



# Lochaber Transport Forum

*Co-chruinneachadh mu ghoireasan - siubhail Lochabair*

## Minutes of the Lochaber Transport Forum Meeting

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2019, 11.00

The Duncansburgh Church Hall, the Parade, Fort William

### **Present;**

Brian Murphy – Chairperson	BM
Benny MacDonald – Lochaber Transport Forum	BMcD
Tony Dobson – Strontian resident	TD
Chris Evans – Strontian resident, bus/train user	CE
Donald Stewart – bus user	DS
Christine Hutchison - Kilmallie CC	CH
Cllr Denis Rixson – Highland Council	DR
Flora McKee – Voluntary Action Lochaber	FMcK
Iain Macniven – Arisaig & District CC/West Highland CRP	IMcn
Ian Langley – Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge and Achnacarry CC/ West Highland CRP	IL
Cllr Ben Thompson – HC	BT
Ronald Wegner – RMT	RW
W MacPhee	WMcPh
John Barnes - Friends of the West Highland Lines/Glenfinnan Station	JB
Iain Erskine – CalMac	IE
Sarah Kennedy – FWMSC	SK
John Gillespie – Caol CC	JG
Victoria Sutherland	VS
Ali MacDonald – HC	AMcD
Kate Willis – Lochaber Environmental Group	KW
Lucy Cooke – Highland Third Sector Interface	LuC
Lizzie Cooper – The Nevis Partnership	LiC
Sally Morris – Bus user	SM

### **1. Welcome**

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

### **2. Apologies;**

Peter Knight – Citylink	Sonia Cameron
Kate Forbes – MSP	Steve Roberts
Cllr Allan Henderson – HC	James Wilkin - WHCRP
Kath Small – Ballachulish CC	John Stafford – Sottish Canals
Arthur Cowie – SATA	Lesley Stewart
Mike Cooper – HC	

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

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2018 were approved by Ian Langley and Iain Macniven with no amendments.

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#### 4. Matters Arising

Under 4, Matters Arising, there is an outstanding request for the cost of the late evening service between Fort William & Kinlochleven. This was included in a recent list emailed to Mike Cooper/Ali MacDonald to catch up with older actions which haven't been addressed.

**Action - AMcD has the list and will respond.**

Under 5, Walking & Cycling, there's been a statement issued to say the short length of pavement required outside the Aldi supermarket will be completed by early summer, avoiding Easter.

Under Rail, at top of page 4, it was expected ScotRail would be represented today as the Transport Forum were given assurances. Unfortunately no one was available to attend today.

There was discussion on actions which remain outstanding for several meetings or are not responded to. IL – issues raised should be dealt with by the next meeting as meetings are only quarterly.

BMcD said he tries hard to take them all over to following meetings or to contact the person responsible. It's very frustrating when a representative attends a meeting and says they will deal with cases but do not follow up or can't attend the following meeting. I don't feel I need to gather all the info discussed at meetings especially when others have agreed to deal with it.

DS – it was mentioned at a previous meeting Councillors can help to find out more on particular issues.

DR – I'm happy to do what I can to help.

#### 5. Cycling & Walking

BMcD – I got in touch with HITRANS to ask if the new Active Travel Officer could attend our meetings. Unfortunately there is no-one here today. We were told the Active Travel Map for Fort William is in hand.

BM - There's been very little news on active travel for quite some time.

BT – there will be a meeting with Councillors and Sustrans locally on March 11<sup>th</sup> to take some projects forward. Any issues can be passed on through this meeting.

VS – we've been looking at improving paths in Glencoe and invited an officer from Sustrans to a meeting. She attended an evening meeting and was very supportive.

CE – cycling on the A82 from Corran to town is very dangerous, when will there be a separate path put in?

BM – I was on the NCN 78 Steering Group. The problem with the section from Corran Ferry to Fort William is there's just not enough space beside the road to create a cycleway, so it was decided to route cyclists across Corran Ferry and then back over the loch via Camusnagaul Ferry.

BT – work is ongoing to find a suitable route from Inchree to Lundavra. It would probably help if groups pushed for these improvements.

LC – we are having problems in Glen Nevis, there are so many cars and it's very congested at times. We would like to encourage walking and cycling. The pavement from the Visitor Centre to the Hostel is in a very poor state, unsafe and unpleasant to walk. There are about 300k people per year visiting the area.

VS - maintenance funding is difficult to find. We heard about community links funding, this requires a purpose for connecting places.

BM – the Councillors present aren't from this ward but maybe they can help.

DR – roads and maintenance are now much higher in the list of complaints received.

BM – have the Nevis Partnership costed the work needed to be done.

LC – the Council have looked at it but there's no money available.

There was a discussion on who owned the area between the road, pavement, verge, etc. in Glen Nevis.

BMcD – the Environmental Group have been trying to find out more about the bike lockers outside the rail station. They would like to make use of them as part of their bike repair/workshops project. ScotRail have been very slow to help.

## 6. Public Transport

### *a) Rail*

CE – I travelled on an upgraded train recently on the West Highland Line and they are not suitable.  
JB – I've mentioned this several times, we should complain.

BMcD – the list of complaints we've had recently is, seating is harder, there is less room around tables, toilets are smaller and not practical, the aisles are very narrow and high backed seats block views.

BMcD – I had hoped there would have been a representative from ScotRail here today. We were given assurances previously but when I checked recently there was no certainty. There will be a further meeting of the West Highland Review soon.

DS – I recently travelled on the sleeper train and it was shocking. The first class lounge in Fort William serves tea/coffee and minimal snacks. On the train the alarm wasn't working, we had no hot water and toilets were not clean.

IL – I've had a good service when using it. There is a complaints procedure to follow and they will compensate for problems.

SK – I used it in January, it's very small so I hope the new stock is better. Looked at booking again but £450 return was too much.

CH – I agree with DS, I've seen dirty toilets.

**Action BM – we should write to Serco with these complaints.**

LC – when moving house recently I considered Locheilside but was disappointed there is no chance of commuting by train. Also the last daily train from Mallaig departs at 18.15, too early for an evening visit.

There was discussion on the recent report by the West Highland Community Rail Partnership for improvements to the timetable. This has looked at extra daily services between Mallaig and Glasgow and commuting journeys on either side of Fort William. With ScotRail taking on new stock in the Central Belt this will free up dedicated stock for the West Highland Line. With an expected increase in business and housing in this area it's a good time to improve services. ScotRail have already committed to providing an increased Sunday service next winter as a one year trial.

BMcD received support from several Councillors for the additional timetable report. The Forum also added a letter of support as did several other local groups.

**Action – include the CRP Report when sending out these minutes.**

### *b) Community Rail Partnerships*

BMcD – one of the major projects this summer is to rewrite a book on walks accessed from stations within the area covered by the West Highland CRP, Crianlarich to Mallaig. This is in agreement with Cicerone Press and will include timetables and station information.

The website currently has info on walks and other projects. [www.westhighlandcrp.com/](http://www.westhighlandcrp.com/)

The play, Brief Encounters, which toured some local stations last spring has been offered to other areas to help promote arts and culture with railways.

There was an email from Network Rail with an update on the building on Corpach Station which was hoped would be renovated and used by a local group. Because of various problems with the

building, and as it's not listed, it is likely to be considered for demolition. The CRP will enquire more.

### **c) Ferries**

IE – we've had a restructuring of the Area Operations Managers, this makes three areas instead of two. Finlay MacRae will cover Hebrides and Skye, Simon Richmond will be covering the Clyde and I'll be covering Argyll and Lochaber.

We have tendered for the contact to operate the Northern Isles Ferry Services.

Work will start in Lochaline in October for improvements on the pier, this will require a six week closure for vehicles with a passenger only service. The work will continue for one year.

Work has been completed in Oban on No 1 linkspan. We have also taken over some land from ScotRail/Network Rail to make improvements.

DR – is there any update on the experimental service we looked at for the Mallaig/ Armadale service?

IE – there is no news yet.

BM asked about the two new ferries which have been delayed.

IE – The issues have not moved on yet and things are getting desperate.

BMcD – I was notified by the Camusnagaul Ferry they have been asked to change the time of the early morning crossing from Fort William. This will depart at 07.40 instead of 07.45 and it now meets the bus service from Treslaig to Strontian.

The Forum heard of the change to the bus service about a year ago because Ardnamurchan High School opened earlier. The bus times had to change therefore not connecting with the ferry. The Forum asked HC for a change in the ferry time but this was refused.

CE asked about the report completed for the future of Corran Ferry.

DR – there's a push to get to the next stage. They are currently looking at different options of ferries and loading to work best with the very strong current.

Action - **include the Ferry Report when sending out these minutes.**

### **d) Buses**

BM – unfortunately we don't have a representative from Shiel Buses today.

AMcD – I'll deal with the list of issues received from the Forum and respond to them.

JB – there are still many issues with timetables, it's gone on far too long.

AMcD – HITRANS have had the contract from HC for dealing with timetable. We are looking at bringing it back in house and will know very soon what is decided.

DS – Shiel Buses show timetables on buses but they should face in and not out. Also, many timetables are too small. They should also have timetable leaflets available.

DS was also not happy with a recent Citylink service operated by Shiel Buses.

BMcD – the contract for the Glasgow to Fort William/Skye Citylink services are operated by both Shiel Buses and West Coast Motors. It's best to report to Citylink Customer Services as reps always say they can check back on info received.

LC wanted to see more hop on/hop off around the area to lessen car use.

BT – there's a transient tax consultation which might help. Funds need to be ring fenced to support park & ride facilities for camper vans. An area could be for day time parking with waste and rubbish facilities, showers, laundry, etc., not overnight parking. There are too many parking in Glen Nevis and this will help reduce congestion.

IL – I've been impressed with the amount of clearing which has gone on around bus stops, etc., over growth has been cut back.

SM - There is a poster blocking the view from the bus shelter at the new M&S retail park.

BMcD – this is on the list given to AMcD. Previous posters have been changed so it's disappointing another has been put up which isn't transparent.

AMcD agreed it should be dealt with.

There's a damaged hedge and verge along Achintore Road which needs to be repaired.

**Action - DR offered to report this.**

There was general agreement that Shiel Buses are operating good services around the area.

## 7. Community Transport

AMcD – it was previously reported the funding HC gives to Community Transport will roll over another year from April 2019 to 2020. We will be having a conference working along with the Community Transport Association (CTA) in Inverness during May to consider funding for the following three or five years.

BMcD reported he's no longer providing MiDAS Courses but Highlife Highland may be able to help some groups.

## 8. A82 – Update -

**BM - Fort William Traffic Congestion** - There has been some correspondence between the A82 Partnership, Kate Forbes MSP, Michael Matheson the Transport Minister, and Transport Scotland. The Minister has instructed Transport Scotland officials to undertake further work on the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG).

**Tarbet to Inverarnan upgrading** - Survey work is continuing, they are hoping to publish Draft Trunk Road Orders by the end of March.

IL - I'm concerned by the number of drivers who have overtaken me while I'm indicating to turn right. There are also many overtaking on double white lines between town and Spean Bridge. There have been lots of cars going off the road leaving verges dangerous and not repaired. Heavy haulage have also damaged verges.

BM – the A82 Partnership regularly relays complaints about road condition and maintenance to Transport Scotland and BEAR Scotland. Also Councillors have meetings with the police.

*The Forum received a later email from Councillor Thompson to say he had reported the dangerous driving to the police Chief Inspector.*

## 9. AOCB

SK gave out leaflets of the cruise ships coming to the town this summer. There will be 17 visits between March and October.

IL – there are even benefits when cruise ships come to Oban as some passengers take bus tours to Fort William.

CH –initial work has been done for the puffin crossing in Corpach and the lights will be installed soon.

BMcD gave notice of a Transport Scotland Accessible Travel Conference taking place in Glasgow on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March. This will showcase inspirational work by young disabled groups. Michael

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Matheson, Cabinet Secretary for Transport will open the event and there will be a range of guest speakers. Further info from Karen Armstrong, Team Leader Accessible Travel Policy, Scottish Government, on 0131 244 1165.

#### **10. Date of next meeting**

There will be a Bus User's Group Meeting on **Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March at 11.30** in the Duncansburgh Church Hall.

The next Transport Forum Meeting will be on **Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> May at 11.00** in the Duncansburgh Church Hall.

#### **From meeting 14<sup>th</sup> May**

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

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2019 were approved by Tony Dobson and Sarah Kennedy with one amendment.

Under 5. Cycling & Walking, BT wished to clarify what he said. 'Work is ongoing to find a suitable route from Inchree to Lundavra. It would probably help if groups pushed for these improvements.'

This should be replaced by, 'I have raised the issue with Sustrans given the time we will have to wait for Transport Scotland to do something about Corran to Fort William. They have looked at other options but there is no work ongoing unless groups push for alternatives like Inchree to Lundavra.'