



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held in Council Chamber,
Council Offices, Sandwich Road, Stornoway/MS
Teams, on Tuesday 28 November 2023 at
2.00pm.

PRESENT

Mr Norman Macdonald (Vice-Chair)	Mr Kenneth Macleod
Mr Iain A MacNeil	Mr Donald Macsween
Mr Paul Steele	Mr John A Maciver
Mr Mustapha Hocine	Mr Iain M Macaulay
Mr Uisdean Robertson	Mr Duncan MacInnes MBE
Mr Grant Fulton	Mr Gordon Murray
Mr Robert Mackenzie	Mr Rae Mackenzie
Mr Angus Morrison	Mr Angus McCormack
Mr Norman Misty Macdonald	Dr Frances Murray
Mr John Norman Macleod	

APOLOGIES

Mr Donald F Crichton (Chair)

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Kenneth J Maclean	Mr Calum Maclean
Mr Iain M Macleod	Mr Malcolm K Macdonald
Mr Paul Finnegan	Mr Finlay M Stewart
Mr Ranald Fraser	

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Malcolm Burr	Mrs Shona Hadwen
Mr Calum Iain Maciver	Mrs Fiona Maciver
Mr Derek Mackay	Ms Ashley Ferrier
Mr John Cunningham	Ms Caitriona McCuish
Mrs Mairi Maciver	Ms Caroline Brick
Mr Murdo Mackay	Mr Kevin Murphy
Mr Iain Watson	Ms Louise Mathews
Mr Iain Kennedy	Mrs Morag Ferguson
Mr Colin G Morrison	Ms Samantha Ferrer
Mrs Dolina Macleod	Mr Sandy Gomez
Mr John A Gilles	Ms Seonaid McDonald
Mrs Anne MacDonald	Mr William Seaborne

Prayer

The Meeting was preceded in prayer by Mr Angus Morrison.

MINUTES

Minute of Meeting of 19 September 2023 1

The Minute of Meeting of 19 September 2023 was **approved**.

Declaration of Interest	2	Mr Duncan MacInnes MBE declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 5 as he had been involved in writing the St Andrew's Report for the application and remained in the meeting during discussions.
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PRESENTATION

Western Isles Connection Project	3	The Depute Chief Executive submitted a Report to cover a presentation to the Committee by representatives of SSEN Transmission regarding SSEN-T's "Western Isles Connection Project" including the proposed 1.8GW Transmission Link, HVDC Converter Station and associated AC Substation and related cable route between Transmission Link landfall and the selected "Creed North" HVDC Converter Station site.
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The Report stated that at present, 420MW of Onshore Wind generation is consented and contracted to Grid while two ScotWind Offshore Wind developers have secured lease options for 1,334MW of offshore generation likely to be routed through Lewis. In order to transfer this generation to market in time to help meet 2030 UK carbon reduction targets, OFGEM have authorised the construction, by Transmission Owner SSEN-T, of a 1.8GW Transmission Link between the Outer Hebrides electricity network at Stornoway and the nearest National Grid substation at Beaully, Highland to be completed and energised by 2030.

The Chair welcomed Colin Bell, Alison Hall, Stuart Macpherson and Sandy McTaggart from SSEN-T to the meeting. A Presentation was delivered to the Committee in respect of the Western Isles Connection Project. The presentation provided an update on the overall project, including:

- Project timeline and key events;
- Factors considered when selecting the Lewis Site;
- Recognition of the significance of the Historical Site – Lewis Chemical Works;
- Peatland Management – details of ongoing activity being undertaken to ensure minimum disturbance to peatland habitats whilst ensuring the best solution when working in peat is unavoidable;
- Community Benefit Fund Schemes – information provided on a proposed framework but awaiting further guidance from the UK Government;
- Local Solutions – Accommodation, Supply Chain and Logistics;
- Indicative Site Visualisations.

Following the presentation Members were afforded the opportunity to ask questions. The Chair thanked the representatives from SSEN-T for their informative presentation.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle notes the contents of the presentation by SSEN Transmission representatives on the various aspects of their Western Isles Connection Project.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Outcome Delivery Report	4	The Depute Chief Executive submitted a Report presenting the half-year progress of the 2023/24 Departmental Strategic Priorities for the Depute Chief Executive Directorate detailing an update on the departmental key areas of strategic risk, progress on the strategic outcomes and the resources identified to implement the Business Plan. The Report further detailed financial performance and progress on departmental workforce planning. Analysis showed that the departmental budgets were within tolerances.
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The Report stated that the Business Plan was aligned to all four strategic priorities and four service areas within the departments contributed to the achievement of 15 strategic outcomes. The Report concluded that the Depute Chief Executive's Directorate had maintained good controls on business planning, governance, and budget management the first two quarters of 2023 / 24. In addition to its core functions and responsibilities,

the Directorate's key tasks were working to review, update and implement the Comhairle's Corporate Strategies and political priorities while delivering a strong set of services on behalf of the community across a broad service portfolio and seeking to take best advantage of new and emerging economic opportunities.

It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the Committee's interests were concerned, that the Comhairle notes the half-year progress of the 2023/24 Departmental Outcome Delivery Plans.

FISHERIES

Mr Duncan MacInnes MBE declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item as he had been involved in writing the St Andrew's Report for the application and remained in the meeting during discussions.

Evaluation of the
Outer Hebrides
Creel Limitation
Pilot 5

The Depute Chief Executive submitted a Report to inform members of the research and evaluation carried out by St. Andrews University as to the social, economic, and operational implications of the Outer Hebrides Creel Limitation Pilot.

The Report stated that the Outer Hebrides Creel Limitation Pilot (CLP) is a research and evaluation project in an area east of the Outer Hebrides, studying operational and socio-economic impacts of limitation on fishers. The pilot was implemented in November 2020 and ended in October 2022. It aimed to limit the increase in creel numbers, reverse the decline in local shellfish stocks, increase catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE), examine a local-scale fisheries management approach, and investigate vessel tracking in the inshore fleet. It was hoped that the pilot would reduce conflict amongst fishers and improve health and safety, well-being, the efficiency of fishing operations and the economic situation of fishers.

The Report further stated that due to the unfortunate timing of the CLP, the socio-economic impacts have been difficult to interpret against a backdrop of COVID, Brexit and the cost-of-living crisis. However, the results of the study suggest movement in the right direction, with fishers noticing either a small improvement or no decline in their circumstances. Many fishers agree that the pilot represents an optimistic, albeit imperfect, starting point - believing that the creel limits need to be reassessed and reduced. It is hoped that with a re-evaluation of the creel limits and limitation area, the positive impacts on conflict, well-being, economic situation, and operational patterns may be experienced more keenly by a larger proportion of fishers.

To ensure that any benefits accrued from the pilot are a true reflection of the socio-economic impacts, the study recommended that the pilot be extended both in time and area. This small-scale co-management in the form of a creel limitation at a localised level shows promise yet thought must be given to the issue beyond a localised jurisdiction, such as that of foreign vessels.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle is made aware of The Outer Hebrides Creel Limitation Pilot and its outcomes and findings.

Scottish
Government
Consultation –
Improving Inshore
Fisheries Data 6

The Depute Chief Executive submitted a Report to seek homologation of the Comhairle's response to the Scottish Government Consultation on the use of electronic tracking and monitoring technology on all under 12m commercial fishing vessels in Scottish Waters, which closed on 7 November 2023.

The Report stated that on 14 August 2023 Marine Scotland opened a consultation seeking views on using electronic tracking and monitoring technologies on under 12 metre commercial fishing vessels in Scottish waters (and Scottish vessels wherever they operate). The consultation closed on 7 November 2023.

The Report stated that the consultation proposals concern modernising the inshore fleet via the use of electronic technologies, by using a spectrum of solutions ranging from simple tracking devices to more sophisticated Remote Electronic Monitoring (REM) systems. The objective of using vessel tracking is to improve understanding of where under 12 metre vessels are fishing. The data generated would enable more efficient decision making and responsive inshore fisheries management through informing the Scottish Government's fisheries and wider marine policy development – thus enhancing the inshore fisheries evidence-base and provision of scientific advice and gathering intelligence for enforcement purposes.

The Comhairle's response to the consultation was appended to the Report. The proposed response was circulated to the Primary Industries Member Officer Working Group (PI MOWG) in advance - for finalising and approval - prior to formal submission. It is proposed that the Comhairle's response be homologated, given that the closing date of 7 November 2023 preceded the current committee series.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle agrees to homologate its response to the Marine Scotland Consultation on the use of electronic tracking and monitoring technologies on under 12 metre commercial fishing vessels in Scottish waters, as appended to the Report.

PLANNING

Scottish
Government
Consultation - New
Build
Developments:
"Delivering gigabit-
capable
connections"

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The Depute Chief Executive submitted a Report to enable the Comhairle to consider and agree its response to a Scottish Government Consultation on delivery gigabit-capable connections in new build developments.

The Report stated that the Scottish Government is working to improve and extend Scotland's broadband and mobile networks to benefit communities and businesses across the country. This is in line with the government's commitments to deliver nationwide gigabit connectivity as soon as possible.

The consultation was seeking views on the proposals to amend building standards to ensure that all new build homes are equipped with gigabit-capable (greater/faster than 1,000 megabits per second) infrastructure from the outset, with a connection available subject to a £2,000 cost cap per dwelling.

The response to the consultation was appended to the Report.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle agree the consultation response detailed at Appendix A to the Report.

Planning
Performance
Framework

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The Depute Chief Executive submitted a Report to present Scottish Government feedback on the annual Planning Performance Framework Report for 2022-23.

The Report stated that the Planning Performance Report (PPF) of the Comhairle, for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, is the twelfth such report, initially prepared voluntarily but now statutory on account of the Planning Scotland Act 2019. The PPF is a national initiative which aspires to provide a balanced measurement of the overall quality of planning services while aiming to drive a culture of continuous improvement.

Despite the challenging circumstances arising from a backlog of work post the pandemic, staffing resource and intensified customer demand, planning performance for the period of the 2022/2023 report while slightly down on the previous year was fairly consistent with the Scottish Average.

The Report further stated that for the 2022/23 reporting year, the Comhairle received positive feedback from the Scottish Government, with 12 out of the 14 key markers being awarded green ratings, one marker scoring amber and one marker achieving a red rating.

The CnES Planning Performance Framework Annual Report 2022-23 and Feedback from the Scottish Government on the CnES PPF Report 2022-23 were appended to the Report.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the Scottish Government feedback on the 2022-2023 Planning Performance Framework Report as detailed in Appendix 2 to the Report.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Nature Restoration
Fund – Investment
Opportunities 9

The Depute Chief Executive submitted a Report to seek approval to utilise the Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) to support community generated projects across the Outer Hebrides in line with the aims and objectives of the NRF as presented in the letter received on 29 June 2023 outlining the Comhairle’s “Allocation of the ‘Edinburgh Process’ Strand of the Nature Restoration Fund and Seed Funding for Nature Networks”.

The Report stated that Comhairle nan Eilean Siar received £255,000 from the Scottish Government’s Nature Restoration Fund for the 2023/24 financial year. Funding for 2025/2026 is included in the Scottish Government programme for Government and the Comhairle can, therefore, anticipate additional sums over the next two years. An initial allocation was dedicated to the control of invasive species, that project being delivered across the islands by Community Land Outer Hebrides.

The Report further stated that Comhairle officers met with NatureScot representatives to discuss options for delivery of the funds in the Outer Hebrides. As part of this discussion a project to deliver improvements to paths at the Loch Druidebeg Nature Reserve and other environmental improvement works in South Uist has been identified under the theme “enhancing and connecting nature.” To allocate the remainder to the fund, it is proposed that officers will work closely with communities to develop projects that can be supported and delivered under the NRF guidelines.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) notes the allocation of £255,000 from the Nature Restoration Fund;**
- (2) approves £26,700 from the Nature Restoration Fund to Storax Uibhist to support Hebridean Way enhancements at Loch Druidebeg and other environmental improvements; and**
- (3) allocates the remainder of the Fund to support community-generated nature restoration projects in line with the strategic themes identified under the Nature Restoration Fund.**

HERITAGE

Heritage
Update Service 10

The Depute Chief Executive submitted a Report to provide an update on the Heritage Service of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar looking at what was achieved in 2023 and illustrating the plan for 2024.

The Heritage Service covers three service areas:

- Outer Hebrides Archaeology Service – protecting and documenting the historic environment throughout the Outer Hebrides.

- Museum nan Eilean - two accredited museums both with changing exhibition programmes for diverse audiences, caring and conserving collections.
- Tasglann nan Eilean – (the archive service) collecting, preserving, and opening archives relevant to the Outer Hebrides.

The Report stated that the Service had recently refreshed its forward action plan based around seven key strategic aims. The draft plan was attached to the Report at Appendix 1.

The Report stated that over the past period the Comhairle's Heritage Service has continued to deliver a consistently high level of service against a challenging resource background. The Service has continued to innovate, delivering new digital approaches, and delivering exhibitions to the highest of standards. The Service also continues to lever in significant levels of external resources to help underpin the type of events and exhibitions to which both the Service and the Comhairle aspire.

The Report further stated that the Service has developed a Forward Action Plan with seven key strategic aims that will help the service progress and innovate further. The Plan will be important in providing strategic direction to the Service in an era of ever-diminishing resources. Critical within the Action Plan are proposals around much-needed Collections Resource Centres. It is hoped significant progress can be made in the delivery of these Centres during 2024.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) approves the Forward Plan Action Plan outlined at Appendix 1;**
- (2) agrees the next steps to be taken regarding funding for progressing the Collection Resource Centres; and**
- (3) notes the positive impact of new digital resources in the Heritage Sector.**

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Reports
Outstanding

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The Depute Chief Executive submitted a Report detailing the Reports Outstanding arising from the decisions of the Committee.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the Report.