

Islay Community Council Meeting
Draft Minute
Wednesday 28th February 2024, 6:30pm at Bowmore Service Point.

1. Welcome and Apologies

Present: Islay McEachern (IM), Convenor; Jim Porteous (JP), Secretary; Billy Sinclair (BS) and Colin Fraser (CF), Joint Treasurers; Frazer Campbell (FWC); Councillor Dougie McFadzean (DMF); Scott Currie (SC), PC Graham Turner (GT), Police Scotland; Gillian Nelson-Edwards (GNE); Innes MacIndeor (IM).

Remote attendees: Councillor Alistair Redman (AR), Sandy Taylor (ST), Chris Abell (CA).

Apologies:

Garry MacLean (GM), Councillor Robin Currie (RC), Jim MacCalman (JM).
(Minutes Jayne Geddes).

2. Declarations of interest:

FWC stated declaration of interest with regards planning.

AR stated declaration of interest in relation to being a member of the ACHA board and planning.

IM stated declaration of interest with regards roads.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting 10th January 2024

An amendment was requested regarding the title of PS Wendy Maginnis.

Following this amendment, the minutes were accepted as a true record, proposed by CF, seconded by BS.

4. Matters Arising and Action Points

Report awaited from RC re affordable housing developments. **Continued action RC**
DMF advised that works had commenced on new housing at Port Charlotte.

JP has discussed the possibility of funding for renovation of Morrison Square, Bowmore, and possibly other historic sites, with RC and a council representative however no funding has been confirmed as available.

The Islay Connections report has been completed and will be publicised for discussion. ST will forward a copy to ICC. The report includes a list of priorities. **Action ST**

CA has been in contact with Julian Green regarding concerns re gritting and ice however has not received a response.

IM confirms that replacement pads for the defibrillators have now been received.

CA drafted a letter regarding the staff shortages within the police and it was then discussed at a meeting between ICC and Police Officers. This will now be circulated and sent if all agree. **Action CA**

CA has discussed the concerns re signage with Julian Green. A chevron has been put up at the corners of concern near Port Ellen and a bigger sign is expected to be erected but has not been completed yet.

JP has written to Loganair re concerns. Loganair have advised that the new aircraft are virtually as resilient as the old aircraft and the runway works are adequate. However, there

are ongoing concerns and JP will follow up again. He will contact patient transport to discuss new booking arrangements.

Action JP

JP, AR and DMF – re road repair works and obligations of contractors. AR is awaiting a response re shore street. DMF attended a MAKI area meeting today at which Jim Smith, Head of Roads and Infrastructure was present. An update on road works planned for Islay for 2024-25 was received including roads not completed in 2023-24. DMF has requested changes made to areas prioritised for repairs. AR has also raised similar concerns.

CA has submitted a report including photos detailing concerns regarding the road surface on shore street.

CF & BS have not yet enquired with RBS re bank accounts. The Bank of Scotland branch where the ICC account is currently held will close in early May. BS did go to the local branch of RBS but was advised that staff cannot advise re an appropriate account. They provided a number for the Business Team who they said could advise, but though multiple calls have been made and e-mail sent no response has been received. The possibility of changing to internet banking was discussed but some feel a face-to-face service would be preferable. CF and BS will consider further.

Action CF & BS

TS actions were all continued to next meeting.

Action TS

ICC members met with Ina Glover to discuss Bowmore Hall works, DMF was thanked for arranging this. Major works have been completed but many remain outstanding. She will provide a financial statement and statement of works completed and required. Further funding is required, and it may take some time to be completed. The hall remains unavailable for use. JP queried whether money from the Levelling Up fund may be available for use in relation to the repairs of the hall. DMF stated that £20 million had been allocated to Argyll and Bute but there is no information yet regarding when this will be available or what conditions will be attached to the use of the funds. There will be lots of competing projects requesting funds.

No other matters arising.

5. Police Report

GT gave a report of recent police calls, there were 77 call outs during December, January and February for a variety of minor offences, for some of which charges were brought.

A new Police Officer has been employed and will commence work in March, meaning Islay will have full staffing of Police Officers before the summer. They also still hope to be able to secure some summer secondments.

JP queried whether GT had received a copy of PS Matthew Shaw's recent report and agreed to forward this.

Action JP

AR stated that some constituents had commented that Police Officers were no longer seen "walking the beat" and queried whether this was likely to happen. He asserted that people want to see Police Officers walking the beat and it is raised with councillors regularly. GT advised that the force is single crewed and goes call to call, covering a large geographical area, so this is often not possible. However, does recognise that the need for public reassurance is important.

6. Councillor R. Currie – was unable to attend today.

7. Councillor D. McFadzean

Councillor McFadzean has raised an incident regarding the chevron on the “low road” requesting a larger sign. The sign size should relate to the angle of the road and as a 90-degree bend this needs a minimum of 3 arrows. He has been advised that the arrow in place is a temporary replacement and a larger sign will be erected. There has been no timescale for this, but it is hoped that it will be completed before the summer.

There was extensive discussion of roads at the budget setting meeting last week. It is acknowledged that the condition of roads is bad, especially Shore Street in Bowmore. DMF had an opportunity to discuss this directly with Jim Smith earlier today and has been helping Islay residents with insurance claims. The roads are dangerous and DMF stated that claims should include loss of earnings as well as damage to vehicles. The roads need significant work and he has been reporting pot holes regularly, including taking and sending photos. In his opinion Islay roads are worse than other areas in his constituencies. Budgets are fixed for each area, but repairs and materials are more expensive on Islay so therefore in reality the budget is less than for other areas due to loss of up to 50% due to costs of ferries etc. One third of planned roadworks did not go ahead last year, many because materials could not be transferred due to ferry cancellations. IM stated that ICC previously raised with Pippa Milne the loss of money from the budget due to transport of materials to Islay and requested more funding, however there is competition for this from other areas of Argyll and Bute. DMF advised that the Islands Act should create parity, extra budget is needed to make up for remoteness and extra investment is required in some areas. The island should be trying to obtain extra budget from distilleries and forestry on Islay. ICC has previously been advised there is insufficient forestry traffic on Islay to justify extra funding however the funding allocated does not consider the number of lorries from distilleries, only the mileage travelled. Road monitoring was previously carried out, but no additional funds allocated. DMF stated that the planning application process can include requirements for road maintenance due to the wear and tear of lorries every day. ICC still hopes to start a community benefit fund in conjunction with distilleries and the Machair Wind project is another opportunity for this.

DMF also discussed some recent educational issues and concerns from families who have decided to home educate their children due to perceived issues with the High School. There have been other agencies involved with this including the police due to concerns regarding wholistic care.

Poverty and the cost-of-living crisis is ongoing with many people really struggling. There are lots of dampness issues and it has been difficult to arrange remedial work with some landlords, not all are responsive to the need for repairs. Concerns have been raised regarding the health repercussions. Many people are not heating their houses as they cannot afford to and use of the food bank has increased. People are not using their heating or heating only one room due to cost.

DMF has had positive discussions regarding littering and bins and has organised for the bins at the pier to be emptied. The collection of these had been missed by mistake. The litter bins in Bowmore Square will be fitted with anti-bird devices. The bin at Uiskentuie which was previously removed due to fly tipping will now be replaced. Timely emptying of bins is essential to reduce littering and waste plastic in the environment. JP stated that ICC previously requested more, larger bins and provided a list of locations, funding was available. However, the council instead put signs on existing bins advised people to take litter home.

DMF stated that councillors represent communities as best they can, and all agreed that it was helpful to know that everyone is working towards shared goals.

8. Councillor A. Redman

Full report appended.

Councillor Redman has been addressing similar local issues. He has also been campaigning in relation to the Post Office case regarding sub postmasters. He has been in contact with government representatives to press local issues and dealing with enquiries regarding various topics including littering, streetlights and resurfacing of roads. AR has also been updating the local procurement strategy as it is important that local contractors have the opportunity to bid. He worked with ACHA today, checking on housing conditions and local services and was able to show Management some of the issues in person. Some matters have been ongoing for some time but while there are issues with funding, there is a responsibility to tenants to maintain properties. He also continues to donate to the local foodbanks.

AR queried whether the ICC had installed the purple signs regarding COVID precautions. It was agreed that it was now time these were removed and ICC will arrange this.

Action ICC

9. Treasurer's Report

Balance £6463.65 with two payments made this month.

CF and BS will discuss future banking further.

Action CF & BS

10. ICC Ferry Committee

Full report appended.

The ferry situation continues to cause concern with only one ferry providing service. The MV Caledonian Isles is currently awaiting significant works and will be out of service for at least 16 weeks, possibly longer. CalMac is reviewing options to provide service continuity. The plan is currently to delay MV Finlaggan's dry docking which was due on the 8th March but has now been delayed until at least the end of March. This is good for short term capacity, but the computer system is slow to update so bookings may not be available. CalMac has confirmed that service will be provided by Finlaggan and MV Hebridean Isles (HI) for most of the summer. Finlaggan dry dock may now be close to the Fèis and during main cattle sales and CalMac representatives have discussed possible contingency services with the Ferry Committee (ICCFC). ICCFC have confirmed the preferred service during this period would be HI and MV Isle of Arran (IoA) and have also requested additional sailings as these are both smaller ships resulting in reduced capacity.

The proposed summer timetable has two sailings a week less and ICCFC have requested extra sailings to cover this reduced capacity, suggesting stopping the Oban route during this period. It has also been queried whether the Colonsay connection is necessary or could be offered from Oban instead of Kennacraig. Removing these sailings would allow at least two extra sailings per week. Other measures regarding space management have been proposed to free up capacity.

IM and JP attended a working group meeting with CalMac representatives yesterday and discussed various issues including the management of block bookings. The main period of concern is during the period when Finlaggan goes to dry dock as even with two vessels providing the interim service there will be reduced capacity for vehicles. This will be for around a month.

The first new ship is due to be launched on 16th March 2024 and Brian Palmer from the Ileach and Garry MacLean from ICCFC will both attend. There will be a naming ceremony on Islay when the ferry arrives in October.

Port development works are ongoing and works at Kennacraig leaving the preferred berth unavailable have resulted in some cancellations during bad weather. ICCFC have requested a contingency plan to prevent cancellation which is to sail to Campbeltown or Oban if ferries are unable to dock at Kennacraig. Development works at Port Askaig will commence next month. Port Ellen works are not expected to start until 2025. Argyll & Bute Council still have not disclosed full plans for the Port Askaig works. They had a public drop-in and a meeting with ICCFC in January and shared the proposed plans however some safety concerns were raised, including parking of lorries on the hill, lack of pick up and drop off space and insufficient car parking. The new ferries will offer 40% increase in capacity but there will be less space at the port. ICCFC gave a list of concerns to Scott Reid and requested an update, but this has not been forthcoming. He states that CMAL, CalMac and the Council are all in discussion regarding the plans and findings will be published on the website and another meeting held. Current plans are for Port Askaig to close to ferries from mid-June until the end of July and concerns have been raised that this is during the peak summer period. It is unclear at present what the provision for sailings to Colonsay will be during this period. DMF stated that he would speak to Scott Reid directly to request improved communications, timeline of dates and budgets.

Action DMF

ICCFC continues to advocate for the community, requesting improved timetables and capacity. They have a meeting tomorrow night. Issues with the booking system are also ongoing and this has affected staff, bookings and businesses. CalMac is currently engaging with communities regarding proposals for the new contract. It has been confirmed that a workaround has been found for the issues of booking via Port Askaig or Port Ellen and being unable to see the sailings available from the other port. This should be implemented next month. There have still been no statistics provided since the new computer system was introduced last year.

Concerns were raised regarding poor staff wellbeing and welfare and e-mails and texts which have been received by people regarding bookings which are not theirs. These have contained details of the intended recipients, and this is a GDPR issue.

11. Islay Community Action Plan (ICAP)

530 responses have now been received and CA and ST are working on the analysis. They have commenced writing a report and have lots of figures to set out. It was suggested that a meeting should be arranged to present figures to ICC members and discuss the next stage. A meeting was agreed for 13th March 2024 at 6:30pm at the Bowmore Service Point.

12. Planning reports

BS continues to send the relevant reports by e-mail, weekly. Timescales for processing of applications have reduced recently but are still missing agreed targets.

13. Roads

The road passing Port Ellen distillery continues to cause concern. Temporary repairs have been made but were insufficient. The modifications made to the road have resulted in it being too narrow and concerns have been raised. There are no plans to amend this at present. ICC have written to express concern re this. The road is currently unsafe due to risk of lorries and other large vehicles mounting the pavement as the road is too narrow for them to pass. The Road Compliance Manager has been consulted regarding the narrowing of the road and has not expressed concerns. It was proposed that ICC would write to Diageo and the Council to formally raise and record the concerns of the community and ICC regarding the width of the road and the drainage. JP will write again to Diageo and CA will draft letter to the Council and send to all for approval. AR and DMF will also sign the letter in support, and it will be sent to Jim Smith, Pippa Milne and Jenni Minto as well as Diageo.

Action CA & JP

A quote from the council regarding the introduction of radar speed signs is expected in mid-March. The sign in Lagavulin was privately installed by the distillery.

There is no update on the expected works on School Road in Bowmore.

There are upcoming road closures in Port Ellen due to Scottish Water installing a new main. There will be a drop-in on 5th March to discuss the works. DMF has raised concerns with Sharon Dunlop, Project Manager, regarding restrictions to access caused by the closure. It has been confirmed that emergency services will in no way be restricted access and people will continue to have unrestricted access to their homes, though there may be a short wait. Clarity has been requested regarding contingency for larger vehicles. Resurfacing plans by the distillery have been postponed and will now be completed at the same time. The road will be closed for a maximum of 4 weeks. Significant disruption is expected in Port Ellen with dirty water and water turned off at times. Contingency plans for bottled water are in place. Concerns have been raised regarding noise during the works. Noise levels and hours of disturbance will be monitored by environmental health.

14. Carbon Neutral Islands Project (CNI)

No update has been received from Tom Skinner.

DMF stated that he had received an e-mail confirming that a planning application for a solar farm has been submitted and he has request it is prioritised.

15. Correspondence

Representatives from Machair Wind are expected to attend and give a slide presentation at the next ICC meeting.

ICCFC members had a meeting with Jenni Minto regarding the ongoing ferry issues. She was very supportive.

There is an upcoming meeting regarding the National Independent Framework for Adult Social Care and it is proposed that CA and ST will attend.

There is a Renewable Energy Symposium on 14th March to which ICC and Councillors have been invited. GM will represent ICC.

An invitation has been received for a tour of the biomass plant at Bunnahabhain on 15th March. No attendees from ICC have yet been confirmed.

Bridgend Post Office is closing from 25th March 2024 and the shop will also be closed for some time. There is concern that this will put additional pressure on Bowmore Post Office which is small and only has one terminal. It also has limited access and poor parking. With the local bank also closing there are concerns regarding how cash handling and currency exchange will be managed.

There are upcoming mid-term bi-elections for representatives for the Community Council. This will allow applications for new members and to fill vacancies. ICC currently has 10 members but could have up to 16. The election is on the 2nd May and vacancies will be advertised on the website, social media and in the lleach. **Action FWC**

16. AOCB

GNE is attending the meeting tonight representing the charity Sidekick. Having secured funding for all ability bikes for people who struggle to cycle, they now need to build sheds to store these. They have an additional grant to build sheds and have been donated land at

two sites on which to build them. They now need to apply for planning and have had plans drawn. Applications for planning made through ICC have a discounted fee. ICC unanimously agreed to support with the application and advised GNE request the architect contact them directly. BS will send planning information to GNE.

Action BS

GNE will send details of deadline for use of funds to DMF and AR who will request the application is fast-tracked.

Action GNE

IM suggested also applying for funds for a generator for the Dunlossit site and this was agreed.

SC stated there was a Teams meeting of a Scottish Parliament cross party group on islands, regarding research on the National Islands Plan. The conclusion so far is that 92% said there was no difference since the plan was introduced. The inference is that the plan is in place but is not being followed up. Kirstin Gow on Jura completed a Scottish islands typography which categorised islands into 10 different groups to feed back into the national islands plan. DMF will forward a link to the report.

FWC queried any progress on the path from Bowmore to Bridgend. DMF confirmed that it had been discussed at a MAKI meeting earlier today and is awaiting funding allocation. The first phase from Bowmore to the Gaelic Centre has been confirmed but there is no funding for further development available at present. The first phase should commence later this year or early in 2025.

17. Date/Venue for next meeting:

**The next meeting will be on Wednesday 10th April 2024
Meeting closed at 20:55.**

Appendices

Agenda Item 8 – Report from Cllr Redman

My apologies for any typos.

My ongoing campaign for justice for our sub-postmasters continues to be mentioned in the press and I have been in regular contact with MP, MSPs and ministers from the north and the south.

I will keep fighting hard for justice for our sub-postmasters.

I have been dealing with many littering inquiries. I'm often told by some in the council that more bins means more littering. I strongly disagree with that view.

I have been in contact with our roads and street lighting department about getting the street lighting fixed in Bruchladdich and Portnahven.

I have been in regular contact with the roads department in relation to the specific roads on Islay and inquiries on why good sections of road on Islay are getting re-done and why others are left to deteriorate, the team leader for MAKI has recently been on Islay to inspect the roads you raised amongst others.

I have been told that the Strand was prioritised this year as it was degrading and in line with our 'Stitch in time' works where officers identify roads which are deteriorating and address them before they get to a stage where they need significant investment. Officers are aware of the issues at Bruichladdich to Port Charlotte Road which require engineering works and are not programmed in this year's budget due to cost pressures, however they are monitoring any further deterioration.

Officers have been in discussions with Diageo and are in the process of agreeing investment at Port Ellen (C17 - Mull of OA road) with Diageo paying for the works which are progressing and should be complete in the coming months.

I have also been told that the council are still finalising the Annual Capital Programme (2024/25) and the proposed draft schemes. I am aware that in response to Members requests the service held a Business Day with Members in October to explain how officers deliver the plan and programme the works,

which allowed Members the opportunity to feed into the draft programme with any local knowledge they may have.

In addition, following the Council Budget Meeting on Thursday where £8m was confirmed for the Capital Roads Reconstruction budget, the service circulated the proposed draft programme to Members for any comments. The proposed schemes will go forward to the Area Committees (MAKI Area Committee is scheduled for 28 February) for consideration by Members. Any changes required will be incorporated and communicated to Members and a report on the programme will then route onwards to March EDI committee (21 March) for sign-off.

I have been in contact with the council's economic growth team about South Islay Development who are making good progress with their new community hub and motor home parking area in Port Ellen. This multi million investment includes council direct funding, island Infrastructure funding and also Regional Capital Grant Funding which the council helps administer. This facility is intended to be open later this year.

There has also been a few bin uplift inquires that I have been dealing with.

Through my policy lead remit I have worked on updating our procurement strategy. We recognise the importance of supporting local businesses, and we want to make it easy as possible for them to work with our procurement team and bid for contracts that will help our communities and support council operations.

Our updated strategy focuses on this, and puts local businesses first whilst ensuring we continue to get best value.

I have delt with quite a few benefit and grant inquires and directed many constituents to the appropriate departments.

I was on a walkabout tour today with my fellow ACHA housing board / Local ACHA team members checking up on housing conditions and local ACHA services.

On the matter of housing I been dealing with association housing issues that have been brought to my attention by my constituents. These include outside lights, guttering, gates, windows and damp issues.

I have raised the matter of the metal purple covid signs with our roads and streetlighting department. I'm delighted that our hard working local community council have agreed to take these signs down.

My wife and I have continued to make regular donations to the Islay food bank (as well as other food banks) and as councillor I will continue to do all that I can to promote and support our local food banks.

Kind regards Cllr Alastair Redman - Kintyre and the Island ward

Agenda Item 11 – Ferries Report

Please find Ferries Report below in advance of our CC meeting (agenda item 10).

ICCFC - last regular meeting 24th January

IME and JP met Jenni Minto and Marie-Claire Docherty on 16th February to discuss ferry service issues. These included delay in release of Summer Timetable, reduction of 2 sailings per week, need for extra Feis sailings and coverage for livestock sales, proposals for extra sailings/capacity sent to Calmac by ICCFC, Calmac working group meetings, Calmac computer system, Calmac staff morale, ferry cancellations due to development work at Kennacraig and the need for response from A&BC's Marine Manager in regard to questions and concerns raised by ICCFC and other stakeholders about the port enabling work plans for Port Askaig. Jenni was very supportive and agreed to pursue - since then, there has been some movement on eg earlier bookability of Summer timetable, a holding response from A&BC and working group meetings have re-started as of 27th February.

Operational - We have had a single vessel service on the Kennacraig-Islay route since 1st January with Finlaggan. Numerous cancellations took place in January and early February due to a combination of bad weather and port development work at Kennacraig, which caused major disruption for the island. We have been informed that Finlaggan drydocking is being delayed (from 8th March) due to extensive work needed for Caledonian Isles. It is not yet confirmed which vessel (s) will serve Islay during the postponement period and then when Finlaggan returns from drydock.

Timetables/Capacity -

Publication of timetables for March and for this Summer and the ability to book, have been severely delayed for a variety of reasons. Space availability has also been restricted and in some cases blocked due to Calmac admin problems. ICCFC has campaigned for improvement at the highest levels.

We have been given vessel combination options to consider, with Loti or Isle of Arran, during Finlaggan's delayed overhaul period. This is in addition to reduction of 2 sailings per week in the Summer timetable due to ongoing port development work. We have requested

further clarification, extra sailings and reconsideration of the Oban link in order to obtain additional sailings and capacity to/from Kennacraig. The Islay Working Group is also discussing capacity, timetables, block bookings space wastage, haulier incentivisation for unpopular sailings, distilleries' silent seasons, statistics and other matters.

We have been waiting ten months for an update from CFL regarding forward bookings and performance statistics. So far, CFL has failed to provide any statistics from their new system since April 2024. The Minister for Transport and Transport Scotland as well as the FCB and other stakeholders are aware that this is a serious problem.

For the Summer 2024 timetable, ICCFC has requested at least the same as we should have had for 2023, along with proper management of block bookings and other measures to free up more capacity. CFL's reply is awaited. Lack of any statistics makes it impossible to tell whether the change in management of block bookings back to the port offices (from B2B) has made any positive difference.

New Ferries -

At and following the public 'drop in' on 10 January and an online meeting with ICCFC members, concerns were raised regarding safety of the plans for Port Askaig and timing, including the need to align with everything else that will be going on. Work is due to commence in March with completion August. Despite chasing, no further feedback from A&BC.

At Kennacraig, major upgrade works started from 8th January. These involve linkspan removal and closing of the south berth until August. This has impacted resilience with numerous cancellations that would not otherwise have happened. The effect of a recent changeover in masters seems to have reduced the problem and we continue to monitor.

Port Ellen, public event held 13th February to enable progression of Harbour Revision Orders and to update the community.

New vessels are progressing within planned timescales for completion and ICCFC has sent recent pictures to the Ileach and posted in Facebook. 'Isle of Islay' launch is due in Turkey on 16th March and will be attended by Brian Palmer from the Ileach and Garry MacLean.

Ferries Community Board - Has publicly reported communities' disagreement with Scottish Government's plans to make a direct award of the new CHFS contract to CFL. Next meeting 8th March.

JP is part of a small subgroup working with Transport Scotland to review the new CHFS contract and propose beneficial changes in line with communities' feedback.

bc CC members

rgds/Jim