

**The Highland Council**  
**Lochaber Area Committee**

**22 May 2014**

Agenda Item	<b>3</b>
Report No	<b>LA/ 14/14</b>

**Helicopter Landing Sites in Lochaber**

**Report by Acting Head of Community and Democratic Engagement**

**Summary**

The very rural geography of Lochaber with the inclusion of four islands leads to a scattered and fragile area which presents challenges to all emergency responders and partner agencies. The presentation by the Scottish Air Ambulance Service outlines their response to these challenges.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 Lochaber has a population of around 20,000 with slightly more than 50% living within the Fort William settlement zone. The remainder live across Lochaber which extends to 4,656 square kilometres and has one of the lowest population densities in Scotland at 4.25 people per square kilometre. This includes the four Small Isles of Eigg, Rum, Canna and Muck.
- 1.2 In addition, Lochaber enjoys a significant number of tourist visits per year (estimated at approximately 1 million bed nights per year) adding a considerable volume of traffic to the area. Many of these visitors are attracted by the environment and travel throughout the area for walking and other outdoor activities as well as sight-seeing.

**2. Scottish Air Ambulance Service**

- 2.1 Air ambulances support and extend the service provided by ambulance road vehicles and respond to emergency incidents as well as urgent and planned requests. It operates across the whole of Scotland, largely in remote rural and island locations. The service is fully funded by the NHS.
- 2.2 The ability to land in remote locations is critical and ongoing change to the fleet and equipment being used is increasing this flexibility and adaptability.
- 2.3 Due to its environment Lochaber also sees frequent use of Search and Rescue helicopters which currently land either at Carr's Corner adjacent to the A82 or at the Glen Nevis Business Park, depending on the urgency of the call.

### **3. Landing Sites**

- 3.1** Currently there are no permanent helicopter landing and / or refueling sites in Lochaber. This is an issue which has been raised via the Community Safety Action Team and which partners are currently seeking to address.

#### **Recommendation**

Members are asked to consider and welcome the advances being made by the Scottish Air Ambulance Service in providing a more adaptable emergency response.

Designation: Acting Head of Community and Democratic Engagement

Date: 12 May 2014

Author: Dot Ferguson

Background Papers: