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Customer's are back! Photo by Annie Owens

Welcome to the fifth edition of

Black Isle Bulletin

the official newsletter of the Black Isle
Partnership

Editor's note

*By Asia Cielecka, Community Resilience
Coordinator*

August is a special month. Not only because of (in my opinion) amazing weather, but also plenty of adventures, meeting new people and old friends again. In Black Isle it was a period marked by tourists and customers flowing in. Many issues emerged- from beachfronts obstructed by camper vans and litter, to local businesses reopening in a safe way. Some pubs welcomed special guests, such as Jonny Boy in Fortrose Tavern (pictured above).

The increased traffic ties in with a renewed version of Active Travel Map (see Julian Paren's article below). Our Project in focus is Culbokie Cycling Club, who are willing to help other communities set up similar initiatives to boost cycling safety and battle isolation.

In this busy period our Tuesday meeting has decided to change frequency to bi-weekly, and work in subgroups on a weekly basis. One such a subgroup is Resilience Strategy team, chaired by Jon Palmer. In his article he offers an update on the recent survey and on our approach to how we can turn this difficult situation to transform Black Isle together.

One other guest was what in my country of origin is called "misprint goblin". Our editors claim existence of a goblin who, for unknown reasons, changes the text going to print. If local folklore has its equivalent, please let us know by emailing community@black-isle.info! Meanwhile may I rectify its doing- in the last issue the Littleburn site (which is a Forestry and Land Scotland's site) got mixed up with Munloch Smiddy. Thanks to Nat Wastnidge for picking it up.

Another guest that has wrecked havoc is corona-shaped and belongs to a family of more than 200,000 species! One litre of seawater contains 100bn virus particles, and living organisms have used them to form complex organisms and organs (eg placentas). Viruses made it possible for us to evolve - our "blind watchmaker" has deployed them to enable us grow in a way that was not possible before. Virus is not going away, but learning to live alongside this unique guest will certainly make us more resilient, which is this Editor's deepest wish.



Fortrose Harbour by Asia

Lockdown, walking and a new map

A personal view of Julian Paren,

Treasurer, Black Isle Partnership

A lockdown pastime has been to do more walks on local paths. It has been rare to meet anyone. The footpath network of the Black Isle is a joy in woodland, by the shore and in country estates. I had walked the majority of the Black Isle paths in my years of living here, but lockdown provided a focus on the paths closer to home - and then to be more adventurous and go “off-piste” and explore in woodland, traces of paths which had not been even noticed as paths before. These very minor paths were mainly animal tracks which had clearance at ground level (easy for a dog) but required care up to head height to avoid collisions. So lockdown has brought new adventures very close to home on the Black Isle. For many people the more established paths may be unknown

territory. What reason would one have to explore them? The answer is to treat each outing as a safari, as a good means of exercising, and to see what plants and trees and traces of animals you can find, and even bring fungi home for tea.

To give confidence to excursions off the roads, Transition Black Isle has just published the Third Edition of its map *The Black Isle by foot, bike, bus and train*. It is priced 50p and available from the usual outlets. The maps show the main paths and tracks you can walk (and those you can cycle too) and suggested routes between Black Isle communities for both hardy and leisure cyclists. The map is two sided. One side provides detailed maps of nine Black Isle settlements, while the other covers the Black Isle and beyond to Inverness, Beauly and Alness. Today most people rely on maps on their mobile phones but the maps provided free ignore the footpath network entirely. Ordnance Survey maps are notoriously out of touch in mapping what is, or is not, a possible track for getting around. Transition Black Isle's map has been tested and updated by Black Isle residents with their feet on the ground or with their bikes in the woods. One result is that the map has around 40 more footpaths than previously.

Nobody knows what the future may bring, but focussing one's leisure near to home is certainly good for the planet. The Black Isle is promoted as a good area for Slow Tourism - and with the new Black Isle map there is enough to explore to keep the curious engaged for some time. Don't worry, the minor, minor paths are not mapped - they are for you to find serendipitously.

Feedback from users of the map will help make the fourth edition an even more reliable source of information for the area. I hope the maps encourage more people to explore locally - to savour the unexpected.

For more information:

<https://www.transitionblackisle.org/active-travel-map.asp>



Resilience Strategy Group

an update by Jon Palmer

We had a superb response to the Resilience Survey with 96 submissions in total. Given that there were three questions asking for project ideas and most people suggested at least two for each question that's over 600 ideas to get our heads around! Fortunately, and somewhat re-assuring, there is a lot of consensus on the kinds of things the Black Isle could and should be doing, so the task is not as daunting as it might seem.

A small working group is now piecing all this information together and hopes to produce a draft strategy in the next few weeks. We are conscious that the responses came primarily via social media links and so cannot claim to be fully representative of the Black Isle as a whole. The draft

document will provide a further opportunity for input and we are considering ways in which to make this far more accessible and open to everyone.

A significant theme that a lot of people have raised is the need for better, and more inclusive, communication - to ensure as many residents as possible get to know about issues that affect them. How does a Black Isle Radio station appeal? Or a weekly Black Isle newspaper? Those are just two of the ideas under consideration.



Fortrose flowers, by Asia

Culbokie Community Cycling Club

by Penny Edwards (Culbokie Community Trust)

A new cycling club has been established in Culbokie for cyclists of any ability who are interested in fun group rides or in improving their safety, confidence and skills.

Already the club has attracted a membership of nearly 20 people ranging in ages from 16 to 65. The group has started with short evening rides of between 5 and 10 miles taking in many of the quiet roads and forest tracks around the village. Rides are taken at the speed of the slowest with lots of opportunities to catch breath and have a natter. For the time being the club's activities are constrained by Covid-19 restrictions, with no more than 15 people from up to 5 households on group rides, but when we find we have more people wanting to join in, we split into two groups.

Many club members are interested in developing their skills and the first training event will be on roadside maintenance drawing on the skills of existing members. Once Covid restrictions ease we aim to provide additional training in ride leadership, essential cycling skills, first aid and bike maintenance. The cycling club is affiliated to Cycling UK which helps with training as well as insurance and general advice

The Culbokie Community Cycling Club was established to compliment work, funded by Sustrans, to design an active travel route through the village and encourage more walking and cycling. Its launch has coincided with the increase in interest in cycling as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic and members include both existing cyclists and those attracted back to cycling after many years of absence. After only a month, new friends have been made, fitness and confidence is growing and people have been getting out and having fun.

To set up a similar club the main things you need are one or two people willing to lead rides and one or two first aiders. Ride leaders should ideally be trained - but it isn't absolutely essential. We affiliated to Cycling UK which covers our insurance- the annual affiliation fee is £80.

We'd be happy to talk to others who might be interested in setting up a club.

With each issue of the Bulletin we want to end by focusing on one of the communities in the Black Isle and find out a bit more of what's been going on locally.



Black Isle organisations have been meeting every week since March (via Zoom). If you have any suggestions or ideas you'd like discussed by this partnership, please contact your local representative, (via your Community Council), or e-mail community@black-isle.info



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This edition of Black Isle Bulletin was edited by Asia Cielecka

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