

Minutes (draft) of Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council (TKCC)
Meeting held by Zoom at 7.00pm
Wednesday 1st March 2023

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

1. **Apologies** – Mat Webster, Maud McIntyre.
2. **Minutes of the meeting on 1st February 2023**
Approved.

3. Matters arising from minutes of 1st February

Blether Bench Diabaig - The Manager of Harbours Highland has told SW that HC does not own the pier, instead he thinks it is owned by the Bacon family. His view is that as long as the bench is put in a safe place and does not cause an obstruction, it should be okay. It was agreed we should ask the Bacons as well. Action: CH

Speeding in Fasaig – TF advised that HC will not put repeater signs on a side road. SW/MW have sourced some 3mm thick plastic signs (approx. £50 for a pack of 10) and it was agreed we should try putting these up on lamp posts ourselves. Action: SW

Kinlochewe Toilet Signage - Eric Morrison at HC has informed MM that the sign is now on order and hopefully should arrive soon. It will be erected next to the Kinlochewe sign on the Gairloch side of the village. HC intend also to replace the poles that the Kinlochewe sign is on.

Community Development Plan – The draft plan is now ready to share with the community. It will be available shortly online, there will also be paper copies if anyone needs one. The development plan action group is keen to emphasise the plan is a draft, and that they need the community's views on it. Events will be held in Torridon Community Centre and Kinlochewe Hall on Saturday, 25 March at which people can see the plan and provide their views. All are welcome. It will also be possible to provide feedback by email and phone.

It is intended that a development officer will be appointed to assist with the actions and making projects happen. Initially, the development officer will be employed by the TDCA and their role will include identifying sources of grant funding, and applying for funding as necessary. They will ensure the community is kept actively involved, with plenty of further consultation as things progress.

Kishorn Port & Dry Dock – SW is trying to speak to KPL to co-ordinate a notice for accommodation wanted. She will follow this up at the next liaison group meeting on 22 March. Action: SW

Roads - Bridge over river at Braigh Beag. Andrew Bone (HC) continues to say the repair is in hand and he now has contractors looking at it. Still no sense of when it will be done.

Torridon Glen culvert – Andrew Bone has also advised that work to finish repairs to the collapsed culvert in Torridon glen will take place every night between Monday 6th March until Saturday 11th March. During this time, only emergency vehicles will be able to get through.

TKCC will publicise the road closure as soon as possible through Visit Torridon, Facebook etc.

Action: SW

Torridon Glen resurfacing – Members welcomed a recent announcement from HC that surface dressing of a further 5km of the Torridon glen road will be included in their proposed 2023/24 capital budget.

Glenelg & Arnisdale CC- closure of Kyle dental practice. Unfortunately, SS was unable to attend the meeting on 7th February and has not heard anything since. He will follow up and draft a letter of support from TKCC if appropriate.

Action: SS

AbilityNet. Details forwarded to TDCA as agreed.

Maree Todd MSP (MT) - SW met MT and Cllr Birt and raised the issue of funding for roads. MT said she was very aware of a massive lack of funding for the whole of the Highlands, and that HC is facing a huge budget deficit. She said this is because the UK government is not providing enough funds. She advised that it is definitely worth continuing to push for roads funding as she is hopeful of change, and it helps the Scottish government lobby Westminster.

MT also said the UK government levelling up fund is providing funding to trunk the Achnasheen to Kyle section of the NC500, this should relieve traffic in Glen Torridon.

Information on subject areas – Posting the list provided by Cllr Kraft on the TKCC website is in hand.

Action: SW

Croft 1, Diabaig – CH wrote to Mr Bartholomew as agreed. He responded by asking whether TKCC would approve in principle his idea for a small number of serviced motorhome pitches on the croft. No details have been provided, therefore TKCC has told him there is insufficient detail to be able to comment.

E-bikes – CH has reported back to MM that no-one from Kinlochewe participated in the e-bike trial last year.

4. Peter Fenton - South West Ross Community Car Scheme (SWRCCS)

Peter gave a presentation on what the scheme is doing, and what the community can do to help.

SWRCCS provides volunteer car owners to enable people who do not have their own transport, or access to transport, to get where they want. The whole of the South West Ross area is covered including Kinlochewe, Torridon, Diabaig, Shieldaig, Applecross, Lochcarron, Strathcarron and Achnasheen. Originally the scheme provided volunteers with their own cars to take and return people to church, see friends, community events, doctor appointments within this area, but now the provision of hospital transport has reduced significantly, there is an increasing demand for runs to hospitals including Raigmore, Broadford, Dingwall, Aberdeen and Golspie. Declining numbers of opticians and dentists within the area has also increased demand for transport further afield.

The scheme is funded mainly by Highland Council, and by NHS Highland which covers some admin costs, prescription runs to local surgeries. See www.swrc-carscheme.co.uk for more information – this includes a True/False list of what the scheme offers and helpful links to public transport timetables.

The scheme is currently changing its constitution to become a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). This is to help widen volunteer recruitment and the voting system.

There are ongoing discussions around the possible provision of a minibus in response to a request from Shieldaig school and the recent community survey. Due to a reluctance of some drivers to drive a minibus, SWRCCS is exploring whether they could provide a car for groups of 2 to 5 people. Also, for larger groups, whether they could hold a fund which could be used to pay local transport providers such as Donald's minibus or a coach. SWRCCS will present proposals at the Community Development Plan Day on 25th March.

SWRCCS continues to need more drivers and details of how to volunteer is on their website. They also need telephonists to cover slots from 9.00am to 2.00pm. Telephonists can work from their own home – the car scheme number is simply diverted to their phone number in the morning on the day they choose, they are given a list of available drivers to contact, plus support contacts. As with the driving, telephonists can choose how often they wish to volunteer, select the day/period they are available, and if they want a break for any period of time.

Training/guidance is given once an application to volunteer has been accepted. Peter is happy to speak to anyone interested in volunteering and put them in touch with an existing volunteer to give a rounded picture of what is involved.

SS mentioned the rate per mile that volunteer drivers are paid has been static since 2012 at 45p per mile or 50p with a passenger. Peter stated they are working with Communities Transport Association to lobby the Treasury, MPs and MSPs to increase this allowance. The scheme has to adhere to Treasury and charity regulations and cannot increase it until it is changed. If more than the allowance is paid, volunteers would be required to complete self-assessment tax returns.

CH asked Peter if the scheme works with any other CC's or organisations, and he confirmed they work with Applecross CC, Applecross Development Company, Shieldaig Community Association, Lochcarron Development Company and the Howard Doris Centre. Recruitment of volunteer drivers and telephonists is very important and he asked everyone to let as many people know as possible.

5. Treasurer's Report

The only expenditure since the last meeting was £15 for Kinlochewe Hall rental and £86 for Zurich insurance. Balance of the account stands at £2038.07, £700 of which is allocated to the Covid fund. TKCC's own funds stand at £1338.07.

6. Torridon School – Highland Council statutory consultation

HC has opened its statutory consultation for the closure of Torridon School. This will run from 28 February to 21 April 2023. Details of this, and how to make comments, can be found at https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/26531/torridon_primary_school_consultation_paper

HC is holding a public meeting at Torridon Community Centre, 28 March 2023 at 6.30pm. This is an opportunity for the public to hear more from HC and the Education Service about the proposal, to ask questions, and have the views of stakeholders recorded so they can be taken into account.

The proposal is being advanced for the following reasons:

- Torridon Primary School has been mothballed since the end of session 2011- 12, and no children have attended the school since that time.
- Current population figures within the school catchment indicate a maximum school roll of either 5 or 6 pupils over the next 5 years.
- A school roll of this size provides significant impediments to the successful implementation of a Curriculum for Excellence.

- A school roll of 5-6 pupils hampers social interaction opportunities for children, who conversely benefit from attending larger schools amongst more children of their own age.

TF questioned why HC was closing the school when it was a larger building than either Kinlochewe or Shieldaig schools. All also agreed that not having a school in either Kinlochewe or Torridon was having a detrimental effect on the whole area, as it made it unattractive for younger people with families to live here.

Anne Macrae pointed out a number of inaccuracies in the HC paper setting out the proposal, e.g., the school does not just comprise one room.

It was agreed to have a full discussion at the next TKCC meeting once people have had a chance to read the proposal in full. In the meantime, we will help publicise the consultation through the usual channels. AS also offered to print a few copies of the consultation paper and put them in Torridon and Kinlochewe shops and the community centre/hall.

Action: SW/AS

7. Community Map Scotland

CH attended a webinar and MM watched a recording of a presentation given by Geoxphere, a company which has designed software for use by Community Councils. It is based on a programme they have been running for some years in England and Wales called Parish Online.

The software takes available public data that exists on everything, including the location of things such as public toilets, parking places, EV charging points, schools, churches, etc and overlays it with a filter that allows the user to map specific things in their own and other areas. A map can be created to pinpoint specific subjects so that if, for example, a community organisation wanted to ask for funding or a grant for EV points it can show either where they currently are or highlight a lack of them. Communities in England have apparently found it a useful and persuasive tool.

Communities can also create their own maps. CH suggested for example, plotting the location of potholes, or where camper vans stop regularly overnight to illustrate where facilities could be needed. It could also be used to create resilience in an area such as ours, where there are people who have considerable local knowledge, but it isn't recorded anywhere. Using the software could ensure community organisations do not lose this knowledge when people retire or leave.

The software is provided free of charge for 12 months and all information is kept securely. There is no limit to the number of users - TKCC could sign up and nominate other community organisations also to use it - for example TDCA, community development plan group, COW Trust. Geoxphere hope that a sufficient number of Community Councils do sign up so the Scottish Government will subsidise a subscription after that, as is now the case in England for Parish Councils.

CH proposed that TKCC should sign up for the free trial to see what can be done and how useful it may be. Members agreed.

Action: CH

8. Correspondence Received

- Highland Council – Ward 5 Roads meeting 27 March 2023
SW and TF will attend. If anyone has any matters they would like brought up at the meeting, please contact SW or TF.
- Loch Broom CC – proposed closure of Mo Dhachaidh care home in Ullapool

Action: SW/TF

A public meeting has been held in Ullapool to discuss this. Around 50 people attended, including Cllrs Kraft (Ward 5) and Morrison (Durness). The community agreed to try and get HC to buy the buildings and commission NHS Highland to continue running a care home in them.

TKCC members were very concerned that the care home may close. It was agreed we should support Loch Broom CC and the Ullapool community by also putting pressure on HC. As a member of HC's Health and Social Care Committee, Cllr Birt agreed to do this on our behalf.

Action: CB

- Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) - Slattadale car park
FLS say they are planning to introduce parking charges to support the continued provision of visitor facilities at the car park. Many of their other car parks will remain free of charge.

TKCC members questioned why Slattadale was being singled out in this way and, since the toilets have been closed for a long time, what facilities FLS were referring to. Also, whether a car park charge would raise enough money to be able to do anything. CH agreed to respond to FLS accordingly.

Action: CH

9. Planning Applications

23/00177/FUL - *Alterations and installation of a disabled access ramp / Kinlochewe Public Toilets Slioch Terrace, Kinlochewe.* TKCC members were in support of this application.

23/00487/FUL - *Erection of house / Land 45M SW Of Barnfield, Annat, Torridon.* No comments.

Preplanning consultation – upgrade of telecoms mast at Cornerstone 11173828, 200m uphill from Forest Road, South East of A896, Kinlochewe, Coulin NGR: E: 201360 N: 858260. No comments.

10. Any Other Business

Cllr Birt reported positive news on the forthcoming roads budget for Ward 5. The existing system of allocating funding by percentage of population and length of roads in each region still applies but a new fund has been created that allows funding also to be allocated where the need is most.

As a result, the total funding proposed for 2023/24 is as follows:

- Continuation of last year's budget: £7.2 million; to this is added £5.5 million, making £12.3 million to be allocated to wards according to the usual formula;
- £7.7 million to be allocated according to perceived need across the whole of Highland; a completely new fund;
- £1.266 million for a rapid repair service, e.g. for potholes, etc.

SW asked Cllr Birt who actually makes the decision in Ward 5 where the funds are used. He replied that the Ward 5 Councillors decide, based on information given to them by the Roads Team. SW asked if this information could be made available to TKCC in case the many urgent road issues in our area are not addressed, and we have an opportunity to address this at the forthcoming roads meeting. Cllr Birt agreed we should have this.

Meeting concluded.

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 29th March at 7.00pm on Zoom