

# Newsletter March 2020

## Coronavirus information and guidance

### Message from VAO

The current COVID-19 CRISIS has affected individuals, communities, services and businesses but in Orkney there has been a magnificent community response to the provision of support to those who need a little help and real efforts are being made to work collaboratively and across traditional boundaries.

Like most of you, who are able to, VAO staff are now working from home. We are delivering services as usual although relying heavily on technology and exploring new ways to communicate with each other and with you.

So please continue to contact us. If you're not sure who to speak to please email [enquiries@vaorkney.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@vaorkney.org.uk) and your message will be passed to the right person. Alternatively call 01856 872897 or leave a message on our Facebook page.

### VAO Coronavirus Information Hub - guidance, support information and resources

VAO have created an [information hub](#) for guidance, support information and resources for local organisations and the Orkney community during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Local services can find guidance documents from bodies such as [OSCR](#), [NCVO](#), [SCVO](#), [NHS Scotland](#) and [ACAS](#).

There is a wealth of resources for the community including a list of local businesses who are offering delivery services, links to NHS Orkney and OIC information pages and links to local third sector organisations.

If you would like to add information to the hub or have any questions, please email [ingrid.berry@vaorkney.org.uk](mailto:ingrid.berry@vaorkney.org.uk)

### Covid-19 - Orkney Coronavirus Community Support Hub

A call centre to provide essential information and support to the most vulnerable people in Orkney has been established and opened formally on 30 March.

The NHS is notifying all those most at risk – and for whom the new service is aimed at - by letter.

A team of staff and volunteers, from various agencies throughout the county – including Orkney Islands Council, Orkney Health and Care, NHS Orkney and the Third Sector - will be based at the Pickaquoy Centre in Kirkwall and available to provide vital assistance to those most in need.

The Orkney Coronavirus Community Support Hub will not be open to the public but will be staffed to answer telephone calls on the usual number 01856 879900, seven days a week, from 9am-5pm. A dedicated email address is also available at [coronavirussupporthub@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:coronavirussupporthub@orkney.gov.uk)

Maureen Swannie, Orkney Health and Care Head of Service with responsibility for the Hub, explained that all those in high-risk health categories will be receiving letters from the NHS advising that the facility is being established and to call if they need help, whether for accessing medication, food, essential household items or healthcare services.

*"We plan to contact everyone who is sent a letter from NHS and assess their need/risk to determine what level of support they require, and what that support looks like.*

*"The facility will evolve over the next few weeks as we just don't know what the demand/need will be. We anticipate, that in Orkney, most people will already have family, friends, neighbours helping them to access what they need, but for anyone who doesn't, the facility may be a lifeline."*

## Disclosure Scotland update

The following update highlights a temporary change to the way applications are processed by Disclosure Scotland.

Disclosure Scotland have been working closely with the Scottish Government and key stakeholders on its response to coronavirus (COVID-19).

To aid their prioritisation of checks for those who have the most vital roles supporting the country during this time, Disclosure Scotland are no longer accepting paper applications.

On Monday 30 March 2020, a new page went live on the Disclosure Scotland [website](#) with all the materials you need to continue to submit applications.

Please note; this process should only be completed by countersignatories.

- you can submit an application to Disclosure Scotland via email using the template on the Disclosure Scotland website
- electronic signatures (typewritten or scanned) from the applicant and countersignatory will be accepted
- Disclosure Scotland will process the application through their priority service
- where possible Disclosure Scotland will email you a notification of the outcome, prior to receiving the paper certificate in an expedited timeframe
- Where this is not possible there will be two other outcomes:
  - you will not receive any advance notification from Disclosure Scotland and will have to wait on the paper certificate which will still be in an expedited timeframe
  - you will receive a notification advising that Disclosure Scotland are unable to prioritise your application at this time and will be unable to give a timescale for completion

At this critical time, Disclosure Scotland are providing a safeguarding service to ensure the vast majority of applicants can get cleared to help with coronavirus.

If Disclosure Scotland do not send you a disclosure, either by email or certificate, please do not assume this is because they are late or have made a mistake. A small number of applications require Disclosure Scotland to be fully operational to process and that is impossible at this time.

If you are submitting urgent applications related to coronavirus in the following weeks please contact the dedicated Disclosure Scotland helpline on 0141 302 8511 to plan how you can go about doing this most efficiently.

As it stands the list of prioritised roles remains:

- Healthcare
- Pharmaceutical
- Childcare
- Social work
- Social care
- Prisons and justice

Temporary changes to ID checking guidelines are being made as a result of the coronavirus outbreak: To ensure that the necessary DBS checks can still be carried out, the DBS ID checking guidance will be changed for a temporary period.

The change will allow:

- ID documents to be viewed over video link

Or, if it is not possible to verify documents via video link:

- scanned images can be viewed in advance of the DBS check being submitted

This change should only be implemented for urgent cases where it is not possible to follow the normal identity checking guidelines. The applicant must present the original versions of these documents when they first attend their employment or volunteering role.

## Police Scotland guidance on homeworking and Scam emails

Police Scotland has provided [information](#) relating to homeworking if this is an option for you / your staff. They have also issued guidance on [remote desktop security](#). They advise vigilance during these times as they know there are some who will take advantage of situations to the detriment of others.

## Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

The government have stated they will support employers by paying 80% of salaries under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, in order to avoid redundancies.

They have still to release more information on how this can be claimed however we have answered a few questions you may have regarding this scheme.

### What does Furlough mean?

The word furlough generally means temporary leave of absence from work. Furlough leave has been introduced by the government during the coronavirus pandemic to mean leave offered which keeps employees on the payroll without them working. As the furloughed staff are kept on the payroll, this is different to being laid off without pay or being made redundant.

People who get furloughed must not work for the employer during the period of furlough but usually return to their job afterwards unless redundancies follow.

### Are you eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme? (Claiming 80% of employee's salaries)

Any employer in the country (whatever size) will be eligible for the scheme. Charitable and non-profit organisations are included.

However, the scheme is intended to apply only to employers who cannot cover staff costs due to COVID-19. These employers can access support to continue paying part of their employee's wage, in order to avoid redundancies.

Detailed treasury guidance is expected imminently. This should clarify the mechanics of the scheme; all employers are clearly eligible to apply but we do not now know the extent of the evidence required.

### Are the payments a grant or a loan?

Under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, all UK employers who would otherwise have dismissed employees during this crisis can access payments for part of the employees' salary. This is a grant which employers do not have to pay back. The scheme will run for three months but may be extended as necessary. The details we have so far are as follows:

- HMRC will pay 80% of furloughed workers wages, up to a cap of £2,500 per month.
- HMRC are setting up a new online portal for reimbursement.
- The pay will be backdated to wages payable from 1 March 2020.

### Can employees still work while being classed as Furlough?

To qualify for the scheme, employees must not undertake work for the employer while furloughed. The grants do not cover the wages of employees working a reduced schedule due to the virus; the employees must not work for the employer at all during the furlough period.

### When will the funding be available?

This funding will be open to all employers with a PAYE payroll scheme that was created and started on or before 28 February 2020, including charities. Employers can apply for grants of 80% of furloughed employees' monthly wage costs, up to £2,500 a month, plus the associated Employer National Insurance contributions and minimum automatic enrolment employer pension contributions on that wage, provided they keep the worker employed.

HMRC have been working night and day to develop this scheme and more information on this is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wage-costs-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme> HMRC are hoping to have this up and running by the end of April 2020.

## Coronavirus information for children

Young Scot has compiled a range of information for teenagers and children to ensure they feel supported through the next few months, click [here](#) to have a read.

## Other local news



### Does social enterprise mean business?

As part of the Orkney Business Festival organised by Business Gateway, The Orkney Partnership's Strong Delivery Group facilitated an afternoon session with presentations from the Deerness Community Association, Papay Development Trust and the Orkney Creative Hub.

They each shared their experiences on their own very unique set of logistical challenges in connection with forming a social enterprise, running a social enterprise and the continuing effort that goes into sustaining the businesses.

#### Deerness Community Association

Terry Penna from the Deerness Community Association gave a brief history on the formation of the new hall in Deerness. She also explained that the hall was extended in 2017 after a survey of all the houses in Deerness were canvassed to gauge the community's requirements. Securing funding for the extension was an arduous task with lots of forms being completed but eventually the money was secured from several different funders. Terry's top tip would be to make sure you have plenty of evidence in place to justify the requirement for the intended project.

The hall is very well used and has something on nearly every day. As well as the hall there is a children's play park that is always busy and for extra income they have a wind turbine and campervan hook up points.

#### Papay Development Trust

Next it was the turn of Jennifer Foley with her Papay Development Trust hat on! The fact is that Papay has a population of around 70 people so a lot of people wear multiple hats of all the different organisations and activities they are involved in.

For such a small island the audience were amazed at how innovative, driven and focused the islanders are to make sure they live in a thriving community. Many of the projects undertaken has meant that employment has been created for people on the island.

Tourism by the way of bus tours and ranger walks of the island and boat trips to the Holm of Papay are run regularly. There is a community garden that produces vegetables for sale in the local co-op, this allows islanders to buy fresh produce rather than dated goods that are sometimes delivered twice weekly by the ferry service. Accommodation pods at the co-op for tourists provide an income

for the trust to cover running costs. There are also rooms in the co-op that are used for aspiring artists or workshops for various other activities including cinema nights or just a good old knees up!!

The trust is very pro active in encouraging families to Papay to live, they received funding to renovate a house and a family with children have recently moved to the island. This in turn helps the sustainability of the local school. The trust has recently purchased another property through an asset transfer from the local council, this will also be renovated in time.

### Orkney Creative Hub

The last presentation was from Jan Judge on behalf of the Orkney Creative Hub. Jan passionately shared her experiences on the path to becoming the Orkney Creative Hub. From the “Strond Gallery” in Holm to the progression to Voluntary Action Orkney on Bridge Street Kirkwall where the organisation continued to grow. Eventually the opportunity arose to allow them to take on a property that fitted all their needs at 25 Bridge Street Kirkwall as well as taking on rooms in the old Ortak building at Hatston.

During the time spent at VAO they had exhibitions of art on show from over 400 local artists an amazing achievement.

Upstairs at the “Hub” they offer artists space to work as well as offering workshops on various topics. They have the shop downstairs stocking a huge variety of products. At Hatston they have a “messy” room and a “loom room” both have been extremely popular with the weaving being especially in demand. There will also be knitting machine classes run in the future as these are also very popular.

Orkney Creative Hub receives no external funding streams and therefore must make their own profit to cover running costs and pay wages. The time given by voluntary workers has been invaluable to the success of the Creative Hub over the years. They don't have a captive community audience like in Deerness or Papay and must rely more on footfall through the shop/workshops, as well as strong marketing promotions to make the business sustainable.

Thanks to Terry, Jennifer and Jan for taking the time to give their presentations; everyone in attendance thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon. Thanks must also go to the catering staff at the Blide Trust for supplying the delicious cupcakes for the event.

## Funding & Finance



### Coasts and Waters Heritage Projects

As part of the new scheme, grants between £3,000 and £20,000 will be available for projects which help communities to protect, promote or engage with Scotland's coastal or waterway heritage. This includes projects which are developing and implementing measures to enhance resilience and adapt to climate change.

While community groups are encouraged to apply, the scheme is open to all organisations throughout the country. All applicants, however, should demonstrate how their project will benefit the local community. This could be through developing traditional skills, stabilising historic or marine structures, hosting community outreach and educational activities, or increasing people's understanding of Scotland's coasts and waters heritage.

The Coasts and Waters Heritage Fund is a one-off, competitive fund to celebrate Scotland's themed year and applications will close on Sunday 31 May. Applicants must submit an expression of interest form by 30 April at the latest.

For more information please click [here](#).

More funding information at <https://www.vaorkney.org.uk/help-for-groups/funding-support>

# Volunteering opportunities



## Volunteering you can do from home

VAO realise that keeping yourself busy whilst self isolating at home is key to getting through this uniquely difficult time. For those who are volunteers it can be very frustrating if you aren't able to help the community in your usual way.

But there is a volunteering alternative you can do from home. Micro-Volunteering describes a volunteer or team of volunteers, completing small tasks that make up a larger project. It's a convenient and easy way for potential volunteers to get involved as it can be done anytime, anywhere.

Examples include: citizen science, (activities sponsored by a wide variety of organizations so non-scientists can meaningfully contribute to scientific research), letter writing, proof reading, photo-tagging, surveys, petitions

It differs from traditional volunteering in that the tasks are designed to take only minutes to a few hours and the volunteer does not make a long-term commitment.

It can take the form of virtual volunteering where tasks are usually distributed and completed online via an internet-connected device, including smartphones.

Micro-volunteering typically does not require an application process, screening or training period, takes only minutes or a few hours to complete and does not require an ongoing commitment by the volunteer.

Each week VAO will post links to two micro volunteering opportunities for you to consider and once you have the bug you may well want to research your own.

This week's opportunities are:

<https://www.bemyeyes.com/>

<https://www.onlinevolunteering.org/en/unitar/english-proofreading-instructional-training-guide>

Keep an eye on our [website](#) for more opportunities in the coming weeks.

## Orkney Women's Football Association (OFFA) need board members

Orkney women's football is a growing and popular sport. To help maintain and sustain this growth OFFA is being established to progress female football in Orkney. The association will represent Orkney in Inter County and Island games. It will also maintain the existing clubs to allow for future recreational leagues to be run within Orkney.

OFFA are therefore looking for volunteers to take on the following roles in order to give women's football in Orkney a firm foundation for future success.

Chairperson  
Vice-Chairperson  
Secretary  
Treasurer

If you are interested helping to take the women's game to a new level in Orkney and taking on one of these roles please contact Kirsty Brown on 07854 415826 or at [info-offa@gmail.com](mailto:info-offa@gmail.com).

**For details of other volunteering opportunities, please visit the VAO website or contact [Rob](#).**

# Focus on..... Hamnavoe Carers

This month Sally Bartkowiak tells us about the work of the Hamnavoe Carers

In the inimitable language of bureaucracy, the Hamnavoe Carers (HC) main role is defined in our constitution as: The relief of those residing in the area of Stromness, Orkney, who are in need because they are disadvantaged due to age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage and in furtherance thereof;



- to increase their mobility through providing free transport
- to provide social outings and
- to maintain an association with residential homes and sheltered housing in Stromness to provide for the transport needs of their residents.

What this means in practice is that, three times a week on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, we run shopping trips to both Stromness and Kirkwall and, in the summer and weather permitting, we organise social trips around the islands and even, sometimes, venture south. Each Christmas, we organise a dinner with entertainment and, as a fundraiser and social event, we hold a whist drive on the first Tuesday of each month, in the Stromness Academy. The whist drives require two hosts each evening to run the show and provide the sandwiches and two bakers to provide the fancies or traybakes. If you feed them, they will come!

As we have recently purchased a shiny new bus, we are seeking to use it more widely and to encourage more members to join us on our trips. The bus capacity is 13 but we are rarely full on our runs to the Co-op, Lidl, Tesco, Kirkwall main street, the Stromness shops and anywhere else folk might want to go. (I think sneaky little lunch trips take place from time to time too!) We were also able, for a time, to take a lady from Stromness to Kirkwall to visit her husband in the Balfour Hospital. We would love it if more folk came to join us on our trips.



(This picture was taken at the inauguration party of our new bus in April 2019.)

We are happy to consider any activity that comes under the above remit and our only limitation is the number of drivers we can recruit. An interested driver needs only a clean driving license which

allows them to drive a 14-seater minibus. We will pay for the recommended MiDAS training, held regularly in Kirkwall. We also pay for any updates required. To quote:

'MiDAS is the Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme and is administered by the Community Transport Association. The scheme provides a nationally recognised standard for the assessment and training of minibus drivers and has been designed to enhance minibus driving standards and promote the safer operation of minibuses.'

Hamanvoe Carers was started around 1987 by Stromness folk who perceived the need, had the energy and raised the funds to start the project. At that time, there was an age limitation of 60 years of age. We dropped the age restriction about three years ago in light of changing demographics and the fact that disability and need are not age restricted!

In Stromness, there is an active Eventide Club which meets socially in the centre of town on a regular basis and to whose events some of their members are transported in the HC minibus. HC pay for the MiDAS training of the Eventide Club drivers and are happy to support the Eventide Club. However, this can lead to some confusion amongst the citizenry as to which organisation does what. Generally, the Hamnavoe Carers move about and the Eventide Club stays put!

Personally, I had the greatness of chair of the HC thrust upon me in 2016 when the organisation was in danger of folding altogether. A stalwart volunteer brought together a group willing to step in and become the committee and they have since proved to be a marvellous bunch. Since 2016, the HC constitution has been rewritten, HC became a SCIO, funds were raised and a new bus was bought. We have a [website](#) where you will find a lot more information, contact details, photos and news. In short, HC is now a modern, effective and vibrant group ready to take on more challenges.

Please consider joining us as a member, a driver, a host or a baker and think about bringing a friend!

**Note: All current services are suspended due to the Coronavirus but the bus and a driver will be made available for any deliveries that volunteers are prepared to make.**