

Kilfinan Community Council: Representing our communities on the proposed Argyll Rally routes

Introduction and context

Kilfinan Community Council was dormant until February 2025. Our statutory purpose is to represent the views of our community to the local authority, it is also our responsibility to ensure that public authorities are aware of the opinions and needs of the communities we represent.

At our February meeting we discussed the proposals which have been submitted to the Argyll and Bute Council for the 2025 rally. These would see six day and night stages run in our community council area, including two new stages at Millhouse and Ardlamont.

We agreed to seek views from our residents on the proposed route and road closures. This has enabled us to offer the Kilfinan CC view set out in this paper into the Argyll and Bute Council decision on whether to grant the motorsport order, which the rally organisers require to run their event. To reach that decision the A and B Council need to consider whether community views have been taken into account and the economic benefits of the rally proposals.

As Kilfinan Community Council was dormant until February we did not have the opportunity to participate in the prior processes for these stages, which included a consultation exercise run by the rally organisers, but we have had information from that process to consider.

To engage our communities we published information about the road closures on community Facebook sites and notice boards and invited people to email in or to speak to their community councillors.

It is important to note that our community council area has the most road closures and stages of an CC area.

The road closures in our area are: -

Friday 20th June 2025

**Bealach Maim/Otter Hill Road 21:00 to 01.51 Oyster Catcher
Otter Ferry to Inver Restaurant, Strathlachlan 20.53 to 02:18**

Saturday 21st June 2025

**Bealach Maim/Otter Hill Road 07:48 to 18.15
Oyster Catcher, Otter Ferry to Inver Restaurant, Strachlachlan 08:07 to 13:02
Bealach Maim/Otter Hill Road to Kilfinan village 13:20 to 18:15
Millhouse to Ardlamont 14.03 to 18.50**

Community views

- We received **10 individual objections** citing noise, disruption, business impacts, safety and access issues.

- Community councillors reported some positive comments but the majority of views expressed were not supportive of the proposed routes and a number of people had been unaware of the rally proposals until the community council engagement exercise. This suggests the MCC rally engagement process was not effective.
- We had contact from **two local businesses**, not affected by the road closures, who felt that rally might bring more visitors to the area.
- We received a **detailed response concerned about the impact of the new Ardlamont stage**, the responder previously having submitted a detailed objection to the proposed stage to the council and rally organisers and having received no response. This response highlighted the: -
 - Closure of their business during the relatively short summer season. No suggestion of compensation for loss of income. They also highlighted the impact on their holiday house being unlettable.
 - Impact on people visiting Ostel Bay, one of our area's top attractions.
 - Difficulty in getting to their work.
- **We received a report of a community meeting in Kilfinan Hall in September 2024.** The consensus of that meeting was that:
 - A major area of concern was the impact on holiday lets. There were a number of holiday let owners and workers present. There are several lets close to the route and between the Kilfinan and Millhouse stages. There was concern that lets would need to be cancelled or shortened as holidaymakers to this area will not be expecting to be in the middle of a rally. This would mean losses for owners when the season is already very short. There was also concern that workers who turn lets around will not be able to move between the lets they service, also disrupting these businesses.
 - Disruption for other workers was also a concern. There are shift workers in the area who will struggle to get to work because of the proposed closure.
 - Noise and wider community disruption were also of concern, people felt there was no benefit for Kilfinan and unacceptable downsides. That disruption will not just be for the race time but also for the recce the day before. Large numbers of additional vehicles going in one direction on a single-track road are very disruptive to traffic coming in the opposite direction, lengthening journey times for locals.
 - People also raised concern that damage in other areas had not been repaired from the 2023 rally and were concerned that this did not give confidence that any damage caused in Kilfinan would be promptly repaired.

The meeting concluded that the proposed routing through Kilfinan was not supported, and agreed these views should be conveyed to

the organisers with the suggestion that forestry tracks are utilised, or road closures are confined to areas where there is community support and alternative access.

- The **rally organisers** provided us with their survey results covering our area. The "Argyll Rally Resident and Business Engagement Survey" was carried out through publication on the Argyll Rally Website and multiple social media pages. In summary **7 responses supported the rally, as proposed, and 21 opposed it.**
- We received a **detailed response from the co-organiser of B8000 against the rally (BARS)**. This group has 50+ members and made a series of objections to the route proposals put out to consultation in August 2024. The response makes the point that these objections were ignored by the rally organisers as no changes were made following that consultation. The objections included information on the impact on 7 of the 8 local businesses along the B8000. The key points from the response include: -
 - The closure of the Bealach for a total of 15 hours is particularly unacceptable.
 - The properties affected may be small in number but the disruption to those businesses and residents is completely disproportionate. Also, the Bealach is a critical route for people along the south end of the B8000 to get to Dunoon, closure is severely disruptive for people getting to work and to access services.
 - The proposed night stages are completely unacceptable. Racing 140 cars in the middle of the night, close to houses is simply not on. The level of noise generated at the times proposed is intolerable for the community.
 - Although the period of closure for the Oyster Catcher stages is reduced from 2024, the level of disruption is not acceptable to our community. In addition to the period of closure 140 cars recc'ing the route and moving between stages is extremely disruptive on single track roads, for anyone trying to go in the opposite direction to the flow of the rally cars.
 - The impacts of the rally include serious loss of earnings for businesses, disruption for people getting to and from their work, noise pollution and disruption to people's normal lives, going to and from their houses.
 - In BARS view, rally stages should not be proposed or considered where there are no alternative routes.

We have drawn a number of conclusions from these responses.

- the MCC has failed to engage with communities in planning for their proposed stages. This is particularly underlined by their decision to announce proposals for two new stages in our area without any community engagement to discuss those proposals. When the

consultation highlighted substantive issues with the proposed new Kilfinan stage those concerns were ignored.

- there is no evidence that MCC have considered alternative routes in response to issues raised.
- A number of respondents highlighted the fact that they had previously registered objections and complaints which have been disregarded.
- The MCC consultation in August 2024, on the proposed route disregarded objections raised by substantial groups in our community along the B8000 and in Kilfinan village. No route changes were made in our area as a result of the consultation.
- The rally organisers shared with us a document setting out their responses to each of the issues raised. This runs to 80 different issues, all of which are rebutted by the MCC response. The tone and content are dismissive of community views and concerns. Taken with the earlier point of substantial objections made in the route consultation having no influence on the final route proposals **this underlines our conclusion that community views have not been taken into account.**
- The sense that the rally route is being rail roaded through our area has been further underlined by the rally organisers Facebook and local news announcements that the 2025 rally is going ahead when they do not have the required motorsport order to run the event.

Economic impact

The only economic benefit information we have seen is a one-page theoretical modelling of benefits in Dunoon. This appears to be founded on the assumption that no other visitors would be using holiday accommodation if the rally did not run. We have seen specific information on losses to businesses in our area. These losses include closures of hospitality businesses because of the road closures and compromises to holiday letting businesses.

The BARS submission highlighted substantial losses to businesses along the B8000 and we also heard from the owners of a business on the Ardlamont loop about the significant impact on her businesses.

We have seen no analysis which includes these losses and sets out a net benefit impact. In our view the Council does not have a basis to conclude that there is economic benefit across the Council area. For the Kilfinan CC area there is not doubt that the net impact is economic cost.

We do not accept that the economic benefit criteria to grant a motor sport order for the 6 stages in our area is met and as there is no net benefit information, we cannot see how that criteria can be met for the whole area.

Legal and noise issues

In addition to these points on the approval of the motorsport order we also wish to highlight our concerns about: -

- the legality of road closures where there is no alternative access for pedestrians or vehicles. We would like to understand from the Council how this legal requirement is met for the proposed route.
- the night stages running through our community until 02.00 hours. In our view there must be a prior, public statement from the Council about the noise level on the racing stages and how it complies with noise regulations.

Future planning

The situation we are now in where communities are objecting to a motorsport order being granted by our Council could and should be avoided for future years. The Council should make clear to the rally organisers that they must put in place a credible process, with community councils, to hear and consider community views and economic impact **before** developing route proposals for wider consultation and engagement.

Conclusion

For the Council to approve a motor sport order covering the proposed route the roads regulations require that: -

A roads authority must consider—

- (a)the likely impact of the event on the local community,**
- (b)the potential local economic and other benefits, and**
- (c)any other matters that the roads authority considers relevant.**

The roads authority may make the motor sport order if satisfied that—

- (a)adequate arrangements have been made to allow the views of the local community to be taken into account,**
- (b)adequate arrangements have been made to involve local residents, the police and other emergency services in the planning and implementation of the event,**
- (c)adequate public safety arrangements have been or will be made for the event, and**
- (d)adequate traffic management arrangements have been or will be made for the event**

We are clear that: -

- the views of our community have not been taken into account by the MCC in proposing the 6 stages in our area for a motorsport order.
- The detrimental impact on our community has not been properly considered by MCC in making their route proposals for our area;
- There have not been adequate arrangements to involve local residents in the planning and implementation of the event,

- The economic benefits have not been assessed for the whole rally route, with 14 of the 16 stages which are outside Dunoon not assessed at all. For our area the economic impact is directly negative with a substantial number of businesses suffering real losses of income.

We have confirmation from Colglen CC that their objections to the stage proposals in their area, formally submitted by the CC in September 2024, have not been addressed by MCC and still stand. This means that the Community Council's covering 10 of the 16 stages have objected to the rally progressing on the route proposed.

KCC oppose the granting of a motorsport order for the route proposed. We ask our Council to withhold approval and insist MCC revise their proposed routes in partnership with the Community Councils which have lodged objections.

Kilfinan Community

2nd April 2025