

# Lochaber Transport Forum

*Co-chruinneachadh mu ghoireasan - siubhail Lochabair*

## Minutes of the Lochaber Transport Forum Meeting

Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2018

11.00

*The Duncansburgh Church Hall, the Parade, Fort William*

### **Present;**

Brian Murphy – Chairperson	BM
Benny MacDonald – Lochaber Transport Forum	BMcD
W MacPhee – RMT	WMcPh
John Fotheringham – Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge and Achnacarry CC	JFo
Iona Grant – Glencoe resident	IG
Julie McDonald – LCMA Trustee	JMcD
Stewart Grant - Kinlochleven resident	SG
Donald Stewart – Resident	DS
Mike Cooper – Highland Council	MC
Chris Evans – Strontian Resident/HUG	CE
Denis Rixson – Highland Council	DR
Flora McKee – Voluntary Action Lochaber	FMcK
Iain Macniven – Arisaig CC/West Highland CRP	IMcn
Ian Langley – Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge and Achnacarry CC/ West Highland CRP	IL
Tony Dobson – Headway Highland	TD
Lesley Williams – Bus user	LW
Ali MacDonald – Highland Council	AMcD
John Friel – Shiel Buses	JFr
Arthur Cowie – SATA	AC
Mark Stuart – Bus user	MS
Don Michie	DM
Ronald Wegner – RMT	RW
John Barnes - Friends of the West Highland Lines/Glenfinnan Station	JB

### **1. Welcome**

Brian Murphy chaired the meeting and asked for introductions around the table.


### **2. Apologies;**

Peter Knight – Citylink  
Julie Cromarty - HITRANS  
Kate Forbes – MSP  
Christine Hutchison - Kilmallie Community Council  
Councillor Andrew Baxter – Highland Council  
Councillor Ben Thompson – Highland Council  
Neill Bo Finlayson – Lochaber Times  
Alister MacLennan – ScotRail

Lochaber Transport Forum  
An Drochaid, Claggan, Fort William, PH33 6PH

Tel: 07789517990 Email: [transportforum@carelochaber.org](mailto:transportforum@carelochaber.org)

Web Site [www.lochabertransport.org.uk](http://www.lochabertransport.org.uk)

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### **3. Confirmation of minutes**

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2018 were approved by John Fotheringham and Arthur Cowie.

There was one amendment, at the bottom of page four, the sentence should read;

According to the Audit Commission Council funding was cut by almost 10% in real terms since 2010, some services are ring-fenced such as education and salaries so others are reduced and there is less staff.

### **4. Matters Arising**

Under 4, Matters Arising; there was further email discussion on bus services along the A828. The conclusion was Highland Council and Argyll & Bute Council would discuss with each other when there was a retendering for the AB13448 contract and explore to establish if there were any possible options for the route.

BM – for tourism the area is promoted by the Outdoor Capital of the UK and the South Lochaber Marketing Group, we should ask them for support to improve the bus service on this route.

**Action – the Transport Forum will contact the above groups.**

**Action – the Transport Forum Committee will raise this with Kate Forbes, MSP, when meeting with her next week.**

Under 4, Matter Arising; the Transport Forum offered to write a letter in support of the application for a minibus in Strontian to help with medical/health related appointments. Due to limited time for applying this wasn't possible. A response to the application is expected in the next few weeks.

CE asked if the Community Car Scheme was still operating in the Strontian area as she heard a person phoned and was told the service wasn't available. Perhaps the scheme can be promoted again. TD explained he is a driver with the Car Scheme, lives in Strontian and has done several journeys this year.

*The Transport Forum spoke directly to the Car Scheme after the meeting who confirmed the service is active in Strontian when a driver is available. They have had articles in the De Tha Dol and will promote the service at the Sunart Show later this month. There may have been a request for a journey to Raigmore Hospital which they are unable to carry out due to funding restrictions.*

### **5. Cycling & Walking**

BMcD - the Transport Forum contacted Transport Scotland to report the lack of a pavement alongside the new road layout by Lidl's supermarket. This had already been reported by Lochaber Disability Access Panel along with other issues nearby. Transport Scotland agreed there may be a need for improvements and have asked Bear Scotland to investigate the matter.

BM – it was also reported there is an issue with the stile erected to cross the fence on the opposite side of the road which previously led to the viewpoint for Old Inverlochy Castle.

**Action – the Forum will contact HITRANS and/or Sustrans.**

### **6. Public Transport**

#### **a) Ferries**

BM – CalMac have had many recent problems with breakdowns and delays/cancellations. They have been good at attending meetings until recently which is disappointing.

AC – I've spoken to CalMac recently and they are currently changing management. Robert Morrison, who has previously attended our meetings, has a large area of North Scotland to cover. They still operate the ticket office in Fort William. Hopefully the problems will improve.

DR – I'm aware of the problems within CalMac and concerned it could get bigger with vessels getting older.

DS – at a previous meeting I asked Councillor Henderson what the asset value for Corran Ferry is.  
**Action – the Forum to enquire with Councillor Henderson.**

### ***b) Rail***

BM – a West Highland Lines Review Group has been formed and I attended the first meeting on behalf of the Transport Forum. It's very important to raise community concerns but there is a lack of representation on the review group for local Councillors and other community voices.

JB - the second meeting will be held in Oban on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> October and only two hours are allocated to discuss everything.

AC – there are many accessible issues not being addressed.

**Action – the Transport Forum to contact Transport Scotland to urge wider representation from the community.**

AC – there are problems on local services, four carriages should be used on some services during the summer but this is being cut to two which isn't suitable with so many passengers.

RW – ScotRail are depending on Fort William staff to start and finish extra shifts in Mallaig.

JB – at times toilets aren't available on trains and new station signs don't have up to date information.

BMcD – Following on from the February meeting the Transport Forum had with ScotRail managing Director Alex Hynes we have been back in touch for a six monthly review. No date has yet been set.

JB – there was workshops in Glasgow to discuss the proposed use of 153 carriages for extra storage space, etc. The meeting was dominated by cycling groups keen to ensure more bike space. Other usage should be for extra luggage which is needed. Also the refurbished 156's are losing 14 seats so this can be added into the 153's.

IL – there will only be one 153 travelling daily each way on the West Highland Lines. There should be various uses and options available.

### ***c) Community Rail Partnerships***

BMcD gave an update.

Board meetings are held every second month at stations along the route between Mallaig and Crianlarich with July's meeting in Spean Bridge.

The AGM will be held in Mallaig on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> September.

CRP's are financed in Scotland by ScotRail as part of the franchise agreement with Transport Scotland. The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRPS) have been active in England and Wales for much longer. The Community Rail Awards will be held in Scotland for the first time on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> October in Glasgow. The Brief Encounters play which the West Highland CRP commissioned and toured in several venues earlier this year has been shortlisted for an award in the Best Community Engagement Project at the Ceremony.

The WHCRP can be accessed on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/CRpWest>

Also on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/West-Highland-Community-Rail-Partnership-WHCRP>

### ***d) Buses***

MC – Shiel Buses will be operating all the re-contracted bus services. This includes the 41, the 44 and school services. The N47 evening service between Upper Achintore and Corpach will continue until end of September on a short contract agreement. Finance will be looked at later this month by HC for a further contract.

IL – there are no new timetables available for the 41 at various stops.

There was discussion on the early morning bus to Roy Bridge and last bus from Roy Bridge. MC explained they don't form part of the HC contract but the operator may choose to run these journeys on a commercial basis.

LW has issues with the cut to 22.35 bus to Kinlochleven on the new contracted timetables from 20<sup>th</sup> August as it will affect people getting home from work. It will also break a link with the late bus from Inverness for passengers wanting to continue along the A82 and to Kinlochleven. With no services on Sundays people have limited options when they can get to/from work.

JMcD – the cuts during the afternoon are causing problems for workers who need to get home at an appropriate time for children getting out of school. The gaps between services are not encouraging people to work or visit the area.

MC – I don't make these decisions but I'll pass the concerns on.

AC – we have the Local Compact and Single Outcome Agreement which should be used more often.

DR – I appreciate and take on all that's being said. I can't promise anything but I know it's affecting people and I'll pass on the strength of feeling there is.

JFo – if we can't have subsidised transport can we ask Shiel Buses to operate commercial services? Some areas are not receiving any services.

DS – the cuts aren't acceptable, they weren't consulted on. Also, I think meetings should continue on Fridays so local Councillors can attend.

DS – you can raise many issues with Councillors rather than HC Transport Officers. I'll pass on any issues to other Councillors which don't affect my ward.

There was discussion on various issues with timetables providing the correct information.

JFo – we were promised a new bus shelter in Roy Bridge which has not been provided.

MC – there is no budget at present but we have a list of shelters to be erected and this can be added.

DR gave details of a local community who self-financed a shelter.

BM passed on complaints he received of posters at shelters affecting views of approaching buses.

DS – how much does it cost to reinstate timetables?

MC – we sell space for poster but they shouldn't restrict views, I'll check this. I can also get costs of timetables.

WMcPH – who will operate the journeys to Caol which Stagecoach withdrew from last March?

JFR – Shiel Buses will be operating these journeys.

MS – Shiel Buses are good operators but the 44 service has been very busy recently with many passengers having to stand. Can extra services be added during the summer?

MC – there has been an unexpected rise in passengers since Shiel Buses have taken over so this can be considered for the future as it takes time to register a service which is too late for this year. A new service needs 42 days' notice then must operate for at least 90 days.

There was further discussion on the use of double decker buses at times as low floor buses have limited seating.

All were in agreement Shiel Buses are providing a good service.

SM – the 918 morning service from Oban is very busy during the summer but it's all visitors who use it. I'm very concerned it won't operate during the winter as it's not suitable for residents along the A828.

There was discussion on what bus service locals require. See Matters Arising at No 4 for further details.

**Action – The Forum will enquire with West Coast Motors.**

## 7. Community Transport

MC – HC have decided to continue the funding of Community Transport Projects for another year. The current three year funding was due to finish in March 19. Locally this includes the Community Car Scheme, Lochaber Action on Disability, Drimnin Sealink and Highlife Highland.

JFo is very concerned about possible cuts to the Community Transport Budget. It's more important as public transport services are cut. He asked DR to ensure other Councillors are aware of this.

## 8. A82 – Update

BM gave an update;

There isn't much update to the improvements planned for Loch Lomond side, initial work is ongoing. We are waiting on the AECOM Report from the Strategic Review on congestion in the Fort William area.

The changes at Nevis Bridge seem to be showing a small improvement on traffic flows.

JFO – there is a long list of repairs in autumn along the A82, some with convoys and some overnight.

A large lorry hit the bridge at Spean making it difficult for pedestrians crossing.

There was further discussion on the amount of congestion in the area and with continued development this is set to increase.

JFr – the delays are causing problems with bus drivers keeping to their legal driving hours.

## 9. AOCB

DS asked why the last coach to Fort William leaves Glasgow at 18.00, can this be later to allow more time? It was suggested the times may be set to fit in with driver hours.

## 10. Date of next meeting

There will be a Bus User's Group Meeting on **Friday 14<sup>th</sup> September at 11.30** in the Duncansburgh Church Hall.

Future dates may be moved to Fridays.

## **From meeting 26<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

### ***Confirmation of minutes***

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2018 were approved by Ian Langley and Arthur Cowie.

Amendments were; page 2, No. 5, Cycling and Walking. Lidl's supermarket should be replaced by Aldi's supermarket.

Page 4, Buses, on the third paragraph the second initials should read DR and not DS.