

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	10
Report No	LA/34/25

Committee: Lochaber Area

Date: 10 November 2025

Report Title: Corran Ferry Update

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme, the Corran Ferry New Electric Vessel and Corran Ferry Service operations.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to **note** the:-

- i. Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme (CFIIS) & Corran Ferry New Electric Vessel (CFNEV) Updates; and
- ii. Corran Ferry Service Update

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – Resource implications are highlighted where required within the report.
- 3.2 **Legal** – Legal advice continues to be followed throughout.
- 3.3 **Risk** – Without the Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme (CFIIS) and Corran Ferry New Electric Vessel (CFNEV), the future reliability, capacity and sustainability of the ferry service is at risk. The ferry service plans do not conflict with any aspirations for a fixed link (tunnel or bridge). A ferry is required until such time that any fixed link is constructed. The new ferry design is standardised with CalMac/CMAL vessels and will be resaleable if required.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – In future the new berth provided as part of the CFIIS eliminates the risks associated with the daily ship-to-ship transfer of crew. Meantime, the new flit boat will improve the safety of the current crew-transfer operations.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** – There are no implications for Gaelic.

4 Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme (CFIIS) and Corran Ferry New Electric Vessel (CFNEV) Updates

- 5.1 Please find the "[CFIIS](#) & [CFNEV](#) Updates" in **Appendix 1** of this report.

Corran Ferry Service Update

6 Maid of Glencoul

- 6.1 After completing her refit, obtaining her Passenger Certificate and journeying home, the Maid of Glencoul is back on her mooring at Ardgour, available as relief vessel and to cover for the MV Corran's planned refit commencing at the end of October 2025.

7 MV Corran

- 7.1 The MV Corran is operating as normal. As usual the timetable details and other information is available on the website [here](#).
- 7.2 On Sunday 12 October 2025 Corran Ferry started service early, at 6.20 am (instead of the usual 8.30 am Sunday start time). This extra service was provided by Highland Council to tie in with the early sailings arranged by CalMac's Lochaline – Fishnish ferry service arranged to accommodate extra traffic volumes due to passengers leaving the Isle of Mull after the Mull Rally which took place 10 – 12 October 2025.
- 7.3 The MV Corran's Passenger Certificate expires at the end of October 2025 when she then leaves for her annual refit.
- 7.4 Ensuring that the main vessel is in service up until the end of the Mull Rally and the October school holidays, minimises inconvenience for ferry passengers.
- 7.5 This refit is planned to take place over a shorter timeframe than recent refits, the number and scale of works being less. However, significant works include overhaul of the forward propulsion unit by the original equipment manufacturer, and steel hot-work repairs to the vehicle ramps.

8 Flit Boat (Crew Transfer Launch)

- 8.1 The new flit boat upgrade is progressing well.
- 8.2 The order has been placed for the new flit boat, and it will arrive by the end of the financial year.
- 8.3 60% of the funding is provided from Coastal Communities Funding by the Lochaber Area Community Regeneration Fund approved at Lochaber Area Committee on 11 August 2025 – [Item 8](#).
- 8.4 Recognising the importance of the project and the local value of the flit boat, the Capital Programme Board also approved funding, providing the remaining 40% from the Fleet Capital Budget to ensure the project could take place successfully.
- 8.5 The flit boat upgrade has several benefits:-
 - 8.5.1 Improved crew transfer safety through the provision of a bespoke access platform on the new flit boat, designed to improve the safety of the ship-to-ship transfer of the crew that must be undertaken daily in all weathers (the Corran Ferry is moored overnight on a swing mooring until completion of the new berth under the CFIS project).
 - 8.5.2 This in turn improves Corran Ferry service delivery resilience because safer crew transfer extends the ferry service operating window in bad weather.
 - 8.5.3 Reduced maintenance costs. Being new, and constructed from HDPE, the maintenance costs will be lower. In the context of tough plastic workboats, HDPE stands for High-Density Polyethylene, a lightweight but strong, durable, and versatile thermoplastic polymer known for its high tensile strength, impact resistance, and non-corroding properties, making it ideal for demanding marine applications.
 - 8.5.4 Widened recruitment pool. The new flit boat is extremely seaworthy and will enable crossing The Corran Narrows in all weathers to collect crew where the old boat could not, benefitting both the local community and the future resilience of the ferry service.
 - 8.5.5 Contingency passenger service. Having a suitable boat of our own means that in future we can provide an immediate foot passenger service in the unfortunate event that the Corran Ferry service is off due to the simultaneous breakdown of both the MV Corran and the Maid of Glencoul (as happened most recently in August 2025 for 5 days), also reducing the costs incurred through hiring a suitable passenger boat and crew (as on previous occasions).
 - 8.5.6 Safety cover. Over the years the Corran Ferry flit boat and crew have been First Responder to many incidents in the strong tidal waters at The Corran Narrows, helping to ensure that incidents are dealt with quickly and do not escalate, potentially saving lives, and preventing disruption to the ferry service. As well as assisting yachts, fishing boats and on rare occasion the ferry itself, they have also saved the lives of pets and swimmers who have got into difficulty in the dangerous waters.

9 Slipway Repairs

- 9.1 The Corran Slipway, on the Nether Lochaber side, was repaired during August 2025, with finishing works completed in early October 2025.
- 9.2 Repairs comprised repair to the edge beam on the south face, and extensive concrete surfacing repairs and patching.
- 9.3 Due to the efforts of those involved, the works went smoothly with minimal disturbance to residents and local businesses, whom we thank for their patience and understanding.
- 9.4 Because the works were scheduled at night when the ferry service was off, there was no detrimental impact to the ferry service or passengers.

10 Staffing

- 10.1 As the Seasonal Marshal trial draws to a close, we are grateful to the marshals for their hard work, dedication, and professionalism throughout the season. Feedback has been positive, and the success of the trial is a direct result of their efforts.

11 Winter Season

- 11.1 Storm Amy caused widespread disruption as it swept the country, but thankfully the effect on Corran Ferry service delivery was limited, with the service being off only on the evening of Friday 3 October 2025 for a few hours, from 4.45 pm.
- 11.2 As usual, real time service updates were issued to inform passengers via Facebook and @CorranFerry on X where Corran Ferry currently has 5,400 followers.
- 11.3 Similarly, messaging was updated at the slipways and on Highland Council's own variable message signs (VMS) at Carr's Corner and Salen junction, and all partner agencies informed immediately.
- 11.4 Corran Ferry live traffic cameras showing the Corran Ferry queues continue to be available for viewing on the Council's Corran Ferry webpage [here](#). The live webcams are provided to assist the local community and the travelling public in journey planning.

12 Ticketing Project

- 12.1 The Corran Ferry Ticketing Project is underway. The aim of the project is to modernise the system, to optimise efficiency and benefit passengers. This will involve a phased approach.
- 12.2 The aims include an online sales option for current fares, where a valid e-ticket with a QR-code would be scanned by the Purser on the boat.
- 12.3 This will include a multi-journey purchase option.
- 12.4 As agreed at the last Lochaber Area Committee, stakeholders will be kept involved as we take this project forward.

13 Contingency Measures

- 13.1 Contingency measures to be deployed in the future, in the unfortunate event that both Corran Ferry vessels are broken down simultaneously, are under review.
- 13.2 As agreed at the last Lochaber Area Committee, stakeholders will be kept involved as we progress this review.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive – Place

Date: 19 October 2025

Author: Richard Porteous, Corran Ferry, Operations Manager

Background Papers: [CFIIS](#) & [CFNEV](#) – Highland Council website
[Item 8](#) – Lochaber Area Committee 11 August 2025

Appendices: Appendix 1 – CFIIS & CFNEV Update

Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme and New Electric Vessel

Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme

1. Planning Application and Marine Licence Consent Update

- 1.1 The planning application was determined at the South Planning Committee on 22 August 2025 when consent was granted and the planning decision notice has been issued.
- 1.2 One of the planning conditions requires parking provision to be provided at Ardgour for unrestricted parking to reflect the current situation and to include and provide proposals for public parking during construction. Options to provide this parking are currently being considered and will be submitted for approval by the Planning Authority in advance of the construction works.
- 1.3 The Marine Licence applications were determined on 10 October 2025 when consent was granted, and the marine licences were issued.

2. Infrastructure Design

- 2.1 The infrastructure design has been completed with Wallace Stone having finalised the detailed design drawings and contract documents for tender issue.

3. Procurement

- 3.1 The Stage 2 Notice, including tender documents and drawings for the Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme (CFIIS), was issued on 15 July 2025 to the five contractors shortlisted through the Stage 1 infrastructure tender process. The tender period was 12 weeks, with a submission deadline of 2 October 2025.
- 3.2 Extensions of time to the tender return date requests were received from the tendering contractors and following review, it was considered that extending the tender return will allow the tenderers to price the tender more robustly, with the expectation that this will provide more certainty with the number of tender returns and submission of commercially competitive tender prices. The revised tender return date has been extended to 23 October 2025.

4. Land

- 4.1 The Estates Team are progressing with land negotiations.

5. Utilities

- 5.1 Communications are ongoing with SSEN for the power requirements and the advance works are now being planned by SSEN. The subsea cable is programmed to be de-energised on 6 November 2025 and SSEN's subcontractor is mobilising on 10 November 2025 to remove the subsea cable.

6. Programme

- 6.1 Following tender return, evaluation and successful award, construction works are programmed to commence in January 2026 with completion programmed for May 2027:

6.2	Activity	Start	Finish
	Detailed Design	28/02/24	07/03/25
	EIA, Marine Licence & Planning Applications	15/03/24	28/02/25
	Marine Licence Consent	28/02/25	10/10/25
	Planning Consent	24/02/25	02/09/25
	Land Acquisition	17/06/24	31/10/25
	Contract Documentation	28/10/24	16/05/25
	Tender Period – Stage 1 – Single Procurement Document	08/01/25	07/02/25
	Tender Period – Stage 2 – Works	15/07/25	23/10/25
	Final Approval of FBC from UK Government	08/12/25	08/12/25
	Contract Award	15/12/25	15/12/25
	Construction	05/01/26	31/05/27

- 6.3 Target date for approval of the FBC from UK Government is prior to 15 December 2025 to allow contract award within the 60-day tender validity period

Corran Ferry - New Electric Vessel

7. Vessel Procurement

- 7.1 As part of the Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited (CMAL) Small Vessels Replacement Programme (SVRP), a concept design has been prepared for the new electric ferry, with a tender specification ready for submission to a shipbuilder.
- 7.2 The vessel will feature a drive-through, roll-on/roll-off (Ro-Ro) standardised design, consistent with CalMac-operated ferries, enhancing service resilience and operational efficiency.
- 7.3 As per the current Infrastructure programme dates (as set out above) the construction of the new 1:8 slipways and the overnight berth will be completed by May 2027. We aim to deliver the new ferry as quickly as is reasonably possible to match the readiness of the infrastructure.

8. Legal Agreements

- 8.1 As reported previously the Economy and Infrastructure Committee (29 May) approved the procurement strategy for the new Corran Ferry. This includes a partnership with CMAL, a joint tender pack, and two separate contracts with the shipyard to deliver one Highland Council vessel and three CMAL vessels under SVRP Phase 2.
- 8.2 In line with this strategy, the project team has completed the final draft of the Joint Working Agreement and continues to work closely with CMAL and legal advisors Addleshaw Goddard LLP. The agreement is now nearing finalisation.

- 8.3 Once the final version is agreed by both the Council and CMAL, the contract will be formalised and signed under the terms of the Joint Tender Agreement under SVRP Phase 2.
- 8.4 The Council will also explore and negotiate with CMAL an appropriate and proportionate approach to Community Benefits relevant to the ship building contract.
- 8.5 Separately, the Yard Support Service Contract with CMAL will be established as an independent service agreement. This will follow the conclusion of the tender process.
- 8.6 To further strengthen the project team and ensure effective oversight, the Council will also appoint a dedicated Client Representative to act on its behalf. While CMAL will lead and manage the Design & Build shipbuilding contract, the Council's representative will be embedded within the project team to support delivery with CMAL always remaining the primary point of contact with the shipyard.
- 8.7 The collaboration will allow THC to play a management role in the project while benefiting from CMAL's extensive experience in vessel procurement and management, technical expertise, economies of scale, site supervision, and ensuring vessel standardisation across the CHFS network.

9. Vessel Delivery

- 9.1 It is anticipated that the new Corran vessel would be the first of four vessels built as part of SVRP Phase 2, with an estimated delivery date at the end of 2028/29.

10. SVRP Phase 2

- 10.1 It is important to note that SVRP Phase 2 will be a separate procurement exercise from Phase 1. It is planned for the second phase of the Islands Connectivity Plan (2026 to 2031) but the realisation of phase two, including planned procurement and construction timeline is subject to funding approvals from Scottish Ministers. Although a later start date, the plan for Phase 2 is for it to run alongside Phase 1 and finish at approximately the same stage.

11. Shore Power

- 11.1 The application for SSEN shore power supply to charge the new Corran vessel overnight has been accepted and paid with an estimated date for delivery of Sept 2028
- 11.2 The importance of this delivery date continues to be escalated, at a senior level through CMAL, SSEN directors and The Highland Council.
- 11.3 In the event of a delay to SSEN's proposed grid upgrade or failure of shore power in the future, the vessel will operate using its built-in backup diesel generator, ensuring that daily operations can proceed without interruption.

12. Deployment Plan 2028/29

- 12.1 The new electric vessel will be the primary vessel and will have capacity to take 32 cars (4 more than the MV Corran) or 16 cars and 2 heavy goods vehicles (HGVs).

The 28 car MV Corran will be retained as the relief vessel. With the larger MV Corran as a backup the service will no longer be limited to carrying shorter articulated lorries during the Winter months.

The older and smaller (50-year-old - 14 car) Maid of Glencoul will be sold

13. Funding

- 13.1 As Members will be aware the Council received confirmation of up to £28m (Nov 2024) in funding from the Scottish Government, for the new electric ferry.
- 13.2 This funding, part of the Inverness and Highland City Region Deal, comes alongside additional investment in shoreside infrastructure which will be funded by £20m from the UK government and £10m from The Highland Council.
- 13.3 As part of the Inverness Highland City Region Deal (IHCRD) governance arrangements, a time extension has been agreed by Scottish and UK Government beyond the original deal end date of March 2027 to align with the estimated spend profile timeline for the Infrastructure and New Vessel.