

**Minutes (draft) of Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council (TKCC)**  
**Meeting held by Zoom at 7pm**  
**Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

Present: Caroline Hamilton (Chair), Sue Whiting (Secretary), Steve Schnabel (Treasurer), Tom Forrest, Colin Stevenson, Maud McIntyre, Jackie Todd, Councillor Chris Birt.  
4 members of the public.

Apologies: Alpin Stewart.

**1. Co-option of new TKCC member**

CH welcomed Jackie Todd who has been co-opted as a new member of TKCC. Jackie lives in Kinlochewe having moved here a couple of years ago.

**2. Minutes of meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

Approved subject to location of meeting being amended to Zoom.

**3. Matters arising from meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

*Roads* – SW reported that the resurfacing works on areas of the Torridon to Diabaig C1083 road have been completed, also repairs and resurfacing to areas of the Annat to Balgy road.

SW reported to Cllr Liz Kraft the huge holes and broken road on the A896 close to Fasaig junction and within 3 days the area was repaired and resurfaced. SW has thanked Liz for her input and help with this and also thanked the roads team for carrying out the repairs and resurfacing works.

The repair to the damaged bridge parapet near Wester Alligin and the blocked drains in Fasaig are still to be done but are apparently on HC's list and we will keep asking. TF to email Cllr Birt to request the assistance of Neil Reid with regard to the bridge parapet repair.

*Action TF/CB*

*Torridon village sign* – It is proving very complicated tracking down the right person to deal with this. SW will keep chasing.

*Action: SW*

*Shared Rural Network (SRN)* – The UK minister in charge, Julia Lopez, finally responded to our letters. Not particularly helpful and, as with her letter to Maree Todd MSP, again missing our point that there must be proper community consultation to establish what our needs are before they waste a huge amount of taxpayers' money putting up masts that benefit virtually no-one and risk causing significant damage.

Ms Lopez did however refer to our meeting with Digital Mobile Spectrum (DMSL) – see previous TKCC meeting minutes – so she is at least in touch with them.

She also referred to discussions taking place with John Muir Trust (JMT). JMT has brought together an informal group of people from bodies such as NTS, Mountaineering Scotland, Scottish Wildlife and is proposing a Green/Amber/Red classification for proposed masts. Topher Dawson of LBCC and CH are part of this group and our idea of Green masts would be masts serving Total Not Spots (with no signal) on main public roads or at inhabited houses or businesses. They would be useful and would be part of a landscape which already contains manmade infrastructure such as power lines and roads. In our view, an Amber mast would serve only a few houses or minor public roads, and a Red mast would serve no public roads or houses.

CH repeated her view that it is important to engage with DMSL and others involved with the SRN programme. With the programme already over budget, this to ensure we get the coverage that we need and do not find they run out of money giving us masts that serve virtually no-one.

The next meeting with DMSL and Virgin O2 to discuss which masts we feel may be useful and which are not has been arranged for next week. This will be done by reference to coverage maps.

*Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) audit - Sgeir Dughall* – deadline for feedback from TKCC and members of the public is 3 June 2024 when audit commences. SW reported that, having spoken to Bakkafrost, the pens at the farm have been moved to Kenmore temporarily while the moorings are replaced, they will be back in place for restocking later in the summer.

*Action: CH/SW*

*Slattadale car park* – CS visited the car park and thinks the COW Trust's 'nearest toilets' info board is still useful. We will respond to FLS accordingly.

*Action: CH*

#### **4. Guest speaker – Allan McLean, Station Commander, North Service Area, Scottish Fire & Rescue**

AM has moved to this area recently to be in charge of SFRS in Gairloch, Torridon & Kyle area.

Main issue facing SFRS is recruitment – with a low population but large geographical area, the service is always looking for and welcomes new recruits for fire fighters from any part of the area.

SFRS is currently going through a transformation with their Strategic Service Plan for the next 10 years. Funding from Scottish and UK Government is challenging and the SFRS have an online survey / questionnaire on their website for the public to give feedback and ideas about all aspects of the fire service. Link to website

<https://firescotland.citizenspace.com/planning-and-performance/shaping-our-future-service-your-say/> and then click onto the Online Survey box.

AM said Torridon fire station is very well run by Stephen Matheson and his crew, which currently has 6 members, with a possible 2 new ones, however one member is soon to leave.

If anyone wishes to have a home fire safety check the crew are always happy to pop into homes for a chat and look at fire safety in the home for anyone.

With climate change and seasonal visitors, wildfires are a big challenge. Fire crews often do leaflet drops in campsites and hot spots to educate and remind the public not to light fires. AM said normally people are understanding if they are approached politely, and the approach is often most effective when made by someone in a uniform.

There is an upcoming event at Torridon Community Centre (23<sup>rd</sup> May) run by Lucky 2Be Here charity who provide free training to the public on defibrillator use. SFRS and Lucky 2Be Here have collaborated to provide a new defibrillator for Torridon to be placed on the toilet block near the campsite.

In answer to questions from TKCC members:

- There is no upper age limit to join SFRS. Minimum age is 18. Anyone can apply but must complete and pass the 2 week intensive fitness tests, and the 2 week fire safety training.

- If anyone sees a potential wildfire it is best to call the emergency service 999 who can direct the call to SFRS 1<sup>st</sup> call duty officers. They can upgrade the call to get the local crew out if needed. In relation to campers not co-operating in putting out a campfire or becoming aggressive the best number to phone is 101 for Police Scotland, as this is more a criminal matter.
- In answer to concerns regarding the cuts to access rangers this year by Highland Council, especially in our local area where there are high fire risks and visitors often light campfires in unofficial laybys, or roadside beaches, AM agreed to arrange for a variety of leaflets regarding campfires, outdoor code, campervans etc to be provided to so that anyone locally can pick them up for handing to the public if they wish to. AM also agreed that the fire crews would put up leaflets on our local notice boards to help get the message out. SW will liaise with AM to arrange this.

*Action SW*

- AM agreed that the visual presence of fire vehicles along roads during periods of high fire risk is valuable but he said they were limited by resources.
- It was noted that many people in the community are willing to help in some way or would like to join the service but are restricted either by the high level of fitness required or the 4-week training programme that would take them away from their employment or businesses. The current model for training does not accommodate any other level of entry but AM suggested we should submit our suggestions and ideas on the survey as these are concerns the service is keen to hear about.
- There is a Community Safety Advocate paid role linked with SFRS, and currently this post is based at Dingwall.
- Although SFRS is looking at making changes there will be no cuts to the Torridon or Kinlochewe fire stations.
- Regarding wildfires and the need for more equipment to deal with them, SFRS looks at incident numbers to determine need. They liaise with estates and their workers to provide beaters/blowers etc. Torridon & Kinlochewe stations are trained to Tier 1 for wildfires, Gairloch Tier 2, and Tier 3 stations use 4x4's to fight hill fires. If there is a wildfire in our area Torridon and Kinlochewe stations will be called to attend, and then if the fire escalates, Tier 2 and Tier 3 stations are called according to the level of the fire.
- Torridon and Kinlochewe stations are unlikely to be provided with any more equipment than they currently have for wildfire fighting.

CH thanked AM for his helpful and interesting information and for giving his time to speak to us. He agreed that anyone wishing to ask further questions should email them to him via SW [secretary@tkcc.scot](mailto:secretary@tkcc.scot) for forwarding. He encouraged as many people as possible to complete the survey and would be happy to meet anyone next time he is in Torridon Fire Station.

## 5. Treasurer's report

The accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023 have been reviewed by an independent reviewer. They will be presented for approval by TKCC members at the AGM in June.

No payments/receipts since last month, current bank account balance remains £1,569.86.

## 6. GALE - Gairloch CC proposals

GCC had been in touch following the public meeting they held in place of the one that GALE had scheduled to discuss their plans for The Shieling but which was postponed due to 'a threat of public disorder'. GCC said the meeting they held was well attended, peaceable and constructive. One of the key outcomes was agreement that members of the community covered by GALE need to engage more with GALE to influence their activities.

Since the meeting, concerns have been raised about the perceived barriers GALE places to those wishing to join as members. This includes being asked to explain why you want to join, to read and agree with GALE's Articles of Association and Code of Conduct, and confirm you support GALE's Mission, Values and Strategic Priorities. Other Development Trusts in the region apparently have a much lighter touch towards membership, e.g. Garve, Lochbroom.

GALE also charges a membership fee. Until recently, memberships were vetted by the board – GCC assumes this is no longer the case but is not sure.

In order to meet the criteria for the Scottish Land Fund application they recently made, GALE was required to change its Articles of Association to ensure that Ordinary (or voting) membership must be open to everyone over 16 yrs (over 18 yrs is also acceptable) living within the defined geographic community. Open membership is not demonstrated if directors can refuse membership.

As evidenced at the GCC public meeting, members of the community do not universally agree with GALE's mission, values etc. They feel there is a need for change within the organisation, but only as a member can they influence that.

Part of the TKCC area, ie. Kinlochewe, is in GALE's Area of Benefit. As such GCC has asked for our views on whether (i) GALE should be approached requesting they consider removing perceived barriers to membership in the hope of attracting a broader membership with a representative cross section of views; and (ii) the CCs within GALE's Area of Benefit should have a seat on the GALE board. GCC would be in favour of this as it would improve working relations between GALE and the CCs and improve community representation in GALE's activities.

TKCC members' views included:

- All agreed it was very important that GALE does engage with the community and reflect the community's wishes. Views varied on the extent to which they are doing this.
- Some TKCC members were aware of people in the TKCC area applying for membership of GALE and being refused.
- We do not know whether people in Kinlochewe perceive there are barriers to membership.
- There are well publicised, highly charged issues between GALE and communities in Gairloch and elsewhere, we are not aware of similar problems in Kinlochewe.
- Most TKCC members felt we already have enough to do trying to represent the TKCC community, and would prefer not to get involved.
- In light of the above, perhaps GCC and other CCs are best placed to try and sort things out.

It was agreed that TKCC should say no to (ii) above, and only say yes to (i) if people in Kinlochewe perceive that there are barriers to membership of GALE. If you live in Kinlochewe, we should therefore be pleased to hear your views as soon as possible.

## **7. Correspondence received**

- Kinlochewe resident – dog mess and litter  
Beinn Eighe nature reserve - the amount of dog poo on and alongside the paths through the nature reserve increases in direct proportion to the number of visitors. NatureScot provides poo bags but unfortunately these are very difficult to use, therefore a lot of poo is left on the ground. The resident feels that better bags, also signage in the carpark reminding people to use them would help a lot. It was agreed TKCC would liaise with NatureScot to try and address this.

*Action: MM*

Litter on the roads – the amount of litter also tends to increase with visitors. The resident feels the shop, petrol station and cafe could be asked to assist by reminding people when they purchase disposable cups, bottles and the like that there are bins in the village car park and also in Torridon. TKCC members felt that contractors are also likely to blame throwing litter out of their vans as they leave the villages. It was agreed TKCC would talk to local businesses and see what can be done.

*Action: MM*

- South West Ross Community Car Scheme  
SWRCCS have recently become a SCIO. With this new structure and constitution, they have asked TKCC to consider becoming a member. This would keep us informed of progress, give us a say at their AGM and show our support for the organisation. TKCC members agreed that SWRCCS plays a vital role in our community and we should become a member. SS to complete the application form.

*Action: SS*

- MSc student – research project on mineral mining  
Tamsin Wake is an MSc student at Edinburgh University who is researching how communities are affected by mineral mining and what their perceptions of it are. She is looking to interview 1-2 individuals from each of three chosen regions (Dumfries and Galloway, Aberdeenshire and Loch Maree) that have been identified by the British Geological Survey as having potential for new mineral mining. TF said that there are gold and silver deposits near Loch Maree.

If anyone is interested in being interviewed, please contact Tamsin - T.Wake@sms.ed.ac.uk. All research participants can be fully anonymised.

- UHI North, West and Hebrides - Gaelic Language Plan for 2023-2028  
UHI North, West and Hebrides has launched a consultation on its first Gaelic Language Plan. Key priorities include driving forward Gaelic learning, promoting and developing Gaelic as a community asset, supporting the development and delivery of short online and in-person language courses, enhancing Gaelic provision in health, early years and childcare professionals, and increasing enrolment on Gaelic medium teacher education.

To view the plan and submit comments, visit - [UHI North, West and Hebrides Gaelic Language Plan Consultation](#) The consultation runs until Friday 31 May.

## **8. Planning application**

24/01044/FUL Erection of extension to house, Land 30M NE Of Duart 2 Kinlochewe  
No comments.

## **9. Any other business**

On behalf of TKCC, CH welcomed Katie Anderson as the new development officer employed by TDCA. Katie's role includes helping to take forward the priorities identified in the community development plan.

CH reported that our draft Local Place Plan is currently awaiting SCDC's design input. MM will attend an HC online learning event about Local Place Plans later this month, Katie may also attend as well.

SW has received and will circulate to TKCC members details of roles and responsibilities within the HC ward management team. The team includes Willie Mackinnon and Lewis Hannah.

*Action: SW*

**Date of next meeting: Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> June on Zoom at 7.00pm,  
AGM followed by ordinary meeting**