

Minute of the Meeting of Kirkwall and St Ola Community Council held in the Friends Room, St Magnus Centre, Kirkwall, on Monday, 23 March 2026 at 19:30

Present:

Lynne Spence, Chris J F Matthews, Steven Brodie, Moyra Gordon, Robert F Leslie, John R Mowat, Tom Rendall, Rosemary Rhodes and Elspeth Seatter.

In Attendance:

- Councillor Sandy G Cowie.
- Councillor Steven B Heddle.
- Councillor W Leslie Manson.
- Councillor John A R Scott.
- 1 member of the local press.
- Hazel Flett, Clerk.

Chair:

- Lynne Spence.

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1. Apologies

Resolved to note that apologies for absence had been received from Cathleen A Hourie and Neil P Tait, and Councillor Ivan A Taylor.

2. Adoption of Minute

The Minute of the Meeting held on 26 January 2026 was approved, being proposed by Rosemary Rhodes and seconded by Tom Rendall.

3. Matters Arising

A. Kirkwall Post Office

Following consideration of correspondence from Alistair Carmichael MP thanking the Community Council for including him in correspondence setting out the frustrations of the community regarding changes at the Kirkwall Post Office in late 2025, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

B. Urban Weeds

Councillor John Ross Scott advised that a meeting had been arranged for later in the week with the Convener of Orkney Islands Council, together with the Director of Infrastructure and Organisational Development, to consider potential assistance to community groups who wished to undertake weed cleaning, with a request that a representative from the Community Council be nominated to take part in further discussions, and it was:

Resolved that Elspeth Seatter should represent the Community Council, with an opportunity also provided to Cathleen Hourie and Neil Tait, should they wish to be the Community Council representative.

C. Community Council Pin/Lanyard

The Chair advised that, after seeking advice from Democratic Services, Orkney Islands Council, the lanyard should contain individual names of the Community Councillors, together with expiry dates, and it was:

Resolved to note that the lanyards should be available at the next meeting.

D. Historic Environment Scotland – Properties and Collections Strategy

Following consideration of correspondence from Historic Environment Scotland thanking the Community Council for its response to the consultation on the Properties and Collections Strategy and requesting further feedback on use of local knowledge and participation in decision-making, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved:

1. To note that Historic Environment Scotland was undertaking an Island Communities Impact Assessment in relation to the Properties and Collection Strategy.

2. That, in future, the Clerk should let all members of the Community Council see any response submitted to a consultation, if it was prepared and submitted out with a formal meeting.

3. That the Clerk should submit further representations to Historic Environment Scotland thanking them for undertaking an Island Communities Impact Assessment and providing a list of potential groups and organisations to be involved in local decision making, which should include Development Trusts.

E. Street Lighting at Meadowbank

Councillor John Ross Scott advised that, together with Chris Matthews, they had walked round Meadowbank at night and had identified a number of issues with regard to lighting which had subsequently been passed to Orkney Islands Council for consideration and action, as appropriate, and it was:

Resolved that Councillor John Ross Scott and Chris Matthews should undertake a similar visit around Papdale East, and report back in due course.

F. Call for Views – Visitor Levy (Amendment)(Scotland) Bill

Following consideration of correspondence from The Scottish Parliament acknowledging receipt of the Community Council's response to the call for views on the Visitor Levy (Amendment)(Scotland) Bill, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

G. Financial Requests

Following consideration of notes of thanks received from various individuals and groups regarding financial assistance received from the Community Council, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

H. SEPA – Safeguarding Scotland's Water Environment

The Clerk confirmed that she had submitted a response to SEPA in relation to the consultation on significant water management issues, after the closing date of 3 March 2026, and it was:

Resolved to note that SEPA had confirmed that the Community Council's response would be included in the overall consultation.

I. EMEC – Fall of Warness Tidal Test Site

Following consideration of correspondence from the Marine Directorate, Scottish Government, confirming that the EIA Section 36 consent application submitted by EMEC in respect of the Fall of Warness tidal test site had been approved, thereby increasing the duration of the consent from 10 years to 12 years, and expiring on 22 March 2028, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

J. Hanging Baskets

The Clerk advised that a further invoice had been received in respect of supplying and fitting brackets for hanging baskets in 2025, and it was:

Resolved that the cost be met, subject to assistance from the Community Council Grant Scheme being approved.

4. Standing Items

A. Ferry Replacement Programme and Harbours Masterplan Phase 2

The Clerk advised that no date had yet been set for the presentation on the ferry replacement programme and the Harbours Masterplan Phase 2, and it was:

Resolved that the Clerk should contact the relevant parties again in order to confirm a date.

B. Carness Road Sea Wall

Resolved to note that there was no further update at this time.

C. Former Street Names

The Clerk had contacted Orkney Heritage Society regarding the proposal to mark former street names and had received confirmation that, while the Society was supportive, there were concerns that would need to be addressed, and it was:

Resolved that Robert Leslie should continue discussions with Spencer Rosie, Chair of the Orkney Heritage Society, and report back in due course.

D. Local Place Plan

The Chair advised on progress with developing the Local Place Plan, including applications for financial assistance towards the consultancy and the consultancy brief, which was costed at approximately £35,000, and it was:

Resolved to make a contribution of £2,000 towards the cost of the consultancy, to be met from the General Fund.

E. Benches

The Chair advised that Orkney Islands Council had advised that a handyman did undertake limited bench maintenance, and it was:

Resolved to note that Orkney Islands Council had committed to providing a list of benches and which ones were likely to be maintained inhouse, following which a co-ordinated programme of maintenance could be progressed, with the Community Council being assisted by the Community Justice service.

F. Sand at Scapa

The Clerk had received correspondence from Orkney Islands Council responding to the Community Council's concerns regarding road safety following the build-up of sand dunes and marram grass along Scapa and querying the proposed width of 3.5 metres, and it was:

Resolved:

1. That the Clerk should respond to Orkney Islands Council, again highlighting the inadequacy of the width, given that buses had been witnessed driving through the narrowest part, with wing mirrors nearly touching the highest part of the dunes, thereby leaving no space for pedestrians etc to move out of the way.
2. That the Clerk should again request that the sand be cleared back to the wall, given that the dunes were not that large and the marram grass was not native to that area.
3. To note that Councillor Sandy Cowie would also continue to make the case for removing the sand in order that pedestrians and vehicular traffic could pass safely.

G. Winter Fest

The Chair advised that she was meeting the new BID Manager the following day to discuss, among other things, the BID's plans for winter themed events, and it was:

Resolved to note the current position.

H. Policy on Financial Assistance

The Chair noted that the Clerk was still to circulate proposed amendments to the current policy to the Finance Sub-committee, and it was:

Resolved to note the current position.

I. Green Plaque for Carnegie Library

The Clerk was liaising with various parties to confirm appropriate wording for the proposed green plaque commemorating the Carnegie Library in Laing Street, which would include reference to Andrew Carnegie, philanthropist, and the opening date, and it was:

Resolved to note the current position.

J. Former Balfour Hospital – Garden Memorial Building

Following consideration of correspondence from Orkney Heritage Society supporting the Community Council's view to retain at least part of the Garden Memorial Building in any redevelopment of the wider former Balfour Hospital site, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note that the Chair of the Board of NHS Orkney had also reconfirmed that the Community Council would be kept informed of all developments in the coming months.

K. Laing Street, Kirkwall

Following consideration of correspondence from Councillor John Ross Scott regarding the condition of Laing Street and what works might be carried out, together with information on the Council's inspection regime for roads assets, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence and the possibility that enhancement of Laing Street could feature in the Local Place Plan

L. Missing Door on Phone Box at Pierhead

The Clerk had submitted photographs to BT of the condition of the phone box at the pierhead, together with a request for full refurbishment, and awaited a response, and it was:

Resolved to note the current position.

M. Festive Lighting in Kirkwall

The Clerk advised that confirmation had been received from The Orkney Fund that “projects of this nature (provision of festive lighting and hanging baskets) would be better suited to a smaller grant or participatory funding scheme, where community councils across Orkney may receive an allocation to support public realm improvement projects. On that basis, these Eols [Expressions of Interest] have not been taken forward to full application at this stage”, and it was:

Resolved:

1. To note that The Orkney Fund had suggested that the Community Council could collaborate with the Kirkwall BID on their festive lighting project, however given the very tight timescales, this was unlikely to prove feasible.
2. That the Community Council should continue to explore alternative funding to assist with the cost of providing festive lighting in Kirkwall and the provision of hanging baskets.

Councillor Steven Heddle left the meeting at this point.

5. Correspondence

A. Events and Consultations

Following consideration of correspondence from the Scottish Islands Federation providing details of various events and consultations happening during March 2026, including a public invitation for groups and communities to register an interest in hosting a baton visit ahead of the Commonwealth Games, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

B. Grass Cutting in Burial Grounds

Following consideration of a briefing note from Orkney Islands Council setting out the results of feedback requested on the maintenance costs associated with grass cutting in active and inactive graveyards, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence, including that no change was proposed to existing numbers of cuts for both the St Magnus Cathedral burial ground and St Olaf's Cemetery.

C. Orkney Sailing Development Officer – Letter of Support

The Clerk had received correspondence from the Orkney Sailing Club requesting a letter of support for funding applications in relation to an Orkney Sailing Development Officer, with a short timescale for response and, after receiving support from a majority of Community Councillors via email, it was:

Resolved to note that a letter of support had been provided to the Orkney Sailing Club.

D. Site K9 New Scapa Road – Proposal of Application Notice

Following consideration of correspondence from Bracewell advising of the Proposal of Application notice in respect of the proposed development of Site K9, New Scapa Road, to provide 65 dwelling houses with associated services and outdoor recreation areas, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note that public consultation events were to be held at Orkney Builders (Contractors) Ltd's head offices at 10 Crowness Road, Hatston, Kirkwall, on 10 and 24 March 2026, with any comments to be received by 7 April 2026.

E. Orkney Marine Planning Stakeholder Update

Following consideration of correspondence from Orkney Islands Council advising that the Orkney Islands Regional Marine Plan had been formally adopted by Scottish Ministers, establishing a new statutory framework for managing marine activities out to 12 nautical miles from the coast, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

F. Royal British Legion Best Kept War Memorial

Following consideration of correspondence from the Kirkwall branch of the Royal British Legion regarding the best kept war memorial competition, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that the Clerk should enter the Kirkwall and St Ola War Memorial.

G. Bag the Bruck 2026

Following consideration of correspondence from Greener Orkney regarding arrangements for Bag the Bruck, which was taking place during April 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved:

1. To note that the Clerk had forwarded the correspondence to the three schools in the Kirkwall and St Ola area, highlighting the possibility of grant assistance from the Community Council.
2. To note that the Clerk had already received two expressions of interest for grant assistance in respect of Bag the Bruck activities.
3. That a donation of £300, to be split equally between any organisation who applied prior to undertaking any Bag the Bruck activities during April 2026, be provided, subject to assistance from the Community Council Grant Scheme being approved.

6. Financial Statements

A. General Finance

Following consideration of the General Finance statement as at 3 March 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the estimated balance as at 3 March 2026 of £16,439.60.

B. Community Council Grant Scheme

Following consideration of the 2025/2026 Community Council Grant Scheme statement as at 3 March 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved:

1. To note that projects to the value of £3,835.89 had been approved, of which £3,019.67 had been claimed.
2. To note the balance remaining for approval within the main capping limit of £1,552.47.

C. Community Development Fund

Following consideration of the Community Development Fund Statement as at 3 March 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the balance remaining for approval of £1,163.46.

7. Financial Requests

A. Netball Scotland Under 15s Squad

Following consideration of an application from L Leonard requesting financial assistance towards her daughter participating in camps and cup competitions for the Scotland Under 15s netball squad between February and September 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that a donation of £15 be given in respect of each camp and cup competition, subject to confirmation of participation and policy capping levels within each financial year.

B. Papdale Primary School

Following consideration of an application from Papdale Primary School requesting financial assistance towards the P7 Residential Trip to Lagganlia in June 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that a donation of £375 be given, subject to confirmation of at least 16 pupils taking part.

C. U18s Orkney/Shetland Badminton Intercounty

Following consideration of an application from T Russell requesting financial assistance towards her daughter participating in the Under 18s badminton intercounty held in Shetland on 7 March 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that a donation of £15 be given, subject to confirmation of participation.

D. Netball Orkney

Following consideration of an application from Netball Orkney requesting financial assistance towards the Senior Intercounty netball competition being held in Shetland between 27 and 29 March 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that a donation of £30 be given in respect of each of the three named players, subject to confirmation of participation.

E. 1st Kirkwall Co Boys Brigade

Following consideration of an application from the 1st Kirkwall Company Boys Brigade requesting financial assistance towards their Annual Camp, staying at the George Smith Centre, Templars Park, Maryculter, between 11 and 15 August 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that a donation of £300 be given, subject to confirmation of no more than 16 people taking part.

F. Vikki Mackay Easter Festival of Highland Dancing

Following consideration of an application from T Paterson requesting financial assistance towards her daughters participating in the Vikki Mackay Easter Festival of Highland Dancing to be held in Wick on 11 April 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that a donation of £30 be given in respect of each dancer, subject to confirmation of participation.

G. Tanya Horne Festival of Dancing

Following consideration of an application from T Paterson requesting financial assistance towards her daughters participating in the Tanya Horne Festival of Dancing to be held in Wick on 31 May 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that a donation of £30 be given in respect of each dancer, subject to confirmation of participation.

H. Papdale East Playpark Association

Following consideration of an application from the Papdale East Playpark Association requesting financial assistance towards Phase 4 of the project to supply and install major play and fitness equipment at the Papdale East playpark, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that a grant of £1,000 be given, subject to assistance from the Community Development Fund allocation being approved.

I. Swimming

The Clerk had received an application from K MacLeod requesting financial assistance towards her son and daughter participating in the Inverness Graded Swimming Meet to be held on 28 March 2026, and it was:

Resolved that a donation of £30 be given in respect of each swimmer, subject to confirmation of participation.

8. Consultations

A. SEPA – Flood Risk Management Plan

Following consideration of correspondence from SEPA seeking views, by 22 April 2026, on local flooding concerns in areas identified as having the highest flooding risk, to help inform the Flood Risk Management Plans covering the period 2028 to 2034, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that Chris Matthews should draft a response from the Community Council for submission following approval via email, and that individual responses should also be encouraged.

B. Orkney Islands Council – Winter Service Policy

Following consideration of correspondence from Orkney Islands Council requesting feedback on the Winter Service Policy, the operational document which specified how the Council would treat the road network, including salt spread rates, temperatures initiating salt treatments and depth of snow required before ploughing, for which responses were required by 9 April 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that members should make any comments to the Clerk, no later than 30 March 2026, which would thereafter be collated and submitted to Orkney Islands Council.

C. Application for Variation of Premises Licence

Following consideration of correspondence from Orkney Islands Council seeking representations on an application for a variation of the premises licence in respect of Rapture, 14 Bridge Street, Kirkwall, which sought the inclusion of the activity of televised sport, for which responses were required by 25 March 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to make no comment.

D. Application for Provisional Premises Licence

Following consideration of correspondence from Orkney Islands Council seeking representations on an application for a provisional premises licence in respect of The Richan, West End Guesthouse, Kirkwall, for which responses were required by 27 March 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to make no comment.

E. Orkney Islands Council – Verge Maintenance Plan 2026 Update

Following consideration of correspondence from Orkney Islands Council seeking reports of injurious or noxious weeds or problem areas to be considered for the safety cut list for 2026, for which responses were required by 30 April 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that members should make any comments to the Clerk, no later than 30 March 2026, which would thereafter be collated and submitted to Orkney Islands Council.

9. Publications

The following publications had been sent to the Clerk and had been forwarded to members via email, and were noted:

- Walking Scotland – eNews – January, February and March 2026.
- VAO Newsletters – January and February 2026.
- Scotland’s Towns Partnership – January, February and March 2026 Newsletters.
- SEPA Updates – 4 February and 4 March 2026 and British Science Week Special Edition.
- SSEN – Whole System Newsletters – February and March 2026.
- ORSAS – Quarterly Email Newsletter – February 2026.
- VAO – Training and Funding Updates – February and March 2026.
- Scottish Rural Action – February Newsletter and Upcoming Events.
- Orkney Islands Council – Community Payback Unpaid Work Scheme.
- Police Scotland – Recruitment Event.
- SSEN – Customer Services Newsletter – Spring 2026.

10. Any Other Competent Business

A. Litter at Kirkwall Marina

Following consideration of correspondence from R Leslie regarding litter left around the path to the marine breakwater, especially around the benches, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that the Clerk should write to Orkney Islands Council requesting the litter bin and the dog litter bin be reinstated on the pathway, as vehicles could be driven round to enable emptying, as the public were not taking their rubbish to the bin at the top of the steps on Cromwell Road, or the bin at the Shore Street end.

B. Bus Shelter at Old Finstown Road/Liberator Housing Development

The Chair suggested that, although there was a dedicated bus stop on Old Finstown Road which served the Liberator housing development, it would benefit from a bus shelter, particularly as it was used by school pupils, and it was:

Resolved that the Clerk should write to Orkney Islands Council requesting that a bus shelter be provided.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Following consideration of future meeting dates, it was:

Resolved that the next meeting of Kirkwall and St Ola Community Council should be held on Monday, 11 May 2026, commencing at 19:30.

12. Conclusion of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 21:30.