

Children of the world at multicultural nursery

Community: Group celebrates contribution from diverse mix of families

BY CHRIS MACLENNAN

For a wee nursery in a Highland town, it has a remarkable spread of pupils. Fort William's Stramash has children from all over the world – of the current roll, 10 are from countries outside the UK.

And now, bosses are celebrating the vital contribution of its vastly diverse gathering of families.

Stramash offers nursery care, school programmes and clubs for children living within half an hour of the facility. Currently, 10

“Inward migration helps ensure the future of local communities”

of the 72 children enrolled at the Fort William nursery are from outside the UK, from as far afield as Chile and Hong Kong.

The social enterprise also has facilities based in Oban and Elgin and encourages parents and children using its services to contribute within the local community.

Team leader at Stramash in Fort William, Cameron Sprague, who moved to Scotland from the US, said: “We have had children from every continent.

“Families moving here from outside the UK means we have more children and we can do more: we can employ an extra staff member and offer more modern apprenticeships to local people.

“People coming from outside the UK enable us to maintain the level and quality of local services that people here rely on. Across the Highlands,



WARM WELCOME: Fort William nursery Stramash has 72 children, with 10 of them from a country outside the UK

inward migration helps to ensure the long-term future of local communities, both socially and economically.”

The nursery is working in partnership with organisations, including the Scottish Government, towards promoting the #wearescotland campaign, which aims to ensure migrants are made to feel welcome and inducted into local communities.

Maree Todd, minister for children and young people, said: “Stramash is a prime example of how small, rural businesses provide not just a service to those who make

Scotland their home, but often employment too.

“This has a positive impact on the local community. We are set to almost double fund childcare from 600 to 1,140 hours by 2020, and it's vital we continue to attract the best candidates to work with our children, regardless of nationality.”

Stramash chief executive, Maggie Tierney, said: “Having children and staff from outside the UK not only builds our capacity to do more, it enriches the experience for all our children and young people.”



Shadow health secretary visits the site of new Kirkwall hospital

HEALTH

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs visited Orkney to tour the site of the new Balfour Hospital in Kirkwall, meeting

Highlands and Islands MSP Jamie Halcro Johnston at the £64million facility.

The hospital is due to open next summer, securing the future of healthcare services in Orkney for years to come.

Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP said: “The new Balfour is a vital project for Orkney, a major boost to local health services and is hugely welcome.

“It is testament to the efforts of the project team

that this major public project is currently ahead of schedule.

“Looking to the future, as far as possible, key medical services must remain in the islands – or be brought to the islands – so that local

patients are not forced to endure lengthy trips to Aberdeen or, as we saw in the case last year of potential trips to Newcastle for local heart patients, even further afield.

“This fantastic new

facility can be the catalyst to achieve that,” added the MSP.

Mr Briggs said: “This is an important facility for Orkney as the NHS celebrates its 70th anniversary.”

TOURISM

Signs are removed to stop visitors camping

BY DAVID MACKAY

Campsite signs in a Speyside park have been taken down in an attempt to deter people from staying there overnight.

Public toilets at Fiddich Park in Craigellachie were closed at the end of June by Moray Council as part of budget cuts.

However, concerns have been raised about the amount of visitors continuing to pitch up at the park amid reports of human waste being seen at the site.

Now the council has ordered “camping” signs to be taken down to dissuade people putting up tents.

Speyside Glenlivet councillor Derek Ross

“It has been a regular stop-off for the Speyside Way”

had pressed for the toilets to be reopened on environmental health grounds but the case was ruled out by the local authority.

Yesterday council staff explained that the park had only ever been considered a “wild” campsite due to the shortage of facilities, while stressing it would cost too much to get the proper accreditation.

Mr Ross said: “The campsite has been a regular stop-off for people walking the Speyside Way for many years. It is still listed on many websites.

“It seems we are trying to encourage tourism on one hand and are taking away from it with the other.”

Stephen Cooper, the council's head of direct services, said: “We will look at the websites to ensure the appropriate information is provided.

“At the moment we have no intention of applying for the licence and planning permission required to designate the park as a campsite due to the costs involved.”