

**Outer Hebrides – Local/Area Advisory Group**  
Minutes of meeting on 14/06/2017  
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar offices in  
Stornoway and Balivanich (linked by VC)

**Attendees**

Stornoway	
Donald John MacDonald (chair)	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Iris Krammer (minutes)	SEPA Flood Risk Management
Colin Maciver	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Paul Hopper	Outer Hebrides Fisheries Trust
Jenny Davies	SEPA, River Basin Management
Balivanich	
Hannah Morrison	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Graeme Sinclair	Stòras Uibhist
Patrick Hughes	Scottish Natural Heritage
Christine MacLeod	North Uist Estate

**Apologies**

Simon Smith	QinetiQ
David Green	University of Aberdeen Marine Lab
Uisdean Robertson	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Stuart Baird	SEPA Stornoway
George MacDonald	North Uist Estate

**1. Welcome and apologies**

Donald John welcomed everyone to the meeting. Attendees introduced themselves.

**2. Minutes of previous meeting**

There were no comments on the previous minutes and they were approved. There were no outstanding actions.

**3. Progress update on flood risk management actions**

Donald John and Colin updated the group on progress with the South Ford project. Recently, ASPECT surveys were appointed to carry out fixed wing drone and land based GPS surveys. Areas to be surveyed include the causeway, Gualan Island and the Lincilate dune system. Further to this, ground penetrating radar will be used on the causeway to assess the level of settlement of sediments and substrate that has occurred. The data will be used to update models previously built. Graeme confirmed that Stòras Uibhist approved land access for the surveys. The aim is to finish these surveys in June/July with results from model re-runs later in the summer.

Graeme highlighted that many in the local community have voiced concerns that the progress of work for the South Ford Area is too slow, that a 250m wide opening or bridge structure in the South Ford Causeway is not being funded and that the proposed South Ford Scheme will not be as effective as an opening in the long term.

Colin highlighted that the cost/benefit scoring for the work to construct an opening is not sufficient to qualify for Scottish Government funding. A separate application for the South Ford Scheme to regrade the South Ford, rebuild the Gualan Island and strengthen the Liniclate dunes was taken forward with Scottish Government funding. Community consultation will take place on the scheme once more information is available.

Work is being done on a feasibility study to review how a bridge opening scheme could be carried out and what level of costs are associated with it. A separate case will be presented to Scottish Government for the work needed to the causeway once this study is concluded but at present, although it has lowered the price of the bridge and improved the cost benefit ratio of the scheme, it is not at the level required for Scottish Government funding.

There are five flood studies planned within the Outer Hebrides up until 2021. Colin advised that the Comhairle is planning to develop the scopes for all studies this year. It is likely that they will be let as one package. Iris confirmed that this is a good idea, as it is likely to attract more bids for the work. Other local authorities have found it difficult to appoint consultants for small scale studies and increasingly studies are being grouped together into one contract. Colin highlighted it would also be easier to manage one contract, rather than five.

Iris updates the group on the coastal flood forecasting and warning scheme and coastal mapping improvements SEPA is planning for 2019. These will be undertaken together, as the same models can be used to improve the flood maps and provide flood warning. To date, tide gauges were installed at Eriskay and Berneray – these are currently collecting data.

At the meeting, no updates were available from Scottish Water on Stornoway sewer catchment modelling or from HIAL on Benbecual airport works. Though it was noted that this had come through the Comhairle's planning department.

## Post meeting update

### Benbecula airport

HIAL: phase 3 ongoing 450m gabion baskets to prevent erosion. Phase 4 is programmed for 2019. Major storms can move several metres of dunes.

### Stornoway airport

HIAL: There is concern around coastal erosion to the runway, which was confirmed by modelling. A programme of works 2021-2023 with several phases has been developed to protect the runway. Some topographic surveys were done, but no site investigation yet.

### Stornoway sewer catchment modelling

Scottish Water: progressing to schedule

## 4. Updates from group members

A Marine Scotland planning application was received by the Comhairle for a new aircraft parking ramp at Traigh Mhòr, Barra airport. Donald John advised that there was little detail in the application and expressed some concern about the location of the ramp and its potential effect on sediment transport regimes, it may be that the ramp will act like a groyne. SNH had also been consulted and did not have any concerns with the ramp.

It was highlighted that the culvert replacement at Sieldenish is now complete.

## 5. SEPA update

### *National Flood Risk Assessment and Potentially Vulnerable Areas*

Iris updated the group on the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Flood Risk Assessment (NFRA). The methodology has been updated, with communities being at the centre of the assessment. Several of the input data sets have been updated – significantly the properties data now includes many more properties and categories. The methodology is currently undergoing peer review. There will also be a greater emphasis on climate change and risk to life / wellbeing. RPS has been awarded a contract to write model scripts to run the NFRA. The NFRA analysis will also underpin the designation of Potentially Vulnerable Areas (PVAs) and the Flood Risk Management Strategies and Local Flood Risk Management Plans. Therefore it is very important that the outputs are scrutinised. SEPA will engage with local authorities December 2017 – March 2018 and with the public in spring 2018 on the NFRA outputs. This will most likely be through an online portal. The NFRA will be published in December 2018.

### *SEPA's flood risk and hazard maps*

SEPA strives to update the flood risk and hazard maps annually with new information (for example from studies or other improvements). However, the December 2016 update has been delayed due to issues with packaging the data. Therefore, the currently available data should still be used.

Improvements to the coastal flood maps are planned to coincide with coastal flood warning improvements. This is because the models built for flood warning, which include an element of wave overtopping, can be used to improve the coastal flood extents. The Outer Hebrides flood map improvements are planned for 2019 – this is too late to include in the NFRA, therefore careful review of NFRA outputs is particularly important here.

### *National Coastal Change Assessment*

The National Coastal Change Assessment (NCCA) is a set of online maps covering all of Scotland. It focuses on changes to soft coastlines, looking at historic changes and projecting future changes. There will also be several reports, including one focussing on the Outer Hebrides. Not all the relevant information is available yet. The official launch has been delayed due to the elections and should happen in July 2017. Information available on [www.dynamiccoast.com](http://www.dynamiccoast.com)

### *Land use planning*

SEPA has been engaging with local authority planners to improve information available regarding flood risk and land use planning. Currently SEPA is working on climate change guidance, following new information around climate change. SEPA's land use planners met with the Comhairle's planners in spring 2017.

## **6. River Basin Management and Planning (RBMP) update**

Jenny updated the group on river basin management actions. Overall, water quality is very good, those that aren't achieving good require further investigation.

- The main pressure in the Outer Hebrides is fish barriers, affecting 11-12 water bodies. Donald John has been a great help in arranging the removal and identification of other council-owned fish barriers and the Outer Hebrides Fisheries Trust delivered the removal of a historic barrier.
- Around ten water bodies have unknown sources of pollution – often this is caused by multiple sources (septic tanks, agriculture, wild bird populations, etc.). Further monitoring and investigation including new DNA testing can help assess the sources of pollution.
- One water body is downgraded due to acidity
- A few water bodies are affected by hydropower. SEPA has been engaging with Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) and improvements are planned.

- Across Scotland over fifty shellfish water protected areas are not in good condition. SEPA is working with Food Standards Scotland, who regularly collects data – however, they base their assessments on worst case scenarios to protect human health. For SEPA this information is difficult to use for proportionate regulation thus work is ongoing to resolve assessment of shellfish waters. New DNA monitoring can help pinpoint the sources of E-coli, which are often the cause of failing shellfish waters. Jenny will share the shellfish waters paper (**Action 29**).

The group discussed flap valves in the Outer Hebrides. Donald John will check if he can create a map of where they are, to share with SEPA. Graeme can provide information of those under Stòras Uibhist control. Jenny highlighted that while useful, this is not urgent information. (**Action 30**)

There was a discussion on Loch Bi in South Uist. The Loch may be experiencing changes to its salinity levels as the flap valve to the east (owned by Stòras) could be allowing increased sea water inflow and the increased sand levels and relatively recently installed flap valves to the west (owned by the Comhairle) are restricting sea water inflow. Some major repairs are likely to be required to the valve to the east while the ones to the west may need to be propped open over the summer months.

There is an ongoing two year study of Loch Bi led by Professor Stewart Angus of SNH in conjunction with the Comhairle and Stòras which focuses on the survival of marine invertebrates in the loch and provides data on water level and salinity. Jenny will get in touch with Professor Stewart to find out more about the study (**Action 31**). Jenny noted that historic maps indicate that Loch Bi used to be open to the sea in the east and west. Patrick confirms that shells of marine invertebrates have been found, indicating that the water used to be saltier. Paul will bring salinity metres to the Loch on his next visit (**Action 32**). The importance of the flap valves to the ecology of the Loch as well as to flood risk management was highlighted. Iris emphasised that where possible, it would be good if studies could achieve multiple purposes.

The group also discussed partial barriers. While there is no legislative requirement to deal with these, from an ecological perspective it would be good to reduce partial barriers. These tend to reduce fish movements during low flows. Installation of baffles (for example from hard wood) tends to be cheap and concentrates flow in a smaller area, increasing opportunities for fish movements. Paul agreed that the Fisheries Trust would be interested in this and Jenny offered to help.

Jenny highlighted that SEPA has new legislation, The Water Environment (Remedial Measures) (Scotland) Regulations 2016.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2016/19/contents/made> . These notices can be served to local authorities to help secure remedial works. It is recognised that funding is a primary issue for not removing fish barriers for example and the notices may help solve this. If not we would make a case to Scottish Government to provide more funding if required. However, it is not envisaged that this will be needed in the Outer Hebrides as Comhairle, Fisheries Trust and SEPA have worked closely to improve water bodies.

#### **7. Any other business**

No other business was raised.

#### **8. Date of next meeting and close of meeting**

The next meeting will be in 10-12 months, possibly coinciding with the public consultation on the National Flood Risk Assessment and draft Potentially Vulnerable Areas.

#### **Actions arising from the Local Advisory Group meeting**

<b>Action Number</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>To be completed by</b>	<b>Update</b>
<b>29</b>	Circulate shellfish waters paper	Jenny	30/06/2017	Circulated with minutes July 2017
<b>30</b>	Donald John to collate and share map on flap valves in Outer Hebrides	Donald John	30/11/2017	
<b>31</b>	Get in touch with Stewart Angus at SNH to discuss his Loch Bi study	Jenny	30/06/2017	
<b>32</b>	Take salinity metres to Loch Bi on next fisheries visit	Paul	30/11/2017	