

COMMUNITY* LAND SCOTLAND

COMMUNITY LANDOWNERS
CORONAVIRUS RESPONSES

Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn / Galson Estate Trust



As a community landowner and community anchor organisation, Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn (UOG) has been very responsive to the COVID-19 emergency. UOG published its [response plan](#) on March 23rd and has been working to ensure all c.1,900 residents (c. 800 households in 22 villages) on the Estate have been individually contacted and are aware of what the Trust is doing to help during these unprecedented times.

We spoke to Lisa from the Trust at the beginning of April 2020. 'We were really fortunate as I think we managed to mobilise the community pretty promptly. Over three weeks ago I heard the First Minister on the radio on my way into work and she mentioned "WhatsApp Trees", basically groups for folk who live on the same street etc. I thought it might be good to do this for every village on the Estate - taking account of those who don't have WhatsApp by recording a phone number. The idea behind this was to account for every single household in a bid to foster a way of allowing people to help each other - providing mutual support as opposed to setting up a helpline and then having to match volunteers or becoming so swamped we couldn't help anyone properly.'

This approach seems to be working really well so far and the Trust has almost universal coverage of all residents on the Estate. Where residents have not yet been reached, volunteers are still trying to make contact. Whilst this has been a mammoth task, the Trust has seen neighbours offering to do shopping, take in bins and even just saying a friendly, "morning, how are you all today?". Gestures that might seem trivial under normal circumstances, can provide a lifeline to members of the community self-isolating.

Community Land Scotland have shared graphics by the Galson Estate within this case study in the hope that would be informative.



The Trust managed to do this so quickly by setting up a private Facebook group to support those collecting phone numbers and establishing a volunteer group (many of whom already volunteer or have volunteered in the past for the Trust). This is also working well as it is helping the Trust react and respond quickly to any gaps that might appear in services and support in the area.

The Trust has also redeployed a member of staff to become a delivery driver. The local car hire company were offering vans free of charge, so the Trust quickly got insurance in place and decided to offer to do collections from Stornoway, from the local crofting co-operative, Lewis Crofters. The co-operative could no longer offer deliveries as they needed all their staff to operate a drive-thru service for residents calling in telephone orders. The Trust delivery service is now running three days per week and there are three drop-off areas (large car parks at community buildings) across the Estate.

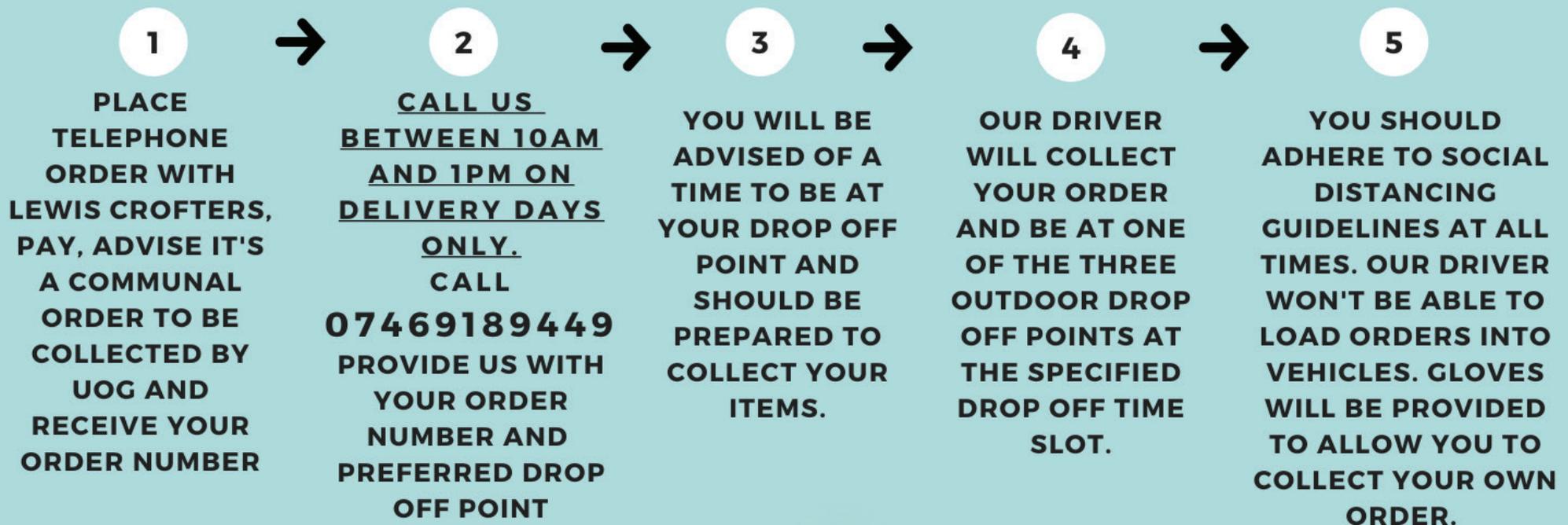
DELIVERIES WILL BE:

MONDAY

WEDNESDAY

FRIDAY

YOU MUST LET US KNOW YOU WANT A COLLECTION BY CALLING US BETWEEN 10AM AND 1PM ON ONE OF THESE DAYS. WE HAVE TO BE ABLE TO COLLECT ON THE SAME DAY.



To further support the community and particularly those unable to leave their homes, the Trust is delivering prescriptions from two surgeries across the Estate, five days per week. Volunteer drivers are carrying this out on a rota basis, delivering to all 22 villages on the Estate on specified days – this makes the logistics of delivering large volumes of prescriptions a lot easier.

The Trust has also put volunteer support into one local shop to enable it to stay open as it was providing essential items, such as fuel and gas. To help keep residents connected and entertained at home the Trust is offering Gaelic and English Bookbug sessions on their newly created YouTube channel three times per week. They have also launched a Gentle Movement class and this will run every Thursday.

Lisa said, 'The Trust has been talking about setting up a [YouTube channel](#) for a while, this situation has spurred us on. In the end it turned out to be very easy to do and free. We just had to overcome our fear of presenting!'



Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn

78 subscribers

VIDEOS

PLAYLISTS

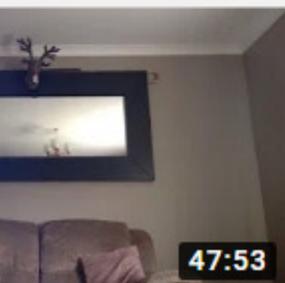
CHANNELS

DISCUSSION

ABOUT



PLAY ALL



47:53



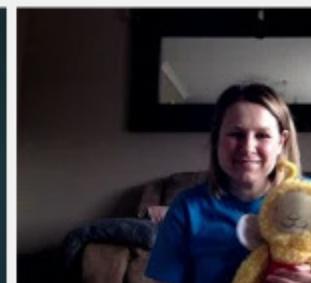
26:46



30:03



5:57



Bookbug English -
15/04/2020 (Animal)

Bookbug 15.04.20 - Gàidhlig -
15/04/2020 (Animal)

An t-Isean Glas - Gaelic
15/04/2020 (Animal)

Bookbug English 13
15/04/2020 (Animal)

In terms of the practicalities of running multiple support services the Trust has set aside time for analysis and review of the various schemes in place and are proactively supporting organisations on the Estate to work through what might be available to them. The Trust is keen to point out that they are not setting up new long-term services but providing support to existing and complementing them where possible.

The staff team has a Zoom meeting every weekday morning at 11.00 to discuss how things are going, to support each other and for motivational purposes.

One of the main barriers for everyone to overcome has been the barrage of information circulated by official channels, printed media, online and social media. Many residents look to their community anchor organisation in times of crisis, so the Trust had a member of staff sift through all of the information available to them at the outset so they could relay the official advice to the residents of the Estate. Information from Scottish Government, Scotland Islands Team and Highlands & Islands Enterprise has been particularly useful and reliable.



BUSINESS & COMMUNITY SUPPORT



ARE YOU WONDERING WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR YOUR BUSINESS OR ORGANISATION DURING THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS?

There has been a raft of support measures announced by the UK and Scottish Governments and it can be very confusing to understand how they might apply to individual circumstances. We plan to focus on a different scheme everyday and today we will start with the most straightforward option.

This has been particularly important as many members of the community might be feeling overwhelmed by or confused about the amount of information they have received - the Trust is mindful that people process information at different speeds.

As the community newspaper can no longer keep running, the Trust has established a community newsletter (their second issue is going to print shortly). Issue one was well received and they have managed to publish it free of charge. The newsletter has been available in local shops and been going out with local grocery deliveries etc. The Trust has received lots of positive feedback and once again amazing volunteers have offered their time to work alongside Trust staff to get this out.

Going forward, the Trust will continue to assess the gaps and try to do what they can to ensure the community are supported and feel secure during what is such a difficult and perplexing time. We asked if the Trust had encountered any 'red tape' that has stopped them from doing anything, Lisa said, 'No, not really. We can't let rural communities suffer due to bureaucracy. We ensure we risk assess what we do, remain flexible to the situation which is obviously in flux and employ a great deal of common sense'.

Lisa went on to say, 'The Estate is community owned and what better way to celebrate land ownership than to ensure the community are supported during the good times and the bad. The community here is amazing and it has been so encouraging to see how everyone has rallied around to support each other'.

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