

Connect

monthly

**February
2018**

School Bus
Take Care



**On the
buses**

moray
council



Donald McRae, Public Transport Manager

Dear Colleagues

Having grown up with an ever developing interest in public transport and a fine taste in quality anoraks, I joined Moray Council in April 2001 to manage the Home to School Transport brief within the Public Transport Unit.

Prior to that, I was raised to the West of Inverness in a rural community, studied at Aberdeen University (well I knew where the best student pubs were) and then joined the bus industry, initially a nationalised environment which passed into employee ownership and then to the Stagecoach Group. This saw me based in the Highlands, Renfrewshire, Ayrshire and Glasgow before moving back north to Moravian shores. It was during my time with Stagecoach in Moray that I jumped to the dark side and joined the local authority.

I've now been manager of the PTU for three and half years and, in that time, we've continued to develop our award-winning demand responsive bus service. We provide this lifeline service using vehicles in

our fleet already operating on schools and adult day services - which offers a five hour window in the day to provide what's known by many as 'Dial M'.

Home to School Transport and Adult Day Services are amongst the largest responsibilities within the team and by the time this goes to print, we'll be ready to go out to procure new contracts for a further five years. It's always an apprehensive moment – making sure we've dotted every 'i' and crossed every 't' – but we all look forward to seeing it come together for August 2018.

The most inspiring part of this role are the people we employ, both directly and through our partner/supplier coach and taxi operators. Our drivers are out early and, at this time of year, often facing challenging weather and road conditions. The 'extra miles' these folk go to regularly, often without our knowledge, is greatly appreciated.

Our school escorts work with a number of vulnerable younger people, making the home to school

journey with the youngster on what, for them, can be a very challenging part of the day.

Likewise, our school crossing patrol team are also out early and in all weathers ensuring traffic stops to allow parents and their young children to cross safely. And lastly, but certainly not least, our small PTU team provide knowledge, experience, empathy and dedication in ensuring that we deliver the best service that we can.

On a more personal note, with travel high on my list of 'to do' things every year, the next holiday will be a return visit to Flanders and city of Ghent, where I'll be found gazing at trains and tramcars, toasting myself in coffee shops and finding more than the occasional glass of wine along the way.

However, and I guess many of the 'Heads Up' contributors confirm this, Moray and Scotland's north east coast is a great place to stay and for now, it's most definitely home.

Donald

Editorial

Welcome to your February *Connect*! Glad to see we've made it through January – dry or otherwise – and are girding our loins for the year ahead.

We've got some more introductions to councillors in this edition. You might be one of those that said in the recent staff survey that you don't know who they are or what they do, so here's your chance to find out a bit more.

Our friends in the Public Transport Unit (PTU) are the main feature, what a busy section that is! Just finding time to talk to us was a task in itself, but despite the pressures they all seem to maintain a good sense of humour.

Talking of pressures, the budget is set this month and it's likely that some colleagues are going to be affected by the decisions coming out of it, so let's all be aware that this may not be the best start to the year for some.

Team Connect

Peter Jones
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

Sharon Dunbar
MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

Angus McNicholl
DESIGNER



Even at a cost of over £4 million per year, transporting more than 2,600 kids to school each day is no mean feat.

But that's the job that our Public Transport Unit (PTU) bravely tackles. They're responsible for keeping the wheels going round and round, so to speak. And there are a lot of them. Wheels, that is.

To give you an idea of the size of the job, we've got 33 full and part-time bus drivers, 28 Council owned buses, a total of 140 contracted coaches and taxis and 44 school escorts all pulling together to pull off the serious logistical headache of providing school transport in Moray.

But it's approached with steely determination and a sense of humour. Essential, says Donald MacRae, who has headed up the PTU for over three years.

"We encounter some weird and wonderful situations," he said.

"I won't name names, but just last month we had a student (who shares a moniker with a late musical legend) stubbornly refuse to get into his allocated taxi after school. Inevitably, the office broke into song, singing 'Rebel, Rebel!'"

As *Connect* went to press, the PTU was putting the finishing touches to swathes of tendering documents which will secure the provision of the service for the next few years. It's a lot of responsibility and something which the team have to get right.

It's the culmination of months of work, and ensures every pupil who is entitled to school transport receives it. In addition to home to school transport, they're also tendering for adult day services transport, Moray-wide subsidised bus services and on-demand dial-a-bus services, and ad-hoc school and taxi hire.

Suffice to say, with a remit this big the team do encounter some bumps along the road.

Carole Dawson, Public Transport Officer (Education), is responsible for home-to-school transport, and transport for looked-after children under social work care.

She told *Connect*: *"No matter how far in advance you've planned your day, it could all change as soon as you walk through the door and find out that a school crossing patroller or driver isn't going to make it into work."*



"The feedback we get from pupils, parents and the schools makes it all worthwhile"

Carole Dawson
Public Transport Officer
(Education)

"Our relationship with our education colleagues is improving all the time too. We have a great working relationship with our Educational Support Officers in particular, which makes life easier for us in planning suitable transport."

Angela, who in her role as Technical Clerk manages the school escorts and provides the PTU financial system support, agrees that there has been an improvement, adding: *"Before I felt that school escorts were regarded as being 'outsiders', but now they're seen as playing more a part of the school day because, without them, many of our pupils wouldn't make it to school."*

"We're a good cross-department team and work well together."

Teamwork requires great communication, and the eyes and ears on the road belong to Traffic Assistant, Norman McLeod. He also maintains in excess of 200 bus shelters in Moray, and is currently dealing with a mysterious bus shelter incident on the A96 near Brodie, of which we can say no more about just now...

But what about when it all goes wrong? The team recall the nightmares they've been confronted with over the years, with one standing out in particular.

"We first heard about this particular incident when someone contacted us and told us to watch a YouTube clip," says Donald.

"When we looked at the video we saw a bus driver who'd grounded a bus on a tight bend between Spey Bay and Nether Dallachy, and had asked a local farmer to help him move the bus using a forklift."

"A prolonged cold spell can make some of our more challenging routes even more difficult for the drivers"

Donald McRae
Public Transport Manager



"We've also been faced with last-minute requests from schools that pupils require transport from remote locations – a fun problem to solve just before you're going on holiday!"

Stevie Robertson, Public Transport Officer (Community & Local Services) looks after community and social work transport, bus stop infrastructure and Dial M. He says that like most departments in the council, an ongoing challenge is meeting increased demand from the public while facing shrinking resources.

"What we sometimes find is that operational vehicles like gritters and waste trucks can take priority over workshop maintenance our buses, as they need to get back on the route to service winter road maintenance or scheduled collections. Whilst we understand this, it results in some juggling to keep everything moving."

"Also, because of the specialist vehicles in our fleet, we occasionally have to send these outwith Moray for servicing or maintenance," says Transport Coordinator, Sharon McGlinchey, who organises maintenance of the vehicles, holiday and sickness cover and line manages drivers and school crossing patrollers.

But the team says the highlights far outweigh the low points, and it's the relationship between the kids and our PTU colleagues which is the real strength of the service.

"The feedback we get from pupils, parents and the schools makes it all worthwhile," says Carole, who cites her role getting children with special needs to school as particularly meaningful.

"I really enjoy that because it's so rewarding; you can see the difference when a pupil can make it to school and back without any difficulty, when it could have been a real struggle beforehand."

*"It's just brilliant
I love my job"*
Edwina Fraser
Driver



"The trouble was, not all the kids were off the bus beforehand. Some of the pupils had got off to film it, and that's what we were watching online!"

Of course there are the usual seasonal headaches, although despite a particularly chilly winter there has only been one day this season when school transport hasn't made it to pick up Glenlivet pupils.

"Ice has been a particular issue this winter;" says Donald. "A prolonged cold spell can make some of our more challenging routes even more difficult for the drivers."

But absolute faith is placed in the drivers' judgement – if they say a road isn't safe to travel on, the PTU back their decision.

"The nature of some of our roads, particularly the Glen of Newmill, the Craigellachie Primary route and Tomintoul through the Braes of Glenlivet, all make for bonnie driving on a summer morning, but the reality in winter is that they are challenging to say the least," says Donald.

Sharon says it's not just the roads themselves which can present a problem, but the lack of mobile signal if a situation does arise.

"We had a previous incident where a bus broke down, thankfully with no kids on board, but our driver was forced to walk half a mile to phone the incident in because there was no signal in the area."

Drivers of course are the lifeblood of the service, and Edwina Fraser has been a bus driver with the council for 24 years. She cites the highlight of her career with us as meeting all the kids which use the bus service.

"It's just brilliant – I love my job. I've met some characters but I can honestly say I've never had any behaviour problems with the pupils I've worked with, and the parents are fantastic too."

The changeable weather, especially in the winter, Edwina agrees is the real nightmare.

"One time the road was closed between Dufftown and Glenrinnies so the school phoned and asked me to come and get the kids to take them home. But how was I to manage that when the road was shut?"

"In the end it was organised for a snowplough to clear the road, with us following behind for the return journey. Exciting stuff!"





Shrove Tuesday or, as most of us refer to it, Pancake Day is just around the corner. With hundreds of recipes and thousands of tempting topping combinations, we couldn't possibly list them all. So instead, here's one fool-proof recipe for perfect pancakes.

- Makes 6-8 pancakes
- 60g plain flour
- 1 medium egg
- 175ml milk
- Oil (for frying)

Mix all the ingredients together to make a batter, then gently pour into a pre-heated frying pan. Cook until the edges curl and bubbles start to appear in the batter. Toss or flip and cook for another minute or so, then serve with a topping of your choice.

Top tip: for best results leave prepared batter settle in the fridge for a few hours before use.



Valentine's Day is just a few days away and if you're planning a special gift or treat for your loved one, remember to use your employee discount!

We've secured discounts from local leisure outlets, retailers and restaurants to make your money go that little bit further.

We've got offerings from jewellers, hoteliers, gyms and even a furniture and carpet store (not the most romantic gift, though!) so be savvy with your spending and check where you can receive a discount locally before you part with your hard-earned cash.

INTERNSHIP



GOAL



SKILLS



KNOWLEDGE



MENTORING



PRACTICE



OPPORTUNITY



TRAINING

Back in November we introduced you to the latest cohort of Career Ready recruits, who're mentoring S5 pupils through a two year programme to prepare them for life beyond the school timetable.

With the latest programme up and running, the attention for Claire Wall, our employee development adviser who takes on mentor recruitment within Moray Council on behalf of Career Ready, is to sign up at least eight volunteers for the next intake.

Connect caught up with Claire to find out what kind of employee can support a Career Ready participant, and what they can expect in return.

"The biggest selling point is I can offer is the relationship between the mentors and the interns. The interns say that when they come here for their internship they admit they don't have a clue – they're nervous and scared."

"By the time they're making their presentation at the end of their internship their confidence has soared – they're like completely different people. For the mentors, it's a great sense of pride."

But who should become a Career Ready mentor? Someone with the time to support an intern, Claire emphasises.

"The biggest thing that the mentors say they don't appreciate beforehand is the time commitment, you don't want to short change those who're taking part."

Interns spend an academic year being mentored then take part in a four-week paid internship here at the council, then the remainder of the academic year being mentored.

"I offer a support meeting for mentors at the beginning of the programme, where we outline expectations and chat through any questions they have."

career ready

"Good social skills are vital for any would-be mentor, and to be able to relate to young people. Interns often need more detailed instruction and encouragement, so patience is a must. You'll also have to be able to overcome challenges as they crop up, for example if an intern doesn't have email or has run out of credit on their phone."

We're part of a network of organisations across Moray providing opportunities within the Career Ready programme, and there is always a high demand from schools to take up these placements.

If you're interested, feel free to contact Claire for an informal chat before committing. If we're oversubscribed, or if you fancy taking part but can't commit the time this year, we'll keep a reservation list.

So, if you're up for the challenge of supporting Moray's young people on whatever career path they choose, Claire says you can't go far wrong with becoming a Career Ready mentor.

"If you have something to offer these young people then please take part – they need you."

Since I last wrote about the Moray Growth Deal in *Connect* (August 2017 Issue page 2), a lot has happened. I've summarised this below, but as a quick reminder the vision for the deal is: 'by 2030, Moray is an outward facing and ambitious community, a thriving and well connected commercial base, an environment in which quality of life is valued and supported and a destination of choice.'

Community engagement

We have been out and about at public events throughout the region publicising the deal and asking people to get involved by completing the online survey. Among the events we attended were Speyfest, Keith Country Show, and Elgin Food and Drink Festival.

At the same time briefings have been given to various community groups, such as the Joint Community Councils, Community Engagement Group, Community Planning Partnership, Moray Forum, and TSi.

An awareness day and workshop sessions were held with students at Moray College to get their views on the vision for the deal, and to capture thoughts on why young people choose to stay in the area or leave.

This period of community engagement ran from 14 July to 30 September, and during that time 1,132 people completed the survey. The results have been analysed and published on the My Moray website (www.mymoray.co.uk/moray-growth-deal-meets-overwhelming-public-support/). These will form part of an ongoing review of the programme's vision and objectives.

Political engagement

We published our Statement of Intent, an initial document to set out the proposed programme for Moray (also available on My Moray) we held a series of briefings with local the MP/MSPs, and with Lord Duncan, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Scotland Office (UK Government) and Keith Brown, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work (Scottish Government).

These briefings were followed up with meetings of officials from both governments to agree the next stage of the process. All those briefed were supportive of a deal for Moray and liked the direction the Statement of Intent showed we were taking, which is very encouraging.



Business engagement

An important part of the deal from both governments' perspectives is the involvement and support of the private sector. This can be clearly seen from other City deals (eg. Sir Ian Wood at Aberdeen). To achieve this we are in the middle of a series of meetings with business leaders with the aim of creating a Business Assembly to help take the deal forward with input from this sector.

Business case development

The deal will be driven by the projects within it. Along with all the engagement activity, the project team has been developing high level business cases for submission to both governments. Unfortunately, until we know which projects are supported and which are not, we can't do the next stage of engagement on the projects themselves, several of which are designed to address major issues in our rural communities in particular. Submission of our business cases for review is the first step in the negotiation process to an initial agreement, in which the projects which will progress would be set out. We originally hoped to complete this process by the end of 2017, but as all areas of Scotland are now in the process of submitting proposals the date for this initial agreement will depend on capacity elsewhere, including funding capacity. In short, Moray needs to be seen as at the front of the funding queue.

For this reason it is important that we maintain the profile of Moray's proposal and that politicians and business leaders continue to lobby strongly on our behalf.



Workforce Culture

Recognising a colleague's achievement, having tea break with them or holding the door open in the corridor all contribute towards the environment we work in and define the workplace culture. At Moray Council we're developing a positive workforce culture, where employees feel valued and respected, problems are addressed, behaviours are positive and people management is described as great.

The Workforce Culture Group was put together after you told us back in 2013 about issues of victimisation and harassment in the workplace. Since then, a number of actions have been completed both across the council and within lower scoring services. Work has been ongoing and last year's Employee Survey has allowed us to monitor progress. Now that the results of the survey are available, along with a new administration, it was an opportune time to re-establish the group and meet some of the new faces around the table:

- Roddy Burns (Chief Executive)
- Denise Whitworth (Acting Corporate Director – Corporate Services)
- Frances Garrow (Acting Joint Head of HR & ICT)
- Councillor Sonya Warren
- Councillor George Alexander
- Councillor James Allan
- Sandy McGillvray (Unite)
- Susan Slater (EIS)
- Suzanne Wright (Unison)

At the most recent meeting the group discussed progress so far, updated the action plan and agreed a focus for 2018. The group will now meet every other month to discuss how the action plan is progressing and monitor improvements. So look out for regular updates and find out how you can contribute towards developing a more positive workplace environment. Take a look at the workforce culture section on Interchange and discover some of the useful documents already available.

If you have any questions relating to the Workforce Culture Group, contact HR by emailing hr@moray.gov.uk or telephoning 01343 563261; alternatively you can contact any member of the group.

HR Noticeboard

Edenred Childcare Vouchers

Just a reminder that from April changes are planned to the childcare voucher scheme and you'll no longer be able to sign up. If you're already in the scheme then you can continue to claim as normal.

As we mentioned in December, the new scheme that is set to replace childcare vouchers is called Tax-Free Childcare. Under the new scheme, eligible families will get 20 per cent of their annual childcare costs paid for by the government. It works that for every 80p you pay into a newly-created Childcare Account, the government will contribute 20p. This could mean government contribution of up to £2,000 per child as the scheme assumes a maximum of £10,000 per year childcare costs per child.

Wee Winter Walk Challenge

To inspire a bit of activity the Healthy Working Lives group have another walk challenge taking place this month. By the time we went to press, six teams had signed up!

The challenge is for each member of the team to walk 10,000 steps per day, this should total 1,120,000 steps for the team over the four-week challenge.

Keep checking the interchange for updates on how the teams are getting on. And, even if you're not taking part in the challenge, why don't you try for 10,000 steps a day and see if you can do it?

Time to spare, Time to share?

Do you have a couple of spare hours on a Wednesday afternoon?

Social worker Alex is looking for volunteers to share their skills and hobbies with their newly-formed women's group – *Connect*.

It could be anything, but here are a few suggestions:

- cooking
- fitness
- art
- beauty
- dance
- drama
- music

If you've got a hobby or skill you'd like to share with the group, get in touch with Alex on **01343 557200**

WORKING ON A PROJECT?

Working on a project at the moment? Then you need the Project Management Office's (PMO) bitesize peer discussion sessions.

These 45-minute sessions are informal and a great way to network with other project managers and colleagues. The sessions centre on a 15-minute presentation followed by Q&A and peer discussion. If you would like to attend either of these sessions then please book a place using CLIVE.

If you want to talk to someone before booking then get in touch with david.moreton@moray.gov.uk (3605) or david.morris@moray.gov.uk (3801) or call Mark (3810) or Shona (3691).

Negotiating & Influencing - 7 February @ 10am in Annexe Room 3

'Negotiation is the discussion between parties aimed at reaching a decision, while influencing is a technique used to affect the behaviour and actions of others.'

Association of Project Management book of Knowledge (2012)

Change Management - 21 February @ 10am in Meeting Room 3

'Change management is a collective term for all approaches to preparing and supporting individuals, teams, and organisations in making organisational change.'

Budget Update

It will not have escaped your notice we've been discussing the council's budget proposals with everyone. In addition to the formal workforce consultation process, we've used our social media, an online survey, email and hard copy returns to attract comment and debate from the public and employees who have also commented on the wider public consultation. It's been gratifying to see much more involvement from you in this debate than before.

Although carried out over a short period, we had over 800 surveys completed, 1200 comments on social media and 150 emails submitted. This excludes those sent by employees via their line manager or workforce representatives.

All the responses are being collated and made available to elected councillors, who will be setting the council's budget for the 2018/19 financial year on February 14. That's when they decide what proposals from their draft document are to be implemented.

Following those decisions many of us are going to be affected to some degree. This could mean more work or increased responsibility as staff numbers reduce, a change in working environment the team some of us have been used to, reduced hours and in some cases redundancy. Losing colleagues in this way is distressing, and unfortunately signs are that the reductions will continue for the foreseeable future.

So please be aware that those around you might need a bit of extra understanding and support at this time.

Celebrations



Although Environmental Protection were unable to host a Burns supper this year, they still managed to get into the spirit of the occasion! They celebrated with some homemade goodies including haggis parcels, fish pie, shortbread and millionaire's shortbread all washed down with Irn-Bru.

One member of the team even crocheted a haggis – complete with wonky legs!

Alex Morrison, Team Leader of the Community Care Access Team, celebrated his 60th birthday in January. His colleagues went all out, decorating his workstation and presenting him with a fabulous chocolate cake – yum!



Two retirees from Kinloss Primary School are pictured below. Fiona Sutherland, a cook, has worked for us for an impressive 24 years, while catering assistant Mary Whyte has racked up 16 years of service. Enjoy your retirement!



Councillor's Spotlight



Results from the recent employee survey show that many of you were unclear what our councillors do or who they were. To help address that, here's the second of a series featuring prominent councillors introducing themselves...

This opportunity to introduce myself and share the role of a councillor in your magazine is very welcome.

I arrived in Moray to take up a post in Forres with Grampian Regional Council just after training in Youth and Community at Aberdeen College of Education.

My 21 years employment in the council has helped me return as a Councillor, as some former colleagues are still working for Moray Council. When I left the council I took up a short-term post with Children 1st, supporting young people in their communities. Thereafter I worked with families at RAF Kinloss for 11 years until the base closed and the Army Barracks replaced it.

I explain this because I feel it may help the understanding of my 'Independent' stance; no political party but a commitment to do the best for Moray within the Administration group.

This is particularly brought into sharp focus as we approach one of the most difficult budgets the council has ever faced. The breadth of population we are engaging with on this is wide and the positive relationships already built within communities, the third sector, NHS and the military demonstrate how well we

can do things. Looking ahead, the opportunities are still there for capacity building. It's important to remain positive even as we approach unprecedented times, where communities will be expected to take on more.

Another area I am heavily involved in as Chair of the council's Communities Committee is the evolution of the Moray Integrated Joint Board. This change to bring health and social care staff and ideas together was a steep learning curve during the last administration and I am sure will continue to be a large part of our work in the future.

We as Councillors are expected to set strategy, agree policies and set the direction of travel for where we want to be in the next few years. A big influence on this is through our community involvement with local Moray groups, from where we can monitor and hear from the 'coalface' the impact of our decisions is being felt. As a big part of that 'coal face' we like to hear from you too, because as Richard Branson said: *"Clients do not come first. Employees come first. If you take care of your employees, they will take care of the clients."*

Cllr Lorna Creswell
Ward 8 Forres



Moray profile

- 8 wards
- 26 councillors
- 1 Convener
- 1 Leader

I was delighted to be asked to write a small piece for Connect and to introduce myself to you all. I was elected back in May 2017 to represent the Fochabers Lhanbryde Ward. There can be no greater honour in politics than to represent your home area, and I was truly grateful to all those who gave me their first preference vote which saw me elected for the first time to local government.

Having been brought up in Fochabers, attending both Milne's Primary and High Schools before furthering studies at Moray College then through in Aberdeen, my career aspirations at that time were to follow a computing path. I was lucky enough to work as a technician at BT's flagship cable television experiment in Aberdeen, a company which latterly became Atlantic Telecom. By that time I had risen the ranks to become the IT System Manager looking after a bespoke billing system which ran on IBM mainframe and then mid-range platforms.

Telecom were very much a customer-focused organisation and their in-house training in customer service was certainly very useful to me in all aspects of my career.

The 26 elected members are no different to anyone else here in Moray; we are all affected by the changes and difficulties we face as a local authority. This – perhaps more than anything – made me seek election to work hard to better the area for my family so that they have a Moray to be proud of in years to come.

As a councillor we are in a way almost like a football club manager. We are lucky to be given the opportunity to be in

effect caretakers for the council, to promote its growth and future stability. This opportunity will be judged by the electorate as to how successful our endeavours will have been.

I'm chairman of the Planning and Regulatory Services Committee, a role that comes with a lot of weekly reading materials, some brought to committee and some which is dealt with by the council's great team in planning.

As many of you will know that we have our Local Development Plan for 2020 currently out for public consultation at a number of events throughout Moray. Planning can make such a significant change in the physical growth and development of Moray, so it's important that each and every one has the chance to have their say or to highlight concerns. This isn't my Moray, or your Moray, it's everyone's Moray.

In my short time in the council and in the chair, I've been working hard to develop good working relationships with staff and the committee members. I find it encouraging to know that we have elected members who are prepared to leave political allegiances at the front door to work together and deliver what's best for the area.

I thank you for the opportunity to introduce myself. I welcome any comments or suggestions from you, whatever the topic may be, especially if I can be of any help or assistance.

*Cllr Marc Macrae
Ward 4 Fochabers Lhanbryde*



Keiran's Legacy

More than £2,000 has been raised by our kind-hearted colleagues for Keiran's Legacy.

The charity was set up following 16 year-old Keiran McKandie's death in 2016, to provide defibrillators in the local area. Around 20 defibrillators have been provided since, including 10 in police vehicles – as they're often first responders to an emergency call – several in local communities and one in Elgin Academy, where Keiran was a pupil.

David Sweeney, an Architectural Assistant within our housing and property section, organised a 'dress down Friday' to coincide with 'flexi-Friday' – the last day in each flexi period. Those taking part in the monthly dress down day donated £2 each time, and in the last year have raised £200 for the charity.

"Lots of people knew Keiran, know the family or have kids that age themselves. It's a charity that's very close to our hearts."

Meanwhile Ian Walker and Shaun Kerr, who took part in a coast-to-coast cycling challenge – named Lighthouse2Lighthouse – last June to raise funds for Keiran's Legacy, supported by colleague Stewart Taylor who ensured they were well fed and on hand to repair any bike-related faults.

The duo set off from Ardnamurchan and endured heavy showers at the start of the challenge, which eased off and a tail wind saw them ahead of schedule and able to conserve some energy for the gruelling 236 mile cycle.

"Neither of us suffered any mechanical breakdowns, but sitting on a bike all day did take its toll on

our bodies. Stiff and sore shoulders became the norm, with liberal reapplication of Chamois cream on the more delicate body parts to minimise aches, pains and chafing," they said.

Having passed through Aviemore at 7pm and continuing on their journey north, they hit Huntly in time to see what they dubbed the 'alarming nightlife and all the debauchery that goes with it', prompting them to pick up the pace. They arrived at Boddam Lighthouse at 4.41am and gratefully received a dram before Shaun, true to his word, stripped to his boxers and braved a plunge in the North Sea.

Keiran's mum, Sandra, spoke with *Connect* after receiving the cheques for £200 and £2,100 respectively at Moray Council HQ in Elgin.

"As Keiran's advocate, I want to sincerely thank all the staff for everything they've been doing to raise money."

"This is about Keiran contributing to society and how he continues to make a difference even though he isn't here anymore – that's just the type of lad he was."

"I think a lot of people knew Keiran and he has touched a lot of people's hearts, many that we weren't even aware of. He just loved life, sports and people – he was always smiling."

One defibrillator including training, a prep kit and secure casing, costs around £1,500. If you've been inspired to fundraise for Keiran's Legacy you can get in touch by emailing keiranslegacy@outlook.com. Sandra is putting a team of walkers together for Aberdeen's kiltwalk later this year.