

Marking the Year of Young People 2018

By **Katie Macleod**

Following the national launch of Scotland's themed "Year of Young People 2018" in Edinburgh at New Year, the Outer Hebrides will see its own Year of Young People kick off later this month, with a special cèilidh initiated and organised by the islands' young people themselves.

Those who showed an interest in organising events at the Year of Young People soft launch in December were invited to a meeting with Community Learning and Development last month, where they decided they would like to start off the celebrations with a cèilidh in Stornoway Town Hall on 30th March. The use of the building is coming under the organisation of e-Sgoil, who are currently looking at events that could be held in addition to the cèilidh.

While the Year of Young People calendar in the Western Isles is being implemented through partnership working by a steering group, Education and Children's Services at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar are organising a number of events themselves. As well as promoting already-scheduled events for young people under the Year of Young People banner

– such as the recent Battle of the Bands event on 17th February – the department is setting up a variety of celebrations specific to the themed year itself.

One likely to make headlines in the months to come is the involvement of pupils from the Outer Hebrides in Shetland's Big Takeover festival on 14th-16th September. The three-day programme will see young people in charge at local organisations, as well as roster of events covering music, drama, arts, sports, film, and writing, and a number of young people from the Outer Hebrides will be travelling to take part in the festival. This collaboration grew out of the relationship between the two island councils – staff from both education departments have been on reciprocal visits in the last year – as well as connections forged through the Our Islands, Our Future initiative.

Closer to home, the Western Isles Islands Games Association will host a Youth Games programme in Stornoway from 19th-22nd June, with 3rd and 4th year pupils from all four Secondary Schools in the islands competing. Sports at the event will include athletics, swimming, football, basketball, and badminton, and the programme will feature a closing ceremony of music and dance performed by the young people.

Throughout the year, young people in schools across the Outer Hebrides will also be working on the major inter-generational and bilingual project that is Dileab: A Legacy. The year-long project explores the legacy of the four major social influences in the Outer Hebrides over the last century, with each area exploring a different theme: Lewis will focus on the Iolaire disaster; Harris on protest and politics; Uist on the impact of the two world wars; and Barra on emigration.

Dileab will feature collaboration between schools and their local Comainn Eachdraidh, and involve research and recording of local stories, music, and poetry relating to the four themes. "Apart from the involvement of young people in 2018, this will have a legacy of providing resources and gathering information for future benefit", says Fiona MacInnes-Begg, Extended Learning Manager at Community Learning and Development, of the significance of the project.

Along similar intergenerational lines will be the 'Musical Memories' and 'Vintage Teas' Year of Young People events, where young and old come together to share experiences through song and conversation.

Community Learning and Development are also

getting involved in the Year of Young People, and are currently in the process of acquiring a mobile bus to allow them to provide youth work in areas of the islands that do not have the necessary facilities. They are also planning on running four HI Fires courses. As Fiona explains, "these are 10-week initiatives that allow young people to experience what it means to be a firefighter, whilst enjoying a fantastic experience, meeting new people, and learning valuable life skills."

On top of that, applications are underway for LEADER Funding, an EU funding package that has £100,000 earmarked for projects associated with the Year of Young People. With the first application deadline falling on 7th March, members of the Outer Hebrides Local Youth Action Group are getting ready to decide which projects best serve the needs of young people, and therefore which projects will be receiving funding.

There's plenty for young people to look forward to in the months ahead, and it all kicks off with the cèilidh later this month. As Fiona notes, "the young people are invested in it, and have said they'll take charge of selling tickets to their peers, and that shows an ownership of the process, which is critical for the Year of Young People."