

Corran Ferry Project

Frequently Asked Questions

1.	<i>Why is the Corran Ferry so important?</i>	• Found approximately seven miles south of Fort William the Corran Ferry provides a lifeline connection and a 'shortcut' across the Corran Narrows of Loch Linnhe. Connecting the Ardgour peninsula in the west with the wider Lochaber region in the east. • The service provides an essential transport link to connect the communities of Fort William, Ardgour, Sunart, Ardnamurchan, Moidart, Morar, Morvern and the Isle of Mull (via the CalMac network), including providing access to employment, acting as a gateway for tourists and meeting supply chain needs. • The Highland Council are responsible for operating the Ferry service, which is the busiest single vessel route in Europe, taking just 5 minutes to make the approximately 400m crossing, and carrying approximately 270,000 cars and 11,000 commercial vehicles / buses per year. • Road based diversion can be up to 2 hours and involves navigating single track roads with limited access for the largest of commercial vehicles due to bridge height restrictions. The ferry service is therefore integral to the economic and social wellbeing of the peninsula and the wider areas.
2.	<i>What are the key issues with the Corran Ferry?</i>	Vessels • The relief vessel the Maid of Glencoul (49 years old) urgently needs to be replaced due to her age and reliability issues, associated with difficulty in sourcing parts which is becoming ever more expensive, threatening service resilience. • Since August 2023, the Maid of Glencoul has been out of service, awaiting the manufacture of bespoke component parts, but also a steering controls system upgrade modification. (Scheduled return to service is expected July 2024). • In having deck space for only 14 cars, she cannot keep pace with the ever-increasing demand, and this causes back-up of vehicles waiting to board in the marshalling area. • The Maid of Glencoul also has height and weight restrictions for larger commercial vehicles. There are also height and weight restrictions on the alternative road routes due to a low bridge. Consequently, the peninsula is effectively cut off for many large commercial vehicles when the Maid of Glencoul is in service.

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		- The main vessel the MV Corran (23 years old) is also nearing end of design life. Infrastructure - The strong tidal flow through the Corran Narrows and the gradient of the current slipways, together with the absence of an aligning structure, necessitates the use of vessels with quarter point loading ramps (i.e. the Maid of Glencoul and MV Corran). - Existing infrastructure, designed to accommodate the quarter point vessels, do not allow for the more conventional 'straight through' Roll on Roll Off (Ro-Ro) vessels to operate on the slipways. Hence, there is no opportunity for interchanging vessels with other ferries in Scotland. - Unfortunately, there was a suspension of the service last year when both quarter point vessels were out of service at the same time. Due to the infrastructure restrictions, there were no other ferries in Scotland able to operate the service. - Marshalling areas on both sides of the crossing are too small. Queuing vehicles can cause a road safety issue by backing up onto busy roads, particularly the main trunk road A82. - No overnight berth. Vessels overnight on 'swing' moorings which results in the embarkation of the crew onto the ferry via a vessel-to-vessel transfer twice daily. This is an uncommon practice and presents a health & safety risk, albeit one which is currently well managed.
3.	<i>What is being done about it?</i>	The Highland Council's proposed Corran Ferry Project consists of the following elements – Infrastructure Improvement Scheme The Infrastructure Improvement Scheme will involve the construction of a new slipway and an overnight berthing pier at Ardgour, and the construction of a new slipway, breakwater, marshalling area, parking, shared-use path and public facilities, north of the Corran settlement on the Nether Lochaber side. The new infrastructure will improve the resilience of the ferry service and facilitate the operation of a new electric vessel. Refer to FAQ 15 below for more information on improved resilience.

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		- More information on the Infrastructure Improvement Scheme can be found on the Highland Council's website: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20028/corran_ferry_project/1070/corran_ferry_infrastructure_improvement_scheme and the project's consultation webpage: https://www.africlimited.co.uk/consultations/ New Vessel - A new, larger electric roll-on roll-off ('Ro-Ro') ferry (32 car) will offer increased capacity from the existing main vessel, the MV Corran (28 car), and will contribute to meeting the Highland Council's and Scottish Government's climate change commitments. - The MV Corran (23-year-old; 28 car) will replace the older and smaller (49-years-old; 14 car) Maid of Glencoul as a larger and more reliable relief vessel. - The use of the existing 23-year-old MV Corran (28 car) will provide service resilience as a relief vessel, until such time that the Council can undertake to deliver a second electric ferry. - More information on the proposed new electric vessel can be found on the Highland Council's website: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20028/corran_ferry_project/1124/new_electric_vessel
4.	<i>How will the Corran Ferry project be funded?</i>	The Council has received confirmation of up to £28 million (Nov 2024) in funding from the Scottish Government, allowing us to proceed with plans for a new electric ferry. This funding, part of the Inverness and Highland City Region Deal, comes alongside additional investment in shoreside improvements which will be funded by £20m from the UK government and £10m from the Highland Council.

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5.	<i>Will the cost of ferry tickets change?</i>	- Capital funding has been secured through other channels and will not be funded through fares. - Ferry ticket pricing, along with other Council fee paying services, is reviewed on an annual basis. - Any updates will be communicated via Highland Council's website: https://www.highland.gov.uk/corranferry
6.	<i>Will the timetable and/or operating hours of the ferry change?</i>	No change is proposed to timetabling and operational hours.
7.	<i>How long will construction take?</i>	- The timescale for the construction programme will be confirmed upon determination of the preferred infrastructure designs. Based on other development projects, the anticipated timeframe is approximately 18 months. - Further information on the construction phase will be shared in Round 3 of Public Consultation, see FAQ 26 for more information on public consultation.
8.	<i>How long will the ferry be out of service during construction?</i>	- In consideration of minimising disruption to the service as far as practicable, infrastructure designs (including new slipways) mean the existing service can continue on the existing infrastructure during construction, and hence disruption (if any) is anticipated to be minimal. - The public will be notified in advance of any unavoidable interruption or delays and will be coordinated as non-consecutive days, periods of hours each day and/or a change in the ferry schedule, to minimise disruption, as far as practicable.

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9.	<i>What impact will there be on the local community and road network?</i>	- Minimising impacts on the local community and traffic system is a key consideration for this development, recognising this is in the heart of a small community. - Potential impacts will be assessed as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) (underway in 2024). The EIA will identify mitigation, where necessary, to reduce potentially significant impacts as far as practicable. - Results of the EIA, including proposed mitigation, will be communicated in Round 3 of Public Consultation. See FAQ 26 for more information on public consultation.
10.	<i>Where can I find a layout of the proposed infrastructure design?</i>	Information on the Infrastructure Improvement Scheme, including the outline scheme design, can be found on the Highland Council's website: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20028/corran_ferry_project/1070/corran_ferry_infrastructure_improvement_scheme and the project's consultation webpage: https://www.affriclimited.co.uk/consultations/
11.	<i>When will the new infrastructure and ferry be in operation?</i>	The target dates for completion are - - Construction of infrastructure - March 2027. - Introduction of new electric Corran Ferry - It is hoped that we can deliver the new ferry as quickly as possible, however we have not yet determined a preferred procurement strategy and are exploring all the options in this respect and will issue a news release in due course.
12.	<i>Why not build a new diesel ferry instead?</i>	- Funding for a diesel ferry is unachievable as this does not align with Highland Council's net zero strategy and Scotland's national legally binding target to become Net Zero by 2045. - The Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 emphasises the necessity to reduce emissions and pursue low carbon infrastructure solutions, with electric power the preferred option for short ferry crossings. Hence, the Highland Council joining CMAL's Small Vessels Replacement Programme will provide standardised, state-of-the-art ferries with electric zero emission operation on various routes along the West Coast of Scotland.

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		Introducing a new diesel ferry alone would not address the infrastructure issues, including the existing pressure on marshalling capacity (and back-up onto busy roads), a lack of overnight berth (requiring unfavourable vessel-to-vessel crew transfer) and no option of increasing service resilience via vessel interchangeability.
13.	<i>How will the new electric Ferry operate if there's a power cut?</i>	The new electric ferry will have a back-up diesel generator onboard which will provide a high level of resilience to enable the ferry service to operate as normal in the event of an interruption to the power supply.
14.	<i>What is the estimated life & cost of replacement batteries for the new electric Ferry?</i>	10 years of operation is guaranteed for the 3 exemplary battery chemistries that have been evaluated as below - - LFP - Lithium Iron Phosphate - NMC - Nickel Manganese Cobalt - LTO - Lithium Titanate Oxide - Current average market price for battery replacement indicates a cost of £3.43 million for battery replacement every 10 years as a worst-case scenario. Final battery type will be subject to the procurement process. - The cost is considered planned capital investment and will be managed through the Council's Capital Programme.
15.	<i>Will the Ferry service be more reliable?</i>	- The location and design of the new slipways and alignment structure will allow the ferry to safely dock under stronger wave conditions, increasing resilience in adverse weather. - The overnighting berthing structure will provide the crew with a safer means of access. By providing modern step aboard access and replacing the method of vessel-to-vessel transfer, it is expected the operational weather window will increase. - Compared to the smaller MV Maid of Glencoul with her height and weight restrictions, the MV Corran acting as the relief vessel will resolve the severance issues for larger commercial vehicles and provide an improved means of relief service when the new electric vessel is away for annual maintenance.

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		The new electric vessel, with it's straight through Ro-Ro loading and unloaded arrangement, will enable faster loading with better ramp alignment for large commercial vehicles.
16.	<i>What are the green credentials of the new electric ferry?</i>	- Full-electric machinery concepts offer (close to) zero emissions operation, thanks to very low grid emissions resulting from Scotland's high renewable energy share. - This new Corran vessel will align with the Highland Council's net zero strategy and Scotland's national legally binding target to become Net Zero by 2045. - A full-electric propulsion will provide very quick power availability all year round which will help to increase the efficiency during manoeuvring. - Energy efficiency of the total electrical system grid-to-propeller on the new vessel is more than twice as high as the efficiency of the MV Corran diesel ferry (tank-to-propeller).
17.	<i>Where can I find further information on the new Corran Ferry design?</i>	 New Corran Vessel -Ro-Ro Ferry - All Electric (32 car) Further information on the vessel design can be found on the Highland Council's Corran Ferry Project website as below - https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20028/corran_ferry_project/1124/new_electric_vessel

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18.	<i>Why not build a bridge instead of replacing the ferries and infrastructure?</i>	- The Council has always supported a fixed link (bridge or tunnel) solution and made representation to Scottish Government for a fixed link at Corran through the Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2) which informs the Scottish Government's transport investment programme over a 20-year period (2022-2042). Unfortunately, a fixed link solution at Corran was not considered as a project to take forward into the STPR2. - Without a credible funding option or viable delivery plan for a fixed link, the Highland Council's focus was directed into upgrading the ferry service as the most feasible and deliverable option for improving the transport link in the short to medium term, as we urgently require a new ferry and infrastructure now, to ensure service reliability and resilience whilst the case continues to be made for a longer-term fixed link. - The Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme will not preclude the option of a fixed link across the Corran Narrows in future as it does not conflict with any land that may be required in future for a fixed link. - Additionally, the new electric vessel has been designed to be easily sold on or redeployed elsewhere, if a fixed link alternative crossing is secured for the Corran Narrows. - The Highland Council has no money to build a fixed link due to the upfront investment costs which would far exceed the Council's resources. Therefore, funding support will be required at a national level.
19.	<i>How long would it take to build a bridge?</i>	Subject to funding approval from the Scottish Government, a "best-case scenario" for a suitable bridge at Corran from funding approval to completion would be in the region of 10 years.
20.	<i>What is the estimated capital cost difference between the proposed new ferry and infrastructure against the cost of a new bridge.</i>	- The current estimated cost of a new electric ferry is £25 million and new infrastructure proposed under the Infrastructure Improvement Scheme is £30 million (£55 million in total). - Factoring in the rising costs in the construction industry because of economic and geopolitical issues, the current estimated cost for a suitable bridge solution, including contingency and approach works, would be in the region of £90 million to £120 million. Source: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20028/corran_ferry_project/1125/hitrans_corran_fixed_link_study

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		It should be noted that a significant investment in other roads and infrastructure on the peninsula would also be required to deal with a significant increase in traffic volumes associated with a fixed link connection, for which there is no funding currently available.
21.	<i>Why don't the Council use reallocated funds from the Inverness & Highland City Region Deal to build a bridge?</i>	The monies allocated from the Inverness and Highland City Region Deal were based on the preferred infrastructure (short - medium term) option for Corran. There are currently no additional monies currently available within the Deal. If additional funding becomes available, it will be open to all partners/projects to "apply for".
22.	<i>Is the Highland Council undertaking further steps to progress the delivery of a longer-term Fixed Link?</i>	The Highland Council has responded to Transport Scotland's Islands Connectivity draft plan as part of the consultation process to ensure that the Mull Fixed Link work includes the potential to consider the longer-term fixed link options for Corran.
23.	<i>What is the Highland Council doing to engage with local community?</i>	- The Council recognises there are differing views in the community on the preferred solution to challenges of the Corran Narrows crossing. Recognising the project has been approved by members, we continue to work closely with the local Community Councils to provide project information and answer questions. - Pre-application public consultation is currently underway for the Infrastructure Improvement Scheme (refer FAQ 27) and we welcome the local communities' views.
24.	<i>New infrastructure is due for completion in March 2027. How will the service operate between these times?</i>	- The Highland Council are well placed to have the Corran vessel scheduled for construction relatively quickly after the completion of the infrastructure. However, delivery is yet to be confirmed. - It is envisaged the MV Corran will undergo ramp modifications to allow her to operate on the new slipways. As scheduled maintenance, this is expected to take a period of weeks, not months. Maintenance timing will be carefully scheduled to minimise service impact as far as practicable (i.e., avoiding summer peak periods).

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		• The MV Maid of Glencoul will operate on the existing slipways when the MV Corran is away for modifications and she may be able to operate on the new slipways without modification, this is to be confirmed. • Additionally, there may be an opportunity to borrow a loch class vessel from CMAL's fleet that can operate on the new slipways whilst the MV Corran is away for modification. This too will need to be confirmed nearer the time.
25.	<i>Why is additional marshalling and parking only on the Corran side, not Ardgour?</i>	• It remains a goal to also extend the Ardgour marshalling area in Phase 2 of the project. However, this is not included within the funding of the current proposed works package. • Although understandably frustrating for local access, it is worth noting that, approximately 80% of vehicles travelling North on the A861 are accessing the Ferry. Hence, only about 20% of vehicles are not accessing the Ferry (typically only about 100-120 vehicles per day travel past the slipway through Ardgour as 'through traffic'). • In comparison, backing up of the ferry queue at Corran beyond the existing current capacity rapidly impacts the A82, where approximately 90 to 95% of vehicles are not accessing the ferry (typically 6,000 to 7,000 vehicles per day travel past the ferry turn off as 'through traffic'). • The capacity of the Ardgour marshalling is approximately 34 vehicles if used correctly which is approximately 1 vessel's worth of storage. • The capacity of the Ardgour marshalling is often not utilised due to poor lane discipline and large spacing of vehicles. • The provision of a Purser's Kiosk at Ardgour will help to facilitate a more pro-active on the ground management of the existing marshalling capacity, particularly during peak periods. • Highland Council will also review local signage to see if improvements can be made to minimise risk of queuing traffic on the A861.

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26.	<i>What are the Public Consultation Events and what is their purpose?</i>	• Pre-application consultation allows for the project to collect comments and consider this feedback as the project progresses. • Pre-application consultation is a process legally required to support the planning permission and marine licence consent applications for the Infrastructure Improvement Scheme. As such, the consultation is tailored to (and only required for) activities requiring consent. This predominantly includes the construction activities and operations associated with the proposed new infrastructure (i.e., new slipways, overnight berthing structure, breakwater, alignment structure, marshalling areas, parking areas, roads, toilet facilities, bicycle shelter, purser's kiosks, paths and utility services). • Affric Limited have been engaged to lead the pre-application consultation process for the Infrastructure Improvement Scheme. Consultation rounds are as below: - Round 1: November and December 2022 in Ardgour, Fort William and Strontian. - Round 2: June 2024, in Fort William and Ardgour. - Round 3: 26th September 2024 in Ardgour. • Public consultation material from past events is available on the project's consultation website: https://www.affriclimited.co.uk/consultations/ • A Pre-application Consultation Report will present a summary of all three rounds of consultation. This Pre-application Consultation Report will be submitted to the respective consenting authorities as part of the planning permission and marine licence applications. It is at this time the responses to consultation will become publicly available. • Please note, the Infrastructure Improvement Scheme is just one part of the Highland Council's larger Corran Ferry Project, for which further information can be found here: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20028/corran_ferry_project. Aspects of the Highland Council's wider Corran Ferry Project, including the process of Council project approval, funding allocation, vessels or operational management of the ferry service are not part of the Infrastructure Improvement Scheme or scope of the pre-application consultation Affric Limited are facilitating.
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27.	<i>Why were second round public consultation events held only in Fort William and Ardgour?</i>	• Potential effects of the location siting, construction and operations of the new infrastructure (e.g., visual impacts, traffic impacts, in air noise etc.) are anticipated to be experienced primarily in the immediate settlements of Ardgour and Corran. Hence, venues for in-person consultation were selected to be near, or at least easily accessible, to these settlements. • It is recognised that many communities in the wider region also have a key interest because many will frequently use the new ferry access infrastructure (slipways, roads, marshalling areas and facilities, junctions and parking, paths etc.) and may be impacted through the construction period. Therefore, the opportunity to access consultation materials and provide comments is made available to all via the project's consultation webpage: https://www.affriclimited.co.uk/consultations/. • The public consultation events and links to the consultation webpage were widely advertised for consultation rounds 1 and 2 through emails to local Community Councils, advertisements in the Oban Times newspaper and updates on the project's consultation website and the Corran Ferry social media platforms 2. • As outlined in FAQ 26, the Infrastructure Improvement Scheme is just one part of the Highland Council's larger Corran Ferry Project. Feedback relating to other elements of the Corran Ferry Project, for example the process of Council project approval, funding allocation, vessels or operational management of the ferry service should be communicated to the Highland Council or your local councilor, as these are not included in the scope of the Infrastructure Improvement Scheme consultation.
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28.	Where can I find more information or express my views?	New Vessels or Fixed Link - For more information, refer to the Highland Council's Corran Ferry website: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20028/corran_ferry_project. - Comments relating to the proposed new vessel, democratic process of Council approval or funding allocation can be communicated to the Highland Council corranferryproject@highland.gov.uk or your local councillor. Corran Ferry Operations - For more information, or to provide feedback on current Corran Ferry operations (i.e. timetabling, fares etc.) please refer to the Highland Council's Corran ferry website: https://www.highland.gov.uk/corranferry or email: corranferry.office@highland.gov.uk Infrastructure Improvement Scheme Information on the Infrastructure Improvement Scheme is available on the Highland Council's website: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20028/corran_ferry_project/1070/corran_ferry_infrastructure_improvement_scheme and the project's consultation webpage: https://www.affriclimited.co.uk/consultations/. Note: Representations made to The Highland Council or Affric Limited are not representations to the Highland Council Planning Authority or Scottish Ministers. - Once the Planning and Marine Licence applications have been submitted to the Highland Council Planning Department and the Scottish Marine Directorate respectively (expected end January 2025), these consenting authorities will advertise their consultation periods and there will be an opportunity for representations to be made directly to them.
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