



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

Minute of Meeting held in Council Chamber,
Council Offices, Stornoway on Wednesday 7 May
2025 at 10.30am

PRESENT

Mr Kenneth Macleod (Convener)	Mr Ranald Fraser
Mr Paul Steele (Leader)	Mr Norman Macdonald
Mr Duncan MacInnes, MBE, Depute Leader	Mr Donald Macsween
Mr Kenneth J Maclean	Mr John A Maciver
Mr Iain A MacNeil	Mr Iain M Macaulay
Mr Iain M Macleod	Mr Malcolm K Macdonald
Ms Susan Thomson	Mr Gordon Murray
Mr Mustapha Hocine	Mr Angus McCormack
Mr Uisdean Robertson	Dr Frances Murray
Mr Paul Finnegan	Mr George Murray
Mr Kenneth M Macleod	Mr Norrie Macdonald
Mr Robert Mackenzie	
Mr Angus Morrison	

APOLOGIES

Mr John N Macleod	Mr Rae Mackenzie
Mr Donald F Crichton	Mr Finlay M Stewart
Mr Calum Maclean	

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Malcolm Burr	Mr Derek Mackay
Mr Donald A Macleod	Mr James Mackinnon
Mrs Anne Murray	Mrs Shona Hadwen
Mr Tim Langley	Mrs Marina Macaulay

Prayer

The Meeting was preceded in prayer, led by Mr Angus Morrison.

Tribute: Cllr Iain A
MacNeil

The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, extended sincere condolences to Cllr Iain A MacNeil, and his family, following the death of his son Tony.

Tribute: Mr Donnie
Steele

The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, paid tribute to Mr Donnie Steele, who was previously Councillor for the Barraigh, Bhatarsaigh, Eirisgeigh agus Uibhist a Deas Ward, between 2012-2017. The Convener stated that Mr Steele had been a Member of the Environment and Protective Services Committee, the Education and Children's Services Committee and the Licensing Board. The Convener further stated that Mr Steele had been a very popular community figure in Uist and had been a Director of Stòras Uibhist since 2020 and had worked at QinetiQ for 27 years and was latterly the Benbecula Airport Manager.

The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, extended sincere condolences to Mr Steele's family, friends and former colleagues at this time.

Tribute: Mrs Dolina
Macleod

The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, extended sincere condolences to Mrs Dolina Macleod and her family, following the death of her father.

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Tribute: Mrs Margaret Ann Macdonald	<p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, paid tribute to Mrs Margaret Ann Macdonald, School Assistant at Lionel School, who had passed away on 29 March 2025.</p> <p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, extended sincere condolences to Mrs Macdonald's husband Roddy John, who is employed by the Comhairle working at Marybank Depot, and her two sons Daniel and Jonathan.</p>
Tribute: Pope Francis	<p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, expressed condolences to the Catholic communities of the Western Isles, following the death of Pope Francis on 21 April 2025.</p>
Tribute: Jack Libby	<p>The Convener referred to Mr Jack Libby, who had recently left Comhairle employment and had taken on a new position with Highland Council. The Convener stated that Mr Libby had been employed by the Comhairle since 2009, when he was appointed Children's Services Social Work Manager. In November 2019, Mr Libby was appointed as Head of Service, Community Care and in January 2022 was appointed as Chief Officer, Children's Services/Chief Social Work Officer.</p> <p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, thanked Mr Libby for his many years' service and wished him and his family all the very best for the future.</p>
Tribute: Scottish School's Pipe Band Championships	<p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated the Lewis and Harris Youth Pipe Band, who had been awarded the Scottish Schools Pipe and Drums Trust Eilidh Macleod Endeavour Award, sponsored by Eilidh's Trust, at the Scottish Schools Pipe Band Championships in Kilmarnock on Sunday 10th March 2025.</p> <p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated Castlebay School's Young Musicians, who had won the Freestyle Competition at the Scottish School's Pipe Band Championships.</p>
Tribute: Film G Awards	<p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated the following, who were winners at the FilmG Awards in Glasgow on Friday 7 March 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Comunn na Gàidhlig, Isle of Harris, Best Comedy for An Guth ➤ Rosa O'Halloran, Isle of Lewis, Best Documentary in the Under 18 Category for her independent entry "Forsan" ➤ Rachel Kate Macleod, Isle of Lewis, Best Performance Award for Acting in Geama ➤ Lauren Smith, who has strong ties to the Isle of Lewis, Over 18 FilmG Choice Award for the documentary A' Choimhearsnachd agus Mise.
Tribute: Kara Hanlon	<p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated Kara Hanlon on her success at the recent British Aquatics Championships where she had won a Gold Medal in the Women's 50m Breaststroke competition and Silver Medals in the 100m and 200m Breaststroke competitions.</p>
Tribute: Western Isles Islands Games Association	<p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated the competitors from the Western Isles who had been selected for the WIIGA squad, as they prepared to compete at the Island Games in Orkney at the end of June 2025 and wished them all the very best at the Games.</p>

MINUTES

Minute of Meeting of	1	The Minute of Meeting of 12 February 2025 was approved , subject to the following correction at item 3 of the Minute, Question 2, delete:
(a) 12 February 2025		"and the value of the inherited parent developer's Contract for difference".
(b) 25 February 2025		The Minute of Meeting of 25 February 2025 was approved .

Declaration of Interest 2 There were no declarations of interest.

QUESTIONS

Written Questions to the Convener and Chairmen of the Committees 3 The following written questions were submitted by Cllr Gordon Murray:

Question 1

Given that thousands of 1950s-born women in the Western Isles face financial hardship due to the DWP's maladministration in communicating State Pension age changes, exacerbating local challenges like increased social care demands, childcare pressures, and reduced economic spending, what steps will the Comhairle take to urgently press our local MP to join the All-Party Parliamentary Group on State Pension Inequality for Women and advocate for a compensation scheme, as recommended by the PHSO, to support these women and mitigate the knock-on impacts on our communities?

The Convener responded as follows:

The Chief Executive and the Leader meet with the Member of Parliament on a monthly basis and they will raise this issue with the MP at the next meeting between the Comhairle and the MP.

Question 2

At the council meeting on 12 February 2025, I asked you "Where was the provisions in the Education Act for a local authority to set up a learning centre?"

You said you would come back to me with an answer. As of 1 May, the deadline for the resubmission of questions for the Comhairle meeting on 7 May, you have not sent me a response and I, therefore, would ask you to let me have your response to my supplementary question of 12 February 2025 relating to the Sandwickhill Learning Centre.

The Convener responded as follows:

I am sorry that you did not receive a response to the question you asked at the meeting on 12 February.

Please refer to section 1(1) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, which states:

...it shall be the duty of every education authority to secure that there is made for their area adequate and efficient provision of school education and further education.

and s17(1):

...it shall be the duty of an education authority, in the performance of their functions under sections 1 to 6 of this Act, to provide for their area sufficient accommodation in public schools (whether day schools or boarding schools) and other educational establishments under their management to enable them to perform their said functions.

Mr Murray asked the following supplementary question:

When the Sandwickhill Learning Centre was closed what procedure was followed, as set out in the relevant statute, for its closure?

The Convener indicated that he would provide Cllr Murray with a written response to his question following the meeting.

Question 3

At the meeting of the Comhairle on the 12 February 2025, in relation to a question asked on Community Benefit associated with windfarm developments, you said that the quantum associated with offshore windfarm developments for Pot 2, which would be used for application by the Comhairle for improvements from the Butt to Barra, was still

under negotiation. When will a report be submitted to the Comhairle on the cash value of Pot 2?

The Convener responded as follows:

Discussions are ongoing with Northland Power regarding the form and value of community benefit to the wider Outer Hebrides. The most recent discussion was held on the 4 March. Given the status of the project, we are unable to put a timescale on the conclusion of these discussions. It should be noted that the agreement with the West Side Estates Group represents a sector-leading community benefit agreement in relation to offshore wind, and the Comhairle played an important role in initiating the discussions around that. An Energy MOWG is scheduled for 29th May at which Northland will be present, enabling all Members to receive an update on the stage of the project.

Cllr Murray asked the following supplementary question:

Would the Convener agree with me that the minimum acceptable level of community benefit for the Pot 2 element should be at least equivalent to £7,500 per megawatt approved by Highland Council for a central fund which will support and enable economic development, increase prosperity and achieve equity for all communities across the Western Isles.

The Convener indicated that he would provide Cllr Murray with a written response to his question following the meeting.

GOVERNANCE

Appointment of
Chief Social Work
Officer 4

The Chief Executive submitted a Report which advised of the appointment, by the Chief Executive, of Mr Michael Stewart, Criminal Justice Service Manager, as Interim Chief Social Work Office. The Report stated that the term of the appointment would be until the recruitment of a permanent Chief Social Work Officer.

It was agreed that the Comhairle note the appointment of Mr Michael Stewart, Criminal Justice Service Manager, as Interim Chief Social Work Officer with effect from 14 April 2025.

Community Safety
Board and
Licensing Board:
Appointment of
Members 5

The Chief Executive submitted a Report which sought the appointment of Comhairle Members to vacancies on the Western Isles Licensing Board and the Community Safety Board.

It was agreed that the Comhairle:

(1) appoint the following Members to serve on the Western Isles Licensing Board:

**Cllr Iain A MacNeil
Cllr Paull Finnegan
Cllr Malcolm K Macdonald**

(2) appoint the following Members to serve on the Community Safety Board:

**Cllr Robert Mackenzie
Cllr Gordon Murray**

Senior Councillors'
Allowances 6

The Chief Executive submitted a Report which provided details on the implementation of the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2024 (Remuneration) Amendment Regulations 2025. The Regulations allowed the Comhairle to award up to 10 Senior Councillor Allowances. The Report invited the Comhairle to consider awarding a further two Senior Councillor Allowances to the remaining unremunerated posts of Chair of Comataidh Gàidhlig and of the Community Safety Board and to consider the level of each Senior Councillor Allowance.

It was agreed that the Comhairle:

- (a) note the implementation of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Amendment Regulations 2025.
- (b) agree to set the salary of the Convener at the maximum of 75% of the post of Leader as prescribed in the Regulations.
- (c) designate two further positions of Senior Councillor, in respect of the posts of Chair of Comataidh na Gàidhlig and Chair of the Community Safety Board; and
- (d) approve the allowances for Senior Councillors in the amounts set out in paragraph 5.6 of the Report.

COMMITTEES

Committee
Decision Reports

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The following Committee Decision Reports were approved:

- (a) Education, Sport and Children's Services Committee – 29 April 2025
- (b) Sustainable Development Committee – 29 April 2025

In relation to item 13 of the Sustainable Development Committee Decision Report 29 April 2025, Cllr Gordon Murray, seconded by Cllr Malcolm Macdonald, moved the following amendment:

In respect of item 13 of the Sustainable Development Committee Decision Report of 29 April 2025 that the recommendations detailed in the Report be not approved until the Chief Officer of Economic and Community Regeneration has sought clarity from the Scottish Government that any obligation period regarding the use of the capital receipt referred to in the Report by the Chief Officer of Economic and Community Regeneration has passed and that a further Report be submitted to the Comhairle when a response has been received by the Scottish Government to ensure that financial resources entrusted to the Comhairle are used for the purposes for which they were given by the Scottish Government.

The Comhairle then proceeded to vote on the matter.

The vote was taken by roll call as follows:

MOTION

Mr Kenneth Macleod
Mr Paul Steele
Mr Duncan MacInnes, MBE
Mr Kenneth J Maclean
Mr Iain A MacNeil
Mr Iain M Macleod
Ms Susan Thomson
Mr Mustapha Hocine
Mr Uisdean Robertson
Mr Paul Finnegan
Mr Kenneth M Macleod
Mr Robert Mackenzie
Mr Angus Morrison
Mr Ranald Fraser
Mr Norman Macdonald
Mr Donald Macsween
Mr Angus McCormack
Dr Frances Murray

AMENDMENT

Mr John A Maciver
Mr Iain M Macaulay
Mr Malcolm K Macdonald
Mr Gordon Murray

Mr George Murray
Mr Norrie Macdonald

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

In relation to item 14 of the Sustainable Development Committee Decision Report of 29 April 2025, Cllr Gordon Murray, seconded by Cllr John A Maciver, moved the following amendment:

delete recommendation (4) and replace with:

- (4) authorise the Chief Executive to terminate the current lease between Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and NA Lews Castle Limited and invite tenders for the lease of Lews Castle, the renowned day-visitor destination, upscale events venue which offers exceptional accommodation and that the Chief Executive prepare a further Report, following a procurement process on a new lease between Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and an operator, which will ensure that all elected members and employees of the Comhairle should achieve best value for money and avoid legal challenge to the Comhairle.

As the matter had been taken in private at the Sustainable Development Committee, it was agreed that the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the debate on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Schedule 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, namely, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the Comhairle) would be disclosed.

The Comhairle then proceeded to vote on the matter.

The vote was taken by roll call as follows:

MOTION

Mr Kenneth Macleod
Mr Paul Steele
Mr Duncan MacInnes, MBE
Mr Kenneth J Maclean
Mr Iain A MacNeil
Mr Iain M Macleod
Ms Susan Thomson
Mr Uisdean Robertson
Mr Paul Finnegan
Mr Kenneth M Macleod
Mr Robert Mackenzie
Mr Angus Morrison
Mr Norman Macdonald
Mr Donald Macsween
Mr Iain M Macaulay
Mr Malcolm K Macdonald
Mr Angus McCormack
Mr George Murray
Mr Norrie Macdonald

AMENDMENT

Mr Mustapha Hocine
Mr Ranald Fraser
Mr John A Maciver
Mr Gordon Murray
Dr Frances Murray

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

- (c) Transportation and Infrastructure Committee – 30 April 2025
(d) Policy and Resources Committee – 30 April 2025
(e) Audit and Scrutiny Committee – 1 May 2025

