

Minutes (draft) of Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council (TKCC)
Meeting held on Zoom - 7pm on Wednesday 15th October 2025

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

Apologies: Steve Schnabel (Treasurer), Alpin Stewart, Tom Forrest, Jackie Todd.

In attendance: Cllr Chris Birt, Katie Anderson.

2 members of the public.

1. Minutes of meeting on 17th September 2025

Approved.

2. Matters arising from meeting on 17th September 2025

Kinlochewe derelict house – AS to report at the next meeting on the feasibility of a community purchase. *Action: AS*

Kinlochewe speed restriction imprint – Cllr Birt reported that HC roads team have promised to put a 40mph staging point on the two roads into Kinlochewe that don't already have one. Painting speed reduction imprints on the roads will need to be done by a different team. Cllr Birt believes it will be difficult to interest HC in doing this, but he said he would try. *Action: Cllr Birt*

Coulin estate Eason Dorca hydro extension – CH will contact the land agent. *Action: CH*

Track to Kinlochewe cemetery – SW has found some relevant information, however she still needs to find the right person in HC to talk to. *Action: SW*

TKCC email addresses - SW, CH and SS will arrange a date to meet to discuss a new email provider. *Action: SW, CH, SS*

Kinlochewe Primary School bell - CH wrote to HC as agreed to say that in light of some strongly held views in the community, TKCC is not able to support moving the bell at the moment. Also, if it has been moved, some people have suggested that Gairloch Museum would be a better location than Kinlochewe Village Hall.

CH asked HC whether some sort of preservation order could be placed on the bell and on the time capsule cairn which is in the school grounds, to prevent them both being removed by any future purchaser of the site. HC responded by saying unfortunately it is very difficult to add a burden which would stop a future purchaser from doing this. Once the property is sold it will be outwith HC's hands, however hopefully, whoever does purchase the school will wish to leave it where it is or, should they ever wish to remove it, will liaise with the local community. HC confirmed they will make sure any purchaser is aware of the local interest.

In her experience as a planner, MM felt HC's response made sense and that communication between the community and any purchaser would be essential.

The owner of the former schoolhouse which adjoins the school, Alison Shutt, was present. She said she is potentially interested in purchasing the school and, if she does, she will retain the bell and time capsule. She feels it would be tragic if they were removed. She has enquired whether the site could be split, so she could purchase only part of the building, however HC says this is not possible.

She does not know when the building will come on the market, however she will keep TKCC informed.

Cllr Birt raised the possibility of a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) of the building which he feels HC would be amenable to. It was agreed that any CAT would need to consider what the building would be used for and that it would need to be initiated by a community organisation. Katie Anderson, TDCA community development officer, who is heavily involved with potential CATs in Fasaig (see below) said she would be happy to help any members of the community who may be interested in exploring this further.

Similarly, whilst it is not TKCC's responsibility to initiate a CAT, CH confirmed that we would be happy to assist.

Gairloch Museum – MM submitted a comment on behalf of TKCC supporting the roundhouse project as agreed.

Coulins Estate peatland restoration – CS has spoken to the estate manager. It is unclear which estate is responsible for repairing the damage that has been caused, CS will therefore keep working on it.

Action: CS

3. Treasurer's report

Just a single transaction since the last meeting - the annual purchase of two Armistice Day wreaths for Fasaig and Kinlochewe for £79.20 each. Current bank balance is £1,695.35.

4. Update on community development plan – Katie Anderson

Katie has been in post as Development Officer for 18 months. She is guided by priorities identified in the Torridon & Kinlochewe Community Development Plan and is supported by the TDCA Development Sub Group who meet monthly to review progress.

The development projects contribute to the running of Loch Torridon Community Centre (LTCC) through management fees. This helps with insurance costs, heating, stationery etc. In the current financial year, the projects will contribute around £5k to LTCC, helping to make it more sustainable. All projects are fully funded and don't use money from TDCA.

Projects completed by Katie so far are:

Local Services Information Pack – successful application to the Community Regeneration Fund to develop a local services information pack, which has recently been delivered to every house in the TKCC area. A digital version in English and Gaelic will soon be finalised and made available online.

Community Recycling Hub – This was opened in March 2025 in the LTCC carpark, taking items up to the size of a microwave oven. It is well used, although there have been some delays in getting volunteers to take regular runs. Katie is currently negotiating with ILM Highland for 6 monthly amnesties for them to take larger electrical items such as washing machines and fridges.

Two successful swap shop events were held to support the launch of the hub, with more planned. Gairloch Museum are bringing their popular Make Do & Mend sessions to LTCC on 17th October.

Community Cinema - Katie has taken over running the cinema in LTCC with the support of volunteers to hold regular film nights. These have been popular and well attended by up to 20-30 people per screening.

Games & Growers in Kinlochewe – Katie set up a regular afternoon games session in Kinlochewe Village Hall on Wednesdays following the Soup Lunch. She is co-ordinating a Growers Group in Kinlochewe to keep village planters looking their best.

In addition, Katie is doing a considerable of work on the following larger, longer term projects.

Community Resilience Planning – This is a major new project. Recent storms and power outages, plus wildfires, have shown how important resilience/emergency planning is. Katie was involved in making a successful application to Royal Countryside Fund for two years funding to ensure we have a robust community emergency plan. This funding will pay for a staff member to take the work forward. Prior to having someone in post, Katie will begin work on forming a steering group.

The project is intended to include extensive community engagement and to consider each settlement's individual needs as well as what action may apply to the whole TKCC area. The project will have support from the HC Emergency Planning Team. Year two of the project will be focused on funding, buying any equipment that may be needed and testing and refining the plan.

Torridon Play Park – A formal Community Asset Transfer (CAT) application has been submitted to HC. This was validated at the end of September so HC now have 6 months to make a decision. Local parents have met and discussed their priorities and Katie has contacted playpark equipment suppliers to get an idea of costs. Katie has also begun the work of writing a funding strategy.

Torridon School - Torridon Primary School has been a key focus in the last 18 months. Consultants SKS who were employed to undertake the feasibility study, identified a number of potential funding sources. Katie has spent time meeting with those funders and has found there are significant challenges. Over the summer TDCA has advertised locally and regionally for potential business partners to help with redevelopment costs.

Torridon campsite - Exploring a CAT of the campsite in Fasaig was identified as a development plan priority. It also represents a potential new funding stream for the community. A successful bid to Crown Estates for funding for technical aspects of a feasibility study has led to John Gilberts Architects now working on the project. Test pits have been dug on the site and it is believed it will be possible to improve the site's drainage enough to allow campervans to park.

A community consultation event in mid November will soon be publicised which will give people an opportunity to feed into the project's development. In addition, the Development Sub Group asked campers and campervan users over the summer to provide feedback on the current site and suggest improvements to the current facilities.

The full feasibility study and business plan will be written by Katie and two members of the subgroup, aiming to have this finished for Spring 2026.

In answer to questions to Katie from TKCC members present:

Re Campsite:

- a new access will be required as the current access point close to the Fire Station is restricting. The toilet block will remain in its current position.
- Paul Bolton at NTS says designs for the proposed NTS Gateway opposite the campsite area have been submitted and are awaiting funding, though no progress so far. Paul is on the Development Sub Group and is therefore closely involved with both projects.

- There will be provision for a mix of campervans and tents, numbers yet to be formalised. Demand for campervan sites is very high in the season and the new campsite will not be able to absorb it all, but it will take some pressure off other local campsites and some of the roadside layby parking, in addition to generating income for the community.

Re Emergency Resilience Plan

- Two local people have expressed interest in the new post, and these are being followed up. Funding for the post covers one person for one day a week but this may be adjusted depending on the applicants.
- CH said she thinks it is very important that TKCC members are closely involved with the plan and that they need to be involved with the steering group to bring together their knowledge of local villages and what is needed.

CH thanked Katie for her very informative presentation and for the considerable amount of work she has done to date. If you have any questions or feedback, please contact Katie by email to: development@lochtorridoncentre.co.uk

5. Short Term Let Control

Powers for local authorities to designate Short Term Let Control Areas have recently been introduced to manage high concentrations of secondary lettings by restricting or preventing short term lets that affect the availability of residential housing. These powers allow planning policies to be used by HC to assess applications which change the use of a dwellinghouse to a short-term let and allow communities and individuals the right to make representations through the planning application process. In the HC area, currently only Badenoch and Strathspey is subject to this control.

Cllr Birt said that HC Ward Committees are due to discuss soon whether to extend the control into part, all or none of each of their wards. If they do decide to designate new Short Term Let Control Areas, the next stage will be a wide consultation before recommendations are made to HC. HC will then ask the Scottish Government for approval.

Cllr Birt said he and Cllr Liz Kraft have decided to vote in favour of extending control into all of Ward 5. This is because an HC officer reported that since Short Term Let Control was introduced into Badenoch and Strathspey, house prices have fallen, which Cllr Birt said was good news for local people.

Despite already having made a decision, Cllr Birt said he was still interested in TKCC's views. Points made by TKCC members and others present included the following:

- *The rationale for control is to manage areas of high concentration of short term lets and/or to maintain the character of a community. Who defines "high concentration" and "character"? It is important that this is clear.*
Cllr Birt did not know the answer to this question but said the high pressure wards are Skye, Badenoch and Strathspey, and Ward 5. Also that the ad hoc guidelines that had been developed for Badenoch and Strathspey seemed to be working.
- *Having to apply for planning permission will be an additional burden on local people who are already required to apply for a licence if they wish to supplement their income through holiday rentals.*
Cllr Birt agreed this was a drawback, however the existing licensing system only considers whether a building is suitable as a short term let, not on whether a short term let is desirable for the community.

- *The broadbrush approach suggested by short term let control is worrying. Many local people rely on holiday lets for their income.*

Cllr Birt said there was no intention to make the control retrospective.

- *A potentially more serious issue for the TKCC area is that of empty houses and/or rarely used second homes. Since our local economy relies on tourism, renting houses out short term is much better for the community than leaving them empty.*

Cllr Birt said there was no intention to bring short term letting to a standstill. However, HC's view is that Torridon is a problem area.

- *Is there enough data from Badenoch and Strathspey to indicate whether short term let control has resulted in more houses being made available for long term rent? This would be beneficial for the TKCC area.*

Cllr Birt did not know the answer to this question. He said most of the refusals so far have concerned applications from people wanting to build new short term lets.

The discussion concluded by Cllr Birt saying that TKCC is the only community council in Ward 5 that he is involved with which has expressed any doubts. The other five are all firmly in favour.

6. Correspondence

- HC – Housing Needs & Demand Assessment Survey

HC has launched a survey to assess local housing needs. This is to enable them to plan for new housing and housing services, making sure the needs of all residents and communities are met. TKCC members were very pleased that HC are doing this, therefore all homeowners, tenants and/or people looking for a home in Highland are encouraged to have their say before 7 November 2025. To take part in the survey, see www.researchresource.co.uk/AJHighlandHNDA.html or contact Research Resource to complete a telephone survey on 0141 641 6410 or at info@researchresource.co.uk

- South West Ross Community Car Scheme - AGM Notice

SWRCCS are holding their AGM at 18:30 on Thursday 23rd October at the Lochcarron Centre. MM agreed to attend on behalf of TKCC.

Action: MM

7. Planning Applications

None.

8. Any Other Business

None.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 19th November 2025, 7.00pm – by Zoom