

**Air Ambulance Evacuation Procedures on Coll
Community Planning Partnership**

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report advises of concerns raised by a local GP with regard to current air ambulance evacuation procedures on the island of Coll.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The recommendations are that Argyll and Bute Council, The Scottish Ambulance Service, NHS and the Coll Local Voluntary Fire Service work in partnership to agree suitable protocols for medical air evacuations (medi-vacs) on Coll and investigate potential funding streams for any infrastructure upgrades required e.g. aerodrome lighting.

3.0 Background

3.1 Medi vacs are currently undertaken by helicopter only on Coll as the runway at the island's aerodrome is too short for the King Air 200c fixed wing aircraft to land on. The existing helicopter landing site utilised for medi vacs was chosen by Strathclyde Fire and Rescue on behalf of the NHS.

3.2 At present, medi vacs take place from Ballard Field using portable landing lights supplied by the NHS. The portable landing lights are set up by the local volunteer fire officers when required. Ballard Field has no shelter or mobile phone signal and, as such, the local GP does not deem the current arrangements to be fit for medical evacuations.

3.3 The existing arrangements for medi vacs are as a result of historic arrangements between the Scottish Ambulance Service and local volunteer fire service. Argyll and Bute Council has no control over the portable lights or landing sites utilised. The Council's Airport Station Manager has however, raised on numerous occasions that the aerodrome on Coll is available for use by air ambulance flights however he was advised that the current Ballard Field landing site was suitable to requirements.

3.4 The aerodrome at Coll has a modern terminal building with parking facilities, heating and hot/cold water. The terminal building also has a phone line enabling the local GP to advise receiving hospital staff of the condition of a patient which is significant in such a rural location where mobile phone signal can be intermittent.

3.5 The airfield at Coll has no landing lights however, the windsleeve lights are operational. The temporary landing lights could potentially be used at the airfield in the event of a medical emergency whilst the potential for permanent aerodrome lighting is investigated.

3.6 Future investment in aerodrome lighting to accommodate medi vac flights would be subject to a business case and discussions with key stakeholders will be required regarding funding arrangements. There will be an expectation that stakeholders will either make an upfront contribution to any upgrade costs required or the Council will re-coup costs through future landing charges.

3.7 Despite the emergency nature of medi vac flights it is essential that landing fees are collected by the Council in order for island aerodromes to remain sustainable and continue to serve local communities.

4.0 Conclusion and Next Steps

4.1 It has been identified by the local GP that current arrangements for the air evacuation of patients from the island of Coll are not fit for purpose. Argyll and Bute Council manage the local aerodrome on Coll which it is considered would be more suitable for the emergency transfer of patients.

4.2 The Council recognise the importance of air services to rural island communities and are very happy to accommodate medi vac flights at all Council owned aerodromes.

4.3 Argyll and Bute Council, The Scottish Ambulance Service, NHS and the Coll Local Voluntary Fire Service should enter into dialogue regarding future protocols for medi vac flights on the island.

For further information and clarification contact Moya Ingram, Strategic Transportation Manager, Manse Brae 01546 604190.