

AGENDA ITEM 7**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held in **Council Chambers, Council Offices, Charles Kennedy Building, Achintore Road, Fort William, on Wednesday, 19 February, 2020 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

Mr A Baxter (items 10 to 15)
Mr A Henderson

Mr N McLean
Mr D Rixson

In attendance:

Mrs C McDiarmid, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place
Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)
Mr S Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager
Mr S Eastaugh, Access Officer, Inverness and Nairn
Mr F MacDonald, Head of Property Services (by VC)
Mr A Henderson, Principal Project Manager (by VC)
Mr N Young, Transport Planning Officer (by VC)
Mr R Gerring, Transport Planning Manager (by VC)
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Community Services
Ms L MacKellaich, Road Safety Officer
Ms S MacLennan, Housing Manager (South)
Mr J Henderson, Housing Investment Officer (by VC)
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

Also in attendance:-

For item 4:-

Mr A Nicolson, Programme Manager, Highlands & Islands Enterprise (item 4)
Mr A McKenna, Fort William, Inverlochy & Torlundy Community Council
Mr M Drayton, Fort William, Inverlochy & Torlundy Community Council
Mr A Farquhar, Fort William, Inverlochy & Torlundy Community Council
Mr I Langley, Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge & Achnagarry Community Council (in abeyance)
Dr M Foxley, Ardgour Community Council
Mr J Hutchison, Kilmallie Community Council
Mr S Stoddart, Duror and Kentallen Community Council

Inspector Isla Campbell, Lochaber Area Inspector, Police Scotland (item 5)
Ms V Treffer, HITRANS (item 8) (by VC)

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

Business**1. Interim Chair**

The Chairman had indicated that he would be late in attending the Meeting and therefore Members were invited to appoint an Interim Chair.

Mr A Henderson was unanimously appointed as Interim Chair for this meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Allan and Mr B Thompson.

3. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED** the following Declarations of Interest:-

Item 13 – Mr D Rixson (non financial)
Items 8 & 10 – Mr A Henderson (non financial)

4. Fort William 2040 An Gearasdan 2040

There was circulated Report No LA/1/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

Representatives from Community Councils in Lochaber had been invited to attend the meeting for a question and answer session on this item.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was queried how the new vision theme of a low carbon place worked alongside the potential for natural gas as a fuel source in Fort William. It was explained that this was linked to the plans for the Smelter and given the reliance on other fossil fuels being transported to the area by truck, a gas network for Fort William would lower the carbon footprint for the town. However, there had been a declaration of a climate emergency made by The Highland Council so the appetite for new infrastructure that would deliver gas to the town had disappeared. HIE were now working with The Highland Council and Zero Waste Scotland in order to look at approaches to deliver all the new infrastructure and existing provision in Fort William in a net zero carbon format.
- It was requested that the carbon emissions on North Road, Fort William should be monitored as the air quality for walkers and cyclists on this road seemed to be poor;
- It was queried if the Council had an environmental policy that would consider low carbon in the future. It was advised that a climate change strategy was being developed which would help understand what tangible measures would be needed to meet the zero climate change commitment. The Council also had a carbon management plan which considered how the Council's operations could reduce its carbon emissions. There was not a community strategy as yet and this was currently being considered at the Council's Climate Change Working Group. All suggestions on how the Council could reduce its carbon emissions would be welcomed.
- While the aspirational project of a fixed link at Corran Narrows was preferred, in the meantime there was a need for a replacement programme for the MV Corran Ferry and road improvements on the A861 to be included in the Fort William 2040 Plan. Members were supportive of this.
- The Crown Estate Scotland Board were in active discussion with a number of coastal communities including Fort William 2040 regarding a number of projects. This required strong leadership and full time project officers in order to

implement projects. The Crown Estate could provide funding for FW2040 projects.

- The invitation to Community Councils to attend the meeting while welcomed could not be regarded as consultation on the report as there was a need in future for a community consultation event, prior to the report being submitted to the Lochaber Committee. In response, it was intended that the approach to consultation helps reinforce the intention that the Council was taking a collaborative approach and that it was a transparent exercise and an open forum for updating the FW2040 plan and being responsive to changes. The proposed approach to consultation in the coming year was detailed in the report. Views on any additional consultation activities that should be undertaken were welcomed.
- Corpach Port expansion project also mentioned the possibility of the creation of a Harbour Trust and Harbour Authority for Loch Linnhe. It was requested that the creation of a Loch Linnhe Harbour Trust and Harbour Authority should be a project on its own.
- Ambitions for the Waterfront were included in the plan, such as Cruise Ship Reception Facilities. It was advised that currently a Harbour Master from a different port had to be brought in every time a Cruise Ship visited Loch Linnhe.
- Reference was made to the aspirational project for a community transport scheme in South Lochaber. If a scheme was found that was deemed viable to progress, this would be developed as an active project in the FW2040 plan. Given the importance of this initiative to South Lochaber, Members supported this project moving from an aspirational project to an active project.
- In relation to the enhanced community/sports/cultural centre within Fort William, it was explained that HIE had commissioned an options appraisal which would involve assessing the current infrastructure for indoor sports and culture within the area and a review of future provision. This work would be held in conjunction with Linnhe Leisure, High Life Highland and The Highland Council.
- The Lochaber area lacked a cultural hub, and therefore this was an aspiration within the Plan.
- An active travel route for a way to the Isles was suggested to be added to the Plan and reference was made to discussions that had been held with Sustrans on a walking/cycle route to the Isle of Skye.
- the need for better coordination between independent projects was highlighted, so that these projects were better integrated.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the comments made through the FW2040 consultation and **AGREED** the proposed updates to the FW2040 online document summarised at Appendix 1, specifically:
 - a) the inclusion of a new Vision theme relating to “A Low Carbon Place”;
 - b) updates to the FW2040 Masterplan at Appendix 2 and corresponding Delivery Programme at Appendix 3;
 - c) the list of new / aspirational projects listed at Appendix 4; and
 - d) also **AGREED** the following aspirational projects to be added to the active FW2040 Plan as decided at the meeting:-
 - replacement programme for the MV Corran Ferry;
 - A861 road improvements.
 - the creation of a Harbour Trust and Harbour Authority for Loch Linnhe
 - Community Transport Scheme in South Lochaber

- ii. **AGREED** that the updated FW2040 online document should be a material consideration for development management purposes forming an integral part of the West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan Action Programme;
- iii. in response to the independent evaluation of FW2040 detailed at Appendix 5, **AGREED** that the Council's Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment and HIE Area Manager jointly write to Scottish Government to seek better spatial coordination of spending by government departments and agencies and to suggest that Fort William be a pilot for such a place based approach to investment;
- iv. **AGREED** that the updated FW2040 material approved by Committee as set out above, be incorporated within other illustrative and explanatory material and published as an updated FW2040 online Storymap as soon as practicable;
- v. **NOTED** the intention to continue to monitor and review FW2040 progress as outlined in section 7 of the report.

5. **Police Scotland Local Committee Performance Report** **Aithisg Choileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Poileas Alba**

There was circulated Report No. LA/2/20 by the Lochaber Area Inspector, Police Scotland.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The current Local Policing 3 year Plan was coming to an end and Police Scotland were seeking comments via an on line survey for the next term of the Policing Plan;
- There had been a reduction of 492 people detected for speeding in the area in 2019/20 compared to 2018/19;
- Where possible, Police Officers would liaise with Community Councils, either by attending meetings or by correspondence to discuss any police matters.

The Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-20 Year 3, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2019- 31 December 2019.

6. **Lochaber Local Access Forum – Annual Report** **Fòram Intrigeadh Ionadail Loch Abar – Aithisg Bhliadhnail**

There was circulated Report No. LA/3/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

In particular, reference was made to unauthorised mountain bike trail building, ways of managing it and the new guide for land managers and riders produced by the National Access Forum.

The Committee **NOTED** the Lochaber Local Access Forum Annual Report.

7. Fort William Offices Update

There was circulated Report No. LA/4/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

Members praised the outcome of the new Fort William Offices project which transformed a derelict old building into modern flexible office accommodation. It was hoped that this project would act as a template to repurpose other old buildings.

It was noted that by relocating to the new Offices the Council were able to discontinue leasing three other properties in the Town, generating annual revenue savings of over £375,000. This money would be used to finance the new Offices and was not surplus money. It was confirmed that by moving to the new Offices there had been a reduction in running costs.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the report.

8. Fort William Active Travel Masterplan Refresh Cunntas as Ur mu Phriomh Phlana Siubhal Gniomhach a Ghearasdain

Declaration of Interest - Mr A Henderson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Chair of HITRANS but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in discussion.

There was circulated Report No. LA/5/20 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- In relation to the College Link route, there was a need to continue discussions with the College as the College had aspirations for a new College at Blar Mor.
- feedback was sought on shared use paths between cyclists and pedestrians. It was advised that shared use was not seen as an exemplar in an urban environment and would not meet the criteria for funding from Sustrans. However, shared use paths would be appropriate in low volume routes. There had been instances where poor behaviour by road users had required the intervention of the Council with advisory signing. In terms of the enforcement issue, when a cyclist uses a footway that is not permitted for cycling, this is an offence and would be a Police matter. Transport Scotland in other projects in Highland were bringing forward shared use proposals.
- With reference to proposed developments at Blar Mor, the Fort William Spine route was planned close to the Blar, but not directly to it. It was confirmed that any future developments would be considered in the active travel planning.
- An assurance was sought that there would be access to active travel routes for emergency vehicles as it may be a good route in an emergency. It was confirmed that there were no plans to close any roads to emergency vehicles.
- Lochaber Environmental Group were active on bike projects and they were extremely proactive. It was advised that there was a lot of funding that the Council could not apply for and instead the Council had given support for funding bids to various Groups, including the Lochaber Environmental Group.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

i **NOTED** the contents of the report, in particular the recent policies that identify walking, wheeling and cycling at the top of the sustainable transport hierarchy;

ii **APPROVED** the use of the Fort William Active Travel Masterplan as a material consideration when dealing with development proposals and as a supporting document for funding bids; and

iii **AGREED** to delegate the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment to liaise with other bodies, including Transport Scotland, with a view to identify funding opportunities and a delivery programme to target early improvements across the Fort William active travel network.

9. Town Centre Fund Update

The Committee **NOTED** that four Lochaber projects received grants from the Town Centre Fund. All projects were on target to fully commit their allocation by end-March 2020, as follows:

Caol Regeneration Company - Caol Co-op car park - public realm improvements - £65,000;

Caol Regeneration Company - Thomas Telford Corpach Marina – contribution to professional fees linked to marina project - £77,045;

Fort William Marina and Shoreline CIC – Canopy, Cameron Square, Fort William - £30,570;

Highland Council - Fort William High Street public realm improvements (priority works – lighting) - £26,352. This project had been amended from a lighting scheme to delivery of a ‘greener’ High Street by installing trees and renewing street furniture.

10. Corran Narrows Options Development Study – Interim Update Sgrùdadh Ceangal Stèidhichte Caolas a’ Chorrain – Cunntas san Eadar-àm

Declaration of Interest - Mr A Henderson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Chair of HITRANS but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in discussion.

There was circulated Report No. LA/6/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- In terms of engagement with the community on the Study, it was advised that the Consultant had used all information gathered from previous engagements and reports on the views of the community on the benefits of having a fixed link at Corran Narrows. Due to the timescale for the Study to be completed and submitted to Transport Scotland further community engagement at this point had not been feasible, but there had been engagement with various representatives within The Highland Council and other Partner agencies. However, for the next stage of the process, wider community engagement would be critical.
- The Corran Ferry had an impact on a much wider geographical area than the area in close vicinity to it. It was explained that last year the A830 road from

Fort William to Mallaig had been shut for approximately 10 hours and the only alternative route was the Corran Ferry. Therefore when considering societal impacts, the corran narrows crossing was a strategic component for the transport network in the Lochaber area.

- The Corran Ferry was enormously important to the economy of the west Lochaber area.
- It was advised that Officers had already engaged with Transport Scotland regarding the Strategic Transport Projects Review and highlighted the traffic conditions and difficulties in Fort William on the A82 and A830 and that the Corran Ferry helps to address any closures of the trunk road. The Consultant would be encouraged to recognise the wide impact that the Corran Ferry had for the wider Lochaber area and the connection to the Island of Mull.
- In terms of the power generation option, it was queried if the potential for raising revenue income for any fixed link project would be included in the Study. It was advised that any project coming forward would not hinder power generation opportunity.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

i **NOTED** the contents of this report; and

ii **AGREED** to delegate the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment to:

- a. submit the final report to Transport Scotland at the earliest opportunity;
- b. prepare a future briefing for Ward 21 Members; and
- c. present follow up reports to the Lochaber Area Committee and Economy and Infrastructure Committee.

11. **Lochaber Area Roads Maintenance Programme 2020-2021** **Prògram Càradh Rathaidean 2020-2021**

There was circulated Report No. LA/7/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- In terms of drainage at Kinlochourn, this road was badly affected by water and efforts were being made through improved drainage to get the water of the road.
- In relation to the cyclic verging budget, there was a lot of interest now in cutting verges as little as possible for wildlife preservation, and it was queried if there were any savings to be achieved in this budget. However, it was also noted that there was a counter argument that verges were not being cut enough. It was confirmed that biodiversity was an issue being considered when cutting verges. The budget also included repairs to verges.
- It was confirmed that East Bay Road, Mallaig surfacing works had been costed;
- It was advised that no surface recycling had been undertaken last year due to budget constraints. The same position would apply next year if the budget remained the same as last year's budget.
- It was queried if the Council was maximising funding from the Strategic Timber Transport Fund. For example, the Trislaig Road and Drimnin Road had significant volumes of timber transport and they were deteriorating quickly. It was confirmed that the Council was working with the Highland Timber Transport

Partnership in developing a portfolio of roads for consideration of funding under the scheme and the Trislaig and Drimnin roads would be included in this.

- There was a feeling in the Lochaline community that Calmac were encouraging more HGVs to cross from Fishnish to Lochaline and then onto the Corran Ferry rather than go via Oban. There seemed to be a larger volume of HGV's on that road, leading to significant deterioration of the road. An undertaking was given by the Officer to look into this.
- It was confirmed that the Lochaber, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey area would now have its own road gully emptying machine, so there would be an uplift in road gully emptying in the area.
- It was felt that the Mallaig road scheme, Caol road scheme and Morar road scheme should be capital works schemes as they were equally as populated as any of the A class roads in the area. In particular, it was requested that the Mallaig road scheme and Morar road schemes be included in the capital budget works.
- It was advised that where abutment washout repairs were on hold, the bridges were still being inspected. The Council was in a better position now regarding bridge inspections allowing Officers to monitor repairs required to bridges.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

i **APPROVED** the proposed 2020/21 Roads Maintenance Programme for Lochaber Area, with the addition of the Mallaig and Morar road schemes being included in the capital budget works;

ii **AGREED** that the Trislaig Road and Drimnin Road would be included in the list of roads for consideration of funding from the Strategic Timber Transport Fund; and

iii **AGREED** that the issue that Calmac might be encouraging HGVs to use the Ardnamurchan Peninsula route would be looked into.

12. 20 mph Zones in Lochaber Villages Sònaichean 20msu ann am Bailtean Loch Abar

There was circulated Report No. LA/8/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, reference was made to continuous requests from the communities in Ballachulish and Kinlochleven where there was widespread support for the introduction of village wide 20 mph zones. It was understood that Roads Engineers relied on collision data when considering road safety schemes, but it was felt that a proactive approach should be taken and road safety schemes should be introduced to help prevent accidents happening. Therefore, it was hoped that a way could be found to find funding to support these communities with the introduction of 20 mph village wide zones.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

i funding sources for the implementation of any new 20 mph schemes be sought corporately with an update report to be taken to a future Economy and Infrastructure Committee; and

ii Community Services continue to seek funding sources/opportunities for implementation of new schemes.

13. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Choileanaidh Taigheadais

Declaration of Interest: Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest 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 interest did not preclude his involvement in discussion.

There was circulated Report No LA/9/20 by the Executive Chief Officer, Property & Housing.

It was advised that there had been discussions in Ward 21 regarding spending money on environmental improvements in the Claggan area and given that it was near the end of the financial year, confirmation was sought, that if those discussions were not concluded that the funding could be carried forward into the next financial year. It was confirmed that the funding could be carried forward into the next financial year.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2019 to 31 December 2019.

14. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2020/21 Màil Gharaidsean 2020/21

There was circulated Report No. LA/10/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Property and Housing.

The report provided information on garage rents for Lochaber and invited the Committee to set rent levels for garage and garage sites held on the Housing Revenue Account for 2020/21.

Following consideration, the Committee **AGREED** a 3% rent increase to apply to Lochaber Garages and Garage Sites.

15. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** for information Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 6 November, 2019 which were approved by the Council on 9 December, 2019.

Concern was expressed that the Lochaber Committee minutes had been amended by the Council's Administration at the Council meeting held on 9 December, 2019. The amendment had been in relation to the Committee's discussion on Corran Ferry fares. It was emphasised that these minutes were a record of the Lochaber Committee's discussions and as had previously been drafted, they had been an accurate record of what had been said at the 6 November, 2019 meeting. While the Budget Leader and Chief Executive may have disagreed with what had been said, neither of them had been at the meeting and therefore as it had been an accurate record of what was said, it was felt very inappropriate for the Council's Administration to change the content of the minute. There had been no prior indication given to the Chairman of the Lochaber Committee who had made the comments, that the minute was to be changed at the Council meeting and this was disappointing.

It was confirmed that an indication had been given by the Budget Leader and Chief Executive that as a result of the Lochaber Committee agreeing to the introduction of

pedestrian charging on the Corran Ferry that it would not be necessary to go ahead with the increase in Corran Ferry fares that was already planned for the next financial year.

It was further highlighted that the minutes were a legal document that would be relied upon for scrutiny purposes in future.

The meeting ended at 1.05 p.m.