

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held remotely on **Tuesday, 30 August, 2022 at 10.30 a.m.**

### **Present:**

Mr A Baldrey  
Ms S Fanet  
Mr J C Grafton  
Mr A MacDonald

Mr T MacLennan  
Ms L Siggers  
Ms K Willis

### **Officials in Attendance:**

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber), Communities and Place

Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Mr E McIntosh, Localism & Engagement Coordinator, Communities & Place

Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager Community Regeneration, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Ms M Gray, Project Officer Community Regeneration, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance and Governance Service

### **Also in attendance:-**

Mr M Colliar, Group Commander, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

Mr C Robb, Local Officer, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

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

**The Clerk was in the Chair for items 1 to 4**

## **BUSINESS**

### **1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 30 June 2022 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Lochaber Committee.

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

Nominations were invited for the post of Chair of the Lochaber Committee.

Ms K Willis was nominated by Mr A Baldrey and this was seconded by Ms S Fanet.

Mr A MacDonald was nominated by Mr J C Grafton and this was seconded by Ms L Saggars.

On a vote between the two candidates, Ms K Willis received 4 votes and Mr A MacDonald received 3 votes and there were no abstentions.

The Committee therefore **AGREED** that Ms K Willis be appointed as Chair of the Committee, the votes having been cast as follows:-

**Votes for Ms K Willis**

Mr A Baldrey; Ms S Fanet; Mr T MacLennan; Ms K Willis

**Votes for Mr A MacDonald**

Mr J C Grafton; Mr A MacDonald; Ms L Saggars

**5. Appointment of Vice Chair  
Cur Iar-Chatraiche an Dreuchd**

Nominations were invited for the post of Vice Chair of the Lochaber Committee.

Mr J C Grafton was nominated by Ms S Fanet and this was seconded by Mr A MacDonald.

On there being no other nominations, the Committee **AGREED** that Mr J C Grafton be appointed as Vice Chair of the Committee.

**6. 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 LA/12/22 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, it was queried what the breakdown was between retained and permanent staff in the Service. It was advised that Highland had one wholetime station based in Inverness and there were also wholetime staff who carried out duties such as legislative fire safety and community safety training, etc. There were also commanders for each area and on call support watch commanders. Wholetime personnel in Highland were a relatively small number compared with central belt colleagues and therefore, the staffing model for Highlands was very much a retained and volunteer model.

It was noted that there had been 11 deliberate fires in March, these were mainly wildfires instigated through muirburn and there had also been a toilet block and rubbish fire.

The Fort Augustus Fire Station responded to a number of incidents in the Lochaber area and it was queried if information on this station's availability and incidents it responded to could be shared. It was advised that this station was not within the Lochaber operating area but was available for support when required.

In terms of muirburn fires it was queried if the Service was required to be notified before the fires were started and how many became out of control. It was advised that under muirburn legislation, the Service should be notified before the fire was started. The Officer advised that he would discuss at a later date with Members some of the investigative work carried out in respect of these fires. The Service did engage fully with landowners and forestry commission etc to raise awareness of their responsibilities prior to lighting these fires.

It was queried that with the cost of living crises, whether there was any indication that people were using equipment that was less safe and if so, how could help be provided. It was advised that there may be increased risks whereby people take shortcuts and this would be discussed at a strategic level within the Service. The Service would work with community partners and identify vulnerable members in communities, so that preventative help can be provided. The effects of the cost of living crises would be closely monitored to see if there were any upward trends on incidents that required to be addressed.

Having scrutinised the report, the Committee **NOTED** the Area Performance Report.

**7. Lochaber Area Roads Winter Service Plan 2022/23  
Plana Seirbheis Rathaidean Geamhraidh Sgìre Loch Abar 2022/23**

There was circulated Report No. LA/13/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In discussion, it was advised that the A889 road from Kinlochlaggen to Dalwhinnie was in the Badenoch and Strathspey operational area. This was a trunk road and received a 24 hour service in winter.

There were 2 vacancies within the local team at present and the Service was actively trying to recruit to fill these posts.

In terms of the process for refilling grit bins during snowfall, it was advised that if the winter maintenance team were unable to do this, colleagues in Amenity Services or Cleansing would assist and refill grit bins. Occasionally, other resources, such as contractors, had been hired to do this, as during spells of heavy snow resources could become very stretched. There were also footway tractors based in Fort William for clearing snow in the town and outlying areas.

It was advised that Bear Scotland's main salt stockpile was in Corpach and there was a second one in Ballachulish. These were covered stockpiles which kept the salt dry and historically these supplies were available to the Council to share. Work was underway for the Council to have its own covered salt stockpile in Carr's Corner, Fort William and there was also a covered salt stockpile in Strontian. This would mean the Council was self sufficient with its salt supplies and less reliant on Bear Scotland, but both organisations would still share salt supplies if necessary.

It was queried how often footpaths leading to Invergarry and Spean Bridge schools were treated in winter. It was confirmed that these locations would be treated as required and in terms of the target treatment times within the Winter Service Plan. Further information on this would be provided to Councillor J Grafton.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for the Lochaber Area; and
- ii **NOTED** that Covid-19 and driver's hours regulations will potentially have an impact on the winter service provided.

**8. Asset Transfer Request – Tougal Car Park (Change Request)  
Glusad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd – Pàirc Chàraichean an Taoibh Ghil**

There was circulated Report No. LA/14/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

Following consideration, the Committee **AGREED** the following recommendation for transfer of the asset:

19-year lease of Tougal public toilets and car park by Morar, to Road to the Isles Facilities Group, at no annual charge. Conditions of the transfer to include:-

- The lease will be restricted to community use, including provision of public toilet facilities and chargeable parking.
- The lease will be on a Full Repairing and Insuring basis (the tenant will be responsible for maintenance and insurance).
- Evidence of Planning approval for the proposed development.
- Evidence of security of tenure over additional land for development of additional parking.
- Road to the Isles Facilities Group covers all reasonably incurred property and legal costs associated with the asset transfer process – both the Council's and its own.
- Any transfer will be subject to existing burdens / conditions in the Council's title to the property (e.g. 3rd Party access rights, etc.). The Council may also impose further burdens / conditions if they consider this expedient (e.g. economic development burdens, etc). The Council will only transfer property for which it has title to do so.
- Any other terms to be agreed by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place in consultation with the Chair of Lochaber Committee.

**9. Applicant Change Request  
Iarrtas airson Tagraiche Atharrachadh**

Place Based Investment Fund Programme (PBIP)

The Scottish Government allocated the Highland Council £1,963,000 ring-fenced Place Based Investment Programme (PBIP) funding for 2021/22. On 1 September 2021, Members of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee Members agreed an area distribution of the grant. Lochaber Committee was allocated £154,144.

In discussion with Ward 11 and 21 Members at the joint Ward Business Meeting held on 11 October 2021, Members expressed a desire to invite bids for the

available PBIP grant. The process opened on 29 December 2021 and closed 21 January 2022. On the 7th February 2022 the Lochaber Committee approved four applications.

#### Island Infrastructure Fund (IIF)

The Highland Council received an award of £510,000 from the Scottish Government to be allocated to deliver infrastructure projects across Skye, Raasay and the Small Isles through the Islands Infrastructure Fund. On the 7th March 2022, Lochaber Committee Members unanimously agreed to funding four Small Isles Projects.

#### Applicant Change Request for both funding Streams

The Isle of Canna Community Development Trust which has been funded by both these funding streams has since approached the Highland Council for a change request of the preferred delivery partner on their project (letters which had been circulated). Due to internal resource, VAT considerations and the ownership of the land belonging to the National Trust for Scotland (NTS), it has been agreed between the Trust and NTS that it was more appropriate for NTS to receive the PBIP and IIF funding and deliver this project. Upon completion of the building, a long lease (20+years) would be instated and the property would be managed by Isle of Canna Community Trust on behalf of the community. The Trust had several different funding streams involved in this project and measures had been taken to ensure NTS as the delivery partner on all approved applications. The Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund by example had already approved the change request.

A comment was made that the National Trust for Scotland had circa. £350m in assets and that this should be taken into account in future when considering giving money to this organisation. NTS should be asked what assets they have which could be made available to projects.

The Committee **APPROVED** the applicant change request of the preferred delivery partner on the project to National Trust for Scotland.

#### **10. Town Centre Fund Request for Reallocation of Funding Iarrtas Maoin Meadhan a' Bhaile airson Maoineachadh Ath-riarachadh**

There was circulated Report No. LA/15/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

In discussion, it was advised that the request for variation to the approved Town Centre funding for the Fort William Marina & Shoreline Community Interest Company project had arisen due to increased costs associated with the project. The increased costs were in relation to bad weather, higher volumes of rock and clay being dredged, higher fuel costs, delays due to a Cruise ship in port and all these were deemed to be fair increased costs. The total cost of the project was now £112k.

It was highlighted that a number of projects that the Council were dealing with were experiencing unexpected higher costs which was proving to be very difficult.

This Community Interest Company had provided pontoons which encouraged Cruise liners to visit the area and provided income to the Highland Council, so their work was of great benefit to Fort William and the wider area.

It was advised that the Town Centre fund programme was now closed and if the request for variation was not approved, there would be an underspend in the Town Centre fund programme and the money would be returned to the Scottish Government. Therefore, approving the variation would ensure the money was kept locally.

The Committee **APPROVED** a variation to the Town Centre Fund grant for a total of £25,314.41 towards the cost of dredging works, in line with the approved objectives of the Highland Coastal Communities Fund project.

## **11. Appointments to Outside Bodies**

### **Cur an Dreuchd gu Buidhnean air an Taobh A-muigh**

The Committee **AGREED** the following Member appointments to companies, groups or organisations:-

#### **Company appointments**

Isle of Rum Community Trust – **Councillor J C Grafton**

Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust – **Councillor A Baldrey**

Knoydart Foundation – **Councillor A Baldrey**

Loch Shiel Jetties Trust - **Councillor A MacDonald**

Lochaber Care & Repair Board – **Councillor A Baldrey**

Lochaber Housing Association Board – **Councillor S Fanet**

Martin Ferguson Memorial Trust - **Chair of the Lochaber Committee and Councillor T MacLennan**

Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Trust – **Councillor S Fanet**

West Highland Museum Trust – **Councillor S Fanet**

#### **Non – company appointments**

Aonach Mor Liaison Group – **Councillor S Fanet**

Fort William 2040 Stakeholder group (Ward 11 Member) – **Councillor J C Grafton**

Fort William 2040 Stakeholder group (Ward 21 Member) – **Councillor A MacDonald**

Linnhe Leisure (Nevis Centre) – Advisor to the Board – **Councillor K Willis**

Nevis Landscape Partnership – Advisor to the Board – **Councillor K Willis**

Lochaber District Fisheries Trust – **Councillor K Willis**

Lochaber District Salmon Fishery Board - **Councillor A MacDonald**

Lochaber Environmental Group – **Councillor A Baldrey**

Lochaber Music Festival Association – **Councillor J C Grafton**

Lochaber Health & Social Care redesign stakeholders' group (Ward 11 Member) – **Councillor J C Grafton**

Lochaber Health & Social Care redesign stakeholders' group (Ward 21 Member) - **Councillor T MacLennan**

Lochaber Community Partnership – Kinlochleven Community Action Group – **Councillor S Fanet**

Lochaber Community Partnership – Caol Community Action Group – **Councillor L Saggars**

Lochaber Community Partnership – Upper Fort William Community Action Group – **Councillor K Willis**

Lochaber Community Partnership – Ward 11 Member – **Councillor L Sagers and substitute Councillor J C Grafton**

Lochaber Community Partnership – Ward 21 Member – **Councillor T MacLennan and substitute Councillor A MacDonald.**

**12. Ward Discretionary Budget  
Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird**

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Ward Discretionary Fund applications have been approved since 1st April 2022:-

Ward 11 & 21

Mallaig Ardnamurchan & District Pipe Band - Venue hire costs - £789.75

Headway Highland – Support for core organisation costs - £142.86

Highland Council - Cruise ship welcome plaques - £115

Highland Council – Deer warning signs, Kinlochleven - £147.48

Ward 11

Mallaig Community Council – for phase 1 circular path works - £5000

**13. Minutes  
Geàrr-chunntas**

There was circulated for information, Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 7 March, 2022 which were approved by the Council on 10 March, 2022, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

The meeting ended at 11.40 a.m.