

Huntly's Brexit tree in spotlight as subject of film

By Pat Scott

pat.scott@hnmmedia.co.uk

A WILLOW tree which proved controversial before it was planted features in a film which will be screened next week.

Deveron Projects have teamed up with film and arts group Alchemy to screen a film about the weeping willow tree planted to mark Brexit.

The tree is under the stewardship of a group of local people including Freya Wilson, a student from The Gordon Schools.

Speaking on behalf of fellow stewards, Ms Wilson said that the weeping willow, might appear just another tree, but it has a far deeper meaning.

The film, Brexit Tree, was produced by artist Clemens Wilhelm and film-maker Jan Martinec.

Ms Wilson said: "The tree was planted as part of a project to heal division within the Huntly community surrounding Brexit.

"How could we reunite the leavers and remainers – how could we calm the fears of the town?

"The aim of the weeping willow project was to bring everyone together with the planting of new life



The tree-planting ceremony almost a year ago.

Picture: Becky Saunderson

– with the willow tree being a symbol of hope and sorrow it reflected the feelings of many in the town.

"Eight members of the local community were entrusted to look after the willow. It is our job to maintain the tree, but sadly over the past year the willow has been vandalised three times.

"We are unaware whether the people doing this know of the significance of the tree to the town. We feel disheartened knowing this will be

the third replanting in a year.

"This is a community tree – the weeping willow belongs to anyone who wishes to care for it or find solace in it. So, don't destroy it because we will continue to replant it again and again and again and again."

The film will be live streamed on Alchemy's website on Thursday, February 4 at 7pm and will be available until Sunday, February 7.

There's link to the live stream at www.deveron-projects

Ranger service's new strategy plan backed

COUNCILLORS have endorsed Aberdeenshire Council ranger service's strategy up to 2023.

The service seeks to connect people to places and aims to increase appreciation, understanding and care of the area's natural and cultural heritage. It employs six full-time rangers and a coordinator.

Under normal circumstances, rangers hold a variety of events for schools and the wider community.

A new strategy for the service has four key priorities: to further promote the health and wellbeing benefits of accessing the outdoors and ensuring it is accessible; increasing opportunities for outdoor learning; action to combat biodiversity loss to promote the countryside and coast as a green tourism destination and increase opportunities for income generation.



If you need help to pay for a loved one's funeral and receive certain benefits, you can apply for Funeral Support Payment. It's a one-off payment towards burial or cremation costs and more. People typically receive around £1700 in financial support and you can apply after a person has died until 6 months after the date of their funeral.

Find out if you're eligible and apply at mygov.scot/funeral-support-payment Or call our specially trained team on **0800 182 2222**



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Council set to review hire charges

THE cost of hiring school facilities by community groups is set to be revised across Aberdeenshire by the local authority.

Although all lets are currently suspended due to the Covid-19 lockdown, education and children's services let charges are not aligned with the pricing structure for other council-run facilities, such as community halls and sports centres.

As a result, users face two sets of charges for comparable lets in similar establishments.

When they meet this week, members of the education

committee will be asked to approve the proposals to amend the charges, and enable community users and staff to work with one set of charges for a consistent and more straightforward approach.

Charges will be unit based and priced per hour, and are subject to an inflationary uplift as agreed by the head of finance at 2.8 per cent for financial year 2021/22.

Education, in common with other council services, is incurring additional cleansing and sanitisation costs, which have not been factored into existing price calculations.

In tandem with Live Life Aberdeenshire, the education service will be looking to continue to pass on the extra costs to those who regularly hire facilities.

As an example, a martial arts group hiring a badminton court for two hours would be asked to pay an extra £5 for the nightly hire to enable a half-hour cleaning session of the area and equipment used.

The cost of additional cleaning would be recharged at the lowest possible rate to enable the employment of caretaking staff to clean spaces ready for the next user or a school's pupils and staff.

Green light for letting units at Rhynie

FINAL permission has been granted for the erection of 13 short-term letting units near Rhynie.

Ian Duxbury of Mains of Rhynie had applied for consent for the scheme of four one-bedroom lodges and nine two-bedroom lodges on the former quarry site at Mains of Rhynie.

Members of Aberdeenshire Council's

infrastructure services committee unanimously welcomed the plans.

Planners said the proposed lodges and associated infrastructure on the former quarry site were served by passing public transport and would be well related to the settlement of Rhynie and nearby tourist attractions.

They said the siting

was acceptable and the layout and design were respectful to the site.

Councillors did, however, seek the inclusion of a travel plan as a condition of the delegated grant.

The Marr area committee had previously raised a query relating to control over the occupancy of the units to ensure they

were only short term.

Two letters of objection had been received. They raised concerns about access to the site from the A97, including visibility, the ability to adequately supply 13 lodges with water, drainage, noise and loss of amenity, and the site's ability to handle the private foul water system proposed.