



# COMHAIRLE COIMHEARSNACHD CILL MHÀLAIDH KILMALLIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

**DRAFT Note of public meeting held at 7.15pm on Monday 26 August 2024 at Kilmallie Community Centre**

## **Present**

Gwyn Moses (Chair)  
Russell Leaper (secretary)  
Carol Anne Campbell (Treasurer)  
Lyn Kilpatrick (member)  
Cllr Liz Saggars  
Cllr John Grafton  
Cllr Kate Willis  
Cllr Sarah Fanet  
David Summers, Principal Transport Officer, The Highland Council  
David Phillips, Managing Director, Shiel Buses  
David MacGillivray, Owner, Shiel Buses

## **Members of the Public**

13 in person  
6 on-line

## **1. Community Council Meeting of 26 August 2024**

The ordinary business and Agenda for the meeting of 26 August 2024 was deferred until Monday 23 September 2024 in favour of the Public Meeting regarding the reduction in the Corpach – Plantation bus service from 15 July 2024. Community Council members approved the transfer of funds to the newly formed community fridge group. This group will take over the funds and operation of the community fridge from the Community Council.

## **2. Bus Timetable Reduction**

All present **AGREED** for the meeting to be recorded by Lochaber Times.

## **Background**

David Summers (DS) set out the background to the current situation which was that Shiel Buses had notified the Council about the impossibility of buses keeping to time because of traffic congestion. Detailed analysis had been undertaken and various options for resolution had been considered. There had been no desire to reduce bus services but there was a need to improve reliability for the public and to meet punctuality standards of the independent regulator. Lower levels of service promote punctuality.

Chair – Gwyn Moses  
Secretary – Russell Leaper [secretary@kilmallie.org.uk](mailto:secretary@kilmallie.org.uk)  
Treasurer – Carol Anne Campbell [cacampbell.cac@gmail.com](mailto:cacampbell.cac@gmail.com)  
[www.kilmallie.org.uk](http://www.kilmallie.org.uk)

David Phillips reported that he had been asked to review performance of the bus network in Fort William for Highland Council. The evidence from a 3-year period demonstrates that journeys of 30 minutes were consistently taking 90 minutes and that this is no longer just a problem in the summer months. While the underlying issue is congestion caused by inadequate road infrastructure, there is not currently investment commitment from Scottish Government and to meet a 30-minute timetable sections of the route had to be sacrificed.

### **Feedback from the Floor**

There were a range of points/questions made from the floor:

- What about the disadvantages? Groups of people in our community are being disadvantaged by a reduction in service.
- Why is the Council not making lobbying for funding for Fort William a priority?
- Is the Council's Public Transport Budget publicly available?
- Would temporary traffic lights at peak times on roundabouts help the traffic flow?
- Can consideration be given to reinstating the 30minute service over the winter months?
- Introduction of the 20mph speed limit (traffic calming) has had an impact on congestion where it was promised not to.
- New housing completions (Blar Mor and Upper Achintore) have not been matched with bus transport planning and investment.
- Children are having to cross the A830 to get to school.
- No bus service commitment for new housing in Upper Achintore and reduced service from Upper Achintore to the Health Centre. Can we be assured on commitment and planning in relation to transport services once the new hospital is built?
- What can be done collectively to put pressure on for funding a 4<sup>th</sup> bus for Shiel Buses in order that service can be restored? What is the cost of a 4<sup>th</sup> Bus?
- What has happened to the previous Fort William Congestion Group? This was led by a Councillor and enabled discussion with Transport Scotland.
- What has happened to the Transport Scotland research study and the preferred Option 3 for an improved road network?
- There needs to be stronger and more effective leadership on STPR2 Integrated Transport Plan.
- If we were a town in Europe more would be made of the water as a resource by providing a waterbus service – this needs to be put on the table.
- Equally, other countries have rail-buses – how seriously has this been looked at?
- The reduced bus times aren't convenient for people to get to and from work.
- Free bus travel isn't as accessible as intended.
- Traffic Lights at the Inverlochry roundabout and the High School junction would be better than existing arrangement.
- Is there any drone footage of the congestion?

## **Responses from speakers and councillors**

DS explained that the Council's School Transport and Public Transport budget is fully committed. There is a willingness to look at where savings can be found but in practice this means saving money from elsewhere in the transport Budget, savings being made elsewhere across Council budgets, or achieving additional resources from elsewhere. He noted that some pressure on Scottish Government to reopen the Bus Partnership Fund would be helpful. This Fund is currently suspended hence progress on investigative and development work to find alternative routes for the buses was paused. He agreed to provide details of the Council's Public Transport costs to the Community Council, though noted these are available on the Council's website as public documents.

In reference to the 3-year analysis on traffic patterns and trends DP noted that the existing infrastructure doesn't allow for changeovers and that ideally the solution would be a dedicated bus lane. Resources from the Scottish Government's Transformative Transport Scheme is the longer term ambition.

Meantime, DS said that he would explore traffic lights at Peak times, although in relation to the A82 and A830 this matter would be for Transport Scotland. He also reported that resources were expected to be available from the Active Travel Budget to complete the bus link beside the medical centre which would allow a bus service for the residents at the new housing on Blar Mor.

In terms of bus service provision for the new housing in Upper Achintore DS reported that the road cannot be designed until the final phase of housing is completed and the road level is known. Nonetheless he acknowledged the need for improved and joined up planning.

David MacGillivray responded that a 4<sup>th</sup> bus may help deliver an improved service but that what is needed is improved infrastructure. DS noted that Shiel buses were assessing the cost of a 4<sup>th</sup> bus.

Cllr Kate Willis (KW) reported that there is strategic and planning work going on in the background on STPR2 via the Fort William 2040 Transport Group. Feedback is awaited from SG on proposals for monitoring cameras strategically positioned on the Trunk Roads to help identify proportion of traffic by residents, visitors stopping and staying over, and numbers just passing through. A plan cannot be developed without up-to-date detailed data.

DP noted that the Fort William 2040 Transport Sub-Group is also working with Scottish Canals who are agreeable to reducing the number of openings to help mitigate congestion problems at school opening and closing times.

Cllr Sarah Fanet commented that the solution was not going to be one thing, and that meantime an agreement to reinstate the service temporarily over the winter months would be helpful.

Cllr John Grafton reported that there had been a more recent study of the Inverloch and Nevis Bridge junction arising from which there was a proposal of an additional bridge.

Russell Leaper commented that in relation to KW's point about data, that there was a tipping point with congestion and that the traffic flow measurements should establish that tipping point.

There was an undertaking from DS to follow up as above noted.  
The meeting finished at approximately 8.30pm.

### **3. Date of next Community Council meeting**

Monday 23 August 2024 at 7.15pm.