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Crowds rally to support Ukraine



A large crowd gathered at the Market Cross in Lerwick at the weekend to show their support for the Ukrainian people, whose country is being invaded by Russia. Read full coverage of how Shetland is responding to the crisis on page 2.
Photo: Dave Donaldson

Sally and Lace enjoy the Crufts limelight

Sally Sanford and her dog Lace have enjoyed a week in the limelight at Crufts. The Sandwick woman and her Nova Scotia Tolling Retriever were to take part in the event yesterday for the fifth time.

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Support for disorders

NHS Shetland launched a steering group to support people with eating disorders. The group includes NHS professionals and people with lived experience of the disorders, as well as relevant partners and third sector organisations.

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Councillors stand down

Chairman of the council's education and families committee, George Smith, is standing down from the SIC. And independent member Theo Smith confirmed he would not put himself forward for re-election.

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Childcare 'extension'

A flagship childcare policy could be extended to include even younger children. Plans are afoot by the SNP administration for free nursery provision to be opened up to one-year-olds.

EXCLUSIVE — Page 19

Scanner hope for 2023

NHS Shetland hopes to have the MRI scanner up and running by autumn 2023, after delays hit the project. The health board said the tendering process had now begun, marking another milestone in the project.

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Fuel price rise adds to cost of living pressure

■ Diesel up to £1.75 a litre, unleaded now at £1.64

■ Residents turn off heating to cut bills

BY RYAN TAYLOR

The fast increasing cost of fuel and heating is pushing hard-up households into even greater difficulty ahead of the dreaded price cap rise due next month.

Rising tensions over the escalating conflict in Ukraine caused oil prices to jump this week, with Brent crude taking a leap by over six per cent to pass the \$130-a-barrel mark.

Warnings have been issued that many people are choosing to simply turn off their heating and live in cold conditions, risking both physical and mental health.

Fuel prices at the pumps have risen dramatically to £1.75 for a litre of diesel in Lerwick, and £1.64 for unleaded – with prices reaching even higher levels in country forecourts.

Local Citizens Advice manager Karen Eunson has highlighted a national "Debt Happens" campaign aimed at offering reassurance to householders and encouraging

them to seek help through the Citizens Advice network.

"At Shetland CAB, we are seeing high numbers of folk who are very worried about the huge rises they are seeing in their energy bills," she said.

"Worse than that, though, many people are coming for help as they

People are coming for help as they simply can't afford to heat their home. They are turning off their heating.

Karen Eunson

simply can't afford to heat their home and they are turning off their heating.

"Living in cold homes is bad for people's health, and the stress and worry are bad for mental health.

"We would encourage anyone worried about the cost of heating to get in touch with CAB through our



website www.shetlandcab.org or by phoning 01595 694696.

"We can access emergency help to pay for fuel costs and, up to the end of April, we can apply for financial support for people to reduce energy debt.

"We can also check for any missing benefit entitlements and refer folk for support with energy efficiency measures."

Citizens Advice says almost two million people across Scotland have seen their finances worsen over the course of the pandemic.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine sparked widespread condemnation, prompting western countries to carefully examine how, and where, they source their energy.

America has banned Russian oil and gas, while Britain said it would phase out Russian oil this year.

It comes ahead of the dreaded rise in the energy price cap – the most a utility company can charge – from 1st April.

That means the cost of heating an average house is expected to rise from £1,277 to £1,971 – a hike of £693 per year.

A further increase is expected in October.

But with Shetland suffering much greater levels of fuel poverty than most other parts of the country, the impact in the isles is expected to be much more keenly felt.

Almost a third of homes here are already classed as being in fuel poverty, according to the Scottish House Condition Survey.

But this week the Scottish government warned more than 40 per cent of households in large parts of Scotland are likely to be in fuel poverty.

Energy Action Scotland, which campaigns for an end to fuel poverty, is urging the UK government to tax the excessive profits being made by oil and gas giants and to cut VAT on energy bills.

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OUT NOW

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UKRAINE CRISIS

£12,500 is raised

Three fundraising appeals for the people of Ukraine have now raised almost £12,500.

Ryan Thomson's Shetland Stands with Ukraine fund for the British Red Cross has now raised £6,700, while Kate Niesciur's appeal to raise money for the Ukrainian children through Unicef has raised £4,783.

And Fiona Farquhar's raffle of a print signed by Douglas Henshall has also raised £1,000.

Mr Thomson, who spoke at a vigil for the people of Ukraine in Lerwick last Saturday, said the generosity on show was "amazing".

"Thank you everyone who has donated to two extremely worthwhile causes," he added.

A pop-up shop is being held to raise much-needed funds for Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Shetland Solidarity with Refugees is planning to be in Bolts Shopping Centre from Monday, and is appealing for volunteers. The pop up shop is planned to run for two weeks.

Labour donation

The Shetland Labour Party will donate £1,000 to the British Red Cross Ukraine Crisis Appeal.

The move was unanimously approved at its annual general meeting on Wednesday night after being proposed by Averil Simpson.

Newly re-elected party chairwoman Susan Bowie said the donation reflected widespread concern in the isles about the situation in Ukraine.

"I think all of us in Shetland are heartbroken at the terrible suffering being endured by folk in Ukraine, and the refugees fleeing the war there," she said.

"Anything the local Labour Party can do to help, we will."

In her annual report, Dr Bowie thanked Gordon Thomson and long-term vice-chairman Geordie Jacobson for their service over what she said had been a very difficult year.

Jim Nicolson was elected vice-chairman and Rob Portman treasurer. Mr Thomson will continue as secretary.

Light up the broch

The Clickimin Broch should be lit up yellow and blue in support of the people of Ukraine, according to one Lerwick community councillor.

Averil Simpson asked if the broch could be lit in the colours, as the town hall was last week, to show solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

Fellow councillor Damien Ristori called it "a nice idea".

Asked by chairman Jim Anderson when she thought the community council should do this, she responded: "Any time".

She added that it could be lit in the colours "over a weekend".

Mr Anderson said the Lerwick Community Council would see if they could get the appropriate filters for the lights to carry out the tribute.

The Lerwick Town Hall was lit in the colours last Tuesday night.

'Quite probable' the UK will end up at war with Russia, MP warns

BY RYAN TAYLOR

A war with Russia is looking increasingly likely.

That is the stark warning from Shetland's Westminster representative, who fears the Ukrainian conflict could seriously escalate should Russia attack a Nato member.

Speaking to *The Shetland Times*, Mr Carmichael said there was a "duty on us all" to take the words of Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy seriously and support the fight in Ukraine.

Ukrainians have repeatedly appealed to the international community for a no-fly zone to be introduced over their country to help protect its citizens from Russian attacks.

The UK has so far held back on that commitment, amid fears it would spark a wider conflict which threatens to see Nato jets locked in combat with Russian forces.

Mr Carmichael was speaking after history

was made in a packed House of Commons, when President Zelenskyy addressed MPs on Tuesday via video link.

Mr Zelenskyy, whose tone was widely described as Churchillian, was given a standing ovation.

"There is a duty on us all to take what he says seriously, and make every effort to support the Ukrainian fight to protect their sovereignty," said Mr Carmichael.

Asked whether he felt that should include a no-fly zone, Mr Carmichael replied: "I am not persuaded that that is for the best, but I think we have to be talking about it."

"Anything that we do would have to be done as a multi-lateral, probably Nato, force."

"That is a significant escalation which is not to be done lightly."

His comments came on the day Poland offered to supply all its MIG-29 fighter jets to a US air base in Germany, to allow them to be passed to Ukraine. The Pentagon

later said the idea was not tenable. But Mr Carmichael said these options needed to be explored.

"The thing that concerns me is the argument I hear that says we can not have a war with Russia."

He said it was "quite probable" that Russia, under President Vladimir Putin, "may put us in a position where he attacks a Nato member – in which case we're obliged, by treaty obligations under Nato, to have a war."

In his address to MPs, Mr Zelenskyy outlined the challenges faced by Ukraine as it is attacked by Russia.

Mr Zelenskyy used the speech to call for further action and aid from the UK, echoing the famous "we will fight them on the beaches" speech made by Winston Churchill during the Second World War.

In a statement, Mr Carmichael, said: "Parliament has seen some moments of high

drama and real emotion over the years but I am pretty certain that we have never witnessed anything quite like that.

"In fact I hope that we never have the grim cause to witness anything of this sort again: the image of a man who is fighting for his life and for his nation's democracy, addressing the mother of parliaments, will have been seen around the world."

"The House of Commons has a unique atmosphere when it is full and when the moment really matters. The mood was electric. I could see several MPs around me were enormously moved by what they were witnessing and by the enormity of what is at stake."

"The response that we and other countries take must be more than just words. Anything less than the strongest measures would be to dishonour the concept of liberal democracy and the sacrifice being made for it right now by the people of Ukraine."



Councillor Ryan Thomson addresses the crowd.

Photo: Dave Donaldson



Zoë Garbett shows her support.

Photo: Dave Donaldson

Hundreds turn out in support of Ukraine

Hundreds of Shetlanders turned out to Lerwick's Market Cross to show solidarity with the people of Ukraine on Saturday.

A minute's silence was followed by the playing of the Ukrainian national anthem in a moving gesture of support.

The event, arranged in just two days, also featured councillor Ryan Thomson giving an impassioned speech.

He said: "We are all gathered here today to demonstrate our solidarity with Ukraine and the people of Ukraine."

"Those who remain there inside the country and in equal measure those who have fled the war and are seeking refuge."

"We are all watching, listening and reading the news on a daily basis in horror, in astonishment and in fear for the innocent civilians in Ukraine."

"Families are being torn apart, separated by war. Men and women fleeing, men and women fighting."

"Families that are split up hope to be reunited one day and one day soon."

"We spend that little extra second or two hugging our children good night as we see children sleeping in underground Metro stations, bunkers and emergency shelters."

"We also salute the courage and determination of the Ukrainian people. They are strong and brave men, women and children who themselves are living in a war zone, fighting and resisting with their lives."

"Their strength, courage and bravery in the face of adversity is inspirational."

"While some quite rightly flee the country, some Ukrainians living abroad went back into the country in their droves to fight and sup-

port their country. Their bravery is beyond comprehension."

"Here in Shetland we are also doing our bit. We all stand here today showing support and solidarity."

"We have two fundraisers on the go; Shetland stands with Ukraine Red Cross fundraiser and a fundraiser to support Unicef. A total of the two fundraisers is reaching the £10,000 mark in just five days."

He added: "Companies the length and breadth of Shetland are donating funds from sales, donating money and showing solidarity and support for Ukraine in other ways, such as the window displays you can see the street."

MSP Beatrice Wishart, who couldn't attend the event due to its hasty arrangement sent a message of support, saying: "We have all been watching the images from Ukraine with

a feeling of dread and helplessness in the face of Russian aggression."

"We had thought such conflict were consigned to history books. Scottish Liberal Democrats and my solidarity are with the people of Ukraine."

"Shetland has united in solidarity with Ukraine. Islanders have not been slow in backing international aid projects before, especially those where children are involved."

"As the humanitarian crisis unfolds in Ukraine with people fleeing to other countries the spirit of generosity in our community once again shines."

"It was estimated one million people were displaced in a week and what comes next in Ukraine is uncertain but I urge anyone who can to assist refugees and help keep them safe."

It is right that we open our arms to Ukrainian refugees

Preparations by the SIC to settle Ukrainian refugees in the isles have been welcomed by Shetland Greens.

Martin Randall, who is standing for election in the Shetland Central ward, said Shetland has "always shown a warm welcome to visitors arriving on our shores".

"With conflict and climate change forcing people to leave their homes in the global south in ever increasing numbers, it is right that we open our arms to them, providing shelter, support and a hopeful future as part of our community," he said.

He called on the UK government to waive visa restrictions on refugees escaping Ukraine.

Both Debra Nicolson and Alex Armitage, who are also

council candidates, said the potential arrival of Ukrainian refugees was an opportunity for Shetland to renew its commitment to anti-racism.

"It was uplifting to see so many Shetlanders attending the event in Lerwick in support of Ukraine last weekend, as it was seeing so many taking a stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020," Ms Nicolson said.

"It's upsetting to have seen a number of racist crimes in Shetland in the last few years."

"In this context, not being racist is not enough, we have to take a step further and actively resist racism."

Mr Armitage said the Greens had been speaking to local

folk over the last few months about producing an "open-source manifesto" prior to May's elections.

"One of the ideas that has come out of our manifesto building process, which has received strong support, is to produce a Shetland Charter against Discrimination which will educate and empower people to resist and call out racism, whether that's in our schools, workplaces or in public."

"Shetland has been a society with low numbers of ethnic minorities but this is changing fast."

"With a warm welcome and strong commitment to inclusion, Shetland can be a thriving and hopeful society for our children and grandchildren."

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