

**The Highland Council**

**Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held remotely on Monday, 6 November, 2023 at 10.30 am.**

**Present:**

Mr J Finlayson  
Mr D Millar

Mr C Munro  
Mr R Stewart

**Officials in attendance:**

Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place  
Ms N Wallace, Service Lead – Environment, Planning and Sustainable Travel  
Mr A Puls, Environment Team Leader, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy  
Ms M Macdonald, Area Education & Learning Manager, Education & Learning  
Mr M Bailey, Programme Manager, Economy & Regeneration  
Ms A Smith, Project Manager, Strategic Improvement  
Mr A Yates, Strategic Lead, Environmental Health & Bereavement Services  
Mr W MacKinnon, Ward Manager, Communities and Place  
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager, Community Regeneration  
Ms M Gray, Project Officer Community Regeneration, Infrastructure & Environment  
Mr A Bruce, Service Delivery Manager, Resources & Finance  
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Performance & Governance

**Also in attendance:-**

Inspector A Mackenzie, Police Scotland  
Ms J Gibbons, Team Leader, National Parks, Scottish Government  
Mr N Breslin, National Parks team, Scottish Government  
Mr T Nabi, National Parks team, Scottish Government  
Mr G Hogg, Director, Lateral North

**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 J Finlayson in the Chair**

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

There were none.

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

Transparency Statement: Item 4 – Mr D Millar  
Transparency Statement: Items 5 & 6 – Mr C Munro

**3. 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 14 August, 2023 which were approved at the Highland Council meeting held on 14 September, 2023, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

In terms of Standing Order 9, with the consent of Members, item 10 was taken at this point in the meeting.

#### **10 Islands Infrastructure Fund 2021/22: Sleat Motorhome Facilities Maoin Bun-structair nan Eilean 2021/22: Goireasan Dachaigh-mhotoir Shlèite**

There was circulated Report No. SR/23/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

Following commentary on the report by the Programme Manager, a point was made that given the competitive nature of bids for funding, account should be taken of how deliverable projects are.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** to formally withdraw the offer of £109,992 from the Sleat motorhome project;
- ii. subject to agreement from Scottish Government and Highland Council Corporate Finance, **AGREED** that £109,992 is rolled into the 2023/24 Community Regeneration Fund allocation for the Isle of Skye & Raasay and administered in line with the approved procedures for this fund; and
- iii. **NOTED** that Members would be updated on discussions on this matter with Scottish Government.

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

**Transparency Statement: Mr D Millar made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as his son was a serving Police Officer outwith the Highland area. Mr Millar wished to record a connection to the item but having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There was circulated Report No SR/18/23 by the Area Commander for Police Scotland.

Following a summary of the report by the Inspector, Police Scotland, a comment was made that percentages shown in the report should be a maximum of 100% to make it easier to understand. In terms of drugs misuse there appeared to be a discrepancy between the statistics and the anecdotal evidence of drug misuse in the area. The Police did receive information from various sources about drug misuse which would suggest a significant problem. However, this information related to a small minority of people in the community which the Police did focus on.

In relation to road traffic collisions, the process of recording incidents and police attendance at collisions was explained. There were more accidents known in the community than what was recorded in statistics, as only more serious road accidents were shown in the statistics in the report and not all accidents required Police attendance.

The statistics did show increases in road safety offences/sexual crime offences reported over a five year period as there had been an increase in calls and interaction with the public following the Covid lockdown period. In particular, the public were encouraged to report sexual crimes to the Police or through third party reporting.

Police Scotland had a set budget, and expenditure had to be maintained within this budget which did affect policing and at times a judgement had to be made on what police activities it was reasonable for officers to attend, as they had a large geographical area to cover. Police Scotland had reduced the number of Officers due to budget constraints and there had been restructuring within the Highland division to make best use of its resources.

It was confirmed that the detection rate for serious assaults was very good and it was understood that any assault was traumatic for the victim and the Police did all they could to bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice.

There were problems with shoplifting and challenges with security in larger shops, such as supermarkets where there was more use of self service payment methods and this reduced a barrier of security that used to be in these shops.

The Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 3, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 01 April 2022 – 31 March 2023.

## **5. New National Park(s) in Scotland - Presentation Pàirc(ean) Nàiseanta Ùra ann an Alba – Taisbeanadh**

**Transparency Statement: Mr C Munro made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a co-opted Director of SkyeConnect, but as the item was for information purposes, Mr Munro wished to record a connection to the item but having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

By way of introduction, the Chair advised of plans to create at least one new national park in Scotland and currently areas which might wish to be involved were submitting expressions of interest. Through communication with local residents, Skye and Raasay was considering submitting an application and representatives from the new national parks team had been invited to the meeting to provide an update and what needs done so any application from Skye and Raasay can progress.

The team leader, national parks, Scottish Government was in attendance to give a presentation on the new national park(s) nomination, appraisal and designation process and covered the following areas: -the bute house agreement commitment to designate at least one new national park in Scotland by 2026; background on national parks in Scotland, what they are designed to do and the flexibility in the legislation to tailor a new national park to the circumstances and needs of the area; the nominations process and timeline; the criteria for new national parks; the support that is being made available to groups: Lateral North support, film, technical workshop, FAQ document; and what happens after 29 February 2024:

appraisal, Ministerial decision, statutory reporter process, preparation of designation order.

Following the presentation, the main points raised in discussion were as follows:-

- One of the aims of a new national park was to support sustainable land use which was very important in Skye and Raasay;
- Consultation and debate amongst stakeholders in the communities on a proposal for a national park in Skye and Raasay was very important in order to ensure the best way forward;
- There was good practice already in the area of nature friendly farming and crofting and there may be opportunities to share this good practice across communities in Scotland;
- There was a strong belief that Skye should be the number one candidate for a new national park. Skye had many areas designated as areas of special scientific interest and Raasay was part of a project for it to become a carbon neutral island.
- It was encouraging that Lateral North had been awarded the contract to provide support to nominating groups, as they had a lot of experience in this area.
- The decision on a new national park would ultimately be taken by Scottish Government Ministers and it was difficult to know at this stage if more than one park proposal went forward for consideration, but it was a possibility.
- Lateral North will have a range of ideas that would be explored with Members on engagement work that could be undertaken with stakeholders and communities;
- It was important that the public and communities did not try and compare what might happen on Skye and Raasay with other national parks in Scotland as there was flexibility and opportunity to almost design your own national park, within certain criteria, so it did reflect the individual nature that the people of Skye and Raasay live in.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the presentation on the new national park(s) nomination process and that the presentation slides would be sent to Members.

## **6. School Inspection Report Kilmuir Primary School and Nursery/ Bun-sgoil Chille Mhoire agus Sgoil Àraich Chille Mhoire**

**Transparency Statement: Mr C Munro made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as he had a family member who worked in Kilmuir Primary school. Mr Munro wished to record a connection to the item and would not take part in discussion on it.**

There was circulated Report No. SR/19/23 by the Education and Learning Manager.

The Education and Learning Manager highlighted the clear strengths in the school inspection report, within Kilmuir Primary school, particularly in the development of gaelic. It was unusual to have included in a school inspection report practice worth sharing more widely and the Head Teacher and staff at the school were commended for the very positive statements made. The areas for improvements

were also very clear in terms of long term planning, raising attainment and self evaluation. The school had been working very closely with the Education and Learning Manager, the Collaborative Lead Officer and other officers on these areas for improvements, prior to a return visit by school inspectors around April/May, 2024. The management support for the school and Head Teacher was very important. Improvements were being made and there was confidence that when school inspectors return they would see good progress on improvements to have confidence in the Head Teacher.

There had been 2 supply teachers in post at the time of the inspection and their work was commended. Other updates in staffing at the school were provided and the importance of stability in staffing was vital to continued improvement at the school. An update on staffing, following meetings this week, would be provided to Members.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the report's findings in relation to the School;
- ii. the report's findings in relation to the Nursery;
- iii. an update on staffing at Kilmuir Primary School would be provided to Members;
- iv. an update would be provided to a future meeting on progress being made on improvements at the School following the next visit by school inspectors.

## **7. The Storr Progress Update 23/24 Cunntas às Ùr mu Adhartas aig An Stòr**

There was circulated Report No. SR/20/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

By way of introduction, the Chair thanked Officers for their work on the Storr project and the engagement they had carried out with local communities in Skye and Raasay over the last few years to move forward all the developments at the Storr. The success of the project had been that it had been managed at a local level with a strong team of Officers supporting the project.

The Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place thanked members for their support on the developments at the Storr which had very much been a team effort to progress. There was a summary of the report following which points raised at the meeting included:-

- Developments at the Storr aimed to provide improved visitor management and protection of the environment. This had been achieved at minimum costs to the Council which had been a huge success. It was also important to be flexible in the approach to future developments as there was potential for further income streams, for example, holding weddings at the site, and the importance to retain the income generated from the site to support the project was highlighted.
- The Storr was an internationally renowned visitor site and it was appropriate that facilities were provided and that there was the ambition to match such an important site. It was highlighted that the communication and governance on the project had been excellent. Also, emphasis on the

gaelic language and culture in the project was welcomed as this had a big part to play in what was offered to tourists.

- Guided walks at the Storr would provide good visitor management;
- Developments at the site would provide increased business from tourists for local businesses in the area. Local products would be promoted at the new centre and local products from Raasay should also be promoted. Alcohol products perhaps could be considered for sale in future to take advantage of the many local alcohol products produced in the area.
- The work of the countryside rangers was commended;
- There had been a saving of £16k in the waste contract agreement. This was a significant saving and the work by all those involved in achieving this was acknowledged.
- the overstay charges for use of electric vehicle destination chargers would be reviewed as people could park for the whole day and only pay £1 for this;
- electric vehicle chargers at Bayfield car park, Portree were not working and this would be investigated. Also, the importance of robust agreements for maintenance of electric vehicle chargers at the Storr was highlighted.
- the centre would have cashless sales and perhaps it would be a missed opportunity to not allowing cash sales at the centre. However, it was advised most people paid by card and from a business point of view security concerns were reduced when cash was not held on site.
- There had been delays in the supply of the digital display screen at the site, which highlighted, for example, car parking availability, and an update on this was due this week.
- The close working on the site management plan with NatureScot was very important as NatureScot was reassured that the protection of the environment at the site was a priority.
- Costs were continual increasing, including costs to manage the site. Income from the site may need to be increased, but this had to be balanced against ensuring increases in prices did not affect visitor numbers. It was believed there was current capacity to increase charges at the site not only to meet costs but to maintain investment in the site.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the ongoing local Member involvement and established governance through an Officer-led cross-Service Project Board;
- ii. the ongoing Partnership working including with Skye Iconic Sites Project, NatureScot, SkyeConnect, and local community;
- iii. the significant achievements delivered by the Project and the continued progress being made;
- iv. the future growth opportunities for the site for both Council and local economy;
- v. the commitment to measuring performance including regular reports to the Skye & Raasay Area Committee;
- vi. that the overstay charges for use of electric vehicle destination chargers would be reviewed; and
- vii. that electric vehicle chargers at Bayfield car park, Portree were not working and this would be investigated.

*At this point the meeting was adjourned for a short break and it resumed again at 12.30p.m.*

## **8. Bereavement Services – Project Updates Seirbheisean Caoidh – Cunntas às Ùr air Pròiseactan**

There was circulated Report No. SR/21/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

Following commentary on the report by the Strategic Lead, Environmental Health & Bereavement Services, the following main points were raised during discussion:-

- There was difficulty in finding suitable land for burial grounds, however the Service was looking to progress burial grounds where it could;
- it should be possible for people to advance purchase lairs that they wished to be buried. But if there was limited capacity, advanced sales would be paused, so that there was capacity for current burials.
- It was disappointing that the next phase of the Portree burial ground had taken so long to progress and it was costing significantly more money now than it should have done, had the extension been progressed many years ago. Ideally it would be better to be ahead of the capital programme as much as possible, so that land was identified and consideration given to the formal processes, for example, planning permission for burial grounds.
- It took 6 months for lairs to settle prior to being used for burials and there was between 15 and 16 months capacity in the existing Portree cemetery. Reassurance was sought that there would be capacity in the Portree cemetery. It was confirmed that there would be capacity at this site up to 2026 once the works had been completed and it was possible to accelerate the use of new lairs if required.
- An update on arrangements for a new Skeabost burial ground was requested. It was advised that one site was currently considered a good option and this was looked into.
- an update on progress with the Cill a' Bhealaich cemetery extension would be provided to Councillor C Munro; and
- that a strategic approach to maintaining historical cemeteries and their value to ancestral tourism would be discussed further.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the progress of burial ground extensions in the Skye and Raasay area; and
- ii. the challenges with identifying and developing suitable land for burial ground development.

## **9. The Islands Winter Boost Fund 2023/24 Maoin Èiginn Cosgais Bith-beò nan Eilean 2023/24**

There was circulated Report No. SR/22/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

Following a summary of the report by the Service Delivery Manager and discussion by Members, it was noted that feedback would be given to the Service

on the increase in costs to administer the scheme compared to last year and that this money would be better spent on providing support to eligible households.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** that the Council had received Islands Winter Boost funding for 2023/24 to help alleviate the impacts of the cost crisis for island communities; and
- ii. **AGREED** that this funding be used to automatically make non-recurring cost crisis payments of £127 per eligible household by 28 February 2024 where the Council holds current bank details, in accordance with the eligibility criteria set out in section 4 of this report.

#### **11. Ward Discretionary Budget Buidseat Fo Ùghdarras Uàird**

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward Discretionary Fund Grants for Ward 10 in the financial year 2023/24:-

Highlife Highland Skye & Lochalsh Archive Centre £500  
Skye and Lochalsh Mental Health Association (2) £500  
Skye Youth Pipe Band £1,000  
Waternish Community Garden £500  
Portree & Braes Community Trust £1,500  
New Pads for Tigh na Sgìre Defibrillator £55  
Helping Hands Skye & Lochalsh £2000  
Skeabost & District Community Council £530  
SEALL £500

The meeting ended at 1.00 p.m.