



COMHAIRLE @ 50 UPDATE

Report by Chief Executive

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to provide an update on the Comhairle's plans to mark its 50th Anniversary.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 There are three main elements to marking the 50th year of the Comhairle. The first, a Civic Reception which is scheduled to take place in the Town Hall, Stornoway on Friday 16 May 2025 – events will also take place in Uist and Barra. The second element is a publication to mark the Comhairle's work over the last 50 years, as well as looking ahead to the next 50. The third is an expert panel discussion evening which is scheduled to take place later in 2025.
- 2.2 Work is continuing on the research for the Comhairle @ 50 publication which will cover the Comhairle's work and achievements over the last 50 years. Several key contacts from various parts of the islands have been identified to assist with the research element of the publication to ensure that a comprehensive picture can be presented. Appendix 1 shows the proposed chapters to be covered.
- 2.3 Niall Houston (Strategy Officer) has been working on the research element one day a week along with Seonaid McDonald (Archivist) and Colin George Morrison (Team Leader, Heritage and Culture). As this is additional to the workload on the team, it had previously been indicated that external support would be required on the challenging task of designing and editing the publication.
- 2.4 Karen Mackay Design, who assisted the Comhairle with the Iolaire Centenary booklet, has now been contracted to assist with the design element and ensure the book is completed to a high quality. Appendix 2 shows the timeline of the process for the book to be completed.
- 2.5 It is anticipated that the total cost of the book and Civic Events can be covered from this year and next year's Civic Budget, presuming that there is a minimal call on the 2025/26 Civic Budget for other purposes. However, as part of the consideration for any commercial opportunities to mitigate the cost of the publication, a list has been drawn up of Comhairle partners, contractors etc who will be given an opportunity to advertise as part of the Comhairle's publication. The publication will also be made available for sale.
- 2.6 The Town Hall has been chosen as the most appropriate venue for both the expert panel evening and main Civic Reception in order to utilise Comhairle facilities, IT and catering. The Civic Reception on Friday 16 May 2025 will also coincide with the official launch of the book and all current and ex-Members as well as current and ex-officials will be invited to attend.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle:**

- (a) **note the progress being made with the planned research work and themes to be covered in the publication;**

- (b) note that Karen Mackay Design has been contracted to assist with the design element of the publication;
- (c) note that the Town Hall will be the venue for both the Civic Reception on Friday 16 May 2025 and the expert panel discussion evening later in 2025; and
- (d) note that it is anticipated the projected costs of the publication and Civic Events can be covered from 2024/25 and 2025/26 Civic Budget.

Contact Officer: Colin George Morrison, Team Leader, Heritage and Culture, Internal: 211215, External: 01851 822622

Appendix 1: Proposed chapters
Appendix 2: Publication Timeline

IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	The costs of the publication and Civic Reception can be covered from 2024/25 and 2025/26 civic budget but every effort will be made to mitigate the costs to the Comhairle through commercial opportunities.
Legal	None
Staffing	The ongoing work on the research element of the publication is additional to the regular workload on the team but the team are confident that there are enough resources to take the publication to completion and deliver the Civic Events.
Assets and Property	None
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	None
Equalities	None
Corporate Strategy	None
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	None

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- 5.2 Work is continuing on the research for the Comhairle @ 50 publication which will cover the Comhairle’s work and achievements over the last 50 years. Several key contacts from various parts of the islands have been identified to assist with the research element of the publication to ensure that a comprehensive picture can be presented. Appendix 1 shows the proposed chapters to be covered.
- 5.3 Niall Houston (Strategy Officer) has been working on the research element one day a week along with Seonaid McDonald (Archivist) and Colin George Morrison (Team Leader, Heritage & Culture). As this is additional to the workload on the team, it had previously been indicated that external support/skills would be required on the challenging task of designing and editing the publication.

- 5.4 Karen Mackay Design, who assisted the Comhairle with the Iolaire Centenary booklet, has now been contracted to assist with the design element and ensure the book is completed to as high a quality as possible. Appendix 2 shows the timeline of the process for the book to be completed.
- 5.5 It is anticipated that the total cost of the book and Civic Events can be covered from this year's and next year's Civic Budget, presuming that there is a minimal call on the 2025/26 Civic Budget for other purposes. However, as part of the consideration for any commercial opportunities to mitigate the cost of the publication, a list has been drawn up of Comhairle partners, contractors etc who will be given an opportunity to advertise as part of the Comhairle's publication. The publication will also be made available for sale.
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- 5.7 A meeting took place with the Lieutenancy at Museum nan Eilean on Friday 15 November 2024 to compare notes as they are well advanced with their own plans for their 50th Anniversary publication. It was noted that there was very little overlap with the work the Comhairle is doing on Comhairle @ 50. The Comhairle and Lieutenancy committed to having another meeting early in 2025 when it will be clearer what progress has been made with both books.
- 5.8 The BBC were contacted on Wednesday 6 November 2024 regarding the possibility of sharing some of their archive material through the Comhairle social media channels and the possibility of a Eòrpa special programme featuring the Comhairle. They are planning a full day Outside Broadcast to mark the occasion and are particularly interested in how Uist and Barra were transformed – this is at a very early stage of planning. They also confirmed that they will be keeping their coverage to BBC Naidheachdan/BBC News outlets rather than Eòrpa. Discussions are ongoing regarding the archival material.