

Dounreay helps motorbike charity support NHS in Caithness

The cash will enable Highland and Islands Blood Bikes to establish a permanent presence in Caithness.

This will speed up turnaround times for samples such as Covid-19 tests between hospitals and healthcare facilities in the north Highlands and the medical laboratories at Raigmore Hospital in Inverness – a distance of more than 100 miles.

Until now, the charity has been running the Inverness to Caithness route from Inverness but wanted a motorcycle based in Caithness, with fully trained riders, to serve the local community

Ross Sharp, President of HAIBB, said:

We are looking to source funding for a motorcycle to be based in, operated from, and dedicated to each of the areas serviced by the major hospitals in Highland. One of these is Caithness General Hospital, so we approached Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd and applied for a grant.

It's just fantastic that this will now become a reality. Being able to fund this motorcycle will make a huge difference. We will now be able to service the whole of the Caithness area much more efficiently. In turn this will help the NHS and improve their patient experience by ensuring samples, and other important items, are processed more quickly.

We will now also be able to service the wider needs of the Caithness area and offer courier services, completely free of cost, to GP surgeries, care homes and other healthcare premises, as well as Caithness General Hospital. At this time of crisis we see it as important that samples, vital supplies, medicines and other products are able to circulate freely and flexibly between healthcare facilities. This will enable us to play our part in doing so.

HAIBB is part of a UK-wide network of blood bikes supporting the NHS, operated entirely on a voluntary basis.

Normally, it provides an out-of-hours service at weekends and evenings when NHS transport may not be available. During the coronavirus crisis, it has been working up to 14 hours a day delivering samples and materials.

Mr Sharp added:

This addition will bring our fleet to 5 motorcycles, something we didn't expect so early in our existence, and with some volunteers also using their own bikes, our service to the Highland and Islands community is expanding. Our riders will always be identified by their distinctive BLOOD vests and the bikes will also carry distinctive UN3373 BLOOD boxes on them. All our riders are committed to an advanced level of riding. If you see our riders out doing their bit please give them a wave and give them some space – they are doing it for free, free to our NHS.

Mark Rouse, Managing Director of DSRL, said:

The NHS is such a critical part of the infrastructure of this area at the best of times. This agreement with the blood bikes charity will strengthen the long supply lines that support our hospitals and healthcare facilities at a moment of greatest need and I'm delighted we are able to support this.

Dounreay, once the UK's centre for fast reactor research, is now Scotland's largest decommissioning project. Work to decommission the site is being delivered by DSRL, a company owned by Cavendish Dounreay Partnership, on behalf of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

Further information including how to become a volunteer, make a donation or becoming a sponsor can be found at www.haibloodbikes.co.uk.