

Comhairle Coimhearsnachd Mhuile

MULL COMMUNITY COUNCIL



Coinneamh na Comhairle 1d Iuchar 2026

Meeting of the Council 1st July 2026

Minutes / Geàrr-chunntas

Minutes of the meeting held in person and on-line on Wednesday 1st July 2026

Attendees

James MacLennan
Sharon Worrall
Billy McClymont
Norma McInnes
Rupert Ormond
Susan Ringwood

Guests

Finlay MacDonald, Hebridean Horizons
Rob Claxton-Ingham, new member elect
Kim Vallance, new member elect
Fiona Brunton
PC Tara Watt
Tracy Mayo, Mull Campus Working Group
John Holliday, Tiree Community Council
Tom Skinner, Islay Community Council
Richard Bentley, Colonsay Community Council

Two members of the public were present and Colin Morrison, Jenny Jackson, Naomi Knight, Terry Hegarty and Rachel Ball online

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies received from John Maughan. Steve Fisher has resigned from the council.

2. Declarations of interest

None to declare

3. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 9th June were approved, subject to two small corrections. Proposed by SW, seconded JMCL

4. Police report

PC Tara Watt gave a verbal report for June. 42 calls were received in the month, 18 from Tobermory, 10 from the Ross, 8 from Craignure and 6 from Salen. There was a total of 16 crimes while the rest were information calls. Answering a question about the traffic incidents, PC Watt confirmed that none were speed related. The speed guns will come over to Mull once they have had their annual calibration and service. It is not yet known when the Road Traffic Police can come over.

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5. MachairWind (Wind Farm) Planning Consultation

JMcL introduced the MachairWind planning application, submitted to the Marine Directorate by Scottish Power Renewable (SPR). The application is now open for comment until August 16th. The papers are published. Representatives from other islands had been invited to this meeting: Finlay MacDonald, Iona; John Holliday, Tiree; Tom Skinner, Islay; Richard Bentley, Colonsay.

JMcL read out an email from MachairWind which stated: "I have discussed this with the team, and whilst we remain on hand to respond to any queries or concerns as they arise from communities, we feel it is important that island representatives have the opportunity to engage in open and candid discussion amongst themselves. This is particularly pertinent now that the Marine Directorate's consultation period on the proposals has launched".

FMacD spoke on behalf of Hebridean Horizons. He stated that he opposes the proposal. He encouraged people to read the non-technical report published with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). He outlined the involvement Iona has had with MachairWind and stressed his disappointment with the lack of response to queries raised. He also stressed that he considers the EIA is not independent but rather written to make the proposal look as good as possible.

There are many concerns and issues that have been raised, but the visual impact is the most significant one. FMacD stated that the photomontages used to illustrate how the wind turbines would appear as seen from Mull are very misleading and underplay the impact. His strong view was that if the photos are inaccurate, what else in the report is also incorrect? The size, extent and position of the turbines are of particular concern. The EIA gives an assessment of the visual impacts but uses arbitrary measures to do so. For example, the impact of turbines seen from less than 20km is rated 'severe', 20km to 30 km as 'moderate', and over 30 km as 'insignificant'. The turbines will be 21km from the Mull coast, so are rated as moderate, but these are not independently agreed criteria. Other concerns included that the tourism impact assessment was conducted as a desk exercise, with no local businesses being consulted.

The impact on migratory birds other than seabirds has not been included, meaning that the impact on critically endangered corncrakes has not been assessed. He acknowledged that views differ but encouraged people to get fully informed before making up their minds. The degree and extent of community benefit is not yet determined, as it isn't yet known what rate of payment MachairWind will receive from the UK Government for the power produced.

In response to questions from the public FMacD explained that the decision will be taken by the Scottish Government's Marine Directorate, and any objections should be sent to them. The email address will be published on Hebridean Horizon's website. It was confirmed that MCC are a statutory consultee, as are Argyll and Bute Council. It was also explained that the Marine Directorate take expert views from other government agencies, notably Nature Scot. It is believed that the RSPB and National Trust for Scotland have already objected to the proposal. If the Marine Directorate rejects the proposal, then apparently Machair Wind can appeal to the UK Government, since power is not a devolved matter.

RO stated that as a professional marine biologist he considered that the biological impact assessments had been done both independently and fairly. He stated that almost all marine biologists are passionate conservationists and unlikely to minimise threats to marine life. He agreed that the visual threat to the seascape was the greatest concern and potentially unacceptable. He emphasised the need to distinguish between the impacts caused during construction and the subsequent ones due to operation. With

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fisheries while site construction may well have some detrimental impact, often other benefits accrue in the longer term.

John Holliday from Tiree spoke. He has experience of dealing with SPR. The Tiree Community Council has twice discussed the proposal. His view was that on Tiree opinions about the proposal are subdued, with a low level of interest. Tiree CC intended to represent the range of views on the island in their response to the Marine Directorate.

Richard Bentley from Colonsay spoke. The CC held off expressing a view until they had undertaken a survey of residents. 110 replies were received (from 160 issued) with 65% of full-time residents opposing the proposal. Of those who were neutral or in favour, the possible benefit to employment was a consideration. Most second home-owners were opposed to the proposal. Colonsay will make a response opposing the application, focused on challenging the impact assessment methodology and highlighting in particular the project's visual impact. They will share their draft response with other CC's and aim to have it ready in 3-4 weeks.

Tom Skinner from Islay CC explained that they are yet to give a statement. There are not many with strong feelings about the proposal, and open days were poorly attended. The main concerns were that the project will not secure the power supply to the island, and that there is little commitment to local employment. The lack of any firm timeline for the decision makes consideration difficult – it was understood it could be up to three years before a decision was made. He felt that since even strong objections were unlikely to influence the outcome, the focus should be on maximising community benefits.

SW spoke about the correspondence Mull CC have received – there had been more than 400 posts on the FB pages and many emails too. It was agreed that Mull CC members will hold a separate meeting to discuss the representations they have received and formulate a decision. The Vice-convenor thanked everyone for their contributions to the discussion, including members of the public who had attended in person to ask questions.

6. Argyll & Bute Councillor's report

Cllr WH sent in a written report, but unfortunately it was not circulated at the meeting. It will be included in the August meeting.

7. Planning

i) Applications submitted and validated during June had been circulated. None appeared to raise major concern.

ii) Local Place Plan. Fiona Brunton gave a summary of the work that has been done by her and MICT towards a Local Place Plan for Mull. A meeting of the working group took place on June 23rd (attended by JM, JMCL, RO, SW, FB, together with Denis Baxter and Kate Payton from MICT). FB has reviewed the previous plans produced and drawn out any relevant details. She has also compared the initial draft with Place Plans from other islands, and cross referenced it with the existing Local Development Plan produced by Argyll and Bute Council. The next stage is to understand what specifically can be done. Other local individuals and organisations have been approached and invited to join the group. The next meeting is scheduled for July 9th.

8. Health and Social Care

Nothing to report

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9. Transport

i) Ferries. FMacD, as Vice-Chair of the Mull and Iona Ferry Committee, gave a short report. There is not yet an update on the passenger access system at Craignure. The key issue is whether the current gantry was new when it was built, in which case it can be repaired, or whether it was an assembly of used elements. The MV Isle of Mull is back from its latest repairs. A decision is awaited on whether it can remain in service for a longer period until the new replacement ferry is in service.

ii) Roads. RO had written to Argyll & Bute Council (A&BC) (copied to Cllr William Hume) reminding them about our request for 20pmh speed limits in the major settlements. They had replied that there is a programme underway to introduce these, but as yet there was no timeline for when Mull would be assessed. The flashing speed limit signs outside Lochdon school should now be in working order. NMcl reported that she has raised the issue of missing passing place indication poles on the roads to the Ross. RO added that he had also written to Argyll & Bute Council roads department on this issue. ACTION NMcl to contact Cllr Hume for a progress report on the sites she had identified.

SW had reported the potholes left by the installation of telecoms cables directly to the reporting system on the A&BC website.

Cllr WH had been told by A&BC that funds were not available to repair the solar powered speed alert signs, including the one in Salen which has stopped working. Apparently they had initially been funded from a non-A&BC source. A cost of £15K per sign had been quoted for replacement.

10 Education

SW reported on consultation sessions held with Tobermory High School and Mull-based Oban High School students to gather their views for the community survey. It was a very positive engagement. A wide range of issues were raised, including the lack of buses in evenings and at weekends; the need for somewhere for young people to meet; and the need to improve the quality of food served at the Oban High hostel. Questions were also asked about police support for Mull.

Tracy Mayo, Mull Campus Working Group. TM summarised the work of the MCWG to date to provide context for understanding what new options for the proposed campus could be introduced at this stage, ahead of the formal consultation due to be opened 24th August. A key issue is the inflexible nature of the LEAP funding necessary to build the school. There had been an offer from the Scottish First Minister to consider the need for flexibility in funding new schools on islands, but A&BC need a mandate from Councilors before they can proceed to consider this. TM reported that A&BC have indicated that they intend will press ahead with the project as planned for Tobermory unless another legal case is launched on the basis of the UNCRC. TM is still pursuing the matter of missing data on Mull student attendance in Oban, and has taken up the issue with the Scottish Government's Islands' team and asked for a meeting. MCWG has also requested a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Education. Further legal action or lobbying are also options for the group.

11. Royal Mail (RM)

SW reported that major issues remain with the mail service, particularly in the Craignure area. More staff have resigned, including recently appointed posties. Recruitment, training and the working culture are key issues. 10 posties have been sent over from other localities to assist, but obviously don't know the island or the routes. Community mail collection points have been set up and proved very effective at clearing the back log of mail. Correspondence has been exchanged with RM staff in the London HQ, and London-based staff will be attending a meeting with MCC in Mull at the end of July. An interim on-line meeting will also be sought. A new Operations Manager covering the Mull area is in post and will be on-

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island 3 days a week. This is the first time a Mull-based manager has been appointed. Many in the community have pitched in to help and been really appreciated by the postal staff.

12. Emergency planning

i) No specific updates from Warm Centers groups. A Food Hygiene course is being offered via MICT, but has been rescheduled from April.

ii) The Housholder's leaflet should be available soon ACTION SW

iii) Mull and Iona First Responders Emergency Group. RO gave a report on the meeting held on 18th June, chaired by John Newing (Mull Coastguard), and attended by representatives from eleven organisations. Recent relevant events had included a medical emergency at the Tobermory pontoons. This required use of the defibrillator at the Harbour offices; this has now been replaced with a new model. NHS Highland is doing preparatory work in case potential Ebola cases should present at Oban Hospital. Older fire appliances on Iona and other islands are to be replaced, and a wildfire strategy is to be implemented. SSEN (Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks) reported that a resilience portal is being developed which will map warm hubs, community centers and welfare resources for Mull and Iona. A real-time, multi-agency exercise at Tobermory Distillery is scheduled for October 17th; any member wishing to attend should contact Mark Gibbings of the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service.

13. Notice Boards

SW reported that she is awaiting more information about locations etc. before these can be ordered. RCI stated he would take on responsibility for a Bunessan board. RO will follow up with Salen Spar. The proposed board for Craignure will likely also include separate information for visitors, e.g. bus timetables etc.

14. Action register. SW will circulate an update. MCC members were encouraged to send in their completed actions for recording.

15. AOB

Mull Community Sports Hall – RO updated that £37,000 had now been raised by the Mull Community Sports Hall crowdfunder. Currently up to £50,000 will be matched by corporate sponsors.

16. Date of next meeting Wednesday 5th August 2026

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