

## Chair's Report, June 2026

The sale of the Clan Donald Estate has been completed. We wish the new owners well as they decide how to take the estate forward.

However, this sale has highlighted something troubling: the views of communities—those who live and work the land—hold no sway morally, ethically or legally. The Land Reform (Scotland) Act has made its way through parliament but offers us bare consolation. We still lack agency, and this episode in our history convinces me more than ever that communities must have a stronger voice in the ownership, stewardship and use of their land.

There is also the matter of the Clan Donald Lands Trust, which continues to operate under a shroud of invisibility. Whilst perhaps not strictly a matter for the Community Council, this is certainly important to many people in Sleat and to the wider clan diaspora. Answers are needed. We should not, however, expect support from the authorities on this issue. OSCR, the charities regulator, has shown itself to be unfit for purpose. Their investigation into CDLT was disappointing, leaving many issues unanswered.

Communication with Highland Council remains challenging. Their lack of resources, our distance from Inverness, and a top-down culture that fails to value engagement and participatory decision-making all play a part. Effective communication channels are essential for our community, for strong democracy, and for building trust.

That said, there are glimmers of hope. I want to thank the council officers who have been positive and responsive, as well as Councillor John Finlayson for his consistent efforts to support our community. John is always quick to respond and happy to take up the issues we raise. His approach makes a real difference.

Our roads reached a nadir during the winter, falling into the worst state of disrepair many can remember. Since then, we have seen significant patching work from Highland Council, and this council has received assurances that there is a plan to fully resurface roads where needed. We look forward to seeing this delivered.

Ferry problems are a familiar refrain for Sleat. This year has been one of the worst for many years, and the impact on local businesses here and in Mallaig has been significant.

The service should meet three essential requirements. First, we need two appropriate vessels to maintain reliability. Second, we need clear accountability for timetables and performance. Third, we need continuity of service across summer and winter.

To be clear, this is not an inconvenience. The ferry disruptions are costing people their livelihoods and jobs. For Sleat and the communities around Mallaig, this ferry service is an economic and social necessity. It is time that CalMac, CMAL and Transport Scotland started treating it as such. Sleat Community Council, along with the Ferry User Group and Mallaig Community Council, will continue to advocate for the ferry service we need and deserve.

I'm delighted that our Local Place Plan is now registered with the Highland Council and working for us. I hear a lot of comments and complaints—about roads, ferries, wild camping and more—but when more of us get active, we can shift the dial. We can make more things happen. We can make Sleat the place we want it to be. Take this as a call to action, an invitation to get involved in the Community Council, volunteer with the Community Trust or CDI, take the initiative with the things that matter to you. There are many opportunities to volunteer and if they don't exist, create them!

Finally, my thanks to all the members of the council for their hard work and collegiality this year. I particularly want to thank Kate Duffus for assuming the role of Secretary at the last AGM and to John Weir for his co-option to the council and for taking over the Secretarial duties from Kate for the year ahead.

**Dr Andy Williamson**

June 2026