

North Uist Community Council Meeting Comhairle Coimhearsnachd Uibhist a Tuath



MINUTES	Date: Tuesday 11 th May at 7pm	Location: Via Microsoft teams
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Present:	Joan Ferguson (Vice Chair)	Flora MacDonald
	Michelle MacDonald (Secretary)	Connor Lawless
	John MacDonald (Treasurer)	Iain MacLeod Cllr
	Kenneth MacDonald	Roddy MacKay Cllr
	Donald Angie MacLennan	
	Raghnall Maclain	
	Effie Rodger	
Apologies:	Uisdean Robertson Cllr	
	Donald Ewen Morrison	
	Rachel MacLean	
Public:	Fiona Galbraith (Calmac area manager)	Margaret Coull
	Iain Stephen Morrison (Am Paipear)	Gail Robertson
	Jemma MacVicar (North Uist and Benbecula Locality planning Group)	Abigail Taylor (Am Paipear)
	Angus Campbell (Calmac Community COard)	

1.	<p>Apologies: Apologies given from Donald Ewen Morrison, Rachel MacLean and Uisdean Robertson Cllr</p>
2.	<p>Adoption of minutes/action list:</p> <p>Previous minutes proposed by Effie Rodger and second by Flora MacDonald.</p> <p>Action's list – Majority of actions from previous meeting were for Uisdean who was unable to attend.</p> <p>Lochmaddy bank: new lines going down to help with parking spaces.</p> <p>Kilmuir Cemetery: shared an image taken of a large rabbit hole beside grave. Cllr IML to chase up with Cllr UR to see if any action has been taken.</p> <p>Cars left at bottle bank at Lochport road end: Found out the land belongs to the Council. Cars were meant to have been uplifted at end of March but</p>

	<p>there has been a delay. Jemma MacVicar reported that the locality planning group are looking into a regular car uplifting service. Gail Robertson also reported there is a government scheme called 'cartakeback.com' that will arrange to uplift scrap vehicles off the island.</p> <p>Beach access routes/tracks: CL reported that they have found a few possible funding options but will update when funding has been applied for.</p> <p>Potholes at Hougharry road end: waiting for update from Uisdean Robertson.</p> <p>Scolpaig grazing: Councilors have not heard who has been chosen as tenant, will inform CC when they hear.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Ferry Service:</p> <p>Joan thanked Calmac Area Operations Manager Fiona Galbraith, Angus Campbell from Calmac Community Board and local representative Gail Robertson and for joining the meeting.</p> <p>Question was raised as to why the mezzanine deck is not being used on the MV Hebrides this summer, despite being used last summer in the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The reduced capacity is causing major concern as it has had a negative impact on people trying to travel, local businesses and haulage. Questioned was also asked if the MV Hebrides is the only vessel not using the mezzanine deck.</p> <p>Fiona Galbraith (FG) reported that the vessels not using the mezzanine deck are the MV Hebrides and MV Isle of Lewis. FG explained that the reason behind not using the mezzanine deck on these vessels is due to the cleaning and turnaround times.</p> <p>FG explained that the reason the mezz deck was used in summer 2020 was because passenger numbers were much lower than any normal summer as not many people were traveling due to the pandemic. Therefore, last summer, they were able to follow the cleaning protocols put in place by Transport Scotland, without having to run at reduced capacity or reduced sailings. This year, Transport Scotland gave HITRANS and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar two options – 1. No use of mezz deck but run to normal timetable or 2. Use the mezz deck and lose one sailing per day. This was given out in November 2020 and the Comhairle decided to not use the mezz deck. The reasoning behind the options is that the use of mezz deck increases turnaround time as staff cannot begin cleaning until all passengers have left passenger area. This is how the mezz deck can be used on the MV Loch Seaforth as passengers are able to go to their cars on the mezz deck while it is raised, even when the other cars have not left the flat deck.</p> <p>Fiona stated that the decision to not use the mezz deck may not last all summer and that if the Scottish Government relax the COVID-19 rules, meaning cleaning protocols may also be relaxed, then the capacity could be increased.</p>

Question was asked as to why there are no extra sailings. FG answered saying that to allow extra sailings, they would require additional crew, but Transport Scotland have said they will not fund extra resource (across the whole Calmac network) due to the COVID-19 capacity restrictions.

FG reported that currently the capacity of car deck already booked for the summer on the MV Hebrides is at about 30-40%. Questioned was asked if this takes into consideration the weight or is it just space? FG said that it does include deadweight capacity as well as car meterage.

FG reported that Calmac are using 'turn up and go' again this year which allows for essential last-minute travel i.e., hospital appointments and emergencies. There are 2 spaces per sailings reserved for this. Question was asked if this is less than last year, **FG to find out how many turn up and go spaces were available last summer.**

It was agreed that the Community Council will write to MSP Alasdair Allan and the Scottish Government with the concerns regarding the reduced capacity on the MV Hebrides and the impact on locals and local businesses. **Joan Ferguson, Conor Lawless and Effie Rodgers agreed to work on the letter together.**

Question was asked as to why the Calmac contact centre in Gourock is still working to restricted hours? FG explained this is due to staff still working from home. FG informed that there will be staff in the ports when there are sailings, for example if you needed to get in touch with someone on a Friday night regarding the Lochmaddy-Uig late sailing there will be someone in the Lochmaddy port until the ferry has reached the arrival port.

Question was raised regarding hiring other vessels to cover when Calmac vessels breakdown or need additional sailings. FG answered saying that the reason Calmac did not use the Pentalina (from Pentland Ferries) when the MV Loch Seaforth broke down was due to the Pentalina being on charter and would be unavailable for four weeks. FG also informed us that Calmac are hesitant in hiring the Pentalina because there are several ports that she does not fit on and there is a clause in her hire that states she can be recalled at 24 hours' notice therefore would not be reliable for long term cover.

Question was asked if you must wait until a port is opened to phone to amend/cancel a booking? FG answered saying that booking amendments and cancellations can be done online (on internet/browser but not on the Calmac app as yet).

Concern was raised regarding the payoff of staff in the Stornoway Calmac call centre, that were then readvertised through an agency in Glasgow on a 4-month contract. Disappointing for the islands if these jobs have been taken away to be given to people on the mainland. **FG to find out more information regarding this.**

Issue was raised regarding lorries being on the ferry with no driver and being stuck behind lorries waiting for the drivers to come onto the boat. This then delays the other cars that cannot get passed. FG confirmed that calmac rules

	<p>state it is 1 driver per 2 vehicles therefore a driver can take off one vehicle then go back for the other.</p> <p>Concern was raised regarding booking with travel vouchers, they can only be used in the port office and cannot be used online which has been difficult during the pandemic due to ports discouraging members of the public from entering. FG explained that travel vouchers cannot be used online but they can be used over the phone, but you need to phone the departing port. Direct numbers for the ports are on the timetables and Michelle will post the local port numbers on the Community Council facebook page.</p> <p>Question was asking if the MV Hebrides is working with reduced crew? FG is not aware of reduced staff numbers but will check.</p>
4.	<p>Councillors report: Nothing to report.</p>
5.	<p>Secretary position: Michelle is looking to step down as secretary therefore if anyone would like to take on the position or knows of anyone interested, please get in touch.</p>
6.	<p>Salt bins: Benbecula Community Council received funding which they have spent on salt bins and are looking to share them across the islands. The CC members feel we should accept them but that it should be the Comhairles responsibility to look after them. Suggestions were made to put the bins at the local housing schemes. Jemma MacVicar informed us that she is doing a public consultation for the salt bins in Benbecula to see where the community would like them placed and she is offering to do the same for North Uist - the CC members accepted Jemmas offer.</p>
7.	<p>BCC Fund: Benbecula Community Council have money from the HIAL boat that was sold and have been in touch to ask how we would like the money to be divided (Michelle sent email round to CC members). The options were to either give the £900 to one local group, divide the money to multiple groups or to take the money and ringfence it until we decide on who to give it to. Not enough responses were received to decide, Michelle to email all members again to prompt a reply.</p>
8.	<p>Correspondence received: No correspondence received.</p>

9.	<p>AOCB: Issued raised regarding road down to Griminish Pier in need of repair – Cllr Iain MacLeod to investigate this.</p> <p>Questioned asked as to why chemo is not being done in Uist and Barra Hospital to save patients travelling to Stornoway? – Michelle to email Cllr Uisdean Robertson to ask since he is our rep on the Health Board.</p> <p>Concerns were made regarding no social distancing on the Loganair flights to Stornoway and Glasgow from Benbecula. Unfortunately, it would not be financially viable to social distance on a plane, but the issue is the public not knowing that the plane will be full until they are on it which can be uncomfortable for many people due to the pandemic.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Date of next meeting: 22nd June 2021 at 7PM POSTPONED UNTIL 29TH JUNE AT 7.30PM</p>

Actions list:

- **Cllr IML to chase up with Cllr UR to see if any action has been taken regarding rabbits in Kilmuir Cemetery.**
- **Councillors to inform CC when Scolpaig grazing tenant has been chosen.**
- **FG to find out how many turn up and go spaces were available last summer.**
- **Joan Ferguson, Conor Lawless and Effie Rodgers to send letter to MSP and Scottish Government regarding ferry.**
- **FG to find out more information regarding Stornoway Calmac call centre payoffs.**
- **Michelle will post the local port numbers on the Community Council facebook page.**
- **FG to check if the MV Hebrides is running with reduced staff.**
- **Cllr IML to investigate repair of the road down to Griminish Pier.**

