

NHS WESTERN ISLES

BOARD MEETING

MINUTES OF MEETING
18TH DECEMBER 2025
HELD AT 10:00AM
MICROSOFT TEAMS



Members Present: *alphabetical order by surname*

Debbie Bozkurt	Director of Finance and Procurement	Karen France MacLeod	Chair of ACF / Non-Executive Director
Colum Durkan	Director of Public Health	Gillian McCannon	Board Chair (Meeting Chair)
Julia Higginbottom	Non-Executive Director	Ian McCorquodale	Non-Executive Director
Paul MacAskill	Non-Executive Director	Frances Robertson	Nurse / AHP Director and Chief Operating Officer
Naomi MacDonald	Non-Executive Director	Annetta Smith	Non-Executive Director
Diane MacDonald	Director of HR & Workforce Development	Sheena Wright	Whistleblowing Champion & Non-Executive Director

In Attendance:

Kerry Coleman	Web, Graphics & Media Specialist/Inquiry Support Officer
Claire Paterson	Secretariat

1. WELCOME

Mrs McCannon took the Chair and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Members apologies

Paul Steele	Non-Executive Director
Jane Bain	Non-Executive Director / Employee Director
Gordon Jamieson	Chief Executive
Sara Else	Medical Director
Maggie Jamieson	Head of Communications, Claims & Patient Information
Michelle McPhail	Corporate Business Manager

3. INTRODUCTION

3.1 Chair's Report

Mrs McCannon advised that there was nothing to note under this agenda item.

4. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Board Members did not declare any conflict(s) of interest in relation to the content of the agenda, which may require a declaration of interest.

5. MINUTES

5.1 Minute of 30.10.25 - DA

Board Members approved the Minutes of the meeting held on 30th October 2025 as a correct record of the discussion.

Decision: The Board formally approved the Minute of the meeting of 30th October 2025.

Action: No action required.

5.2 Matters arising from previous Minutes

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes raised.

5.3 Action Points

The committee discussed the action points as follows:

30.11.22 - 6.1 Finance Performance – *The financial impact on psychiatry was raised as a concern and a request for additional mental health activity was requested within the Performance Report.*

In the absence of Dr Else, Ms Robertson noted that there was no update for this action.

Mrs McCannon highlighted to the Board that as the deadline for this action was February 2025, the status is to be changed to red as progress has stalled.

The Board agreed.

Action: Status of action to be changed to red.

28.06.23 - 3.2 Cancer Service Update – *Review the Board position in relation to the service level agreements with single handed consultants and contingencies.*

Ms Robertson noted the original concerns around the training in chemotherapy, this will be supported by the recruitment of the coordinator post which is due to be advertised.

In regard to transport, Ms Robertson noted that there are currently no concerns that has been highlighted and all mitigations are in place for the winter period.

Ms Robertson suggested a discussion around the clarity of this action and what is the expected outcome. Mrs McCannon agreed, highlighting that there are two actions included within the one point and from the next meeting, the Cancer Update should be a standing item on the agenda.

The Board agreed.

Mrs Smith raised the question around the SLA, asking if the sub national planning is affecting the arrangements and any inpatients in Raigmore. Ms Robertson responded, noting that no issues due to this have arose and patients are unaffected.

Action: Ms Robertson and Mrs McCannon to meet prior to February Board meeting to discuss the future standing agenda item and relook at this action.

21.03.24 – 7.2 Western Isles Performance Report – *Dementia Plan will be presented in due course.*

Ms Robertson noted that there are upcoming interviews schedule for the Dementia and Frailty Lead post, which has a number of suitable candidates.

It was intended to have a draft Dementia Plan available for this meeting however, Ms Robertson stated that due to service pressures this has been delayed. A draft will be shared at the February Board meeting.

Action: Ms Robertson to share a Dementia draft plan at February Board meeting.

Decision: The Board formally noted the updates.

6. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

6.1 Financial Performance Monitoring Report

6.1.1 Appendix 1 – Month 7 25/26 Finance Report

Issue: *The Board was asked to note the report presented by Ms Debbie Bozkurt, Director of Finance and Procurement.*

Discussion: Ms Bozkurt advised that the Board is in a better position with an expected year-end break-even position, with the Month 8 Report being submitted to the Scottish Government this week. The attached report has additional demographic information to what was submitted to the Scottish Government.

Ms Bozkurt noted that the late allocations of Scottish Government monies is a risk, as well as the uplift for Medical and Dental pays. Ms Bozkurt assured that all Boards are in the same position regarding these, with the concern being that if the Scottish Government do not have these funds available, the financial position of the Board changes.

There was other several risks identified with delayed discharges, pharmaceuticals and off island treatment with a high number of placements built into projections, but further placements could cause increased cost pressures.

Despite significant service pressures, overspends have been managed and contained where possible. Several initiatives, including contract agreements and recruitment efforts, are expected to deliver further cost reductions in the coming year.

Mrs McCannon thanked Ms Bozkurt for the detailed report, advising that it is clear the Board's financial position is well managed.

Mr Macaskill noted that despite financial challenges, strong financial control and governance has provided assurance that everything is managed accurately, thanking Ms Bozkurt for the demographic overview which is extremely helpful.

Mr Macaskill asked for an update on the current position in relation to delayed discharges. Ms Robertson informed the Board that on the system, there are twenty-six across NHS Western Isles, twenty-two in Western Isles and four in the Southern Isles.

Ms Robertson advised that delayed discharges position continues to fluctuate, with previous numbers sitting around twelve to fourteen, and the situation remains challenging to manage. Mitigations are in place to manage this, and both front-door admissions and Hospital at Home are contributing positively to this work. The integrated front-door model is also supporting improvement efforts.

Mr Macaskill asked for an update to be provided to the Board outlining current vacancies and any associated risks. Ms Bozkurt stated that this can be developed and shared at the Finance, Performance and Resource Committee.

Ms Bozkurt referred to Table 17, Chart 3 within the report, which shows the cost of a delayed discharge is approximately £800 per month, and there has been a 40% increase in delayed discharge beds. Much of this pressure relates to care home closures and ongoing staffing challenges.

Decision: The Board formally noted the report.

Action: Ms Bozkurt to present a report to the Finance, Performance and Resource Committee, outlining current vacancies and any associated risks.

6.2 Capital Report – December 2025

Issue: *The Board was asked to note the report presented by Ms Debbie Bozkurt, Director of Finance and Procurement.*

Discussion: Ms Bozkurt advised that this report has been created to provide the Board with awareness of the agreed capital investment. The additional allocations purchased were spent on the Xray Rooms, LED Lights, IT Infrastructure Resilience, Industrial Laundry Iron and Cylera Sensors.

A Capital Grant Application has been made; however, this has not yet been confirmed.

Ms Bozkurt informed the Board that bids are being made to the Scottish Government after it was circulated to Boards that there is spare money available for equipment. Ms Bozkurt stated that there is a list held of equipment needed by the Board allowing appropriate bids to be made.

Ms Higginbottom suggested adding climate change information to future reports.

Ms Bozkurt noted that the Board have been advised to create a business case for £160,000 to develop an infrastructure for EV Charging, and updates will be provided to the Board on this.

Decision: The Board formally noted the report.

Action: No actions required.

7. PERFORMANCE

7.1 Corporate Risk Register – November 2025

7.1.1 Appendix 1 – Revised Register

Issue: *The Board was asked to note for assurance the report presented by Ms Frances Robertson, Nurse / AHP Director and Chief Operating Officer.*

Discussion: Ms Robertson advised that as there was no Corporate Management Team meeting in December therefore this months update will be included in the next report. Teams continue to work diligently on these reports to ensure updates are available on the 1st of each month. The information provided is as up-to-date as possible

Mrs McCannon noted that although the risks have been clearly identified , updates must be provided in the next report, and thanked Ms Robertson for the report.

Decision: **The Board formally noted the report.**

Action: **No actions required.**

7.2 Information Governance Assurance Report

7.2.1 Appendix 1 – Narrative Report

Issue: *The Board was asked to note for awareness purposes the report presented by Mr Colum Durkan, Director of Public Health.*

Discussion: Mr Durkan advised that the report relates to period April to September 2025. There have been a total of 190 Subject Access Requests in 2025 to date, with a projection of 250 by the end of 2025. The same trend is seen in Freedom of Information Request numbers with 653 requests received to date.

Mrs McCannon thanked Mr Durkan and his team for a highly informative report.

Decision: **The Board formally noted the report.**

Action: **No actions required.**

7.3 Standards and Hospital Performance Report Q2

7.3.1 Appendix 1 – Narrative Report

Issue: *The Board was asked to note for assurance the report presented by Ms Frances Robertson, Nurse / AHP Director and Chief Operating Officer.*

Discussion: Ms Robertson informed the Board that Mr Durkan is the responsible author for this report and should present the attached.

Mr Durkan advised that the greatest pressure on the system continues to be capacity. Emergency Department attendances have increased; however, the proportion resulting in admission has now stabilised. All wards are currently operating above 100% capacity.

Ms Robertson informed the Board that current data shows there are four patients waiting over 52 weeks. Of these, two are clinically unfit for surgery. A new pathway has been implemented to ensure that all patients admitted are medically fit for surgery.

Ms Robertson advised that we are on track to achieve zero waits over 52 weeks by March 2026, with mitigation plans in place for potential disruptions such as adverse weather.

Mrs McCannon thanked Mr Durkan for the informative report, highlighting that clarity is needed on the ownership of this report and the presenting responsibility.

Decision: **The Board formally noted the report.**

Action: **Ms Robertson and Mr Durkan to confirm the ownership of this report and who has presenting responsibility.**

7.4 Whistleblowing Report Q2

7.4.1 Appendix 1 – Narrative Report

Issue: *The Board was asked to note for assurance the report presented by Ms Frances Robertson, Nurse / AHP Director and Chief Operating Officer.*

Discussion: Ms Robertson advised the Board that zero concerns were raised within the reporting period.

Mrs Wright added that Mr McCorquodale is taking over as Whistleblowing Champion from the 1st March 2026.

Decision: **The Board formally noted the report.**

Action: **No actions required.**

8. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

8.1 Board Meeting Schedule 2026

Issue: *The Board was asked to approve the Board meeting schedule for 2026 presented by Mrs Gillian McCannon, Chair NHS Western Isles.*

Discussion: The Board approved the 2026 Meeting Schedule.

Decision: **The Board formally noted the schedule.**

Action: **No actions required.**

8.2 *No Paper*

8.3 Winter Plan 25/26

8.3.1 Appendix 1 – Narrative Report

Issue: *The Board was asked to note for assurance the report presented by Ms Frances Robertson, Nurse / AHP Director and Chief Operating Officer.*

Discussion: Ms Robertson advised that this document was approved at the Corporate Management Team meeting last month however, as a live document, updates will be made as required and recorded within the action tracker.

Ms Robertson informed the Board that the core principles of the winter plan are; prioritise care for all people in our communities who need it most, utilise effective prevention; ensure people receive the right care at the right time and place; maximise system capacity and capability; and support mental health and wellbeing of the Health and Social Care Workforce. To develop this plan, work is involved from numerous areas to define expectations and challenges.

Flu cases are currently high and continuing to spread. While locally we've been behind the national trend, we are now seeing a significant increase in cases, and the virus is circulating. Ms Robertson noted that staff are strongly encouraged to get their flu vaccination.

In regard to Delayed Discharges, a Complex Discharge Coordinator has been appointed with a start date yet to be agreed.

Mrs McCannon thanked Ms Robertson of the detailed overview of the plan.

Mrs Wright asked that, as the vaccine has been made easily available to staff, what is holding them back from taking it? Ms Robertson responded, noting that there is an erroneous belief that the vaccine makes you ill and after Covid 19, a lot of staff seem to have vaccine fatigue. Ms Robertson added that work continues to encourage staff to take the vaccine and overcome the resistance.

Mrs Smith asked what the maximum number of beds that can be utilised in Erisort if needed. Ms Robertson responded, noting that a maximum of sixteen beds however, Flu and other cases are currently being managed within the core wards which can be challenging due to the limited number of side bays.

Mrs McCannon highlighted the following observations regarding the attached report. The expectations set by the Scottish Government have been noted, and it appears that all necessary measures are in place and functioning well. However, the current plan seems to lack any significant input from a social care perspective. While their capacity to provide support may be limited, previous years have shown the importance of maintaining this link, particularly in managing winter pressures. Ms Robertson thanked Mrs McCannon for the comments, noting that this will be discussed with the Interim Chief Officer IJB and social care provision can be added into the winter plan.

Decision: The Board formally noted the report.

Action: No actions required.

8.4 Health and Care Staffing Act

8.4.1 Appendix 1 – HCSA Board Report Q1

8.4.2 Appendix 2 – HCSA Board Report Q2

8.4.3 Appendix 3 – Safe Care Professional Judgement

Issue: *The Board was asked to note for assurance the report presented by Ms Frances Robertson, Nurse / AHP Director and Chief Operating Officer.*

Discussion: Ms Robertson advised that the attached Quarter 1 and 2 reports have been submitted to HIS and included in the annual report to the Scottish Government.

For the Quarter 3 report, a total percentage of the areas who are complying with the act will be included to provide assurance.

There remains a small number of areas of Real Time Staffing to be onboarded to the system. Work continues around this.

Ms Robertson highlighted that Appendix 3, is not appropriate to share with the Board and asks that this report is disregarded. Mrs McCannon agreed.

Decision: The Board formally noted the report.

Action: No actions required.

9. STAFF GOVERNANCE

9.1 Human Resources Workforce Report September 25

9.1.1 Appendix 1 – Narrative Report

Issue: *The Board was asked to note for assurance the report presented by Mrs Diane Macdonald, Director of Human Resources and Workforce Development.*

Discussion: Mrs Macdonald advised that the September Workforce Report shows no significant fluctuation from previous months.

Over the last few years, there has been an increase in staff numbers, mainly due to the merging of the 2C Practices in Barra and Benbecula. However, Mrs Macdonald noted that due to the Agenda for Change Reduced Working Week, there has been a real time reduction of 19 Whole Time Equivalent posts, with further expected in April 2026 when the next hour reduction is to take place. Mrs Macdonald advised that planning for this reduction is underway, with priority to maintain the service for patients. Mrs Macdonald noted that feedback from staff is that there are concerns about the same working needing to be completed within a reduced time.

There is a current focus around sickness management, with numbers at the highest rate locally, across all job families. The main absence is long term with Anxiety/Stress/Depression/Other Psychological Illness. Mrs Macdonald informed the Board that each absence has been looked at and the spike in numbers looks to be reducing with many due back to work in November. Staff will continue to be supported on return to work through Occupational Health and the variety of Wellbeing Initiatives.

Over the month of September, Mrs Macdonald advised that there were over 30 new starts within the organisation and that there continues to be a high level of job descriptions going through the system. Mrs Macdonald added that there are posts that remain difficult to recruit to, and work is ongoing looking at ways to attract people into these posts.

Mrs Macdonald advised the Board that the ballot closes tomorrow for the Resident Dr's Strike, with fourteen days' notice needed. Resilience Groups are meeting, with plans in place to cover a five-day strike, which is manageable however, service pressures will be felt by staff.

The Long Service Award scheme began this year, with three events and two more planned for early 2026, have all been well received. Mrs Macdonald thanked all members of the Board who attended, to support and thank our long serving staff. Ms McCannon agreed, stating that it was an honour to attend the event.

Ms Bozkurt advised that the Scottish Government have agreed to provide an allocation to Boards for the Reduce Working Week, however, to date there is no confirmation on the amount. Mrs Smith asked if this money is a one-off payment. Ms Bozkurt confirmed that the money will be recurring.

Decision: The Board formally noted the report.

Action: No actions required.

9.2 *Organisational Development and Learning Report 2025 Q2*
9.2.1 *Appendix 1 – Narrative Report*

10. CLINICAL GOVERNANCE

10.1 Healthcare Acquired Infection Report

10.1.1 Appendix 1 – HAIRT Aug – Sept 2025

10.1.2 Appendix 2 – HAIRT Oct – Nov 2025

Issue: The Board was asked to note for assurance the reports presented by Ms Frances Robertson, Nurse / AHP Director and Chief Operating Officer.

Discussion: Ms Robertson noted that during the period August to September there were one Staphylococcus Aureus (SAB) hospital acquired infection reported, there were six Escherichia Coli Bacteraemia (ECB) infections, one hospital acquired, four healthcare associated and two community associated infections. There were no community associated Clostridioides Difficile Infection (CDIF) infections and of the thirty operations completed, there were no surgical site infections.

Ms Robertson commended all staff as hand hygiene, cleaning compliance and estate monitoring were all above 95%.

Ms McCannon thanked Ms Robertson, noting the positive turnaround with cleaning while managing the service pressures.

Decision: The Board formally noted the reports.

Action: No actions required.

11. PUBLIC HEALTH

11.1 Climate and Sustainability Annual Report

11.1.1 Appendix 1 – Narrative Report

Issue: The Board was asked to note for approval the report presented by Mr Colum Durkan, Director of Public Health.

Discussion: Mr Durkan advised that due to submission dates to the Scottish Government, Mrs McCannon and Mr Jamieson have previously approved the attached.

Mr Durkan advised that both reports are an NHS Scotland requirement, covering similar information and work that is covered under the climate agenda.

Ms Higginbottom extended thanks to Lorraine Gilles for all the work on this.

Mrs France-Macleod thanked Mr Durkan, noting that it is positive to see the work being done and ongoing progress.

Mrs N Macdonald asked if this report is to be published on an annual basis. Mr Durkan advised that this report will be annual.

The Board approved the attached.

Decision: The Board formally approved the report.

Action: No actions required.

11.2 Public Bodies Climate Change Duty

11.2.1 Appendix 1 – Narrative Report

Issue: *The Board was asked to note for approval the report presented by Mr Colum Durkan, Director of Public Health.*

Discussion: Mr Durkan advised that the attached report contains the same information however, presented in a different format.

The Board approved the attached.

Decision: **The Board formally approved the report.**

Action: **No actions required.**

11.3 Breast Screening Location Change Appendix 1 & 2 contained in exec summary

11.3.1 Appendix 3 – Breast Screening Fairness Assessment

Issue: *The Board was asked to note for awareness purposes the report presented by Mr Colum Durkan, Director of Public Health.*

Discussion: Mr Durkan advised that a survey was circulated to the Isle of Lewis population following low uptake from the Breast Screening Team on their last visit. From this, the evaluation was that the main reason was due to the limited parking at Western Isles Hospital. The Public Health Team then circulated a second survey, looking at new preferred locations which resulted in the Co-op car park being the most appropriate. Mr Durkan noted that there is no adverse impact on any group of patients from this move.

Mrs France-Macleod thanked Mr Durkan, noting the positive work getting feedback directly from patients which should hopefully increase uptake. Mrs N Macdonald agreed, highlight the positive partnership working with other businesses.

Decision: **The Board formally noted the report.**

Action: **No actions required**

12. REPORT / APPROVED MINUTES FROM BOARD SUB COMMITTEES FOR AWARENESS

12.1 Staff Governance Committee

12.1.1 SGC Minute of 14.08.2025 – A

12.2 Area Partnership Forum

12.2.1 APF Minute 29.10.2025 - A

12.3 Area Clinical Forum

12.3.1 ACF Minute 25.07.2025 - A

12.4 Finance, Performance & Resource Committee

12.4.1 FP&RC Minute 09.09.25

12.5 Health and Safety Committee

12.5.1 H&SC Minute 18.09.25

The Minutes were presented for information and awareness purposes. There were no questions raised.

Decision: The Board formally noted the sub committee's minutes.

Action: No actions required.

13. OTHER INFORMATION

13.1 Demographic Update

Issue: *The Board was asked to note the report presented by Ms Debbie Bozkurt, Director of Finance and Procurement.*

Discussion: Ms Bozkurt advised that, following the attached report being shared at other committee meetings, sharing with the Board for further awareness.

Decision: The Board formally noted the report.

Action: No actions required.

13.2 Ms McCannon took this time to extend thanks to Ms Higginbottom, due to this being her the last formal Board meeting, for her contribution to the Board duties, additionally all the work around sustainability.

14. EVALUATION

	YES	NO	COMMENTS
For Chair only to Complete:			
Was the draft minute and action plan / log received within the 5-day time frame for you to review? If note state how many days before receipt.	✓		
Were you satisfied that the agenda items presented covered the current significant areas?	✓		
Was there was sufficient time to review the papers between receipt and the meeting date?	✓		
Was there sufficient time allocated to all agenda items?	✓		
Were the executive summaries an accurate reflection of the detailed paper?	✓		
Was the information contained within the meeting papers, clear, focused, explicit and enabled members to make informed and effective decisions? If not state what information would have helped.	✓		
Were you able to contribute to the discussions and have your views considered?	✓		
Was there were sufficient refreshment breaks?	✓		
Did you consider that the Board discharged its duty in respect of • Proper Scrutiny • Relevant Questioning • Constructive Challenging	✓ ✓ ✓		

14. DATES, TIMES & VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

Board Meeting

Date: 26th February 2026

Time: 10:00am

Venue: Teams

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution, commitment, and involvement in the Board discussion.

END