

# Highpoints

# Sàr Phuingean

Local Voices,  
Highland Choices

Council Programme pg3

Exploring Highland  
history and heritage

Archaeology Festival pg4



LOCH ABAR 2017

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October to Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October

Read about the Mòd on page 7





# Contents

- 3 Council Programme
- 4 Highland Archaeology Festival
- 6 Praise for world beaters
- 7 Royal National Mòd 2017
- 8 LEADER funding secured
- 10 250th Youth Trainee
- 11 Apprentice Star
- 12 Archimedes Screw
- 13 Scottish Award recognises Council
- 13 It's yours, Claim it!
- 14 Augsburg Apprentices
- 16 Bulky Uplift service
- 17 Civic Inverness Medal
- 18 West Link
- 19 Rugby Club
- 20 Muir of Ord Rail Bridge
- 20 Top Planning award
- 21 Beat Doorstep Crime
- 22 River Connections
- 23 Sculptural Destination
- 24 Lost dogs return home
- 26 New Wick Campus
- 26 Top brass tuition
- 27 Caol Joint Campus

## Contact us

### Write to:

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

**Email: [corporate.communications@highland.gov.uk](mailto:corporate.communications@highland.gov.uk)**

**Phone: 01463 702020**

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Cover photo by John Paul Peebles

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

# Welcome Fàilte

Welcome to the latest edition of our magazine Highpoints (Sàr Phuingean).

In this issue you can read about a wide variety of initiatives and developments across Highland. These help to illustrate each of the five themes in our Council Programme, 'Local Voices, Highland Choices'.

**A place to live:** The Archaeology festival highlights the wealth of history and heritage we have in the Highlands and will hopefully inspire young and old to explore and find out more about the place in which we live.

**A place to learn:** Pictures from Wick Campus and the Caol Joint Campus show off some of the fabulous new educational facilities we are creating in Highland for our young people. You can also read about the impressions of Augsburg exchange students who visited this summer as part of our

twinning programme.

**A place to thrive:** Pages 8 and 9 describe a number of projects which have benefited from LEADER funding which enables applicants to invest in community projects their area.

**A welcoming place:** Lochaber is preparing to welcome the 2017 Royal National Mòd, promoting our region and celebrating the Gaelic language and culture with an international audience.

**A redesigned council:** Our staff have redesigned the bulky uplift service bringing improvements in service as well as releasing £57,000 of savings. This is just one of the many redesign projects that are underway in the council.

These are just a few stories about the work of The Highland Council. Why not follow us on twitter @highlandcouncil to find out more about what is happening in your area.

Enjoy reading!



**Bill Lobban** Highland Council Convener



# Council Programme agreed - Local Voices, Highland Choices

The Highland Council has agreed a five-year Programme which sets out a number of strategic goals across 5 themes: a place to live, a place to learn, a place to thrive, a welcoming place and a redesigned council.

Council Leader, Margaret Davidson said:

“Our Programme builds on the foundations of localism that we have been establishing over recent months. We are committed to devolving more power to areas to make democracy work better for communities.

This is an exciting and energetic region full of entrepreneurs and we need to build on the undoubted strengths in our communities. Workforce planning

is crucial for our future and we must plan to grow our own skilled workforce to meet the needs of tomorrow, with early years provision, support for schools, modern apprenticeships, and supporting and growing job creation and opportunities across the region.

In tandem with growing jobs and opportunities we need to ensure we have places for people to live and thrive. We have an acute housing need and we will be ambitious with our targets for new homes and encouraging the private sector to join with us in our ambition.”

She continued:

“There are many risks, mostly fiscal, to the successful outcome of our Programme, but never better opportunities. This programme must have cross-chamber support and the next step is to discuss the detail with members and engage with our communities and partners in order to deliver the best we can for Highland.”

The agreed priorities will form the basis of the Council’s corporate and service plans.

“74 new and returning elected members together with Chief Executive Steve Barron, Leader Margaret Davidson, Convener Bill Lobban and former Depute Chief Executive Michelle Morris”



Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon

# Celebrating Highland Archaeology, History and Heritage



• Highland Archaeology Festival •  
Fèis Arc-eòlais na Gàidhealtachd

## Archaeology Festival to showcase Highland's historic past

The high point of the year for celebrating the local heritage of the Highlands started on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September. For two weeks, the Highland Archaeology Festival offers, throughout the Highlands, a range of walks, talks, workshops, exhibitions, the annual conference special children's activities and other events for all ages.

Now in its 24<sup>th</sup> year, the festival features over 80 events, special exhibitions at museums throughout the Highlands, a Museums Trail with 16 participating museums and a geocache trail exploring our rich heritage from prehistoric times through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Highland Council's Archaeologist Kirsty Cameron said:

“We're delighted that so many organisations and museums have again offered such a range of activities which celebrate archaeology, and history from earliest settlers to modern times. Walks to special places in the Highlands and talks describing aspects of our heritage are always popular. But this year we also have a range of unusual activities showing how our local heritage links to many other aspects of the Highlands. Back by popular demand is an archaeology pub quiz, craft activities and a

hands-on workshop afternoon at Highland Council. We're particularly pleased to have two high profile lectures, one by Cecily Spall focusing on medieval excavations at Portmahomack and Eilean Donan Castle and one by Dr Alison Sheridan of the National Museum of Scotland discussing how DNA analysis is changing our understanding of Highland prehistory.”

Chair of The Highland Council's Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee, Councillor Allan Henderson said:

“The Highland Archaeology Festival is the premier event of its kind in Scotland, and attracts people from a wide area. We live in an area where the heritage is so accessible, and many local societies and museums promote their local area and projects. Scotland's Archaeology Strategy notes that archaeology is for everyone, contributing to our wellbeing and knowledge, and to our economic growth and quality of life. What better way to showcase this than by a festival stretching across the Highlands and celebrating the range and diversity of Highland heritage. I particularly would like to thank all the event organisers for their time, imagination and effort, as the festival would not be possible without them.”

There are several activities to tempt people to explore further afield. Sixteen museums have chosen a special object in their collections. A passport is available in the festival brochure or from the website where participating museums will record the visit – and the person with the most stamps will win a prize. New this year is a HAF2017 geocache trail, where special geocaches have been hidden at sites related to Highland heritage. A special afternoon at the Highland Council headquarters in Inverness on the 13<sup>th</sup> October provides an opportunity to learn new skills, from photography to building survey, and how to use the Council's database of all known heritage, the Historic Environment Record.

The annual Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Research conference, also at Council Headquarters in Inverness, has a fascinating series of talks ranging from prehistory to modern remains, as well as lots of displays from local groups and museums. A special round-table discussion session will explore dating methods in archaeology. The festival website: [www.highlandarchaeologyfestival.org](http://www.highlandarchaeologyfestival.org) provides information on all the activities.



**HISTORY  
HERITAGE &  
ARCHAEOLOGY**

• 2017 •



Photo: Pictured getting ready to hunt for treasure using the Geo-cache are Denis Fyfe from Avoch Primary School and Cllr Allan Henderson.



Events guide  
lùl thachartasan

The Highland Council  
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Highland Archaeology Festival  
Fèis Arc-eòlais na Gàidhealtachd

30<sup>th</sup> Sept - 15<sup>th</sup> Oct 2017

HISTORY HERITAGE & ARCHAEOLOGY  
• 2017 •

Celebrating Archaeology, History and Heritage  
A' Comharrachadh Arc-eòlas, Eachdraidh is Dualchas



# Praise for world beaters



Lochalsh Junior Pipe Band

Ross and Cromarty Pipes & Drums School and Lochalsh Junior Pipe Band achieved the ultimate accolade by becoming **World Pipe Band Champions** in their respective grades (Novice A and Novice B) in Glasgow in August.

Highland Council Piping Instructors Niall Matheson and Niall Stewart, and drumming Instructor Drew Caldwell were congratulated and thanked for all the additional time they spend working with these groups by the Council's Music Development Officer, Norman Bolton.

Mr Bolton said:

“Winning a competition at this level is a huge achievement, not only from a playing perspective but also in overcoming the additional geographical challenges associated with living in the Highlands, while competing in a largely central belt based activity. The bands' successes are also testament to the support of local communities, parents and the pupils who choose to participate in addition to their weekly lessons.”

The World Pipe Band Championships were held at Glasgow Green. This year 219 Pipe Bands and 8,000 pipers and drummers competed. Around 35,000 people attended the event over 2 days.

Winning the World Pipe Band Championships is the ultimate piper and drummers' dream.

The Worlds competition is adjudicated by the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association.



RACPADS warm up at the Worlds



Ross and Cromarty Pipes & Drums School



# Lochaber prepares to welcome the 2017 Royal National Mòd

The Royal National Mòd takes place in Lochaber from Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October to Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October and it's set to be a record-breaking year for the festival, with participant numbers expected to exceed 3,600 - the highest in a decade.

The nine-day spectacular of Gaelic music, arts and sport, organised by An Comunn Gàidhealach and supported by The Highland Council, will take place in Fort William for the first time in ten years.

Last year's event generated £2.5m for the host location, the Western Isles, and organisers are confident they'll see a similar impact in Lochaber, renowned for its outdoor tourist attractions and welcoming community.

Scotland's biggest Gaelic Cultural Festival will kick off on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October with a torchlight procession, which will see

hundreds of people weave through the streets of Fort William. The procession will conclude at the Nevis Centre where a glittering opening ceremony will take place.

The Mòd is the most important festival of the Gaelic language in Scotland. It sees thousands of competitors from Scotland and across the world, including a delegation of American

“ The Mòd puts Gaelic on local, national and international platforms ”

competitors this year, take part in or watch over 200 competitions in highland dancing, sport, literature and drama, as well as Gaelic music and song.

Alongside the main competitions, The Mòd Fringe returns with a bustling programme filled with traditional music, book launches, concerts and art forms of every description, throughout the festival week.



Detail of the Fringe festival programme can be found at:

[www.ancomunn.co.uk/nationalmod/fringe](http://www.ancomunn.co.uk/nationalmod/fringe) as well as in various pubs, hotels and other venues local to Lochaber.

Cllr Alister Mackinnon, Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee said:

“ We are delighted that the Royal National Mòd is returning to Lochaber, an area in Highland where Gaelic and its associated culture remains part of the community. We are also pleased to be supporting The Royal National Mòd as the event has a great deal to offer the Gaelic community. It will be a pleasure to welcome all the visitors to the Highlands, including those from overseas, who should enjoy the convivial atmosphere, the great range of singing and musical competitions, the many informal ceilidhs, lectures and the various events on offer as part of the exciting fringe programme. The Mòd puts Gaelic on local, national and international platforms, as it provides the opportunity to showcase the best of our language, culture, in the areas where we live, learn, and work.

“ I believe that the Mòd will have a positive impact in the area and official studies show that it contributes hugely to the economy of the area where it is hosted. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mòd Loch Abar Local Committee for their hard work, especially in relation to fund raising, and I wish Mòd Loch Abar every success. ”

**Photo left to right:** Pupils from Bun Sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar show off their skills ahead of the Royal National Mod with Ciara MacDonald (11), Owen MacRaild (9), Shane O'Rua (10), Arran Stephen (10), Seumas MacFarlane (10), Seumas Stevenson (9)



Photo by John Paul Peebles



# Projects across the Highlands secure LEADER funding

Photo left to right:  
John Fotheringham  
(Chair of Sutherland Local  
Area Partnership);  
Jodie Fraser; Chris O'Brien,  
(Lochaber Chamber of  
Commerce); and  
Scott Armstrong  
(VisitScotland)



Photo by John Paul Photography

A number of groups across the Highlands are celebrating after successfully securing funding from the Highland LEADER Programme.

Potential applicants are encouraged to come forward for a share of the £6 million still available for projects benefitting communities in mainland Highlands, the Small Isles and Skye, excluding Inverness and the Cairngorms National Park.

Nairn Sports Club was awarded funding of £65,000 from LEADER. Steve Jack, President of Nairn Sports Club said:

“Our current facilities were built when membership

numbers were around 250. The existing facilities are in need of redevelopment and refurbishment to accommodate our membership which has grown to over 900 members.

“The grant from LEADER will allow us to alter the existing building to form new changing rooms and social space. The building will also be extended. The additional space and reorganisation of the current gym will make better use of the facilities which can be used by anyone in the community. By extending the building we will be able to introduce more initiatives that promote health, well-being and rehabilitation.”

Lochaber Chamber of Commerce will also benefit under the latest funding round, with an award of £35,000 from LEADER. The Chamber's Destination Manager, Chris O'Brien, said:

“We will produce a series of short videos to promote Lochaber as the best place in the UK to experience the outdoors. The videos will feature a wide range of locations, tourism businesses and local people. The digital campaign will also encourage visitors to the area to use the hashtag **#myoutdoorcapital** to share their experiences of Lochaber.”





Photo by John Paul Photography



Photo left to right:  
David Godden (Chair of the Inner Moray Firth South Local Area Partnership), Pauline Barron, Craig Urquhart, Steve Jack (Nairn Sports Club)

“ LEADER funding will also contribute towards the development of promotional materials showcasing Lochaber to cruise ship operators and customers. We will also help local businesses to make the most of the opportunities from the increased number of visitors to the area as a result of the new pontoons in Fort William. ”

Also benefiting from a funding boost of £34,997 from LEADER is Glenelg and Arnisdale Development Trust. Tina Martin from the Development Trust said:

“ The existing play area in Glenelg is very popular but no

longer fit for purpose as it floods and needs upgrading. The grant from LEADER will allow us to create a new play park adjacent to the current play site on land owned by the Trust.

“ A number of new innovative pieces of play equipment will be installed for all to enjoy, along with safety surfacing. As the park is near Glenelg Brochs, we are excited that the park will include replica brochs seating as well as new interpretation boards to provide information about the Brochs. We hope the park will become a visitor attraction and gathering place for local people and visitors to the area. ”

The Highland Strategic Local Action Group is responsible for the overall management and delivery of the Highland LEADER Programme.

It's Chair, Jon Hollingdale said:

“ LEADER aims to promote economic and community development within rural areas. Individuals, groups, organisations and businesses can apply for funding towards a wide range of projects. Funding is allocated on a first come, first served basis so we would encourage applicants to get in touch as soon as possible to discuss any project ideas and to find out how LEADER can help. ”

For further information about the Highland LEADER Programme [www.highlandleader.com](http://www.highlandleader.com)



Photo: Children from Glenelg in the current Playpark

Photo by John Paul Photography



# 250th Youth Trainee Leah Muir tells her story

I began my placement in the Communications and Resilience team at The Highland Council in early August after being at Barnardo's for over two months.

Drew Mcneil, an Employment Support Supervisor, helps to get young people on The Highland Council's Work Based Learning Programme to work as Youth Trainees in different departments. I am Drew's 250th Youth Trainee, showcasing how many young people he has helped to gain experience and a great opportunity. While being Drew's 250th Youth Trainee, the number continues to grow as he puts more young people into the training programme here at The Highland Council.

Drew also works closely with the Barnardo's charity and their Barnardo's Works Project which is where I was situated before I came to The Highland Council. It was there that I was introduced to Drew which led on to me gaining this fantastic opportunity. Coming from an area, which is viewed as deprived in the Highlands, there aren't very many employment opportunities for someone my age, having only recently left school with little work experience.

Patricia Anderson, Barnardo's Works Manager, created the Barnardo's Works Project, allowing young people between the ages of 16-24, who are not in education or employment, a better opportunity and more available access to employment. The program helps a group of young people to prepare for work, before Barnardo's find a suitable work experience

placement for each young person, placing them there for a rough time span of 10 weeks, unless the employer requests differently.

I paid a visit to Barnardo's recently reuniting with Patricia Anderson and Morven Docherty, two staff members at Barnardo's who mentored my group when I attended, to ask them a couple of questions about what it is that they do at Barnardo's and why they do it. In fact, Morven was new to Barnardo's just like everyone in our group.

We weren't sure what to expect when we walked through those doors and neither did she. I asked them how they came to be at Barnardo's.

Morven said:

“I needed a change and being a 'people person', this was ideal for me. My previous experiences in a working environment were working in a Pharmacy and Retail.”

Patricia came from an HR background. She said:

“What led to me to Barnardo's was my passion for young people getting opportunities and helping young people. I feel that employers have forgotten what it's like to start out when they don't employ young people. This is what drove me to set up the Barnardo's Works Project 9 years ago.

“It's now at the point where employers phone us and ask for help to fill in vacancies within their companies, which is huge as it's as if we were a job agency. It shows us that we must be doing a good job and have a



good reputation with employers across the Highlands.”

Morven added:

“Getting good feedback from the employers as well as the young people who have gone on work experience is really satisfying. Watching them grow and develop into young working people is really rewarding as you know that you were part of their growth and helped them along the way.”

Barnardo's has helped dozens of young people all across the Highlands gain employment, all due to Patricia Anderson creating the Barnardo's Works Project because of her belief that young people deserve just as many opportunities as someone who has had lots of working experience. It has changed young people's lives for the past nine years, including my own, and will hopefully continue to help for many more to come.

I know this placement and the experience I will gain while being here at The Highland Council will give me a gigantic boost, not only for my CV when I move forward in my career, but also for my confidence throughout my life and I have Barnardo's, The Highland Council and Drew Mcneil to thank for that.

**Leah Muir, Youth Trainee**



# Good advice from an Apprentice Star

By Leah Muir, Youth Trainee

Alvin Hunte has been awarded two prestigious awards this year - the Building Technology Apprentice of the year award and Apprentice of the year at University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI).

Alvin now works as a Trainee Civil Engineer Technician for the Highland Council and is based in Golspie.

I had the fortunate opportunity to be able to meet with Alvin recently and ask him a couple of questions regarding his awards and how he got them, but first I asked him what his typical day was like. Alvin said:

“I prepare drawings for contracts, sites and also contractors. My job has a lot of drawing and surveying involved as well as a great deal of input into the design and blueprints of projects.”

Alvin Hunte put in the hours in order to get to where he is, using a lot of his spare time to study in order to pass his classes and achieve what he desired. He spoke about how at UHI you are given a lot of independent study time and how he believes that you can't go wrong if you use your time wisely, recommending that you use your free time to study and to revise what you learned that day. He highlighted and passionately put across the point that you should:

“enjoy what you're doing or what course you're studying and that is the main priority when figuring out what it is you want to go forward with as a career.”

The work he does today links to the Civil Engineering HNC that he studied in College, allowing him to take what he learnt at college and apply it directly to the work he does at Highland Council. Alvin Hunte certainly didn't take anything for granted while he studied at Inverness UHI and pushed forward, working to his greatest ability in order to pass his HNC, resulting in a fantastic job as a Trainee Civil Engineering Technician with The Highland Council.

I asked Alvin what advice would you give to someone who is interested in this or a similar career?

Alvin said:

“I would just say to go for it and dive right in, giving it 100%. It is certainly a really rewarding career and not just because you get to see some nice parts of the country. Put your mind to it and you can do almost anything.”

Alvin spoke about when he was younger and about how he wanted to be an architect, liking the idea of sketching buildings and designing, but he soon changed his goal to Civil Engineering as he enjoyed the more technical side of it. When he left school, he worked in a call centre in Dingwall for a while before he then went on to work with Westminster Council before his current post with Highland Council.

Alvin Hunte has proved himself time and time again, showing his managers, as well as people around him that hard work really does pay off and great rewards come to those who work hard for them.

Being able to meet Alvin was a pleasure - he was quite inspirational, showing me that if you really want something enough and you work hard for it, then there's nothing stopping you from achieving what it is you're striving towards. Alvin Hunte is a prime example of how hard works pays off, rewarding you in truly spectacular ways.



Photo: Alvin receiving his UHI award

Photo courtesy of UHI



# Archimedes Screw to generate power for Inverness



The Highland Council is planning to install a Hydro Electric Archimedes Screw at Whin Park Lade.

The 100KW turbine will control the water flow from the River Ness through to Whin Park and will be able to generate 672,529 KWh, which is equivalent to the power for 150 homes.

The renewable energy project is estimated to generate an income for the Council of around £90k to £120k at current prices. The annual operating cost will be in the region of £15k.

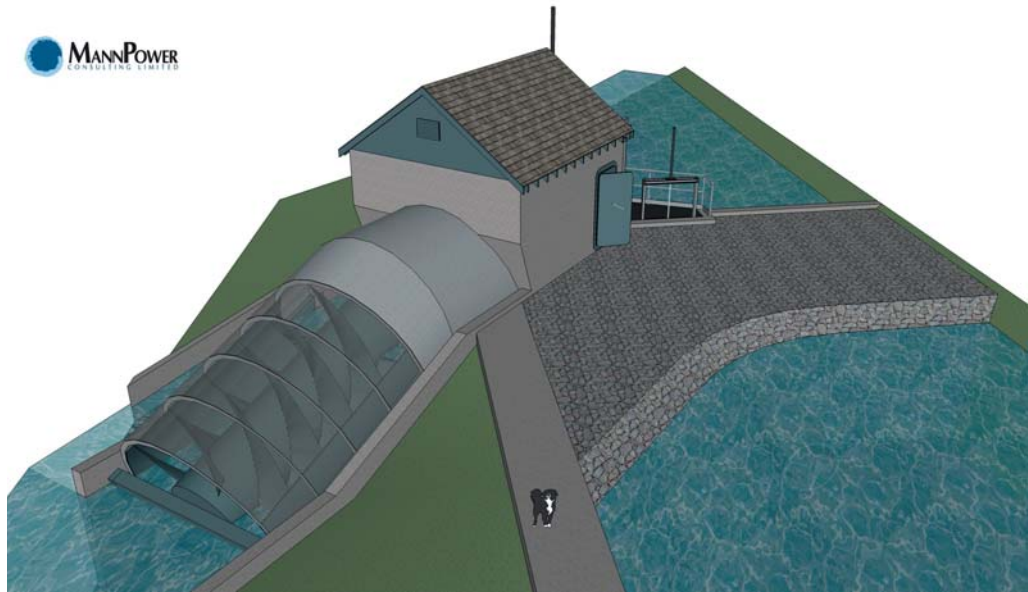
The electricity could supply council buildings, and local venues including Inverness Leisure and the Highland Archive Centre, generating further savings.

The installation will be 4.2m in diameter and allow a controlled water flow, as well as providing sufficient screen to protect various species of fish. The turbine is designed to have a low environmental impact.

Chair of the Council's Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee, Councillor Allan Henderson said:

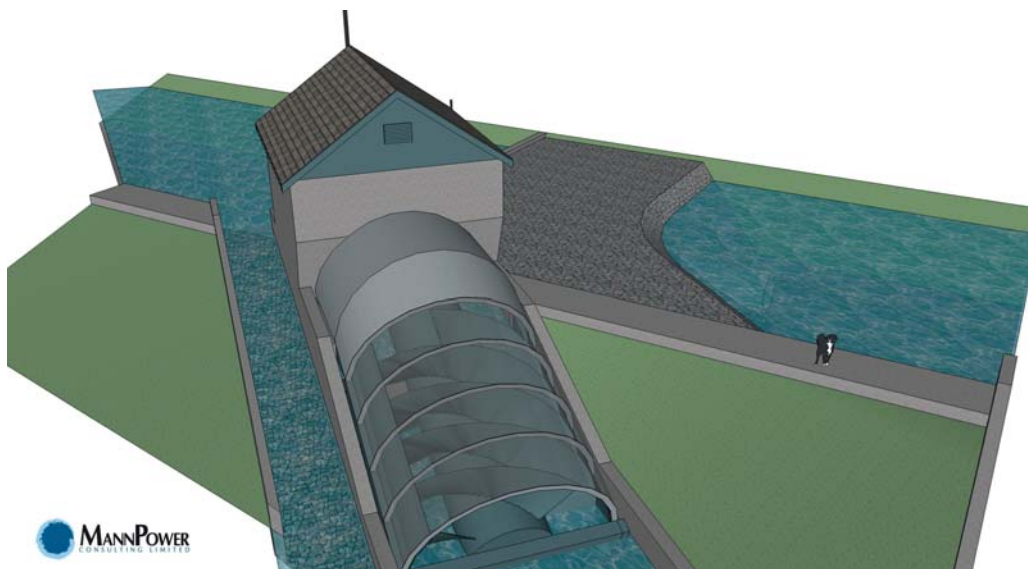
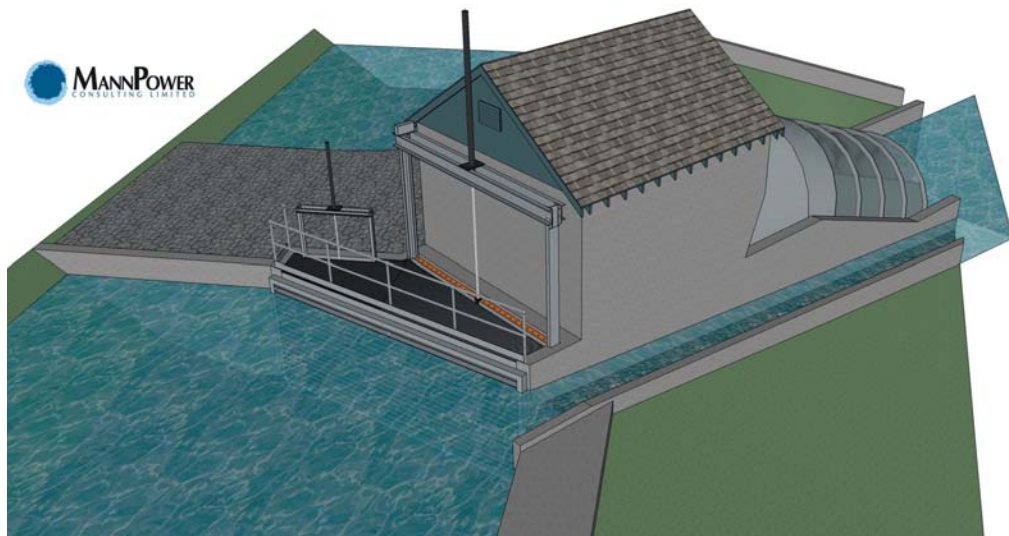
“This modern, innovative project provides an excellent opportunity for the Council to generate income and renewable energy and make savings.

The Archimedes Screw is a fascinating piece of engineering and technology which in itself should be a feature of significant interest and may hopefully inspire young scientists of tomorrow.”



The Highland Council contracted AMECFW and senior specialist in Archimedean crew hydropower systems, Mannpower Consulting Ltd, to develop the project design.

It is anticipated the planning application for the installation of the Torvean Micro Hydro Scheme Archimedes Screw will be submitted in Winter 2017 and will include consultation with relevant statutory consultees.





# Scottish Award recognises energy efficiency

The Scottish Energy Efficiency and Health Homes Award recognised the Council's work to assist with reducing energy use in Highland homes through the Home Energy Efficiency Programme for Scotland – Area Based Scheme, and the particular drive to identify and assist homes that are in fuel poverty or vulnerable to the cost of energy.

The Council has achieved substantial improvements to over 1200 properties across the Highlands by upgrading and replacing the insulation of the houses. The scheme works are undertaken by the Council partner E-On.



The Scottish Government Scheme, designed and delivered by councils, with local delivery partners, targets fuel-poor areas to provide energy efficiency measures to a large number of Scottish homes, while delivering emission savings and helping reduce fuel poverty. The Highland area-based scheme has run for 4 years and delivers on a range

of fabric measures, as well as heating to improve the energy rating of the homes to reduce energy bills.

This is the second national award that the Council scheme has taken, The Highland Council won the UK project of the year in 2015 at the national Green Deal & ECO Awards.

## It's yours

Find out which benefits you may be entitled to and claim them.

It is estimated that more than 500,000 cases of individuals or families in Scotland may not be claiming the benefits they are entitled to.

Scotland's social security system exists to help those in need and on low incomes and when your personal circumstances change. People shouldn't be worried about claiming what they are entitled to; that's what the system is there for.

Many of us will need this support at some point in our lives. Our personal circumstances can change very quickly: whether through losing a job, a family bereavement, becoming a carer, or having a child. But often we

don't realise that changes in our lives can mean we are entitled to additional support and that there is a range of benefits all of us are entitled to know about.

The Scottish Government is working with the Citizens Advice service in Scotland to help people find out what they're entitled to and to claim it. Citizens Advice Scotland has a providing a dedicated web page with all available information on benefits and tax credits, eligibility and how to access them, as well as a free benefits helpline.

For more information, visit: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/benefits](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/benefits)

or phone: **0800 085 7145** or alternatively support is available from the **Council's Welfare Support Team** on: **0800 090 1004**.

## Claim it!



# Augsburg Apprentices experience life in Scotland

As part of our Twinning programme, The City of Inverness and The Highland Council hosted twenty exchange apprentice students from Augsburg, Germany for two weeks in May this year.

During this period they spent a day with The University of The Highlands and Islands (UHI) and

a period of 9 days on a work exchange programme. All of the students were Administration Apprentices, working for the Augsburg and district local authorities. These authorities currently employ approximately 120 Administration apprentices and their total apprentice numbers are in the region of 300-350, a substantial commitment



for an authority of just 6000 staff.

The purpose of the work placements was to gain an understanding of a Scottish local authority, working practices, experience within their area of study and use of language skills.

The Highland Council and High Life Highland colleagues agreed to host the students in Learning and Development, Human Resources, Care & Learning, Business Support, Communications and Resilience, Policy, Archive Centre and Development & Infrastructure.

These placements provided rich and worthwhile environments for the students to meet their visit objectives. Council hosts all commented on the excellent language skills and enthusiasm demonstrated by their temporary German colleagues.



Photos courtesy of Vocational College Augsburg, Erasmus+





# Our visit to Highland

It all started with the help of the Town Twinning Committee in the year 2009.

Because of an Erasmus+ Project financed by the European Union, we – 20 apprentices from Augsburg, Germany – were given the chance in May 2017 to do work placements for two weeks with The Highland Council.

It is the 6th time for German trainees to be welcomed here in Inverness.

We were able to gain a lot of experience and in our two weeks we identified some differences to the public administration in Germany.

Firstly, we all serve an apprenticeship within the “dual system” like 60% of all secondary graduates in Germany. It combines the theoretical training in vocational colleges and on-the-job training, in our case, in local authorities. Right now, The Highland Council has only 30 apprentices.

Secondly, we have noticed that Highland Council has a much larger area (about half of the size of Bavaria) to manage. Even the



largest municipalities in Germany do not have such a large area to administer. Because of the large area, the employees of Highland Council often have to leave their workplaces for a day to attend meetings throughout the Highlands. In Germany, field service for administrative assistants is rare.

In addition, Highland Council is responsible for several tasks, which are provided by a different institution in Germany, such as health insurances.

Unlike in Germany, open-plan offices are widely used in Scotland. If three employees have to share an office in Germany, it is considered a lot.

The Highland Council is very keen on working as paperless as possible. In Germany efforts are being made to switch to this system, too, but it is still in progress.

In general, the administration in Scotland is very modern. A lot of social media are used, for example Skype, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Some employees work with two monitors and many have laptops to be mobile. Social media is even sometimes prohibited in German authorities.

Furthermore, we noticed that home-based offices are very common. In Germany this way of working is not yet widely spread.

The working hours in Scotland are different to Germany. People in Germany usually have to work 39 per week.

The office dress code at The Highland Council is smart casual. In Germany there is no dress code



except for the management.

Modes of address are not as formal as the German administration. Most Scottish employees use first names. The supervisor is even addressed by his/her first name. Usually in German authorities no one uses first names except for befriended colleagues.

During our time in Scotland we were also able to go on some excursions. Of course we visited the famous monster Nessie. But unfortunately she was not home. In Nairn we enjoyed a Sunday afternoon on the beach. A more serious sight was Culloden Moor – the famous battlefield. Highlights were our visits to Glen Ord Distillery, Dùn Èideann and Edinburgh. There we visited the castle and the Scottish Parliament.

We are very grateful to the Highland Council and to the Inverness College for their hospitality. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this work placement and to get an insight into the Scottish administration. We had a great time and learned a lot.





# £57k saved and service improved

You will soon be able to book bulky uplifts with just 24 hours' notice as part of a number of improvements to the service following a council-wide review which has also delivered significant savings.

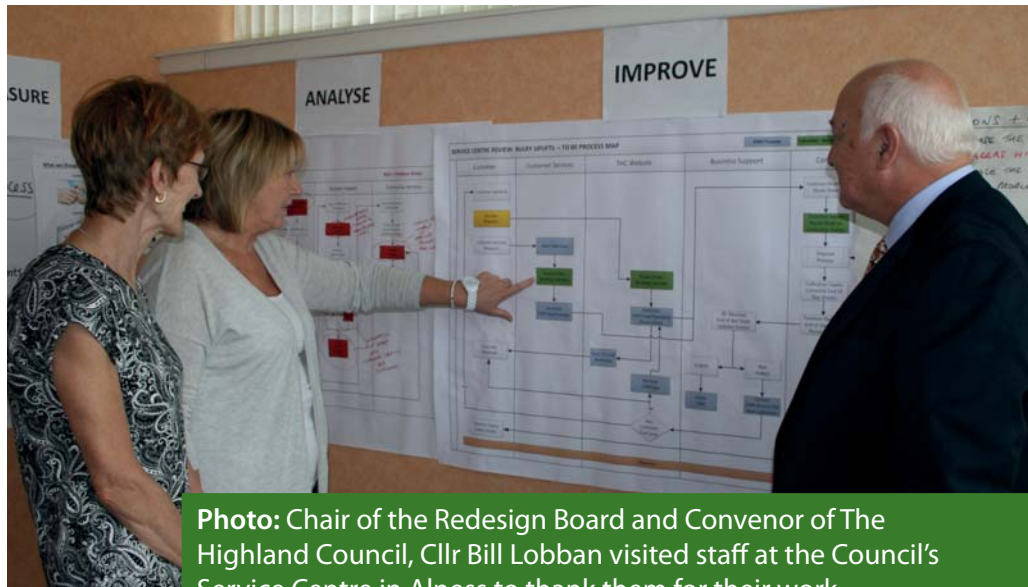
Last year a total of 216,510 calls were handled and processed by the Council's Service Centre in Alness. Service Centre staff played a key role in the review by helping to identify how improvements and efficiencies could be made to not only reduce the time taken to process requests and cut down the number of calls coming in, but to improve the bulky uplift service for customers.

A new web-based collection calendar is now available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to allow anyone looking to book a bulky uplift to find out the next available date. Before the review, bulky uplifts were not provided over the Christmas period, but people will now be able to request and receive bulky uplifts throughout the whole year.

By integrating data and cutting out duplication, staff handling time for bulky uplift bookings is being reduced. Following feedback and input from staff, requests now go direct to the teams doing the actual uplifts making the whole service more direct and responsive.

Improvements identified in the review have contributed to £57,000 of savings being delivered this financial year which represents 10% of the Service Centre budget.

Bulky uplifts is just one of several reviews being undertaken by the Redesign Board.



**Photo:** Chair of the Redesign Board and Convenor of The Highland Council, Cllr Bill Lobban visited staff at the Council's Service Centre in Alness to thank them for their work. He is pictured being shown details of the enhanced service by service centre staff Shirley Douglas and Rhona Macdonald who were involved in the Bulky Uplift service review.

The Council's bulky uplift service is for the disposal of unwanted large items and is available to households across the Highlands. The charge is £20.02 for up to 3 items and £40.05 for up to 6 items. Anyone looking to book an uplift can do so online by visiting:

[www.highland.gov.uk/request](http://www.highland.gov.uk/request) Choose 'Disposal of large household items'



Photo by The Highland Council



# Life saving act results in Inverness Medal

The civic Inverness Medal has been awarded to two members of Highland Council staff for saving a colleague's life by administering CPR.

At the City of Inverness Area Committee, Provost and Leader of Inverness and Area, Helen Carmichael presented the Inverness Medal to John Reid, Environmental Health Technical Officer and Richard Duncan, Trading Standards Enforcement Officer.

They both received medals for acting in the highest spirit of service to administer CPR to their colleague Ian Wilson who had suffered a heart attack while at work earlier this year on the morning of 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2017.

Provost Helen Carmichael read excerpts from a letter sent to her by Ian's wife Veronica regarding

the selfless acts of John and Richard in saving Ian's life.



Photo by Ewen Weather'spoon

**Photo right to left:** Provost of Inverness Cllr Helen Carmichael presents Richard Duncan and John Reid with civic Inverness Medals for saving Ian Wilson's life.

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The first of the central beams to connect the north and south side of the West Link bridge were put in place in March this year, with subsequent work on the bridge structure completed over the summer.

Plans are underway to find a name for the new bridge with a number of options going to a public vote this autumn. The new road is scheduled to open in December 2017.

The new pitches and clubhouse at Canal Parks are now complete.

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 West Link forms part of the Council's contribution to the



**Photo:** Provost of Inverness Helen Carmichael and Leader Margaret Davidson are amongst the first to walk across the new bridge.

Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon

City-Region Deal investment by partners, agreed in March 2016.

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.

The West Link will reduce congestion within Inverness City Centre and encourage cycling and walking by increased active travel links. Journey times will be improved and it will enable the development of significant areas for housing and other economic development at Ness-side and Torvean.

[www.highland.gov.uk/invernesswestlink](http://www.highland.gov.uk/invernesswestlink)



**Photo:** All weather rugby pitch and club house

Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon



# Creative Try for art installation at Rugby pitches

Two unique art installations combining rugby and art were recently installed at Inverness Rugby Pitches in the final phase of the Canal Parks development as part of the Inverness West Link Project.

Artist Angus Ross, and Senior Maker Steven Gray made the final preparations of the installations 'Line Out' and 'Touch Judge' which are sited close to the grass pitches of the rugby club and a footpath which will be frequented by walkers, runners and cyclists.

Councillor Graham Ross, Chair of the Community Liaison Group for the West Link project said:

“I am particularly pleased that the Rugby Club were involved in this project and I am sure that Angus Ross’s design will provide a welcome feature to the area not just for rugby fans for people using the nearby path for recreation.”

Commissioned by The Highland Council and High Life Highland, Artist Angus Ross explained:

“The ideas behind the commissions were that they should be responsive to the nearby Rugby Club and facilities while also linking and interacting with the local community.”

The public will have access to the art features when work is completed on the surrounding West Link works in the area in December.



Photo: Artist Angus Ross (seated) and Steven Gray installing the 'Line-out' artwork.



Photo by The Highland Council

Photos by The Highland Council





Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon

Photo left to right: Caitlyn Heggie, Cllr Margaret Paterson, Scott Fraser and Cllr Angela Maclean

## Official opening of Muir of Ord Rail Bridge

Pupils from Tarradale primary joined local councillors and guests to officially open the new £3.3m railway bridge in Muir of Ord.

The new crossing carries vehicles travelling on the A862 through the village over the main Inverness to Dingwall rail line and replaces the previous bridge which had a single lane traffic restriction on it. This old bridge was dismantled as part of the works.

The project was delivered on time and on budget. Throughout the works, the Council liaised closely with the community and after the ceremony the local Councillors paid tribute to their understanding and patience during the works.

Poised to cut the ribbon to mark the official opening in the photo above are Head Girl Caitlyn

Heggie and Head Boy Scott Fraser with Dingwall and Seaforth Ward Councillors Margaret Paterson and Angela MacLean.

## Top planning excellence award

The Pentland Firth and Orkney Waters Marine Spatial Plan has won the Excellence in Plan Making Practice category at the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Awards for Planning Excellence 2017.

These are the most established and respected awards in the planning industry. The Judging panel commented:

“This plan, a first of its kind for the UK, should be held up as best practice for other councils struggling to integrate land and marine planning into a single plan. It is an interesting and imaginative approach to marine planning and given Britain’s maritime heritage, it’s surprising there aren’t more plans like this one.”



Photo: James Green - Orkney Islands Council, Dr Shona Turnbull - Highland Council and Tracy McCollin - Marine Scotland



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- ✓ Fit a door chain or bar - and use it
- ✓ Expecting someone?  
Only let callers in if they have an appointment. The message is: if in doubt, keep them out!
- ✓ Always ask for ID.



**Think**

Expecting someone?  
Only let callers in if they have an appointment.



**Secure**

Use your door chain / spy-hole before opening the door.



**Question**

Ask for callers I.D. Verify by phone. But if in doubt, keep them out.

- ✓ Don't keep large sums of money at home.
- ✓ Look out for those in your community
- ✓ Report anything suspicious straight away
- ✓ Call 999 and ask for the police if you feel scared or threatened

Find out more at:

[www.scotland.police.uk/keep-safe/personal-safety/doorstep-crime-and-bogus-callers](http://www.scotland.police.uk/keep-safe/personal-safety/doorstep-crime-and-bogus-callers)



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# River Connections artwork breathes life into riverside

'River Connections' by award winning artist Mary Bourne is a series of inter-related works which was commissioned to highlight the ways the River Ness connects Inverness to other times and other places.

Newly appointed Chair of the Inverness City Arts working group, which commissioned the art work, Councillor Isabelle Mackenzie, took a walk down the river with Mary Bourne and Cllr Bet McAllister to view the art and hear about its meaning.

River Connections is one of a number of commissioned art installations which are being developed around the River Ness as part of the River Ness Art Project. The final project will be to create a digital trail around the river.

The scheme involved work inlaid and carved into the flood wall and pavement, and sculptural seating. A cycle of specially written poems was commissioned from Ken Cockburn, working to a brief drawn up by Mary. She also worked with George Gunn, a master dyker, to create sculptural seats that represent key points in the river's progress. These are its headwaters, the point at which the downward flow of the water is held in equilibrium by the upward flow of the incoming tide, and the point at which the river meets the sea.

Local people worked with poet, Ken Cockburn, to respond to the area at the mouth of the River Ness. Mary Bourne then taught them letter cutting, enabling them to carve their poems into



Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon

Photo: Chair of the ICARTs working group Councillor Isabelle Mackenzie (centre) with artist Mary Bourne (R) and Working Group member Councillor Bet McAllister (L).

stone to be incorporated into a seating area overlooking the mouth of the Ness – the Merkinch Circles

Mary's work, predominantly in carved natural stone, reflects on man's relationship with his environment and often deals with themes of subjectivity, the passage of time and change. The physicality of the objects she makes is very important and they are often highly tactile.

She says

“For me art is a medium for reflection and communication. Given the durability of my medium, this means communication not only between contemporaries, but between generations: stone warmed and shaped by my hands will perhaps again be warmed by the hands of someone in some unknowable time to come.”

More about the project can be found at:

[www.highland.gov.uk/rivernessart](http://www.highland.gov.uk/rivernessart)

Mary Bourne is an artist based in the rural North East of Scotland. Trained at Edinburgh College of Art and a John Kinross Scholar in 1985, her professional experience has included numerous public commissions, including interpretative artworks at Bennachie, Aberdeenshire; Mallerstang, East Cumbria and Mugdock Country Park, Milngavie. She has worked with high profile architects, as well as with the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust and Historic Environment Scotland on a contemporary carving project for the 16th century Riddle's Court on Edinburgh's Royal Mile.

Mary has exhibited widely in Britain and abroad. She has received a number of prizes and awards including the Meyer Oppenheim Award (1997) and Ireland Alloys Award (1996), both from the Royal Scottish Academy.



# The Sculptural Destination nears its completion



Photo: Annie Cattrell taking casts of rocks on either side of the Great Glen.

Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon

The Sculptural Destination, by artist Annie Cattrell, is one of the River Ness arts projects destined for the banks of the Ness at Friar's Shot.

Annie Cattrell has been taking casts of the rocks on either side of the Great Glen in preparation for the final sculpture. The pieces will be moulded in silicone, which does not damage the rocks, and cast in resin infused with bronze powder to shine in the sun or artificial light. The finished work will be about 7ft high. The sculpture is designed to frame a view of Inverness Castle when standing between the two faces.

Annie described the concept behind the 'Sculptural Destination'. She said:

“The Great Glen Fault is of great geological significance; one of the reasons being that it is the location and meeting of two distinct land regions (North West Highlands and Grampian Mountains). The Loch Ness area is still seismically active, the most

recent earthquake taking place in the early 20th century reaching 4 on the Richter scale.

“James Hutton, the 'father of modern geology', who proposed the idea of a rock cycle over geological time, famously said: "that we find no vestige of a beginning, no prospect of an end.

“Historically, a circular natural stone with a hole in the middle of it - the Adder stone - has been believed to have magical powers. The person looking into the hole or aperture of the stone might see a vision or forecast of the future.

“It is my intention to combine the scientific method, the understanding of the powerful nature of the folk law and the cultural need for predictions, forecasting and belief systems to attempt to determine the future. The sculpture Seer would draw upon these ideas and embed them into the physicality of the sculpture, making an interactive place and space of two sections where people could stand

between and envisage future positive dreams.”

Chair of the River Ness Arts working group, Councillor Isabelle Mackenzie said:

“It was fascinating to meet Annie and hear about the concept behind her sculpture which brings together the geological past, mythology and folklore. It will be a very special feature on the banks of the Ness for years to come and I am sure people will marvel and interact with the piece in many ways.”

Annie met with the local community at a meeting in Inverness and listened to suggestions for how the sculpture should be lit and interpreted.

The Sculptural Destination is scheduled to be completed and in place by mid 2018.

Annie Cattrell was born in Glasgow, studied Fine Art at Glasgow School of Art, University of Ulster and at the Royal College of Art.

She has exhibited widely including at Pier Art Centre; Anne Faggionato Gallery and Inverness Museum and Art Gallery.

Cattrell has completed residencies at Camden Arts Centre; The Royal Institution of Great Britain; The Royal Edinburgh Hospital; ACE Helen Chadwick Fellowship at Oxford University and at the British School at Rome.

She lectures at the Royal College of Art and is Reader in Fine Art at De Montfort University in Leicester.



# Lost dogs return home to Inverness Town House

Two lost dogs have been discovered and returned to their home at the Town House after decades in storage.

The two stone dogs, which originally stood proudly on the top of the A listed Town House, had been missing for many years, until by strange coincidence, within hours of the unveiling of the Town House, they mysteriously reappeared.

The two forgotten sculptures had been gathering dust in unmarked crates in storage in an outbuilding at the Council's Diriebught Road depot, when during an office move on the site, the crates were taken to museum stores. There, archivists discovered the two dogs and traced their origin to the Town House from archived photographs.

The restoration of the Town House included the creation of two new stone sculptures of wolves, and the scaffolding was due to start coming down

on the day after Project Manager, Jason Kelman was informed about the uncanny discovery.

Provost of Inverness Helen Carmichael said:

“This is a truly remarkable discovery! It is quite uncanny that they turned up by coincidence just at this time, with just hours to spare for the unveiling of the Town House. It is as if the dogs wanted to be found and returned to their rightful place.”

The original sandstone dogs are believed to be fine, high quality sculptures, with a huge amount of character carved into their quizitive faces. It is believed they were put into storage in the 1960s when work was previously carried out on the Town House building. The scaffolding will now remain in place while conservationists examine the dogs repair them and reinstate them to the roof. The wolves, who are now another part of the building's history and heritage, will be moved to an alternative location at the Town House.



Photo by Ewen Weatherpoon

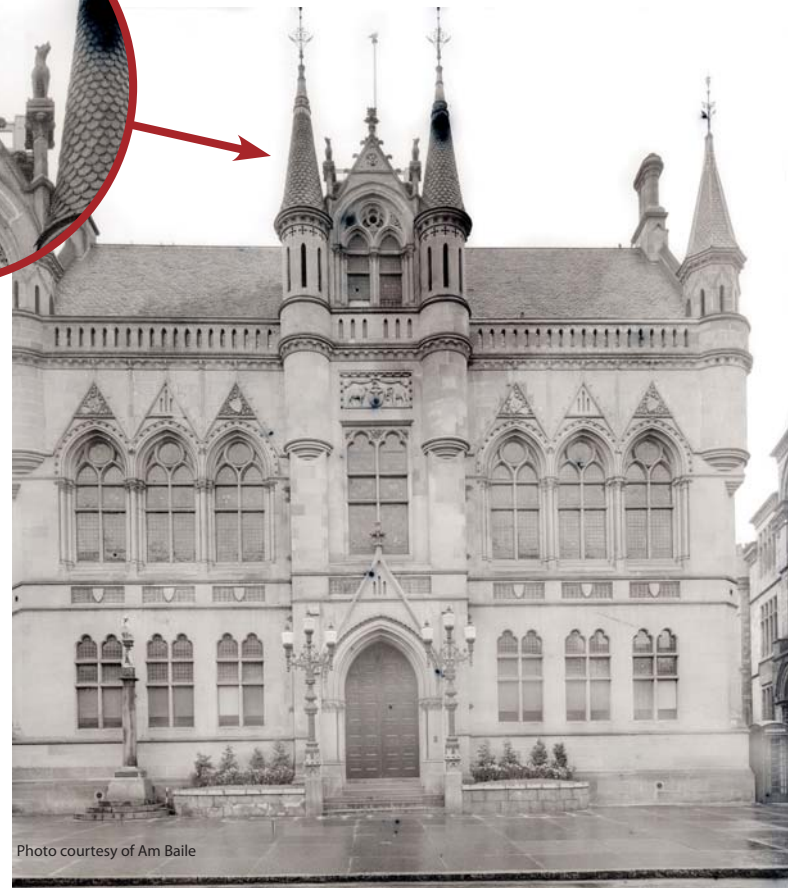


Photo courtesy of Am Baile





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# Wick Campus settles in to first full school year

Children in Wick Community Campus have settled in to their first full school year in the £48.5 million state of the art facility which is part of Scotland's Schools for the Future programme and received more than £17 million from the Scottish Government.

The campus which also houses a swimming pool and library, opened in April with a piper led procession of pupils and teachers.

The procession of 400 pupils in their new school uniforms were led by Highland Bagpipers Alistair Miller and Chester Henry, a P7 pupil.



A video which shows the superb facilities at Wick Campus can be found at the following link:

[www.hubnorthscotland.co.uk/news/2017/wick-community-campus](http://www.hubnorthscotland.co.uk/news/2017/wick-community-campus)

## Top brass tuition

Fifty pupils from across Highland schools attended a Brass Day held in Inverness in September organised by The Highland Council's Instrumental Tuition Service. Those who attended are all relative beginners on their instruments and the event aimed to inspire and motivate the pupils by giving them the experience of playing in a larger group. The event was a success, and showed a marked difference in the confidence and quality of playing within the short space of time the pupils were together.

The day was led by Alan Friel, a conductor, musical director, adjudicator and Instrumental Music Service Manager in the



Creative Minds Team at Easy Ayrshire Council, supported by The Highland Council Brass Instructors.

## Day of film music

Members of Dingwall Academy Senior String Ensemble and their Highland Council Instructor, Rachel Farmer worked with members of the Scottish Ensemble, violist Andrew Berridge and cellist Naomi Pavri in a day of film music, which tied

in with the Scottish Ensemble's performance of Silver Screen Sounds at Eden Court on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> September.

The Highland Council's Music Development Officer, Norman Bolton, said

“We have a vibrant working relationship with Scottish Ensemble, who are always keen to work with developing musicians when they are here for their Eden Court performances. As always, we are keen to expose young musicians to the wider professional music scene, and opportunities like these go a long way to enhancing the high standard of tuition available through Highland Council's Instrumental Tuition Service.”





# Caol Joint Campus offers focal point for community

Pupils and guests gathered with former pupil and professional footballer Duncan Shearer, for the official opening of Highland Council's Caol Joint Campus comprising Caol Primary School, St. Columba's Primary School and Caol Community Centre in June 2017.

The Caol Joint Campus opened its doors to pupils in September 2016. The current pupil roll at St Columba's Roman Catholic Primary School is 100 Primary and 11 Nursery pupils and there are 234 Primary and 71 Nursery pupils at Caol Primary School.

The new Caol Community Centre brings together several different organisations under one roof. It includes a Youth Centre and Youth Café, Meeting Rooms, Art Studios, an events hall, bar and kitchen. Lochaber Action and Disability host their weekday lunch club from the facility, and there are regular scheduled events and classes open to the local community.



Chair of Lochaber Committee, Cllr Andrew Baxter said:

“This is the culmination of a major investment programme for new schools in the Fort William area. Schools are often the focal point for a local community. With two primary schools, a library and community facilities all on one site the Caol Campus is already proving to be the focal point for this community. It's fantastic to hear how it is already being so well used by everyone in the local area.”

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