

Highland Council – Item 6 – Notice of Amendment - Corran Ferry

Letter from Councillor T MacIennan

The communities served by Corran Ferry recognise that Highland Council has to provide this service on an efficient and cost effective basis. With the forthcoming Community Empowerment Bill, the community want to be actively involved in the co-production of future service delivery. After consultation between Local Members and Community Representatives there is agreement that the following may allow us to move forward –

There is a need for complete clarity and openness from Highland Council on a number of areas and it would be helpful if independent opinion was sought on a number of matters.

- 1 What specifically is the State Aid block to this crossing being subsidised.
- 2 Independent confirmation that Highland Council is complying with European Equalities legislation 2010.
- 3 A robust business plan for the future of the crossing which in the short term focuses on savings and an efficient service.
- 4 A longer term over 5 year's business plan which should explore the potential of renewable energy in a fixed crossing.
- 5 The confidence for both Local Members and the wider community to participate in efficiencies and the search for savings going forward can only be attained by access to information pertaining to the financial details of the Corran Ferry.

The local community in a recent meeting with the Chief Executive made the following suggestions for savings - these could form a foundation for future efficiencies -

- Disabled concessions to be reviewed or clearly recognised in the accounts
- Charges for pedestrians and cyclists
- Sponsorship and advertising income
- Challenge maintenance costs and where maintenance services are sourced
- Change refit schedule from annual to bi-annual

To facilitate the gathering of this information and access to financial detail, Local Members and the local community are agreed that a 2% increase for the upcoming financial year allows dialogue to take place pending a long term solution.

Thomas MacIennan

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Letter from Councillor G MacKenzie

Thomas

Thank you for your proposals on behalf of the Lochaber Members and local community to help us resolve the issues surrounding the Corran Ferry crossing.

I am very pleased that Lochaber Members and the local community recognise the fact that we need to provide this service on an efficient and cost effective basis. It is also great to see the local community has so many ideas that could help close the cost gap, with the added benefit of reducing any risk of State Aid being a factor going forward.

You have requested that the Council reduces its proposed fare increases on 1 April from 4% to 2% to enable dialogue to take place pending a long-term solution. I welcome this as it will allow time for further public consultation to take place on the ideas the community has come up with thus far (plus any further ideas that may come from the community and local Members during consultation). This will allow officers time to work up what cost savings could materialise if these ideas were taken up and how these could further reduce the cost gap going forward.

You have also requested that there be complete clarity and openness from Highland Council on a number of points

I have discussed all of this with the Director and we agree that, in the interest of openness and transparency, all these points should be addressed.

With that in mind, I would propose the following timetable for these activities:

1. What specifically is the State Aid block to this crossing being subsidised

By 31 May 2015

2. Carry out a full analysis of the financial costs (initially with the Lochaber Members)

By 30 June 2015

3. Community consultation on alternative ways to reduce costs

By 31 August 2015

4. Robust Business Plan which in the short-term focuses on savings and efficiencies and in the longer term (5 years plus) explores the potential of renewable energy in a fixed

crossing

By 31 December 2015

5. Complete an Equalities Impact Assessment with independent confirmation that Highland Council is complying with European Equalities legislation 2010 -

By 31 December 2015

The Business Plan and Equalities Impact Assessment will require consultancy work.

Taking all of this into account, I would recommend to Council to:

- i. Agree that the option to transfer the operation of the ferry to Transport Scotland is given no further consideration;
- ii. Approve a 2% per annum increase in the Corran Ferry fares from 1 April 2015;
- iii. Agree the five actions as outlined; and
- iv. Agree that a report comes back to the first Community Services Committee in 2016 detailing the outcomes of these actions and recommending the fares to be applied for 2016/17

Graham