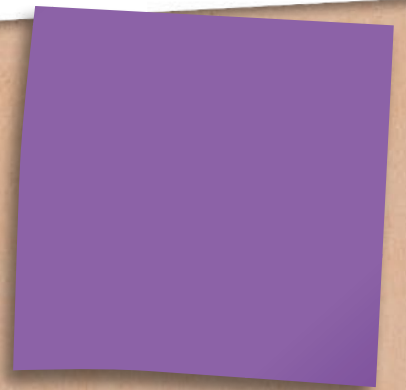


Staff Connections Ceanglaichean Luchd-obrach



Staff Bulletin | October 2020 | Issue 40

Spotlight edition pt3



Ambitious

Sustainable

Connected

Message from the Chief Executive

Dear Colleagues

As the recent escalation of COVID-19 cases across the UK and the increasing number of outbreaks in Highland has shown, our response to the pandemic continues and our resilience measures to manage this must remain in place for some time to come. Not only do we face a second and possibly further waves of the virus, we also need to prepare for the impact of Brexit and a potentially severe winter ahead.



There are new restrictions in place and these are subject to change depending on changing circumstances. These will continue to have an impact on us all personally, and also on the services we deliver and new demands on these services. We have shown how resilient we can be, working together as a team and learning and adapting as we go. We need to continue to learn and adapt and prepare for what lies ahead. Business continuity planning remains as vital as ever, as does ensuring we comply with the controls in place to keep us and others safe in the workplace .

Many of you are out in the workplace providing essential services such as social work, education, registrations, maintenance, cleaning and managing waste. Those of you who can do your job from home must continue to do so for now. You can read more about how we are starting to plan for the future and how this might look on page 9.

Above all it is important that you all continue to keep safe and well and that we continue to do everything possible to keep our communities safe and well. I want to thank you all for everything you do – for your hard work and your adaptability.

Take care and keep safe,

Donna Manson **Chief Executive**

Smithton Primary Head Teacher voted a Lockdown Legend

An Inverness Head Teacher has won a national award from a leading Scottish learning organisation for going above and beyond during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Aileen Mackay, Head Teacher at Smithton Primary School, was named 2020's Lockdown Legend, after leading the public vote.

Over the summer holidays of 2020 pupils, parents and teachers from across Scotland nominated their Lockdown Legends, in a nationwide search to recognise their efforts.

The Tree of Knowledge is the organisation behind the Lockdown Legends awards and its esteemed panel was made up of Gayle Gorman (CEO of Education Scotland), Louise Macdonald (CEO of Young Scot), Graham Hutton (President of School Leaders Scotland), Gayle Shepherd (Director of People and Technology at SEC), and Stuart Brown (Head of Branch and Business Banking at Barclays).

The Top 5 nominations were picked out by the judges and they went forward to the public vote. They were:

- Aileen Mackay, Head Teacher, Smithton Primary School
- Gaela Hall, Librarian, Doon Academy
- Karen Reid, Family Link Worker, Glenrothes High School
- Diane Crosbie, Teacher, Glenwood High School
- Lisa Colburn, Teacher, Masterton Primary School

Both Aileen Mackay and Gaela Hall have won a weekend break in a tree house.

A social care worker was just one of those who voted for Aileen and they said:

"Aileen has always been a committed and caring headteacher. But during lockdown she was often working 18 hour days to look after the children, parents and staff. Aileen makes everyone she speaks to feel important, valuable and heard. She goes above and beyond any regular headteacher. If Aileen says she will help you she does and will go out of her way to do so. Aileen MacKay is a truly committed and caring headteacher unlike no other and she deserves lockdown legend recognition."

A typically humble Aileen said:

"This recognition is really about the staff, parents and pupils. While it is lovely of the staff to do this I remain mortified about getting an award for just doing my job."

You can see the full list of comments by those who nominated Aileen at this website: www.bit.ly/AileenMackay



Aileen Mackay



Name:

Janie Esson

Post title:

Customer Service
Assistant/Assistant
Registrar

Janie supports people and services across Highland

We have had to constantly adapt and remain resilient to frequent changes to manage our statutory functions, whilst preparing to face the worst-case scenarios in death registration.

Weddings were a main priority; communicating with bridal parties, updating on the guidelines, postponing their ceremonies or organising refunds.

New Registration risk assessments have allowed us to resume a limited appointment service allowing parents to sign their birth registrations and the collection of wedding schedules.

New reforms were introduced by our Government making it possible to register deaths remotely by telephone and via virtual appointments, allowing registrars to transcribe informant signatures into the national records. This allowed for service

wide resilience with informants completing death registration remotely with documents being posted out.

With footfall being pushed to telephony channels, Service Points have stepped in to create a virtual Service Centre, allowing us to continue to support customers and our wider Council colleagues across all Highland communities.

The new technology has enabled us to offer our existing services with no break in service whilst enabling us to work safely. The other services such as, the Covid Helpline and outbound calls to our vulnerable residents throughout the Highlands have also been greatly received and been a god send for many. I am very proud to have supported these services.

www.highland.gov.uk/contactus

www.bit.ly/HighlandRegistrationServices



Name:

Karen Jackson

Post title:

Registrar/Customer
Services Officer

Personal touch pride for Highland Council registrar Karen Jackson

The registration service operates 22 offices spread across Highland, one dedicated registration office in Inverness.

The Inverness office has private interview rooms and two ceremony rooms for marriage/civil partnership ceremonies.

Highland records over 6,000 events annually, 2,000 births, 2,500 deaths and 1,500 marriages (approximately). About 40% of these events are in Inverness, and the rest over Highland with smaller numbers recorded in remote but still important rural offices.

Registration is a very personal service carried out with customers face to face, a special service that staff pride themselves on.

Dealing with people during some important life events, an honour to record happier occasions such as births, or being involved in marriages, equally rewarding is helping the bereaved family record the details of the passing of their loved one.

This year, like everyone, we have experienced huge changes in how we work and continue our service. Doors closed to the public in March whilst we waited for guidance on how to work. Registration is a statutory requirement, staff are classed as key workers. The UK Government passed the UK Emergency Bill enabling death registrations to be completed "remotely". Working with colleagues in the health service and bereavement services to introduce new practices within a week we were back recording registrations, working by telephone and email. During the peak of lockdown in Scotland we offered our service 7 days a week. We have now registered over 1,000 deaths remotely across Highland. Marriage was suspended on the very day of lockdown. Many months have been spent working with couples to re-arrange dates. Since 29th June ceremonies started again with restrictions in place. Birth registrations were also suspended; at the end of June Highland had around 450 babies to catch up on! This is an ongoing task, but we are now heading in the right direction.

Name:
Steve MacDonald
Post title:
Caithness Community
Payback Officer

Name:
Donald Coghill
Post title:
Inverness Community
Payback Officer

Community payback benefits locals following lockdown

Despite restrictions during COVID-19, the Caithness Community Payback Teams in Caithness and Inverness have been working to ensure that clients sentenced to carry out unpaid work by the Sheriff Courts are paying back their local communities.

Miller Academy in Thurso has taken receipt of five refurbished children's benches which were repaired and repainted in bright Rainbow colours. Head Teacher, Jacqui Budge said: "We are delighted with the work carried out by the Caithness Community Payback Team. The benches were in a state of disrepair but have been brought back to life due to the hard work put in and



Pictured receiving the benches is Head Teacher Jacqui Budge with pupils from P1, P2 and P3

are now brightly painted and the wood replaced to make them strong and safe. The pupils will now be able to get the benefit of sitting outside in safety and comfort."



Pictured at the new Victoria Walk fencing in Thurso is Community Payback Supervisor David Souter

The badly damaged clifftop fencing along the west side of Victoria Walk in Thurso has also been improved with a complete overhaul thanks to hours of work carried out by clients sentenced by Wick Sheriff Court to carry out Community Payback.



Pictured taking receipt of the benches are (l-r): Ann Brock, Gill Lawrie, Bob Miller, Community Payback Supervisor and Sharon Dismore, Thurso Grows Project Co-ordinator.

Thurso Grows took receipt of two picnic benches specifically designed for use by wheelchair users.

The benches were fully

constructed by the Caithness Community Payback Team in their Wick workshop by clients who had been sentenced to carry out unpaid work by Wick Sheriff Court.

Thurso Grows is funded by the Scottish Government Climate Challenge Fund.

Community Payback Officer for Caithness Steve MacDonald said: "It's great to see locals benefiting from this work carried out by those who have been sentenced to pay back the community against which they have offended."



Freshened up railings at Bught Park, Inverness

Meanwhile, in Inverness, anyone enjoying a stroll around the Bught Park area may have noticed that the railings have had a lick of paint thanks to the work of a Community payback team and their supervisors. As well as painting the perimeter railings around the park area white, red paint has been used to freshen up those around the shinty pitch with enough paint leftover to give the goal posts a coat too.

Community Payback Officer Donald Coghill said: "We needed a relatively central job that the workers could make their way to so the Bught was ideal. It was quite a task as all the railings had to be treated with an undercoat before the painting could begin but everyone involved did a great job and should feel pleased with their efforts."

For further info please email Criminal Justice Service at:
criminaljustice@highland.gov.uk

Save the Date - Highland Climate Change Conference

To mark Climate Week, the Council held a series of online sessions focussing on the future of electric vehicles (EV) in Highland. During the online session's communities were introduced to electric vehicles, informed of the Council's current actions and future ambitions for the development of EV infrastructure in Highland and sign posted towards EV grants and loans available for purchasing electric vehicles.

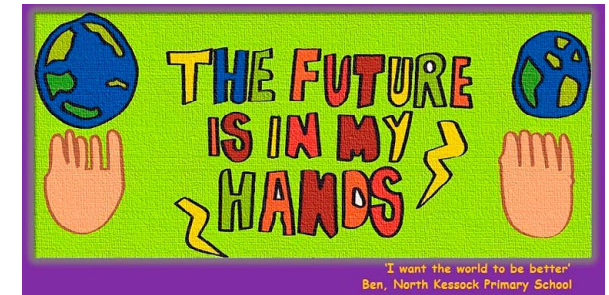
Most importantly, the Council was able to welcome community views and opinions regarding the expansion of EVs in Highland, ahead of the phasing out of the need for new petrol and diesel vehicles in Scotland by 2032. The series of events highlighted some common perceived barriers to EV ownership in Highland and the actions that could be taken to remove such barriers.

Officers were encouraged in respect of the enthusiasm and passion from attendees for increased EV use in Highland from every participating community. Clearly, there is strong local support for additions to the charging network for the use of locals and visitors alike.

Climate Change Coordinator Joe Perry said:

"It was fantastic to hear from many members of the public; we really appreciated the engaging discussions and insightful contributions of the whole week. Climate Week may now be finished, but we are fast approaching the Highland Climate Change Conference, which will this year be held online on 2nd November.

"This conference will be open for professionals and members of the public to attend and will feature talks from climate experts representing The University of Highlands and Islands, Sustrans, The Scottish Wildlife Trust, SNIFFER, Scotland's International



Development Alliance, Keep Scotland Beautiful, Zero Waste Scotland, Creative Carbon Scotland, Friends of the Earth, Extinction Rebellion and many more. The day of online talks will culminate with a selection of workshops which attendees will be able to sign up to in advance."

Details of how to register for this free-to-attend conference on:

Monday 2nd November

and the associated workshops will be announced in the coming weeks.

Looking to the future - new ways of working

Guidance for office based staff

We are aware that the Scottish Government has most recently reinforced its consistent position that:

“...everyone who **can** work from home, **should** work from home... We know not everyone wants to work from home... but with the virus on the rise again, home working limits the numbers of people... gathering together for lengthy prolonged periods indoors. That is why it is so important.”

The advent of COVID-19, its damaging effect on Council finances and its impact on how a substantial amount of office work is now carried out, means we need to examine The Highland Council's future office estate requirement.

We recently carried out research with service managers to identify the balance of staff considered likely to require some form of return (full-time or on a flexible basis) to an office workplace at an appropriate time, and those who could be based longer term working from home. On the basis of this and how



**If you can, working from home
is still your best option**

we have improved technology to enable remote working, there is support from the Council's senior management to explore the principle of establishing a number of hub offices across the area and reducing, where appropriate to do so, the number of other offices used in each hub locality. It is not, however, simply a matter of rationalising our estate; it needs engagement with all parties, consideration of how staff will work and the investments which will be needed to support a long-term view, in order to support service delivery. Work is underway on defining the scope and programme of work to take this initiative forward.

Control of COVID-19 in the workplace

No one should attend work if they have any COVID-19 symptoms.

These are a:

New continuous cough

Fever/High temperature

**A change in/or
loss of taste or smell**

If you are able to work safely from home, then you should continue to do so.

What should I do if there is a suspected case in the workplace?

If any member of staff develops any of these symptoms at home, they need to self-isolate and get tested.

If any member of staff develops symptoms **while at work** then they should report by telephone to Line Manager and go home immediately and self-isolate. They should also be advised to contact NHS Inform and arrange for a COVID-19 test.

When to notify the Health Protection Team

The NHS Highland Health Protection Team (HPT) do not need to be informed of a single suspected case of COVID-19. Suspected cases; those which are not confirmed by a COVID-19 test, only need to be notified to the HPT if there are several of them at the same time in the workplace.

What will happen if the result is negative?

(this advice is not applicable to people identified as contacts of cases)

Member of staff can return to work if:

- They are fully recovered and have had a normal temperature for 48 hours.
- No-one else in their household has developed symptoms.
- However, if anyone else in the household has subsequently developed COVID-19 symptoms and has not had a test then the staff member will have to self-isolate for 14 days from the onset of the other household members symptoms or until a negative test result.

Suspected case of COVID-19 in the workplace

What will happen if the result is positive?

Member of staff must:

- Remain at home in isolation for a full 10 days from the date of symptoms on set (or from the date of the test if they had no symptoms).
- Their household members should also isolate for 14 days from the same start date.
- All individuals will be contacted by the NHS Highland Contact Tracing Team.

Arranging a test

A test can be arranged without consulting a GP/health professional.

The symptomatic staff member, should book a test through the UK Government's Citizen Portal. If they have difficulty in booking a test, they can call this number for help:

0800 028 2816

Guidance for non-healthcare settings can be found here:
www.bit.ly/Non-Healthcare-Guidance

Send member of staff home immediately

Advise member of staff to self-isolate along with other household members

Staff arranges a COVID test via NHS Inform

Ensure prompt cleaning of work areas/vehicle as per guidance

Until the test is done and the result is available, the symptomatic person should remain in isolation at home. All household contacts should self-isolate at home until test results are available.

Face coverings in the workplace

Recommendations ahead of mandatory requirements

(Based on Scottish Government current Schools guidance paragraphs 80-98 here: www.bit.ly/SchoolGuidanceSept)

Use of face coverings in the circumstances set out below should be seen as just one mitigation within a package of measures. The other mitigation measures in the workplace, including physical distancing, environmental cleaning, personal hand and respiratory hygiene remain vitally important.

Face Coverings should not be confused with PPE: www.bit.ly/ScotGovFaceCoverings

Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings. Further information on exemptions can be found in wider Scottish Government guidance:

www.bit.ly/ScotGovFaceCoverings

Face coverings should also be worn in the following circumstances (except where a person is exempt from wearing a covering):

- Indoor communal settings – e.g. staff canteens and corridors in workplaces.
- Staff in schools should also continue to follow the specific Scottish Government guidance on face coverings in school - see paragraphs 80-98 here:

www.bit.ly/SchoolGuidanceSept

How to put on, remove, store and dispose of face coverings to avoid inadvertently increasing the risks of transmission - key points:

- Face coverings should not be shared with others.
- Before putting on or removing the face covering, hands should be cleaned by washing with soap and water or hand sanitiser.
- Make sure the face covering is the right size to cover the nose, mouth and chin. Wear the face covering properly, including not touching the front and not pulling it under the chin or into the mouth.
- When temporarily storing a face covering, it should be placed in a washable, sealed bag or container. Avoid placing it on surfaces, due to the possibility of contamination.
- Re-usable face coverings should be washed after each day of use at 60 degrees centigrade or in boiling water.
- Disposable face coverings must be disposed of safely and hygienically. They are not considered to be clinical waste in the same way that used PPE may be.

COVID-19 advice

Work from home where possible
Stay safe, protect others, save lives

You should:

- wear a face covering
- avoid crowded places
- clean hands and surfaces regularly
- stay 2m away from other people
- self-isolate and book a test if you have COVID-19 symptoms (new continuous cough, fever or loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste).

Remember FACTS for a safer Scotland

F	Face coverings	
A	Avoid crowded places	
C	Clean your hands regularly	
T	Two metre distance	
S	Self isolate and book a test if you have symptoms	

 Healthier Scotland
Scottish Government

nhsinform.scot/coronavirus
#WeAreScotland

 NHS
Highland

Processing of COVID-19 supplies

During May 2020 The Highland Council introduced a modified process for requesting the purchase of specific product categories during the COVID-19 Period.



www.bit.ly/HowToOrderCovid-19Supplies (Intranet)

Commencing Monday 5th October there will be a slight change to the processing of COVID-19 supplies requests. Council Services should continue to fill in the same COVID-19 supplies request form and send it to their Single Points of Contact/Deputies for an initial overview. Once this has been reviewed, and assessed as appropriate to proceed, the Single Point of Contact/Deputy will advise you by email that the order can be raised in Integra. At this point Services should pass their request forms to the support staff within their own Service that normally raise orders on their behalf.

www.bit.ly/CovidSuppliesRequestForm (Intranet)

Should Services have a query about the progress of their order once it has been raised in Integra by their support staff, the two avenues to check will be:

- has the budget holder approved the order in Integra; and
- if so, then contact the Logistics Team at: tmangen@highland.gov.uk

Subsequently, upon receipt of goods, please pass the delivery note onto your support staff to allow the receipting of goods within Integra.

Should you have a query about this particular procurement process that is not addressed within the Intranet content please contact:

Stephen.Graham@highland.gov.uk

Test and Protect, Scotland’s approach to implementing the ‘test, trace, isolate, support strategy’, is a public health measure designed to break chains of transmission of COVID-19 in the community.

If you are presenting symptoms of COVID-19 or you have tested positive for it, then you will be asked to self-isolate at home for 10 days. Other members of your household will need to self-isolate for 14 days.

The symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- continuous cough;
- fever/high temperature (37.8C or greater);
- loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste (anosmia).

Anyone with the symptoms of COVID-19 should go online to www.nhsinform.scot to book a test.

If you cannot get online please call **0800 028 2816**.

Identify people with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and ask them to self-isolate	Rapid testing to identify cases	Identify and trace close contacts of cases	Support self-isolation (for at least 7 days) and close contacts (14 days)
People reporting symptoms consistent with COVID-19 are asked to self-isolate and a test is arranged.	Testing enables those who do not have COVID-19 to be released from self-isolation, and contact tracing to continue for positive cases.	All cases are asked to self-identify close contacts, and are able to access telephone support. For low risk cases, all close contacts are provided with advice to self-isolate. For high risk and complex cases specialist risk assessment and support to identify close contacts is available.	Some cases and close contacts will be able to self-isolate easily. Others will need support to isolate.

This approach is designed to help interrupt chains of transmission in the community by identifying cases of COVID-19, tracing the people who may have become infected by spending time in close contact with them, and then supporting those close contacts to self-isolate, so that if they have the disease they are less likely transmit to it to others.

The NHS will also now be asking people to self-isolate who do not have symptoms but have been in close contact with someone who has been confirmed by testing to have the virus.

Where can I find out more information?

Test and Protect:

www.bit.ly/TestandProtectScotland

Testing for COVID-19:

www.bit.ly/NHSTestingCovid

How to self-isolate and what to do:

www.bit.ly/Self-isolate

Current restrictions in place for Scotland:

www.bit.ly/Covid-19restrictions

Visit our staff intranet page, and check your staff email, for a summarisation of the **Scottish and UK Government’s daily COVID-19 briefings**.

Protect Scotland app

Download from App Store: www.bit.ly/AppStoreProtectScot

Download from Google Play: www.bit.ly/GooglePlayProtectScot

To help stop the spread of the coronavirus, we encourage you to download the Protect Scotland app from NHS Scotland's Test and Protect. It is a free mobile phone app designed to help us protect each other as it alerts you if you have been in close contact with another app user who tests positive for coronavirus.

And if you test positive, it can help in determining contacts that you may have otherwise missed while keeping your information private and anonymous.

The app does not hold personal information, know who you are, or know where you have been. It cannot identify you or track your movements.

How does the app work?

- Once you have installed and set up Protect Scotland, it will run in the background of your device. You can use your phone and other apps as normal.
- Using Bluetooth, the app will exchange anonymous, encrypted, random codes with other mobile phones with the Protect Scotland app installed. You do not need to have a WiFi connection and the app uses a very small amount of your mobile phone data, but you do need to keep Bluetooth switched on.
- When the app finds another user, it will record the contact, the distance between your phones and the length of time your phone was near theirs. This is all done anonymously.
- If you test positive for coronavirus, you can choose to input the Test Code, provided by the contact tracer, into the app. This will automatically notify other app users that you have been in close



contact with (within 2 metres for at least 15 minutes).

- When another app user tests positive, and has inputted a Test Code, the app will notify you and any others if it determines you may be at risk.
- You may or may not still be contacted by a contact tracer. This depends on whether you have been identified to be at risk through traditional contact tracing methods.
- It is your choice over whether you choose to download and use the app or not. You will never be asked to prove you have the app, and you should never be asked to show the status of the app to anyone else – that is entirely up to you.

More information, visit Protect Scotland's website at: www.protect.scot

Lena gives presentation on Gaelic Medium Education (GME) at Edinburgh University Bilingualism Matters online event

Lena Walker, Education Officer for The Highland Council, was invited to present at the Edinburgh University Bilingualism Matters online event, co-hosted with SCILT on 'The New Normal for Languages at Home, School and in the Community'.

Speaking about the experience, she said:

"This was a great opportunity to draw attention to the work that we are currently doing in our schools. At the same time, it highlights where we can improve to support language learning at home and in school settings. I thoroughly enjoyed being a part of this event and hope to do so again in the future."

At the event, attendees heard of the challenges we faced during and pre-coronavirus on promoting the use of language in our homes and how we can promote the language going forward. The seminar included discussion on a snapshot of the challenges for teachers encouraging home language use in a primary and additional support needs (ASN) settings, how digital learning can help to support the challenges of a minority language, developing

partnerships with families and communities and how we can learn from experiences in lockdown.

The specific webinar 'Gaelic Medium Education during Lockdown – Challenges and Innovations' was chaired by John Joe MacNeil, Senior Teaching Fellow in Gaelic Education at the University of Edinburgh and opened by Professor Antonella Sorace (founding director of Bilingualism Matters) (EN).

This webinar was an introduction to the very complex topic of GME and minority language, and Edinburgh University intend to run further sessions in the future which we look forward to.

Bilingualism Matters

Bilingualism Matters is a research and information centre at the University of Edinburgh, founded by Professor



Antonella Sorace in 2008. They study bilingualism and language learning, and communicate what they know to enable people to make informed decisions based on scientific evidence. They have partner branches run by international teams of researchers in many countries around the world.

If you are interested in finding out more about Bilingualism Matters, their future events, blog and podcast, then please visit:

www.bit.ly/BilingualismMatters

Archaeology Festival 2020 goes online



The 2020 Highland Archaeology Festival has been taking place online and has been featuring a top selection of speakers, both homegrown and international, who are bringing to life some of the fascinating heritage of the Highlands.

There's still a chance to take part in one of the virtual talks. Full details of the programme and information on how to book tickets are available on the HAF website:

www.highlandarchaeologyfestival.org

World Mental Health Day

The 10th October is World Mental Health Day, do one thing for better mental health.

World Mental Health Day 2020 is the most important one yet. The months of lockdown and loss have had a huge impact on us all. Prioritising our own mental health and wellbeing, and thinking of others who may be struggling, has never been more important than it is now.

www.mind.org.uk/get-involved/world-mental-health-day-2020



School Food Vouchers

P4-S6 pupils entitled to receive free school meals when at school, will automatically receive food vouchers if they are asked to isolate from school as a result of testing positive with COVID-19 or because they are identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive.

Food vouchers will also be provided to P1-3 pupils who are entitled to a school clothing grant if they are asked to isolate from school in the circumstances set out above.

There is no need to apply, vouchers will be automatically issued using the contact details held by the pupil's school. If you are a parent of a school pupil, then please remember to let your school know if you change your email address or mobile number to ensure you receive these school food vouchers.

If you have not claimed free school meals/a school clothing grant, and you are on a low income with children in primary/secondary school, then the Council's Welfare Support Team can help you to apply.

To contact the team, call **0800 090 1004** or email them at: welfare.support@highland.gov.uk

From plot to plate

Seeking Views on Growing Our Future

Are you a keen veggie grower or would you like more opportunities to grow the food you eat? The council has drafted a food growing strategy, Growing Our Future and is currently running a consultation.

www.bit.ly/HighlandGrowingOurFuture

Keith Masson The Council's Climate Change officer said:

"It has become clear whilst developing the Council's food growing strategy and as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, that there is increasing appetite across Highland for more "grow your own" schemes and initiatives, and this consultation gives everyone the opportunity to let us know if our strategy and action plan will help make that happen."

The consultation can be found below, and will be open until **23rd November 2020**.

www.bit.ly/GOF-Consultation



Ex-Forces? There's a new staff network for you!

Support for veterans and families of veterans.

In 2012 and 2018, The Highland Council signed the Armed Forces Covenant which is a promise by the nation that those who serve or have served, and their families, should be treated fairly.

Recognising the value of its ex-Forces staff, adult cadet instructors and their families, the Council now has an Armed Forces Staff Network to promote wellbeing and opportunity for our veterans, and support those struggling through difficult times. The network provides a platform for maintaining links to previous service and a helping hand or a sympathetic ear where necessary. The network is run by veterans for veterans, people who understand the challenges both in serving and leaving the services.

We are looking for members to join, and for mentors to provide support to both current and new colleagues. Training provided.

If you are interested, please email: james.mccreath@highland.gov.uk or call **01463 644009**.

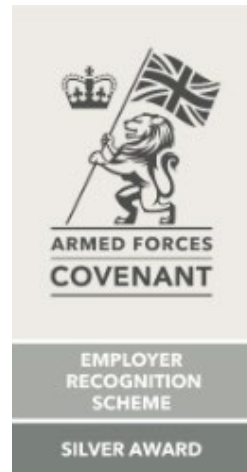
For everyone to keep in touch there is also a Facebook group which is private to join and post but visible to locate - search for "Highland Council Staff Forces Network".

The network will also be arranging social events, with the first event being a virtual Quiz Night on Friday 30th October.

For more information on social events, keep an eye on the Facebook page or email: nicola.bonnar@highland.gov.uk

Let Nicola know of any event ideas you might have and/or be interested in helping to arrange.

For general enquiries about the staff network contact Jim McCreath: james.mccreath@highland.gov.uk



World Mental Health Day

This Saturday 10th October is World Mental Health Day.

World Mental Health Day 2020 is the most important one yet. The months of lockdown and loss have had a huge impact on us all. Prioritising our own mental health and wellbeing, and thinking of others who may be struggling, has never been more important than it is now.

Staff are reminded of the Council's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) www.spectrum.life which is available to provide staff **and their family members**, free confidential mental wellbeing support.

Support includes a Counselling service with web chat support; fitness plans; legal assistance; financial advice; and eLearning content relating to a variety of wellbeing topics.

All this is available free,
24 hours a day,
365 days of the year.

Watch this short video to see how the EAP might be able to help you or someone close to you:

www.bit.ly/SpectrumEAPvideo

- Highland Council - Employee EAP Guide www.bit.ly/EAPguide
- How to access and register with the EAP www.bit.ly/Discover-Spectrum-Life
- Highland Council - Manager EAP Guide www.bit.ly/ManagerEAPguide
- EAP Management Referral Form www.bit.ly/EAP-ReferralForm
- Spectrum Life (EAP) - Online Fitness Classes www.bit.ly/EAP-OnlineFitnessClass

Managers are asked to please share this information with staff not on email.

EAP Poster

The EAP Poster should be displayed within workspaces as a visible reminder. www.bit.ly/EAP-Poster



We recognise many of you will have found new and innovative ways to enhance wellbeing and stay connected over this challenging period. For example, walking groups, online choirs, zoom quizzes etc. We are keen that staff are able to feed in suggestions and share helpful tips and are currently exploring different ways to do this – more information about this and other support resources to follow!

Annual leave

Holidays are essential for our health and wellbeing. Regular breaks help us build resilience and avoid us feeling overwhelmed and “burn-out”.

Managers are asked to approve leave requests wherever possible and ensure adequate cover to facilitate leave.



spectrum

.life 

is
the Council's new Employee
Assistance Programme.

Discover Spectrum.Life,
our new online health and
wellbeing service, by
watching the video here:

www.bit.ly/Discover-Spectrum-Life

and signing up using our
organisation code.

Organisation Code

j5n2Rh73

Support includes a Counselling service with web chat support, fitness plans, legal assistance, financial advice, and eLearning content relating to a variety of wellbeing topics.