

**Notes of the Ward Five Joint Community Council meeting  
held on Wednesday 28 February 2024 via webcam**

**Community Council members present:** Kenny Maclean, Caroline Gamble and Sadie-Michaela Harris (Garve & District CC), Christine Mackintosh (Marybank, Scatwell & Strathconon CC), Norma Ross (Contin CC) from 7.00pm until 8.10pm, Topher Dawson, Mike Newman, Kevin O’Leary and Marie Renwick (Lochbroom CC), Ann Macleod (Coigach CC), Willie Scambler (Wester Loch Ewe CC), Bob Widdows (Gairloch CC), Anne Macrae (Applecross CC), Michelle Teago and Liz Howard (Lochcarron CC), Audrey Sinclair (Kyle CC) and Siobhan Barker (Lochalsh CC).

**Also present:** John West (Highlife Highland) from 7.00pm until 7.25pm and Cllr Liz Kraft from 7.30pm.

**Apologies:** Bob Moir (Garve & District CC), Ron McAulay (Strathpeffer CC) and Cllr’s Campbell & Birt. Verbal apologies given by Ann for Stuart Edwards (Coigach CC).

Kenny Maclean (Garve & District CC) once again chaired the Joint Community Council meeting and opened the meeting at 7.00pm.

**Future of the Mobile Library Service –**

<https://www.highlifehighland.com/old-libraries/wp-content/uploads/sites/128/2023/09/West-Ross-Mobile-Library-how-are-we-performing-2022-23.pdf> John West explained that there are seven mobile libraries across seventy routes across the Highlands stopping at 650 different locations every three weeks. Highlife Highland operate the service which The Highland Council pay for. One of the current seven library vans is off the road, awaiting repairs. Most of the vehicles are long overdue replacement, they are an aging fleet. Each vehicle costs around £150,000 to purchase. The current review is due to this and The Highland Council’s tight budget. Every stop/overlap of route is being reviewed to see if changes can be made yet still provide the service to all who wish to use it. The review is looking promising if moved to a four rather than three week visit cycle. Focus groups of actual users have been giving their feedback over recent weeks and this has proven extremely interesting and useful such as 90% say online services do not meet their requirements. 89% say delivery perhaps via post does not work for them either. They like to see and feel the selection of books available. Schools are an important part of all this to encourage children’s reading skills. Care homes have also been asked for their views. All this will be used to build a business case. Smaller vans have been considered but only slightly smaller, they can still carry around 5,000 books. The general feeling of Community Council members was the outlook looked promising. Questions included will large print books still be available? (Yes). Have user numbers allowed for when the van was not able to visit due to breakdowns? (Yes). Statutory duty? (Must be a service available FOR ALL). Can Posters be supplied to promote the service? (Yes). The Wi-Fi is patchy in places? (Yes, but parking at locations such as Village Halls that have good Wi-Fi helps). Applecross and Strathgarve Primary Schools are very keen to still see the van and the children look forward to it. (Noted). Is lease rather than purchase of vans an option? (Yes, being actively considered). Local delivery if the van cannot visit? (Highland wide could be logistically difficult but a more local arrangement perhaps via Dingwall Library might be). Important all

ages are involved and catered for. Disabled access into van? (Yes, part of the requirements). 5% increase of users since Covid was noted – see attached. The final decision with regards to mobile library provision will be made by The Highland Council. John is happy to be contacted directly if there are any issues and will keep the Community Councils updated.

John was thanked for attending and left the meeting at 7.25pm.

**Scottish Fire & Rescue Service** – no update available.

Cllr Liz Kraft joined the meeting at 7.30pm.

**Road network issues** – Kenny read out the following from the joint Community Council meeting held in April 2019 ... *“This subject is one that affects all our communities and is a topic that CCs are lobbied by residents continuously. It was suggested that the road conditions are at a tipping point with any investment by HC being just a drop in the ocean. Cllr’s Biz Campbell & Alex MacInnes spoke strongly on this subject and it was suggested that CCs should write to their local MSP requesting more money for local roads as current funding is not enough.”* He asked have things changed in the last five years? Community Council members had mixed feelings. It was noted that cold tar fills are still common place and do not last. Where are the Rapid Repair Team (still trying to recruit). Cllr Kraft confirmed the Hotbox is in the east side of the ward today and that budget increases this financial year were due to us having so many miles of road in the ward but lack of money from previous years are perhaps now showing, hopefully more funding soon - [https://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/4939/highland\\_council](https://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/4939/highland_council) “A” roads will always come first as they are key to getting around, even for emergency services. Also, people travel up to 60mph on these roads so more issues if they hit a pothole at those speeds. It was noted the roads team are very helpful and are doing their best in difficult circumstances.

Norma Ross (Contin CC) had to leave the meeting at 8.10pm.

Trunk roads appear to have bigger budgets and have less issues. Work on the A890 west of Achnashellach is ongoing this week. Will this road ever be widened? – see attached file (it is no longer on the capital plan). Are there enough roadmen? (Many did not get to take summer holidays so works such as resurfacing could be done in the better weather so many are overdue holidays now, Ullapool road team are recruiting, if anyone interested, please get in touch). Priority is safety. Anyone (Community Council or residents) can send Cllr Kraft photos of road issues and she is happy to send the photos on. Although potholes are an issue, drainage was felt by many to be even more important as if the water cannot get away, the road service will suffer. It was noted that climate change and size of drain pipes are issues but also water running off private land onto council roads is too. Are the council still responsible for 3metres either side of the road? (unclear, Cllr Kraft will ask). Heavy vehicles, volume of traffic, speed are probably all issues that will not go away. Hire machines not being used to their full advantage? (Cllr Kraft is happy to raise issues if more details are provided). In Lochcarron, a recent landslide cut off the community for around two weeks. The local road team, especially Roy Mackay were outstanding. Roy also helped by getting cars to the other side of the issue and taxiing people back and fore, full credit to

all. Signs at Starthcarron Junction still awaiting replaced and faulty repairs – who is responsible for checking such works are up to standard? (Cllr Kraft noted the points but contractors do have responsibilities and there are fines via The Scottish Roads Commissioner - <https://www.roadworksscotland.org> and <https://roadworks.scot/>). It was noted the whole of the Highlands is a huge area, perhaps things are worse in some ways but officials are willing to listen and try and help which is appreciated. Do utility companies have to make good when they dig up the roads? (Yes). It was felt community liaison is key. A side road in the Dundonnell area is giving Lochbroom Community Council members particular concern. Photos will be sent to Cllr Kraft asap. Ullapool streets are in a poor condition (noted, photos please to Cllr Kraft). The Bealach was also raised, missing white lines and Passing Place signs and stickers on important signs again! SSEN are due to dig in the area to lay cables so their works may help the situation. Kenmore area also noted as having a poor road surface. NC500? A visitor levy may help towards costs caused by campervans, tbc. Mental health – who wants to go out if you get a burst tyre on a pothole each time? (a point noted by all). Previous Community Council members across the ward left because they felt they were not getting anywhere. Will this ever be resolved to everyone's satisfaction? Cllr Kraft again encouraged all issues to be photographed and sent to her at the time and she is happy to raise accordingly. Budget decisions tomorrow may also help but roads will remain a top issue going forward whatever happens.

**AOB - Cllr Patrick Logue has left the Conservative group and is now a Liberal Democrat.** It was noted he does not appear to attend many Community Council meetings. Cllr Kraft confirmed Patrick was in meetings today and can be contacted by email anytime.

**Ward Manager** role has been redesigned, more information to follow.

**Future of Achnasheen toilets** – questions have been asked following the decision to close the hall and lack of community interest to take them on. Cllr Kraft confirmed enquiries are ongoing but agreed it is crucial they are retained as they are used by many from the west.

Kenny asked if Community Councils still wanted to **share minutes** with each other? Was it still a helpful/useful thing to do? All agreed and we would encourage all other Community Councils in the ward to join in, always good to compare notes! Cllr Kraft confirmed that area committee minutes are available on The Highland Council website but ward business meetings are not public due to commercially sensitive information and individual cases could be identified.

**Shared Rural Network** – The Shared Rural Network is an agreement between the UK Government and mobile industry announced in March 2020 to improve rural mobile coverage <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-emergency-services-mobile-communications-programme/emergency-services-network#extended-area-service> Concern was raised at the prospect of 95% geographical rather than population coverage. Areas such as Beinn Eighe where there are no houses or roads will have a mast yet local communities may not. Plans seen by Lochbroom Community Council (Via NatureScot) indicate 274 masts but this has been denied by the Shared Rural Network ... who were unable to confirm exact numbers themselves ...



It was suggested it would be helpful if Community Councils could flag up pre-planning and planning applications under this scheme, perhaps to Torridon & Kinlochewe Community Council who have taken the lead on this matter. Planning lists available to all Community Councils would also help so an accurate picture can be seen. In the Lochalsh Community Council area a new mast has blended in well so it is possible. Six pre planning applications for masts in the Marybank, Scatwell & Strathconon Community Council area a further six in the Lochcarron Community Council area were noted. Cllr Kraft confirmed the MSP has raised the matter both with the Scottish & UK Governments and will see if responses can be shared. It was also noted the Wester Ross Biosphere are also keeping tabs on these developments. More info at <https://srn.org.uk/> and <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-4g-infill-programme-progress-update/>

A date for the **next Joint Community Council meeting** will be discussed nearer the time.

**Kenny closed the meeting at 9.10pm** by thanking everyone for taking the time to attend and to Garve & District Community Council member Sadie-Michaela Harris for hosting the webcam session. Those in attendance thanked Kenny for chairing and for all he does to support ward five Community Councils.

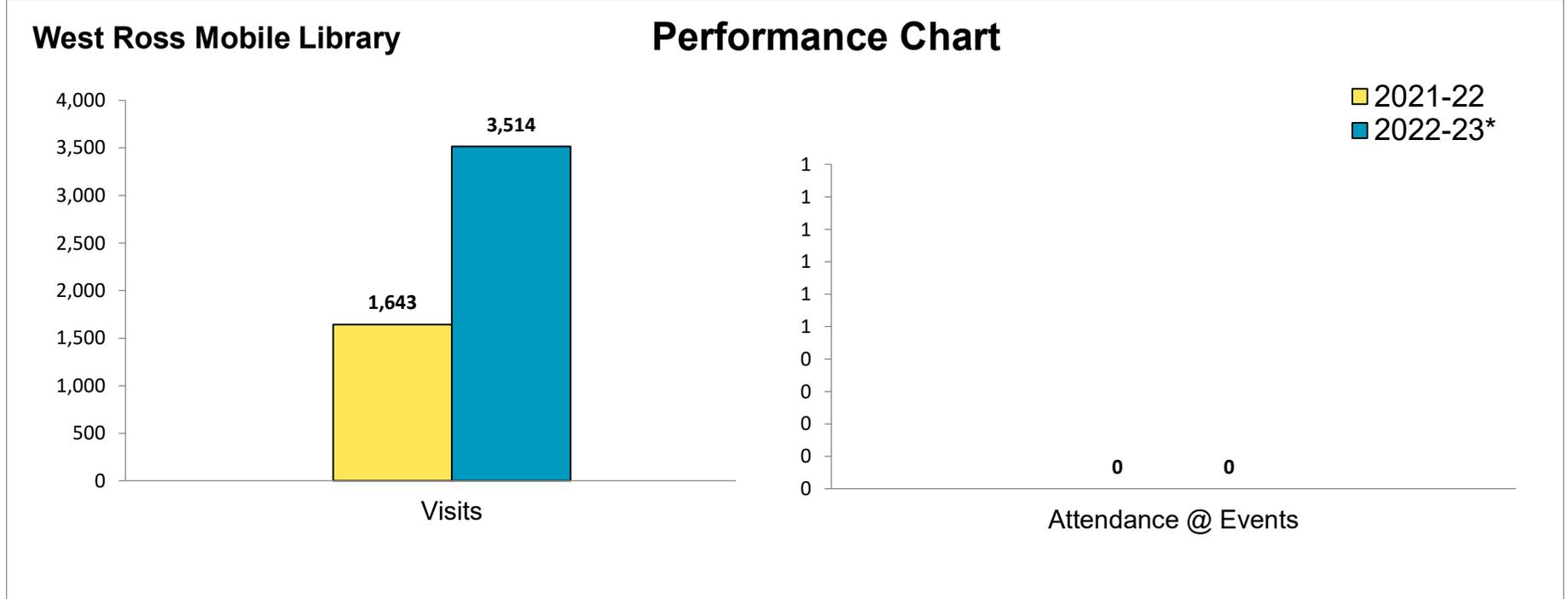
# How is West Ross Mobile Library Performing



## West Ross Mobile Library

\* Figures based on estimate

Activity	2021-22	2022-23*	Difference	% Difference
Visits	1,643	3,514	1,871	113.9%
Attendance @ Events	0	0	0	



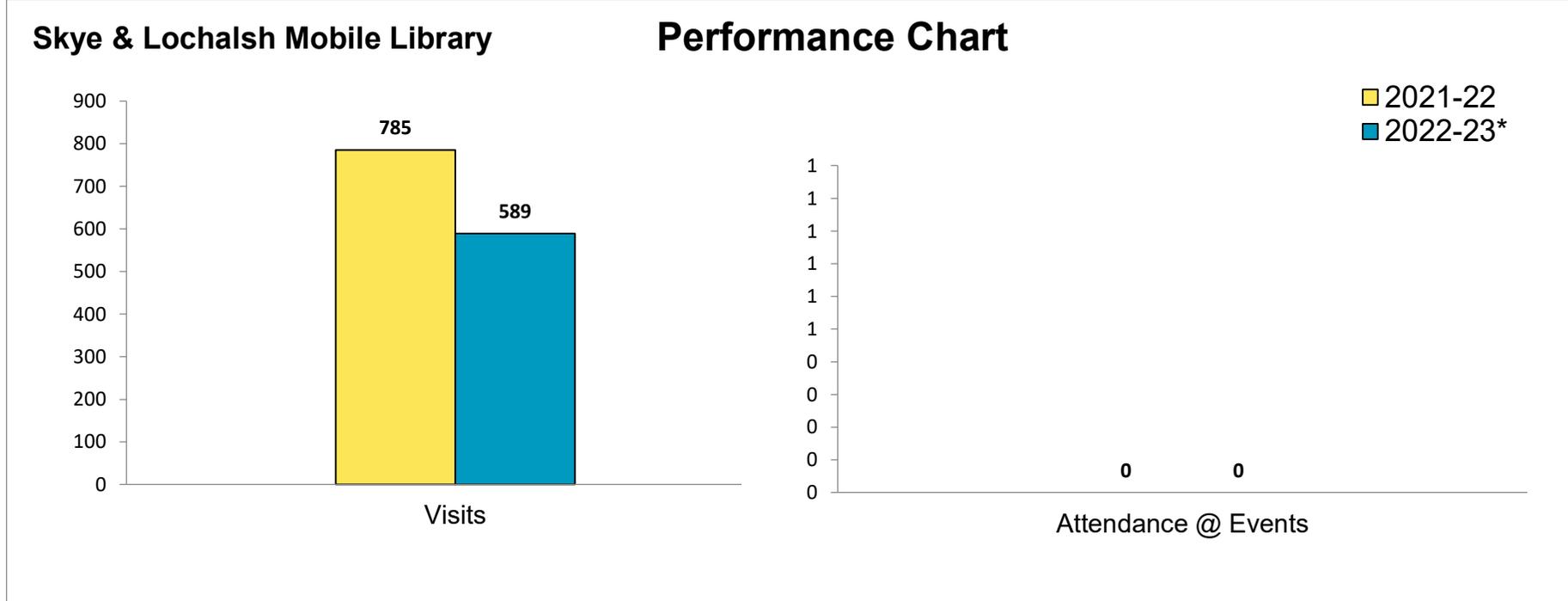
# How is Skye & Lochalsh Mobile Library Performing



## Skye & Lochalsh Mobile Library

\* Figures based on estimate

Activity	2021-22	2022-23*	Difference	% Difference
Visits	785	589	-196	-25.0%
Attendance @ Events	0	0	0	



**The Highland Council**  
**Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee**  
**4 November 2015**

Agenda Item	19
Report No	PDI 74/15

**A890 Balnacra to Lair Road Scheme**

**Report by Director of Development and Infrastructure**

**Summary**

This report presents the proposed A890 Balnacra to Lair road scheme. The scheme comprises 5.8 km (3.6 miles) of new single carriageway road to replace an existing narrow single track section. Previous design work on the scheme looked at three route options. A preferred option was progressed following public consultation and an options appraisal. The design of the preferred option was further developed until work stopped in 2010 following deletion of the scheme from the Capital Programme.

At the meeting of the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee on 3 June 2015, the scheme was named as a Major Road improvement within the Council's 10 year capital programme.

This report summarises the previous design work and sets out how the scheme can now be progressed. In order to progress the scheme, Members are asked to accept the preferred route option and give approval to proceed with the planning application and land negotiations for the road improvement scheme.

**1. Background**

1.1 The A890 provides a strategic link between the Moray Firth area and the communities of Wester Ross including the deep water facility at Kishorn which is currently used by Ferguson Transport for sea freight movements. As such, it forms a crucial route for local communities and businesses in terms of the provision and supply of services, as well as being a primary route for visitors to the area wishing to access the North West Highlands. The route runs 51 km (32 miles) from its junction with the A87 at Auchtertyre to the roundabout at Achnasheen.

The location of the road is illustrated on the plan in **Appendix 1**, with the section under consideration highlighted.

1.2 Since the 1960s, the A890 has been gradually upgraded from single track to single carriageway. The stretch between Balnacra and Lair is one of several remaining single track sections and is a particular bottleneck due to a low masonry railway bridge with poor road alignment and a rail level crossing.

1.3 The Balnacra to Lair scheme seeks to eliminate this sub-standard section by providing 5.8 km (3.6 miles) of new 6m wide single carriageway road with hard strips to current standards with a design speed of 100 kph (60 mph).

## **2. Options Appraisal**

- 2.1 Previous design work was undertaken on the Balnacra to Lair scheme by the Council in 2008 to 2010. During a review of the capital programme at that time the scheme was removed from the list of projects being considered. The scheme was therefore not taken forward for planning permission. The Options appraisal work which was progressed at that time however is still relevant.
- 2.2 In 2009 a Route Options Appraisal was carried out by ASH consultants. Three alternative route options were included in the appraisal; a 'red' route, a 'green' route and a 'blue' route. These are illustrated in the drawing included in **Appendix 2**.
- 2.4 'Green' Route: The new road would pass north of the housing at Balnacra and utilise the existing level crossing. The route would then follow the existing road between Loch Dughail and the rail line to a point west of Achnashellach Station. From there the road would then cross the railway line via a new bridge and continue to the north of the railway line to tie into the existing A890. The existing rail bridge at Lair would remain open for local access.
- 2.5 'Blue' Route: The new road would cross to the south side of the railway and the housing at Balnacra via a new railway bridge. The route would then follow the existing road between Loch Dughail and the railway line to a point west of Achnashellach Lodge. From there the road would pass to the south of the community at Lair passing through the croft ground and then cross the railway line via a new bridge to tie into the existing road.
- 2.5 'Red' Route: The new road would pass north of the housing at Balnacra and would remain to the north of the Dingwall to Kyle of Lochalsh railway line for the whole length and would tie into the existing A890 east of Lair railway bridge. The existing level crossing and railway bridge would be maintained unaltered for local access.

## **3. Options Appraisal Findings**

- 3.1 The routes were evaluated on Landscape and Land Use, Visual Amenity, Cultural Heritage, Ecology and Nature Conservancy and Leisure and Recreation.
- 3.2 The red route to the north of the existing railway line was considered to be the most favourable option when considering all aspects of the options appraisal.
- 3.3 On the 28 May 2008 a public consultation meeting was held at Lochcarron Community Hall seeking views on the three options. Around three quarters of respondents favoured the red route. Only three respondents were opposed to the red route.
- 3.4 Further work was undertaken on the design of the 'red' route including an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The scheme was developed to a

standard almost sufficient to support a planning application. However, work stopped in 2010 and no planning application or further progress was made.

- 3.5 Both the Green and the Blue routes involve constructing new railway bridge crossings. One new bridge in the case of the Green route and two new railway bridges in the case of the Blue. The cost of each railway bridge is between £1.5m and £2m. The red route therefore has a cost advantage when compared the other two routes as no new railway crossings are required for the red route.
- 3.6 The red route has the advantage that through traffic will not have to cross the railway line.

#### **4. Next Steps**

- 4.1 The 'red' route was previously identified as the preferred option and it is proposed that design should now proceed on this basis. Members are asked to accept the red route as the Council's chosen route option.
- 4.2 It is proposed to carry out public consultation on the details of the preferred route prior to the submission of planning permission to help mitigate any points raised by the local community.
- 4.3 Planning permission will be required for the scheme. The planning application would need to be supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The design and EIA for the 'red' route was previously developed to a standard almost sufficient to support a planning application. The previous work would require updating and completing prior to a new planning application.
- 4.4 It is proposed that all land for the scheme should be acquired by the Council under the powers of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984. Acquisition would be by agreement. Should agreement not be reached a further report will be brought to committee to consider the use of compulsory purchase powers.

#### **5. Implications**

- 5.1 Resource:  
PDI committee report 31/15 allocated £722k of the capital programme for the scheme. This forms part of the £29.3m allocated to Major Roads schemes in the capital programme to 2023. The proposed budget estimate for the scheme is currently c£12m, this figure will be reviewed and finalised as design works proceed. It is expected if land agreements and planning permission are completed that construction could commence in 2018/19.
- 5.2 Legal:  
Construction of the scheme would require acquisition of land by the Council. The Council would use the powers under the Roads Scotland Act 1984 to acquire land by agreement. If compulsory purchase powers are required to progress the scheme then this will be the subject of further reports to Committee.

- 5.3 Equality:  
Issues relating to equality would be addressed at detailed design.
- 5.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever:  
The detailed design will incorporate measures to minimise the importation of materials and make best use of natural materials encountered on-site. In addition measures will be put in place to minimise waste during the construction works. The procurement procedures for the construction of the project will be managed to maximise the use of locally sourced goods, services and materials.
- 5.5 Risk:  
The level and type of risk on this scheme is currently considered to be normal for a road building scheme. Risks would be managed through the detailed design process and through supervision of works on site.
- 5.6 Gaelic:  
The scheme presents an opportunity to use bi-lingual road signing.
- 5.7 Rural:  
The scheme would improve road transport links to the west coast aiding the economy of the local area

### **Recommendation**

The Committee is asked to:

- approve the 'red' route as the Council's chosen route option; and
- give approval for the scheme to progress through the following stages:
  - planning application
  - land acquisition
  - detailed design

The Committee is also asked to note that approval for budget allocation and construction programme will be sought following the detailed design and planning approval.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 12 October 2015

Author: G Smith

Background Papers: Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee  
Report No. PDI/31/15 (3 June 2015)

# Appendix 1 Location Plan

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Revision Details	
By	Date

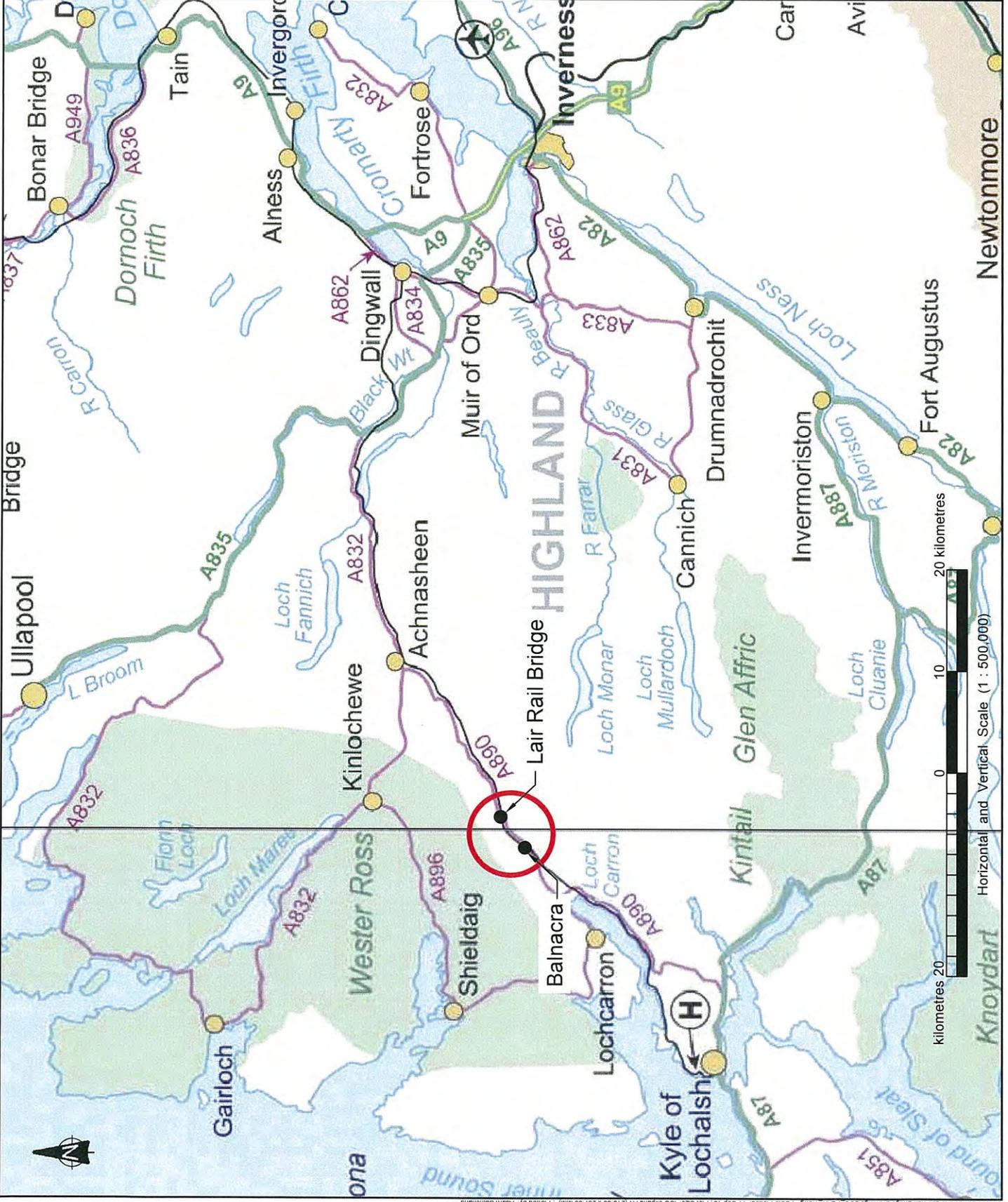
**The Highland Council**  
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

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Project	A890 Balnacara to Lair Rail Bridge
Scale	1:500,000 (@ A4)
Drawn	AS
Checked	AT
Drawn Date	08/05/2015
Checked Date	08/05/2015
Project No.	RS7150
Drawing No.	Loc_Plan_1



# Appendix 2

## Options Appraisal Route Plan

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Revision Details

By	Checked	Date

**The Highland Council**  
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd  
DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

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**Options Appraisal Route Plan**

Not to Scale (@A1)

Scale	AS	AS	AS
Scale	AS	AS	AS
Scale	AS	AS	AS

Project No. RS7150  
Drawing No. OA-01

