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Spotlight Session – Transport Scalpay Community Centre 23rd May 2024

David Macdonald (Harris Forum Development Officer) opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and explaining that the Harris Forum was in the process of updating the Harris Plan to be, less of a list of projects, and more an objective based document that would be based on the National Islands Plan.

Everyone present then introduced themselves and noted any group affiliation they may have in Harris.

Mairi Maciver (Community Learning & Development) described the Place Based Toolkit and how the session would work.

The first question was: **Are paths and routes (walk, wheel or cycle) suitable?**

It was noted that the roads in Scalpay are very narrow and very difficult to walk on at times of high volumes of traffic. It is made even more difficult in the summer months when the roads are busier still and there is a greater volume of campervan traffic.

There was also a discussion, that occurred frequently throughout the afternoon, about the speed of traffic. It was noted that this is not primarily by visitors to the island but more often by locals. One responder shared personal experience of walking throughout the village and the dangers that this imposed.

It was requested that there could be a single white line placed on all roads throughout the island to allow for walkers to have their own space.

It was also noted that the main trunk between Tarbert and Leverburgh needs to be a double track road as due to the volume and speed of traffic it can be dangerous at times.

With regards to suitability, it was noted that even in the most densely populated areas of the island there were poor and unmaintained kerbs and pathways.



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Furthermore, the few pathways that there are are not suitable for people with disabilities or people using pushchairs. An example of this was provided that even the main pathway through Tarbert does not allow for a pushchair at points and users have to walk on the road which is hazardous.

It was noted and agreed by all respondents that the island does not cater well at all for people with disabilities and it was noted that we cannot put barriers up within our community.

The second question was: **Are routes well lit?**

It was the general feeling in the room that our more densely populated areas needed street lighting but in our more rural areas there was no need for it. The conversation returned to the fact that if there was adequate footpaths then there would be less of a need for street lighting. Most folk in the room agreed that paths were more of a concern than street lighting.

Another point that was made was the need for further education on the clothing that people should wear if walking or running at night. It was the general feeling that not enough people are wearing high visibility clothing and then there is a danger for them walking at night without adequate footpaths.

The conversation, at this point, returned to the discussion on the speed of traffic. One responder noted that there was a clear need to capture data as the only answer to mitigate the argument. It was mentioned that we could campaign for the rubber strips that monitor the speed of traffic in certain areas. This would need to be done in partnership with the Local Authority but would be the only way of capturing data that then could be quickly interpreted.

A question was posed to the room as to whether or not we would want to see blanket speed limits throughout our villages and the general consensus for built up areas was that this should be in place.

A final point was made on this question around the subject of educating rather than just legislating. Further campaigns should be progressed in schools and work places to educate young people and adults on the dangers of speeding and the need to drive safely.

The third question was: **What is public transport like in your place?** The first comment from the room was highlighting the positive fact that it is always on time. A second note was made that, specifically for Scalpay, the frequency of the bus service is a positive.

It was noted however, with frustration, that there is often no joined up thinking with regards to timetabling and an example was provided that the bus service from Tarbert does not link up with the ferry service. Many around the room called for an integrated public transport system and an



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example of the Citylink bus at Ullapool was recognised. The feeling was that more often than not there was no communication or interaction between public transport providers which is even more crucial in our rural areas.

A further note was made at this point regarding accessibility. It was the general feeling in the room that the bus services on the islands were not accessible for all users.

There appeared to be a demand in the room for an evening bus service but a survey would be required to capture the data to back this up. A conversation was then had on the potential of a community bus service utilizing online and app based booking systems although upfront cost was noted as a particular stumbling block.

The fourth question was: **Are our ferries fit for purpose?**

The conversation began by noting that the issues that our island community faces in this regard is not with the service that Calmac offer locally. Most felt that the level of customer service and provision was generally positive from the company. The biggest issue, that the room noted, was with CMAL and Transport Scotland. It was noted that there seems to be a lack of control from Transport Scotland and a lack of understanding of Island need. This could potentially be resolved by seeing Island representatives at board level within these organisations.

A straw poll around the room showed that people are generally happy with the ferry service with the exemption of the booking system which was noted as a significant negative.

It was also felt that the issues are just as bad, if not worse, with air travel noting the timetabling and pricing as particular negatives.

David Macdonald (Harris Forum Development Officer) thanked everyone for coming and for their contributions. He also thanked Mairi Maciver (CLD) for facilitating and the meeting was ended.