

**Connect**  
monthly

**January  
2020**

*Music*

*m*oray  
music  
centre

*to our ears*

**moray**  
council



JANUARY 2020

## Contents

Heads Up	3
Music to our ears	4
HITRANS Thistle Card	7
No Unauthorised Access	7
Three New Dummies for Moray Training	8
HR Noticeboard	10
Christmas Jumpers	11
Congratulations	11
Greenfingers	12
Blue Monday	13
What a load of Mince!	14
Winter Driving	15
Need help with money?	16

## Editorial

Welcome to your January *Connect*!

Happy New Year!

2020; who would have thought it? At the turn of the millennium we were expecting flying cars and hoverboards to be the order of the day by now. It's not quite turned out that way. Any mention of flying now is likely to generate a frown from those promoting a climate change agenda, and the only boards that hover are those that oversee work done by others at the coal face.

Things are never as bright or as dark as predicted. We weren't eaten by the Millennium Bug, the Dome's initial flaccid offering managed to be re-invented into a top venue, and we're still looking for those miracle cures.

So as Moray Council faces something of a mountain to climb in terms of balancing our budget over the next two years, let's hope that with the commitment of us all and our elected members we're led towards a sustainable future. The services we provide to our community are vital and frequently life-saving, and we are best equipped to continue providing them.

We hope all our readers have a positive and productive 2020; *Connect* will here to chronicle your achievements and the council's development.



**Peter Jones**  
Communications Officer



**Sharon Dunbar**  
Media & Communications  
Officer



**Angus McNicholl**  
Designer



# HeadsUp

Kim Paterson, Acting Educational Resources Manager

## Dear Colleagues

Since stepping up into the Acting Educational Resources Manager role in September it has been a busy and interesting few months. Within my role I'm responsible for managing the Sport and Leisure Service, with the aim of transforming it to make it more sustainable and efficient for the future. We're currently striving to improve the marketing and commercialisation aspects, while meeting our customer needs – no easy task with the ongoing budget saving requirements.

For me, being active is the most important part of everyone's daily life – far more important than work! The benefits of being active are endless: improved mental health, increased performance and productivity at work, increased opportunities to socialise, opportunity to be active with your family/friends, improved fitness levels and it's FUN! It's therefore imperative that as a service we provide as diverse a programme of activities, and sport and leisure facilities that can be accessed by residents and tourists, and support our local community-based sports clubs.

From Active Start sessions for pre-school children, the Active Schools and swimming lesson programmes for school-aged children, to fitness classes and pool/gym use for adults and walking sports for older adults – we have activities for all ages and abilities. We also support our local community groups offering sport and physical activity opportunities in Moray, through our Community Sports Hub programme.

The team which I previously managed, Active Schools and Sports Development, has changed significantly over the past 12 months and this has been largely due to the lack of job security. Despite losing over 52 years of experience from those who have moved to pastures new, I'm delighted at the enthusiasm and hard work from the new members of the team.

Staff and volunteers are the greatest asset within any organisation and this is evident in the passion and commitment within our service. On a daily basis I receive feedback on how colleagues go above and beyond to ensure a positive

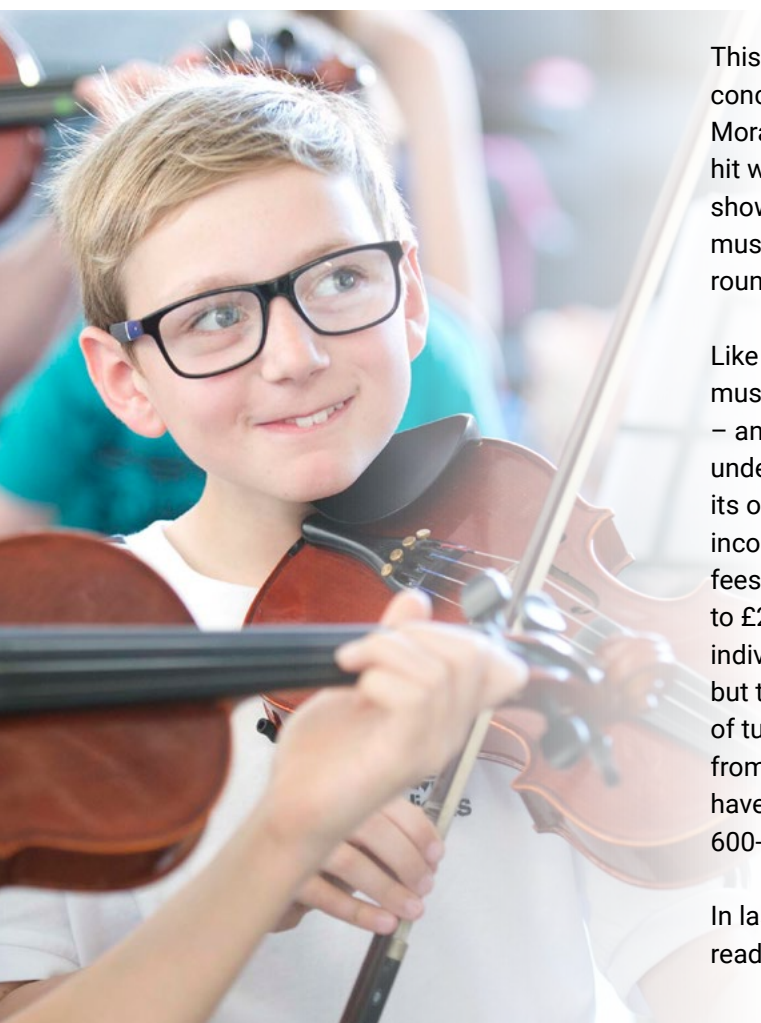
and enjoyable experience for all our customers, and I personally thank them for their endeavours.

Finally, since it's January it would be remiss of me not to plug our FitLife membership scheme to encourage all of us to maintain any New Year resolutions relating to 'being more active' to help shed the festive excess! Not that I'm biased whatsoever, but FitLife membership is the greatest bargain around!

Purchasing a FitLife card means you can access any Moray Council sport and leisure facility as well as Moray Leisure Centre. It'll get you into fitness classes, public swimming, fitness rooms, junior swimming lessons, sports coaching sessions, Active Schools sessions – the list is endless. If you're even away on business or holiday in the Highlands, Argyll and Bute, Orkney, Western Isles or the Borders you can use your FitLife card to get free access to their facilities. Every household needs one! Check out [www.moray.gov.uk/FitLife](http://www.moray.gov.uk/FitLife).

Best wishes  
Kim





This year's Music Centre concert by pupils from across Moray was another huge hit with the audience, and showcased the great work our music instructors do all year round.

Like most other services, music instruction has been – and continues to be – under pressure to reduce its outgoings and increase income. Last year the annual fees for music instruction rose to £291 and 415 for group or individual tuition respectively, but thanks to the high standard of tuition and talent evident from the concerts, numbers have remained high at between 600-700.

In last month's *Connect* you read a 'Heads Up' introduction

from the acting head of music instruction, Alexander Davidson. *Connect* went out and had a chat with some of the team that deliver this great service and amazing concerts.

There are nine instructors including Alexander, and between them they cover a huge variety of instruments and the entire school estate. Lessons are delivered to individuals or groups as part of the 30 timetabled lessons a year. In addition the team run the Saturday Music Centre, where groups are tutored to become part of a formal orchestra aiming at performing concerts twice a year.

One of the longest-serving members of the service is trumpet player Alasdair Grant.



**“Getting young people into musical groups learning together helps them make friends and builds confidence.**

Alexander Davidson



He started teaching music in 1992, when the area was under Grampian Regional Council control, and says he has never lost the thrill of seeing young people learning to play an instrument.

*“We start students at P4 with trumpets or other brass instruments,” he said.*

*“I’ve had a whole primary class playing plastic trumpets, and even performing a number in the recent Music Centre concert. They all get such a buzz from performing.”*

Outside of his school work Alasdair plays with the Mahler Players, described as a ‘compact orchestra’ that performs sweeping suites from the great classical composers

such as Mozart, Tchaikovsky and Dvořák plus, of course, Mahler. He also plays with the RAF Voluntary Wind Band.

Erin Carroll – who was in Alasdair’s class when she was in school – is a saxophonist and has been teaching woodwind instruments as part of the music instruction team for 10 years in Moray. She also plays in two groups outside of school, the Moray Saxophone Quartet and Fiddich Winds, a woodwind band.

Her role as woodwind instructor takes her all over Moray, clocking up 1,400 miles a month!

*“The travel time does impact on the day sometimes, but it’s worth it,” she said.*

*“There’s no doubt that taking on an instrument gives so much to students.*

*“It improves their motor skills and dexterity, and if they continue with an instrument many universities see that as evidence of commitment to study. It is a big plus when the competition for places is tough – such as in medical school.”*

Alexander teaches violin, as he has done for both Aberdeen City and Moray councils for the last nine years, but since taking on the role of acting head of the service he has had to devote afternoons to some of the administration work.

*“We have nine instructors including me and inevitably there are always a few issues to deal with, either with an instrument, parents or*

*scheduling,” he said.*

*“But we have a great team and together we manage to resolve most things that pop up.*

*“There’s a great tradition of fiddle playing in Moray – we’ve loads of people learning it. One of the reasons is that it’s the only instrument that can be taken at P3, so by the time other instrument options become available at P4 many are on their way with a violin.”*

A major issue in recent years has been increases in the cost of tuition fees to parents. While those in receipt of free school meals get instruction for no charge, parents wishing individual lessons for their children have had to find an extra £37 for this year’s tuition. Some councils have scrapped free tuition altogether, while

**There’s a great tradition of fiddle playing in Moray – we’ve loads of people learning it.**







**These groups are all age and ability levels, but music is the common ground they meet on**

others provide it for free and most have increased charges.

All tutors agree with Erin on the effect of music tuition to young people: the educational and social benefits lead to a boost in classroom performance, increases confidence and reduces bullying.

*"Getting young people into musical groups learning together helps them make friends and builds confidence," said Alasdair.*

*"These groups are all age and ability levels, but music is the common ground they meet on.*

*"There is a huge amount of evidence to prove that learning to play a musical instrument improves academic performance, which begs the question why the level of fees is not more of a level playing field*

*across all councils."*

Alexander added that the council offers support in the shape of instrument loan and a VAT-free scheme if a family wanted to buy an instrument.

*"Like most services we see regular salami-slicing of funding or increase in fees – we just have to keep promoting music instruction and the benefits of music to student's lives in and out of school," he said.*

*"To keep costs down we're already working with other councils in the north and Highland to share collections of sheet music – which can be very expensive when it comes to concerts.*

*"If anyone has collections of sheet music that needs a home, we'd love to hear from them!"*

The Moray Music Centre offers students aged 7-18 years old who play an instrument an opportunity to participate in a number of orchestral groups. The groups include:

- junior wind band
- senior wind band
- junior string orchestra
- senior string orchestra/ senior orchestra
- senior brass band

The 225-strong Music Centre meets from August to March at Elgin Academy on a Saturday morning between 10am and noon.



## Making journeys easier for those in most need

HITRANS, the regional transport partnership for the Highlands and Islands, has introduced a quick and easy way for those with a disability to get help when using public transport, particularly buses.

By showing a Thistle Assistance Card to the driver, a holder can advise him of any special help that is required.

A card holder simply peels off a relevant sticker – such as sight, hearing, speech or mobility – and attaches one or more in a space provided on the front of the card.

The holder can also indicate on the card one of the following messages:

- Please wait for me to sit down
- Please talk slowly and clearly
- Let me know when we arrive at:

The holder can provide additional information on the back of the card that they think may be useful to the bus driver.

The card is supported by a wide range of voluntary organisations and transport operators in the Highlands and Islands. It does not mean that the bearer gets a concessionary or discounted fare.

To obtain the HITRANS Thistle Assistance Card please either email [info@hitrans.org.uk](mailto:info@hitrans.org.uk) or phone [01463 719002](tel:01463719002).



**NO  
UNAUTHORISED  
ACCESS**

## Security breach at council HQ

Although this applies chiefly to those working in HQ and Annexe buildings, schools and depots, security should be uppermost in the minds of everyone.

In mid-November a member of the public was allowed into our HQ building. He was seeking the elections office to return a postal vote and have something on the form explained to him.

He was able to wander the corridors unchallenged for some time before he located the correct office, and then surprise the elections officer – who was there on her own at the time – with some aggressive questioning about the voting procedure.

Although handled calmly by the elections officer, who was able to eventually escort the gentleman off the premises, it was still a disturbing experience for her.

There are two reasons our buildings need to be kept secure: one is the safety of staff that work in these buildings and expect to do so in safety; two is the security of the building itself from vandalism or other damage. Those with a longer memory will recall that some time ago when public access was allowed, a member of the public attempted to set fire to council HQ.

So please, challenge those wishing to enter council buildings and make sure they have a bona fide council pass. If they don't, refuse entry and refer them to the Access Point where our colleagues can contact the appointee.

If you are expecting someone from outwith the council, such as for interviews or other council meetings, ensure the Access Point staff know the details and make proper arrangements to greet and escort the visitor.



# THREE NEW DUMMIES FOR



## MORAY TRAINING

**I know  
that by  
doing this  
job, I can  
make a  
difference  
to what  
happens  
in care  
homes.**

Our Moray Training colleagues have welcomed three new bods to the team – albeit they can't walk, talk, or even breathe.

Alexander, Fred and Steven are the new CPR mannequins – named to make them more realistic for those undertaking vital, potentially life-saving training. These hi-tech mannequins literally light up when you're getting it right. Perform CPR compressions at the right depth and rhythm, and they'll light up to show you when you've nailed the technique.

First aid training is led by Training Officer, Doug Taylor. He's an experienced trainer and has delivered these courses to nearly 700 people over the last six years.

*"Before, I was an avionics engineer and delivered training courses in Kinloss. I did a teaching course and really enjoyed it."*

*"I enjoy it when I'm getting on with the job – unfortunately there's a lot of paperwork which goes with it though, which is less enjoyable. I much prefer delivering the training."*





The team – Doug, Stephen, Donald and Mo – work well together to deliver a raft of training including social services and healthcare to external clients – assessing and verifying candidates so people can remain in employment in places like care homes. As well as offering local training, the team train and assess candidates from as far away as Peterhead and Dingwall.

*“All care staff working in a care home have to have an SVQ – no matter what their role is,”* explains Stephen, who is an SQA-qualified verifier and

assessor, and previously worked for Glasgow City Council in learning and development.

*“You get people who come to us who want to do a qualification but others who only turn up because they have to. That can be hard work because they can be less engaged and it can take a bit of time to turn that around.”*

*“I enjoy working with the candidates undertaking their SVQs. I know that by doing this job, I can make a difference to what happens in care homes. The support we give – training and education – is an important part of that process.”*

Mo, with her background working in various care settings, has performed training and had management roles, so knows her stuff.

*“She has a huge amount of experience which is really invaluable for us,”* says Doug.

Each member of the team has their specialism, whether it be manual handling or people handling. Donald, for example, supports candidates through work placements as part of the employability fund contract with Skills Development Scotland, working with school leavers who don't know which direction they want to go in – they undertake real jobs for real clients, including us. He's a practical man, and is also not a fan of paperwork! But he's incredibly experienced, having worked with Moray Training for some 35 years, and has trained hundreds of people during that time.

But it's first aid training that's seen big rise in uptake recently. Understandably so, as having the know-how means you can react should the worst happen to you or someone around you.

*“It's easier to deal with a stranger when you're performing first aid, because there is no emotional attachment,”* says Doug.

*“I had someone come back to me to say I'd saved her son's life – he'd been choking and she'd carried out abdominal thrusts. I reassured her that in fact, all I'd done was shown her what to do – it was her who'd saved his life.”*

**It's easier to deal with a stranger when you're performing first aid, because there is no emotional attachment.**



# HR Noticeboard

## Fund raising effort from Ashgrove

Colleagues at Ashgrove have raised a fantastic £782 for Alzheimers Scotland this year. A whopping £320 was raised in the Christmas raffle, with a further £462 with other efforts throughout the year, including dress down Fridays. Well done Ashgrove – what an amazing team effort!

## 2020! New Year, New You?

Our Healthy Working Lives group will be sharing information about activities and advice on health matters during 2020. Watch this space for some great articles on how you can make some changes to improve your health.

## Survey Results

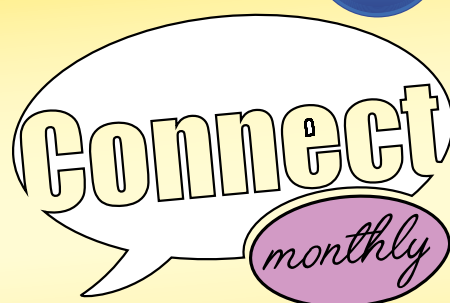
Look out for information on the results of the 2019 Employee Survey. Coming soon to the interchange and next month's Connect.

## Need someone to talk to?

We have a confidential, employee support service for colleagues to use.

Call 0800 970 3980 (24/7, 365 days a year) or visit [www.timefortalking.co.uk](http://www.timefortalking.co.uk).

Live chat: Enter the website, click on 'Live Chat' and enter the password TfTnow



email [connectnews@moray.gov.uk](mailto:connectnews@moray.gov.uk) to get Connect emailed to your personal email address, every month.



# Christmas Jumpers



## Congratulations

Congrats to our colleagues who've won a Scottish Quality in Planning Award, for delivering successful places through quality auditing. They've been recognised for their approach, involving colleagues across planning, transportation, flood risk management, housing and SNH.

Delivering high quality places is important in supporting health and wellbeing, specifically the national health challenges of obesity, dementia and loneliness, climate change, biodiversity and promoting resource/public sector efficiencies.

Well done!





# Greenfingers

## Training Project



### Site Operations

We continue to successfully provide our local wholesale customers with their quality bedding, salad and veg plants, and in response to customer demand have been able to offer a larger variety of perennial plants. We hope to increase this offering in 2020 as we develop our public access sales area based at the Moray Resource Centre.

Our quality Christmas wreaths have proven to be very popular again. Thank you to all of our customers for the continued custom and support of our service.

### Dr Gray's Hospital

We were very proud to have been invited by the Friends of Dr Gray's to attend the 200th anniversary of the hospital. Four of our team attended a tea party and met Princess Anne, the Princess Royal. We continue to maintain the hospital's sensory garden, and have additional works planned for 2020 which we started before the frosts came.

### Moray Resource Centre

Our team of trainees, volunteers and members of RAF Lossiemouth, laid a path through the grassed area which has been developed into a natural walkway giving dry public access to our shed and sales area. We are looking at developing our partnership working at MRC and plan to have a regular presence there in 2020, as we develop our public access sales area base. Furthermore, we aim to continue to work closely with the volunteers at MRC to maintain their lovely garden area and also turn a piece of unused, overgrown ground into a fully accessible vegetable plot. Greenfingers really enjoy working at MRC; we have been made very welcome and feel like part of an extended team.

### Reflection on 2019 and looking ahead to 2020:

We always end the year with a period of reflection before we plan for the year ahead. We celebrate our successes, observe all of our feedback and then make plans. It's so important to stop and ponder for a moment, then move forward in a focused and positive way.

We have had a very busy year which has seen us make and develop stronger links with our local planning department, Moray College's Horticultural Department, RAF Lossiemouth personnel, Employability Consortium and Moray Resource Centre. We hope to continue to build upon these in 2020.



## Open Day

2019 saw our most successful open day ever for Greenfingers. We were proud to have the opportunity to showcase all the work our trainees do and to get the chance to meet our customers and put faces to some of our Facebook followers! We were joined by Moray Wellbeing Hub who had their pop-up Café, really adding to the community feel of our open day. We also welcomed Forestry & Land Scotland, SSAFA and other partners, and hope to replicate this at our 2020 event which will be on Saturday 9 May 2020. Save the date!

## Forestry & Land Scotland

Greenfingers continued to work on a weekly basis with forestry teams in our local woodlands, completing various training and work experience tasks. These include laying gravel paths, removing and installing Dragon's Teeth and Waymarkers, clearing car parking areas of overgrown grass and independently carrying out our nominated trail checks. This work is set to continue into 2020 and our trainees will benefit from gaining experience from learning different tasks and using different tools.

## January Jobs for the garden.


You can welcome the New Year by making plans for your garden or get involved in a local community garden project. The fresh air will do you good, just wrap up warm!

Tidy up the garden and remove any fallen debris. You can make sure your shed and tools have been cleaned, sharpened and oiled if necessary and get your pots ready for the first signs of Spring – it is just around the corner, promise!

Enjoy the restful period, check the seed catalogues and we will feature in *Connect* again at seed planting time.

**It's so important to stop and ponder for a moment, then move forward in a focused and positive way.**

# Blue Monday



Blue Monday has become a regular calendar event; this year it falls on 20 January. There are those who say it's the most depressing day of the year, some claim there's scientific fact behind Blue Monday, while others suggest it's a marketing ploy by those in the holiday business to make us head straight to the travel agent.

Theories aside, the NHS website says that lots of people can suffer from the 'winter blues'. It's thought that the problem is related to the way our bodies respond to daylight – the mental health charity MIND says one theory is that some people are affected by shorter daylight hours in the winter – they produce higher melatonin, causing lethargy and low mood.

To combat this try getting outside as often as you can, especially if it is a bright day. It's also important to eat well in winter, including plenty of fresh fruit and veg. Keep active; activity is thought to change the level of mood-regulating chemicals in the brain, plus it can be a change of scene and opportunities to meet new people and socialise – which can also help.

Please consult a GP or other medical professional if you feel you need support or assistance.

Additionally if your Christmas spending is catching up on you, don't worry there are lots of places to turn for help. Banks usually offer an annual free health check on your finances or if you have overspent and want to talk to someone about this you can contact Money Advice Moray, their advice is FREE and confidential.

Check out the poster on page 16 which signposts you to various agencies which can support you if you need help with money.



There wasn't a soggy bottom in sight for the mince pie bake off last month in room 204 in HQ.

Four bakes from our education colleagues Nicola Milne, Fiona Grant, Helena Jones and Sarah Marshall, were presented to Quality Improvement Managers, Karen Lees and Stewart McLaughlan.

After an intense period of judging, a standalone winner couldn't be agreed, so Karen and Stewart declared Fiona and Nicola worthy joint winners.

*"We were very impressed with the presentation, as well as the overall look and taste," said Karen.*

*"There was seepage in some of the bakes, but it only added to the moment!"*



What a  
load of Mince!



# WINTER DRIVING

Strategy  
Talk

Bad weather and longer hours of darkness make driving more hazardous, but the risks presented by these hazards can be reduced by careful forethought and relatively simple precautions. In very bad weather your first consideration should be: do I need to drive? Take advice from TV and radio weather reports, as well as Police Scotland and Transport Scotland at <http://trafficscotland.org/>

During bad weather make sure you let people know where you are going, your route of travel and when you expect to arrive. Plan your route in advance. Allow for extra travelling time or even consider delaying your trip if the weather is poor.

The first precaution you can take is to make sure that your vehicle is fit and serviceable for the drive.

Check the following:

- The vehicle is clear of snow and ice and remember snow or ice on the windows will affect your visibility. A small scraped viewing hole is totally inadequate and snow left on the roof will slide forward over the windscreen when you brake.
- The windscreen is undamaged and clean, the wipers work and the washer bottle is full, with the correct screen wash mix for the conditions. A dry cloth or kitchen roll is handy for helping to keep the inside of windows clear. Remember, whatever the weather, don't drive unless you can see properly all around.
- Lights are clean and working.
- Tyres are in good condition with adequate tread and are to the correct pressure, including the spare.
- Brakes are working properly.
- Engine oil is at the correct level.

During the winter months you should carry an emergency kit. It's recommended that this includes:

- a shovel;
- de-icing equipment;
- a charged mobile phone;
- a working torch;
- a hazard warning triangle;
- winter boots or wellies;
- warm clothing.

Depending on the weather forecast and the job to be done, you may want to add a blanket; a flask with a hot, non-alcoholic drink; something to eat.

## Adverse Weather

We recognise that employees may face difficulties in attending work in times of severe weather conditions and guidance regards this is available on the interchange. These guidelines are designed to ensure that the disruption to the service is minimal in the event of adverse weather conditions, whilst ensuring the health and safety of employees.

As the winter weather approaches please remind yourself of these guidelines so you know what to do should we be faced with adverse weather. Advice can also be sought from your manager or the HR Helpline on [563261](tel:563261).

# need help with money?

Need help with money? This time of year can be challenging for many of us, so if you need some advice or support, the services sign posted below will be able to help.

