

Comhairle Coimhearsnachd Mhuile



Coinneamh na Comhairle 4mh den Ghearran 2026 Meeting of the Council 4th February 2026

Minutes / Geàrr-chunntas

Attendees

James MacLennan
John Maughan
Rupert Ormond
Sharon Worrall
Billy McClymont
Norma McInnes
Steve Fisher
Susan Ringwood

Cllr Willie Hume

Guests

Denise Baxter, MICT
Tracy Mayo, Mull Campus Working Group
Nigel Burgess, potential new MCC member
Janice Wilson Hall, Mull Business Group
Jean Lanteri- Laura, NW Mull Community Woodland Co
Deborah Bryce, Machair Wind Offshore
Kiera Wilson, Machair Wind Offshore
Eileen Kane, Machair Wind Offshore

+ members of the public on-line

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies received Michelle Devlin, who was due to speak on two agenda items

2. Declarations of interest

None to declare

3. Membership

Norma McInnes was elected as a co-opted member. Proposed by JM, seconded SF.
Michelle Devlin has confirmed her resignation from the Community Council.
Denise Baxter, the newly appointed Chief Executive Officer for MICT was welcomed to the meeting and spoke briefly. She stated this is her fifth week in the role and she has lots to learn and to get up to speed. She is keen to meet groups and individuals and learn about the key issues people face.
Questions followed. DB stated that affordable housing is a high priority for MICT and 35 people have been housed in MICT rental properties, with more planned as resources allow.

4. Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 7th January 2026 were approved. Proposed by JML, seconded JM.

5. Police report

None received

Comhairle Coimhearsnachd Mhuile

6. MachairWind Offshore Windfarm

Members of staff from MachairWind Offshore (Scottish Power) gave a presentation providing an update on the project to install an offshore wind farm off the Ross. Following the engagement events held last year, feedback has been taken into account and changes made to the project. The proposed area is now 40% smaller and will include between 91 and 144 turbines. The project's characteristics include being capped at 2,000 MW of energy production and being grid connected to South Ayrshire. The submission for licence approval will be made in Q2 of this year, at which point all the supporting documents such as environmental impact assessments will be made publicly available, and MCC will be informed when this has happened.

A geophysical survey has been completed, and expert topic group meetings have been held with key specialist stakeholders. All this information will feed into the planning application.

MachairWind are involved in the 'Fit for offshore renewables' project, which will support four Argyll based businesses to be able to engage with the tendering process etc.

272 people attended 16 consultation events with 44% of feedback coming from Ross residents. Key learnings were that there is wide-spread support for renewable energy, but concerns were also raised about visual impact on the landscape, on marine life, and on night-time navigation.

A Community small donations fund has been established and Mull groups operating in the Ross can apply for grants of up to £500. The first round of grants has been made to Ross of Mull & Iona Community Transport, Mull Music Makers, Mull Gaelic Choir and Dervaig Seafood Night supported by Mull & Iona Fisherman's Association. The 2026 fund will be launched soon.

A socio-economic action plan has also been produced. Although this is not a statutory requirement, MachairWind feel it is important to demonstrate their commitment to the communities in which they work. The key themes of the plan include STEM, supply chains, skills diversification and good development principles. Once the project is operational, the Ross of Mull will be able to access a community benefit fund. Five apprenticeships in construction will be offered; suppliers from Argyll and Bute will be prioritised; and £500,000 will be offered to support capacity building in Argyll and Bute looking at training and workforce development to enable people to secure jobs in the windfarm industry. The socio-economic plan will be a live document, evolving on feedback from continuous engagement recognising that needs and priorities may change as the project develops. Deborah Bryce will be the engagement point person throughout the life of the project.

Discussion followed, and the project staff confirmed that the energy produced will not be available to Ross residents, as the amount produced requires it to be supplied to larger number of households to be optimally efficient. Bendoran is one of the proposed ports for the construction phase, but the selection process has not yet been completed and operational details are not yet agreed. There is a commitment to reduce CO2 emissions as much as possible including in the choice of vessels and the location of ports. Sending the power generated to South Ayrshire will result in transmission charges being lower than for Mull, and this has been a factor in the decision process. The power will all be transmitted subsea and transmitted as a DC current using an innovative technology.

An ancillary question about Mull wide power cuts was asked, and DB confirmed that SSEN are looking at distribution upgrades.

ACTION. KW will provide SSEN contact details for the resilience group.

Comhairle Coimhearsnachd Mhuile

7. Mull Business Group

Janice Wilson Hall spoke about the plans to establish a Business Group supporting all businesses across Mull. While the concept was prompted by the proposed Visitor Levy, the group is not limited to the tourism sector. The group seeks to encourage business owners to come together to share common concerns such as the Visitor levy, business rate levels, ferries, etc. Tourism business has not yet recovered to pre-Covid levels, and other sectors have also been affected. The age profile of business owners is also a concern, as few young people find opportunities to stay on Mull. The Business group are keen to gather economic data to form a baseline for their activities and a survey will be published and distributed soon, with MICT's support.

There is a concern that Argyll and Bute Council and Scottish Government are pushing for growth in the visitor economy, but such growth could be challenging to the island's infrastructure and may not be in businesses' best interests. Depopulation and lack of housing are high on Argyll and Bute's risk register. Year round, future looking, employment providing proper career opportunities will be vital to help retain the young people of Mull as they enter the job market. Jobs in AI, data, digital technology etc, and not just the traditional roles of forestry and fishing need to be promoted. Tourism will always be important, but a pivot away from excessive growth in the sector will be vital to make Mull sustainable. Discussion followed. JWH agreed to support SW in youth engagement activities. The Young Islander's Network was discussed and SW stated that she is hopeful that a young Mull resident has been found to join the network.

8. Gaelic Promotion

Alasdair Whyte provided an update which JM read. AW met with officers at Scottish Government to discuss potential capital investment in the proposed Gaelic Cultural Centre in Salen and expects further information in the next month. Mull & Iona Gaelic Partnership have secured funding for an activity as part of World Gaelic Week, and a quiz night will be held in the Salen Hotel on Feb 28th. Teams are invited to join with at least one Gaelic speaker per team. The Community Council's agenda and minutes will include headings in Gaelic, and thanks are due to Mairi MacLennan for assisting with this.

9. Transport

No report from the Mull Ferry Committee. MCC members spoke about attending the consultation event held by Calmac to discuss options for which vessel will replace the Isle of Mull when it is decommissioned. Options include retaining the IOM for three or four more years and a technical report due in late March will confirm if this is practicable.

JM reported that at a meeting of the Harbour Board it was stated that the council is reviewing funding for the Craignure pier replacement project and that, despite some requests to pause decision-making due to cost concerns, the project is continuing into the design and business case stages. They are about to appoint management consultants

JJL spoke about the proposal to commission a landing craft for Ulva. Invitations to tender had gone out to install a mooring to accommodate the vessel. It will be a single mooring for vessels up to 12 meters. Work is expected to be completed in March, although the Mooring Association have not yet been involved. Discussion followed. The details have not yet been confirmed about the specification of the landing craft, and funding has not been secured. Operational details about who will crew it etc are to be confirmed.

Comhairle Coimhearsnachd Mhuile

10. Tourism

Argyll and Bute Council have formally paused further consideration of the proposed Visitor Levy.

11. Education

SW gave a report. The Argyll & Bute Council Community Services Committee was held on 11th December 2025. These are the key points covered within the meeting:

i) Care Experienced Children and Young People Academic Year 2024/25 - Continued progress has been made to reduce the attainment gap between care experienced and all learners. Key performance indicators also highlighted continued progress was being made in all areas.

ii) Education Performance Data Analysis 2024/25 - A&B Council commended the hard work and commitment of pupils and staff in securing the levels of attainment and achievement. Final insight data will be provided in February 2026. It was noted that the total number of students can affect the achievement measures. Initial views showed that:

- Tobermory High School performed well against both the Argyll & Bute and the Scottish averages with above average performances in 2 of the 3 A-C Pass Rate award types and all of the A-D Pass Rate awards.
- Oban High School performed well against both the A&B and the Scottish averages with above average performances in 2 of the 3 A-C Pass Rate award types and the A-D award types.

iii) Developing the Young Workforce - A&B continues to have a wide variety and impact with the range of initiatives and activities, ranking them 9th out of 32 Local Authorities in the period April 2023 - March 2024. With this achievement, it was agreed to make the roles of Developing the Young Workforce Lead and Co-ordinators permanent.

iv) Annual Participation Measures – The number of young people in the age group 16-19 years old is monitored to see how many young people are in school, higher education, further education, employed, in apprenticeships, training or voluntary work. In the year 1st April 2024 - 31st March 2025 there were 228,163 young people in Scotland, of which 3,271 are in Argyll & Bute. Of the latter, 94.6% were participating in education, training or employment, which is 1.3% above the national participation level of 93.3%. This places Argyll & Bute 10th out of the 32 Local Authorities.

Mull Campus Working Group.

Tracy Mayo reported that the Judicial Review decision is still pending, but that the presiding judge Lord Cubie's clerk has acknowledged the MCWG's request for an update. The MCWG is concerned that key data concerning Mull's children is not being recorded and that if they were collected it could materially impact key decisions being made. Without the data being collected decisions are being made that do not adequately reflect the needs of island communities. The onus is being placed on communities to challenge this to ensure they bring about fair and equitable processes. MCWG have sought MCC's support to highlight this issue. The Integrated Impact Assessments conducted for the Mull Campus have been inadequate and limited, and the Scottish Government's Islands Act has been described "toothless" because in the absence of an independent body to review decisions there is no or limited accountability and it does not deliver.

MCWG had met in a closed session with a group of human rights experts to discuss the rights of the child. The group are not ready to be quoted yet, but information will follow in due course. Meanwhile Professor Katie Boyle, professor of human rights and social justice at the University of Strathclyde will speak on Children's Rights Based Decision Making on 16th February at An Roth, and all are invited to attend.

Comhairle Coimhearsnachd Mhuile

JM also reported that MCC had written to Argyll and Bute Chief Executive Pippa Milne requesting that the Note of Argument the Council presented at the Mull Campus Judicial Review be made public. PM declined this request, stating that the document would only give a partial picture of the whole complex matter.

12. Community Survey

MICT, with the encouragement of the Council, have launched a Community Survey which is available on social media, websites and in paper versions distributed around the island. All are encouraged to complete it. The information from the survey will be used to help shape follow up meetings and roadshows with the ultimate outcome of contributing to a Place Plan for Mull.

13. Digital Switchover

MCC members met with Iain McInnes, Argyll and Bute, Digital Liaison Officer to discuss several concerns regarding the provision of communication and digital services that impact on the community, to request help in providing clarity on what is currently available, and to escalate to the appropriate government agencies and companies on MCC's behalf if core services are not of an adequate service level.

A comprehensive set of questions were raised, but a response had not been received in time for the February MCC meeting.

RO met with Sodhi Dillon of BT/EE. SD gave assurance that individual householders will get letters giving a specific date for their individual digital switchover or asking for an engineer to visit as required.

14. Emergency Planning and Resilience

i) RO reported that the household advice leaflet had been awaiting confirmation of final details about Warm Centres but is otherwise ready to print. **ACTION SW**

ii) Warm Centres. Dervaig and Salen have made good progress with their plans. SW will prepare a condensed version of the Dervaig group's notes for sharing with the resilience group. Dervaig's plan has three phases a) provision of food, b) getting out into the neighbourhood, and c) next steps and future proofing. One outstanding area for all warm centres is to agree boundaries between each to ensure coverage is provided to all residents.

iii) Long term resilience. A separate group has been drawn together to take forward longer-term issues such as community power generation. The South West Mull and Iona Development Trust are proposing to support village halls with a joint CARES funding application to Local Energy Scotland. UK Government are holding a digital connectivity resilience enquiry and MCC have been invited to submit information to the Scottish Islands Federation via a survey.

iv) Mull and Iona EPG. RO attended an on-line meeting of the Mull and Iona Emergency Planning Group (EPG). This is the network of first responders (Police, Ambulance, Fire & Rescue etc.) chaired by the Coastguard representative, John Newing. The agenda included a review of updates and recent incidents from each organisation, the draft Emergency Response Plan, discussion of joint training opportunities, and a proposal to hold a Major Exercise. Other significant points emerged during discussion including the following: Generator supply and availability during power cuts including to people dependent on power for medical devices; the maintenance of generators; NHS securing ferry space for emergency supplies. One point clarified is that the operation of the Tobermory Flood defense barriers is not the responsibility of the Coast Guard.

Comhairle Coimhearsnachd Mhuile

It was reported that SSEN offers grants to support community benefit groups, including the purchase of generators. For details see: <https://www.ssen.co.uk/news-views/2024/SSEN-opens-applications-for-new-3m-community-fund/>. A new round of funding will be available in 2026. See <https://www.sse.com/news-and-views/2026/01/sse-reinforces-leadership-in-community-investment-funding-with-2026-plans/>

The coastguard will be testing / demonstrating life-saving equipment in the Swimming Pool at the Isle of Mull Hotel at Java, Craignure at 1 pm on Tuesday 17th February.

JM shared information about the ability to use any mobile phone to send a text to 999 if no voice call can be made due to poor signal or other reason. To be able to do this, you must first register your phone by texting the word 'register' to 999. and then follow the on-screen instructions. You only need to do this once, not each time you need to dial 999.

Flood risk. SEPA (Scottish Environmental Protection Agency) have asked MCC to respond to their Flood Risk Management Phase 1 Consultation. This is to identify areas of coast or areas around rivers and streams that may be at increasing risk of flooding. The intention is not to identify properties at risk per se, but to be aware of locations where mitigation work now can minimise the risk of coastal or flash flooding in the future.

Action: RO to speak to Brian Swinbanks to confirm how the deployment of the Tobermory Flood Defense Barriers is triggered. **ACTION RO**

15. Planning

6 applications were lodged in January, including for the proposed new Co-op Store in Tobermory. It was agreed to keep an eye on an application to build a house near Calgary pier.

16. Health and Social Care

Nothing to report

17. Action Register

SW reported that the register is up to date, with most outstanding items listed for Cllr Amanda Hampsey's attention

ACTION. SW will contact Cllr AH to discuss.

It was agreed that the item regarding access to tracks on the Torosay Hill estate be closed following SR receiving details of where the new gates have been installed. A map will be published on MCC social media when it is finalised.

18. Argyll and Bute Councillor's reports

None given.

19. Any Other Business or Matter Arising

i) Java bus shelter. BMcC confirmed that he has contacted the Hospital and West Highland Housing regarding the need for a bus shelter since the ownership of the land where the shelter would be sited needs to be verified before further progress can be made.

ii) JM reported that the Tobermory Co-op manager and food operations manager have been invited to speak at the March MCC meeting about the proposed new store at Balisgate, Tobermory.

Comhairle Coimhearsnachd Mhuile

iii) A group of community councils had requested that MCC assess the community view on whether community councils should have comparable powers and funding to Parish and Town Councils in England. A very small precept would allow the Council to have a paid clerk / secretary for example. This was agreed by all members.

iv) The closing date for the Scottish Government Community Needs Assessment Survey has been extended to 8th February.

v) Members will attend a local governance review meeting for community councils to discuss the Democracy Matters initiative.

20. Public Questions

None raised

21. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be Wednesday 4th March at 7pm in person at An Roth and online. All are welcome to attend by either means.

Mull Community Council Members

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