

The Highland Council
No. 6 2025/2026

Minutes of Meeting of the Special Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 12 June 2025 at 2.00pm.

1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence
A' Gairm a' Chlàir agus Leisgeulan

Present:

Ms S Atkin	Mrs B Jarvie (Remote)
Mr A Baldrey (Remote)	Ms L Johnston (Remote)
Mr C Ballance	Mr R Jones
Mr A Baxter	Mr S Kennedy
Dr C Birt	Ms E Knox
Mr B Boyd	Ms L Kraft
Mr R Bremner	Mr B Lobban
Mr I Brown	Mr P Logue
Mr M Cameron	Mr D Louden (Remote)
Mrs I Campbell (Remote)	Mr W MacKay (Remote)
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair (Remote)	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr A Christie	Mrs I MacKenzie (Remote)
Mrs M Cockburn	Mr S Mackie (Remote)
Mr S Coghill (Remote)	Mr A MacKintosh
Ms T Collier (Remote)	Mr R MacKintosh (Remote)
Mrs H Crawford (Remote)	Mrs A MacLean
Ms L Dundas (Remote)	Ms K MacLean
Mr J Edmondson	Mr D Macpherson
Ms S Fanet	Ms J McEwan (Remote)
Mr J Finlayson (Remote)	Mr J McGillivray (Remote)
Mr D Fraser (Remote)	Mr D Millar (Remote)
Mr L Fraser (Remote)	Mr H Morrison (Remote)
Mr R Gale (Remote)	Ms L Niven (Remote)
Mr K Gowans	Mr P Oldham
Mr A Graham	Mrs M Reid
Mr M Green	Mr M Reiss (Remote)
Dr M Gregson	Mr K Rosie (Remote)
Mr R Gunn (Remote)	Ms M Ross
Mrs J Hendry	Mrs L Saggars
Ms M Hutchison (Remote)	Mr R Stewart
Mr A Jarvie	Ms K Willis (Remote)

In Attendance:

Chief Executive
Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate
Chief Officer – Legal and Corporate Governance
Head of Roads and Infrastructure
Joint Democratic Services Manager

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr M Baird, Mr J Bruce, Mr J Grafton, Mr D Gregg, Ms M MacCallum, Mr T MacLennan, Mr D McDonald, Mrs M Paterson, Mrs T Robertson and Mr A Sinclair.

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

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

Notice of Amendment – Corran Ferry – Foot Passenger Fare **Brath Atharrachaidh – Aiseag a’ Chorrain – Faradh Choisichean**

With reference to the Minutes of the Meeting of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee held on 29 May 2025, the following Notice of Amendment had been received in accordance with Standing Order 13.2 –

“We the undersigned, give this Notice of Amendment to review the decision of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee at its meeting on 29 May 2025 at the next meeting of the full Council and agree not to introduce a foot passenger fare on the Corran Ferry”.

Signed:	Mr A Baxter	Mr A Christie	Ms K Willis	Mr R Stewart
	Mr P Logue	Dr M Gregson	Mr R Gale	Mr M Reiss
	Mrs A MacLean	Ms J McEwan	Mrs T Robertson	Mr D Macpherson
	Mr J Edmondson			

In this context, there had been circulated Report No. ECI/13/25, by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place and a copy of the draft Minute from the meeting of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee held on 29 May 2025.

Mr Gowans **MOVED** the Minutes the Economy and Infrastructure Committee on 29 May 2025 with the addition of Mr I Brown as being present at the meeting and except for Item 7 which was the subject of the Notice of Amendment.

In summarising his motion, Mr Gowans drew attention to the support and approximate £70m of funding that had been provided by the Council for the Corran Ferry vessel and infrastructure improvements, which included around £27m of Scottish Government funding that had initially been intended for projects in the Inverness area. A comprehensive report had been presented explaining the socio-economic benefits and risks associated with the proposal to charge £2 for foot passengers on the ferry. It was estimated that around 270k people used the ferry every year, many of whom were tourists. Anyone under the age of 23, over the age of 59, or registered as having a disability, was entitled to free passage on the ferry. The original amendment from Mr Baxter, considered at the Economy and Infrastructure Committee on 29 May 2025, contained the phrase ‘at this time’ in relation to not implementing the foot passenger charge and, as this had been removed from the current amendment, Mr Gowans queried at what point Mr Baxter would consider implementing a foot passenger charge. He also drew attention to Mr Baxter’s proposal in February 2019 to introduce a £1 foot passenger fare. The 2024-25 Quarter 3 revenue monitoring report had shown a forecast £1.3m overspend on the Corran Ferry, which demonstrated that the ferry was already being heavily subsidised by other Council wards. While the Corran Ferry was a vital part of the Council’s integrated transport infrastructure, people did not expect to

use public transport free of charge, with various examples provided of other Highland ferries and their charges. In implementing a foot passenger fare, the key issues were ensuring fairness and equality, and generating much needed income to ensure sustainability of services.

Mr Baxter summarised his Amendment, citing the importance of the Corran Ferry, and highlighting the change from a £3 foot passenger fare proposal at the Economy and Infrastructure Committee on 29 May 2025 to a £2 fare proposal, which it was estimated would generate an income of around £20k. He acknowledged his proposal in 2019 to introduce a £1 charge and explained that he had been told at the time that this would raise £200k in income. He referred to the recent article in the Lochaber News about the impact the proposed foot passenger fare would have on local residents and businesses, and he expressed concern that engagement on the latest fare proposal had not been undertaken with local Members, residents or businesses. He proposed that a review, with appropriate consultation, of the entire ferry fare structure and more clarity on passenger numbers was required, and he highlighted what the cost of the foot passenger fare would be for someone using the ferry to commute to work without a vehicle.

Ms Willis summarised her proposed addition to Mr Baxter's amendment, which was as follows: "Not to proceed with the introduction of a foot passenger fare on the Corran Ferry at this time. To pause and review with an investigation and review of the fare structure and ticketing system on the ferry, to be reported to Full Council in October."

Ms Willis emphasised the need for full consultation with all stakeholders, for more concrete information on passenger numbers, and the impact the introduction of a foot passenger fare would have on local businesses, and for a review of the ticketing system, which required modernisation. She expressed concern that the proposal had been presented to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee without consultation with local Members.

During discussion, some Members spoke in favour of introducing a foot passenger fare as follows:-

- all other Highland ferries charged for foot passengers and other methods of public transport were not free;
- while a bridge would be free, taking a bus across the bridge would not be free;
- a significant amount of funding, which could have been spent elsewhere in the Highlands (with some examples being provided), had been diverted to the Corran Ferry improvements, and income from the foot passenger fare would subsidise the expenditure on the ferry to an extent;
- the cost of holding a special Council meeting to review a democratic decision made at a strategic committee was highlighted;
- the actual number of foot passengers was unknown but once a fare had been introduced, this could be tracked and reported; and
- Members were reminded they represented the needs of the whole of the Highlands, not only those of their local wards.

Other Members spoke against the introduction of a foot passenger fare as follows:-

- key issues included the lack of concrete data on the number of foot passengers using the ferry and the impact the introduction of a fare might have on local businesses and residents, especially those using the ferry to commute to work from this remote and fragile community;
- 800 local residents had signed a petition against the introduction of a fare;
- the residents on the Ardnamurchan peninsula had suffered 145 days without a ferry service, which had cost them financially, and they should not be further penalised by increased fares;
- the 500-year history of the crossing at Corran was summarised, noting its long-term key role for the local economy;
- the lack of consultation with local people, businesses, local Members and the Corran Ferry Stakeholder's Group was concerning;
- the possible impact on depopulation if people felt they could not afford to live and work on the peninsula should be considered as a risk; and
- given the relatively low level of income that would be generated, it was not worth the damage that might be caused to the local economy and individuals without further engagement and investigation.

It was also suggested that only tourists and visitors, and not local residents, should be charged the foot passenger fare.

Following a summary of the motion and amendment, Mr Baxter accepted the addition of Ms Willis' proposal into his amendment.

Mr K Gowans, seconded by Mr M Green, **MOVED** the decision made by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee on 29 May 2025 to introduce a Corran Ferry Foot Passenger Fare.

Mr A Baxter, seconded by Ms K Willis, moved as an **AMENDMENT** the motion as detailed above, with the following addition: not to proceed with the introduction of a foot passenger fare on the Corran Ferry at this time. To pause and review with an investigation and review of the fare structure and ticketing system on the ferry, to be reported to Full Council in October.

Following a vote there were 34 votes for the motion and 27 for the amendment, with no abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore carried, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the motion:

Ms S Atkin, Dr C Birt, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs B Campbell, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs M Cockburn, Mrs T Collier, Ms L Dundas, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Ms E Knox, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Loudon, Mr W MacKay, Mr G MacKenzie, Ms K MacLean, Mr D Millar, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Niven, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Reid, Mr K Rosie, Mrs M Ross.

For the amendment:

Mr A Baldrey, Mr C Ballance, Mr A Baxter, Mr A Christie, Mr S Coghill, Mrs H Crawford, Mr J Edmondson, Ms S Fanet, Mr R Gale, Mr A Graham, Dr M Gregson, Mr R Gunn, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs B Jarvie, Mr P Logue, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mr R MacKintosh, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D Macpherson, Ms J McEwan, Mr J McGillivray, Mr M Reiss, Mrs L Saggars, Mr R Stewart, Ms K Willis.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** to introduce a Corran Ferry Foot Passenger Fare and **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee held on 29 May 2025 subject to the inclusion of Mr I Brown in the attendance.

The meeting was concluded at 3.20pm.