

Agenda Item	10
Report No	LA/33/26

The Highland Council

Committee: Lochaber Area

Date: 11 August 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:-

- i. **Note** the Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme (CFIIS) & Corran Ferry New Electric Vessel (CFNEV) updates; and
- ii. **Note** the 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 CFIIS and 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 Construction for the 18-month CFIIS commenced in early 2026 and is well under way for this transformational £30m landside project, delivering major upgrades on both shores of the Narrows. This includes a new slipway and overnight berthing pier at Ardgour, with 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 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, with accompanying photographs provided in **Appendix 2**.

Corran Ferry Service Update

6 MV Corran

- 6.1 Since she re-entered service on 2 April 2026 the MV Corran is operating to the usual timetable, running seven days a week.
- 6.2 Corran Ferry service information is published on the [Corran Ferry Webpage](#), and latest service updates for passengers continue to be provided via the Corran Ferry [Facebook \(external link\)](#) page and the [@CorranFerry \(external link\)](#) X page. The Corran Ferry X page currently has 5,460 followers.

- 6.3 Day-to-day Corran Ferry service delivery is unaffected by the CFIS, whose works are taking place alongside the existing Corran Ferry operation (photographs are provided in **Appendix 2**).

From an operational perspective, the local area being temporarily busy with barges and small boat traffic, there are regular safety meetings between the Corran Ferry team and site engineers. The contractor Charles Brand issues any necessary Notices to Mariners, and close communication between the Corran Ferry skippers, barge operators and construction vessels continues.

Such day-to-day cooperation helps to ensure there is no effect on the Corran Ferry service and that business-as-usual continues uninterrupted for ferry passengers.

- 6.4 The MV Corran's next annual refit period commences 1 November 2026. The planning for this is underway, aiming to keep the length of the MV Corran's absence to a minimum to ensure continued resilience for the communities that rely on the Corran Ferry service, and stakeholders and passengers will be kept fully informed with regular updates.

7 Maid of Glencoul

- 7.1 The Maid of Glencoul's refit commenced Monday 20 April 2026. Completion of scheduled maintenance works, and hot steel repairs allowed the vessel to return to the water on Thursday 2 July 2026, prior to the shipyard's summer holiday shutdown during week commencing 6 July 2026.
- 7.2 At the time of writing, the ongoing works requiring completion are the vehicle ramp-flap improvements and electrical rewiring. The wiring work is critical to the return of the Maid of Glencoul. Delays associated with specialist third-party dependency means completion of the rewiring and the vessel's subsequent return is anticipated to be August 2026.
- 7.3 On Monday 20 July 2026 rewiring was sufficiently progressed to power up and test ship systems. Main Engines and propulsors were all found to be as should, and few system snags found, boding well for upcoming completion.
- 7.4 As July and August are the busiest months for passengers and the community, every effort is being made to bring this date forward where possible, to maximise contingency cover for the service.

We will continue to keep stakeholders regularly updated on progress in the coming weeks and apologise again for the anticipated programme delay.

- 7.5 In reinstating the Maid of Glencoul's licence to carry Dangerous Goods, we are confident that on her return from refit she will again be able to carry Bottled Gas (LPG, propane, butane) and Hay, Straw and Bhusa.

8 Oral History

- 8.1 In collaboration with the Lochaber Archive Centre, the Corran Ferry Oral History Project commenced with the first interview taking place on 1 July 2026 with Miss Morag Mackintosh of Corran (Nether Lochaber), who's family used to operate the Corran Ferry service.
- 8.2 The Highland Council (then Highland Regional Council) took the Corran Ferry service in-house in the early 1980s. Prior to this, Miss Mackintosh's family had operated the crossing for many years, and latterly under contract to the Argyll County Council. (In 1975 the Authority boundaries changed following the reorganization of Scottish local government and the area transferred from Argyll to Highland.)
- 8.3 There is already a recording of Miss Mackintosh's late sister Ann on HighLife Highland's [Am Baile](#) website, and it is planned that Morag's recording, and hopefully others, will join Ann's on Am Baile.

9 Flit Boat

- 9.1 As described in the Corran Ferry Update report to Lochaber Committee on 11 May 2026 - [Item 8](#) the new flit boat is now in service and named Mòrag Bheag after Miss Morag Mackintosh of Corran (Nether Lochaber), who's family used to operate the Corran Ferry service (see the section on the Corran Ferry Oral History Project in this report).
- 9.2 As described in the Corran Ferry Update report for Lochaber Area Committee on 10 November 2025 - [Item 10](#), the flit boat upgrade provides several 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).
 - Improved safety response at the Corran Narrows.
- 9.3 Pictures of the new flit boat are provided in **Appendix 2** of this report.

10 Corran Ferry Ticketing Project

- 10.1 Since the start of June 2026, our existing Corran Ferry ticketing supplier, Professional Data Management Services Ltd (PDMS), are contracted to supplement the existing Corran Ferry Compass ticketing system with ticket sales online. Online sales will fully integrate with existing reporting and back-office support. The project is currently going well, and we hope to be able to go live in December 2026/January 2027.
- 10.2 The aim of the Ticketing Project is to modernise the ticketing system, to optimise efficiency and benefit passengers.

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

- 10.3 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).
- 10.4 Existing ticket sales methods will continue concurrently as the new online offering is phased in for passengers.
- 10.5 Passengers (Private/Light Goods Vehicles and Commercial Vehicles over 3,500 Kg GVW) and stakeholders will be kept involved as we progress the project to completion.

11 Carryings/ Weather

- 11.1 Vehicle carryings in May and June have been 6% lower than last year. This is reflected in [Visit Scotland \(External link\)](#)'s trackers which highlight the cost-of-living increase (exacerbated by the wars in the Persian Gulf and Ukraine) affecting UK domestic visitors to the Highlands. Latest estimates from [Visit Britain \(External Link\)](#) indicate similar uncertainty for international visitors this year.
- 11.2 However, the latest period from 1 July to mid-July is only showing a slight decrease of 2%. This combined with the start of the English school holidays gives a more positive outlook for July and August, usually the busiest months of the year.
- 11.3 In serving the local community Corran Ferry continues to ensure priority for emergency service vehicles, in a vessel [Boarding and Priority](#) system which is otherwise, through necessity, on a first-come-first-served basis (see photographs provided in section 3 in **Appendix 2**).
- 11.4 Following the severe gales and heavy rain from Storm Dave in early April 2026, the Lochaber region saw conditions stabilise. According to [Met Office \(External Link\)](#) data, May temperatures remained moderate at 8–9°C (with less sunshine than May last year). Then in June, the region became the wettest in the UK, receiving approximately 145mm of rainfall, before transitioning to drier conditions and above average temperatures, again, giving a more positive outlook for the summer ahead.
- 11.5 Consequently, Corran Ferry has experienced no service outages due to the weather since the storms in April 2026.
- 11.6 Equally, there have been no service outages due to vessel breakdowns during the last 5-month period up to mid-July 2026.

12 Corran Ferry Stakeholder Group

- 12.1 Corran Ferry Stakeholder Group meetings focus on Corran Ferry service operations. They continue to 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.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 20 July 2026

Author: Richard Porteous – Operations Manager – Corran Ferry

Background Papers: Corran Ferry Update report, Lochaber Committee,
11 May 2026 - [Item 8](#)

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 2 – Photographs (1. CFIIS, 2. New Flit Boat, 3. Emergency Services Vehicles)

Appendix 1

Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme and New Electric Vessel Update

1 Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme

- 1.1 Construction continues to progress well and the works on the Nether Lochaber side include:
- Backfilling of suitable material in the marshalling area which are approximately 90% complete.
 - Rock drilling for the tubular steel fender pile units at the new slipway breakwater berthing structure where six tubular piles have been installed to date and three remaining.
 - Construction of the reinforced concrete stairs from the marshalling area and connecting with the A82 Trunk Road have commenced.
 - The placement of rock armour to the Nether Lochaber marshalling area which are approximately 35% complete.
 - The Nether Lochaber rock dredging is approximately 20% complete where the toe of the breakwater has been dredged and works have now commenced on the main dredge area
- 1.2 The construction works on the Ardgour side include:
- Sheet piling installation to the Ardgour slipway which are approximately 85% complete.
 - Infilling works to the Ardgour slipway with rockfill material commenced on 6 July and are approximately 10% complete
 - Demolition works to the existing pier structure have commenced
 - Construction of the Ardgour retaining wall structures are approximately 90% complete with two small walls to be constructed following completion of the sheet piling to the overnight berthing structure.
 - Infilling works behind the retaining wall structures are progressing to provide the widened carriageway and parking area in Ardgour.
 - Dredging works at Ardgour are progressing and are approximately 60% complete
- 1.3 Five community liaison group (CLG) meeting have been held in Ardgour over the last five 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 any community and resident concerns.
- 1.4 The contractor's current construction programme shows the completion date as May 2027.

2 Corran Ferry New Electric Vessel - Procurement

- 2.1 The Highland Council, in continued collaboration with Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited (CMAL), is progressing the development of a tender for the replacement Corran Ferry in accordance with the Procurement Strategy approved by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee on 29 May 2025.
- 2.2 While the Council's preferred approach remains a joint procurement through the Small Vessels Replacement Programme Phase 2 (SVRP2), provision has been made to progress the Corran Ferry independently, as a single ship tender should circumstances require. This flexibility ensures that the Council can proceed with a standalone procurement exercise using the same approved procurement methodology, while continuing to benefit from CMAL's technical and procurement support.
- 2.3 Preparation of the tender documentation is currently underway. Once finalised, a Contract Notice will be published on the Public Contracts Scotland (PCS) portal, inviting expressions of interest and enabling suitably qualified suppliers to submit bids in accordance with the procurement requirements.
- 2.4 The Council remains committed to introducing a new electric vessel for the Corran crossing at the earliest practicable opportunity, aligned with the delivery of the associated shoreside infrastructure. Construction works are progressing well and are currently programmed for completion in May 2027, with the installation and commissioning of the charging infrastructure scheduled for completion by September 2028.
- 2.5 Subject to the successful completion of the procurement process, the contract for the new vessel is expected to be awarded in March 2027. Based on current programme assumptions, the replacement ferry is anticipated to enter service early 2029.

Appendix 2 – Photographs

1 Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme (CFIIS)

1.1 Corran (Nether Lochaber)

1.1.1



Tubular piling and rock dredging

[The works on the opposite side of the narrows, at Ardgour, are in the background in the centre in the far distance in this picture]

1.1.2



Rock armour placement

1.1.3



Corran site aerial view

1.2 Ardgour

1.2.1



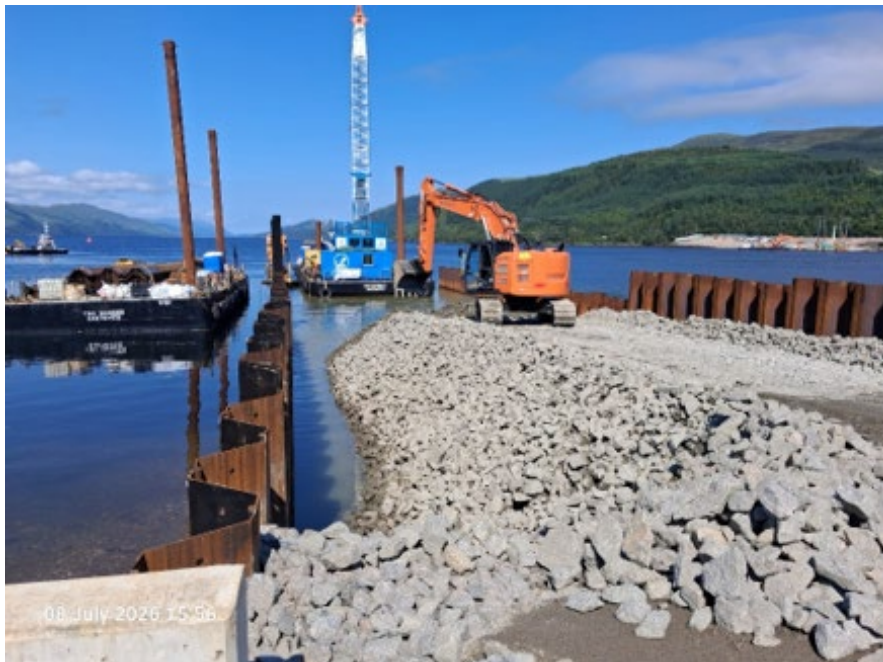
Initial concrete retaining wall construction

1.2.2



Crane used to install sheet piles for new Ardgor slipway

1.2.3



New Ardgor slipway infill in between sheet pile retaining walls

[The works on the opposite side of the narrows, at Corran (Nether Lochaber), are visible in the background at the RHS of the picture]

2 New Corran Ferry Flit Boat (Mòrag Bheag)

2.1



Delivery of the new flit boat the Mòrag Bheag

2.2



2.3



Mòrag
Bheag in
service

2.4



3 Emergency Services - Priority Boarding - Corran Ferry

3.1



Ambulance, Corran
(Nether Lochaber)

3.2

