

# AGENDA ITEM 10

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council offices, Charles Kennedy Building, Achintore Road, Fort William on Thursday, 30 August 2018 at 10.30 a.m.

### Present:

Mr A Baxter  
Mr A Henderson  
Mr N McLean

Mr I Ramon  
Mr D Rixson  
Mr B Thompson

### In attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)  
Mr M MacLeod, Head of Planning and Environment, Development and Infrastructure Service  
Ms T Urry, Head of Roads and Transport, Community Services  
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Community Services  
Mr S Manning, Principal Transport Officer, Community Services  
Ms S MacLennan, Housing Manager (South), Community Services  
Mr J Henderson, Housing Investment Officer, Community Services  
Mr R Gerring, Transport Planning Manager, Development and Infrastructure Service  
Mr D Kennedy, Access Officer (Skye, Lochalsh and West Lochaber), Development and Infrastructure Service  
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Service

### Also in attendance:

Area Inspector, I Campbell, Police Scotland  
Mr N Scroggie, Next Generation Broadband – Project Compliance Manager, Highlands and Islands Enterprise  
Mr S Canning } Corran Ferry Consultants  
Mr S Leitham }  
Ms D Paton, AECOM

**An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.**

**Mr A Baxter - Chairman**

### Business

#### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr B Allan.

#### 2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED** the following declaration of interest:-

Item 5, 6 and 7 – Mr D Rixson (non-financial)

### 3. **Police – Area Performance Summary** **Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìre**

There had been circulated Report No LA/6/18 by the Area Commander for Police which provided an update on the progress with reference to the objectives outlined in the Highland Policing Plan 2017-20.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- the Driving Ambition events which had taken place in Lochaber, Kinlochleven and Mallaig Secondary Schools were welcomed and information was sought as to when it would take place in Ardnamurchan High School;
- reference was made to recent road fatalities, a number of which had involved motor cyclists. Considerable effort had been made to educate local motor cyclists on potential dangers but many of those involved in accidents lived outwith Highland and it was questioned how best this group could be reached;
- the popularity of the North Coast 500 was well recognised but it was questioned if this had also had an impact on the number of road accidents in Lochaber with tourists choosing to explore other routes;
- concerns had been raised as to how best to deal with the aftermath of an accident on the A82. Depending on the severity of the accident the route could be closed for some time and it was suggested that Traffic Scotland could make better use of Variable Message Signs (VMS) to inform motorists well in advance of incidents. These signs could also be used to highlight any recent accidents on the road to raise awareness with drivers and motor cyclists;
- concern had been expressed by Community Councils at variable speed limits, particularly on the trunk road through Fort William. Whilst recognising that this was within the remit of Traffic Scotland, it was felt a uniform speed limit would reduce the need for policing;
- reference was made to a recent social media campaign aimed at motorists overtaking cyclists;
- it was disappointing cyclists did not make use of cycle paths when available;
- the Deloitte Ride Across Britain cycle event had caused significant difficulties as a result of road closures and consequently this year it had been rerouted elsewhere;
- the increase in the number of offences concerned with the supply of drugs had increased but this was a sign of success and positive policing;
- as a result of conditions last winter at the Glencoe Ski Centre, difficulties had been encountered on the A82 with skiers parking vehicles on the roadside. However, discussions had taken place with the operators of the ski centre and measures were in place should this reoccur. However, informing skiers via VMS boards would prevent them from travelling to the area unnecessarily when the ski resort had reached capacity; and
- information was sought, and received, as to staffing allocations at police stations in Lochaber, together with the current number of vacancies. Despite various attempts to recruit, some posts remained unfilled and this was due to a number of factors including the availability of housing. Police officers were key workers and it was hoped that the Council could explore how it might assist.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **Scrutinised and NOTED** the Area Performance Report;

- ii. **AGREED** that the Head of Housing and Building Maintenance be contacted to explore the possibility of providing housing for key workers; and
- iii. **AGREED** that Transport Scotland be contacted to discuss the possibility of Variable Message Signs containing information regarding the available capacity of the Area's Ski Resorts.

#### **4. Highlands and Islands Enterprise – Presentation Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean – Taisbeanadh**

Mr Nick Scroggie, Next Generation Broadband – Project Compliance Manager made a presentation on the rollout of broadband across Lochaber. He outlined the various initiatives in place, namely, the Digital Superfast Broadband Programme, the Scottish Government “Reaching 100%” Programme, the Council’s Local Full Fibre Network Programme and the UK Government’s Gigabit Voucher Scheme.

Areas still existed in Lochaber where there was no or limited connectivity, particularly a problem for businesses and Bed and Breakfast establishments. Although broadband via satellite could help, this was expensive and other possible options which might be explored included Wireless, provided by either private operators and/or community based schemes, or 4G.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** that a copy of the PowerPoint Presentation be circulated to Committee Members.

#### **5. Lochaber Local Priorities Prìomhachasan Loch Abar**

**Declaration of Interest: Mr D Rixson declared non-financial interests in this item as a Trustee of Mallaig Heritage Centre and lifelong member of the West Highlands Museum but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interests did not preclude his involvement in discussion.**

Councillor Rixson made a presentation on why Lochaber’s Natural and Cultural Heritage should be included as one of the Lochaber Priorities. He outlined the case for the creation of a Web Portal which he suggested would both interest and inform, attract visitors, investment and employment and enhance a sense of identity and pride in Lochaber. A demonstration of the content such a Portal might contain having been provided, a breakdown of possible funding streams was also detailed.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the presentation;
- ii. **AGREED** the protection of the area’s Natural and Cultural Heritage as a Local Priority; and
- iii. **AGREED** to support the principle of a web portal subject to further discussion at a Ward Business Meeting.

#### **6. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais Taigheadais**

**Declaration of Interest: Mr D Rixson declared non-financial interests in this item as the Council’s representative to Lochaber Housing Association but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interests did not preclude his involvement in**

## **discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No LA/14/18 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on how the Housing Section performed in relation to Scottish Housing Charter and other performances indicators for the period 1 April 2018 to 30 June 2018.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought in relation to staffing levels in relation to “Repairs appointments kept”, which had been flagged as Red, and how this compared to other Areas;
- although not wholly due to Universal Credit, it had had a significant contributory effect to the increase in rent arrears. Highland Council had made considerable progress in the past in driving down rent arrears and, while Universal Credit had its merits, it was important that housing benefit was removed from it and representations were made to both MPs and MSPs in this regard; and
- the recent walkabout at the Plantation to identify areas of the estate which needed attention was welcomed. However, disappointment was expressed that not more of the area’s residents had taken part but this was due to a lack of awareness. As a result it was suggested a review should take place as to how these events could be better publicised.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2018 to 30 June 2018; and
- ii. **AGREED** to consider how best “walkabout” events could be publicised to local residents, particularly Housing Association tenants.

## **7. Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2019-2021 Prògram Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais 2019-2021**

**Declaration of Interest: Mr D Rixson declared non-financial interests in this item as the Council’s representative to Lochaber Housing Association but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interests did not preclude his involvement in discussion.**

There is circulated Report No. LA/15/18 by the Director of Community Services.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- in terms of priorities assurances were sought, and received, that safety issues always took precedent;
- when external fabric work on Council housing took place it was important that repainting was also included, given the impact on the ambiance of the area. This was particularly important when external cladding repairs took place as, without painting, the cladding was exposed to damage from frost;
- although concern was expressed at the inadequate internal doors in some properties, it was explained that these were the responsibility of the tenant;
- whilst the big capital schemes were welcomed, it was important not to overlook the small maintenance issues;
- it would be useful for Members to be aware of the number and details of repairs

outstanding which were more than three months old. There was concern that some repairs were signed off as having been completed when, in fact, this was not the case;

- clarification was sought as to what effect the Scottish Government's new Energy Efficiency Standard on Social Housing would have. In this regard, any advice and/or information the Council could provide to non-Council owned properties would be welcomed as it would have the added benefit of reducing the carbon footprint;
- environmental improvements could make a considerable difference to an area and it was hoped resources could be increased in future; and
- parking on Kilmallie Road was both a safety and environmental issue and it was hoped improvements here could move forward in the near future.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the allocation of resources to the Lochaber Area as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- NOTED** the investment priorities as set out in section 4.2 of the report;
- AGREED** the proposed two year HRA Capital Programme for Lochaber 2019-21 as set out in Appendix 2 of the report; and
- NOTED** that updates on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme will continue to be provided through ward briefings and at Local Committees as requested by Local Members, in addition to reporting to the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee; and
- AGREED** that the number and details of repairs outstanding for more than three months be reported to a Ward Business Meeting.

## **8. Car Parking in Lochaber Parcadh Chàraichean ann an Loch Abar**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/16/18 by the Director of Community Services.

A summary having been provided by the officer in relation to income collected to date and the impact of changes to car parking in Fort William, Members made the following comments:-

- an indication was sought, and received, as to the total capital expenditure incurred to introduce the changes to parking charges in Fort William;
- of the 200 Season tickets it was queried how many of these were bought, either directly or indirectly, by the Highland Council. However, it was important to bear in mind data protection restrictions and, furthermore, it was not possible to ascertain how organisations funded partly by the Council might chose to spend their funds;
- income projections were now on a more accurate footing but it was recognised that there was still uncertainty as to how this might decline over the autumn/winter period;
- information was sought, and received, as to the proportion of the Council's car parking budget generated from Lochaber. To ease the burden on Fort William it was important to look at other parking initiatives, both in Lochaber and in other Council areas;
- the possibility of introducing parking charges in Mallaig, for a 1 year trial period, was suggested. This would go some way to addressing a projected shortfall with the proposal of introducing a Lochaber £60 season ticket. Parking restrictions in

Mallaig would also assist with traffic management issues, photographs having been tabled of issues which had arisen during the summer. Considerable informal consultation had taken place over the summer and, while not unanimous, there had been significant support for the proposal. There were more than 300 spaces in Mallaig and the proposal was to introduce charges in approximately 120 of these, located in the centre of the village. As a result, the impact would affect visitors more than local residents and would go some way to meet the aspirations of the community in addressing their parking problem. Further details of this proposal were provided, including reserving some spaces in the East Bay car park for residents from the Small Isles and Knoydart but leaving the remainder of this car park free from charges. However, it was emphasised that a formal consultation process needed to be followed;

- furthermore, the introduction of parking charges along Glen Nevis and/or at the Glencoe Ski Centre had previously been suggested and disappointment expressed that further information had not been provided as to the viability of this and which could have alleviated part of the financial burden. These locations had the benefit of moving the financial burden from residents to tourists;
- to increase the uptake of the season ticket it was suggested that it be reduced to £5 per month. To mitigate this it was suggested that camper vans could be charged for overnight stays in Council car parks etc. However, it was pointed out that this could conflict with commercial camping sites and, in the first instance, this proposal should be considered by the Commercial Board;
- others felt £10 was the correct rate as it would allow those staying in a holiday let in the Small Isles, if parking was rolled out to Mallaig, to stay for 1-2 weeks for £10;
- the 30 minute free parking had proved popular whereas, before, a charge of 20p had been incurred; and
- the proposals for the An Aird 2 car park were welcomed but concerns had been raised about some users and, consequently, it was important that Local Members and partner agencies be informed when bookings for the full car park were received. It was important that partial closure of the car park was allowed.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. **AGREED** the sustaining of the Local Parking Season Ticket fee at current rates;
- ii. **NOTED** the current information of tariffs/parking incomes and **AGREED** to review this again at the November Area Committee once a full set of figures for the 2018 tourist season were available;
- iii. **AGREED** to the part or whole closure of the An Aird 2 car park for occasional event use subject to cost recovery for part or whole closure; and
- iv. **AGREED** that further information also be brought back on areas where car parking could be extended including Mallaig, Glencoe Ski Centre and Glen Nevis.

In terms of Standing Order 18, the Committee **AGREED** that agenda item 11 and 10 be considered at this juncture.

## **11. Corran Ferry Options Appraisal Measadh Roghainnean Aiseag a' Chorrain**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/19/18 by the Director of Community Services.

In amplification of the report a presentation was made by the Consultants commissioned by Highland Council to undertake an appraisal of future operations for the Corran Ferry service. The study had provided an opportunity to review all aspects

of infrastructure and operation and the options as to how, and at what level, the service could be put on a sustainable footing. Whilst acknowledging the community aspiration for a fixed link across the Corran Narrows, this was a long term proposition and did not remove the more immediate need to make the ferry service viable. Accordingly, looking at possible opportunities, a careful analysis had been made of all factors including infrastructure, crew, operations and methods of delivery. It also considered if the current service level was appropriate with a view to developing a short list of three options to be assessed against Transport Planning Objectives (TPO) and Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) criteria, namely:-

Option 1a - a new larger quarter point vessel, with MV Corran retained as the refit/relief/second vessel

Option 2c – a larger straight through vessel, with MV Corran retained as the refit/relief/second vessel

Option 2d – larger straight through vessel, with refit/relief/second vessel secured from elsewhere.

In summary, all three options addressed the infrastructure and service problems and therefore the determining factor was the method of service delivery. Bearing in mind that the current model was unsustainable, Members needed to consider the degree of control they wanted to maintain, the extent to which they wished to retain liability for the service and if they wanted the private sector to be involved.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- in response to a question, it was explained that, in terms of operational benefits, a straight-through roll on roll off ferry had the advantage of being able to source relief and refit more readily than a quarter loading vessel;
- the potential savings of all electric vessels was sought;
- the safety of the crew of any option was paramount;
- while at present Calmac had few, if any, stand-by vessels, there was an aspiration that this would change in the future;
- the 12 feet height restriction on the A831 and other height and weight restriction on alternative road routes, effectively made the peninsula an island;
- although it had been acknowledged for some time that there was a need for a replacement vessel, there had been a reluctance to look at all options and the inclusion of these in the study was welcomed;
- the Consultants' full report was not publically available due to the confidential information it contained. However, the Executive Summary had been included as an Appendix to the report as it was important that the Committee's discussion today was open and transparent. In future, it might be necessary for some discussions to be held in private; and
- it was important that the potential of providing a fixed link over the Corran Narrows in the future should still be explored.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the strategic business case options presented in the Corran Ferry Service Options Appraisal;
- ii. **NOTED** the intention to present the report to the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee in November 2018 in reference to the financial aspect;
- iii. **APPROVED** the exploration of options in more detail in order to develop a preferred outline business case, including essential consultation with Members and appropriate stakeholders;

- iv. **APPROVED** discussion with Transport Scotland in order to explore options in more detail; and
- v. **NOTED** the intention to bring a further report back to Committee with proposals to address the sustainability of the current Corran Ferry Crewing Model.

## 10. Fort William Strategic Transport Study Sgrùdadh Còmhdhail Ro-innleachdail a' Ghearasdain

There had been circulated Report No. LA/18/18 by the Director of Development & Infrastructure.

Ms Deborah Paton, AECOM made a presentation on the preparation of a comprehensive and evidence based Pre-Appraisal Report in compliance with STAG. Information had been gathered from various sources, forming the basis of a case for change in Fort William. She highlighted the main themes which had arisen including road network and resilience, poor bus accessibility, limited rail journeys both locally and to the Central Belt and the constraints on active travel. Congestion was a key problem which needed to be addressed and, through workshops and a range of other engagement methods, the objective was to create a transport network that alleviated the economic and social impacts of congestion, particularly journey time variability, for both local and strategic transport users and which would accommodate future growth in Lochaber. It was important therefore to move forward to the next stage (Stage 1 Appraisal) and, to emphasise the importance of the issue, a collective approach from the Council, Hitrans and HIE to the Transport Minister was proposed.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- including robust evidence based data was important;
- the increase of tourism in the Highlands needed to be emphasised in the narrative, especially the impact of the North Coast 500. The tourist season lasted approximately 200 days and, most nights, as a result of tourists staying in the area, the population doubled;
- the volume of traffic using the Calmac ferry service to Skye and the Small Isles also had an impact on the road network;
- between the Lochybridge and West End Roundabouts there were 7 sets of traffic lights and 6 roundabouts to navigate, adding to the congestion in the town;
- congestion on a trunk road needed to be considered differently from congestion within a town;
- the data relating to the impact of traffic on the A82 during the peak season should be highlighted to other Council Members; and
- it was hoped that the information gleaned through the charrette exercise relating to improvements to the town centre would be incorporated but that some of these issues could still be addressed meantime.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the Executive Summary, attached at Appendix 1 of the report; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the submission of a joint letter from the partner organisations (Highland Council, Hitrans, and Highlands and Islands Enterprise) to the Transport Minister seeking agreement for Transport Scotland to lead on the Stage 1 Appraisal and complete the appraisal within 6 months.

**9. Winter Maintenance Plan for 2018/19**  
**Plana Obair-gleidhidh Geamhraidh airson 2018/19**

There had been circulated Report No LA/17/18 by the Director of Community Services.

In amplification of the report, Members were informed that, at the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on 16 August 2018, the Saturday treatment service had been reduced to offset the additional costs of providing an increased Sunday service. In Lochaber this could be accommodated within the proposal presented to Members in the report. In addition, the Committee had agreed that all available manual staff across Community Services could be mobilised to assist with treatment of footways as deemed necessary.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- the measures and arrangements put in place, with the operators of the Nevis Ski Centre, to keep the access road clear of snow and ice were welcomed;
- disappointment was expressed that, at present, there was no community reliance available to help with the gritting in the Upper Glengarry area;
- the possibility of approaching the Glencoe Ski Resort to ascertain if they were willing to assist with gritting Glen Etive during bad weather merited exploring; and
- in relation to the review of footway tractors, Members were advised that the numbers in Lochaber had remained the same. However, a quad bike had been used locally to assist with gritting and which, during the summer months, was used to help with weed killing.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Maintenance Plan for Lochaber Area which included the priority road maps presented in Appendix B of the report subject to the alterations verbally conveyed as a result of the decisions taken at the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on 16 August 2018.

**12. Annual Area Capital Report**  
**Aithisg Bhliadhnaidh Calpa Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/20/18 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the expenditure on each project in this Council area in 2017/18; and
- ii. the budget for each project in this Council area in 2018/19.

**13. Homologation of the Appointment of Trustees to the An Aird Trust**  
**Aontachadh Urrasairean a Chur an Dreuchd do Urras na h-Àirde**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/21/18 by the Head of Policy and Reform.

The Committee **AGREED** to homologate the appointment of Councillor Andrew Baxter and Councillor Blair Allan to the An Aird Trust.

**14. Support for Fairtrade Town Status for Fort William**  
**Taic airson Inbhe Baile Malairt Cothromaich airson a' Ghearasdain**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/22/18 by the Head of Policy and Reform.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. to support the principles of Fairtrade by promoting awareness of the Fort William Fairtrade Town initiative when appropriate and by serving Fairtrade tea and coffee at its meetings; and
- ii. to appoint a Council officer to liaise with the Fort William Fairtrade Team.

**15. Lochaber Local Access Forum Appointments**  
**Cur an Dreuchd do Fòram Inntreigeadh Ionadail Loch Abar**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/23/18 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

The Forum had been in a period of abeyance in recent years but, with a number of local issues arising, it was expected that it would once again meet on a more regular basis.

Having **NOTED** the existing members who were continuing their membership, the Committee **APPROVED** the appointment of Dr Michael Foxley and Mr Ruari Watt as new members of the Local Access Forum for Lochaber, as detailed in the Appendices to the report.

**16. Minutes**  
**Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 11 April 2018 which were approved by the Council on 10 May 2018, it having been highlighted that, in the Preliminaries, Mr A Rixson should read Mr D Rixson.

The meeting ended at 4.20 p.m.