

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held in the Charles Kennedy Building, Fort William, and remotely on **Monday, 11 May 2026 at 10.30 am.**

Present:

Mr S Cameron
Mr J C Grafton
Mr T MacLennan

Mr M Prosser
Ms L Saggars
Ms K Willis

Officials in attendance:

Ms K MacLeod, Roads Operations Manager (Lochaber), Place Cluster
Mr R Bartlett, Principal Officer Traffic & Parking (Acting), Place Cluster
Mr R Porteous, Operations Manager, Corran Ferry, Place Cluster
Mr M Bain, Project Manager (Corran Ferry), Place Cluster
Mr A Maciver, Principal Engineer, Place Cluster
Mr M Culbertson, Project Officer, Community Regeneration Fund
Mr W MacKinnon, Community Development Manager (West & Mid Highland)
Ms L Bauermeister, Community Development Manager, Place Cluster
Ms E Wilkinson, Principal Housing Officer, Place Cluster
Ms B Aitken, Senior Environmental Health Officer, Place Cluster
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Corporate Service

Also in attendance:

Chief Inspector D Allan, Police Scotland (item 3 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.

Ms K Willis in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr A Baxter.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following Declaration of Interest/Transparency Statement:-

Item 5 – Mr M Prosser (Declaration of Interest)

3. Police Scotland Local Committee Performance Report Aithisg Choileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Poileas Alba

There was circulated Report No LA/19/26 by the Area Commander, Police Scotland.

There was commentary on the report by the Chief Inspector, Police Scotland and in particular reference was made to the retirement of Inspector K Duncan. The Inspector had dedicated herself to partnership working in the area and would be

very much missed. A replacement officer had been identified and until this officer was in post, an interim officer would cover duties in the Lochaber area. In terms of road safety and road crime, the Lochaber area had a specialist road safety unit based in Fort William and they made efforts to improve driver behaviour in particular. In addition, the team continued to engage with the Visitor Management Plan, working with various Partners to ensure the Highlands continues to be a safe and enjoyable place to visit. This work included targeted intervention at key sites and pursuing dangerous driving cases through the criminal justice system.

Continuing, anti social behaviour and violence would always be the main focus for officers locally. In particular, there had been an increase in common assaults over the past twelve months but serious assaults had reduced during this period. In relation to Acquisitive crime, fraud cases continued to rise and efforts to address this were being made, such as educating the public. In terms of protecting vulnerable people, the Police provided a robust response to domestic abuse in particular.

In discussion, reference was made to fraud cases and the prevalence of this being perpetrated from abroad. Google had changed their system to make individuals google e-mail address more accessible and as a result a Member stated that the number of fraud calls he received increased substantially. It was queried if there was any contact with Google to inform them of how damaging such action could be. It was advised that this would be something that would be carried out by Police Scotland cyber crime unit. In terms of links with schools to educate young people, the Prevention and Intervention Officers did deliver in schools in relation to internet safety. Focus was also given to internet safety for adults, particularly older and vulnerable adults. An undertaking was given to check if anything more could be done to educate the public on internet safety/security.

In terms of increase in fuel prices, there had not been a rise of fuel theft, but this was something to be aware of if fuel prices continued to increase. The Police would continue to educate the public to keep their fuel secure as possible.

In terms of road safety and the number of visitors involved in fatal crashes, it was queried how Police Scotland were working with their partners in educating visitors about driving behaviour in Highland. It was advised that links were made with car hire companies and tourist sites. There was also publicity on road safety through various mediums.

In terms of unmarked police cars, the public did become aware of them and it was a challenge when social media sites highlighted these cars in the area. An undertaking was given to advise Members if the Police used unmarked motorbikes as a tactic to address motorbike driving behaviour. There was engagement by officers on motorbike driver behaviour. Further, in relation to driver behaviour amongst young people, there had been a programme on this in the past and also included families who had lost members of their families in road traffic incidents. It would be checked if there were currently any programmes on educating young people on driver behaviour.

It was queried how often Police patrolled the A82 Glencoe towards Glasgow. It was advised that this road was a priority for the Police patrol team. Further, detail on the frequency of these patrols would be provided to Members. Lochaber was a

victim of its own success with many people visiting the area and the infrastructure did not always allow for the safest driving conditions.

The Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2023–2026 Year 1 attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 01 April 2025 – 31 March 2026.

4. Fort William Common Good Fund – 2024/25 Annual Accounts and 2026/27 Proposed Budget
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Maoin Math Coitcheann a' Ghearasdain

There was circulated Report No. LA/20/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place which presented the 2024/25 Annual Accounts and 2026/27 Proposed Budget for Fort William Common Good Fund (FWCGF).

In relation to the proposed budget, clarification was sought on income and costs and it was confirmed that the figures in the report were accurate and as presented in the annual accounts. Parking Services had been asked to provide information on parking income and costs which were separate from this report. Pending any updates on figures from Parking Services, if there were still costs to be paid relating to the 2024/25 accounts these would go into the 2026/27 accounts.

In relation to the damage to the sea wall at the West End Car Park, a survey of the sea wall had been undertaken and a report on this would be submitted to the next meeting of the Area Committee in August. Further, it was queried if there was a timeline for repairs on pre-existing dilapidations to the surface of the car park. It was advised that the Operations and Maintenance service had acknowledged it will be responsible for covering these costs relating to the damage to the sea wall and surface of the West End Car Park.

Clarification was sought on the future liabilities of the FWCGF for the sea wall at the West End Car Park. It was advised that once repairs had been made to the sea wall and the surface of the car park it would be reasonable for the Common Good Fund to contribute 55% of the ongoing maintenance and repair costs, reflecting the Common Good Fund's receipt of 55% of the associated income.

In relation to the annual costs for car parks, there was a £53 per bay cost allocated to car parks and this was removed from the income of car parks. It was queried if this money would be used to cover this cost of upgrading the surface of the West End Car Park and if not, what was it spent on. Information on this would be sought from Parking Services and provided to Members.

The Scottish Six Days Trial held recently had free use of the West End Car Park. A request had been made to the organisers that they consider making a donation to the FWCGF for use of the car park and it was queried whether they had agreed to this or not. Information would be sought on this and an update provided to Members.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the FWCGF Statement of Accounts (Appendix 1) for 2024/25; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the proposed budget for 2026/27 as set out in Appendix 2.

**5. Community Regeneration Fund Assessment of Applications
Measadh Iarrtasan Maoin Ath-bheòthachadh Coimhearsnachd**

Declaration of Interest: Mr M Prosser declared an interest in The Island Park Community Field SCIO application as he was a Board member of The Island Park Community Field SCIO. Mr Prosser left the meeting for this application.

There was circulated Report No. LA/21/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place which presented six funding requests to the Lochaber Community Regeneration Fund (CRF) budget for 2025/26, for discussion and decision by Members. The report also updated Members on the Lochaber CRF budget position for 2025/26 and 2026/27.

The report detailed the applications received for consideration with a total grant request value of £231,558.89. If Members were to approve all of these applications, there would be £50,952.17 remaining in the CRF budget for 2025-26. All six applications were eligible for support. Members were asked to consider the applications presented and agree whether to approve, defer or reject the application.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

i **NOTED** the Community Regeneration Funds currently available in Lochaber; and
ii **AGREED** all the applications for Community Regeneration Fund grant award and the grants requested.

6. Lochaber Off-Street Parking Place Order Consideration of Objections

There was circulated Report No. LA/22/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place, which provided Members with information regarding the proposed off-street Parking Place Order in the Lochaber area.

It was advised that if the Parking Place Order was approved car parking pay machines should be on site at the various car parks within the next 4 to 6 weeks.

The Committee:-

i. **NOTED** the locations of the car parks in the proposed Variation Four Order;
ii. **NOTED** the intention to remove West Bay, Mallaig (CP0089) car park from the Order;
iii. **NOTED** the impact assessment in Appendix 1;
iv. **NOTED** the outstanding objections received to The Highland Council (Off Street Parking Places) (Decriminalised Parking Enforcement and Consolidation) Variation Four Order 2025; and
v. **APPROVED** the making of the Parking Place Order.

**7. Area Roads Capital Programme 2025/26 Update
Prògram Calpa Rathaidean na Sgìre 2025/26**

There was circulated Report No. LA/23/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place which provided an update on the Area Roads Capital Programme 2025/26.

It was noted that the final capital budget allocation for Lochaber roads was £2,030,660. It was queried what amount was required to keep the Lochaber roads up to a reasonable standard. It was advised that the roads capital programme was an evolving list of priorities and maintenance/improvements to roads would always be required. The weather also placed constraints on when road maintenance could take place. The Roads team were commended for quickly repairing a particularly bad pothole in Upper Achintore which was one of the main roads in Fort William.

It was advised that a substantial amount was spent on the temporary filling of pot holes and this benefitted road users and there were less claims being submitted to the Council for pothole damage to vehicles. The budget for structures was for general maintenance to structures, such as vegetation clearance. This budget was not enough for new bridges and this would fall under the allocation for capital programmes. A gully emptying machine was shared between Lochaber and Badenoch & Strathspey areas and drainage was a priority for the roads team.

In relation to the Council's reporting portal of road defects, such as potholes, the Corporate Communications team could publicise the online portal and phone number for reporting defects. A link to the reporting portal would be shared with Members.

An undertaking was given to provide members with the master spreadsheet of Lochaber area capital works which would outline all the works previously agreed by the Committee.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the final budget allocation for Lochaber area for 2025/26;
- ii. **NOTED** the works completed on the approved list to date; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the additional works as completed which were identified and prioritised throughout the year.

8. **Corran Ferry Update Cunntas air Aiseag a' Chorrain**

There was circulated Report No. LA/24/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place which provided an update on the Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme, the Corran Ferry New Electric Vessel and the Corran Ferry Service operations.

It was highlighted that the Corran Ferry was currently operating a full service and the report described the works undertaken on the MV Corran annual winter refit and the ferry had now re-entered service in time for the busy holiday season. Notwithstanding breakdowns, over the long term the MV Corran record was good in terms of service delivery, particularly compared with the wider ferry network which was experiencing considerable issues over the last few months.

The Maid of Glencoul was now away at her own annual refit and this was scheduled to take 2 – 3 months, allowing her to return to Ardgour in time for the busy summer season in July.

In relation to crew, there were a few vacancies in the process of being filled and seasonal Traffic Marshals were in place. Details were also provided on the Corran Ferry Ticketing Project. Further, the launch of Highland Council's new Online Engagement Platform 'Go Vocal' will help facilitate with passenger engagement.

In discussion, reference was made to the lack of marshalling at the Corran Ferry at the start of the Easter holidays. In response, lessons had been learned from this and for example additional marshals had been in place for the Scottish Six Day Trials being held in the area. Further, there was also a need to monitor traffic queues at the Ardgour side of the Corran narrows.

Reference was made to a parking issue stemming from the South Planning Applications Committee and two local Members on that Committee wished it recorded that they had never had involvement with parking issues at the Corran Ferry, but had commented that parking at this site had always been open to the peninsula and local residents and this should be continued.

It was welcomed that the new Corran Ferry crew transfer launch (flit boat) was now in service at Ardgour. Details were provided in relation to the mitigation works for otters and guillemots within the site boundary of the Corran Ferry infrastructure improvement scheme.

In relation to the Corran Ferry new Electric Vessel it was planned that a contract award for a new Electric Vessel would be placed to a shipyard in March, 2027.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

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

9. Housing Management Performance Report Aithisg Choileanaidh Càraidhean Thaisghean

There was circulated Report No. LA/25/26 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 March, 2026.

Thanks were extended to the work of the Housing team. There were housing surgery drop in sessions and many people had said these had helped them with many issues. Also Housing Management Officers visited rural areas and also held drop in sessions.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026.

10. Environmental Health – Annual Report & Activity 2025/26

There was circulated Report No. LA/26/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place which provided an update on the Environmental Health team and provided an annual report on local activity during 2025/26.

Following a presentation on the report by the Senior Environmental Health Officer, congratulations were extended to the community group for achieving the Ballachulish bathing water designation. It was noted that should water quality results over consecutive sampling periods fail to meet required standards in future years, there was provision for Scottish Ministers to review and potentially remove the bathing water designation. It was felt that if water quality standards were failing then actions should be taken to improve them, before removing the designations. It was advised that this was the requirement under regulations, that sampling and testing happen after designation has been granted.

In relation to the incident at the local Leisure centre where investigations concluded that the source was likely due to intermittent disposal of chemicals into the sewer network, it was advised that there had been no further incidents, and there would be ongoing monitoring.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the scope and volume of work currently being delivered in the local area;
- ii. local issues and current operational priorities;
- iii. Highland wide issues impacting Environmental Health services; and
- iv. the format and content of the report.

11. Ward Discretionary Fund 2025/26 Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward Discretionary Fund grant awards since the last Committee meeting:-

Ward 11

HLH - Countryside Rangers - Dùthchas project - £900

Loch Sheil Festival - Loch Sheil Festival "Shielings" - £510.92

Ward 21

HLH - Countryside Rangers - Dùthchas project - £900

Nether Lochaber Community Council – Defibrillator - £1,000

URRAM - Ev Charge point - £400

Loch Sheil Festival - Loch Sheil Festival "Shielings" - £439.08

Buzz project - venue costs Youth Drop in sessions - £1,000

Island Park Group – Kinlochleven Gala Day - £1,185

Ewens Room - Wellbeing Explorers - £1,539.89

A full list of Ward Discretionary Budget awards for 2025/26 was available at:

<https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/download/421/ward-discretionary-budgets-and-spend>

12. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 26 January, 2026 which were approved by the Council on 26 March, 2026.

The meeting ended at 12.37 p.m.