

Welcome to another busy month
in our wee Highland town.

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In The News

Few will have failed to realise that something was going on in the firth in the middle of June, when protestors from Greenpeace boarded a drilling rig as it was preparing to leave for operations. Shore Street resident Ross Couper had a ring-side view of events with it all taking place, almost literally, on his doorstep. Here he provides us with a personal insight into what went on:

The Delaying of Paul B Loyd Jr.

Sunday 9th June

Three anchor handling tugs are clustered around the Paul B Loyd, a Transocean drilling rig, that has been moored in the deep water off fishertown in Cromarty for the last few weeks. For much of its time here a single large black and white supply vessel has been in the firth providing supplies to the rig, recently this has been replaced by a smaller vessel, Vos Explorer. For some reason this ship anchors in the mouth of the firth, quite a distance from the rig. Two of the tugs spend most of the day picking up the anchors that have held it in place. At about 6.30pm the yellow and black tug reverses out to hold station by the Bus Bank buoy (the red buoy). It seems a bit unusual as there were only three or four anchors left in place and plenty of daylight to remove the remaining anchors and usually the rigs leave as soon as possible.

Late in the evening it becomes clear that the rig has been boarded by two Greenpeace protestors.

Monday

By morning it is national news with most outlets claiming Greenpeace boarded the rig as it was being towed. (The

BBC in England did not disclose the location of the rig.) Given the North Sea has had these vessels around for nearly 50 years the media seem remarkably ignorant of procedures and maybe geography.

The police are rarely seen in Cromarty but there are at least 4 here by the morning

Using binoculars 2 banners were seen, one small, the other larger, white letters on red - against an orange red rig, each spelling out Climate Emergency. The protestors, both female, spent the night on a narrow walkway, about 15 feet below the main deck, around the leg closest to fishertown.

I paddled out to my yacht moored west of the pier, then attempted to sail around to a mooring off fishertown. The sun had come out, half-way around the wind died. I started to motor, spotted an inflatable, and diverted my course to intercept. It turned out to have two Greenpeace protestors on board. I chatted to them for more than half an hour, they weren't very free with information except that they were intending to delay the rig for as long as possible. I motored to my mooring off fishertown and went ashore.

The police numbers increased during the afternoon and there were rumours of a police boat.

Around 9.00pm I sailed, then motored my yacht back around to its normal mooring west of the pier and paddled my canoe back around to the fishertown, weather overcast and threatening rain. There was little activity around the rig.

Tuesday

Around 8.00 am I could see there were two men climbing the ladder up the leg of the rig. It turned out the two original protestors were being replaced by two men. I discovered later that these two were the occupants of the inflatable I encountered on Monday, one of them lives locally as does one of the women they replaced.

The morning was sunny, but the weather worsened to showers and coldish wind. More police were evident and police boats appeared.

Wednesday

I was away for most of the day. There was little change in the standoff except there seemed to be more police.

Thursday

Felt sorry for the protestors on the rig the weather overnight has been wintry, they must have been cold. On Monday one of the two on the walkway could be seen standing up in a sleeping bag. The press are here with huge lenses on their cameras, BBC and Scottish TV vans are parked together on the shore. Much more activity around the rig, 2 police boats with at least 3 crew on each are motoring around the rig, culminates in a helicopter landing on the rig in the afternoon. About 20 people (all men?) disembark. They seem to be police. Eventually with police from the deck above the leg, a police boat from below and the rig ballasting itself down about 4 metres, the protestors are persuaded to leave the rig.

The tugs get in position to remove the remaining anchors. Many of the police leave.

(Note to Greenpeace $4 \times 24 = 96$ and not 70. My book club believes editors are as common as Scotland's national animals which all you readers will know are unicorns.)

Friday

There were some police here between 2 and 3am in the morning.

The morning Scottish radio news tells me that there are two more Greenpeace protestors aboard. The Greenpeace website says they boarded at 4.00am. I was told that they came from Ardersier. They have occupied a similar position on the rig except they are on the most seaward leg, they put up two more banners the longer one being red letters on a white background. It looked a bit homemade. After the police have returned the police boats reappear and, perhaps all the police personnel north of Perth, resume their stations in Cromarty.

The pair of police boats circle the rig for most of the morning. The protestors are visible occasionally but being further away are less easy to spot. The cameramen with their huge lenses are the best source of information. At around the same time as the helicopter appeared yesterday it comes lands and disgorges, I counted 22, policemen?

The rig begins to ballast down, the police occupy the walkway and a police boat is at the foot of the leg. The protestors have vanished, a cameraman tells me they are hiding in the anchor chain guides at the top of the leg. After some time, they are discovered by the police. It takes

some hours to get them off the rig. When I left for a dance at about 7.20pm they were still on the rig. I returned at 12.30am the rig was just reappearing off the South Sutor, it must have left around 11pm. So the protestors must have been taken off around 9.30.

Sunday

I get the ferry to Nigg with my bike arriving at 8.45am. Two policemen with a van were watching the ferry. They looked very bored. On my return about midday, no police at Nigg but there was a different police van on the links.

Conclusions

The crews of the 3 tugs and Vos Explored or the crew of the rig don't seemed to have spotted the inflatables. Perhaps keeping a better watch might be in order.

There were in total probably 10 Greenpeace protestors. They were far outnumbered by the police.

I was once part of a group of visitors lifted on board a rig in the firth using a personnel basket. The rig used one when inspections were being done some 3 weeks previously. Helicopters are expensive and are not the safest of aircraft.



Some locals made their views known.

Open Studios Hailed A Great Success

Janie Verburg writes:

'Artists around the town opened their working spaces at the beginning of June. Hundreds (literally) of interested people wandered in and out of studios, talking to the makers and artists. Discussions were had on how to whittle wood and how to hammer silver and how to work oil paint. One visitor said, "It's a delight to begin to understand the process of creating a beautiful thing." Cromarty seemed to be at the heart of it all.

So, pop next year's date in the diary: first weekend of June 2020 (Sat 6 and Sun 7)'

And Open Gardens Too

Corrie Jeffrey writes:

'The Art and Flowers in the East Church was the best ever as voted by the many who support the event year after year.

Evelyn Wilson and her team really went to town on the "Cromarty by the Seaside" theme even importing a vintage Orkney rowing boat that belonged to Anne Ross's father to set the scene. Driftwood, shells, the choice of boat-shaped containers and blue and white flowers, wellies bucket and spades all added to the seaside feeling.

Julie Price's pupils had shell paintings on display as well as their botanical watercolours.... impressive talent in the town.

The school children mounted an exuberant display of painted stones from the seashore with prizes awarded to the best in each year group, a very difficult decision for the judges!

The exhibition attracted over thirteen hundred visitors.

The sun shone on Cromarty over the weekend when thirty gardens opened to welcome visitors. Cycling without Age piloted their trishaws to provide transport around the town.

The plant sale in East Bellevue and the sale of Gardening books raised £500 and teas in Wellington House another

£500, thank you Chrisie and Robert for the delicious barbecue and Arthur for the jugs of Pimms. Woolly Birdie and the Highland Brass Band performed in the Courthouse gardens and Clinging to the Wreckage in Clunes House....great entertainment.

There were six new gardens, so extra thanks for their hard work and we hope to see even more next year.

With the exhibition, garden entrance tickets, rickshaws, teas, books, plants and donations we raised over £1750 to date with some more still to come.

Thank you all, painters, flower arrangers, bakers and tea makers, gardeners and Krystina, cyclists and Cromarty itself for a brilliant weekend.'



Anyone spot the rogue cockerel at Clunes House?

Cinema Becomes Reality

The foundations for the new Cromarty cinema were started this week, in the location next to The Slaughterhouse by the ferry slipway. Watch this space!



What Are You Reading This Summer?

Cromarty Library Summer Reading Challenge begins on Monday 8th July. This year's theme is Space Chase; an out-of-this-world adventure celebrating the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing. It's fun and totally free! Call into the Library for more details.

Local Arts Group To Hold Its First Exhibition

Black Isle Collective - The Summer Art Show

The Stables, Cromarty

Opening: Sat 13 July, 2 - 4 pm

Open daily: 14 - 21 July, 11 - 4 pm

A group of established and emerging artists from the Black Isle (and a step or two beyond!) come together to share their passion for making art. An exhibition of paintings, sculpture, printmaking, soundworks, textiles - and much else besides.

Meet the Artist: Kirstie Cohen – Sun 14th at 2pm; Pamela Tait – Fri 19th

Pop-up poetry salon: Sat 20 July, 1 - 3 pm

Everyone is welcome!

Cromarty's Waterloo?

Clinging To The Wreckage play the Victoria Hall on Saturday 27th July with an Abba and 70's themed evening of live covers. Dressing up essential. Tickets on the door or from Wendy Mullery. All profits to local good causes.

Cromarty Arts Trust

July Events

To purchase tickets/book places:

info@cromartyartstrust.org.uk / 01381 600354

JIM SMITH: BACK TO THE TEUCHTER: Friday 5 July, Stables, 8.00pm **SOLD OUT!**

SINGING IN HARMONY: Saturday 6 July, Stables, 10.00am - 4.00pm £35

Cromarty's own Jessica Bates leads this fun and relaxed day of singing - open to absolutely anyone that loves to sing (no experience necessary). You'll learn songs from around the world in rounds, call & response and harmony. Prepare to smile, laugh and make music with like-minded people! Bring a packed lunch and water.

BLACK ISLE COLLECTIVE: THE SUMMER SHOW
- 13 - 21 July, Stables, 11.00am – 4.00pm daily and 2.00-4.00pm on Sat 13th. FREE ENTRY

Pop-up Poetry: Poetry readings, Sat 20th, 1.00-3.00pm

PAINTING & DRAWING OUTDOORS - WITH JONATHAN SHEARER: Saturday 20 & Sunday 21 July, Old Brewery & outside, 10.00am - 4.30pm **FULLY BOOKED!**

FEIS ROIS CEILIDH TRAIL: Friday 26 July, Stables, 8.00pm (doors from 7.30pm)
£7 (£4 under 16s) Tea/coffee available or BYOB
Enjoy a night of fine music, dancing and craic courtesy of the Fèis Rois Ceilidh Trail 2019. This band of five talented young musicians will entertain you with a family-friendly,

authentic, traditional ceilidh with caller so no problem if it's your first time!

Please check out www.cromartyartstrust.org.uk for all our courses, workshops and gigs. Tickets available for everything right now!

Development Trust News

Cromarty finally gets the cash, and more could be on the way

In the first week in June, after a long delay, the news was confirmed that £300,000 has been committed by the Scottish Government for investment in Cromarty.

It has been won by the Cromarty Community Development Trust (CCDT) to establish a dedicated site for motor homes with proper facilities, and to repair the slipways at Nigg and in Cromarty to secure the long-term future of the ferry service.

The CCDT was one of 13 successful applicants to the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, from across Scotland.

The fund was set up to address the increasing popularity of outstanding scenic areas stimulated by marketing successes such as the North Coast 500, film tourism and the huge growth in cruise liner arrivals. This has resulted in some areas, at certain times of the year, experiencing pressure on infrastructure and negative impacts on some local communities.

In Cromarty's case, the number of motorhomes using the Links as an unmanaged and free campsite.

The trust is now trying to tie down further support from different sources, including the Beatrice Offshore Windfarm fund and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. This to ensure the community gets the best out of the RTIF project.

This would mean, for example, raising enough to pay for an extension to the slipways which would allow a larger ferry to be deployed.

The CCDT, meanwhile, is in the process of acquiring the wooded area around the industrial units at Whitedykes for the motorhome park.

This is being done under the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) scheme established by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. This is explained on the notice on the tree at Whitedykes. The offer to the council for this land is £1.

The CCDT's was one of six projects across the Highlands to benefit from the second round of RTIF funding. The others were:

- £273,632 to create new toilets and showers along with signage at An Laimhrig pier, Eigg
- £184,506 to enhance visitor access which will protect iconic landscapes and internationally important habitats at the Old Man of Storr on Skye
- £300,000 to install public transport access facilities, parking, signage, paths and toilet facilities at Lower Steall Falls Car Park, Glen Nevis.
- £300,000 to create an extended hardstanding area in west Bayfield Carpark, Portree, to provide more parking spaces, day parking for motorhomes with waste and water facilities
- £53,704 towards the final phase of the Glenfinnan Viaduct project to create a footbridge and new path to link the new car park (supported on Round 1 of the RTIF) to the existing path to the viaduct, preventing the need to walk up the main trunk road for access.

Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs in the Scottish Government, said:

“Scotland’s breathtaking natural scenery and rich historical sites are attracting a growing number of visitors from around the world. While this is great for bringing jobs and investment, it can also put pressure on communities, services, transport and facilities – particularly in rural areas.

“This funding will help the tourism industry keep pace with the upsurge in interest by developing and maintaining much needed infrastructure such as new pathways, car parks and facilities at some of our most iconic rural and natural attractions, benefitting local communities and visitors alike. This investment is crucial so that visitors from home and abroad can continue to enjoy our fantastic landscape, culture and hospitality for years to come.”



The Asset Transfer notice at Whitedykes

New Houses on the horizon

CCDT directors met Albyn Housing and their architects earlier this month, to discuss plans for a housing development in the field next the park.

It was agreed that a total of 25 new homes should be built, in different phases. These to comprise a mixture of social housing, those for affordable rent, others on a shared equity basis and some, a maximum of 25 per cent, for private purchase.

It was agreed that the architects would work up several options with drawings, which would be put to the community with residents having the final say in a secret ballot.

Albyn and the architects have agreed to attend a public meeting in Cromarty in September, to brief the community on their thinking.

Feeling the heat

The CCDT has submitted an application to Local Energy Scotland (LES) for funding to conduct a feasibility study into a local heating system for Cromarty. Such a scheme would use power from renewable energy sources.

LES manages CARES - the Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme.

The aim of CARES is to support and grow the number of community and local energy projects throughout Scotland, as well as increasing shared ownership energy installations across the country.

There are already over 17,000 district heating systems in place in the UK, and nearly half a million connections to them, most of which are domestic customers. The CCDT wants to investigate whether a system would work in Cromarty, and which would be the best sources of energy to use.

Thrift shop doing good business

The thrift shop continues to be successful with over £2100 raised so far. This is a great result - huge thanks to the volunteers for sorting the goods donated and manning the shop.

And Finally...

If you have a complaint or question about activities taking place in the waters of the Cromarty Firth, or on Port-owned facilities (Invergordon Service Base and the Saltburn Pier), please contact the Port of Cromarty Firth directly.

CFPA state:

'All feedback is logged and all questions are answered. We have a quality management system to ensure continuous improvements are made.

Please bear in mind that your complaint or question may relate to activities on private facilities or being undertaken by independent companies operating on the Port's facilities. These activities do not necessarily fall under the

jurisdiction of the Port. We will try to assist and point you in the right direction to have your query answered.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call +44 (0)1349 852308 or email cfpa@cfpa.co.uk.

We hope you've found this an interesting and informative read. Please let us know what you think, or send suggestions and ideas for articles via editor@chromartylive.co.uk

The Cromarty Live Newsletter team is Jon Palmer, Jeremy Price, David Ross, Laura Shepherd

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