

Minutes (draft) of Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council (TKCC)
Meeting held by Zoom 7pm
Wednesday 23rd October 2024

Present: Caroline Hamilton (Chair), Sue Whiting (Secretary), Steve Schnabel (Treasurer), Colin Stevenson, Tom Forrest, Maud McIntyre, Jackie Todd, Alpin Stewart (from item 5), Councillor Chris Birt.

7 members of the public.

1. Minutes of meeting on 18th September 2024

Approved.

2. Matters arising from meeting on 18th September 2024

Roads – SW has finally had a response from Iain Moncrieff at HC. He has asked his team to sort out the drainage in Fasaig and repair the parapet on Alligin bridge. Robert Giddy of HC has promised to inspect soon.

Shared Rural Network (SRN) – As planning applications for SRN masts continue to be submitted all over the Highlands, including in our area (see below), TKCC and TDCA have written again to the government. This time to the Chancellor of the Exchequer pointing out that, when there is a hole in the public finances and she is putting together a Budget, potentially a large amount of taxpayers' money could be saved if the Total Not Spot part of the SRN programme was paused and reviewed.

CH has also spoken to our new MP, Angus Macdonald. He is up to speed with the issues and is due to be meeting soon with Chris Bryant, the minister responsible for the programme.

HC Local Living tool consultation – MM reported on the survey she completed on behalf of TKCC and her responses will be circulated to members. The consultation closed in August and ran alongside the Highland Place Standard Survey consultation which has been ongoing since March 2024.

Communities and businesses are being called on to help inform an interactive tool, being developed by HC, which assesses how well Highland places meet the principles of local living. 'Local living' aims to enable people to meet the majority of their daily needs within a reasonable distance to their home. Local input is important to help HC refine the tool's method and accuracy, as well as to inform HC on potential approaches to take in rural areas.

HC Ecology strategy consultation – JT reported that the consultation took the form of an online meeting at which HC took the 10 community councils who attended through the draft strategy. Attendees gave their feedback, and an updated strategy will be circulated.

HC Land Management Plan – Cllr Birt said this was originally written in 2012 and has been superseded by the new HC Housing Plan. This anticipates building 24,000 new homes over the next 10 years, 9,000 of which will be social housing, the rest will be for sale. Most of the homes will be in the inner Moray Firth area, but there will also be some in Wester Ross.

Cllr Birt said it would be helpful if communities could identify for HC areas of land where building might be possible. CH suggested that this would require HC to consult with communities. Cllr Birt agreed to feed this comment back.

Action: CB

Scotland's International Development Alliance (SIDA) Sustainable Development Goals survey - MM reported there were 121 responses (including TKCC's) which SIDA was pleased about. They have agreed there should be better communication with rural areas.

Bin store in Fasaig – The grant application to North Highland Initiative has been drafted, and will be submitted with a signed copy of TKCC's constitution. *Action: SW*

RAF Air Cadets - A link to the presentation was put on the TKCC website.

Local Place Plan – This was submitted to HC on 20th September in advance of the original deadline of the end of September. HC have not yet accepted the plan for registration, potentially because they are having to deal with a large number of plans submitted all at once. We have been told that LPPs established as valid up to the end of 2024 will be registered and taken into account in the preparation of the new HLDP.

Royal Mail deliveries – CH wrote as agreed. No response yet.

Kirkhill & Bunchrew CC – Cllr Helen Crawford's motion was supported by 62 community councils and was passed by HC. This called for, amongst other things, a real time map of proposed new electricity substations and storage facilities as well as planning training for community councillors to help them deal with large infrastructure proposals. Cllr Crawford has been in touch subsequently to say she is seeking confirmation from HC of the timelines for delivery of the map and training etc.

First responders – JT is investigating what has happened to the scheme in our area and has written to the Scottish Ambulance Service. She will contact Bob Widdows at Gairloch CC to see if we could work together on this. *Action: JT*

HC motorhome tourism leaflet – Cllr Birt has not yet fed back to HC that paper copies are needed. He agreed to do so. *Action: CB*

Chemical waste disposal road signs – CH wrote to HC as agreed to say that TKCC supported these. MM reported that COW Trust has been told the signage is in process, therefore they hoped it would be installed soon.

3. TKCC constitution, standing orders, code of conduct

TKCC requires a current, signed copy of the constitution for the purposes of the NHI grant application. The constitution, standing orders and code of conduct documents were therefore circulated to TKCC members before the meeting. The documents were proposed by TF, seconded by SW, and unanimously approved.

This was also an opportunity to remind all members of the key principles of being a CC member and the code of conduct. These include:

Part 1: Members should declare their interest if any matter on the agenda relates to them personally so they can step down at the meeting while the matter is discussed and any decision made.

Part 2: The principles of the Code of Conduct being of service to the community, selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, stewardship, openness, honesty, leadership, and respect.

Each TKCC member (including AS when he joined the meeting) declared they agreed with and will abide by the code of conduct.

CH to liaise with SW to organise a signed copy of the constitution.

Action CH/SW

4. Treasurer's report

At the end of September, we finally received our annual grant from Highland Council (£447.27). £72.60 was paid for two Remembrance Day wreaths which have been delivered. Phil Reid will lay the wreath in Torridon and Doug Stevenson will lay the one in Kinlochewe.

The bank account balance is £1,944.53.

5. Highland Council Community Council Review 2024-25

All CCs have been invited to respond to an online survey relating to key aspects of being a community council, including boundary size, engagement with the community, meeting frequency, attendance by members, conduct, funding and the role a CC member.

CH asked members if they wished to comment, and the following was discussed:

- If a neighbouring CC ceases to continue, should an existing CC take it on? TKCC members agreed this would be not be appropriate since every community has its own needs and identity
- How to encourage wider community involvement – we will keep informing people about we do and try to publish our minutes wider
- The potential for recruiting youth members was noted
- Training is required for CC members in relation to planning.
- A formal forum for CCs in the HC area is needed so we can communicate with each other on a regular basis and work together on shared concerns. Currently Kenny Maclean of Garve & District CC is the unofficial liaison for Ward 5 CCs and there is no-one likely in the future to replace him.

CH agreed to complete the survey on behalf of TKCC

Action CH

6. Correspondence received

- Ian Jackson, HC – Kinlochewe Primary School
Further to previous discussions, at the next meeting of HC's Education Committee on 21 November, HC may consider a proposal to begin a statutory consultation on the formal closure of Kinlochewe Primary School.

HC has considered the suggestion that the Kinlochewe catchment should be rezoned to Shieldaig Primary rather than Gairloch Primary. On balance, HC has decided to propose that Gairloch Primary should be the new catchment school, based on the fact that most children from the Kinlochewe catchment currently attend Gairloch Primary. However, this matter can be discussed further during statutory consultation.

If a closure proposal is agreed by the Committee, the consultation will begin in January 2025 and a public meeting will be held locally to discuss the proposal, likely to be towards the end of January.

- HC – Kinlochewe recycling point
HC has suggested creating a recycling point for small electrical items in the car park by Kinlochewe toilets. This would be similar to the form of the existing textile recycling bank which would need to be removed. CH to speak to Katie Anderson at TDCA who has also been investigating recycling options.

Action: CH

- **SWRCCS**
The community car scheme's AGM will be held at Torridon Community Centre on 29 October at 18:30. The AGM will be followed by the presentation of the Kings Award by Mrs Joanie Whiteford, Lord Lieutenant of Ross & Cromarty.

MM agreed to represent TKCC as a member.

Action: MM

- **Gairloch CC - Local Place Plan**
Gairloch CC has sent TKCC a draft of its LPP. TKCC members had no comments.
- **National Trust for Scotland**
NTS has published a new "Plan for Nature" that outlines their ambitions to conserve the nature in their care until 2032 and beyond. See: www.nts.org.uk/plan-for-nature.

The plan identifies the six priority habitats which the Trust has special responsibility for and a particular ability to make a positive impact. These are heathlands, pinewoods, and montane willow scrub in uplands; seabird colonies and machair on islands; and habitats defined by ancient and veteran trees in parklands and wood pastures.

NTS' species conservation focuses on mountain plants and seabirds, plus hen harrier, red-necked phalarope, corncrake, Greenland white-fronted goose, narrow-headed ant, willow tit and vendace. They also look after Scottish endemics slender scotch burnet (a moth on Burg, Mull) and three species of whitebeam tree on Arran, which occur nowhere else in the world.

Through its work to conserve nature, NTS intends to play an important part in delivering government commitments for nature, including the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and tackling the nature and climate crises.

- **Wester Ross Biosphere – Area Place Plan engagement**
To help develop an Area Place Plan for Ward 5, WRB has collated as much information as possible from existing plans and consultations - including Local Place Plans.

A first draft of the plan will be published on 28 October on www.engagehighland.co.uk. Comments are invited via this website, also at drop in sessions being held at Torridon Community Centre on 13 November, 11am-1pm and Gairloch Community Hall on 14 November, 11am-1pm. Deadline for comments is 28 November.

- **HC - Community resilience survey**
This short questionnaire asks whether the Torridon and Kinlochewe community has a resilience plan, to which the answer is no. CH to complete.

Action: CH

- **HIE – Voice of Communities survey**
Community organisations across the Highlands and Islands are invited to share their aspirations, plans, and challenges in this survey. In particular, HIE is interested in learning about organisations' experiences of community wealth building.

TKCC members agreed we have participated in a lot of surveys recently, and decided to give this one a miss.

- *HC Legal Team (Licensing) - Draft Gambling Policy Statement*
HC is consulting on the draft gambling policy statement for 2025-28 on behalf of The Highland Licensing Board under the Gambling Act 2005. Members of the public and relevant bodies are invited to comment.

The draft statement for consultation is at: www.highland.gov.uk/gambling. Responses must be submitted by 6 December 2024 to licensing@highland.gov.uk or by letter to: Claire McArthur, Clerk to the Licensing Board, Council Offices, High Street, Dingwall IV15 9QN.

- *Kinlochewe resident – Celtman and Cape Wrath Ultra*
TKCC has received several emails from a resident concerning a dispute over the events' use of a track to access a field at Cromasaig.

TKCC has considered this correspondence and concluded the issues are a private dispute and it is not appropriate for TKCC to become involved. Since the dispute involves TF, TF has declared his interest and has had no involvement in the decisions taken by TKCC on the matter.

The resident has suggested that the issues could be resolved by moving the events away from Cromasaig. However, it seems to TKCC that the organisation of Celtman, Cape Wrath Ultra and other events in our area are principally matters for the organisations concerned. We believe the events largely have the support of the community and that on balance the benefit the community receives outweighs any disadvantages. Having said that, if TKCC becomes concerned that any event may have an adverse impact on the community, we will raise those concerns with the organisers, as we have in the past.

TKCC members wished to state that we support well-organised events that take place in our area. And to thank the Celtman organisers for the way in which they have engaged with TKCC and the community and the steps taken to address concerns raised with them in the past.

7. Planning Applications

- *24/03851/FUL - Land 1.7KM SE Of Garbaig House Slattadale Loch Maree Achnasheen*
Extension of existing dam and access track.

This is a major project designed to increase the height of Loch Garbaig and thereby increase the hydro-electric output. The application includes extensive environmental and habitat reports, many of which are quite technical. Wester Ross Salmon Fishery Board has noted it has the potential to affect salmon spawning, however other environmental bodies have not commented. TKCC members agreed that HC should consult appropriate specialists, including NatureScot, before making a decision. Also, that in our response, TKCC should raise the possibility of some sort of community financial contribution from the applicant.

Action: CH/MM

- *24/03722/FUL – Land 3180M SE Of Staff Block The Torridon Inn Torridon – near Loch an Eoin*
Proposed 20m SRN lattice mast with 3 No. shared antennas, 2 No. dish antennas, associated cabinets and ancillary apparatus, within a fenced compound, and all other associated ancillary apparatus and development.

TKCC has lodged a lengthy objection. The proposed mast is in a National Scenic Area and Wild Land Area. It will need to be built by helicopter, it is not clear how it will be powered (this may have to be by overhead or underground power lines), it will cost millions, and destroy a beautiful footpath. It will provide no additional 4G signal for communities or roads - the

coverage maps show it will merely duplicate existing 4G coverage. Many of the houses covered benefit from fibre as well.

Louise Gray (landowner) called CH before the meeting to say the estate was still trying to establish all the details of the proposal. The developers had not told them, for example, that a new track would need to be built and run past Thrail House. The estate is also keen to understand how the mast will be powered.

8. Any other business

Circulating minutes – it was agreed that it is not practical for our minutes to be summarised down to the required 2 pages max for publishing in Gairloch Times or An Carranach. Paper versions are regularly put up on the notice boards at both Torridon and Kinlochewe Village Halls. Online versions are posted on the TKCC website and Facebook page, and on Visit Torridon mailing list. JT suggested we publicise them on the Kinlochewe Village Hall mailing list as well, and she will provide details to SW to initiate that.

Action JT/SW

Coire Dubh car park – letter received from Rory Shannon, NTS ranger to say that HC have refused his request for a waste bin at the Coire Dubh car park. This car park is used extensively by tourists in the season and currently has no waste bin. Rory says he spends a lot of time at the site collecting rubbish and litter. He has asked TKCC to support a further request to HC for a waste bin. Members agreed, we will tell Rory.

Action SW

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 20th November at 7.00pm

By Zoom