

Minutes (draft) of Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council (TKCC) Meeting held by Zoom on Wednesday, 2 March 2022 at 7.30pm

Present: Caroline Hamilton (Chair), Sue Whiting (Secretary), Colin Stevenson, Tom Forrest, Steve Schnabel (Treasurer), Alpin Stewart, Cllr. Alex MacInnes

1 member of the public.

1. Apologies

Sally Cook, Mat Webster.

2. Minutes of meeting on 2 February 2022

Approved, subject to recording that Alpin Stewart also attended the meeting.

3. Matters arising from minutes of 2 February

Core paths maintenance funding – work has commenced on the path between Rechullin and Torridon House. Unfortunately, whoever has been doing the work has used recycled tar planings which everyone agreed was not appropriate. TF has contacted Phil Waite to complain, and is trying to reach the contractor to sort things out.

Action: TF

Mowi fish farm noise – contrary to Mowi's report that stated their mitigation measures at the fish farm opposite Wester Alligin have been effective, a resident in Inveralligin has again notified TKCC of noise problems. In addition, SS confirmed that frequently a low rumble could be heard in Inveralligin coming from the farm, sometimes this was so bad he was unable to sleep.

It was agreed that TKCC should write to Mowi to tell them this.

Action: CH

4. Julie Wileman - HC Community Support Co-ordinator

Julie explained that she has recently taken over as co-ordinator from Lynn Frost and now looks after Wards 5 and 10. She is part of Dot Ferguson's team and is based in Fort William. She has never visited our area but is looking forward to doing so in the near future.

Julie has a long background in the voluntary sector and her role is to support community organisations particularly to access funding. She can also act as an interface between HC and the voluntary sector.

She circulates lots of information about funding to community organisations, helps them identify suitable funding sources and is available to help organisations complete their applications.

5. Treasurer's report

See attached. The issue of the email accounts will be discussed. CH believes it may be possible to achieve a substantial reduction in the cost of the 123-reg accounts.

Action: CH/SS

6. NTS Torridon Gateway

NTS have now shortlisted 6 architects for their proposed new visitor centre at the entrance to Fasaig. CH participated in the shortlisting process by highlighting firms that mentioned the importance of community consultation in their expressions of interest.

SS, AS and CH have also met with Will Boyd-Wallis (Area Manager) and Paul Bolton (local ranger) of NTS to give some initial feedback on their outline brief for the centre. Based on this, NTS will invite the shortlisted architects to submit design concepts.

Will stated that NTS are very keen to obtain the community's views. He emphasised the proposal is still at an early stage and there will be opportunities for the community to provide input in due course. He was pleased the future of the centre had been included in the community survey, and he looked forward to hearing ideas that come out of the survey regarding both the centre and how NTS could play an increased role in the community.

It is not clear yet how the new centre will be funded, as NTS will need to raise funds for it.

7. Roads

CH, SW and TF attended the Ward 5 business meeting on 9th February. The objective was to discuss the report prepared by TKCC (see TKCC website) and to try and get HC to give our roads the attention they require.

CH gave a brief report of the meeting. The meeting was attended by our four Ward 5 Highland Councillors in addition to Ian Moncrief (IM) and Andrew Bone (AB) of HC Roads. Whilst IM said he would look into everything, overall the meeting was disappointing. Mr Cockburn was the only Councillor who spoke, and AM did not contribute at all.

CH thanked IM and AB for the work they were doing but explained that the people we really wanted to talk to were the Highland Councillors. TKCC has been complaining to HC for years about the roads and we had the impression that either the Councillors were not listening, or if they were listening, they weren't bothered.

Ian Cockburn got quite angry at this and said they were doing something because they had disaggregated the Ward 5 roads budget from the rest of HC.

We were informed that HC had already decided to top dress a further 5km of the A896 between Kinlochewe and Torridon plus a small area by the Torridon Hotel. We said much more needed to be done, including to the Torridon to Diabaig road. We were told HC has no funding or plans for this and the implication was we were very lucky to have any money at all spent in our area.

When asked why HC did not go to the Scottish Assembly for extra funds, Mr Cockburn said if we wanted more, we should write to them ourselves.

AM agreed this was frustrating and said he was sorry the meeting didn't work for us. He said all councillors were under pressure about roads. He agreed there was not enough funding and suggested we wrote to the leader of the HC.

Other matters discussed at the ward 5 business meeting included:

- Could a weight limit be imposed to prevent the excessive loads that are now frequently carried on the A896. IM said the road could only have a limit of 8.5 or 12 tonnes and both would prevent essential deliveries getting through.
- Any driver wishing to take an abnormally large load along the A896 is required to obtain a licence. IM promised to find out if any licences have been granted, however we have not heard from him. AM said he would chase IM up at a meeting in the next few days and report back to TKCC.
- IM can organise a traffic count for Kinlochewe although he is not sure what this will achieve (it has also been promised before).
- IM has not had time to do the bridge survey that he was supposed to undertake at the end of last year. Therefore there is no report.

After further discussion, TKCC members agreed that despite our best efforts, were making insufficient progress. It was felt we needed to get the community more involved and suggest that as many local people as possible should write to Highland Councillors, Scottish government, Scottish Minister for Transport etc. With local elections coming up, people should ask candidates what they will do about our roads if they are elected. In addition, they should bombard HC with pictures of potholes.

We agreed to circulate contact details of relevant MSPs etc and draft some letters/emails that could be copied and pasted to them. We would also suggest that residents should put together a social media campaign.

Action: All

8. Correspondence received

North Highlands and Islands Climate Action Hub

A development officer at the hub has enquired whether we would be interested in having her attend a TKCC meeting. The hub has been set up to help community groups and organisations with climate action projects and plans, for example to help cut through red tape, look for professional advice or even help with funding and applications.

It was agreed we should introduce the hub to any community groups with suitable projects in mind once the results of the community survey are known.

Wester Ross Biosphere

The biosphere have expressed interest in finding out more about what is happening in our area. In addition, they are holding a number of online events they would like to encourage people to attend.

SCDC Supporting Communities

SCDC are holding an online learning event on 31st March for communities wishing to undertake community surveys. They have asked the Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Action Plan Group to give a short presentation about their experience in engaging with the community during Covid. CH will contact members of the group to ask if any can attend.

Action: CH

9. Planning applications

22/00408/FUL - Erection of 20.0m high lattice tower and associated ancillary works, Land 1040M NW Of Loch Maree Lodge, Loch Maree, Achnasheen. This was previously the subject of a planning pre-consultation enquiry, unfortunately it still includes a number of misleading location references which it was agreed we should point out. Otherwise no comments.

Action: TF

22/00658/FUL - Erection of extension to house and erection of garage, Tigh Brachen 2B Shore, Diabaig. No comments.

10. Future meetings

TKCC members agreed we should continue to hold most of our meetings by Zoom, with two meetings per year to be held in person, one in Torridon and one in Kinlochewe.

11. Any Other Competent Business

None.