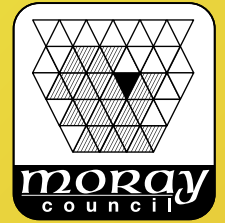


# connect



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**John Mundell**

**Comms Hub**

**Best Value Report**

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## Editorial

As spring makes way for summer we're bringing you a dose of sunshine in this month's Connect.

An introduction to our interim Chief Executive, John Mundell, tells us his vision for his time with us here in Moray..

We learn more about the Dandelion project, funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, and supports armed forces families with school-age children.

We have an update on the Learning Estate, which continues apace with engagement in Forres and Buckie ongoing and due to begin in Elgin next.

Your chance to use the pool bikes, a reminder about sustainable travel and our digital champions and an update on the Best Value report are all included in this edition.

Councillor's Corner continues with our Ward 8 – Forres Elected Members, who tell us their reasons for becoming councillors and how they ended up in the chamber.

Enjoy the issue and we'll be back with your July/August edition in a couple of months – as always feel free to get in touch via [connectnews@moray.gov.uk](mailto:connectnews@moray.gov.uk)



Kirsty



## John Mundell – Interim Chief Executive

As we prepared to say cheerio to Roddy Burns in the last edition, we say a big hello to our Interim Chief Executive in this one.

Taking up the reins from the end of May, John Mundell joins us at an important time in the council's lifecycle. We're faced with more budget decisions that can be described as challenging and, while there are nuggets of positivity, a Best Value report (see [page 8](#)) that highlights where improvements are still needed.

We introduced John in March but we wanted to find out what makes him tick, and what made him choose Moray as his next port-of-call. We found out when we met up with him a few days into his handover with Roddy.

"I've always felt the biggest compliment somebody can give you is to ask you for your help. I really get a buzz out of helping people and organisations to improve so that staff and service users feel proud about what they've got and what more can be achieved."

Recognising Moray Council is heading in the right direction, John continues: "I want

to release the talent and let that talent within the organisation feel safe, trusted and confident to be able to showcase what they can do. I love seeing people thrive and flourish."

John sees his role as creating the environment to allow that to happen: "I don't have all the answers, I've got lots of experience and skills I bring to the team, but everyone has their part to play in working together to overcome the many challenges the council and our communities face. We're all committed to public service and in an organisation that exists to provide essential services and makes things better for folk, we can all claim positive outcomes when we successfully pull together as a team and deliver efficient and effective services."

When asked about his style and ways of working, John admits hybrid working will take some adjustment for him, as it has for all of us, but is getting more used to what

Introducing John:  
<https://newsroom.moray.gov.uk/news/moray-council-announces-interim-chief-executive>

that way of working looks like now.

“I believe I’m personable and I like to see people and speak to them so the challenge for me coming into the organisation is not being able to make those connections and develop constructive relationships as quickly as I’d like. I’m also not great with remembering names initially, so I apologise if I’ve forgotten any already – especially when people are moving desks and in different places when I see them next!”

When it comes to interactions with staff, John is keen to highlight that he puts feeling valued at work at the top of what he asks for: “I want to look out for staff, I’ll be firm when it’s needed and I will challenge in a supportive way when it’s appropriate, but overall I want staff to feel valued too. I know I’m at my best when I feel I have a useful contribution to make and we may all make mistakes along the way but we’ll learn from them, no organisation is perfect.

“We must all remember, that Elected Members also have an extremely challenging role and we need to support them to fulfil their responsibilities on behalf of the local communities they serve across Moray.”

It’s very clear that local government and public service is an area of passion for John, having started in front-line operations in the 1970s he’s been through re-organisations and worked his way up through various levels of responsibility. “Councils are brilliant. We’re providing a vast range of very important services to the public 365 days a year, twentyfour seven. That’s what we do and what we’ll continue to do. Hopefully we’ll do it, in the areas where we need to, a

little bit better than we have in the past.”

When asked about his proudest achievement in his career, John struggles to narrow it down but is proud of where he’s come from in life and how that has shaped his understanding and empathy for the situations people find themselves in. “I’ve worked hard all my life, from starting working for a dairy farm at 13 years old in the morning before school to where I am now, I understand the graft people put in and how tough things can be for many people.”

He goes on to describe the transformation of Inverclyde Council as a highlight of his time there from 2006 until 2016: “In 2005 Inverclyde Council was a badly failing council and by 2016 we were ranked in Bloomberg’s Best Employers survey as the best public sector organisation to work for in the UK. We didn’t chase that but council employees responded to the survey anonymously and that’s what makes me most proud, they wanted to tell people that was their experience.”

Outside of work John’s small farm keeps him busy and his lifelong interest in karate led to him competing and becoming an international karate referee. Time as a gymnastics coach and, more recently, a tour coach driver as a hobby shows the variety of experiences he brings to Moray. With his HGV licences up-to-date and passion for front-line services it’s likely we’ll see John out with our crews soon.

John’s parting words as he laid out his vision for being an aspirational council sets the tone for his time with us in Moray: “We need to work together to get out of the rut we’re in and to be bold, bolder than we’ve been.”



## For all your comms needs – comms hub on Interchange

Comms Hub:

[http://interchange.moray.gov.uk/int\\_standard/Page\\_152982.html](http://interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_152982.html)

Media Protocol:

[intranet.moray.gov.uk/secure/docs/file153073.pdf](http://intranet.moray.gov.uk/secure/docs/file153073.pdf)

Guide for videos:

<http://intranet.moray.gov.uk/secure/docs/file153657.docx>

As the comms team prepares to welcome some new faces (we've a new Learning Estate Comms and Engagement Officer starting in June) we're sharing the latest updates to the comms hub on Interchange.

As usual, you'll find the comms plan template to complete and send to us with any comms requests; the updated email signature template; our social media house rules – becoming more and more relevant for corporate social media admins; and our branding and style guides – both due to be refreshed this year alongside new accessibility guidance.

The media protocol was updated last year and worth having a look at to refresh yourself with the way media responses work. Whenever we enter a pre-election period further guidance on this will be sent out as well.

We also now have a guide for videos on the hub. Video content is a key tool we're using more, particularly on social media – all platforms are now primarily video sharing channels.

We've also upgraded our YouTube channel with individual streams now available for specific services, so we can tailor your content and add it to your own playlist. Have a look at the guide to see what's involved with video content and get in touch if you have a campaign we can help with – the earlier you involve us, the better, so we can plan content properly.

You can find us in HQ102 (near the front door) or email [pr@moray.gov.uk](mailto:pr@moray.gov.uk)

## Policy update

As a result of legislative changes and/or changes to working practice, there are a number of small revisions to our employment policies covering Flexible Working, Paternity Leave, Maternity Support and Adoption Support Leave and Recruitment and Selection. These take effect from April 2024.

The revisions to the policies are as follows and these changes will be updated on the policy documents found on the Interchange.

- Flexible Working Policy: Employees can now make two applications in a 12 month rolling year: there is a reduction in the decision period from three months to two months from date of receipt of a flexible working application; removal of the requirement for an employee to provide a business case to support their application and a meeting with the employee is only required to discuss the outcome and reasons for rejecting the application.
- Paternity Leave, Maternity Support and Adoption Support Leave Policy: Employees have an increased time in which they can start this leave following the birth or adoption, with the period moving from 56 days to 52 weeks; two week paternity leave can be taken as two weeks or as two separate weeks; the notice period to request leave has reduced from 15 weeks to four weeks and if the employee wishes to then change the timing of the leave they must give as much notice as is reasonably practical within the four week block. This has changed from 28 days' notice to change.
- Recruitment and Selection Policy: The policy has been updated to reflect shortleeting moving back to services and the reference to centralised shortleeting has been removed.

Should you have any questions on any of these amendments please get in touch with [HR@moray.gov.uk](mailto:HR@moray.gov.uk)

## What's Live on CLIVE?

Since the last update, the OD team has been working hard in the background to make sure all the eLearning modules available through CLIVE are up-to-date.

CLIVE:

[ouncil.learnprouk.com/](https://ouncil.learnprouk.com/)

They're pleased to announce updates on the following modules:

- Coaching and Mentoring
- Building Personal Resilience
- An introduction to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Manual Handling Theory

A reminder too that there's a comprehensive suite of eLearning modules on Microsoft 365. They can be found under the ICT Skills category and range from an introduction to Microsoft Teams through to using complex functions in Microsoft Excel.

When time allows, please take a moment to visit CLIVE and explore the array of learning opportunities that are only a mouse click away.

If you get stuck, help is at hand. Contact [organisational.development@moray.gov.uk](mailto:organisational.development@moray.gov.uk) if you have any issues with your CLIVE account or have any questions about eLearning.



## Best Value in Moray Council report

Best Value Report:

[https://audit.scot/uploads/2024-03/coa\\_240328\\_moray\\_council.pdf](https://audit.scot/uploads/2024-03/coa_240328_moray_council.pdf)

Webcast of meeting  
11 June:

<https://moray.cmis.uk.com/moray/...>

Webcast service:

<https://moray.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

**A**t the end of March Audit Scotland published the Accounts Commission's latest Best Value in Moray Council report.

The report highlighted the turnaround in Moray Council in recent months where collaboration in the chamber was deemed impressive and the way forward for us as an organisation.

The commission indicated that, while it will monitor progress, it doesn't need to conduct a follow-up report. Although the recommendations set out ask us all to play our part in improving best value practices for the council and at pace.

The summary of findings and recommendations are below and the full report can be found online.

The next step for the council is to consider the report and its recommendations and to agree on a way forward for the authority. This meeting is to be held on 11 June 2024 and will be available to watch, as usual, on the webcast service.

At the time, the Council Leader, took the opportunity to thank all staff for efforts to progress the council's transformation policies and everyone's continued contribution to performance management and improvement across our services.



## Key findings

- Financial sustainability remains a key challenge – reliance on reserves and unidentified savings is not sustainable.
- While there have been improvements the pace of change and transformation is slow – this must be accelerated in pace and ambition.
- Performance reporting timescales need improved.
- The council has used external support to develop leadership, scrutiny and improve officer/member relations.
- Acknowledges the long-standing challenge of recruiting senior staff – must demonstrate how it will address capacity gaps.

## Highlights/Improvements

- Cross-party working and collaborative leadership – particularly around setting the recent budget.
- Council engaged well with communities on budget work and corporate plan.
- Improvement actions to be brought together in Best Value action plan by April 2024.

## Recommendations

- Members should work effectively together to act on key decisions in an effective and efficient manner.
- The council should ensure all Audit and Scrutiny Committee members are clear on their remit.
- Undertake further consultation and engagement with communities with more PB involvement.
- Finalise performance and delivery framework for new corporate plan. Implement annual self-evaluation to identify strengths as well as areas for improvement.
- Report performance in a more timely manner.
- Increase pace of transformation and identify savings to ensure financial sustainability.
- Keep affordability of capital plans and related revenue expenditure under review.
- Monitor any slippage in capital plan.
- Review forecasting process to ensure most accurate projections.

## Councillor's Corner, Ward 8: Forres



Cllr Scott Lawrence

Cllr Paul McBain

Cllr Draeyk Van Der Horn

## Cllr Scott Lawrence

Cllr Scott Lawrence is a **member of the Appeals Committee; Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee; voting member of the Clinical Care and Governance Committee and the MIJB; and a member of Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee; Housing and Community Safety Committee; Licensing Board; and Planning and Regulatory Service Committee.**

I'm happy to have this opportunity to introduce myself to everyone that works for Moray Council. I'm 44 years old (hard paper round!) living in Forres with my wife Lisa and our two daughters aged 6 and 16. Since being elected just over two years ago I have spent many hours learning about the wide variety of roles within Moray Council and all the people who make sure that we function as a council day to day.

Before standing for election, I had my own business as a Hypnotherapist in Forres. Although I now have a lot less time for therapy I still enjoy seeing and helping clients with a variety of problems. One of the great privileges of being a therapist is learning the untold truths about people's lives and the pressures and

pains of modern living. It's certainly one of the factors that motivated me to stand as a councillor, the ability to relate that everyday experience of working families (including my own) to the council chamber. It's something I felt was missing in the past due to the age demographic of elected members.

Anyone who lives in Forres probably knows me best from my 24 years as a postie in the town, a role I started when I was 17 years old. Undoubtedly the role of local postie has changed over the last 10 years especially after privatisation. Many of the things that attracted me to postie life seem to still at least be available through council employment. Secure employment with the ability to work towards full time hours, good pensions, good union representation and the ability to contribute to the local community. While understandably during the UK cost of living crisis people value money above all else, I feel these other factors can sometimes be overlooked and should not be underestimated. From 2007 I had a spell of council employment as a youth worker in Forres for 7 years, I wholeheartedly enjoyed working

with the young people in Forres and the job gave great insight into being a council employee, which has proved very handy in my new role.

Forres has been home to my family for generations and it is a huge pleasure to represent my hometown as a councillor, this along with my lifelong passion to promote Scottish Independence led me to standing as an SNP councillor for Forres. Day to day life as a councillor has been an interesting experience and given me a huge range of experiences and understandings. From the intricacies of planning, to the vast challenges of health and social care it has been a whirlwind of learning and meeting amazing people, a whirlwind that I am still coming to terms with. Having said that, the privilege of being an elected Councillor is not one I take for granted. Hopefully my experience as a council employee, a working parent and someone who cares deeply about their local community will help influence councillor's decisions for the better. I look forward to meeting many more council employees in my time as a councillor as I continue to appreciate all the hard work and variety of roles that make up Moray Council.

## Cllr Paul McBain

Cllr Paul McBain is **Chair of the Appeals Committee and the Licensing Committee; member of the Corporate Committee; Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee; Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee; Housing and Community Safety Committee; MLRB; Planning and Regulatory Services Committee and the Police and Fire and Rescue Services Committee.**

Politics is what many see when you enter the council as an elected member or Councillor as we are known to the public. This was my fourth time at standing for election, the first being in 2007 as an Independent Candidate for the Fochabers ward; 2011 by-election in Forres; 2012 and finally 2022 as a candidate for the Conservative Party in Forres.

Growing up I lived in Fochabers and attended Milnes High School, leaving in June 1980 having stayed on till Sixth Year and elected as Head Boy in that final year.

On leaving school I had no intentions on further education as I knew what I was going to do with my life, a Policeman. Having passed the entrance exam the opportunity to stay in the Grampian area was limited and the offer of going elsewhere in

UK was not that inviting.

I ended up working at the local nurseries at Christies for six months while I waited the year to reapply for Grampian. I started with Fine Fare retail as a Trainee Manager in Aberdeen and there I stayed till 1992 when we moved back to Fochabers, having purchased the local shop and Post Office. Having sold our business in 2005 I then moved to a chain of Spar Stores as their Area Manager till early 2007. That year I decided to stand for Council, it wasn't because I had any political agenda, but with the job I had in the Post Office dealing with day-to-day local issues it felt like a good fit.

Not succeeding in 2007 was disappointing but I then moved to Forres where we purchased the Post Office and when a by-election was called in 2011, I stood as a Conservative candidate for the vacancy. While not successful I put my thoughts towards May 2012 but again falling short at the last count on the day. I was very disappointed having not been elected but you brush yourself down and move on.

We were building our business in Forres and I became involved in the Senior Management structure of the Post Office and represented all Scottish Post Offices with a voice at Government level in London. I

decided in 2017 not to stand as my work commitments were such that I could not represent the constituents of the Forres ward the way they would deserve and although it was a tough decision it was the correct one.

When the Prime minister spoke on TV in March 2020 about the pandemic, I was returning from Chesterfield from three days with Senior Post Office officials not knowing then that this would be my last involvement with this group. I had made the decision to step away from the front line and while covid prevented movement and many other restrictions we in the Post Office continued to be of service every day during Covid restrictions.

I decided to stand for the 2022 elections in July of 2021 having had talks with my family. Although I was still busy with my business I was committed to stand again and after seven months of pounding the Forres ward leafleting and engaging I was successful in being elected, fifteen years since I first put myself forward.

Having taken 15 years to get in I now have the chance to help support and direct change in working within a team of 26 councillors.

## **Cllr Draeyk Van Der Horn**

Cllr Draeyk Van Der Horn is a **member of the Corporate Committee; Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee; MLRB; Planning and Regulatory Services Committee.**

My background is in Conservation and Landscape Architecture but surprisingly when I moved to Amsterdam I became a chef. Since then, I have travelled the world managing successful food enterprises, developing local food networks and running events.

After resettling in London, I spent many years being part of chefs collective, developing national food assemblies, consulting with

NGOs and establishing community organisations before moving to Dartmoor National Park to re-wild a farm with my husband. Here I developed my work in deep ecology. Living close to nature and listening to its wisdom was a humbling experience.

I moved to Moray in 2022 and became Moray's first Scottish Green Councillor, to my mind "you have to have courage, commitment and remind yourself every day you are here to serve." That can be a challenge, but it is also something to defend and celebrate.

When not doing council work you will find me working as a registered

celebrant, managing a community woodland garden project, opening a new shop or hunting for a publisher having just written my first book of speculative fiction. Otherwise you will find me out and about in the Cairngorms, which is my second home, not just because of the stunning landscape but for the wellbeing of hiking, running, swimming and cycling which helps keep me fit in mind and body.

I am committed to a world that celebrates nature celebrates life. This lives for me through the act of listening to people and planet. I share this in my life and in all that do.

## **Cllr Kathleen Robertson – Council Leader**

In the previous edition of Connect, our Councillor's Corner included a profile of Council Leader and Chair of the Education, Children's and Leisure Services committee, Kathleen Robertson.

Kathleen Robertson's profile:  
<http://interchange.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file154214.pdf>



## Moray's Dandelion Project launches

Latest newsletter:  
<https://drive.google.com/file/>

Contact Form:  
<https://forms.office.com/...>

**T**he Dandelion Project is a three-year initiative funded through a £370,000 grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, which has enabled an Education Support Officer to be appointed to lead the Project. It supports armed forces children in primary and secondary education from regular, reserve and veteran families.

Priyanka Chard, Education Support Officer, leads the project: "The Dandelion Project supports schools to ensure Armed Forces children have the right conditions and environments in their school to thrive, no matter the challenges that may generate from their serving parent's work commitments.

"It aims to create a long-lasting legacy for families in Moray who are navigating the twists and turns of military life. The core objective is to make transition and schooling easier and more supportive for the children from Armed Forces families and help those supporting and working with them to better

understand the needs and barriers that are sometimes facing them."

The last two months have been jam-packed, starting with the project's launch, to planning exciting opportunities for pupils, professional development for staff, and working collaboratively with agencies.

Back in February, three pupils from Moray were invited to participate in the celebration of Never Such Innocence's (NSI) 10TH Anniversary event at Edinburgh Castle. Alfie, a student from Elgin Academy and NSI ambassador, delivered a moving speech where he shared his experiences

as a child from an Armed Forces family. Lily and Rhianna, pupils from Lossiemouth High School, sang a moving performance of 'Welcome Home', a song written by Armed Forces pupils to capture the feelings of life as a military family. This event underpinned the significance of children's voices.

April was Month of the Military Child (MotMC), a time dedicated to celebrating children and young people from military families. Being an Armed Forces child can be exciting, but it can also present challenges.

Within Moray were a variety of activities, including a photo competition where children were encouraged to take photos that illustrate their 'World as an Armed Forces child'.

Reading Force attended two 'Books and Blether' drop-ins to give away a free book for anyone aged 0-18 years old from an Armed Forces family. NSI also delivered several workshops around our local schools and pupils were encouraged to wear purple on Friday 26 April as a sign of support.

The local Moray branch for SSAFA (the Armed Forces Charity), worked with the project to run bake sales at council offices raising a fantastic £445.57, which will all go to supporting Armed Forces families in Moray.

Keep an eye out on Interchange and news channels for future events throughout the year – including new CPD training for council staff.



# Learning Estate Update

It's been a busy year for the Learning Estate Team as various programmes of work gather momentum. From the launch of the Sustainable Learning Estate Engagement and heading out for engagement in local Associated School Groups, to the successful LEIP 3 funding bid for Forres Academy, which has accelerated the improvement plan for the school.

## Sustainable Learning Estate Engagement

In September 2023, engagement launched to address the sustainability challenges of Moray's Learning Estate.

This engagement is the next stage in the delivery of a modern and fit for purpose Learning Estate that's flexible and inspirational; supports excellence and equity for all in Moray; provides life-long learning opportunities; and the foundations for a growing a diverse, sustainable economy. It aims to examine a number of factors to achieve the vision including the utilisation, occupancy, suitability and condition of all Moray schools.

Currently, there are 45 primary schools and eight secondary schools overseen by Moray Council. For the purposes of engagement, it was decided that each associated school group (ASG) would be considered individually, allowing for a more detailed approach within each community.

The first phase of the engagement launched in the Forres ASG where an online survey ran from September to November 2023. A public meeting was held during this time to give residents in the Forres ASG the chance to share their views and opinions on what they

want out of their schools.

Following online engagement, a focus group made up of representatives from Forres parent councils, community councils, development trusts and elected members was formed to discuss the survey findings and explore challenges and opportunities regarding schools in the area.

In February 2024, the second phase of the engagement launched in Buckie ASG with an online survey running through to March. Two public meetings were held and a focus group made up of Buckie community representatives and will meet in May to discuss the findings and explore options.

Reports outlining the engagement findings of both Forres ASG and Buckie ASG and the recommended potential options will be considered at future meetings of the Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee.

The next phase of engagement will take place in Elgin ASG in June 2024 and other ASG focused events will take place over the next year.

Keep up to date with the Sustainable Learning Estate engagement:

[www.moray.gov.uk/moray\\_standard/page\\_153558.html](http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_153558.html)

Find out more about the consultation:

[www.moray.gov.uk/moray\\_standard/page\\_151261.html](http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_151261.html)





## Forres Academy

In October 2023, the Scottish Government announced that Moray Council's bid for Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP) Phase 3 funding for Forres Academy had been successful.

LEIP is a joint £2bn investment programme between Scottish and local government designed to improve the condition of the school estate and benefit 50,000 pupils to learn in condition A/B schools.

The condition of the school has been a source of concern for some time and the discovery of RAAC back in August 2023, only heightened the need for a replacement.

Following engagement with Hub North

Scotland and a Design Team, three sites were shortlisted as suitable potential locations for the new school and informal public engagement took place.

Formal consultation with the community regarding the site selection of the new build followed with several assessments discounting one of the three site options, leaving Lochyills and Applegrove Playing Fields/Roysvale as the two remaining options.

Consultation on these sites ran in March and April and a report outlining the responses to the consultation will be considered by the Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee at its meeting on 14 May 2024.

## Staff pool bikes

Pool Bike on Interchange:  
[http://interchange.moray.gov.uk/int\\_standard/Page\\_108419.html](http://interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_108419.html)

Staff led bike rides:  
[http://interchange.moray.gov.uk/int\\_standard/Page\\_154105.html](http://interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_154105.html)

Last year the council's bicycle fleet was fully replaced, including two new e-bikes and a new shelter with e-bike charge units installed at the councillor's car park. These were externally funded and it's been encouraging to see an uptake in the use of pool bikes over the last 12 months.

Pool bikes are a great way to build your daily exercise into the working day. Also, by using pool bikes, you'll be contributing towards the council's goal of reducing its carbon emissions to net zero.

Kim McGowan, Technician: "The pool van is parked at Cooper Park, so taking a bike is often quicker to get to my sites. I also cycle to Lhanbryde and make use of the Active Travel route alongside the river and the A96. It's a safe and direct route and takes me 20 minutes. Our manager supports our cycling for work."

Jordan Bowler, Task Supervisor, cycles to the outskirts of Elgin to meet clients at the workshop: "Cycling helps to recharge and process my thoughts before arriving at the next destination. A win-win!"

A short survey of pool bike users earlier in 2024 showed that using the bikes is often more time-efficient for short distances than driving and parking; booking is more flexible as pool cars are often booked for a whole day; and people support the health and environmental considerations.

Suggestions for improvement include providing information on safe routes for travel; more communication and encouragement from managers on the use of pool bikes; and improving the bike booking system/pick up of keys.

As a result, we'll be looking to improve the information available on the Pool Bike Interchange page, including sign posting staff to safe routes for travel, and we'll encourage teams to discuss the use of pool bikes for shorter distances during team meetings.

Skills sessions and staff led bike rides are available for those who need a confidence booster or a reminder on personal safety whilst using a bike.



Ross Ferguson, Emergency Planning Officer, who joined a led ride recently, said: "I've not cycled for fifteen years, but my confidence was back within two minutes. I expected the e-bike to be heavy and difficult to operate, but it was easy and fun. I was shown paths that I didn't realise were there. I'll cycle to the (RAF) Base in Lossiemouth and destinations nearer by now. Booking pool cars is often difficult especially when last-minute. People often mention being 'stuck in the office' and well-being is a main objective for the council. This is your chance to change that!"

If you have any questions, want to offer suggestions for improvements or just provide some general feedback please contact the team at [activetravel@moray.gov.uk](mailto:activetravel@moray.gov.uk)



# Digital Champions: bridging the digital skills gap

Digital Champions on interchange: [http://interchange.moray.gov.uk/int\\_standard/Page\\_138190.html](http://interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_138190.html)

Feeling lost with Teams, struggling with Excel?

Help is only an email away. For anyone struggling with the new version of Microsoft Office, our Digital Champions network is here to help.

Our Digital Champions are an engaged group of employees, who recognise the value of technology, and are committed to helping colleagues improve their confidence, motivation, and digital skills for work. They're not trainers; they're colleagues who want to help other colleagues get the most from Microsoft 365.

Through peer-to-peer learning, Digital Champions support colleagues with a range of digital tasks from helping someone get to grips with hosting a meeting on Microsoft Teams, accessing eLearning or getting the most from Excel.

How do I get help?

- If you have a Microsoft query and need to know how to do something, please contact the Digital Champions team via [DigitalChampions@moray.gov.uk](mailto:DigitalChampions@moray.gov.uk)
- Your support request will be circulated to the network of Digital Champions so that only the Champion with the knowledge and availability will reply.
- The Champion will work with you one-to-one to provide support or signpost you to useful resources.
- For more information, visit our Digital Champions Interchange page.

# CYCLE2WORK 2024 – now open for applications!

It's back...  
and we are pleased to announce the Cycle2Work Scheme is now open!

The scheme is open from 13 May 2024 until 21 June 2024. 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 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 [www.halfords.com/cycle2work](http://www.halfords.com/cycle2work) – use the employer code: MORAYCOUNCILC2W
- Or phone Halfords on 03455 046444.

## What to do next:

- Have a look at the bicycles and safety accessories available at either the Halfords stores or online at [www.halfords.com](http://www.halfords.com)
- Decide how much you need to spend
- Complete the Halfords Hire Agreement by logging on to [www.halfords.com/cycle2work](http://www.halfords.com/cycle2work)
- 'Sign' an electronic version, payroll and HR will be alerted that you have applied
- After processing the Hire Agreement, it will be countersigned by Human Resources, and you will receive a letter of collection via email
- Once you receive your Letter of Collection, go to Halfords (or your chosen store) to 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 a 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 cannot access the scheme online or have any questions, you can phone Halfords on 03455 046444.

**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 as well as 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 councils employment during that period you are liable to pay the balance.

For further info:

Cycle2Work on interchange:  
[http://interchange.moray.gov.uk/int\\_standard/Page\\_142287.html](http://interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_142287.html)

Cycle2Work at Halfords:  
[www.halfords.com/cycle2work](http://www.halfords.com/cycle2work)



## **STAR AWARDS are coming...**

Following on from the success of the STAR award scheme in previous years, it'll soon be time to open the nomination window for 2024 STAR Awards.

STAR (Special Thanks and Recognition) Awards formally recognise the contributions of our colleagues. The Star awards and nomination process will follow the same format as previous years; submitting your nomination must be made using the correct nomination form. We will be accepting nominations from 12 August 2024.

Nomination suggested categories below are for guidance only. Nominations may also be made under other headings of your choosing.

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

All submissions should answer the following questions. It's on this part of the form 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?

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](mailto:organisational.development@moray.gov.uk) or by posting a form to Organisational Development, HQ, High Street, Elgin, IV30 1BX.

Judging will take place shortly after the scheme closes. With all nominations receiving a letter of thanks and three awards being given.

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

STAR Awards 2024 schedule

- Nominations Open: 12 August 2024
- Nominations Close: 2 September 2024
- Judging takes place: W/C 16 September 2024
- Letters of thanks to be sent and award to be given : W/C 1 October 2024

# No capes!



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## Not All Superheroes Wear Capes

Moray Council's Placement Services Team provides care for individual children and sibling groups.

We do this through our foster carers throughout Moray who provide placements for children and young people in need.

We also provide services for short breaks, children with more complex needs, and young adults transitioning to independent living.

If you have what it takes to be a Foster Carer or would be interested to hear more about this rewarding experience, contact the team on 01343 563568 / 01343 563325 or email [DutyPlacementServices@moray.gov.uk](mailto:DutyPlacementServices@moray.gov.uk)



## Don't get phished – get trained!

**W**e all know we face cyber threats and attacks, that phishing is a major threat to Moray Council as well as to us personally. Fraudsters are constantly trying to attack individuals and businesses to get sensitive and valuable information that they use to expand their criminal enterprise.

Recent successful cyber-attacks on Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council), as well as on public bodies (NHS, UHI, SEPA) and businesses (Arnold Clark, Royal Mail) show how real the threat is.

Moray Council is also subjected to attempted phishing attacks on a regular basis, which, if successful, could massively impact our ICT systems, our day to day working and the services we provide.

Late last year, ICT simulated a phishing attack on our systems and were concerned at the results. 737 employees clicked on the link and 452 entered details. Although, around 275 employees reported this as a suspected phishing/scam email to our IT Service Desk.

To help make sure we all understand the dangers and what we can do to help protect Moray Council, as well as

ourselves personally, we've partnered with MetaCompliance to provide a short training session.

If you haven't already, you'll be getting an email soon inviting you to log on to watch some short videos and answer a few questions to help keep us all safe from cyber attacks.

It's important all employees take the time to do this training – it only takes around 20 mins – and could save us all a big headache in future!

More information on Interchange:  
[interchange.moray.gov.uk/int\\_standard/  
Page\\_153128.html](https://interchange.moray.gov.uk/int_standard/Page_153128.html)



# Moray and Banffshire Heroes Awards

We know our staff are special and now many of them have been recognised by HN Media for their efforts both in the council and outside.

The Moray and Banffshire Heroes Awards celebrates unsung heroes and organisations who dedicate themselves to helping others, are there in our hour of need and who contribute to society in various ways.

The call for nominations went out at the start of the year and on 25 April the winners were announced. A number of council staff were nominated and shortlisted for their work either in their council capacity or through voluntary work.

We'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate all nominees and say a huge well done for making such an impression that time was taken to nominate you. We're proud of everyone for the selflessness they show whether at work or in their personal life to contribute to our communities.

The full list of winners is below and we hope you all enjoyed your night – it's a well deserved chance for us to say thank you.

## The Moray and Banffshire Heroes were:

- Brave Child – Ellie McHardy
- Primary Pupil – Delilah Clark
- Primary Teacher – Sarah Will
- Secondary Pupil – Abbie Howe
- Secondary Teacher – June Buchan and Emma Maclauchlan
- Emergency Services – Elaine Mair
- Carer – Fran Hutton
- Charitable Organisation – Moray School Bank
- Fundraiser – Lucy Lintott smith
- Community Champion – Rhona Patterson
- Green Hero – Judith Binney
- Green Community Venture – Girlguiding Moray
- Healthcare – Theatre Staff at Dr Gray's
- Volunteer – Janet McDonald and Elaine Penny
- School – Findochty Primary School
- Hero of Heroes – Elaine Mair

<https://www.northern-scot.co.uk/news/watch-moray-and-banffshire-heroes-are-crowned-with-inspirat-349038/>



Trusted Trader:  
<https://www.trustedtrader.scot/Moray/signup>

## Want to find a trader you can trust?

**H**ere's how to find a reliable one.

Where can I find a reliable tradesperson? It's the key question for anyone racing down the home improvement plan route.

The good news is Moray traders have signed up to Moray Council's new Trusted Trader scheme.

The Moray Trusted Trader page on our website lists traders that have been vetted and approved by our Trading Standards.

The site collects good and bad customer reviews and all comments posted are genuine ones.

Joining the scheme is credibility for Moray traders so if you know any please spread the word about the scheme – the more traders we can get on the site, the more we'll all have to choose from!

You can find a Trusted Trader here [www.trustedtrader.scot/Moray/](http://www.trustedtrader.scot/Moray/)

Traders wanting to join should visit the Moray Trusted Trader website here. The process should take around 10 minutes and a half-price offer of £120 is open for a limited period.