



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

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Minute of Meeting held via Microsoft Teams on
Wednesday 31 March 2021 at 5.00pm.

PRESENT

Mr Norman A MacDonald (Convener)	Mr Finlay Stewart
Mr Roddie Mackay (Leader)	Mr Keith Dodson
Mr Calum Macmillan	Mr Rae Mackenzie
Mr Iain A MacNeil	Mr Angus McCormack
Mr Donald Manford	Mr Charlie Nicolson
Mr Paul Steele	Mr Iain M Macaulay
Mr Roddy Mackay	Mr Neil Mackay
Mr Iain M Macleod	Mr Gordon Murray
Mr Uisdean Robertson	Mr Donald Crichton
Mr Paul Finnegan	Mr John A Maciver
Mr Grant Fulton	Mr Calum Maclean
Mr John Mitchell	Mr John Mackay
Mr Ranald Fraser	Mr John N Macleod
Mr Angus Morrison	Mr Kenneth Macleod
Mr Norman MacDonald	Mr Kenny John Macleod
Mr Alasdair Macleod	

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Malcolm Burr	Mrs Susan Rabe
Mr Tim Langley	Mrs Mairi Maciver
Mr Calum Iain Maciver	Ms Anne Napier
Mr Joe MacPhee	Mr Nigel Scott
Mr Allan MacDonald	Mr Colin George Morrison
Mr David Gibson	Mrs Marina Macaulay
Mrs Morag Ferguson	

Tribute: Sgoil Bagh
a'Chaisteil

The Convener referred to Sgoil Bagh a'Chaisteil, Isle of Barra, had who recently won a FilmG Award, in the Gaelic Learners category, for their film Sealladh Ùr.

The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated Sgoil Bagh a'Chaisteil on this Award.

Tribute: Sgoil
Bhaile a Mhanich
Pipe Band

The Convener referred to Sgoil Bhaile a Mhanich Pipe Band who had recently won 1st Prize in the Scottish Schools 2021 Freestyle Championships, Primary Category, which was held online and was the world's biggest school pipe band online event.

The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated Sgoil Bhaile a'Mhanich on this Award.

Tribute: Kara
Hanlon

The Convener referred to Kara Hanlon, who had been selected to compete in swimming trials for the Olympic Games in Tokyo. The Convener stated that Kara is believed to be the first person from the Western Isles to have been selected to compete at this level.

The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated Kara on her selection and wished her all the very best at the upcoming British Swimming Selection Trials on 14-18 April 2021.

Prayer

The Meeting was preceded in prayer, led by Mr Gordon Murray

MINUTES

Minute of Meeting of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar of:
(a) 3 February 2021
(b) 23 February 2021

1 The Minutes of Meetings of 9 December 2020 and 26 January 2021 were **approved**.

Declaration of Interest

2 Mr Donald Crichton and Mr Charlie Nicolson declared an interest in Item 5, as Trustees of Stornoway Trust, and left the meeting during consideration of the matter.

Mr Calum Maclean declared an interest in Item 5, as a Trustee of Stornoway Trust, and remained in the meeting during consideration of the matter.

QUESTIONS

Written Questions to the Convener and Chairmen of Committees

3 The following written question was submitted by Mr Gordon Murray:

Would the Convener agree with the Comhairle SNP Group's long held aspiration to harness our God-given energy resources by converting these to carbon free energy and thus replenish our coffers annually to help address funding deficits and capital projects?

The Convener responded, as follows:

From the inception of the "Energy Innovation Zone" Strategy in 2000, the Comhairle has had a long-standing vision for a true local energy economy that would see energy consumption across the outer Hebrides being met by on-island generation. This is presently articulated in the Corporate Strategy where Recovery and Renewal Strategic Theme 3 seeks to demonstrate leadership in reducing our islands carbon emissions and maximising the socio-economic benefits derived from our renewable energy resource.

The strategy seeks to utilise our renewable resources to meet our energy needs and decarbonise the islands while adapting to, and mitigating against, climate change. There are a number of priorities relating to energy and climate change including proposals to work with stakeholders to develop a mechanism that would allow locally generated electricity to be delivered to local consumers at a competitive price and further develop 'Hebrides Energy' as the vehicle for local energy supply.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

11/00108 - 4
Construct access associated with the creation of a Deep Water Port, Gumaig Bay, Arnish, Isle of Lewis

The Head of Economic Development and Planning submitted a Report which sought delegation to the Director for Communities to determine a Planning Application for works which would form part of a development classed within the Planning Hierarchy as a 'Major Development'; in terms of the Scheme of Administration, such a decision would otherwise fall to be determined by the Comhairle.

The Report stated that since the planning permission in principle had been granted in December 2019 the design of the Deep Water Port (DWP) had evolved and as a consequence the route of the primary access road had been required to be altered. As there was a requirement for the new planning permission to meet tight funding deadlines delegation was sought for the application to be determined by the Director for Communities

It was agreed that the Comhairle grant delegation to the Director for Communities to determine the planning application without further reference to the Planning Applications Board or the Comhairle, assuming the process raised no new sensitive issues and no significant body of representation was received against the planning application.

18/00216/PPDM - 5
Druim Leathann
Windfarm, North
Tolsta, Isle of Lewis

The Head of Economic Development and Planning submitted a Report which sought planning permission to construct a windfarm comprising 14 wind turbines (up to 140m to blade tip) and install associated infrastructure, including access tracks, crane hardstanding areas, a substation, form temporary construction compounds, laydown areas and borrow pits at Druim Leathann, North Tolsta, Isle of Lewis (the proposed development). It was indicated in the Report that a copy of the planning application documents, the EIA non-technical summary, the EIA Report (EIAR), and the EIA supplementary information (SI) were available to view on the Planning Public Access Portal.

It was agreed that the Comhairle approve the planning application subject to:

- (a) **the application of planning conditions, based upon the draft set of conditions provided in Appendix 1 to this Report; their finalisation delegated to the Director for Communities;**
- (b) **the completion of either a new or a variation to the existing S75 Planning Obligation Agreement with Druim Leathann Wind Farm Limited (DLWF Ltd) and other relevant land interests, such agreement to secure existing commitments with updated sums for the provisions for a Planning Conditions monitoring officer and to add measures to secure the implementation of the terms of the Agreement between DLWF Ltd and the met office re impact on the weather radar; the Chief Executive being granted delegated Authority, in consultation with the Director for Communities to complete such an Agreement and where appropriate, to discharge the Existing Agreement following an application from the Developer once the new agreement or variation has been registered;**
- (c) **a Direction be made under Section 58 (2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 the effect of which would be to direct that subsection 58 (1) of the Act is not to apply as respects the permission and instead that the permission is to lapse on the expiration of a 5 year period from the date upon which it is granted.**

Mr Iain M Macleod abstained from voting on the above decision.

LOCAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Outer Hebrides 6
Local Transport
Strategy 2020-
2030: Fixed Links

The Chief Executive submitted a Report which detailed a request, under Standing Order 6, that the Comhairle consider whether a Benbecula to Skye fixed link should form part of the Outer Hebrides Local Transport Strategy 2020-2030.

The Report outlined considerations in respect of this and noted that, during construction of the Local Transport Strategy, there was no indication of support for fixed links between

the Outer Hebrides and mainland Scotland. There was, however, interest in fixed links across the Sound of Harris and the Sound of Barra, which was reflected in the high priority action within the Local Transport Strategy of, 'a high level review of connectivity across the two Sounds, considering economic impacts and whole life costs'.

The Report stated that Transport Scotland was in the process of concluding the Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2) and a potential tunnel (dual carriageway width between Benbecula (Ranish) and Skye (Neist Point) had emerged as an infrastructure option within STPR2.

It was suggested that, in the event that the Comhairle wished to consider the matter further, that a Seminar be arranged to consider the many issues which permanent connection of the Western Isles, or a part or parts of the Western Isles, to mainland Scotland by way of a fixed link, would raise. It was also suggested that the Comhairle would require to undertake detailed island impact assessment and community consultation before considering its own policy stance on this issue and such a process would enable an informed policy stance to be taken in advance of the next annual review of the Local Transport Strategy.

Mr Norman A MacDonald, seconded by Mr Norman MacDonald moved approval of the following:

that the Comhairle:

- (a) note the request that a Special Meeting of the Comhairle be arranged in terms of Standing Order 6 to consider the inclusion of a fixed link between Skye and Benbecula within the Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2);**
- (b) note the significant policy implications, set out in Paragraph 6 of this report, implicit in the concept of fixed link connectivity between the Western Isles or part thereof and mainland Scotland;**
- (c) seek further information and reports on the matter; and**
- (d) ask the Chief Executive to arrange a Members' Seminar to consider relevant policy issues.**

Mr Calum Macmillan, seconded by Mr Gordon Murray, moved the following amendment in respect of recommendation (a) above:

"that Comhairle support the project included in the STPR2 list of projects at 2331 Fixed Link Ranish, Benbecula to Rubha Néist, Skye so that Comhairle is supportive of integrating the Island' Spinal Route into the Transport Scotland Trunk Routes via the Fixed Link between Benbecula and Skye; further, that Comhairle support the fixed link projects across the Sound of Barra (2328) and the Sound of Harris (2327) as part of the Transport Scotland funded and maintained Trunk Road infrastructure in the Islands."

The Comhairle then proceeded to debate the motion against the amendment.

The Comhairle then proceeded to vote on the matter.

The vote was taken by roll call as follows:

MOTION

Mr Norman A MacDonald
Mr Roddie Mackay
Mr Uisdean Robertson
Mr Grant Fulton
Mr Paul Finnegan
Mr John Mitchell
Mr Ranald Fraser
Mr Angus Morrison
Mr Norman MacDonald
Mr Alasdair Macleod
Mr Finlay Stewart
Mr Keith Dodson
Mr Rae Mackenzie
Mr Angus McCormack
Mr Charlie Nicolson
Mr Iain M Macaulay
Mr Neil Mackay
Mr Donald Crichton
Mr Calum Maclean
Mr John Mackay
Mr John N Macleod
Mr Kenny John Macleod

AMENDMENT

Mr Calum Macmillan
Mr Iain A MacNeil
Mr Donald Manford
Mr Paul F Steele
Mr Roddy Mackay
Mr Iain M Macleod
Mr Gordon Murray
Mr John A Maciver
Mr Kenneth Macleod

The Motion having received the majority of the votes cast became the finding of the meeting.

APPOINTMENTS

Appointment to 7
Vacancy

With reference to item 5 of the Minute of Meeting of 3 February 2021 the Chief Executive submitted a Report which sought the appointment of a substitute member on the Western Isles Integration Joint Board following the resignation of Councillor Paul Finnegan.

It was noted that there were currently three substitute members on the Western Isles Integration Joint Board.

It was agreed that the Comhairle do not appoint a further substitute member on the Western Isles Integration Joint Board, at this time.

COMMITTEES

Committee 8
Decision Reports

The Committee Decision Reports were approved, unless indicated below:

- (a) Communities and Housing Committee: 23 March 2021
- (b) Education, Sport and Children's Services Committee – 23 March 2021
- (c) Transportation and Infrastructure Committee – 24 March 2021
- (d) Sustainable Development Committee – 24 March 2021

Mr Donald Crichton, seconded by Mr Norman MacDonald moved approval of the Sustainable Development Committee Decision Report of 24 March 2021.

Mr Calum Macmilan, seconded by Mr Donald Manford, moved the following amendment to Item 10 of the Decision Report of the Sustainable Development Committee of 24 March 2021:

“that the Comhairle agree that a Report be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee in terms of Standing Order 40 seeking the approval of funding support for the abattoirs in Uist and in Barra to bring parity to the abattoir provision across the comhairle area through the provision of £10k per facility from balances previously saved on loan repayment charges and that the funding be provided on such terms and conditions as the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Director for Communities, shall determine.”

The Convener informed the Comhairle that, in order for the amendment to be debated, suspension of Standing Orders would be required, as a decision on this matter had been taken within the last year.

The Comhairle proceeded to vote on the suspension of standing orders.

It was agreed not to suspend Standing Orders to enable the amendment to be debated.

(e) Audit and Scrutiny Committee – 30 March 2021

(f) Policy and Resources Committee – 31 March 2021

NOTICE OF MOTION

The following Notice of Motion was submitted by Mr Gordon Murray, seconded by Mr Donald Manford:

That Comhairle nan Eilean Siar:

- (i) acknowledges the efforts that this council has made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy;
- (ii) recognises that councils can play a central role in creating sustainable communities, particularly through the provision of locally generated renewable electricity;
- (iii) further recognises:
 - that very large financial setup and running costs involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers result in it being impossible for local renewable electricity generators to do so,
 - that making these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier's operation would create significant opportunities for councils to be providers of locally generated renewable electricity directly to local people, businesses and organisations, and
 - that revenues received by councils that became local renewable electricity providers could be used to help fund local greenhouse gas emissions reduction measures and to help improve local services and facilities;

- (iv) accordingly resolves to support the local electricity bill which, if made law, would make the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate by establishing a right to local supply; and
- (v) further resolves to instruct the chief executive to:-
 - inform the local media of this decision,
 - write to local mps, asking them to support the bill, and
 - write to the organisers of the campaign or the bill, power for people, (at 8 Delancey Passage, Camden, London NS1 7NN or info@powerforpeople.org.uk) expressing its support.

The Convener responded, as follows:

I welcome Cllr Murray and Cllr Manford's acknowledgment of the extensive efforts made by the Comhairle in regard to greenhouse gas reductions and the promotion of renewable energy. I recognise the role that councils can play in this regard and agree in relation to the very large financial setup and running costs involved in retailing locally generated electricity. I also agree that these costs presently prohibit market entry for local authorities. The potential of a local electricity bill is a step in the right direction which is why the Sustainable Development Committee considered the bill on 4 December 2019 and the Comhairle subsequently agreed the principles of the proposed bill. At present 258 MPs support the local electricity bill but 400 MPs are required to make it law.

The Comhairle is already listed among the 56 local authorities supporting the bill, which is also supported by over 300 community organisations and 55 national agencies. Given that the Comhairle has already considered the local electricity bill and is a publicly acknowledged supporter I see no reason to write to the organisers at this stage.

Similarly, the Comhairle has been public about its support of the bill. In November 2019, Cllr. Donald Crichton, Chairman of the Sustainable Development Committee stated in a Press Release that: "the principles of this new bill align closely with the Comhairle's ambitions in the area of electricity generation and supply". Cllr. Crichton went on to acknowledge that "this bill will simplify the process and reduce the costs faced by local supply companies". I am sure Cllr. Crichton would be happy to reaffirm to the media and to our MP the decisions of his Committee and existing Comhairle policy in regard to the Local Electricity Bill.