

# North Uist Community Council



## Comharle Coimhearsnachd Uibhist a Tuath

### NUCC minutes

Meeting held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022 at 7.30pm at Ceann na H-Airigh

#### Present:

Joan Ferguson (**JF**) - Chair  
John MacDonald (**JMD**) - Treasurer  
Lynda MacLean (**LML**) – Secretary  
Michelle MacDonald (**MMD**)  
Rachel MacLean (**RML**)  
Cllr Uisdean Robertson (**UR**)  
PC Nikki Stanfield

#### Public:

Matthew Topsfield (**MT**)  
Lachina MacVicar  
Annag MacKinnon  
Jemma MacVicar (**JMV**) (North Uist & Benbecula Locality Planning Partnership)

#### **1. Apologies:**

Conor Lawless, Ragnall Maclain, Effie Rodgers, Donald Angie MacLennan, Donald Ewen Morrison, Kenneth MacDonald, Anne MacLellan

#### **2. Adoption of minutes**

Minutes could not be adopted due to meeting not being quorate. Members acknowledged that no decisions could be made tonight due to this.

#### **3. Matters arising:**

##### *Kilmuir Cemetery*

Awaiting works, there has been Covid related delays.

##### *Recycling Bins*

If bins available decision needs made to where they are to be placed.

**ACTION:** LML to email members for suggestions on placement of these.

##### *Provision of 'just-in-case bags'*

Survey to be progressed, look for volunteer to partner with **ER** to continue with this.

**ACTION:** **JR** to email round for member to volunteer

##### *Outer Hebrides Flood Risk Management Plan*

**JF** hasn't been able to get hold of Donald John MacDonald (Comhairle Engineer, Uist).

**ACTIONS:** **JF** will continue to peruse this.

##### *National Care Service Consultation*

Continued from previous minutes as no action has been taken yet in regards to writing to Comhairle to ask for new Care Home for North Uist be included in the Capital Programme. It is hoped it will be included.

**ACTION:** **JF** to write letter to Comhairle

##### *Ferries*

Uist Association of Community Councils (**UACC**) met with Robbie Drummund online, CalMac were unable to provide answers, bottom lines seems to be that they are unable to provide enough ferries.

##### *Spaceport 1 Planning*

NUCC comments submitted to Comhairle planning team.

#### *Bank of Scotland Parking*

NUCC unable to progress this any further.

#### *Emergency Planning*

Suggested that a dedicated meeting should take place to discuss this.

**ACTION:** Add to Agenda for next meeting to decide on a date and time to meet for this discussion.

#### *Metering Issues*

Still on-going issue for the Islands. Am Paipear wrote article on it. TIG and CAB are assisting a number of clients.

**ACTION:** Add to our Facebook page once ferry issues subsides to get an idea of how many affected in NU.

#### *Defibrillator Support*

JF spoke to Gail at BCC, not received funding from sale of HIAL boat yet, Sarah MacMillan aware once we receive this we will look at making a contribution towards defibrillator support.

#### *Roadside rubbish*

Now sorted.

#### *Ukraine Aid*

A big thanks to all who supported and donated especially **RMD** who sorted all received donations.

### **4. Co-option of Members**

#### *Flora MacDonald*

NUCC were saddened to hear of Flora's passing and a minute silence was held to remember Flora. We give thanks to Flora's many years of contribution to the NUCC. A card was sent on behalf of NUCC to the family.

#### *Volunteer Award*

Member **JMD** was given a round of applause for being awarded the Western Isles Volunteer Centre Clisham award for all his volunteering efforts. Well done John!

### **5. Treasurers Report**

**JMD** gave brief summary of the End of Year accounts, as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

Balance of **£19055.62**

Restricted funds balance of £16750.42 made up of -

- Social Fund                   £ 3350.42
- Track Fund                    £ 2000.00
- Play Park Funding       £10900.00
- Kilmuir Fund                £ 500.00

Unrestricted funds £2305.20

North Uist War Memorial Account Balance £994.68

**JMD** will send report and cheque books to Stornoway.

### **6. Police Report**

PC Nikki Stanfield attended the meeting and gave stats of North Uist from beginning of the year.

25 Calls have been made to the police

4 of which are discounted as duplicate of same incident

3 Criminal offence recorded – 2 were dishonestly offences and 1 relates to Child Protection

Vast majority of calls are concern of persons, assisting partner agencies and weather warnings.

PC Stanfield is keen to be contacted and to give advice surrounding crime prevention to stop instances happening.

### **7. Councillors Report**

**UR** provided this via email which was circulated to all members and copied below -

#### *Red Diesel*

Ferry crossing's have been secured this week and so Certas will have sufficient product on island to meet all current orders. Another vehicle is then scheduled to arrive within a week with more product.

They have had internal discussion's last where a long term solution was reviewed and which is now being developed and we will hopefully have the details for that shortly.

#### *Benbecula/Stornoway PSO*

The tender for the Benbecula Stornoway Air Service was intended to produce a new four year contract. Only one bid was received; from Loganair. Due to the uncertainty over passenger demand due to the Covid 19 pandemic and future plans to potentially change service aircraft, the offer was for a single year only.

The Comhairle has a budget available for the Inter Isles air services which is currently £410k per annum. Four service options were made available in the tender, including an operator designed service that allowed the service provider to choose what services could be provided for the available budget.

No service option met the available budget. To maintain a three day service required an additional £161k. The provision of this additional funding requirement for one year only, was agreed by the Comhairle. This will be partly funded from what are diminishing reserves.

The Comhairle will continue to lobby Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government to review the provision of lifeline, PSO air services. The current mix of service provision is no longer considered to be fit for purpose and a full review of options to better serve communities in the future is urgently required.

#### Note from Meeting with Johathan Hinkles

##### Inter-island PSO

Uisdean Robertson referred to the Comhairle's agreement to fund the Benbecula/Stornoway PSO for a one year period and the challenges for the Council around reduced budgets. He asked about Health Board discounts and the lack of commitment from NHSWI to make a contribution to the provision of the service. Johnathan Hinkles responded stating that there has been a NHS commercial discount arrangement in place across the network for about 10 years with the exception of Barra, Campbeltown and Tiree and he would check for Stornoway/Benbecula. Jonathan Hinkles indicated that with the levels of traffic, recovery, and fleet replacement to consider, the uncertainty around the recovery of passenger numbers after the pandemic was such that Loganair's position was to commit to provide the service for one year only. He highlighted that this was a reflection of current uncertainties in forecasting, as opposed to any long-term lack of commitment by Loganair.

Uisdean Robertson raised concerns for the future of this lifeline service and Jonathan Hinkles made the point, in terms of Scottish Government support, that air services within council areas were deemed to be the responsibility of the Council, as opposed to cross-council areas. However, this did not apply to ferry services, perhaps an argument worth taking up with Transport Scotland.

##### Benbecula/Glasgow

The route remained steady, there had been a dip during December/January with an increase in Covid cases and summer bookings were buoyant and Loganair were building up to a double daily flight from May 2022.

##### Summer Capacity

Kenneth Macleod and Uisdean Robertson highlighted ferry capacity and potential peak periods during the summer due to incoming tourism and islanders travel for holidays. Jonathan Hinkles indicated that if there was demand and the economics were sound he could provide additional flights. Reference was also made to the winter period and the impact on ferry services due to the Uig pier project (September 2022 to March 2023) which could potentially increase demand on air services, both Benbecula and Stornoway. Jonathan Hinkles agreed to keep an eye on all the pinch points raised including school holiday breaks at the end of October and February 2023.

##### *Lochmaddy Harbour*

Contractor is mobilising plant and equipment to Lochmaddy this and next week and have engaged with Macaulay Askernish for the hire of plant and labour for initial site set-up.

##### *Small Vessel Replacement Programme*

Following the first reference group meeting in December 2021, there will be a second meeting to provide further updates on CMAL's Small Vessel Replacement Programme. The proposed dates are either Wednesday 11th or Thursday 12th May 2022. This programme includes a replacement for the Loch Portain.

##### *Levelling up Fund*

The UK Govt published the prospectus for LUF Round 2 published recently:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-fund-round-2-prospectus>

Very little has changed since the last round, with the only two significant changes:

- the promotion of a few English and Welsh local authorities into higher priority categories – though no changes in Scotland (see attached map)
- a commitment to support two showcase £50m culture projects across the UK this time round

The submission deadline is July 6th, so a few weeks later than last year, which will give the new administrations time to consider and sign off the bids.

The Round 2 application form has been published yet, but is expected to be very similar to last year's given how limited the other changes have been.

A short paper and a set of slides setting out the details of and strategic and economic rationale for the culture & heritage bid is being prepared. The Transport bid includes the section in North Uist already reported on.

#### *Uig Harbour - Highland Council Note*

A Highland Council spokesman said: "An economic assessment as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken; where a Socio-Economics, Tourism and Public Access assessment considered the potential effects of the Proposed Development on the socio-economic and tourism characteristics of the area. The EIA concluded that any disruption to the ferry service at Uig will be clearly communicated to members of the public, along with alternative available ferry service options, to minimise potential impacts on tourists, local residents and commercial businesses.

"An Islands Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) became a statutory requirement in December 2020 as part of the National Islands Plan by which time the Uig project was 4 years old and was out to tender for the second time.

"The Highland Council recently met with Transport Scotland's Island's Communities Team and agreed that an Islands Communities Impact Assessment will be completed and the process which the project has gone through from development, including consultations carried out as part of the project from 2017, will be formalised within the Islands Communities Impact Assessment.

"The Skye Triangle Infrastructure Programme held four consultation meetings from April 2017 to September 2018 and community engagement events in April and November 2019.

"The closure period is essential to allow major investment in replacing life expired infrastructure and improving the capacity, reliability and resilience at Uig for the longer-term benefit of the Skye Triangle routes.

"Through the iterative design process the outage period was confirmed as 21 weeks when the contractor was appointed for the construction works.

"Since award of the contract to RJ McLeod in late July 2021, The Highland Council has been carrying out a further review of the closure period, with the contractor for the above works which were planned for 12 September 2022 to 3 February 2023.

"The review considered if any improvements could be made to the outage period which may alter both the duration and timing.

"The outage period has now been re-scheduled and avoids the late September period and will commence on 10 October 2022 until 27 March 2023 (a period of 24 weeks). The closure period has had to be extended from 21 weeks to 24 weeks, however, includes contingencies for weather related events and is based on a 6-day working week thus providing more certainty that the works will be complete by the end of March deadline. The Highland Council will continue to engage with the contractor to reduce the outage period and will seek to minimise any further disruption to services where practicable.

"CalMac is hosting a second series of public consultation and engagement meetings next month to gather feedback on the revised and proposed temporary changes to timetables. The Highland Council will also be attending these sessions to answer any questions on the harbour upgrades or closure.

"The Highland Council will continue to work closely with CalMac and members of the Skye Triangle Infrastructure Programme to deliver this project to the benefit of the communities that it serves."

#### *North Ford Causeway*

North Ford 2.0, anticipated construction April to July 2023. Scope to be determined by prevailing construction costs, ranging from remedial works to span replacement.

#### *Surface dressing*

Supplier of Bitument oil can no longer supply but another supplier has been sourced which has resulted in an increase of costs.

*Fare review, Island Connectivity Plan and HIAL*

**UR** advised that an argument is being put across that the free travel for under 22's and over 60's should be extended to ferries for those staying in the Western Isles.

**ACTION:** **UR** to email further information to LML who will distribute via email to Members.

## **8. Jemma MacVicar (NUBLPP)**

*Care and Maintenance of areas of priorities*

Previous Town Centre fund (which funded Balivanich regeneration) changed name to Places Investment Fund. Plan to have everything ready for when fund comes up again, planning on regeneration activities, Lochmady highlighted to be an area.

*Requests for funding to support Community Halls*

Everyone responsible for own funding request though NUBLPP and UCVO are looking to see if they can get a bulk fund which can then be distributed to Community Halls for maintenance.

*Uist in Bloom*

Flower containers have been repainted and will be replanted along with new ones and they will be dispersed through North Uist, needing volunteers to look after ones in local areas.

*Childcare*

Extended survey going out to all parents in Uist and Benbecula on childcare availability. The survey will be distributed through schools next term.

*Transport*

Feedback on Bus service has been fed back to the Comhairle and DA Travel who have met to discuss small tweaks which can be made to Summer timetable focusing on direct routes. Only services which run completely empty will be removed from timetable. Assurance has been given that services which people rely on to get to work will not be removed.

*Employment*

**JMV** building relationships with Comhairle training officers, a lot of funding and support available for those out of work and to get them back in to work and gain qualifications. Employers can also get support and some funding if they employ someone who has two barriers to employment (living on Island is one) others range from having young children, from minority group, low income households.

*Sustainable food places*

Project emerging for Local Authority to encourage more sustainable and better food production from the Scot Gov initiative of 'Better food for all'. Funding will be available to support initiatives of local food production, scope for groups to come together to decide how initiatives be progressed to increase food production.

*Play and Recreation opportunities*

Money being held by NUCC and UCVO for play park maintenance and repair work.

Sollas are looking to install a new play park and Lochmaddy to revive the existing one then look at extending it for older children. Lochmaddy have a volunteer day scheduled for 30<sup>th</sup> April, everyone welcomed to attend.

NUBLPP looking to co-ordinate all play park so as they work together. **JF** advised on a CNES play park coordinator post advertised to be based in the Western Isles.

**ACTIONS:** Members to think of areas in North Uist which are in need of regeneration pass onto **JF**.

**LML** to Email Matthew Topsfield the Balivanich regeneration information received from Alison Cropper.

**JF** will look out advert for play park coordinator and email round.

## **9. Ferries**

Calmac second round of consultations taking place this week in Lochmaddy and Balivanich Hall. A few members attended Lochmaddy and the main feeling is that Calmac have already made their decision. A discussion was had in regards to food supplies, medication and how the proposed ferry time table will affect those on the Islands. No notes were being taken at the consultation or leaflets available to be taken away.

An alternative timetable and various suggestions have been previously made by Councillors, businesses and members of the community but none of which taken on board by Calmac. Members of **UACC** are meeting with the transport minister tomorrow morning (6<sup>th</sup> April), **JF** representing NUCC. **JF** will be asking regarding if they will offer free flights for Island children travelling especially due to ferry issue there may be more demand on flights.

All present at meeting agreed we can't accept what is currently on offer from Calmac right now.

**ACTIONS:** **JF** to attend meeting with transport minister tomorrow.

**JF** to ask Highland Council to cover the cost of leaflets on ferries to be distributed to every household in NU.

## 10. Tracks update

No updated, agreed to carry over to next meeting. Crown Estate Application to be submitted.

**ACTION:** Add to agenda for next meeting.

## 11. Clachan War Memorial

Benches painted and ready to be secured in place.

Discussed to look to see if there is any funding available for war memorial upkeep – bushes trimmed and grass cut. No decisions on this can be made tonight since not quorate.

**ACTION:** **JMD** to get 2 quotes for what's required at memorial

**All** keep an eye out for funding opportunities

## 11. Correspondence

### *Emergency planning*

SEEN resilience fund information came through via email, closing date is 13 May. It has been suggested to come together to create resilience centres/hubs in North Uist and do a North Uist wide application to the fund in the hope that it will bolster an application.

**ACTION:** Separate meeting to be arranged for beginning of May to take this forward.

## 12. AOCB

### *List of members onto Facebook*

It has been suggested to have a list of the names of NUCC members on Facebook so as those in the Community know who to contact.

**ACTION:** To be discussed with all members to ensure they are in agreement before proceeding.

### *Am Paipear*

A note of thanks goes to Iain Stephen Morrison, Editor for all he has done to support and promote the Uist Communities during his time at Am Paipear.

**ACTION:** Thank you card to be sent from NUCC.

### *Lochmaddy football pitch*

Would CNES consider cutting the grass on the pitch when they are next in the area?

**ACTION:** **UR** will look into if Council would do this.

**JMV** will also look to see if she can get someone in the community to volunteer to do this.

### *Whats app group for Members*

It has been suggested to set up a group for members so as it is easier to stay in touch and be aware who is unable to attend meetings to ensure we are quorate going forward.

**ACTION:** Discuss further at next meeting and look to set up if everyone is in agreement.

### *Other ways to advertise NUCC meetings*

A discussion of other ways to promote meetings to encourage those from the community to attend

- Posters in shops
- Mailing list for those interested
- Send onto **MT** at GCA to forward to members
- Ask Comann Eachdraidh Uibhist a Tuath to distribute to members
- Email local halls to advise of meeting

## 13. Date of next meeting

No date was set for next meeting though location is to be Lochmaddy Community Hall.