



Welcome to the sixth edition of

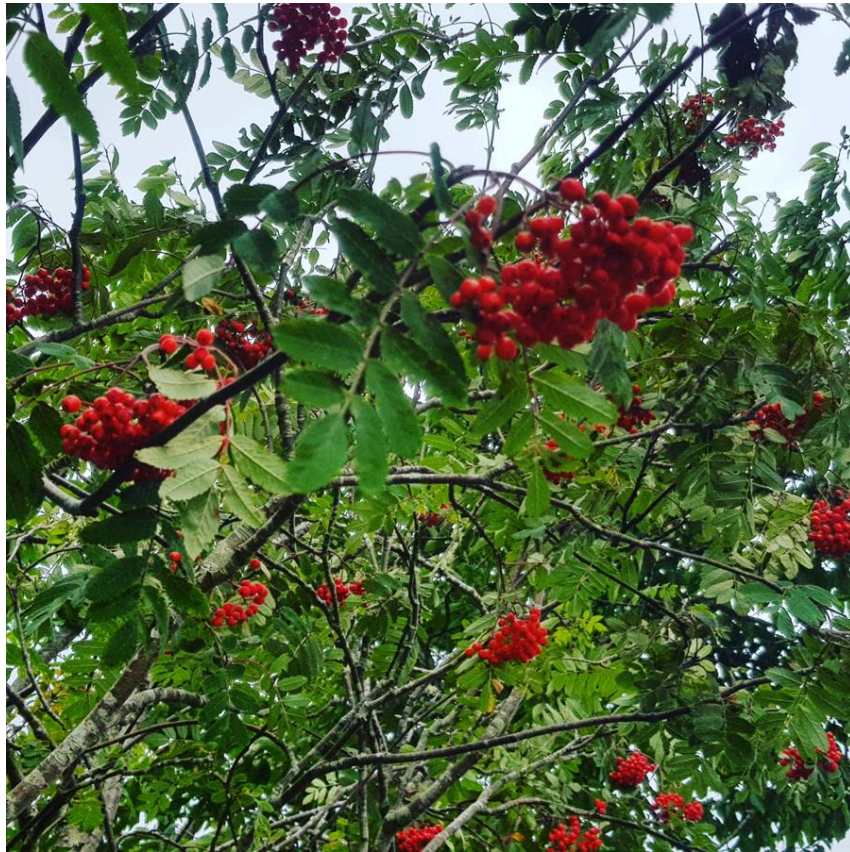
Black Isle Bulletin

the official newsletter of the Black Isle
Partnership

Editor's note

*By Asia Cielecka, Community Resilience
Coordinator*

September was our busy month. We were closing of our Supporting Communities work, and in the last days we focused on Community Larders being established in Monloch, Culbokie, North Kessock, Avoch and Fortrose. Many of us have families, to whom the process of return to schools and universities has posed new challenges. A natural flow of seasons brings not only the autumnal harvest from the fields, but also an increasing number of patients falling prey to viruses, including COVID. This, combined with weakened economy and winter days on the horizon can result in a gloomy attitude. Luckily we have the Bulletin to save us from it!



Supporting Communities Fund update

by Asia Cielecka

It was a real pleasure to work on the Supporting Communities Project funded by HIE as Community Resilience Coordinator. Not only I had a chance to help organisations make impact and deliver outstanding service to the community, but guided by BIP's superbly accomplished Directors I was also lucky to meet a bunch of amazing people, fiercely committed to helping others. I am grateful to all and everyone who participated in our shared response to the unique situation in which we found ourselves in. Let me refresh your memory with a few actions that we have taken together since April.

We started with establishing our social media channel on Facebook, leaflet with key contacts and a mailing list. In the first days my role was to get in touch with local stakeholders, which resulted in strong working relationships later on. I am glad that my strangely spelled name didn't put anyone off!

We supported deliveries to those experiencing financial hardship as well as those shielding, delivered by fantastic Avoch Scouts and Black Isle Cares. We have financed vouchers for Cromarty Cares Project, which covered shop expenses.

Making food available to all was our main objective, and to achieve that we supported building well stocked, centrally placed sheds. These already appeared in Munlochy, Culbokie and North Kessock- we are waiting to see ones in Avoch and Fortrose soon. Sharing of more than food has also been supported- as in Avoch, where we were delighted to fund the refurbishment of the phone box that is now an exchange spot.

We have supported volunteers and organisations with expenses - for printing (Venture Safely campaign, BIP Newsletter, CC leaflets), mileage (volunteers' expenses across Black Isle), biodegradable packaging, microwaves, fridges etc. Sadly we could not support all requests, due to our funding criteria which was substantially narrowed in the early negotiations with our funder. We have received and distributed resources such as hand sanitisers kindly donated by Mr Healy of Invergordon Distillery and Mr Pearson of SMC Cosmetics, with delivery sponsored by Karen Napier Trust.

We financed digital inclusion initiatives across Black Isle, namely James' Support Group from Cromarty, looking after those affected by suicide, and AbilityNet, specialising in Digital Training for the elderly and disabled. Our application to SCVO resulted in getting iPads and ChromeBooks for children and adults at risk of isolation, which are still being distributed to those in need.

We have worked with local community councils who identified families in need, and distributed £100 per child in Back to School cash grant to allow purchase of the basic necessities. This has been by far our most popular project and we are extremely grateful to all those who stepped in with gusto to administer the monies- with special thanks to our committed Treasurer, Julian Paren.

At BIP we have been diligent to avoid double funding, asking each project for a detailed declaration on funding received from other sources. We have also made

applications to other sources to support further projects that benefit our community.

Now that our funding has closed, our weekly Resilience Strategy group started proposing “quick win” projects for other funds. On top of that, the remainder of the Supporting Communities Fund can potentially be used for sustainable projects. We're inviting the community organisations to formally become the main decision-making body by nominating a representative who will become a member of the Black Isle Partnership and be part of the Strategic Partnership Group. If you would like to work with us please fill in and return your application for membership (if you don't have it yet let us know via community@black-isle.info and we will send one to you).

We hope that you will join us on that journey and that we'll continue to hear your views via emails or during our Partnership meetings.



Latest pandemic-related guidance

Communications materials for the September Restrictions and Control the Spread campaign:

[September Restrictions Campaign Assets \(ZIP, 506 KB\)](#)

[Control the Spread Campaign Assets \(ZIP, 576 KB\)](#)

Highland Third sector interface organised a meeting to discuss the reopening of the Halls, which you can see here:

<https://www.highlandtsi.org.uk/previousevents>

Legionella risks during the coronavirus pandemic

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/legionella-risks-during-coronavirus-outbreak.htm>

COVID-19 - guidance for non-healthcare settings

<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-guidance-for-non-healthcare-settings/>

Individual Risk Assessment:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-individual-risk-assessment-for-the-workplace/>

Poster on washing hands:

<http://www.nipcm.hps.scot.nhs.uk/appendices/appendix-1-best-practice-how-to-hand-wash/>

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance

<https://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/>

Guidance for Third Sector Leaving lockdown

<https://scvo.org.uk/support/running-your-organisation/leaving-lockdown>

SCVO Funding

<https://scvo.org.uk/coronavirus/funding>

Highland Community COVID-19 Response

<https://www.covidhelp4highland.org/>

Disinfecting premises using fog, mist, vapour or ultraviolet (UV) systems during the coronavirus pandemic

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/disinfecting-premises-during-coronavirus-outbreak.htm>

HTSI Online Training

<https://www.highlandtsi.org.uk/onlinetraining>



Preparing for the long haul

by

*Gordon Adam (written in
September)*

I'm writing this on a rare trip outside the Highlands – aboard the London train from Inverness. Since I last made this trip two months ago there are signs that things are returning to normal – the only direct daytime train service has returned which is very welcome, I was afraid it would be lost for good. And the buffet is open again.

But this is the new normal: there is no buffet trolley, passengers are few and socially distanced, and face-masks are obligatory. Most trains we pass seem to be almost empty. It is clear that although lockdown may get easier, we are in for the long haul.

So is there a silver lining to the Covid cloud? Something to compensate for the lack of live music and theatre which I particularly miss, and the irritating and seemingly arbitrary restrictions of how many people from what number of households we can invite to our homes? Also to compensate for the economic uncertainties ahead, the threat to businesses and livelihoods, and all the worry that results?

Community cohesion seems to have benefited. This may seem an abstraction in the face of a pandemic, but as readers to the Black Isle Bulletin will have seen, there are plenty of examples of how the community has pulled together to help: from providing Back to

School grants, shopping vouchers and Chromebooks and iPads to those in need, to a befriending service for those self-isolating, and community larders set up in many places. And the welcome sight of whole families walking and cycling along the Beaulie Firth road in front of my house in North Kessock. The big challenge, of course, is how to build on these positives.

There has been much talk of a greener future, and Highland Council has won a £750,000 grant to put in place a network of cycle lanes in the towns. Transition Black Isle has won funding to design an active travel route which will allow safe off-road cycling avoiding the fast and dangerous road between Munlochy and Avoch – a key part of the route linking Rosemarkie and Fortrose to Inverness

Predictably there has been a reaction – from confused motorists in the towns, to one landowner in particular

who seems intent on blocking the Avoch –Munochy link.
Can community action win out in the end?

This is the big question facing us: the Highland Council appears to be onside – it has a commitment to localisation – or “place-based decision making”. New area committees have been set up to allow funding decisions to reflect local priorities. There have been long held concerns that the Highland Council which covers one third of mainland Scotland’s land mass is simply too remote to understand local concerns.

Local responses to the Covid crisis have reaffirmed the vitality of many communities, including the Black Isle. When money is available, there is growing evidence that it can be spent productively if control is delegated to local groups. Clearly there are governance issues to be sorted out – communities are often divided and it is important that different interests are represented when project funding decisions are being made.

A fundamental problem is reluctance of government funding bodies to allow community organisations decide what spending priorities should be. Usually they lay down what precisely the money should be used for, and strict financial reporting requirements which can stretch the resources – and patience – of small organisations dependent on volunteer labour.

This dynamic needs to shift, and the hope is that the often inspiring community responses to Covid will help do just that. Many have proved they can be trusted to spend public money wisely with minimum oversight. But it will not be an easy battle to win: governments generally want to hoard their power, and particularly their spending power which is what they believe gains votes. On the other hand, newly energised communities could have stronger voices – and plenty of votes – if they choose to exercise them in support of local democracy. The years ahead will no doubt be challenging, but they also represent a real opportunity in terms of how decisions affecting our lives are made.

Gordon Adam is a Black Isle Councillor and Chair of the Black Isle,

Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee.



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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