



## Soul mining

10th Dark Season Blues festival sets record with a huge lineup and a return to the 'real venue'

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

No heat, no toilets and not enough power to handle all the stage lights. Now *that's* the proper way of celebrating a decade of Longyearbyen's biggest music event.

"We're back and we're glad," said Jon Sandmo, introducing the first concert in Mine 3 since  
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ORBO & The Longshots, top, and Grainne Duffy, middle, perform during the 10th Dark Season Blues festival. At bottom, a capacity crowd in Mine 3 listens to the Howlin' Huskies. All photos by Mark Sabbatini / Icepeople.

# Trying to tame traffic

Walkway for students, better routes for snowmobiles and bikes part of plan through 2015

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

It's tough enough walking to school with the dark, weather and wildlife to worry about, so the least the city can do is keep the kids from having to dodge speeding cars.

That's the message from parents, students and school employees, according to an updated traffic plan that prioritizes projects in Longyearbyen through 2015. As a result, city leaders say their top priority is a walkway that allows youths, especially those in kindergarten, to avoid one of the town's busiest side streets.

"Schoolchildren described how they got to school, where they stayed in their spare time, and how they felt unsafe on the way to school and in their leisure time," the report notes. "In addition, parents gave feedback on where they believed schoolchildren were unsafe."

The 400,000-kroner walkway would allow students to avoid Hilmar Rekstens street, where drivers frequently exceed the posted 30-kilometer-an-hour speed limit. The original plan proposed speed bumps on the street, but those were rejected with an expectation police will be more

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## Lovin' a decade of local bureaucracy

Past and current leaders savor wins on key issues, but not all convinced council is a positive

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

Without it taxes might be higher. Coal mining's future might be darker. And kids' teeth might be a bit healthier.

Cake, candy, music, dancing and occasionally tedious speeches by politicians were part of the 10th birthday celebration of Longyearbyen's local government Monday at Kulturhuset. Past  
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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Youths pummel piñatas filled with candy during the 10-year celebration of Longyearbyen's local government Monday at Kulturhuset.

## Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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*Icepeople* is published weekly (or thereabouts) on Tuesdays (or thereabouts), with printed copies available free on a limited basis in Longyearbyen. Additional printed copies are available locally and by mail upon request. Charges are on an "at cost" basis.

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## Corrections policy

When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

## Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.

## Kings Bay mining tragedy, 50 years later



NTB



NRK



NRK

A procession in Harstad, top, carries coffins of 10 of the 21 miners killed at Kings Bay 50 years ago in Norway's largest mining explosion. The anniversary of the tragedy at the mine, seen shortly after the explosion at bottom right and news of which was broadcast by NRK's Knut Olsen at bottom left, will be observed Monday and Tuesday in Ny-Ålesund. Among those scheduled to attend are King Harald, Parliament President Dag Terje Andersen, 29 miners surviving the disaster and family members of those killed. The gas explosion 300 meters underground on Nov. 5, 1962, had national repercussions, with then Prime Minister Einar Gerhardsen and his Cabinet resigning in 1963 due to a vote of no confidence after an investigation revealed numerous safety issues at the mine, which was shut down the same year. The 10 bodies at the funeral procession were the only ones rescuers were able to recover. It is still unclear what caused the blast, but the Cold War meant Ny-Ålesund's mining operations continued far longer than advisable, according to NRK.

## Icesheet

### Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Those Arctic Cold War headlines continue to be pretty darn chilling this week. Russia authorized trawlers often detained for illegal activities in Svalbard to carry machine guns. They also had a "top-secret nuclear sub" covertly mapping the seabed "to prove (its) North Pole claim." The U.S., meanwhile, admitted one of its Navy ships had a radiation leak that caused several Norwegian Coast Guard mariners to get sick during training exercises in the area this summer. So it seems like a good idea to brief locals about **the second major battle-for-the-Arctic online video game released in the past seven months. The earlier "Naval War: Arctic Circle" cast players as generals managing troops and now "Arctic Combat" makes the experience personal as a first-person shooter.** The latter is in beta testing with an official release date of Dec. 6, and early reviews say the free-to-play title is engaging, if unoriginal technically and in concept (the Ruskies, as usual, are the bad guys). Updates from the battlefield are available at <http://ac.webzen.com> ... Time again for



WEBZEN

**Not in my back yard...please?** The battle for our turf gets up close and personal this winter in the free online FPS "Arctic Combat."

full disclosure of our willingness to be a government-funded propaganda sheet, as *Icepeople* has been awarded a 40,000-kroner culture grant from the city for the third straight year to pay for printing costs. We asked for 50,000 kroner since we're publishing more issues than ever (on pace for 50 this year for the first time), but no dice. It seems suitable the funds come from liquor store profits, since the consensus is this rag is unmistakably resembles the work of raging alcoholists.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Members of the local band Howlin' Huskies, above, pause to refuel during their performance Saturday at Mine 3 as part of the 10th Dark Season Blues. The last concert in the now-closed mine was in 2007. At right, energetic members of a record crowd hit the dance floor during a blues marathon Saturday at Huset. The festival's landmark anniversary featured about 60 national and international musicians, twice as many as in recent years.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

## 10th blues fest is one for the records

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2007. "This is the real venue for Spitsbergen Blues."

Saturday's sold-out concert by the local band Howlin' Huskies, who performed there multiple times before the mine closed in 2008, was perhaps the highlight event of the 10th annual Dark Season Blues. Sandmo, a longtime resident at the band's first concert in the mine, said the musicians were all miners back then.

"They had hard, cold, tough work and that reflects the character of the music," he said.

The four-day festival has firmed established itself at the top of the local cultural scene, and the landmark anniversary featured a record lineup of about 60 musicians performing before record crowds.

"All of the venues were at some point during the event full," wrote Espen Helgesen, head of the Longyearbyen Bluesklubb, which hosts the event, in an e-mail interview. Attendance figures are still being tallied, but there were a higher than usual ratio of mainland visitors and "the feedback is overwhelming from everybody,

both from the audience and the artists."

The easiest event to get into might have been one of the best – and free – as a first-ever official opening with a multitude of preview concerts was staged early Thursday evening at Kulturhuset. Perhaps a quarter of the seats were empty while some of the festival's biggest names played some of their most in-demand songs, including U.S. artist Jace Everett who said playing his landmark hit "Bad Things" appears to be required by Norwegian law.

"I'm also tired of the song and I apologize to everyone," he quipped.

Most concerts were in the town's three main pubs, with two or three bands playing in each Thursday and Friday, with the largest show as usual being a two-stage marathon at Huset on Saturday night.

The festival ended with a Sunday night blues jam at Brasseri Nansen, a larger venue than the traditional Barentz Pub, and drew a peak crowd of about 400, Helgesen wrote.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### Svalbardhallen facing 26M kroner of repairs for 15 years

Svalbardhallen may need 26 million kroner of repairs and upgrades during the next 10 to 15 years, according to an analysis by an engineering company. The report by Sweco states the recreation facility is well-maintained, but immediate measures as well as longer-term major renovations are necessary. Immediate issues include water damage near a faucet in the swimming pool and a warehouse heating system. Longer-term projects include replacing floors in the swimming and dressing room areas, replacing the pool's purification system and replacing ventilation systems. The facility's budget has no funds for unforeseen circumstances and next year's budget contains no funds for maintenance projects.

### Choirs among big winners of annual city culture grants

Store Norske's men's choir was among the big winners of this year's culture grants from Longyearbyen, receiving 70,000 kroner of the 87,000 kroner requested to pay for a conductor, music and other operating expenses. Longyearbyen's mixed choir didn't fare as well in a way, receiving 70,000 kroner of 120,000 requested. Other top recipients of the 2.7 million kroner in total awards include 100,000 for Longyearbyen's big band and 40,000 for Longyearbyen School's production of "Hair." A total of 7.3 million kroner in requests was made for local arts projects funded by profits from retail alcohol sales.

### Museum's 'good fairies' get postcard deluge from Swiss

Svalbard Museum has turned into a collection site for postcards from Switzerland after two employees found and returned a wallet left by René Wulser, a Swiss visitor, this summer. Patricia Battig and Silvia Galli (a Swiss intern) returned the wallet, and all of its contents, along with a handwritten letter. Wulser did more than send a thank-you note, contacting Switzerland's largest French-language newspaper, which ran a blog item about "Spitsbergen's good fairies." That has resulted in about 30 congratulatory postcards, with more arriving continuously.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Rain/snow. NE winds to 56 km/h. High 0C (-8C wind chill), low -6C (-11C wind chill).	Rain/snow. E winds to 56 km/h. High 3C (-2C wind chill), low 0C (-8C wind chill).	Cloudy. E winds to 35 km/h. High 2C (-3C wind chill), low -2C (-8C wind chill).	Cloudy. NE winds to 35 km/h. High 0C (-4C wind chill), low -2C (-8C wind chill).
24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness	24-hour darkness
<b>Extended forecast:</b> Sunday, cloudy, 1C (-1C), -4C (-5C), light 0:00h; Monday, cloudy, 1C (-1C), -2C (-5C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, snow, -2C (-6C), -4C (-10C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, snow, -3C (-10C), -5C (-12C), light 0:00h			
Data provided by storm.no			



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Local leaders, residents and visiting dignitaries break out into dance, above, as Longyearbyen's Latin America population presents its cultural influence on the multinational city Monday at Kulturhuset. Nearly 20 percent of the city's residents are foreigners from about 30 nations and are allowed to vote in local elections after three years instead of the seven years required on the mainland. At right, Erle Steen performs a Sirkus Svalnardo routine during the city government's 10th birthday celebration.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

## Local government remains controversial

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and current leaders reflected on unique aspects such as allowing foreign nationals to vote after three years of residency compared to seven on the mainland. They also discussed how local politicking has influenced national leaders about issues such as efforts to continue coal mining at new and existing sites.

"I have a hard time imagining people in Longyearbyen being treated as well if we weren't there," said Christin Kristoffersen, head of the municipal council, in an interview afterward. "The government is very dependent on knowing how the shoe fits and the local democracy does that."

She said she is spending much of the week in Oslo discussing issues such as engineering studies and commerce strategy with political and business leaders, for instance.

The always controversial issue of income taxes was another victory for Longyearbyen, where residents pay only 15.8 percent compared to 28 percent on the mainland. That didn't stop an uproar when national leaders raised the rate to 19.8 percent in 2005. Kjerstin Askholt, polar region director for Norway's Justice Department, told the crowd at Monday's celebration it's the only instance he's aware of where a tax increase was rescinded after a single year.

Longyearbyen's government and its 15-

member council were founded on Jan. 1, 2002. But the decision was controversial, and remains so among some who question if the council is more than a figurehead body and if they're pushing for things that truly are in the town's best interest.

Jon Sandmo, a dissenting party member on the council and longtime resident until departing recently due to illness, said "we kidding ourselves" believing the city has a true government since national leaders can reassert their authority at any time. He said the city gets insufficient funds to meet its needs and local politicians are pushing misguided priorities such as upgrading the existing power plant at a high cost when a new one will be eventually necessary in any scenario.

Instead, local politicians should be responsible for smaller issues such as schools and recreation, Sandmo said. The best thing the council has done, he added, is making Kulturhuset an all-ages facility by refusing it an alcohol permit.

The worst thing?

"Building the (expensive) Kulturhuset," said Sandmo, who objected to it replacing Huset as the performing arts center and says he will never set foot in the new building on principle.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## Snowmobile, bike paths part of traffic plan

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stringent enforcing the speed limit.

A reduced speed limit of 30 kph between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. is proposed for Polarflokken kindergarten near Longyearbyen School, along with improved street lighting.

Other goals include establishing snowmobile routes offering "clear and unambiguous marked routes from and in Longyearbyen," and a road network for pedestrians and cyclists.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## What's up

### Oct. 31

6 p.m.: Movie: "Hasta La Vista!" Belgian comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

### Nov. 1

2 p.m.: Board of Culture and Leisure Authority meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

6 p.m.: Bydrift board meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

7:30 p.m.: Author Erika Fatland presents her book "Året Uten Sommer" about the tragedies of July 22, 2011. Longyearbyen Library.

### Nov. 2

9 a.m.: Board of Youth Enterprises meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

### Nov. 3

All-day, half-price movie marathon at Kulturhuset. Films include:

- Midnight: Movie: "James Bond: Skyfall," U.S./U.K. action, no age limit specified.

- 11:15 a.m.: Movie: "Sammy 2," Belgian animated/children's film dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up.

- 1 p.m.: Movie: "Asterix og Obelix hos Britene" (3D), French children's film dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up.

- 3:15 p.m.: Movie: "E.T. – The Extra-Terrestrial (30th anniversary edition)," U.S. sci-fi/family, ages 7 and up.

- 5:30 p.m.: Movie: "To Liv," Norwegian/German drama/thriller, no age limit specified.

- 7:30 p.m.: Movie: "Uskyld," Norwegian drama, ages 15 and up.

6:30 p.m.: Loy Krathong celebration hosted by Thai community. UNIS.

### Nov. 4

11 a.m.: All Saints Liturgy w/ torchlight procession to cemetery. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Asterix og Obelix hos Britene" (3D), French children's film dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

## What's online

**Icepeople.net** provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- *14 rescued from sea storm at Bjørnøya*
- *Food production 29% of greenhouse gas*
- *Climate context of U.S. 'frankenstorm'*
- *Big Arctic Halloween scare: polar bears*