

Minutes (draft) of Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council (TKCC)
Meeting held by Zoom - 7pm on Wednesday 21st May 2025

Present: Caroline Hamilton (Chair), Sue Whiting (Secretary), Alpin Stewart, Jackie Todd, Maud McIntyre, Tom Forrest, Colin Stevenson.

Apologies: Steve Schnabel (Treasurer), Cllr Chris Birt.

2 members of the public.

1. Minutes of meeting on 16th April 2025

Approved.

2. Matters arising from meeting on 16th April 2025

Kinlochewe to Gairloch potholes on A832 road – SW to remind Cllr Birt to chase HC roads department and update us on progress. *Action: SW*

R100 broadband – In investigating the scheme, SS found an R100 survey that he tried to complete. As only 3 or 4 questions related to broadband, the rest to the wellbeing of his household, it seemed a waste of time. It was agreed that TKCC would not pursue this any further.

HC Zurich insurance/Teams – SW to remind Cllr Birt to find out whether HC could help reduce CCs' costs by providing an indemnity and access to HC's Teams account. *Action: SW*

Treasurer's report – SS split the annual income line into Grant from HC and Fasaig bin grant as agreed.

Possible development sites – CH submitted the sites as agreed to HC for possible inclusion in the next Highland-wide local development plan. She said this was an onerous process which asked a large number of technical planning questions, as a result she felt it was not as accessible to communities as it should be.

TF provided Cllr Birt with details of the derelict house behind the post office in Kinlochewe as agreed.

Kinlochewe speed restriction imprint – SW to remind Cllr Birt to find out whether a speed reduction imprint could be painted on the road surfaces at the entrances to Kinlochewe. It was agreed this request should be extended to Fasaig as well. *Action: SW*

3. Treasurer's report

Only one transaction since the report for our last meeting on 16 April – a final bank charge of £4.25 to Bank of Scotland. That account has now been closed and all funds have been moved to the new TKCC Virgin Money account where the balance stands at £1,701.89.

The final income and expenditure report for the year ended 31 March 2025 has been independently reviewed ahead of the AGM in June.

4. Guest Speaker - Malcolm Turner, Woodland Trust, Estate Manager, Gleann Shildeag

MT attended to give an overview of the Woodland Trust (WT)'s ongoing plans and their work within the Glen Torridon Partnership.

WT is a UK wide organisation, with 500k members, that protects woods and trees for people and wildlife. It took on Ben Shieldaig in 2019 and added the neighbouring Couldoran estate in 2021. The area sits within the Rainforest Zone, with pockets of mixed woodland including pine, birch, oak and hazel. WT is keen to protect the existing woodland and further expand it, incorporating good ecological practices including deer management and fencing, eradicating invasive rhododendron, planting native tree species and ground improvement.

125,000 trees have been planted over 92 hectares in the northeast part of the estate and a further 330,000 will be planted in the main part of Glen Sheildaig. The third phase of land improvement and planting is planned on the southern part of the estate towards Kishorn in 2 to 3 years' time. Seed collections over the last few years with community member involvement has been especially useful and successful – gathering seeds from local and indigenous tree species, further helped by the setting up of a tree nursery in the grounds at Couldoran House to grow the seeds for planting on the estate. Seeds from local trees increase the chances of success as trees are climatised to the area and its specific conditions.

The ancient Caledonian Pinewood sites are fragmented between Shieldaig and Kinlochewe. The Glen Torridon Partnership therefore came about to connect woodlands and create corridors for wildlife and biodiversity. The partnership was formed in 2023 and includes the five estates – Beinn Eighe, Coulin, Torridon, Ben Damph, and Shieldaig, making a good mix of ownership by WT, NatureScot, National Trust for Scotland and private owners. Partnership members meet regularly and funds were raised by WT in 2023 to appoint Joan Cumming as project development officer for the partnership. Unfortunately, Joan has been unwell over recent months, MT hopes she will resume her role in due course.

Relationships have developed well between the five estates with good collaboration and each estate choosing its own plans. A lot of discussion is around deer management and the best methods to reduce the numbers. Some estates are more successful than others at deer management and WT is willing to help and share resources. Solutions are decided on evidence led information and recently WT obtained lottery funding to train people in the use of thermal imaging drones to build an accurate picture of the land and deer numbers. 8 community members have signed up for training and the qualified team will be contracted by WT and the other estates – creating employment and building skills for the area.

A Communities Stalking Programme has been started at Beinn Eighe, and there is currently a scoping project in place to study potential demand and supply for venison production.

Rhododendron is currently being surveyed on the western end of the estate, this includes monitoring past works and evaluating what the partnership can do to protect the rainforest going forward. This could include setting up a dedicated "Rhoddy Squad" for the area, thereby creating further employment opportunities. Ben Damph rhododendron was treated 10 years ago and it will come back if not treated again. Initial funding to control it is not always repeated or available for follow up treatment, therefore the partnership is currently looking at how best to finance it.

MT concluded by saying he is conscious that there has been reduced contact between WT/the partnership and the community during Joan's absence and WT would welcome suggestions from the community for improvements that could be made.

Questions from TKCC members and the floor included:

Q. Is possible that the Beinn Eighe stalking scheme can expand to cover other areas?

A: There is capacity to help train others and collaborate for the long-term depending on the potential spread of the area.

Q: We have heard Couldoran House has been sold to a private owner. Will WT remain there as a base and what will happen to the tree nursery on the site.

A: The house has been bought by private owners who wish to live there and use the house for projects such as dark sky events and nature/literature related workshops. WT will no longer use the house but will have a small base within the grounds. The tree nursery will remain there and will continue to be managed by Ann Barton for WT. The nursery grew 10,000 seedlings last year and it is hoped this will increase to 20,000. The focus is on growing aspen, juniper, Scots pine and oak from seeds collected in the area.

Q: CH commented that since initial discussions around the community development plan, engagement with WT/the partnership group tailed off. She suggested liaising with MT to discuss how best to resume contact.

A: MT agreed.

Action CH

TKCC members thanked MT for his very interesting update and information, and looked forward to collaborating further in the future.

5. Correspondence received

- Highland Council – Kinlochewe Primary School
HC Education and Learning Service has published its consultation report into the proposal to discontinue provision of education at Kinlochewe School and reassign its catchment area to that of Gairloch Primary School. The report includes an overview of issues raised during the consultation together with HC's responses, and recommends that HC approves the proposal.

The full report can be viewed online at <http://www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations>

- Forestry and Land Scotland – Slattadale car park
FLS intends to install a new parking meter in June/July at the Slattadale car park to enable card payments for parking. This is to make it easier for visitors to pay, no changes are being made to the tariff or parking rules. Income generated will go towards maintaining facilities at the site.
- TDCA - Community Emergency Resilience Plan
TDCA is aiming to develop a Community Emergency Resilience Plan for the TKCC area. This would strengthen our community's ability to respond to potential emergencies, such as severe weather, flooding, landslides, loss of heating, loss of electricity, loss of home telephone connection, loss of water, road closures, drought, wildfires, pandemics etc. To help TDCA apply for funding for the project, TKCC has written a letter of support.
- Garve CC/Gairloch CC – Radio Teleswitch awareness session
The Radio Teleswitch Service (RTS) is a system that uses radio signals to switch electricity meters between different rates, such as peak and off-peak, or to control heating and hot water systems. It is being shut down on 30 June 2025 due to its end of life. This means customers using RTS meters need to upgrade to a smart meter to avoid disruptions to their energy supply and heating. An awareness session is being hosted by Energy Action Scotland in Inverness on Tuesday 27 May. Garve CC and Gairloch CC are also pushing for an online session.

- **Strathnairn CC – Changes to heights of wind turbines**
Strathnairn CC wishes to alert communities across the Highlands to a new trend in onshore windfarm applications whereby wind turbines are now being proposed up to 200 metres high (the previous maximum height was 149.9m). This means they are likely to be much more visible from longer distances, and they will be required to have red industrial civil aviation and MOD lighting (with a consequent loss of dark skies). This will affect not just the CC area in which the wind turbines are sited but also neighbouring CC areas as well.

Due to the way the planning system works, communities in the CC area in which the wind turbines are proposed to be sited will be consulted in the usual way. However, communities outwith that area will not be consulted. It is therefore very important to keep an eye out in relation to proposed developments in other areas as well.

- **Kirkhill & Bunchrew CC/Cllr Helen Crawford – Energy cumulative impacts**
In September 2024, HC passed a motion supported by over 60 CCs (including TKCC) that required the Leader of HC to engage with the Scottish Government to end to what is known as “salami slicing” in respect of energy developments. This is the practice whereby an application for eg. a major wind farm or battery storage facility can be submitted for planning approval without reference to the full cumulative impact such as the grid connection that it will require.

Cllr Crawford is surprised that to date the Leader has taken no action in respect of this. TKCC members agreed that we should contact our local Ward councillors to ask that they ensure he does so immediately.

Action: CH

- **Kirkhill & Bunchrew CC/Cllr Helen Crawford – Energy cumulative impacts**
In addition to the above, a convention of community councils who are adversely impacted by major energy infrastructure is being held on 14 June 2025 in Beaulieu. The convention will be chaired by Cllr Crawford. It aims to raise the profile of the impact on communities that are expected to host the infrastructure and identify protections that need to be put in place.

TKCC members agreed we should write to K&B CC and Cllr Crawford in support, however due to other commitments (e.g. Celtman), we are unable to attend.

Action: CH

- **Connecting Carers – unpaid carer survey**
Connecting Carers has been funded by the Health and Social Care Alliance to explore the impact of the caring role on unpaid carers with disabilities and long-term health conditions of their own. As per the 2022 Census, 32% of those in the HC area caring for another person live with their own disability or long-term health condition.

Unpaid carers with disabilities and long-term health conditions often postpone medical treatment and health care due to caring responsibilities, face more barriers accessing breaks and respite, and are more susceptible to loneliness and isolation. The research aims to help improve early recognition of carers, so they can access support without spiralling into crisis first. Connecting Carers also want to increase awareness of this carer demographic among service providers, so that their needs are better accommodated.

To participate, please contact Andrew Scobie, Research Officer, at research@connectingcarers.org.uk or call the Carer Support Line on 01463 723560.

- **BEAR Scotland - Trunk road maintenance, A835 North of Tarvie**

BEAR Scotland, on behalf of Transport Scotland, will be undertaking essential carriageway resurfacing works on the A835 North of Tarvie. This will involve closing the road between 7pm and 6am every night except Friday and Saturday commencing 7pm on Monday, 2 June and finishing at 6am on Tuesday, 10 June.

Due to no suitable diversion routes being available, amnesty periods will take place at 9pm, 10pm, 11pm, 12am, 2am and 4am. Access through the works site for emergency services will always be maintained.

6. Planning Applications

25/01437/PNO Land 2.3KM NE of Professors Cottage, Kinlochewe – Creation of access track.
No comments.

25/01396/SCRE Land 80M East of The Farmhouse, Coulin, Kinlochewe - Construction of three new water intakes and associated infrastructure to increase capacity at an existing run of the river hydroelectric scheme

It was noted that if this screening opinion request leads to a planning application which is approved, the catchment of the existing hydroelectric scheme will be increased by some 43%. This in turn is likely to lead to a considerable increase in profits.

In light of this, TKCC members agreed it would be appropriate for the community to benefit from a financial contribution. It was agreed we should raise the matter with HC and ask that this request be passed to the applicant/developer for discussion and consideration. If necessary when the detailed planning application is submitted, we could also ask HC to impose a requirement on the applicant to pay an appropriate levy to TKCC or another community organisation on behalf of our community.
MM agreed to write to HC to this effect. *Action: MM*

7. Any Other Business

Cape Wrath Ultra – in a change to the arrangements reported at the last meeting, the runners will camp in a field in Incheril.

Garve CC/Kenny Maclean – it was noted with sadness that Kenny Maclean's mother had recently died. CH agreed to send him condolences on behalf of TKCC.
Action: CH

Date of Next Meeting:
Wednesday, 18th June 2025 by Zoom
AGM at 7.00pm, to be followed by an ordinary meeting