



Change Is Coming

Cromarty Grocery Delivery Service

From Nige Shapcott:

'First of all a huge thank you to the volunteers who have made the Cromarty Grocery Delivery Service work so well for so many people for so long. Times are changing for the better with the infection rate for COVID-19 dropping off rapidly and new phases of freedom announced by the Scottish Government on Thursday.

This means that we need to change the service to meet the changing needs of the community, importantly still relying on our volunteers to provide a service for the most vulnerable in our community.

We are proposing to change the delivery system to a pick and order system which reflects a gradual decrease in demand for the delivery service. The Cromarty Store is seeing an increase in visits from people who were previously reliant on the delivery service and a reduction in the size and frequency of the average order.

So on the weekend of June 6th we will transition to a system where we will ask volunteers to pick from a list provided by the Store and either deliver or hand over the bag(s) to a volunteer who will deliver. It is really important to understand that we will still need our volunteers to provide the help for people who need the grocery delivery service. We will still be using WhatsApp to call for volunteers next week as normal.

Alongside that we are in partnership with Black Isle Cares who are in the start-up phase of running a 10-week trial to

deliver chilled 2-course meals to people in Cromarty. We may need volunteers for that too.

So we have reviewed where we are now and are going forward - and what has come out loud and clear is that we need our volunteers. For the next week things will run as normal and more details of the revised scheme will follow, if you have any questions or would like to newly volunteer please email shapcott@pitt.edu.

The time for thanks

Again a huge thank you to our volunteers, Marcel and Kitty and the Store Staff, and we cannot forget the people who developed the safety guidelines and have been running the service on a day to day basis for 10 weeks - let's hear it for Fi Grist and Gill Hubbard!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

THANK YOU EVERYONE!



Some volunteers have even been out fixing the street lights. Or would that be the firefighters? Good to see Cromarty entering into the spirit of the whole Black Isle scarecrow thing.

Local Response to National Crisis

The Cromarty Community Development Trust has contacted the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) to offer its support during the crisis facing the conversation charity heralded by the pandemic.

Its heritage properties and holiday accommodation have been closed since March to comply with the coronavirus lockdown. As a result, its income is forecast to drop by £28m this year. The charity also disclosed it had made investment losses of £46m due to stock market conditions.

It is not yet clear how the NTS's operation in Cromarty will be affected. But it is being reported that more than 420 NTS staff are at risk of redundancy across Scotland, as emergency plans are developed. The body said it will look to sell off non-heritage land and property, and seek support from the Scottish government and grant-giving bodies.

The CCDT recognises that the NTS has played a crucial role in the life of Cromarty, since it was gifted Hugh Miller's cottage by Cromarty Town Council in 1938. The charity's stewardship of Hugh Miller's memory in the community has been crucial to the development of the town.

The NTS's importance to the local economy has obviously grown greatly since then, as the cottage/museum attracted increasing numbers of visitors. The charity's holiday letting has only served to underline its role as a significant economic driver.

The CCDT directors therefore contacted the NTS, to express our concern and support for the charity and its staff at this time of difficulty. We also asked the NTS if there was any way the development trust might be able to help safeguard the charity's operations in Cromarty through continued local control.

Other CCDT News - Composting!

One of the issues that has been raised with the CCDT in the last few weeks, has been the need for a local composting facility to deal with peelings, grass cutting and other compostable material due to necessary

restrictions imposed upon normal services by the COVID-19 outbreak.

The idea came from a Transition Black Isle project proposal to cut down CO₂ emissions from mileage visiting the dump and/or smoke from unnecessary bonfires. It can also be seen to have mental health value in the context of civic pride and activity.

What is envisaged at this stage is a well-managed composting site somewhere central in town. It would consist of 3 timber built U shaped containment areas adjacent to each other. The containment areas would be approximately 2.4 metres (8ft) on each side. Two would be used for processing compost and one for chippings.

One potential location mooted was on the land at the back of Townlands Barn, which is owned by the CCDT.

The trust board agreed in principle that this was an idea worth pursuing, although more detail was required. Initial soundings about funding are being taken.

Anyone interested in volunteering in the composting project please contact Sheila Currie - in person, by Facebook or email sheilacurrie15@gmail.com

Progress on the ferry slipways and campsite continues to grind slowly on, working through the process and trying to satisfy all the many public bodies involved. We'll get there!

More From Hugh Miller

New Writing Good News

From Martin Gostwick:

'Cromarty is at the heart of some great new writing on the natural world inspired by local hero Hugh Miller.

Prizes will be awarded this month (June) to 16 winners in the latest Hugh Miller Writing Competition for the best new pieces about Scotland's geology.

Organisers the Scottish Geodiversity Forum were thrilled by the quality and quantity of the entries - more than 100

- and co-sponsors Cromarty-based charity The Friends of Hugh Miller were thrilled that nearly 20 of them came from young people attending Cromarty Primary and Fortrose Academy.

Local teachers Emma McCallum (Primary) and Karen Meikle (Academy) have been thanked for an "astonishing" number of entries from their classes.

The Middleton Trust, which has previously supported the highly successful children's operas, backed a new award for the most promising writer aged 18-25. You can read all the winners on the website

www.thefriendsofhughmiller.org.uk.

Nothing Stands In The Way Of Wildlife!

Some thoughts from Caroline Vawdrey:

**Spring hope, summer's thug: the deceptive
charm of butterbur**



Butterbur in Spring

I've always enjoyed seeing the flowers of white butterbur in early spring, spreading light at an often gloomy time of year, so it was a real disappointment to me to find that in summer they become complete thugs, their large circular leaves smothering everything. And something seems to have changed in recent years - perhaps climate change - meaning that they are now spreading rapidly. In

Cromarty, they're obvious on the shore path of the Reeds Park, and many of the gardens below the Ladies Walk are being swamped by them. Out in the countryside, they join a range of invasive plants that can be spread quickly along river sides - and there are now huge swathes of them smothering out the native delicate woodland flora along Newhall Burn.

Such is the concern about their spread that the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative have been trying out ways to control them along the River Fiddich, where they are also rapidly spreading.

They spread by underground rhizomes, which makes them a real challenge to control. Unfortunately the main way to effectively treat them so far is by using glyphosate weed-killer. If you want to try spraying, now is the perfect time.

On a domestic scale perhaps mulching with old carpets or repeated cutting to gradually weaken them might work. It's definitely worth experimenting with techniques, and letting native flowers get their chance to thrive. You can see about the research into controlling white butterbur [here](#)'



Butterbur in Summer

Swifts need help

'Swift numbers in Britain are plummeting - with more than 50% decline since 1995. To try and build a more accurate picture of how these exhilarating birds are doing

the RSPB is working with other conservation organisations to encourage people to submit their swift nest records to SwiftMapper. You can find out more about their work, the app and how to buy or make a swift nest box [here](#)'

Getting to know nature

'If you'd like to know how to identify some of the wildlife you're seeing around Cromarty have a go at learning bird song, or join some of the nature-based citizen science projects that you can do from home, there's a good starter list on the Highland Environment Forum website at www.highlandenvironmentforum.info

The Forum is open to anyone with an interest in environmental issues, and who agrees with its aims – so take a browse around the website, and if you think you'd like to join the contact list get in touch with Caroline at highlandenvironmentforum@gmail.com

Plexus Media designed the website, amalgamating two old ones - they did a great job - thank you!

And from Jeremy Price:

What's Happening With The Animals?

'For the last 10 years I have been walking our various dogs in and around Cromarty as well as being lucky enough to have a large, wildlife-friendly garden in which all manner of birds and small creatures flourish. On walks up the South Sutor and around the fields I often see deer and the very occasional hare or wild cat. On one occasion in 10 years I have seen a fox scurrying up Causeway and from time to time see badgers on the road between Cromarty and Rosemarkie.

Of course, dolphins are prolific and each year there are otters making their way up and down the shore as well as the odd porpoise, pilot or minke whale.

But this year has been different in a peculiar way. A few months ago I mentioned to a greenkeeper at Fortrose and Rosemarkie Golf Club that I was sure I'd seen rabbit droppings on the course. He hadn't and said what I'd

heard and believed, that rabbits had gone from Black Isle many years ago having been wiped out by myxomatosis.

A few weeks ago, however, Julie and I were walking the dogs down the hill from The Stables and stopped to chat to friends on the sharp bend just above the Pirate's Graveyard. The dogs suddenly became excited and we found them with a rabbit. The rabbit was lucky – we prevented the dogs doing what their instinct tells them to do and it hopped off into the undergrowth unharmed. Unusual, yes, as our friends verified. They'd been in the town well over 30 years and had never seen one.

A couple of weeks later and in the space of a few short days, not only did we see more hares in the fields above the Sutor Road on several occasions (having only seen one on very rare occasions on the Reeds Bed) but also more rabbits, lots more, at the top of the Sutor and the surrounding areas. One was less lucky in its encounter with the dogs but there was no doubt that there are quite a few in that vicinity including one enormous one which crossed the road in front of me and then came back parallel with the road only some few yards away from me, the dogs oblivious to it! Just through simple observation and encounter, it's obvious to me that the rabbits are back in the area and increasing in numbers.

There have been plenty of deer, too, close to the Sutor Path at day and night. I'm used to seeing them but not usually in such numbers and so close.

But the strangest encounter has been the badger in the garden. On 1st May, the dogs became overly excited and I thought they'd found the first hedgehog of the season. Having pulled them away from a narrow passage between a wall and the oil tank I saw the creature which was immediately identifiable as a badger, its sleep disturbed by the dogs barking. Badgers can be very aggressive and it could easily have turned on them, causing some really nasty injuries.

After discussion with the SSPCA I left the gate open and in the morning it had gone and as I was working near that spot could say for sure that it did not return during the day. However, come 10pm it was back in the same spot and the dogs were going mad with excitement – not attacking it but just excited to see a new visitor with a

strange smell, no doubt. It had gone by morning and I took measures to block off the place it was bedding down in. A check around the garden revealed a hole in the fence by the allotments that it could have been getting in and out, and a further one elsewhere.

The SSPCA have been helpful but cannot turn out unless the animal is injured. Scottish Badgers were very interested as they don't get much feedback from the Black Isle and encouraged any sightings to be reported to them. They were very helpful and sent lots of information. It seems it was a juvenile, around one year old. When the mother has more cubs the juveniles take the opportunity to leave the sett and explore. It's not unusual to find them in odd places in the spring.

So there's lots going on locally with the wildlife. Keep your eyes open - the quietness of the last few weeks is having a positive effect on nature!

Business Updates

A New Life for the Slaughterhouse

Tony Vandyke writes: 'It has been three years since we opened the doors of the Slaughterhouse to bring our own specialty coffee to Cromarty and the Highlands. Recent global events have forced a pause in activities for us and everyone, but we are close to getting underway again, although now with a new owner, or as they say, under new management!

We are happy to say that Laura Thompson will take over ownership from the 1st of July. Laura has been involved almost since day one and has been a key element in making the Slaughterhouse Café what it is now. Her enthusiasm for great coffee will keep the spirit alive and we wish her the very best.

Now is also a great opportunity to thank everyone who has been involved and the friendship we have enjoyed; all have played a significant part in creating the atmosphere that has become synonymous with the Slaughterhouse; great coffee without ceremony but with good humour despite perhaps an occasional dose of scathing sarcasm.

Thank you to all our loyal supporters and visitors, amongst which I would also like to give a special thank you to the local people of Cromarty whose loyal and ongoing support have enabled us to stay open all year every year!

We are also happy to announce that Vandyke Brothers Specialty Coffee will continue as a roaster and wholesaler of our unique coffee and we look forward to supporting Slaughterhouse Coffee and other outlets in the years to come. We at Vandyke Brothers are poised and ready to take it all on, our doors are open now!

Ingrid's House

'We have been missing our customers so much and can't wait to reopen when phase 2 kicks in in Scotland. We had huge deliveries of amazing new stock just before lock down so the shelves will be full of exciting designs for you including some award winning classics.

For those customers that will still be isolating or live further away, we are going to be offering a one to one virtual shopping experience. This can be done via video calling or just a good old telephone! More details on this to follow.

We will of course be opening strictly following the Scottish government guidelines to keep you all safe. We are currently working on how many people we can safely have in the shop at one time and will have a hand sanitising station at the door to keep us all safe.

Can't wait to see you all either in person or via video.

Take care and stay safe.

Ingrid and Pete'

Calluna

We are busy preparing our shop for reopening with measures to ensure customer safety and social distancing. In addition to new ranges from our clothing suppliers, we have a range of new lines including beautiful silver Scottish jewellery by Chris Lewis, canvas crossover bags, cosmetic bags, coin purses & glass cases, and a range of

lip balms, hand creams and candles from The Great British Bee Co. We look forward to welcoming you back!

Sutor Creek

****New**** Added to our offerings are freshly made frothy coffees, a selection of delicious cakes and Afternoon Tea. Afternoon Tea includes scone with jam, selection of sandwiches, brownie and strawberry tart – also available with Prosecco! We offer weekly specials in addition to our regular menus and wood-fired pizzas - visit our website for full menus. Phone 01381 600 855 or email sutorcreekcafe@gmail.com to order, collection available 12-8pm Thursday to Sunday with delivery available within Cromarty. Stop by to pick up your coffees, cake, deli items or to place an order for pizzas or meals!

Get ready to get SILLY!

From Lyn Anderson:

'It's almost time for this year's Summer Reading Challenge and this year it is going digital!

Although libraries are closed right now, we will continue to deliver the Summer Reading Challenge through virtual services and e-learning platforms.

This year's theme offers families a chance to have fun, and children are encouraged to read anything that makes them happy – whether it be a comic, joke book, poetry, fiction or non-fiction. This can be in digital or print format, through our eBook lending service or from what they already have at home.'

Silly Squad officially begins on Friday 5th June. Check out the details at: www.summerreadingchallenge.org.uk

Playgroup

Denise Macfarlane writes:

'We hope All our wee friends are ok...we would like to encourage the children off all ages to wear something in their fav colour and on their daily walk take as many

pictures they can of all things they see of that colour in Cromarty! Please feel free to share your photos.

We would also like to encourage parents to share some positives that have happened in lockdown! In a world where we can be anything let's be kind!

Church Worship

'Just a reminder to let people know that we're live-streaming our Sunday service at 11am at www.cruparish.online.church. Also have other opportunities that people can info about on the Culbokie Church Centre Facebook page. (Covers Cromarty as well.)'
Terry Burns

Walk Through Cromarty's History...

From Mary Bowers:

'Both the East Church and Cromarty Courthouse are now leaving their gates open during the day and invite you to include the churchyard and the museum garden as part of your walks.

Did you realise that the back walled garden to the Courthouse museum includes a community orchard and also wildflower areas? The apple and cherry trees are still in bloom, and marsh orchids just about to show their vibrant pink flowers. There are a couple of benches where you can sit and enjoy the vista of the lovely old Courthouse building, including the cell block at the rear. There is also a prisoners' exercise yard, which we ask you not to enter, as we are waiting for some repairs to be done and there are also swallows nesting!

We've been leaving the wildflowers to grow in the East Church graveyard too, keeping paths around the church mown for easy access. If you're interested to know more about the people who are buried there, you can download the inscription guide to the gravestones on the library page of the website at www.eastchurchcromarty.co.uk/archive.asp

Coronavirus Archive

A reminder that the Courthouse museum is collecting items from our community which will document the way we navigated the current pandemic.

We are thinking of ordinary objects, words, art, photos, craft, diary entries, and documenting particular experiences - in fact anything that is significant or meaningful to you and others around you.

This will form part of a collection in the museum which will chart an important period in our lives, which will slip into history. If you'd like to help with this project then please contact: Mary Bowers at 4 High Street or email marybowers554@gmail.com



The garden at the rear of The Courthouse.

Arts Trust Latest

The Cromarty Arts Trust would like to thank everyone that took part in their recent forward-planning survey. 240 responses were submitted and the survey is now closed whilst responses are analysed. We now have lots of useful feedback to help us consider when and how we might be able to open our doors to audiences and participants and offer entertainment/arts/culture/education in a safe and socially distanced environment. If you didn't manage to complete the survey but have a view you'd like to share, you are welcome to email us at info@cromartyartstrust.org.uk.

Also, if you don't yet receive our regular Enews and would like to - a useful way of keeping up to date with everything we have going on - do please drop us a line at the above email or complete the form on our [website](#).

Many thanks,

Georgia'

So finally...

Let's hope we can all enjoy being more sociable over the coming weeks whilst continuing to be thoughtful, sensible and not to put anyone at risk. May the wonderful Spring weather we've witnessed herald a special summer, to be remembered for all the good things it has to offer. We look forward to bringing you more positive Cromarty news in a month's time.

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@cromartylive.co.uk

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

The Newsletter is currently sponsored by Cromarty Stores. Printed copies are also available at the Stores for those unable to access the online version.

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