

A photograph of three children standing in a grassy field, holding hands. The child in the center wears a red quilted raincoat, a yellow skirt, and red rain boots. The child on the left wears a blue and yellow raincoat and yellow rain boots. The child on the right wears a blue and green raincoat and green rain boots. All have rainbow-colored cuffs. A purple banner is at the top, and a purple triangle is at the bottom right.

Connect
monthly

**September
2018**

**TEAMWORK
MAKES THE
DREAM WORK**

moray
council

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Editorial

3 Welcome to your September edition of *Connect*! With the holidays over for many it's time to get back into work mode again, and there's a lot going on. Naturally the over-riding issue is how the council will balance its budget next Spring, and many senior managers have been hard at it for months looking at ways to close the gap. It's not going to be easy or pleasant, and we'll have our part to play.

10 However, our main story shows just what we can do when the money's there. The team behind scaling up for the increased early learning and childcare provision (ELC) have refurbished the Lady Cathcart building in Buckie to accommodate demand in that town, and what a fabulous job they've done. The ELC provision across Scotland is being funded by the Scottish Government, and Moray's efforts are being seen by the government as showing how it should be done. The new classrooms at Milne's in Fochabers are also part of the programme.

12 The team's plans for the roll-out of ELC across Moray over the next two years are already well advanced, and more nurseries will be coming on stream soon.

13 It's a relief to see that John Stewart, one of our engineers, has made a good recovery after a heart attack. This is in large part to the quick actions of his colleague, Kenna, who saw how ill he was and whisked him to hospital. With more than 60% of our workforce over the age of 45, we all need to keep an eye on our colleagues and learn to recognise the signs of a heart attack or stroke.

www.nhs.uk/conditions/heart-attacksymptoms
www.nhs.uk/conditions/stroke/symptoms

Team Connect



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COMMUNICATIONS
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Angus McNicholl
DESIGNER



HeadsUp

Joanna Shirriffs, Senior Project Manager - ELC

Dear Colleagues

Following a degree in modern languages I started my career in the private sector, working as a project manager in London and Paris for the investment banking arm of Barclays Bank. I soon realised that the world of finance wasn't for me and left banking to study for a Master's degree in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney.

I returned to the UK in 2001 to continue my studies and teach at the University of Bradford but in 2003 was tempted north by a Scotsman (who I later married) and I have been living in the North-East of Scotland ever since.

I've worked in the public sector since 2003, using my project management (and often conflict resolution!) skills in a number of different roles, firstly with Aberdeen City Council and then with Aberdeenshire Council where I worked as a Project Coordinator in Education & Recreation, Policy Manager in the Chief Executive's Service, and latterly as ICT Service Manager responsible for project and information management.

Over the years I'd been spending more and more time in Moray with my family, loving the countryside and the beautiful beaches, and in January 2017 we decided to leave Aberdeen and move even further north for a better quality of life. I

was very keen to work in the area too and in April 2017 I moved across to Moray Council to take on the role of Senior Project Manager – Early Learning & Childcare Expansion.

The Early Learning & Childcare expansion is a major Scottish Government initiative to increase the number of funded hours of Early Learning & Childcare (ELC) available for two, three and four year olds, and for these hours be offered in a more flexible way, including during the school holidays. We currently offer 600 hours of funded ELC per academic year, and we need to increase to 1140 hours for every child per year by August 2020 – which isn't that far away!

This a major challenge for Moray Council, and for all local authorities across Scotland. You can read about how the team is embracing the challenge in the cover feature of this *Connect* edition.

Every day is different for me and the team – developing our plans for the expansion, while at the same time working with nurseries that have already started offering the expanded hours (phase one started in August 2018) so that we can learn from what works well, and make changes where things aren't working so well. We are also liaising closely with the Scottish Government, and with the other seven local

authorities in the Northern Alliance to share ideas and combine our efforts. There is so much going on that some days it feels like I'm trying to solve an almost unsolvable jigsaw puzzle, but the team and I are hugely motivated by the potential of what we are trying to do – we know that investing in good quality early learning and childcare and family support will lead to better education, health and economic outcomes for all our children.

When I am not at work I'm a mum to my two children first and foremost, but I also enjoy walking my dog, running and travelling. Languages are still a passion and I will sometimes be found hiding away at home translating children's literature for contacts in France when I have the time.

Best wishes
Jo

EARLY LEARNING & CHILDCARE

**TEAMWORK
MAKES THE
DREAM WORK**

ELC



■ Pearl Gray (Catering), June Kavanagh (HR) and Kirsty Boyle (Comms & Engagement), just some of the team working to roll out ELC in Moray.



Teamwork makes the dream work... so says Caractacus Potts in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang and so the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) team have discovered while rolling out the Scottish Government's expansion of funded nursery hours.

Working towards the 2020 deadline for providing 1,140 hours of ELC for three and four year-olds, and eligible twos, the project team have relied on a number of existing council departments to assist with the mammoth task of preparing for the changes.

Finance: Where would we be without accountant Nicky Gosling keeping us on track? Finance has overseen the project spending, from drafting the financial template to the distribution of purchase cards for new Nursery Managers. Involved in all aspects of the building/refurbishments to the staff contracts, finance is a huge part of the expansion.

ICT: With new nurseries being created and a load of new staff starting in each phase, David McKay and his ICT team have been instrumental in ensuring the IT infrastructure is in place for a smooth transition from school-based nursery to standalone local authority nursery.

Design: Moray MacLeod and his merry band of designers and architects have been involved since the very beginning, by designing and costing the refurbishments needed to meet the demand of the expansion. From small-scale jobs to brand new buildings, and everything in between, Moray is bringing the ELC vision to life by creating modern childcare settings.

Legal: The expansion has given the education and social care team the chance to introduce long overdue contractual changes so Georgina Anderson has been casting her eye over everything legal. Leases for partner providers, staff contract changes and Scottish Government legislation are all considered in this project.



Catering: We're lucky to have lured Pearl Gray away from catering on a secondment to oversee the catering, cleaning and janitorial changes the expansion brings. Providing funded nursery meals and opening longer hours has an effect on various departments – thankfully Pearl has cooked up a fantastic plan to see us through the project.

HR: Our dedicated HR Officer for the project, June Kavanagh, has been concentrating on the staffing requirements for the expansion while also implementing workforce development plans. With 126 FTE staff being needed in Moray Council nurseries alone for the expansion (10,000 across Scotland!) June has developed the new staff contracts, which will see our nurseries open year-round for the first time if they are required.

Comms & Engagement: Ensuring parents are informed of their entitlement; keeping staff up-to-date; highlighting the increased career opportunities in ELC and organising any associated events are the main workstreams undertaken by our dedicated ELC Comms Officer, Kirsty Boyle. The next phase of the expansion is going to see even more consultation with parents and the public around future ELC provision, which will occupy Kirsty's time alongside her comms work for the [ELC Academy](#). Check out the recently released [ELC in Moray video](#) to see how it's going!

First Stop...

... on the ELC train is Lady Cathcart in Buckie. The first of our big refurbishments for the expansion is the old school building, which will now house a 50-place nursery in the ground floor with a specialist Additional Support Needs base. Contractors have been beavering away all summer fitting new kitchens and toilets, overhauling the classrooms and turning the outside space into a fantastic, safe learning area.

With a new heating system being installed next year and a trial of two year old funded places from September, Lady Cathcart will be a much sought-after nursery, also much needed in Buckie with the existing school nurseries bursting at the seams.





Next stop...

... phase two of the expansion. With the first phase nurseries now running under their new Nursery Manager structure and parents enjoying the flexibility of choosing their hours for the first time in Moray Council nurseries, the ELC team is looking ahead to phase two. Phase two staff and parent information sessions begin in October with all areas being visited before Christmas – and January's registration. Our focus is on ensuring the quality of early learning and childcare for our youngest learners – isn't it great to see all of these Council departments working together to achieve that?

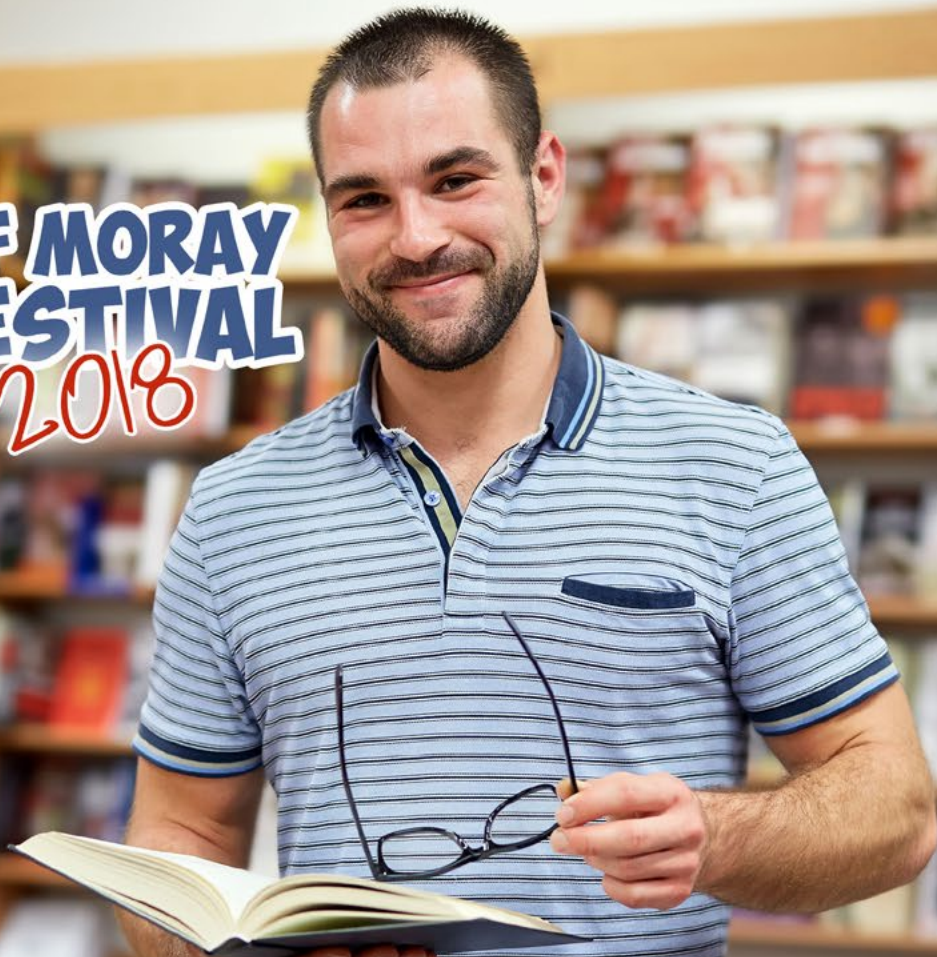
ELC Expansion Information Sessions

Wednesday 26 September, 2-3pm, HQ Committee Room

Information session for staff

- 🗨 Find out what the Early Learning & Childcare expansion means for you and your department
- 🗨 Learn about the phasing and nursery refurbishment programme
- 🗨 Ask us your questions about ELC – carers, eligibility and more!

SPIRIT OF MORAY BOOK FESTIVAL 2018



The line-up for Moray's popular annual book festival has been revealed and tickets are now on sale. The Spirit of Moray Book Festival runs from 11-15 September and Sally Magnusson and Stuart Cosgrove are just some of the names confirmed to attend.

Sally will be in conversation about her acclaimed debut novel *The Sealwoman's Gift* and Stuart Cosgrove, recently seen on BBC's Rip It Up documentary about Scottish music, will be contemplating *Soul Music and Social Change*.

Best-selling authors Isla Dewar and Fiona Gibson will make an appearance to talk about their recent novels *It Takes One To Know One* and *The Mum Who Had Enough*.

Helen Bellamy talks about her life with artist John Bellamy. Les Wilson will be recounting the sad tale of a World War I disaster which he explored in his book *The Drowned and the Saved*. Naturalist, nature photographer and writer Polly Pullar recounts the antics of pine martens near Ardnamurchan as in her book *A Richness of Martens*.

Following the success of the inaugural literary dinner at last year's festival, Moray libraries are delighted to offer

again a delicious three-course meal prepared and served at Johnstons of Elgin, and this year crowned by an after dinner talk by whisky aficionado and author Charles MacLean.

The schools' programme showcases an array of the finest Scottish talent both new and established. The authors presenting are Emily Dodd, Cathy Cassidy, David MacPhail, Diana Hendry, Chae Strathie, Janis Mackay and Emily MacKenzie. This fine collection of writers and illustrators are set to entertain with stories about pirates, Vikings, pop bands and dancing wildlife.

Families with small children are not forgotten as Bookbug invites those with babies and toddlers to a Family Festival Frolic with songs, rhymes and stories being the order of the day. There are two sessions but places are limited and so booking is essential.

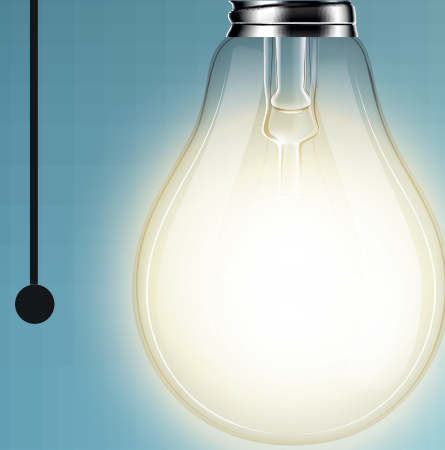
The Spirit of Moray Book Festival public events begin with a free but bookable event presented by the National Library of Scotland about their International Style of Muriel Spark exhibition.

This festival once again has something for everyone and bookings can be made via Moray Council's website:

www.moray.gov.uk/moraybookfestival.



Share your... Bright Ideas!



Our staff suggestion scheme, Bright Ideas!, closed for suggestions on 31 August and since then we have been considering each suggestion. We'll now share a sample of them at our employee conferences and hear from you about what you think.

The outcome of all suggestions will be finalised by Fri 2 November and all of the suggestions will be published soon after.

Activity	Deadline
Launch of Bright Ideas	Wed 1 August
Deadline for submissions	Fri 31 August
Liaise with service managers and provide initial response	Fri 14 September
Refer variety of suggestions to the workforce	Mon 17 until Fri 28 September
Display suggestions at the Employee Conferences	Fri 14 September Wed 19 September Tues 25 September
Finalise outcomes with CMT	Fri 19 October
Respond to and publish Bright Ideas	Fri 2 November

For now though, here's a sneak preview of some of the suggestions we have received so far:

- Centralise the budget for promotion and marketing
- Stop the purchase of clothing as workwear, which is not required as PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)
- Run a recycling campaign within Moray Council buildings so we can lead by example and manage our waste more effectively
- Convert green areas around houses to parking areas to save on grass cutting costs and generate income
- Charge for staff parking, with the exception of staff who have to use their own car for work purposes

HR Noticeboard

STAR Awards Update

Thanks for all of your STAR Award nominations. The nomination window closes on Friday 7 September, so if you haven't nominated a colleague or team yet, there's still time.

Judging will take place later this month, with those shortlisted being put forward for a Colleagues' Choice Award. Details on how to vote in the Colleagues' Choice Awards will be available on the interchange and *Connect* during October.

Holiday Buyback

Struggling to get the balance right between work and home life? Our holiday buyback scheme could help you even things out.

It allows eligible members of staff to buy up to two extra weeks' annual leave. It's a salary sacrifice agreement, so equal instalments are deducted from your pay packet each month over the year. For every extra week you take, you'll sacrifice a week's pay.

Maybe you're planning on moving house next year, going on honeymoon or an extended holiday – holiday buyback could help you strike the right balance and give your life outside of work the time it deserves.

Applications are being taken (for 2019 requests) just now for the scheme, but will close on 30 November to allow Payroll to process all applications in time for the January pay run.

Just so you know, holiday buyback won't have any impact on your pension contributions or entitlements.

You can look at the [guidance and application form](#), to see if it's right for you.

Employee Conference

We're excited as the employee conferences are this month! Planning of the events starts early in the year and here we are in September already! We are very much looking forward to them and hope you are too.

As a reminder dates and venues are given below and letters with further information about the conference will be with you soon if you have confirmed your attendance.

Look out in the October issue of *Connect* for a full round up of the events where we'll share how they went and give an overview of speeches, discussions and feedback – and of course some pics.

Buckie High School	14 September / 8:45* to 13.30
Forres Community Centre	19 September / 8:45* to 13.30
Elgin Bishopmill Hall	25 September / 8:45* to 13.30

*8.45 to 9.00 for registration

North East Scotland Pension Fund Update: Retirement from 55

If you were paying in to the scheme on or after 1 June 2018, you can now retire and access your pension from age 55.

Previously members could only choose to take their Local Government pension before 60 with their employer's permission. However with new changes in force, members can now choose to take their pension from 55 onwards without needing permission. Remember that if you choose to take your pension before your normal pension age, your pension will be reduced due to early payment. The following table details the extent of the reduction:

Number of Years Paid Early	Pension Reduction (Men)	Pension Reduction (Women)	Lump Sum Reduction (Unisex)
0	0%	0%	0%
1	6%	6%	3%
2	11%	11%	6%
3	16%	15%	8%
4	21%	20%	11%
5	25%	24%	14%
6	29%	28%	16%
7	33%	31%	19%
8	36%	35%	21%
9	39%	38%	23%
10	42%	41%	26%
11	46%	44%	N/A
12	49%	47%	N/A
13	52%	50%	N/A

Further information on your pension is available from the North East Scotland Pension Fund:

www.nespf.org.uk.

Childcare Vouchers Update

Scheme now closed to new applicants

We've mentioned before in *Connect* that childcare vouchers through the salary sacrifice scheme would cease in 2018, as last year the government began the roll out of a new scheme called Tax-Free Childcare (TFC) which changes the package of financial support it offers to working parents.

Our childcare voucher provider, Edenred, has confirmed that the scheme will be closed to new entrants from 4 October 2018 – meaning we cannot accept any new applications. Existing scheme members can remain.



email connectnews@moray.gov.uk to get *Connect* emailed to your personal email address, every month.

'PROVERBIAL SENSE'

STAYING SAFE WHEN USING MACHINERY, EQUIPMENT OR IN BUILDINGS

Doug Reid, Health and Safety Manager shares an important message about looking after ourselves and others at work.

Accidents can happen when we are not mindful of the condition of the things that we work with or the environment we work within. Whether it is a tool, a machine, a vehicle, an item of protective equipment, a piece of furniture or the buildings and structures we inhabit; if they are not in a reasonable condition and being maintained then faults can go unnoticed and people can get hurt or services can be disrupted.

When trying to think of an engaging way to pass this message on to you, I was reading recent articles to look for some cutting-edge thinking on the subject. It became clear to me that the wisdom of the ancients rather than current gurus holds true today as proverbs kept coming to mind for each main point. The definition of a proverb is 'a simple and concrete saying, popularly told and repeated, that expresses a truth based on common sense or experience'.

So I'll use things my grandparents & parents used to say and hopefully you'll see what I mean.

Actions speak louder than words: If you are worried about something or someone in your work area, or are experiencing pain or difficulties you think are connected to your work equipment, do something about it. Take a bit of time to carry out a regular inspection of your work area and equipment and if you find any faults then fix them or report them to the appropriate people for action. Always ensure that people are protected from harm until such time as the faults can be fixed. If you feel that you need to escalate an issue or problem then you should speak with your manager in the first instance and if you feel it is still unresolved contact the Health and Safety Team.

A stitch in time saves nine: If you do things when they are first noticed as needing done then often the trouble and cost of fixing them will be much less than when things are left to deteriorate.

A trouble shared is a trouble halved: Passing on information about problems to the appropriate people or departments is vital in making sure everything is as it should be. Chasing up important things, involving others in any areas of concern and involving others in finding the solution to problems are also important things to consider.

If you buy cheap, you'll pay dear (or twice): Making sure that quality, functionality, usability and sustainability are considered alongside cost is important when making decisions on what we buy or who we get to do work for us. The hammer which could only be kept at temperatures above 12°C in case the head fell off was a classic example of that saying being true. If the quality of a product you use to do your work causes concern, raise this with your line manager who can look into any issue further.

Look before you leap (Or fools rush in...): As with any hazard that you have to deal with, before you get stuck in to the work make sure there's an adequate risk assessment and safe system for the job. Ensure you have had the necessary training (and make your manager aware if you have not) and that operator maintenance checks are complete.

Checking that the environment is safe for the work to progress and that all additional safety equipment is available is the other factor to consider prior to work starting. Use a risk assessment approach to help prioritise any actions required, especially when budget pressures exist.



Susan *away*

- Susan, pictured front and centre is joined by colleagues on the steps outside of HQ, as they say goodbye.

After 12 years in Moray Council, Head of Integrated Children's Services, Susan Maclaren, has left us to take up a post as Training Officer with the Care and Learning Alliance.

She said: *"What a phenomenal bunch of people I've worked with; the support, the laughs and the down times – we've just gone on with it!"*

WORLD'S BIGGEST COFFEE MORNING



INVITATION

Who: Everyone!

Where: Council Annexe, Elgin

When: Friday, 21 September 2018

Social events can contribute towards improving working relationships, motivation and engagement, and with this in mind we want to tell you all about our next event – MacMillan Cancer Support, the World's Biggest Coffee Morning.



The World's Biggest Coffee Morning, taking place on Friday 28 September is Macmillan's biggest fundraising event for people facing cancer. It is the perfect chance to catch up with your colleagues over a cuppa and a slice of something delicious, all whilst supporting a great cause.

Last year, Gillian Thomson from Housing organised the event within the Annexe and tells us more about it, *"I've been organising work Macmillan coffee mornings for a number of years now, my mother passed away from cancer at the age of 50 and I decided I'd like to do something almost as a remembrance to her. Macmillan is obviously such a worthwhile cause and they rely solely on charitable donations. As so many peoples' lives are touched by this disease, I feel it's really important to do something, no matter how big or small it all adds up and gives a great sense of achievement and satisfaction in that the money raised is helping someone."*

"My first coffee morning started when I worked for Fife Council prior to my move North, firstly it was just bacon rolls and homemade jams to start with and it has developed from there, here we are today some 20 or so years later and we're hosting a great annual event, last year raising just short of £1,000."

Gillian is organising the event again this year, this time round it will be the week prior on Friday 21 September, so put the date in your diary and come along!

"This is a whole team effort – the lovely team includes my colleagues, Claire, Ivor, Glynis and Trudi also Lorraine, Dennis and Gary from facilities. This event cannot succeed without the generous support and effort from all. The local businesses have been extremely supportive and generous over the years with their donations. Most importantly without the generosity of all staff efforts in baking and donating the event could not be so

successful. The delight I hear and the great comments from all when our fundraising total is declared brings a huge smile and makes everyone feel good, at the end of the day we all recognise the importance of this great cause."

You may want to organise your own event from the location where you work from. Maybe you want to bring in some delicious home baking, have a bake off, hold a raffle, or simply offer to make your teams cup of tea or coffee that day in exchange for a donation. There are lots of different ways to get involved, check out the [Macmillan](https://www.macmillan.org.uk) website for more details.



MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT

Kenna's rapid response gets John on the road to recovery



**WORLD
HEART
DAY**
29 SEPTEMBER

1 0 August 2017 is a day that Chartered Engineer, John Stewart, won't forget. It started like any other work day but soon took a turn for the worse as he suffered a heart attack. Now, a year on, he speaks to *Connect* to raise awareness of the symptoms of a heart attack, and the long-lasting impact it can have on someone's life...

"That morning I'd got up, showered and had breakfast like usual, then got on my motorbike to ride to work from my home in Lossiemouth. I didn't get very far before I started feeling queasy and breathless. In fact, by the time I got to the Buccaneer garage I felt really bad, but continued into work.

"When I got to the Council car park, I couldn't get off my bike; I lay across the tank mustering up the strength to get inside the building because I thought that if something was seriously wrong with me, I needed to be around people.

"I sat down at my desk and my line manager, Neil Fotheringham, asked me if I was ok. I remember replying 'not really, I don't feel well'. Someone was sent for a car to take

me to A&E and then my colleague, Kenna Warren, came in. I asked her to come and sit beside me, which is something I wouldn't normally have done – so she knew something was wrong!

"She took one look at me and said that I needed to get to hospital right away.



Ten minutes later I was in A&E at Dr Gray's; fortunately it was a quiet weekday morning so I was seen almost straight away. At first they thought I was having a panic attack because I was hyperventilating, but after hooking me up to an ECG machine I was suddenly surrounded by medical staff. One of them told me I was having a heart attack, I questioned if I was going to have one and they replied – no, you're having one just now!

"It was surreal, I felt like I had tunnel vision. Having a heart attack looks nothing like it does in the movies – I wasn't writhing around in pain and I couldn't tell you that I was having a heart attack in that moment.

"I was off work initially for six weeks while I recovered at home, but although I was feeling better physically, I began to struggle with my mental health. I researched and found statistics that said one in three people who have surgery or heart attacks fall into depression, and one in six with severe depression.

"I'm lucky; because of the early intervention of Kenna I didn't have a cardiac arrest. The survival rate is only 10 per cent. I've made a full

recovery physically and although I'm still taking regular medication, I feel as good as I've ever felt because there were days [before the heart attack] when I felt tired all time.

"I'm a private person so I don't really share my inner thoughts about what happened, but I'm trying to raise awareness of the symptoms of a heart attack, and also the longer-term health effects. I didn't think I was a typical candidate for a heart attack; I eat well, exercise and don't smoke, which is a huge factor for heart attacks, so it's not something I'd ever thought about – but it can happen to anyone.

"I'd like to give something back for all the help I got with my recovery, maybe do some voluntary work with the British Heart Foundation, supporting people who've had a heart attack and are at risk of depression."

PS – John's also encouraging us to sign up to be organ donors – latest figures show that half of Scots have registered to donate their organs or tissue after their death.

Signing up to the organ donor register is simple.

Get started at www.organdonationscotland.org/yes.

■ John praised his friend and colleague, Kenna, for her quick thinking.





DIGGING FOR HISTORY

Archaeologists will once again descend on Cluny Hill this month for a second excavation, after success in 2017 saw them claim significant and conclusive findings.

After being granted permission by our lands and parks section to carry out the dig on council land, last year's excavation team will be joined by seven new archaeologists for the dig.

Professor Leif Isaksen from Exeter University spoke with *Connect* about last year's dig, and what they hope to achieve this time around.

"Last year's excavation was a huge leap forward in our understanding of the hill," he said.

"Not only did it remove any possible doubt as to its existence, but we also learned that it had at least two cultural phases: the Late Bronze Age when it was constructed, and the Early Iron Age when the site was used for iron-production. It's not clear what happened in between."

"Our principal focus in 2017 was on the surrounding ditch and bank, so this year we intend to investigate the fort's interior."

During this month's excavation, which runs from 8-23 September, the team of archaeologists and community groups will focus on an area east of Nelson's Tower, where a geophysical survey has detected sizeable

magnetic anomalies that may be the result of slag deposits or smelting furnaces. They'll also be looking at a possible entrance on the south side of Cluny Hill.

"Key questions will be to determine the scale of the iron-working operation, whether there is any evidence for domestic activity, and whether the Iron Age levels overlie earlier Bronze Age features," said Leif.

"We're also likely to encounter further charcoal deposits associated with the iron slag, so radiocarbon dating them may give us a clearer idea of how long the hillfort was in use."

Claire Herbert, part of the archaeology team for Moray, Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Councils, said it's great to see investigations continuing at Cluny Hill.

"Even more so when there is once more the opportunity for the public not only to visit and learn about the site, but also to get their hands dirty join and in with the excavation and survey. As a 'lost' hillfort (or enclosed settlement) Cluny Hill is important to the local heritage story as well as at a national level. Fingers crossed for good results again this season"

You can follow the group's progress on the Cluny Hill Dig blog: clunyhilledig.wordpress.com

Lisa's fundraiser

Back in June's edition we shared ICT Officer Lisa Sutherland's efforts, as part of a fundraising committee, to organise a dinner dance, golf day and sell raffle tickets to raise much-needed funds for Aberdeen Royal Infirmary's Oncology Research Fund.

■ Lisa, second left, pictured with the fundraising committee who raised a fantastic sum of money



We're pleased to report that it's been a phenomenal success and the committee has managed to raise an outstanding £34,960! This blows their previous fundraising total of £23,000 for Macmillan out of the water and is a massive achievement.

Speaking to *Connect*, Lisa said: "In the end more than 9,000 raffle tickets were sold – they had to be folded up and put in a paddling pool before the draw could go ahead!"

"I'm absolutely thrilled with the amount we've managed to raise and would like to say a big thanks to colleagues who purchased raffle tickets; we had nine members of staff win prizes but many, many more who bought tickets and I'm grateful for their support."

Bob's Buddies Bikeit Tribute

■ L-R: Louise, Mark, Carl, Tracey and Don



Colleagues have paid tribute to Research and Information Officer, Bob Ramsay, by getting on their bikes to mark his love of cycling on Cycle to Work Day (15 August).

It was organised by Bob's colleague and fellow RIO, Carl Bennett, who spoke with *Connect* after the event.

"Following Bob's sudden and completely unexpected death just two weeks ago, the team in the office are finding ways to come to terms with what has happened," he said.

"Two years ago myself, Louise and Bob participated in Cycle to Work Day and we felt it would be a fitting tribute to Bob to follow his route into work for this year's event. Louise and I met Bob's wife Linda at Portessie bright and early for a cup of tea and piece of shortbread as the waves from the Moray Firth gently lapped the beach. After chatting

with Linda for a while and sharing some memories of working with Bob, including seeing him dressed as Shrek, we set off for Garmouth to the first of our pre-arranged meeting points, passing the seals lying on the beach at Portgordon. At the Spey Viaduct we met up with Don Toonen at exactly the estimated time! Bob would have been impressed, although I can't repeat the precise words he would have used.

"On the road to Lhanbryde our numbers were further swelled by Tracey Rae who had cycled all the way from Lossiemouth, and Mark Aldridge on his mountain bike. The weather was perfect; no breeze, warm and slightly overcast. With hardly any traffic the route was ideal for commuting and we were soon in Lhanbryde.

"Waiting for us was Jill Sowden who joined us for the last leg of the

journey, which followed the cycle route alongside the A96 and then onto the cycle path running on top of the new flood defences.

"Bob would have been able to identify the various birds and gulls swooping overhead, which is something we all agreed on: his encyclopaedic knowledge of everything is already being sorely missed. Like a perfectly executed military plan (23 years in the Royal Air Force counted for something) we arrived at Elgin Cathedral on time, just as the sun came out.

"A short bumble through Cooper Park and up past the Ionic Bar – which Bob threatened to take us into every Christmas – and we arrived at the Council HQ. A few moments later the rest of the team appeared with photographers, balloons, flapjacks and a 'Bob's Buddies' banner making us feel very proud."