

# Staff Connections Ceanglaichean Luchd-obrach



Staff Bulletin | December 2021 | Issue 46

Tilleadh a' Mhòid Nàiseanta Rìoghail gu  
Inbhir Nis air a mheas fìor shoirbheachail

Royal National Mòd's return to  
Inverness hailed huge success!



Am fìdhlear ainmeil Donnchadh Siosalach agus an seinneadair  
Gàidhlig Anna NicLeòid aig cur air bhog a' Mhòid Nàiseanta  
Rìoghail ann an Inbhir Nis.

Notable fiddle player Duncan Chisholm and Gaelic singer  
Anna Macleod at launch of the Royal National Mod in Inverness

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# Royal National Mòd's return to Inverness hailed huge success

The 129 year-old Royal National Mòd 2021 celebrating Gaelic language and culture was held at Eden Court Theatre in Inverness from 8<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> October and closed with a Massed Choirs Event at The Northern Meeting Park, where the Mòd flag was handed over to the city of Perth, hosts of the Mòd 2022.

After last year's event was unable to go ahead in person, the national festival organised by An Comunn Gàidhealach and supported by The Highland Council took a hybrid approach, with performances, competitions and cultural activities in-person and online.

There were 70 competitors in the live children and adult singing competitions, including the Silver Pendant, An Common Gàidhealach Gold Medal and the Traditional Gold Medal. There were also 16 senior choirs present, with 320 choristers taking part in showcase concerts.

Meanwhile, there were more than 400 online participants across 86 online competitions, including piping, poetry and accordion. These drew in online viewers from the UK, USA, New Zealand, Japan and Europe.

In addition to the competitions, a rich fringe programme was on offer including live music at Eden Court's outdoor venue every evening and a host of family-friendly activities.

The Royal National Mòd is supported by EventScotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, The Highland Council, EventScotland, The Scottish Government, HIE, Caledonian MacBrayne and SQA.



Gold Medal winners, Màiri Aisling Callan from Annathill near Coatbridge and John Joe MacNeil from Barra taking home the prestigious prize at the women's and men's events respectively.

Luchd-buannachaidh a' Bhuinn Òir, Màiri Aisling Callan à Annathill faisg air Coatbridge, agus Iain Iòsaph MacNèill à Barraigh a' toirt dhachaigh nan duaisean cliùiteach aig farpaisean nam ban is nam fear.

# Tilleadh a' Mhòid Nàiseanta Rìoghail gu Inbhir Nis air a mheas fìor shoirbheachail



Chaidh Mòd Nàiseanta Rìoghail 2021, a tha 129 bliadhna a dh'aois agus a' comharrachadh cànan is cultar na Gàidhlig, a chumail ann an Taigh-cluiche Eden Court ann an Inbhir Nis bhon 8 gu 16 Dàmhair. Thàinig e gu crìch le Co-chruinneachadh nan Còisir aig Pàirc Chruinneachaidh a' Chinn a Tuath, far an deach bratach a' Mhòid a shìneadh gu baile-mòr Pheairt, aoighean Mòd 2022.

Seach nach robh e comasach do thachartas na bliadhna an-uiridh a dhol air adhart aghaidh ri aghaidh, b' e cumadh measgaichte a bh' air an fhèis nàiseanta am-bliadhna agus i air a cur air dòigh leis a' Chomunn Ghàidhealach le taic bho Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd. Bha gnìomhaidhean, farpaisean is cleasan cultarach a' dol air adhart an dà chuid gu pearsanta agus air-loidhne.

Bha 70 farpaiseach ann am farpaisean beò na cloinne is nan inbheach, a' gabhail a-steach An t-Aigeallan Airgid, Bonn Òir a' Chomuinn Ghàidhealaich agus Bonn Òir an t-Seann Nòis. Bha 16 còisirean an làthair le 320 seinneadairean a' gabhail pàirt anns na cuirmean taisbeanadh àrd-ùrlair.

Aig an aon àm, bha còrr air 400 com-pàirtiche air-loidhne tarsainn 86 farpaisean air-loidhne, a' gabhail a-steach pìobaireachd, bàrdachd agus bogsa-ciùil. Tharraing iad sin luchd-amhairc air-loidhne bhon RA, Na Stàitean Aonaichte, Sealán Nuadh, Iapan agus an Roinn Eòrpa.

A thuilleadh air na farpaisean, bha prògram beartach a' tachairt air an iomall, a' gabhail a-steach ceòl beò ann an ionad a-muigh Eden Court gach feasgar cuide ri grunn chleasan teaghlaich.

Tha am Mòd Nàiseanta Rìoghail a' faotainn taic bho EventScotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd, Riaghaltas na h-Alba, Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean, Caledonian Mac a' Bhriuthainn agus Ùghdarras Theisteanasan na h-Alba.



Women's Mòd Shinty Cup at the Bught.

Cupa Camanachd nam Ban aig a' Mhòd aig a' Bhucht.

# Message from the Chief Executive

Dear Colleagues

I have enjoyed meeting staff recently in Lochaber, Knoydart, the small isles, Caithness and Inverness to hear first hand how the Pandemic is impacting upon our communities and our staff. It is both humbling and inspiring to see how well our staff are continuing to adapt and to serve our communities in the most challenging of circumstances.

It was also very inspiring to join with many of you over the past week in our online staff engagement sessions. We heard lots of good ideas and we will be putting some of these into action, particularly the suggestions about coordinating staff volunteering and additional role opportunities to support the Council and our colleagues in this latest wave of the Pandemic.

As a Council and as Highland Communities we face the most challenging of times as we respond to the implications of the Omicron variant of COVID as we go into 2022. There is no doubt that we will have to continue to adapt and prioritise what we can do as we will experience significant staff absences. It will be a tough time for everyone but I have no doubt that we will come through this challenge owing to the skills, talents and experience we have collectively in our Council. As shared on the online briefings it will be very important to look after each other and care for our colleagues and care for our customers.

I wish to sincerely thank each and every one of you for the fantastic job you are doing – we need to be proud of what we have achieved together in 2021. I am sure many of you are looking forward to a break and some well-earned rest, please do get a break and be kind to yourself. There will also be many staff who will still be working over the holiday period, providing essential services and keeping people safe and I thank you for this.

There are many opportunities for us as a Council in 2022 as we focus on our transition to Net Zero and continue with the improvements we are making across all of our Council services. We have demonstrated that we are Ambitious, Sustainable and Connected – and Caring; these values give us HOPE for a bright and positive future in 2022.

Take care, keep safe and strong,

Donna Manson, **Chief Executive**



Link to watch one of our recent staff briefing sessions:  
<https://youtu.be/CJZHslCgArc>

Ambitious

Sustainable

Connected

# New Biodiversity champion joins The Highland Council

The Highland Council's Environment Team is pleased to welcome Nathan McLaughlan into a unique secondment post, jointly funded by NatureScot and the Council. The role of Biodiversity Partnership Officer has been created to support the Council in delivering their commitments on a range of biodiversity issues over the next two years.

Nathan, who was born and raised in Inverness, studied zoology at Aberdeen University. He comes with 13 years of experience with NatureScot, working all over the Highlands. This included managing a national nature reserve, site monitoring and surveys, partnership working and complex development cases. It has included work on species, habitats and geology from coastal habitats to the uplands and everything in between.

In the short-term Nathan will be overseeing the biodiversity mapping exercise aiming to identify possibilities for improving the value for nature of Highland Council owned and managed land. He will also work with the Highland Environment Forum, advise on the Nature Restoration Fund Grant Scheme, and review the Council's biodiversity policies.

Speaking about his new role, Nathan said:

"I'm really excited at the opportunities this post brings. As a local lad I've always been passionate about the species and habitats of the Highlands. Utilising the strengths of the two partner organisations to benefit the fantastic wealth of biodiversity in the area, I'm looking forward to contributing to a range of exciting nature-based projects."

NatureScot Area Manager for South Highland, Chris Donald said:

"We are delighted this post is up and running. It provides a wonderful opportunity for the Council and NatureScot to work together even more closely on the twin challenges of the climate emergency and biodiversity loss. Biodiversity underpins healthy natural environments which provide multiple benefits for people and boost our physical and mental health and cohesion. Nature-rich land uses are better for wildlife and help us to mitigate and adapt to climate change. This post is coming at a crucial time and will work at the heart of the Council to deliver positive biodiversity policies and actions in the Highlands."



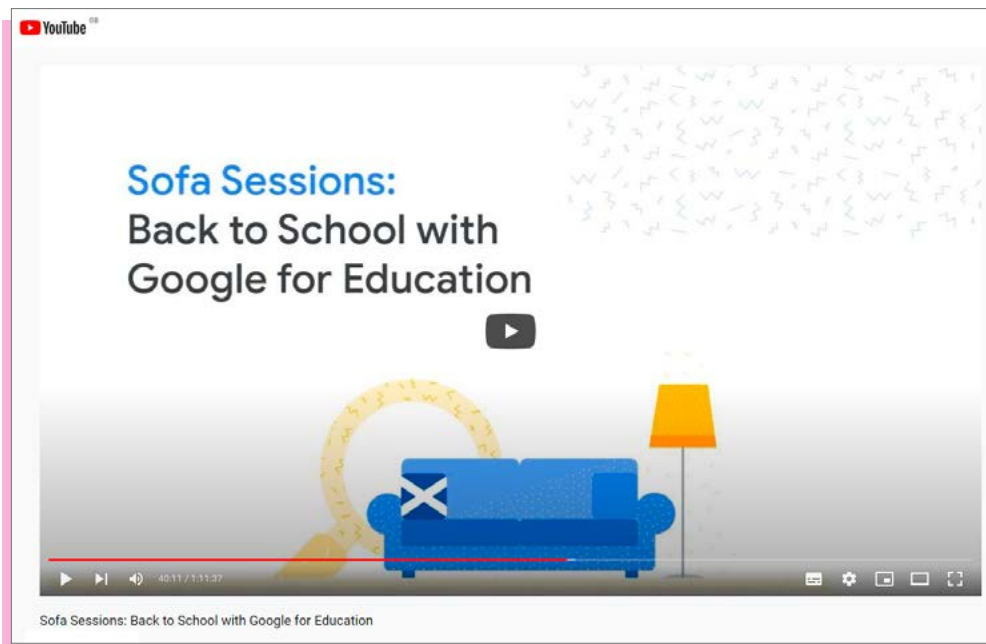
Nathan pictured with his fox red lab Nala

# Highland staff share expertise at Google for Education event

Tania Mackie and Robert Quigley from the Council's Education Improvement Team shared their digital expertise, and the Council's digital journey so far, at a national Google Education event which took place remotely.

The event, Sofa Sessions: Back to School with Google for Education, showcased the latest updates to Google Workspace and invited a selection of experts to contribute to the online discussion.

The Council's Education Improvement Team were invited by Google UK directly, as a result of their very close working relationship and how transformational G-Suite for Education/Google Workplace has been in developing a digital strategy in Highland schools.



In 2021, the Council has continued to connect and support learners and educators across Highland. The Council now has 33,260 active Chromebooks with 14,400 secondary pupils using a 1:1 device for use at home and school.

## Mr Quigley said:

"It was great to have the opportunity to share the digital journey in Highland and to be able to showcase the amazing progress that schools have made towards embedding digital learning into the curriculum. Being involved in the session just affirmed that Highland are well and truly leading the way forwards on the use of digital tools to support and enhance learning and great to be able to highlight this on a national platform as well as reinforcing the excellent working relationship that exists between Highland and Google."

## Ms Mackie added:

"The Google Event was an opportunity to identify what has worked well in Highland and what we can do to build a future for our young people that truly reflects the digital skills and learning agenda. This future is now, and it is exciting - with the Scottish Government pledge of a device for every school aged pupil, digital transformation is truly being placed at the heart of our curriculum."

# ICT Transition Programme Update

ICT Transition is a complex programme which will see all ICT services currently provided by Wipro, transfer to the Council on a phased basis. This started in October 2021 and will be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

This new in-house delivery and management of our ICT is expected to bring greater benefits in terms of value for money, quality of service and flexibility to meeting changing business demands. It will also help the Council use technology to transform the way Council services are delivered.

## The Programme has reached some early milestones:

- On 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021, the Field Engineering team transferred to The Highland Council. Field Engineering are the staff who work across all the Highlands fixing your computers, installing software and equipment.
- On 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021, the ICT Service Desk transferred to The Highland Council.

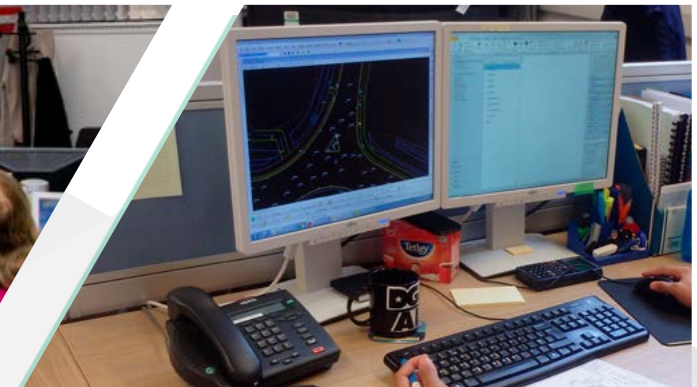
## You will still be able to contact the ICT Service Desk to log incidents in the following ways:

- Using MyICTPortal via the intranet
- Using the webchat function on the homepage of MyICTPortal
- By telephone.

Wipro will continue to deliver some background support functions for the Council until April 2022.

The telephone number for the ICT Service Desk has changed to:

**01463 383810**



# Reporting a Cyber Security Incident

The previous issue of Staff Connections reported on the Cyber Resilience Exercise held on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2021 by the Communications and Resilience and ICT departments. Both teams are keen to promote cyber security. In this issue, we focus on how the reporting of potential cyber risks by staff is essential to the ongoing security of the Council.

The Highland Council **ICT Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)** outlines how the organisation's devices and systems may be used, the monitoring of user activity and the management of recorded information. The AUP applies to all employees and other users of ICT devices and systems when Council business is conducted. Section 6 of the AUP relates the procedures for managing information security breaches and the process for reporting potential misuse. Subsection 6.2 makes clear that users can raise an information security incident by contacting the Service Desk. Furthermore, staff are required to inform ICT when a security concern or possible breach is identified.

**'Spear phishing'** is an example of a cyber threat with the potential to be damaging to the Council. 'Spear phishing' is a more targeted form of 'phishing', in which fake messages are designed to resemble genuine communications by including details specific to the recipient found on social media or other publicly available sources. The sender may also impersonate a trusted or frequent contact. The additional details and targeted approach make the message seem authentic, and the recipient is more likely to act upon the demands of the message. 'Spear phishing' can be used to deliver malware or ransomware through a bad link or file and compromise whole systems.

## What can you do?

Everyone has a role in preventing and mitigating threats to cyber security. Staff are the first line of defence against cyber threats by remaining vigilant and informing the ICT Service Desk when a risk has been identified. If you are concerned by a communication that you have received, report the issue to the ICT Service Desk via MyICTPortal on the Intranet or by calling:

**01463 383810**

Top Tips for staff below



ICT Acceptable Use Policy and Good Practice:

<https://highlandcouncil1.sharepoint.com/sites/Intranet-ICT/SitePages/ICT-Good-Practice.aspx> (Sharepoint link)



# Stay Safe Online

## Top tips for staff

Regardless of the size or type of organisation you work for, it's important to understand **why** you might be vulnerable to cyber attack, and **how** to defend yourself. The advice summarised below is applicable to your working life and your home life. You should also familiarise yourself with any cyber security policies and practices that your organisation has already put in place.

## Who is behind cyber attacks?

### Online criminals

Are really good at identifying what can be monetised, for example stealing and selling sensitive data, or holding systems and information to ransom.



### Foreign governments

Generally interested in accessing really sensitive or valuable information that may give them a strategic or political advantage.



### Hackers

Individuals with varying degrees of expertise, often acting in an untargeted way – perhaps to test their own skills or cause disruption for the sake of it.



### Political activists

Out to prove a point for political or ideological reasons, perhaps to expose or discredit your organisation's activities.



### Terrorists

Interested in spreading propaganda and disruption activities, they generally have less technical capabilities.



### Malicious insiders

Use their access to an organisation's data or networks to conduct malicious activity, such as stealing sensitive information to share with competitors.



### Honest mistakes

Sometimes staff, with the best of intentions just make a mistake, for example by emailing something sensitive to the wrong email address.



## Defend against phishing attacks

Phishing emails appear genuine, but are actually fake. They might try and trick you into revealing sensitive information, or contain links to a malicious website or an infected attachment.



Phishers use publicly available information about you to make their emails appear convincing. **Review your privacy settings**, and think about what you post.



**Know the techniques that phishers use in emails.** This can include urgency or authority cues that pressure you to act.



Phishers often seek to exploit 'normal' business communications and processes. **Make sure you know your organisation's policies** and processes to make it easier to spot unusual activity.



Anybody might click on a phishing email at some point. If you do, **tell someone immediately** to reduce the potential harm caused.



## Secure your devices

The smartphones, tablets, laptops or desktop computers that you use can be exploited both remotely and physically, but you can protect them from many common attacks.



**Don't ignore software updates** - they contain patches that keep your device secure. Your organisation may manage updates, but if you're prompted to install any, make sure you do.



**Always lock your device when you're not using it.** Use a PIN, password, or fingerprint/face id. This will make it harder for an attacker to exploit a device if it is left unlocked, lost or stolen.



**Avoid downloading dodgy apps.** Only use official app stores (like Google Play or the Apple App Store), which provide some protection from viruses. Don't download apps from unknown vendors and sources.



## Use strong passwords

Attackers will try the most common passwords (e.g. password1), or use publicly available information to try and access your accounts. If successful, they can use this same password to access your other accounts.



**Create a strong and memorable password for important accounts**, such as by using three random words. Avoid using predictable passwords, such as dates, family and pet names.



**Use a separate password for your work account.** If an online account gets compromised, you don't want the attacker to also know your work password.



If you write your passwords down, **store them securely away from your device.** Never reveal your password to anyone; your IT team or other provider will be able to reset it if necessary.



**Use two factor authentication (2FA) for important websites like banking and email,** if you're given the option. 2FA provides a way of 'double checking' that you really are the person you are claiming to be when you're using online services.



## If in doubt, call it out

Reporting incidents promptly - usually to your IT team or line manager - can massively reduce the potential harm caused by cyber incidents.



Cyber attacks can be difficult to spot, so don't hesitate to **ask for further guidance or support** when something feels suspicious or unusual.



**Report attacks as soon as possible** - don't assume that someone else will do it. Even if you've done something (such as clicked on a bad link), always report what's happened.



**Don't be afraid to challenge policies or processes that make your job difficult.** Security that gets in the way of people doing their jobs, doesn't work.



# SJC Pay Award 2021

The 2021/22 pay offer has now been approved for non-teaching staff.

The revised offer has now been agreed:

- **£850 increase in salary for all those earning under £25,000**
- **2% increase for those earning £25,000 - £40,000**
- **1% increase for those earning £40,000 - £80,000**
- **£800 increase in salary for all those earning over £80,000.**

This offer is based on a 37 hour working week. Where staff work less than 37 hours, a pro-rata rate will be applied. For example if you work 35 hours the £850 award is pro-rata to £804.05.

It should be noted the pay award is due from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021, however in the agreement reached the award will be backdated 3 months to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

Payroll are working to process the pay award including backpay in December pay. The timescales to deliver this are extremely challenging and it would be appreciated if payroll colleagues are contacted with only urgent queries during the next few weeks.

Staff who received an increase to £9.50 per hour on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 will receive their backpay for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 in January. Backpay will be paid for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 in December's pay.

Revised pay scales can be accessed at: [www.bit.ly/GradingStructure2021-22](http://www.bit.ly/GradingStructure2021-22)

**Please note:** The above award does not apply to teachers or staff on Agenda for Change conditions.

## In house drone and photography projects

Need good quality aerial footage or help with surveying work?

There is now a page on the intranet with an application form to request drone filming or photography in house:

[www.bit.ly/BookDroneFilming](http://www.bit.ly/BookDroneFilming)

For more information please email:  
[graeme.mackay@highland.gov.uk](mailto:graeme.mackay@highland.gov.uk)



# Annual Leave carried forward due to COVID-19

One of the temporary changes to policy introduced last year arising from COVID-19 is the Council's policy on annual leave.

The National Government amended the working time regulations to recognise essential workers and those who are continuing to provide services during the pandemic, and who may be unable to take leave. The Council replicated this and allowed staff to carry forward up to 20 days leave into the next two leave years (2021/22 and 2022/23).

It is important for managers to make every effort to enable staff to take leave throughout the year for staff's mental and physical wellbeing. This is a reminder that staff should be encouraged to take annual leave due to them in the current leave year, where practical. If this is not possible due to service delivery reasons, leave can be carried forward into next year's leave 2022/23. It is anticipated this will cover a small number of staff.



# Public Holiday for Platinum Jubilee

Highland Council staff will be able to enjoy an additional public holiday on:

## Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2022

The public holiday is to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and to mark 70 years on the throne in line with UK Government arrangements.

There will be no change to the Council's existing public holidays.

On Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June next year Highland Council offices and schools will be closed with minimal service provision on 3<sup>rd</sup> June such as emergency services and waste.

A request will be made to the Scottish Government for the Council to reduce the number of teaching days to accommodate the additional public holiday.

**Please note:** Staff on Agenda for Change have different public holidays which are updated on the HR Micro site.



## Emergency COVID-19 Response

# Local LGV Drivers needed

For Winter Maintenance Programme across Highlands



**Post Title – Community Works Operative 4 (LGV)**

**Location – Various across Highlands**

**Salary – £10.93 per hour**

The winter maintenance programme is one of the most important services that The Highland Council provides, and it is potentially under threat due to the current increase in cases of the Omicron variant of COVID-19.

It is essential that we work hard to keep our roads open throughout winter enabling people to attend work, school, medical appointments and for emergencies.

Do you have a current LGV licence (preferably along with CPC but not essential) and can spare some time around your current work commitments?

Gritting our winter routes usually takes 3-4 hours per route and work takes place early morning and early evening.

For more information call Andrew Hunter on:

**01463 702111**

or email: [andrew.hunter@highland.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.hunter@highland.gov.uk)

# Flu immunisation for pupil-facing staff

All staff who are pupil-facing are eligible for a free flu vaccination. This includes not only nursery, primary and secondary school teachers, but also pupil-facing support staff in local authority and independent settings.

Pupil-facing means all staff who come into contact with pupils in schools. This includes teachers, classroom support, admin support, catering and facilities staff who work directly with pupils in a school setting.

Key workers can arrange their vaccination by phoning the National Vaccination Helpline at **0800 030 8013** (8am-8pm, 7 days a week) or by visiting the online portal at: <http://vacs.nhs.scot>

If booking by phone, they will be asked a series of questions to confirm their eligibility. If the individual has received an invitation letter, there will be a username provided in the letter that can be used to book an appointment online. New dates and locations are added to the online portal regularly, so it is worth checking back if there is not a suitable appointment straight away.

For more information on the flu vaccine, please visit:

[www.nhsinform.scot/flu-vaccine](http://www.nhsinform.scot/flu-vaccine)

Book your flu vaccination online:

<http://vacs.nhs.scot>

# More than 4,000 young people learning an instrument

More than 4,000 youngsters across the Highlands are now learning a musical instrument – the highest level since High Life Highland started lessons.

High Life Highland provides leisure and other services on behalf of The Highland Council. Music tuition transferred over in 2018 with 2,900 pupils. HLH Head of Music Development Norman Bolton said:

“Now that instructors can once again recruit pupils, and the announcement from Scottish Government that music tuition fees no longer apply, I’m delighted to say we’ve now exceeded 4,000 pupils. These numbers are very much due to the flexibility of our instructors, adopting a blend of in-person and online tuition. With these blended strategies we can reach some of our more remote schools for the first time.

“We were able to maintain a high level of access to tuition throughout lockdown thanks to the support from The Highland Council colleagues and our schools’ IT infrastructure. We have been able to invest in some new instruments, and instructors are carefully working through the applications as demand increases.”

High Life Highland has 49 music instructors who operate across most Highland schools. HLH also offers the chance to learn from the comfort of your own home with evening classes for vocal and guitar tuition.

A new block of lessons are now available to book with more information at:

[www.highlifehighland.com/music-tuition](http://www.highlifehighland.com/music-tuition)

Mr Bolton added:

“Getting tuition back in place has been challenging but, I’m glad to say, successful. We are very much looking forward to getting extra-curricular school and area groups back to rehearsals, with the plan being to have the flagship Highland Young Musicians groups activities back in the picture by early 2022. We’ve made many changes to what we do and how we do it over the past couple of years and are all looking forward to exciting times ahead and some more wonderful music making in Highland schools and communities.”



The 4000th pupil was Joni, in P6 at Cromarty Primary, and will be having violin lessons with HLH Instructor Jan Anderson.

# Highland Climate Change Conference hailed a success

COP26 was the world's most significant summit on climate change. COP stands for Conference of the Parties, and the summit was attended by the countries that signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – a treaty that came into force in 1994.

The two-day conference featured speakers from across the sectors and included keynote speeches from UK and Scottish Government, including Drew Hendry MP for Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey, Scottish Green Party MSP Arianne Burgess, Minister for Environment and Land Reform, Mairi McAllan MSP and the Minister for Just Transition Richard Lochhead MSP.

The conference focused on four themes: Energy, Land and Sea, Net Zero and Resilient Communities and each day was followed by a set of workshops to delve even deeper into discussion on the climate emergency and how we can move forward.

The 'Energy' section explored emerging technologies which will help the energy industry reach net zero in Highland. Attendees heard about developments in green hydrogen, SSE Renewables, energy efficient school initiatives and much more. The 'Land and Sea' section took a closer look

at how our lands and sea can help to tackle the climate and ecological emergency. The talks focused on The Flow Country World, the Highland Good Food Partnership, rewilding projects and others.

The 'Net Zero' inputs examined what net zero actually means and explored how we can achieve it within Highlands.

Those who joined listened to speakers talk about The Highland Council's journey to net zero, financing net zero and a Just Transition.

And finally, the 'Resilient Communities' section heard from community groups and organisations already taking action to tackle the climate emergency, such as representatives from The Rose Project, Thurso Community



**21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2021**

Development Trust and others.

The entire conference is available on the Highland Council's dedicated Highland Climate Change Conference webpage:

[www.bit.ly/HighlandCCC2021](http://www.bit.ly/HighlandCCC2021)

and Highland Council's YouTube channel:

[www.bit.ly/HCCC-Day1](http://www.bit.ly/HCCC-Day1)

[www.bit.ly/HCCC-Day2](http://www.bit.ly/HCCC-Day2)



# Highland Council Elections

## Staff wanted for Polling Station duties in May 2022

We are calling specifically upon our Staff in our remote areas to come forward and join us

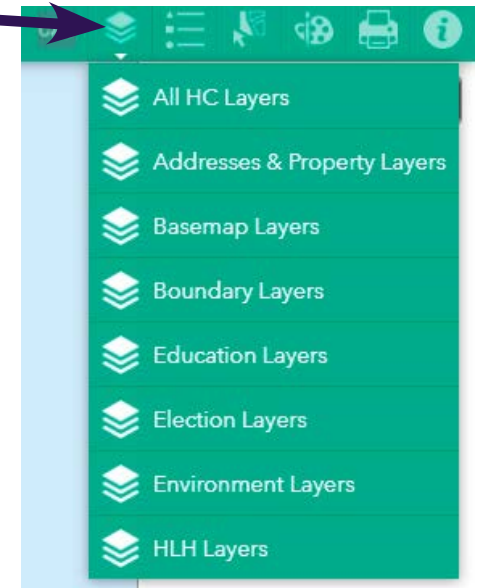
### Where could I work?



You can use our polling station tool to locate the polling station near you:

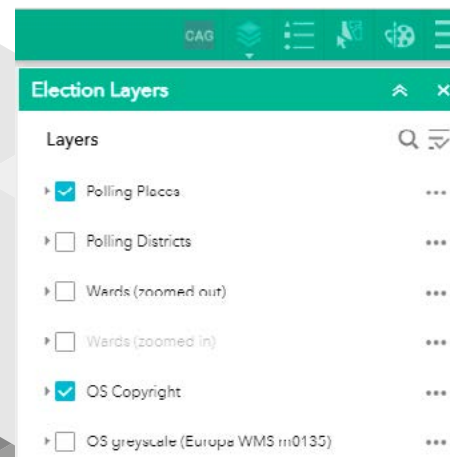
Highland Council Map Room: [www.bit.ly/ArcGIS-PollingStations](http://www.bit.ly/ArcGIS-PollingStations)

Once the application is launched, select the layers tab from the right hand bar:



From the drop down menu, select the 'Election Layers'.

On the next drop down menu, tick 'Polling Places'.



And you will be able to view all the polling places in the Highlands.

You can use the zoom tool to increase or decrease the map to locate a polling station or you can put your postcode on the top.

# When will the election take place?

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022

## And what job could I do?

Inexperienced staff can apply for the post of poll clerk and then move up the rank with more experience to Presiding Officer Level.

## Why?

- ✓ You will be part of a great team and will gain additional skills to add onto your CV.
- ✓ As a statutory obligation for the Council your manager should support you to be released to work for elections.
- ✓ You will get special leave and get paid an additional payment for polling station duties.
- ✓ The election is on an in-service day so school staff will be free to take up a role.
- ✓ Why not consider roping in family and friends to work alongside you at a Polling station?
- ✓ Full training will be given.

## Interested?

There is information on our web page including descriptions of roles in Polling Stations:

[www.highland.gov.uk/info/799/elections\\_and\\_voting/603/employment\\_at\\_elections](http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/799/elections_and_voting/603/employment_at_elections)

## How do I apply?

We have an online application form on our webpage but if you have any questions or require more information before you decide if you apply please email:

[election@highland.gov.uk](mailto:election@highland.gov.uk)





# Part-time Electoral Canvassers Wanted

Electoral Registration Office, Moray House, 16-18 Bank Street, Inverness IV1 1QY

We are looking for individuals to assist us with our electoral canvass in the following areas:

- **Fort William**
- **Dingwall and surrounding area**
- **Rural Caithness**
- **North West and East Sutherland**
- **Aviemore and surrounding area**
- **Inverness and rural Inverness.**

Canvassers will work alongside staff in our area offices to doorstep canvass properties in these areas. Hours are flexible with some evening and Saturday work required.

## Purpose of the post

To assist the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) with the annual canvass. You will be required to visit assigned properties and make attempts to obtain electoral registration information for all of these properties.

## Main Responsibilities

Main duties to be undertaken within a required timescale include:

- Visiting each household within a designated area to collect registration information with use of a tablet.
- Advising members of the public on the completion of individual registration forms including need for National Insurance numbers and dates of birth.
- Attending the ERO office in person at regular intervals as directed by the Electoral Registration Officer/supervisor.
- Recording information about properties.

Training sessions covering all aspects of the duties, including health and safety issues will be covered prior to commencement of the canvass.

Further information including application forms, job description and person specification can be found on our website:

**[www.highland.gov.uk/hwi-vjb](http://www.highland.gov.uk/hwi-vjb)**

(click on '6. Job Vacancies').

# Fort William and Ardnamurchan By-Election Result

Following the death of Cllr Ian Ramon a by-election was held on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> December to elect a new councillor to represent Ward 21.

The successful candidate was Sarah Fanet (SNP) who now joins Cllrs Blair Allan (SNP); Andrew Baxter (Scottish Conservative); Niall McLean (SNP).



The count was held electronically on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> December at Lochaber High School. The Election team would like to thank the school staff and the pupils, especially those who helped with ballot box opening.



Thanks also goes to all the polling staff and everyone else who was involved.

The political make-up of the council is now as follows:

Independent (24)

Scottish Liberal Democrats (11)

Scottish Labour Party (3)

Scottish National Party (19)

Scottish Conservative and Unionist (10)

Highland Matters (4)

Sutherland Independent Group (1)

Non-aligned (1)

Vacant (1)\*

\*Ward 11, Caol and Mallaig- Ben Thompson has stepped down as a councillor but as this vacancy occurs within 6 months before the Local Government Election on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022 it will remain vacant.



# Revised Councillors' Code of Conduct

The revised Councillors' Code, issued by the Scottish Ministers, is now effective as of 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

The revised Code will be published on the Standards Commission's website at:

[www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/codes-of-conduct](http://www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/codes-of-conduct)

The Standards Commission's revised **Guidance** on the Code is available on their website at:

[www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/guidance/guidance-notes](http://www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/guidance/guidance-notes)

The Commission have updated and revised their **Advice Notes** in light of the changes to the Code.

The following Advice Notes are now available on the website at:

[www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/education-and-resources/professional-briefings](http://www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/education-and-resources/professional-briefings)

- [Arm's Length External Organisations;](#)
- [Bullying and Harassment](#)
- [Gifts and Hospitality](#)
- [How to Declare Interests](#)
- [Article 10 ECHR](#)
- [Social Media](#)
- [Distinguishing Between Strategic / Operational Roles](#)
- [Role of a Monitoring Officer](#)
- ["Assisting Constituents" Card](#)
- [Advice Note for the Public on the Councillors' Code](#)

# Seasonal Access Rangers success

In response to last summer's visitor pressures in many Highland locations, The Highland Council developed a multi-service Visitor Management Plan and allocated £300,000 from the £1.5M budget to implement seasonal access ranger jobs. Seventeen rangers in total were recruited and covered a third of the Scottish land area, nearly 26,500 square kilometres.

The Seasonal Access Ranger team have patrolled much of the Council area and reduced the impact of thousands of visitors on the Highland environment and its communities. The Access Rangers have welcomed and engaged with over 18,000 people, informed them about the area and available services and advised them of responsible behaviour.

They encountered 8,500 tents and 22,500 motorhomes and identified and removed the remains of 3,300 fires, 3,700 toileting sites and over 2,000 bags of dropped litter.

There has been huge support and appreciation for the Access Ranger's work, let's hear from some the Rangers about their roles this summer.

**Outdoor Access & Long Distance Route Manager, Philip Waite said:**

"The first year of having a team of Rangers out on location has been a great success, like all jobs it comes with its individual challenges but on the whole the team have made a significant contribution to engaging, informing, and welcoming people to the Highlands. It really is the most beautiful place to work and if we can continue to educate people to respect and protect the area for all to enjoy then it's a good day at the office."

**Seasonal Access Ranger, Roz Birch said:**

"As someone who loves the outdoors, meeting people and protecting the environment, this job is a perfect fit. It has been really rewarding to be able to report positive changes in outdoor access behaviour and engage with people to better understand the individual role and responsibilities we all must share to keep the Highlands protected and beautiful for generations to come."



# Seasonal Access Rangers success

Funding allocated to the Outdoor Access team for the remainder of this financial year has allowed five Access Rangers continued work until April 2022. They will assist the Access Officers in carrying out countryside site and core path improvements and implementing further improvements in readiness for 2022.

In September this year, the Corporate Communications Team produced a video about the work of the Access Rangers, on location at Loch Duntelchaig and Loch Achilty.

You can view the video on our YouTube channel:

<https://youtu.be/LvDcHV3zxfQ>



Thanks to Philip Waite, Outdoor Access Manager and Tim Francis, Senior Access Ranger – North Highland for their assistance and patience with the Highland weather!

Focus now turns to the 2022 season, after further funding of £1.5m was agreed by members to extend the Visitor Management Plan into next year.

# Third and Final phase of Inshes Park completed

The third and final phase Inshes District Park main path infrastructure has recently been completed and is now open to the public.

Work on site started in April this year and involved the construction of a surfaced footpath linking the pedestrian bridge on Inshes Road with Elmwood Avenue in Milton of Leys.

The path provides an attractive and more protected off-road route for both cyclists and pedestrians and provides the final link in the active travel and recreational route between Sir Walter Scott Drive and Milton of Leys. A planting and landscaping contract for

Phase 2 and 3 will follow on from these works as funding becomes available.

Inshes Park is funded through developer contributions collected over the past number of years from adjacent housing developments. Sustrans Scotland have provided a £277K grant towards Phase 3 as part of their 'Places for Everyone Programme'.

Thomas Prag, Chair of Inshes Community Association said:

"We thank the councillors and officers who had the foresight to set aside this land as a new park 20 years ago! The path is already in regular use with commuters, buggy pushers, joggers and dog walkers. And there's more to come as the park provides opportunities for many community led projects such as the recently installed picnic tables and the proposed wheel park."



## Fancy a walk?

Depending on your levels of fitness, and the weather, you can choose to complete a walk around the original Inshes Park, (Phase 1 which opened in 2012), Phase 2 (opened in 2017), or the newly completed Phase 3, or if you are feeling extra energetic – how about a walk around the complete park?

# Employee Assistance Programme

Our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a confidential counselling service that provides support to company employees and your family.



24/7



**Our EAP is available  
24/7, 365 days a year covering:**

- Counselling
- Legal information
- Financial information
- Consumer information
- Career guidance
- Life coaching
- Mediation
- Health information
- Health information
- Cancer support
- Autism support
- Infertility & pregnancy loss
- Elder care support
- Parent coaching
- International employee support



**Register online:**

<https://app.spectrum.life/login#>  
Organisation code: **j5n2Rh73**

# Help is at hand through the Employee Assistance Programme

spectrum  
.life

Now in its second year running the Employee Assistance Programme offers free and confidential services to all staff and their families.

Wellbeing support is available to all Council employees, their partners, and dependents over the age of 16 who are still living at home. A telephone helpline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The helpline provides immediate access to confidential telephone counselling, or you can access the service through a web portal, live chat, or app. You may be referred on to face-to-face, phone or video counselling where appropriate. Telephone consultations with qualified experts, can provide practical advice in a wide range of fields.

Contact **Spectrum.Life** if you need:

- Legal or financial assistance.
- Consumer advice.
- Career guidance or life coaching.
- Mediation.
- Support for non-nationals and their families.
- Health advice, including physio, podiatrists and dietitians.
- Advice on practical, day to day issues and services.

The service can also support managers with any unique issues they may face as part of their role. It also offers help and guidance around managing staff better when there is an issue you feel unable to deal with yourself.

In addition to your emotional wellbeing the employee assistance programme also offers a wealth of information and podcasts on a range of topics including parenting tips; heart health; switching off; understanding cancer; making positive changes; budgeting; getting/staying fit; and healthy eating.



24/7



24

**Register online:**

<https://app.spectrum.life/login>

Organisation code: **j5n2Rh73**





## When should I use the Employee Assistance Programme?

The EAP can help with a wide variety of problems. Our fully qualified team of counsellors and experts are highly experienced in personal and work-related issues and can support anyone suffering with issues including, but not limited to:

- Depression, anxiety, stress.
- Grief and bereavement.
- Addictions.
- Relationship and marital problems.
- Work stress and work-life balance issues.
- Life transitions such as career progression.
- Financial concerns
- Queries around a legal issue.

## Who will I speak to?

When contacting the EAP you will get straight through to a fully qualified, accredited, and experienced counsellor who will work with you to ensure you get the most appropriate help with whatever issue you are having. The counsellors can understand the root causes of an emotional issue and help with onwards referral to the service most appropriate.

## What happens on the initial call?

On first contact, the Case Manager will explain what the service can provide and its confidential nature. The only information that must be given is the name of the company to initially access the service.

If follow up referral is necessary, to set up your case file, the Case Manager will gather some additional information:

- Such as name and date of birth - to check employee's eligibility for the service.
- Contact details so that the team can get in touch with the employee if needs be.
- To enable the Case Manager to create and keep a full record of all your contact with the service to keep track of their case, referral etc. and ensure you are receiving all the care needed as promptly and efficiently as possible.
- If the Case Manager is unavailable when you are looking for help, other team members will have your case details at hand and will be able to provide you with the most up-to-date and accurate guidance.
- Wherever appropriate, the Case Manager will share necessary details with the relevant professional you are being referred to such as counsellor, legal expert etc.

**Note:** This information is stored securely and is never shared with the Council or colleagues. It is only ever shared when necessary with qualified and accredited professionals and the employee will always be made aware of this beforehand.

## Is the service confidential?

Yes - the service is always completely confidential.

When you call, the only information that must be given is the Council's name to initially access the service. You choose what information you share, and no details will be given to anyone unless you instruct the EAP to do so.

As outlined, to arrange a follow up or referral, additional information provision is necessary. The only information that we would ever provide to the Council is anonymous statistics, to enable the Council to know how the service is being used. We will never give any information that may cause anyone to be identified and personal details don't have to be supplied to access the service.

All counsellors and the extended team are bound by professional standards and a strict code of ethics regarding confidentiality and the disclosure of details of individuals who have contacted them.

The only limits to confidentiality are if the individual discloses that they may be at risk to themselves, an identified adult, or a child. In these situations, we would need to let other professionals know, but this will be discussed with the individual if anything like that comes up.

### Register online:

<https://app.spectrum.life/login>

Organisation code: **j5n2Rh73**



## How do I get referred for counselling?

Following initial assessment, based on your preferences and suitability, the counsellor is informed enough to allow for a sophisticated matching of you with the relevant type of counselling be it face-to-face, video or phone, with the most suitable counsellor available.

On referral, contact from a counsellor will be made within 48 hours and they will offer an appointment within 5 working days and will arrange the first session at a time that suits you.

**spectrum**  
.life 





# spectrum

# .life



is  
the Council's new Employee  
Assistance Programme.



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.

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

**[www.bit.ly/Discover-Spectrum-Life](http://www.bit.ly/Discover-Spectrum-Life)**

and signing up using our  
organisation code.

Organisation Code

j5n2Rh73



# #DriveSmart this festive season



**POLICE  
SCOTLAND**

Keeping people safe



## When it comes to drink and drugs, the best approach is none

Drink and drug-driving can have devastating consequences, people can and have died, and those responsible have gone to jail. Think about how you're going to get home, before you head out, and remember to consider any journeys the morning after. Drugs can stay in a user's system for hours and even days after consumption. Some heavy users will always have drugs in their system. Even if you're slightly over the limit, in the eyes of the law you are a criminal – there's no grey area. It doesn't matter if it's drink, or drugs or both. Police are now able to carry out on-the-spot tests using drug wipes for any motorist they suspect of drug-driving, or who has been involved in an accident, or stopped for a traffic offence. If the test is positive, the driver will be arrested. You are up to three times more likely to be killed or seriously-injured in a road accident when driving after taking cannabis, rising to ten times for cocaine. Taking drugs or combining them with alcohol multiplies your risk of being involved in a crash. Drug/drink-driving convictions are not only driving offences but also criminal offences, and upon conviction you will receive a minimum 12-month ban; 3-11 penalty points; a criminal record; up to 6 months in prison and/or a fine of up to £5,000.

**Drug and drink-driving can have devastating consequences.**

**#DriveSmart, don't drive under the influence of drink or drugs this festive season.**



# Clear Your Head Campaign



These are worrying and uncertain times. The coronavirus outbreak has changed daily life for us all in Scotland and has had a real impact on how many of us are feeling. It's ok to not feel yourself right now, and we have some great tips to help get you through it.

'Clear Your Head' highlights the practical things people can do to look after themselves whilst staying at home.

Find tips on how to stay positive and feel better at:  
[www.clearyourhead.scot](http://www.clearyourhead.scot)

