

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	15
Report No	LA/16/26

Committee: Lochaber

Date: 26 January 2026

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.

6 Corran Ferry Service Update - Maid of Glencoul

6.1 Breakdown

At approximately 10:30 am on Tuesday, 16 December, the Maid of Glencoul experienced a steering fault and was withdrawn from service.

6.2 Communications

Passengers were notified immediately via @CorranFerry on X, the Corran Ferry Facebook page, and the Corran Ferry [website](#).

Local Council Members were notified by email, and a general [media release](#) was issued that afternoon on 16 December 2025.

Through its [media release](#) the Highland Council apologised to customers for the disruption and thanked our third-party operators for their swift response in providing alternative services, it being Highland Council's priority to provide service alternatives whilst repairs are carried out.

Once more information was available, the weekly stakeholder update was issued as soon as possible next day on Wednesday 17 December 2025.

Further regular updates were then provided as soon as more information became available. These are summarised in Table-1 below.

Table 1 – Communications week commencing 15 December 2025

Comms type	Date Issued	Notes
Members Email	16/12/2025	Maid of Glencoul breakdown and service outage plans.
Media release	16/12/2025	Maid of Glencoul breakdown and service outage plans.
Stakeholder Update	17/12/2025	Maid of Glencoul breakdown and service outage plans. Maid ramp Naval Architect inspection. MV Corran Refit update.
Media release	18/12/2025	Corran Ferry services update.
Members Email	18/12/2025	Maid of Glencoul progress update.
Members Email	19/12/2025	Maid of Glencoul back in service.
Stakeholders Update	19/12/2025	Maid of Glencoul back in service. MV Corran Refit update.
Media release	19/12/2025	Maid of Glencoul back in service. Corran Ferry services update.

6.3 Contingencies

Contingency plans were implemented immediately to maintain connectivity for communities.

Alternative Services:-

1. A 12-passenger foot service across the Corran Narrows (Nether Lochaber to Ardgour) commenced at 13:30 hrs on Tuesday 16 December 2025, 3-hours after the Maid of Glencoul was taken out of service, following the normal ferry service timetable, until further notice.
2. An enhanced passenger service operated immediately between Camusnagaul and Fort William Pier. Timetable details provided on the website belonging to the operator, [Highland Ferries \(external link\)](#).
3. Plans were also mobilised to provide a connecting shuttle bus service between Strontian, Ardgour, and Camusnagaul.

6.4 Repairs

The steering fault required to be repaired by specialist engineers. The ferry team communicated closely with them from the outset of the breakdown. Due to the time of year, they were struggling to get an engineer to site at short notice. Meantime our crew worked with them remotely.

If the issue could not be resolved by that method to everyone's satisfaction (including the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)), then we would require to wait until specialist engineers could get to site. The specialist engineers worked hard to make this happen.

However, working with the specialists remotely was effective, and the work of our own engineers proved key to the successful resolution.

6.5 Return to Service

The Maid of Glencoul returned to service following two days of successful sea trials and operating approval by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). The vessel resumed service at 2pm on Friday 19 December 2025.

The return to service [media release](#) was issued in the afternoon of Friday 19 December 2025 informing and apologising to the public for the inconvenience and thanking our third party operators again for assisting with alternative services at this important time of year for passengers.

6.6 Vehicle Ramps

As agreed at the Corran Ferry Stakeholder Group meeting on Monday, 8 December 2025, a Naval Architect conducted an on-site assessment on Monday, 15 December. This included a review of recent refit work on the Maid of Glencoul's ramps, specifically the replacement of worn stools.

Initial verbal feedback indicates potential options to improve access for low-slung vehicles. A written report is being prepared and will be communicated as soon as it becomes available.

7 **MV Corran**

7.1 Annual Winter Refit

The MV Corran's refit is progressing well. Parts for Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) equipment required for emergent repairs identified during dry dock are subject to lead-time challenges. However, every effort is being made to expedite delivery. The current programme indicates completion in early 2026, with a more definitive timeline expected in January.

Updates continue to be provided to the Corran Ferry Stakeholder Group through our weekly communications.

8 Dry-dock Scheduling and Passenger Certificate dates

8.1 At the last stakeholder discussion on Monday 8th December 2025, officers agreed an action to contact the MCA regarding Marine Safety Certificate and below is the initial response we have received from the MCA (see section 8.2 below).

8.2 The anniversary date of the certificate is set and cannot routinely be changed.

The Corran has certificate anniversary date of 31st Oct and Maid of Glencoul has certificate anniversary date of 8th March. It is up to you to manage around this with dockings/maintenance as required.

There is a possibility to have a “one off” change of anniversary date – you would need to provide a formal request for this and outline the reasons why you wish to change it. The new date would then be set and not able to be changed again.

Note also that the renewal surveys for your certificates generally need to take place within 3 months of the expiry/anniversary date.

The legal basis for the above can be found in SI 2015 No. 0508 - The Merchant Shipping (Survey and Certification) Regulations 2015.”

8.3 In January we will work to seek any potential change request as outlined by the MCA to see if this is a viable option to consider.

9 Flit Boat

9.1 The construction of the new flit boat (crew transfer vessel) is progressing well, to be completed this financial year in line with budget funding.

9.2 The name of the new flit boat is Mòrag Bheag (Wee Morag).

This is after Ms Mackintosh whose family used to operate the ferry before Highland Region took it over in 1975. Ms Mackintosh still lives next to the slipway and is happy for the boat to be named after her.

10 Corran Ferry History Project

10.1 Oral History Recordings for [Am Baile](#)

Ms Mackintosh has also kindly agreed to do an Oral History recording. There is already a [recording of Anne Mackintosh](#), Morag’s elder sister on the Am Baile website (Highland History and Culture, the [Highland Archive Service](#), Highlife Highland).

Lochaber Archive Centre also plan to interview various other people to capture Oral History recordings related to the history of Corran Ferry for [Am Baile](#).

10.2 Corran Ferry History

Highland Council has various historical Corran Ferry records, and objects of significance that Lochaber Archive Centre wish to preserve and add to their existing collection of documents and photographs.

They will work with the Corran Ferry team to do so as the Corran Ferry service enters the upcoming period of transition to the new ferry and infrastructure.

11 Ticketing

- 11.2 As confirmed previously, 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.

The project focuses on an online sales option for current fares, where a valid m-ticket with a QR-code would be scanned by the ferry Purser.

This will include a multi-journey purchase option.

- 11.3 As agreed at Lochaber Area Committee, stakeholders will be kept involved as we take this project forward.

As the project advances officers are currently working closely with colleagues in the Business Improvement Team and Procurement Services.

12 Winter Season

12.1 Strong north westerly winds have had an impact this last quarter.

Storm Bram affected the north-west. Thankfully the effect on the Corran Ferry service was limited to the service being off overnight from Tuesday afternoon on 09 December 2025.

There were also brief afternoon/evening outages for short-lived unnamed storms on 27 November and 13 December 2025.

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.

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.

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.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive – Place

Date: 22 December 2025

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Background Papers: [CFIIS](#) & [CFNEV](#) – Highland Council website
[Item 10](#) – Lochaber Area Committee 10 November 2025

Appendices: Appendix 1 – CFIIS & CFNEV Update

Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme and New Electric Vessel

Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme

1 Planning Application Update

- 1.1 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. The parking between the new slipway and berthing structure has been reviewed where the revised proposal is to provide 18 perpendicular parking spaces which is an increase from the originally proposed 8 parallel parking spaces. This proposal has been submitted for approval to the Planning Authority in advance of the construction works.

2 Procurement

- 2.1 The Stage 2 Notice tender process was completed on 23 October 2025 when tender submissions were received. The tender evaluation and assessment process has been completed, and the award letter has been issued to the preferred contractor.

3 Utilities

- 3.1 SSEN have completed their subsea cable removal works and their advanced works are now well progressed prior to the construction works commencing

4 Programme

- 4.1 Construction works are programmed to commence at the end of January 2026 with completion programmed for May 2027. The first Community Liaison Group meeting will be arranged following the contractor mobilising on site.

4.2

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	01/12/25
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	26/11/25	30/01/26
Contract Award	15/12/25	15/12/25
Construction	26/01/26	31/05/27

5 Vessel Procurement - THC / CMAL Partnership Agreement

- 5.1 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 the Small Vessels Replacement Programme Phase 2.
- 5.2 As part of this strategy, the partnership agreement with CMAL has been completed and formally endorsed.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 To strengthen the project team and maintain oversight, the Council will appoint a dedicated Client Representative. While CMAL will lead and manage the Design & Build contract, the Council's representative will work within the team to support delivery, with CMAL remaining the primary contact for the shipyard.
- 5.5 This collaboration allows THC to take an active management role while leveraging CMAL's expertise in vessel procurement, technical support, economies of scale, and site supervision. It also ensures the new Corran vessel is standardised with those being deployed across the CHFS network.

6 Vessel Delivery

- 6.1 The SVRP Phase 2 procurement process is planned to start in Q1 2026/27. 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 of Q4 2028/29.
- 6.2 It is important to note that SVRP Phase 2 will be a separate procurement exercise from SVRP 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.