

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held remotely on **Tuesday, 27 August, 2024 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

Mr A Baldrey (remote)
Mr J C Grafton
Ms S Fanet

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

Officials in Attendance:

Ms D Ferguson, Senior Community Development Manager
Mr W MacKinnon, Community Development Manager, West and Mid Highland
Ms K MacLeod, Roads Operations Manager - Lochaber
Ms A Martin, FW2040 Project Manager
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer - Corporate

Also in attendance:-

Mr C Scott, Station Commander, Lochaber District, 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.**

Ms K Willis in the Chair

BUSINESS

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were none.

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

There were none.

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee Noted that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Lochaber Committee.

**4. 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/14/24 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

Following commentary on the report by the Local Senior Officer, it was clarified that a primary fire related to a dwelling fire, whereas as secondary fire would be a shed or outbuilding. Also, 2 specific road traffic accidents had

resulted in the majority of the increase in road casualties for the period in Lochaber. There had been a significant amount of casualties involved in these incidents and there had been good partnership working from emergency services to help those involved. Also, home fire safety visits were prioritised at those people most at risk, identified by agencies that referred them to the SFRS. There was no definitive evidence that people were using sub standard equipment to heat their homes due to the cost of living crises, but an undertaking was given to communicate to SFRS staff to look out for this in their home safety visits. Further, there had been no trends identified relating to deliberate fires.

Continuing, whilst congestion on roads could cause delays, this did not put people's lives at risk as there were appliances, other than Fort William, that could be sent to incidents. In terms of staffing in the retained fire service, there had been an increase in recruitment to the service last year in Lochaber. The service were looking at innovative ways to recruit and retain staff.

It was highlighted that the number of short term lets were increasing and it was queried what effect this was having on the service who required to carry out fire safety checks. It was advised that this had no effect on front line operational staff, as there was a dedicated team to deal with the increase in short term licensing applications.

The Committee Noted the Area Performance Report.

5. Fort William 2040 Annual Update Fios às Ùr mu An Gearasdan 2040

There was circulated Report No. LA/15/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place which provided an update on the progress of the Fort William 2040 (FW2040) Masterplan and Delivery Programme.

Following a summary of the report by the FW2040 Project Manager, Members supported the extension of the Project Manager post for FW2040 for a further 24 months.

It was noted that a short-life working group had been established to address the traffic and travel impacts resulting from the operation of the canal swing bridge at Banavie. It would look at how the operation of the bridge can be better co-ordinated with the other uses on the road.

Information on FW2040 projects were available online via the Highland Councils website. If there was a specific proposal for community engagement additional ways of engagement could be set up, such as the Town Centre Masterplan was displayed in the local library to try and make it accessible as possible. Also, it was intended that next year there would be another community engagement event on FW2040 projects. There would be a conversation amongst officers on how to maintain community engagement on FW2040.

There was no set criteria on what projects were included in the FW2040 programme, but consideration would be given to how well a proposed project aligned with its general principles around FW2040 i.e. making Fort William a better place to live, work and visit.

An update on the various stages for producing a final document on the Town Centre Masterplan was provided. It was hoped the final document would be available within the next 2 months. Thereafter, focus would be on progressing proposals that had general support.

An alternative new helicopter landing site in Fort William had been identified and there were discussions amongst various local parties about the costs of developing the site and securing funding.

The importance of lobbying politicians was highlighted in order to gain their support in progressing some of the main items in the programme, such as the new hospital, traffic and transport.

The Committee:

i. Noted the progress that had been made with the individual projects within the FW2040 Masterplan as summarised at Appendix 1: FW2040 Projects Update July 2024.

ii. Noted the wider developments that had been implemented in 2023 to enhance the delivery of the programme, specifically:

a) an extensive programme of community engagement undertaken on the proposed Fort William Town Centre Masterplan.

b) the establishment of a short-life working group to address the traffic and travel impacts resulting from the operation of the canal swing bridge at Banavie.

c) continued engagement on specific issues and with particular interest groups through the FW2040 Community Stakeholder Group and FW2040 Transport Sub-Group.

iii. Noted the extension of the Project Manager post for FW2040 for a further 24-months.

iv. supported identified priority FW2040 work areas for the coming year as summarised in section 5 of the report.

6. Winter Service Plan 2024/25 Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh 2024/25

There was circulated Report No. LA/16/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place which detailed the 2024/25 Winter Service Plan for Lochaber Area.

It was highlighted that the Council publishes “Winter Services” leaflets for each operational area providing the public with information on snow clearing and gritting of Council roads along with maps showing the priority attributed to individual roads. Community self-help was also being encouraged under the Councils “Winter Resilience” scheme whereby communities can submit an application via their community council to carry out footway gritting operations within an agreed area. In addition, extra salt heaps and grit bins had been placed in targeted areas and any information from Members/Community Councils on further areas in the community to be supplied with extra salt would be welcome.

The staff resources in the roads team was close to full complement. Also, in terms of contingency plans for flooding on roads, it was advised that maintenance on culverts, blocked ditches etc to drain water from roads was a high priority for the roads team.

The Committee Approved the Winter Service Plan for 2024/25.

**7. Allocation Process for Area Share of Invitation to Pay Income
Pròiseas Riarachaidh airson Co-roinn Sgìreil de Theachd-a-steach
Cuireadh airson Pàigheadh**

There was circulated Report No. LA/17/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place inviting the Committee to agree a process for the allocation of area Invitation to Pay income within the community in which it has been generated.

If the proposal was approved, contact would be made with the Community Council with guidance on submitting applications for invitation to pay income. They would also be consulted on whether the income was to be used for the Mallaig area or a wider area.

The Committee:

- i. Approved the proposed process for the area allocation of Invitation to Pay income.
- ii. Noted that the process will be reviewed after the first year of implementation.
- iii. Noted authorisation of spend up to £10,000 would be assigned to the Senior Community Development Manager and £10,000 or over would be subject to Area Committee approval.

**8. Fort William Business Improvement District
Roinn Leasachadh Gnothachais a' Ghearasdain**

There was circulated Report No. LA/18/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, which provided a summary of the Fort William Business Improvement District Steering Group's proposals to establish a Business Improvement District (BID) for Fort William. The report also explained the Council's involvement and support provided. It was highlighted that the Economy and Infrastructure Committee confirmed that Highland Council had no cause to exercise its right of veto in respect of the establishment of the BID at its meeting held on 22 August 2024.

Information was provided on the ballot of local businesses to determine whether the BID goes ahead. The Council would also get a vote on any properties it had in the BID area that had no tenant in them. There was a concern that the Council, who was not a business, would be paying into the BID with public money.

Further, a view was expressed that while being supportive of BID areas, there was disappointment that the BID area would cut Fort William in half in that businesses on one side of the river lochy would have to pay for the BID while businesses on the other side would not. It should have included the whole of the Fort William town. Also, Members were being asked to agree the BID, but

for 3 Members there would be no cost to their electorate and they were being asked to impose a burden on people not in their Ward.

Ultimately, it would be down to businesses in the BID area whether to support the BID or not in the ballot. Businesses were encouraged to participate in the BID process so they understood the proposals, objectives and what it would mean for their business and contributions that they would have to make should the BID be supported.

The Committee:-

- i. Noted the proposals for the establishment of a Business Improvement District in Fort William;
- ii Noted the Economy and Infrastructure Committee confirmed that Highland Council had no cause to exercise its right of veto in respect of the establishment of the BID at its meeting held on 22 August 2024; and
- * iii. Agreed to recommend to full Council that it supports the Fort William BID Proposal when this is considered at the meeting of the Highland Council on 19 September 2024.

**9. Highland Council Representative on the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust
Rìochdaire Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd air Urras Dualchais Eilean Eige**

The Committee was invited to appoint 1 Member to serve as a Director of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust.

Ms K Willis was nominated by Mr A Baldrey and this was seconded by Ms L Siggers.

There being no other nominations, the Committee therefore Agreed that Ms K Willis be appointed as a Director of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust.

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

The Committee Noted the following Ward Discretionary Fund grant awards 2024/25:-

Ward 11

CAMAS - Programme of Events 2024 - £950
West Highland Museum - Expansion & Upgrade Project - £1,000
Knoydart Foundation - Community Venison Value Added Building Project - £900
An Aird Events Ltd - Lochaber Live - £600
Knoydart Foundation – Website rebuild - £1,825
Highlife Highland - Highland Archive Service Isle of Eigg workshop £356
Arisaig & District Community Council – Christmas Lights - £1,000

Ward 21

CFINE - Fareshare in Highland (Fort William & Ardnamurchan) £366
West Highland Museum - Expansion & Upgrade Project - £1,000

The Island Park Community Field SCIO - Kinlochleven Gala Day 2024 - £500
An Aird Events Ltd - Lochaber Live - £900
Acharacle Community Council – Community noticeboard- £862.37

11. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 14 May, 2024 which were approved by the Council on 27 June, 2024, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

The meeting ended at 11.35 a.m.