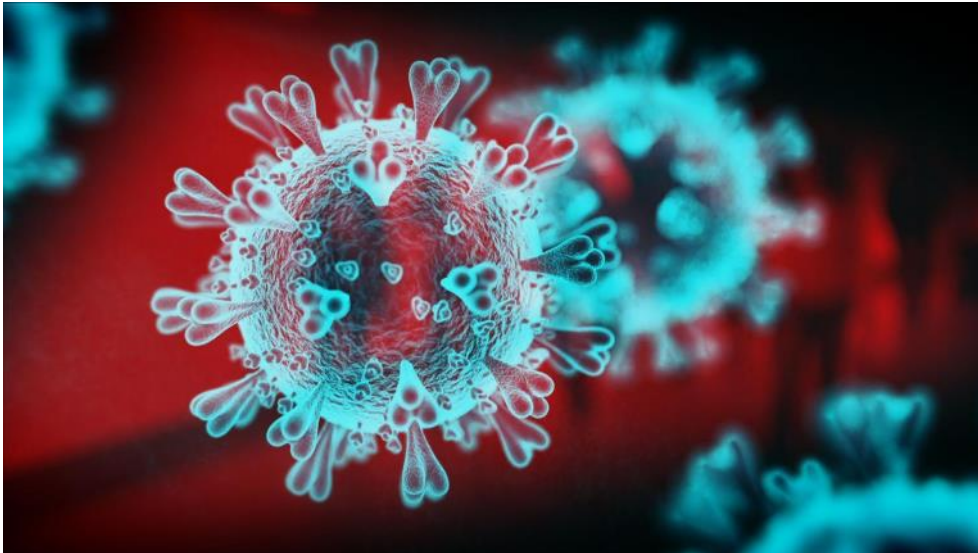


# THE BLETHER

the blether ['bleðə] – the newsletter of the community of Hoy and Walls

THE COVID 19 ISSUE APRIL 2020

## THE COVID-19 ISSUE



Graphic credit: Sky news

Who could believe that something so small—“a spiky ball of genetic material coated in fatty chemicals called lipids, and which measures 80 billionths of a metre in diameter” (according to the Guardian 17.04.20)— could bring so much havoc and distress to the world in such a short time.

Times have certainly changed recently and the whole world seems to be a very strange place at the moment. On Hoy and Walls, we could not be isolated in a more beautiful place but that doesn't mean that we are immune from loneliness, anxiety, financial hardship and mental health issues. If you are facing financial or emotional difficulties and struggling with life talk to someone. These are unprecedented times which nobody was prepared for, so please do not feel embarrassed to ask for assistance. There are many people in the same situation.

This issue of *THE BLETHER* is, hopefully, going to provide you with some useful information to help you through these extraordinary days.

**Stay at home and stay safe!**

### Welcome to

the COVID 19 Issue of *THE BLETHER*.

*This issue includes information and contact details for all Hoy and Walls residents who might need some additional help whether financial or emotional.*

*There are also a number of items to distract from COVID19 if that's possible.*

*Contact details for further information or for contributions can be found on the back page.*

*Do please get in touch if you have anything you'd like to share with the community!*

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## INFORMATION AND SUPPORT HUB

BENEFITS

HOUSING

ADVOCACY

DEBT

ISOLATION

SOCIAL CARE

WELL-BEING

**IF ANY OF THE ABOVE OR ANY OTHER SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES ARE CAUSING YOU ANXIETY WHICH IS AFFECTING YOUR WELL-BEING, WE CAN OFFER YOU SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE IN THESE AREAS.**

**THIS IS A FREE SERVICE, NON-JUDGEMENTAL AND COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL.**

**PLEASE CALL THE**

**INFORMATION AND SUPPORT HUB**

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO ACCESS THIS SERVICE THEN CALL 701356 MONDAY-FRIDAY**

**OR ALTERNATIVELY EMAIL [denize.lace.iohdt@gmail.com](mailto:denize.lace.iohdt@gmail.com)**



ISLAND OF HOY DEVELOPMENT TRUST

Following a successful application, the IoHDT would like to express thanks to Foundation Scotland for the grant of £5000 from their Community Response, Recovery and Resilience Fund.

The funds will be used to assist with the running of the Information and Support Hub and the efforts of the volunteer group, Volunteer Connection, and other initiatives instigated to support the community of Hoy and Walls during the Covid-19 breakout.



Foundation  
Scotland



NATIONAL  
EMERGENCIES  
TRUST

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUND

Island of Hoy Development Trust



The Island of Hoy Development Trust, like other trusts around the country, has been working on a community plan. This is to ensure that people on the island who are affected by the coronavirus crisis through losing their job or experiencing a reduction in income, and need help with household expenditure (general provisions, energy bills) in the weeks and months ahead, are offered some assistance.

The Trust is making funds available immediately and we are working hard to secure additional support. This scheme will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

The fund is open only to Permanent Hoy and Walls residents in need of immediate support who fit the following criteria:

- Individuals/families in receipt of benefits/Working Tax Credits/Child Tax Credits
- Individuals who have applied for Universal Credits and are awaiting their first payment.
- Individuals who have lost their only source of income e.g. zero hours contract or self-employed.
- Individuals who have had to stop working to provide childcare because of the current restrictions.
- Individuals in receipt of pension credits

### **HOW IT WORKS:**

- Each eligible household is entitled to receive £10 per person, per week up to a maximum of £50 for a family with children under the age of sixteen.
- All you need to do is contact the Wellbeing Coordinator through the Information and Support Hub.
- The Information and Support Hub can also offer guidance on any socio-economic issues that could be causing anyone anxiety in regards to Debt, Social Care, Benefits, Advocacy, Fuel Bills, Housing, isolation etc.

In order for us to manage the overall scheme we can assure you that your details will be handled in the strictest of confidence and in compliance with general data protection regulations (GDPR)

**Please understand this is currently for those who need immediate support and is not intended as an addition to existing benefits or source of income.**

For further information or to see if you are eligible please contact Denize on 701356 or email [denize.lace.iohdt@gmail.com](mailto:denize.lace.iohdt@gmail.com)

## COUNCIL COMMENT—TRYING TIMES



When asked if I'd like to make a contribution to this edition of The

Blether my first instinct was to say 'no thanks' as I didn't think there was much to report that hadn't been covered by one source or another in the proceeding weeks. On reflection I thought 'why not' so here goes!

As an eternal optimist, Spring is my favourite time of year, days are getting longer, bird song increases, air is getting warmer, lambs are in the field and it appears that everything is there to look forward to. Not in 2020 unfortunately. We are in trying times.

From a councillor's perspective, like many workers, our daily lives have been turned upside down. School Place is virtually closed down yet we still need to support our constituents, take decisions and be alert to the changing circumstances around us. Fortunately technology has come to our aid and through 'Microsoft Messenger Teams', a system that allows 'virtual' meetings via computers etc., we are able to have weekly briefings from the Interim Chief Executive and his Directors.

We even managed to 'hold' a Special General Meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> April where we set up various funds to try and help Orkney businesses and individuals, particularly isle residents, through these tricky times – whether our decisions prove to be correct, only time will tell but that's no different from what would happen in normal circumstances.

We've also had advice from the Scottish Government as how we can have 'virtual' Licensing meetings which are very legal oriented but necessary. Hopefully we can have businesses ready for when restrictions are lifted.

Orkney's broadband connectivity, although much

maligned, seems to be holding up not too badly – unfortunately Magnus is having issues on Hoy and Birsay/Harray can be intermittent. I'm going to be a wee bit smug here and admit, after months of badgering from my 'gaming' son and YouTube viewing wife I signed up to 'fibre to the cabinet' and have seen a tremendous difference (not seen the bill yet!).

Hopefully as many as possible of you will have been watching James's nightly 'blogs'. We're trying to keep everybody up to speed with what's going on in Orkney and how people can help in these difficult times. Orcadians are without doubt resilient and have tremendous community spirit so it is no surprise that, amongst the national constant depressing news, there are tremendous efforts and good news locally.

If you can, adhering to the social distancing rules, please check on friends and neighbours. They may appear to be ok but all of us are feeling the strain and it may manifest in different ways.

On a very personal note life at Button, Stenness is revolving around the garden – 5 acres all told so plenty to do. Pheasant, pigeons, wagtails etc. enjoying the hens feed not so sure about the 'hoody' crows. This weekend I plan to attempt to cut my own hair to avoid the 'lockdown' hair do syndrome, Mrs Crichton not willing to get involved! If it warms up I might even try planting tatties, lettuce, radish etc.

Take care and try and smile, whistle, sing – it does help.

**Cllr Rob Crichton**



**HOY AND WALLS VOLUNTEER GROUP  
ARE HERE TO HELP  
GOOD DAY PHONE CALLS,  
SHOPPING ETC**

**IF YOU NEED A HELPING HAND CALL 701356  
MONDAY-FRIDAY OR MESSAGE THE HOY AND  
WALLS VOLUNTEER GROUP ON FACEBOOK**

## OIC HUB AT PICKY CENTRE

A call centre to provide essential information and support to the most vulnerable people in Orkney has opened at the Picky Centre in Kirkwall. The NHS is notifying all those most at risk – and for whom the new service is aimed at - by letter.

A team of staff and volunteers, from various agencies throughout the county – including Orkney Islands Council, Orkney Health and Care, NHS Orkney – are available to provide vital assistance to those most in need.

The Hub is staffed to answer telephone calls on 01856 879900 below, seven days a week, from 9am-5pm.

There is also a new national help line for those who do not have family or existing community support, cannot get online and who are over 70, disabled, require the support of mental health services, are pregnant or receive a flu jab for health reasons.

This can be accessed by calling 00800 111 4000 – from 9:00-17:00, seven days a week.

## SUPPORT FOR BUSINESS

Businesses can apply for grants to help them deal with the impact of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak. Business Gateway have produced a comprehensive list of help available (29 pages!) to businesses, self-employed, and third sector organisations including grants and loan schemes.

Details can be found here:

<https://www.bgateway.com/resources/finance-and-grant-announcements>

This includes one-off grants designed to help protect jobs, prevent business closures and promote economic recovery, and more than 90,000 ratepayers across Scotland will be able to benefit.

The Business grant support fund is additional to separate tax relief measures and is part of a package of measures worth £2.2 billion. Orkney Island Council are administering the grants locally on behalf of the Scottish Government. Small businesses in receipt of the small business bonus scheme or rural relief, as well as hospitality, leisure and retail business can benefit.

Two types of grant are now available to ratepayers:

- £10,000 grants for small businesses in receipt of the Small Business Bonus Scheme or Rural Relief
- Or £25,000 grants for hospitality, leisure and retail properties with a rateable value between £18,001 and £50,999.

The Scottish Government has estimated that there are 990 businesses in Orkney that are eligible for a Coronavirus Business Support grant and, by 16/4/2020, the Council had processed or paid a total of 298 applications and are now urging other businesses who think they are eligible for the fund to come forward.

The Business Support Fund Form can be found under the button labelled 'Support' at:  
<https://www.orkney.gov.uk/Council/C/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-businesses.htm>

Business Gateway Orkney can offer information and advice to local businesses via one-to-one appointments using video or telephone calls. Get in touch at:  
[business.gateway@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:business.gateway@orkney.gov.uk) to request a call back.

## OIC FOOD FUND

Island shops have been commended for the incredible service that they are providing in difficult times. They have increased stock levels, expanded choice of goods available.

However, with internal ferry travel restrictions currently in place due to Covid-19, isles residents are mainly reliant on island-based shops for their shopping rather than mainland supermarkets - where prices may be cheaper.

A funding mechanism has been established by Orkney Islands Council to support isles residents in buying goods from the isles shops. The scheme will see each

isles resident allocated £5 per week for the next four weeks to spend in a shop on their island – with the fund administered with support from the local community council. It will run initially for a 4 week period.

If you have any queries about this fund then please contact Kim Dobrzynski via facebook messenger,

email [ilohoywalls@gmail.com](mailto:ilohoywalls@gmail.com)

or by phone 701402 and leave a message.

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## OTHER HELP FROM OIC

You can now apply for a council tax reduction online through our new customer services platform, MyOrkney.

Use the link below which will take you to our council tax reduction webpage where you will find the online form.

[www.orkney.gov.uk/CV-CTR](http://www.orkney.gov.uk/CV-CTR)

Anyone on a low income who currently pays council tax can apply. Once an application form has been completed, we will do a means-tested assessment to see if you are eligible for a reduction.

Please find some important email addresses for finance queries:

For housing benefit, council tax reduction and discretionary housing payments – [benefits@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@orkney.gov.uk)

For crisis grants and community care grants – [swf@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:swf@orkney.gov.uk)

For council house rents – [rents@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:rents@orkney.gov.uk)

For council tax or non-domestic rates – [revenues@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:revenues@orkney.gov.uk)

**If you are struggling to use the council website or can't find the information you need, please contact Denize at the IoHDT office—01856 701356 or email [denize.lace.iohdt@gmail.com](mailto:denize.lace.iohdt@gmail.com).**

# WILDLIFE WATCHING SPRING 2020



Although our lives have changed so much in the past month, Spring is springing all around us and there are plenty of signs to spot on your daily walk or from the garden. Willow catkins are unfurling on grey and eared willows and you might spot early migrant chiffchaffs and willow warblers searching the bare branches for small insects.

There are yellow flowers appearing in the roadside verges, first coltsfoot heralding the promise of spring, followed by lesser celandine, dandelions and primroses.

The melodious song of skylarks is all around us on a bright day and is sure to lift your spirits. The beautiful song is a way of the birds showing their fitness and the strongest skylarks will continue to sing even if they are being chased by a hunting falcon. If they have survived to sing another day, female skylarks have been shown to choose these strongest males.

Through the spring months, wading birds also start adding their songs to the natural symphony- I love to hear the bubbling calls of curlews mix with the almost electronic notes of lapwings and the urgent top notes of redshanks.

As the ground starts to dry out after all the winter rain, it is wise to be mindful of the risk of wild-fire. April 2020 marks ten years since the last big wildfire on the RSPB nature reserve near the ancient woodland at Berriedale. A week of dry weather in April and May is enough to raise the fire risk to extreme and avoiding risky activities such as burning off grass and garden clippings is a sensible precaution.

Lee Shields

Other things to look out for in the next months:

**Marsh marigold**



**Creeping willow**



**Purple squill**



**Marsh Orchid**




**Scottish Wildlife Trust** The Scottish Wildlife Trust has created a range of free and fun activities to help children of all ages stay connected with nature during lockdown.

Access the activities online at:

<https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/things-to-do/learn/>

## HI FROM THE HOOLIE

I am sure you all know that the plans for this years Hoolie are on hold but can assure you that the team is as keen as ever and will look at putting a party together as soon as it makes sense.

In the mean time we have tried to maintain a bit of the Hoolie spirit by encouraging people to post short videos on to our Facebook page. So far, we have had contributions from our incredibly talented islanders as well as from further afield in fact as far as New Zealand.

Any form of entertainment be it singing, dancing, telling a joke, any thing at all. It doesn't have to be vision if you're not comfortable with it. I suppose dancing needs video although it might work with tap dancing. If you fancy giving it a go it would help us all keep that feeling of community that comes alive at the Hoolie.

Big thankyou to all our key workers and the volunteers that are keeping everything going. I am so glad that I live amongst such a fantastic community. Love to everyone and stay safe.

Ian D

# #Hoy Hoolie's Got Talent

UPLOAD YOUR TALENT VIDEO NOW IN THE HOY  
HOOLIE FACEBOOK GROUP TO TAKE PART

PERFORMANCES SO FAR FROM:

JAMES HARPER - DOSCA

SHANNON KANE

DEANNA JOHNSTON

CLAIRE HASTINGS

CRAIG RENDALL & COREY JANE

BERTIE GILLESPIE

KEITH DEMPSEY

BRIAN CROMARTY



[HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/1034635913217134/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1034635913217134/)



## REFLEX PROJECT

The IoHDT has been working in partnership with Community Energy Scotland to develop and expand the community transport service provided on the island. As part of the ReFlex project, the Trust has taken delivery of two 100% electric Nissan e-NV200 vehicles, one able to carry seven people, the other adapted to take a wheelchair and 5 passengers. Although not the longed for electric bus, these vehicles will complement the scheduled service already operated by the Trust.

It is envisaged that the vehicles will provide a dial-a-bus type service, the details of which are being finalised. There are also plans to work in conjunction with the Health Centre to offer a patient transport service for less mobile or vulnerable patients. Currently, the EVs are being used to deliver prescriptions and essentials to people around the island.



As a result of Covid 19, planned upgrades to the YM power supply and the installation of a dual 7kW charger, as part of the ReFlex project have been delayed. However, some electrical works have been undertaken locally to fit a temporary additional 7kW charge point at the YM so that both vehicles can be charged in the meantime.

The Trust looks forward to being able to use these vehicles to their full capacity in the future.

## OIC SPORT AND LEISURE—ONLINE FITNESS CLASSES

*From OIC website*

In these uncertain times keeping fit and healthy is vital for a lot of people in Orkney. Therefore, it's great that so many of Orkney's fitness class instructors are hosting virtual classes. There are a variety of fitness classes available online.

Along with technology, this would not be possible without all the instructors and the sports and leisure staff coming together with ideas and enthusiasm to ensure physical activity is still accessible for people in Orkney.

More information can be found at :

<https://www.orkney.gov.uk/OIC-News/online-fitness-classes.htm>

Or

[www.facebook.com/oicsportandleisure](https://www.facebook.com/oicsportandleisure)



sport  
scotland



Physical activity to support mental health

## The Dwarfie Stane

Well hello there! Let me introduce myself! I'm Dwayne. Well that's what my friends call me. My real name's Dwarfie Stane but my pals say that 'Dwayne' rolls off the tongue better. Anyway, I live in the valley on the way to Rackwick (the views' not bad).



But about 200yrds down the valley is the most annoying rock that had ever lived. He's called Patrick (well, his real name is 'Partick Stane' but I don't think he deserves such a posh title)-

and he's such a pain. He's always on about how he's a better stone than me and I'm *too boring*. He says that all the tourists and walkers prefer him and don't care about me. Well- I won't stand it any longer. Because this year I'm entering the *INTERNATIONAL GEOLOGICAL AWARDS*. Oh yes. And I'm going to beat that stupid 'Partick Stane'. He's got nothing on me, 'cos I used to be home to a savvy dwarf called Snorro-(Google him if you're interested). And to top it off I've got some snazzy Persian graffiti written on me- which I was pretty cheesed off about when they first drew all over me but now, it could defo come in handy.

I'm well jealous of last year's winner - the Great Pyramid. He lives over in Giza and WOW he's cool. Home to some dead pharaohs and lots of jewels I hear. Year before that was those folks down at Stonehenge. Bit thuggish they are- but impressive none the less. I remember the year the Cliffs of Dover went head to head with the Giants Causeway. Man- there was a lot of gossip and politics THAT year. This year I reckon I've got quite a bit of local competition. Of course that numpty Patrick is entering, and I've heard that those folks at Brodgar are entering as a 'Ring'. I know the 'Stones of Stenness' are having a go. So I say *bring it on! Heheheh!!!*

AEDJ

.....  
: Some thoughts from Eeyore

: "A little consideration, a little thought for others, makes all the  
: difference."  
:

: "It never hurts to keep looking for sunshine."  
: —Eeyore



## NOTICEBOARD

**HOY AND WALLS HEALTH CENTRE****Telephone: 01856 701209**

Your health centre like all of the NHS is working differently in response to COVID -19. We do need to reduce face-to-face contacts in order to keep you safe and enable the core team of the health centre to stay healthy and well so they can continue to provide a service for you.

So if you don't feel well or you need advice what should you do?

- Please call and speak to Debs or Teresa, they may be able to deal with your problem or they can then organise a telephone call back for you with Simon, Sue, Iain or Sally.
- The NHS wide experience is that many of your problems can be effectively dealt with over the telephone or perhaps with a video call.
- If we do need to see you we will arrange a time for you to come down and we will ask you to wear a face mask to protect you and us
- We can still come and see you at home if that's necessary we will however be wearing protective clothing again to protect you and us from the risks of COVID-19

We are still here to support you and your health needs. We are very grateful that you are working with us in different ways, whilst together we have the same aim of keeping Hoy safe, happy and healthy.

**Emergencies**

**In case of an emergency, phone 01856 701209.**

**When the surgery is closed call Balfour Hospital 01856 888000 and ask the operator to bleep the Hoy GP.**

**Prescriptions**

In order to reduce footfall to the Health Centre, the IoHDT will be doing medicine deliveries on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays to all those who would like their prescriptions delivered. When ringing with your repeat prescriptions, please let Teresa and Debs know if you would be happy for them to be delivered and where you would like them to be left. You or a family member can still pick them up for yourselves at the surgery but please ring first.

We may have to alter delivery days depending on how the new ferry timetable works out.

Prescriptions are taking a little longer to arrive than previously so please make sure that you always have at least 2 weeks worth of your tablets so that you don't run out.

If you have any queries or want to let us know that you'd like your medicine delivered email [ork-HB.LonghopeSurgery@nhs.net](mailto:ork-HB.LonghopeSurgery@nhs.net) or ring 701209



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Registered Office: 8 Albert Street,  
Kirkwall, Orkney KW15 1HP

## Island of Hoy Development Trust



If you have any queries or questions, regarding  
the activities of the Trust

please contact Debs ([chair.iohdt@gmail.com](mailto:chair.iohdt@gmail.com))  
or Liz ([liz.davidson.iohdt@gmail.com](mailto:liz.davidson.iohdt@gmail.com))



## WEATHER ROUND UP



### January 2020

Total rainfall for month 119.6mm  
Highest rainfall in 24hrs. 20.1mm on  
31st  
Highest max.temp. 12.2c on 7th  
Lowest max. temp. 5.4c on 27th  
Ave. max. temp. 9.0c  
Lowest min. temp. -1.3c on 8th.  
Highest min. temp. 8.4c on 5th  
Ave. min. temp. 3.8c  
Ave. temp. for January 6.4c

### February 2020

Total rainfall for month 185.1mm  
This is the highest February rainfall  
total I have ever recorded. Previous  
highest was February 1990 with  
181.5mm  
Highest rainfall in 24hrs. 24.3mm on  
26th

Highest max. temp. 9.1c on

21st

Lowest max. temp. 5.1c on 12th  
Ave. max. temp. 7.5c  
Lowest min. temp. -1.6c on 13th  
Highest min. temp. 7.4c 5th  
Ave. min. temp. 1.7c  
Ave temp. for February 4.6c

During the storm on the 9th. Feb. my barograph  
dropped down to 947mb, this is the lowest reading I've  
ever recorded

### March 2020

Total rainfall for month 102.7mm  
Highest rainfall in 24hrs. 44.5mm on 1st.  
Highest max. temp. 11.2c on 24th.  
Lowest max. temp. 6.2c on 1st.  
Ave. max. temp. 8.3c  
Lowest min. temp. -2.0c on 5th.  
Highest min. temp. 6.4c on 23rd/31st.  
Ave.min. temp. 2.9c  
Ave. temp. for March 5.6c.

In the early hours of Sunday 29th. Mar. my barograph  
read 1053mb, this is the highest reading I've ever rec-

## THE BLETHER®

If you have something to contribute or ideas for the newsletter then please contact Debs or Vincent:

Phone: 01856 701444

Email: [debs@theblether.org.uk](mailto:debs@theblether.org.uk)

Snail mail: Loft, Longhope, KW16 3PQ

All items welcome