

Mull Community Council Draft Meeting Minutes 11th December 2024

Attendees

Community Council

John Maughan

Sharon Worrall

Billy McClymont

Tracy Mayo

Steve Fisher

Rupert Ormond

Angus Williams

James MacLennan

Argyll & Bute Councillors

Andrew Kain

Guests

Richard Crozier – Mull Rally Organisation

Gordon Milne – Mull Rally Organisation

Alison Munro – Planet Youth, Argyll & Bute Council

Joe Reade – Mull Ferry Committee

Jo Prior

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from:

- Willy Hume
- Emily Greenhalgh
- Daisy Williams

2. Declarations of Interest

- There were no declarations of interest

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

- The minutes of the last meeting were approved subject to correction of a spelling error. Proposed: Steve Fisher. Seconded: Rupert Ormond.

4. Police Report

- There was no Police attendance due to prior commitments. They sent their apologies.

5. Mull Rally

- Richard Crozier (RC) provided feedback on this autumn's rally. RC stated that the rally had gone very smoothly with very little damage caused compared to some previous years.
- He explained a series of changes which the organising team are keen to explore for next year (2025). It would be hoped to achieve:
 - An event focused more on the Friday evening (60+ stage miles)
 - Improved contingency / resilience in response to stages lost in 2024

- A “Whole Island Event” building on the 2024 return to the Ross of Mull
- An Improved accessible on-island spectator experience
- A return to the Glengorm Road shakedown on the Friday morning
- Legs starting at Tobermory, Craignure & Salen
- A total of 150+ stage miles for the first time since 2016
- Continuation of the forestry area queueing for the Fishnish Ferry
- The convenor (JM) mentioned that there had been one or two complaints about speeding through Salen and non-participants parking on pavements there. RO also mentioned non-participants speeding between Aros Bridge and Salen and asked if a road safety awareness campaign could be incorporated in the event. RC said that such an initiative called “Keep the Race in Place” was being promoted in Ireland and could perhaps be adopted on Mull.
- RC stressed that the organisers welcomed all feedback and invited any residents or businesses who wished to “Get in Touch”, if possible by January 7th via consult@mullrally.org.

6. Planet Youth

- Alison Munro of Planet Youth, a youth health improvement programme being led in partnership by Argyll & Bute Council and NHS Highland gave a presentation about the project which aims to address problems of adolescent substance misuse, youth behaviour and poor mental health before they become serious.
- Alison presented a short animation which is available on-line: An Introduction to Planet Youth in Scotland (vimeo.com).
- The programme originated in Iceland where it has had a dramatic effect in cutting school age and youth drunkenness, smoking and cannabis use, while also increasing participation in sport and time spent with parents.
- Five Argyll & Bute high schools including Tobermory are currently involved. In the first stage students were asked to complete a questionnaire about their feelings and behaviour and this data is used to help inform local challenges which should be addressed through community action.
- Further to this, Alison and Asia Nicoletti visited Tobermory and met with S1 pupils and parents to gather further views. Questions included “What is good about growing up on Mull?” and “What improvements can be made for young people growing up on Mull?”
- AW expressed concern that a proportion of pupils had indicated that they were unhappy at school, and wondered whether this was linked to the poor condition of the school buildings. Alison and Asia will meet with Tobermory Parent Council in January – an invitation to attend will be extended to all Parent Council’s on Mull.
- More information about Planet Youth can be found at <https://www.planetyouth.scot/>.
- Any resident or organisation interested in assisting the project is welcome to contact Asia and Alison at argyllandbute@planetyouth.scot.

7. Matters Arising

7.1 Flooding in Tobermory.

- RO commented that a week previous he had attended a webinar for west coast and island community councils organised by the National Improvement Service for Local Government. The first part of the meeting had focused on emergency and contingency planning and recommended the Ready Scotland website <https://ready.scot>.
- Different community councils had different plans for different types of emergency, such as a ship sinking in local waters.
- Some councils had flood plans e.g. with Flood Wardens appointed and available to act. It might be useful to study these.

7.2 Smart Meter Installation

- The convenor has written to 24 nearby community councils to ask for their experiences with smart meters.
- Michelle McEwan, secretary of the Ardchattan Community Council, drew attention to the turn-off of the Radio Teleswitch system planned for 30th June 2025. This is the system by which RTS meters report off-peak usage of electricity.

8. New Power Cable to Iona

- This item was postponed.

9. Education Tracy Mayo

- TM updated the Mull Community Council on the Mull Campus Working Group work since the previous meeting. Members of the Working group attended A Community Sounding Board Meeting on the 14th November with the Mull Campus Team. There was also a public meeting and meetings with Jenni Minto, MSP, and a meeting with Tim Eagle, MSP, and Councillor Amanda Hampsey.
- The Working Group consists of a mix of Community Councillors, some local trust members, and residents. TM & JM made a call for more volunteers. If you are interested in joining contact details for Tracy are below. The group is open to all.
- TM guided everyone through the slides that had been prepared for the public meeting. They had been amended to take account of the FOI response received on the 10th December.

TM reminded everyone of the following statements:

9.1 Iona Community Council

- “Iona Community Council strongly supports parent councils, MCC and other community bodies on Mull in their assessment that the school is not fit for purpose and needs to be replaced (not refurbished).”
- “Beyond this position, for Iona, it has been very hard to engage with the process to date we do not know the terms on which we’re involved – in particular, wherever the school is located, we need to know as a starting point whether Iona can attend Oban High School on the current funded terms. We can’t effectively be involved in a process, let alone about location, if we don’t know whether fundamental provisions are affected or not”

9.2 Argyll & Bute Council

- “The LEIP funding conditions set out by the Scottish Government would not cover the development of 2 separate schools and a split site would also be a regressive step in terms of educational benefit and operational efficiency of a single site.”

9.3 Bunessan parents

- Bunessan parents highlighted to the Working Group that they have recently updated their survey. 95% of parents would send their children to such a Mull central high school, in contrast the Argyll & Bute Council team in reporting the feedback from their own “Community Sounding Boards” reported that there was “no consensus on an agreed location”, without appearing to understand the complexity of the issue.
- An Argyll & Bute report even claimed that “quiet voices” disagreeing “were being harassed”, this comment TM stated demonstrates a lack of understanding of the situation and stress being felt by community members now and historically. The comment needed context.
- 50% of the same young parents surveyed stated they would consider leaving the island if a central high school is not built. Over half of the parents said there needs to be funded placement retention for Oban High including the hostel (please note currently hostel and travel costs are covered by the Council).

9.4 Tobermory

- In the absence of a similar survey for Tobermory parents, and to give as full a picture as possible TM shared the following, please note these are quotes from the Council's report:
- "Negative impact on economic development/opportunities if the campus relocated from Tobermory – many families choose to live there because of the proximity to the school."
- "If best site isn't Tobermory can we still look for funding for a primary in Tobermory."
- "Moving it from Tobermory will cause a ripple effect where you lose good teachers, families etc who will move away from here."
- "Tobermory NEEDS primary education. But secondary does not need to be Tobermory."
- "Tobermory is a community. This is an opportunity to enhance. Taking the campus away will rip heart out"
- "Supportive of a central high school for the whole island to access. Concerned about losing ELC and primary, especially transport for ELC. Existing island facilities must be considered when selecting a site.

9.5 Hearing from our Children

- It is important to come home each night to spend time with family. Teenagers that go to Oban for school have less connections with the community and they are less likely to stay of Mull when they finish school" Tobermory High School student
- "The Campus needs to be in the middle, so it is a medium trip and fair to everyone" Tobermory High School Student
- "if the new school was in Tobermory, none of the Ross children would want to go as it is far. It's only fair for it to be half-way, not all about Tobermory. It's hard to go to the hostel in Oban at age eleven. Kids that age should have a choice to go to the high school on Mull or Oban" Oban Hostel Border
- "We would be worrying about the ferries 24/7." Iona Primary School pupil

9.6 Council's Report

- TM highlighted the Council's report on the drop-in sessions. TM recognised a report of this nature involves considerable work. TM highlighted that there were concerns about the report, some stated it could be misleading, others referred to it as crude and lacking context.
- Furthermore, it was highlighted that in the report, if Iona is removed from the process the impact on weighting for some site selection criteria may change, more information is needed to assess this impact.
- TM learned from the FOI response that the selection of a suitable site is very much in the public interest and a period of extensive engagement and consultation will be required as part of the process.

9.7 Integrated Impact Assessments - Mull Campus Team

- The Mull Campus team have indicated that impact assessments are being undertaken. The community council have written to the council to ask that community members be included in conducting these assessments as they cannot be satisfactorily completed without local input.

9.8 Confusing language/wake up moment

- TM also described how she had recently collated numerous documents issued from Argyll & Bute Council or obtained through freedom of information requests. Notably in statements and documents at no point did any prior document indicate that new building could not be split between a central high school and a retained primary school at Tobermory.
- In contrast, a September 2024 report of Argyll & Bute Council on their own soundings commented that it appeared to be "a wake-up moment" for the community, since the community did not "appreciate that it was a like-for-like replacement of the existing Tobermory ELC, primary and secondary school campus" that was on offer.
- The working group are now focusing on pushing for fair process and for all voices to be heard.

10. Transport - Ferries

- Joe Reade reported on behalf of the ferry committee that he had recently had a meeting with Calmac. He said that despite the recent disruption caused by ageing vessels and winter storms some progress was being made
- It was not yet certain what would happen when MV Isle of Mull ceased service next year, but it was still anticipated that the Caledonian Isles would be used on the Craignure route despite the fresh problems uncovered following maintenance work
- An issue with ticketing via the website was being addressed and the deck space reservation pilot was going well.
- If all Calmac's new vessels were delivered on schedule there should be a two-vessel service between Craignure and Oban next winter (2025-26).
- The suggestion was made that the ferry situation had become so difficult that many residents had stopped complaining. JR advised it was better if they continued to complain

11. Tourism

11.1 Visitor Levy

- Jo Prior reported on the Mull tourist business community's continuing concern at the proposed visitor levy.
- She understood that six Council Areas had shown interest in implementing the visitor levy, but many community councils were unhappy about the likely consequences and were opposed to the Council continuing with a full public consultation.
- There is great concern that the proposed 5% rate is too high and will take many businesses over the VAT threshold, adding to their costs. She understood that at least six businesses on Mull were expecting to close if the levy is implemented.
- She also pointed out that local residents would pay the levy if needing to stay in a hotel on the mainland.
- There would be more support for the levy if the funds collected on Mull could be ring-fenced for use on Mull, but she understood this was unlikely to be possible.
- Argyll & Bute Councillor Andrew Kane thought the visitor levy proposal had been brought forward on the basis of insufficient data and agreed that a proportional use across the county of the funds generated was pretty much impossible.
- He commented that the effect on tourism to Mull would be very difficult to assess because of the disruptions to the ferry service.

12. Planning & Housing

- SF reported that there had been 30 comments lodged to Argyll & Bute concerning the contentious planning application at Aros Mains.
- The Council had been asked to support three planning applications for erection of houses on Croft 2 at Pottie, Fionnphort. It was agreed a planning group would meet separately to discuss the applications¹.

15. Health & Social Care

- There were no new issues or developments

¹ The working group agreed to support the application.

16. Argyll and Bute Councillors Report

- Cllr. Andrew Kain emphasised the need to grow Mull’s population and insisted (contrary to another opinion) that the population of Mull was still declining. He again emphasised that it was essential to grow a better economy.

17. Any Other Business

- JM had continued to press Argyll & Bute about the need to grit the road at Ardura, arguing that the gradient of the hill should be taken into account. He had received a response, but the questions asked had not been answered.
- It was reported that one of the island’s refuse trucks / bin lorries was out of service. BM commented that this linked to the very large route it operated over.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 8th of January 2025, 19:00 at An Roth, via Zoom and Livestreamed.

Mull Community Council Contacts

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