



Minutes of the meeting held in person and on-line on Wednesday 3rd December at 7pm.

Attendees

James MacLennan (chair)

Rupert Ormond

Sharon Worrall

Billy McClymont

Susan Ringwood

Argyll & Bute Council

Cllr Willie Hume

Cllr Amanda Hampsey

Guests

Norma McInnes

Tracy Mayo, Mull Campus Working Group

Joe Reade, Mull Ferry Committee

PC Tara Watt

Jean Lanteri-Laura, NW Mull Community Woodland Co

+ members of the public on-line

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from John Maughan, Ben Donovan, Steve Fisher, Cllr Jim Lynch

2. Declarations of Interest

None to declare

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 5th November were approved subject to a minor correction requested by Cllr Hume relating to Item 6 on speed limits. Proposed by JML, seconded SW.

4. Police Report

PC Tara Watt gave a verbal report for November. There was a total of 43 calls to the police, mostly for information and advice. 4 crimes were reported in the month including damage to a vehicle and an attempted break in.

The scam awareness sessions proposed for Pennyghael and Dervaig will now take place in January.

5. Mull Rally

Cameron MacLean introduced Sam Spencer as the new Clerk of the event. Sam gave a report and presented slides showing the proposed routes and road closures for the 2026 Rally, which will take place 9th- 11th October and will follow the traditional format of three legs over Friday night, Saturday daytime and Saturday night. The route will be published for consultation. It is based on the assumption that the road past Gribun rocks can be used, although not for a competitive stage. There will be an alternative route planned as a contingency, and both will be submitted for approval at the same time. There is proposed to be a new stage on the Ross at Ardtun and approval is being sought from British Motor Sport to include this. The organisers will aim to keep any road closures to a minimum. They have taken feedback and comments from the 2025 event into account and made some adjustments. All information will be in the consultation documents.

Discussion followed. Asked about the rally's length, CMcL said that at 162 competitive miles it would be the longest stage rally in the UK. In addition, 152 non- competitive miles would be covered by competitors. Road closures between Ardtun and Fionnphort will be scheduled as late as possible in the day to ensure residents and visitors are not inconvenienced too much.

6. Education

SW gave a report. She explained that Cllr Audrey Forrest had given her final education update at the full Council Meeting on 26th November. She has now been replaced by Cllr Kieron Green as Education Lead.

The "Connecting for Success - Shaping for the Future" independent review has been completed and the report presented at the full Council Meeting. There are ten key strategic service improvement recommendations to be delivered over a 2-4 year timetable across Early Learning, Primary and Senior levels. The main overarching theme is the need for greater strategic collaboration across all services and partners, with particular focus across best value, affordability, sustainability, performance and collaboration. Full details are available on the Argyll and Bute Council website.

There is a new STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) Hub South which will be situated within Dunoon Grammar School. The STEM team will provide crucial outreach to rural and remote schools. The facility's core mission is to deliver STEM learning opportunities directly linked to future areas of economic growth in Argyll and Bute and across Scotland.

The mentoring service for Tobermory High School is moving forwards. The new staff are in place within Argyll and Bute Council and mentors are being trained. The next stage will be to match the mentors to the students. MCR Pathways are still looking for new mentors who are able to donate one hour per week.

TM on behalf of Mull Campus Working Group gave the following report. The Judicial Review decision has yet to be made.

On the 21st November members of the Mull Campus Working Group met with a Professor of Law specialising in International Law to discuss Island Community Impact Assessments. Topics discussed included: Who can challenge an ICIA and on what grounds, who decides the review, what remedies are being sought and what policy recommendations does the group have?

Three of the Mull Campus Working Group met with another Professor of Law who specialises in Human Rights matters. Details of this meeting will be reported at a later meeting since discussions are at an early stage. There is still no update on a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary. MCWG expressed concern at changes made to the political management of A&BC, with an independent Policy Lead for Education being appointed. TM raised the issue of the importance of transparency in all dealings.

TM has written to Argyll & Bute Council regarding the data that are still not being recorded for Island students, such as days lost due to weather or other ferry issues. This could be done through a few simple additions (new codes) to the Scottish Government's SEEMiS system. This data could help shape KEY decisions. Tim Eagle, MSP, has written to the Cabinet Secretary regarding this matter.

TM drew attention to the fact that letter writing can make an impact and encouraged all concerned at this issue to make their views known.

7. Transport

i) Ferries. Business Resilience Fund. Joe Reade reported that a consultation meeting has been held and it would seem that the decision to exclude Mull (and other islands) from the fund may be under review.

JR had a meeting with Duncan Mackison, Executive Director of Calmac. A number of topics were discussed and there was a robust and frank exchange of views. These included:

- i. weather reliability and the view that Calmac have changed their thresholds, so that ferries are being cancelled in conditions when they would formerly have sailed.
- ii. the arrangements for replacement vessels for the Isle of Mull, and whether a comparable service can be provided. The concern is that the currently proposed replacements can only offer a lesser service than has the IoM.
- iii. the need for a two-vessel service in the winter was made, or as a minimum to restrict the one vessel service to January and February. Duncan Mackison said this could not be guaranteed.

Following complaints a change to arrangements at Oban for boarding the Frisa is being considered to avoid passengers needing to stand in the rain. A covered shelter cannot be provided, so the suggestion is for all passengers to remain in the ferry terminal until they are called.

JR encouraged everyone to consider attending one of the four consultation meetings being held the following week to gather views on the design criteria for the next generation of ferries. This is a formal, statutory consultation and is taking place before the naval architecture consultant is appointed. The Mull Ferry Committee will aim to produce a summary of the key asks from the community based on the survey previously conducted.

Discussion followed. Cllr WH raised the issue of school children being left in Oban when the Frisa was full, even though day trip visitors had been taken on that sailing. Calmac have replied that they cannot prevent this.

ii) Speed limits. RO has written to the new Head of Roads and Infrastructure at Argyll & Bute Council, Andy Summers, setting out the views gathered from residents supporting the change from 30pmh to 20pmh limits throughout the island's settlements and had received an acknowledgment. Discussion followed. RO confirmed that no timescale has been given for a decision. Cllr WH stressed that it will speed limits will need to be policed to be effective. PC Watt stated that two officers are needed to enforce any speeding offences and current staff shortages may impact on this.

Action: SW will send the information about our requests to the police inspectorate.

iii) Bus shelter at Java Hospital. JML raised the need for a bus shelter outside the Craignure Hospital since if during rainstorms passengers waited inside the building they could easily miss the bus. **Action: JMCL will send the information to Cllr WH who will follow this up.**

8. Emergency Plan

RO reported that a well-attended on-line meeting has led to the formation of a group corresponding on a wide range of topics. It had become apparent that there are three distinct issues: advice to households; warm spaces; and long-term resilience – and it may be most convenient to form separate groups to deal with each of these.

i) information leaflet. The household information leaflet is close to a final stage, with only a few minor amendments to consider. Suggestions for format etc were discussed.

Action: RO to send SW the text for formatting.

ii) warm centres. Salen have made great progress with their plans to establish a warm centre. Dervaig discussed it at their recent AGM. A resilience committee chaired by Moray Finch has been established. Pennyghael remain interested but have not yet begun work on this. Thanks were expressed to MICT for offering to help with funding applications.

iii) long-term resilience. This topic includes provision of local electrical power supplies which a sub-group of members are interested to take forward.

9. Planning Applications

Five new applications were validated in the month. No objections were raised to any.

10. Housing and Utilities

RO spoke about a Scottish Islands Federation (SIF) on-line webinar he had attended concerning the improvements to mobile phone services in island areas and the provision of broadband to remaining households following the completion of the current R100 scheme. There were four speakers and several interesting points emerged. Project Gigabite is intended to connect a further 121,000 premises to broadband with the aim of reaching 100% availability by 2032. Mobile coverage has been greatly improved by a recent government project funding additional masts. With few exceptions currently mobile phone masts only have batteries to power them for about an hour in the event of a mains power cut, but EE has been awarded funding to instal batteries or generators at a network of masts that will keep them operational for 5 - 7 days by 2029.

11. Health and Social Care

BMcC reported on a meeting with MSP Jenni Minto and the original funders of Bowman Court. The contract with the funders gives them the right to take a financial claw back in the event of any change to the building's purpose. This would amount to £1 million, and as such be prohibitive to the plans to establish residential care facilities at Bowman Court. The only potential mitigations would be for the funders to agree on a deduction for depreciation, and to allow for the fact that only a proportion of the building would be converted. BMcC was not optimistic that this could be achieved but remains fully committed to seeking a solution that will prevent Mull families being divided when loved ones move to a mainland care home.

12. By- Election to Community Council

Since there were fewer candidates than vacancies the Argyll & Bute returning officer has declared John Maughan, James MacLennan, Ben Donovan and Susan Ringwood elected to the Community Council with effect from 15th January 2026. Michelle Devlin has advised that she wished to resign from the council.

13. Argyll and Bute Councillors' Reports

(i) Cllr AH reported that she had raised a motion to the full Argyll & Bute Council to declare a health and social care state of emergency, but this motion had been defeated. Her concern was the serious financial deficit and workforce capacity issues of the Council, as noted by the recent Scottish Fiscal Commissions report.

She reported that she had opposed the closure of toilets across the Argyll & Bute Council area, which had been proposed as a cost saving measure. A final decision will be taken in February. She expressed her disappointment at not being able to lay the memorial wreath in Tobermory at this year's Remembrance service. She also reported being pleased to have helped with the issues of street lighting in Salen and the installation of Christmas lights.

Cllr AH also gave details of the amendments to their Visitor Levy scheme that Argyll & Bute Council are considering. It is anticipated that changes in the law will give local councils more discretion about how they impose any levy. Options are expected to include a fixed rate, rather than a per centage per night; charging per person per night, or just per night; and varying the levy by geography, accommodation type, or season. None of these changes would mitigate the issue of local people having to pay to stay elsewhere in Argyll & Bute if they were unable to

return home- say due e.g. to ferry issues. Because these new proposals represent a significant change, the Council would need to conduct a new consultation and publish the results. Cllr AH invited all to write to councillors making their views known.

Action AH will send a written statement outlining the Visitor Levy issues

(ii) Cllr WH reported on the situation concerning the road closure at Gribun Rocks, full details of which are available on the Argyll & Bute Council website. A report has been published on the options for remedial work at Gribun. The four main interventions are:

To install rock stability netting across the whole face at Gribun. This is costed at £68m

To install rock stability netting across a limited, high risk section. This is costed at £20m

To undertake scaling (removing loose rocks) across the whole area. This is costed at £2m

To undertake scaling in a limited 500m area. This is costed at £0.5m

Action: SW will place a link to the report on MCC's social media.

Cllr WH also reported that the Iona breakwater project is nearing completion and already producing the expected benefits for ferry landings. The new toilet block is also nearly finished. The issue of footpaths at Fionnphort is being considered. The proposed plan to improve the ferry landing at the Fionnphort side is progressing, and the delays caused to the work on the Iona side caused by the discovery of a seagrass bed have been mitigated.

14. Any Other Business

SW reported that the island's Sports Minibus has been delivered and is available for bookings; it can be used by all groups, though sports groups would have priority. Thanks were given for all who worked hard to make this possible.

15. Questions from the Public

TM addressed a statement to Cllr WH about the need for prompt and engaged communication on any matters that residents raise with councillors.

16. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed provisionally to hold the next meeting on January 7th 2026, but to review the need for a meeting by the new year.

Community Council members and contact details

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