

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held remotely on **Tuesday, 23 January, 2024 at 10.30 a.m.**

### **Present:**

Mr A Baldrey (remote)  
Ms S Fanet  
Mr A MacDonald

Mr T MacLennan  
Ms L Saggars (remote)  
Ms K Willis

### **Officials in Attendance:**

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

Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager/Corran Ferry, Operations Manager

Mr D Wood, Principal Housing Officer, Housing & Property

Mr D Lamont, Community Works Officer, Communities & Place

Mr M Culbertson, Project Officer, Community Regeneration Fund

Mr M Crowe, Project Officer, Community Regeneration Fund

Ms A Martin, Project Manager (FW2040), Communities & Place

Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Performance and Governance Service

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

Mr M Colliar, Group Commander (Highland West), Scottish Fire & Rescue Service,

Mr C Scott, Station Commander, Lochaber District, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

Mr A Hubbert, Threesixty Architecture

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

### **Ms K Willis in the Chair**

#### **BUSINESS**

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr J C Grafton.

**2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement  
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd**

There were none.

**3. 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/1/24 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

Following commentary on the report by the Station Commander, Lochaber District, Members were pleased to note that overall the statistics showed below average and decreases in number of incidents which was good to see.

In relation to the last storm to hit the area it was queried what the impact on the Service had been following the A82 being closed due to a fallen tree, which effectively cut Fort William off. It was highlighted that Authorities needed to have a serious look at this as it did impact on all emergency services. It was advised that the Service had been lucky in that there were still sufficient crew that lived in Fort William town centre which allowed it to still have an operational response. In terms of the operational response outside Fort William, in this situation, there were other options within the district for other stations to respond. The resilience model with partner agencies had moved from a local to a national model, which allowed the Service to draw on resources from across Scotland. The Highland Council had done a remarkable job in clearing up storm damage in very challenging conditions.

It was advised that community response unit stations, such as Spean Bridge, had all been allocated funding for a new vehicle with new equipment and off road capability and they should be delivered to stations later in the year.

The Committee **noted** the area performance report.

#### **4. Corran Ferry Update Cunntas air Aiseag a' Chorrain**

There was circulated Report No. LA/2/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

Following commentary on the report by the Roads Operations Manager/Corran Ferry, Operations Manager, during which he acknowledged that it had been a challenging year for all concerned with the Corran ferry breakdowns. The ferry team were grateful to the community and local business community during that time for their understanding and co-operation. They were equally grateful to service suppliers such as Calmac, maintenance contractors and partner agencies for their assistance.

In considering the report, Members acknowledged the difficult year for the Corran ferry and that there was a long term programme for a replacement ferry and associated infrastructure. Options for funding were being looked at but no conclusions reached as yet. £20m in funding received to date was greatly welcomed and the momentum to build on this was ongoing particularly to focus on vessel replacement. The new vessel would be electric powered with diesel generator back up to top up the batteries. New technologies to power vessels were being developed all over the world and the industry was moving at pace. New technologies were becoming more advanced and reliable.

The maintenance of the current vessels was discussed and the importance of annual services and good relationships with suppliers was highlighted. Mitigations in place should the ferries break down again were detailed.

Following, further discussion, the Committee **noted** the information provided in the report and that the crew of the Corran ferry be thanked for their efforts during the recent challenging times with the ferry.

#### **5. Lochaber Area Roads Programme 2024/25 Prògram Rathaidean Sgìreil Loch Abar 2024/25**

There was circulated Report No. LA/3/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Roads Operations Manager provided an overview of the proposed roads maintenance programme for the Lochaber area, which was predominately surfacing and surface dressing. In terms of what could be achieved, the priorities were set out in the report, however the budget for roads maintenance had not yet been agreed. The priority list showed what could be achieved if the basic allocation of around £500k was given and any other priorities would be dependent on additional funding being received.

During maintenance works the roads team tried hard to avoid road closures and cause as little inconvenience as possible to local communities. In this respect, it was requested that in terms of the planned works on the B8007, Officers engage with the community council and elected members at an early stage on traffic management proposals. In terms of road maintenance planned for Eigg, the island only had the one road and the condition of it had deteriorated. Scottish timber transport scheme funding had been received to pay for some works to it in the last few years. This road was a priority and some funding had also been received from the small isles improvement fund for it. Similarly, the road on Knoydart was also in need of repair and there would be a focus on this in future years.

The Committee **approved** the proposed 2024/25 Area Roads Capital Programme and that a commitment was given to engage with the local community Council and elected members at an early stage on traffic management proposals for planned works on the B8007 Salen to Camus Inas.

## **6. Draft Fort William Town Centre Masterplan & Delivery Framework Prìomh Phlana Meadhan Baile a' Ghearasdain**

There was circulated Report No. LA/4/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The report provided an overview of the process to develop a draft Fort William town centre masterplan and delivery framework. The Fort William 2040 programme was at a key stage in implementing an agreed vision and there was a need to position the town centre at the core of the FW2040 programme. The draft masterplan sought to build on the town centre action plan and to provide the FW2040 Board with a framework to progress. Last year, Threesixty Architecture had been appointed to develop a fresh plan for the town centre with key themes to this. There had been comprehensive stakeholder engagement and a further period of engagement was proposed. Mr A Hubbert, Threesixty Architecture was in attendance and went over the highlights of the plan, and there was also commentary on the proposed public engagement by the FW2040 project manager.

Thereafter, Members welcomed the fantastic vision of the draft masterplan, they shared the aspirations to make Fort William better and it was an exciting vision to work towards. There was further detail provided on the stakeholder engagement. There was a concern that there may be public scepticism that all these plans were never going to happen based on past experiences, particularly with the significant amount of money that would be required to see all the plans come to fruition. It was highlighted that it was not always public money that went into such projects and if you made an area attractive, private

investment could be sought for developments. These were long term visions and projects would be prioritised and carried out on a phased basis.

In terms of the vision to change the A82 trunk road going through Fort William back to 2 lanes of traffic, it was queried what the traffic management proposals were to deal with the significant volume of traffic on this road. It was advised that this was a very important road, but however this was an aspirational long term vision for the town centre. Transport Scotland had been engaged with on the vision and the proposal would require to be considered as part of a wider detailed study of the road network in that area.

The Committee **agreed**:-

- i. the content of the draft Masterplan and Delivery Framework, including stakeholder feedback obtained to date; and
- ii. to conduct a 12-week period of public engagement under the auspices of Fort William 2040 (FW2040).

**7. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2024/2025  
Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2024/2025**

There was circulated Report No. LA/5/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

The Principal Housing Officer gave a summary of the report, following which Members were invited to agree a level of rent increase for garages and garage sites for 2024/25. In response to queries from Members, there had not been an increase in the repairs budget for garages in the last few years and the tenant consultation on the rent increase had still to be concluded, but initial soundings were that tenants were minded that a 7.3% increase would be acceptable.

The Committee **agreed** a 7.95% rent increase to apply to Lochaber Garages and Garage Sites.

**8. Scottish Government Play Funding Allocation**

There was circulated Report No. LA/6/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place. Members were invited to agree the spending of their Scottish Government Play funding allocation on the identified sites.

The Committee **agreed**:

- i. the allocation of funding to the projects identified for Ward 11;
- ii. the allocation of funding to the projects identified for Ward 21;
- iii. homologate the spend for works already completed in Ward 11 at for Roy Bridge Play Park; and
- iv. homologate the spend for works already completed in Ward 21 at Victoria Road and Inchree Play Parks.

**9. Community Regeneration Fund (CRF) Assessment of Applications  
Measadh Iarrtasan Maoin Ath-bheòthachaidh Coimhearsnachd**

There was circulated Report No LA/7/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The report detailed the community regeneration fund allocations received in the current round. There were 22 applications, however 5 of those were directed to the community led local development fund as they were capital projects that could potentially meet the criteria for that fund. It was confirmed that all 5 of these applications (Lochaber rural education trust mini bus; Mallaig & Morar community centre kitchen upgrade; Morven water sports club kit; resurface of car park in Arisaig; Shielbridge hall fire alarm system) would remain with that fund and were withdrawn from consideration of funding from the CRF.

Therefore, there were 17 applications for consideration at the meeting and a total request of funding of £445K, with an available budget of £540,708. If all applications were approved there would be an underspend of £95,706. All 17 applications were eligible for support.

Following consideration of the applications, the Committee:-

- i **noted** that 5 of the projects submitted had been withdrawn from consideration and had instead been redirected to the Community Led Local Development Fund.
- ii **approved** all of the remaining applications. In terms of the Green Fingers project, the Project Officer to liaise with the applicants to re-work project costs in light of recent storm damage; and
- iii. **agreed** to ringfence the remaining grant within the 2023/24 allocation to deliver area priorities identified through work to develop an area-based plan, subject to full applications being brought to a future committee meeting for consideration.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward Discretionary Fund grant awards 2023/24.

### Ward 11

HLH Archive Centre – contribution to travelling exhibition costs Tir nan Og - £750

Lochaber Wheeled sports society – for purchase of bikes & helmets - £1,000

Knoydart Trading Limited – purchase of freezer - £2,350

Nevis Landscape Partnership - National Park Working Group - £1,500

### Ward 21

Kinlochleven Primary School Council – School trip - £250

South Lochaber Community Association – Contribution to Bus repairs - £1,750

Lochaber wheeled sports society – for purchase of bikes & helmets - £1,000

West Ardnamurchan Community Council – for purchase of IT kit - £450

Nevis Landscape Partnership - National Park Working Group - £1,500

## 11. **Minutes** **Geàrr-chunntas**

There was circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 31 October, 2023 which were approved by the Council on 14 December, 2023, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

The meeting ended at 1.00 p.m.