



# OUTER HEBRIDES COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Minute of Meeting held in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Stornoway and through Microsoft Teams on Thursday, 22 August 2024 at 2.00pm.

## PRESENT

Cllr Paul Steele, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Chair)  
Ms Alison Macdonald, NHS Western Isles  
Mr Anthony Standing, Skills Development Scotland  
Mr Colum Durkan, NHS Western Isles  
Mr David MacLennan, NatureScot  
Ms Dena Macleod, Hebridean Housing Partnership  
Ms Dolina Smith, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar  
Mr Donald John Macdonald UCVO  
Cllr Donald Macsween, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar  
Cllr Duncan MacInnes MBE, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar  
Ms Ealasaid Dhòmhnaillach, Bòrd na Gàidhlig  
Ms Emily Durie, North Uist and Benbecula Locality Group  
Ms Erica Clark, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar  
Mr Euan Cowan, Police Scotland  
Mr Finlay MacLennan, Community Land Outer Hebrides  
Ms Fiona MacInnes Begg, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar  
Ms Gillian McCannon, NHS Western Isles  
Cllr Gordon Murray, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar  
Ms Jemma Macvicar, Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn/ Galson Estate  
Ms Joanna Peteranna, Highlands and Islands Enterprise  
Mr Joe MacPhee, UHI North, West and Hebrides  
Mr Lester MacDonald, Scottish Government  
Mr Malcolm Burr, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar  
Mr Ross Macrae, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
Ms Sheena Stewart, Third Sector Interface Western Isles

## APOLOGIES

Ms Alannah Logue, Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament  
Mr Colin Gilmour, NHS Western Isles  
Ms Hannah Ritchie Muir, UHI North, West and Hebrides  
Ms Jane Mackenzie, Police Scotland  
Mr Nick Fayers, Integration Joint Board  
Ms Susan MacPherson, SEPA  
Ms Susan Macrae, Skills Development Scotland

## MINUTES

Minute of Meeting of 14 March 2024 1.

The Minute of the Meeting of 14 March 2024 was approved.

North Uist and Benbecula Locality Group 2.

Ms Sheena Stewart, Third Sector Interface Western Isles submitted the draft North Uist and Benbecula Locality Plan Update for 2024. The Report noted that the North Uist and Benbecula Locality Group is a partnership of local public, private and third sector organisations working collaboratively to enhance the lives and wellbeing of the people of North Uist and Benbecula.

Ms Emily Durie, North Uist and Benbecula Locality Group led a Presentation in relation to the work of the Locality Group and future planning. It was noted that the Locality Group had initially focused on five key themes identified by the community as key areas for improvement:

- **Employment** – the Locality Group has good engagement with the Uist Repopulation Working Group, and the Uist Economic Task Force to resolve the significant issues in relation to employment identified in consultation with employers and the community. Specific actions to identify gaps in resource have been implemented, including assistance in recruiting digital volunteers to support local craft producers to set up an online database.
- **Transport** – the Locality Group has been proactive in bringing local issues to the attention of strategic groups and continues to focus on addressing issues such as timetabling and local active travel. The Partnership has supported the development of increased accessibility for wheelchairs and prams within the Langlass Woodland and aims to deliver tangible outcomes in relation to active travel and transport for communities in North Uist and Benbecula.
- **Childcare** – a full consultation has been carried out to assess childcare need across Uist. Childcare career options have been widely promoted across the region, and that the Locality Group is a core member of the recently established multi-agency Uist and Barra Childcare Forum.
- **Play and Recreation** – the Locality Group has supported the development and improvement of existing and new play parks in the area.
- **Care and Maintenance** – the Uist in Bloom project has been well received and remains incredibly popular with businesses and families participating each year. The Locality Group continues to facilitate community clear up days, Christmas light displays and community initiatives.

Ms Durie noted that other challenges and themes had emerged since the establishment of the Locality Group, and that **Anti-Poverty and Wellbeing**, and **Climate Change** issues are being progressed as key areas for improvement in the area.

Ms Stewart noted that the North Uist and Benbecula Locality Group had met on 13 August 2024; there was a high level of attendance from members, and there remains a significant and strong commitment to deliver positive outcomes for the community. There is a recognition that the Locality Group has, and continues, to deliver tangible positive outcomes for North Uist and Benbecula.

It noted that the Locality Group had discussed the establishment of a North Uist and Berneray Forum and noted that this would work in parallel to the work of the Group, with a focussed remit on political lobbying and supporting and developing economic activity in the area. Ms Stewart noted that the North Uist and Berneray Forum was a separate entity from the Community Planning Partnership, but that there would be areas for collaboration and crossover, whilst avoiding duplication.

Ms Stewart noted that the Locality Group, and in discussions with partners from wider Uist, had recognised that the key areas for improvement: Employment; Transport; Childcare; Play and Recreation; Care and Maintenance; Anti-Poverty and Wellbeing; and Climate Change were key issues replicated across Uist. It was noted all of Uist had been classed as a Repopulation Zone in recognition the islands acute depopulation challenges and the actions that need to be taken to attract and retain people to and on the islands to live and work. Ms Stewart noted that the North Uist and Benbecula Locality Group strongly recommended that the remit of the Group be extended to cover all of Uist and Eriskay.

Mr Colum Durkan, NHS Western Isles noted that Public Health colleagues had found the North Uist and Benbecula Locality Group to be a positive support for the area, and a valuable route of engagement with stakeholders in the area, and that there would be merit in extending the remit of the Partnership to include all of Uist and Eriskay.

Ms Joanna Peteranna, Highlands and Islands Enterprise noted that she fully endorsed the proposal to extend the remit of the Partnership, and commended the work carried out by the North Uist and Benbecula Locality Group in enhancing the lives and wellbeing of the community.

Cllr Gordon Murray, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar commended the work being carried out by North Uist and Benbecula Locality Group to address key actions in the area and recommended that the Community Planning Partnership Board endorse and approve the extension of the Locality Group's remit to include wider Uist and Eriskay.

Mr Malcolm Burr, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar welcomed the work that had been, and continued to be delivered by the North Uist and Benbecula Locality Group but noted that it was not within the Board's power to approve a decision on extending the remit of the Locality Group at this time; It was noted that the Locality Group had been established with a specific remit and lifespan as part of the current Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) and that Locality Group arrangements would require consideration as part of the review of the LOIP.

The Chair, on behalf of the Community Planning Partnership commended the work of the North Uist Locality Group and welcomed the opportunity to explore extending the remit of the group as part of the review of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan. It was noted that the North Uist and Benbecula Locality Group would continue to meet in its current form in parallel to the review of the LOIP.

Partnership  
Headlines

3. Ms Dolina Smith, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar noted that a job fair had been held in Stornoway Town Hall to provide Bakkafröst employees with employability support following confirmation that the organisation had begun redundancy consultation with 77 staff at their Marybank Processing Site. The event was facilitated by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Skills Development Scotland, the wider Local Employability Partnership and local employers and was well received by attendees. Over 35 Bakkafröst employees facing redundancy had secured new employment, and work is ongoing to support all remaining employees.

Ms Joanna Peteranna, Highlands and Islands Enterprise noted that there is growing international uncertainty over the future of the parent company of the Arnish Fabrication Yard '*Harland & Wolff*'. Ms Peteranna noted that HIE and the Comhairle were working closely to monitor developments and support the yard.

Mr Malcolm Burr noted that representatives from the Comhairle had met the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Health, Neil Gray MSP, as part of a recent Ministerial Visit to the Outer Hebrides. Public Sector Reform was considered as part of the discussion, with strong encouragement from the Cabinet Secretary that this would continue to be fully explored at a national level.

Mr Burr noted that interest in the Outer Hebrides from both the Scottish Government, and UK Government remains high following the recent UK Parliamentary General Election, with a significant number of visits to the islands already made or in planning.

Housing	4.	<p>Ms Dena Macleod, Hebridean Housing Partnership noted that resource pressures continued to place significant challenge on the housing sector; the annual Occupational Health Adaptations Grant for 2024/25 had been placed on hold by the Scottish Government, and there remained uncertainty if this would be issued, or at what scale. Ms Macleod noted that HHP continued to make representations on the critical need for grant support to address occupational health needs at a national level and noted that HHP had committed £35k of internal funding to address pressing needs.</p> <p>It was noted that the previous UK Government had announced that £20m had been allocated to the Outer Hebrides as part of the UK Government's Levelling Up Partnership Programme. It is anticipated that a review of the Levelling Up Fund will be carried out by the new UK Government, although the detail and criteria of which are unclear at this time. Mr Burr noted that following consideration, the Comhairle had agreed that the majority of the Levelling Up Fund allocation would be used to deliver a suite of innovative projects in Uist and Barra to support economic growth.</p>
Transport/Lifeline Services	5.	<p>The Chair noted that a Members' Seminar had been held for Elected Members on 20 June 2024 to consider Fixed Links and Connectivity. The Seminar considered the success of fixed link projects in the Faroe Islands' and recognised the need for consultation with communities across the Outer Hebrides to understand priorities and collate views on both inter-island and island to mainland fixed link opportunities and options.</p> <p>Cllr Murray noted that the Seminar had been well received by Elected Members and noted the benefit that inter-island fixed links could bring in relation to enhanced internal trade market opportunities. Cllr Murray noted that it was important that all island communities were involved in considerations around fixed links.</p> <p>Mr Burr noted that the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Health, Neil Gray MSP had attended a roundtable meeting in Uist on 21 August 2024, involving representatives from the Benbecula Patient Participant Group, Scottish Government, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, NHS Western Isles, HITRANS, Hebridean Air Services, Air Task and CalMac to consider current concerns about travel links to the Isles of Uist and Barra. Mr Burr noted that the meeting was positive and allowed service users the opportunity to discuss key challenges facing transport and lifeline services.</p> <p>It was noted that following discussion at the roundtable meeting, a short life working group will be established (to be led by HITRANS) which will explore opportunities for change to enhance the existing service. Mr Burr noted that a five-day service between Stornoway and Benbecula/ Barra remained optimal, but that this could not be delivered within current financial provision. It was noted that Elected Members had committed to retain a service between Benbecula and Stornoway.</p> <p>Mr Burr noted that the short life working group would explore options to extend the opening hours of Benbecula airport to allow enhanced rotations and maintain connections between Benbecula-Stornoway-Inverness, and discuss with HIAL and Hebridean Air Services potential changes to the days/ times of flight rotations to meet need. It was noted that Hebridean Air Services were in the process of purchasing a new aircraft to provide enhanced resilience on the network.</p> <p>The Chair noted that the short life working would explore innovative options for enhanced service delivery as part of its remit, including hydrogen fuelled aircrafts.</p> <p><b>It was agreed that the Chair would share the minute of the roundtable discussion in relation to current concerns about travel links to the Isles of Uist and Barra with the OHCPP Board.</b></p>

Ms Fiona MacInnes Begg, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar provided a summary overview of the work of Community Learning and Development (CLD). It was noted that as part of a national inspection of all 32 local authorities in Scotland, HMIE had carried out a Progress Review of CLD in January 2024. The Review considered the CLD Action Plan, a three-year statutory action plan, which includes aspects of adult learning, community capacity and youth work. Ms MacInnes-Begg noted that the Plan had been reviewed and would be considered by the Comhairle at the September Committee Series.

Ms MacInnes Begg noted that HMIE had identified that significant progress had been made in relation to leadership and governance in relation to CLD, and that feedback on progress had been positive. There is a Steering Group in place to support progress and promote services.

It was noted that the Scottish Government had published a Report in relation to an Independent Review of Community Learning and Development (CLD) on 18 July 2024. The findings from the Review Report are being considered by CLD officers and partners to understand the impact in both a local and national context; this will be linked closely with the findings of the Hayward Review in relation to Education provision.

Ms MacInnes Begg noted that work is ongoing through the Steering Group and in collaboration with stakeholders to develop the Outer Hebrides Community Learning and Development Plan 2024 – 2027. The Steering Group is exploring mapping, and opportunities for streamlining cross cutting existing plans, in recognition that are a number of action plans across groups which could be rationalised. In discussion, it was recognised that consultation with the community and stakeholders was vital to this work.

It was noted that the Board had previously considered the establishment of a Community Learning and Development Sub-Group as part of a revised structure following the review of the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership. In discussion, it was recognised that this would be revisited as part of the review of the LOIP and wider Community Planning Partnership structure.

**It was agreed:**

- (1) that Ms Fiona MacInnes Begg, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar would report back to a future meeting of the Board on the progress made in relation to the review of recommendation made in the Independent Review of Community Learning and Development; and**
- (2) to consider the establishment of a Community Learning and Development Sub-Group as part of the review of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and wider Community Planning Partnership structure.**

With reference to item 5 of the minute of the meeting of 14 March 2024, it was noted that there had been no submissions made in relation to the detailed breakdown of the level of contribution that partners are able to provide to support the review of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan/ Community Planning Policy Work.

Mr Malcolm Burr, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar noted that Elected Members had approved the establishment of a post to inform and influence strategic direction on key areas of policy and strategy, including anti-poverty measures. Mr Burr noted that there was some scope within the remit of this post to maintain and co-ordinate community planning structures and processes, but there is a need for enhanced support and input from partners.

In discussion, it was noted that if a suitable resource cannot be identified to deliver this work, a Special Meeting of the Board will be required to allocate tasks and commit resources across partners as part of the review, in recognition that partners have a statutory duty to deliver the LOIP.

Discussion was held in relation to the outcome of the OHCPP Place Standard Questionnaire issued to members of the Community Planning Partnership and wider stakeholders in March 2024. The questionnaire provided an opportunity for people in the Outer Hebrides to influence their health and wellbeing, as well as the opportunities and services available to them.

**It was agreed that**

- (1) Mr Malcolm Burr, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar would provide a detailed breakdown and costings of the resource level required to deliver on the review of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) and Community Planning Policy work;**
- (2) Community Planning Partners would identify a detailed breakdown of the level of support contribution they are able to provide to support the review of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan/ Community Planning Policy work to the CPP Administrator by 20 September 2024; and**
- (3) Ms Fiona MacInnes Begg, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar would liaise with colleagues in NHS Western Isles as to the findings of the OHCPP Place Standard Questionnaire – findings would be reported back to the Executive Group/ Board for consideration as part of the review of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.**

Executive Group	8.	The Draft Minute of the Executive Group Meeting of 13 June 2024 was submitted for information. It was noted that the Executive Group will next meet on 5 September 2024.
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Anti-Poverty Group	9.	The Draft Minute of the Anti-Poverty Group Meeting of 3 April 2024 was submitted for information.
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Ms Gillian McCannon, NHS Western Isles noted concern on the impact of vulnerable residents in the Outer Hebrides following confirmation that the Scottish Government will follow the UK Government in no longer providing winter fuel payments to all pensioners – this will be replaced by a means tested alternative, particularly given the Outer Hebrides experienced amongst the longest and coldest winter periods in the UK.

**It was agreed that:**

- (1) the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership Anti-Poverty Group will be tasked with considering the impact of the withdrawal of winter fuel payments to all pensioners; and**
- (2) the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership Anti-Poverty Group would produce a letter on behalf of the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership to the Scottish Government, and UK Government which raises concern in relation to the potential impact of the removal of the winter fuel payment for all pensioners, and seeks assurance that measures are in place to avoid any vulnerable persons from slipping between gaps and not receiving support entitlements.**

Climate Change Group 10.

It was noted that a bid to UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)'s 'Maximising UK adaption to climate change research projects' fund was submitted by the Open University in July 2024, and that the Climate Change Group was awaiting the outcome of the bid; the bid is for a wide ranging research project in climate change adaptation in the Outer Hebrides leading towards the development of an adaptation plan. If successful, the work would be delivered over 30 months commencing in November 2024. Alternative funding options will be explored if the bid is not successful.

It was noted that a the first-ever Gaelic Climate Change convention was held in South Uist in November 2023. The convention brought together residents, representatives from relevant organisations and interested parties from academia, media and the Gaelic development sector, and was well received by attendees.

Climate Hebrides CIC is facilitating an inaugural Outer Hebrides Climate Conference – OH-COP1. The event will be held on 24 September 2024 in An Lanntair, Stornoway, with provision to engage in the event remotely. The event will be the largest climate event ever held in the Outer Hebrides and will bring together a diverse group of voices to discuss the past, present, and future of climate action across our islands. It was noted that members of the Board are encouraged to attend the event.

Stornoway West Locality Group 11.

Item deferred to next meeting.

The Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership Board will next meet on Thursday, 14 November 2024 at 2.00pm.