

Note: the following news script was for a day selected for no particular reason and it is a typical example of the breakfast time bulletins at 0700, 0730, 0800 and 0830. It was saved as a file between the 0700 and 0730 bulletins, hence the date and time.

The chief executive of the Shetland Islands Council, Alistair Buchan, has commented after councillors unanimously approved his improvement plan, drawn up as a response to the recommendations issued by the Accounts Commission in August.

Mr Buchan said that, as he said to the members, he felt that this programme would deliver the change that the members, the staff and the public wanted to see for Shetland.

He noted that, at a time when local government was entering its most difficult period since the war, it was definitely a time for cool heads and for all to pull together.

Mr Buchan claimed that the changes being faced would most definitely test the organisation to its limits and there was no doubt in his mind that everyone would be affected in some way.

Mr Buchan stressed that for this to be successful, the council required the wholehearted support of the elected members and everyone who worked for the council as well as engaging effectively with the public of Shetland.

Mr Buchan added that to undermine this improvement process would not be in the long-term interests of Shetland.

NorthLink's Hjaltland made one of its fastest ever trips from Aberdeen to Shetland last night, in order to be in port before the weather worsened.

The Hjaltland left Aberdeen harbour at eighteen forty-seven yesterday evening and it arrived at Kirkabister at two forty-two this morning, a time of seven hours and fifty-five minutes.

The Hjaltland and the Hrossey are both capable of travelling at twenty-eight to twenty nine knots, but this uses up more fuel, and so the usual travelling speed is sixteen to seventeen knots.

The Scottish Rural Schools Network, an umbrella community pressure group aimed at retaining rural schools, has questioned whether the claimed cost-savings in closing the secondary department of the Scalloway Junior High School are credible.

The network claimed that the closure proposal under consideration for the Scalloway Junior High School had always raised questions over the validity of the potential cost-savings. The network also claimed that information provided by another local authority on another set of closure proposals cast further doubt.

The other local authority is Argyll and Bute, which has announced plans to close twenty-six primary schools in its area. The estimated amounts that could be saved in staff and property by this was offset by the loss of government grants for schools and the cost of additional transport.

The Scottish Rural Schools Network also claims that if the Scalloway secondary department should shut, the council will have to pay for additional transport.

It claims that it would be cheaper to keep things as they are and to build a smaller replacement Anderson High School.

Tavish Scott has commented after the Scottish Liberal Democrats forced the Scottish government to make a statement in parliament later today on the Scottish Water Bill. It is believed that the ministers have withdrawn the bill over concerns that it was not competent.

Mr Scott claimed that this was another humiliating blow to the first minister, who had been criticised for his "legislation-light" approach to government.

Mr Scott claimed that the Scottish Water Bill looked to have joined the SNP's other two "flagship" laws in Davy Jones' locker. The other two were independence and reforming the council tax.

Mr Scott added that hiding a bill's incompetency behind an extended consultation exercise was just wasting taxpayers' money and the civil service's time.

The Sound Primary School, the North Roe Primary School and the Urafirth Primary School have all achieved a further Eco School Green Flag award in recognition of their environmental work. This means that the Sound Primary School and the North Roe Primary schools now hold three Green Flags and Urafirth holds two.

Sixty percent of Shetland's schools have an award under the Eco School programme, putting Shetland, percentage wise, in the top three Scottish local authorities.

Keep Scotland Beautiful, the national assessors for the Eco School programme, said that all three applications, were "excellent" and that the Sound Primary School, in particular, was "a case book example" of an environmentally and sustainably aware school.

White fish landings

The landings today were well above average again, as they have been all this week and all last week, with 10 boats, 9 local, landing about 1900 boxes. 6 boats – the Peterhead Barnakle, the Defiant, the Guiding Light, the Ocean Way, the Renown and the Tranquility - landed 977 boxes for Lerwick, with more to land. 4 boats – Alison Kay, the Prevail, the Radiant Star and the Resilient - landed 838 boxes for Scalloway, with more to land. The total of the landings so far this week is over 7500 boxes.

The Valhalla was towed into Scalloway by the Comrades yesterday.

The Shetland Area Command of the Northern Constabulary has announced a new area inspector.

The new area inspector, Eddie Graham, held a post in Shetland for four years, between 1999 and 2003, when he and his family stayed at Quarff.

After transferring from Fife Constabulary in 1991, Eddie Graham was first posted to Gairloch. His career after that was at the force's training and recruitment department, section sergeant at Kyle of Lochalsh, shift sergeant in Shetland and then in Orkney.

When the Shetland area inspector vacancy arose recently Eddie Graham jumped at the chance to return to the area. Inspector Graham said that he hoped that Shetland's communities would provide him with the necessary support to help keep the islands among the safest places to live and work in the UK.

He added that given his experiences of living in island communities, particularly Shetland, he was delighted to be presented with an opportunity to once again tackle the challenges that remote living could bring.

The public space closed circuit TV system for the town centre of Lerwick is now up and running. The Shetland Community Safety Partnership organised an official launch of the system yesterday.

A company called Alba Community Partnerships has been chosen by the Scottish Futures Trust as the preferred bidder to operate the Hub North Territory.

The Hub North Territory is an area that includes the Shetland Islands Council, NHS Shetland and local suppliers based in Shetland. The hub initiative is being set up to change the ways the council, the health board and other public bodies plan their new facilities, such as health centres and sports centres, and deliver their services.

The aim of that is to bring public bodies together to increase joint-working and sharing in the provision of the likes of sustainable community buildings.

Other News

The new alcohol legislation will take effect next year, after it was passed by the members of the Scottish parliament yesterday.

There will be tougher age proof rules. However there will be no minimum pricing, after that failed on a vote.

The Scottish education secretary, Mike Russell, has said that he disagrees with graduate fees, but that he cannot rule out introducing them in Scotland. He said that the financial outlook for universities was grim.

Evidence found in rocks in the bottom of a loch near Lochinver in north-west Scotland has shown that a critical point in evolution took place twelve hundred million years ago, four hundred million years earlier than previously thought. Until now scientists had believed the important shift in the levels of oxygen in the Earth's atmosphere took place eight hundred million years ago. Chemical signatures of bacteria, found in ancient rocks near Lochinver, had provided the evidence.

Iain Dundan Smith, the work and pensions secretary, is to introduce his benefit changes to parliament today. His aim is to get people off benefit and into work.

It looks as if the cause of the explosion in an engine on the Qantas super jumbo has been found. The most likely cause was a fire in leaked oil which caused disc damage.

Tests on the parcel bomb from the Yemen found at East Midlands Airport last month has found that it was time to detonate over the east of the United States. The onward address was Chicago.

It looks as if the Burmese pro democracy dissident, Aung San Suu Kyi, could be released. This followed the election where the military won, with claims that the election was unfair.

Cholera has been confirmed in Port au Prince the capital of Haiti. So far almost six hundred and fifty people have died in rural areas.

Nordic News

The municipality of Torshavn in Faroe is having much the same kind of town centre problem as Lerwick, and like those businesses in the town centre of Lerwick, who want to revitalise the area, Torshavn municipality wants to do something about it. The municipality wants more life in the town centre, with more shops, restaurants and cafes to create an atmosphere around the town hall square. The Hotel Torshavn is to be extended to bring two squares together.

The Sea Shepherd Conservation Society is planning to go back to Faroe again next summer to protest at the pilot whale grinds. Sea Shepherd's presence this past summer was secret at first, with the society gathering information-only on the grinds. After the Sea Shepherd's cover was blown, it became more active by placing small floating acoustic transponders in the sea to try to scare away the pilot whales with noises on their hearing frequencies. An expert in Faroe claimed that this did not work, but others are

not so sure with less pilot whales coming to shore. The founder of Sea Shepherd, Paul Watson, will be skippering the campaign in Faroe next summer with a Sea Shepherd presence at sea, on land and in the air. A curtain of sound will be deployed, just like this year, but greater, and any grinds that do take place will be recorded for television.

The Norwegian state energy company, Statoil, has decided to concentrate on offshore wind turbines, and drop those on land, as part of its strategy for renewable energy. Statoil explained that its decision reflected the strong international growth in offshore windfarms, combined with the group's long experience in the offshore oil and gas industry. Statoil will sell off its present wind power projects on land.

Local shipping

The offshore support vessel Bibby Topaz and the rig supply vessels Havila Saturn and the Esvagt Sigma are at the Greenhead Base with the rig supply vessel NSO Fortune due there. The survey vessel the Kommander Stewart is due at Victoria Pier West for the weekend. The shuttle tanker the Loch Rannoch is south of Lerwick and it is now due at the Sullom Voe terminal tomorrow.

The Shetland area weather forecast

Today will be cloudy with blustery showers, some heavy. The wind will be south-easterly force 7 to gale force 8, gusting higher at times, backing easterly for a time, and then veering south easterly and decreasing to force 4 this evening. The temperature will be up to 7 degrees today, down to 5 degrees tonight, and 5 degrees tomorrow.

The 5 AM weather: In Lerwick it was cloudy, a southerly force 6 wind, gusting higher, and 6 degrees. In Kirkwall it was cloudy, a southerly force 6 wind, gusting higher, and 6 degrees. In Aberdeen it was partly-cloudy with showers, a southerly force 5 wind, gusting higher, and 5 degrees. In Bergen it was partly cloudy, a south-easterly force 3 wind, and -1 degrees. In Torshavn it was mostly cloudy, an east-south-easterly force 7 wind, gusting higher, and 6 degrees.