

<p><b>ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL</b></p> <p><b>DEVELOPMENT &amp; INFRASTRUCTURE</b></p>	<p><b>OBAN LORN AND THE ISLES AREA COMMITTEE</b></p> <p><b>9 OCTOBER 2013</b></p>
<p><b>INLAND WATER SAFETY – LOCHWATCH LOCH AWE INITIATIVE</b></p>	

## **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1** LochWatch Loch Awe was set up in March 2010 to improve safety on and around Loch Awe; to provide safety advice; lead in accident prevention work and assist the emergency services during an incident.

The volunteer group now wish to provide a safety boat on the loch; campaign for the compulsory wearing of lifejackets; introduce an emergency sign initiative at the loch and seek to have a national inland water safety forum established.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1** That Members note the content of this report and consider:

1. Recognising the work of LochWatch Loch Awe to date.
2. Backing the campaign to introduce an all-weather safety boat on the loch.
3. Contributing to the debate on the compulsory wearing of lifejackets on and around Scotland's inland waters.
4. Supporting the emergency sign initiative.
5. Supporting the call to establish a Scotland wide inland water safety forum.

## **3. NARRATIVE**

- 3.1** Following the deaths of four fishermen on Loch Awe in March 2009 a Fatal Accident Inquiry was held at Oban Sheriff Court. The report on the inquiry has been published and the findings state that the deaths may have been avoided if-  
Lifejackets have been worn; account had been taken of the weather;

alcohol had not been consumed; the men had returned to their campsite by road; earlier contact had been made with the emergency services.

**3.2** The findings of the inquiry include safety issues that have been tackled by the community safety forum and by the LochWatch Loch Awe Safety scheme. The Sheriff refers to this in his report, and describes educating loch users is a “*pre-eminently important task*”. Part of the LochWatch education activities includes leaflets; posters; signs; a lifejacket initiative and a voluntary scheme for loch users; this includes a voluntary Code of Practice which has been freely distributed. LochWatch volunteers also speak with fishermen and other loch users to encourage the wearing of lifejackets and attempt to deter alcohol consumption whilst in charge of a boat. There are 100 LochWatch volunteers including loch side residents; hotel staff; loch users and fishermen.

**3.3** LochWatch now look to build on the success of the scheme by introducing a safety boat onto the loch. This boat will have an all weather capability and its principal role will be accident prevention. It will be equipped for rescue and will respond to incidents and will support the emergency services. The boat will take the safety message afloat; will maintain the loch navigation marks, assist official agencies and be available on a delayed response basis. The tragedies in Loch Awe and in other inland waters in Scotland have a thread running through each of them and that is that the victim was not wearing a lifejacket. For each activity undertaken on inland waters there is a suitable lifejacket available. LochWatch have made a call for the compulsory wearing of activity appropriate lifejackets on Scotland’s inland waters. This campaign has been taken to Scottish Ministers.

One of the difficulties faced during an incident is providing the emergency services with accurate locations. LochWatch wish to introduce an emergency signage scheme that can be used by anyone who needs to call the emergency services. The sign will display the emergency telephone number, 999 or 112, and will display a unique reference number which, when given to the emergency operator, will provide location information. These signs can be useful in any emergency whether on the loch, on the road or at a camp site for example.

LochWatch Loch Awe is one of the few voluntary organisations working in Scotland to reduce accidents on inland waters and believes there should be a national forum looking at the issues on a Scotland wide basis. LochWatch has made representation to Scottish Ministers to have a Scotland-wide inland water safety forum established.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

**4.1** LochWatch Loch Awe is recognised a unique scheme designed and developed for Loch Awe. Its model could however be rolled out

across Scotland. The current initiatives indicate that as an organisation LochWatch is continually striving to educate people and provide information that allows individuals to make sound judgements on their personal safety on and around water. The underlying aim of the Loch Awe initiative is to reduce the number of people who lose their life.

## **5. IMPLICATIONS**

**Policy:**

**Financial:** None

**Personnel:** No implications

**Equal Opportunity:** No implications

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