



# Newsletter December 2021

## Local News

### Kirkwall Christmas Tree Festival 2021

The Kirkwall Christmas Tree Festival 2021 took on a slightly different form this year – by using decorated wooden pallet trees instead of real ones! The Kirkwall Christmas Tree Festival started last year by Youth Development at VAO as a project for youth groups to do during a time when not much else was going on due to Covid restrictions. Decorated trees were displayed in the courtyard of The Orkney Museum, and it was a huge success. Even though restrictions had eased this year it was something that they wanted to do again, albeit slightly differently.



This year, the trees were displayed at the entrance to Kirkwall BID's Winter Wonderland event, so were seen by thousands of people who came to have a go on the ice rink, or just came for a look.

Each group was provided with up to three wooden pallets each, and it was up to them to decorate them however they wanted, and what a creative bunch of young folk we have living here in Orkney! The trees looked absolutely incredible! Each one of them was completely different, represented their groups

fantastically and were a joy to look at.

The groups who took part were: Connect, Dounby Rainbows and Brownies (who teamed up with Orkney Native Wildlife Project and the RSPB for their trees), Firth Youth Club, Relationships Scotland Orkney, Stromness Junior Youth Club, The Edge, West Mainland Youth Achievement Group, Youth Cafe and Ypeople.



It was fantastic to see the original designs and we can't wait to see what next year brings!



## ROAR back in action

VAO's ROAR group have had a busy few months, culminating in their first real life event since March 2020. Merry Quizmas went ahead with a small but very enthusiastic crowd on Wednesday 8th December. The volunteers all pitched in and did a tremendous job, raising just over £200 for Orkney Food Bank.



The following week, the group took advantage of a school study period and a rare spell of dry weather to visit some of Kirkwall's elderly and sing a few carols. Their efforts were much appreciated, with visits to Sunnybrae Sheltered Housing, St Rognvald's House and the Gilbertson Day Centre, where they were delighted to receive a box of sweets which were gone before they arrived back at school in time for the last period of the day!



ROAR rock it up outside St Rognvald's House



## Christmas fun at KGS



A group of S5 pupils at Kirkwall Grammar School have been busy making Christmas cards for the residents of St Rognvald's House. The pupils had hoped to be going up to the home in person on a weekly basis, but sadly due to Covid have been unable to this year, so instead thought they would send some festive wishes another way.

Working with Kirsty Rochford (one of VAO's Youth Development Workers) on a weekly basis, the pupils have been putting great efforts into making some beautiful cards that will be distributed around the residents and common rooms to bring a bit of Christmas cheer.

Pictured (L-R): Poppy Burton, Cady Denoon, Eleanor Dean, Jenna Milne, Grace Dorricott, Ellen Miller; Front: Freya Laing; Missing from photo: Yolanna Kirby

## Adult Befriending Groups

The Adult Befriending Groups recently re-started with activities including indoor bowls, a film afternoon and plenty of time for a cuppa and a blether.

All groups are held at the Life Centre, Kirkwall from 1.30-3.30pm. Anyone 60 and over welcome. For more information, please contact [Sarah Kelly](#) or call 872897

Monday - Scribble Scrabble: A relaxed group with scrabble, doodling and colouring in.

Tuesday – Evergreen: A different activity each week.

Thursday - Games Group: A variety of board and floor games suitable for all abilities.



## NHS Orkney looking for Board members

Do you want to make a difference to the NHS in your local area?



The NHS impacts on everyone's lives at one time or another and this could be your chance to get involved in improving, sustaining and protecting the health of the local population. What's involved? NHS Orkney is looking for two people to join the Board. These are rewarding and worthwhile opportunities that will take up around 8 hours a week and last for up to 4 years. In return, you will be paid £8,095 a year. You will also get reasonable travel and subsistence costs, dependent carer expenses and support to help you carry out your duties.

Can I apply?

We want to hear from people with a diverse range of skills, backgrounds and knowledge. You do not need to be a health expert or have previous experience of being on a Board. You do need to have a commitment to helping us improve the health and wellbeing of the people living in Orkney. If this is you, we would like to hear from you. If you are appointed you will receive training and support to develop your skills and to learn any new skills you may require.

How do I find out more?

More information on these roles can be found at the public appointments website: [www.appointed-for-scotland.org](http://www.appointed-for-scotland.org) or by calling 0300 244 1898 (Freephone). Completed applications must be received before midday Friday 7 January 2022.

## VAO Christmas Closure

VAO will close on Friday 24 December and reopen on Wednesday 5 January. Despite all the uncertainty we hope everyone has a safe and Merry Christmas.

## Funding & Finance



### Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund

VAO is acting as the funding lead partner for Orkney, working collaboratively with the Orkney Partnership's Community Wellbeing Delivery Group, and the Integration Joint Board (IJB), to effectively distribute the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund to small, grass roots, community groups and organisations.

A total of £75,197 has been awarded to Orkney to support community-based initiatives that promote and develop good mental health and wellbeing and mitigate and protect against the impact of distress and mental ill health within the adult population.

Our local priorities have been identified in collaboration with statutory and third sector partners and service users, and comprise:

- Social Isolation
- Prevention of suicide
- Unpaid Carers
- Older People
- Rurally/Island Distanced
- Poverty
- Trauma

Organisations will have 12 months to deliver their projects from the point of award.

- Small grant applications (up to £2,500) can be submitted at any time up until 9am on Monday 14 February 2022.
- The deadline for large grant applications (up to £10,000) is 9am on Monday 17 January 2022.

Find out more [here](#) or email Clare Gee at [clare.gee@vaorkney.org.uk](mailto:clare.gee@vaorkney.org.uk)

### Funded Work Placement Opportunities

In response to the economic impact of the covid-19 pandemic, the Scottish Government has awarded funding to encourage public and third sector organisations to offer paid work placements to people aged over 25 years, who have been unemployed for over 12 months and have additional barriers to employment.

There is no cost to your organisation, and they are looking for entry level posts suitable for people to gain essential skills for future employment.

Placements should offer between 16 – 30 hours per week, fixed term for 6 months but can be flexible to meet the needs of the individual, i.e. term time, less hours for longer. The placements must be supernumerary.

- Participants must receive £9.50 per hour and start dates must be between November and March. You'll pay the wages and reclaim in full off Orkney Island Council monthly in arrears.
- Organisations will receive a £2000 training grant to ensure individuals gain relevant training/ qualifications for the role and to support positive future transitions.
- Placements must be supported by a nominated staff member (mentor) who, in turn, will be supported by a named officer from Orkney Island Council.
- You will be responsible for induction and day-to-day management of the participant.
- Progress will be reviewed regularly with participant and mentor and can be stopped if not working out.

Interested organisations will need to complete the application form which can be accessed [here](#).

To find out more please contact Morgan Geddes-Ward on 01856 873535 ext 2411 or email [employability.support@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:employability.support@orkney.gov.uk)

## Business Ventilation Fund

The Scottish Government's Business Ventilation Fund will help businesses improve ventilation and air quality on their premises to help reduce the risk of coronavirus transmission. The fund will allow businesses to claim back costs to improve ventilation of up to £2500.

Support will target high-risk settings where people come into close proximity, such as hospitality and leisure sectors.

Applications will be accepted until Thursday 31 March 2022 or until the fund runs out.

Find out more [here](#).

**Did you know that VAO produces a monthly Training & Funding Update? It contains useful information and links about current training and funding opportunities as well as enterprise and governance advice. To sign up, email: [enquiries@vaorkney.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@vaorkney.org.uk) and let us know you would like to be added to the mailing list. The December update can be viewed [here](#).**

## Education & Training



### Scottish Drugs Forum training Jan-March 2022

Scottish Drugs Forum has over 30 years experience of researching, training and supporting organisations and has developed significant expertise in the field.

They have recently released dates of their online training sessions for January - March 2022.

Click [here](#) to view what's available.

# Volunteering Opportunities

## Wildlife Youth Forum



Orkney Native Wildlife Project are in the process of setting up a youth forum and want youth from all different backgrounds to help celebrate the amazing wildlife we have here on Orkney!

Young adults have the unique opportunity to gain valuable hands-on conservation experience by creating and running a wildlife youth forum to protect and promote Orkney's wildlife with the world's largest invasive species eradication project.

The wildlife youth forum offers Orkney young folk (ages 16 – 30) the chance to have their say and be actively involved in wildlife conservation in Orkney. Young adults also have an opportunity to acquire valuable insight into a major conservation project, as well as develop their interests in the company of others sharing similar passions.

Activities will be determined by the members and could include opportunities to take part in practical conservation, such as wildlife surveying, in collaboration with the Orkney Native Wildlife Project (ONWP) providing valuable experience for anyone keen in a conservation career.

There are many different roles available on the wildlife youth forum which suits all abilities. These range from conservation science, field work to public relations and management. For more information on the eight roles available, and how to get hands-on protecting Orkney's native wildlife for the future click [here](#).



## Get Ready To Volunteer

'Get Ready To Volunteer' is a course that is designed to develop confidence, teach all about volunteering and about what is involved when you are thinking of becoming a volunteer. Two courses have recently been completed in Kirkwall, with the workshops taking place over a few weeks and being attended by nine young people in total.

As well as some theory work a few fun exercises, part of the course gets participants involved in a volunteering activity. One group made dog biscuits to give to Loving Homes Dog Rescue Centre and the other made Christmas cards for residents at St Rognvald's Care Home.

Everyone who took part received a 'Team Saltire Award' for their efforts. Well done!

If you are interested in taking part in a course or would like any more information please get in touch on [enquiries@vaorkney.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@vaorkney.org.uk)





## LEND A HAND IN 2022

**Got some free time in the new year?**

**Want to learn new skills and meet new people?**

**Does your organisation need volunteers to help?**

### CONTACT VAO TO SEE HOW WE CAN HELP

Volunteering is for all ages and abilities and can be done indoors or outdoors, individually or with a group and for all sorts of community organisations.

VAO can help organisations looking for volunteers and give advice and training on volunteer management, policy and practice too.

**Get in touch to find out more.**

Sam Stringer - Volunteer Development Worker

samantha.stringer@vaorkney.org.uk 01856-872897 [www.vaorkney.org.uk](http://www.vaorkney.org.uk)

If you would like to promote your organisation, an activity or project or have an interesting story to share, please contact [Cecily.cromby@vaorkney.org.uk](mailto:Cecily.cromby@vaorkney.org.uk)