

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held remotely on **Monday, 16 February 2026 at 10.30 am.**

Present:

Mr J Finlayson
Ms C Gillies

Mr D Millar
Mr R Stewart

Officials in attendance:

Ms D Sutton, Chief Officer Operations & Maintenance, Place Service
Ms S Armstrong, Chief Officer Revenues & Commercialisation
Mr M Bailey, Strategic Lead Commercialisation
Mr A MacBain, Business Management Analyst (Income Generation)
Ms M MacDonald, Area Quality Improvement Manager, People Service
Ms D Henderson, Strategic Lead Care & Support, Health & Social Care
Mr J Mackay, Amenity Services Manager (North), Communities and Place
Mr L MacDonald, Repairs Manager, Housing & Communities
Mr D Swanson, Active Travel Project Manager
Ms M A Gray, Project Officer, Community Regeneration Fund, Place Service
Mr W MacKinnon, Community Development Officer (West & Mid Highland)
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Corporate Service

Also in attendance:

Station Commander, S Fraser, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (item 3 only)
Mr S MacPherson; Mr P Higginbotham; Ms J Rodgers, SSEN (item 4 only)
Ms M MacLennan, Ms B Anderson, Dunvegan Community Trust (item 5 only)

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**

Item 14 - Ms C Gillies (Transparency Statement)

**3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Local Committee Performance Report
Aithisg Choileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus
Teasairginn na h-Alba**

There was circulated Report No SR/1/26 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

Following commentary on the report by the Station Commander, reference was made to the recruitment and retention challenges facing the Scottish Fire and

Rescue Service in this area and the Service continued its efforts to fill vacancies to ensure station availability. In the last six months recruitment had been positive and in particular, Broadford station had seen a 33% increase in staff since last year.

In terms of the development of new stations in Uig and Portree, it was advised that a pre start meeting with the contractors would be held in late February regarding the new Uig station. In terms of the new Portree station, funding would be made available with a view to construction commencing in the next financial year.

In relation to muirburns, the Service worked closely with landowners/estates to ensure that the Service could provide advice and support to them. Further, the joint mobilisation system was a pilot project and had been used successfully so far on Skye.

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

4. SSEN Transmission Skye Re-inforcement Project – Community Benefit Fund Presentation

Pròiseact Ath-neartachaidh Tar-chur SSEN an Eilein Sgitheanaich – Taisbeanadh Maoin Buannachd na Coimhearsnachd

Representatives from SSEN were in attendance to give a presentation on their community benefit fund which was currently being developed. The presentation covered SSEN approach to community benefit funding; plans for developing the fund in accordance with UK Government guidance; community engagement and timeline for development of the fund.

In discussion, it was queried why half of the money available would be through the Regional fund as opposed to more money being available to the community fund where the impact of the re-inforcement project would be greatest. It was advised that this was SSEN's approach to community funding and was used for other funds, such as renewable funding. This was based on evidence that setting money aside for regional transformational projects was an effective way of spending this money, such as for cross area priorities to be addressed.

It was queried if the amount of funding was enough to make up for the effects of the project in local communities. It was advised that from experience of community funding, around £5m for a local community benefit fund was good progress. With the addition of Regional funding, there would be a total of over £10m available for projects.

There would be a Panel who would decide on applications for community benefit funds. There would be a comprehensive recruitment process to appoint members to this Panel and efforts would be made to ensure as wide a range as possible of community members could apply to be on the Panel.

An online survey regarding the fund would be advertised and would also be available at community consultation events. The community consultation would firm up what the communities priorities were.

The SSEN representatives were thanked for their attendance at the Committee, and otherwise the Committee **NOTED** the presentation and that Members would be kept updated with progress on the community benefit fund.

5. Dunvegan Community Trust Presentation
Taisbeanadh Urras Coimhearsnachd Dhùn Bheagain

Representatives from Dunvegan Community Trust were in attendance and gave a presentation in relation to information about the Trust; work the Trust undertook in the community; key projects that the Trust were delivering and some of the challenges faced by the Trust i.e. funding, staff capacity and access to land.

Following the presentation, reference was made to the Trust's long term aims and ambitions which showed they were covering the real issues highlighted by the community, such as housing, a community pitch, community transport. The Trust working in partnership with other communities/groups was very proactive and welcomed. In terms of developing a local place plan, the Trust intended to do this themselves without seeking external help given the substantial costs this would incur.

In terms of marine tourism in the area, Dunvegan pier was a unique asset for the whole of the North West and there was a need for a new Group comprising people with experience in economic development to get involved to progress marine tourism.

In relation to the Gaeltec community hub, the building had substantial repair needs with around £1.5m needed for this project. It was intended to undertake this project in two phases as this would help with funding the project and would enable other projects to be delivered from the Hub more speedily.

Members were supportive of the work of the Trust as community regeneration and tackling depopulation were key issues to address in the area.

The representatives from Dunvegan Community Trust were thanked for their attendance and the Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

6. Area Roads Capital Programme 2026/27
Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2026/27

There was circulated Report No. SR/2/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place. The report detailed the proposed prioritised 2026/27 Area Roads Capital Programme for Skye and Raasay, for Members agreement.

It was highlighted that the Economy and Infrastructure Committee had now agreed road maintenance budgets, but final figures were still not known as results from the Scottish road maintenance condition survey were still not known. An indicative figure for the capital allocations for Skye and Raasay area was £3,187, 975.00 for 2026/27.

In discussion, a view was expressed that given this was a remote and rural area, the Committee should made representations to the Scottish Government to try and obtain more funding for roads maintenance, particularly given the number of visitors to the area which had an impact on our roads. This proposal would be discussed at an Area Business meeting.

In regards to the revenue budget for roads maintenance in this area, this would be decided at the full Council budget meeting in March. A document provided at a previous Roads Redesign project workshop would be provided to Members. This document informed on how the revenue budget for roads maintenance was allocated and the road conditions across Highland. Good progress was being made on roads maintenance across the area with additional investment making a real difference over the last two years.

It was advised that there was a separate budget proposal for Sconser quarry for investment in the quarry and to undertake work to understand capacity at the quarry to deliver more.

Further, recruitment was underway to fill vacancies in the roads team. Discussions were also being held with SSEN regarding potential funding from them for staff to take forward their projects. The Council aimed to undertake as much work inhouse as it could on roads maintenance. The Council did encourage young people to see opportunities of working with the Council. The Service worked with the Council's Employability team on recruitment and workforce planning.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the rolling programme of Capital schemes as listed in Appendix 2 of the report, which will be a multi-year programme;
- ii. **NOTED** the Area budget as agreed at the February, 2026 Economy and Infrastructure Committee; and
- iii. **NOTED** that the rolling programme may require to be updated once results from the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey have been received and considered.

7. Community Regeneration Fund (CRF) Assessment of Applications Measadh Iarrtasan Maoin Ath-nuadhachadh Coimhearsnachd

There was circulated Report No. SR/3/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place which presented three funding applications to the Isle of Skye and Raasay Community Regeneration Fund (CRF) allocation for discussion and decision by Members.

Members were supportive of all the applications and therefore, the Committee **AGREED:-**

- i. the applications and grant requests for the South Skye Mens' shed and Counselling Care Skye & Lochalsh; and
- ii. to approve £100,000 of CRF towards a road infrastructure improvement project as per the detail in 6.2 of the report.

With the approval of the Committee, the following item was taken after item 6 of this minute.

8. Allocation of Local Car Parking Income

There was circulated Report No SR/4/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place.

It was highlighted that Members had made a commitment that any parking income available for spending in the local area should be invested in the infrastructure in the area and in particular roads.

The Committee **AGREED** £100,000 of the Area share of car parking income as match funding for a future Community Regeneration Fund application towards a road infrastructure improvement project as per the detail in 6.2 of the report.

9. The Old Man of Storr Site Management – Parking Charge Review **Stiùireadh Làrach Bodach an Stòir – Ath-sgrùdadh air Cìsean Parcaidh**

There was circulated Report No. SR/5/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive Corporate which updated Members on a proposal to increase parking charges at The Old Man of Storr site, effective from 1 April 2026, to maintain service standards, fund ongoing maintenance, and support future developments.

Following commentary on the report by the Chief Officer Revenues & Commercialisation an opinion was expressed that the increase in parking charges should be more than proposed given Isle of Skye was the second most visited tourist destination outside Edinburgh in Scotland. In Edinburgh some of the car parking charges were up to £9 per hour. It was felt the increase should be at least £2 for both tariffs (up to 6 hours and up to 12 hours) which would be reinvested to improve facilities at this site. Also the number of people that opted for the 'up to 12 hours' tariff was significantly less than the lower tariff. Therefore, it may be worth removing the higher tariff to ensure there is more turnover of people at the site.

It was advised that there were proposals to increase the retail space and car parking capacity at the site and therefore there would be a review of car parking tariffs on an ongoing basis.

It was also felt that people visiting the site went firstly to walk in the area and the facilities were there to enhance tourists experience of the area and they should not be overcharged for this.

It was confirmed that £7,500 from on Street parking income would be reinvested to road improvements at the site. There was also a review of the Council's parking policy which would be considered at the Council meeting in May.

The Committee **AGREED:-**

- i. the proposal to increase the daily parking charges at The Old Man of Storr site by £1 for both tariffs (up to 6 hours and up to 12 hours), effective from 1 April 2026; and
- ii. that the Local Parking Season ticket arrangement for Skye car parks remain unchanged.

10. Scottish Government Play Park Funding **Maoineachadh Phàircean Cluiche Riaghaltas na h-Alba**

There was circulated Report No. SR/6/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place which proposed Members agree the allocation of funding for Uig play park to receive a full refurbishment.

This funding was welcomed and refurbishment of this play park would be welcomed by Uig and the wider area and those waiting for the Ferry at Uig.

Concern was expressed regarding the little amount of money left for maintenance of play parks in the area from an annual budget of £8500. There was a need for more investment in play parks rather than relying on communities to take on responsibility and find funding for play parks. Partnership working between the Council and Community Groups to support play parks was highlighted.

The Committee **AGREED** £39,868.16 to be allocated to the agreed project as outlined in section 6.4.1. of the report.

11. Portree High Associated School Group Overview **Foir-shealladh air Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Àrd-Sgoil Phort Rìgh**

There was circulated Report No. SR/7/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive People Cluster which provided an update of key information in relation to the schools within the Portree High Associated School Group (ASG) and provided useful updated links to further information in relation to these schools.

In discussion, reference was made to the standards and quality reports for schools and the self evaluation taken place in individual schools. It was queried what the experience was of the inhouse self evaluation compared to HMIE inspections. It was advised that a grading of satisfactory was not where schools wanted to be and the area education team continued to work very closely with them. Portree High School had given themselves a grading of satisfactory but given their good attainment it was felt this school should be graded good.

School rolls across Highland were decreasing ever year and there was a need to understand how this could be managed better. It was advised that this was a concern and had an impact on staffing in the ASG. The reasons for this were smaller families and housing issues. Broadford Primary school was forecast to have an increase in its school roll from 2026/27.

It was reassuring that there was not the fixation of education that young people had to do higher, advanced higher education and go to university. This could be seen in the destination information of pupils that things had changed in the last few years. It was advised that schools did look at the wider achievement on young people. Schools could improve on the recording of skills being taught to children when looking at wider achievement.

Pupil destinations information was only available for 2023/24 and not information for 2024/25 and it was advised that this was a concern each year. There was a much higher rate of young people leaving school and into employment, with some of them moving into further education thereafter.

Teacher recruitment in Portree ASG had overall been positive this year. In terms of subject choice in gaelic medium and english medium staff recruitment was becoming an issue and perhaps the Council could advertise for bilingual teachers. It was advised that with more young people coming back to Skye who were gaelic medium trained in Education, there could be opportunities for employing them in general education before going onto the senior phase education. The service was working hard to support gaelic medium in the school.

In terms of support for neurodivergent children there was a need to focus on class Teachers having the skills in the classroom to ensure they were aware of the needs of children.

It terms of pupils who refused to go to school, it was queried what support was given to encourage them to go back to school. It was advised that attendance was monitored and when necessary interventions could be put in place before attendance became to the point of school refuser.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report.

12. Children's Disability Service Update Cunntas mun t-Seirbheis do Chloinn le Ciorraman

There was circulated Report No. SR/8/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive People which provided the Committee with information in relation to the delivery of Childrens Disability Services within the Highland Council and specifically within the Skye & Raasay area. A timeline of the progress of the short break service within Skye & Raasay was also provided.

In discussion, recruitment challenges in the Social Care staffing for the short break service was highlighted and efforts continued to encourage interest in the local area to apply for vacant posts. It was noted that staff in childrens services were paid a lower rate compared to staff in adult services and a levelling up of salaries might help with recruitment. There was a review of how the social care sector was delivered and this might provide an option to improve matters.

The Committee **NOTED** the issues raised in the report and the implications for the future provision of service within Skye & Raasay.

13. Housing Repairs and Capital Report Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais

There was circulated Report No. SR/9/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place which provided information on how the Housing Service performed in relation to Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators up to 31 December 2025.

In discussion, it was highlighted that the Housing Service were currently undertaking a restructure and details were provided. It was requested that a report on the new structure, particularly in relation to line management in the Skye/Raasay area be submitted to the next meeting.

It was clarified that the average length of time to complete emergency repairs was measured from the first point of contact to the Council.

The Committee **NOTED:-**

- i. the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2025 – 31 December 2025; and
- ii. that an update on the Housing Service restructure would be provided to the next meeting.

14. Active Travel Update Cunntas mu Shiubhal Gnìomhach

Transparency Statement - Ms C Gillies declared a transparency statement in relation to this item as she was the Chair of Raasay Development Trust. Having applied the objective test she did not consider that she had an interest to declare.

There was circulated Report No. SR/10/26 by the Active Travel Team Leader with an update on the 2-year fixed term Active Travel post, funded through income available to the Committee.

In discussion, it was requested that for future reports a map of the locations for the various projects be produced. It was confirmed that the repairs to the Moll Road would only allow access for walking/cycling and not for vehicles. The Portree mobility hubs were to be delivered by end of March and it was requested that an update report on this project be submitted to the next meeting.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the update on works undertaken / upcoming;
- ii. **NOTED** the budget which has been allocated to support Active Travel projects on Skye and Raasay;
- iii. **AGREED** to support efforts to secure additional funding for delivery of Active Travel projects on Skye and Raasay; and
- iv. **AGREED** that an update report on the Portree mobility hubs project be submitted to the next meeting.

15. Ward Discretionary Budget Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward 10 Discretionary Budget applications approved since the last meeting of the Committee.

Brae's Village Hall - External Wall Repairs - £3,000

Portree & Braes Community Trust - Speak up for Gaelic Project - £1,000

16. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held on 1 December 2025, the terms of which were approved at the Highland Council meeting held on 11 December 2025.

The meeting ended at 1.24 p.m.