

Connect



m.connect

***the wee electric bus
that makes a big difference***



Editorial

We're bringing Connect to you a little later than planned – we could get used to all those long weekends but we join you as we head towards the end of May.

We might be thinking about getting those summer holidays in the diary if we haven't already (surely I'm not the only one who spends the Christmas break planning my annual leave for the year ahead?!), be sure to check out our scamcation article to avoid those pitfalls.

Alongside some light-hearted content this month – we enjoyed finding out about your pets for National Pet Month – we're also looking at budgets as part of the council strategy talks and more information about menopause assistance. One of our colleagues' national martial arts triumph is celebrated, while we say a fond farewell to a long-serving member of staff who retired after almost 30 years with us.

We're introducing our elected members for Ward 1 – Speyside Glenlivet in our new feature, Councillor's Corner, and we look ahead to the official launch of the new m.connect bus services throughout Moray.

As we bask in the warmer weather and keep our fingers crossed for a glorious summer we'll be back after that with some refreshed staff communications.

Take care,



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Heads Up

Nicola Moss

Head of Environmental and Commercial Services

As I type this out the birds are singing in the garden, and it really feels like spring might finally be here (even if that doesn't mean we won't see another sprinkling of snow), and with that change of season comes a shift in emphasis for many folk in Environmental and Commercial Services. The long hours for our gritter drivers are coming to an end – and what a season it has been, with thousands of miles of roads treated, so a huge thank you to the team for helping keep Moray moving.

The spring brings about an upturn in other activity as our Open Spaces team get ready for their peak season in maintaining our parks, cemeteries and other green places. Spring also sees leisure boats being lifted into our harbours after the winter which complements the commercial and fishing activity that takes place all year round. It's a new year for school catering too as the school menu changes at the start of the summer term – still providing tasty meals that fit in line with the government's nutritional requirements.

In Environmental and Commercial Services we cover a broad portfolio of front line services including waste and recycling, and public transport as well as those mentioned above, but also key infrastructure functions such as roads maintenance, fleet, civil engineering design, structures and flood risk management, facilities, traffic and transport planning.



In my spare time I conduct Lossiemouth Military Wives Choir and there are definitely similarities between the two jobs – as Head of Service my role is to support and enable people to do their jobs well, as well as to lead on major projects like Energy from Waste and plan ahead as we journey forward (not dissimilar to getting ready for a big concert). My job is only part of a bigger picture, with the service delivery from all of those who work in Environmental and Commercial Services. And, given I've got editorial control of this piece, it's a great opportunity for me to say thank you to each and every one of you for what you do.

Nicola



m.connect: on-demand bus service launches in Moray

Our popular Dial M bus service is being enhanced and rebranded as m.connect – an on-demand bus service covering the whole of Moray.

From Tuesday 2 May we'll be able to book using the brand new, easy-to-use app. The app makes the service even more flexible than ever, allowing passengers to book up to two weeks in advance and up to one hour before travel. Those who prefer to use the booking line can still book this way.



by phoning:
0300 1234565



or get the app:
http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_148244.html

The m.connect Bus Revolution project is one of the first Moray Growth Deal projects to launch its full service. The Growth Deal totals over £100m of investment in the local economy with funding from the Scottish and UK Governments, as well as public and private sector contributions.

This is the first stage of the £4.3m m.connect service, funded through £4m of Scottish Government funding and £300,000 from Moray Council.

The key aims of Bus Revolution are to increase the numbers of people using public transport, reduce the number of people facing transport barriers to employment, education or recreation, and reduce



▲ m.connect driver Terry Robertson stands proudly beside his new e-vehicle.

the environmental impact of transport in the area. Why not have a look at the service information online to see if you can make your journey to work by bus?

Building on our award-winning on-demand bus service, m.connect will provide public transport which meets the needs of the region's largely rural economy and help move our fleet to low-carbon vehicles.

The app, which is available to download from apple and google play stores from 2 May, allows users to create and manage journeys how they want to. Payment features, vehicle tracking and notification options are all part of the app function.

As part of the first phase of enhancements, service times are being extended and m.connect will operate as follows:

- 🕒 06:30-20:15hrs Monday to Friday in Buckie, Keith and Speyside;
- 🕒 09:15-14:30 (17:00 during school holidays) Monday to Friday in the Elgin zone; while
- 🕒 08:00-17:00 Monday to Friday and 09:00-17:00hrs on Saturdays in Forres.

Perfect for local commuting, business, leisure and visiting with more options in future phases.

Six new electric vehicles are being added to the m.connect fleet to start with, so we can travel knowing we're contributing to reducing our carbon footprint. On-board WiFi also means travel time can be productive.

Options to pay by credit/debit card (contactless), National (Scotland) Entitlement Cards and with cash are available, while the operating zones and fare structure have been simplified. There's even a £9 all day travel option.

Group bookings will be available from October 2023 with the option to repeat a favourite journey without going through the full booking process each time.

More details including fare structure, route map and booking details can be found on our website.



Find out more:

moray.gov.uk/mconnect

Speaking as the service launched, Chair of Moray Council's Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee, Cllr Marc Macrae, said: "Many of us will have spotted the m.connect buses dotting around Moray in recent weeks as we prepared to

see the launch of the full service, so it's great to have the project live now. Transport is an issue we often hear is a barrier for people to take part in activities, commute to work and get around the region. This on-demand service goes some way to remove these concerns and get folk moving around Moray with much more ease and a real potential to boost the local economy.

"The simplicity of the app, booking process and low-cost fare structure is a real boost to the service and I look forward to seeing many more people opting to take the bus as we all become more mindful of our carbon footprint."

Our Head of Environmental and Commercial Services, Nicola Moss, has been overseeing the project since its early days in the Moray Growth Deal and has seen her hard work pay off with the launch.

"The public transport team in the council have always been keen to further grow the innovative bus services we've been operating, and expand to reach more people in our communities. A lot of hard work has gone on behind the scenes by many people across the Council to get us to this point, so it's really exciting to see it all coming to fruition."





▲ Alasdair McEachan [left] and Roddy Burns [right] present Moira Patrick [centre] with a bouquet at her send off.

Legally retired!

If you were in HQ towards the end of March you'd have seen Moira Patrick's smiling face beaming at us from posters around the building. The now former Democratic Services Manager left us after 29 years of service with Moray Council to enjoy her retirement back home in Ayrshire.

What started out as a temporary, one year admin contract turned into a career spanning 40 elections, seven different councils, and five Chief Executives. Given Moira started with the council around the same time as current Chief Executive, Roddy Burns, it was fitting that he should present Moira with a token or two from the friends she made during her time at Moray Council.

Roddy also spoke of the progression they've seen from collating word processed committee reports with double sided tape and tipex through the introduction of email and becoming one of the first local authorities in Scotland to webcast all committee meetings.

Moira also led the council through the introduction of various voting systems, from Single Transferable Votes to Proportional Representation and electronic counting. Not to mention challenges like major weather events disrupting committee meetings, which Moira got her teams through with good humour and professionalism.

Head of Governance and Strategy, Alasdair McEachan, rounded off a tribute to Moira in the council chambers, with current and former colleagues, by saying: "Moira is a glass half full person with a can-do attitude and nothing phases her. She's always looked out for her staff and has brought on the next generation of registrars and committee staff. She leaves her services in a fit and ready state for the future but also leaves a big gap in the organisation."

Moira thanked everyone for gathering to say cheerio and was: "Sad to be leaving as I enjoy my job so much, but it's nice to be leaving on a high."

All colleagues, past and present, wish Moira all the very best for her retirement.

Councillor's Corner

Ward 1: Speyside and Glenlivet



Juli Harris
Scottish National Party

Cllr Juli Harris

My journey to being a councillor has been rather a long one, but I am delighted to have finally become active as a politician, as I have been interested in politics and humanity since childhood.

My mother is a teacher from Buckie and my father was in the Armed Forces and from London, a rather eclectic mix which resulted in a lot of wonderful travel overseas as a child, before returning to the area in my early teens, and finally settling permanently in Moray.

I studied politics, international law and international relations at Aberdeen University. The late 70s and early 80s were a great time to be politically active and although not a party member, I provided active support to causes such as anti-Apartheid, Amnesty International, International Aid and generally enjoyed myself campaigning for change.

I worked in Aberdeen at the start of the oil boom before marrying a farmer and moving to Orton, near Rothes. I completed a secretarial post graduate course at Moray College and worked as a seasonal distillery tour guide for several years, as well as taking time off to have my family. I have three children; sadly, James died as a young baby and we moved shortly after that to Craigellachie, where Lauren and Harris were born.

Still, I longed for the chance to use my skills and wanted a career that I could enjoy and succeed at. I completed a one year postgraduate teaching course at Aberdeen and worked as a teacher in Elgin, Lhanbryde and Lossiemouth, before gaining the headship of Rothes Primary School, then my final school and headship at Milne's Primary School in Fochabers. So you see, I know a lot of Speyside and Moray very well, from a variety of angles!

I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis early on in my career but was able to manage my condition pretty well until I was in my fifties, when it became progressive. I took early retirement to slow down the progression and learn about how I could stay healthy. It worked and I am happily in remission.

When council elections were coming up, I realised that I was interested in taking an active part in local politics, to be involved and make a positive difference, given the challenging times we face today.



David Gordon
Scottish Conservative and Unionist



Derek Ross
Independent

Cllr David Gordon

Becoming a member of the council is a complete contrast with my last occupation of running a magazine publishing business, which I established in 2007 in Moray/Aberdeenshire. I would write, edit various contributions and go out and about the Northeast on photoshoots for: cars, fashion, food; also covering local events; and finding interview subjects from the business, sports, heritage and arts communities. I also ran business networking events; the last one was at Gordon Castle.

I had lots of connections in Speyside with the KN magazine (9,000 printed copies per month plus the e-zine) and I was often visiting in the ward. I am an active hill-runner and I am often out on our local hills enjoying the fine views and wild areas.

I have read Connect Magazine and picked up copies in the Annexe. It is a good idea for a large organisation to have its own magazine to share good news and inform, especially having some printed copies to pick up.

Cllr Derek Ross is also a member for the Speyside Glenlivet ward and currently sits on the Corporate Committee; Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee; Housing and Community Safety Committee; Moray Local Review Body; and the Planning and Regulatory Services Committee].

Greenfingers



Learning



Therapeutic



Social

Project

HEALTH &
SOCIAL CARE
MORAY

New growth for Greenfingers

If you follow Greenfingers on social media, you'll have seen that they have a few exciting new projects on the go as part of their service re-development.

Refreshed branding

Greenfingers, run by Health and Social Care Moray, is now recognised as a social and therapeutic project. The aim is to use the healing properties of gardening, outdoor spaces and the natural world to aid health and recovery, and promote the wellbeing of individuals within our local communities.

They offer a safe and supportive environment, which provides opportunities for people to make local connections and take steps towards personal health, social or learning aspirations.

Greenfingers has widened their criteria to include more people who share interests rather than a specific diagnosis and are happy to be contacted for an informal chat about the project and how to make a referral.

Grow with Greenfingers

Short, seasonal-based courses, as an introduction to Greenfingers and/or as part of a social reablement programme, have started. These can be based at the extensive site within Cooper Park in Elgin or out in local communities as a small group outreach programme.

Plant sales

For all avid gardeners, Greenfingers has veggie and flower plant sales in the planning stages. These will all be held within the gardens of Moray Resource Centre (MRC), Maisondieu Road, Elgin. Watch this space in future editions of Connect or follow Greenfingers social media channels for dates.

Community connections

The regular community-based works include maintaining garden areas of Logan's rainbow, the planters at Moray Council HQ, the MRC garden and eco works with Forestry and Land Scotland.

Providing new and exciting learning experiences for Greenfingers attendees is a must and they've added



another three very exciting projects for development throughout 2023 and 2024.

MRC dementia-friendly garden area

The team is working closely with everyone at MRC to re-design the garden seating area at the back of the building to make it a more welcoming and therapeutic space for everyone, including people living with dementia. Providing some interactive gardening-based experiences for the attendees of MRC as part of this rewarding development project is next.

Garden makeover for Dr Gray's Hospital

Dr Gray's and Greenfingers Horticultural Project are set to join forces to develop the iconic old "Rose Garden" into a more restful and therapeutic sanctuary in the grounds of the hospital. Staff, patients and community members will benefit from the sensory, calm, and restful experience within the urban green space.

This exciting project has been made possible with the support of a £2,000 award from the NHS Grampian Endowment Fund, the official charity of NHS Grampian. Work on the garden makeover is set to begin now spring is here, with the main works taking place throughout 2023 followed by seasonal additions as the garden develops.

Raised bed container gardening

In the true sense of "making the most of what we have", over winter a lot of work has been happening at Greenfingers' own site in Cooper Park, where they've cleared an area to establish some raised garden beds. They'll also have a covered raised bed growing area for those rainy days.

How does this all happen?

Greenfingers has an amazing team of attendees, volunteers and staff who are involved within all of the planning processes and contribute their own ideas, skills, enthusiasm and hard work. With a lot of unsung heroes who beaver away in the background and are there when needed.

A big thank you to everyone who has continued to support Greenfingers over the years.

Follow us on:



Instagram:

https://www.instagram.com/greenfingers_moray/



Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/GreenfingersMoray>



and Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/GreenfingersM>



menopause

Let's Talk Menopause

Menopause is an individual experience and transition, however it's widely recognised that menopause and perimenopause can have a big impact on the individual's life, including relationships and work. There are things that can be done to help with symptoms and support is available if you need it though.

The NHS recommends lifestyle changes including eating well, exercising and looking after your mental wellbeing to help with symptoms. Suggestions include getting plenty of rest and trying to keep a regular sleep routine. Calcium rich food to keep bones healthy and talking to others going through the same thing, such as family, friends or colleagues.

You can also speak to a health care professional - a GP, nurse or pharmacist can give you advice and help with your menopause or perimenopause symptoms.

The NHS Healthtalk also provide videos of women talking about living with menopause and perimenopause and what helped them.



NHS Healthtalk:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/help-and-support/>



Sleep problems



Weight gain and slowed metabolism



Mood changes



Headaches

Support is also available from Charities who offer information and support:



Women's Health Concern

<https://www.womens-health-concern.org/>



Menopause Matters

<https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>



Daisy Network

<https://www.daisynetwork.org/>
for premature menopause



Menopause Café

<https://www.menopausecafe.net/>

Moray Leisure Centre runs dedicated Menofit classes and cafes. These are exercise classes that are aimed at those affected by the menopause.



Moray Leisure Centre:

<https://www.morayleisurecentre.com/news/more-menopause-classes-added/>

You can use your Fit Life? Card or pay as you go.

Certified Carbon Literate



The Council now has 27 Carbon Literate staff members who are helping to embed climate thinking within their departments. No matter what your role is, you can help the council to meet our goal to have Net Zero carbon emissions by 2030. You can find out more on our staff climate change pages.



staff climate change pages:

interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_143298.html

Here are just some of the staff who have recently received their Carbon Literacy certificates:

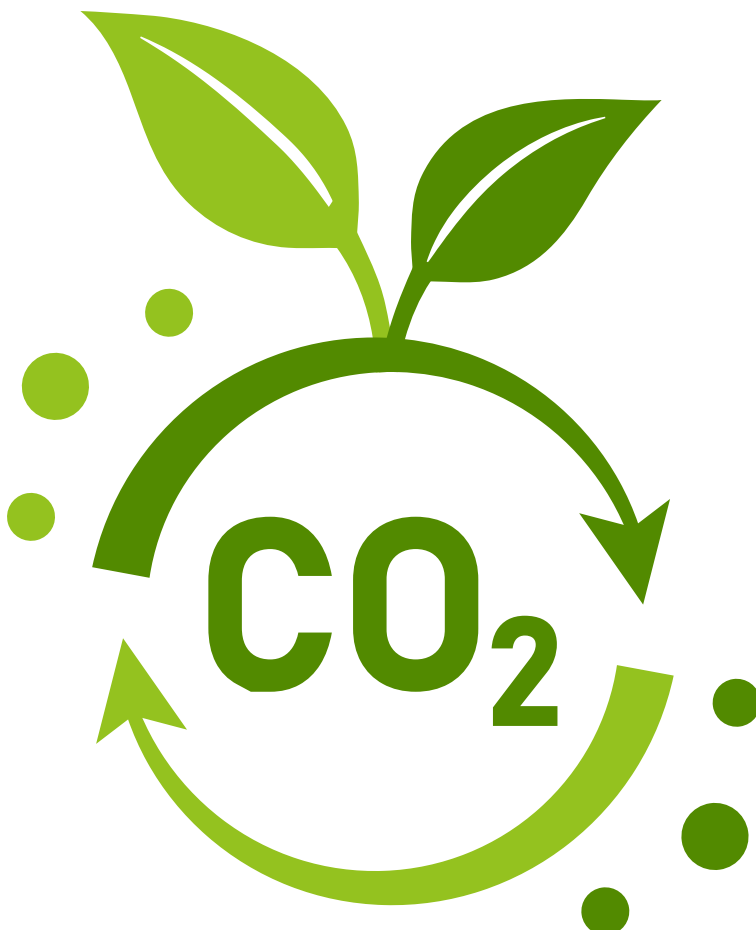
- 👤 Alice Hodgson, Procurement Officer
- 👤 Elaine Summerfield, Procurement Officer Systems
- 👤 Emma Gordon, Planning Officer
- 👤 Glen Dunn, OD Adviser
- 👤 Jeanette Netherwood, Senior Project Officer
- 👤 Katrina Martin, Senior Infrastructure Growth/Obligations Officer
- 👤 Kirsty Shand, Development Project Officer
- 👤 Lisa MacDonald, Senior Planning Officer
- 👤 Louise Dunn, Development Project Officer
- 👤 Rebecca Morrison, Infrastructure Growth/Obligations Officer
- 👤 Shannon Creswell, Community Wealth Building Officer

Our training focus is currently on elected members and management, but we hope to offer a course to all staff again later in the year. If you would like to become certified as Carbon Literate or have any questions about the course, please contact Sophie.



email Sophie:

climatechange@moray.gov.uk





Budgeting

StratChat: Budgeting

The Council sets Council Tax for the following year no later than the beginning of March each year. The budget for 2023/24 was set on 1 March 2023. We have a projected shortfall of income against budgeted expenditure for 2023/24 of £20 million - £4.5 million savings have been identified and approved and the balance of the shortfall will be met by using reserves.

Reserves are our savings for a rainy day, but like our own personal savings these can only be used once, and so this doesn't solve the problem, but does give us a bit more time to develop the significant savings needed for 2024/25 and 2025/26. We need to be planning for these now.

Everyone will be aware of the exceptionally high levels of inflation in recent months, and that was a feature of the budget for 2023/24, with higher than normal levels of uncertainty about price rises. That makes financial planning more difficult and also makes it more important that we ensure tight control over the Council's expenditure.

As always there are a number of strands to our approach towards finding savings. A particular feature in 2023/24 and in future will be to build on cross-service initiatives. The two key ones will be energy consumptions and procurement.

Energy costs have been much in the news, as has the impact of climate change. So there are two really strong incentives to reduce our energy consumption – to save money and to save the planet. The Energy Team are developing work programmes to bring this forward. We can all play our part in keeping energy use down and in reducing our carbon footprint.

Procurement is another area where we all have a part to play. Many people have purchasing cards to use when going about Council business. A condition of using these cards is that VAT receipts are provided to the Payments section so the Council can claim back VAT on purchases – in many cases this isn't happening. A conservative estimate of the money we stand to lose annually is £40,000. The Payments section are actively chasing services for VAT receipts – you can do your bit by ensuring that if you use a purchasing card you get a VAT receipt and submit it.

We are also planning to review the range of items available to purchase – we have previously operated with restricted catalogues, which streamlines the procurement process as well as ensuring the most economically priced items are those available. Work is ongoing to see how this approach can be most effectively introduced in key areas like stationery.

In addition to these cross-service initiatives we continue to look at ways of transforming our service delivery. Transforming services isn't easy and takes time and we recognise that is unlikely to deliver the level of savings we need at the pace required. It is, however, a crucial part of the savings toolbox, and we have set aside money to invest in the transformation of services, developing and building on the approved Improvement and Modernisation Programme. Members have approved a preference to find savings by transforming service delivery: making efficiencies to do the same at less cost or to do more at the same cost in areas of increasing demand. The next preferred option is to generate additional income, and there are a number of proposals for income generation which have been made as part of the budget process.

However, if all else fails then we will need to consider cuts in services (or stopping services altogether) or reduction in service standards. Over the last 10 years the Council has been making efficiency savings and service cuts finding over £50m in savings over that period, and no-one underestimates the difficulties in continuing to find further savings.

Across the Council there will be many and different ways of doing things and we want to make sure we adopt the best working practices. So if you have a good way of working to share – how you went paperless, how you streamlined processes (maybe during lockdown), how you encouraged digital uptake and anything else which you feel is a success for your service – then please do so. There's a great strength in working together to find solutions.



Council Travel Plan

Staff Travel Survey

Moray Council is committed to promoting and improving sustainable travel choices to our sites. As part of this we are inviting employees to complete a travel survey.

The 'Council Travel Plan' was renewed in 2021 and a staff travel survey was undertaken to see how the Covid-19 pandemic may have changed the way our staff travel to/from work and on council business and how they may travel once all restrictions were lifted.

As part of the ongoing monitoring and review programme, and now that restrictions have ended and we're seeing a return to office and hybrid working, we're looking to repeat a staff travel survey for all employees based at HQ and Annexe. This will help us understand how our staff travel to work and when undertaking council business, and what would make alternative options more attractive.

The survey should only take about five minutes to fill in, and will provide important information that can shape how we think about travel to and from our work in the future. Those who complete the survey can be entered into a prize draw to win a £100 Moray Loves Local gift card.



Take the survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BMFCR2K>

If you have any queries about the survey, please feel free to contact our Sustainable Travel Officer.



Janet MacDonald:

janet.macdonald@moray.gov.uk

Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please be assured that all answers are confidential.

HR

NOTICEBOARD



King's Coronation

Just a reminder that it's the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III on Saturday 6 May with Monday 8 May as an additional days leave for the council.

The council will operate essential services only on 8 May 2023. This means that all schools, early learning settings, sport and leisure facilities and libraries will be closed. Other essential services will operate on a reduced capacity basis, to be confirmed in advance.

Those staff unable to take the additional leave on this day because they do not work that day or for service reasons, are able to take the extra day annual leave at another time in consultation with their manager. Those who for service reasons have to work on this day will receive their normal salary for this day; no enhancements are payable as this is an additional day's leave and not a designated public holiday.

The extra day of holiday will be added to timesheets with no adjustment required from staff.



Scottish Military Community

We saw the first recruitment event in the Annexe for the 2622 Highland Squadron from RAF Reserves, Lossiemouth on 1 March 2023. This was a successful lunch time session for the RAF Reserves with a few council employees signing up for the scheme. Look out for future events coming soon across the authority.



Age Scotland Unforgotten Forces News:
[interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/](https://interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_134613.html)
[Page_134613.html](https://interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_134613.html)

This month there is information on research into women veteran experiences, outdoor therapy for veterans, winter heating payments, exploring the Fife pilgrim way, plus much more!

HR Bulletin

The first HR Bulletin for 2023 was published on Interchange in March. Topics included Emergency Payments update, Career Ready, First Aiders, OH Reports, Workload Toolkit Pilot, Access to Work, Health Adjustment Passport, Smarter Working and more!



You can find the HR Bulletin here:

interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_144210.html

First Aiders

Updated lists of First Aiders have now been distributed across the HQ and Annexe campus. Please refer to the updated lists when required. Any queries on this should be directed to Health and Safety.



email Health and Safety:

safetyadviser@moray.gov.uk

Pre Retirement Courses

Are your retirement savings on track? Do you know how much income your pension savings may provide? And have you thought about how much income you might need when you retire?

Financial education specialists 'Affinity Connect' would like to personally invite you to attend an interactive full day course around the key aspects of planning for a financially secure future.

Retirement might be up to 10 years away but it's never too soon to start planning. This course is perfect for anyone thinking about retirement or already at the planning stages.

During the course you'll learn how to:

- 👉 Plan for the lifestyle changes ahead
- 👉 Maximise the benefits of your State and workplace pensions
- 👉 Make the most of your tax-free cash
- 👉 Understand the income options available from your pension
- 👉 Achieve your retirement goals

Course Date	Location	Start	Finish	Pension
16 May 2023	Online	9:30am	noon	LGPS
18 Jul 2023	Elgin	9:30am	3:30pm	LGPS
06 Sep 2023	Elgin	9:30am	3:30pm	LGPS
19 Oct 2023	Online	4:00pm	6:30pm	Teachers
25 Oct 2023	Elgin	9:30am	3:30pm	LGPS

Find more about how to join a course:



Planning for the Future

interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_116989.html





Schools compete for Ethics Cup

Teams from three Moray secondary schools were in a philosophical mood as they grappled with challenging ethical issues in a closely fought heat of a UK-wide contest.

Pupils from Keith Grammar, Buckie High and Elgin Academy displayed their critical, creative and collaborative thinking in the North-East regional round of the 2023 University of St Andrew's Ethics Cup. Opposing teams are encouraged to work together to get to the truth of the matter, rather than defend a single point of view as they would in a debating contest.

It was the second time Keith Grammar School and Buckie High School have co-hosted the regional event. Along with their own teams, they welcomed competitors and supporters from Elgin Academy, Fraserburgh Academy and two teams from St Margaret's School for Girls in Aberdeen to Keith. St Paul's RC Academy in Dundee took part online.

All the teams were kept on their toes as they participated in three, hour-long rounds divided into 30 minute matches. The format sees Team A take the lead in discussing a case study in the first match, while Team B provides alternative viewpoints and questions. In the second match, the roles are reversed with Team B leading the discussion on a different case study and Team A putting forward counter opinions.

▲ Team members (from left) Jessica Morrison, Robbie McAskie, Kenna Johnston and Cassie Findlay.

The 11 case study topics ranged from discussing the moral implications of keeping academic research behind paywalls to whether ghosting is ever morally permissible – and everything in-between.

With each of the teams gaining in confidence as the day progressed, the scoring of the matches were often only a few points apart and the judging panel commented on the high quality of insightful discussions from all pupils.

Fraserburgh Academy emerged as regional winners with three out of three wins and now go on to compete in the final of the Ethics Cup at the University of St Andrews in May 2023. Keith Grammar School were runners-up with two wins and a draw.

Thanks go to everyone who made the regional tournament such a success – the judges, team managers, and everyone at Keith Grammar who gave their tireless support to ensure the whole day ran smoothly. Here's hoping even more Moray schools enter the tournament next year.



Cycle 2 Work

Cycle2Work 2023


It's back ... and we're pleased to announce the Cycle2Work Scheme will be opening soon!


The scheme opens from **10 May 2023** and will run to **15 June 2023**. 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 – conditions apply – you should either:

 log on to the website:
www.cycle2work.info
– use the employer code:
MORAYCOUNCILC2W

 or phone Halfords:
0345 504 6444


What to do:

🔑 Have a look at the bicycles and safety accessories available at either the Halfords store, Elgin or online

 Halfords website:
www.halfords.com

🔑 Decide how much you need to spend

🔑 Complete the Halfords Hire Agreement by logging on to the cycle to work website

 Cycle2Work website:
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

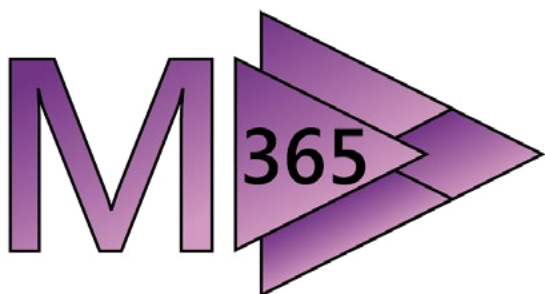
🔑 Once you receive your Letter of Collection go to Halfords (or the store you have chosen) and place your order.

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

If you can't access the scheme online or have any questions, you can phone Halfords.

 phone Halfords:
0345 504 6444

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.



M365 Progress in 2023

What's happening?

This is a quick project update from the team behind our migration from Office 2016 to Microsoft 365. A move that will enable us to access a suite of cloud based productivity apps, including Microsoft Teams, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, OneDrive, and so much more.

Work is ongoing to configure the infrastructure required to make M365 available. ICT, with the help of others across the Council, continue to work behind the scenes to support the effective and safe rollout of Microsoft 365 (M365) across the Council during 2023.

Some of the areas that the team are working on currently include:

Exchange Online

Colleagues within ICT are preparing a move to Exchange Online. As a user you shouldn't notice any difference in your use of email, however, this work potentially enables us to use more of the functionality that is on offer from the M365 platform such as the Tasks by Planner and To Do app. This is a very useful app that brings your individual and personal tasks together, ultimately helping to make your task management more manageable.

Currently, the Exchange Online is scheduled for the second quarter of 2023 and then likely deployed through a phased rollout once the required setup and configuration works have been completed and tested. More information will be available once the migration is ready to begin.

Office 365

ICT, along with colleagues from different service areas, will be testing the use of Office 365 with some of the core systems used by those different service areas to identify any potential issues. Once testing has been completed, Office 365 will also be rolled out in a planned phased approach.

Audio Conferencing for Teams

Late last year you may have noticed that Audio Conferencing for Teams was enabled. With Audio Conferencing turned on you and your meeting participants can join by telephone.

A step-by-step guide has been added to the Microsoft Teams eLearning module available within the IT Skills category in LearnPro (Clive).



LearnPro link:

interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_107125.html

These are just some main highlights of what is happening behind the scenes. More information will be shared as the project continues to progress.

Want to follow the project?

Please feel free to check out the M365 Project page on the Interchange. Here you will find information about the project, current M365 FAQs and information regarding team 'Microsoft 365'.



M365 Project:

interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_142376.html

Team 'Microsoft 365' has been created within Microsoft Teams in a bid to improve communication regarding the Microsoft 365 project. Within the team you will find a place to communicate, information about the project and a list of M365 FAQs.

For more information about the team and how to join it, go to the Team Microsoft 365 Interchange page. Or, go straight to the M365 FAQs and click on 'Connecting to team Microsoft 365'. This will show you how to join the team.



Microsoft Team 365:

interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_144775.html M365 FAQs: interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_142384.html



M365 FAQs:

interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_142384.html#general

What happens next?

Once the majority of the infrastructure work has been completed the project will move towards the testing phase with support and input from key users and the Digital Champions Network. This allows the team to iron out any issues before the solution is deployed. More information to follow as soon as it becomes available.



Career Ready

Make a difference!

We need your help to identify mentors for the 2023/2024 Career Ready programme. As we've been supporting this programme for several years, it's now becoming more challenging to find mentors so your help is needed now more than ever.

Career Ready is a social mobility charity that wants every young person, regardless of background, to progress to a positive post-school destination and prosper in work and life. It seeks to connect young people with the world of work through a supported mentoring programme.

Our mentors are matched to a young person from Moray and over the 18 month programme, you'll enjoy regular contact with the young person and the chance to support them during a 4-week workplace internship during the summer.

The benefits are clear:

- 📈 91% of students say Career Ready raised their career aspirations
- 📈 87% of alumni said Career Ready had a positive impact on their life
- 📈 89% of mentors report their mentoring and coaching skills as excellent or good at the end of the programme, compared to 40% at the start
- 📈 98% of Career Ready students' progress onto positive destinations in education or employment

We ask anyone interested in becoming a mentor to please contact us so that we can begin to fulfil our commitment to the next programme, which starts later this year.



email:

organisational.development@moray.gov.uk

Sustainable Travel Calendar

MAY

1-31 May 2023 – National Walking Month 2023

Awareness raising week aimed at promoting the benefits of walking.



Find out more:

www.livingstreets.org.uk

1 May 2023 (for 8 weeks) – Paths for All Spring Step Count Challenge

Walk the walk.



Find out more:

www.stepcount.org.uk

15 – 19 May 2023 – Walk to School Week

Awareness raising week aimed at promoting the benefits of walking to school.



Find out more:

www.livingstreets.org.uk/what-we-do/projects/walk-to-school-week

May 2023 – Work Wise Week 2023

Raising awareness about smarter working (flexible working, home working, remote working) amongst employees and employers. During the week Workwise UK will publish a daily guest blog from strategic partners as well as organisations who shared their thoughts on how COVID-19 has impacted the way we live and work and what the new norm could look like once the economy starts to recover.



Find out more:

www.workwiseuk.org/workwiseweek/

Friday 19 May 2023 – National Work from Home Day 2023

Promoting the benefits of home working to both individuals, businesses and the environment. This will be marked with two guest blogs, details of which can be found on the link below.



Find out more:

www.workwiseuk.org/workwiseweek/

JUNE

June 2023

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.



Find out more:

www.bikeweek.org.uk

5 June 2023 – World Environment Day

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



Find out more:

www.worldenvironmentday.global

June 2023 – 2023 Active Travel Conference

Detail to be confirmed.



Find out more:

www.walkcycleconnect.org/

10 – 18 June 2023 – 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!



Find out more:

www.greatbiggreenweek.com/about/

16 June 2023 – Clean Air Day 2023

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.



Find out more:

www.cleanairday.org.uk

AUGUST

4 August 2023 – Cycle to Work Day 2023

Cycle to Work Day will be back on 4th 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.



Find out more:

www.cycletoworkday.org/

SEPTEMBER

5 – 9 September 2023 – 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.



Find out more:

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

26 September – 2 October 2023 – Scotland's Climate Week 2023

Details TBC.



Find out more:

www.greenerscotland.org

16 – 22 September 2023 – 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.



Find out more:

www.mobilityweek.eu/home/

September 2023 – Act TravelWise Week 2023

Act TravelWise is co-ordinating TravelWise Week 2023. More details to follow.



Find out more:

www.acttravelwise.org/travelwise-week/

1-30 September 2023 – 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:

lovetoride.net

OCTOBER

October 2023 - National Liftshare Week

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



Find out more:

www.liftshare.com/liftshareweek

Whole of October 2023 – International Walk to School Month

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



Find out more:

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

30 October – 26 November 2023 - Paths for All Step Count Autumn Challenge 2023

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



Find out more:

www.stepcount.org.uk

14 -20 November 2023 – UK Road Safety Week

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



Find out more:

www.roadsafetyweek.org.uk



Back to the Floor Visit

Rhona Gunn (Depute Chief Exec) started March with a Back to the Floor activity, visiting council properties. She joined John Hogg, a plumber based at the DLO in Mosstodloch, assisting with repairs and hearing first hand of the day-to-day activities of the Council Housing Repairs team.

Rhona said “It turned out that John and I both had close connections to Burghead and that he knew my mum, so it’s a small world! Over the morning, jobs came in on a hand held device which John updated, including adding details of any parts used. As the morning progressed, we seemed to have a bit of a run of broken taps and I was fascinated to see John quickly adapting a washer from salvaged spares to do a fix when he didn’t have the right part in his van. He had been on-call earlier in the week and was out for a flood reported in the wee small hours, which he sorted and enjoyed a bacon roll for breakfast with the very grateful tenant – it’s always rewarding to be able to do a fix in a crisis like that. All in all, based on the warm welcome they gave him many of the tenants knew John, and it was refreshing to see how quickly and efficiently he resolved their problems”.

Thank you John, for showing just what a typical day as a plumber for Moray Council is all about.

Back to the Floor visits enable Senior Managers to work alongside employees, sharing experiences of day to day front line roles, and showcasing best practices and efficiencies. If you’d like to see a Senior Manager join your team, please contact Karen Baker.

@ email Karen:
karen.baker@moray.gov.uk

Service Question Time

Edward Thomas (Head of Housing and Property) and Jeanette Netherwood (Senior Project Officer – Smarter Working) fronted the first Service Question Time of the year. Looking at the smarter working project and property/working arrangements. There were 16 attendees from HR, ICT and Organisational Development, Housing and Property Services and Governance, Strategy and Performance present, hearing about how the first phase is going, what is still to come and what has already been done.



Avoid a 'scamcation' and be a good visitor

With people still reluctant to travel abroad in the post-pandemic world and seeking best bang for their buck as they try to balance household budgets amid rising costs, demand for breaks at home in the UK – or staycations – remains high.

A warning to take steps to avoid falling victim to a “scamcation” has been sounded by Trading Standards Scotland after a sharp rise in bogus holiday offers was reported last year. This included fake accommodation listings on social media, cold calls and unsolicited emails offering holiday deals, scam websites and fake reviews on popular travel websites.

Caravan scam – Scammers posted fake adverts on social media for caravan breaks at a holiday park in Ayrshire. One woman paid £250 in cash for a four-

night break at the park, only to discover on arrival that the caravan was not owned by the person advertising it. The fraudster had used pictures of a different caravan and didn't have any affiliation with the park. Although the woman was able to book a last-minute break through the holiday park, she was left £250 out of pocket.

Fake glamping adverts – A company offering glamping holidays noticed that some of their accommodation, which was already fully booked for the summer, was being advertised on fake social media accounts. The link in these adverts led to a scam website which looked very similar to the genuine site and had a similar URL.

Here are Trading Standards Scotland's top tips to avoid a 'scamcation' this summer

- 🏠 Do plenty of research before booking a holiday online. Before booking a holiday which you've seen on social media or in an unsolicited email, contact the company via their official website or publicly listed phone number to check that it's legitimately available at the price quoted and for the required dates.
- 🏠 Be suspicious if a provider will only give you the option to pay by cash or bank transfer. Where possible, pay for holidays using a credit card rather than via bank transfer – this will offer you more protection if you are a victim of fraud or if something goes wrong. It will also prevent scammers from obtaining your payment details.
- 🏠 Before making any payments, check the terms and conditions of the booking and the cancellation policy. Accommodation providers and holiday companies should have clear information about what to do if you need to change or cancel your booking.
- 🏠 Make sure that you have contact details for the company or provider and be suspicious if they cannot provide receipts, invoices or terms and conditions.

If you're planning to stay close to home in beautiful Moray or to head off to explore the great outdoors in another region of Scotland, be a great visitor and leave no trace of your visit.

- 🏠 **Parking:** park safely ensuring you don't block entrances, passing places or gateways, and don't damage grass verges by parking on them.
- 🏠 **Litter:** After you've enjoyed your picnic, takeaway or snack, please put your rubbish in the bin or take it home with you.
- 🏠 **Be a responsible dog owner:** Don't allow your dog to approach people or animals, including wildlife, uninvited. Where possible avoid livestock. Always keep your dog in sight and under control. If in doubt use a lead. Always bag and bin dog poo, and take it home when bins aren't available. Look out for the sticker on council bins if you're out and about or use your household green bin.
- 🏠 **Water safety:** Water at open water and inland sites is often much colder than it looks, and cold water can affect your ability to swim and self-rescue. Be aware of underwater hazards, currents and uneven depths. Always swim parallel to the shore, that way you're never too far away from it.
- 🏠 **Fire safety:** If you're thinking of doing some outdoor cooking, make sure your BBQ is sited well away from sheds, fences and shrubs. Keep children and pets well away. Don't use an accelerant to light your BBQ. Once completely cold, dispose of in your household bin.

The Moray Speyside Tourism website is a great source of info on things to do, places to stay, food and drink, locations and events.



Moray Speyside Tourism:
www.morayspeyside.com/



Golden girl Francesca is Scottish Champion

Hard work, determination and fighting spirit earned Francesca Marchetti not one, but two gold medals at this year's Scottish Open Jiu-Jitsu Championships.

Francesca, the Business Support Team Leader for Children and Families and Criminal Justice Social Work, now has her sights set on adding to her titles at the European Championships.

She took up jiu-jitsu in May 2018 and has achieved her blue belt. The Brazilian martial art is based on controlling your opponent by pinning them down to the ground, with the aim of forcing them into submission by using techniques such as arm locks, leg locks, and chokeholds. It differs from other martial arts as you can be offensive from a bottom position as well as from a top one.

Francesca explained: "I train on average five times a week – six if I'm very close to a competition – at the SBG Moray in Elgin under coaches Kevin McAloon and Martin Donaldson. I've recently taken on a strength and conditioning programme, too, in order to improve my performance.

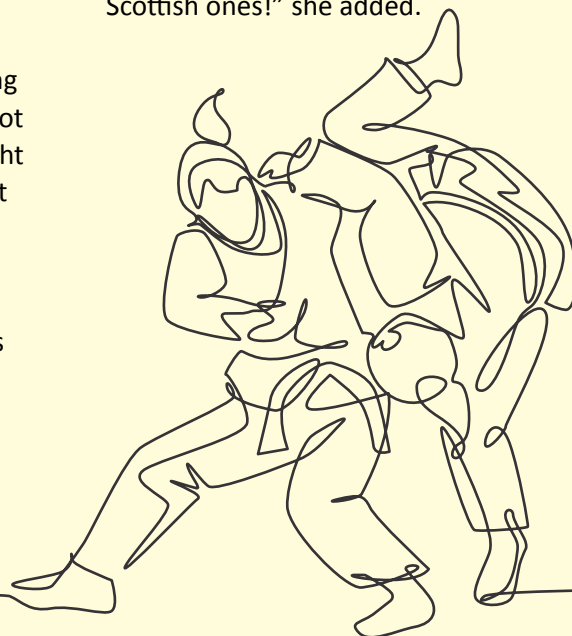
"Competing can be very stressful and overwhelming so along with physical training, I also have to do a lot of work on my mind-set to make sure I'm in the right place to undertake a challenge of this kind and that I'm going there doing my absolute best.

"I strongly believe that hard work pays off. I've put my heart and soul into my training lately, so I guess this is how I achieved double gold at the Scottish Open 2023. I was feeling confident going into the competition but still didn't expect to win as I was competing against very good opponents."



Francesca, who claimed victory in two different categories – one which involves fighters grappling while wearing traditional jiu-jitsu uniform or gi, and the other where they wear shorts and tops – admits she's a very ambitious person and has made it her mission this year to "think big".

"I would love to go and test my skills at the European Championships towards the end of the year – hopefully winning a title there will go well with my Scottish ones!" she added.





National Limerick Day

We all need a bit of silliness in our lives from time to time and National Limerick Day provides the perfect annual opportunity!

Celebrated each year on 12 May, the familiar five line verse is renowned for its humorous, sometimes bawdy themes. Instantly recognisable from the rhythm of the verse they are cleverly constructed to put a smile on our face.

National Limerick Day is on 12 May to mark the birthday of Edward Lear, the English writer known for his works of nonsensical prose and poetry. It was Edward Lear who was to popularise the Limerick in his *A Book of Nonsense*, published 1846. His limericks were popular then and this form of nonsense literature has managed to retain its appeal to this day.

We asked you for your best Limerick so here are our favourite (and printable!) efforts.

There was a young man from Devises
Who had ears of different sizes
One was so small
It was no good at all
But the other was large and won prizes
Andrew Burt, Social Worker

A canner, exceedingly canny
One morning remarked to his granny,
"A canner can can
Anything that he can;
But a canner can't can a can, can he?"
Anonymous

An elderly man from Keith
Mislaid his set of false teeth,
They'd been laid on a chair,
He'd forgot they were there,
Sat down, and was bitten beneath.
Kirsty

There was an old man from Milan
Whose limericks never would scan.
When told this was so,
He said, "yes, I know.
But I always try to get as many syllables into the last
line as I possibly can."
Anonymous

National Pet Month

1 April - 1 May 2023

National Pet Month (NPM) celebrates and raises awareness of responsible pet ownership through educational campaigns. NPM celebrates pet ownership, sharing the many benefits of our cherished companions. We know our pets get us through tough times and can be a comfort and company for us when working from home, for example.

While the National Pet Month campaign runs from April to May each year, the important messages around responsible pet ownership is relevant all year-round.

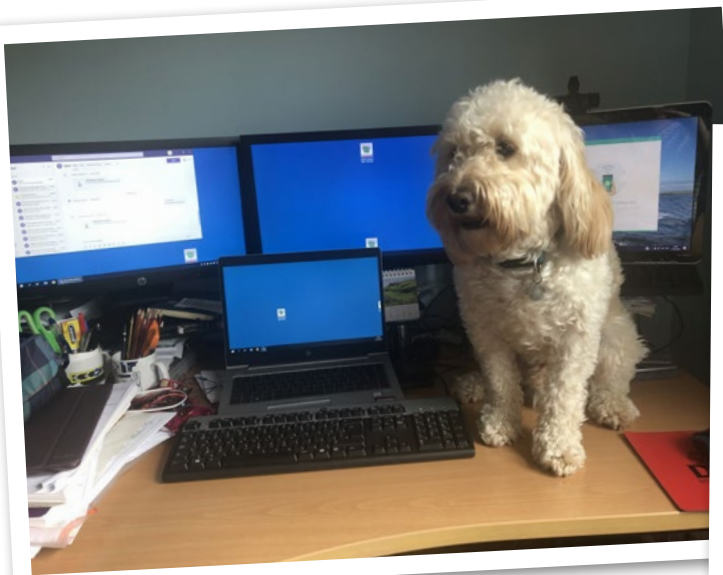
During the campaign month there are fundraisers and events in support of the UK's many pet welfare organisations and charities – keep an eye out for any in Moray.



responsible pet ownership:

<https://www.nationalpetmonth.org.uk/>

Meanwhile, enjoy some photos our colleagues have sent in of their pets – we're delighted to see so many adopted as unofficial service mascots! Chief among them are Archie and Aubrey, job-sharing in the Traffic and Transportation Team.



- ▲ Archie
Elaine Penny, Engineer [Traffic]
Role: Best-est Boy – Traffic and Transportation Team (Job Share)
Key Duties: Raising team morale, supervising DSE Workstation assessments, tail wagging and shoe stealing.

- Aubrey
Diane Anderson, Senior Engineer [Transportation]
Role: Best-est Boy – Traffic and Transportation Team (Job Share)
Key Duties: Raising team morale, reminding the Senior Engineer to take regular breaks, finishing any cold cups of tea.



► Otto
Selina Cotton,
Economic
Growth team



▼ Ollie and Oscar
Rachel
MacDonald,
Rents Admin



▼ Luca, Harley and Harper
Emma Connor, Business Support Team
Leader, Customer Services



◀ Angus
Susan Souter,
Senior
Accountant

▼ Lola and Luna
Dionne
McLennan,
Building
Standards



MORAY GIFT CARD LOVE LOCAL



KEEP THE SPEND
LOCAL WITH
YOUR FAVOURITE
RETAILERS!

Moray Gift Card update

You'll have seen the buzz around the Moray Gift Card – from Christmas gifts to Valentine's Day competitions, there's been a lot of interest in our offering.

Our colleague, Kirsty Shand, has been promoting the card over the last year – which can be used like a debit card – getting more Moray businesses on board and making the card as accessible as possible.

Below are some of the newest businesses to start accepting the Scotland Loves Local Moray Gift Card – there are now over 180 involved! The most recent to get on board is bowling and soft play specialists Innoflate Elgin, operated by Pinz.

Newest businesses:

- 🍷 The Pantry Forres
- 🍷 JC Dawson Butcher Elgin
- 🍷 Pizza Pan Forres
- 🍷 Planta Café Eatery and Wine Bar Elgin

- 🍷 Ashers Bakery's: St Giles, Elgin High Street, Lossie, The Hub Café
- 🍷 Drumnagorach Designs
- 🍷 Dominos Elgin
- 🍷 Nickel and Dime Elgin
- 🍷 Strathisla
- 🍷 Hair and Body Mechanics Elgin
- 🍷 Greenacres Coffee Shop
- 🍷 FarmFoods

Kirsty says: "With over 180 businesses to spend a Scotland Loves Local Moray Gift Card, there really is something for everyone.

"When it comes to keeping active, there are over 15 leisure and attractions, from golf courses to glamping, castles to cathedrals, and even our local football club.

"This latest addition of Pinz Elgin to the Moray Gift Card gives recipients of the card even more choice, so they can experience all that our region has to offer."



Order your card online now:

<https://scotlandgiftslocal.com/product/moray-gift-card/>

Scan here for a full list of participating businesses in your area!
Or visit: scotlandgiftslocal.com/product/moray-gift-card

