

FAIR ISLE TIMES

VOLUME 49 ISSUE 21

PUBLISHED SINCE 1978

8th JULY 2026

Da School Year Dat's Awa...

A reflection from your Principal Teacher correspondent

August – New Beginnings

The start of a new school year always brings with it an element of excitement. As a teacher in a larger school, you would usually be welcoming a fresh set of faces – ones you know but had never taught – through your classroom door. New relationships would be forged, new personalities would be perched on the seats and fresh books would be labelled. To those educators who cannot quite comprehend what life is like in a very small setting, the stock line I have coined rings true, “it’s not easy, it’s just different.”

There was, though, a different feel to August 2025 as a tribe of three (one, of course, must include the nursery) became four as we welcomed Khalicee through the door. All four children deserve praise for a fantastic year but to see how far this young lady has come since she first set foot on her Fair Isle journey has to be up there in our yearly highlights. Credit must be given to those well-established voyagers upon the high seas of Fair Isle Primary School for welcoming our newest pupil so warmly, gently and in a typically friendly fashion. It was then, I think, that we knew it was set to be a brilliant year.

September – The Year of the Dragon (sort of)

Education has changed a lot in the last decade, not least since those days of Covid and lockdown. Some changes are for the better although apparently teachers do still hang upside down from the school rafters at night – like bats. It has now been universally recognised that children are at their best when learning about subjects that interest and engage them, whatever they may be. It is down, as it should be, to the teachers when linking them into age-old subjects like Literacy and Maths.

Our first topic of the year was “Dragons”. Anyone who has come through our classroom doors will have noticed a large, colourful creation snaking its way across the beams, fiercely guarding its eggs. The children adore it and it is testament to the hard work of Fiona. She is so much more than just an art instructor here at Fair Isle Primary School and what folk do not see, but what needs to be recognised, is how much thought, planning and attention-to-detail she puts into all her sessions.

October – There’s Something Strange in the Neighbourhood

October is usually a quiet month, although no month at a primary school can ever be truly described as “quiet”. We now find ourselves at the end of the month for a fantastic Halloween “themed” day. It is always the case that we like to think the future of the isle is



in safe hands and, in terms of the guising and the extravagant costumes that the children embrace, this event very much illustrated that. Pumpkin carving and some spooky bioluminescence made for excitement all-round.

November – Ramblin’ Free

Our Cruise Ship stall in the hall raises lots of money for what some might term a “good cause”. However, it is always a source of pride to us that the children at Fair Isle Primary School recognise that there are lots of children, both in the UK and further afield, who are far less fortunate than we are, and that they can play a small part in raising money to aid and help those children who find themselves in dire straits and dangerous situations.

Here, we encounter our wonderful “Lighthouse to Lighthouse” fundraiser for Children in Need. Setting off from North Lighthouse and joined by a determined group of ramblers, who kept the children chatting and keeping going, we certainly picked a glorious day when the sun shone. Brodie joined us at Setter and the 4.1 miles all the way to the South Lighthouse flew by in a matter of no time. The generosity and kindness of the community, leading to an outstanding total in excess of £800 meant that the children had an extra spring in their step, with it even earning us a slot on Radio Shetland.



December – The Demise of Dr Lerwick Ramsbottom

Shakespeare once wrote that, “All the world’s a stage”. One mantra I have stood by as a teacher is that every single child has an inner-performer that will flourish if the spotlight is shining in the right direction and the correct words of encouragement are deployed. Sheep Rocks was a pantomime that the children contributed toward, had a great deal of ownership of and brought to life in what was a very magical and meaningful way.

A cunning and menacing baddie, a principal boy who had the audience rooting for him at every turn, a supportive princess and even a whirlwind sidekick wielding a plate of whipped cream. This pantomime had it all and the children deserved the applause from a perpetually supportive audience. Perhaps the most poignant scene was the one we named, “Last Christmas in Burkle”. I am sure the isle recognises how much we will miss The Shaws come October. The school certainly does, and each and every event you are currently reading about could not have happened this year without the support that “Queen Hollie” has given the children and I, both as a colleague and as a friend.



January – Ain’t No Day Like a Snow Day

I was told, upon moving here, that it rarely snows in Fair Isle. Yet, as January came around, the children would awake shortly before the beginning of a new term to see a carpet of white outside of their windows. I am always secretly wary (perhaps not so secretly now) when those elsewhere ask me what “home learning” is offered to children when schools are shut. On days like this, the message will always be clear: go out there and enjoy it while it lasts. And they certainly did.



February – All Aboard a (thankfully stationary) Good Shepherd

Parents in a previous life used to giggle at the Head Teacher when he would, without fail, state in every February newsletter that he “couldn’t quite believe we are midway through the year”. However, the months were certainly flying past as the children embraced a photography topic which saw them presented with their very own digital camera and the opportunity arose for another cracking school trip – this time to The Good Shepherd. Hopefully, running through this reflection like a thread in a knitting pattern, is the notion that we really are that fortunate to



have the support of everyone in the community when it comes to giving the bairns those experiences that spark interest. A huge thank you to Ian Best and the crew of The Good Shepherd for welcoming us aboard the boat so we could learn all about what it takes to be a crew member, sailor or skipper. The children loved it.

March – Conquer the Climbing Wall

I haven't even mentioned our school trips (grandly termed enrichment trips) yet. Again, it is so important to all of us here: teachers, parents and pupils, that we gain that familiarity with Lerwick and the Anderson Halls of Residence from an early age and access those sorts of activities that Fair Isle cannot offer; such as swimming lessons and trips to the climbing wall. We are proud to have been on four separate Lerwick trips this year and again would like to put on record our thanks to Ann and the team at Tingwall for always getting us back safely as well as Amy, who (with vast amounts of patience for my madcap ideas and schemes) works patiently behind the scenes to make sure everything is booked and no hitchhiking has to happen.

If you would have told me, in my first year of teaching (15 years ago now) that I would be taking children from the age of five upwards on overnight stays away from their parents, I would have chuckled and given you some long odds. However, it is testament to the resilience and "can-do" spirit of our bairns that they absolutely embrace these trips. So many moments stand out but all three of them reaching the very top of the climbing wall is perhaps my personal favourite. More harnesses will be needed next year.



April – The Boss Comes to Visit

In my previous role, I was a Principal Teacher on the Isle of Jura in a Shared Headship model. I saw many of them in Argyll and Bute. April saw our Shared Headteacher - Christie, appointed in November, coming out to visit us for three days to build relationships with the children and get to know our setting well. We gave her a week to remember, giving me an opportunity to thank the brilliant crew at the Bird Obs, especially Carla the Ranger who puts in a lot of hard work and dedicated thought to deliver sessions to our children (on this occasion a spot of bird ringing) and whose presence we really value in school. As does David with his FIMRO sessions and beach cleaning expertise.



Christie was also here for Voar Redd Up, which would not be possible without the ultimate guru of gardening and of the outdoors herself in Pat. Pat has been a source of wisdom and encouragement all year to us and the day was a great success.

Regardless of thoughts across Shetland on the shared headship model, which I know are wide and varied, it is evident since she took up post that Christie sees herself very much as the Head Teacher of both Fair Isle and Sandwick and is passionate about our bairns succeeding. The children love her visits (who doesn't love a Head Teacher who brings you mangoes?) and always look forward to catching up with her virtually, too.

May – Brodie's Dance Moves Hit the Headlines

It isn't just the primary age children that head out to Lerwick. Throughout the year, we have firmly established a weekly "Fun with Foula" session between both nurseries. They meet virtually together to complete art projects, chatter away whilst painting and share their experiences of growing up in an island. Answering an invite to attend the Early Years concert at the Shetland Folk Festival, Brodie and Hollie (with a bit of help again from the flexible folk at Tingwall) set out to meet Foula nursery and boogie away to some music. Even then, we weren't quite prepared for just how sensational his dance moves would be, leading to him becoming what some would call an "internet sensation". Does he get the moves from Grandad Iain, one person asked? They might not be far off the mark.

It was fantastic to see our very youngest pupil head out for such a cracking



experience. The first of many, no doubt!

June- Lead Your Own Learning

As referenced earlier on, children are at their best when they lead their learning. The final term of the year saw Khalicee, Ander and Luca take part in self-directed projects, with a final showcase in the hall a week or so ago. These projects always drive home the words of the late, great Sir Ken Robinson who says that schools sometimes run the risk of “educating children out of their creative capacities” through overly rigid ways of doing things. Through letting the children be creative with dressmaking, model planes and fishing around Fair Isle, it became clear that the talents our children possess here are wide, varied and need to be nurtured in equal measure. The more astute reader will be sat there thinking, “hang on, Jonathan has no idea how to make a dress and he certainly isn’t good on a boat”. And they would be right, which leads us onto the other wonderful aspect of these projects: for Anne, Steven and Neil to give up their time and expertise to help foster this creativity made the learning that took place all the more impactful and we are so grateful for them doing so.



Another thank you goes to Lucy and Ruth, who have come in to do supply for us this year, with Lucy still embarking on the mammoth journey from Skye and, whilst Ruth’s journey from Setter isn’t quite as epic, she has always been there to give me words of wisdom when needed.

A special thank you to the parents of the children: Eileen and Guillermo, Alice and Khalid and Amy and Andrew for your support, kindness and cake-baking prowess over the year.

And a final thank you to you, the community, for all your support. I wonder what learning and events await the children next year, when the tribe of four become a tribe of six?



ISLE NOTICES

- **Chapel this Sunday 11am.** All very welcome. Susannah leading the service
- **Rockpooling this weekend.** All welcome to come and join in a rock-pooling session with FIMRO Education Officer David Parnaby this Saturday. For more info please contact David
- **Free books and toys** – Freyja has had a big sort out of her bedroom meaning there are many children’s books and a few other bits and pieces (cuddly toys etc) all free for collection from the Hall porch. Please go and have a browse as they will be cleared away before the cruise ship on the 18th
- **Fair Isle 10km and Half Marathon** – postponed last weekend due to bad weather and poorly runners! Provisionally rescheduled for Friday 31st July. Please get in touch with Jonathan at

Schoolhouse if you are keen to join (more info also in the Fair Isle Fitties WhatsApp group – contact Eileen if you would like to join)

- **Cruise ship** – Final cruise ship of the season (well, there is one booked for October but let's see what the weather does...). The final Hall open day for cruise ships is on Saturday 18th July for the visit of Scenic Eclipse. Current plan is to arrive at 0830, with the Hall and Museum being open for all cruise visitors, isle visitors and isle folk too from 0930-1230. Contact Eileen for more details.

Fair Isle Demonstration and Research MPA update

Fair Isle inshore fish survey

Good news, FIMRO have had confirmation of funding to support this year's inshore fish survey. This will be the fifth annual survey around the isle carried out by UHI Shetland. This year's survey will incorporate some further focused flapper skate work in collaboration with a Scotland-wide project called SharkScape. This will involve satellite tagging to find out more about how flapper skate use the Fair Isle marine region as well as taking samples for various analyses including DNA. The survey is scheduled (weather depending) for the end of August. Further information on the SharkScape project available here: <https://innovationhub.napier.ac.uk/environments/environments-case-study-sharkscape-project>

10 years of the Fair Isle Demonstration and Research MPA

November marks the 10-year anniversary of the Fair Isle Demonstration and Research MPA which was legally designated on the 9th of November 2016. To mark this milestone and celebrate the amazing project and research progress made over this time we're planning a celebration in Fair Isle in the Autumn time. More information coming soon!

As part of these celebrations, FIMRO are working with Liz Musser to develop a promotional video. Liz will be on the isle on Thursday 13th of August for filming and interviews. Katie will be in touch with individual folk soon. You can watch the promotional video Liz developed back in 2016 to launch the consultation for the DR MPA here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3TB5Oyqbs6E> some familiar faces!



FIMRO Education Officer

I just want to highlight the amazing work by FIMRO's Education Officer David and all marine citizen scientists on Fair Isle over the last few months. Citizen science activities such as beach cleans, rock-pooling, Shorewatch, mermaid's purse ID sessions and more are an incredibly valuable (and fun!) way to collect important ecological data which help us to monitor marine biodiversity over time. Data from these surveys also contributes to national databases and can inform marine policy and management measures to help protect our marine ecosystems.

There are lots more photos of recent Education Officer events on [FIMRO's website](#) and the [MPA Facebook page](#). See David's update for more information on summer marine citizen science plans.

Wishing you all a great and sunny summer holidays.

Katie Cubbon – Fair Isle Demonstration and Research MPA Research Officer



FIMRO summer events

We'll be running a variety of events through the school holidays looking at Fair Isle's marine life and how you can help to record what's going on. The plan is to have beach cleans, rock pooling and Mermaid's purse searches. There'll also be some seaweed surveys and intertidal surveying; these are less suitable for big public events, but if anyone is interested in taking part in them, please get in touch. We'll be carrying on with Shorewatching as well and, as we enter the best time of year for cetacean sightings, it would be great to have some more volunteers to join our small but enthusiastic current team, so please let me know if you'd like to get involved.



With no FIT during the summer, I'll send emails round the Isle with details of events as they're organised, but get in touch at any time if you've any questions.

I came, I saw, iNaturalist

One way of recording not just the marine life you observe, but any wildlife you see anywhere in the world, is using iNaturalist www.inaturalist.org. There is a website and app, in which you can add your own observations of any plant, animal, insect etc., as well as exploring sightings from millions of other observers around the world; so it's great for identifying that moth you saw in your hotel room on holiday (surely it's not just me that does that?...). Just create a free account, take pictures of your sightings and upload them with the name of what you've seen. If you don't know what it is you've photographed, the website will suggest possible identities; use these to try to help you identify your sighting, or leave it as something more general ('moth' etc) and anyone else using iNaturalist can try to identify it for you. The sightings are publicly available, so can contribute to our knowledge of what's occurring in Fair Isle. If anyone has an interest in recording what they're seeing around the Isle, it's worth a look, and I'd love to hear people's feedback as to how they find using it.

David Parnaby, FIMRO Education Officer

An introduction to who is building the new ferry

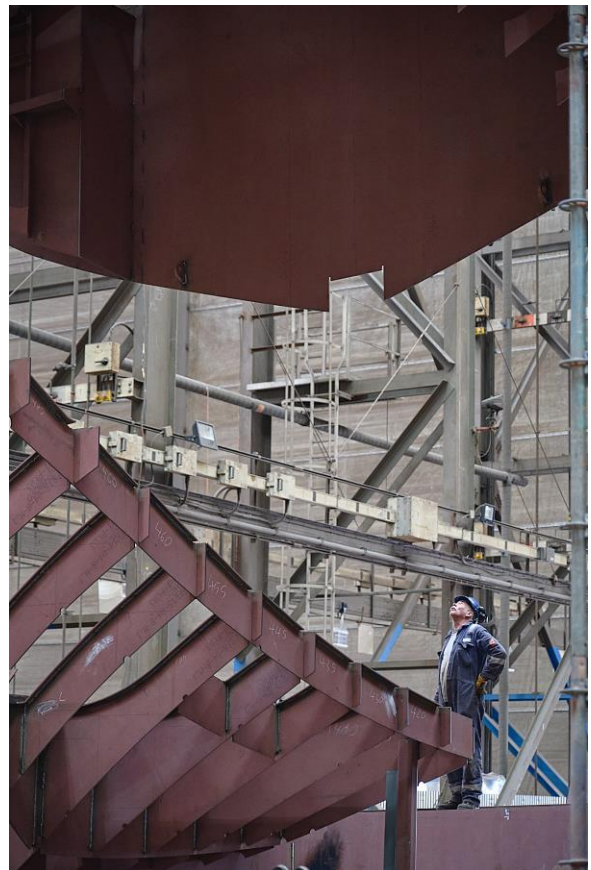


Above: Steve Ross – now and 30 years ago when he joined Parkol

The next key figure in the building of Good Shepherd V is Parkol's Fabrication Chargehand Steve Ross, who recently celebrated 30 years at Parkol!

Steve supervises all the tradespeople building the vessel day-to-day, giving them valuable advice and practical help when needed. Having built each vessel that came out of Whitby shipyard, Steve's experience and knowledge is invaluable.

Whitby born and bred, Steve worked locally as a mechanic and used to help Parkol working on engines, until was offered a job in 1996 as an engineer. This was the time when Parkol started building our first new build vessel – scalloper Jacqueline Anne. Helping Jim Morrison with fabrication work on this build, Steve started learning fabrication first-hand and never looked back since. 30 years later he still isn't thinking about retiring. It's the finished boat, Steve says about the reason he has been devoted to his job at Parkol. Seeing the project through from flat steel plates to the finished vessel gives him gratification and pride in his work.



GRADUATION NEWS!!

Huge Congratulations to Ythan Shaw of Burkle on graduating this week with a 2:1 in Chemistry from the University of Edinburgh. Well done Ythan, and all the best for your next step (*writing a science column for the Fair Isle Times...?*)

That's us off for the summer break now, have a wonderful summer and the Fair Isle Times will be back in late August!



Thanks to Luke from the Obs for the report below on his brilliant find late last month

June in Fair Isle is a strange time of year; the ornithology team finishes census to focus on seabirds with the passage of common migrants slowing down. Fair Isle, however, has a history of turning up a June “mega” or two, and it is always in the back of our minds that there is a chance of finding something amazing, especially after the Northern Parula found at the end of May.

My family had arrived in the Isle to get their seabird fix, enjoying close views of a massive Gannet colony, dodging Arctic and Great Skuas defending their nests, and watching the thousands of Auks on the cliffs. We had also enjoyed a bit of late spring passage, unearthing a Greenish Warbler whilst out looking at the sea birds with a Serin also found. A couple of days later we found a stunning Long-Tailed Skua, with a Pectoral Sandpiper flying over at the same time. In any other year this would have been an amazing week in the “magic” Isle but then came the afternoon of the 28th...

The morning of the 28th was spent doing some more seabird work up on Bunness as we tried to add to our Puffin colour ring scheme. It was a Sunday and I had the afternoon off so I took the family to the north end of the Isle to see if anything had arrived on the bodies of water up there. We parked near the Wirvie Burn and walked up the road past the Golden Water (which was empty), heading over Mopul to check on an Arctic Skua nest which had completed its clutch of two eggs. We then headed towards the North Light, passing the Kirn o’Scroo (a large hole in the ground caused by a collapsed sea cave). I was reminiscing on the birds that had been here before (Turtle Dove, Golden Oriole and even a Siberian Accentor) and said to my Dad that it would be amazing if we could just get one more!



We headed on and checked the Kiln o’Scroo, a smaller depression with a ruined crub at the bottom. As we reached the brow, three birds flew up and landed in the rocky scree above the crub. The first two birds we quickly identified as Wheatear but the third bird lacked the white rump and seemed to be a sandy beige colour. I immediately knew it was interesting but didn’t have a clue what it was. Luckily the bird didn’t go far and had perched on a prominent rock in the scree. I quickly scanned the ridge for the bird - Wheatear, Wheatear, BANG - there sat in front of us the unmistakable sight of a Trumpeter Finch. Its bright pink bill stood out against the rock, masquerading as a thrift flower.

I shouted out to my Dad “there’s a f***** Trumpeter Finch!” much to the displeasure of my Mum! Luckily, Dad and the rest of the family were able to get onto the bird easily as it sat motionless on the scree.

I put out the news on the island WhatsApp group and we sat down and waited for what felt like an eternity for the first Isle twitchers to turn up (in reality it was only an impressive four minutes for the first person to arrive by bike). However, they were about twenty seconds too late as the bird decided to leave and fly off out of sight behind the lighthouse. After a couple of minutes it flew back over us and dropped into the Kirn o'Scroo where Assistant Warden Tom had timed his arrival very well; it landed in front of him before immediately flying over the ridge of Mopul and out of sight.

Cars started arriving and we headed out to try to relocate the bird, splitting up to cover as much of the open heather we could. Luckily after about 45 minutes the bird had returned to its favoured Kiln o'Scroo where all twitchers managed to catch up with the bird before it went on another jolly behind the lighthouse. This time the bird went missing until 19:30 where it was then watched in the Kiln o'Scroo devouring thrift seed heads before digesting them in the late evening sun in the scree, where it stayed for three days, allowing great views for lots of happy islanders and a few lucky Shetland twitchers. That evening we all headed into the Obs bar and were able to reflect on a remarkable day. Finding a "Mega" bird is something I'm sure most birders who come to Fair Isle dream of and being able to do that alongside my Dad, who has taught me all I know about birds, was very special and a moment I am sure we will both never forget!

This bird represented the first record for Fair Isle and Shetland, the 5th for Scotland and the 16th for Britain first since 2011. Interestingly we were able to match photos with the Irish bird concluding that there is a high possibility that it is the same individual that was on Great Saltee, matching face patterns, moulted tail feathers and primary coverts. A very cool movement of the mega rare bird.

Luke, at the Obs

**FREE
TRAINING**



ASIST

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training

**FAIR
ISLE**

ASIST is a 2 day face-to-face workshop that provides participants with practical skills and knowledge to effectively recognise those who may be at risk of suicide and conduct a suicide intervention

WHEN: To be arranged

WHERE: Fair Isle

TIME: 9 - 5pm (both days)

BOOKING: Mind Your Head

Phone: 01595 745035

Email: mindyourhead@shetland.org

Scan the QR code to register your interest. You will then receive a registration link to book your place.

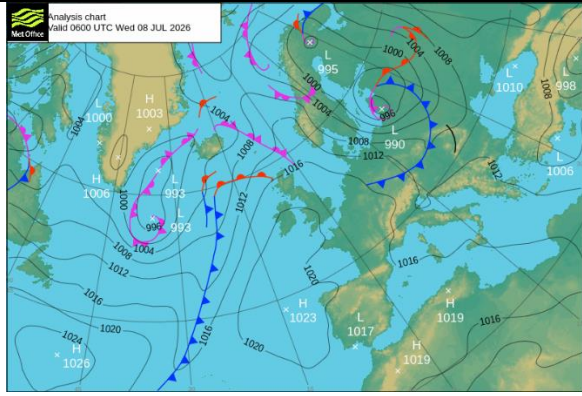


We are delivering ASIST training in local communities, for local communities.
This training is open to anyone - whether it is for your personal interest & skills or in a work capacity.

This free training has been made possible by the generous donations made by the Shetland community.

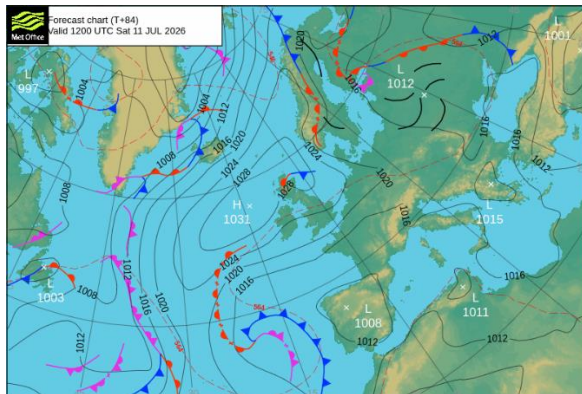
Mind Your Head are keen to come to the isle and provide free training on dealing with helping those at risk from suicide. If there are enough folk keen to take part they will come here to the isle to give the training. A previous attendee confirmed it was a very useful and interesting course. If interested, please get in touch via the details on the poster





Analysis Chart 0600 UTC

Wednesday 8th July 2026



Forecast Chart 1200 UTC

Saturday 11th July 2026

GENERAL SITUATION Wednesday 8th July 2026

High pressure across Europe continues to High pressure centred over the North Sea covers the whole of the British Isles. In the northern edge of the anticyclone, Shetland lies under a cloudier westerly airstream. Weak Atlantic fronts held to the west and northwest by high pressure contribute further cloud. With the high forecast to drift towards Scotland clearer skies are expected over the next few days and into the start of next week though - with the high predicted to continue slowly westwards light north-westerly airstream is likely.

OUTLOOK FOR TODAY AND THE WEEKEND

Temperatures 13° or 14° by day. 10° to 12° overnight.

THURSDAY 9th: Perhaps some early brightness but low cloud, mist or fog and patchy light rain soon returning.

FRIDAY 10th: Cloudy with chance of a shower, then drier with sunny spells by afternoon. F2-3 WSW winds. Mostly dry overnight with clear spells. **Sea State:** Slight at W 1 metre. East of Shetland slight at WSW 1 metre.

SATURDAY 11th: Mostly dry, partly with sunny or clear spells' F3 NW winds. **Sea State:** Slight at W 1 metre.

SUNDAY 12th: Mostly dry but cloudier with F3 NW winds. **Sea State:** Slight at NW 1 metre.

FORECAST FOR NEXT WEEK Temperatures 13° or 14° by day, 9° to 11° overnight.

MONDAY 13th: Rather cloudy though mainly dry with a moderate N or NW breeze. Possibly misty later. **Sea State:** Slight at NW 1 metre.

TUESDAY 14th: Cloudy though mainly dry with a fresh N breeze. **Sea State:** Slight at NW 1 metre.

WEDNESDAY 15th – SUNDAY 19th: Continuing settled, mostly dry with cloudy or partly cloudy skies. Moderate N winds occasionally fresh. **Sea State Wednesday:** Slight at NW 1 metre. **Dave Wheeler**

