

Minutes (draft) of Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council (TKCC)
Meeting held by Zoom at 7.00pm
Wednesday 19th July 2023

Present: Caroline Hamilton (Chair), Sue Whiting (Secretary), Colin Stevenson, Maud McIntyre, Alpin Stewart, Tom Forrest, Mat Webster, Councillor Chris Birt
2 members of the public.

1. Apologies – Steve Schnabel (Treasurer),

2. Minutes of the meeting on 21st June 2023

Approved subject to the reference in item 3(a) to Kinlochewe School being corrected to Shildaig School.

3. Matters arising from meeting on 21st June

Bin surround, Torridon – AS has not yet consulted residents. It was noted the smaller bin has not overflowed as much recently, therefore maybe it will be sufficient after all. Once the size of bin is known, quotes on a surround can be obtained.

Action: AS/MW

Community Council Election Timetables – SW will ask HC when they expect to send us posters. We will then put these up on noticeboards, and publicise through social media.

Action: SW/others

HC repair of bridge by Wester Alligin – Despite chasing, SW has had no response yet from HC to the question of why a safety barrier has not been installed. TF noted that when we suggested a safety barrier to HC two years ago at a roads meeting, they seemed to accept it was a good idea. In 2022, HC Roads Manager Iain Moncrieff stated at the joint roads meeting that the bridge had not been inspected as originally planned.

SW to contact the Roads Team via Ward 5 office again to ask if a barrier will be considered in future work plans/inspections. TF to speak to Andrew Bone (Roads Team). Cllr Birt also to follow this up.

Action SW/TF/CB

Planning application 23/02539/FUL – CH wrote to HC to ask for trees to be planted in mitigation, as agreed.

Howard Doris Centre, Lochcarron – MM attended the working group meeting on 12 July in a personal capacity. The meeting focussed on how the new community centre was going to be run, and it was not appropriate to raise the issue of day care services for residents in our area.

It was agreed MM should write on behalf of TKCC in this regard. This will include a request that the centre helps to establish what our local residents' needs are.

Action: MM

TKCC minutes – SW and MM provided hard copies of the minutes for 21st June to Torridon Community Centre and Kinlochewe Hall and will continue to provide copies in the future.

Kinlochewe village septic tank – CS reported that the estate is keeping a close eye on the situation. Scottish Water has not yet responded to his request to review the frequency of emptying, and there remains confusion about the cause of the problem. He will keep chasing Scottish Water.

Action: CS

TF noted that Peter Cunningham at the Fisheries Trust is currently looking at water quality. MW said the Torridon septic tank was emptied in June, having not been emptied for around 3 years.

4. Treasurer's report

No change from last month. Our accounts for 2022-23 have been submitted to HC and we await our grant for this year.

5. Gregor Watson, Highland Council Access Ranger

Gregor attended to give an overview of current issues within the area. He covers the South West Ross area and his colleague Fraser Connal covers the North West Ross area.

Gregor referred to the 2020 Scottish Tourism Action Group (STAG) Report that covers many issues in the Highlands that have occurred with the wider growth in tourism. A copy of this will be made available. Facilities for camper vans/motorhomes remain a significant issue – more infrastructure/funding to provide them are required. Other commonly occurring issues include the conduct of wild (informal) campers, provision of adequate toilet facilities, car parking, litter, and waste collection.

95% of Access Ranger work in the tourist season relates to off road parking/camping issues. There is a need for further clarification of some parts of the Road Traffic Act regarding off road parking – currently HC is responsible for up to 3 metres of land beyond the edge of the road, beyond that it is the landowners responsibility. Car parks, laybys/passing places are not permissible sites for overnight or wild (informal) camping. Most visitors are well behaved but some are ill-informed regarding the Access Code for conduct in the environment – lighting fires/waste/toileting etc.

In our area, informal camping and parking in inappropriate places are the principal issues. Issues around off road parking/fires in Glen Torridon have improved. Generally, issues such as this are reported to Rangers depending on the level of local community tolerance, and both he and Gregor liaise closely with local NTS Rangers.

SW recently reported to Gregor that she asked some campervan visitors to put out an open fire on the commonly used site on the flat rocks near the Inveralligin road junction. Gregor placed a No Camping sign on the site and will forward some leaflets/information that could be handed to visitors found to be lighting fires to make them aware of the Access Code.

Gregor feels that more educational information boards regarding camping/fires would be welcome to guide visitors to positively do things, rather than tell them what not to do. He suggested that TKCC should write to him to support the use of more information boards so he can forward this to the Ranger Management team. TKCC members agreed.

Action: SW

CS asked if the fire service vehicle in Kinlochewe could patrol the area during periods of high fire risk. Gregor said the Rangers share live information with the fire service crews and police. It was noted that local fire service crews are dependent on volunteers. MW to forward details of the Fire Chief at Kyle to Gregor so that he could ask if that would be possible.

Action: MW

6. Community development plan update

MW gave update on the Action Plan Group's recent request for the community to submit ideas for uses of Torridon school and playpark if closure is confirmed.

25 people responded. The majority wanted the playpark or green space to continue, with maybe a community shed. For the school, the main suggestions were as follows:

1. Convert all to living accommodation, (not holiday let),
2. Convert all to community space /business.
3. Whole site to be let to a stand-alone business with possible linked living accommodation.

Any option would have to be suitable to obtain funding, it must not compete with existing similar facilities in the village, would need to fill a gap/need within the area, and be sustainable.

No decisions have been made yet. Applications are being made to Scottish Land Fund and Highland Council Communities Regeneration Fund (CRF) for £25k to pay for a consultant to carry out a feasibility study. Options will be looked at, narrowed down in consultation with the community, and any final decision will have to be submitted to HC as a business plan to show its viability as a Community Asset Transfer (CAT).

A lot of time has already gone into the brief for recruiting a consultant, enquiries are being made to find out costs and availability. The first of the two funding applications have to be submitted by the 9th August. The aim is to keep everyone informed/updated within the community.

CH added that the Action Plan Group were also looking for funding for a paid Development Officer, but time pressure on funding applications relating to the School has taken precedence.

At the request of Cllr Liz Kraft, as Chair of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (WRSL) Committee, the Action Plan Group will present the whole development plan to the committee on 4th September. Cllr Birt said this was a good opportunity to discuss the plan with the area team, and useful to be done ahead of submitting any finalised business plan for the school.

In answer to CH's question, Cllr Birt stated Ward Councillors have an input into funding applications to the CRF but the decision comes from HC. He also mentioned the Coastal Communities Fund has allocated 200k to Ward 5. This is one of four funds within the umbrella of the CRF.

CH concluded by saying that if anyone in the community has ideas or wishes to get involved in any way with the Development Plan, please contact the Action Plan Group – the more people who are involved from the community the better.

7. Scottish Government Visitor Levy Bill

The Scottish Government has proposed a new law under a Visitor Levy Bill, which would allow local authorities to introduce an additional charge when someone pays for overnight accommodation. The Bill is at Stage 1 and public consultation runs from 26th June to 15th September 2023.

The basic format of the levy would be a percentage charge (eg 1%) of the cost of an overnight stay in an accommodation property but it would not include overnight accommodation in campsites/motor homes/tents. The levy would be collected by the accommodation provider.

Many organisations representing Scottish businesses involved with overnight accommodation have been gathering feedback already. For example, The Scottish Tourism Alliance have produced a very informative document on the proposed bill in the link: [Local Visitor Levy Manifesto and Recommendations](#).

TKCC members expressed a number of concerns/views, for example:

- How will the money be used and what guarantee is there that it will be used for tourism
- The levy must be the same across Scotland – too much confusion if it is a different rate in different regions
- Camper vans/campsites should be included in the levy
- In areas such as the Highlands where most visitors arrive by vehicle, the levy could be charged via ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition)
- European countries have charged a levy for some time so most overseas tourists are used to being charged, but for tourism in the Highlands, which can be up to 75% from domestic visitors, may be adversely affected
- Increased administration burdens on accommodation providers

It was agreed that in view of the diverse views/opinions likely to be held by the community, TKCC should encourage as many people as possible to submit their views and feedback on the government links: [Share your views with the committee](#) - [Please submit your views using the digital consultation tool](#)

Anyone with a problem finding links to information, please contact Sue on secretary@tkcc.scot.

8. Correspondence received

- Albyn Housing/Hickman Park
A Kinlochewe resident contacted TKCC to say they understand one of the tenants at Hickman Park may be about to move away, leaving the property available for someone on the housing list. They are very keen that it should be allocated if possible to someone who can work in the village, especially since the shortage of housing has been identified in the community development plan as a major constraint for Kinlochewe and other villages.

CH wrote on behalf of TKCC to the CEO of Albyn Housing drawing their attention to this. She pointed out that the shortage of housing means many local businesses struggle to find staff due to the lack of available accommodation. Therefore, if any tenancies do become available, please could Albyn give due consideration to people who wish to move to Kinlochewe to work there.

- Wester Loch Ewe CC – HC mobile library
Correspondence involving Wester Loch Ewe residents expressing concern about the mobile library service and what will happen when the current vehicles finally reach the end of their life. TKCC members agreed this is a vital service that needs to be maintained.

CLlr Birt said he was not aware of any plans for HC to discontinue the service. HC had bought a new vehicle recently, and he was currently actively involved with trying to get it back on the road following a breakdown.

- Mowi Scotland – sustainability certification webinar
Mowi Scotland are hosting a web-based presentation and Q&A session on Monday 31st July at 2pm with the link to be advertised on Visit Torridon. This is to provide stakeholders and communities with the opportunity to learn more about the company’s ongoing sustainability certification activities. Their target is to have 100% of their yearly harvest volumes certified with a Global Seafood Sustainability Initiative recognised standard: the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) or GlobalGAP.
- Highland Council - Alcohol licensing policy
The Highland Licensing Board has begun consultation on its next Statement of Licensing Policy for November 2023 to November 2028. Responses must be submitted by 31 August: https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=brXwiRZt6E-duhdvqUD3yWfi995f9QJFmFxVep_7igVUM1RKRzM2Uk44TVhHWTFVTU5GOUUpBTUY1Uy4u

Cllr Birt, who sits on the HC Licensing Committee, said there were no plans to change anything. MW noted that most of the provisions concerned premises that were much larger than those in our area.

- NHS Highland - New arrangements for reporting Adult Concerns
NHS Highland have changed the arrangements for reporting Adult Concerns. The current mailbox and 0800 902 0042 phone number will soon be de-commissioned and they are now asking everyone to direct their Adult Concerns / Referrals to the appropriate locality Adult Social Care Team – see attached.
- SWRCCS – cycle roadside repair kits
Information about a scheme run by Sustrans Scotland under which people running community spaces, such as community centres and hubs, can apply for basic cycle repair kits for use by service users and the local community. It was agreed to forward the information to Torridon Community Centre and Kinlochewe Hall.

Action: CH

9. Planning applications

23/03093/FUL | Installation of a 4.3m mounting pole and dish and associated ancillary works | Doire Na Garbhe Telecommunication Site Kinlochewe. No comment.

10. Any other business

TF and MW reported that the recent Celtman event had gone very smoothly. MW noted the business the event brings to our area, thanked the community for the wide effort that people put in and said there had been very positive feedback.

TF reported that emails from tkcc.scot addresses were no longer coming through to any of his email addresses. It was agreed the issue of email accounts for TKCC members would be addressed after the upcoming elections as gmail, for instance, has changed its protocols recently making it hard for users to receive emails from certain domains, including .scot domains.

Next meeting date - 7pm on Zoom:

Wednesday 6th September 2023