

Castlebay & Vatersay Community Council

Meeting of 30th May 2024 - Draft Minutes

CCC members Present:

Paul McGuire (PMG) – Chair

Katie Denehy (KD) - Vice Chair

Sarah Ann MacLean (SAML) – Treasurer

Eileen Frater (EF) – Committee

Donald MacNeil (DMN) - Committee

In Attendance:

Cllr Kenneth MacLean (Cllr KML)

Cllr Ian MacNeil, (Cllr IMN)

Rachael Saunders (RS minutes)

Summary of Actions at the end

- 1) Welcome – PMG Welcomed everyone to the meeting which started at 19:04
- 2) Apologies – Rose MacDougall
- 3) Minutes of previous meetings proposed by Eileen McLeod Frater and Seconded by Katie Denehy.
- 4) **Matters arising/continuing from last meeting:**

a) Playpark, Streetlights & Roads

Road markings: PM said the road markings had mostly been done from this round; progress is being made thanks to the two different crews painting with hand and machine.

Road side maintenance:

Improvements have been made with the Gorse at the North end of the island. Serious concerns were raised re replacing more crash barriers. IMN said there is an annual road survey available throughout the Western Isles, and he's requested a list of things on it.

Streetlights: PM said that the street lights are now sorted after being out for quite some time. IM said it would be worth looking into the age of the street lights in case they only last so long. PM said that PC Farndale mentioned there was an issue with the timing mechanism where the lights were not switching off at the right time at the top of the pier road (A888 to the School), and that he had picked up a replacement timer in Stornoway in May. It was agreed that during the Summer months it would be less noticeable however during Winter it would become more of an issue if not resolved.

Action 1: [Cllr IMN to look into age of street lights](#)

Football pitch/drains: Cllr KM asked if there had been a response to the letter regarding the football pitch; KD confirmed there had been no response. PM said that he had a walk around with DJ and Angus MacDonald; DJ said the flap at the bridge was faulty, the debris was backed up and it was likely the culvert had never been changed, and would need replacing in the near future. The culvert replacement was part of the Hub plan. IM said that the ditches had been partially done around 3 years ago however they were not completed.

PM also said that the drainage area for the Co Op in the reeded area has a very bad smell, however no one has claimed responsibility despite going between Co Op and SSE, again multiple times. IM suggested calling SEPA and getting them to use enforcement orders to determine responsibility, as this has been going on since around 2007. IM said that Scottish Water are responsible for the tap water and water going through the drains; PM said that Caladh took responsibility for the drains two years ago.

[Action 2: Cllr IMN to speak with SEPA regarding drains](#)

[Action 3: Cllr KM to speak with MacLennan contractors](#)

b) Hub Update

Castlebay School: SAM advised there had been a further visit to the school since the last meeting; PM confirmed this, and that AA was writing to confirm the school was not fit for purpose. The council have put forward a number of proposals to either renovate, build new, or keep part of the building. Both Northbay and Castlebay councils met with Malcolm Burr (Chief Exec for CnES), Paul Finnegan (Head of Education), and Susan Thompson (Vice Chair of Transportation) for a detailed meeting, and they are looking at options to build a new school. KM said that it's clear now to them that a new building for both schools is needed.

Hospital/Care Facility: Alastair Allan wrote to the health board but has had no response. He offered to set up a meeting with the Minister but it is unknown if this was done. IM advised that they still hadn't met with Jenny Gilruth, and that they're still pushing strongly for the new build. KD advised AA wrote back in mid May to say he'd received a letter from the NHS regarding St Brendans; this was put up on the Castlebay Council Facebook page. PM said that the Health board haven't decided on a plan and we need to keep applying pressure to push for it, as we need direction on what is happening.

Action: KM had spoken to Nick and emailed CC afterwards.

Local Health & Social Care; Regarding dentistry, KM stated that everything is pointing to Barra losing the permanent dentist. Currently if there is a need for emergency treatment, patients have to call NHS24, and often have to travel to Uist+Barra Hospital. PM said that there are lots of problems getting emergency treatment – many can't get a space on the ferry, some need urgent treatment but not getting it as they can't get over to Uist due to the ferry timetables and being fully booked. It is felt that we need a resident dentist on Barra for the times there are no locums; been told that the 111 service is being withdrawn. KM agreed to raise this at the next locality meeting. PM raised concerns around the 111 service – people are waiting hours when they need to go to the hospital, and many have just gone to the hospital directly because they have been waiting so long. One particular case, someone had concussion and needed stitches. Two years ago we were told they would look into local dispatch or triage, but nothing was done, and people here are now accepting the fact that there is no service here. Another concern is people being taken to Stornoway hospital and then they are stuck as they have no transport to get back – in one instance a pensioner was dropped off in Leverburgh and had to make their own way home from there. WI Health Board are saying it's not their responsibility but there is a duty of care to get people home again following treatment. They rely on the good will of Calmac staff to wait with them for taxis etc. KD said that people need an advocacy to say they need to go to Glasgow instead of Stornoway for treatment. KM said he had already written to Gordon about this, but willing to write again; PM said to CC in the MSPs, as at some point someone is going to suffer from the impact of this. It was discussed the possible

use of a community vehicle to take Barra patients to attend appointments in Uist. PM agreed to discuss this to VABV. KM advised he would contact Locality about patient transport, dentistry and concerns with 111 service. He has also followed up about mental health issues and the 2 posts for CPNs. One is reserved for a dementia specialist and the other is reserved for Gill Russell who is still training. It is unknown how long she will be in training for. IM advised that one CPN is retiring.

[Action 4: Cllr KML to raise Dentistry, mental health issues with HHP, Health Board & CnES & feedback at next locality meeting](#)

[Action 5: PM to contact Voluntary Action](#)

- c) *Public Bins*: KM said he had spoken to Fiona Galbraith who said she would arrange to get it sorted however it has yet to be actioned. It is apparent that the bins are being filled by people in motorhomes/campervans. KD asked if more bins at Calmac piers would help – KM said he will follow up with Calmac regarding additional bins

[Action 6 : Cllr KML to speak to Calmac about the bin situation](#)

- d) *Castle* – SAM said that a meeting was held with John and Sarah, and John wanted to speak with the staff from the castle to ascertain how it would work through the summer. They have things back up for the summer, including benches at the marina for people waiting for boat tours, and people will be in Castlebay hall with information. It was asked about the cubicle but there is still no suitable space – the Post Office, heritage centre and Buth were considered however not suitable. The virtual cube which allows people to visit the castle virtually isn't currently happening but there may be scope to bring it up to the hall by lorry in July for a week. It can't be left in the hall however due to weddings and functions etc. IM asked about the space requirements and if it could be stored in a container at the Marina as there is wifi there, and this could be locked overnight. He also suggested the unit beside the gin distillery in Castlebay –

[Action 7: SAM to speak with Callum MacKenzie about using the unit next to the distillery for the castle cube storage](#)

- e) *Transport Committee*: PM advised that the Transport Committee is now up and running and holds meetings monthly. Last meeting EF wrote a letter to Malcolm Burr, which was well received from VA. Eoin MacNeil advised that a solution was found to provide £120k towards all community transport for a further year. There have been letters regarding ferry transport sent to the committee, and they are working towards a more strategic plan for points of entry issues to the island. They are open meetings which anyone can attend; there were 15 in attendance at the last meeting. PM said that the feedback from the meetings is about exchanging information and making people aware of others' concerns – it is hoped that this will progress to the area forum. The next transport meeting is 10th June. IM advised he was attending the Western Isles ferries meeting in Stornoway the following Tuesday; he could not attend the meeting in Fort William due to ferry timetables so will be attending online. PM said that action does need to be taken, as the issues are stifling businesses and medical appointments. The additional crew/ferry could be seasonal, to relieve the pressure during the tourist months. IM said that the Loch Bruhsda ferry is likely to remain on the Mallaig-Armadale run.

- f) *EE Signal* – PM said that BT have said they have postponed the decommissioning of the copper line until 2027. When he looked into getting a new broadband deal, he asked about removing the phone line and was asked if he has an emergency line. They

said they ask everyone as they need to check everyone has a backup line. IM said there is still no signal at Vatersay hall; it's been raised as there are multiple events held there and people get stuck if they cannot make phone calls. IM said he can follow up with requesting a mast to be put there.

[Action 8: IM to follow up about requesting a mast to be put up at Vatersay Hall](#)

Other Items for the Agenda

- 5) CBaB through the Spagan fund has offered £5k annual donation to distribute in small tranches as they see fit. This has now been paid to the Council, and the agreement is that the grants are capped at £500, which would help fund 10 community groups. There would be no need to apply, they can come straight to the Council. The £5k has been offered to both Castlebay and Northbay councils. SAM and EF have agreed to make decisions on who to distribute the grants to. PM advised that it will be some time before it's launched to ensure everything is in order. KD said that Rachael from Foundation Scotland with CBaB is happy to have a Teams meeting with people to talk through the process and is happy to set that up; it was suggested to wait until schools are back to arrange this.
- 6) Herring Walk - KD made an application to Spagan and the council have received £2100 to pay for strimming and tidying up the herring walk. There has already been some work done, however the Council can help with tidying up and grass cutting.
- 7) *Dentist* – KD wrote a letter to Robert MacIntosh to thank him for all his dental work over the past 25 years.
- 8) *Bus Shelter* – IM asked if any invoices had been received for the bus shelter; KD confirmed nothing had been received as yet. The concrete had been put in through their own doing, IM advised that this would cover the cost of the VAT added. PM said that during the area forum there were 3 bus stops identified, with one to be completed each year. The airport bus shelter will be repurposed with seating added, and the next one is to be done in Vatersay village; DM said he currently picks up from Vatersay hall, however IM said that the requests were mostly from school children who miss the bus, so it was suggested that it needs to be in Vatersay village. PM agreed to speak with Paul Donnelly who is chair for Vatersay Village. KD said she can put the application in for it, and it was agreed to include costs to maintain as the bus stops are the responsibility of the community council.
- 9) Crown Estates funds – KD advised there have been a lot of applications in for the initiative which was due to help all of the islands – Balivanich received £90k as a port of entry, Castlebay was due to receive £61k however this has been frozen. KD agreed to chase up with AA.

AOCB – none raised.

[Action 10: PM to speak with Paul Donnelly regarding location of Vatersay bus stop](#)

[Action 11: KD to send application for Vatersay bus stop funding](#)

[Action 12: KD to chase up with Alastair Allan about £61k crown estate funding for Castlebay](#)

Finances: SAML updated on finances as follows:

£32,970.13 is the account total, of which most is ring-fenced as follows:

- £11k Grass cutting grant,
- £8,700 Bus Stop,

- £1,500 Playpark.
- £1,400 Pensioners party
- £120 for Chloe, £450 for grass cutting, £60 for Helen.

All the above amounts are restricted so when these amounts are allocated, the balance will drop drastically.

Payments in:

- £378 for the Herring walk insurance
- £5k from CBaB/Spagan funding
- £2.5k for grass cutting

g) Date of Next Meeting: **Thursday 29th August 7pm at Barra Learning Centre.**

Summary of Actions:

No	Description	Who	Completed ✓
1	ClIr IMN to look into age of street lights	ClIr IMN	
2	ClIr IMN to speak with SEPA regarding drains	ClIr IMN	
3	ClIr KM to speak with Kenny regarding drains	ClIr KM	
4	ClIr KML to raise Dentistry, mental health issues with HHP, Health Board & CnES & feedback at next locality meeting	ClIr KM	
5	PM to contact Voluntary Action regarding leaving a bus in Uist for community transport to+from hospital appointments	Paul McGuire	
6	ClIr KML to speak to Calmac about the bin situation & also feedback at the next meeting about the bin surrounds issue after meeting IC	ClIr KML	
7	SAM to speak with Callum MacKenzie about using the unit next to the distillery for the castle cube storage	Sarah-Ann	
8	IM to follow up about requesting a mast to be put up at Vatersay Hall	ClIr IMN	
9	KD to schedule Teams meeting with Rachael from Foundation Scotland once schools have returned	Katie Denehy	
10	PM to speak with Paul Donnelly regarding location of Vatersay bus stop	Paul McGuire	
11	KD to send application for Vatersay bus stop funding	Katie Denehy	
12	KD to chase up with Alastair Allan about £61k crown estate funding for Castlebay	Katie Denehy	

Abbreviations:

C&VCC – Castlebay & Vatersay Community Council

CnES – Coimhairle nan Eilean Siar

CBaB – Coimhearsnachd Bharraigh & Bhatarsaigh

VABV – Voluntary Action Barra & Vatersay

LAF – Local Area Forum

MB – Malcolm Burr

LPG – Locality Planning Group

IJB – Integrated Joint Board

AA – Alastair Allan