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FEATURE: New look Scalloway fishmarket... p20-21

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Dramatic scenes



Shetland County Drama Festival began on Monday. Here Donald Anderson causes a stir as Hamish McKilloff, playing up to his name in *Out of This World* by the Westside Players. See pages 26-27.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

SIC spending is 'unsustainable'

BY KEEGAN MURRAY AND CHARLEY-KAI JOHN

Council spending must be hauled back to sustainable levels soon or else the authority's reserves will be gone within a decade.

That was the warning sounded by SIC finance chief Jamie Manson on Wednesday as councillors approved a budget for the coming year.

Elected members previously examined a draft budget last month as they discussed and eventually approved a council tax hike of almost five per cent.

That decision was informed by a budget in which the council faced having to make an "unsustainable" draw on reserves of over £12 million if it was to maintain services at current levels.

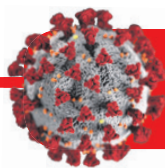
In light of the council tax increase and additional money from the Scottish government the amount which had to be taken from reserves had fallen, Mr Manson said.

But he told councillors that if they were to balance the books on their £124.6 million general fund spend, a draw of £10.5 million above sustainable levels would still have to be made.

Mr Manson warned councillors that continued spending at that rate would see the reserve fund emptied by 2029/30.

He said that the time had come to "look at efficiencies" with spending cuts looking set to feature high on the agenda ahead of next year's budget setting.

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CORONAVIRUS LATEST

Six confirmed cases as NHS plans for next level

BY KEEGAN MURRAY & RYAN TAYLOR

Shetland Health Board was yesterday ramping up its plans to deal with the coronavirus pandemic, with a focus on implementing a more vigorous plan that will affect services.

As this newspaper went to press there were six confirmed cases with many more people known to be self-isolating and seeking testing.

NHS Shetland's interim medical director Brian Chittick yesterday told reporters the situation concerning the virus was "developing very rapidly".

"We've had four additional cases of Covid-19 which takes us to six.

"At the moment we're contact tracing a new set of people from the recent results and we will be getting in contact with people and inviting them in to have testing undertaken.

"It's also important to say things are developing very rapidly. If you look externally to Shetland the World Health Organization has announced that Covid-19 is now a pandemic.

"There is a lot of discussion within the UK about where we are in our containment phase, and whether there is a decision about moving to the next phase, which is the delay phase.

"We are looking at implementing a pandemic flu plan which we have prepared and that will impact on how we are providing services moving forward."

Mr Chittick urged anyone feeling unwell to avoid going to work. Similarly, he advised against anyone displaying symptoms from visiting elderly or more vulnerable people in, for example, care homes.



Brian Chittick says the coronavirus situation is "developing very rapidly"

The new cases were identified via the contact tracing of the initial two cases of coronavirus that were identified.

Those first two confirmed cases were announced on Monday and yesterday Iain and Suzanne Malcolmson went public about their ordeal (see separate story).

Four further cases were confirmed at 2pm yesterday.

This came a day after World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus labelled the outbreak a "pandemic".

He said: "We are deeply concerned, both by the alarming levels of spread and severity, and by the alarming levels of inaction. We have called every day for countries to take urgent and aggressive action."

Schools remained open at the time of going to press, though two Up-Helly-A's, a schools music festival, concerts and a football tournament had all been cancelled or postponed.

Several other groups ranging from sports clubs to youth organisations were yesterday contacting members to say planned meetings were postponed.

It was yesterday announced that the BBC had decided to cancel its *Any Questions* episode which was due to be broadcast from Maelgwyn today. The visit of the radio show should be rescheduled for later in the year, according to Shetland Amenity Trust.

On Tuesday a special "pod" was set up outside the Gilbert Bain Hospital in Lerwick to allow testing to take place outwith the main hospital building.

There has been widespread speculation about how rapidly the virus may spread and whether any of those at risk have come into contact with other people.

NHS Shetland refused to confirm how many had been tested for the virus but said "all those deemed to be at risk are being contacted and asked to come in for tests if they have symptoms".

One of the cases confirmed yesterday is a Scottish Sea Farms worker, according to the aquaculture firm.

Tracy Bryant-Shaw, head of human resources for Scottish Sea Farms, said the worker had done "the responsible thing" and self-isolated until test results were available.

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Couple are first to contract virus

BY RYAN TAYLOR & ADAM CIVICO

An architect who contracted coronavirus has spoken to *The Shetland Times* after sharing a post on Facebook to put straight "some of the more vicious rumours" spread since he was confirmed as having the virus.

Iain Malcolmson confirmed in the post that he and his wife Suzanne had tested positive for the virus following a trip to southern Italy, something which he said left health services "gobsmacked".

Yesterday, he explained why he decided to go public with the ordeal. He told this newspaper that publishing the online post was "against our instinct and principle," but he insisted "that is the line in the sand. That is all we can do."

His post stated that the couple had visited Naples for a long weekend. Before travelling they had checked the government website which advised "travel to Naples was fine as there were no cases in that region at the time".

That was still the case when they returned home. In his Facebook post, Mr Malcolmson wrote that on Thursday night after returning home he started to develop mild cold symptoms and contacted the health services.

"The initial advice was that southern Italy was not a high-risk area and therefore we did not need testing. However, this information changed on lunchtime Friday when Italy was upgraded.

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Suzanne and Iain Malcolmson.

Full coverage on pages 2,3 & 4

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Community: Lerwick to get revamped lifeboat 13

Sport: Cup triumph for hockey squad 40



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CORONAVIRUS

Couple praise 'fantastic' aid given by NHS amid outbreak

«Continued from front page

"We were advised to self-isolate, and we would be tested."

This, he stated, they did immediately. He added, in an apparent response to rumours that have been circulating, that they "have not been out partying, or socialising of any kind".

"Both NHS Shetland and Public Health Scotland/Shetland were gobsmacked when the positive results came on the Sunday evening. At that point we provided as much detail and information as we possibly could to help the health professionals carry out their work."

Mr Malcolmson added that he and his family followed all the health service advice.

He later referred to the "fantastic" support he has received from the health service, friends, family and neighbours. But he added that "nasty rumours and wild speculation" have also been spread.

"We would do anything to change this situation, and we are desperately worried about friends, family and anyone else who may have been affected."

"Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but that does not change

where we are now. We do however know, that we did everything we could as per the guidance.

"Public Health Shetland urges everyone to follow the same principles, however, if the consequence of doing your best and trying to do the right thing is to get vilified by others, it will put people off, and this will increase the risk in the long run."

He invited people to share the post.

Speaking yesterday he told this newspaper: "It's been really tough, but we followed every step we could possibly do."

"The only thing we know is me and Suzanne have tested positive. That's the only thing we know."

"If you're dealing in facts, we don't know that we caught it in Italy. There's no 'fact' that's going to tell you that until well down the line."

"So we don't know where we caught it. The only thing we know is that we have got it."

Asked how he was feeling now, he said: "We're feeling fine in ourselves but obviously really worried for everybody else."

"If everybody follows the guidance that NHS and Public Health Scotland have given that's the way to do it."

Cancelling festivals right decision, says gutted jarl

■ Smuha and Delting Up-Helly-A' called off

■ Davies will lead his Brae squad in October

BY RYAN NICOLSON & KEEGAN MURRAY

The final two Up-Helly-A's of the fire festival season have fallen victim to coronavirus.

South Mainland Up-Helly-A (Smuha), due to be held today, was put off until next year while the Delting festival has been moved to October.

The postponements come after cases of the novel coronavirus Covid-19 reached the isles.

Two cases were confirmed on Monday, rising to six by yesterday afternoon.

In the immediate aftermath of the first confirmations both festivals looked set to press ahead.

But on Wednesday afternoon the World Health Organization (WHO) labelled the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic and NHS Shetland subsequently recommended postponing both festivals in an effort to contain the spread locally.

Smuha Guizer Jarl Jamie Laurenson said it was "a bit of a bummer" that the festival was cancelled, but was adamant that the committee was left with "no decision to make".

Mr Laurenson's wait to become the next Smuha jarl jumped from two days to 359 days within a matter of hours on Wednesday as the festival was cancelled for 2020.

He said he was unsure of how



Smuha Guizer jarl Jamie Laurenson attaches galley planks but today's festival has been cancelled.

Photo: Kevin Osborn

he would feel today, on the day he should have been leading his squad through a string of parties in the South Mainland.

"We'll just cope," he said.

"The tough thing was last night [Wednesday]," in reference to the decision to cancel the festival late that evening.

He said that once the Smuha committee had heard from the local health board that they believed the festival should be postponed, there was no other option than to cancel the event.

"We thought when we got to Wednesday we had cleared a couple of hurdles," he said.

"We did what we could. We were making sure we didn't come into contact with vulnerable people, but the halls we could have no control over."

Mr Laurenson said the decision to cancel, rather than postpone this year's festival, was taken because "we would prefer to have our Smuha next year."

Around 20 friends and family of Mr Laurenson arrived into Lerwick on the NorthLink ferry yesterday morning, to be met with the news that the festival had been cancelled.

Mr Laurenson said he felt "vexed" for those people who had travelled from the mainland and abroad to celebrate this weekend, and hoped they would be able to organise some form of squad get-together to make up for the disappointment of the cancellation.

"We're not really sure what would be appropriate to do," he added.

The Delting fire festival is now provisionally set to take place on Friday 30th October, with the hop day to follow on Hallowe'en.

Dwayne Davies, who was to lead his large squad of Vikings through Brae next Friday, said: "It is what it is. We can't really proceed with what's going on."

At an emergency committee meeting on Wednesday evening the decision to postpone until later in the year, rather than delay for a whole year like Smuha, was taken for a variety of reasons, Mr Davies said.

Pushing every Delting jarl's celebration back a year would have created an awkward clash come 2022 as the Delting and Northmaine jarl's squads would share numerous members, weeks apart and in neighbouring communities.

Another reason October was identified was to allow time for coronavirus to be brought under control and to also see the return of dark nights, with summer's long evenings likely to ruin the effects of the procession somewhat.

The situation will be re-evaluated later in the year and the date may be moved again but for now Delting Up-Helly-A' will take place on 30th October.

The Smuha committee will all be pushed back a year as a result of the cancellation.

Calls to cancel the remaining

fire festivals began on Monday, when journalist and former health board member Tom Morton wrote a blog post arguing that the events were a "fertile breeding ground for infection".

He pleaded for people to "not allow pride, arrogance and bloody-mindedness to lay Shetland's vulnerable elderly and unwell open to this virus" and asked how those who organised the festivals would feel if someone was to die because of contact they had made at one of the community events.

Isles GP Susan Bowie, Mr Morton's wife, joined her husband in calling for the cancellation of the remaining festivals.

She described herself as "worried" about the potential for a wider coronavirus outbreak caused by the festivals, and said the parties in the public halls would be like "a Petri dish".

"If everyone gets it and spreads it within a couple of weeks we're not going to be able to cope", said Dr Bowie.

MSP Beatrice Wishart said she supported NHS Shetland's decision and hoped the move would "reduce understandable anxiety in the community".

"I recognise the disappointment that many people who have spent months preparing for the event will feel."

"Measures like this are not taken lightly but in exceptional times we must take exceptional action."

First minister advises all mass gatherings to stop

«Continued from front page

"At the same time, he made Scottish Sea Farms aware so that we could take the necessary precautions to protect all other employees. In line with NHS and Health Protection Scotland advice, this has included tracing all those who might have come into contact with our employee in recent weeks and asking them to notify their GP and NHS24 then self-isolate."

"Last night, our employee learned that his test results had come back positive for coronavirus, however he reports feeling well otherwise whilst remaining in self-isolation."

Earlier in the week, NHS Shetland interim medical director Brian Chittick said: "While we recognise people may feel anxious about coronavirus, we would like to offer reassurance that we are taking all the necessary steps to try and contain the virus."

Shetland MSP Beatrice Wishart said: "My first thoughts are with the patients and their families. I wish them a speedy recovery."

"We must take sensible steps guided by scientific evidence. It is important for us all the follow and keep up to date with the advice from the NHS and take particular care to wash our hands regularly."

The Scottish government yesterday confirmed that the national total had risen to 60 (an increase of 24 in one day) while across the UK 460 people had tested positive as Wednesday evening, including eight deaths.

An emergency Cobra meeting of medical experts and Westminster ministers was taking place yesterday afternoon, with home working, school closures and limits on gatherings thought to be on the agenda.

At the same time in Scotland, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon recommended the cancellation of all mass gatherings of over 500 people.

She said: "The health secretary [Jeane Freeman] and I have decided this morning that we are minded that we will advise the cancellation, from the start of next week, of mass gatherings of 500 people or more."



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CORONAVIRUS

Operations could be cancelled as NHS prepares for epidemic

- Plans in place to deal with staff absences
- Test samples sent to Glasgow for analysis

BY RYAN TAYLOR

Non-urgent procedures at the Gilbert Bain Hospital may be postponed to help NHS staff deal with an increase in coronavirus cases, health officials have said.

Planning is also taking place to help deal with staff succumbing to the illness and being unable to work.

It comes after a testing "pod" was installed in a portable cabin in the hospital car park as NHS staff faced up to the mammoth task of combatting Covid-19.

NHS Shetland has been holding daily press conferences this week to provide updates.

Interim medical director Brian Chittick insisted numbers of confirmed cases could increase and urged people to continue to abide by guidelines around hand-washing and cleanliness.

"Everything is being done to contain the spread of the virus at the minute and everybody has a role to play in that. That includes really good hand hygiene, avoiding touching mouths, eyes, noses with hands, washing our hands regularly."

He said part of the planning was around preparing for staff absences.

Ways to address that could include asking part time staff to work extra, or turning to other boards across the north of Scotland for staffing support.

"At the minute we're still looking at every possibility," Mr Chittick said.

"This virus doesn't just sit in the community, our people work and live in the community. There's risk that they may become cases themselves and we're planning for that."

He added the cancellation of certain elective procedures if the

number of cases ramps up was also a possibility, although he said it was "not something we're looking at in the immediate future".

Mr Chittick said more beds would be available in the Gilbert Bain if case numbers increase dramatically.

But he stressed it was important to highlight the size of the hospital.

"We can't build wards. We've got what we've got. So it's important that we balance what we may need from an isolation perspective compared with those who are already in for illnesses and sicknesses unconnected with the outbreak."

Mr Chittick said the situation surrounding the outbreak was "complex".

He said the island health authority had benefited from weeks of planning, as well as the partnership it has with sister health boards – in particular NHS Grampian – and other agencies such as the Scottish Ambulance Service and Health Protection Scotland.

"Really a lot of the planning has come to fruition, but I think the challenge that could lie ahead is not a challenge we face alone. All the health boards in Scotland are facing a similar challenge."

"It's a moving target. We're meeting on a regular basis just to keep that planning going."

The custom-built portable hut now sitting outside the Gilbert Bain was brought in to allow for testing of any suspected cases, while at the same time keeping patients away from the main hospital building.

But officials said the pod was not something which should be merely treated as a drop-in centre for people who suspect they may be displaying symptoms.



The cabin outside Gilbert Bain Hospital in Lerwick which will be used to test for coronavirus cases.

Instead, they urged people to self-isolate until advised they should visit to the pod for testing.

Swab samples will be sent to Glasgow for analysis, with outcomes of the tests expected over a 24-hour to 48-hour timeframe.

Although it became operational on Tuesday, the testing pod is not, in itself, a direct response to the confirmation of coronavirus cases in the isles.

The board's chief executive Michael Dickson said it had been in NHS Shetland's planning since coronavirus began to escalate a number of weeks ago.

Mr Chittick added: "The aim of this was to allow an external facility to the main hospital to allow the testing of suspected coronavirus patients."

"That will facilitate the need not to cross the boundary of the hospital."

"I think we're working in a very complex situation where things are evolving. The main principle is that we now have that external testing facility that we can use as and when required."

"The contact tracing is ongoing and part of that contact tracing

is an analysis of whether people need to be tested."

"The pod is where people are requested to come in for testing. It's not a drop-in centre, it's not somewhere where someone's presented with a cough and thinking they need to be tested."

"It is specifically those who have been contacted by our health protection team, who feel that from a risk assessment they need to be tested, and that's how the pod will work."

Mr Dickson said he recognised concerns voiced by people fearful of the potential spread of coronavirus throughout the isles.

However, he stressed that those first infected "followed the advice" correctly. He said people should contact the NHS via telephone after beginning to feel unwell.

"Everything that should have happened did happen in this case. It also helps us in the contact tracing that they knew where they went to and when they started to self-isolate."

"Again, to reinforce, the first thing anyone can do when the start to feel unwell is self-isolate and then seek advice on the telephone."

The virus was detected following a recent trip to Italy. Mr Chittick said it was "not within our bound-

aries" to discuss whether those infected had returned to the isles via plane or ferry.

Mr Dickson said samples would be processed as "quickly as possible" to co-ordinate the transfer of samples to the mainland.

"I think we're in a very strong position in terms of having as short as possible turn around time from testing to getting results," he said.

Wednesday's press conference came ahead of the calling off of Up-Helly-A' events in the South Mainland and Delting.

Mr Chittick said questions around large-scale events gave him the opportunity "to reinforce the self-precautions you can take".

He recommended avoidance of the sharing of hip flasks "or drinking utensils" with other people.

"Also, if you are coughing, sneezing, its into a disposable tissue that is then thrown into a bin and then your hands are washed or sanitised after."

"If you're feeling under the weather, give consideration to whether it is the right thing to be doing to be partaking in a large social gathering."

But he added: "We would be saying that at any time of the year."

Harbour triage?

BY RYAN TAYLOR

Questions have been raised over whether a triage system could operate at Victoria Pier during the cruise ship season to assess visitors and help mitigate against the potential impact of the coronavirus.

North Mainland councillor Andrea Manson raised the issue at a meeting of the integration joint board.

She said cruise ships brought "enormous pressure on the Gilbert Bain Hospital".

It came during discussions around next year's budget.

The meeting heard talks had been held at the emergency planning forum, which was said to be satisfied sufficient plans were in place.

Earlier in the meeting, held last Thursday, Allison Duncan questioned whether there was any contingency budget planned to deal with a potential outbreak of Covid-19 coronavirus.

Finance official Karl Williamson said costs would have to be absorbed in the short term, although he hoped the UK government would later come to cover additional expenses.

Director of community health Simon Bokor-Ingram told the meeting: "At the end of the year, when it comes to the final reckoning, if there's any government support then – as long as we can quantify our costs – then we'll have a case."

North Mainland councillor Emma Macdonald said the virus was "no different from flu."

"We don't know how bad it's going to be. We don't know who's going to get it."

"I think we have to keep it in perspective. We manage things like the flu all the time."

Meanwhile, Shetland Islands Council's marine operators have highlighted a notice to mariners issued by Health Protection Scotland and the Scottish Ports Liaison Network.

It calls on cruise ships and, in some cases, cargo vessels to bring forward notification if anyone onboard has travelled from an area at risk from the disease, or if they have been in close contact with anyone with a confirmed case of coronavirus.

The full notice is published in today's newspaper. See *Public Notices*.

Patients told to telephone clinic

Patients are being urged to stay away from Lerwick Health Centre unless their visit is "absolutely necessary".

The practice sent out a message on Wednesday morning stating that "due to the current coronavirus situation" it was introducing a "phone triage service".

Patients were asked to contact the clinic by telephone to discuss their symptoms.

The health board's deputy chief executive Simon Bokor-Ingram said a growing number of people concerned about the virus had been phoning the Lerwick Health Centre, instead of turning up at the door in person.

"It is really helpful, and we are very grateful that people are heeding the advice that is out there, and they are choosing to telephone in."

"In most cases they are able to get advice and potentially treatment without having to come into the practice."

"We've managed to close out an awful lot of consultations through the telephone."

Authority up to the challenge, says Riise

BY RYAN TAYLOR

This week's outbreak of coronavirus is a "game-changer" for the isles, but a high-ranking council official has insisted the SIC is prepared to deal with the regularly changing challenge.

Corporate services manager Jan Riise says the potential for an outbreak of Covid-19 has been on the authority's radar for several weeks.

The authority has held key discussions with ports and ferry operators as well as airlines to help mitigate against the outbreak.

Speaking on Tuesday on behalf of chief executive Maggie Sandison, Mr Riise said efforts had been made to ensure people were receiving the correct guidelines.

He said the matter had been on the corporate management team's agenda during weekly meetings for the last month.

"The corporate management team meets every week, and it is a standing item," he said, adding an emergency planning forum had met twice since the issue came to light.

"We've also arranged separate meetings with the port to talk about port health with ports, ferries, LPA – and we've also involved airline services in that."

"The game-changer was cases in Shetland because what we were talking about before was to prevent rather than contain, whereas now the mood is very much switched to contain."

He added the chief executive had been circulating health board advice to ensure people were reading the correct guidance.

Advice had also been given "not to engage" with the media on matters "that could cause people to misinterpret or misunderstand the government's message through the NHS".

He added advice had also been circulated to elected members to help them deal with queries from constituents.

Mr Riise said information was available from "loads of links" on the public statement from the health board.

"Use the links and follow that guidance and actually don't trouble the NHS unless you've got a real reason for doing so – don't clog the lines with random questions."

Adding the situation was "pretty much steady as she goes" for the council, he said it had not reached the stage where the SIC's workforce were considered to be under threat. None of them, on Tuesday at least, had been confirmed as a coronavirus case.

He said all council services had been examined as part of business continuity plans, with efforts made to ensure work can continue with reduced numbers of staff if anyone on the payroll does fall ill.

"It's just practical steps to keep us functioning as best we can at times where the planning preparedness for this suggests you could have up to 17 to 20 per cent of your workforce not at work."

Reiterating a stance taken by officials at Hayfield House (see separate story), he said there were no plans to close schools.

"One of the things that creates the bulge for you in terms of planning, is that as soon as you start closing schools that affects everybody because parents stay home, and the whole thing begins to intensify."

"It's not just sick people who are not at work, it's also people caring for those who are sick."

"At the moment we're just dealing with the information we have and yesterday [Monday] was a game changer. But the planning is still in place for it and it's very much follow the NHS advice."



Jan Riise says the council is well prepared for the outbreak.



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CORONAVIRUS

Architect who was exposed to disease takes no chances over himself and wife

A co-worker of two confirmed coronavirus cases and his family voluntarily took self-isolation as fears about the spread of the illness grew this week.

Colin Sim, an architect at Malcolmson Architects, and his wife Danielle chose to self-isolate after it was confirmed that two of Mr Sim's colleagues had contracted coronavirus. Ian and Suzanne

Malcolmson later publicly revealed they had the disease.

Mrs Sim, in a public letter written on her Facebook page on Monday, said that her husband had been in close contact with them for one and a half days and had been subsequently advised by the health board to self-isolate for two weeks at home.

"At the current time Colin is in one room of our house and he can only come out to use the bathroom," Mrs Sim said.

She and their young son had been advised that they did not need to self-isolate by the health board, she said, but had decided not to send the youngster to nursery in case they were infectious without displaying symptoms.

Mrs Sim addressed the public letter to the parents, guardians and teaching staff of the Lerwick pre-school, and said they wanted to "avoid any chance" of spreading the virus to anyone else at the nursery.

We are deeply distressed at any alarm, confusion and upset this news may raise. "We thought it best to be as open

and honest as we can be in this situation we have found ourselves in whilst at the same time not wanting to appear alarmist."

In a further post on Wednesday morning, Mrs Sim said the family remained in "precautionary self-isolation", and thanked people for their messages of support.

No plans so far to close schools but that could change

Schools remained open this week following the confirmation of six cases of coronavirus reaching the isles.

As this newspaper went to press yesterday the council said there were no immediate plans to close schools.

The council's head of children's services Helen Budge had been in contact with Scottish government officials throughout the week.

Meanwhile, the schools' music festival for primary children, which had been planned to take place next week in Mareel has been cancelled.

Some families are known to have been self-isolating, including taking their children out of pre-schools and schools, amid concerns over Covid-19.

However, health officials are said to have advised against self-isolation, unless people are told it is necessary by professionals, or they are otherwise unwell.

Mrs Budge updated members of the education and families committee on Tuesday afternoon.

She said an information poster had been sent to all schools on Friday, with checks being car-

ried out on Monday to ensure the information had been sent home.

Mrs Budge added an NHS press statement had also been sent to schools. Information was also contained on the children's services section of the council's website.

"It's a very changing picture. Every day at 2pm the Scottish government reveal the latest numbers, and we are keeping very much in contact with the Scottish government and NHS Shetland."

She added daily meetings were taking place and contact was being maintained with schools or parents with any concerns.

"We have a situation where we have been keeping schools very much informed as we have been asked to do by the NHS and the Scottish government," she said.

Her comments came after schools manager Shona Thompson said advice over coronavirus was a "moving feast", but added staff at Hayfield House had been in talks with public health representatives.

"We've been signposting folk to the advice that exists," she said, highlighting a "very helpful document" from Health Protection Scotland.

"We've had conversations with

staff in public health and what they are telling us is that you don't self-isolate unless public health have told you to, or you are feeling unwell.

"We're saying to folk, 'this is the guidance, if you are unsure phone your GP and a clinician will phone you back'."

She added health officials were also advising that that those potentially at risk would "have to have had the right amount of contact at the right time".

"It is a moving feast as you can imagine."

She added: "Helen [Budge] has had a conversation with the Scottish government and has passed our information onto them.

"We've been told that any school closures will be taken by the Scottish government – and it will be Scotlandwide."

She added: "We're not at that stage yet – we're still in this 'containment' stage."

NHS Shetland Interim Medical Director Brian Chittick said: "While we recognise people may feel anxious about coronavirus, we would like to offer reassurance that we are taking all the necessary steps to try and contain the virus."

Warning issued after scams start to emerge

Shetlanders have been warned to watch out for scams related to coronavirus.

Savvy scammers are said to be capitalising on fears around the illness by targeting the email addresses of vulnerable locals.

The Scottish Business Resilience Centre (SBRC) is warning Shetlanders to be vigilant, with scammers duping the British public out of over £800,000 to date on scams tied to coronavirus concerns.

Fraudsters are exploiting fears around the spread of coronavirus by sending out coronavirus-themed phishing emails falsely claiming to be from a reliable source, in the hope of gaining personal information and financial details and tricking people into opening malicious attachments.

The emails in question pretend to be affiliated with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), and claim to provide the recipient with a list of people in their region affected by the illness.

Multiple victims had also attempted to pur-

chase protective face masks from fraudulent sellers for as much as £15,000 in one case.

Although the majority of people would ignore these emails, it is feared that the panic surrounding coronavirus may lead to many people being drawn into the scams.

SBRC's head of business resilience Ian Stephen said: "These cynical scams are a telling example of how cyber criminals prey on people's worries.

"It was a matter of time before coronavirus was used as a trigger, with scams likely to rise in numbers as the disease continues to spread across the globe.

"People need to ensure that they do not allow their fears to cloud their judgment online, even if something does appear legitimate, it is better to be safe than sorry."

Anyone that receives a suspicious email is reminded not to click on any links or attachments, to right-click on the sender details to see the real email address of the sender or to right-click the link and copy the URL, then paste it to see where the link is actually trying to take you.

Mareel could shut, says Howell

Shetland Arts chief executive Graeme Howell said the organisation was prepared for the potential closure of Mareel due to coronavirus.

Countries across the world have closed cinemas in an effort to prevent the spread of the illness, while distributors have taken the unorthodox step of postponing their releases to avoid making significant losses.

No closure decision had been taken as this newspaper went to press. Mr Howell said this week that he was not sure "if concern is the right word" to describe the feeling around Shetland Arts about the situation, but that they were "keeping our eye on it".

"It's an ever-moving situation," he said. "All you can do in these situations is follow the advice."

So far, there had been no noticeable decrease in ticket sales despite this week's announcement of confirmed coronavirus cases in the isles, Mr Howell said.

A closure was "obviously not ideal", he added, but if such an extreme situation unfolded the arts and entertainment venue would be covered by business resilience planning.

BIRTHS

LESLIE – STOVE – Steven and Michelle are delighted to announce the sudden but safe arrival of Winnie John-James, on 27th January, 2020, six weeks early, at Aberdeen Maternity Unit. Many thanks for the lovely gifts and cards, xx.

DEATHS

BELL – Caroline (née Bennett), after a long battle with cancer, on Tuesday, 3rd March, 2020. She was peaceful, comfortable and surrounded by close family. Daughter to Clive and Pam, wife of Paul and mother to Sarah, James, Alex, Aaron and Charlotte. She was the bravest, most dedicated and selfless daughter, wife, mother and friend, always ready for a chat and asking after others. She will be deeply missed.

A celebration of Caroline's life will be held at Sandwick Social Club on Saturday, 21st March, 2020, at 11am. Please come in bright colours and share stories and memories.

CHALMERS – Wilma Jean (née Gray), of 91 King Harald Street, Lerwick, sadly deceased due to old age and trials and tribulations thereof. 30th April, 1936 to 2nd March, 2020. Peaceful. Beloved wife, sister, mother, aunt, grandmother and luncheon companion.

A fun person to know and very pretty. Our mum was cool.

– Alastair, Garth, Andrew, Alistair, Graeme and Sandy.

FRASER – Karl Jacobson George Andrew, died at the Western General Hospital, Edinburgh, on Sunday, 1st March, 2020, aged 85 years. Devoted husband to the late Marion Naismith Hay and a much loved dad to Carolyn Ann. Much loved brother to Stephen. Uncle to Graeme and Helen and families.

– Lovingly remembered and sadly missed.

GARRICK – At Anchorlea, Walls, on 25th February, 2020, Marigold.

Treasured memories of a dear aunt and grand-aunt.

– Lovingly remembered by Douglas, Barbara and family.

JOHNSON – At the Gilbert Bain Hospital, on 1st March, 2020, Ann Jean, Little Ayre, Muckle Roe, aged 95 years. A much loved aunt.

Softly the leaves of memory fall,
Gently we gather
and treasure them all.

– From all her nieces, nephews and families in Eshaness, Gluss, Brae and Cunningsburgh.

SLATER – Ian Laurence, passed away at home, West Baila in Lerwick, on Monday, 2nd March, 2020, aged 65 years. Beloved husband to Teresa, loving dad to Katrina and Ross, special father-in-law to Jonny and devoted grandad to Nathan, Dylan, Isabella and Zena.

Until we meet again.

Those special memories of you
will always bring a smile,
If only I could have you back
for just a little while.

Then we could sit and talk again,
Just like we used to do,
You always meant so very much,
and always will do, too.

The fact that you're no longer here
will always cause me pain,
But you're forever in my heart,
Until we meet again.

– Loved and missed and never forgotten by his loving wife, Teresa, xxx.

What we'd give if we could say,
Hello Dad, in the same old way,
To hear your voice, see your smile,
To sit with you and chat awhile.
So you who have your father,
Cherish him with care,
For you'll never know the heartache,
Till you see his vacant chair ...

– Missed terribly by Katrina, Jonny, Nathan and Zena, xxx.

Your life was a blessing,
Your memory a treasure,
You are loved beyond words,
And missed beyond measure.

– Sadly missed by Ross, Dylan and Isabella, xxx.

(Continued on next column)

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

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(Continued from previous column)

No longer in our lives to share,
But in our hearts you are always there,
Just as you were, you will always stay,
Loved and remembered every day.

– Fondly remembered by Caroline, xxx.

You always had a smile to share,
Time to give and time to care,
A loving nature, kind and true,
Is the way we'll both remember you.

– Sadly missed by his sister-in-law Lynne and nephew Harrison, xxx.

No one knew the pain he bore,
Beneath the smile he always wore,
Peacefully sleeping, he rests at last,
Life's weary troubles and trials past.

– Brother Roderick, sister-in-law Audrey and family at home and away.

We cannot bring the old days back,
When we were all together,
But memories of those special times,
Will live with us forever.

– Much loved and sadly missed by his sister Edna, brother-in-law Kevin and all their family.

SLATER – Ian, on 2nd March, 2020.

– Missed and always remembered by Mary, Scott, Wilma and family; and Stuart.

SMITH – Laurina (Laura) (née Tait), passed away peacefully at Ward 3, Gilbert Bain Hospital, on 25th February, 2020, aged 90 years. A much loved wife, mother and granny.

God saw that she was weary,
The road was hard to climb,
So He gently closed her eyelids,
And whispered peace be thine.

Our hearts are full of memories,
With pride we speak your name,
Though life goes on without you,
It will never be the same.

Till we meet again.

(Continued on next column)

(Continued from previous column)

– Lovingly remembered by her husband Andy, her daughter Elizabeth, son John Robert, son-in-law Anthony and all her grandchildren, Robert, Matthew, Loretta, Bethany, Charlotte and families.

A loving nature, kind and true,
Is the way that we will
all remember you.

– Lovingly remembered by the families of the late Frankie, Maggie and Mary.

IN MEMORIAM

BUTLER – Billy, died 9th March, 2010.

– Love Heather, Keri and Neil.

GEORGESON – Annie, died 9th March, 2008.

Loved and remembered every day by us all.

– Drewy, Graeme, Anita, Willie, Judith, Bruce, Rozanne, Allie, Karis, Willum and Bobby, xxxxx.

HOOKER – In loving memory of Ian, who died on 14th March, 1992.

– Anne, Kerry, Emma and Sally.

HUGHSON – In loving memory of Frances, a dear mam, granny and Granny Frances, who died on 13th March, 2005.

Always willing to help others,
When herself should be at rest,
She was the kindest of mothers,
Now amongst the heavenly blessed.

– Remembered with love by Kenny, Elizabeth and families.

JOHNSON – In loving memory of Ruby, a dear wife, mam and nan, who passed away on 16th March, 2017.

Never more than a thought away,
Loved and remembered every day.

– Sadly missed by Harry.

– Margaret, Ivan, Heather and families.

KEITH – Treasured memories of Jim, who passed away on 13th March, 2010.

Sadly missed.

– Alexis, Davie and Emma, John and Susan.

– George and Sheila, Anita, Gary and Stephanie and families.

– Mam, Hughina and Lindsay and family.

NICOLSON – In loving memory of John, who passed away on 11th March, 2011. A much loved husband, dad and dada.

Loved and remembered every day.

– Adaline and all the family, xx.

POTTINGER – Treasured memories of Robina (Ruby), a very special wife, mam and granny, who died on 13th March, 2014.

Loving thoughts of times together,
Hold memories that will last forever.
We hold you close within our hearts,
And there you shall remain.

To walk with us throughout our lives,
Until we meet again.

– Loved dearly and sadly missed by all the family.

– Harold.

– Robert, Donna, Kianna and Bobby.

– Catherine, Ricky, Aidan and Caitlin.

ROBERTSON – In loving memory of Attie, a dear husband, dad, grandad and great-grandad, who died on 13th March, 2009.

– Lovingly remembered and sadly missed by Aileen and family at home and away.

SMITH – In loving memory of Billy, a dear husband, dad and grandad, who died on 16th March, 2010.

Every day, no matter where,
Deep in our hearts,
You are always there.

– Sadly missed, Violet and family.

SMITH – Remembering William George (Billy), who passed away in Tenerife on 15th March, 2019.

– Sadly missed by all the family.

SMITH – In loving memory of Ruby (née Coghill), who died on 11th March, 2017, aged 91 years.

Rest in peace.

– Fondly remembered and sadly missed by her sons Arnold and Ewan and all her family.

THOMASON – Treasured memories of Billy, who died on 19th March, 2016, a dear husband, father, father-in-law, grandfather and great-grandfather.

In our hearts you will always stay,
Loved and remembered every day.

– Sadly missed, Vina, Martin, Kathleen, Stephen, Margaret and families.

THOMSON – In loving memory of John, a dear husband, dad, grandad and great-grandad, who died on 13th March, 2008.

Precious thoughts of times together,
Hold memories that will last forever.

– Lovingly remembered by Dorothy and all the family.

RETURN THANKS

THE FAMILY OF THE LATE Marigold Garrick would like to express their sincere thanks to all family and friends for their help over the years. Thanks to Ward 3, Gilbert Bain Hospital, Walls Health Centre and Wastview Care Centre. Special thanks to Beryl for the beautiful service, Maurice for the music and Billy Stout for playing the organ. Thanks to Alan Dow and all at Goudies Funeral Directors Ltd for their help. Special thanks to Mags at Universal Stores for the lovely flowers and to ushers John, Brenda and Barbara, pallbearers, grave diggers, Bryan, Kevin and Gary for parking cars, Jan and all the willing helpers at the tea and who baked. To all who attended the funeral, especially those who travelled home fae south. Thanks for all the messages, phone calls and beautiful flowers and cards. The donation amounted to £1200 for the British Heart Foundation. Thank you all very much.

THE FAMILY OF THE LATE Wilma Chalmers would like to say thanks to all the people of the Shetland carers community and all the kind people who have helped us care for mum.

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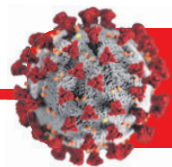
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As the global coronavirus crisis continues to deepen...

Isles shutdown begins



The empty toilet roll shelves at Tesco on Sunday. Photo: Robert Wishart



Commercial Street was deadly quiet as shoppers stayed away. Photo: Dave Donaldson



Shetland Museum and Archives shut its doors on Tuesday. Photo: Dave Donaldson



Clickimin Leisure Centre closed on Tuesday evening. Photo: Dave Donaldson



The deserted Mareel car park in Lerwick. Photo: Dave Donaldson



Library services are halted. Photo: Dave Donaldson

Venues close, events off and people told to stay at home | Schools close and may remain shut until summer break

BY KEEGAN MURRAY

The unprecedented scale of the coronavirus crisis became clear as sweeping changes to public life hit the isles.

Less than two weeks after the first two cases of Covid-19 were confirmed in Shetland the number of people who tested positive for the virus has risen to 16, according to official government statistics.

The actual figure is thought by many to be much higher as people throughout Shetland, including those reporting symptoms of the virus, have gone into self-isolation in an effort to limit the spread.

From Monday the majority of schools in Shetland closed their doors – a response to both staff and pupil absences – and a midweek announcement from the Scottish government will see all schools and nurseries throughout the country remaining shut.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon warned that the closures may extend through to the summer, and as this newspaper went to press the upcoming exams were cancelled.

A raft of events have been called off stretching right through to the summer. Last week's South Mainland Up-Helly-A' and the Delting Up-Helly-A' – which

should have been taking place today – were the first events to be called off in light of the outbreak.

Since then other major events including the 40th Shetland Folk Festival, the Classic Motor Show and the Simmer Dim Motorcycle Rally have also been cancelled.

Closures also hit the restaurant trade, pubs and shops, with other businesses who chose to remain open introducing measures such as home deliveries or encouraging customers to use contactless payments.

While a package of support for busi-

nesses was announced by the UK government during the week there remains no doubt that businesses will be fearing for the future as an extended period of economic decline faces the country.

One area which looks certain to suffer from the effects of the outbreak is tourism.

The cruise ship *Magellan*, which called into Shetland last Friday, could be the last for some time with the ship's operator Cruise & Maritime Voyages announcing a six-week suspension of all activity before the vessel had even made it to Kirkwall.

And with governments around the world closing borders or advising against

all but essential travel this summer looks set to be a quiet one for everyone concerned in the tourist trade.

Nationally the number of confirmed cases rose to 266 yesterday afternoon with six people now reported to have died after contracting the virus. And throughout the UK nearly 3,000 people have tested positive with more than 100 dead.

With the UK said to be only a few weeks behind countries such as Italy and Spain in terms of the spread of the virus there comes the possibility that more stringent lockdown measures could be introduced.

In-depth coverage on pages two to eight

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CORONAVIRUS

Ambulance service will take critical cases south

Patients with Covid-19 who require intensive care will be transferred to the mainland by the Scottish Ambulance Service.

MSP Beatrice Wishart questioned Scottish health secretary Jeane Freeman on the matter on Tuesday, who confirmed that those needing intensive care would be transferred.

Ms Wishart also asked the minister for reassurances that medical evacuations for isles patients needing intensive care on the mainland would be carried out safely and efficiently.

Ms Freeman said the ambulance service would "ensure the transfer of any patient from any of our islands who has clinical need to do so".

The ambulance service held a conference call with chief executives from Highlands and Islands health boards on Friday to produce plans for these circumstances, including the possible use of ferries and road transport, according to Ms Freeman.

"I'm grateful for the assurances from the health secretary that plans are in place to transfer isles patients who need intensive care to the mainland," Ms Wishart said.

"With no intensive care unit in Shetland, it's crucial that any transfers are done as safely and efficiently as possible and that NHS staff and patients know exactly how that will happen."

Earlier in the week it was suggested that military aircraft could be used to transport positive cases, with isles MP Alistair Carmichael questioning the UK government on intensive care transport for islanders.

Mr Carmichael said: "In Shetland we have 15 of the 171 confirmed cases in Scotland. That is almost nine per cent, from an island community of 22,000."

"In normal circumstances, anyone requiring intensive care in Shetland is taken by air ambulance to mainland Scotland. Because of the nature of coronavirus, we cannot do that."

"I understand that military assets will be engaged for that transportation, but clinicians tell me that there is no understanding of the protocols and there has not yet even been a dress rehearsal."

"Will the secretary of state speak to his right honourable friend the secretary of state for defence to ensure that all necessary communication happens to ensure that when the service is needed, it will work?"

Health minister Mr Hancock replied: "Yes, I will. We will make sure that we support people on all parts of these islands, including all islands that are part of these islands."

Ronas Ward back in clinical use as hospital prepares for influx

■ Almost 40 beds set aside for patients with Covid-19

■ Health board pushes to get two more ventilators

BY CHARLEY-KAI JOHN

NHS Shetland has set aside space in the Gilbert Bain Hospital to treat those with confirmed cases of coronavirus.

The step, which was taken as handling of the virus moved into the "delay" phase, frees up nearly 40 beds at the hospital in Lerwick, which were not available a few days ago.

The Ronas Ward has been brought back into clinical use and a critical care unit has also been put in place to cope with patients who might need ventilators.

No Covid-19 patients were being treated in the Ronas Ward or critical care unit when this newspaper went to print yesterday, according to NHS Shetland.

Some patients with symptoms and confirmed cases are currently self-isolating, and most of those seem to be okay, said NHS Shetland chief executive Michael Dickson.

There are 12 surgical capacity beds, an additional 22 elective beds, plus five respiratory beds dedicated to Covid-19 patients. At the moment, there are 34 beds "ready to go".

The hospital has two to three ventilators available, but aims to have five in total.

As there is no intensive care unit at the hospital, they are still reliant on being able to transfer the most critical patients to the mainland, with Scottish health secretary Jeane Freeman confirming earlier this week that the Scottish Ambulance Service would be used. Mr Dickson said that critical patients would be transferred to Aberdeen.

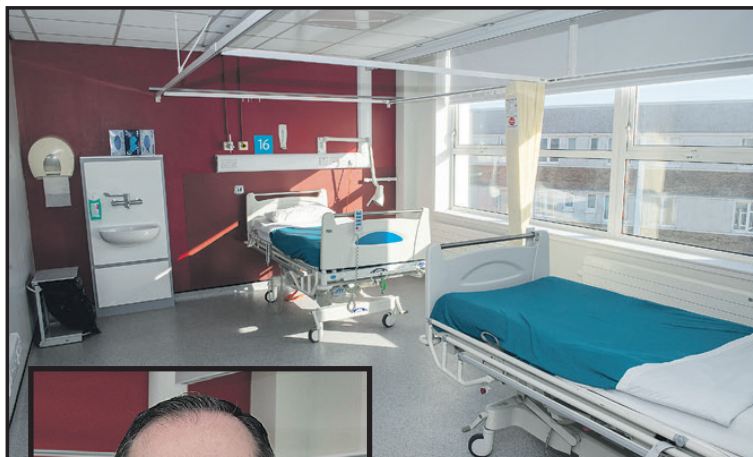
However, NHS Shetland was not just thinking about the picture in the isles or the north east, but the responses across the UK, said Mr Dickson, with anywhere that has critical capacity being used to treat patients.

The mainland and places like London are "weeks ahead of us", meaning that NHS Shetland is keeping an eye on these situations and can expect a similar curve in the isles.

The numbers in the isles "feels quite high", said Mr Dickson, but per capita statistics should be taken with a pinch of salt given the Shetland population.

Changes to testing also mean the "numbers have become less important", and the confirmed cases were still comparatively low.

The fact that Shetland has cases also means that the health board has had a head



The reconfigured Ronas Ward in the Gilbert Bain Hospital. Inset: Michael Dickson.

Photo: Dave Donaldson



ments to offer the right support for them - Mr Dickson could not give figures for the number of staff off due to sickness.

The NHS is also working with the SIC to help staff with childcare now that schools are indefinitely closed.

Staff have also come back from retirement to help out at the hospital.

National guidance means that staff are not currently being routinely tested, but Mr Dickson said they were looking to get a testing facility in Shetland, which would speed up the process across the board.

"It's going to happen," said Mr Dickson. "We are pushing really hard to get that."

Tests have to be flown to Glasgow at the moment, which can take between 48 hours and a few days given the numbers the city is dealing with. An isles facility would save "huge amounts of time", even just when it came to transport, said Mr Dickson. Aberdeen is also setting up its own testing facility.

NHS Shetland has activated its "pandemic disease plan", meaning that anything other than "core business" is being cancelled to free up staff.

The pandemic plan sets out NHS Shetland's response to an "infectious disease outbreak that cannot be dealt with through its normal day to day activities". It also sets out how the board will work towards getting back to a "steady state when the infection either disappears or does not require special measures".

Speaking at a press briefing on Sunday afternoon, the health authority's interim medical director Brian Chittick said they were committed to protecting hospital staff handling any confirmed cases.

"We are in unprecedented times," said Mr Chittick.

In the coming weeks the number of cases will rise substantially, according to health officials, but the symptoms are often mild and most people will recover quickly.

Mr Chittick described it as a "rapidly changing" and complex situation, due to the disease spreading all over the world.

One of the difficult things for the health board has been keeping up with the latest updates and applying them to their practices, when "guidance has been fast and furious".

Normal NHS board activities are also suspended so that all resources can be focused on dealing with the coronavirus outbreak.

The coronavirus testing regime has changed since moving into the "delay" phase, meaning that only people who are unwell in hospital with suspected Covid-19 will be tested, and there will be no community testing.

Those displaying symptoms should not visit anybody in care homes or places where there are vulnerable people.

The driver for any changes to guidance would be the "protection of the vulnerable".

Responsibility also lay with the individual, said Mr Chittick, as folk should think about whether they should be visiting places with vulnerable people. Hospital visits should not be made unless completely necessary.

Those with symptoms (new cough, fever, shortness of breath), regardless of their travel history or contact with confirmed cases, must stay at home for seven days, but should not contact their GP unless symptoms significantly worsen. If after this period there are no symptoms for two days then the person can come out of self isolation.

The health board has also advised being "meticulous about washing hands with soap and water or using hand sanitiser. Use and dispose of tissues safely and stay away from anyone who is in a vulnerable group if you are even mildly ill".

The health board in Shetland is the only one which is providing regular press briefings.

Next of kin restriction at Gilbert Bain Hospital

NHS Shetland cracked down on visitors to the Gilbert Bain Hospital in Lerwick this week as they looked to tackle the spread of coronavirus.

On Tuesday the health board announced that only immediate family members would be allowed to visit patients.

Other visitors were not permitted, the board stated, asking that "only next of kin visit patients".

Later in the day NHS Shetland stated that patients would only be allowed visitors for two hours each day.

Visiting times would be restricted from 3-4pm and 7-8pm daily, and each patient will be asked only to have "a maximum of two visitors at a time".

Children under 12 were asked not to visit relatives at all, but to phone or FaceTime instead. The health board added that nobody should visit if they were showing any symptoms of Covid-19; specifically a new cough, fever or shortness of breath.

Those in hospital who had tested positive for coronavirus would have arrangements

made to speak to relatives remotely. Director of nursing and acute services Kathleen Carolan said the decisions had been taken to balance "visiting arrangements with overall patient safety".

She said: "There will be times when these arrangements will be relaxed and in certain circumstances visitors will be able to visit at any time."

"If there are any queries about this then please speak to the nurse in charge of the ward before you arrive at the hospital."

'Essential visitors' only at SIC care homes

The council is taking steps to prevent the spread of infection in care centres during the pandemic.

Care centres will only allow "essential visitors", including health and care professionals and close family visiting those receiving end of life care.

Care centre staff will ensure that, as far as possible, residents have access to telephones, Skype and other forms of communication to

maintain contact with family and friends.

Changes have also been made to day-care, vocational activity and respite arrangements. Adult services - learning disability and autism groups at the Eric Gray centre and Newcraigelea Day Care and the Gold Group, will close to ordinary bookings from this week.

Day care provision will also

close and alternative arrangements for day care services for older people are being made.

People affected by the changes would be contacted directly by care staff and arrangements made to support them in the best way possible.

Director of community health and social care Simon Bokor-Ingram said: "Care centre residents are particularly vulnerable to infection

and we're taking steps to help protect them ... We have also made the difficult decision to close day-care provision and some of the adult services groups."

"We understand that this will have a significant impact on families and carers but we've taken these steps to minimise the risk to some of the most vulnerable members of our community, based on the national guidance."



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CORONAVIRUS

Firms prepare for 'devastating impact'

BY RYAN TAYLOR

Coronavirus plunged Shetland into meltdown as government advice to abide by stringent social curbs and avoid "non-essential contact" led to dire warnings of an economic crisis.

Tourism is at the forefront of concerns, with the head of Shetland Tourism Association Emma Miller warning the Covid-19 pandemic risks a "devastating impact" on the sector.

The Scalloway Hotel has already closed its doors to weather the storm brought by the virus which has spread through Europe.

But the practical outcome of the government's advice is that more pubs, restaurants and cafes risk seeing a dramatic downfall in custom.

Ms Miller, who is also the Living Lerwick project manager, warned some enterprises, many of which are small-time self-employed outlets, would go to the wall before Shetland can ride out the drama brought from Covid-19.

"Every day things are changing so fast that folk are just overwhelmed," she said.

"We know that this is going to have a fairly devastating impact on both the local economy and the tourism economy, because we just don't know how long it's going to last.

"At the moment we don't even know what it is we're trying to plan for."

Asked about the financial cost to tourism, she said: "If the whole season is lost – and that is worst case scenario – it has to be millions.

"It's just utterly devastating. Some of these businesses, I don't see how they're going to come back from it if they lose their whole season.

"We can do what we can to support the retail businesses by encouraging people to still use them.

"But when it comes to things like hairdressers – these are places that you have to turn up to use their services."

One tour operator who is preparing for a quieter season is James Tait of Island Trails, which offers guided tours and walks throughout the isles.

He said the decision could prove costly for the tourism sector.

"In light of the recent government advice on non-essential travel, I think we will see a downturn in the tourism industry this season," he told this newspaper.

"I'm expecting no tours in April and May and it will hopefully pick up later in the season if things improve.

"We have to balance our business with trying to keep folk safe. It's a very difficult line to walk.

"I've had a few cancellations but I think a lot of folk are waiting to see what happens."

"I might have to do more social media to reach out to potential customers."

The Scalloway Hotel, owned by husband and wife team Peter and Caroline Mackenzie, closed its doors ahead of Monday night's advice from Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his Holyrood counterpart First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

Mrs Mackenzie said: "Normally at this time of year, the majority of our accommodation trade would be business travel.

"It became apparent by the middle of last week that this was all being cancelled, as companies and organisations based in mainland Scotland instructed their staff not to travel.

"We were pretty certain, looking at Italy and Spain, that we would eventually be facing a shutdown so we took the decision to close the hotel meantime.

"We kept the bar open for our regulars over the weekend and shut the doors on Sunday evening.

"The next six months are normally when we would expect to be running at maximum occupancy, so the prospect of being shut for any length of time is devastating for us, for our staff and for everyone else involved in this industry."

Local manager of VisitScotland Steve Mathieson said the tourism body was being as "resilient as possible".

But he warned: "None of us have been faced with this situation before."

He added: "It's a very serious situation for somewhere like Shetland. We're at the stage of trying to collate infor-



Emma Miller has serious concerns about the economic impact the pandemic will have.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

mation to start with, because we don't have hard and fast figures for things like cancellations."

Custom at restaurants and cafes have taken a big dip, with the Olive Tree reducing its hours of business.

As of Wednesday the Peerie Shop and cafe announced it was closing "until the situation improves", while citing "dire times".

Fjara cafe bar in Lerwick was remaining open, and storing hope in a new take-away service.

But it said on Facebook the decision was "not being taken lightly", and that "we will be following every procedure we can to protect our staff and our customers".

It added: "These are difficult times for everybody and we clearly have a long way to go before any sort of normality is restored."

Lerwick hostelrys have been feeling the pinch as people adhered to the Prime Minister's call for people to avoid pubs and clubs.

Captain Flint's announced online that it would be remaining closed until the

end of the month due to government advice. The town centre bar is due to review the situation on 31st March.

The Douglas Arms, or Marlex, has been tweaking its opening hours but is due to open as normal today.

Manager of the Lerwick British Legion Susan Mann said fewer people were visiting the premises, and people were postponing functions.

"It's obviously a concern but we'd rather people stayed safe," she said.

"We're doing everything we can, like cleaning and advising customers to wash their hands.

"I'm in the process of cleaning the lounge.

"We're doing everything we can, but at the moment we are staying open."

Meanwhile, Living Lerwick said businesses in the town centre were continuing to struggle on, as Commercial Street began to resemble a ghost town with shoppers showing a reluctance to come

Ms Miller highlighted steps the body is taking to overcome the pandemic's economic impact.

"These are unprecedented and challenging times for our community and our local businesses. It is essential we follow government guidance and keep ourselves and our families safe, but we do also have to continue to live our lives.

"The measures that our local shops and businesses have taken to enable people to still access their goods and services, while remaining as safe as possible is to be commended.

"We don't know how long this crisis will continue for, and while we, rightly, look after ourselves, I would also urge people to think local first when ordering anything. Our local economy, jobs and services will be the longer-term casualties of this situation and we can hopefully manage that with support from the community."

Difficulties are being experienced out at sea as well, with a collapse in the market for crabs and scallops said to be hitting largely small-time operators dependent on the shellfish sector.

Much of the shellfish produce is normally dispatched to the continent, but with the Spanish market in particular taking a dip, due to its own problems with coronavirus, isles producers are struggling to cope.

Executive officer of Shetland Fishermen's Association Simon Collins told this newspaper that shellfish was feeling the "immediate impact".

"Brits by and large don't buy our own shellfish – a lot of it goes to the continent," he said.

"It's a moving target, there's something we're finding out almost daily.

"Our market has dropped off very quickly. The immediate reaction seems to be 'Stop, stop, stop!' – we're not stockholding this stuff. We can't wait for customers to come back.

"If the continental market is depressed for months that's a really serious issue for the shellfish market."

He added: "The problem is also, the kind of UK operations that provide shellfish is typically under 10-metre boats.

"They are small scallop or small creel vessels that don't have a financial cushion to withstand the shocks."

Seafood Shetland chief executive Ruth Henderson was putting a brave face on the situation, insisting demand for seafood remained "reasonable".

"Landings at the start of the week have been light, and there was no fishmarket today [Wednesday], due to the weather, so exports of wild-caught fish and shellfish, salmon and mussels continue, albeit in lower volumes.

"We are seeing an immediate downturn in the restaurant trade, but anticipate retail customers to continue to buy fish and shellfish for normal consumption.

"This is, however, an ever-changing situation, which is completely beyond our control.

"Seafood Shetland's role, as a trade body, is to support our members wherever possible. We will be closely monitoring government announcements so that we can continue to advise our members accordingly."

Rely on good business sense and consider options

The ongoing coronavirus crisis has created uncertainty for many businesses. *The Shetland Times* asked Irene Hambleton of Lerwick-based accountants RSM for her advice to people who may be worried over finances.

A helping hand

The current situation is fast moving and dynamic. However, good business principles still prevail. Responsible businesses will be looking to the medium term while coping with the current position.

Cash management is key and a daily receipts and payments cash flow is a sensible step, as well as looking at all scenarios.

Delaying some payments may be possible, while chasing money due to you is one short-term measure. I also urge you to discuss options with your bank before considering high interest rate loans or credit cards.

Business rates retail discount (Scottish government)

The following steps to be put in place to support businesses during the 2020-21 financial year were announced by the Scottish government:

- a 75 per cent rates relief for retail, hospitality and leisure sectors with a rateable value of less than £69,000 from 1 April 2020;
- an £80 million fund to provide grants of at least £3,000 to small businesses in sectors facing the worst economic impact of Covid-19;
- 1.6 per cent rates relief for all properties across Scotland, effectively reversing the planned below inflation uplift in the poundage from 1st April;
- a fixed rates relief of up to £5,000 for all pubs with a rateable value of less than £100,000 from 1st April.

Business rates retail discount (UK government)

This has been increased to 100 per cent for 2020/21 for properties in retail, leisure and hospitality. Businesses may need to apply to the local authority to obtain the discount and guidance should be published by 20th March.

Retail, hospitality and leisure grant (UK government)

Businesses with a property with a rateable value of between £15,000 to £51,000 will be able to access a £25,000 grant. Details are being clarified on accessing this grant.

Corona Business Interruption Loan Support (CBILS)

CBILS is designed to provide loans £1,000 to £5 million for businesses facing cash flow issues.

Final details are being defined but outline conditions include that the business must have an underlying viable business, annual turnover less than £41m; and operate in an eligible sector.

Covid corporate financing facility

Larger business may access a new short-term lending facility at current commercial terms provided by the Bank of England. The scheme will be in place for 12 months.

HMRC Time To Pay arrangements (TTP)

Businesses and those that are self-employed with outstanding tax liabilities (including PAYE, NIC, VAT Corporation Tax) may be eligible for support which will be reviewed case by case.

One-off grant of £10,000

Specifically aimed at small businesses that already pay little or no business rates under the existing Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR), a one off grant of £10,000 has been made available for these businesses (also including those which qualify for Rural Rate Relief).

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) reclamation for businesses

Businesses with under 250 employees will be able to reclaim expenditure for any employee, who for a period of up to two weeks, has claimed SSP because of coronavirus.

This includes self-isolation and employees will not have to provide a doctor's fit note.

HMRC preferential status

HMRC's status as a preferential creditor has been delayed from 5th April to 1st December 2020.

IR35

The implementation of IR35 has been deferred until April 2021.

Face-to-face visits cancelled at housing offices

Hjaltland Housing Association is asking people to consider whether their visits to the Lerwick office is essential.

In light of government and NHS advice, the association is recommending that clients use the telephone on (01595) 694986 or email at mail@hjaltland.org instead of calling at the office.

Chairman Bryan Leask said: "The health and safety of our tenants, employees, contractors, and customers is our top priority.

"Hjaltland is continually reviewing

our business continuity plan to reflect the advice of the government and NHS to minimise any disruption on our service.

"In order to avoid unnecessary contact we would ask customers to consider whether their visit to the office is essential."

Mr Leask said Hjaltland was planning how it could continue to provide a service to customers should the coronavirus affect tenants and staff, including any contractors currently employed to carry out repairs or other work to tenants' homes.

He added: "We will follow the direction of Health Protection Scotland and you can download a copy of their advice at <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/>.

"The association will implement various measures as the situation changes to protect the health and wellbeing of our tenants, staff and contractors."

Further updates and any changes to service provision will be posted at www.hjaltland.org.uk/news.

Meanwhile Shetland Islands Council's housing service started putting measures

in place from Monday to help minimise the spread of coronavirus to both tenants and staff.

The housing service would only respond to emergency and urgent repairs calls, the SIC stated. Anyone calling would be asked some screening questions to ensure that staff were supported to take appropriate precautionary measures when attending a property.

The repairs help desk contact number is (01595) 744399. Details of what is classed as emergency and urgent repairs is con-

tained in the Tenants Handbook and on the SIC housing website at www.shetland.gov.uk/housing/tenants_repair_responsibilities.asp

From Monday community housing support staff would not be carrying out home visits – contact would be maintained by telephone and new referrals will be restricted.

People should only contact the SIC housing service at 6 North Ness, Lerwick, if they need to make an emergency homeless presentation. For any queries people are asked to call (01595) 744360.

CORONAVIRUS

Lockdown measures will be coming, SIC warns residents

Stark message from local authority chiefs

'Unprecedented times', says leader Coutts

BY KEEGAN MURRAY

Isles residents should expect further disruption to public life and plan for the weeks ahead as confirmed cases of Covid-19 continue to rise across the country.

That was one of the messages which Shetland Islands Council chief executive Maggie Sandison issued this week as she detailed how council services may be affected by the coronavirus outbreak.

Mrs Sandison said that lockdown measures similar to those currently in place in Italy and Spain could be coming, with Britain said to be a couple of weeks behind those countries in terms of case numbers.

Administrations in Westminster and Holyrood have this week introduced a number of measures, such as school closures and advice against all but necessary travel, but those may be added to and tightened further, warned Mrs Sandison.

"What we have got to really recognise looking at Italy and Spain is

that we could be a couple of weeks away from something similar", she said.

"People should think about how that's going to be and how we're going to look after each other. People should be preparing for that because that is the reality."

Detailing how the council has responded to the virus to date, Mrs Sandison said that staff were being told to work from home where possible with the authority placing an emphasis on "protecting staff health and wellbeing wherever possible".

For many delivering frontline services there "will be no choice but to come in to work to do their job", but the council is encouraging people to reduce face-to-face contact.

Measures include telephone calls and video conferencing in place of meetings and also advice to staff to "not travel anywhere unnecessarily".

To further protect staff and reduce the amount of contact they have with others Mrs Sandison

encouraged members of the public to consider whether they needed to visit council offices or whether their query could be dealt with by a phone call.

Advice to self-isolate for seven days if suffering from symptoms, or for 14 days if someone in your household is ill, had led to a high number of absences, Mrs Sandison said, with a very real possibility that these absences would continue to grow.

All of this week the local authority has started the day with departmental meetings where staff take stock of how many absences there are and what level of service disruption may come from this, before asking "how can we respond to what's happened today".

After this "we then have a tactical meeting with representatives from each department coming together to try and find solutions".

Where certain services become untenable due to high levels of absence the council has to make a judgment call on what are the most essential services and can they

repurpose staff from one area to keep another going.

This may mean taking a school canteen worker over to a care home kitchen to cover an absence or asking a member of the roads team to support staff working in refuse collection, Mrs Sandison said.

However, there may come a time when absence levels are so high that even that becomes untenable, Mrs Sandison warned.

"I would ask the public to recognise that we will not be able to sustain the level of services that we currently deliver", she said.

Another concern for the authority has been trying to identify those people who "manage" normally but who may become vulnerable during a lockdown.

She said the council had been looking at "how do we make sure that we are picking up those people that wouldn't necessarily be on our list of vulnerable people at the moment [but who] become vulnerable because of isolation".

Mrs Sandison also encouraged everybody to follow guidelines



What we have got to really recognise looking at Italy and Spain is that we could be a couple of weeks away from something similar.

Maggie Sandison



around hand washing and social distancing, saying that "everybody in the community is critical to managing this outbreak".

"Everybody can reduce the spread of this virus", she said.

Meanwhile, political leader Steven Coutts issued a statement echoing Mrs Sandison's sentiments that it was "essential" to follow guidance from the government.

He said: "These are unprecedented times, and the impact on our community is already severe."

"Our number one priority has to be the health of our community. It is absolutely essential that everyone in our community continues to follow the advice of public health professionals. We all have a role in managing the spread of the virus."

Mr Coutts added: "The community has seen significant change

to council services and this will continue. We will be directing resources to those that need it most. Our staff have responded superbly and I am very mindful of the pressures they are under and further challenges to come.

"In the wider Shetland economy there is major impact and we will be working hard to ensure government support packages are applicable and available to Shetland employers and households.

"There is no shying away that this is going to continue for a considerable period of time. I would like to thank the community for their understanding, and this must continue. We must all support each other.

"Most crucially we must continue to follow the advice of our health professionals."

Special arrangements in place for council office visits

The council has put arrangements in place for people who want to contact its various offices.

The revenues and benefits office at 8 North Ness in Lerwick remains open but discussions in person will no longer take place.

Queries regarding benefit claims or council tax/rent charges will be by phone or email until further notice – that also applies to pension queries.

For benefit queries email benefits@shetland.gov.uk and for pension queries email pensions-finance@shetland.gov.uk

Otherwise, people are asked to call (01595) 693535.

As of Tuesday the SIC economic development and community planning and development services offices in the Solarhus building at 3 North Ness Busi-

ness Park in Lerwick were closed to the public.

The council said it was "a measure to minimise the spread of coronavirus" and "was taken in light of the most recent advice from the UK government".

Staff from the affected departments would be working remotely, where possible, for the time being in order to ensure that services to Shetland communities

and businesses continued as much as possible. Grant applicants or claimants were requested to submit any and all material to the services via email or by post, and to contact responsible officers via phone or email with any queries.

The business development, community development and grants functions would remain operational, the council said, but all business would be conducted remotely.

The transport planning service is asking anyone with queries regarding blue badge applications, national entitlement cards (bus passes/ferry vouchers) and taxi/private hire car applications to phone (01595) 744868 or email transport@shetland.gov.uk rather than calling along in person.

Anyone emailing with queries should include a telephone contact number if possible.

BIRTHS

DOULL – Ewan and Charlene are delighted to announce the safe arrival of their son, Haydn Adam Doull, on 2nd January, 2020. A lovely peerie brother for Chloe and Isla. Special thanks to Theresa Chivers and all the staff at the Gilbert Bain Maternity Unit and Theatre.

JAMIESON – Maurice and Rachel are delighted to announce the safe arrival of their son, Theo Donald, on 12th March, 2020. A lovely peerie brother for Marnie, and first grandson for both Lowrie and Frances, Tingwall, and Jim and Mary, Burra. Special thanks to all staff at the Gilbert Bain Maternity Unit.

MULLAY – Paul and Missy are delighted to announce the safe arrival of Seth Andrew, on 29th January, 2020. Mackie adores his peerie brider. Thank you for the messages, cards and gifts we've received. A big thank you to Emma and all at Gilbert Bain Maternity and also Aberdeen Maternity for the excellent care and support we received. A special thanks to all our lovely family for your support. We are forever grateful for everything you do for us.

DEATHS

BELL – Caroline (née Bennett).

The celebration of Caroline's life originally scheduled for 21st March has been postponed until further notice.

BELL – Peacefully at the Gilbert Bain Hospital, on Tuesday 3rd March, 2020, Caroline, wife of Paul, 10 Brakefield Road, Sandwick.

Ours is just a simple prayer, God bless and keep you in His care. – Fondly remembered by aunts and uncles in Cullivoe.

BELL – Caroline.

Saying goodbye to a wonderful woman, an outstanding mother and a tremendous friend.

Caroline you will be missed beyond words but will live on in our memories. – From the Bell family and their families.

CHEYNE – (née Jacobson). Jemima Rose. Peacefully, after a short illness on 11th March, 2020, at Morlich House Care Home, Rose, aged 89 years, much missed mum of Karen, Julia and Sarah, grandma of Jessica, Zoe, Ygraine, Leona and Mimi and great grandma of Brenden. Service at Warriston Crematorium, Cloister Chapel, Edinburgh, EH7 4HW, on Tuesday 24th March at 10.30am. Family flowers only.

COUTTS – Bunty, peacefully on the 10th March, 2020, went to the arms of her Lord, leaving one surviving sister and daughters Lynda, Brenda and daughter-in-law Carolyn and their families.

You are not lost our dearest one, Nor have you travelled far, You just stepped inside home's loveliest room and left the door ajar. Glad you are at peace.

– Lynda, William, Hannah, Jonathan, Peter, Lorraine, Thomas, Evangeline and Thorbein.

Goodbyes are only for those who loved with their eyes, because for those that loved with their heart and soul there is no such thing as separation.

– Brenda, Jack, Matthew, Andrew, Laura, Jacob and Eva.

Your life was a blessing, Your memory a treasure, You are loved beyond words and missed beyond measure. Granny Bunty sleep tight.

– All our love, Carolyn, Katrina and Rory.

Dearest sister Bunty, Just a thought of sweet remembrance, Just a memory sad and true, Just a love and sweet devotion, Of one who thinks of you.

– Nina Jackson and family.

Remembering the laughs and fun with you,

We will miss them, and you.

– Edith, Allan, Anna and Rachel.

HARPER – Catherine, at Overtonlea Care Centre, formerly of Exnaboe, on Sunday, 8th March, 2020, aged 98 years.

– Treasured memories of an aunt, aunt-in-law, great-aunt and great-great-aunt.

JOHNSON – At the Gilbert Bain Hospital on 1st March, 2020, Ann Jean, aged 95 years, wife of the late James, Little Ayre, Muckle Roe.

God saw her getting weary, So He did what He thought best, He put his arms around her, And whispered, "Come to rest."

– Fondly remembered by Jack and Kathleen, Lynn, Peter and family, Jacqueline and family.

Fond memories of Ann Jean.

– Jean, Karen and their families.

JOHNSON – At the Gilbert Bain Hospital on 1st March, 2020, Ann Jean, Little Ayre, Muckle Roe, aged 95 years.

Dearly loved and sadly missed.

– Ivor and Elsie.

– Jeffrey, Diane and family.

– James, Louise and family.

– Esther, Peter and family.

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

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NAPIER – Dr Ramsay, peacefully on 8th March, 2020. Beloved husband of Sadie, father of Ian and Fiona, and father-in-law of Ian.

The kindness of friends, The warmth of toil, The peace of rest.

SLATER – Ian.

When someone you love becomes a memory, That memory becomes a wonderful treasure to always hold in your heart.

– We miss you, Michael and Ingrid, x.

IN MEMORIAM

BREVIK – In loving memory of Annie, died on 21st March, 2001.

Time passes by but memories stay, Loved and remembered every day.

– Sadly missed by all the family.

BULLEY – Treasured memories of Tom, who passed away on 18th March, 2019.

Sad and sudden was the call, So dearly loved by one and all, His memory is as precious today, As in the hour he passed away.

– Dearly loved and very sadly missed by Susan, Alison and their families, xx.

COUTTS – Treasured memories of Michael, who died on 22nd March, 2013, aged 43 years.

Close in our hearts, you will always stay, Loved and remembered, every day.

– Carolyn, Katrina and Rory, xxx.

CUMMING – Treasured memories of Andy, a dear husband, dad, gramps and great-gramps, who passed away on 20th March, 2010.

No matter how life changes, No matter what we do, A special place within our hearts, Is always kept for you.

– Lovingly remembered by his wife, his daughters and their families at home and away.

DALLEY – Treasured memories of Annette (née Mouatt), a dear wife mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, daughter and sister, who died on 22nd March, 2003.

I cannot bring the old days back, When we were all together, But memories keep you close to me, And memories last forever.

– Lovingly remembered by all the family at home and away. Terry, Richard, Paul, Debbie, Molly, Kaelan, Theo, Jim and Hazel.

DRUMMOND – In loving memory of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, and uncle, William George (Willie), who died on 17th February, 1996, Catherine (Katie) on 22nd March, 1997, and Archie on 23rd May, 2003.

In God's care you rest above, In our hearts you stay with love.

– Sadly missed, daughter Muriel, son-in-law Donald and family.

EUNSON – In loving memory of Jessie Barbara, who passed away on 19th March, 2004.

Precious memories.

– From her sisters and brother-in-law and their families at home and away.

HAWKINS – Treasured memories of our loved ones who have passed away. Dad, died 18th March, 1975, Mum, 29th March, 1992, brother Francis, 24th March, 2007 and sister Cecile, 28th January, 2020.

Time goes by, but memories last.

– From family at home and away.

HENRY – Remembering with love our dear dad and grandad, Tommy, who died on 24th March, 2019, aged 69 years.

The world changes from year to year, Our lives from day to day, But the love and memories of you, Will never fade away.

– Sadly missed, Lee, Jake and Isabella, Lynn, Olivia, Ella and Pat, xxx.

JOHNSON – In loving memory of my dear parents, mum Elizabeth, 24th March, 2003, dad Christy, 3rd September, 1956, brothers Larry, 21st August, 1956, Jim, 16th November, 1982, Clarence, 11th July, 1998, my dear sister Gilda, 20th February, 1998, and nephew Leon, 16th June, 2001.

Love and miss you. – Mary, Chris, Robert, Ivan, Marie, Gwen and families.

LESLIE – In loving memory of Margaret, who passed away on 18th March, 1999. A loving wife, mom and granny.

– Loved and missed always, Laurence and Susan and Jennifer and their families.

– A dear sister, loved and remembered by Jem, Larry and family.

– A loving sister-in-law remembered by Eleanor and Robert.

MANSON – In loving memory of Helen Jean, a dear mam and granny, who died on 23rd March, 2013, and Alex, a dear dad and grandad, who died on 7th November, 1997.

Loving thoughts, memories dear, Treasured more each passing year. – Sandra and family.

MURRAY – With love we remember our mam and dad, nan and dada. Tom, who died on 18th March, 1992, and Maggie, who died on 29th January, 2003.

Precious memories of happy times together.

– Marabelle, Margaret, Les, Jenny and families.

NICOLSON – Treasured memories of Jacqueline Anne (née Sinclair), who died on 19th March, 2018.

A daily thought, a silent tear, A constant wish that you were here, An empty feeling no one can fill, We love and miss you and always will.

– Lovingly remembered by Mam, Brydon, Jennifer, Paula and families.

ROBERTSON – Treasured memories of our dear parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, Katie, who died 13th March, 1997, and Andrew, on 15th September, 1994, also our dear brother and uncle, Billy, 4th June, 2010.

The flowers we place upon your graves, May weather and decay, But the love for you who sleeps beneath, Will never fade away.

– Lovingly remembered and missed so much by Margaret, Andrew and all the family.

SANDISON – In loving memory of Bruce, who passed away on 18th March, 2019, a loving husband, dad and grandad.

Your life was a blessing, Your memory a treasure, You are loved beyond words, And missed beyond measure,

Unseen, unheard but always near, Still loved, still missed and very dear. God bless and keep you in His loving care.

– Love and miss you so much, Barbara, Mark, William, Jon and their families.

SINCLAIR – Treasured memories of Tom, who passed away on 18th March, 2003, in Australia.

– Always remembered by mum, Rosie. Always in our thoughts.

– From Aunt Mary, brother-in-law Hunter and all cousins at home and away.

TULLOCH – In loving memory of Christina Ann (Cirsty), who died on 19th March, 1991.

– Always remembered and still sadly missed by her family at Heights Hamar and in New Zealand.

RETURN THANKS

THE FAMILY OF THE LATE Catherine Harper would like to thank those who helped Katie in her later years at Exnaboe and Toabsgeo. Also those who diligently visited her in Overtonlea and the staff there, who looked after her so well. Thanks to our friend Charlie Greig for conducting a homely and fitting service and her friend and neighbour Alice for playing the organ. And finally to those who supported us at the funeral, that was greatly appreciated, together with the £300 which was donated to the Shetland MRI Scanner Appeal in Katie's memory.

WITH HUGE THANKS. THE FAMILY of the late Ian Slater would like to thank all family and friends for their support and devotion throughout Ian's illness, all who attended the funeral and all who have visited, sent cards, flowers and messages; Alison and Lynne from Macmillan Shetland who provided immeasurable dedication, commitment, help and support; Drs Wilson, Murphy, Pinnick, Krusche, Jones and Scott for their invaluable support; Elaine, George and Kyle from SIC OT team for their continued support; Averil and Brian from the One Stop Shop; NHS community nurses Lorraine, Rebecca, Rachael and Jessica; Rachael Solitt social worker; Brett, the Care at Home and Annsbrae teams for the remarkable service enabling Ian to remain at home; Goudies Funeral Directors Ltd for care and compassion throughout a very difficult time; Arthur Watt for the wonderful service; Brian Morrison for the uplifting music; Jacqui, Katie and Leigh-Anne for serving food; and the Masonic club for the use of their premises. Finally, to all who generously donated to the collection so far, totalling an amazing £1374 to be split between Macmillan nurses, Clan House and the Scottish Haemophilia Society.

CORONAVIRUS

Ferry crews told to keep on taking fares despite worries over passenger contact

- One crew took skipper's advice to refuse payment
- Lerwick councillor Leask brands situation 'ludicrous'

BY RYAN NICOLSON

Ferry workers have accused the council of leaving them exposed to coronavirus by continuing to accept cash payments.

One crew member said they felt "pretty pissed off" at being asked to continue to take cash payments at a time when the UK government had advised people to avoid unnecessary contact with others.

Another warned this week that they were already "absolutely stretched" by the disease, with any further absences likely to result in ferries being cancelled.

Marine and port operations team leader Kevin Main acknowledged that reductions and cancellations in the inter-island ferry service were now "absolutely inevitable".

Crew members on two different ferry routes joined Lerwick North councillor Stephen Leask in calling for the SIC to suspend payments on all bus and ferry routes for the time being.

One ferry crew this week took the decision, on the advice of their skipper, to refuse payment from passengers to prevent infection.

But workers were then told, via an e-mail from the SIC attributed to chief executive Maggie Sandison, that they would still have to take fares during the public health crisis.

Ferry workers, who spoke to this paper on the condition of anonymity, were angry

at what they felt was a lack of support from the SIC.

The vending machines had been emptied on the ferries staffed by both crews we spoke to, to prevent contamination, yet attendants were still being told they would have to take cash in person.

One worker said that on their ferry, "aabody meant to be off is working" to cover those already in self-isolation due to coronavirus.

And they added that that was "only going to get worse" as more were forced to stay at home in the coming weeks.

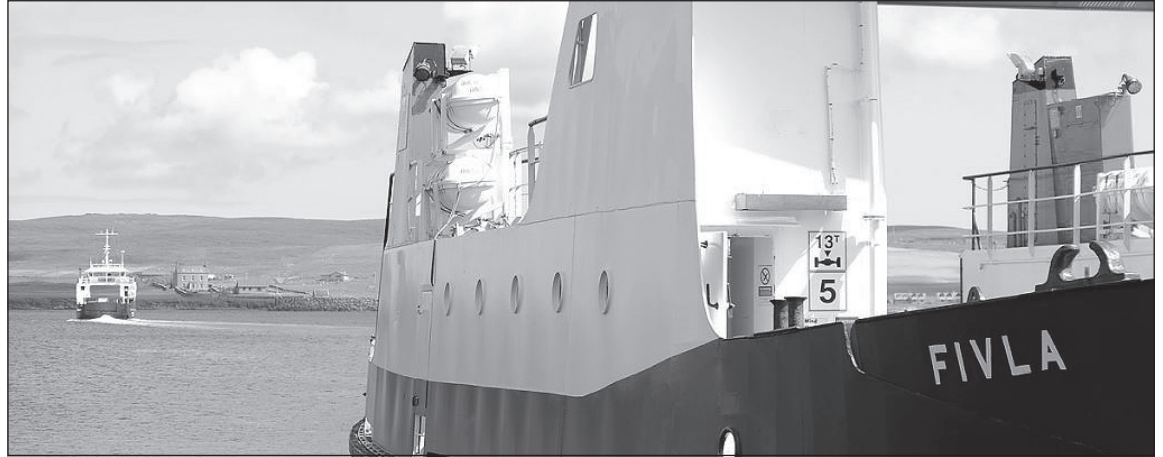
Disposable gloves had been provided to the workers who would have to accept cash payments, while they had also been asked to follow government advice and to wash their hands frequently.

The SIC has taken preventative measures to stop the spread of the illness on its ferries this week, advising passengers to remain in their cars on crossings and reminding foot passengers to "respect cleanliness and hygiene".

But some ferry workers said those measures did not go far enough.

One worker asked if the council expected crew members to change their gloves after dealing with cash at every car.

Mr Leask said it was "ludicrous" that the council was continuing to put ferry and bus workers at risk at a time when social distancing was being enforced.



Some inter-island ferry attendants feel that fares should be waived during the crisis

He believed the SIC was sending the public "mixed messages" by asking most people to work from home while keeping ferry attendants and bus drivers on the frontline.

Mr Leask was critical of the council, and called for it to adopt "a constant approach" to the outbreak across all of their departments.

"We have to look at the social distancing as a priority," he said.

"Can the ferry crew really go back and forth, and back and forth to wash their hands?"

Mr Leask urged the SIC to take a "common-sense approach" to the pandemic and to waive ferry and bus fares for the time being.

That was not ruled out by Mr Main, who

said he did not think "anything is off the table" as the council attempted to navigate an ever-changing situation.

He said that the council was keen to "ensure a sense of normality" on board the boats, and was so far just asking attendants to maintain good cleanliness.

Mr Main gave a good indication of how the week's developments had taken the country by surprise, saying that his department was "acting on plans we thought we would be acting on in a week's time".

But Mr Leask condemned the council's inaction on the bus and ferry situation, and said he "would like to have egg on my face" once the coronavirus pandemic calmed down.

"We are in difficult times and we have to take steps," he said.

Widespread illness among ferry attendants, and subsequent ferry cancellations, was "the last thing we need".

Mr Leask also called on the council to address the "lack of 21st century technology" aboard its ferries, in reference to their reliance on cash instead of card transactions.

In response to a question about whether the SIC might be worried about covering the cost of running their ferries for free for an unknown length of time, Mr Leask said that while that was a "worthwhile" concern the move would only be temporary and would protect those frontline staff.

"This is not a situation where people are going to have a free for all," he said. "They will use this in a respectful manner."

"They will be travelling only if they need to travel, I can be assured of that."

School closures pre-empt decision by government

BY RYAN TAYLOR

Schools and nurseries will stay closed for a second week as part of continuing efforts to slow the spread of coronavirus, with no guarantee they will open after the Easter holidays.

Next week's blanket closures will come as part of a Scotland-wide measure announced mid-week by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

Most isles schools have already been closed this week for "operational and resilience" reasons – which largely relates to staffing and pupil absences.

On Friday 746 children stayed home from school or nursery as well as 50 members of staff across the schools service.

Only Fair Isle, Fetlar and Foula schools stayed open – although even those remote primaries will be closed next week as part of the nationwide decision.

Direct payments are being made to families where children were entitled to free school meals in a bid to help alleviate the financial burden placed upon parents.

However, uncertainty surrounds what happens in the new term

during which secondary pupils are due to begin sitting their exams.

Speaking on Wednesday, Ms Sturgeon advised parents that schools and nurseries would not necessarily reopen after the spring break.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) has been closely monitoring the crisis.

The UK government cancelled exams in England and Wales and Deputy First Minister John Swinney made a statement yesterday on the Scottish government's latest decision.

SIC quality improvement manager Robin Calder said the council had been monitoring the situation surrounding Covid-19 daily, and added education staff were awaiting "clarity" from the SQA over the exams timetable.

"This is now a national decision. Most of our schools have been closed since Monday to pupils."

"Nicola Sturgeon has announced that schools will be closing on Friday across the country."

Mr Calder said "established systems" were already in place to allow pupils to continue learning at home.

That includes paper packs of

We had to make the decision we made. It wasn't an easy decision, but it was the most appropriate way forward.

Robin Calder



learning resources and also "digital options" including the use of Glow – the Scottish schools intranet system, which allows teachers to communicate with pupils electronically and offer feedback.

"We got that in place this time last week because we could see what was coming."

Mr Calder said officials were waiting for clarity from the Scottish government on whether schools would be staffed by teachers next week.

But he added teachers would be

able to be in contact remotely with pupils whether they were working from school or home.

"What's crucial with the virtual communication is young people in the senior phase preparing for exams."

He added: "Following the government's announcement we will now wait for clarity from the SQA, however I think it would be important to stress the SQA have been aware of Shetland's unique circumstances in that all our secondary settings have been closed."

In Brief

Library shuts

The Shetland Library and Learning Centre in Lerwick closed from 5pm on Tuesday due to ongoing worries over coronavirus.

Manager Karen Fraser said the closure would allow flexibility in staffing arrangements, so that staff can work behind the scenes, answer calls or emails, or work from home.

The mobile library would not be out and home deliveries suspended pending review, she said, with a hope that they could continue in due course.

Ms Fraser said: "The library apologises for this temporary closure and will be working to help customers use eBooks and online services."

"The public are reminded that

free wifi extends into the library's grounds so can be used at any time by people with their own devices."

Shetland Library will post service updates on its website, Facebook and Twitter sites.

Sanitiser stolen

The NHS Shetland chief executive has called on people to stop taking hand sanitiser from health services.

Michael Dickson said he was disappointed to hear that alcohol hand rub was being removed.

"Alcohol hand rub is used to decontaminate the hands of staff caring for patients," said Mr Dickson.

"I appreciate there are shortages but it's disappointing to hear it is being taken by members of the public."

"It's a vital aid for staff to protect patients, please don't remove it from any facility."

TV series on hold

Filming for the new series of *Shetland*, which was due to start at the end of March, has been put on hold.

A decision had already been made to postpone for two weeks, but filming has since been halted due to the growing coronavirus pandemic. Two more series of the murder-mystery drama, based on the Ann Cleeves' novels, were announced in December.

Five series have already been broadcast by the BBC, with the show having won fans around the world.

Testing not offered

Potentially sick people have been told not to turn up at A&E or health centres expecting to be tested for coronavirus – unless asked to do so.

NHS Shetland chief executive Michael Dickson said he

appreciated feelings of anxiety around Covid-19, but that if people were worried they should visit this NHS site: www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19

"I appreciate people are feeling anxious but we won't be offering Covid-19 testing unless clinically indicated," he said.

"Please do not present yourself at A&E or health centres and expect to be tested if we have not asked you to do so."

Awards cancelled-

Voluntary Action Shetland has cancelled the Saltire Awards ceremony which was due to take place at Mareel in Lerwick on 31st March.

All young volunteers who were due to get their certificates at the awards ceremony will receive them by post within the next few weeks.



Town Centre Access

Your town centre businesses will continue, as far as possible, to provide goods and services through the Coronavirus crisis with additional measures in place for customer and staff safety and convenience.

Delivery and collection options available.

Find daily updated contact details and ordering / access arrangements at:

www.livinglerwick.co.uk/town-centre

CORONAVIRUS

Trust boss in call for more government help

Warning follows major steps

Week sees closure of Market House

BY RYAN TAYLOR

The chief executive of Shetland Amenity Trust has slammed UK government support offered in light of the coronavirus crisis for failing to help charitable organisations.

Mat Roberts was speaking on Tuesday after the trust announced draconian measures including the closure of Shetland Museum and Archives.

He said a “worst case scenario” could see the trust lose up to half a million pounds as a result of the outbreak.

His comments came in a week which also saw the closure of Market House in Lerwick, which closed its doors on Tuesday, as well as the two other trusts.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson told the public to avoid pubs, clubs and non-essential travel in the latest episode of the battle against the virus.

Scotland is to receive £780 million from the Treasury to ensure health services and businesses are properly equipped with the resources required to fight against the outbreak.

But Mr Roberts’ comments came ahead of a Scottish government announcement on Wednesday that £20 million would go to third sector resilience fund as part of a £350 million package of measures.

The decision to close the museum and archives comes in what has already been described as a difficult period.

In January, Mr Roberts said the trust was bracing itself for its toughest year to date, as it faced up to a 2019 financial deficit of over £457,000.

Mr Roberts said the trust had been forced to take draconian measures.

“At the moment we are modelling around the fact that we may have zero footfall,” he warned.

He said the promised government assistance did not appear to have included the charitable sector at all.

“The best I can establish is that if you are a charitable organisation and over 50 per cent of your income comes from commercial trading activities you may be eligible.

“Most of the government support is in things like rate relief, and charities don’t pay rates – so that’s of no help to us. Nice offer – no use.”

Mr Roberts said the decision on closing the museum was a hard one to make, but he added it was one effectively forced on the trust.

“It is extremely serious,” he said.

“It is really, really disappointing that we are two weeks into this and there is no mention at all of the third sector.”

He added: “We listened to the advice coming from the Prime Minister and the First Minister.

“Very late last night we had a meeting and said ‘okay guys, what do we do?’

“We’d seen a significant reduction in footfall through the museum. We were closed yesterday as a matter of course anyway.

“It’s very disappointing, but we review it every day.”

Work is continuing on Shetland Wool Week, in the hope that the major event – which takes place in late September and early October and contributes over £2 million to the local economy each year – will be able to go ahead.



The closure of Market House in Lerwick will be reviewed today. Inset: The notice greeting visitors to the Voluntary Action Shetland building.

Photos: Dave Donaldson

But a celebratory launch event planned for next week at the Museum and Archives has been called off.

It had been planned to announce the wool week patron and launch the hat pattern for 2020. The team at the trust is now working on an alternative “virtual” launch.

He added the trust would be seeking support from would-be donors, and added online fundraising pages would appear on the trust’s website.

“We will be telling them we are anticipating very severe financial hardship and for these events to be assured for future years their generous help and support at this stage would be much appreciated.”

Mr Roberts added: “It was already a difficult time and it just got more difficult. We are talking to our stakeholders on how we can work together on all aspects of this.”

Shetland Charitable Trust chief executive Ann Black said there were currently no plans for the charitable trust to amend its financial situation in relation to the hardships that the amenity trust was experiencing.

“The trust is a long-term investor with a prudent financial strategy in place.

“At this stage there is no proposal to amend the strategy although we will continue to monitor our externally managed investments closely.”

Executive officer of Voluntary Action Shetland – which owns Market House – Catherine Hughson said she would be reviewing the decision to close the building today. But she told this newspaper she expected the building to remain closed for another full week.

Ms Hughson said: “The majority of the organisations have cancelled all client contact except through telephone, and meetings have been cancelled.”

She said measures had been implemented to safeguard staff, adding there was “not much footfall through the building”.

“I’ll be reviewing it on Friday,” she said. “But I’d expect another full week of closure.”

Flights are reduced

BY KEEGAN MURRAY

Loganair has announced a reduction to its flight offerings over the coming months due to the increasing impact of Covid-19.

The airline said that the measure came as “forward bookings [continued] to fall dramatically versus their previous levels”.

Locally the airline’s new “emergency timetable” means no flights between the isles and Glasgow or Inverness between 17th April and 31st May.

Sumburgh will still offer two flights each day between Sumburgh and Aberdeen. There will also be two flights per day to Edinburgh, connecting via Kirkwall airport.

Meanwhile, ferry operator NorthLink has said that it will turn passengers away who are suffering from coronavirus symptoms.

This was one of the “necessary precautions” announced by NorthLink on Monday.

Other measures include installing extra hand sanitation points and extra cleaning throughout the operator’s vessels and at ferry terminals.

In statement on Monday the firm added: “For your reassurance, our ship’s ventilation system is on full fresh air and there is no re-circulation of air through the internal accommodation on board.”

Of the new Loganair timetable, the airline’s chief executive Jonathan Hinkles said: “The coronavirus situation has worsened materially in the last four days, and we have now seen forward bookings fall by around 75 per cent versus their usual levels.

“From the end of next week, we will be implementing an emergency timetable, which will reduce our operations from around 214 to 95 scheduled flights each weekday. We expect this to be a temporary reduction and we are implementing this until the end of May but may have to extend that timescale as the situation continues to develop.”

Mr Hinkles added: “Customers booked on flights up to the end of May can change their reservation without a change fee to travel on a future date. However, if future flights are more expensive, the difference in fare will be payable. Where services are completely suspended a full refund will be applicable.

“I would strongly advise our affected customers to manage their booking through our website as we are experiencing exceptionally high call volumes into our call centre.

“Importantly, we will maintain lifeline services to the island communities we serve but will be forced to do so with reduced frequency.”

Mr Hinkles said that Loganair staff have been asked to consider a series of measures aimed at protecting employment levels – including reducing working hours by 20 per cent and accepting a 20 per cent reduction in salary as a result or taking a period of unpaid leave.

He said: “We are working hard to avoid redundancies and lay-offs as have already been seen at major international airlines and as are likely to follow at several UK airlines in the coming days.”

However, he also advised that the recently announced plan to recruit former Flybe team members would continue, but with a delay to start dates of employment.

Mareel’s a victim, too

Mareel, the Garrison Theatre, Bonhoga Gallery and the ShetlandMade retail shop at Sumburgh Airport all closed on Tuesday, as Shetland Arts shut its venues in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Shetland Arts said the venues will remain closed “until further notice”.

Chief executive Graeme Howell said the decision “was not taken lightly” but for the welfare of their staff they had no other option.

Staff are being supported to work from home where possible.

Any customers with tickets booked for films or events until 2nd April will receive a refund, Shetland Arts said.

This followed advice from Prime Minister Boris Johnson to avoid gathering in places such as cinemas and theatres, which led to the widespread closure of cinemas across the country.



All Shetland Arts venues and shops are closed.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

Doors close on leisure centres

Leisure centres and swimming pools closed to the public on Tuesday evening amid the developing coronavirus crisis.

Shetland Recreational Trust says the decision to temporarily shut its network of centres and swimming pools was made following the latest government and Health Protection Scotland advice to limit all unnecessary social contact, including going to the gym.

There is no indication of when they will reopen.

Trust facilities will still be available for the schools service if required during the period of public closure. However, that now seems unlikely to be needed.

Shetland Recreational Trust general manager James Johnston said it had been a difficult decision, adding that it would be regularly reviewed to assess whether all or part of the trust’s network could be reopened.

He said the decision was based on the latest advice and was led by the need to protect the health and wellbeing of staff and customers.

Mr Johnston said: “The coronavirus outbreak presents us with an unprecedented challenge. In dealing with this situation we are guided by the latest advice from the Scottish government and Health Protection Scotland.

“Unfortunately, that has led us to conclude that we must temporarily close all our leisure centres. This was a difficult decision but I am sure that people will understand the reason why it has been taken.”

introduce the earlier opening times for OAPs earlier this week, which will see the shop open two hours earlier than usual every day.

Mr Maclean said this time of the morning was “usually quiet” in the Lerwick store, so would prove the ideal time for older shoppers to find the items they needed.

“We ask ordinary customers to respect this and allow those most

vulnerable to shop in the early mornings when things are a little more peaceful,” he said.

He also praised the response of his workers to the ongoing disruption, saying they had been “working round the clock” to keep customers needs met as best as they could.

“Their response so far has been nothing short of outstanding in light of the current circumstances.”

Early opening at supermarket

BY RYAN NICOLSON

Tesco in Lerwick opened its doors to OAPs from 6am this week in a bid to give pensioners the best chance of picking up essential products.

Store manager Ryan Maclean

made the decision to dedicate the first two hours of their day to those most vulnerable as supermarkets across the country found themselves having to limit the amount of produce that customers could buy.

Tesco was one of the supermarket chains that had to take the unprece-

dented step of restricting customers to three of each product in an effort to tackle scenes of panic-buying and stockpiling, with toilet paper, antibacterial hand gel and pasta all at a premium in the Lerwick branch.

The Lerwick supermarket was one of the first across the country to

Some staff will be working from home and some will need to take time off work but you can still get in touch with us by telephone, post or email.

As your community newspaper we are determined to keep you informed about what is happening at this rapidly-changing time. The company will also be continuing its other commercial work including, printing, sign-making and design services.

Much of life in Shetland has been forced to a halt because of coronavirus but we will get through this. Meanwhile, we want to hear your news and views on all subjects, not just the disease, so we can share them with our readers.

You may be spending more time at home. It might be that you use that time to write a short story, pen a poem or paint a picture. If you do, share them with us and we can consider publishing some of them – it

might just help us lighten the mood a little during this difficult time.

Community is especially important at a time like this. If you know of any heartwarming stories of how people are pulling together let us know so we can share them with the whole community.

The Shetland Times Bookshop is open normal hours for the present and you can buy online at <https://shop.shetlandtimes.co.uk/>.

We will still provide you with news and views

The Shetland Times remains committed to maintaining our comprehensive news coverage in print and online amid rising concerns and rapidly-changing government advice surrounding coronavirus.

We have implemented several measures to protect staff and visitors while continuing to operate our usual service and will continue to change the way we operate if necessary, in line with government advice.

CORONAVIRUS

Virus calls a halt on cruise ship visits to the isles for next month

- Operators to cease trips to the isles
- Petition calls for a ban on visits

BY RYAN NICOLSON

Cruise ships are unlikely to be seen in Lerwick harbour until the middle of April

Cruise operators Cruise and Maritime Voyages (CMV), G-Adventures and Viking Cruises, which are set to have ships visit the isles in the next six weeks, all announced they had temporarily ceased operations due to the outbreak of coronavirus.

The *Astoria* was due to sail into Lerwick from Torshavn tomorrow morning, before operator CMV cancelled all of its routes last Friday evening, amid ongoing concerns about the cruise industry and the spread of Covid-19

The German-owned *AIDAaura*, a frequent visitor to Lerwick Harbour, is now set to be the next cruise arrival on Thursday 9th April. AIDA also announced it was to cease its routes but only up to Sunday 5th April.

May's first two prospective visitors, the *Viking Jupiter* and the G-Adventures *MS Expedition*, are still scheduled to arrive with both companies expecting to begin sailing again on 1st May.

But harbourmaster Alexander Simpson said this week that they were expecting more cruise



The cruise ship *Magellan* in Lerwick Harbour.

Photo: Brian Gray

ships to cancel their visits "in the coming days and weeks".

There were originally set to be 114 cruise ships visiting the isles this year, although that number is set to be significantly lower with the cruise industry crippled by the spread of coronavirus.

Anger and dismay were expressed on social media last Friday when the *MS Magellan*, a CMV ship, arrived into Lerwick harbour from Reykjavik in Iceland. Iceland has more than 100 confirmed cases of coronavirus.

That furore rose further when CMV announced they were to cease their cruise operations after the *MS Magellan* had left Shetland. She was due to sail for Kirkwall late on Friday evening, but instead returned to her home port in London as the company announced they had taken the "difficult decision" to end their routes in light of the global pandemic.

The company also said that the "impending lockdown of many ports around the world" had resulted in the decision.

A petition was shared on social media calling for Shetland to ban cruise ships from docking in the isles to prevent the spread of the illness, before the *Magellan* arrived last Friday, with *The Orcadian* reporting that some Orkney residents were also opposed to the ship's arrival into Kirkwall.

Mr Simpson and Lerwick Port Authority have maintained that they are prepared for the possibility of an infected passenger arriving in the isles in the last few weeks.

"The masters of any vessel is required by law to report on the health of crew and passengers prior to a port visit. If there is any issue declared the vessel is placed into quarantine and from there is a process which is followed according to our emergency plans."

The port authority have since updated its website to say staff are continuing to monitor the situation, and will implement any changes to procedures when they see fit.

MP seeks help for those returning

Isles MP Alistair Carmichael raised concerns in the House of Commons this week about support for people attempting to return to the UK during the coronavirus crisis.

Addressing the Foreign Secretary following the announcement that the government was advising against all foreign travel for the next 30 days, Mr Carmichael highlighted the situation of Shetland and Orkney constituents who were currently trying to return home from outside the UK.

Mr Carmichael said: "The Foreign Secretary is absolutely right. Repatriation is a complex and costly business. That, surely, is why it is not something that should just be left to individuals and there must be a leading role from government."

"Like many MPs I have had representations from constituents in Morocco who now find themselves stranded. The ambassador's Twitter account is telling them just to go to the airport with their passport and their ticket and see what they can fix up when they get there."

"We realise that the consular services are under stress but surely this is a moment when they must have every possible resource to provide the best possible information for our constituents."

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab replied: "I totally agree with him. We are providing the very best support, care and advice. Of course when it comes to repatriations we have secured I think it was 200 who came back from China at the outset. We are also working in relation to the *Braemar* cruise ship ..."

"We will do everything that we can. Of course the point I would make to the Right Honourable Gentleman, this situation is very fluid."

"The decisions that are being made on the ground in countries like the one he suggested are often happening very rapidly and the challenge for airlines and consular support is to make sure that we can respond, not just as quickly as possible but as effectively as possible."

After the exchange Mr Carmichael said: "I recognise the immense pressure that consular services are under, but we must ensure that people are supported in returning home from overseas travel in light of the new advice from the FCO."

"I will continue to work with consular services and FCO officials to make sure that isles constituents who have been travelling abroad can get home safely as soon as possible."

Folk festival is put on ice as the coronavirus cases steadily rise

The 40th Shetland Folk Festival has joined the list of large-scale events put on ice due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The festival's committee said that last Friday's decision had not been taken lightly but said that the "wellbeing of everyone in our community" had to take priority.

Shetland's first two cases of the highly infectious coronavirus were announced last week and the number of confirmed cases has risen steadily since then.

As with other parts of the country a range of measures which have had a wide-ranging impact on public life have been deemed necessary to combat the virus.

Concerts, festivals and sporting events such as Six Nations rugby and Premier League football have been cancelled or postponed throughout Europe.

The 40th folk festival, which had been set to kick-off at the end of next month, will now take place in 2021.

This will also mark the 40th birthday of the festival, with the first Shetland Folk Festival taking place in 1981.

According to a statement from the festival's committee the decision followed weeks of consultation with venues, musicians, stakeholders and volunteers.

A number of the acts due to play at this year's festival will now appear in 2021.

One such act is the Danish eight-piece Habadekuk who addressed the cancellation on Facebook.

The group wrote: "We're so sad about this, have been looking forward so much for a long time. But we'll keep doing that for one more year for sure."

"Take care everybody and keep the music flowing (at home for now)."

In issuing the news the festival's committee also addressed the effects which the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent ban on large gatherings in many affected countries will have on the music industry.

Many self-employed musicians, technicians and agents will be impacted by these measures, the statement said, and the com-

mittee encouraged people to support musicians wherever they could by buying albums and merchandise and attending next year's festival.

Ticket-holders are entitled to a refund though there is also scope to have your membership postponed until the festival's 2021 instalment.

In their statement, the committee said: "We have not taken this decision lightly, but after weeks of consulting venues, musicians, stakeholders and volunteers; the health and wellbeing of everyone in our community (and those who wish to come here) must be our priority."

"We want our 40th festival to be a celebration of everything good about our islands, and recent measures such as global travel restrictions, limits on public gatherings and an understandable uncertainty amongst the most vulnerable in our community has led us to conclude that it's better to wait another year to really do Shetland and its musical family justice."

Lights dim on biking rally

The fields of Ollaberry will be quiet in June after the 2020 Simmer Dim rally joined the long list of cancelled events this week.

In a statement published on Facebook, committee member Aimee Sutherland said it was with "great sadness" that they were having to call off this year's event.

Although this was "totally devastating news" the committee had decided that they must "be sensible" and take on board the currently developing situation regarding Covid-19.

All those booked could keep their bookings for next year, the message said, though any disappointed visitors could also request a refund.

They ended their message by reminding bikers to "take care, look after each other and wash your hands".

The annual event sees devoted bike enthusiasts travel from across the country to take over Ollaberry for a weekend of camping, music and games.

The 2021 Simmer Dim Rally is now set to be held between Thursday 17th and Sunday 20th June.

Churches stay shut to prevent the spread

Church services have been impacted by the outbreak of Covid-19.

All Church of Scotland Services, including Easter services, have been suspended until further notice.

The Kirk's transition minister for the isles, the Rev Frances Henderson, said: "The Church of Scotland services throughout Scotland have now been officially cancelled for this Sunday and up to, and including, Easter."

"We cancelled all our services last Sunday in Shetland as well but now it's Scotland-wide."

The virus has also had an unwanted impact on Catholic services.

St Margaret's Church in Lerwick has cancelled all public Masses, along with other Catholic churches in Scotland, until further notice. Parish services which had been due to be held in Voe and Cullivoe have also been called off until further notice.

Methodist services have been called off, too, along with Bible studies and a course on Lent, although services have been streamed online to allow for home worship.

Baptist Churches have also seen service cancellations. The scheduled services at Quoy's in Lerwick have been cancelled for this week. Worshippers have been urged to check the kirk's website for further developments.

Classic Motor Show breaks down this year

BY RYAN TAYLOR

Fans of cherished cars and motorbikes have been dealt a blow with news the Shetland Classic Motor Show has been cancelled amid ongoing concerns about coronavirus.

The committee provided a statement on Friday outlining a decision to call off the event, which was scheduled to take place on 6th and 7th June at the Clickimin Leisure Complex.

The committee said it was faced with "only one choice" – to cancel the show.

"Whilst there will undoubtedly be disappointment among the many exhibitors, visitors, volunteers and organisers alike, it would have been irresponsible to endanger the health and well-being of those individuals, and that of the Clickimin staff," a statement from chairman Colin Nicholson said.

"It could also have put unnecessary strain on the local health service."

A final decision is still to be reached on when a subsequent show will take place, but organisers say it is unlikely to be before June 2022.

The first priority for the committee was contacting exhibitors from outwith the isles who have already made travel and accommodation bookings.

Organised tours around the isles for the various categories of vehicles, on the two days immediately before and after the show weekend, are also cancelled.

The cancellation means a number of "firsts" that had been lined up for the event will now not be visiting.

These included a 1926 Bugatti Type 35B; a 1981 DMC DeLorean and a 2002 Honda XL650V Transalp motorcycle.



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CORONAVIRUS

Keep being positive, says West Side woman who lives in Italy

BY CHARLEY-KAI JOHN

Shetlanders are as prepared as anyone to handle the outbreak of coronavirus, according to an isles woman in locked-down Italy.

Osla Fraser, originally from Culswick on the West Side, has lived in Italy for 17 years.

She works as a translator and teaches translation studies in the city of Perugia, in the Italian region of Umbria, and has been working from home since the country went into lockdown at the beginning of last week.

Speaking to *The Shetland Times* on Tuesday afternoon, Mrs Fraser said she was glad the UK government had “finally” taken some action, after it advised people to avoid social contact, unnecessary travel and work from home where possible.

Last Friday, she shared her concerns on the situation and lack of action in a Facebook post, which was subsequently shared hundreds of times by isles folk. She said the response to her post, shared after the number of confirmed coronavirus cases in the isles reached double digits, had been “overwhelming”.

Mrs Fraser said she was “incredibly lucky” to have grown up in Shetland, as the experience of living in a community where ferries and planes do not always run, meant she had a different approach to life.

“You cannot always plan for

everything,” she said, adding that folk in the isles were a lot more organised due to their connections to the mainland often being cut off.

Mrs Fraser said she bet if Shetland was shut down there would be enough in folk’s freezers to survive for a month or two already.

Commenting on her current situation living and working in Italy, Mrs Fraser said she was “obviously a bit worried” but added it was important to “look on the positive side”, as she had the opportunity to read books and listen to music she would otherwise not have had the chance to.

She also benefited from living out in the countryside and could go for a walk – as long as she is not with someone else. This was more difficult for those living in cities such as Rome, with Italians not allowed to leave their region and many cities closing public parks.

One positive is the lack of pollution.

“There is a different feel in the air,” she said, with pollution disappearing due to a lack of flights and cars on the road.

The remote teaching has been going “quite well” so far, she said, and she had been speaking to friends who are teachers in the isles about useful video conferencing programmes to use, including Zoom, when teaching from home.



Osla Fraser says reading and walks in the countryside have helped her cope.

Mrs Fraser, who teaches at Mediazione Linguistica Perugia, said there were very specific reasons for carrying on lessons, so students could finish the academic year at the right time, including for those who might have masters degrees lined up, which could be complicated otherwise.

Having lessons also gives Mrs Fraser and her students a “daily routine”, that can provide “some

form of normality” for those in a locked-down country.

She teaches university students, but said keeping a routine was more difficult for primary school pupils, given the involvement of parents and keeping the attention of primary younger children.

On government action, she said it was difficult to comment as she was “not an expert”, but said that in the UK, like Italy and other

European countries, she thought that most people and those in charge had been “reticent” when it came to taking action.

She included herself among those who had thought that this “would not affect my life in such a dramatic way”. Mrs Fraser also said she understood why governments in democratic countries were initially hesitant to impose draconian controls, telling people what to do.

When it came to taking action to help elderly folk and those with health problems, Mrs Fraser said the government had been “terribly slow”, when they could already see the Italian situation unfolding. These were active, important members of society and deserved as much protection as everyone else, she said.

Mrs Fraser wants those in charge to start speaking in a more “compassionate way”, and making sure that folk who were more vulnerable were cared for.

“I think it is important for folk to stay positive,” she said.

If folk have to self-isolate, then they should take advantage of that time to study something, or read all the books sitting next to the bed and do things productive, she said.

Shetland was “absolutely one of the best places to be” as there is “still that sense of community”.

• To read more of Mrs Fraser’s online post visit www.shetland-times.co.uk and search for “Osla Fraser”.

Relay for Life put off until May next year

The organising committee for the Relay For Life has taken the decision to postpone this year’s planned event until May 2021.

Chairman Martin Henderson said the decision had not been taken lightly, but the organisers felt it was important to respond to the ever-changing situation in a sensible way that prioritised the health of our participants and provided clarity about the plans at the earliest opportunity.

Shetland’s Got Talent, originally scheduled for Saturday 18th April as a CRUK fundraiser, has also been postponed and will go ahead on 24th October 2020 at Mareel.

Mr Henderson said: “Our thoughts are with everyone who is currently having to deal with this situation directly and indirectly.

“We will continue to explore ways that we can support our communities and Cancer Research UK over the coming year and we are looking forward to seeing you all at Shetland’s Got Talent in autumn.

“We are incredibly grateful for the work and money that has already been raised by you all.”

If teams or participants have any questions they are asked to email shetlandrelaychair@yahoo.co.uk.

No face-to-face teaching at either of isles colleges

Terminal staff urged to try and work from home

Shetland College and NAFC Marine Centre are to suspend face-to-face teaching from 5pm today.

The University of Highlands and Islands (UHI) made the announcement regarding all its colleges, universities and research institutions on Monday afternoon, “to help reduce the risk of spread of coronavirus within our community”.

The arrangement will continue until further notice, UHI said, after principals including Jane Lewis from Shetland College and Willie Shannon from NAFC Marine Centre met on Monday morning.

No campus buildings, including residences, are closing and other activities, including the provision of student support and library services and resource centres, will continue.

A letter has been sent to all university partnership students and staff, saying: “These are unprecedented times but we’re planning carefully to ensure you can continue your studies, including examination arrangements, with as little disruption as possible.”

The suspension covers all further education, higher education and community programmes delivered at campuses across the Highlands and Islands, Moray and Perthshire, with students not attending classes in person after Friday.

UHI said it is working closely with NHS services and Health Protection Scotland regarding the situation, and will take direction from them.

No overseas travel is permitted for students or staff, and only essential course-related travel within the UK will be allowed.

The operator of the Sullom Voe oil terminal is urging non-essential personnel to work from home to help combat the threat of coronavirus.

EnQuest is implementing a “phased reduction” in the number of staff and contractors at the terminal to limit the spread of the virus “while maintaining plant availability”.

It comes as BP has opted for its offshore helicopters to temporarily by-pass the isles when flying offshore to minimise the risk posed by the virus. The precautionary measures have already come into effect. Temperature checks will also be carried out on workers entering the site, which is being classed as out of bounds to visitors.

Planned vendor visits are being re-scheduled, while group events and gatherings will be cancelled.

EnQuest said in a news release: “We are reviewing

the work activity on-site daily and are postponing non-essential work, where necessary.

“Our actions are in line with industry protocols to ensure hygiene levels can be maintained and that safety critical operations are protected.”

BP said in a statement: “BP’s priority is the safety, health and wellbeing of our people and the communities we operate in.

“As part of our mitigation measures during the delay phase of Covid 19 (Coronavirus), we have taken the decision to transport individuals to our west of Shetland installations direct from Aberdeen instead of their normal transit through Shetland.

“This is a temporary measure intended to help remove unnecessary footfall on Shetland and to reduce the risk of the virus spreading.”

Times Past

25 Years Ago

Bressay is united in anger over ferry fare rises which have already stopped one family moving back to the island and threaten to end house values plummeting.

Islanders have worked out that the cost to a family with two children travelling to work and using Lerwick’s facilities will shoot up from an average of around £840 a year to nearly £2300 once the new fares come on 1st April.

About 170 people – almost two thirds of the adult population in Bressay – turned out for Monday night’s hastily organised meeting at the hall.

Next time some sleek non-rabbit-shaped animal darts under your wheels it would be worthwhile stopping and inspecting the remains – especially if you live in Northmavine.

It could be that you have wiped out a rare example of the latest public enemy in Shetland – the killer mink.

Somebody did away with one recently and its carcass was found by Ollaberry crofter Andrew Sharp. Pretty sure of what he had, he contacted Jonathan Swale of Scottish Natural Heritage. The remains thus found their way to the offices of SNH in Lerwick where the alarm bells were immediately sounded.

The Young Fiddler of the Year is Jenna Reid of Quarff.

Jenna won the Scottish Folk Society’s open competition in the Town Hall to take the Frank Jamieson and a cheque for £250.

Andrew Gifford of Lerwick came second and Heather Middleton, also Lerwick, was third.

50 Years Ago

If all goes well, Shetland’s £1,000,000 inter-island car-ferry system could be in full operation by the summer of 1974 with parts of the system working effectively in the two preceding years.

Shetland County Council’s Transport sub-committee met on Tuesday to consider in detail proposals for the scheme, which envisages the purchase of four ferryboats, and the creation of ten terminal points, plus the necessary roadwork.

And they have put forward certain recommendations to the County Council for their consideration at the April meeting. If the council approve, the whole scheme would then go up to the Scottish Development Department. If they give the go-ahead signal the dream could become a reality within four years.

Discussions on a common fishing policy by prospective Common Market entrants would “serve no useful purpose” and “it would be premature to take up a position” regarding British fishery limits.

That is the view of the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, given in reply to Commons questions by Mr Jo Grimond.

Mr Grimond asked if the Minister would invite the Governments of Norway, Denmark and Eire to a conference to discuss a common policy for the conservation of stocks and the protection of fishing limits, on the basis that those countries enter into negotiations with Great Britain for entry into the Common Market.

Shetland fishermen want to see a new pier built on the west side of Shetland – and they are unanimous in recommending that it should be sited at the old herring station in Ronas Voe.

The fishermen’s final decision was taken at a meeting in Lerwick.

There are several good reasons why another pier should be provided, and why it should be in this fine, sheltered voe, say the fishermen.

100 Years Ago

Treat to Young Children – An Excellent Entertainment – When enthusiasm and kindness of heart are both associated in one individual, it is

wonderful what can be accomplished, and we had an object lesson in this on Saturday last. It is quite a short time since Miss Cathcart, the new district Queen Victoria Jubilee Nurse for Lerwick, arrived and took up her duties, in succession to Nurse Grant. Nurse Cathcart had been in France “doing her bit” during the Great War as a nursing sister. Throughout the whole of that terrible experience, her “lot was the common lot of all” who devoted themselves to nursing the brave lads who were brought back from the fighting line to hospital – many of them to die, in spite of care and nursing. But that is a chapter in the Nurse’s career on which she refuses to enthuse.

After her return to England – Miss Cathcart is not Scotch – she was appointed as Q.V.J. Nurse to Lerwick, where she arrived late in November, and entered on her duties of visiting the sick poor at their homes. She instantly became a favourite with her patients, and her visits – and she has been a slave to duty – were at all times welcomed by her numerous patients amid the trials and weariness of pain and sickness as gleams of sunshine in dark days.

Shortly after Nurse Cathcart’s arrival in Lerwick, she observed that while all manner of gay things were provided for the “grown-ups,” there seemed to be little effort made to cheer the lives of what she described as “the kiddies.” Nurse Cathcart decided that this neglect of the children should no longer exist, and she set to work, and gathering subscriptions from her friends, invited about eighty young children to a treat in the Salvation Army hall on Saturday afternoon, the hall having been kindly placed at her disposal by the officers in charge.

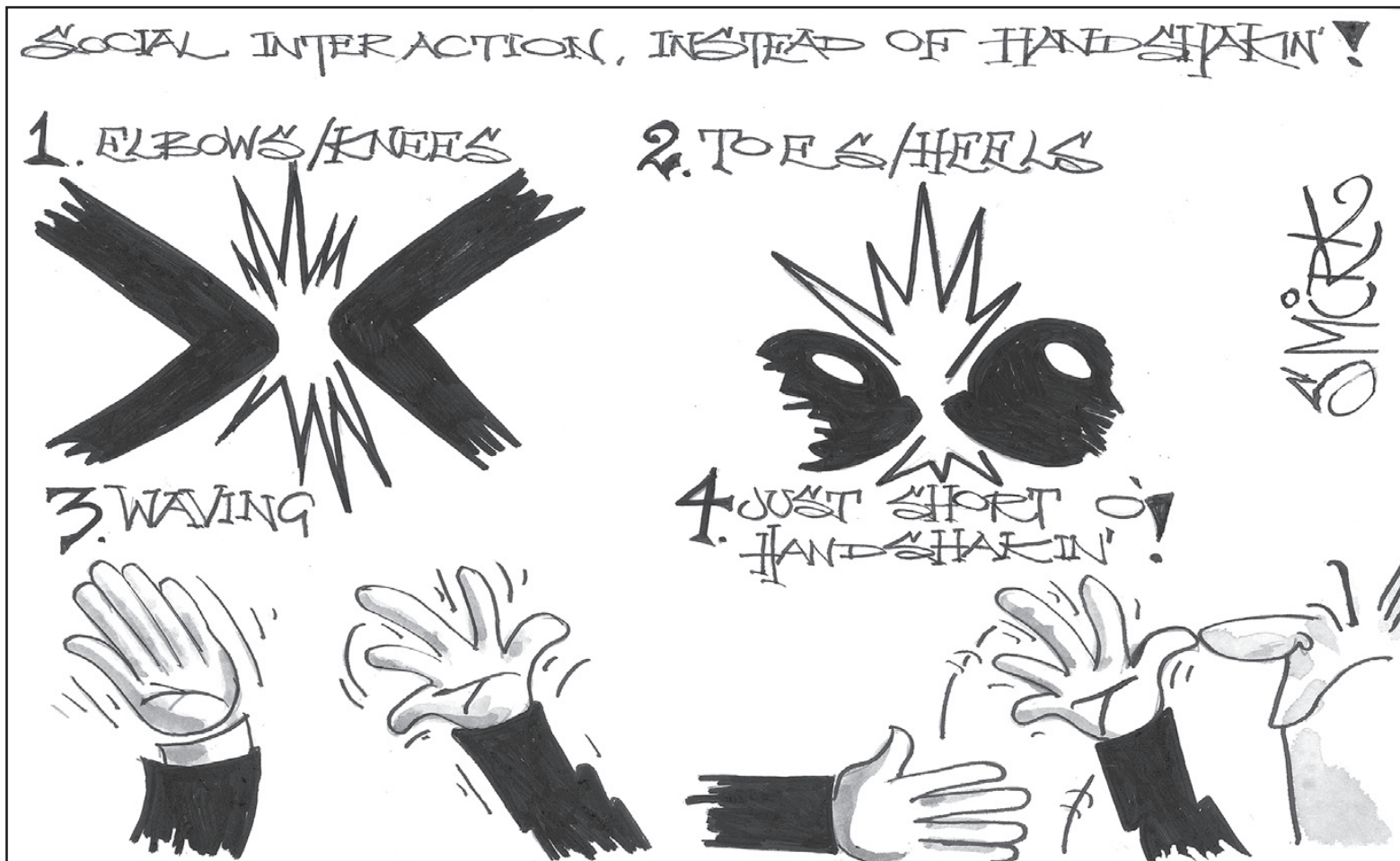
Outside it was stormy and cold, but inside the hall all was bright and cheery. The young children, “dressed in their best Sunday clothes,” formed a pleasing picture, and the tables were loaded with all the most tempting of juvenile delicacies, to which ample justice was done by the bairns. Among those present looking after details were: Mrs Yule, Ordgarff; Mrs W. Gladstone Walker, Queen’s Hotel; Miss Harrison, Dr Jean Yule, and several others, all of whom seemed to strive with each other as to who could do the most the make glad the children’s hour. But Miss Cathcart was the presiding good genius, who joined heartily in the games that followed, and, although, unlike the Fairy Godmother at the christening of the young prince, she carried no magic wand, she certainly carried pleasure and joy into the hearts of her little proteges, whose lives she had so successfully brightened for a few hours.



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OPINION



Stick together

The pace of change this week has been head-spinning.

Hour by hour the devastating extent of the coronavirus crisis has become clearer as the impact it is having on our lives has deepened.

Closure followed closure and cancellation followed cancellation. Several of Shetland's biggest flagship celebrations will not take place this year.

Mareel, Shetland Museum and leisure centres across the isles have pulled down the shutters.

Businesses are reeling with many facing an uncertain and worrying future as the isles effectively went into lockdown.

This time last week schools were open, albeit with hundreds of pupils and scores of staff absent. Now schools will remain closed with no guarantee they will reopen before the summer holidays.

The pervading emotion coursing through the isles is anxiety. Nobody knows how this situation will pan out or how long it will take to get back some sense of normality.

Many have said it is as if the country is on a war footing. The situation is certainly unprecedented in peacetime.

The restrictions on everyday life are staggering. We are told to stop socialising. NHS Shetland is rapidly transforming wards into isolation units. Office work-

The Shetland Times THE OLD ROCK 20.03.20



This is a resilient place full of resourceful people. That will stand us in good stead.



ers are being told to stay at home and face-to-face meetings are practically forbidden.

Watching the desperate scenes from Italy, France and other parts of Europe it is plain to see why such extreme measures are needed.

Governments were facing criticism over a perceived lack of action. That charge can no longer be levelled at them and it is anticipated that more drastic restrictions will be put in place over the coming days.

It is essential that administrations at home, in Edinburgh and London are straightforward and transparent with their message.

Clarity is needed over some of the measures imposed, not least, clearly telling young people what is happening in connection with their exams.

Above all, level-headed leadership is called for.

As a community we must recognise that this will not last forever while also remembering that, for now, everyone can do their bit to help slow the spread of Covid-19.

We should take some comfort from the fact that Shetland seems to have avoided the worst ravages of hoarding and panic buying and that the NHS response so far appears to have been robust and rapid.

This is a resilient place full of resourceful people. That will stand us in good stead. Stick together, look out for each other and we will get through this.

LETTER FROM EDINBURGH



**Beatrice Wishart
MSP**

We are living in a time of crisis. The Covid-19 virus has changed our lives and will do so for many months to come.

It was a sombre sitting in the Scottish Parliament on Tuesday. Sombre but very unified. Only a handful of weeks ago all the political parties were disagreeing over constitutional issues and much more. But hostilities have ceased in the face of this unprecedented national and global crisis.

The cabinet was in the chamber to answer the many questions MSPs had after statements from the First Minister and the health minister, ranging from personal protection equipment for healthcare professionals to education closures to business support.

We are all in this together and we will work together, with a common purpose to preserve life and our communities, to care for its vulnerable people, and to keep our health and support services running.

Some people have compared this time to the Second World War and invoked the "war spirit" that our parents and grandparents knew. Shetland's year-round community spirit is a big part of what makes this a great place to live, but people took pro-active action last week in the face of what could be seen coming down the tracks. It felt like Shetland was trying to get ahead of the curve.

Our schools were closed this week due to "operational and resilience" reasons. Some staff and pupils were self-isolating, and some parents voted with their feet by keeping their children home. And now schools across Scotland are to close from today.

The consequences of practically everything closing down is catastrophic for businesses and charities. On Sunday I spoke to one local hotelier who observed if it had been said the previous Sunday that the business would close its doors in a week's time no-one would have believed it. Sadly that is what has happened, albeit temporarily.

We have wall to wall coverage of coronavirus, understandably so. It's important that we follow the latest advice from the government and NHS and know what to do to try and prevent catching and spreading it.

But in watching the news so intently we should be mindful about the impact that may be having on the mental wellbeing not just of ourselves but on those around us. It's easy to become overwhelmed.

In a bid to help provide current information, I'm updating my Facebook and website daily.

The Shetland parliamentary office is closed now for face to face meetings, but we're still answering emails, calls and letters, and will get back to you as quickly as possible. Staff from the Edinburgh office are working remotely. Our contact details are Beatrice.Wishart.msp@parliament.scot and Alistair.Carmichael.mp@parliament.uk. Telephone (01595) 690044.

As people were leaving parliament they were saying "good luck" and "take care". I pass on those sentiments to all in our community.

A REGIONAL OUTLOOK: YOUR MSPs' VIEWS

This week...



**John Finnie
Green Party**

I was delighted to see the Shetland branch of Women's Aid recently receive a glowing report from the Care Inspectorate for the care and support it provides to women who had suffered from domestic abuse.

The report is a reflection of the hard work, dedication and compassion of the charity's volunteers and staff. The report followed hot on the heels of a fundraising drive for Shetland Women's Aid by the wonderful staff at Scatsta Airport, showing that their work is held in high esteem by the community as well as the inspectors.

The importance of that work can hardly be overstated. The team provides emotional and practical support to women who have been victims of domestic abuse, offering a lifeline when victims are at their most vulnerable.

Sadly, the charity continues to face enormous financial pressure as its waiting list for support continues to grow. The increase in recorded incidents can partially be attributed to victims recognising abuse and having an

increased confidence that they will be taken seriously and receive the support they need. Gender-based violence has been, and indeed still is, seriously under reported.

Far too often in the past women weren't taken seriously and even when they were the support necessary to get away from an abusive situation simply wasn't there, but Women's Aid is tireless in its efforts to rectify the situation.

There have been improvements in recent years in the way in which the authorities handle reported cases of domestic abuse. Improved collaboration between Police Scotland and prosecutors recognises that these crimes can have a huge ongoing impact and so ensuring their safety from the moment of reporting and all the way through the process of investigation is enormously important.

These improvements are all to be welcomed but it is important that we don't become complacent. The fundamental injustice which underpins domestic violence is the continuing inequality of women in society and until that is fully addressed the blight of abuse will continue.

At Holyrood I am a member of the cross-party group on men's violence against women and girls because it is important for men to recognise the responsibility they carry in addressing this inequality.

I have heard some powerful and deeply moving testimony from women after suffering from domestic violence which has left me in no doubt about the terrible damage that abuse can do. There remains in society an unfortunate tendency to silo domestic violence away as a "women's issue". But that ignores the simple fact that the overwhelming number of perpetrators are men.

We all have to shoulder the responsibility and put in the effort to make our society a fair and just place for women to live. Women's Aid has been leading the way for a long time and I am deeply grateful for its work.

Our other columnists...



**Maree Todd
SNP**



**Rhoda Grant
Labour**



**Jamie Halcro Johnston
Conservative**

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Shot in the arm for over 3,000

BY RYAN TAYLOR

The fight against coronavirus has reached a significant milestone with over 3,000 people getting their first vaccination – despite the week's snowy weather preventing some from receiving their jabs.

NHS Shetland launched a significant drive to get shots into people's arms, with the opening of a mass vaccination centre in Lerwick on Monday.

The health board is also undertaking a major effort to reach remote and distant island communities such as Fair Isle and Foula.

The latest weekly figures, published by Public Health Scotland on Wednesday recorded Shetland's total as 2,916 for the period up to 31st January – an increase of almost 1,000 on the previous week. NHS Shetland yesterday confirmed the number had topped 3,000.

It is one of the highest proportions across Scotland. Only Orkney, Western Isles and Highland health boards have vaccinated a larger percentage of their adult populations.

After being slightly slower to roll-out the vaccination programme, due in part to its later arrival in the isles, NHS Shetland has rapidly increased the speed of delivery.

The major effort means about 16 per cent of the adult population in Shetland have now had their first vaccine dose.

In another encouraging sign, no new cases of coronavirus have



Harold Massie is given the first vaccine at the Independent Living Centre in Lerwick on Monday.
Photo: Ryan Nicolson

been reported in the isles for over a week.

NHS Shetland says people over 65 are next in line for vaccination, as are those who are "clinically extremely vulnerable".

Over-50s will begin to receive their jabs by mid-March with this cohort continuing into May.

Vaccine roll-out leader Brian Chittick said the first jabs were under way and, in some cases, already completed on the non-doctor islands of Fair Isle, Fetlar and Foula.

"We have special dispensation from the Scottish government to vaccinate all residents on these islands now," he said.

"This is because of the logistical challenge of transporting the vaccine and also being able to get trained vaccinators on and off the outer isles."

Mr Chittick said the mass vaccination centres would be kept central (in Lerwick and Scalloway) because of the challenges around storing and transporting the vaccine.

People aged over 65 living in Whalsay, Yell and Unst are expected to receive their vaccinations through their health centres.

"Those living on the Shetland Mainland will be asked to come to Lerwick," Mr Chittick said.

Wednesday's snow prevented some people from getting through for their appointments, prompting the health authority to announce a phonenumber for people to use.

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Virus reality hits home for health official Campbell

EXCLUSIVE

BY ANDREW HIRST

As a communications official for Shetland's health board, Carol Campbell has been at the sharp end of the isles' response to the pandemic.

After months working alongside senior figures to keep the public and media informed, Mrs Campbell considered herself to have a good understanding of Covid-19.

But her professional experiences took on a new dimension last month, when she and her son were struck down with the virus – enduring 21 days in self-isolation.

Speaking from home, just before her period of isolation ended, Mrs Campbell, 52, said: "It's been an absolute lesson to me about how easy it is to get this virus and how careful you have to be.

"You don't realise how hard it hits you, particularly in terms of the news that's going on around you.

"Everyone is talking about Covid deaths and Covid infections and you start to think, God, now I'm one of these statistics.

"I think it was most noticeable when the daily numbers came through, and I was one of the two cases for that day.

"And suddenly you realise, every figure that you talk about during this whole crisis is a family that's affected, it's another life that could go wrong because of this."

Mrs Campbell's isolation began on 11th January when her teenage son, David, tested positive in a case linked to the North Mainland outbreak.

She said her son's symptoms were mild to start with and it was quite a shock when the test results came back positive.

His condition worsened, however, and by the time of his 17th birthday on 16th January, Mrs Campbell said he was feeling very unwell, despite being healthy and a keen runner.

"He was just totally flat," she said.

"He was almost pale to the point of transparency; it was like he had shrunk.

"It was like a really bad flu but he was also battling with intense headaches at that point as well.

"I really felt for him."

While the physical conditions



He was almost pale to the point of transparency; it was like he had shrunk. It was like a really bad flu but he was also battling with intense headaches at that point as well.

Carol Campbell



were worrying, Mrs Campbell said she was most concerned by the impact of the isolation.

"Being a teenager during this time and then getting Covid on top of it all, and being so cut off from the outside world, it was really bothering me," she added.

By the time the family's period of isolation was almost due to end, David was reported to be feeling better, and everyone was looking forward to getting out of the house again.

But during a call with NHS Shetland chief executive Michael Dickson about a media inquiry, he noticed she sounded "a bit croaky" and advised her to take another test.

"As he said it there was almost a featherlight sensation in my chest," Mrs Campbell said.

» » Continued on page seven

Hitch for caravan park plans after 'cyber attack'

Frustration at environment agency troubles

Setback could delay project by months

EXCLUSIVE

BY RYAN TAYLOR

Doubts hang over ambitious plans for a new campsite and caravan park following a "significant" alleged cyber attack against the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, with concerns the crisis could set the project back by months.

Representatives of the Scalloway Community Development Company (SCDC), which is behind the site, are being left increasingly

frustrated because repeated calls to Sepa are left unanswered.

Director Andrew Blackadder says the issue came to light after he began seeking information relating to the planned discharge from the site's sewage system.

The issue is of particular concern to the development company because of documentation known as a Controlled Activities (Scotland) Regulations or "Car" licence, which must be in place before planning consent is given.

Mr Blackadder said a condition of funding from one of the site's backers calls for all consents to be in place by the end of March.

He now has concerns over whether all necessary consents will be in place by then.

SCDC was one of a number of organisations to receive Crown Estate funding to the tune of £99,000. The scheme has also recently received £250,000 from the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF).

Mr Blackadder said all Sepa offices across the country were closed.

"The whole place has collapsed," he said.

Mr Blackadder emailed the agency "a week or two ago", but has still received no response.

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LET'S TALK BUSINESS



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CORONAVIRUS

Carol on road to recovery after tough period of self-isolation and illness

« « Continued from front page

"It was like someone drew a feather over my lungs – I could pinpoint the instant it happened."

The next morning, leaving the house for the first time in days, Mrs Campbell went straight for her Covid test at the pod outside the Brevik building.

Later that day, she got the positive results back – meaning she had to go back straight back into isolation, along with her son and husband Colin.

Within a couple of days her symptoms had worsened.

"The overriding feeling was an intense headache and sense of my shoulders being pushed down hard, like there was big weight on me," she said.

"I couldn't clear my head of the foginess."

Unable to think straight, Mrs Campbell began to panic that she would not recover enough to do her job.

But after a "stern talking to" by the health board's occupational health team, Mrs Campbell agreed to stop working and rest for a few days.

During that time, she caught up on some recommended reading and TV.

Originally from South Africa, where she worked as deputy editor of the *Sunday Tribune* in Durban, Mrs Campbell also said she was inundated with calls from old friends and former colleagues from across the globe.

And by last Wednesday she was feeling well enough to help Mr Dickson remotely organise his regular Facebook broadcast about the pandemic.

On Friday she was "over the worst of it" and raring to get out of the house.

"We haven't done any exercise in three weeks, so you really start to appreciate the little things," she said.

"Just to walk around Clickimin will be the biggest reward out of everything."

Mrs Campbell praised Sound Service Station for delivering groceries during their isolation and The Cake Fridge for bringing a birthday cake on David's 17th.

But with reports highlighted by Mr Dickson last week that many folk being asked to self-isolate are not fully complying, such as by visiting shops, Mrs Campbell has reinforced the need to stay home.



Carol Campbell with her dog Polly.

“

If I had broken isolation during David's illness I could have infected everyone I came into contact with, because even though I wasn't symptomatic at the time, I was probably already infectious.

Carol Campbell

”

"If I had broken isolation during David's illness I could have infected everyone I came into contact with, because even though I wasn't symptomatic at the time, I was probably already infectious," she said.

"I could have made other people sick; other people could have died.

"If I'd gone to work, I could have made Michael [Dickson] sick, he's the head of two health boards; I could have made Elisabeth Clarke sick, she's one of the people leading the vaccination programme; or I could have made Brian Chittick sick, who is also playing a key role.

"These are all high-profile people in the NHS who are needed to head up this fight, never mind the fact that other innocent people could have caught it.

"You just don't know how someone's going to respond to Covid. They could get critically ill.

"We've had people in our hospital who have died, so even though I've managed to get through this without any serious consequences there are others out there with underlying health conditions which you might be unaware of so it's not worth taking the risk."

Having struggled with self-isolating, even for a few weeks, Mrs Campbell urged folk to reach out to vulnerable friends and family on their own during the pandemic.

"We can't see each other, we can't go into people's homes, but we can phone one another," she added.

"The things that meant most to me was just getting a WhatsApp message from somebody asking 'are you OK', or a message on Facebook, or someone standing at the gate with a bunch of flowers.

"Although we don't all have technology most of us at least has a telephone so just reach out to them, give them a ring and ask them how they're doing.

"One day all this will be finished and we will be able to see our friends and family again, but in the meantime we've just got to hang in there and do our best.

"We all need hope at the end of the day. And the biggest joy about now being part of the vaccination rollout is suddenly sensing a change in the mood of the community.

"Two weeks ago there seemed to be this feeling of dejection but now I think people are starting to feel hope again."

Two more centres to open on 1st March

« « Continued from front page

The health board announced the telephone number yesterday morning for those struggling to get through for their jabs because of the snow. The number is (01595) 743319.

Several people were unable to make their slot on Wednesday and had to reschedule.

Mr Chittick said: "If you require advice on your eligibility for the Covid vaccination, and potentially when you will receive it, then you need to check the NHS Inform website.

"And, if you have not yet received an appointment for your Covid vaccination, you need to wait until one of our team contacts you in due course. I must remind people that the Independent Living Centre is not a drop-in facility and is by appointment only."

"This is the biggest and fastest rollout of a vaccination programme ever undertaken and we need everyone to work together and keep flexible and to keep the programme moving."

Mr Chittick said care home residents and care home staff, who had received their first vaccination at the end of last year, would begin receiving their second vaccines within the next two weeks.

"So far the flow of vaccine to Shetland has been steady and we will now go into a phase of finding a balance between giving people their first vaccination and others their second," he said.

The system that had been put in place was flexible and allowed for deliveries of the vaccine to be used quickly and efficiently, he added.

The mass vaccination centres at Gilbertson Park Games Hall and the Scalloway Games Hall are scheduled to open on 1st March, but Mr Chittick said, subject to vaccine availability, it was possible they would be open sooner.

Figures from Public Health Scotland continue to show no new recordings of Covid cases in Shetland since 26th January.

As part of the drive to keep cases low, the Scottish government is considering asking people to test for coronavirus before coming into the isles.

National clinical director Jason Leitch confirmed the idea was being looked at.

MSP Beatrice Wishart and MP Alistair Carmichael wrote to the Scottish government in December calling for exploration of options for mass testing at points of entry to the Scottish islands.

At a meeting of the Holyrood's Covid-19 committee, Ms Wishart said that "where there are low levels of the virus, we should be doing everything possible to keep it that way".

Professor Leitch confirmed: "We are thinking about [it]".

He recognised a continued need for quarantine measures.

Commenting after the government's acknowledgement of the testing idea Ms Wishart said: "Keeping Covid-19 cases to an absolute minimum is incredibly important to help restrictions in Shetland lift safely and quickly. Prevalence in the islands is currently low and that must be protected.

"The National Clinical Director has talked about protecting island communities, and constituents repeatedly point out that we have a geographic advantage in stopping the spread of Covid.

"Getting to the islands is naturally more restricted than to other areas of the country so it seems feasible to test people before they arrive. This could be an effective method to reduce any importation, keep cases low and protect the local community."

First vaccination centre opens as health board begins to ramp up its jabs effort

BY RYAN NICOLSON

Around 150 people a day could be vaccinated in a new centre in Lerwick as the NHS battles to turn the tide against coronavirus.

The Independent Living Centre in Gremista, Lerwick, was opened to the public on Monday as the health board steps up its vaccination programme in the isles.

A further vaccination centres will also be opened in Scalloway and at the Gilbertson Park games hall in Lerwick within the next month.

Clinical team leader Elaine Maguire said they had ordered in 75 vaccinations for Monday. She hopes that once the centre can be opened for 12 hours, they will be able to administer around double that number each day.

The centre's opening on Monday corresponded with the first day those aged between 70-79 were moved to the front of the vaccine line.

Former Shetland Public Partnership Forum (SPPF) chairman Harold Massie, 71, was the first in the seat for an initial dose of the Pfizer vaccine on Monday, and he said it was a "real honour" to be selected.

"It's absolutely essential that people get this vaccine," he said.

"After all the good work to get us this far, it's our responsibility to get it."

Mr Massie said the vaccine itself was "one of the easiest things I've done".

Ms Maguire, who administered Mr Massie's vaccine, said that she was "really excited" about the stage they had reached in the vaccination programme and was looking forward to it being ramped up.

"We're having a relatively slow start, just opening from 9-5," she said.

"Usually we're going to be open from 8-8. We're not sure if we'll be doing the weekend yet."

Unlike at the Lerwick Health Centre, which closes for dinner, Ms Maguire said the centre would not close at any time during the projected 12-hour days, with staff taking "staggered breaks" instead.

She said the only thing that could slow down the programme was the availability of vaccines.

"We have got everything – we have kit, we have staff, we have the training.

"It's all to do with the number of vaccines.

"For a vaccinator it's challenging, for staff it's challenging, from a management point of view it's challenging."

Ms Maguire said that delivering the vaccination programme equated to a "juggling act".

"But at the end of the day, this is the number one priority in the world.

"This is our only way out of this."

While sourcing a high number of vaccines was an issue, and subsequently trying to organise people to come in to receive their first dose at short notice could be fraught, Ms Maguire said they had found no problems with the public coming to get the jab.

"Very few people don't come," the team leader said.

"They might need carers, or need support from family with them, but most people are just grateful to get the call.



"When you call them, they're here in 15 minutes."

Patients will be administered the vaccine in one of five vaccination rooms at the centre, before moving to the "post vaccination observation area" for 15 minutes afterwards.

NHS Shetland chief nurse Edna Mary Watson said this was primarily to ensure that anyone accepting the vaccine did not take ill in the aftermath, particularly if they had been anxious or high on adrenaline before getting the jab.

Patients always have to wait 15 minutes after the Pfizer vaccine, but only after the AstraZeneca vaccine "if they are driving".

"We don't want people to endanger themselves," she said.

Ms Watson said that a number of podiatrists and dentists had committed to "quite a lot of training" so that they were able to join the staff issuing the Covid vaccine to patients.

"Because these vaccines are new, quite a lot of training is needed," she said.

"I'm really pleased that these groups have come forward to help.

"We've had some retired nurses and doctors come forward too.

"It's amazing, the level of commitment."

Those aged between 70-79 are being invited to come in for their first dose of the vaccine, with those who were shielding during the first lockdown set to be invited in from next Monday.

Integration joint board chief officer Brian Chittick, who is overseeing the vaccine roll-out for NHS Shetland, reminded patients on Friday that they would be contacted to come in for a vaccine and that the centre in Lerwick would not be a walk-in clinic.

"You will receive your appointment by telephone and we ask that you accept what is offered if you can," Mr Chittick said.

"On the day, you should arrive just before your allocated time where marshals will be on hand to show you where to park and then where to go inside.

"Individuals will be guided through to their vaccination area, be vaccinated and then you will be required to stay for 15 minutes following your vaccination prior to leaving to go home.

"The whole process will take about 30 minutes."

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CORONAVIRUS

Virtual classrooms are enthusiastically received

BY RYAN TAYLOR

Home schooling may be a topic of dread for parents as much as pupils, but one primary school teacher has harnessed online technology to create a “virtual classroom”.

And if you are left confused by hyperlinks or Bitmojis, a quick chat with Carly Cheyney should prove to be a real education.

The P5 teacher at Bell’s Brae Primary School in Lerwick has developed an idea started on the mainland to create her own child-friendly document – specially designed to be attractive to pupils.

It features links which takes pupils directly to online pages or videos which provide them with information or worksheets.

Children can even get their instructions from Mrs Cheyney’s Bitmoji – essentially a cartoon version of herself.

She – the real Mrs Cheyney, not the cartoon – developed her virtual classroom after the Christmas holidays, when pupils began home learning again.

Pupils soon began to appreciate the new approach. And parents did, too, because the simple layout is designed to be as intuitive as possible to even younger children.

“It was an idea that I had seen Scottish colleagues sharing on online groups,” she said.

“I had seen various versions of it and thought I would give it a bash myself.

“It’s a Powerpoint document, with hyperlinks in the document. Visually, it’s really engaging and attractive to bairns.”

She said children could open up the virtual classroom and quickly get access to all their tasks for the day.

“I thought this might be a good way for bairns to be as independent as they can be at home, bearing in mind that a lot of the parents are working from home.

“They’re not having to go into Google and type in a website address, which can be quite

challenging if it’s a long website address.”

“The feedback from pupils and parents so far has been really positive.”

Mrs Cheyney, who has taught at Bell’s Brae for the last 10 years, said she simply uploaded the mate-

rial on Sunday nights. The technology enables her to use recordings of her own voice over teaching points, to give the virtual classroom a more authentic feel.

“Sometimes we use other videos, because I believe in not recreating the wheel if you find something

that’s good – but I think putting my own voice to things has also helped with that social connection.”

The idea has caught on to such an extent that other teachers in the school are using virtual classrooms, too.

Children have also been able to “meet” one another during “circle times” where they can see and catch up with one another – an important feature, given the lack of social interaction during these days.

Mrs Cheyney said she enjoyed working with technology, and embracing the challenge of making it engaging for pupils in a way that will encourage them to log on in the mornings.

“I uploaded it the first week we were back and it’s just spiralled.”

P4 pupil Jack Kelsey told *The Shetland Times*: “It’s good, because it’s easier to find what work we need to do each day.”

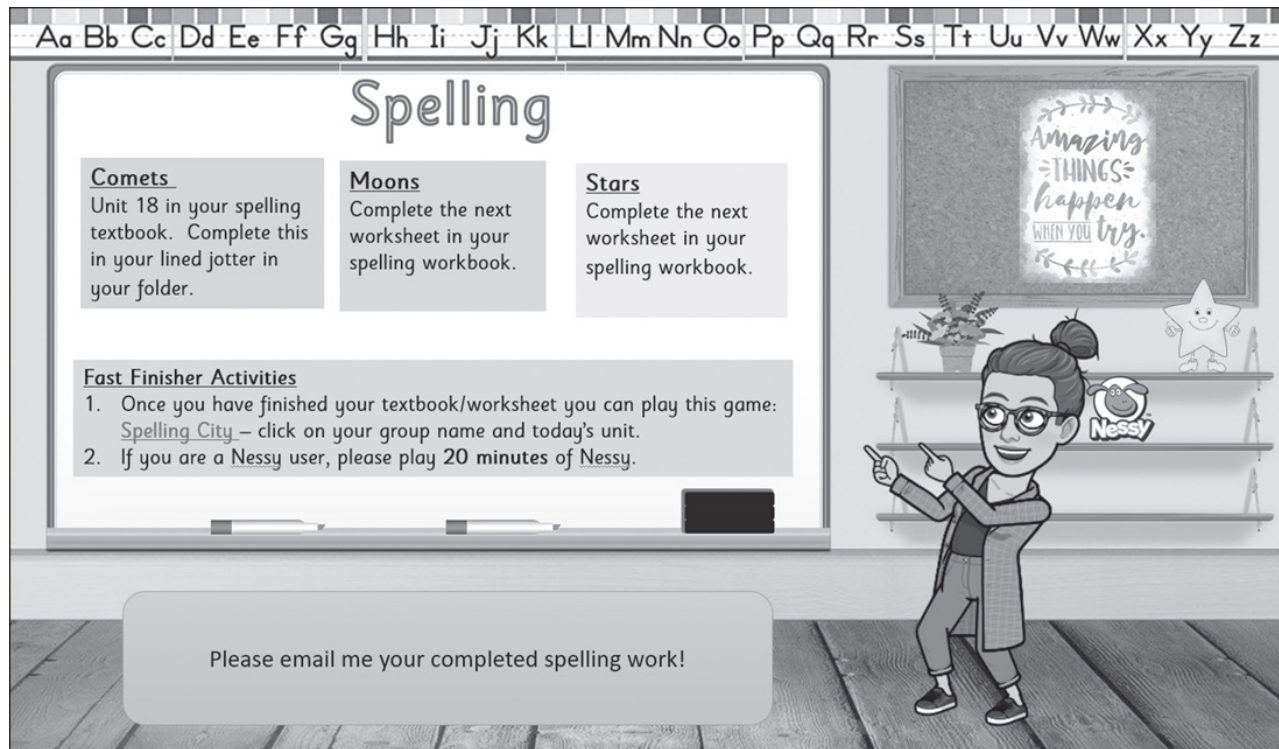
One of Mrs Cheyney’s P5 pupils is Winnie Johnston.

“It’s easier now because we know where everything is,” she said. “We just click on the virtual classroom and I can see everything on it for the day.

“I like getting to use the computer.”

Meanwhile, P6 pupil Tyler Whyte said: “I like how the teachers have put things on [clips] to explain how we do sums.

“It helps me to remember, and I can watch it more than once.”



Not the real Carly Cheyney, but her Bitmoji, setting out the tasks for the week.

Step-by-step return could be imminent

■ Pre-school children will soon be back

■ Sturgeon: Balance needs to be struck

BY RYAN TAYLOR

A regional approach to opening schools may be considered by the Scottish government, it emerged this week as the SNP administration tentatively prised the door open on classroom learning.

Education minister John Swinney said he would not rule out taking distinctive decisions in individual communities as Covid levels drop across the country.

It comes as Shetland has shown signs of moving out of the crisis, with no new cases of coronavirus being recorded in a whole week (*see separate story*).

Mr Swinney was speaking after the first minister finally rang the bell on home learning for some pupils.

Nicola Sturgeon told MSPs on Tuesday that pre-school children

could soon return to their nursery settings.

Similarly, youngsters in classes from primaries one to three will also ditch the home learning packs.

Ms Sturgeon also announced a part-time return for senior pupils who need to undertake practical work in order for them to complete national qualification courses.

Government ministers indicated they had to strike a balance between protecting people from the virus against the developmental and social harms keeping pupils out of school.

Initially, no more than eight per cent of a secondary school roll can be physically present at any one time.

“Small increases” in provision will be made for children with additional support needs – but only where there is “a clear and demonstrable necessity”.

All other pupils, with the exception of vulnerable children and those of key workers, will continue with remote learning.

Children’s services staff at Shetland Islands Council are now busily planning for the proposed changes, which are due to be introduced after the long-weekend, from 23rd

February. One significant part of Ms Sturgeon’s announcement was an expansion of testing. The Scottish government says people who work in schools – and early learning and childcare settings attached to schools – will be offered at-home testing twice a week.

The offer is also being made to senior pupils.

Two-metre physical distancing for adults and pupils will be required in secondary schools in the period immediately after a return.

The step-by-step return is expected to be finalised by the Scottish government in two weeks’ time.

But it will be dependent upon the ongoing suppression of coronavirus.

The announcement came ahead of a session of the Scottish parliament’s education committee at which isles MSP Beatrice Wishart sought assurances that a local approach might be considered, amid growing concerns over the detrimental impact the long spell away from school was having on pupils and their families.

“The announcement yesterday by the government has provided a chance for families to plan ahead for the return to schools partially reopening,” she said.

“It is a moment of hope for some of those families struggling to juggle home learning along with work and other responsibilities.

“It is clear that remote learning is a struggle for many, and based on feedback from constituents people seem to be finding it harder this time round. The level three restrictions in the islands also mean more parents are expected in work, which has a knock on effect for remote learning arrangements.”

That chimes with the view of Hamnavoe Primary School’s parent council Kay Anderson, who previously highlighted the challenges parents face in Shetland of providing home learning while still having to work.

This week she said it was “sensible” that some children would be able to return.

“I understand a lot of parents do have concerns about their younger bairns not being able to socialise very much,” she said.

“That’s a really valid concern. Everything to do with the whole pandemic – every decision has been made on research and recommendations from experts.

“I think it’s sensible that bairns at the lowest risk of transmission

are going back as soon as possible.”

She added: “I think it’s difficult for island communities. The Scottish government has to be in a difficult situation, because they’re having to try to make the best decisions for the middle of Glasgow, as well as Shetland.”

Chairman of the SIC’s education and families committee George Smith offered assurances that health and safety of staff and pupils would be “absolutely paramount”.

“We have arrangements in place for the period up to Wednesday 17th February to support remote learning for children at home, as well as for children of key workers, and for children requiring additional support, to access their remote learning in their schools and early learning and childcare settings.

“I welcome the commitment to a return for our youngest children later in February, and I would like to reassure staff, parents and carers, and pupils, that health and safety will continue to be absolutely paramount to all of our planning for the phased return later this month.

“I thank all our school and early learning and childcare staff

for all that they are continuing to do, supporting our children and young people and facilitating remote learning.

“It has been a huge effort in such challenging and unprecedented times.”

Education secretary John Swinney said: “I appreciate only too well the burden being placed on many families as they navigate this Covid pandemic.

“I am also acutely aware of the need to maintain teaching and learning wherever possible. In doing so, the health and wellbeing of our children, young people and staff is paramount.

“My priority has been to ensure a safe return for children and young people to school and nursery as quickly as possible.

“That is why the steps that have been announced today are guided by the advice of the chief medical officer and public health experts.

“Children and young people will begin a gradual, phased return to classrooms supported by a testing regime and enhanced guidance. A sense of caution underpins the plans unveiled today, but this is essential as we work to return to full time teaching in schools.”

New challenges facing teachers are highlighted

BY RYAN TAYLOR

Teachers have voiced concern that “no discussion” has taken place on the need for further mitigations such as physical distancing among younger primary pupils making their return to classrooms.

The local branch of the Educational Institute for Scotland (EIS) says a blended learning model with more emphasis on physical distancing should be considered.

Local secretary Matthew Moss has spoken after the Scottish government announced younger children would be able to return to their in-school lessons later this month.

Mr Moss said concerns had grown since the new variant had shown signs of impacting on all age groups.

“Any school return remains contingent upon continued progress on community suppression of the virus so we need to see infection levels coming down substantially on a national level before the return date can be confirmed for 22nd February,” he said.

“The EIS believes that a blended learning model, implementing physical distancing and smaller class sizes, would be a safer strategy to deploy.

“We would need to see strong scientific evidence to justify the government’s approach.”

Mr Moss has welcomed the availability of greater testing for staff and senior pupils.

“In Shetland, we currently have a good system for asymptomatic testing for school-based staff and widening this to regular home testing will be beneficial.”

However, he warned: “It will also present challenges”.

“Issues around transport, collection and drop off, both within the islands and off island, and turnaround times will need to be looked at carefully in the coming weeks.”

He said the planned return of senior pupils “must be organised in a way which explicitly enables physical distancing amongst pupils”.

And he said other mitigations such as ventilation and face coverings also needed to be considered.

“We suspect that the proposed phased return will present a number of staffing challenges here in Shetland, as provision for key workers and vulnerable children plus some further provision for ASN will also need to be resourced.”

However, director of children’s services Helen Budge said the council was paying close attention to the guidance issued from Edinburgh. She said Shetland had been fortunate because it had been spared the community spread seen in other parts of Scotland.

“We have had two small outbreaks in schools and these were very quickly dealt with.

“The very low positive cases currently in Shetland is also encouraging for us planning for the return to school of early learning and childcare and Primary 1 to Primary 3.”

She added “very good” risk assessments and hygiene measures were in place for all pupils and staff.

“The staff in our schools have been very good at socially distancing with one another across all stages including the early years,” she said.

“Whilst I appreciate that there is a call for physical distancing amongst P1-P3 pupils, we are working within the Scottish government guidance for these children.”

Mrs Budge said there was a “very quick roll out” for test kits, which she said were due to arrive in the isles next week.

“We will get them out to staff as soon as we can,” she added.

“There will be guidance on how these kits are to be used. These lateral flow tests provide an immediate result so there will be no need for them to be collected from the person once they have been used.”

Mrs Budge said head teachers were working “very closely” with staff to ensure children received “the best learning opportunities”.

She added childcare provision for key worker children and those benefiting from support by being in

school would continue as the plans announced this week were developed.

“The logistics of how this will work for each school is being worked on just now, and I know that the best solution for each individual school will be found by the head teachers working with the central staff team.

“There may be some challenges for us regarding staffing and we will work through these as they arise.”

She said there had been a “very good working relationship with all unions, including the EIS”.

“This has certainly supported the changes to the delivery of learning since last March.

“It is this close collegiate working at the local level which has meant that we have been able to tailor the learning for the bairns here in Shetland.

“I know we have had many support staff in school since Christmas supporting those young people who have been in, and I am very grateful to them for all they have been doing during this time both to support the remote learning and for those who have benefited from being in school.”

She added: “I am also very aware that the situation may change for us should there be an outbreak and we will deal with this should it occur, or if there is a change to the direction from the Scottish government.”

CORONAVIRUS

Business grant announcement could help ease traders' ongoing frustration

Miller welcomes cash boost

Firms really struggling, she says

BY ANDREW HIRST

A new grant launched to provide Shetland businesses with the same support as those on the mainland has been welcomed as "the announcement we've all been waiting for".

The Island Equivalent Payment launched this week to support businesses operating under level three Covid-19 restrictions, which had been unable to access the funding already provided to those subjected to full lockdown.

Living Lerwick project manager Emma Miller said the announcement was "very much needed – and very much welcomed".

Isles businesses had been able to remain open throughout the latest mainland lockdown but many in Shetland said they struggled as folk stayed home amid concerns about the virus.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon had announced last month that £3m would be available to support

the island regions in recognition of these challenges.

However, there had been growing concern over the lack of clarity on how the new fund would be delivered.

With applications opening this week, managed by Business Gateway, Ms Miller said it had come as a "massive relief" following weeks of uncertainty.

"It's the announcement we've all been waiting for," she said.

"We'd been in a sort of no man's land under level three.

"Businesses were being told to open their doors and trade as normal, but at the same time the government and health authorities were telling people not to leave the house.

"It put businesses in a completely impossible trading situation, which was very frustrating for them.

"They were losing money every week and it made no difference whether they were open or closed.

"Now that they've finally been given this guidance and the council has been able to open applications, it's going to make such a difference. It's going to really take the pressure off.

"Just because your business is closed doesn't mean you don't have to pay rent or bills and so this grant will be a massive relief."

Shetland MSP Beatrice Wishart also welcomed the decision, saying many businesses had been "merely treading water in the current environment".

"Level three restrictions have effectively posed the same significant challenges for businesses in Shetland as those in other parts of the country given that everyone is being encouraged to stay home at the moment," she added.

"Some businesses have also voluntarily closed to help stop the spread of the virus."

Ms Wishart said she was glad businesses could now apply for



Lerwick has been quiet despite avoiding full lockdown.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

much-needed support and the priority must be ensuring the "vital funding gets out the door and into the coffers of businesses as quickly as possible".

Under the scheme, businesses in level three which would have been eligible for support under level four, can now claim for backdated payments for the period 28th December to 24th January.

Temporary closure grants of £2,000-£3,000 are available for eligible businesses depending on their rateable value. Businesses can apply every four weeks until restrictions are lifted.

One-off payments to retail and leisure businesses of £6,000-£9,000; and hospitality business of £6,000-£25,000 are also available, again depending on rateable value.

The top-up grant is not available to self-catering properties and B&Bs but Business Gateway said schemes were currently being developed to help those sectors.

Ms Miller said she expected guidance on the additional schemes to be made available within the next fortnight.

Meanwhile, she expressed hope that footfall in the town centre would begin to pick up again as Covid case numbers showed signs of slowing.

"It's fantastic that we seem to have managed to get the case numbers under control again," she said.

"We've not had new cases for a few days – and long may that continue.

"I think that will only increase people's confidence.

"Under this level, people are allowed to visit non-essential shops and as long as everyone sticks to the rules to make sure they're social distancing, we should hopefully be able to get back to some kind of normality."

The SIC has encouraged businesses affected by the current restrictions to apply for the new funds.

Businesses that have already applied for the Strategic Framework Business Fund do not need to reapply for the one-off top off grant.

New applications, including for the Island Equivalent Payment, should be made via the SIC's website.

Business can email businessgateway@shetland.gov.uk for more information.



We'd been in a sort of no man's land under level three ... Businesses were being told to open their doors and trade as normal, but at the same time the government and health authorities were telling people not to leave the house.

Emma Miller



Senior consultant warns we are 'still in a tunnel'

BY ANDREW HIRST

A senior clinician has warned Shetlanders that the vaccination rollout is not the silver bullet in the fight against Covid-19 – and to "keep on keeping on".

NHS Shetland consultant physician Pauline Wilson said the vaccine was just one of many measures needed to defeat the pandemic.

She said people needed to "keep our guard up for a little longer" as complacency could risk a fresh wave.

"Yes, the vaccine is a light at the end of the tunnel," Dr Wilson added.

"But it's a tunnel we're still in; we're not at the end of it yet.

"There is a glimmer of hope, but we've got to keep this collective effort going.

"We owe it to each other."

Dr Wilson made her comments during an interview with *The Shetland Times* on Monday, as the first patients entered the mass vaccination centre at the Independent Living Centre in Gremista.

The new centre, and two others set to open next month, are intended to ramp up delivery of the vaccine from the hundreds to the thousands each week.

But while Dr Wilson has stressed how important it is for everyone to get vaccinated, she also cautioned it would not resolve the problem overnight.

"For the vaccination programme to become effective, we need to be vaccinating quite a significant proportion of the population," she added.

"It takes time for that to happen.

"We still need to follow all the other measures that go along with the vaccine."

With plans to vaccinate most of the UK's adult population in the coming months, Westminster health secretary Matt Hancock has predicted a "great British summer".

But while Dr Wilson said she understood the desire to set timeframes, she added that doing so in a pandemic was fraught with difficulty.

"It depends on so many variables," she said.

"The rollout of the vaccine, the disease activity in the population at a particular moment and other factors all come into it.

"Saying we will be clear of Covid and

back to normal by a certain date is, I would say, premature."

Despite her reluctance to set a date for the return to normal, Dr Wilson acknowledged "it does feel there is more hope right now".

She said it was especially important to stay focused to prevent services becoming "overshadowed" by the pandemic.

Dr Wilson said a major concern, since the beginning of the crisis, had been how to reach people who were staying at home with illnesses when they should be seeking help.

Although, NHS Shetland has managed to reopen many services and has used

technology so some patients could be seen remotely, Dr Wilson said she was concerned a backlog could build up if Covid worsened again.

"We need to be running the health service for everyone," she said.

"That's yet another reason why we cannot afford to be complacent, because every time the focus is back on Covid it means services could be cut, or scaled back.

"The system is recovering but it's about keeping that momentum going."

Dr Wilson said her colleagues shared in the community's frustration after 10 months of relentless battling against the pandemic.

But while the crisis has proved challenging for colleagues, she also said it had brought out the best in people.

"What was really heartening at the beginning was the way in which the whole team pulled together, not just doctors and nurses, but also the cleaning staff, radiology services, laboratory workers, everyone," Dr Wilson added.

"We've all changed how we worked, right from the start, it was evident that services had to adapt really quickly.

"Literally walls were being built where there weren't walls before and staff were having to move with the guidance as it changed on an almost daily basis.

"Everyone had to prepare, at the hospital and across the wider health services, for something that really was unprecedented."

And despite the challenges, Dr Wilson said morale had remained high among staff.

"It felt that although we were in a pandemic, there was a real sense of team effort,

in that we wanted to make sure we got this right for Shetland," she said.

"People were keen to pull together and make it work.

"And I think it has changed the way staff view each other.

"We're much more of a coherent team, we understand each other's roles better, which is really fantastic."

As the pandemic became more "business as usual", however, Dr Wilson acknowledged it had grown tough – particularly with the recent wave of cases.

"There was definitely a sense of 'here we go again'," she said.

"But I suppose we always knew that a second wave was possible; the nature of the virus indicated that, so mentally we had prepared ourselves."

Dr Wilson said that by the second wave, the team had established clearer pathways of care and made arrangements for particularly unwell patients to be transferred sooner to Aberdeen.

"These things have all flowed much easier this time," she added.

"However, this is also the same staff who have been dealing with all the other aspects of healthcare for the Shetland population all the way through.

"That's why the messaging is so important – this is a public health crisis and therefore we have a collective responsibility towards each other to follow the guidance.

"We can all get out of this together."

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Pauline Wilson urged people to stay on their guard while community vaccinations continue.

Photo courtesy of NHS Shetland

Education needs overhaul post-Covid, says MP

Isles MP Alistair Carmichael has made a call for a "rebuilding" of education systems in the UK following the pandemic.

He said that would address the difficulties of connectivity and digital access in different parts of the country and give better opportunities to future generations.

During a parliamentary debate on the UN International Day for Education, Mr Carmichael highlighted the benefits of supporting education internationally, and programmes like the Global Classroom Partnership participated in by Anderson High School.

He said: "Like others, I reflect on what education has

meant for my family. It pains me to see that with 90 per cent of our children out of school as a result of school closures, we risk taking away opportunities from our own coming generations.

"The pandemic has illustrated better than most things the full consequences of the digital divide, with which we have lived for too long.

"We see those areas of the country that have access to connectivity and those that do not, and the families who have broadband and sufficient devices for everybody to get home schooling opportunities, and those who do not.

"So when we come to the end of the restrictions and to rebuilding our economy, we must also look at rebuilding our own education system."

Mr Carmichael also reflected on the impact of government plans to renege on the 0.7 per cent gross national income (GNI) target for international development, a Liberal Democrat policy while in government.

He said: "Giving opportunities to young people in the developing world is not some act of altruism; it is actually good for our own children and communities.

"I look at the work that has been done by Anderson High School for decades now through the Global Classroom Partnership, and I see what that has added to young people in Shetland.

"The money – in hard cash terms – that we would be required to put in to meet the 0.7 per cent GNI target would already be much reduced; not actually to meet that 0.7 per cent target is criminal.

"The government must think about this again, not just for the benefit of people in the developing world, but for the benefit of our own children and their educational opportunities."

CORONAVIRUS

Folkies sadly out of luck for second year running

■ No festival until 2022 ■ No option but to cancel

The 40th Shetland Folk Festival has been postponed for a second time.

The event, originally due to be held at the end of April 2020, will not take place until April 2022 at the earliest.

With live concerts looking increasingly unfeasible for the next few months, the festival committee has taken the decision to push the almost week-long musical feast back by another year.

The committee said that while having two years without the festival may feel “dispiriting” to some, they had no other option but to push it back again.

Their priority was to keep the community “as safe as we can while ensuring the long-term future of the event”.

Mhari McLeman, on behalf of the committee, said: “It was unanimously decided that in the current climate it is simply too unpredictable to plan and deliver an international music event for thousands of attendees in a few months time and by making this decision now, we can be more confident the festival will survive and thrive for years to come.”

The committee had “kept their options

open” over the past few months, and had held discussions about how the festival could possibly go ahead “in various circumstances”.

But the decision was made that the festival would not be viable in the current climate.

The committee said they were confident that the 40th Shetland Folk Festival would be “well worth waiting for” once it finally arrived.

“In the meantime we would like to thank everyone in our community for their resilience and to those who are working tirelessly for us all in these tough times.

“We hope people can still find a way to celebrate folk festival acts (past, present and future) by continuing to appreciate and invest in music.”

Visiting artistes set to appear at the 40th folk festival include Dougie MacLean, J.P. Cormier and the Nordic Fiddlers Bloc.

Anyone with a membership for the postponed 2021 event will have it carried forward to 2022, with a provisional date of April 28th 2022 set for the folk festival to begin.



Tuning up for the 39th Shetland Folk Festival are musicians Charlie Muench (left), May Erlewine (centre) and PJ George (right) with committee members Louise Johnson and Lewie Peterson. The wait continues for the 40th ‘anniversary’.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

In Brief

Isolation support is extended

The Scottish government is set to extend the eligibility for the £500 self-isolation support payment.

From 16th February it will include everyone on an income below the level of the real living wage, as well as those in receipt of a council tax reduction because of low income.

People with caring responsibilities for someone over the age of 16 who are asked to self-isolate, where the carer themselves meet the other eligibility criteria, can also receive the grant.

Highlands and Islands SNP list MSP Maree Todd welcomed

the extension, stressing the importance of staying at home during the pandemic.

She said: “We know just how crucial self-isolation is in preventing transmission of Covid-19 – that’s why it’s so important that we do everything we can to make it easy to do the right thing.

“I welcome the extension of the eligibility criteria for the Scottish government’s self-isolation support grant which goes further in breaking down the financial barriers linked to self-isolation. It is only right that people on low incomes are given appropriate financial support if they are told to self-isolate.

“We have seen an increase of cases in Shetland during the second wave of the virus, meaning more people will have been contacted and asked to self-isolate.

“I’m sure this grant will have

helped to alleviate the stress associated with self-isolation for many of those, and now with its extended eligibility, it will go on to support even more people.”

Health staff praised by Tory

Highlands and Islands MSP Jamie Halcro Johnston has praised NHS staff working across the Northern Isles for their work delivering the Covid-19 vaccine roll-out.

The Conservative list member said “We owe a great debt to everyone who has been delivering the roll-out across the islands.

“And it is encouraging that, according to the latest figures, over 4,000 doses have been administered across Orkney and Shetland, which is significantly ahead of the Scottish average.

“A huge effort is being put in by

health staff, managers and others in getting jags into arms.

“However, despite the fantastic effort in the Northern Isles, Scotland is running behind the rest of the UK in terms of the roll-out and it is so disappointing that the Scottish government rejected Scottish Conservative proposals for a vaccination task force to address the factors which are causing the delays.

“The virus remains a clear and present danger in too many of our communities and, if SNP ministers can find the time to set up an independence task force, surely they can find the time to set up a unit focused on clearing away the obstacles slowing down the vaccine distribution.

“We must accelerate the roll-out of the vaccine, get more of these life-saving doses into those who need them most and give us all hope that more normal times are within reach.”

MSP experiences a scamming

Highlands and Islands MSP Jamie Halcro Johnston has warned over the threat from scammers exploiting the pandemic after being targeted himself.

The Conservative list member said criminals were using the Covid-19 vaccination programme to exploit people and had received a scam email himself claiming to offer a vaccination date.

Mr Halcro Johnston said: “The vaccination programme has offered real hope to so many people and it is sickening that there are people out there willing to exploit this for financial gain.

“Having received an email myself, I realised straight away that it was a scam and should be reported, but many might not as

the scam emails are becoming increasingly sophisticated in their initial appearance.

“It makes me so angry that there are criminals out there seeking to defraud people by making bogus offers to provide testing and vaccination services.

“It really is important that as many people as possible are made aware of this – particularly those who may be vulnerable – so we reduce the chances of them falling victim to these scams.

“That’s why I am backing efforts by Advice Direct Scotland to raise awareness of this problem.

“They provide a dedicated website on coronavirus-related issues at www.coronavirusadvice.scot and I would encourage anyone who becomes aware of suspicious activity to report it via www.scamwatch.scot.”

Times Past

25 Years Ago

Twelve jobs are to be axed by Shell at its Lerwick supply base at Holmsgarth, it was announced this week.

The company has been looking into the future of its supply base at Holmsgarth since last September and in the face of a dramatically decreasing workload total closure was on the cards.

As a result the disappointment at lost jobs has been tempered by relief that the entire workforce is not yet to be laid off.

Shetland may have to wait until the end of July to find out if Sullom Voe will stay open beyond the year 2000.

But the delay may not prevent the SIC from opening the doors on spending from the charitable trust, which has not been accepting spending bids until the future of the terminal is resolved.

The oil terminal’s negotiating team this week secured a breathing space of another six months to decide whether to accept or reject the SIC’s offer of concessions to help keep Sullom Voe viable into the future.

The Shetland Lottery has collapsed after just two months, due to the poor response from the public.

The final draw will take place tonight before the estimated £2,000 which has been raised for local good causes will be divided up.

Promoter Jim Hendren blamed the venture’s failure on a combination of the obsession with big money on the National Lottery (especially its two recent big roll-over weeks), the bad snow and the festive season.

50 Years Ago

A nineteen-year-old Norwegian girl was so enamoured with Shetland after spending the autumn here that she decided to return on a working holiday with a friend. But on the British mainland, instead of meeting the friendliness and hospitality they had expected, they were confronted with a barrier of officialdom which resulted in a fortnight of confusion and misery before they finally reached their destination.

Student Oddhild Brandal first visited Shetland in August last year and stayed with friends of her mother’s, Mr and Mrs Godfrey Morewood, Gardistaing, Mid Yell, until Christmas.

On 18th January, she and friend Lisbeth Remme set sail from the port of Kopervik in the Norwegian refrigeration ship *Norvoll*, bound for Newcastle, where they intended applying for work permits. However, a shock awaited them when they reached the port two days later – they were informed the permits should have been arranged from Norway and the immigration authorities refused them permission to land.



The annual Miss Islesburgh Contest was held in early February 1971. Here are the contestants and judges on the selection evening at the Garrison Theatre in Lerwick. Ann Leask (centre) took the title and is wearing the Miss Islesburgh sash. The previous year’s winner, Elizabeth Blance (back left) went on to be selected as Miss Highlands and Islands in the same year.

Photo: Dennis Coutts

There were no signs of a settlement of the Post Office strike when we went to press yesterday and, like the rest of the country, Shetland is without mail services – though better off than elsewhere because the telephone service is fully manned.

There was a period at the weekend, however, when it seemed Shetland might be reduced to emergency calls only.

Throughout this week it has become more difficult to find a public telephone kiosk not jammed with coins. Yesterday these were being emptied – but the slots were then sealed so only emergency calls can now be made.

The great search for oil in the North Sea has now centred on Shetland and Lerwick has become a haven for a number of survey ships.

For the second successive weekend the West German seismographic *Prospekta* of Bremen was in port. Also making her second call was the Danish *Karen Bravo* and she was joined by the Norwegian *Polarhav*, both working for the Western Geophysical Company of America.

Prospekta is expected to be in the area for the next two months and is working for Shell Oil. Only five months old, she is the one ship built for the job but the other two are equally sophisticated equipment wise.