

Minutes (draft) of Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council (TKCC)

Meeting held by Zoom - 7pm on Wednesday 16th July 2025

Present: Caroline Hamilton (Chair), Sue Whiting (Secretary), Alpin Stewart, Maud McIntyre, Tom Forrest, Colin Stevenson.

Apologies: Steve Schnabel (Treasurer), Jackie Todd, Cllr Chris Birt.

2 members of the public.

1. Minutes of meeting on 18th June 2025

Approved.

2. Matters arising from meeting on 18th June 2025

Possible development sites – HC has postponed publication of the calls for development sites to allow time for larger scale submissions will be appraised as potential Masterplan Consent Areas. It is not known when the revised publication date will be.

Kinlochewe derelict house – TF received a reply from HC Empty Homes Officer stating that as she is the only officer covering the whole Highland area, her resources are stretched but she would do what she could and keep Tom informed. TF to send photos of the property and site as requested.

Action: TF

AS mentioned there may be options for dealing with land not claimed, as there is new legislation for the Crown to allow communities to acquire land not passed on in preference to it being sold. He will also research the current legislation covering derelict and abandoned land. *Action: AS*

As they are members of the TDCA Development Plan sub group, CH suggested she and AS inform Katie Anderson about the property so that, if appropriate, she can research possible grant availability for community groups to acquire sites of this type. *Action: AS/CH*

Kinlochewe speed restriction imprint – Cllr Birt to report at the next meeting on whether a speed reduction imprint can be painted on the road surfaces at the entrances to Kinlochewe and Fasaig.

Action: Cllr Birt

Woodland Trust – CH introduced Malcolm Turner to Katie Anderson and attended a meeting with them to discuss Torridon Primary School.

HC/Energy cumulative impacts – Cllr Birt to report at the next meeting on whether the leader of HC has now engaged with the Scottish Government as required, and what has happened to the proposed online map. *Action: Cllr Birt*

GALE – Mid Wester Ross (MWR) Housing Group – In response to our questions, GALE responded as follows. With the approval of TKCC members, CH then sent a letter of support on behalf of TKCC to assist in the application for grant funding from the SSE Hydro Fund:

- *Who is the applicant, presumably GALE?* Yes. GALE has an existing governance structure and covers all four CC areas so GALE were suggested by a member of Gairloch CC to take on the administration of the role. However, the housing strategist/project officer will be answerable to the MWR Housing group committee/steering group. One of the project aims is to create its own governance structure so the role can be handed over.

- *How much are you asking the Hydro Fund for?* This will be based on GALE's pay structure. The housing strategist/project officer job will be 2.5 days a week, ideally for 3 years, but it may be 2 years. A ball park figure would be £25,000 if it were two years and £37,500 for three years.
- *Who are the members of the "Mid-Wester Ross Housing Group"?* There are representatives from each of the CC areas within GALE's area of benefit.
- *Which area does the group cover?* The area of the four CCs mentioned. Although Torridon isn't within GALE's area of benefit, as this is more about collaborating between CCs it was agreed to include Torridon. If any area decides they don't want to be involved in the plan, that would be up to them and GALE would respect that.
- *What is GALE's role?* See above. GALE is facilitating and administering the group, including by paying for Charlie Burrow's time planning and hosting meetings, writing up agendas and brief minutes/updates, completing the Hydro fund application.
- *How does the proposed strategy fit with Highland Council's housing strategy?* Part of the housing strategist/project officer role will be to write a strategy for the MWR area based on research of existing plans and strategies, consultation with experts, further consultation, and whatever else is necessary. HC's housing strategy covers a huge area and is largely decided upon by those representing and living within the Inverness area. This would be more specific to us.
- *If houses are acquired, who will own them?* Essentially, they would be owned by the MWR Housing Group. There are many, many different types of models which could be adopted which are often discussed in the meetings, and with CHT who attended the last meeting. Some of those models, people would keep ownership of their house and lease their property out on a long lease. If the group did go down the route of purchasing homes, these would be owned by the housing group (similar to a housing association). Therefore the group would need to be properly formed with its own governance structure. The houses would likely be homes in need of work to bring them up to modern standards and would have a rural housing burden placed on them. Raasay DT did this on some homes which needed a lot of work. CHT would usually be the 'broker' for all these arrangements which creates a buffer between the tenant and the owner/community. This is how it has worked elsewhere.
- *How will the TKCC area benefit from the project, particularly since we understand that TKCC is not one of Community Council areas that is covered by the Hydro Fund?* GALE is based in Gairloch, which is covered by the Hydro Fund. However, there would be no 'favoritism' towards just this area and SSE has confirmed to GALE that they would still welcome the application. The housing strategy will be designed to benefit the area of all four CCs.

3. Treasurer's report

With no transactions since the last meeting, the current bank balance remains at £1,701.89.

4. Shared Rural Network update

On 30 June, very positive news was received that the UK government has announced that the Total Not Spot (TNS) part of the SRN programme has been substantially reduced. There will now be only 44 TNS masts in total built in the Highlands, down from the original estimate of 315 (a map of the revised list of sites can be found on the SRN website). This means that almost all the proposed

masts in remote places that would have brought little or no benefit to communities and businesses will not now be built.

It is hoped the SRN's new focus will be on masts that are actually needed by communities and businesses, and that now the onslaught of applications has stopped, HC planning officers will be in a better position to scrutinise applications properly.

In the TKCC area, it seems the two proposed new masts at Heights of Kinlochewe are likely to go ahead, however the other 10 proposed masts will not. Planning applications for masts all over the Highlands have been withdrawn, including the application for a mast in Coire Mhic Nobuil and the one on the Coulags path on the Beinn Damph estate.

The two proposed new masts at Heights of Kinlochewe connect to a string of masts that runs through the Fannichs to Garve and do not appear to benefit communities. CH understands there is opposition from estate owners to these masts, and because the Fannichs area is covered by Garve CC, it was agreed that CH would contact Garve CC to ask them for their views.

John Muir Trust issued a statement to thank communities, charities and landowners for their contributions to a campaign which, in their view, has led to real, tangible impact to protect and defend wild places and demand that the money is directed to where coverage is needed.

Thanks also to CH and all involved with the huge amount of work it took over the last two years to help bring about this decision.

5. Correspondence received

- Glen Hydro – pre-planning consultation for Easan Dorca catchment extension
Coulin Estate intend to submit a planning application to permit the construction of three additional intakes to the existing Eason Dorca hydropower schemes on the estate. The purpose is to extend the catchment and allow additional water to be abstracted from nearby burns to increase generation from the existing hydropower scheme. This will also involve the construction of a length of buried pipe to connect the new intakes to the existing intakes.

The existing hydro scheme has a catchment area of approximately 6km², there is the potential to increase this by approximately 2.55km² or 43% using the proposed catchment extension. This could lead to an annual increase in green renewable energy generation of approximately 647MWh, which is the equivalent to approximately 240 households' annual electricity consumption.

If the planning application is successful, construction work will go ahead in the summer of 2026 and involve a small team working on the hillside for approximately 12 weeks.

After some discussion, TKCC members agreed that we should write to the developer (and the estate) to ask whether any thought has been given to sharing the benefits of the scheme with the community. AS confirmed it is common practice nowadays for this to happen, and MM reported on correspondence she has had with Cllr Birt which confirmed that HC is no longer prepared to make community benefit a condition of planning approval, instead it is up to communities to deal with developers directly.

CH also questioned how the increased energy is proposed to be transported to the grid. She hoped it would not involve the construction of new overhead power lines, for example. TKCC members agreed it is very important that details of the arrangements are included in any

planning application so that people can understand the full impact of the proposal on the landscape and environment before being asked to comment. It was therefore agreed to include this in our response as well.

Action: CH

- Paul McGreal, Durty Events

Durty Events is organising an adventure race that will come through the TKCC area for a few hours. This is separate to and will involve far fewer participants and vehicles than Celtman, as a result Durty Events hope that the impacts will be minimal. Confidentiality is required as the course for the event is not yet known to participants, however if residents wish to have details, please contact secretary@tkcc.scot.

TKCC members agreed that Durty Events must inform local residents about the event in advance. Also, they need to ensure that participants and crew respect the fact that this is a very quiet, rural area, local residents are not involved with the event and they would like to go about their normal business without being inconvenienced. For example, noise must be kept to a minimum and roads must not be blocked.

CH agreed to write to Durty Events on behalf of TKCC to express the above.

Action: CH

Some TKCC members expressed a concern that we do not want the TKCC area to be viewed as a sort of adventure playground where events can be held by anyone at any time. However, all agreed it was good that we had been told about this event.

- Kirkhill & Bunchrew and other CCs – CC convention meeting with Highland MPs/MSPs re impact of major energy infrastructure on communities

Following the convention of over 50 CCs representing over 72,000 residents held in June, a meeting will now be held with MSPs and MPs in Inverness on 12 August. This is to discuss the convention's concerns about the impact on Highland communities of multiple major energy infrastructure projects and applications and to give MSPs and MPs the opportunity to outline their proposed actions on behalf of communities.

It is unlikely that any TKCC members will be available to attend, however MM and CH both said they would if they could.

- North Highland Initiative – Impact Report 2025

2025 is the 20th anniversary of NHI and to reflect on this, they have produced their very first impact report. TKCC members noted it with interest.

- Gairloch High School – July 2025 newsletter

TKCC members also noted this.

6. Planning Applications

25/02299/PIP - Erection of house and garage -Land 150M West Of Taigh A Gheamair Incheril Kinlochewe. No comments.

25/02545/PIP - Erection of a house, renewal of 23/00310/PIP - Land 300M North Of Aultroy Kinlochewe. No comments.

25/01895/FUL - Installation of ground mounted solar PV array (12 No. panels) - Greenhill 5 Incheril Kinlochewe Achnasheen IV22 2PA. MM declared an interest and left the meeting to allow this to be discussed. The remaining TKCC members had no comments.

24/00006/ENF – Unauthorised upgrade of track – Croft 2, Cromasaig Kinlochewe Achnasheen IV22 2PE. It was noted that this enforcement notice has been issued.

7. Any Other Business

Brown sign – the large damaged brown sign to Fasaig close to the junction of the A896 has at last been replaced by HC. TKCC members thanked SW for all her work in getting this done.

NHS physiotherapist – TF raised concerns that appointments for the NHS physiotherapy service in the area are often not available or cancelled. Having made some enquiries about the relevant person to contact, AS suggested we write to Kate Earnshaw, NHS Scotland Area Manager, to make her aware.

Action: TF

Track to Kinlochewe cemetery – TF reported that a Kinlochewe resident has asked who is responsible for maintaining the track to the cemetery and ensuring it is kept clear and open to visitors. This may become an issue if and when the farm changes hands, especially since the track is currently in a poor state. TF agreed to research and report back.

Action: TF

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 17th September, 7.00pm - in person at Kinlochewe Hall