

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held remotely on **Monday, 26 August, 2024 at 9.30 am.**

Present:

Mr J Finlayson
Mr D Millar

Mr C Munro
Mr R Stewart

Officials in attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate
Mr W MacKinnon, Community Development Officer (West & Mid Highland)
Mr M Sutherland, Roads Operations Manager (Skye)
Mr J Maclean, Bereavement Services Project Manager
Mr M Bailey, CRD/UKSPF Programme Manager, Economy & Regeneration
Ms A Smith, Project Manager, Strategic Improvement
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer - Corporate

Also in attendance:

Ms S Compton-Bishop, Board Chair, NHS Highland
Ms L Bussell, Board Nurse Director, NHS Highland
Mr M Colliar, Group Commander, SFRS
Mr S Fraser, Station Commander, SFRS
Mr S Cousins, Communications Director, SkyeConnect
Mr G Curley, Director, SkyeConnect
Ms Jo-Anne Ford, Chief Officer, Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations

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/Transparency Statement
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/Aithris Fhollaiseachd**

Items 7 & 8 – Mr C Munro (Transparency Statement)
Items 9,10 & 12 – Mr D Millar (Transparency Statement)

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee noted that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee.

**4. 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 3 June, 2024 which were approved at the Highland Council meeting held on 27 June, 2024, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

**5. Presentation on NHS Highland Response to the recommendations in the Independent External Review of Skye, Lochalsh and South West Ross Out of Hours Service, Sir Lewis Ritchie 2018
Taisbeanadh air Freagairt NHS na Gàidhealtachd do na molaidhean san Ath-sgrùdadh Neo-eisimeileach on Taobh A-muigh mu Sheirbheis Taobh A-muigh Uairean Àbhaisteach an Eilein Sgitheanaich, Loch Aillse agus Rois an Iar-Dheas, Sir Lewis Ritchie 2018**

Sarah Compton-Bishop, Board Chair and Louise Bussell, Board Nurse Director, NHS Highland were in attendance to give a presentation on NHS Highland's response to the recommendations in the Sir Lewis Ritchie report on out of hours service for Skye, Lochalsh and South West Ross. Delivering against the recommendations had been very challenging given the Covid pandemic and complex nature of service provision in rural and Island communities. However, significant progress had been made thanks to staff and continued input to this process from local communities and community representatives. An update on progress was provided and it was highlighted that good progress had been made on the multi agency recommendations contained in Sir Lewis's report and it was intended to complete outstanding actions within 2024, such as in the areas of urgent care centre, care bed provision, continued community and staff engagement, interagency workforce planning and transport. In particular, it was advised that there was no intention to close Portree Hospital any time in the near future. Thereafter, attention would be turned to long term plans for the area and the representatives indicated that they would welcome the opportunity to return to the Committee to present these.

In discussion, it was highlighted that Sir Lewis Ritchie in his report had found that the out of hours service had not been sufficiently sustainable or equitable. North Skye had the majority of the population on the Island and a growing number of tourists visiting the area. An out of hours service was essential for the area that was sustainable and resilient and progress that had been made with this was encouraging. The learning from this could be applied to other rural and Island communities. The need for continued support of staff was necessary given there was so much focus in the community concerning Portree Hospital. Also, clear communication was required as to what the public could expect from an urgent care/out of hours service and the review of care bed provision was crucial and must meet the needs of the North Skye community.

Further, there was some anxiety in the community over the 111 urgent support provision given delays in the service. This needed to be fit for purpose to deliver the health care needs in Skye and it was confirmed that there was engagement with NHS24 on this issue. There was also an allegation that the medical centre in Portree were not willing to cater for urgent care and people were being directed to Portree hospital or Broadford hospital for emergencies. It was advised that there was a need for clear communication in this respect. Also, there was work ongoing to build up GP capacity in the area.

In terms of freeing beds in the hospital by providing social care for people at home, there was work ongoing through a recruitment group to achieve this, but it was challenging to recruit people to undertake this role. While there was a need for a Highland transport group, there was still a need for a local transport group with local community engagement.

It was highlighted that the sign for Portree Hospital had been removed and it was confirmed that action was being taken to replace it.

It was noted that Sir Lewis Ritchie would be on Skye this week to attend the Steering Group meeting and continued to work with NHS Highland on the implementation of the recommendations in his report. There were concerns in the community and they wanted the best possible health care for all of the Island. In terms of recruitment of staff, NHS Highland were in discussions with the Council and the Skye and Lochalsh Housing Association about their staff needs for housing.

The Chair thanked the representatives from NHS Highland for their presentation and looked forward to them attending a future meeting.

**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 SR/12/24 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, the improvement in Uig station availability was commended and it was advised that Uig Community Trust was in conversation with CMAL who owned the Uig ferry terminal building. They were to consult with the community and it was likely that the building would be handed over and the site cleared, which could affect plans for a new SFRS station in Uig. It was confirmed that the SFRS were considering station developments in both Uig and Portree.

It was clarified that a secondary fire was a fire involving non structures, such as bins, waste, derelict vehicles. Such incidents were reported to other agencies, such as Police Scotland, to address any trends in anti social behaviour.

There was scope for the service to have a short term let operator on Skye given the number of applications to be processed.

In terms of concerns with battery storage facilities, a North area working group had been set up to better understand the issues to be addressed with these facilities and an update on progress on this was provided. This issue was also being discussed nationally in terms of best practice and operational learning in

responding to incidents at battery storage facilities. The SFRS had a team working on renewable energies who would feed information into this conversation. In relation to concerns about retained stations being able to attend and cope with a battery storage facility fire, it was confirmed that they would attend and received the same training as full time members of staff to deal with such incidents.

In response to concerns over crews dealing with incidents over a protracted period and the impact this could have on their mental health and wellbeing, it was confirmed that the welfare of staff was a key priority for the Service and there would be crew rotation in such incidents. It was a national service and extra resources could be brought in from outwith the area if required.

The Committee Noted the Area Performance Report.

7. SkyeConnect Presentation Taisbeanadh SkyeConnect

Transparency Statement - Mr C Munro declared a transparency statement in relation to this item as a previous Director of SkyeConnect. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

Simon Cousins, Communications Director and Gary Curley, SkyeConnect were in attendance to give a presentation about SkyeConnect, projects they deliver in the community and some of the challenges they faced.

In discussion, reference was made to the idea of a visitor levy on campervans when visiting Skye, but it was not felt this would receive general community support, given the strong opposition in the past to tolls on the Skye bridge. There was a view amongst some people on Skye that visitor management was poorly managed such as social issues caused by over tourism and anti social behaviour. There should be a focus on ensuring tourism was sustainable and look at how to grow high value tourism. Improved infrastructure was key for tourism and local people. A tourist management plan for Skye and engagement with community trusts and community would help address these issues.

There was support that a visitor levy should include campervans and motorhomes which could be managed through the use of number plate recognition cameras at entry points to Skye. The money generated could be used to improve infrastructure in the local area and towards destination management organisations. There was a need to create more dedicated areas for motorhomes and campervans where a charge would be made for their stay and perhaps legislation could be introduced to stop these vehicles from stopping overnight outwith these dedicated areas. Further, there was ongoing work to progress the Skye cycle network project.

The Committee having expressed their thanks to the representatives for their presentation and acknowledged the work they undertook in the area, Noted the presentation about SkyeConnect and the projects they deliver in the community.

8. Skye and Raasay Future - Presentation Àm ri Teachd an Eilein Sgitheanaich is Ratharsair

Transparency Statement - Mr C Munro declared a transparency statement in relation to this item as a Council appointee to Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

Jo-Anne Ford, Chief Officer, Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations was in attendance. The organisation delivered third sector support services on behalf of the Highland third sector interface. The Committee were given a presentation about the Empower Skye and Lochalsh Programme the organisation was running which aimed to develop more opportunities for community participation; increase community resilience; improve third sector sustainable growth; enhance health, wellbeing, and welfare outcomes; and develop innovation and knowledge sharing. This would be achieved through the delivery of two projects: Management of Skye and Raasay Future (SARF) Plan; and Skye and Lochalsh Health, Wellbeing and Welfare Collaboration. Information on funding, activities and timeline for these projects were provided.

In discussion, it was welcomed that the projects within SARF were to be reviewed and updated. The SARF Project Board would be handed over from the Council by the end of August and would continue to have Elected Member and Council officer input at their meetings. Dates for meetings of the Board would be sent to Elected Members. The Skye and Lochalsh Health, Wellbeing and Welfare Collaboration directory was welcomed and it would be circulated widely in the community.

The Committee thanked the Chief Officer for attending the meeting and otherwise Noted the presentation and looked forward to continued engagement on the projects within the Empower Skye and Lochalsh Programme.

9. Roads Maintenance Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Chàradh Rathaidean

Transparency Statement - Mr D Millar declared a transparency statement in relation to this item as he had family members working for the Council. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There was circulated Report No. SR//24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place. The report provided an update on the Area Roads Capital Programme 2024/25, including works completed and additional works programmed for the remainder of the financial year.

Following commentary on the report by the Roads Operations Manager, it was highlighted that the additional funds for roads maintenance was very welcome and would increase the amount to be spent from £0.5m to £3m in this area. The lobbying by the Council of the Scottish Government to provide these additional funds and the work of Officers to identify where this money was best spent was acknowledged. This combined with a Islands infrastructure funding application and local Members disaggregated budget would provide further additionality for roads maintenance.

Further, the roads team were congratulated for the amount of work undertaken in poor weather over the summer period. It was noted that the Roads Operations Manager had committed to contacting Community Councils on planned works

affecting their area, so that this could be carried out with best value for money to communities and trying to minimise delays to road users.

The Committee Noted the roads maintenance update contained in the report.

10. Winter Service Plan for 2024/25 Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh airson 2024/25

Transparency Statement - Mr D Millar declared a transparency statement in relation to this item as he had family members working for the Council. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There was circulated Report No. SR/ /24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, which provided details of the 2024/25 Winter Service Plan for Isle of Skye and Raasay Area.

In discussion, delivering salt heaps to rural areas early did make a difference and relieved some of the pressure on the roads team. There was good community engagement and participation on winter maintenance and officers were happy to work with communities on this. The suggestion of communities being able to take salt from salt heaps themselves would be considered as there would need to be an assurance that the public had the means to do this and that the salt would be used on public roads.

Continuing, the work of the roads team in keeping roads open during winter was commended. The need to assist community workers/care workers in winter conditions to reach their workplace or clients was highlighted. Partnership working was key to this situation and the Roads Manager was keen to work with partners on this to provide assistance whilst recognising that there was a budget and winter maintenance policy that had to be adhered to.

There was to be a winter service leaflet prepared for each operational area to highlight to the public the primary and secondary routes to be gritted in winter conditions. It was welcomed that salt bins had been secured so that the salt did not deteriorate in the rain. The roads team would also do its best to clear pavements when resources allowed this. In terms of pavements in Portree, Uig and Broadford that were trunk roads, Officers would work with Bear Scotland to clear footpaths on trunk roads.

Thereafter, the Committee Approved the Winter Service Plan for 2024/25.

11. Bereavement Services Project Updates Cunntasan às Ùr mu Phròiseact nan Seirbheisean Bàis

There was circulated Report No. SR//24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place which provided an update on the work being undertaken on burial ground capacity and new burial grounds in the Skye and Raasay area.

Following commentary on the report by the Bereavement Services Project Manager, it was welcomed that good progress was being made with plans for extensions to Portree and Dunvegan burial grounds. It was noted that land investigations were being carried out at Skeabost/Borve and it was hoped suitable

land could be found soon as the current burial ground was now closed. In terms of Cille a'Bhealaich, Staffin burial ground, there was 7 years capacity and additional ground would be identified for additional capacity for the future. It was understood there was no available land for an extension at Ashaig burial, but this would be confirmed to Councillor J Finlayson.

The Committee Noted:-

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

In terms of Standing Order 9, with the consent of the meeting the following item was taken after item 6 on the agenda.

**12. The Storr – Update Report 24/25
An Stòrr – Aithisg Ùrachaidh 24/25**

Transparency Statement - Mr D Millar declared a transparency statement in relation to this item as he had family members working for the Council. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There was circulated Report No. SR/16/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate which provided progress at The Old Man of Storr (The Storr).

Following commentary on the report by Officers, during which it was highlighted that projections showed there could be up to 300,000 visitors to The Storr this year and it was ranked in the top ten places to visit in the world by TripAdvisor. The importance of stakeholder engagement, the Project Board and local Elected Members to the success of the project was also highlighted, as was the opportunity to create local employment and half of surplus income would be kept for spending in the local area. The formal opening of the The Storr centre was to be held later in the day. The project was awarded the Convener's Award at the recent Highland Council Staff Recognition Awards ceremony which was extremely well received by all staff working on the project.

In discussion, Members congratulated all those involved in this project which would be a great visitor centre for this iconic tourist destination and it would be used as a template for future projects. This was an evolving project and the Project team would continue to gather information from the site and make changes when required. The centre would also provide opportunities to support gaelic, local history and environmental education. The supply chain to build the centre was impressive with local contractors involved and local suppliers products were on sale at the centre, which would create community wealth in the area. The staff at the centre were experienced and highly motivated and would be great ambassadors for the area.

Continuing, knowing how long it takes to develop projects, consideration should be given now to extending the car parking at the site to cater for more visitors. The management of traffic at the centre also had to be looked at given the volume of traffic.

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 NatureScot, SkyeConnect, and the local community, including suppliers;
- iii. the significant achievements being delivered by the Project and the continued progress being made; and
- iv. that regular reports will continue to be taken to the Isle of Skye and Raasay Area Committee.

13. Ward Discretionary Budget Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee Noted the following Ward Discretionary Fund Grants for Ward 10 in the financial year 2024/25:-

Skye & Lochalsh Junior Football Association - Junior Football Season - £760
Minginish Community Association - Cairn Plaque - £300
Skye Events – 40th Anniversary ½ marathon & 10k - £500

14. Dunvegan Community Council Ward Discretionary Fund Application

Urgent item – This urgent item of business was considered by the Committee as a decision was required by Dunvegan Community Council to meet the timescales for funding of the project.

There was circulated Report No. SR/17/24 by the Head of Community Support, Contact and Engagement relating to an application from Dunvegan Community Council to the Isle of Skye and Raasay Ward Discretionary Fund for funding to support costs associated with a visitor information project. Given that the application was for retrospective costs, this required to be considered at Area Committee.

The project aimed to inform visitors to Skye about traffic management and visitor facilities. It involved installing signage on lampposts in targeted areas and managing a website with visitor information. The applicant was seeking £1,393.80 from the Ward Discretionary Fund towards the total cost of £2,893.80.

Members were supportive of the application. The need for passing place signage was also highlighted as many tourists did not understand what passing places were for. It was advised that there was now a dedicated member of staff dealing with passing places and signs within the roads team to carry out this work.

The Committee Agreed the application for funding from Dunvegan Community Council in the amount of £1,393.80 from the Ward Discretionary Fund.

The meeting ended at 12.45 p.m.