

Connect

June / July
2022



SMASHING stereotypes





June / July 2022

Contents

Meet the team	2
Editorial	2
Smashing stereotypes	4
Our councillors	8
StratChat: Housing Need	10
Mentoring Young Talent	11
Tips for a safer summer	12
Cycle to work 2022!	14
Flexible and early retirement policy	15
Return of the STAR AWARDS	16
HR noticeboard	18
Fundraising Friends	23
Community Support Unit	24
50 years of service	29
Volunteering	30
Menita's Greenfingers	34
Handover of Lossiemouth High School phase 3	35
Summer on the East Beach	36
Sustainable Travel events calendar	38
Ukrainian arrivals	40

Meet the team



■ Sharon Dunbar MCIPR
■ Senior Communications Officer



■ Kirsty Craig MCIPR
■ Communications and Media Officer



■ Ryan Bell MCIPR
■ Communications and Engagement Officer (Learning Estate)



■ Angus McNicholl
■ Designer

Editorial

Here comes Summer!

Get your sunscreen looked out – Summer is here and we're ready for it. This issue of Connect brings you tips on staying safe in the sunshine (we're not dubbed [Scotland's Sunshine Coast](#) for nothing!); perhaps you'll head to Lossie's East Beach now it's accessible by bridge again; and an update from Greenfingers – including the benefits of gardening.

We're also celebrating some of our staff who have broken out of the mould and taken on roles they may not traditionally have been seen in in years gone by. We love it when we can celebrate diversity and inclusion in the workplace and we're super proud of our colleagues who want to share their story with us.

Speaking of which, we're always keen to hear from you with your achievements, recommendations and ideas you'd like us to know about. You can email connectnews@moray.gov.uk for inclusion in future editions.

As the school holidays approach we wish our education and support services colleagues a good end of term and we hope you get a good break over the summer. We often see HQ, the Annexe, depots and other offices quietening down over the Summer months as we take leave. A staggering 50% of UK employees don't take their full holiday entitlement each year! It's important for your mental and physical health to make sure you take your leave, not to mention the benefits in reducing absence and increasing productivity.

If you are taking time off over the coming months – have a safe and enjoyable break, we'll be back with an Autumn edition later in the Summer.



HeadsUp

Edward Thomas, Head of Housing and Property

Dear Colleagues,

I joined Moray Council in July 2021, having previously worked at West Dunbartonshire Council. Over the past 18 years I've worked in a range of local authority roles related to housing and homelessness.

My background includes studying housing at university, and I'll apply this knowledge and experience to ensure every aspect of Moray Council's housing service meets the highest standards in both stock condition and customer service.

It's my belief that the role of public sector housing is critical to enabling communities and individuals to thrive and, particularly at a time of concern about energy costs, to be warm and affordable places to live.

It's ironic that the greatest consequence of global warming in Scotland will be the cost of keeping our houses warm, and this will be the biggest challenge facing us in the decade ahead.

It was an unusual time to join the council during pandemic restrictions, and one consequence is to still be meeting new people on a daily basis as more of us return to the office for part of the week.

As limitations have receded, I've also been able to get out into some of the communities we serve, including a recent visit to one of our sheltered housing complexes where I heard first-hand both how vital it was for our teams to have continued delivering frontline services throughout the pandemic, but also how grateful they are to be returning to something closer to normality – craving the social contact we have especially missed.

The patience and resilience of our communities throughout has been incredible and there are many similar instances of our tenants and residents taking time out to thank our teams for the ways they've adapted to support them in these most challenging of circumstances.

Getting to know a new area is not without its challenges, and while those of us from the west coast may forever be deemed 'Glaswegian' in the eyes of many, in time this will hopefully diminish compared to my first attempt at pronouncing Findochty!

In the short time I have been in Moray I've been encouraged by the welcome of the community for me and my family, and I'm committed to working to improve the local area.

SMASHING stereotypes

If you were asked to draw a head teacher, how do you picture them? Or a school janitor – what are they like? It would probably be however you remember them in school yourself.

It's likely though, that you'd imagine a bit of a stereotype in these roles. Well we're bringing you the story of two colleagues who have broken out of the mould, smashed the stereotypes and all the other clichés.

Tattoos on show and screwdriver at the ready, Eva Wikberg took up the post of janitor at Speyside High School earlier this year. Definitely not your archetypal school janitor. But my goodness has she made the role her own!

We caught up with Eva to find out what attracted her to the job.

"I'm an only child and my Dad didn't really want a girl, so I used to do everything with him and loved working with tools, it's followed me all through my life.

"By trade I'm a nail technician and during the first lockdown I was home for three months without a penny, it was horrendous and stressful. I decided I needed a break from that and took on a Covid cleaning job at the High School. I did that for about a year and a half when I heard the senior janitor was leaving."

Colleagues and friends encouraged Eva to apply for the job even though she had her doubts.

"I had so much support from the teachers because they know I'm a grafter."

Eva likes to keep busy and will always find something to do around the school. She's learning new skills along the way and says she's dealt with "absolute disasters" already.

Knowing and learning how to fix new problems has been Eva's proudest achievement so far.


"As soon as I get a phone call I take my screwdriver with me. One time there was a leak in one of the bathrooms. I turned the water off but it was knowing what to do next, the senior janitor was in another school so I was by myself. You just do what you have to do and instinct kicks in and now I've got the confidence to just do it. I just do everything to the best of my capability and you get through it."

When asked about the most rewarding aspect of her job, Eva highlighted the sense of community in the school.

"I've had a good few jobs but I've never been as appreciated as I am here. Everybody appreciates what you do and every time you do something in this school everybody says 'thank you'. It makes you want to do a good job and even little things they appreciate, which is really nice."

When it comes to people's perception of a female janitor, it has been external contractors who've had the biggest surprise.

"There's a few times we've had workmen coming in and they ask if there's a janitor around, even though I'm wearing the uniform, and when I say I'm the janitor they ask for my senior. They were kind of reluctant to accept me but they know me now and realise I know what I'm talking about."



I JUST DO
EVERYTHING
TO THE
BEST OF MY
CAPABILITY
AND YOU GET
THROUGH IT.

This doesn't faze Eva though – she takes the chance to shake up their prejudices.

"I like it when they come in and they think 'oh, it's a girl' and that's happened quite a lot, then I prove I know what I'm doing. It feels good and now I'm building those relationships with tradesmen and delivery men."

The change of career for Eva has not only given her a confidence boost in her own abilities, but has been an extremely empowering experience.

"I used to be quite a nervous person, I was always worried about not doing anything right. Coming into this job and being appreciated, you feel empowered. You feel strong and that you can take on anything."

Eva's message to anyone, particularly women, who might be hesitant to go for a job they may not traditionally be seen in is simple.

■ Eva Wikberg, janitor at Speyside High

"If there's something you want to do, just go for it! The father of my children is a nurse, after he was a computer engineer, and he loves it. That was a stereotyped role for a long time but if you want it, you can do it."

The positive influence of Eva being in this post is also being noticed amongst the school pupils.

"It's good for them to see someone different. The kids ask about my tattoos and they accept someone who looks a bit different. There are loads of girls in the school who say it's great to see a lady doing my job and I like that they can talk to me about anything too, as I'm approachable. I get up every morning and am excited to come to work."

There's no better compliment for a workplace than that and our schools seem to be leading the way in changing those perceptions of traditional staff roles.

Current statistics show 84% of primary head teachers and 44% of secondary head teachers in Scotland are female. With the average age of a head teacher being 50 years old with over 10 years of experience we certainly have one breaking down some of those barriers. Kyle Scott has been head teacher at Elgin Academy for three years, having previously served as Deputy Head Teacher and Principal Teacher of PE.

■ Kyle Scott, Head Teacher
at Elgin Academy

Kyle also cites early family influences for his career choice.

“My father’s a civil engineer and growing up I’d always thought I wanted to be an engineer. When I was applying for university I had to apply for five or six courses and I had one gap. My mother suggested because I liked children and loved sport, why not apply for teaching, so I did.

“I realised I did have a real passion for helping young people and sport was my vehicle for that initially. I just wanted to be a positive role model and to have a positive impact on their lives.”



I REALISED I DID HAVE A REAL PASSION FOR HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE AND SPORT WAS MY VEHICLE FOR THAT

When it comes to a career trajectory, Kyle didn't always have his sights set on being a Head Teacher.

"I've always lived by the mantra to be the best you can be and I always want to try and better myself and learn. I didn't have a plan to become a Head Teacher but early in my career I had a very inspirational Head Teacher and he really challenged me. He encouraged me to go for the Principal Teacher job at Elgin when it came up and once I got it I thrived off that leadership role.

"I've always been quite driven and it got to the stage where I wanted to have a wider impact and not just inspire pupils but also staff."

The idea of a relatively young Head Teacher hasn't registered with pupils or parents in Kyle's experience, but the pre-conceived idea appeared rather closer to home.

"Teaching's known for the stereotype of 'you need to serve your time before you're ready' and I disagree with that. When I was talking to my mother and father when I was applying for Depute Head Teacher posts I was quite young and my Father asked: 'You're going to be a Depute already?' He was surprised.

"I think it's a generational thing though – we need to start changing that stereotype to make sure our young people don't have that perception and they know they can do anything based on the way they are and how they perform.

"The refreshing thing about our young people is they don't see age, they see Mr Scott the Head Teacher, and I think that's lovely."

Kyle also has simple words of encouragement for anyone who might wonder if they've got the experience to go for a role they perceive as more suited to an older person.

"Believe in yourself! If any member of staff or pupil who comes to me and questions that, I say they're as good as they are. If they've done something for a week, six months or six years is irrelevant. If you think you can do it and are willing to put the effort in, go and do it.

"I challenge my staff if they say during their professional reviews they're just waiting to get more experience. My question is always 'what are you waiting for?' It's about quality and who you are, you're ready if you think you're ready.

"The last two years have taught us a lot – you have to live for the moment."

Those words of encouragement from our colleagues, Eva and Kyle, might just be all the rallying call you need. Perhaps we should all aim to be a bit more Eva and Kyle – believing in ourselves and living for the moment.

Ward 5: Heldon and Laich



Ward 3: Buckie



Ward 8: Forres



Ward 6: Elgin North



Ward 1: Speyside and Glenlivet



Ward 7: Elgin South



Ward 2: Keith and Cullen



Tracy Colyer
Scottish Conservative and
Unionist



Theresa Coull
Scottish National Party



Donald Gatt
Scottish Conservative and
Unionist

Our councillors

2022
to
2027

Last month 26 councillors were elected to represent eight wards across Moray at the local government election. We carried a feature on the work that goes in behind the scenes to run an election and count (if you've not had the opportunity to read this yet, we recommend you check it out!) and here is a gallery of those elected.

You can visit our website to see a breakdown by ward, by party, to view committee membership, etc. On 18 May, at the first Full Council meeting of the new term, a minority Conservative administration was formed. Co-Leaders have been confirmed as Cllrs Neil McLennan and Kathleen Robertson, with Cllr Marc Macrae taking on the role of Convener.

We'll be delving more into the work of a councillor, and inviting elected members to introduce themselves in Connect, from next month's edition.

Ward 4: Fochabers and Lhanbryde



Marc Macrae
Scottish Conservative and
Unionist



Shona Morrison
Scottish National Party



Ben Williams
Scottish Labour Party



HOUSING NEEDS

All Scottish councils are required to publish a Local Housing Strategy. Ours was approved in April 2019 and is available [online](#). Each Local Housing Strategy must be supported by a Housing Need and Demand Assessment which does exactly what it says on the tin – it's an assessment of what is needed.

Since April 2019, the Local Housing Strategy achievements include:

- 320 new build council/housing association homes completed in locations across Moray.

Including:

- 1 extra care/very sheltered complex
- more than 100 accessible bungalows, for our older and disabled citizens
- 14 homes with support for people with learning disabilities
- 54 four+ bed homes to alleviate overcrowding

The energy efficiency of 228 private sector homes has been improved through the Scottish Government funded EES: ABS insulation programme, more details on [our website](#).

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a serious impact on progress, due to interruptions in the supply chain and the cessation of works inside houses during lockdown periods, but there are signs that this is starting to improve and backlogs are beginning to clear.

Both the Housing Need and Demand Assessment and Local Housing Strategy have close links to the strategic plans of NHS Grampian and Health and Social Care Moray, aiming to provide the sizes and types of housing that is needed and where it is needed, for the long term.

The Local Housing Strategy is also closely linked to the Climate Change Strategy. Did you know that 30% of carbon dioxide emissions come from residential dwellings? Building highly insulated, energy efficient homes will make a big contribution towards reducing carbon emissions.

What next?

Local Housing Strategies are updated on a five year rolling programme, and a bit like painting the Forth Bridge, it's time to start again with a new Housing Need and Demand Assessment.

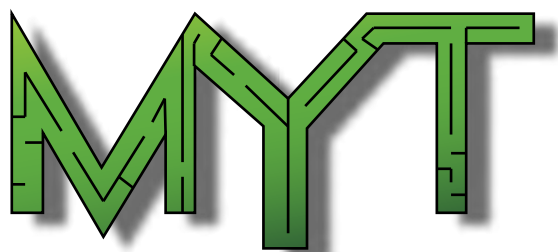
That assessment will be used for two key purposes:

- To influence how much land is needed for housing and importantly, where, to be designated in the Local Development Plan.
- To influence investment and policy decisions made by the Council and local housing associations with the aim of improving the housing system in Moray via the Local Housing Strategy.

Work is about to begin on the next Housing Need and Demand Assessment.

Its findings will have a direct influence on the next Local Housing Strategy, and ultimately on the number and type of houses that are built, and on any insulation schemes we are able to make available.

Housing Strategy Group members are already aware that this work is about to start, but the general public will be asked for their opinions too. Please look out for an opportunity to take part, likely to take place during Summer/Autumn 2022 and be publicised via the Council's website and social media.



Mentoring Young Talent

Our employability team's new Mentoring Young Talent video will be making its debut on social media this Volunteers' Week (1-6 June) to encourage more people in Moray to consider mentoring a young person.

Just one hour a week is all that's asked to support a young person in the area. Current mentors come from all walks of life in Moray, including pensioners and those still in work. Many get together with a mentee once a week to go for a walk, coffee or to undertake an activity, and to be someone who listens to and offers advice to young people navigating their life and considering their future and what opportunities may lay ahead.

Training and support is available, and mentors say it's made a positive difference to their life as well as their mentee.

One mentor, who is 65 and features in the MYT latest video, sums it up: "It doesn't matter how old you are. It doesn't matter what you've got in your life. Your life experiences will help young people make decisions that will affect them for the future."

If you're interested in applying to join the team of mentors, email mentoring@moray.gov.uk to speak with one of our colleagues in employability.

MYT MENTORING YOUNG TALENT Supporting Moray's Young People

Could You Help Make a Difference?

Mentoring Young Talent is a volunteering programme set up by Moray Council in 2019 to support young people between the ages of 12-26 years.

We seek volunteers with a range of life experience and backgrounds who are available to offer a minimum of an hour a week to build a one to one relationship with a local young person.

"If I can help a young person and hopefully give them some positive guidance gained from my life and business experience I will be very happy, as I want to make a difference." *Jim*

We provide training and supervision, including tailoring opportunities to enhance your knowledge of issues that affect young people locally.

Apply to Join Our Team of Mentors

GET IN TOUCH TODAY

"I joined the programme because I wanted to help young people have a new face to guide them through a tough time in life." *Hazel*

mentoring@moray.gov.uk
[@mentoringmoray](https://twitter.com/mentoringmoray)

MORAY COUNCIL
MORAY PATHWAYS
LEARN | TRAIN | WORK



Tips for a safer summer

Summer is here which means more time for us all to spend enjoying the great outdoors. While it's important to be prepared for any dangers that we might face during the summer, it's also important to remember to enjoy it and relax away from the stresses of work. If we normally work outside, it's time to forget those cold winter days and make those of us who work indoors really jealous.

The weather in a Scottish summer is unpredictable to say the least. But when the sun does come out, it's good to enjoy the rays as much as possible. Sunshine is a great mood enhancer, and also helps our health by delivering the Vitamin D that our bodies need.

There are a few things to think about, though, to protect ourselves and our families.

- **Moisturise and protect:** Never forget the sun protection cream – at any age. Remember to re-apply regularly especially if sweating during work or having been for a swim.
- **Keep hydrated:** Drink plenty fluids. Water, juices, squash are all good as are ice lollies. Remember when carrying out physical work your fluid requirements are much higher. If you feel unwell, dizzy or have a headache, these may be signs you are dehydrated.
- **Wear a hat:** A hat protects us from the heat of the sun, and works with sun cream to help ward off the threat of skin cancer. If working, keep tops on and keep covered up.
- **Seek out the shade:** If the sun gets too much, find yourself a tree or canopy so sit under. Take work breaks out of the sun, take the chance to cool down.
- **Keep sunburn remedies to hand:** However careful we are there always seem to be bits we've missed with the sun cream. Something soothing in the medicine cabinet in case we discover we've burned is a good way to turn down the pain and reduce skin damage.





Don't let the bug bites spoil your day

Insects thrive in hot weather, which means outdoor activities during this time of year can quickly turn into a feeding frenzy. Be especially careful if working or carrying out activities in woodland, heathlands, moors or in long grass.

Be particularly aware of the dangers of tick bites as infected ticks can carry Lyme's Disease, a particularly unpleasant and debilitating infection. Learn to recognise what ticks look like, how to remove them if they get attached, and how to recognise the signs and symptoms of an infected bite. Seek immediate medical attention if you have any symptoms.

For further information visit the [NHS website](#).

Cover exposed skin: Wear long-sleeved shirts, long trousers, socks and a hat. Tuck your shirt into your trousers and tuck your trousers into your socks for maximum protection. Some bugs can bite through thin fabric.

Use insect repellent: Use EPA-registered insect repellents that contain DEET for protection against mosquitoes, ticks and other bugs. Other repellents protect against mosquitoes but may not be effective against ticks or other bugs.

If you are also using sunscreen, apply it first, let it dry and then apply repellent. Do not use products that contain both sunscreen and repellent. Do not spray repellent on the skin under clothing.

For further information on Lyme's Disease follow this link to the [Interchange](#).

Cycle to work 2022!

It's back! We're pleased to announce the Cycle2Work scheme is open!

The scheme opens from 30 May 2022 and will run to 1 July 2022. It's a great scheme to help you get active and it's easy to apply. Select a bicycle and safety accessories, taking advantage of the savings available from tax benefits. You can choose your new bike and accessories from hundreds of brands in-store or online from Halfords, Tredz, or one of the range of independent bike shops that Halfords work with.

Please remember the Cycle2Work Scheme is not solely for personal use – The Department of Transport and HMRC guidelines states that the cycle must be used to cycle primarily to and from work, this should be around 50% of the usage.

During this period, if you want to opt into the scheme* you should either:

- Log on to www.cycle2work.info – use the employer code: **MORAYCOUNCILC2W**
- Or you can phone Halfords on: **03455 046444**

*Conditions apply, details can be found on the website.

What to do:

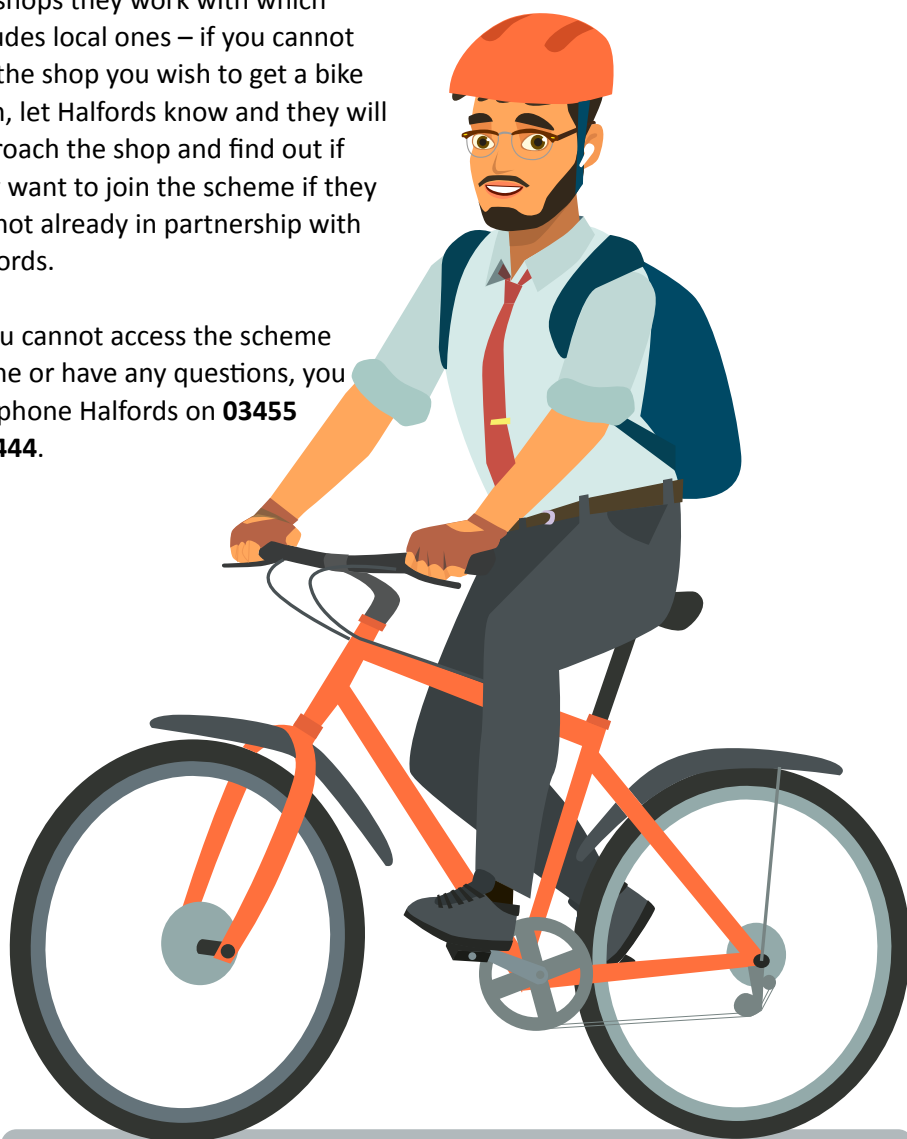
- Have a look at the bicycles and safety accessories available at either the Halfords store, Elgin or online at www.halfords.com
- Decide how much you need to spend

- Complete the Halfords Hire Agreement by logging on to www.cycle2work.info
- 'Sign' an electronic version and payroll and HR will be alerted that you have applied
- After processing the Hire Agreement it will be countersigned by HR and you will receive a letter of collection via email
- Once you receive your Letter of Collection go to Halfords (or the store you have chosen) and place your order.

The Halfords website has a list of the shops they work with which includes local ones – if you cannot see the shop you wish to get a bike from, let Halfords know and they will approach the shop and find out if they want to join the scheme if they are not already in partnership with Halfords.

If you cannot access the scheme online or have any questions, you can phone Halfords on **03455 046444**.

Please note: before you sign up to a Hire Agreement you must read the operational guidelines on interchange and the information available on the Halfords website and the terms and conditions of the Hire Agreement thoroughly as this is a contractual document that is binding. Once signed up, you are obliged to pay the full amount across the length of the hire period and if you leave the council's employment during that period you are liable to pay the balance. The FAQ section of the website is also useful for answering questions and providing good advice.





Flexible and early retirement

What is it?

There are two Flexible & Early Retirement policies, one for SJC staff and one for Teaching staff. They each cover the options and processes for both Flexible and Early Retirement for the two different staff groups. Supporting these policy documents are toolkits which should be read alongside the policy document.

Why do we have this policy?

A large number of employees retire every year and the council is committed to giving employees support to encourage a smooth transition from work to retirement. The policy and toolkits give employees flexibility and choice in terms of working arrangements and job remit, in the later periods of their working lives. It also gives managers the opportunity to retain key skills and knowledge whilst planning for the replacement of the employee.

What is flexible retirement?

Flexible retirement is where employees reduce their working commitment (hours) while releasing a proportion of their pension benefits up to full retirement.

What is early retirement?

Early retirement is where employees choose to take their pension before Normal Pension Age (NPA) and their pension will normally be reduced for early payment. As you are choosing to take your pension earlier than expected, your pension needs to stretch and be paid over a longer period of time.

Who can benefit?

Any employee who has at least two years' service with the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), is aged 55 years or over and has agreed to access some or all of their pension.

What do I have to do if I'm interested?

Firstly, read the Flexible & Early Retirement Policy/ Toolkits to see if either option is right for you, attend a pre-retirement course if required and have a discussion with your manager. You may also want to seek independent financial advice.

Where can I get more info?

- Flexible & Early Retirement Policies / Toolkits
[HR Policies](#)
- Corporate Event
[Planning for the Future](#)
- North East Scotland Pension Fund(NESPF)
<http://www.nespf.org.uk/>
- NESPF forms and guides
<http://www.nespf.org.uk/publications/Publications.aspx>
- NESPF Retirement Guide
<https://www.nespf.org.uk/active-member/retirement/>
- State Pension Age calculator
<https://www.gov.uk/state-pension-age>

RETURN OF THE STAR AWARDS



Following on from the success of the STAR award scheme in previous years, it will soon be time to open the nomination window for 2022 STAR Awards.

STAR (Special Thanks and Recognition) Awards formally recognise the outstanding contributions of our colleagues.

Do you know a colleague or a team who stand out from the crowd? Someone who goes that extra mile or makes a difference at work and deserves to be recognised for it - then why not nominate them for a STAR Award?

The scheme will follow a similar format as previous years; the guidance provided in terms of headings that nominations may be made under are suggestions only and nominators may submit an entry under a different heading as long as they are able to illustrate an outstanding contribution in some way.

Nomination suggested categories below are for guidance only. If you think there is another category for nominations please let us know.

Efficiency, Overcoming Adversity, Health and Wellbeing, Support, Leadership, Community/Volunteer, Good Citizenship (or Public Spirit) & Customer Service.

Submitting your nomination: nominations should be made using the correct nomination form. We will be accepting nominations from late August until mid-September 2022.

All submissions should answer the following questions as it is on these that the judging panel will base its decision – so please think through your response carefully.

- Why are you nominating the person/team?
- How has their work led to improvements within the Council?
- What is distinctive or exceptional about their contribution?



STAR Awards 2022 schedule

Entries must be supported by sufficient evidence therefore nominators should think hard about the information being provided to ensure it demonstrates the impact of the colleagues/teams contribution.

Nomination forms and guidance will be available on the interchange soon or alternatively from OD. You can submit your nomination by emailing a form to organisational.development@moray.gov.uk or by posting a form to Organisational Development, HQ, High Street, Elgin, IV30 1BX.

The Colleagues' Choice Awards are nominees that have been shortlisted by the judging panel following the STAR Awards nominations and you will be able to celebrate the efforts of your colleagues by choosing who you would like to see pick up the award, more information on the nominees and how to vote will be available on the 'poll' section on the interchange homepage.

Judging will take place shortly after the scheme closes which will be followed by the Colleagues Choice nominations and as before, the awards will be presented in conjunction with the Long Service Awards at a special ceremony towards the end of the year.

So get your thinking caps on now and let us know who you think deserves to be recognised!

Nominations Open	Late August
Nominations Close	Mid-September
Judging takes place	Mid-late September
Finalists notified and invitations to award ceremony issued	Early-mid October
'Colleague's Choice' vote Open	Late October
'Colleague's Choice' vote Close	Mid-November
STAR Awards ceremony in conjunction with long service awards includes the announcement of Chief Executive's Award	November



HR

NOTICEBOARD

Employee Conference 2022 - Coming soon

Planning is due to start shortly for this year's employee conference, so keep an eye out to see if you're one of the lucky ones who will receive an invite.

This year's conference is about 'Transformation to Achieve'. We're all aware that there are challenges as well as opportunities ahead and during the conference we'll consider what roles we play as colleagues in addressing these and how changes will affect us.

The conference is also a chance to talk to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Heads of Service about issues that are important to you, as well as meeting colleagues from across the council services.

Don't miss your chance to contribute to the discussion if you receive an invitation. The date is still to be confirmed but will be in the autumn. More information about the conference will be shared as arrangements are finalised and invitations will be sent out in the next couple of months.

If you don't receive an invite but would like to come along, speak with your line manager in the first instance and then contact HR - we'll do our best to accommodate any requests. There will also be other opportunities and ways to contribute.

We look forward to seeing you there.

The Mental health and wellbeing PULSE survey has launched!

Following on from last year's Mental Health and Wellbeing Survey we have launched a short pulse survey, comprised of eight questions, so will only take a few minutes to complete.

This survey will act as a checkpoint to allow us to assess how staff are coping and feeling now as we continue to recover from the pandemic. The results will be used to assess whether the priorities identified from last year's survey remain the same and will help us ensure that we continue to focus our efforts in the right direction where staff feel they need the most support.

Your mental health and wellbeing matters, so please take this opportunity to let us know how you feel.

The survey is available online and in hard copy please ask your manager if you've not received a copy. If you haven't already, this is a good time to register for Interchange access to enable access to the survey and other information from your own device.

Complete the survey and make your feelings count!

HR Bulletin

The latest HR Bulletin for managers will be published later in June with more information for your teams regarding HR, OD and H&S updates. You can find bulletins on the Interchange and the latest edition here: [HR Bulletin](#)

Pre-Retirement Courses

If you are thinking of retiring in the next few years then join an Affinity Connect pre-retirement course, which is a must for anyone considering retirement. The courses will encourage a positive and realistic approach to a financially-secure retirement and help you to make informed choices.

Course Date	Location	Start	Finish	Pension
26 July 2022	Online	9:30am	3:30pm	LGPS
20 October 2022	Online	4:00pm	6:30pm	Teachers
26 October 2022	Online	9:30am	3:30pm	LGPS

You can find more information on how to join a course here - [Planning for the Future](#)

Scottish Military Community page

Did you know that we publish monthly Scottish Military Community updates? These have information for current and ex-serving military personnel and their families on a wide range of subjects, including current news, training courses, funding, and much more! The updates are published on the Interchange: [May 2022 Update](#)

Mental Health Awareness Training

Delivered by the Moray Wellbeing Hub, the first of our two-day Mental Health Awareness training is being delivered virtually on 16 and 23 June 2022. If you would like to attend speak to your line manager in the first instance. Limited spaces are available and can be booked by contacting organisational.development@moray.gov.uk

WHAT'S LIVE ON CLIVE?

If you've not been on CLIVE lately, you might not have noticed some of the new courses that we've launched. In addition to all the existing content that's already there, we've released the following courses:

- * Moray Council: Fire Awareness
- * DSE Awareness
- * Leadership: Leading in Complexity
- * An Introduction to the 3 Horizons Framework
- * Moray Council: Adult Support and Protection - module 1
- * Child Protection Level 1 Recognition and Response

When it comes to keeping your training up-to-date, there are some courses that you need to do on a regular basis, and one of those you need to keep updated is Data Protection. To help with this we have a Data Protection course that you can complete, and you'll be able to access it annually to ensure that your knowledge and understanding is up to date.

Login to CLIVE to check out the new courses.

If you've got any questions about eLearning please email organisational.development@moray.gov.uk



■ This is Carl Bennet, who works for Health and Social Care Moray and also happens to be a keen cyclist.

We've been hearing the term 'Active travel' more over recent years as the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated how we can change the way we do things very quickly. National travel restrictions resulted in many of us travelling differently, discovering our local communities and making more journeys by walking, wheeling and cycling.

'What exactly is Active travel?' you ask.

Active travel simply means making journeys in physically active ways, be it walking, cycling or wheeling to work, school or other everyday journeys you make.

Active travel can offer a convenient, accessible and affordable way to move more and provides substantial wins that benefit individual people and the community as a whole.





- It's okay, you don't have to be able to lift your bike over your head, Carl is just showing you how good he feels.

Moray Council Active Travel Plan

Our draft Active Travel Strategy was approved by the Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee in December 2021 and was open for feedback from staff and the public until Sunday 3 April.

Our strategy aims to make active travel an attractive and realistic choice for short everyday journeys, enabling and encouraging people to walk and cycle as part of their daily lives. These aims can be split into three main categories:

- **Infrastructure** – increase in provision of physical infrastructure;
- **Work** – increase in walking and cycle journeys to work; and
- **Education** – increase in walking and cycle journeys to education.

We've had many successes – such as The Speyside Low Carbon Hub, the Moray School Streets Pilot Project, the River Lossie Cycle Path and the WOW Walk to School Challenge programme – but we recognise that there's still more that can be done.

The strategy will enable us to continue encouraging people to think about the type of journey they are making and consider if it can be made by foot or bike. By supporting more people in Moray to walk, wheel, and cycle for everyday short journeys, we will improve health, create safer communities, and reduce environmental impacts.

All responses from the consultation are now being analysed and summarised. Further engagement of the findings will be held with the stakeholder group before being reported back to a meeting of the Council's Economic, Development and Infrastructure Services Committee.

Changes will be made to reflect consultation responses and a final version of the strategy will be published for a further round of consultation later in the year.



Career Ready is a social mobility programme designed to 'connect disadvantaged young people with the world of work, unlocking their potential and levelling the playing field'.

We, in partnership with Career Ready, provide targeted young talent in S5/6 with a structured, impactful, two-year programme which empowers, boosts social capital and develops work skills.

With a mentor from the world of work, a four-week paid internship within Moray Council, and a series of skills masterclasses, young people leave the programme more confident, knowledgeable, and ready to follow their identified career path.

Undoubtedly a key part of the success of this programme is the amazing support offered by our workplace mentors. And we are now seeking interest from any employees that would like to join the programme as a mentor.

There's no denying that being a mentor is a commitment. It requires regular contact with the young person over the two years and the organisation of a four-week virtual internship. But, you're supported by the Organisational Development team and our Career Ready Regional Manager.

The benefits include:

- A young person from Moray will be given an opportunity they might not otherwise get. It's satisfying knowing we are in a position to help our young people.
- The mentor will be supported on their journey with full mentor training provided by Career Ready.
- The mentor's career development and C.V. will be enriched.
- The team or service will benefit during the 4-week internship. We've seen some great examples where services have profited from an extra pair of hands.

This is not just for managers; if you feel you would be a great mentor and would appreciate this opportunity please contact your manager.

We require interest from any potential mentors to contact us via organisational.development@moray.gov.uk so that we can continue to fulfil our commitment for this programme.



Colleagues and friends, Gil Nicol and Bev MacDonald are taking on the challenge of their lives as they train for the Cairngorm to Coast duathlon.

Fundraising Friends

In fact, by the time you read this, they'll have completed the mammoth 100km route from the Cairngorms car park to Lossiemouth – done as a 30km walk and then a 70km cycle.

Gil and Bev, who work in Placement Services and at Dallas Primary respectively, are raising money for Mikeysline, a support group for young people offering a textline for mental health support and suicide prevention.

"This is a cause close to our hearts with seven children and two grandchildren between us and the prevalence of mental health issues and suicides of young people in our local area," says Gil.

It's the most challenging event the duo has taken on, having completed a Race for Life some 15 years ago, and walking the Dava Way. What's inspired them? Pushing themselves beyond their comfort zone.

"We also wanted to make our children feel that anything is achievable. Bev and I are great friends that have been there for each other through all the usual ups and downs of bringing up children and the ins and outs of lives.

"We do a lot of socialising together with our families and friends. Our children have been brought up alongside each other and it has been lovely seeing them from babies through to the adults they are today.

"There were young people who were ages with ours who committed suicide, and were both the life and soul of the party. It's brought it home that you can never tell what people are experiencing and that opportunities for receiving the right help and advice are essential to keep our young people safe.

"That's why we've chosen to support Mikeysline – they provide support and guidance via a textline, school visits and drop in centres, so money is vital to keep this service running to literally save lives."

Bev and Gil have smashed their fundraising target. They hoped to raise £500 and they've raised more than £1,300 so far! If you're inspired to donate, you can visit their [JustGiving](#) page.

COMMUNITY

We've seen many new faces join the council over recent years so we'd like to introduce you to our re-structured communities service. The service is managed by Kevin McDermott and is made up of three teams: The Community Support Unit, Adult and Family Learning, and Youth Work.

We'll be introducing you to the Community Support Unit in this edition of Connect – be sure to look out for future editions where we'll introduce you to the other teams that make up this evolving service.



Kevin McDermott
Communities Service Manager

"I'm Kevin McDermott and I'm the Service Manager for the Communities CLD Team which has been in place for just over a year now. The new service brings together Adult and Family Learning (previously known as Essential Skills), Youth Work and the Community Support Unit (CSU) – representing the three parts of community learning and development (CLD).

"I worked for Moray Council over 25 years ago before going on to manage REAP and then working in various roles in Aberdeenshire Council. What pulled me back



- 1 Laura Cameron
- 2 Sandra McCallum
- 3 Gordon Ruddiman
- 4 Debra Duke
- 5 Rhona McNicol
- 6 Tracey Rae
- 7 Martin Robertson
- 8 Jane Martin
- 9 Dawn Brodie

Support Unit

to Moray was the opportunity to help develop the new service and to contribute to areas like citizen engagement and tackling inequality, which are prominently identified in key strategic documents like the Corporate Plan and the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP).

“When I worked in Aberdeenshire I was very aware of the work of the Community Support Unit and the pivotal role they played in supporting the transfer of some key facilities from council to community ownership. The starting point for this process was very challenging, effectively around closing facilities,

but the long term support provided by the CSU helped communities to harness their efforts into a positive process of local management and eventually ownership.

“This long-term approach is what we mean when we talk about engagement – it’s not a one-off consultation or an event but a process we go on with our communities.

“This edition of Connect will tell you more about the current priorities of the CSU, and we will share similar inputs in future editions on the work of our Adult and Family Learning and Youth Work teams.

“We are a service that believes in and is built around partnership working. On a micro-level, bringing the communities team together is an example of the benefits of such an approach with the sum of the parts being greater than the individual elements. This principle applies to our wider work – and is captured in the Partnership CLD Plan produced by our CLD Strategic Partnership.”



Dawn Brodie
Community Learning and
Engagement Manager

Dawn is the Community Learning and Engagement Manager within the Communities CLD Service – which includes the Community Support

Unit. We spoke to Dawn, who provided an overview of the CSU:

“I took on the acting up role of managing the CSU team in March 2020 just as the pandemic impacted on all our lives – a challenging time for everyone. However, the CSU team was very active during what was an extraordinary time, supporting the community response in very practical ways. From providing PPE equipment for volunteers to supporting communities to access funding, for example, the Community Food Fund and other resilience funding to support the most vulnerable members of their communities.

“In the past year we’ve welcomed new members of the team and are now settling back into the core work of the CSU which is all about building the capacity and influence of all members of our communities. Our work is closely aligned to the main strands of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 which includes Locality Planning, Community Asset Transfer and Participatory Budgeting. We also support the work of our Community Councils and engagement work with the review of our Learning Estate in Moray.”

But what does that all mean in practice?



Tracey Rae and Gordon Ruddiman
Community Support Officers

Tracey Rae and Gordon Ruddiman cover the Buckie and Keith, and Elgin ASG areas with a focus on locality planning. Locality planning is a way for Community Planning Partnerships to tackle inequality in our communities and target resources where they will have the most impact.

Tracey’s main focus recently has been reviewing the Buckie Locality Plan and supporting groups to deliver projects and priorities



identified by the community. The Buckie Community Lunch is one of the projects which has recently started again and provides a great opportunity for local people to come together to socialise, volunteer, build confidence and enjoy good food. Local agencies also come along to promote their services and support.

Tracey is about to start a community consultation in the Keith area to identify their key priorities, something she finds exciting at the outset as it offers so many opportunities for the community to get involved at whatever level they

feel comfortable and help shape their community.

Gordon is currently supporting the work of the New Elgin (East) Community Plan which is beginning to pick up momentum on developing the four themes – Better Off, Better Health, Better Place and Better Community.

There are already signs of new groups forming, from health groups such as cycling and family walking groups, to environmental and housing estate concern groups. ‘Feel Good Friday’ is a new initiative which offers residents in New Elgin a chance to meet up, enjoy crafts and a chat over a cuppa. It starts on Friday 10 June from 11am to 1pm at New Elgin and Ashgrove Public Hall annexe. The ground surrounding the hall is the base of the established community garden project supported by REAP. There are sessions every Wednesday at 10am with everyone welcome – even if it’s just to sit and enjoy the garden.



Martin Robertson
Community Support Officer (CSO)

Martin covers the localities of Forres and Speyside and has experience in a range of development projects in local authorities and third sector organisations.

Recent projects such as 'Spirit of Community' in Forres are a strong example of the community-based approach to engagement, working towards a community-led plan. Martin is also involved in community consultation work on projects such

as the Mannachie Park Masterplan – getting out and about to speak to the local community, giving them an opportunity to shape the plans to improve the play area and wider surrounding greenspace at Mannachie.

Martin has also been getting to know organisations in the Speyside area, supporting groups with issues around governance and project development.



Rhona McNicol
Community Support Officer (CSO)

Rhona covers the Laich and Milnes areas. Rhona is also currently focusing on developing Community Resilience Planning throughout Moray working with Community Councils and organisations to co-ordinate the local response to emergencies.

Recent events such as Covid-19, Storm Arwen and power outages have highlighted how important it is for communities to have emergency plans which can be put into action by volunteers working

alongside and complimenting the work of our emergency services. Rhona has helped with the creation of resources and templates and is currently supporting working groups in Moray who are actively working to produce their own bespoke plans, identifying possible risks, local assets and volunteers in their communities who can help in an emergency. This work will increase the collective resilience of our communities and help reduce the impact and recovery time from an emergency event.



Debra Duke
Community Council Liaison Officer (CCLO)

Debra started work with the CSU just as the Community Council Election process was underway so had to hit the ground running at one of the most the busy times for the CCLO. However, her previous experience working in democratic services and parish councils stood her in good

stead for this challenge. Debra supports Community Councils with their work including training, policies and finances and also supports the Joint Community Councils (JCC). Debra has also been working with Rhona on Community Resilience Planning.



Jane Martin
CSO, Learning Estate

Jane is the Community Support Officer for the Learning Estate Team. Many of you will know Jane from her previous role as Community Council Liaison Officer. Her new role involves engaging communities in Moray on the future of the learning estate.

Moray Council's Learning Estate Strategy sets our vision to ensure that we develop more efficient and fit for purpose school buildings for current and future generations across Moray. Jane is committed to ensuring that all stakeholders are involved in this process.



Laura Cameron
CSO (Participatory Budgeting) and
Sandra McCallum
Community Support Worker (PB)

Laura and Sandra support the delivery of Mainstream Participatory Budgeting (PB). Participatory Budgeting is often better known as a method of distributing small grants to community groups for projects. However, the Scottish Government set a target of a minimum of 1% of council budgets to be subject to a mainstream PB process involving local people more closely in the design of services and allocation of existing budgets.

In the last year colleagues in Open Spaces have worked alongside CSU and local communities to allocate a budget of £200,000 to improve play areas in Rothes, Cullen, Findochty and Mannachie. Communities have

worked alongside officers during the engagement and creation of the design brief for contractors and then the decision on the final design has been through a community vote. The new Rothes play area is the most advanced of the projects and is being installed at the moment – a Council budget of £50,000 being matched by an impressive £110,000 of community fundraising.

Laura and Sandra are always keen to hear from other council services interested in the benefits of using PB, working alongside communities to prioritise and allocate their budgets, targeting resources more effectively.





50 years of service

Imagine being in your job for 50 years! 50 years, 5 months and 28 days to be precise.

That's how long recently retired, Willie Duncan, was with Moray Council for before leaving us in December 2020. His milestone made him the longest ever serving member of staff for Moray Council and was marked with a presentation by Deputy Chief Executive, Denise Whitworth, in April.

Willie left school in 1970 at 15 years of age and served his apprenticeship as a Joiner with Moray District Council at Blackfriars, Elgin. He then spent five decades with the council in its various incarnations.

During that time he progressed to Joiner, Foreman, Area Manager, and latterly Senior Housing Projects Officer, based at Mosstodloch.

Willie retired during the covid-19 pandemic, in December 2020, with his wife, Moira, also retiring shortly afterwards, following her own long service with the Education and Social Care Team at the council.

Finally, pandemic mitigations allowed us to mark the occasion with some of Willie's former colleagues in the council chambers.

During the presentation, Willie Duncan said: "I've thoroughly enjoyed my work with the council. I never had a bad day with the staff I worked with over the years. The professionalism of the staff stands out, from the tradesmen right through to the guys in the office, without them the system doesn't work.

"There's been a lot of changes over the years. I've seen a lot of faces, a lot of management changes, and structure changes but I've made a lot of friends and I thank them very much."

Denise added: "Over 50 years is a milestone it's unlikely many of us will reach with Moray Council, given Willie was 15 years old when he started with Elgin Town Council. It's a remarkable achievement and one we are delighted to mark as we thank Willie for his fantastic service to Moray.

"We wish Willie all the best in this new chapter of his life and we hope he enjoys his retirement with his wife, Moira, visiting family around the world."

Mike Rollo, Building Services Manager, and former colleague of Willie's, added: "Personally, I thank Willie for his support to me during my time in the council. 50 years is a phenomenal milestone to reach and the changes Willie has seen during his time with us are exceptional.

"Willie will be missed at work but we look forward to seeing him in his role as Moray Ambassador for Elgin BID as we wish him and Moira a well-deserved happy retirement."

Willie's hobbies include motor biking, hillwalking, travel and he's also an active member of Elgin dramatic societies. He's currently an Ambassador for Moray with Elgin BID and is a 'weel kent face' in Elgin circles having been involved in hosting the likes of the Christmas lights switch on over many years.

Willie and Moira intend to spend their retirement travelling, and with family in Canada and Australia after recently returning from Tenerife and all at Moray Council wish them the very best.



Volunteering in Health and Social Care for 10 years

At a time when volunteering is at the forefront when it comes to supporting people in our local communities, it's only right that we highlight some of the work of the Volunteer Department within Health and Social Care Moray (HSCM). We also celebrate the annual nationwide Volunteers Week 2022, which runs 1-7 June.

Over the past 10 years nearly 1,600 referrals have been received for volunteers to support people in the community as buddies and alarm responders, and in day services, community activities and projects.

During the pandemic, 355 referrals for Volunteer Buddies and Alarm Responders were received, with 67 since January this year alone. Despite the restrictions, 300 clients were matched with volunteers from January 2020.

Getting out and about to recruit new volunteers or give talks to schools and various groups across Moray during the pandemic was limited. However, many were able to access details [online](#) or emailed the team directly on volunteering.CC@moray.gov.uk. The team also link in with tsimORAY and local community groups to promote volunteer opportunities.

Due to the continued high demand there are 134 clients currently on the waiting list so if you, or anyone you know, may be interested in volunteering get in touch with the team. You could join the 150 active volunteers the service currently has, who have all received a certificate or card alongside a thank-you letter from Chief Officer, HSCM, Simon Bokor-Ingram to celebrate Volunteers Week 2022.



Volunteering with Moray Libraries

On Thursday 2 June 2022, Moray Libraries took the opportunity to thank the volunteers who contribute so much across the library service, over a cup of tea and a slice of cake.

The dedication and commitment of our volunteers is hugely valued and the range of qualities, skills and expertise they bring affords a diversity which enriches the service enormously. We have volunteers who work alongside colleagues across Lending, Learning Centre and Heritage Centre services, providing an invaluable contribution to the service and local communities.

Simon Rogers, a volunteer at the Help Hub in Buckie and Elgin Libraries for the last six years, shared his volunteering story.

Simon began volunteering after completing his degree in Environmental Science at Moray College UHI in 2015.

"In November 2015 my mother died after a four year battle against cancer. I had too much time on my hands and filled it with some extra learning about microbial resistance, statistical analysis and cyber security. In late 2016 I developed depression which took me to some rather dark places. After recovering I was invited to an evening at Elgin Library to tell my story as a mature student. Whilst there I found out that volunteers were

welcome, especially with computer experience. Being a bit of a nerd I thought I could help and volunteered."

Simon says volunteering keeps his mind active and he gets as much out of the sessions as the people he is helping: "I rarely leave a session without a smile on my face from something that has been said or done. It allows me to get out of the house, even more important after the lockdowns we all experienced. It allows me to give something back to society when I am unable to work and those I've been able to help are genuinely grateful."

Seeing other people improve their skills, grow in confidence and knowing he has helped them achieve this, boosts Simon's skillset too.

"I had little to no experience in operating Apple products but volunteering has meant that I have to be able to solve issues with these products as well, so this has also improved my skillset and shows that older dogs can be taught new tricks!"

Simon is keen to encourage new volunteers with Moray libraries. If you are inspired by his story and would like to find out more about volunteering opportunities and how to apply, please contact Elgin Library on 01343 562600 or email elgin.library@moray.gov.uk.

Greenfingers



A huge thank you to everyone that has continued to support Greenfingers Training Project over the years, and especially in the last two years. The last two sales held at Moray Resource Centre were a great success, and the lovely comments and feedback are really appreciated.



Welcomes and Farewells

Alex Irving was welcomed into the staffing team last year along with his array of nature-based knowledge and skills. Alex has quickly become a valued team member, and will be an integral part of the team as Greenfingers move forward.

Alongside Alex we've also welcomed several new trainees and participants, as others have moved onto pastures new.

Meet the staff at Greenfingers

We're proud to have a team of very knowledgeable and passionate gardeners, food growers, foragers and bee-keepers.

Pam Lewis is the Training Officer at Greenfingers along with the team of Training Support Workers/Drivers who are, Emma Ritchie, Anne Chadwick and Alex Irving.

Menita Roberts is the Training Projects Co-ordinator.

Gardening for Wellbeing

The benefits of gardening and being outside in nature are becoming more and more recognised for its positive effects on individuals health and wellbeing. It's shown to have healing properties on your physical, mental and emotional wellness.

By taking the time to disconnect from the noise of a busy world to reconnect in a natural environment is a proven stress reliever.

This has been evident for a lot of people, during the recent difficult times, as people naturally migrate back to their 'roots' in their local communities, open spaces and gardens.





Did you know?

- There is a natural antidepressant called *Mycobacterium vaccae* present in soil, which can stimulate your serotonin production, providing a 'feel good factor'.
- The fresh smell after a rain fall is called Geosmin or Petrichor. It's reported that this smell can be more intense in healthy soils and can decrease stress in humans and improve your mood by up to 60%.

Food growing revival

We've seen a great return to sustainable garden food growing and the re-learning of traditional skills over the past few years, we're hoping this will continue and become the norm once again.

This is just one of the areas that Greenfingers had been focused upon pre-lockdown as part of the Food Growing Strategy, and this will be a part of our exciting development plans as we move forward.

As well as the feel good factor of being in a veggie patch, community garden or food forest, there are the added benefits of increasing your resilient food production of healthy fruits and vegetables with no food miles.



We look forward to embracing the next phase for Greenfingers as we move forward with our plans. We'll stop in by with you via the Connect Magazine every so often to keep you up-to-date with progress, and don't forget to look Greenfingers up on Facebook and Twitter for more regular updates.

I hope you can find some time to enjoy the great outdoors and can top up on some Geosmin.

Menita's Greenfingers



In April we received delivery of 10,000 plug plants from our supplier; these have been potted on and are being nurtured and cared for by our staff team and trainees. Plants we received were geraniums, begonia non-stop, lobelia, antirrhinum, petunia Surfinia, verbena and gazania. At the beginning of June, once we've grown them on they will be planted out at all the war memorials throughout Moray by our colleagues in lands and parks.

We also work at Moray Resource Centre gardens, maintaining the gardens surrounding the Centre (apart from grass cutting) and this gives us the opportunity to support our trainees to develop their horticultural skills in a different environment to Greenfingers. We held a very successful veggie plant sale there in April and also one in May selling mostly bedding plants. These sales allow us to connect with our customers who may not get the opportunity to chat to us and see the plants our trainees have grown and looked after. These sales also give our trainees the chance to learn customer service skills by selling and carrying plants to customers' cars if required.

Over the winter months our Greenfingers team cleared a large piece of land at the rear of the Moray Resource Centre garden. This piece of ground has been underutilised for a significant amount of time, which was reflected in some of the random rubbish we found in there and all the overgrown weeds, brambles and nettles! It was a great, active job for us to do during the colder months; we stayed warm by being so active and the end result was a large piece land which we now hope to develop.

In the short term we've sown a wildflower meadow mix to suppress weeds and attract local pollinators, and are discussing ideas for the long term use of this land – ultimately we want to develop it into a food growing area.

We've a new compost area which has been constructed by our volunteers, Keith and Brian, which will be very well used and will provide us with some lovely home-made compost to use in the gardens in the future.

Spring has been very busy for us and along with all other people who garden, the unpredictability of the weather is always a challenge for young plants! We've sown lots of veggie plants seeds and this year we did something a little different with our pea seeds. In the past the mice have always had a good munch on them and rendered them unusable. This year we sowed the peas in a shallow guttering pipe, tied the pipes from the top of the greenhouse out of reach of the mice... and it worked!

Our peas germinated and, once they were big enough plants, we gently slid the contents of the pipe into a pre dug trench the depth of the pipe to avoid root disturbance. This has worked and we have healthy pea plants growing in our raised beds. Now we just need to protect them from the birds!





LOSSIE HIGH PHASE 3 HANDOVER

The opening of the new bridge hasn't been the only exciting thing going on in Lossie recently as Phase 3 of the new Lossiemouth High School was successfully handed over in April, marking the completion of the £42million new-build project.

The demolition of the former school building and community centre, an external all-weather sports pitch, an extension to the carpark and a new footpath have been delivered as part of the £3.1million Phase 3 works.

The new-build project comprised of three phases, with Phase 1 seeing the completion of the main school building, which can accommodate up to 800 pupils, in April 2021. Phase 2 works included traffic calming measures and the resurfacing and upgrading of the existing school car park which forms part of the new car park.

The project was developed and delivered by Hub North Scotland with Balfour Beatty undertaking the construction. The contribution from our services across the council has been invaluable in the completion of the project, so thanks to building control, planning, housing and

property, ICT, finance, legal and roads for their efforts throughout.

We'd also like to thank the staff, pupils and leisure team at Lossie High School for their involvement in the project to date.

We spoke with Lossiemouth High School Head Teacher, Janice Simpson, who said that the completion of the final phase will allow the school to continue providing modern education, sports and community facilities for the local area to enjoy.

She added: "The new 3G sports pitch is an excellent and welcome resource for our pupils to enjoy and we very much look forward to delivering the curriculum in this outdoor space.

"Our aim at Lossiemouth High School is to ensure that every child leaves with the skills, knowledge and confidence to succeed in their next steps, and we feel very fortunate to have such a wonderful learning environment in which to achieve this."

We also had the chance to speak

with Ewen Fowlie, Project Director for hub North Scotland, who said: "This is a landmark moment for what has been a fantastic project, which is already bringing many benefits for the Lossiemouth community.

"It has now been a year since the new school opened with pupils, staff and the public enjoying wonderful facilities. The completion of the new 3G sports pitch and other final works is the culmination of a lot of hard work by all involved to deliver a building that will be enjoyed by generations to come."

Jim McCluskie, Senior Project Lead at Balfour Beatty added: "This is a significant achievement, testament to the skills and expertise of our people who have worked closely and collaboratively with hub North Scotland and Moray Council over the last few years.

"With the final phase of the project now complete, we are delighted that students and the local community alike, will be able to fully enjoy the wide range of facilities available across the new, improved learning campus."

Summer on the East Beach



We've all been looking forward to getting back on one of Moray's most famous and popular beaches this summer and now we can. The Ministerial opening of the new access bridge to Lossiemouth's East Beach took place on 31 May, following the Scottish Government investing £1.8m in the project.

Moray Council formally took ownership of the bridge following the event and will now maintain the structure, constructed by Beaver Bridges. Lossiemouth Community Development Trust and HIE also contributed, with the community involved in choosing the bridge colour and decking.

We've all watched the progress, some of us even watched the live stream of the construction of the new structure, which is sited near the original bridge of 1908. The bridge from Seatown that we all recognise, which was constructed in 1919 and closed in 2019 for safety reasons and has now been removed as it had deteriorated further.

At the time of closure some 4,000 people were using the bridge every day so we're looking forward to seeing the East Beach and Esplanade busy once again. Ice cream is optional but recommended.

Our Consultancy team have been at the forefront of the major project. With the new bridge being approved, constructed and open less than three years since the old one closed we take our (hard) hats off to the team.

Initially overseen by Stephen Cooper's team led by Debbie Halliday, we know Will Burnish and James Munro in particular have shone in their respective duties. We're lucky to have fantastically skilled staff in-house who can lead and command such large-scale infrastructure projects. Well done to all involved – race you to the sea!

The stats and facts

Bollards to prevent vehicular access are at the end of the bridge but the new bridge supports buggies and beach wheelchairs, making access to the popular beauty spot more accessible than ever before.

The new bridge spans approximately 75m in length in an arched form. A 3.5m wide footway with decking boards made of wood effect composite materials join 1.4m high parapets.

The steelwork is finished in fluoropolymer coating and sit atop pile driven columns and connected into ramps built either side. Rock armour surrounds the entry points to the bridge. New footpaths to access the bridge have been installed and the existing ones on the Esplanade side are being upgraded.



■ Consultancy colleagues soak up the sun



Sustainable Travel events calendar

The Sustainable Travel events calendar is your one-stop-shop for active and sustainable travel information. Whether you are just looking to find out more, or want to get involved with some of the national events to create positive change, there is something for everyone. As a workplace we have the opportunity to reduce emissions by supporting and promoting active and sustainable travel. By shifting to active and sustainable travel it not only helps protect our planet – it brings so many benefits to organisations and employees too.

What is active and sustainable travel?

- Walking and wheeling (wheelchairs and other mobility aids)
- Cycling
- Public transport
- Shared transport (e.g. bike share, lift share)

What's on:



6-12 June 2022 – Bike Week

Bike Week, delivered by Cycling UK, is an annual celebration to showcase cycling. Thousands of people all over the UK enjoy the simple pleasure of riding a bike.

www.bikeweek.org.uk



5 June 2022 – World Environment Day

A global day for positive, environmental action and to encourage support for sustainable development.

www.worldenvironmentday.global/



14 June 2022 – 2022 Active Travel Conference

The National Active Travel Conference is now well-established as the go-to event for everyone whose professional life touches on the need to encourage and develop active travel in Scotland.

www.walkcycleconnect.org/



16 June 2022 – Clean Air Day 2022

Led by Global Action Plan, Clean Air Day brings together communities, businesses, schools and the health sector to improve public understanding of air pollution, build awareness of how air pollution affects our health and explain the easy actions we can all do to tackle air pollution, helping to protect the environment and our health.

www.cleanairstay.org.uk



4 August 2022 – Cycle to Work Day 2022

Cycle to Work Day will be back on 4 August. This year, it's all about giving your employees that Love to Ride feeling from now until the big day...

How can my employees take part? Via our free online Love to Ride community, where employees can share their experiences of trying a different commute, and upload their cycle rides for a chance of winning from our bumper haul of prizes. We're running seven weeks of cycling challenges. So that's seven separate opportunities for your employees to win.

www.cycletoworkday.org/



5 September 2022 – Zero Waste Week

Zero Waste Week is an award-winning campaign, raising awareness about the environmental impact of waste. Whether you're an individual, business or organisation, join in and reduce the amount you send to landfill.

www.zerowasteweek.co.uk/zero-waste-week/

SCOTLAND'S CLIMATE WEEK

12-18 September – Scotland's Climate Week 2022

Details TBC.

www.greenerscotland.org

EUROPEAN MOBILITY WEEK

16– 22 September 2022 – European Mobility Week

This is a European festival promoting environmentally sensitive transport and raising awareness of the nuisances caused by the use of private cars in the city (Air, noise pollution, congestion etc). Good opportunity to promote active travel and public transport usage.

www.mobilityweek.eu/home/



18-26 September 2022 – Great Big Green Week

A national week of events celebrating action on climate change. In September communities across the country will join together for the Great Big Green Week. It will be the biggest event for climate and nature ever in the UK, and everyone's invited!

www.greatbiggreenweek.com/about/



16-22 September 2022 – Act TravelWise Week 2022

Act TravelWise is co-ordinating TravelWise Week 2022.

www.acttravelwise.org/travelwise-week/



1-30 September 2022 – Love to Ride for Cycle September

Cycle September is the ideal time to engage businesses and their employees to try cycling for active travel!

Signup at lovetoride.net



TBC October 2022 – National Liftshare Week

Encouraging people to join the liftshare network in order to save money cut their carbon footprint and meet like-minded people.

www.liftshare.com/liftshareweek



TBC October 2022 – Climate Week 2022

Climate Week 2022 is an opportunity for you and your organisation to showcase what you're doing to help Scotland reach our new targets.

www.sustainablesotlandnetwork.org



Whole of October 2022 – International Walk to School Month

Month long awareness raising event where schools across the world join forces to promote walking to school.

www.livingstreets.org.uk/walk-with-us/walk-to-school



TBC October 2022 – Paths for All Step Count Autumn Challenge 2022

It all begins in October so sign up your team of five today and join us.

www.stepcount.org.uk



TBC November 2022 – UK Road Safety Week

An annual community event aimed at inspiring people to promote road safety within their local community.

www.roadsafetyweek.org.uk

The background of the top half of the page features a stylized Ukrainian flag with blue and yellow horizontal stripes. A decorative border of white stars on a blue background runs across the top. The word 'UKRAINIAN' is written in a large, white, serif font, centered between two horizontal bands of the star pattern.

UKRAINIAN

arrivals

We've all been shocked and saddened by the atrocities in Ukraine, forcing millions to flee to safety from their homes as Russia continues its invasion.

The flag of Ukraine has been flying above Moray Council's HQ to demonstrate our solidarity with its people, and you'll be pleased to hear that meaningful, tangible action is happening as we welcome dozens of Ukrainians to Moray through the families scheme, as well as the Homes for Ukraine scheme, which has seen local hosts throw open their doors.

So far around 28 Moray households are supporting Ukrainians through the Homes for Ukraine initiative, and both a strategic and operational multi-agency group is up-and-running to make sure things are in place for arrivals to receive benefits, education, healthcare, job opportunities, and more.

Our Health and Social Care Moray colleagues, with partners, have been running drop-in sessions at Elgin Community Centre for Ukrainians to find out more information about services available to them. Around 50 attended the first session, with some returning for the second one as well.

Work to support those resettling in Moray continues apace and there's currently a vacancy for an Assistant Refugee and Resettlement Officer, so once the team's together we'll be showcasing in more detail the hugely important work they do in welcoming refugees to safety here in Moray.