



# Lochaber Transport Forum

*Co-chruinneachadh mu ghoireasan - siubhail Lochabair*

## Minutes of the Lochaber Transport Forum Meeting

Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2018

11.00

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

### **Present;**

Brian Murphy – Chairperson  
Benny MacDonald – Lochaber Transport Forum  
W MacPhee - RMT  
John Fotheringham – Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge and Achnacarry CC  
Stewart Grant - Kinlochleven resident  
Iona Grant – Glencoe resident  
Christine Hutchison - Kilmallie Community Council  
Donald Stewart – Resident  
Councillor Allan Henderson – Highland Council  
Mike Cooper – Highland Council  
Donny MacGillivray – Shiel Buses  
Sarah Kennedy – Fort William Marina & Shoreline Company  
Arthur Cowie – Lochaber Disability Access Panel  
Gwyn Moses – Member of Public  
Kath Small – Ballachulish Community Council  
Chris Evans – Strontian Resident  
Jennifer E Beattie – private resident  
Councillor Andrew Baxter – Highland Council  
Denis Rixson – Highland Council  
Jessica Rossmorris – Bus User (44)  
Sandra Bolton – Bus User  
Irene Salter – Bus User  
Flora MacKee – Voluntary Action Lochaber (left the meeting at 12.15)

### **1. Welcome**

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

### **2. Apologies;**

John Barnes - Friends of the West Highland Lines/Glenfinnan Station  
Tony Dobson – Headway Highland  
Ronald Wegner – RMT  
Peter Knight – Citylink  
Kate Forbes – MSP  
Sonia Cameron  
Steve Roberts

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

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018 were approved by Willie MacPhee and Stewart Grant.

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#### 4. Matters Arising

Under 6b) Rail on page 2, BMcD sent out a Summary from the meeting with Alex Hynes, ScotRail along with the agenda for this meeting.

Also under Rail on page 3, the faulty doors at Fort William Railway Station have been repaired.

Under 6d) Buses. The Forum received an email from Neil MacRae at HiTRANS after reading the minutes. He contacted both Highland Council and Argyll & Bute Council enquiring about possibilities of improving public bus provision along the A828.

BM – the service along the A828 is very limited and there have been efforts to improve this for a long time, the possible use of Oban Hospital for South Lochaber residents was highlighted.

DS – there is an early service to Oban but no return for commuters, it's very limited during school holidays and tourists in Ballachulish can't get easily to Oban. Can I put this to Councillor Henderson in his role with HiTRANS?

**AH – it's very limited as it's run as a commercial route, I can raise it with HiTRANS.**

**BM – the Forum can also enquire with Neil MacRae again.**

AC – the Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance (SATA) have a cross party meeting in the Scottish parliament on 30<sup>th</sup> May to discuss fully accessible bus transport.

CE – there have been problems with the provision of transport for hospital appointments from the Strontian/Acharacle area and it's being looked at with help from local groups.

FmcK – I attended a very recent meeting to discuss these problems as the Scottish Ambulance Service have had to cancel many journeys at short notice leading to missed appointments. I was involved with the Lochaber Transport Advise Booking Service Project (LTABS) which operated several years ago. It's possible a community based transport scheme can be set up to provide health related journeys from this area with help from the Aspiring Communities Fund. Can the Transport Forum write a letter of support to accompany applications?

**Action - it was agreed the Forum should provide a letter of support.**

#### 5. Cycling & Walking

JR asked for clarification on where the cycle track goes from Ballachulish to Fort William. It was explained the official National Cycle Network 78 (NCN78) goes over Ballachulish Bridge and follows the extended pavement to Corran Ferry. Cyclists are advised to cross the ferry, travel on the A861 to Camasnagaul and use the small ferry to Fort William.

BMcD received a query about the problem of walking along the pavement on the A82 from the Ben Nevis Estate past National Tyres. The pavement stops here for a short bit and many more people are walking here since the new shops were opened.

**Action – the Forum to contact Highland Council**

#### 6. Public Transport

##### a) Ferries

AH – there is no one here from CalMac to report on the current ferry problems, I've noted 16 disruptions to crossings today. The MV Clansman has had an expensive repair. So many things have gone wrong, Easter has been early in the year and very busy, the problems have been disastrous. Signs still say each Mallaig/Lochboisdale service is cancelled but there's not been a service for months. There are several meetings coming up soon including a meeting with the Interim Managing Director of CalMac and the Scottish Transport Minister.

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DMcG asked about the consultation for the Corran Ferry, there isn't an option for a bridge/fixed link. Is there a separate consultation for this? AB & AH weren't aware of this.

*AH informed the Forum later to say the fixed link option is not in the initial consultation. HC have given a contract through Scotland EXCEL for Corran Ferry Services Option for immediate future to PBA. A fixed link consultation is probably later in the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) for Island/Rural Connectivity.*

SK – Nova Innovation design bridges which are fitted with tidal energy devices providing renewable energy. They have asked us about requirements for cruise ships to use the area.

AB – best to contact Highland Council.

BMcD – there was an action from the February meeting regarding figures for the Oban/Mull route to see if there was a preference for this to be used rather than the Lochaline/Mull route. Fares on Corran Ferry may be affecting this as it's not covered by the Road Equivalent Tarriff (RET).

Figures received from Calmac are; for Oban – Craignure, passengers up 4%, cars up 4%, coaches up 7% and commercials up 4%.

Fishnish – Lochaline; passengers down 2%, cars 0%, coaches up 17% and commercials down 6%.

### **b) Rail**

JR – the journey from Glasgow still takes such a long time, why is the train so slow?

BM – we've just had confirmation of the West Highland Line Review with the first meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> May in Fort William, hopefully many of these outstanding problems will be raised.

GM – is the meeting open to the public or will there be a consultation to include local views?

*BMcD enquired later at the May Board Meeting of the West Highland CRP regarding a consultation. The general feeling is this is an inaugural meeting and there is an expectation of local involvement and consultation to follow.*

CE – we need a better Sunday service, I find it difficult to travel south when I have meetings on Monday mornings.

AH – it's very important to include local communities and not just tick boxes for this review. There is a chance to get it right.

SK asked if the new sleeper trains will continue to Fort William or change in Glasgow. WMcPh – we should have the new trains to Fort William by April 2019.

SK – there have been problems for cruise ship passengers when trying to book the steam train.

CH – there have been changes on the Highland Main Line, some services are not now stopping at Kingussie and Dalwhinnie. These stops are used by local people as an option to travel south.

JF – it's disappointing that local people have to travel to Kingussie because the rail service provided here is not suitable.

CE – is there full staffing on the local trains now? AC - All staff have returned to work but some of the problems were caused by Abellio cutting staff so much. All the problems raised here can be taken up at the meeting I will be attending on 30<sup>th</sup> May.

DR – Some issues are taking a long time to resolve. I've heard of many problems from rail passengers which could easily be solved if staff in Glasgow made simple changes for this area.

BMcD gave some rail info from Sonia Cameron who couldn't attend the meeting. The new lounge in Fort William Station for sleeper train passengers will soon be open. The steam train is currently very busy, the morning service will begin on weekends from 2<sup>nd</sup> June. The afternoon service is due to start 14<sup>th</sup> May with weekends from 16<sup>th</sup> June.

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

BMcD gave an update.

The play commissioned by the WHCRP toured at several railway stations or nearby during early April. It was a big success with every venue sold out and requests for further shows which will be considered later in the year.

The CRP have taken on a consultant to help with development work.

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) have been active in England and Wales for many years and have decided to hold their annual event in Scotland for the first time. This will be in Glasgow on 4<sup>th</sup> October. CRP's in Scotland are funded by ScotRail through the current Franchise arrangement and ACoRP are offering additional support.

The next CRP Board Meeting will be in Glenfinnan on 14<sup>th</sup> May.

### **d) Buses**

Mike Cooper was asked to give an update on the current situation regarding services which Stagecoach will give up from 30<sup>th</sup> June.

MC passed around copies of the two routes which HC are working on to provide continuous cover from 1<sup>st</sup> July.

Route one is the Stagecoach 44 service, Fort William/Kinlochleven. They asked operators to give a 'Quick Quote' for journeys until 19<sup>th</sup> August. Shiel Buses will provide a service which is mainly every two hours. This is less than at present but budgets had to be re-arranged to provide this cover under contract.

The second route is the Stagecoach 41 service, Fort William/Roy Bridge. Invitations are open to quote for this service until midday 16<sup>th</sup> May. This is also a short contract until 19<sup>th</sup> August and follows closely the current timetable.

Highland council will make the current contracts held by Stagecoach available to retender and have in place for the new school term starting 21<sup>st</sup> August.

DS – we've known about these changes for a while and these cuts will affect people. It's public money and public transport. Did the Council ask communities for comments before deciding on services?

JR – I'm having difficulty getting around by bus as I relied on some of the services which are being cut. It just seems Council savings are being put ahead of providing proper services.

SG – I'm still concerned we'll have the same issues with accessible vehicles which is affecting my daughters travel.

AH – it's difficult to provide a service for everyone's needs. A Transport Officer met with four Councillors before issuing these timetables. It's public money but there's no more available, we can't take any from education, for instance. I understand a lot of the issues being raised but it's so difficult to get money for transport.

IG – I'm concerned about what type of vehicles will be used and if they will be accessible.

DMcG – we use vehicles with ramps rather than lifts which make them easier to manoeuvre.

DS – HC tenders don't have much with regards to quality of service.

MC – we can stipulate what is required with our contracted journeys, the 44 daytime service has been commercial. The more we ask for the more costs are added to the contract.

DR – being a new Councillor I'm catching up with polices. At present car parking is an issue, Councillors will listen to feedback. This is a short term problem and HC Officers are doing their best. Under the Audit Commission Council Funding was cut by 10%, some services are ring-fenced such as education and salaries so others are reduced and there are less staff. We don't have control with overall figures, there is now the allowance to raise Council Tax by 3%. HC staff have severe constraints.

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SK – last summer we discussed hop on/hop off buses for tourists to visit various sites and location closeby. Will this be available this year?

DMcG – we don't have hop on/hop off but we promote our regular services which go to sites of interest.

JF asked if Shiel Buses will be taking on more of the 919 Citylink journeys, Fort William/Inverness.

DMcG – we may take on one of the journeys currently on contract to Stagecoach but I'm not aware of timetables yet.

There is a problem with skis on buses. They are kept under seats or where wheelchairs are positioned.

DMcG – low floor buses don't have boots so this may be more difficult.

DS asked about bikes on buses as this is a tourist area. DMcG – we have a no bike policy.

AH – a group from HC are looking into this.

## **7. Community Transport**

MC – there is no news on the new funding applications which will provide grants from April 2019. We are still looking at this.

BMCD clarified what had been discussed earlier regarding a Community Transport option to provide health care journeys for patients in the Strontian/Acharacle area.

## **8. A82 – Update**

BM gave an update;

Consultancy work continues for the improvements to the Loch Lomond section. There have been Ground Investigations with Draft Trunk Road Orders later in this year.

AH – improvements on the A9 have been slower than expected and may go on after 2025. This will delay money being available for future work on the A82.

JF – there will be a lot of heavy work for the Coire Glas Hydro Scheme. It's expected 3.9m tonnes of rock will be moved by trucks along the A82 amounting to 120 load daily for seven months. We had a meeting with SSE. There is also the wind farm to be erected by Liberty adding to the damage of our roads. We hope the Transport Forum will contribute to any consultation.

BM – there is still work continuing on the review of congestion locally, a report is expected in two months.

Work will take place during June to make improvements at Nevis Bridge to keep traffic moving quicker.

## **9. AOCB**

GM – retailers in the high Street are very unhappy about the way new parking charges have been brought in.

This was just imposed by HC from Inverness with a lack of local consultation. It was only brought to public attention by local Councillors.

There's been minimal publicity with signs giving false information and the Head of Parking Services saying differently. There is no proper info on free parking. There are also extra charges when

paying by card which is not clearly stated. Costs now continue through winter which is ripping off locals.

The new tour coach drop-off points are still showing the old parking signs.

BM – I don't think the Transport Forum can deal with parking as we work with Public Transport. This should be addressed to the Council.

DR –put all you points to me, I know parking is causing problems.

SK – our next cruise ship is coming on 25<sup>th</sup> May and we'd like to ask for volunteers to help us.

## 10. Date of next meeting

### Current dates for Forum Meetings, 2018

		Venue
19 <sup>th</sup> June Fri 22 <sup>nd</sup> June	Bus User's Group Meeting	Duncansburgh Church Hall
7 <sup>th</sup> August	Open Forum Meeting	
11 <sup>th</sup> September	Bus User's Group Meeting	
30 <sup>th</sup> October	AGM and Open Forum Meeting	
11 <sup>th</sup> December	Bus User's Group Meeting	

### From meeting 7<sup>th</sup> August 2018

#### *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.