

Wind farm appeal process

A “civilised” discussion was how Monday night’s meeting of Rogart Community Council – which focussed on the proposed wind farm at Tressady – was described by the chairman.

Plans to erect 13 turbines to the north-west of Rogart were refused by the north planning committee earlier this year.

But the company behind the scheme, Wind Prospects Developments, have appealed the decision to the Scottish Government. Their representative, Sophie Nioche, attended the meeting to answer any questions from members or the public.

Chairing that part of the meeting was Roger Hughes, head of the Rogart Wind Farms Steering Group, set up last year to monitor the three wind farms in the area – Gordonbush, Kilbraur and the one planned for Tressady.

He told us: “I think the meeting went better than expected. There were about 30 people there, representing both those in favour of the development and those against but also those who are neutral.

“They listened to Sophie explain the appeals procedure, some of which I think was a surprise to folk.

“Councillor Graham Phillips was there, who had originally organised a site visit by the north planning committee which resulted in their rejecting the application. He spoke quite a bit and urged both those against and those in favour to write to the Scottish Government voicing their views, bearing in mind the reasons the proposal was turned down in the first place.

“And that was really the conclusion of the meeting.”

Ms Nioche said afterwards: “We’d like to thank Rogart Community Council for the opportunity to meet members and the local community. It was important to provide an update on the appeal process for the application and share how people can comment.

“We had a good, balanced discussion and it was useful to meet those who joined us at the meeting in support of the project. We will continue to share updates as new information becomes available.”

Stephen lucky to be alive after suffering cardiac arrest in surgery waiting room

Staff saved my life after heart attack at doc’s

By Jack Calvert
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A SUTHERLAND man has thanked staff at Brora and Helmsdale Medical Practice for saving his life after he suffered a heart attack.

Stephen Smith (48) from Brora was taking his 13-year-old daughter Hope to an appointment at the practice when he collapsed in the waiting room.

“We are very grateful for the community raising money to provide such life-saving equipment”

Dr Mary Claydon

The fast-acting reception team, GPs and nursing staff used the practice’s defibrillator and CPR – a series of chest compressions to help keep blood and oxygen circulating – to bring him back to life.

Mr Smith said: “Had it not been for the quick response of the practice staff I wouldn’t be here today. I have to thank them all for what they did for me and will be forever grateful to them.

“It was only when I came back into the surgery following my discharge from hospital that I realised how many people were involved in looking after me.

“I would like to thank the reception staff, doctors, nurses, ambulance and hospital staff for the excellent care that I received.”

Stephen was transferred by air ambulance to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary where he stayed for several days before being discharged.



Dr Jo Weir.

He has made a great recovery over the last few weeks.

Dr Jo Weir, a locum GP at Brora and Helmsdale, who was one of the life-saving heroes, said: “Mr Smith is a young gentleman and I understand he was not even attending the surgery for himself. Talk about being in the right place at the right time!

“With the team at Brora surgery working together to perform CPR and the immediate availability of a defibrillator, Mr Smith was speaking again before he got into the helicopter to be taken to Aberdeen. He is a lucky man.”

Dr Mary Claydon, a GP at the practice who also helped Mr Smith, emphasised the importance of local access to cardiac defibrillators.

She said: “We are very grateful for the community raising money for our equipment funds to provide such life-saving equipment in Brora and Helmsdale.

“I would encourage any community group to try and purchase these invaluable pieces of equipment and train in their use as it is only a matter of luck where a cardiac arrest will occur.

“It is a pleasure working with in such a good team as we have within our GP practice.”



Stephen Smith (seated) with (from left) Joan Gunn, practice nurse; Dr Mary Claydon, GP; Angela MacDonald, office manager; Emma Little, receptionist, and Claire Armstrong, midwife.

Fly-tier calls on anglers to return fish



Fly-tier Ronald Sutherland is urging anglers to release salmon back to the river.

A WELL-respected fishing fly-tier – who was asked to design a fly to mark Prince George’s birth last year – is urging anglers who catch salmon using one of his flies to make sure they return the fish to the river.

Ronald Sutherland, partner in the Helmsdale Company and chief salmon designer for commercial fly-tying giants Fulling Mill, is calling for restraint in recognition of dwindling salmon stocks.

Ronald was taught to tie flies by the late Megan Boyd and said that his business sells large quantities of salmon flies every year, which catch thousands of salmon

worldwide – but he does not want to be responsible for killing thousands of salmon.

The timely call comes in the same week as the acclaimed documentary *Kiss the Water* is released.

The film tells the story of the life of worldwide fly dressing expert Megan Boyd, who was also an avid salmon conservationist.

“Ironically she also hated the fact that her beautifully tied flies killed so many salmon,” said Ronald, who now wants to carry on Megan’s conservational ethos.

“Salmon are on the end of an unprecedented rough deal

right now, as it would seem that along their whole life cycle, every animal that preys on them is protected heavily by law.

“Quality salmon angling is critical to the rural Scottish economy and all anglers must do their bit to sustain stocks, and if that means releasing more salmon back into the river, then so be it. We can sleep easy knowing we are all helping an important cause.”

■ According to provisional figures, there were 66,387 salmon caught by rod in 2013, the lowest since 2003. However, the numbers of salmon killed in nets increased by 50 per cent from 16,230 in 2012 to 24,311 last year.

Full steam ahead for far north train trip

ORGANISERS of the steam train trip to Dunrobin on Monday, 12th May, say passengers wishing to go on the journey should book as soon as possible, as they believe it will be a popular event.

Train fanatic and writer Julian Holland is to join *The Cathedrals Express* during its journey. Mr Holland has recently published a book on the 150 best one-day trips by rail – and Inverness to Dunrobin is at 150.

He will be signing copies of his book on the train and at Dunrobin Station and is happy to chat to passengers.

Daniel Brittain-Caitlin, who looks

after Dunrobin Station on behalf of Sutherland Estates, said: “I’m absolutely thrilled that Julian is able to join us for the station open day. He has a great love of Scottish railways and has written a number of books on the subject.”

Meanwhile, in an article this week published online by Wanderlust travel magazine, at wanderlust.co.uk, author Simon Varwell tells of the five lesser-known but most fascinating rail stops across the Highlands – and Dunrobin is number one.

To book a place on the trip, call Steam Dreams on 01483 209888.

Sprinter has new Games role

A FORMER commonwealth sprinter, with ties to Sutherland, is heading back to the Games in a new role.

Dougie Walker, whose parents David and Janet live in Main Street, Golspie, is helping organise the athletes village at the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games.

The speedster, who lived in Golspie for the first nine months of his life before his parents moved away from the area, now resides in Glasgow.

He competed in the 1994 and 1998 Commonwealth Games and won the 200m at the 1998 European Championships as



Dougie Walker

well as being part of the gold medal winning 4x100m relay team at the same event.

The 40-year-old retired just over a decade ago, but recently took on the role of overlay coordinator for the athletes’ village and venue dispatch centre at this year’s games.

The job will see him working on the design and managing the building of the temporary platforms, landscaping,

infrastructure, tents and cabins required at the two venues. Speaking about being in amongst the organisation of a major event, Mr Walker, a golf course architect, admitted that a lot had changed since he was a sprinter.

He said: “I suppose when you’re an athlete you don’t really care about this side. I know that sounds really bad, but you’re kind of wrapped up in your own wee world.

“It’s quite an eye-opener seeing how much effort, planning and money goes into it – although I think it’s scaled up since my day. It’s a lot bigger now than it used to be.”

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