

# 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition

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## Government funding to be sought for new school

By NEIL RIDDELL

Councillors yesterday agreed to submit a bid for Scottish government funding towards the cost of building a new Anderson High School.

The SIC is applying for assistance under the third phase of the SNP administration's £1.25 billion "schools for the future" programme, funded through the Scottish Futures Trust. The deadline for bids is 21st July.

In a report approved by members of the education and families committee yesterday, SIC head of children's services Helen Budge said the government had indicated a desire to support school building projects in all 32 Scottish local authorities. Other

councils have benefited during the first two phases of "schools for the future" but the SIC has not, which could strengthen its case.

The AHS is deemed to be in the poorest condition of any Shetland school, and it is estimated that repair and maintenance of the Knab buildings will cost an average of £1 million a year for the next two decades. In addition, the ageing buildings are "relatively inefficient in energy terms", so in the longer term a new school could ease financial pressure on the council.

Moving an unopposed resolution to approve the funding application, councillor Frank Robertson said it was a "fantastic

opportunity" to attract funding into Shetland for the AHS project.

Should the application be successful, it is still not clear precisely what form the aid would take. It is likely to be August or September before the council learns if its bid has succeeded, at which point the nature of funding should become clearer.

A new school at the lower Stanley Hill would be "similar in size" to the new Eastwood High School being built in Newton Mearns, just outside Glasgow, which was funded by the first phase of "schools for the future" cash.

In a draft of its application, the SIC expresses a willingness to "explore the

possibility of joint working/bundling with the Eastwood High School project if acceptable to all parties".

With the council set to look at shutting more junior highs to save £2 million a year, the issue of what size the new AHS pupil roll ought to be is likely to be a political hot potato. In essence, if many more junior high departments were to go the way of Scalloway, the new school would need to be considerably larger.

Government funding would be linked to the size of the pupil roll when the new school opens. The council's agreed policy is for the new building to have capacity for 1,000 pupils, while the AHS's projected

roll for the start of the 2012/13 session is 891 pupils. Though the draft application says no pressures such as population growth or migration are liable to significantly affect the pupil roll, the council "will look to flexibility in the design to offer future proofing as there is currently a refresh of the Blueprint for Education being undertaken".

Head of finance James Gray yesterday sought to reassure councillors that the SIC's debt-free status, worth more than £13 million a year, would not be jeopardised by accepting a government grant.

**EIS unhappy with blueprint consultation, p.6.**

## Strike ballot for ferry staff

North Boat workers are to be balloted on strike action amid fears the handover of the service to multinational Serco will lead to poorer pensions and possible job losses.

The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) has been critical of the decision to award Serco the £243 million, six-year contract which begins next month.

Islanders' fears about a poorer standard of service, particularly for freight such as fish and shellfish and livestock, appeared to have been at least partially allayed following a series of meetings held with Serco.

But RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: "RMT always said that this deal was about maximising profits at the expense of services, fares and the workforce and our fears are proved well-founded by this pensions scandal."

The union said that in meetings the company had said it would not continue with the pensions provision offered by NorthLink.

Serco, whose takeover of the route was disrupted after rival bidder Streamline unsuccessfully went to court to try to block the awarding of the contract, defended its approach.

Jamie Ross, business development director at Serco, said: "We have had a series of recent meetings with staff and unions and the discussions have been constructive."

"Over the coming weeks we will continue working with both the unions and employees to discuss a number of issues."

A spokeswoman for government agency Transport Scotland said it was legally obliged to tender for public services.

"While the transfer of staff is a matter for the new operator, Serco, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) rules will apply and Serco will be working with NorthLink, the outgoing operator, during the handover period to transfer staff over."

TUPE rules do not cover pensions.

Serco has faced criticism for deciding to operate only one of the two freight vessels it will retain on contract from Seatruck Ferries from January to June. The company insisted it would ensure there was adequate provision for freight between the freight vessels and the passenger ferries.

Meanwhile members of the community can learn more about Serco's plans for the ferry service at three public events in Shetland next week.

The events will take place at 6.30pm next Wednesday at the Shetland Museum and Archives in Lerwick, at the same time next Thursday at Busta House Hotel and next Friday at Mid Yell Public Hall, again at the same time.

Anyone interested in attending should visit the company's website - [www.sercoferries.co.uk](http://www.sercoferries.co.uk)

Jonathan Riley, project director at Serco NorthLink Ferries, said: "We are delighted to have been chosen by Transport Scotland to operate this lifeline service to the Northern Isles."

"We recognise the essential role this service provides for many island communities and businesses and delivering a high level of quality and reliability to our customers is a key priority for Serco."



**FAYE** Richardson lights the Olympic Cauldron during a ceremony at the Clickimin running track after the Olympic flame had been paraded around Lerwick on Sunday. **Photo:** Kevin Jones

## Olympic torch draws big crowd

By RYAN TAYLOR

More than 2,500 people turned out to see the Olympic torch on its most northerly journey around Lerwick in a carnival atmosphere on Sunday.

Sunshine greeted the spectators, most of whom were gathered at Clickimin, as the flame was taken around the town by a succession of proud torchbearers.

The most spectacular part of the torch procession was when it was taken from Clickimin Broch across the loch in the sixaeren *Vaila Mae* by Matthew Cox.

For Unst Leisure Centre manager Matthew the "kiss", the term used by organisers for the passing of the flame, had added romantic meaning because he handed over to his fiancée, aerobics instructor Faye Richardson, who carried it to a stage and lit the Olympic Cauldron. The pair are to marry in August next year.

The event wasn't entirely without incident for Matthew. The time it took the sixaeren to get across the loch was longer than the anticipated "burn-time" on the torch, which meant Olympic officials had to offer him a spare torch to which the flame could be transferred.

"The amount of burn-time they have on the torch meant the time coming across the loch was just too much. They had spare torches ready so they were able to light one."

Despite the minor hiccup, Matthew insisted the experience had been well worth it.

"It's been absolutely amazing. I can't believe the number of people cheering. It's been a great day with a bit of Shetland culture, and the Olympics are coming, so what more could you ask for?"

Before climbing aboard the sixaeren, Matthew ran with the torch to the Clickimin Broch, where he was welcomed by members of the Guizer Jarl

Squad - minus Jarl David Nicolson, who had himself taken part in the event.

"They gave me a guard of honour going into the Broch, but I wasn't expecting them to be at this [Clickimin] side as well, so that was even better."

For Faye - who was nominated for her dedication to athletics and her work as a lifeguard - the day was just as rewarding, although she was initially concerned the cauldron might not light.

"I was a bit worried for a moment that it wasn't going to light, but then it did, and seeing everybody looking at it made it just amazing to be a part of something so big."

She said she was delighted to have taken the torch from Matthew.

"It was really good because we were worried we were going to miss each other."

Asked how she felt about being nominated, (Continued on pages two & three)

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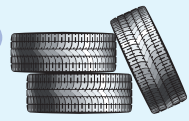
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# A view of new SIC website

Shetland Islands Council launched a new website this week. Still at the original address – [www.shetland.gov.uk](http://www.shetland.gov.uk) – the revamped site features an entirely new look and structure which is designed to let visitors find the information they need quickly and easily.

Last year the council carried out a survey on how it communicates, and the need to update its website was the most common comment which came back from SIC staff and members of the public.

The council decided to carry out a complete overhaul and contracted Shaw Marketing and Design to help. Shaw staff worked with the council's IT Service to create a new design which is all about helping folk find the information they need with as little fuss as possible. The aim is to make sure that people can get wherever they need to go in just four clicks from the home page.

Peter Peterson from the council's executive services said the cost of the new site was under £7,000.

Here, *Shetland Times* IT man WILLIAM SANDISON casts his eye over the site.

Saying "we need a new website" is a little like saying "we need a new vehicle". Both a tractor and a sports car will get you from A to B but what you might actually require is a van. With that in mind, £7,000 seems reasonable to me for what is a fairly extensive website catering to a wide variety of users.

The first impression of the new site is of a visually appealing design with lots of pictures and colours that are easy on the eye. The main home page is split into three main columns of quick links to most popular content on the left, news down the middle and online services at the right. Drop-down menus at the top of the page also take you quickly to various parts of the site. With a "How can we help you?" link and another of "A to Z of council services" the intention is to provide many routes to find what you need.

All very good so far, but I do wonder if those pictures of Shetland and some of the stock graphics and

photos are going to date rather quickly. This brings me to something else highlighted by the council and that is the appointment of a digital communications official with direct responsibility for the content of the website. Excellent idea and probably exactly what the previous site was lacking. Without someone to take ownership of the site and liaise between users, designers and the IT function a site will quickly become stale, uninspiring or unused.

Now with all that positive stuff out the way a bit of constructive criticism. The first stumbling block I encountered was with search. I'm not sure why, but using the likes of Google, Bing or Yahoo to look for council content often results in a link that just goes to the home page. Perhaps this is simply due to cached links that will be replaced once the site is re-indexed by the search engines. That's understandable, but can be confusing when using the site's own search facility since they are relying on Google for those searches. For example, you might do a search for the word "waste". One of the links returned is "Waste – duty of care – summary leaflet". Clicking on that link takes you back to the home page. Now that page either doesn't exist any more or exists somewhere else. Search is a fundamental requirement of most websites. People expect to be able to find stuff in the freeform way that internet search engine interfaces encourage. At the moment, for the SIC site, search is broken. That's a potential show stopper.

While the design throughout most of the site is consistent, with good usability and user experience, this is lost in places where some links take you to what looks like legacy sections of the site or to an external site. Similarly with the search issue, some links even take you back to the home page. I think it should be more obvious that you are clicking through to an external site and some of the sections, such as the online payments section, really require some custom branding so that the design is in line with

the look of the new site.

There appears to be very little in the way of interactive content apart from the usual feedback form. While I'm all for simplifying things as much as possible, and there's plenty of that gone on here with 3,500 pages on the old site being reduced to 1,000 on the new, I would really expect more in the way of links to RSS feeds, Facebook, Twitter and so on. Talking of RSS I didn't actually notice the link on the home page at first. Perhaps it needs the standard icon?

While many documents are available as PDF files, I am a little confused as to why so many are delivered in Microsoft Word format. Surely a legacy of the old site and there's absolutely no reason why everything shouldn't be converted to a standard non-editable PDF format. If documents are delivered in Word format, it's only a matter of time before something embarrassing is left in the metadata. I discovered several usernames and some bizarre document origins for example. Strangely, I also managed to find the odd "confidential" document as well.

Another strange anomaly I noticed is the use of PDF forms for things like booking leisure facilities. To use this, you fill in fields on the PDF form then have to email, post or fax the form to the appropriate department. This is probably a hangover from the old site, but surely a proper browser-based online form would be much more logical for the user and easier to handle for processing and administration behind the scenes?

To finish on a positive note, I quite like the new website. It's simple, easy to navigate, but still with some minor and not so minor, issues to be resolved. I think it requires much more in the way of truly online facilities for complaints, bookings and so on and I would like to see much more use of the data tax payers are funding. Users are being encouraged to provide feedback and suggestions, so time will tell whether those are acted upon and if the site is kept fresh, up to date.

# Water-borne last leg



Matthew Cox carries the torch aboard the *Vaila Mae* across Clickimin Loch.

Photo: Dave Donaldson



Former council leisure and recreation chief John Nicolson carries the flame.

Photo: Dave Donaldson



Carrier Chris Rocks at Clickimin.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

(Continued from front page)  
she said: "It's very humbling, I think, because there are 8,000 torchbearers across the whole of the UK. I think Shetland could have filled 8,000 spaces. I was really lucky to get nominated."

Earlier, retired SIC councillor John Nicolson from Trondra started off the Lerwick leg of the relay outside the Clickimin.

Mr Nicolson played a key role during his time in public life in getting Shetland's sporting facilities, including the Clickimin, up and running.

He almost had to pull out after suffering flu symptoms just days before the relay. He pulled through, however, and kicked off the relay with large crowds cheering him on.

"I felt surprised to be honest. I just did not expect it to be the moment that it turned out to be. With the number of folk around, I found it quite emotional."

"I had the flu on Wednesday, and on Thursday I thought I would have to pull out, but it was surely my destiny to be here."

Maggie Adamson from Fladdabister is best known as one of Shetland's most acclaimed young fiddlers.

However swapping her strings for a torch had surpassed all her expectations.

"I had been speaking to people who have already done it on Facebook and they were saying how you can't describe it."

Maggie, a former Young Fiddler

of the Year, is actually one of the lucky few who secured tickets to go to the Olympics.

However she has already had to sacrifice her ticket to play at the Proms instead.

"I got tickets but unfortunately I'm actually playing at the Proms at the same time. The Scottish Youth Orchestra is going down and I got a part in that. It's been an unbelievable year so far."

Mark Wylie had to endure the steepest part of the whole town, but said he was none the worse for his experience.

"It was unbelievable. The weather stayed fine and I can't get over the amount of people who came out to watch everyone. It's been fantastic."

"I had the steepest part of the



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# but one for torch's northerly tour



The torchbearers beside the Clickimin Broch during their memorable day. Back (from left): Jim Robertson, Chris Rocks, David Nicolson, Mark Wylie, Emily Shaw, Sharon Deyell, Matthew Cox, Andrea Strachan Front: Maggie Adamson, Belle Spence, Megan Keppie, Faye Richardson, John Nicolson, Bryden Priest, Zoe Buchanan and Julie Grant.

Photo: Kevin Jones

## Filming for isles drama

Filming started this week on the new BBC One drama *Shetland*, adapted from the series of books by award-winning crime writer Ann Cleeves.

The two-part crime drama will be partly shot in Shetland and will feature Shetland actors Steven Robertson, who has already appeared in *Being Human*, *Luther* and *Brighton Rock*, and Sandra Voe, who has recently been in *Blood* and *Takin Over The Asylum*.

The drama will star acclaimed actor Douglas Henshall, of *The Kidnap Diaries* and *The Silence*, and is being produced by ITV Studios through BBC Scotland. It has been written by David Kane and will be shot on location in various parts of Scotland, including Glasgow and Ayrshire as well as Shetland.

The powerful murder-mystery, set in Shetland, centres on Detective Jimmy Perez (Henshall), a native Shetlander who has returned home after a long spell away. When a young archaeologist discovers a set of human remains, the island community is intrigued to know if they are an ancient find or a contemporary mystery. And when an elderly woman is shot on her land, Perez and his team find themselves at the centre of two feuding families whose envy, greed and bitterness has divided the surrounding community.

## Sumburgh work starts

The £5.4 million redevelopment of Sumburgh Head into a world class visitor centre is now under way with the arrival on site of the contractor Corramore Construction Ltd.

The first stage of the work has already started on the new accommodation block and the expansion of the lower car park.

Project partners Shetland Amenity Trust and the RSPB are keen to ensure that construction work has a minimal impact on visitors to the area. Local tour operators are invited to submit details of any planned bus tour visits in order to ensure adequate parking and turning arrangements are fully co-ordinated with the contractor, particularly at times of high traffic flow or site deliveries. Details can be submitted to [info@shetlandamenity.org](mailto:info@shetlandamenity.org) or [shetland@rspb.org.uk](mailto:shetland@rspb.org.uk).

Pedestrian access to bird viewing points and the area at the back of the lighthouse tower remains open. The only area now closed to the public is the central courtyard and lighthouse buildings, although access is still available to the RSPB offices and information point, including the acclaimed "puffincam" monitor. Access information will be updated on the main project website at [www.sumburghhead.com](http://www.sumburghhead.com).

Private vehicle access to the top of Sumburgh Head is now restricted to authorised vehicles only. However, access can be granted for disabled or limited mobility visitors by prior arrangement, by contacting the RSPB office at [shetland@rspb.org.uk](mailto:shetland@rspb.org.uk). Advanced notice would be appreciated as the office is not manned every day.

The lighthouse and visitor centre is due for completion by spring 2014.



Guizer Jarl David Nicolson with his torch.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

town at Gressy Loan ... I walked up the first part and then ran up the second piece."

Mark will enjoy at least a part of the London Olympics himself, when he turns out to see the gymnastics final, where he hopes his friend Beth Tweddle will be competing.

David Nicolson looked somewhat out of place in his official white shell suit, while his fellow Jarl Squad members were in full Viking regalia.

"It's another page in the year of the life of a Jarl and it's unbelievable. You're here as Jarl, and you have to do a lot of public speaking and attend public events, so you get used to it. But nothing prepares you for this.

"It's a fantastic experience, and it's good to see the flame come to Shetland. Shetland always gets missed out or put in a box by Aberdeen. But the Met [police] officers that have been up have been bowled over by the place."

Zoe Buchanan won a gold medal for badminton and four other medals at the British Transplant Games in Belfast last year, just 17 months after having a kidney transplant operation, with the new organ being donated by her mother.

She described the experience of carrying the torch as "phenomenal".

"I am still shaking. It's a huge honour, and when we did the torchbearer kiss the sun came out. I



The torch is lit.



The huge crowd at Clickimin.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

thought that was brilliant, and I love the fact the weather stayed dry for us."

After the ceremony the flame was taken to Sumburgh.

Celebrations at the Clickimin were running throughout the day, including a street dance performance by the Pivot Dance Squad and the now well-rehearsed Shetland dialect song *Running wi a Braand in wir Hand* – performed by the local "Flame Choir" and written by Brian Nicolson.

Meanwhile, the flame was flown to its next destination in the Western Isles to continue its long, 70-day journey.

At the controls of the plane was pilot Dave Armour-Rubery, who

said the relay represented a "once in a lifetime" opportunity.

The 36-year-old captain flew as part of a two-crew team bringing the flame and over 60 Olympic dignitaries to the isles.

The experienced pilot, who has held a flyer's licence since he was 18, said he was "very honoured" to be carrying out the important role.

"It's fantastic. For me and my crew it was a once in a lifetime opportunity. This is the first time I've ever been associated with anything this unusual."

Two of Loganair's Saab 340 aircrafts landed at Sumburgh Airport on the day of the relay. One of aircraft carried the torch and flame, along with the associated security

personnel, while the second plane transported 64 LOCOG representatives and VIPs.

Specially-commissioned "Davey-lamps" were used to carry the flame between island destinations.

Flying with a lit flame onboard may not seem like the safest thing in the world to do. The captain said special permission was needed from the Civil Aviation Authority. The flights were chartered by BA.

The man in charge of the other aeroplane was Captain David Miller, from Orkney.

He said: "I'm used to landing on Scotland's islands with important cargo, but never before have I been given the chance to deliver such a symbolic piece of history."

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