COMHAIRLE CHOIMHEARSNACHD SHLEITE
SLEAT COMMUNITY COUNCIL

# Chair’s Report, June 2024

This report covers the period from 22 June 2023 to 24 June 2024. This period covers the dissolution of the previous community council on reaching its term and the formation of the new council.

## Status of the community council

Two serving members of the previous community council stood down on dissolution. I’d like to formally record my thanks to Gordon Matheson and Flora MacLean for their service to the community during their time on the council. Gordon has left us to return to Lewis and Flora, after a significant number of years as a councillor and most recently as treasurer, has stepped back. We all wish them well. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Tim Shone, not only for his chairing of the previous council but also for the support he has given to me in taking on the role of chair.

The community was saddened to hear of the sudden passing of Roddy Murray in March, former chair of Sleat Community Council. Roddy was an exemplar of his generation and will be much missed by many.

The initial election for community councillors in Sleat failed as the final list of nominations fell below the number required to be quorate. A second election held at the start of 2024 drew 13 candidates. The subsequent vote had a turnout of 55%, an exceptional figure for such an election that gives the newly formed council a strong mandate to represent all of Sleat. I want to thank all the candidates who put themselves forward to serve their community, whether or not they were elected. This also means that we now have a full complement of eight elected members, again another huge positive.

I’d like to thank all the members of the community council for their positive, pro-active contributions and for their commitment to supporting and advancing our community.

## Our purpose

Community councils are the base layer within our democracy. We act as a voice for the local area and its residents, collecting the views of local people on a wide range of issues and making representations to the Highland Council and other organisations as necessary. Beyond this Sleat Community Council, thanks to the work of its secretary, keeps people informed about issues and events that are happening locally.

## Our priorities

The council has several issues that it is attending to besides the day-to-day work that it undertakes on behalf of the community.

Youth engagement – We are committed to extending the reach of the community council to include the voices of young people in our community. Mairead MacDougall is leading our efforts to engage with young people with a view to co-opting up to two youth members.

Land Management – This has been an ongoing area of concern expressed to the community council by a number of residents. The community council is listening to their concerns and proactively building relationships with local land owners with a view to improving community engagement.

Local Place Plan – This is an opportunity for the community to map out our aspirations and vision for what Sleat looks like in the future. As such, producing an engaging, positive local place plan that has been co-created with the community is the community council’s top priority for the year ahead. Keep an eye out for a range of public engagement events and opportunities in the months ahead and please get involved! I’m grateful to Kate Duffus and Duncan MacInnes for taking the lead on this,

## Working with other local organisations

As Flora MacLean has stepped down, I have taken her place on the Sleat Community Trust board. The Trust is partnering with the community council on the Sleat Local Place Plan.

Tim Shone continues to represent us on the Deer Control Group and is in the process of winding this up.

## Meetings

The previous community council held one meeting in this period, at Tarskavaig in September 2023. The new council has held meetings at Ardvasar (April 2024) and An Crùbh (May). It will hold further ordinary meetings after the AGM (at Ardvasar) and, after a summer recess, at Tarskavaig in September. Further monthly meetings will then be held until the next AGM in June 2025.

In between official meetings, the community council manages issues through email and arranges informal planning meetings to establish meeting agendas.

Any member of the public can contact the community council to ask us to raise issues on their behalf, which we will do where we are able and report back.

*Dr Andy Williamson
June 2024*