

**Minutes (draft) of Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council (TKCC)**  
**Meeting held in Torridon Community Centre after AGM at 7pm**  
**Wednesday 15th June 2022**

Present: Alpin Stewart (Acting Chair), Sue Whiting (Secretary), Steve Schnabel (Treasurer), Tom Forrest, Mat Webster, Colin Stevenson, Councillor Chris Birt

Five members of public.

1. **Apologies** - Caroline Hamilton (Chair), Louise Pearson (Wester Ross Biosphere)

2. **Minutes of the meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

Approved subject to small amendment required for report on Kishorn Ports Ltd. Minutes have already been circulated but amendment to be posted on website.

*Action SW*

3. **Matters arising from minutes of 4th May**

*Mowifish farm noise* - SS reported that the repair to the exhaust on the feed barge seems to have improved noise levels. Will wait and see if that is the solution.

*Bin opposite Torridon Stores - plan for timber screen.* AS has measured up and is getting a quote for wood and materials. MW suggested that it may be an appropriate time to get a glass recycling bin as well which are usually provided by Highland Council. He will contact Kelvin Wickham at HC to check. Louise Pearson provided contact for Gregor Watson, area ranger, for help with timber surround.

*Action AS/MW*

*Kishorn Port /Community Liaison Group* - TKCC have been invited by KPL to join the Kishorn Community Liaison Group to keep TKCC updated with KPL activities & developments and help generally with information flow. Agreed unanimously, SW was nominated and will accept. Chair asked her to thank Mike Baumeister for the invitation.

*Action SW*

*Highland Councillors new electees, Ward 5* - Chair thanked Councillor Chris Birt for travelling from Strathpeffer to attend the meeting in person. He will be our assigned Ward 5 councillor for this area.

4. **Treasurer's report**

No movement on the account except credit of one penny following a trial to open a PayPal account for TKCC to pay for email subscription renewal online.

SS has negotiated an upgraded contract with the existing email provider which will result in an annual saving of £173 in this year.

**5. Paul Bolton, NTS Ranger**

Paul Bolton came with A1 picture/story boards showing the 6 final proposed design concepts for the new Torridon Gateway Centre. The tender request received 100 replies of which 35 architects applied, and a final 6 designs by those architects have been chosen by the NT.

Location will be on the existing site or within a triangle at the Torridon/A896 road junction. Expected to complete in 2024. Brief was for a budget of £750,000.

Paul asked all present to give him feedback and comments on the designs at the end of the meeting. Designs have been in the community centre for a week for the community to view and give feedback. He has already collected a good number of comments and views, and these will be discussed, and an architect chosen at a meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> June. CH has been asked to participate on the selection panel.

**6. Community Development Plan Update**

To give background for Cllr Birt, MW explained that with the help of SCDC our community survey has been produced. 50% of the population replied which is a very good response. There is now a steering group in place working with SCDC to have further discussions with stakeholders and produce a draft Community Development Plan. When this is available, there will be further consultation with the community and an open day to work out who will take the various actions proposed forward.

**7. Roads – possible social media plan**

Cllr Birt was informed of the long outstanding bridge repair/safety issues on the Torridon to Diabaig road, the appalling state of the surface on Coire Mhic Nobuil bridge. HC have inspected them and are aware, but we do not know if any action is planned. Cllr Birt agreed to talk to Neil Reid, Bridge Inspector once TF has sent him the names and exact locations.

*Action TF/SW/CB*

SW voiced TKCC's concerns that to date we have not been party to plans for road maintenance or repair, and that going forward we wish to encourage better and positive communication with all Ward 5 councillors. Cllr Birt told us he was very aware of the dire state of Highland roads and the shortage of funds and underspending which has allowed such deterioration. Having been a victim to pothole damage he agreed that improvements must be made. A member of the public raised the issue of how difficult HC make it to put in a claim for damage compensation and outlined the extreme length of time it takes just to get an application form.

SW pointed out that despite the proposed resurfacing of a 5km stretch of the A896 Kinlochewe to Torridon, in its current state it is not fit for purpose to cope with the volume and size of traffic. The option for a properly rebuilt, engineered road was raised to take our A road to the same quality as the Gairloch road.

MW and others noted that a modern two lane road would need community consent, and that it may not be straightforward because Glen Torridon is a UNESCO site and a particularly sensitive area.

If such a proposal were to go ahead, Cllr Birt said it would have to be a decision from Edinburgh and he thought it highly unlikely to be successful. It would require a great deal of lobbying. He said he could act as intermediary but cannot do more than that.

If a campaign can be raised to raise awareness of the problems with the roads and give information on lobbying MSPs etc, Jane Dick (Diabaig resident) who was present, has volunteered to be involved with developing a social media presence. She told Cllr Birt about the Caithness Roads Facebook campaign which has 3000 followers and has achieved some action from MSPs.

It is believed that recent repairs to the Bealach na Ba were made after social media raised safety concerns by Applecross residents.

Cllr Birt said he did not know how the government planning and approval process worked to get substantial road investment through to central government. He did know that first it had to get to the top of the HC agenda, and that there is massive competition for funds. He promised to seek out the people concerned and find out what the current situation and plans are for the A896 and this local area.

*Action CB*

Cllr Birt pointed out that in the past, road construction in the Highlands was 50% funded by EU money. Some was still available until end of March 2023 but that won't help us. He asked us to provide a copy of TF's report on the road issues.

*Action SW*

## **8. Correspondence received**

*Donald Duncan, resident of Wester Alligin, copied TKCC on an email that he had sent to all Ward 5 councillors regarding the shocking state of the roads. He also mentioned the continuing noise from the fish farm opposite Wester Alligin and noted that when Mowi conducted some noise level investigations it was done when the farm was fallow and non-operational. In summary he noted that "only by working together at local, Council and probably National level, will we achieve the outcomes we need."*

*Approach by Rebecca Fretwell, Home Energy Scotland offering an e-bike trial for up to 2 months. This would involve 2 e-bikes being made available free for residents to use.*

Home Energy Scotland have proved e-bikes to other remote Highland communities with great success, with local residents going on to buy their own e-bike. Scottish Government provides interest free loans to purchase e-bikes. There was general agreement that the trial was a good thing to try. An Applecross resident reported that the community there benefitted from similar

trial last year. Aside from some storage and maintenance issues, the trial was largely successful, and some residents have bought their own e-bikes since. CH to liaise with Rebecca on how to take this forward.

*Action CH*

*Letter from Stephen MacIntyre, Head of Environment MOWI.* MOWI wish to extend the Torridon fish farm from 10 to 12 pens but without increasing the quantity or weight of fish produced. Jane Dick, who has some professional knowledge of fish farming, said a likely motivation for this was MOWI's stated aim to have 100% of all their farms accredited to ASC (Aquaculture Stewardship Council) standards. ASC have stringent standards on stocking density. Whether or not the request is related to any certification aims, it is a welfare issue and reduction of stocking density is better for fish welfare. Not just for the salmon, but also the lumpfish and wrasse fish used to try to control lice on the salmon in the pens. It is unlikely to increase negative aspects of the farm on the environment, though it has already been noted that the noise issue may still need to be addressed.

#### **9. Planning Applications**

Application for extension to the telecoms mast at Achnasheen.

22/02005/FUL | Extension of tower to 25m height, installation of 3 antennas, 2 dishes and ancillary works | Bidein Clann Raonaid Radio Station Achnasheen.

No comments.

#### **10. Any other competent business**

Sally Cook has resigned from the TKCC. The council would like to thank Sally very much indeed for her valuable input over the last couple of years.

TKCC is now looking for a new member. As Kinlochewe seems currently a little under-represented, it may be good to have someone from that area. Younger people are also under-represented. Anyone interested is welcome and encouraged to contact TKCC to find out more about what being a member entails.

Plans for future meetings are to have 2 per year face to face, one in Torridon, the other in Kinlochewe, and the remaining ones on Zoom. Noted that more public attend on Zoom.

Date of next meeting Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> July on Zoom