of getting a lift, turning lights off when leaving a room, recycling, etc. Players are given points for logging these activities.

The learning hub has various different topics about sustainability, energy and the environment. Children can learn by reading, watching videos and doing quizzes, and are rewarded with points. These points are spent in the island section. Initially each child starts with a small island, but as they progress the sea level falls revealing more land. Users can build and add to the island, all while trying to keep it carbon neutral. If the island is neglected, the sea level rises back up again.

The game was used as a classroom resource and 50% of the teachers reported that pupils also played the game at home, further backing up the suggestion that parents and carers will be exposed to the Highland Climate Challenge. Some teachers stated it was used it as a homework resource, further showing its potential to benefit the home.



Photo: Fiona Boyd and Beatriz Fraga De Cal receiving the award from Lord Rysdale

The total modelled saving made was: 59,095kg of carbon; 161,736 kWh of energy; and £29,227, the average savings per player per week were higher in the Highland pilot at 19kg of CO₂. When looking at the top twenty teams in each pilot, the saving difference is even more evident: per pupil, per week Highland saved 45kg of CO₂.

Moving forward, the Highland Climate Challenge will be made available to all schools, building on the pilot’s success to educate more people on the climate and reducing waste, and saving more carbon and energy in the Highlands. Running the game over a longer length of time will help to reinforce positive behaviour towards saving energy and reducing waste, as well as allowing further learning opportunities.

The Council are promoting the success with partners in Europe as part of the eLighthouse project that involves energy saving and behavioural change in Norway, Sweden, Ireland, Greenland and Finland.

The game helps towards the Council’s Climate Change duties and is very Carbon Clever!

Citizens' Panel helps set priorities

Nearly 1000 residents from across the Highlands have responded to the council's latest Citizens' Panel survey. Each year the panel of just over 2300 adults are asked for their views on the performance of the council and to provide information on their attitudes to a range of issues affecting them, their families and their neighbourhoods.

The survey provides important information, which helps councillors set priorities.

A shorter survey of core questions using social media, targeting 16-34 year olds, was carried out in parallel to the main survey to capture the views of young people who tend to be much less represented in these surveys. This was extremely successful and has highlighted some key areas for consideration.

The majority of all respondents reported that the Council maintains good quality local services, listens to local people, provides value for money and is efficient.

The top three most important services for the public are also the top three used by most people; road repairs and potholes, winter road maintenance and refuse/bin collection. Primary and secondary education were also high on the list of important services to 16 to 34 year olds.

The highest levels of satisfaction are found for parks and open spaces, libraries, Primary and Pre-school

education, recycling facilities and walking routes. Payment of Council Tax and refuse collection were also scored highly by those who use these services. Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee, Councillor Alister Mackinnon, responding to the survey findings said:

“All councillors recognise the challenge of reducing budgets. However, there has been excellent work which has been done to achieve the continued good performance across the Council and I wish to thank staff for the important part they play in delivering these services.

“In previous years we've responded to the panel feedback by making sure that repairing our roads and investing in our schools remain budget priorities. Unsurprisingly, reducing budgets and an increased pressure on services has seen a decline in satisfaction levels in some areas. It is clear that with further cuts projected for the next three years, current service provision is unaffordable. This means we need to place emphasis on redesign and involving the public in how we do things differently in the future.”

98.1% of respondents consider the area within 15 minutes' walk of their home to be 'very' or 'fairly' safe compared to 96.7% the previous year. In comparison, 86% of the younger age group felt safe. This is the highest ever recorded figure and again demonstrates what a good place the Highlands is to live and do business.

The full 2017 survey report, provided by the UHI Centre for Remote and Rural Studies, can be accessed on our performance web pages at:

www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/download/407/how_we_are_performingpublic_performance_reports

Positive future for Poolewe Pool

A community swimming pool in Wester Ross has received support from The Highland Council towards its long-term sustainability.

Members of the Council's People Committee have agreed to transfer £45,911 for Poolewe Pool, from the Council's voluntary sector grants budget, to the budget for services commissioned from High Life Highland, and the service delivery contract with High Life Highland to be amended accordingly.

Earlier this year, following concerns over the future viability of the community asset, and at the request of the Board of Poolewe and District Swimming Pool Association, the management of Poolewe Pool transferred to High Life Highland on 21st June 2017.

High Life Highland has worked with Poolewe and District Swimming Pool Association to secure external funding for a significant

renovation project. The renovation will include an update to modernised plant and equipment, contributing to the longer term future of the facility. Transferring the budget for Poolewe Pool to High Life Highland will help strengthen these development plans and any applications for funding.



Service arrangements for Christmas and New Year

Service Centre

Closed: We will close at 4pm on 22nd December.

Open: We will be open as normal on 27th, 28th and 29th December (opening times 8am to 4pm).

Service Points

Our Service Points will be on reduced opening hours. For further details see the information page about each office: www.highland.gov.uk/directory/16/service_points

Inverness Registration Office

Closed: We will close at 4pm on 22nd December.

Please contact us on **07818 588 203** for advice or information regarding essential registrations in Highland.

Open: We will be open as normal on 27th, 28th and 29th December (opening times 9am to 4pm).

Recycling

Closed: Recycling centres will be closed 25th and 26th December and 1st and 2nd January.

Open: We will be open as normal on 27th, 28th and 29th December (opening times 9am to 4pm).

Online services

Contact us anytime online to report a problem, ask for something or make a payment:

- Report:
www.highland.gov.uk/report
- Request:
www.highland.gov.uk/request
- Pay:
www.highland.gov.uk/pay

Council out of hours telephone numbers

- Health and Social Care - **0845 601 4813**
- Roads, flooding, street lighting - **01349 886690**
- Housing - **01349 886691**
- Registration - 07818 588 203

Emergency out of hours telephone numbers

- All trunk roads - BEAR Scotland - **0800 587 1107**
- Gas Freephone - **0800 111 999**

- NHS 24 - call free on 111 if you are ill and can't wait until your regular NHS service reopens
- Police Scotland - **101** for all services
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service - **01463 240999** (24 hours)
- Scottish and Southern Electric Freephone - **0800 300 999**
- Scottish Water - **0845 601 8855** (24 hours)
- SEPA Floodline - **0845 988 1188**
- SEPA Pollution hotline - **0800 807060** (24 hours)

recycle for Highland
The Highland Council
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

This Christmas Remember to Recycle!

Please use your blue bin to recycle all of your:

- food & drink cartons
- mixed paper & cardboard
- food tins, drink cans & aerosols
- plastic bottles, pots, tubs & trays

*Food waste collection also available in Inverness City area.

Items must be clean, dry & loose!

Refuse & recycling collection dates may change over the festive season

YOUR NORMAL COLLECTION:	WILL BE COLLECTED ON:
Monday 25 th December 2017	Saturday 23 rd December 2017
Monday 1 st January 2018	Saturday 30 th December 2017
Tuesday 2 nd January 2018	Saturday 6 th January 2018

Recycling Centres closed on 25th, 26th December and 1st & 2nd January

Tuesday 26th December (Boxing Day) collections will be as normal!

www.highland.gov.uk/recycle 01349 886603 recycle@highland.gov.uk

Are you ready for winter?

Are you ready at home and on the move for winter?

Have you got a winter kit in your car?

Are you prepared for all eventualities?

Are you looking out for elderly neighbours?

Do you know how to find out and what to do if your school is closed?

We're once again supporting the Scottish Government's Ready Scotland campaign www.readyscotland.org and are urging people in the Highlands to take some time to get prepared and ready for winter and all kinds of severe weather so not to be caught out.

We have 105 gritters, 45 footpath tractors and 1 snow cutter ready for action and over 200 staff will be providing winter maintenance services on the 6,744kms of roads for which we have responsibility. Trunk roads in Highland are the responsibility of Transport Scotland and their operators Bear Scotland.

Salt Stocks

Our road salt stocks are currently at 35,000 tonnes with another 25,000 tonnes due for delivery shortly and arrangements are in place to re-stock during the winter if required.

Gritting policy & priority routes

We grit our roads according to policy and priority. Primary routes are gritted Mondays to Saturdays 6am to 9pm and on Sundays and public holidays from 7am to 9pm. Secondary routes will follow the completion of Primary routes and are gritted Mondays to Saturdays from 6am to 6pm within available resources. 'Other' routes are treated as resources permit. In extreme conditions all efforts will be made to keep Primary routes clear.

Grit/salt bins on council roads have a telephone number displayed on them to allow the public to request a refill. The Council's Winter Maintenance Policy and existing local area gritting maps are on the council's website at: www.highland.gov.uk/gritting

School closures

To find out if Highland schools are closed check the Council's website: www.highland.gov.uk/schoolclosures or call the school information line on **0800 564 2272** and dial in your local school PIN number to get the latest pre-recorded message from the head teacher. The list of school PIN numbers is on the council's website at: www.highland.gov.uk/schoolclosures Make sure you have the phone number and PIN number ready in a handy place now.

FLOODLINE

- Did you know 30cm of flowing water could move the average family car?
- Around 125,000 properties are a risk of flooding in Scotland

SEPA's floodline provides live flooding information and advice on how to prepare for, or cope with, the impacts of flooding 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Why not sign up and receive free flood messages for your area direct to your phone? **Be prepared.**

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Scottish Environment Protection Agency

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floodlinescotland.org.uk

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