

Staff Connections Ceanglaichean Luchd-obrach



Staff Bulletin | October 2019 | Issue 33

Recently staff engagement has taken place in Drummie, Lochaber, Sutherland and Skye. Read more on pages 4-6.

New festive arrangements

on page 7



Cake sale results

Thank you to everyone who attended the cake sale on 19th September.

We are very pleased to announce that a grand total of **£532.72** was raised, this includes gift aid contributions which increases the value of your donations by 25%.

Thanks again and huge thanks to the extremely talented bakers that we have working with us!

Many thanks, Rosemary Macrae, Nicole Hardie and Lorna Bailey

Staff engagement

Donna Manson with Head Teacher of Acharacle Primary School, Lyndsay Bradley

Ambitious

Sustainable

Connected

Message from the Chief Executive

Dear colleagues,

In recent days I have visited staff in various locations and work places across the Highlands and will continue a weekly visit programme to frontline services in the months ahead. My key aim is to continue to understand what our Council services feel like on the ground for staff so that I can ensure that decision making at strategic level is grounded in the reality of where we are at as a Council and that our next steps, whilst ambitious, are realistic and sustainable.

I have learned a lot about our culture and working practices from staff at Drummuie, Fort William, HQ, Corran Ferry, schools in Lochaber and community services staff in Sutherland. It's clear to me that we really need to be listening to our staff and to each other as colleagues in all parts of the organisation to enable us to improve how we do things, to find ways to save money and to value the roles and ideas of the staff who deliver the services. Regular team briefings and team meetings which are inclusive to all staff are very important and I expect that Staff Connections will

“Every single member of Highland Council staff is of equal importance to our success and future sustainability.”

some visits action plans are being created to ensure that

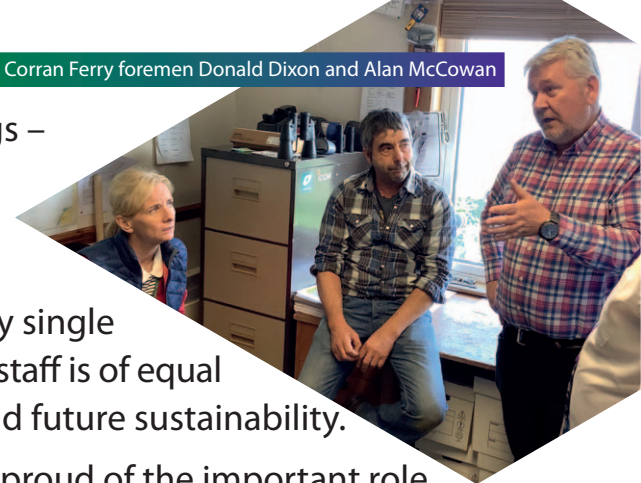
be a feature of these meetings – our aim is to be a connected Council where all staff feel valued and respected for the contribution they make. Every single member of Highland Council staff is of equal importance to our success and future sustainability.

On a personal note I am very proud of the important role that the Council plays in all our communities. I have heard about how the Corran Ferry staff go above and beyond to keep the ferry running for lifeline services in emergencies. Many of our staff have dual roles in communities, participating in local groups, supporting charities and acting as reserve fire fighters. I saw the beautiful garden at Charles Kennedy House and heard how staff have formed a gardening club and are working together with the local Men's Shed. As a Council our staff make a tremendous difference to community life in the Highlands.

The Budget Leader has attended many of these visits with me to talk to staff on the ground. Some of our staff have borne the brunt of significant budget cuts in recent years and are struggling every day to maintain services.

It is even more important to hear what these staff have to tell us so that we can plan better moving forward. Following

Donna with Corran Ferry foremen Donald Dixon and Alan McCowan



www.highland.gov.uk/staffconnections

New appointments

we can address matters raised. There are some quick fixes and things we can do to make improvements in the short term and I am confident that the new structure will, I hope, enable us to break down silos and create a more flexible culture for a sustainable future. This is your Council and together we can move forward retaining the best parts of our current service delivery, addressing areas for improvement and identifying innovative practice. A key aspect of the visits that will continue to take place with the involvement of the new Executive Chief Officer team and myself will be a “you said, we did approach” to ensure that these visits are productive and do enhance our Council delivery and your experience as a member of staff.

I look forward to seeing more of you in the months ahead.

Thank you for your continued hard work and commitment to both your job and the Highland community.

Kind regards

Donna Manson
Chief Executive

Interim Head of Health

Fiona Malcolm has been appointed as Interim Head of Health. Fiona had been working as a legal manager in the Council’s legal team and took up the post in September.

The focus in her new post will be the review of the partnership agreement and integration scheme which is in place to set out the arrangements in place across the Council area for delivery of integrated services for adults and children which is delivered by NHS Highland and The Highland Council using the lead agency model.

She will be working closely with the Council’s partners in NHS Highland with a view to improving outcomes for service users and formalising reviewed arrangements.



Acting Property Manager

Further to an interview process, Tom Murdison has been appointed as the Acting Property Manager for the Property & FM Service, following Stuart Duncan’s retirement.

Tom’s new role commenced on 27th September and will continue until further notice.

We wish Tom all the best in his new role and Stuart all the best for a happy and healthy retirement.



Staff and community engagement

Chief Executive

Donna Manson

has been visiting a number of Highland towns and villages as part of an ongoing programme of staff and community engagement.

On 12th September Donna visited our Drummie Offices and met with staff across a range of services.



Fort William marina

That visit was followed the next day by a day-long trip across Lochaber. The first port of call that day was Fort William marina, where she listened to local ideas for community investment and how the local community is transforming the waterfront in Fort William. From there she and Budget Leader Cllr Alister Mackinnon visited staff at the newly-refurbished Charles Kennedy building. Staff revealed the success of the Fort William office's gardening club with input from the local Men's Shed, which has helped improve the wellbeing of staff and provided an excellent meeting place in relaxing surroundings.



Charles Kennedy building

It was good to see better integration of staff since the move to an open plan office. Lochaber is an area where we are piloting a flexible trades workforce in Lochaber to make best use of in-house resources and reduce outsourcing.

From there, the visit headed south to Corran Ferry to hear from ferry passengers and staff. Donna and Cllr Mackinnon had conversations with visiting bikers and various passengers and discussed this valuable service and the fare structure.



Corran Ferry passengers

Donna and Cllr Mackinnon also met with Corran Ferry foremen Donald Dixon and Alan McCowan, who both said they thoroughly enjoyed the part they played in the crucial service, as well as the challenges faced. New ticketing machines were discussed, as was the need to plan for the future, given the age of the current fleet.

Next up on the trip was a meeting with representatives of Ardnamurchan's five Community Councils. They highlight how the



Corran Ferry staff and officers

Corran Ferry represented a lifeline for the local community and the impact of log lorries, tour buses and campervans who could be paying more. They also expressed a desire to be part of future discussions around fares and future plans and are willing to work with The Highland Council in a positive and constructive way.

That has led to the Corran Ferry project manager Murray Bain writing to all five Community Councils and offering them each a place on the new steering group, which will look at future fares and sustainability of the service.

The visit also included meetings with a number of schools in the region. The first on the list was



Strontian school kids and Head Teacher Christopher Millar-Craig

Strontian Primary, which is a campus model, co-located with the High School.

Donna and Cllr Mackinnon then visited Acharacle Primary, a beautiful, state-of-the-art school, which left a great impression on both the Chief Exec and the Budget Leader. They met with Head Teacher Lyndsay Bradley who highlighted that the school is a self-heating building with gardens outside each classroom. It also presents an excellent model of Gaelic medium immersion. The final school visit of the day saw the Chief Exec and Budget Leader meet with Cluster Head for Mallaig ASG, Martin Sullivan.

Donna and Cllr Mackinnon had time to visit the Mallaig harbour and met with the Mallaig



Donna, Acharacle Head Teacher Lyndsay Bradley, and Alister

Harbour Board, who were holding one of their regular meetings. They listened to members talk about their plans to extend the infrastructure at the harbour, as well as their views on car parking. The day ended with a well-earned fresh fish supper from a local fish and chip shop.

Donna, Cllr Mackinnon and Executive Chief

Officer (ECO) for Finance and Resources Liz Denovan, visited Community Services staff in Sutherland on Thursday 26th September. The two groups of staff they met included roads, waste, housing and lighting staff with useful discussion on challenges with resources, plant, equipment, logistics, recruitment and training.



Donna, Alister and Liz meeting Community Services staff

The Chief Executive went on to visit Lairg depot with interim roads manager Joanne Sutherland and Communications and Resilience Manager Ruth Cleland. An action plan has been drawn up from the visit to respond to some of the issues raised.



Lairg Depot gritter

Staff and community engagement

The Executive Chief Officer (ECO) for Communities and Customer Services, Carron McDiarmid and Head of Environmental & Amenity Services, Andy Summers visited a number of towns in Skye on Monday as part of an ongoing programme of visits.

The discussions with staff locally are part of the senior team's commitment to connect with staff better to find out about local operations and to hear their ideas for change.

The pair visited the Broadford depot to meet staff roads worker Angus Fraser,



Carron, Andy and Depot Manager Brendan Henry

litter patroller Stefan Szoke and Depot Manager Brendan Henry. Carron and Andy heard about the team's work and they also listened as Brendan, Angus and Stefan highlighted areas which might help them and their teams further improve the services they deliver to the public on Skye. This included our arrangements for fleet, staff cover and protective clothing.



Litter patroller Stefan Szoke with Andy Summers

From there they visited Sconser Quarry, where they met with Quarry Manager David Jamieson. He highlighted the work carried out at the quarry and stressed the importance of succession planning, with workers due to retire in the not too distant future. He advised Carron and Andy that at least one modern apprentice would really benefit operations at the quarry.

David said that The Highland Council run quarry produces supplies for roads infrastructure and buildings. He also said that in an average year around 50,000 tonnes of material leaves the quarry.

Next on the journey was a visit to the Portree depot and a look around the waste management facilities with Morag Greenshields, Waste Management Officer (Ops). This provided both Carron and Andy with an opportunity to meet staff at the depot and hear about their work, as well as provide an opportunity for staff to highlight areas for improvement.

Later staff at the Council offices in Portree



Overlooking Sconser Quarry with David Jamieson

shared views on a number of things including how to improve staff communications and staff development/appraisal and how we could make better use of all our assets, including with our partners.



Council offices, Portree

Council festive arrangements update

Over the course of 2019/20, the Council has to save £500,000 from its spend on energy. As a result, and following the Council's declaration of a climate and ecological emergency, work is underway to ensure that all non-essential sites have heating turned down or are closed over the festive period.

It is our intention to ensure that the majority of Council buildings will have their heating turned down to the frost protection setting from **5pm on 24th December**; and then be fully operational again from **Monday morning on 6th January**.

Staff from various teams are working on detailed arrangements, and more information will be provided over the coming weeks. However, staff who are

required to work over the festive period will have the ability to hot-desk in other buildings if their main base is affected, and will also be able to access paper files where necessary.

The provisional list of Council offices that will be open as normal between **8am-5pm** over the festive closure period include:

- 4 Castle Wynd, Inverness
- Dingwall County Buildings
- Tigh-na-Sgìre (Skye)
- Caithness House (Wick)
- Osprey House, Alness
- Charles Kennedy Building (Fort William).

Opening times for Customer Services, including Service Points, are currently being finalised.

Staff who are potentially impacted will need to discuss arrangements with their line manager as to what will work best

for both the service and employee over the days which their building will not be operating as normal:

- Friday 27th Dec;
- Monday 30th Dec;
- Tuesday 31st Dec; and
- Friday 3rd January 2020.

It is important to recognise that these steps are being taken to ensure the Council can continue to provide services over the festive period, whilst at the same time realise cost and carbon savings to help meet budget and statutory climate change pressures. We very much hope that staff will recognise the importance of this, and will work with us to ensure that the process is as seamless as possible.

More information is available on the staff intranet, and this will continue to be updated over the coming weeks:

www.bit.ly/FestiveClosure

Are you planning on working over the festive period?

If you are intending to be at work on 27th, 30th, 31st Dec or 3rd Jan, you will need to complete a survey questionnaire so that the need can be evaluated and catered for, with alternative work locations being prioritised:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BFBFP2J>

Survey responses must be received no later than close of business on Thursday 31st October.

Grey fleet savings

The Council has revealed significant cost and emissions savings by adopting a new business travel strategy, with the introduction of 60 Enterprise Car Club vehicles.

Through a variety of different measures, including the introduction of a new Travel & Subsistence policy as well as Enterprise car club cars at various key sites throughout Highland, the Council has significantly reduced its reliance on the 'grey fleet', where employees use privately-owned cars for work journeys and recharge mileage.

Between June 2018 and March 2019, the Council saw a reduction in staff travel spend of £400,000 compared to 2017/18, whilst the total number of staff miles driven in 2018/19 came down by 850,000 miles.

The Council estimates that by transferring 490,000 grey fleet miles onto the car club, it has also reduced its carbon footprint by approximately 350 tonnes of CO₂ emissions, supporting its efforts to tackle the climate and ecological emergency.

The Council, which covers a region of Scotland that is roughly the size of Belgium, faced a significant grey fleet issue as many of its 10,000 employees have to travel large distances to and from around 1,000 local offices, schools and depots to deliver vital local services.

When it began a review of travel 2 years ago, its grey fleet and car hire mileage was more than 6.5 million miles a year, at a cost of more than £2.5 million per annum.

The continued roll-out of improved ICT infrastructure to encourage video conferencing and focusing on shared and public transport for service delivery where practical will both be important in further reducing spend and emissions.



For more information about the car club, please visit the FAQ page on the Council's intranet, which can be found on the:

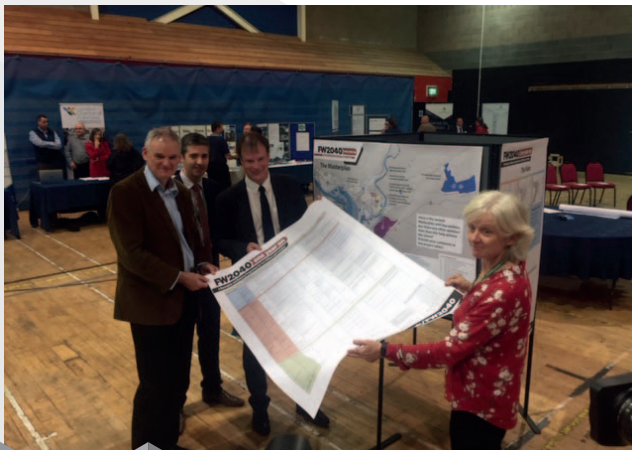
www.bit.ly/fleethiretravel



FW2040 event - A future vision for Fort William

Representatives from council services took part in the successful FW2040 – One Year On event held on Wednesday 25th September in the Nevis Centre.

The event marked one year since an initial consultation held in September 2018, where feedback from participants helped to develop a vision, masterplan and delivery programme for the future of Fort William and Lochaber.



Billed as a gathering place for people to talk to the groups and organisations promoting the various developments in the area, members of the public dropped in throughout the day to review progress made in taking forward key projects and to give their views on the next stages of the masterplan.

The good turnout from the community ensured that each of the workshops which focused on key themes were well attended with lots of interaction and questions asked and answered.

FW2040 is all about delivering a shared vision for the future of Fort William and Lochaber and the collaborative approach is about all working together to turn aspirations into reality.

Other organisations who attended included Transport Scotland, NHS, UHI, Lochaber Chamber of Commerce, HIE, Forestry & Land Scotland, Scottish Canals, Crown Estate Scotland and major

FW2040

2020 2030

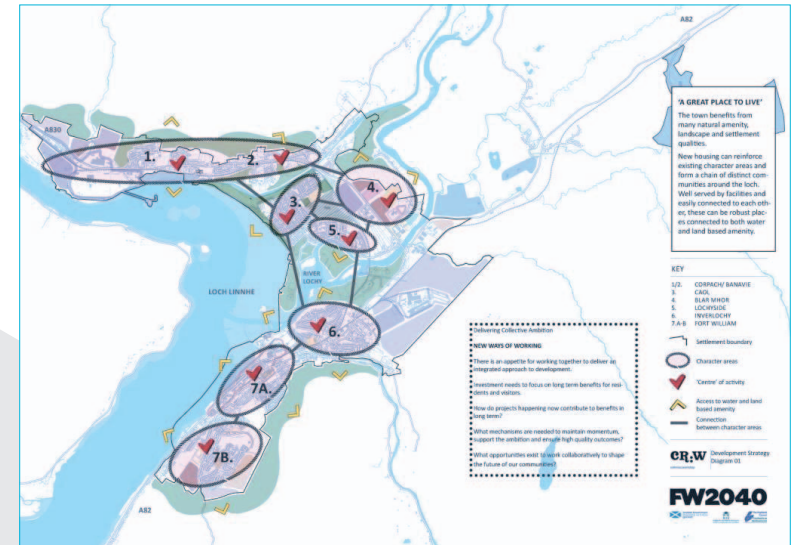
2050

employers including Liberty as well as local community groups and organisations.

Anyone who was unable to attend in person or who wants to provide extra feedback on the vision and the projects can still get involved and pass on their ideas and comments via an online questionnaire:

www.highland.gov.uk/FW2040

which will be available until Friday 18th October.



New process will reduce spend by £360,000

The hire of plant and equipment for Council use has always been challenging. The geographic area combined with lots of hire company's meant the authority did not always receive the best value for money or service. The need for change was identified and work began on a solution to centralise the hire of vehicles, plant and equipment.

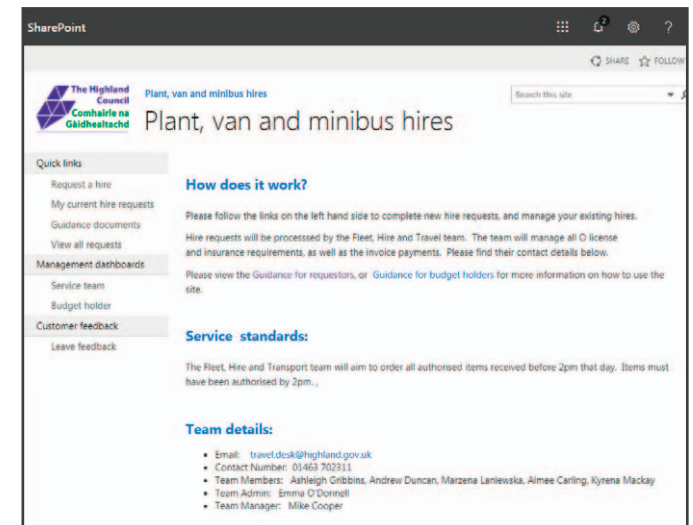
The new process was developed in collaboration between Emma O'Donnell from the Fleet Hire and Travel team and Liam Kay from the digital service team.

Further information can be found on the Sharepoint drive:

<https://highlandcouncil1.sharepoint.com/sites/planthire/SitePages/Home.aspx>

It is a new SharePoint form that captures the need to hire, the length of the hire, any legal and safety requirement relating to the hire such as Hand and Arm Vibration regulations or insurance requirements and provides robust compliance with procurement requirements. It will provide us with enhanced reporting in relation to hires and the cost of hires and we are hoping to reduce the spend by £360,000 in the first year.

The new system means that staff on the ground are able to quickly request to hire items, obtain quick budget holder approval and receive an automated response from the hire portal at the various stages of their request. From a budget holder perspective, they are able to see the various items their team have on hire, their locations, the duration of the hires and the expected total spend. Eventually we hope for them to see in real time their plant hire spend trend against their allocated plant hire budget so they are able to see at a glance whether or not they are expected to go over budget –



creating an opportunity for them to change their plant hire habits before this happens.

From a corporate perspective, we will be able to analyse accurately the plant hire spend, the frequency items are hired – enabling us to analyse whether leasing or capital purchase is of better value, ensure items are added and removed from the 'O-Licence' and our insurance whilst ensuring the relevant vehicles are road legal and the drivers are qualified to drive them.

Furthermore, this process ensures better procurement framework compliance, better budget coding to highlight a more accurate plant spend and provide standardised data for better saving proposals to be made.

ASN Engagement Sessions

Between September and December the Additional Support Needs Transformation Project Team are visiting the 29 Associated School Groups across The Highland Council area.

They will gather views on the review of the ASN Allocation Model. They will be speaking to school staff, children with additional support needs and parents/carers of children with additional support needs. The information gathered will then be shared with Councillors and other stakeholders including schools, parents and pupils. It will be used to support the production of a revised ASN Allocation Model for use in all Highland Primary and Secondary Schools.

Spirit of Wipro Run

Spirit of Wipro Run brings together participants from 110 cities across 34 nations

This annual global event has people stepping forward together as a community to bring about progressive change in society.

184 of all ages and abilities registered for the Inverness event, which is our biggest uptake to date. Jenny Bannerman; Scottish international runner kindly endorsed and participated. Jenny was very impressed that this was free to enter for all in the community with Wipro making a donation to the chosen charity on everyone's behalf, she commended Wipro on their organisation of the event!

Wipro's Inverness office identified the Calman Trust as their chosen charity, with their Chief Executive Isobel Grigor and associates taking part in the event.



The theme for this year's Run was “**#FurtherTogether**”, which celebrated the spirit of camaraderie and several thousands of Wipro employees, their friends and families, alumni, customers, partners and suppliers came together for the event.



The SOW Run reinforces the core values of the organisation:

- Be passionate about clients' success;
- Treat each person with respect;
- Be global and responsible; and
- Unyielding integrity in everything we do.



The SOW Run celebrates the people of Wipro. Over the years, this annual run has become one of the largest employee engagement events in the world. It is a great testament of what the spirit of togetherness and genuine collaboration can achieve.

Each year the proceeds from the SOW Run are used towards social causes identified by the locations, globally. The funds raised by the runners are matched 100% by Wipro Limited and



are utilised by Wipro Cares, the community initiatives arm of Wipro Limited.

Watch this space for information on the Spirit of Wipro Run 2020 Inverness event.



Staff session on Property Rationalisation

Thank you to all who attended the Property Rationalisation and Smarter Working event in the HQ Chamber on the 25th September.

A very good response was received from staff in terms of what you saw as positive outcomes, along with concerns and issues you may have on the office rationalisation and on smarter working.

The project will report back on this soon.

Here is a link to a video which shows how NHS Highland have used smarter working at their HQ:

www.vimeo.com/303687298

A 'new ways of working' email address has been set up:

nwow@highland.gov.uk

Please send any further comments or ideas you have to this address. Thank you.

Brexit

As we approach the deadline of 31st October, the Council continues to step up preparations and planning for an exit from the European Union with No Deal.

An officer group is now meeting regularly and all services are asked to consider potential impacts and to revise business continuity plans accordingly.

A member working group is meeting to consider the impact on Highland and matters of future policy.

Further information is available on our webpage:

www.highland.gov.uk/info/20012/staff_information/815/brexit

Supporting EU citizens to stay in Highland

Depute Leader of The Highland Council, Cllr Alasdair Christie is urging European residents living in the Highlands to register with the EU settlement scheme as soon as possible if they wish to remain living in the UK after Brexit.

The deadlines are as follows:

- EU citizens currently living in the UK will have to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme by 30th June 2021 if they want to keep living in the UK after this date.
- To be eligible to apply to the Settlement Scheme, EU citizens will need to show they are resident in the UK by December 2020.

Cllr Christie said: "Anyone who does not have UK residency and wishes to remain in the UK and Highland can find out more from the following websites"

www.mygov.scot/euexit

www.gov.uk/staying-uk-eu-citizen