

The Horshader Herald

The Horshader Community Development Trust Newsletter
May 2020



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Cùm Sàbhailte san Dachaigh - Stay Home and Stay Safe



Welcome to the HCD mid-quarter newsletter! In March we decided to increase the regularity of communications with members. This was due to the big changes to village life occurring at the moment and the desire to keep everyone up to date with our activities. We felt it important to share news about some of the recently developed services - like the first family takeaway night pictured above! Look out for an additional newsletter per quarter from now on.

Lifeline services, online opportunities, competitions and other fun things for all ages to participate in... though we all hope the lockdown is soon over, the way the community has responded to new challenges displays amazing solidarity, and a willingness to look after one another.

HCD staff continue to work diligently in providing services for many residents. Trust offices at Raebhat House remain closed to the public at all times and your cooperation is appreciated in keeping our staff safe. The office phone line has been diverted to a staff member and contact can always be made by email or post. And please say hello, while maintaining distancing measures, if you see any of our staff out and about on grass cutting or delivery duties.

Best Regards,
Euan MacLeod

Message from the Chair - Flora Macleod

I hope everyone is keeping well and following national advice. My fellow Directors and I have been overwhelmed by the level of volunteer support received. Community support is helping us to deliver our covid-19 services, especially as we work with neighbouring community groups to benefit residents outwith the regular HCD area.

The kindness shown by many in assisting and showing consideration for their neighbours makes me appreciate the community we live in all the more. Thank you all.

Digital Technology Grants

The Trust is establishing a new fund that will award Digital Technology Grants to Horshader residents enabling the purchase of a laptop or tablet. This addition to the existing grants programme aims to make the community as connected as possible at a time when access to online content can be life-changing. Many residents are now more or less housebound, reducing their opportunities for many regular activities.

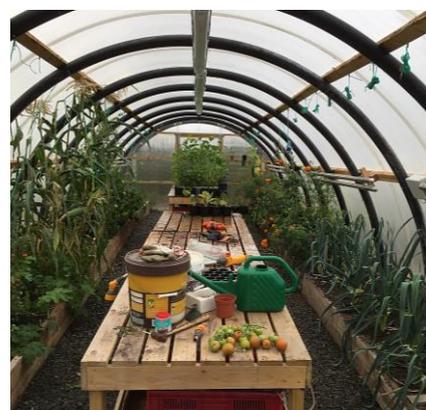
A budget has been set aside for 2020, with smaller amounts being made available in 2021 and 2022 before the fund is reviewed with a view to extending it. Applications are open to individuals in our priority categories - over-65s, and individuals living in households with children of school age. However, applications by individuals that are not in the priority categories will be considered if applicants can evidence exceptional needs - e.g. for accessing work and/or educational content.

The Digital Technology Grants are open to application from Monday 1st June, applications will be assessed on a monthly basis and a decision will take no longer than 1 calendar month from submission. Further information, full terms and conditions, and application forms are available from HCD office - contact us by phone or email.

Community Growing Facilities - Grinnivat Road and Dalmore

The decision to reopen the growing sites was taken based on advice from the Scottish Government. Our amazing garden team, Chris and Billy, worked their socks off to prepare the Grinnivat and Dalmore facilities, installing new hygiene facilities in the process. After contacting each allotment holder, the team designed a rota system to ensure social distancing is simple for all users.

For now, we are monitoring the situation very carefully, and will communicate any future changes to site rules with users as efficiently as possible. The feedback from growers since reopening has been entirely positive, with many appreciative of the facility and the opportunity for safe, outdoor recreation.



Covid-19 Activities

The organisational response to lockdown began the day after HCD directors closed our facilities to the public on March 27th, in line with national efforts. Straight away staff were reassigned to assist Carloway Surgery in delivering medication to the most vulnerable in the community. This has continued on a daily basis and has been much appreciated by many residents. Since then other services have been established and we are now working with several funders including Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Scottish Government, Eat Well Age Well, and STV - Children's Fund.

The Shop and Drop service is well underway, with deliveries being made on a fortnightly basis to vulnerable residents. Eligibility is based on the NHS 'at increased risk' categories, e.g. over 70s, people with certain medical conditions. Over 30 households have benefited from 'drops' consisting of fresh food and milk, non-perishable goods, and other essential cleaning and hygiene products.

A ready meal delivery scheme, run in partnership with 40 North Foods, has been launched to much acclaim. This initiative came about as a way redesigning the popular Blasta Lunch Club at a time when eating together as a community isn't possible. Initially the monthly delivery of delicious ready meals was offered to over-65s but an additional monthly Family Night has been developed. In May, over 300 meals were delivered as part of the scheme. None of this would be possible without the dedication of Anne and Bruce at 40 North. Thanks also to the wonderful volunteers in each village assisting with the growing delivery demands.

The final strand of our new services is a programme of virtual engagement, offering opportunities for and recreation from home. As this is nothing like outreach activities of previous years, time and consideration has gone into researching the best equipment and overall approach to use. The pilot programme includes a block of Gaelic classes, starting on 27th May, and Taic sa Ghàidhlig supporting parents with children in GME. Keep an eye on our social media for info on new online activities.

Online engagement is likely to be increasingly important in future, yet this does not mean that plans aren't being developed to engage with residents 'off-line' - these plans are being developed simultaneously, some of which you will read more of in this newsletter.

The list of registered volunteers now stands at 26 despite work situations changing for individuals all the time. The efforts of volunteers has provided peace of mind for many housebound residents where assistance has been provided in shopping, posting and collecting mail, and many other tasks. While the number of instances of assistance through the scheme has decreased slightly since the launch of Shop and Drop, the coordinated support is crucial to well-being. As part of these efforts, leaflets providing details on services and contact details for HCD have been delivered to all houses in the wider community.

Writing Competition - Let Your Imagination Fly High!

Open to children aged 5-12. First, write a short story beginning with 'One of the good things to come from Covid-19 was...'. Then, get creative and bring your story to life with a drawing or painting. And finally, send us your entry by Thursday 11th June for a chance to win £100!

All stories and drawings must be on A4 sheets of paper - this can be both elements on one A4 sheet, using half for the story and half for the picture, or over two sheets of A4. Stories can be hand written or typed. We encourage entries in Gaelic or English.

Send your entry to our postal address, or take a high quality digital image or scan and email it to admin@horshader.com. One overall winner will receive £100, with three prizes of £50 for runners up. For every entry received, we will put £10 into a pot to donate to a local charity once the competition has closed. The competition winner will have the honour of choosing from 3 pre-determined local charities to donate to. So... get scribbling!

Virtual Engagement

Over May and June some activities will be piloted as we work to establish an exciting programme of virtual engagement. Successfully doing so will not only result in increased opportunities to learn new skills, be entertained, and participate in social activities from home. Video footage of such activities will be archived, preserving amazing content for years to come. We look forward to recording local experts in art, music, history, and more! And in welcoming visiting speakers to share their knowledge as part of the programme.

A block of virtual Gaelic classes starts 27th May, between 12-1pm, and runs for 4 weeks. A phone, laptop, or tablet, and a decent internet connection are all that's needed to take part.

Taic sa Ghàidhlig (Help for Parents) is new service to provide additional support for non Gaelic speaking parents that are struggling with their children's schoolwork. 20-minute slots are available can be booked by getting in touch. This activity will take place over a video call where possible, though phone calls can also be arranged.

Greis-Gnìomhachais - Student Placements

In some very exciting news, everybody at HCD is delighted to welcome 3 university students on placements beginning in June. These young people are all originally from close-by villages and are immensely enthusiastic about being involved in local community development work.

The placements are funded with support from the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Sgeama Greis-gnìomhachais - a scheme to provide work for students in organisations where Gaelic is used every day. Projects have been planned for each student to make a real lasting difference to the community, while they'll also be involved in the developing a new organisational Gaelic Plan.

First up is Katie Gillies from Shawbost. The remaining students will be introduced in future newsletters.

“S ann à Siabost bho Thuath a tha mi agus tha mi dìreach air a’chiad bliadhna agam a chrìochnachadh ann an ceum rèidioagrafaidh, ann an Oilthigh Raibeart Ghòirdain. Tha mi a’coimhead air adhart ri bhith ag obair sa choimhearsnachd agam fhìn, far am faigh mi air sgilean ùr a thogail ‘s a leasachadh, a bhios feumail dhomh ann an iomadach àite-obrach san t-àm ri teachd.”

I'm from North Shawbost and have just completed the first year of a Radiography degree at Robert Gordon University. Working in my own community is something I'm really looking forward to, as well as picking up and developing new skills that will be helpful to me wherever I work in future.



Atlantic Lights Photo Competition

May saw the launch of a photography competition in partnership with the South Shawbost-based Atlantic Lights Candle Company. Over 25 stunning photos of the Atlantic were submitted, with 5 winners being chosen by the judges in the end.

Here are a couple of the winning entries by Mairi Smith (l) and Maureen Macdonald (r).



Staff Spotlight - Covid Activities Coordinator - Anna Mackenzie

Thanks to emergency covid-19 funding, we have been able to appoint a dedicated Covid Activities Coordinator, working on a part-time basis for an initial 4 months. Originally from Back, Anna Mackenzie recently moved to Shawbost, having lived on the Westside for a few years.

Anna is a qualified teacher and has previously delivered a series of Gaelic classes, and music lessons for HCD. Other interests include coastal rowing - Anna represents the Western Isles in Scottish Coastal Rowing Association - and all things musical.



The role is focused on coordinating elements of the covid services, particularly in coordinating volunteer efforts, and much of our delivery work. If you would like further information on any of the services, or would like to volunteer, Anna can be contacted on anna@horshader.com

In Conclusion

We are currently conducting a review of all our communications with the aim of producing more diverse content and reaching more readers across our community. As part of this, in future newsletters we will include items written by members of the community - local news, stories, and more. If any reader would like to share a piece of writing with us for this purpose, get in touch through the usual channels.

Thanks for taking the time to read our newsletter.

Best Regards,
All staff and Directors at Horshader Community Development