

Minutes (draft) of Torriddon and Kinlochewe Community Council (TKCC)
Meeting held by Zoom after AGM at 7pm
Wednesday 19th June 2024

Present: Caroline Hamilton (Chair), Sue Whiting (Secretary), Steve Schnabel (Treasurer), Tom Forrest, Colin Stevenson, Alpin Stewart, Councillor Chris Birt.
4 members of the public.

Apologies: Maud McIntyre, Jackie Todd,

1. Minutes of meeting on 15th May 2024

Approved.

2. Matters arising from meeting on 15th May 2024

Roads – Outstanding is the repair to the damaged parapet on the Alligin bridge and blocked drains in Fasaig village. TF sent an email with details of the bridge, including other items requiring attention on the Torriddon Glen road and near Kinlochewe to Cllr Birt, who has raised all points with HC roads team but to date has received no meaningful reply. The blocked drains are apparently on the schedule to be done.

SW mentioned that the previous numbered and prioritised list sent to all senior roads teams members and Ward Councillors worked well and suggested sending a revised list. TKCC members agreed. SW to liaise with TF to do this. *Action TF /SW*

Torriddon Village sign – SW received confirmation from Iain Moncrieff, HC Roads Operations Manager, that he has instructed roads team to carry out the replacement of the sign and Andrew Bone has asked sign makers for a quote. SW to follow up as necessary.

ASC audit – Bakkafrost/Sgeir Dughal fish farm – TKCC submitted comments to independent certification body LRQA for the annual ASC (Aquaculture Stewardship Council) audit of the Bakkafrost farm. These were under the ASC Salmon Standard Version 1.4 September 2022, Principle 7 – Be a Good Neighbour and Conscientious Citizen.

TKCC's points related to the need for regular and meaningful communication with the community, methods of reporting waste and effective resolution of any complaints, provision of information on the Bakkafrost Community Fund and a proposed farm visit. The Bakkafrost farm manager provided the information when reminded, however under the ASC standard compliance should be proactive by the farm rather than requested by the community. The farm is required to pro-actively arrange for consultation with the local community at least twice every year.

TKCC has provided Bakkafrost with contact details for the Visit Torriddon mailing list so they can post information regarding fish farm activity. We have also suggested they contact Shieldaig Community Council since part of Loch Torriddon is in their area.

The ASC auditors noted that the community had taken a positive interest in responding. TKCC members agreed we would welcome further good communication with Bakkafrost going forward.

Scottish Fire & Rescue – SW has asked for the leaflets regarding campfires, outdoor code, campervans etc, however these have not yet been provided or put up on noticeboards. She will chase. *Action: SW*

Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 - approved by TKCC members at the AGM.

GALE - Gairloch CC proposals – CH spoke to Karen Buchanan at Gairloch CC to pass on our views/decisions.

Kinlochewe dog mess/litter – MM prepared a notice from TKCC asking people to pick up their dog mess and be careful not to leave litter. This has been posted on village noticeboards, including at Kinlochewe petrol station and shop.

South West Ross Community Car Scheme – SS completed the forms so TKCC is now a member.

HC Ward management team – SW has circulated roles and responsibilities to TKCC members.

3. Treasurer's report

No payments/receipts since last month, current bank account balance remains £1,569.86.

4. Local Place Plan

A final draft of this has now been prepared and, in line with TKCC's statutory obligations, has been sent to neighbouring community councils for comment.

Community feedback on the draft is essential and TKCC is keen for everyone in the community to have a chance to comment. The following drop in events have been arranged at which TKCC members and Katie Anderson (Development Officer), will be present to hear people's views. This is very important as the plan will feed in to the Highland Council's next Local Development Plan.

Thursday, 18th July, 3-6pm - Kinlochewe Village Hall

Friday, 19th July, 3-6pm – Torridon Community Centre

CH acknowledged and thanked members of the team for the extensive amount of work putting the plan together, including Katie Anderson and Chris Johnson.

5. Shared Rural Network update

Digital Mobile Spectrum (DMSL) and Virgin Media O2 (VMO2)

Topher Dawson (Chair of Lochbroom CC), SW and CH met with DMSL and VMO2. DMSL is the joint venture established by the mobile operators to liaise with the UK Government on the SRN programme and VMO2 is the operator which is proposing masts for the TKCC and LBCC areas.

The meeting was arranged by DMSL and VMO2 to go through the mast sites proposed so they could hear our views on which masts we feel could be useful, and which may not. With the SRN programme already over budget, this could help them prioritise masts to ensure communities and businesses get the connectivity we need.

At the meeting, CH reported that VMO2 produced maps that showed there are currently no Total Not Spots (TNS) on roads or buildings in the TKCC area, ie there is 4G signal everywhere except on some hills. This confirmed recent research by CH and others, who have driven throughout the area checking signal with EE and other phones. Of course, there may be some particular houses within villages that have poor or no signal due to building materials or other reasons and it would be good to hear from residents about these.

Despite this, VMO2 are proposing 11 TNS masts for our area. The coverage maps showed that 9 of these would cover no roads or buildings at all, therefore we said they are likely to be opposed by the community as they will bring no (or virtually no) benefit to communities and businesses.

The other 2 are proposed high up on rocky crags in Glen Torridon for use by VMO2, Three and Vodafone. These are mainly to cover the glen road that EE already covers. We pointed out this is a waste of money and damaging to the landscape. Also possibly fraud as the glen is not a TNS, it is a Partial Not Spot, therefore the mobile operators should be paying, not the government/taxpayers. In response to which VMO2 said they have to put up new TNS masts because (i) they don't want to share the 3 perfectly good masts that EE has for the glen because EE wants to charge them too much and (ii) they need to run new masts through the TNS programme, otherwise they won't meet their TNS targets - this means they don't even want to use the same sites as EE.

We expressed strongly this should not be allowed. If better signal or signal from further operators is required for roads/businesses/inhabited houses, the mobile operators should not be putting up new masts, they should be sharing or upgrading existing masts.

National Trust for Scotland have also reported masts elsewhere being proposed in supposedly TNS sites, when they are actually Partial Not Spots – these include Kintail, Glen Affric and Glencoe.

Unfortunately, it was clear that DMSL and VMO2's main objective was to fulfil the terms of their contracts with the UK Government. However, they did say they would think about what we said.

CH has reported the above to Building Digital UK, the government agency overseeing the SRN programme and responsible for ensuring taxpayers' money is spent properly. They expressed concerns about the above and CH is hopeful they will agree to meet with us.

John Muir Trust (JMT) - Green/Amber/Red classification

The Green/Amber/Red classification for proposed masts has now been prepared by JMT working in conjunction with NTS, Mountaineering Scotland, Scottish Wildlife, Action to Protect Rural Scotland, Association of Mountaineering Instructors, Community Land Scotland, North-East Mountain Trust, Ramblers Scotland, RSPB, Scottish Raptor Study Group, Scottish Wild Land Group, Scottish Wildlife Trust, The Knoydart Foundation, The Munro Society, Woodland Trust Scotland. TKCC and Lochbroom CC are also signatories.

This framework is designed to help identify masts that are clearly needed (Green), maybe needed (Amber) and not needed (Red). Whilst not legally binding in any way, it has been developed at the mobile operators' request and we hope it will lead to proper community consultation.

BDUK say they are keen to hear from JMT and receive input from the other organisations about this.

Public Accounts Committee

The Public Accounts Committee examines the value for money of UK Government projects, programmes and service delivery.

They have recently published a report that states the SRN programme is over budget and it is unclear how operators can achieve their targets. Cost benefit analyses have not been carried out for the programme, especially in areas of low population. Public reporting of mobile communications coverage is very poor, and Ofcom are reporting that it is very difficult for them to establish accurate

mobile coverage date because mobile operators are reluctant to share their coverage information with competitors.

The committee states it is unconvinced about what the (previous) government has achieved to date with the £400million investment from public funds or how it will demonstrate progress. The report also states that new technology is emerging very fast, and the government needs to consider this in conjunction with other technologies for the programme.

TKCC is asking DMSL, VM02 and BDUK to continue dialogue with us to establish exactly what our communities need, and we are strongly urging them to pause the programme and prioritise the masts that are needed. BDUK say they will be reporting on the SRN programme to the new government after the election and we await the next meeting.

TKCC members thanked CH for giving a huge amount of time, effort and energy to all this.

6. Correspondence received

- Forestry Land Scotland – Slattadale car park coffee pod enquiry
Following our feedback to FLS that TKCC thinks the COW Trust's 'nearest toilets' info in the car park is still useful, FLS notified us of a proposed mobile coffee pod for the carpark and asked for our views.

TKCC members agreed this sounded a good idea, especially when other venues providing refreshments are closed. Their only concerns were that the necessary licences should be in place, FLS need to consult with and take into account the views of other stakeholders, including the community and local businesses, and there should be proper control of waste and litter. MM has already responded to FLS to this effect.

- West Ross Deer Management Group
The group is holding its AGM on 17th July 2024, and has invited a TKCC representative to attend. TF agreed to do this. *Action: CH/TF*

- Jess Carnegie, NTS - Health Walks
'Think Nature Health Walks' from Highland Third Sector Interface supports a network of walking groups across rural Highland. These are intended to help with socialising, getting outdoors and improving health and wellbeing. They are not big hikes into the hills - rather low-level easier routes.

If anyone is interested in this in the TKCC area, Jess could potentially help set up a group with HTSI as part of NTS' role in the community. Please contact jcarnegie@nts.org.uk to discuss.

SW has already suggested to Jess that she publicises this on Visit Torridon and other local social media. Cllr Birt said the physical and mental health benefits of groups such as these are well-documented.

7. Planning Applications

- 24/02035/PNO | Peatland restoration work to take place on Ledgowan Estate | Land at Ledgowan Estate Ledgowan Achnasheen
TKCC members were pleased about the positive effect that a scheme such as this is designed to have on the environment by reducing the risk of flooding and enabling the peat bog to grow and hold carbon. No other comments.

- *24/01854/FUL | Demolition of lean-to, erection of extension and alterations | Corie-N-Anamoich Torrison Achnasheen IV22 2EZ*
No comments.
- *24/01658/CLP | Remove Conservatory, replace with timber extension, clad gable elevations | 3 Cromasaig Cottage Kinlochewe Achnasheen IV22 2PE*
No comments.
- *24/02111/FUL | Erection of house | Land East of Medical Practice Torrison*
No comments.

NB. MM contributed her thoughts on the above by email.

8. Licensing Application

- *The Old Hall Cafe, Kinlochewe, Achnasheen, IV22 2PE – licence for on premises sales only*
No comments.

9. Any other business

None.

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 24th July on Zoom at 7.00pm