

Agenda Item	8
Report No	LA/24/26

The Highland Council

Committee: Lochaber Area

Date: 11 May 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 the 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 new ferry design is standardised with CalMac/CMAL which will offer an enhanced robust process.

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 improves 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 a monitoring and/or 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 With construction now under way on the transformational £30m Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme (CFIIS) landside project, the next 18 months will deliver major upgrades on both shores of the Narrows. This includes a new slipway and overnight berthing pier at Ardgour, alongside a new slipway, breakwater, marshalling area, parking, cycle path and enhanced public facilities at Corran (Nether Lochaber).

These improvements lay the groundwork for the forthcoming £28m investment in the Corran Ferry New Electric Vessel (CFNEV), ensuring a modern, reliable and sustainable service for the route.

The Corran Ferry service is a priority within the Highland Council Delivery Plan 2024-27 and the Highland Council Local Transport Strategy. Funded through the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal (IHCRD), this combined £58m transport ferry investment marks a pivotal time for the Highland Council's Corran Ferry service, the busiest single-vessel route in Scotland.

- 5.2 Please find the most recent CFIIS and CFNEV Updates in **Appendix 1** of this report.

Corran Ferry Service Update

6 MV Corran

- 6.1 In November 2025 the MV Corran left for her annual winter refit.

- 6.2 The MV Corran was unable to return to Ardgour until March 2026 due to Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) repair work to the forward propulsion unit caused by OEM parts delays. This was extended further until the end of March by associated OEM warranty work.

Successful final completion of this warranty work by the OEM before Easter allowed the MV Corran to re-enter service in time for the busy holiday season.

Throughout this challenging period, our ferry crew worked relentlessly to get the MV Corran home and ready for service. During this period, we utilised the Maid of Glencoul to allow for service to carry on during this period of outage with MV Corran. This resulted in officers working closely with the MCA to agree short term safety certificate inspection and certification.

- 6.3 The MV Corran's refit took 5 months for OEM repairs and warranty work.

These scenarios are consistent within the wider industry for this type and age of vessel, evidenced by numerous comparable issues affecting other ferry vessels throughout the Scottish ferry network; currently officers are exploring options to reduce risks whilst noting general supply concerns due to conflict in the middle east.

- 6.4 It is notable that Isle of Mull passengers are heavily dependent on Corran Ferry when there are problems with Mull ferries, as experienced before Easter and the increased usage of Corran ferry during this period.

- 6.5 The Highland Council continues to seek ways to minimise downtime of its ferries and streamline overhaul periods wherever possible.

In recent years, both Highland Council vessels have seen an intensive period of investment, coinciding with major equipment reaching scheduled service intervals. The Council will review future maintenance schedules to maximise efficiency and ensure continued resilience for the communities that rely on the Corran Ferry service.

7 Maid of Glencoul

- 7.1 During the MV Corran's refit, the relief vessel the Maid of Glencoul (51 years old), operated daily, with only 6 days outage out of 151 days in service, which crew and specialist OEM marine engineers worked quickly to resolve. (This was described in the Corran Ferry Update report to Lochaber Committee on 26 January 2026 - [Item 15.](#))

- 7.2 The Maid of Glencoul is now away at her own annual refit. She left Ardgour on Monday 13 April, following the return to service of the MV Corran before Easter.

There are no major equipment overhauls due for the Maid of Glencoul's refit this year. However, she has superstructure repairs and essential rewiring and out of water surveys indicate steel hull patching requirements.

- 7.3 At this refit, as discussed with the Corran Ferry Stakeholder Group, we plan to make some alterations to the original design of the end-flaps on the Maid's ramps to improve the slipway transition for vehicles and we will continue to share any latest information from the Naval Architects with Stakeholders.

- 7.4 Having lost her Dangerous Goods licence due to the age and extent of works required on the Maid of Glencoul, and having invested in the vessel, re-application is planned at this refit, therefore we hope to be able to carry Dangerous Goods on the Maid of Glencoul when she returns from refit. We apologise to affected passengers for inconvenience caused during the winter months while the Maid of Glencoul has been in service.
- 7.5 All considered, the Maid of Glencoul's current refit schedule is anticipated to take 2 – 3 months, allowing her to return to Ardgour in time for the busy summer season in July.

8 Seasonal Traffic Marshals

- 8.1 Commencement of Marshals for 2026 was fast tracked to tie in with the start of the busy season and this year's early Easter.

At the end of March, Corran Ferry queues experienced high traffic volumes influenced by Oban – Isle of Mull ferry service outages. Police Scotland assisted initially until our Seasonal Marshals took over.

The marshalling trial commenced last season and proved beneficial for the safety of passengers and queueing traffic. We have extended the trial again this year and we continue to seek ways to improve the service.

9 Corran Ferry Stakeholder Group

- 9.1 After frequent meetings held over 7 years from 2018 – 2025, the Corran Ferry Steering Group ceased when construction started on the Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme (CFIIS) in March 2026 and is now replaced by the regular CFIIS Community Liaison Group meetings held by the contractor.
- 9.2 Consequently, Corran Ferry Stakeholder Group meetings began in January 2026 to focus on Corran Ferry service operations. Corran Ferry Stakeholder Group meetings take place quarterly, the day after each Lochaber Area Committee, and minutes and associated reports or information are published on the [Corran Ferry Stakeholder Group](#) page of the council's [Corran Ferry](#) website.

10 Flit Boat

- 10.1 Mòrag Bheag the new Corran Ferry crew transfer launch (flit boat) is now in service at Ardgour. She replaces the old flit boat the Rebecca Anne and this improves our resilience plans which have been agreed with local members/stakeholder group.

We are grateful for the Coastal Communities Funding provided by the Lochaber Area Community Regeneration Fund at Lochaber Area Committee on 11 August 2025 - [Item 8](#) which agreed to contribute 60% of the necessary funding.

- 10.2 As described in the Corran Ferry Update report for Lochaber Area Committee on 10 November 2025 - [Item 10](#), the flit boat upgrade provides a number benefits including:
- Improved crew transfer safety;
 - A wider range of operating weather conditions, extending the ferry service; operating window in inclement weather;
 - Reduced maintenance costs;
 - The ability to provide an in-house contingency foot passenger service;
 - A wider recruitment pool (being able to cross the Corran Narrows in all weathers); and
 - Improved safety response at the Corran Narrows.

11 Ticketing

- 11.1 The aim of the Corran Ferry Ticketing Project is to modernise the ticketing system, to optimise efficiency and benefit passengers.

The project focuses on an online sales option for the current fares, where a valid m-ticket (with a QR-code) purchased online and presented on a smartphone to the Purser on the ferry, will then be scanned by the Purser on the ferry (and validity confirmed).

- 11.2 This will include a multi-journey purchase option (i.e. x30 or x40 tickets in a bundle to replace the existing x30 tickets in a paper book).

- 11.3 As the project advances officers continue to work closely with support colleagues in Digital Improvement and Commercial and Procurement Services.

- 11.4 Since establishing our statement of requirements unfortunately there has been a delay of several weeks due to personnel changes in the supplier's project team. However, at the time of writing, we expect the quotation from the suppliers within the next 10 days.

This delay has affected the project delivery timeline. We are still working to implement later this summer if possible, however third-party supply-end delays, passenger engagement, sufficient time for testing, etc will all determine the eventual launch date.

- 11.5 The launch of Highland Council's new Online Engagement Platform 'Go Vocal' will help facilitate with passenger engagement.

- 11.6 Ongoing project work for example includes consideration of potential digital exclusion of some passengers and possible solutions.

We have been working on this with third sector organisation the Mhor Collective, a Community Interest Company specialising in digital inclusion.

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

12 Winter Weather

- 12.1 Storm Chandra at the end of January affected the Corran Ferry, putting the service off early overnight on 27 January due to high SW winds.
- 12.2 February was dull, mild and dryer than average, but March was particularly windy and unsettled in the NW Highlands, featuring repeated Atlantic weather systems, significant rainfall, and strong W and NW winds.
- 12.3 These high winds in March frequently caused significant disruption to ferry services throughout Scotland.

The Corran Ferry service was generally less affected, and often the worst of the wind arrived overnight, however on Tuesday 17 March the service was off from late morning to late afternoon.

On the other 4 occasions that the service was off due to weather in March each outage was limited to 2 - 3 hours.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 17 April 2026

Author: Richard Porteous – Operations Manager – Corran Ferry

Background Papers: Corran Ferry Update report, Lochaber Committee, 26 January 2026 - [Item 15](#)

Corran Ferry Update report, Lochaber Area Committee, 10 November 2025 - [Item 10](#)

Lochaber Area Community Regeneration Fund report, Lochaber Area Committee, 11 August 2025 - [Item 8](#)

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme (CFIIS) and Corran Ferry New Electric Vessel (CFNEV) Updates

Appendix 1

Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme and New Electric Vessel Update

1 Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme

- 1.1 Following contract award, the contractor commenced site works in mid- February 2026.
- 1.2 Works are progressing on site with the Nether Lochaber tree felling works completed in advance of the bird breeding season. The Nether Lochaber marshalling area works are progressing at the new A82 junction with importing and compaction of suitable material and the Ardgour retaining wall works have recently commenced.
- 1.3 Otters were encountered within the site boundary of the Nether Lochaber marshalling junction area prior to construction works which have required appropriate mitigation works being implemented to protect the otters and limit time and cost impacts, all in agreement with NatureScot.
- 1.4 Upcoming works for May and June 2026 include marine plant mobilisation for dredging works at Ardgour, rock breaking works at Nether Lochaber and mobilisation of marine piling plant for the slipway and overnight berthing structures.
- 1.5 The contractor's current construction programme shows the completion date as May 2027.
- 1.6 Three community liaison group meetings have been held in Ardgour over the last three months with local community representatives, local residents, Council Members and Council officials attending. Discussions which have taken place include the upcoming proposed works, traffic management on the A82 at Nether Lochaber and on the A861 in Ardgour village, working hours and revised parking details following the planning decision condition requirement for unrestricted and additional parking to maximise parking for the Ardnamurchan residents.

2 Corran Ferry New Electric Vessel - Procurement

- 2.1 The Highland Council, working in continued collaboration with CMAL, is progressing the development and design of a new tender for the replacement Corran Ferry, under the agreed Procurement Strategy, as approved by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee on 29 May 2025.
- 2.2 Whilst the preference is a joint procurement as part of the Small Vessels Replacement Programme Phase 2, the new Corran vessel could be progressed independently using the same procurement approach if necessary. Accordingly, the Council retains the option to proceed with a single-vessel tender process should circumstances require.
- 2.3 Throughout this year, the tender documentation will be prepared and finalised. Once complete, a Contract Notice will be published on the Public Contracts Scotland (PCS)

website. At that point, interested suppliers will be able to review the opportunity and, where appropriate, submit compliant bids for consideration.

- 2.4 The Council aims to introduce the new electric ferry at the earliest practicable opportunity, aligned with the delivery of the associated infrastructure works. These works are well underway and are currently programmed for completion in May 2027, with the associated charging infrastructure scheduled for completion in September 2028.
- 2.5 Subject to the procurement process, it is anticipated that the contract for the new Corran vessel will be awarded in March 2027, with the vessel expected to enter service between late 2028 and early 2029.