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**Black Isle Bulletin- issue no 3**

1 message

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Resilience+Art+Black Lives Matter+Gardens

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Welcome to the third edition of

# Black Isle Bulletin

the official newsletter of the Black Isle Partnership

## Editor's note

*By Asia Cielecka, Community Resilience Coordinator*

As we are emerging from the lockdown, which was traumatic for some and a blessing for others, many experience a range of difficult feelings. A recent New Scientist article about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) amongst soldiers tells us, that according to research the way to emotional and mental recovery is through the physical exercise. That's nothing new- we all know that walk in our beautiful Black Isle releases endorphins- but following this trajectory we can safely say that being immobilised indoors has left many of us feeling pretty glum. Luckily we have a strong community which has made a tremendous effort to address this.

The current issue has (unintentionally) collected the voices of women- amongst us there is an artist, a researcher, a carer, a Chair... It is fascinating to see how differently we approached the troubles and recovery, and what strengths shine through when the clouds are slowly disappearing.

I hope that you will enjoy this bulletin. Please subscribe and share our message of resilience. Thank you.



## **A more resilient Black Isle**

*By Vanessa Halhead,*

*Director of Black Isle Partnership*

The pandemic has sharpened our focus on many things, and revealed the great strengths of rural communities, like ours in the Black Isle, to look after their own people. It has also shown our vulnerabilities, economically and socially, in the face of a crisis such as Covid-19. The Black Isle Partnership has been working with the community councils and other local organisations to support our collective effort to address the impacts of the Covid on people's lives. We have become, indeed, a partnership.

By working together, the Black Isle community has risen well to this challenge. We have learned many lessons and had many insights into the aspects of our community that we can, and should, strengthen for the future. Although Scotland has been very successful in reducing the rates of infection from Covid-19, and here in the Highlands we have had relatively few cases. None-the-less, the future is not certain. Unlocking has brought with it a level of mobility and contact which we have not seen since the start of lockdown, and we are all aware that this could cause a resurgence of the virus.

Equally, many peoples lives and economic situation has been severely shaken by the lockdown. Many have lost their income and employment, many have found the experience of Covid traumatic. So the question we are all now asking, is how do we cement the learning from the last months, and how do we want our community to move forward in a way that is both more resilient and more sustainable?

To help address these questions, we aim to work closely with all our community groups and representatives, and with the wider community, to develop a recovery and resilience strategy for the Black Isle. This will cover the support systems needed in the event of crisis, but also help to develop our vision for how we would like to see our community move forward in positive ways – socially, economically and environmentally.

Since this work is now recognised across the country as essential, we should be able to harness support for it and we anticipate significant funding will become available soon. So, we are asking everyone to put on their thinking caps, ahead of us asking for your ideas about the future.

***How would you like to see the Black Isle developing in the future? What changes would you propose to make this great community more resilient and sustainable?***



"I carry you" - an art project set up in Avoch by Nat Wastnidge

## **'I CARRY YOU'**

*A photography project inspired by the strong fisher women of Avoch.*

When I moved to Avoch and read about the women that would carry their husbands on their backs to and from the fishing boats to keep them dry I could see it all playing out in my minds eye. A comical but incredible image, one that shows the strength and fortitude of these women.

The act of carrying someone not only shows physical strength but symbolises strength in the wider sense. This photography project was conceived to celebrate and honour these women and the women of present day Avoch in the form of a series of portraits.

I am interested in the stories and the diverse experiences that each woman brings to this project and am looking at developing my ideas to encompass these conversations alongside the photographs.

I am looking for women in Avoch that would be happy to have their portrait taken with a significant person in their life, whether that person is your husband, wife, best friend or another relative. I would like to direct and set up the poses as if you are carrying your chosen person on your back. The portraits will be taken by the water/or in if you're game!. I am really happy to chat with you and explain further if you are interested in joining me.

These photos will give testimony to the different ways that we can be strong with the women being our primary focus. If you would like to participate you can email [theartfidget@gmail.com](mailto:theartfidget@gmail.com)

Thank you!

Nat

## A conversation between Isatou Jallow and Nya Gibson-Proudfoot

*captured by Asia*



**Isa:** - I've always considered myself a feminist... I was raised by a 60's hippie and environmental issues have been very important for me. As I am a black person, race debate became my lived experience, discussed even within my own family. Some of them

ask “*why would you say black lives matter when all lives matter*”? That blanket statement is not helpful at all! For instance somebody said “*why don't you change it to black lives matter too*” which really annoyed me as it softens the impact... which needs to be bold and loud for people to listen...

My mum is a historian/retired university lecturer and I always got told history as it was, outside of the colonised view that were taught in schools. I'm lucky that my close friends are very like-minded, but when we learned about African slavery in school instead of a discussion it was more like “look at Isatou”. You see, I am from The Gambia... for example we watched “*Roots*” which is based in Gambia, and the main character, Kunta Kinte is from the same tribe that I'm from. What was happening to me during and after these classes was racist. Kids can be very mean.

**Nya:** Kids reflect the views of their parents. The strength of Black Lives Matter is holding people responsible for the horrible things that have happened for hundreds of years. The general backlash against the movement is partially guilt and that's what we have to understand: why are we guilty and responsible. I was shocked by the reaction of many people when myself and my friend Iona decided that we are going to make some posters on seventh of May.

We popped them up on the High Street in Fortrose, avoiding houses and businesses. I took a couple of photos and I stuck these up on my personal Facebook and on the Noticeboard. Within a couple of days there were over 300 comments, majority of which were lovely but also there was the backlash, which was expected.

I incorporate dealing with backlash into my activism, however there were just lots of assumptive comments about us personally. People thought that we were not entitled to know about the experience of racism, demanding proof which obviously adds additional pressure. I said to Isa: there is no need to explain your experiences to anybody, especially on the public forum. Our posts were taken down - but I wasn't personally offended even though people called me a “minute activist jumping on the bandwagon”, a “silly little girl” which is ageist and racist and sexist one thing after the other... while I'm legally an adult...

What this showed us was what people on the Black Isle stand for or against. Some supported us, for example Avoch hairdresser Brenda May, The Anderson and Fortrose café. Our main focus now is the petition to the Highland Council for a permanent recognition that the Fortrose Academy and multiple other buildings across the area have been funded by profits from the slave trade. We would like this to be expressed in a plaque or at least mentioned in history lessons, and would like to invite more support for that. It has been signed by nearly 150 people and we would like to get to 300 before sending it to the Council. Those on Facebook can find it on Black Isle Conversations.

In our activist group there is also Iona, Siobhan and a few more women. We would like to make new connections and reach out to networks that are similar in their need to influence a real change. Often fierce women don't get to the level where they are the decision makers.

**Isa:** We want to see a change in education and public acknowledgement of Black Isle links with the slave trade. For example there was a man called Hugh Junor, who was a slave trader married to a woman called Elizabeth, the dressmaker originally from Guyana I believe, who graduated from Fortrose Academy with the award in penmanship. The Jamaica street in Inverness also blatantly suggests the links to slavery.

The reparations to slave owners and their families have been paid from our taxes until 2018 for what they lost in when the slavery was abolished. One of highland's families was paid £9.2M for the slaves they owned, and Cromarty graveyard has plenty of slave owners graves, as noted by a historian Dave Alston. Only Glasgow Uni has benefitted from

£200M from slave trade (this is all in today's money). That profiteering may be one of the reasons why there is no open conversation about Scotland's input into slavery as finances in politics are known to be corrupt and that families of slave owners are still profiting from the slave trade is well hidden.

Something else that has come to light thanks to the BLM movement are the complications involved when it comes to monuments of racists, such as Edward Colston's in Bristol, falsely representing figures of success. For me it is a "funny" one, because although I completely understand the anger and tearing it down, I also think we should change the information that's on it to reflect the harrowing reality of the oppressed and then put it in the museum. The person who was involved in tearing it down is now awaiting a trial even though the community in Bristol have proposed taking these statues down with tens of thousands of signatures. What was also interesting is that there was an information left under the statue by a person who made it, which has only been discovered now.

But educating about colonisation is key: we need to understand that even after the 1837 abolishment of the Slave Trade, countries were colonised by the UK and today, we still profit from this exploitation. After abolishment, these people were left with no resources, and their cultural heritage was decimated. We dismiss the fact that we were the ones who pillaged them.

The schooling system needs to discuss the bad and the good rather than selling the glossed-over version of history. We don't learn about other cultures or their impact on the UK. Even here in Scotland we learn very little about Scottish impact on other areas of the world outside of The Clearances, with more of an emphasis on English impact. This needs to change.

*If you want to support Nya and Isa's petition please click on the link here [Acknowledge Fortrose Academy being funded by slave trade](#)*



Photo by Julian Paren

## Virtual Tour of Avoch and Killen Gardens

*by Mary Smyth*

Back in the pre-Covid-19 days which seems a lifetime ago, Avoch and Killen Community Council planned an Avoch and Killen Open Gardens event scheduled to take place on Saturday 25th July 2020. When we realised this could not go ahead, we decided to do something not previously done in the village - we came up with what we felt was an innovative idea and called it our Plan B!

We were confident that because of the lockdown the residents of Avoch and Killen would be spending more time than ever working in their gardens and we felt all their hard work should be made available for all to enjoy especially for those not lucky enough to have gardens or even access to green spaces at this time.

We asked all the residents of Avoch and Killen to send us pictures and/or short videos of their gardens or even just their favourite plants or trees taken during June to create a Virtual Tour of Avoch and Killen Gardens 2020, which will be available online to coincide with the original planned date for the Open Gardens, 25th July.

To keep people amused while waiting for the launch of the Virtual Tour we featured a daily quiz on our Avoch Open Gardens Facebook, asking to identify a plant or flower. Many commented that they were enjoying this very much and learning about the plants we featured. We were also learning from this fun activity!

Amazed at the popularity and enthusiasm for our idea we are also delighted that our Virtual Tour features 29 gardens. We are thrilled that Kate Forbes, MSP has provided an introduction to our Virtual Tour. Accompanying the Virtual Tour is music played by two very talented local musicians, both pupils at Fortrose Academy with Oran Silverside from Avoch and Freya Taylor from Killen.

Avoch is a lovely village. We are very proud that Channel 4 shortlisted Avoch for the Village of the Year competition in 2018. We would like to thank all the keen gardeners who willingly participated in this project which should benefit not just local residents and the NHS but also help to increase visitor numbers to our unique Black Isle.

It is vitally important for us to raise funds for our villages and since the Highland Council reduced all Community Council budgets, it has been impossible to go forward with all the projects and maintenance requirements for Avoch and Killen. With additional monies raised by our Virtual Garden Tour, AKCC will be able to take on new projects and non-Highland Council maintenance required within Avoch and Killen.

We are also very mindful of the events of the past months and of all the workers in our NHS and we want to raise funds for NHS' official charities. With this in mind we have decided that the monies raised will be split between the AKCC and NHS Charities Together.

To help people donate we have a Crowdfunder page on the AKCC website, on Avoch Open Gardens Facebook and here: <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/avoch-killen-virtual-open-gardens-2020>. We hope that visitors to our Virtual Open Gardens will enjoy the Tour and donate generously.





Photo by Julian Paren

## Community in Focus

*by Becky Richmond*

*With each issue of the Bulletin we want to end by focusing on one of the communities in the Black Isle and find out a bit more of what's been going on locally.*

Over the past 14 or so weeks the friends and neighbours of the Ferintosh CC area really came to the fore as they shopped for each other, collected prescriptions and generally looked out for one another. So much was this the case that our vast number of volunteers were rarely used. The shop in Culbokie began a delivery service which is still in place for some residents and some of the indoor market stall holders got together and set up Culbokie Outdoor Market, which runs from 10.00 - 11.00am every Saturday.

Culbokie Community Trust have been running Virtual quizzes over Zoom which have proved popular; they have provided sunflower seeds for residents to grow and they have just launched a lovely project to create, with the help of the community, a Culbokie Lockdown Quilt. Once complete, the quilt will be hung in Findon Hall.

A new cycle club has been set up to encourage all those who dusted off their bikes and took up cycling again over lockdown to continue doing so and improve cycling confidence at the same time.

On the 1st August, Penny Edwards and myself will be leading a small guided walk around Culbokie as we encourage residents to get to know their village.

Ferintosh Community Council are now looking to the recovery phase as we ease out of lockdown. Many of our volunteers have shown a willingness to continue the volunteer group. A steering group has been formed and is looking into ways in which volunteers can contribute to community life. We are half way through a short consultation with residents, who have been asked what they would like to see on a 'Community To Do List'.

One of FCC's most valuable initiatives was taking The Noticeboard Newsletter from being produced 5 times a year, to an online monthly newsletter with the addition of puzzles, crosswords etc. This has gone down really well with residents and we are now looking at ways in which we can continue this, as well as providing paper copies for those who don't have internet access or access to a printer.

If you would like to contact Becky about any events mentioned above, use her email:

[becky@blackislestud.co.uk](mailto:becky@blackislestud.co.uk)



Photo by Julian Paren

Becky is just one of many community representatives in the Black Isle who have been meeting every week since March (via Zoom). If you have any suggestions or ideas you'd like discussed by this partnership, please contact your local representative, (via your Community Council), or e-mail [community@black-isle.info](mailto:community@black-isle.info)

We trust you have found this issue useful. Please share widely. To be sure of receiving further editions ask to be put on the mailing list via [subscribe](#).



This edition of Black Isle Bulletin was edited by Asia Cielecka

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