



Lochaber Transport Forum

Co-chruinneachadh mu ghoireasan - siubhail Lochabair

Minutes of the Lochaber Transport Forum Meeting

Friday 26th October 2018, 11.00

The Duncansburgh Church Hall, the Parade, Fort William

Present;

Brian Murphy – Chairperson	BM
Benny MacDonald – Lochaber Transport Forum	BMcD
Chris Evans – Strontian resident, bus/train user	CE
Cllr Allan Henderson – HC	AH
Liz Loudon – Fort William CC/West Highland CRP	LL
Jo Cowan – Highland Senior Citizens Network	JC
Julie McDonald – Kinlochleven resident	JMcD
Stewart Grant - Kinlochleven resident	SG
Kath Small – Ballachulish CC	KS
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
Neill Bo Finlayson – Lochaber Times	NBF
Arthur Cowie – SATA	AC
David MacGillivray – Shiel Buses	DaMcG
Donnie MacGillivray – Shiel Buses	DoMcG
Ronald Wegner – RMT	RW
John Barnes - Friends of the West Highland Lines/Glenfinnan Station	JB
Iain Erskine – CalMac	IE

1. Welcome

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

2. Apologies;

Peter Knight – Citylink	Sonia Cameron
Julie Cromarty - HITRANS	Steve Roberts
Kate Forbes – MSP	
Councillor Andrew Baxter – Highland Council	
Councillor Ben Thompson – Highland Council	
W MacPhee – RMT	
John Fotheringham – Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge and Achnacarry CC	
Tony Dobson – Headway Highland	
Lesley Williams – Bus user	
Sally Morris – bus user	
Sarah Kennedy – FWM&SC	
Donald Cameron, MSP	
Rhoda Grant, MSP	
David Stewart, MSP	
Finlay MacRae, CalMac	
Mike Cooper, HC	

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3. Confirmation of minutes

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 7th 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.

4. Matters Arising

Under 4, Matters Arising, BMcD has contacted the Outdoor Capital of the UK by email and phone but not yet had a reply. BM - Kate Forbes, MSP, has raised the issue with Transport Scotland. It's also a problem with rail as the WHL Review held yesterday should be more open and not led by transport professionals.

CE – can there be a Communities Empowerment Request via the Government and not Transport Scotland?

Under 5, Walking & Cycling, the issue of the stile erected to cross the fence opposite the new retail park on the A82 has been dealt with as the second fence has been removed.

Under 6a) Ferries at top of page 3, the asset value for Corran Ferry has still to be provided.

Under 6b) Rail, the Forum was unable to raise any further concerns with the WHL Review Group as the response date from the first meeting had closed. A second meeting has just been held and was attended by the Forum Chair who raised the issues once again.

The six monthly review meeting with a ScotRail representative was held earlier this week.

Under 6d) Buses, bottom of page 3, the N47 evening service is now being provided by Shiel Buses as a commercial service.

Buses, page 4, Mike Cooper informed the Forum the cost of reinstating the previous hourly timetable on the 44 service to Kinlochleven is £85k to £90k.

DS asked for the cost of re-instating a late evening bus to Kinlochleven. He has discussed this with businesses that are affected by the removal of the late evening bus.

Action – the Forum will pass this request to HC.

BM asked Cllr Henderson if he can look into this and extra services for Fort William to Oban through his work with HITRANS.

AH – any additional services will have an impact elsewhere. I've also heard of requests for links to Newtonmore.

DoMcG – we need to see a demand before we start new services or there needs to be subsidises.

JC – young people need transport choices to get to work. Extra Oban services are also beneficial for ferry links and attending the hospital.

Buses, bottom of page 4, there are no changes to the 918 winter service between Fort William and Oban.

5. Cycling & Walking

AH reported Transport Scotland have agreed to add the short length of pavement missing alongside the new road layout by Aldi's supermarket.

BMcD gave details of the Living Streets campaign which is highlighting the need to keep pavements clear and safe and encourage walking. The website address is - <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/> and there is a link to a page for Scotland.

6. Public Transport

a) Ferries

BM welcomed Iain Erskine, CalMac to the Forum for the first time. IE gave a report. He is based in Craignure, Mull. Passenger figures just released for 2017 show Oban to Craignure was the fourth most used route with Mallaig to Armadale fifth on the list. The Mallaig route was busy with 285,483 passengers and the most popular for carrying the highest number of coaches with 2,337. Some areas saw a small drop over 2016 figures including Fishnish to Lochaline and Oban to Coll/Tiree/Castlebay.

There was discussion on the delays with the two new ferries built by Ferguson Marine Engineering. There was also discussion on delays and connecting with trains in Mallaig. IE is keen to know about issues affecting passengers as they want to provide a good service.

There is change needed to the infrastructure at Craignure Pier.

AH raised major problems with the number of disruptions, having the wrong vessels on routes, and ferries with difficulties with their draught. The Communities Board are trying hard but CalMac need to do more.

IE – we need support to get new vessels and we're trying the best we can with what we have.

AH – any new vessels must be built to fit ports.

AC – I've heard different feedback to what was reported about the search for ferries in Scandinavia.

DoMcG raised a problem with buses and ferries from Mull connecting in Lochaline and Kilchoan. IE suggested speaking to local groups and the Mull and Iona Ferry Committee.

CE – what wind predictions do CalMac use when considering cancelling sailings and do you warn passengers? IE – it's entirely up to the Master/Skipper, we use yellow for a warning, amber for cancelled and Red for off all day. There are various issues at different ports.

IL – the Mallaig/Armadale issue is to do with which ferry is used as the small ferry can operate in higher winds.

b) Rail

BM – there was a meeting of the WHL Review Group yesterday in Oban. Prior to this we arranged to meet with Scott Prentice, ScotRail on Tuesday in Fort William but as he had travel difficulties we eventually managed to hold the meeting with him on the phone.

AC – at the meetings Scott Prentice gave details of ScotRail's punctuality targets which are well below what is expected. Also, there seems to be an increase in passenger figures for the sleeper train up to 50%, this includes Fort William journeys.

CE – I attended Tuesday's meeting and the travel problems on the day show what local passengers regularly have to put up with.

AH – there is to be a new pricing structure for the sleeper service with the introduction of new trains on part of the line which was expected this month.

JB – it's still possible to buy single tickets so no change yet.

The Forum checked the sleeper website after the meeting which stated the following; we have announced that there will be a delay in the availability of our new trains..... We will instead be running our current trains on all routes until Spring 2019.

JB gave feedback from both meetings. Transport Scotland and ScotRail are receptive to ideas for improvements to local timetables. It's vital to gather evidence and support from community groups for changes. The West Highland CRP and Friends of the West Highland Lines will be discussing this. For instance, changes can be for more links with Glasgow and short commuting journeys from both sides of Fort William.

BMcD got feedback by email after the meeting with Scot Prentice. Regarding having representatives at Forum meetings, it was suggested rotating attendance at meetings with a Customer Information Manager, A Head of Operations, a Network Rail representative, etc. to cover specific enquiries. There was also feedback to a recent complaint received by the Forum to conflicting information given on various rail websites when there were delays and cancellations locally. This had led to much confusion.

c) Community Rail Partnerships

BMcD – the West Highland CRP held their AGM in Mallaig recently which included a performance of 'Brief Encounters', the play especially written for the CRP.

Several of the committee attended the Association of Community Rail Partnership (ACoRP) Awards in Glasgow where the play received a third place in the Community Engagement Category. Several other Scottish CRP's received awards which acknowledge the amount of work being done in a very short time.

New CRP signs are being erected at some rural stations. Work is continuing on providing rail travel info to link with walks accessible from stations.

IL – there is a company currently filming on the trains and interested on community involvement with the railways. Flint Television are happy to speak to anyone with local rail stories. It's expected the programme will be shown on Channel 4 next year. Their website is <https://www.flinttelevision.com/>

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

DaMcG – we have a new 17 seater coach for the Kinlochleven school route as larger buses weren't necessary. As previously mentioned we are now operating the N47 Fort William/Corpach service commercially.

JMcD gave details of the survey she did for the N44 Kinlochleven route. She took several trips over two days and spoke to passengers of all ages. There is good satisfaction with the service provided by Shiel Buses. Passengers were disappointed about the very short notice when timetable changes were implemented recently. Some people lost employment and local businesses were affected. There was interest from passengers in removing the service at lunchtime for a later evening service. Councillor Niall Maclean held a separate survey which showed a preference to move the current service from 20.00. This will now depart Fort William to 21.00.

JMcD also looked at how services connected with coaches from Glasgow and Inverness for Kinlochleven residents. The changes have affected how visitors travel from Glasgow airport to local B&B's and for local people getting to Glasgow hospitals. Moving the evening service to 21.00 will affect the link with a coach from Glasgow but will benefit local workers.

There was general agreement for the good work done by JMcD on the survey. BMcD also passed on thanks from Mike Cooper, HC.

SG raised concerns when travelling to Oban. There was confusion over booking and the service ran 23 minutes late due to the many stops with school children.

Sally Morris from Kentallen notified the Forum of a journey she took on the early school bus which links with the Oban school bus in Duror. It's the only opportunity to spend a reasonable time in Oban.

DS asked why there is no replacement for Mike Cooper, HC, who is not attending today. Julie did all the surveys so what is HITRANS role in local public transport?

BMcD said Mike just called off yesterday because of something important.

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AH – HITRANS have a strategic role. HC are the main contact.

DS – who else should be involved in accessing better public transport? Jobs are being lost, we don't have trains in South Lochaber. Residents won't be able to attend the new cinema about to be built in Fort William.

AH – it may be the Chamber of Commerce and Councillors. There is a lack of finance in the sector, the Council are completely strapped. Setting up the new bus services since Stagecoach withdrew have been difficult, any new spending has to be taken away from somewhere else.

DS – we should be inviting Councillor Roddy McCuish from Argyll & Bute Council to meetings to discuss better transport links.

BM – Councillor McCuish is also on the HITRANS Board along with Councillor Henderson so they are able to discuss transport.

BMcD had some feedback to the issue raised at another meeting by IL. This was the problem at the bus stop near the Ben Nevis Estate which bus drivers don't see clearly. A note from Mike Cooper, HC, said the stop is partly on a bend, set back off the road and has some overgrowth around it. Shiel Buses have contacted drivers to check closely for passengers waiting at stops. Bear Scotland will also check the overgrowth.

There was discussion over the issues with new advertising on bus shelters blocking the view of passengers and drivers. It seems the top areas may have been changed as they now seem to be more see-through.

7. Community Transport

JMcD gave a report on the Lochleven Community Minibus Association. The group has ceased trading due to operational problems. The minibus is now older and not roadworthy. JMcD has discussed options with OSCR and HMRC to start a new group.

AC – the Community Transport Association (CTA) have new staff in Edinburgh who may be able to help.

8. A82 – Update

BM said there isn't much to report. The recent study by AECOM into congestion problems is completed. It's hoped Transport Scotland will fund the next stage.

DS – Councillor Ben Thompson is looking into this. I'm disappointed with some of the report which didn't look far enough. There were issues with traffic counters and data not being collected sufficiently.

9. AOCB

There was no AOCB

10. Date of next meeting

There will be a Bus User's Group Meeting on **Friday 14th December at 11.30** in the Duncansburgh Church Hall.

There was discussion on future meetings with dates still to be set for 2019. BM had hoped to ask which day of the week is most suitable but as the meeting took longer than expected there wasn't sufficient numbers to take a vote.

Lochaber Transport Forum
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From meeting 12th February 2019

11. Confirmation of minutes

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

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