

Minutes (draft) of Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council (TKCC)
Meeting held in Kinlochewe Village Hall - 7pm on Wednesday 17th September 2025

Present: Caroline Hamilton (Chair), Sue Whiting (Secretary), Steve Schnabel (Treasurer), Maud McIntyre, Tom Forrest, Colin Stevenson.

Apologies: Alpin Stewart, Jackie Todd.

In attendance: Cllr Chris Birt, Katie Anderson.

3 members of the public.

1. Minutes of meeting on 16th July 2025

Approved.

2. Matters arising from meeting on 16th July 2025

Possible development sites – HC has now published the calls for development sites.

Kinlochewe derelict house – TF reported that the HC Empty Homes Officer has told him she is looking into what, if anything, can be done. Cllr Birt said he had raised the matter with the planning department, they said because the building has 4 walls, they are not interested in demolishing it.

Katie Anderson said she thought it might be possible for the community to acquire the site but that the legislation allowing this was difficult to use. AS to report back on his research at the next meeting.
Action: AS

Kinlochewe speed restriction imprint – Cllr Birt reported that there was no progress yet on getting speed reduction imprints painted on the road surfaces at the entrances to Kinlochewe and Fasaig. He said HC roads department do not appear to pay much attention to speed issues.

MM said the issue of cars ignoring the speed limit frequently comes up in conversation with members of the community, and all TKCC members agreed it was a high priority, especially since we fought so hard to get the 20mph limits implemented in the first place.

Cllr Birt said he would keep on trying. He suggested that TKCC should write to Ian Moncrieff at HC Roads, and he would then try and get him to meet with him in Kinlochewe to witness first hand the problems. This tactic had worked with success in Poolewe.
Action: SW/Cllr Birt

HC/Energy cumulative impacts – Cllr Birt said the online map is now available but it is not very informative. The leader of HC has also written to the Scottish government and has received a poor response. The leader does not intend to follow this up since the HC administration's view is they should remain neutral in case there is a public inquiry.

GALE – CH said she had been contacted by the new Chair of GALE, Michael Leng. He told her he was keen for GALE to work more closely with community councils and other community organisations, and he felt GALE's work should be driven from the bottom up, ie. by what communities would like them to do. TKCC members agreed this sounded good, we will see what it means in practice.

Coulin estate Eason Dorca hydro extension – CH wrote to the estate as agreed and received a response from the land agent. This stated that the estate was happy to support the community but

asked how TKCC's request for funding fitted with other requests they had received from community organisations over the years.

CH has spoken to COW Trust and Kinlochewe Village Hall about this, they have confirmed they would be happy for TKCC to take a lead. CH will therefore speak to the land agent to see whether some sort of community fund could be established, perhaps with other estates contributing as well. An advantage of this could be that it would provide a source of funding for community organisations without volunteers having to research possible grant sources and fill in extensive application forms every time sometimes quite small items of expenditure are required.

Action: CH

Durty Events adventure race – CH wrote as agreed to ask that any inconvenience to locals be kept to a minimum, and TKCC members were pleased the event seemed to have passed off without significant disruption.

Second CC convention re impact of major energy infrastructure on communities – CH attended this in August on behalf of TKCC. She reported that nearly 60 CCs were present representing around 75,000 residents. The meeting was very professionally chaired by Cllr Helen Crawford with 11 Highland MSPs and MPs (SNP, Conservative, Lib Dem and Independent) on the panel. Notable absences which caused much anger in the audience were any energy ministers from the UK or Scottish Governments and Kate Forbes MSP.

Many CC representatives spoke powerfully about the significant adverse impact that the proposed proliferation of new wind turbines and overhead powerlines will have on their communities. It was clear the energy companies are under enormous pressure from government to deliver on targets and that applications and plans are flying in often without adequate thought or consultation.

The upshot of the meeting was that each of the MSPs and MPs present undertook to ensure the issues are debated urgently by their respective parliaments. They also confirmed their support for the motion agreed at the previous CC convention which calls for, amongst other things, a pause on all new developments pending the production of a National Energy Strategy for Scotland, and an economic impact assessment. It also calls for Planning Inquiry Commission.

NHS physiotherapist – TF reported that the NHS has now allocated a reserve physio to cover the TKCC area.

Track to Kinlochewe cemetery – The Kinlochewe residents who had previously contacted TKCC clarified their request. This is that TKCC should ask HC to improve the access to Kinlochewe cemetery. The existing track is only accessible for 4WD hearses and other vehicles, also there is nowhere close to the cemetery for mourners to park. They suggested for example, that either the existing track could be upgraded or a new track be put in from the Slioch carpark. SW agreed to investigate and contact whoever in HC is responsible and report back.

Action: SW

3. Treasurer's report

TKCC's annual grant of £447.27 has been received from HC. Outgoings were fees for renewing the tkcc.scot domain (£103.18 fee for 2 years) and an annual subscription fee of £272.74 for 6 email addresses. TKCC members agreed this latter annual cost is too expensive. SW, CH and SS agreed to get together to propose an alternative.

Action: SW, CH, SS

On the plus side, Virgin Money have credited £1.31 cash back for using our new debit card to pay the above fees. The bank account balance stands at £1,774.55.

4. Guest Speaker - Ben Taylor, Scottish Woodlands – Cabuie Estate

Ben Taylor was present to talk about the Cabuie Estate which is managed by Scottish Woodlands. The estate extends to some 15,000 hectares (Ha). It includes parts of what was previously known as Lochrosque Estate as well as land near Lochan Fada. The aim of the new landowner, who bought the estate in 2023, is to enhance its environmental value. He is not interested in generating income from it.

Woodland currently accounts for 3% of the estate and the aim is to increase this to 6%. This means deer control is a first priority and there was some discussion about the best way of doing this, with the estate's view being that fencing is not practical.

A few years ago, deer density on the estate was 20 deer per sq km, representing a total population of 3,300 deer. As a result of active deer management, it is now down to 10 deer per sq km. NatureScot's view is that 2 deer per sq km is necessary for woodland to be sustainable.

There is approx. 90 Ha of ancient woodland. This includes 22 different tree species, as well as a large number of mosses, liverworts and hornworts.

In addition to increasing the amount of woodland, the landowner is also seeking to reduce the amount of degraded peatland from 3,000 Ha to 1,500 Ha and to improve habitats from degraded to good, with aims for individual habitats to be published on a website.

The estate is keen to maintain a good relationship with the community, for example currently 4 people from Kinlochewe are involved with deer control. CH asked if they would be interested in contributing to some sort of community fund if one could be established, to which Ben said yes.

CH thanked Ben very much indeed for a most informative and interesting discussion.

5. Correspondence

- **HC - Kinlochewe Primary School bell**

HC have been approached by an individual who has asked if the school bell at the recently closed Kinlochewe Primary can be gifted to Kinlochewe Village Hall. HC asked if TKCC could assist with this, therefore TKCC asked the Hall for their thoughts. The Hall responded by saying they would be happy to have the bell and would ensure that they find an appropriate location within the hall to affix it and would erect a proper description to be displayed alongside it.

It was clear however from discussions and correspondence received by TKCC that there are some strongly held views amongst TKCC members and in the community that the bell should not be moved if possible. Some asked if a preservation order could be placed upon it, and also on the time capsule cairn which is in the school grounds, to prevent them both being removed by any future purchaser of the site. If the bell has to be moved, Gairloch Museum was also suggested as a better location than Kinlochewe Village Hall.

That is not to say there may not be people in the community who would support the bell being installed in Kinlochewe Village Hall. However, in light of the above, it was agreed that we would respond to HC to say that TKCC does not feel able to support such a move at the present time.

Action: CH

- Kinlochewe resident - community emergency resilience
Following Storm Floris, a number of people in the community have raised the need to have proper resilience plans in place to help communities deal with emergencies in the future. In Kinlochewe and Incheril in particular, Storm Floris highlighted the problems that can be caused by flooding, trees falling, the electricity going down, digital phones not working etc.

It was noted that as part of the community development plan work, grant funding has been obtained by TDCA to fund a new post which will help communities develop resilience plans throughout the TKCC area. It was agreed that TKCC should work closely with whoever is appointed to lead this work. CH agreed to follow this up with Katie Anderson.

Action: CH

- Gairloch Museum – Roundhouse project
The museum is now working on the project with ARC Architects which has extensive experience in community-led heritage projects. They are applying for funding from SSE Communities Hydro Fund and the Historic Environment Scotland Small Grants Fund.

As part of the museum's planning application to HC, they have asked for TKCC's support, either in the form of a letter or through the planning portal. TKCC members agreed we should support this, and MM agreed to respond on our behalf.

Action: MM

- Coulin Estate - Long Term Forest Plan 2025-45
TKCC members had read the draft plan with interest but had no particular comments. The plan sets out a long term vision of restoring, enhancing and extending native woodland ecosystems across the estate. The aim is to bring them closer in scale and character to the natural forest cover that once defined the glens, lochs and lower hillsides of this part of Wester Ross.

This is intended to be achieved through a renewed focus on ecological restoration, improved habitat connectivity, and the sensitive restructuring of non-native plantations. Natural ecological processes will lead where conditions allow and the woodlands will continue to sit alongside low-impact sporting, recreational and economic activity.

CS reported that a resident had commented on the very bad rutting that peatland restoration has caused on parts of the estate. He said he would speak to the estate manager about this.

Action: CS

- NTS Torridon – natural woodland regeneration
The Long Term Forest Plan for the NTS Torridon Estate has now been approved. As with the Coulin plan, an objective is to establish a diverse and thriving woodland habitat network which will create more connectivity between woodland compartments. In line with this objective, NTS wish to expand native woodlands on the estate, using natural regeneration from existing seed sources.

TreeStory are currently preparing an application for an FGS grant to support this work. The project will not use any fencing. The deer population on the estate will be reduced and stalking pressure will be focused on areas where natural regeneration is most likely to occur. Regular monitoring of the extent and condition of the natural regeneration will be used to inform the on-going deer management.

TKCC members were very interested in the plan, however had no particular comments.

- Highlands Caravan and Camping Parks Association – motorhome parking
The Highland Caravan and Campsites Association acts for licensed campsite operators and tourism stakeholders across the Highlands. They are very concerned about the lack of consistent regulation and enforcement of overnight motorhome parking. This issue affects all environments—whether vehicles park at a licensed site, roadside verge, public car park, or informal location – and in their view poses serious threats to public safety, environmental stewardship and the economic sustainability of properly licensed tourism businesses. For example, the opening up by HC of its free car parks to allow overnight parking has led to a loss of income for licensed sites.

The Association is calling on government and public bodies to:

- Establish a uniform regulatory framework for motorhome parking—including roadside, car parks, and private land
- Enforce fire safety and pitch-spacing standards across all overnight locations
- Apply the Visitor Levy fairly to all overnight stays, including unlicensed stops
- Increase collaboration with licensed operators through groups like the Highland Caravan and Campsites Association and the Visitor Levy Reference Group

- Halkirk and District CC – motion re renewables

At the CC convention in August, it was suggested that a motion concerning decisions at the local level should be addressed to HC. HDCC have taken a lead on this based on their experience in Caithness where communities are at the forefront of development.

HDCC are concerned about the lack of a strategic framework within which key facts about renewable energy in the Highlands can be fitted when assessing renewables applications. Instead, faced with an almost overwhelming surge of new applications and proposals, assessments tend to be partial and just focused on individual projects with no context.

NESO recognise this is an issue and are proposing by next year to produce the first ever Strategic Spatial Energy Plan. This will be followed by Regional Plans, one of which will be for North Scotland. The motion calls for a pause on approvals pending those plans coming forward and thereby providing the necessary framework and context.

HDCC plan to take the motion to HC and will endeavour to co-ordinate with the Administration to make sure the motion is competent.

TKCC members agreed we should support the motion.

Action: CH

- Woodland Trust/Glen Torridon Partnership – skills survey
GTP is running a short survey on developing a locally based skills programme around habitat/rainforest restoration. Members of the community are encouraged to complete it. See: <https://forms.office.com/e/9VFqD0Wbtf>.
- SSEN – A832 temporary closure near Dundonnell
SSEN intends to close a 5km stretch of the A832 near Dundonnell in two separate phases from late October to mid-December 2025 and from January to March/April 2026. This is part of permitted development activity in preparation for the installation of the underground cable section of the Western Isles HVDC Link Project. The proposed temporary closure would include amnesty periods during the days of operation with access for emergency vehicle access and timetabled school transport and local bus services maintained at all times.

An application for a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order has been submitted, and Cllr Birt said HC is fighting this very hard.

NB: Shortly after TKCC's meeting was held, SSEN announced that due to extensive local concerns, they have suspended plans for the lengthy road closure to the A832 and is reviewing alternative approaches to minimise disruption.

- Neighbourhood Watch Scotland – digital switchover of landlines
NWS wish people to be aware that landlines are changing, and the UK's telephone network is going digital. By January 2027, the old analogue network will be completely switched off and replaced by new digital landlines which will work using broadband. This change affects all industry providers and their customers. To help support members of communities, especially the more vulnerable, NWS are running two key campaigns:

'National Telecare' campaign: This campaign relates to customers who use a telecare device such as personal alarms, pendant alarms, lifeline devices and home care monitoring systems. It is important that they take action to ensure that their equipment is compatible with the new digital technology. While many modern telecare systems are designed to work with both traditional and digital landlines, older models may require upgrades or replacements. Users are encouraged to contact their landline provider for support as soon as possible.

BT Connected-Together campaign: This initiative encourages friends, family, colleagues, neighbours to help prepare vulnerable members of the community. BT can also make an engineer available to assist people with the transition – to register for this extra support, visit the BT website.

6. Planning Applications

25/02572/FUL - Erection of sunroom and entrance vestibule extension - 2 Annat Torridon IV22 2EU.
No comments.

7. Any Other Business

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.

Cllr Birt explained that currently only Badenoch and Strathspey in the HC area is subject to this control. Whether to extend control to elsewhere, eg. Ward 5 (ie. including the TKCC area), is due to be discussed by Highland Councillors in November. Cllr Birt would welcome the views of TKCC and members of the community on this, therefore it was agreed we would add the issue to the agenda for our next meeting in October.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 15 October 2025, 7.00pm – by Zoom