

The Highland Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the **Nairnshire Committee** held Remotely on 5 August 2024 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr M Green
Ms B Jarvie
Mr L Fraser
Mr P Oldham

In Attendance:

Mr M Greig, Community Development Manager, Communities and Place
Mr S Grant, Senior Engineer, Roads & Infrastructure, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Mr M MacDonald, Technician, Roads & Infrastructure, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Mrs J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance
Ms M Nixon, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

Also in Attendance:

Mr N Nethercott, Station Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Mr C MacPherson, Chief Executive, Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport

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 M Green in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED** the following Transparency Statement:-

Item 5 – Mr M Green

3. Recess Powers

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 Nairnshire Committee.

4. **Good News** **Naidheachdan Matha**

The Committee **NOTED** the following items of Good News:-

- that Mr Alastair Asher had been appointed president of the Royal Caledonian Curling Club, which was a great honour for Alistair, the Nairn Curling Club and the town of Nairn;
- the Committee congratulated Calum Scott, who was the leading golf amateur at the recent Open Championship;
- it was noted that Jesicca Bowie had recently been appointed to role of Community Support Officer and would be a primary contact for local community councils;
- that Viewfield Stables had been emptied and the contents had been collected or donated to charity, and enquiries were underway to explore options to offer the stables as a commercial let;
- the second meeting of the Common Good Fund Engagement Group took place on 1 August 2024 and thanks were given to those who attended;
- good wishes were given to Doug MacLean who was recently appointed as Chair of the Nairn Museum;
- the Committee noted that it was the 200-year anniversary of the RNLI, and they were grateful for the presence of flags around Nairn, thanks were expressed to the local teams for their outstanding work;
- Members noted the Yarn Bombers Group, whose outstanding knitting and crocheting creations across the town of Nairn were commended;
- the upcoming Nairn Book and Arts Festival programme had been released and it was noted that, tickets for events were being sold fast;
- it was raised that the Nairn Local place plan was now out for consultation for public comment;
- that Marine Road had been realigned before the Highland Games take place; and
- that the water leak which had been present on the High Street was currently being repaired.

5. **Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Update** **Cunntas às Ùr mu Shaor-phort Uaine Chaolas Chromba**

Transparency Statement: Mr M Green made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a member of the Council's Inverness & Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Monitoring Group.

There had been a presentation by the Chief Executive Officer of the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- Members commented that the Freeport's membership of the Buy Social Scotland pledge and the FSB was encouraging, and this would offer supply chain opportunities for local businesses;
- it was queried if there would be a portal created for local businesses to discover potential opportunities within the Freeport. Clarification was given that the Freeport was cooperating with the FSB and local businesses to support the creation of a mechanism like this. Local businesses would be

encouraged to work together and form small consortiums to bid for contracts as they arose;

- clarification was sought and given as to what impact the General election and the new Government would have on new windfarms being constructed within the Cromarty Firth;
- it was asked if the social impact measuring from the Freeport was Highland wide or focussed more locally and Members requested that further reports be provided on this matter going forward to ensure there was transparency on this matter;
- clarification was sought and provided on how career pathways would be communicated to schools. The Chief Executive of the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport explained that many of the roles which would not become available immediately, but communication with schools and colleges would take place;
- it would be beneficial to hold a careers fair to encourage people to see the human face of the Freeport, it was confirmed that small Career fairs had already taken place and it would be pertinent to increase the scope of these to raise awareness of the opportunities which would become available. The Chair would communicate with the Chief Executive of the Green Freeport to progress this; and
- that UHI and colleges should encourage career pathways to the Freeport, as part of a wider network of support. It was suggested that this might help to stem the net loss of young people who left the Highlands every year.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

6. Fire Performance Report - Annual Report Aithisg Coileanaidh Smàlaidh – Aithisg Bhliadhnaidh

There had been circulated Report No NC/10/24 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- it was noted that encouragingly, the general trend of fires was decreasing;
- clarification was sought and given about how people would request a home fire visit and what factors would impact the decision to carry out a fire safety visit;
- it was queried as to the loss of the female firefighter who had previously been a member of the Nairn crew. The Station Commander for Nairn clarified that this member had been promoted out with the area and had moved elsewhere to pursue further career opportunities within the Service. It was noted that a new female firefighter was currently going through training;
- that availability of the second appliance was down compared to previous years. It was clarified that availability was an ongoing challenge but availability for the first appliance remained very high and Nairn had good coverage provided by the Fire Service;
- credit was given, as the fire service in Nairn was held in high regard, and this would assist in recruitment; and
- clarification was sought and provided about the challenges of retaining staff within the Service.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the Report.

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

There had been circulated Report No NC/11/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- Members noted that there had been no reduction in capacity or staffing on previous years and there were aspirations for hiring more staff; and
- it was raised that despite it being discussed at a previous Area Committee, on 8 August 2022, the map of gritting routes on the Council's website had not yet been amended, it was requested and confirmed that when this was amended, Members would be informed.

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

8. Nairn Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitchean Inbhir Narann

There had been circulated to Members only Report No NC/12/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During Discussion, the following points were raised:

- it was queried when the new accounting system would be operational and whether assurance could be given that this would be in place before the next Area Committee in November. Clarification was given that it was anticipated that for the next meeting, this would be in place;
- that the useable reserves for the Nairn Common Good Fund were impressive, and it was raised that the interest of £17,000 as part of the fund had not been included in the budget, clarity was sought and given as to why this was omitted;
- clarification was sought and given on why staff costs had decreased but the cost of professional services had increased, the Community Development Manager explained that there was an overall reduction in costs from last year and a more accurate representation would be sought before the next Area Committee;
- it was noted that the Committee was monitoring the progress of the Nairn Community and Arts Centre, and this was an ongoing project;
- Members raised that of the anticipated useable reserves, 5% of that figure had potentially been spent and it was reiterated that when Q1 financial figures had been received, this number would be ring-fenced for clarification;
- the Coastal erosion issue for the area was very pressing and would only become more so, Members considered that including this within the budget for the next year would be sensible and would require Government support;
- it was raised that the Government flood money fund should be reinstated, and that the Council should lobby both the UK and Scottish Governments for funding and a long-term strategy for this issue, as this was as a national flood defence problem;
- whether the remaining Coastal defences could be bolstered and repaired to improve their efficiency;
- clarification was sought about how the quotes which had been received for the options brought before the Committee;
- the seriousness of the issue was questioned, and it was suggested that any temporary repairs which were required could use funds from the Common Good Fund; and

- Members raised that money should not be spent on flood protection schemes until the UK and Scottish Governments made funding available.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the position of the NCGF as shown in the Q4 Revenue Monitoring Statement against Budget for 2023/24;
- NOTED** the proposal and options regarding coastal erosion at Nairn Links and that works carried out were required to be approved and taken from NCGF reserves; and
- AGREED** the recommendation outlined within section 6.4 of the report.

**9. Nairn Common Good Fund – Invitation to Pay Parking Scheme
Maoin Math Coitchean Inbhir Narann – Sgeama Cuireadh Pàigheadh airson
Parcadh**

There had been circulated Report No NC/13/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- Members voiced their disappointment that there was no representation for this report as there were questions which they wished answered. Compared to the previous year the costs had changed drastically and there were concerns about this; and
 - it was decided to defer this item to the next meeting as there were important questions that were unanswered.
- The Committee **AGREED** that report be deferred until the next Area Committee meeting on the 4 November 2024; and
 - meantime, to query the Nairn £40 Permit parking Scheme with the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

**10. Proposed Permanent Traffic Order – 40MPH Limit on Extents of A939 & C1175
Òrdugh Trafaig Maireannach ga Mholadh – Crìoch-astair 40msu air earrannan
den A939 agus den C1175**

There had been circulated Report No NC/13/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised;

- that it was sensible proposal given the increase in HGV traffic;
- that the limit be extended to include a longer stretch of road and include a 40MPH extension of the limit to House Hill, it was clarified that this Proposed Permanent Traffic Order would include the referenced stretch of carriageway;
- Members recollected that a section of this road had been suggested for change to a 20MPH limit, and reassurance was given that this would be brought before the Area Roads Team;
- it was raised that the Traffic light sequencing had changed which was causing more delays than previously; and
- Members queried the possibility of improved lighting on the A939 and the dangers of a lack of pavement near the Cemetery.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the proposed change to the permanent traffic order for these roads.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward Discretionary Fund payment that had been approved since the previous meeting of this Committee: -

Green Hive – Nairn Trike Project - £1,516

**12. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the Meeting of the Nairnshire Committee held on 13 May 2024; and the Minutes of the Special Nairnshire Committee held on 24 June 2024 which were approved by the Council on 27 June 2024.