

## The Highland Council

**Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held remotely on Monday, 15 August, 2022 at 10.30 am.**

**Present:**

Mr J Finlayson  
Mr D Millar

Mr C Munro  
Mr R Stewart

**Officials in attendance:**

Mr W MacKinnon, Ward Manager, Communities and Place  
Mr G Macdonald, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy  
Mr G Smith, Service Lead – Infrastructure, Environment & Economy  
Ms J Wileman, Assistant Ward Manager, Communities and Place  
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance & Governance

**Also in Attendance:**

Mr M Colliar, Group Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
Ms K Stevenson, Local Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

***The Clerk took the Chair for items 1 to 4***

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations on interest.

**3. Recess Powers  
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 30 June 2022 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee.

**4. Appointment of Cathraiche (Chair)  
Cur Cathraiche an Dreuchd**

Nominations were invited for the post of Cathraiche (Chair) of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair).

Mr J Finlayson was nominated by Mr C Munro and this was seconded by Mr D Millar.

There being no further nominations, Mr J Finlayson was appointed Chair of the Committee and took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

At this point, the Chair referred to the shock and sadness at the tragic events that took place on the Isle of Skye and Lochalsh on Wednesday, 10 August. As well as the communities of Sleat and Dornie, the whole of the Isle of Skye and Lochalsh and beyond were trying to come to terms with the terrible events that unfolded. The thoughts and deepest sympathies were extended to all those affected directly and with the wider communities. Members, Officers and Officers of other agencies, churches and community groups were there to support in whatever way was necessary.

As a mark of respect for all those affected, the Committee observed a two minute silence.

**5. Appointment of Vice Chair & Civic Lead  
Cur an Dreuchd Iar-Chathraiche & Ceannard Catharra**

Nominations were invited for the post of Vice Chair & Civic Lead of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair).

Mr C Munro was nominated by Mr D Millar and seconded by Mr J Finlayson.

There being no further nominations Mr C Munro was appointed Vice Chair and Civic Lead of the Committee.

**6. Member Appointments  
Cur an Dreuchd Bhall**

**i Skye & Lochalsh Citizen's Advice Bureau – Board  
Biùro Comhairleachaidh a' Phobail airson an Eilein Sgitheanaich is Loch Aillse – Bòrd**

The Committee was invited to appoint 1 Member to serve as a Director of Skye & Lochalsh Citizens' Advice Bureau.

Mr J Finlayson was nominated by Mr C Munro and seconded by Mr R Stewart.

There being no further nominations, Mr J Finlayson was appointed to serve as Director of Skye & Lochalsh Citizen's Advice Bureau.

**ii Skye & Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations  
Fòram Inntreigeadh Ionadail an Eilein Sgitheanaich is Loch Aillse**

The Committee was invited to appoint 1 Member to attend meetings of the Skye & Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations.

Mr C Munro was nominated by Mr J Finlayson and seconded by Mr D Millar.

There being no further nominations, Mr C Munro was appointed to attend meetings of the Skye & Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations.

### **iii Skye & Lochalsh Local Access Forum Fòram Inntreigeadh Ionadail an Eilein Sgitheanaich is Loch Aillse**

The Council had a statutory duty under Section 25 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 to establish Local Access Forums for its area. There were currently six Local Access Forums in the Highland area which advise on matters in relation to the exercise of access rights, the existence of delineation of rights of way or the drawing up and adoption of the Core Path Plan. In addition, they also offer and give assistance to parties in terms of the resolution of any disputes in this respect.

The Committee was asked to appoint 1 Member to the Skye & Lochalsh Local Access Forum.

Mr D Millar was nominated by Mr J Finlayson and seconded by Mr R Stewart.

There being no further nominations, Mr D Millar was appointed to the Skye & Lochalsh Local Access Forum.

## **7. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held on 21 February, 2022, which were approved at the Highland Council meeting held on 10 March, 2022, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

## **8. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Local Committee Performance Report Aithisg Choileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba**

There was circulated Report No SR/9/22 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- Concern was expressed regarding station availability which had deteriorated and it was noted there were recruitment challenges and challenges faced by personnel when combining primary employment and their operational availability and time away for training. It was queried if it was now time for a new staffing model for retained personnel. It was requested that the number of days stations were available for the months of June, July and August be provided for Members.
- It was advised that social and demographic changes and Brexit had impacted on recruitment not just locally but nationally as well, and therefore the area's station availability was becoming increasingly challenging which required innovative ways of supporting operational responses to be adopted, some of which were highlighted. There was continued active recruitment, but there were significant challenges in recruiting and retaining personnel with a desired progress for a more locally based approach supporting candidates and providing training locally where possible. Work was ongoing with colleagues in Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland areas on an improved retained model which would hopefully support improved recruitment processes. The Service worked extremely hard to improve station availability

and thanks were extended to fire crews for the dedication in undertaking their duties and helping resolve operational issues.

- A point was made that the Portree Fire Station was no longer fit for purpose given its location and there may be land available on the Portree Industrial estate which would be a far better location. It was advised that the Service was making an application for funding to Scottish Government to look at the viability of a tri partite arrangement in Portree for the Fire, Police and Ambulance Services to be located in the one premises. If this happened then an alternative staffing model would also be considered.
- It was queried what could be done to encourage former members of the service to re-join, such as ensuring training was relevant and locally based to reduce time away from the Island. It was advised that exit interviews were held with staff leaving the service and feedback from these showed that there was a need to focus on localised requirements, such as training, to reduce impacts and burdens on personnel. In terms of training, this was continually reviewed to ensure it was appropriate for each station and to reduce burdens on personnel. However, it was important that personnel had the skills and training on equipment for their own safety and for the safety of the community they served.
- Efforts to recruit and retain personnel at Staffin station were highlighted and in particular, there was a need for a manager to take charge of the appliance.
- In terms of the 8 deliberate fires reported in quarter 4, this was a result of an increase in wildfires in the area and the dedication of crews in responding to these was acknowledged as was the assistance to crews from local communities. Raising awareness for people to be careful when out and about in the countryside was important to try and prevent wildfires.
- It was noted that the age for joining the service was 17. This had not changed given the safety aspect of children working in a potentially dangerous situation. However, there would be a Fire Skills Cadet Scheme introduced in the area next year and this would hopefully encourage young people to come forward and join the service when they reached the required age.
- A brief update was provided on a salmon farm barge that had sank, and it was highlighted that there was no risk to the public at this time.

The Committee scrutinised and **NOTED** the Area Performance Report and that the number of days stations in the area were available for the months of June, July and August would be provided for Members.

**9. Isle of Skye and Raasay Winter Maintenance Plan 2022/23  
Plana Obair-gleidhidh Geamhraidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich is Ratharsair 2022/23**

There was circulated Report No. SR/10/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The hard work and commitment of staff over the winter period was recognised;
- In terms of vacancies within the team, a post of Roads Inspector had now been filled and recruitment for a Technician post was ongoing;

- It was confirmed that the Braebost and Totescore depots would be available this winter to store salt, and thereby reducing 'dead mileage' by lorries having to return all the way to Sconser to recharge with salt;
- The Quiraing road between Staffin and Uig did get occasional treatment when resources were available. Given the height of this road, it could potentially be closed in the winter, as there was an alternative primary route around the coast.
- The price of salt continued to rise as did shipping costs for transporting the salt;
- Reference was made to 5 roads in Portree that were not adopted. At the end of one of these streets was a block of flats owned by the Council and it was queried if these would be gritted. If not, perhaps grit bins could be provided for use by residents and mini tractors could be used to spread grit on the pavements. It was advised that the 5 streets referred to had not been built to a standard that the Council could adopt and historically there had been an issue with the contractor going out of business. In terms of the unadopted road with the block of flats, the Housing Service could request a salt bin to be provided for that specific road. In terms of the other streets, if there was a request for grit bins, this would be reviewed and grit bins would likely be placed at the end of those streets.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2022/23;
- NOTED** that Covid-19 and driver's hours regulations would potentially have an impact on the winter service provided; and
- NOTED** that the Roads Operations Manager would report back to a Ward Business meeting with an update on his review of the provision of grit bins and use of mini tractors to spread grit on pavements on the 5 unadopted roads in Portree referred to at the meeting.

## **10. Presentation – Portree Harbour Levelling Up Fund Update Taisbeanadh – Fios às Ùr mu Mhaoin Àrd-ìreachaidh Caladh Phort Rìgh**

The Service Lead (Infrastructure) gave a presentation on the Portree Harbour Levelling Up Fund bid.

It was highlighted that the Council had been working with community groups to improve the Portree Harbour and provide improved cruise ship opportunities and a new breakwater to provide shelter for an improved harbour. The Levelling Up Fund bid had been submitted in early August and the overall package of works totalled £55.4m and a 90% grant bid was sought from the Levelling Up Fund, with the remainder of funding sought from the Council. The main aspects of the bid included:- a fixed link cruise berth; a breakwater to provide shelter and a new access road around the 'lump'; proposals for 100 berth pontoons and small boat slipway; an extended pier, harbour office and RNLI berth; and removal of the tank farm and clear this area for future development. A decision on the bid by the UK Government was expected by October, 2022 and if successful the project could be completed by 2026.

Members expressed their thanks to Officers for their work in preparing the bid and acknowledged the engagement and importance of working with the community in

partnership that enabled such a strong bid. Members welcomed what was a fantastic project.

In terms of the junction at Bridge road, it was suggested this was not fit for purpose, particularly during the busy tourist season. It was a narrow junction and narrow road to Bayfield and the new proposed road around the 'lump'. It was advised that the upgrading of this junction had not been included in the bid. If the bid was successful, the issues of access would be addressed through the detailed design.

The Committee **NOTED** the update on the Portree Harbour Levelling Up Fund bid.

#### **11. Ward Discretionary Grants 2022/23 Tabhartasan fo Ùghdarras Uàird 2022/23**

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Ward Discretionary Grants had been Awarded in the 2022/23 financial year to date:

- i. Staffin Primary School Parent Council – Staffin Beach Path, funding to support repairs to the path that will improve access to the beach £1000 Awarded;
- ii. Headway Highland – Multi Ward Application to support vulnerable adults with an acquired brain injury (ABI) and their families/carers throughout the Highland Region - £71 Awarded; and
- iii. Portree & Braes Community Trust - Light Up Portree Autumn Fling, funding to support the running costs of the family fun day of music, community stalls and children's play area - £1410 Awarded.

The meeting ended at 11.55 a.m.