

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held remotely on Monday, 1 September, 2025 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr J Finlayson
Ms C Gillies

Mr D Millar
Mr R Stewart

Officials in attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate
Ms S Armstrong, Chief Officer Revenues & Commercialisation
Mr G Smith, Service Lead, Infrastructure, Place Service
Mr A MacBain, Client Manager, ICT Services
Mr A MacDonald, Justice Social Work Team Manager
Mr M Sutherland, Roads Operations Manager, Place Service
Mr J Maclean, Bereavement Services Project Manager, Place Service
Ms R Robertson, Project Co-ordinator, Place Service
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager, Community Regeneration Fund, Place Service
Ms M A Gray, Project Officer, Community Regeneration Fund, Place Service
Mr L Marchi, Housing Investment Officer, Place Service
Ms L Bradley, Housing Investment Officer, Place Service
Mr W MacKinnon, Community Development Officer (West & Mid Highland)
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Corporate Service

Also in attendance:

Mr M Colliar, Group Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Ms Jo-Anne Ford, Chief Officer, Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations

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 J Finlayson in the Chair

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were none.

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

There were none.

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee.

4. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Local Committee Performance Report
Aithisg Choileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba

There was circulated Report No SR/18/25 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members and responded to by the Group Commander:-

- The great work of the SFRS in the local area was recognised and thanks were extended to all the employees in the provision of this vital service.
- Recruitment and retention was the biggest challenge facing the service in remote and rural locations and this was recognised at a national level within the SFRS. There was a real focus on working on this to improve the situation.
- It was confirmed that there was legislative guidance on motorhome safety in campsites. In particular, there should be 6 metres space between parked motorhomes, so a fire in one motorhome could not spread to others. SFRS personnel provided guidance on expectations for campsite owners. If there were instances where the guidance was not being adhered, enforcement action could be taken. The SFRS would welcome any reports of instances where this guidance was not being followed, so this could be highlighted for public awareness purposes.
- The joint mobilisation protocol strategy had been introduced due to reduced staffing numbers in stations. The protocol aimed to provide a service that might otherwise not be provided or provided an extended timeline in order to respond to incidents. The Service had never failed to attend an operational incident.
- An update was provided in relation to new SFRS stations in Uig and Portree.

The Committee **NOTED** the Area Performance Report.

5. Community Payback Service - Presentation
Seirbheis Ath-Phàigheadh Coimhearsnachd – Taisbeanadh

The Justice Social Work Team Manger was in attendance to give a presentation on the work of the Community Payback Service.

Following the presentation, the following points were raised by Members and responded to:-

- It was likely there would be more Community Payback cases in future due to plans for more early release of prisoners on short term sentences. It was queried if there would be an increase in staff as a result. If the Scottish Government wished to increase the number of community sentences, there should be more resources provided for staffing. The Service was funded by the Scottish Government.
- It was noted that there was no budget for tools to carry out works. If tools and other resources to carry out works were not donated, it should be recognised that there was a budget need for this.

- It was queried what was the scope of the work undertaken by offenders for Community Payback. Maintenance of cemeteries for example would be a positive news story for communities.
- The Service was keen not to be seen to be taking work off contractors etc. There was a recognition that if the Service did not undertake some work in the community, it would not get done, for example, grass cutting, litter picking.
- It was queried what impact the Service had on preventing re-offending and enabling offenders to get jobs after their sentence was completed. It was advised that unpaid work was one of the more successful ways to stop reoffending.
- A number of building companies were offering training opportunities for offenders and having links with employers would be a focus for the Service.
- There were individual placements such as for example maintenance work on a community centre and working in charity shops.
- Contact details for Community Councils and Groups to contact the Community Payback Service would be provided to Members.

The Committee **NOTED** the informative presentation on the Community Payback Service.

6. Skye and Raasay Future - Presentation **Àm ri Teachd an Eilein Sgitheanaich is Ratharsair – Taisbeanadh**

There was an update presentation on progress on the management of the Skye and Raasay Future (SARF) plan and activities.

Following the presentation, some of the points raised by Members and responded to were as follows:-

- Of the 94 projects originally identified in the SARF plan, 35 projects had already been completed. Contact through the SARF Board would enhance progress with projects and also the process of evaluating projects.
- A Development Trust meeting would be held in September and the feedback from this event would be submitted to the SARF Board in October.
- The SARF Board included the Council, community groups and other stakeholders. There was flexibility to invite other organisations onto the Board and the Board structure would be reviewed annually.
- There was no resources available to undertake case studies of the projects already completed.
- In terms of the involvement of the West Highland Chamber of Commerce in the SARF Board, there was a feeling by members of the public that given this organisation covered such a large area, it might be more appropriate for Skye and Raasay to have its own Chamber of Commerce.

The Chair on behalf of the Committee thanked the Chief Officer, Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations for the presentation on SARF.

**7. Appointment of Vice Chair & Civic Lead
Cur an Dreuchd Iar-Chathraiche & Ceannard Catharra**

Nominations were invited for the post of Vice Chair & Civic Lead of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair).

Ms C Gillies was nominated by Mr R Stewart, but there was no seconder.

Mr D Millar was nominated by Ms C Gillies and this was seconded by Mr J Finlayson.

There being no further nominations, Mr D Millar was appointed Vice Chair & Civic Lead of the Committee.

**8. Winter Service Plan for 2025/26
Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh airson 2025/26**

There was circulated Report No. SR/19/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Following commentary on the report by the Roads Operations Manager, the following main points were raised by Members and responded to:-

- Filling vacancies and staff retention in the road maintenance team was challenging on Skye. There was great competition for staff on the island with examples of the private sector offering much higher rates of pay. Working with the employability service would hopefully help the situation.
- Preparations were being made for the availability of winter maintenance gritters and footpath tractors.
- Salt piles would be put in place as this was the most efficient method of putting a static winter maintenance resource in place. Salt bins were available for communities as self help during winter conditions, but safety should be the priority when undertaking this task. There were resources and support provided to communities to provide extra resilience in winter conditions. The Roads Operations Manager would be holding an event to brief other organisations on the Council's winter service plan and undertook to invite Members and some representatives from Community Councils to this briefing.
- It was the responsibility of the Trunk Road authority to carry out winter maintenance on pavements alongside trunk roads.
- There was limited flexibility in the winter maintenance plan to cover all school routes as the Council had a policy for primary and secondary routes to receive winter maintenance.
- It was queried what road data had been used to determine areas where winter maintenance resources should be deployed. It was advised that there was not much new data that would affect the winter maintenance plan. There had been new housing estates built, but the roads on those estates had to be adopted by the Council before they would receive winter maintenance treatment by the Council. Work was being carried out to adopt all roads that needed to be adopted.

The Committee:-

- i **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2025/26.
- ii **NOTED** that there would be a briefing to other organisations on the Council's Winter Service Plan and local Members and some Community Council representatives would be invited.

9. **Community Regeneration Fund Assessment of Applications** **Measadh Iarrtasan Maoin Ath-nuadhachadh Coimhearsnachd**

There was circulated Report No. SR/20/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place which detailed current funding requests to the Isle of Skye and Raasay Community Regeneration Fund allocation for discussion and decision by Members.

The report detailed 3 community regeneration fund applications received for consideration. The total request of funding for the 3 applications was £107,696.50 with an available budget of £818,392.67. All 3 applications were eligible for support. The Committee were supportive of all the applications and the grants requested.

The South Skye Community Campus – Phase 1 project, was looking to develop a full-size all weather pitch with flood lighting in Broadford. The total value of the work for this project was £844,000. The report sought to secure the match funding to deliver the project, subject to approval of an Islands Programme application and to agree this will be funded via an award of £200,000 from the Isle of Skye and Raasay Community Regeneration Fund allocation. The Committee were supportive of this request.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the 3 applications for Community Regeneration Fund grant award and the grants requested; and
- ii. to approve an award of £200,000 of Community Regeneration Fund to the South Skye Community Campus – Phase 1 project, subject to approval of the funding application submitted for consideration as part of the Islands Programme 25/26.

10. **Housing Repairs Performance Report** **Aithisg Choileanaidh Taigheadais**

There was circulated Report No. SR/21/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members and responded to:-

- It was queried what the spend on the Environmental budget was. Information on this would be provided to Members.
- In relation to the emergency repair timelines in quarter 3 and 4 of 2024/25, repair times will have been higher during the winter period, for example availability to access properties and supplier delays due to winter weather.
- There were minimum standards to be met before void properties were relet. Also when properties were void, there was the opportunity to see what

funding was available to upgrade properties, for example to improve energy efficiency.

- The Isle of Raasay carbon neutral islands project was working on improving the housing stock on Raasay and they collated information on funding opportunities which would be useful information for the Housing team.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April, 2025 to 30 June, 2025.

11. Portree Link Road Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Rathad-ceangail Phort Rìgh

There was circulated Report No. SR/22/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members and responded to:-

- Since the report was written, the tender documents and drawings for the Portree link road had been completed and uploaded to Public Contracts Scotland. Tenders had been invited from 29 August and the tender return date was 25 September, 2025. It was estimated that the project would be completed by early summer, 2026.
- There was frustration expressed by Members and in the community in relation to delays to this project. It was advised that there was a statutory obligation to consult with all public utilities organisations and the Council had been proactive in engaging with them and in particular there had been discussions with Scottish Water on the project for a number of years. However, the Service could not go out to tender without a settled position in respect of utilities, as this would constitute a risk to the project. There was still a small risk to the project in terms of the Scottish Water programme, and this had been allowed for in the tender contract documents for this process to be completed.
- The contractor had an obligation to engage with public utilities organisations in terms of site service diversions for the road works. Also, there were time periods where the contractor had to give advance notice to public utilities that this work was happening.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the funding position in respect of the Portree Link Road;
- ii. **NOTED** the proposed delivery programme.

12. Bereavement Services Project updates Cunntasan às Ùr mu Phròiseact nan Seirbheisean Bàis

There was circulated Report No. SR/23/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members and responded to:-

- Staff were congratulated for the works undertaken on the Portree burial ground extension. An update was requested as to when snagging, landscaping and works on the paths at this site would be completed. Also, when lairs would be expected to become available. It was advised that contractors had recently been on site undertaking some works on landscaping. Once landscaping had been completed lairs would be available. An undertaking was given to arrange a site visit with Councillor Millar, and other Members should they wish to attend, to discuss these and other issues raised at the meeting, relating to this site.
- Work on the Dunvegan burial ground extension was programmed to commence in spring, 2026 and this was welcomed.
- An update was requested on the future of the Skeabost burial ground which was currently closed. This put pressure on other burial grounds site capacity.
- It was queried how it was determined which burial grounds should receive extensions. It was advised that data was provided by the burial administration team on the number of burials, lair sales etc. and from this an overall picture could be seen on burial ground capacity. Any site with less than ten years capacity would be considered for an extension.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the current capacities and progress of burial ground extensions in the Isle of Skye and Raasay area; and
- ii. the challenges with identifying and developing suitable land for burial ground development.

13. Annual Report on Operational Activities at the Old Man of Storr: First Full Year of Delivery
An Stòrr – Aithisg Ùrachaidh

There was circulated Report No. SR/24/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

Following commentary on the report by Officers, the following main points were raised and responded to at the meeting:-

- This was a very positive report and was a fantastic project and success story for the Isle of Skye. By way of reminder, there had been no capital borrowing for this project. The project aims were to promote sustainable tourism and economic resilience, with benefit for the local area and the creation of local employment. All these aims had been achieved.
- The share of net income generated at the site, such as a share of parking income, was invested in the local area on local infrastructure and services.
- To meet the growing demand from visitors, Phase 2 of the Storr project was currently underway and funding for this had come from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- The staff at the Storr centre were commended for their positive attitude and welcoming approach to their job.
- Pricing at the Storr car park was decided by the Committee in 2023. Prices had been increased to reflect increased service provision at the site. Price increases for locals to use the carpark were kept to a minimum. With Phase

2 of the Storr project due to be completed by March, 2026, it would be appropriate to review the Storr car park pricing at that time as more services were being provided.

- In noting Members safety concerns regarding parking at the site, any improvements in parking capacity or governance of parking would be looked at.
- There was a waiting list of suppliers to the Storr centre and the extension to the centre would further enhance the ability to work with local suppliers. What visitors were purchasing and what could be supplied locally helps determine goods for sale. The emphasis continues to be on working with local suppliers to meet visitor demand and generate income.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the achievements delivered at the Old Man of Storr whole site to date and supported the continued development of this important initiative for the Skye and Raasay area.
- ii. the ongoing developments at the Old Man of Storr site to ensure it continues to serve both visitors and the local community effectively.
- iii. that regular reports will continue to be taken to the Isle of Skye and Raasay Area Committee.

14. Ward Discretionary Budget Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward 10 Discretionary Fund Grant awarded since the last meeting of the Committee.

Dunvegan & District Community Council - Ground Maintenance St Mary's - £750
Skye Cats - Animal welfare education and rehoming project - £507

15. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held on 30 June, 2025, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

The meeting ended at 1.22 p.m.