LOCHABER HOUSING ASSOCIATION
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT
THURSDAY 25th June 2026

Meeting Details

Time: 4.00pm
Location: Microsoft Teams

Present: Cathy Osborn (Chair) Di Alexander Andrew Carr May Tosh Ian Pritchard (Part meeting, Left 18.15) John Cooney Rosemary Bridge Clare MacLellan	**Apologies:** Moira MacVicar **Absent:** Nigel Patterson **Leave of Absence:** Mary Philip **Observer:** Jaynie Ireland (Non-confidential items)	**In Attendance:** Margaret Moynihan, Chief Executive Jenny MacKay, Deputy CEO Kim MacIsaac, Customer Services Officer (Minute Taker) Jim Gordon, Interim Asset Manager Kathryn Higgins, Director of Business Transformation & Housing Davina Melton, Director of Finance, Corporate & LCR Maureen Cameron, LCR Manager Ewan MacDonald, MacDonald & Cameron (Part Meeting, left 4.49pm) David Smith, Accountant (Part Meeting, left 5.04pm) Kevin Booth, Alexander Sloan (Part Meeting, left at 4.27pm)

1. Apologies

Summary of Discussion:

The Customer Services Officer confirmed apologies had been received from Moira MacVicar

2. Declarations of Interest

Summary of Discussion:

The register of interests was noted. No further declarations were made during the meeting.

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 21st May 2026

Summary of Discussion:

The Board reviewed the minutes of the meeting held on 21st May 2026 and confirmed them as an accurate record with a minor point noted regarding pagination. The minutes were proposed by John Cooney and seconded by May Tosh.

Decision:

The minutes of 21st May 2026 were **approved**.

Action: Add numbering to the pages

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of 21 May 2026

i. Annual Return of the Charter

Summary of Discussion:

The Chief Executive provided a verbal update advising the Board that the Annual Return on the Charter approved at the last Board meeting was uploaded and submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator by the due date.

Decision:

The Board **noted** the verbal update.

ii. Five Year Projections

Summary of Discussion:

The Chief Executive provided a verbal update advising the Board that the Five-Year Projections approved at the last Board meeting were uploaded and submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator by the due date.

Decision:

The Board **noted** the verbal update.

iii. Entitlements, Payments & Benefits

Summary of Discussion:

The Chief Executive provided a verbal update regarding the Entitlements Benefits Payments Policy reporting that the policy variant had been discussed earlier that day at the RIHAF meeting and that there was agreement that this rural variant did not deviate from the previous iteration and principle. There was confirmation that while each area may have minor variations the feedback was that the Highlands and Islands representatives confirm they will continue to adopt the previously approved policy variant.

Decision:

The Board **noted** the verbal update and **approved** the variant.

5. LHA Annual Audited Accounts 2025/26

Summary of Discussion:

David Smith, Accountant, gave an overview of the accounts and the position at the year-end including increased income offset by higher repairs and staffing costs (predominantly due to the increased employer's national insurance and the approved new post to the Association), resulting in reduced surplus.

Kevin Booth of Alexander Sloan reported on both the Annual Audit and the Audit Findings Report, confirming that the Association has received a clean audit report with no risks or audit adjustments identified.

Decision:

The Board **discussed** and **approved** the Annual Accounts and the Audit Findings Report. The Board also **approved** the signing of the Letter of Representation and Management Response Letter.

Action:

Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary to sign documentation (Immediate).

Review depreciation policies in line with stock condition data (Director of Finance, Corp and LCR – FY 2026/27).

6. Board Appraisal Action Plan

Summary of Discussion:

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the Action Plan to the Board reporting that it had been developed following the annual appraisal process and the subsequent report circulated by EVH at the meeting in May. One of the actions identified during the process was further training in relation to employment training, in response to this request and recognising the value that the Board had felt of previous training an approach had been made to EVH who had confirmed that they are progressing plans to introduce an annual training session for Board members focusing on employment law and legislative updates.

The Deputy Chief Executive highlighted that the SFHA website provides a valuable range of information, events and resources for Board members. Access issues have been identified in relation to board members' access to this website and SFHA have advised that access can be arranged by sharing a list of Board members' contact details. Individuals have been asked to let the Deputy Chief Executive know by Monday 29th June if they wish to opt out.

The Entitlements, Payments and Benefits (EPB) training had been arranged with an external governance expert. However, due to low attendance, directions were sought on postponing the session until August, noting there is no Board meeting in July.

Decision:

The Board **approved** the Action plan, **noted** the information regarding accessing the SFHA website and **agreed** to postpone the EPB training until August.

Action:

Implement Action plan (Deputy CEO – Ongoing).

Provide SFHA access to Board members (Deputy CEO – July 2026).

7. Disposal 17 Rankin Crescent

Summary of Discussion:

The Director of Business Transformation & Housing presented to the Board a report which detailed the Association's general approach to provide tenancies directly to individuals. However, it had been previously reported to the Board and recognised that, in certain circumstances, leasing properties to organisations delivering essential public services can represent an appropriate and effective use of housing stock.

Several key service providers across Lochaber continue to experience significant challenges in recruiting and retaining staff, largely due to the limited availability of suitable accommodation in the area.

Police Scotland identified this as a barrier and expressed an interest in leasing 17 Rankin Crescent. Consideration was given to allocating the property through the Highland Housing Register; however, there were limited suitable applicants whose needs aligned with the size and location of the property. Having reviewed the available options, it was concluded that leasing the property to Police Scotland would represent the most effective and pragmatic use of the accommodation at this time.

Decision:

The Board **approved** the disposal by lease.

Action:

Progress lease agreement (Director of Housing Management and Business Transformation – July 2026).

8. Loan Portfolio

Summary of Discussion:

The Director of Finance, Corporate and LCR presented a report seeking Board approval for the submission of the Annual Loan Portfolio Return to the Scottish Housing Regulator

(SHR). The Board are advised on a regular basis throughout the year of any portfolio activity; however, this report sets out in the format required by the SHR an annual summary of each loan and the associated covenants. No specific questions were raised in relation to the return, and approval is now sought to enable submission by the end of the month in line with regulatory requirements.

Decision:

The Annual Loan Portfolio Return **Approved** for submission

Action:

Submit loan return to Regulator (Director of Finance, Corporate & LCR – June 2026).

9. Membership - *Ms Ireland left the meeting before items 9i and 9ii were discussed.*

i. Shareholding Membership

Summary of Discussion:

The Board received the report proposing the admission of a new shareholding member and accordingly approved the application for shareholding membership for Jaynie Ireland.

Decision:

The Board **approved** the new admission of shareholding member.

Action:

Add Jaynie Ireland to the Register of Members within seven working days.

ii. Board Membership

Summary of Discussion:

The Board received a report proposing the appointment of Jaynie Ireland as a Co-optee on the LHA Board of Management.

Decision:

The Board **approved** the appointment of Jaynie Ireland as a Co-optee Board member.

10. Policies

i. Whistleblowing Policy

Summary of Discussion:

The Deputy CEO presented the whistleblowing policy, which is based on the EVH model. It was proposed that the policy be amended to clarify that anyone wishing to contact the Chair should do so by letter marked "Private and Confidential," which was considered a more appropriate approach rather than sharing personal contact details.

ii. Firewall Policy

Summary of Discussion:

The Director of Business Transformation & Housing presented the Board with the Firewall Policy advising that the purpose is to ensure appropriate governance controls are in place, particularly in response to the internal audit findings. The policy sets out clear roles and responsibilities across all relevant areas. It was explained that the policy has been developed in line with recognised good practice, including Cyber Essentials requirements, ISO standards, audit recommendations, professional staff expertise, and ongoing engagement with Technica. While Technica does not formally approve the policy, it provides regular support through quarterly performance reviews, during which emerging cyber security threats, required changes and compliance considerations are discussed and agreed. In addition, Technica completes an annual firewall assurance statement to confirm that firewall documentation, security settings and controls are being continuously reviewed and maintained. it was noted that assurance requirements are likely to increase in future, with ISO standards expected to move towards six-monthly reviews; this will be considered and adopted as appropriate.

iii. Schedule of Delegated Authority

Summary of Discussion:

The Deputy CEO also provided on the Schedule of Delegated Authority, noting a minor omission relating to accreditations and alignment with relevant bodies. It was further advised, following attendance at the SFHA Governance Forum, that this document may be reviewed and updated sooner than anticipated as part of a wider review of governance documents.

iv. Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy

Summary of Discussion:

The Interim Asset Manager advised the Board that the policy had been updated to reflect the new damp and mould legislation coming into force on 6 October 2026. Key changes related to the introduction of mandatory timescales for responding to and managing damp and mould cases. Failure to meet these timescales could result in compensation payments to tenants, beginning at £15 and increasing by £3 per working day up to a maximum of £100. While the organisation is well prepared for the changes, it was acknowledged that compliance may be challenging and that and new changes to the processes will be trialled and refined ahead of implementation. It was noted that there are provisions to pause cases and stop timescales where access is not provided, ensuring that tenants cannot delay progress while still holding the landlord accountable for missed deadlines.

Decision:

The Board **approved** the whistleblowing policy subject to the amendment as discussed; and both Schedule of Delegated Authority and the Damp, Mould and Condensation Policies were also **approved**.

11. Tenant Engagement Strategy

Summary of Discussion:

The Director of Business Transformation & Housing advised that the Interim Statement of Intent is intended as a holding statement pending the development of a comprehensive Tenant Engagement Strategy. Work is expected to begin once the Housing Lead has been appointed and is established in post. In the interim, the Statement of Intent provides a clear commitment to the Association's approach to tenant engagement and ensures that tenants and stakeholders are aware of the organisation's ongoing commitment to meaningful consultation and involvement. The full tenant engagement strategy will be reviewed and developed in partnership with Tenants Information Service (TIS) following recruitment to ensure it reflects current priorities and best practice.

Decision: The Board **Approved** the statement of intent**.**

Action: Develop a full Tenant Engagement Strategy in partnership with TIS following the appointment of the Housing Lead. *(Director of Housing and Business Transformation)*.

12. Procurement Summary of Discussion:

The Director of Finance, Corporate and LCR presented the Procurement Improvement Plan developed in response to the Scotland Excel Procurement and Commercial Improvement Programme report previously considered by the Board in May. The detailed plan sets out how the Association will address each of the improvement recommendations identified by Scotland Excel, including clear timescales and designated leads responsible for delivering the required Action. It was acknowledged that achieving accreditation and embedding best practice would be a significant programme of work and would not be achieved immediately. The improvements will require changes to organisational processes, wider staff engagement and training, and the collection of evidence to demonstrate compliance ahead of the next assessment scheduled for spring 2028. Although procurement accountability remains with the Director of Finance, Corporate and LCR delivery of the plan will involve contributions from across the Senior Management Team and the wider organisation.

The Chief Executive advised that the organisation was already aware of the need to strengthen procurement practices and that the Scotland Excel assessment provided a useful framework and clear timescales to support this work. The Director of Finance, Corporate and

LCR further emphasised the importance of maintaining momentum over the next two years to ensure that evidence is gathered, and improvements are embedded on an ongoing basis, allowing the next assessment process to be more straightforward and demonstrating measurable progress towards achieving accreditation.

Decision: The Board **noted** and **supports** the Procurement Action Plan**.**

Action: Implement the Procurement Improvement Plan and monitor progress against identified Action and timescales in preparation for the next Scotland Excel assessment in spring 2028. *(Director of Finance, Corporate and LCR – Ongoing to 2028).*

13. Heating System – *aspects of this minute have been redacted as deemed as confidential in nature.*

Summary of Discussion:

The Interim Asset Manager presented findings of the pilot undertaken in relation to the heating systems installed in properties. The review, carried out over the last year, included technical trials, monitoring data, installation of alternative heating systems in two properties and direct consultation with tenants to better understand concerns regarding heating performance and running costs. The findings indicated that the existing air-to-air heat pump systems perform adequately in bungalow properties when operated correctly, providing satisfactory levels of heat and attracting broadly positive feedback from tenants. However, the systems were found to be less effective in larger house types, where property layouts and the use of open fires can prevent heat from being distributed evenly throughout the home. Tenants in these properties continued to express concerns regarding colder rooms, heating consistency, and overall energy costs.

There were extensive discussions on the potential replacement of air-to-air systems in houses with air-to-wet heat pump systems. It was acknowledged that while such systems may improve comfort level and would provide a more even level of heating through radiators in each room, they would not necessarily reduce energy costs unless combined with additional energy efficiency measures. It was also recognised that tenants in this area have more frequent power outages and therefore are more reliant on open fires.

Decision:

The Board **noted** the findings of the review and **supported** the proposed approach of exploring replacement air-to-air systems in larger properties, subject to funding availability and the development of a wider package of energy efficiency measures.

Action:

- Continue discussions regarding future funding opportunities and potential grant support for replacement heating systems, solar panels, and battery storage. *(Interim Asset Manager – Ongoing).*

- Develop options and costings for a phased programme of heating system improvements for affected properties and report back to the Board. *(Interim Asset Manager – Future Board Report).*

14. Authority to Evict

Summary of Discussion:

The Director of Business Transformation and Housing asked the Board for permission to progress Cases CA205 and CA206, noting Action will not be taken against the tenant unless the payment/engagement arrangements are broken.

Decision:

The Board **approved** the authority to evict for both cases.

15. Development *aspects of this minute have been redacted as deemed commercially sensitive.*

Summary of Discussion:

Ewan MacDonald, MacDonald & Cameron provided an update on current development projects.

At Rankin Crescent, all social rented properties are occupied, and three of the four shared equity homes have been sold, with the final property currently being marketed. Once sold, the development will be financially closed and the final grant position agreed with the Scottish Government.

An update was provided on Glenkingie and Mallaig.

The Board was asked to note ongoing discussions regarding a potential housing partnership at Roy Bridge, although no commitment has been made by the Association at this stage.

Updates were also provided on Glenshiel and Inchree, where flood risk assessments and survey work are progressing to support future development planning.

16. Asset Management Update *aspects of this minute have been redacted as deemed commercially sensitive.*

Summary of Discussion:

The Interim Asset Manager provided an update on the Eigg borehole project following a request for information on anticipated annual running costs once the new installation and equipment are operational. He advised that updated information had subsequently been received from High Water, estimating annual maintenance costs at £989 plus VAT. This includes replacement of UV lamps and filters, water quality sampling and testing, and other routine maintenance required to ensure compliance with safety and regulatory standards. The estimate takes account of ferry travel and associated costs, with High Water coordinating visits alongside work on another borehole on Eigg to minimise expenditure, a full cost breakdown could be circulated for members' information.

An update was also provided on legal arrangements relating to access across the Associations land onto an area of adjacent land recently acquired by the community development trust at the end of Morrison Avenue one of our housing developments at Spean Bridge. Discussions are ongoing with the Community Development Trust's representative, and a meeting is to be arranged to agree the process and legal arrangements. The landowner has agreed to meet the costs associated with securing the necessary legal agreements. The Board was made aware that a hand delivered information leaflet was provided to all of the residents to obtain their comments/feedback to the proposed access arrangements and only one response was received expressing concern regarding a potential increase in traffic. Any access arrangements will be subject to agreement with the relevant roads/highways authority to ensure there are no safety implications.

Finally, the Interim Asset Manager advised that matters relating to Awaab's Law had already been addressed earlier in the meeting at Agenda item 10(iv).

Decision:

- Members **noted** the estimated annual maintenance cost for the Eigg borehole installation.
- Members **noted** the updates regarding land access arrangements and Awaab's Law policy changes.

Action:

- Interim Asset Manager agreed to provide High Water cost breakdown for annual maintenance costs to members for information.
- Meet with the relevant landowner representative to finalise legal access arrangements and associated cost agreements and continue engagement with the roads/highway's authority regarding access and traffic implications
- Asset Management Team to progress training and maintenance support for renewable installations.

17. Update on Organisational Review

Summary of Discussion:

The Chief Executive provided a brief update on recruitment activity. She advised that recruitment for Operational Lead posts is nearing completion. The Board were also advised that recruitment for the Director of Asset Management post has not yet been successful, and the recruitment agency continues to work on filling the vacancy.

Decision:

- The Board **noted** the recruitment update.

18. HHR Annual Report

Summary of Discussion:

The Director of Business Transformation and Housing presented the Housing Needs and Demand Report and advised that the report contained detailed commentary and explanations regarding changes in demand levels across the reporting period.

During discussion, it was commented that, while the Housing Register appropriately reflects established letting areas, previous discussions within the Development Working Group had highlighted the need for housing demand information to be considered at a more local community level.

The Director of Business Transformation and Housing agreed with the observation, noting that demand can only be assessed where an area exists within the system for applicants to express a preference. As a result, current figures may not always provide a complete picture of local demand.

Decision:

- The Board **noted** the Housing Needs and Demand Report and acknowledged the limitations of current housing demand data based on established letting areas.

- The Board **agreed** on the importance of exploring housing needs and demand at an individual community level where data is available.

Action:

- Housing Officers to consider opportunities to provide housing needs and demand information at individual community level where feasible.

- Housing Officers to continue using available settlement-level data to supplement information from the Housing Register and provide greater insight into local housing demand.

19. Health And safety Annual Report

Summary of Discussion:

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the Health and Safety Annual Report on behalf of our Health and Safety advisor from Genisis, who was unable to attend the meeting due to other commitments.

The Board were advised that the accompanying presentation had been prepared following questions that were raised at a health and safety training session previously delivered to the Board by SHARE.

The presentation was intended to provide assurance that appropriate health and safety processes, procedures and policies are in place across the organisation and covered key compliance areas, including first aid arrangements, occupational driving checks and gas safety requirements. It was highlighted that there would be a review of the gas safety compliance arrangements for the cookers in the six properties on the Isle of Eigg, although any audit activity is likely to be costly due to the location.

During discussion in relation to occupational driving arrangements, the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that annual driving licence checks are undertaken and that all drivers, including company vehicle users and essential car users, are required to sign declarations confirming that they will notify the organisation of any changes affecting their ability to drive, including penalty points or health issues. The Association does not impose eyesight testing but rely on the signing of the declaration.

The Board were also advised that any further discussion with our Health and Safety Advisor could be arranged if required.

Decision:

- The Board **noted** the Health and Safety Annual Report and accompanying presentation.
- The Board **received** assurance that appropriate health and safety policies, procedures and compliance arrangements are in place.
- The Board **noted** the proposed review of gas safety compliance arrangements for the cookers in the properties on the Isle of Eigg.

Action:

- The Deputy CEO to raise the suggestion of annual eyesight testing for employees who drive on company business with our H&S consultants for consideration.
- Technical Officers to progress the planned review/audit of gas safety compliance arrangements for the six Eigg properties, taking account of associated costs and legislative requirements.
- Customer Services Officer to arrange further discussion with H&S consultants should any members wish to explore the report in greater detail.

20. Annual Staff Training

Summary of Discussion:

The Deputy Chief Executive presented an annual report on staff training advising that this was the third year the report had been produced and that it provides detailed information on training courses carried out by staff during the reporting period. The report was presented for members' information and scrutiny, and members were invited to raise any questions. No issues were raised and the report was noted.

Decision:

- The Board **noted** the Annual Staff Training Report.

21. Compliance with Model Rules 62-67

Summary of Discussion:

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the annual report for compliance with the Model Rules which is required to be presented to the Board at the last meeting before the AGM.

Decision:

The Board **noted** the report.

22. Lochaber Care and Repair annual report

Summary of Discussion:

The Lochaber Care and Repair Manager presented the annual Care and Repair Report, which provides the Board with an overview of the service's statistical performance during the year, together with additional information on service level agreements and the service's financial position.

In presenting the report, the LCR Manager noted that previous annual reports had often highlighted concerns regarding the long-term financial sustainability of the service. However, she was pleased to report that the position had improved significantly during 2025/26 following the establishment of a new three year service level agreement, resulting in a much more positive financial outlook for the service going forward.

The LCR Manager further noted that this would be the last annual report she would present to the Board and expressed satisfaction that it reflected a positive position for the organisation and the service. The Board thanked the LCR Manager for her dedication to the service over the last 20 years.

Decision:

- The Board **noted** the Care and Repair Annual Report.
- The Board welcomed the improved financial position of the service and the positive outlook resulting from the new contract arrangements.
- The **noted** the performance information, service level agreement updates and financial position detailed within the report.

Action:

- LCR Manager to continue monitoring service performance and financial sustainability through regular reporting arrangements.

- LCR Manager to ensure delivery and monitoring of service level agreements under the new contractual arrangements.

The meeting concluded at 6.20PM.