



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held via MS Teams on
Wednesday, 24 March 2021 at 2.00pm.

PRESENT

Mr Donald Crichton (Chair)	Mr Alasdair Macleod
Mr Norman MacDonald (Vice-Chair)	Mr Angus McCormack
Mr Calum Macmillan	Mr Iain M Macaulay
Mr Iain A MacNeil	Mr Neil Mackay
Mr Donald Manford	Mr Gordon Murray
Mr Roddy Mackay	Mr Roddie Mackay
Mr Uisdean Robertson	Mr John A Maciver
Mr Grant Fulton	Mr John Mackay
Mr Norman A MacDonald	

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Paul Steele	Mr Charlie Nicolson
Mr Iain M Macleod	Mr Calum Maclean
Mr Paul Finnegan	Mr John N Macleod
Mr John G Mitchell	Mr Kenneth Macleod
Mr Angus Morrison	Mr Kenny John Macleod

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Malcolm Burr	Mr William MacDonald
Mr Calum Iain Maciver	Mr Domhnall Macdonald
Mr Joe Macphee	Mr Derek Mackay
Mr Pete Middleton	Mr Nigel Scott
Mr Murdo Mackay	Miss Mairi Sine Macdonald
Mrs Anne Macdonald	Mrs Fiona Maciver
Mrs Kathleen Morrison	Mr Murdo Morrison
Mrs Sarah Maclean	Mrs Mairi Maciver
Mr Norman Macdonald	

Prayer

The Meeting was preceded in prayer by Mr John A Maciver.

MINUTES

Minute of Meeting of 27 January 2021	1	The Minute of Meeting of 27 January 2021 was approved .
Minute of Meeting of 23 February 2021	2	The Minute of Meeting of 23 February 2021 was approved .
Minute of Meeting of Crofting Joint Consultative Committee of 19 February 2021	3	The Minute of Meeting of Crofting Joint Consultative Committee of 19 February 2021 was noted .

Minute of Meeting of Fisheries Joint Consultative Committee of 5 March 2021 4 The Minute of Meeting of Fisheries Joint Consultative Committee of 5 March 2021 was **noted**.

Declaration of Interest of 5 Mr Donald F. Crichton declared an interest as a member of the Leader LAG and remained in the meeting during consideration of item 12.

Mr Calum MacMillan declared an interest as his wife is employed in the Economic Development Department and left the meeting during consideration of item 6.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Mr Calum MacMillan declared an interest as his wife is employed in the Economic Development Department and left the meeting during consideration of the following item.

Performance Management 2020/21 Quarter 3 Economic Development and Planning 6 With reference to item 3 of the Minute of Meeting of 2 December 2020 the Head of Economic Development and Planning submitted a Report providing an overview of the Communities Department Business Plan progress and related performance as at Quarter 3. The Report stated that the Communities Department Business plan had 16 Actions and 18 Key Performance Indicators of relevance to the Committee in respect of Building Standards, Business and Regeneration Support, Sectoral and Project Support, Heritage Services and Planning Services. The Report indicated that Business Units were anticipated to out-turn to or ahead of budget with the exception of Planning and Building Standards fee income due to Covid-19.

The Report provided an overview of business performance, risk management, financial performance and stated that the key area of concern through Quarter 3 related to the COVID-19 pandemic across all service areas. Priorities related to maintain a disciplined approach appropriate to the stage of the Scottish Government Route Map in operation at the time, while ensuring continued support to the business and wider community.

The Director for Communities provided an update on the Skye-Harris Sub-Sea Electricity Cable and stated that the replacement cable was in manufacture and SSEN would begin to lay the cable around May and programmed to be in place and energised in late August or early September. The Director indicated that engagement continued with SSEN on grid resilience in regard to the Skye-Harris cable and the replacement programme for Uist and the potential of Scotwind and the Energy Hub projects and the requirement for grid for these in parallel with discussion with OFGEM to make a case for all these elements.

The Director further explained the difference between the HVDC transmission cable which will export both commercial and community energy and the Skye-Harris link which was a distribution cable for domestic consumers. As the Skye-Harris cable failed emergency procurement was granted through OFGEM for a like for like cable. However, putting in an additional cable would require going into the next business planning round in late 2022 and the potential for that and also the Uist replacement programme would be considered then. The Director further stated that the needs case for the HDVC sits with OFGEM. The next Contracts for Difference round is anticipated to be later this year, and if EDF are successful, their needs case becomes revived and, if OFGEM come to a positive decision on the HVDC cable, the timeline for rollout of that could be late 2026 or early 2027. The Director provided a further update on offshore wind projects, specifically the Scotwind Offshore Wind Leasing Round a process run by Crown Estate Scotland.

It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the Committee's interests were concerned, that the Comhairle note the Report.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Outer Hebrides
Local Transport
Strategy 2020-
2030: Strategic
Environmental
Assessment

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The Chief Executive and the Director for Communities submitted a joint Report in relation to the Outer Hebrides Local Transport Strategy 2020-2030: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The Report sought homologation of the determination that a SEA of the Outer Hebrides Local Transport Strategy 2020-2030 had not been required, and to amend the Comhairle's Scheme of Delegation to allow the determination of future SEA's.

The Report stated that there are clear criteria set out by the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the decision whether or not a screening exercise is required is largely based on professional assessment following a statutory consultation process with other statutory bodies and organisations. The Report stated that the Comhairle had been notified on 10 February 2021 that the Consultation Authorities were in agreement with the Comhairle's screening findings and decision making. Due to the desire to finalise the LTS at the earliest opportunity, the Chief Executive, following consultation with Council Members, made the determination on 8 March 2021 under Section 8(1) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 that the Outer Hebrides Local Transport Strategy 2020-2030 was unlikely to give rise to any significant environmental effects and that an SEA was not required.

The Report proposed that the Comhairle's Scheme of Delegation be amended in order that future determination on whether an SEA is required be delegated to the Director for Communities, in consultation with the Chief Executive and that determination of politically sensitive applications by these Officers would be brought to Members' attention.

It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the Committee's interests were concerned, that the Comhairle:

- (1) homologate the determination by the Chief Executive that a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Outer Hebrides Local Transport Strategy 2020-2030 is not required; and**
- (2) amend the Comhairle's Scheme of Delegation to allow the determination of Strategic Environmental Assessments to be made by the Director for Communities, in consultation with the Chief Executive.**

FISHERIES

Scottish
Government
Future Fisheries:
Management
Strategy 2020 to
2030

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The Head of Economic Development and Planning submitted a Report informing of the publication of the Scottish Government's Future Fisheries Management Strategy 2020 to 2030. The Report stated that Marine Scotland had recently published its Strategy setting out its approach to managing Scotland's sea fisheries over the next ten years as part of the wider 'Blue Economy'. The Strategy explored how it would achieve the balance between environment, economic and social outcomes and how it would work in partnership with fisheries stakeholders in Scotland, within the UK and in an international context to deliver the best possible results for the marine environment, the fishing industry and fishing communities.

The Report further stated that a 12-point Action Plan had been developed setting out how Marine Scotland would deliver the aspirations, principles and outcomes detailed within the Strategy. Several of these actions, highlighted in the Report, offered several opportunities for the safeguarding and local development of the fisheries and maritime sector in the Outer Hebrides and linked well with the Outer Hebrides Economic Recovery Strategy and the Islands Deal.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the ‘Scotland’s Fisheries Management Strategy 2020 to 2030’ and the scope for fisheries and marine sector development.

CROFTING

Farm Animal Welfare Consultation 9

The Head of Economic Development and Planning submitted a Report seeking homologation of a Comhairle response to the Scottish Government’s consultation, ‘Farm Animal Welfare Committee’s Opinion on the welfare of animals during transport’. The Report stated that the consultation covered the recommendations made by the Farm Animal Welfare Committee in their ‘Opinion on the Welfare of Animals during Transport’ and the potential introduction of these recommendations in Scotland. The Consultation further considered how these recommendations might be implemented in Scotland and the potential impact of implementation on stakeholders.

The Report further stated that the current EU legislation on the welfare of animals during transport, Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005, applied to all vertebrate animals transported in connection with an economic activity. The requirements of this legislation would be retained in UK legislation and would continue to apply after EU exit and the end of the implementation period.

The Report concluded that the consultation was relevant to the interests of the livestock sector in the islands and merited a response from the Comhairle, recognising the economic value the sector represented and the potential impact on producers in the Outer Hebrides. The Comhairle response to the consultation was detailed in the Appendix to the Report and had been considered by the Crofting JCC on 19 February 2021 and submitted by the consultation deadline of 26 February 2021.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle homologate the response to the Scottish Government consultation, ‘Farm Animal Welfare Committee’s Opinion on the Welfare of Animals during Transport.’

Local Food Production and Crofting 10

With reference to item 6 of the Minute of Meeting of 19 June 2019 the Head of Economic Development and Planning submitted a Report providing an update on latest engagement with local food production and the crofting sector including consideration of future of abattoir services which had been raised at the budget meetings on 23 February 2021. The Report stated that the BREXIT trade deal had allowed for a zero tariff zero quota trade deal in agricultural. However increased costs had been reported by all sectors related to customs checks, health certificates and additional processes (such as multi product consignments) preventing viable trading for smaller exporters. It was not yet clear how this would impact on the Crofting sector.

The Report further stated that government agencies focus had now moved to future support measures that would replace the Common Agricultural Policy and both Scottish and UK Governments had committed maintaining current levels of support until 2024. The future priorities for support measures had been outlined in a five year plan to make sure farmers and land users were provided with stability, certainty and simplicity for:

- Active farming
- Food production
- Environmental improvements
- Forestry
- Rural development

The Report stated that Comhairle officers had engaged with Scottish Government through the Highlands and Islands Agricultural Support Group to ensure the needs of remote and islands areas were considered and were also working on the Primary Industries strand of the Islands Deal and supporting a Scotland Food and Drink sponsored project.

In regard to abattoirs, the Report highlighted the difficulties in sustaining abattoir services and that there were only 14 abattoirs in Scotland that do private kill. Mobile abattoirs were not a realistic option for the islands for the reasons outlined in the findings of a recent study carried out by Scottish Government. The Report referred to the Comhairle budget saving decision in December 2020 to cut the £10k to seasonal lease arrangements of the Uist and Barra based abattoirs. Although the provision in the Stornoway facility will continue, there may be challenges for the privately owned units in Uist and Barra. The Report indicated that Comhairle officers could continue to engage with partners in an attempt to secure additional funding for this sector but the viability of small scale abattoirs is challenging. This, combined with the constraints on available budgets, presents an existential threat to the sustainability of the sector; as it does in other neighbouring mainland and island areas.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) **note the Report; and**
- (2) **agree to continue to engage with Scottish Government and agencies as appropriate in developing agricultural/food and drink support schemes post BREXIT/CAP.**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Scottish Local Authorities' Economic Development (SLAED) Performance Indicators Framework 2019-2020

Local

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With reference to item 10 of the Minute of Meeting of 27 February 2019 the Head of Economic Development and Planning submitted a Report providing an update following publication of the Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development (SLAED) Performance Indicators Framework 2019-2020 Final Report. The Report stated that the SLAED Indicators Framework provided an overview of performance across Local Authorities and a set of measurable benchmarks which could be used to better understand impact, allocation of resources and identify potential areas for improvement for the Comhairle. The Appendix to the Report outlined the Comhairle's Economic Development Performance Indicators Return for 2019/20 and highlighted good progress in the following areas:

- Number of Attendees at Businesses Gateway Events (459);
- Businesses Supported by Council Economic Development Activity (340);
- Employment Rate (81.6%);
- Business Survival Rate (3-Year) - 2015-2018 - (63%);
- Leverage of External Funding (£1: £8.15); and
- No. of Unemployed people that have Progressed to Employment from Participation in Council Funded/Operated Employability Activities (77).

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the Scottish Local Authorities' Economic Development Indicators Framework 2019-2020 Report.

Mr Donald F. Crichton declared an interest as a member of the Leader LAG and remained in the meeting during consideration of the following item.

Outer Hebrides
LEADER 2014-2020
Programme:
Update and
Potential Future
Programmes

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With reference to item 12 of the Minute of Meeting of 2 December 2020 the Head of Economic Development and Planning submitted a Report providing an update on the LEADER Programme extension and seeking support for future programme developments. The Report stated that the Scottish Government had extended the LEADER programme for existing LEADER projects specifically to enable applicants to manage additional capital and revenue costs incurred due to the increased requirements and restrictions to operate safely due to the impact and restrictions of COVID-19. This latest additional support effectively extended the 'active' period of the current LEADER Programme to 31 March 2022.

In response to a letter from Fergus Ewing MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism, provided at Appendix 1 to the Report, the Outer Hebrides LEADER Local Action Group (LAG) agreed to support the development of a future Community-led Local Development (CLLD) Programme. Consequently, the LAG sought the Comhairle's support both to continue to act as Accountable Body and support the development of a future CLLD Programme.

The Outer Hebrides LEADER LAG had commissioned a study into 'Identifying Funding Gaps in the Outer Hebrides'. The Funding Gaps Report Summary, detailed in Appendix 2 to the Report, provided a range of conclusions and recommendations, including that gaps do exist - particularly for young people, creative industries and the tourism sector.

The Committee commended the work done through LEADER and the LAG and welcomed the development of a future CLLD Programme to enable the good work to continue which has supported the successful delivery of many community and small business projects across the islands.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) note the findings of the 'Identifying Funding Gaps in the Outer Hebrides' study; and**
- (2) agree to continued participation in leading the development of a local strategy for the next LEADER/Community-led Local Development Programme post 2021.**

Outer Hebrides
Visitor
Management Plan

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The Head of Economic Development and Planning submitted a Report seeking approval to engage with sectoral and regulatory interests to develop a five-year Outer Hebrides Visitor Management Plan. The Report stated that Tourism was the biggest private sector contributor to the Outer Hebrides economy. Pre-pandemic, its value was on target to exceed £74m p.a. by 2020 and it supported approximately 1,200 FTE jobs. The 2018 Outer Hebrides Visitor Survey had shown a 15% rise in leisure visitors in just over 3 years and this sectoral growth had opened up opportunities for businesses and communities. However, the increased volume of people using local infrastructure was not without its challenges and it was apparent over recent years that many sites were experiencing seasonal pressure on services and resources.

The Report further stated that although the Tourism sector had been hard-hit by Covid-19 there remained considerable volume of traffic to the islands in summer 2020 with a high number of visitors opting to camp or travel by motorhome. The Report highlighted that a number of key issues had been identified, including road congestion, unsuitable parking arrangements, overly full bins, environmental damage, lack of public toilets and motorhome waste disposal points, unsanitary disposal of rubbish and human waste and poor visitor infrastructure messaging. As these issues fell under the remit of several different Comhairle services it was proposed that they could be best addressed via a cross-service group, working in partnership with local communities and other relevant organisations, to form a collaborative and integrated approach. The immediate aim of the group would be to identify areas where visitor provision could be improved and to implement solutions as efficiently as possible. The group's further objective would be the creation of a five-year Visitor Management Plan (2021-26) to strategically address relevant matters with a view to achieving a better experience for both communities and visitors.

Further to the concerns raised by Members in relation to motorhomes and if there would be any guidance in place prior to the 2021 season. The Chair of Transportation and Infrastructure referred to recent discussions with Outer Hebrides Tourism, CalMac Community Board and Transport Scotland on proposals to be taken forward in discussion with CalMac which would be circulated to Members.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) note the creation of a cross-service group to identify and implement solutions to currently identified visitor management issues; and**
- (2) approve the creation of a five-year Outer Hebrides Visitor Management Plan to consider the longer-term requirements of managing growth in this sector.**

Town Centre 14
Legacy Fund

The Head of Economic Development and Planning submitted a Report providing an update on the Town Legacy Fund. The Report stated that the aim of the Town Centre Legacy Fund was to support works or projects that directly benefit the town centre area of Stornoway and its environs. The fund was entirely dependent on rental income from Comhairle owned town centre commercial properties, currently 49 Cromwell Street.

The Report proposed to allocate £15k per annum over the next three years from the Town Centre Legacy Fund to enable the continuation of the Town Centre Painting Scheme and the Conservation Area Building Grant following the budget savings agreed in December 2020. The proposal would enable the Comhairle to meet the high demand for the grant schemes, build on the legacy of the Townscape Heritage Initiative, align with the aspirations of the Stornoway Vision strategy and deliver tangible benefits to residents and visitors, improve wider streetscape and deliver good 'placemaking', continue to engender a sense of civic pride and support economic recovery.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve up to £15,000 from the Town Centre Legacy Fund for the next three years to support the continuation of the Town Centre Painting Scheme and the Conservation Area Buildings Grant; subject to the fund receiving rental income from 49-51 Cromwell Street over the next three years.

Great Place Project Strategy Development and Planning 15

With reference to item 8 of the Minute of Meeting of 1 May 2019 the Head of Economic Development and Planning submitted a Report providing an update on the Great Place Project and seeking to delegate further consideration of the final strategy documents to the Sustainable Development Strategic Member Officer Work Group in conjunction with the Heritage Forum. The Report stated that the purpose of the Great Place Project (Pròiseact an Fhìor-àite) was to develop a heritage and cultural asset strategy for the Outer Hebrides; and to identify strategic approaches to support and deliver appropriate heritage-led economic development, identifying infrastructure requirements and priorities.

The Report further stated that the development of the strategy document and action plan had taken longer than anticipated due to the extensive engagement and feedback process and exacerbated by COVID-19. The project Steering Group, led by the Heritage Forum, were currently reviewing the second draft of the strategy document and action plan and it was proposed to delegate further consideration of the strategy document to the Sustainable Development Strategic Member Officer Working Group in conjunction with the Heritage Forum. A further update would be provided to the June 2021 Committee Meeting.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle delegate formal consideration of the Great Place Strategy and Action Plan to the Sustainable Development Strategic Member Officer Working Group in conjunction with the Heritage Forum.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Reports Outstanding 16

The Chief Executive submitted a Report detailing the Reports outstanding arising from the decisions of the Committee.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the Report.