

Minute of the Meeting of Firth and Stenness Community Council held in the Stenness Community Centre and via Teams on Thursday, 29 January 2026 at 19:30

Present:

Mr R Crichton, Mr M Harcus, Ms W Dunnet and Mrs A Stevenson.

In Attendance:

- Mr D Gowland, Bay of Firth Oyster Restoration Project (Northbay Innovations Ltd).
- Mr R Land, Bay of Firth Oyster Restoration Project (Northbay Innovations Ltd).
- Councillor J Stevenson.
- Councillor R King.
- Councillor D Tullock.
- Councillor O Tierney.
- Ms C Kelday, Community Council Liaison Assistant (via Teams).
- Mrs J McGrath, Community Council Liaison Officer/Interim Clerk.

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1. Apologies and Resignation

The Interim Clerk advised that Ms B Scollay had tendered her resignation from Firth and Stenness Community Council with immediate effect and was therefore not present at the meeting, and it was:

Resolved:

- A. To note that apologies for absence had been received from Mrs R Lyon.
- B. To note Ms B Scollay's resignation, and that a Chair would need to be appointed.

2. Presentation – Bay of Firth Oyster Restoration Project

Representatives from Northbay Innovations Ltd provided an update on the proposed Oyster Restoration Project planned for Firth Bay. He advised they were starting the planning application which would look to have a temporary container with hatchery and public information centre on site in the Finstown area. Members noted concerns over the location of the container, and it was:

Resolved:

- A. To note the information provided and that members had some reservations about the project.
- B. That representatives of Northbay Innovations Ltd would look at alternative locations for the siting of a container and provide an update by email prior to the next community council meeting.

The Bay of Firth Oyster Restoration Project representatives left the meeting at this point.

3. Election of Chair

Resolved to delay the election of a Chair to a future meeting, and that the Vice Chair, Mr R Crichton, should Chair this meeting.

4. Adoption of Minutes

The minute of meeting of Firth and Stenness Community Council held on 4 December 2025 was adopted, being proposed by Mr R Crichton and seconded by Mrs A Stevenson.

5. Matters Arising

A. Festive Lighting

The Interim Clerk advised there were still investigations into the faulty braid which had been reported. Members discussed the possibility of purchasing new braids and motives for Finstown and considered possible locations for these. Mr M Harcus advised that E Frasers fixed the tree lights after they went on fire, and that the tree was still in situ due to the recent bad weather but would be removed this weekend.

Mr Marcus also reported that he would find out from E Frasers who provides the lights for the tree, and it was:

Resolved:

1. That Mr M Marcus would speak with E Frasers regarding replacement tree lights.
2. To keep this item on the agenda.

B. Quarry Group

Mr M Marcus advised there was no update on the formation of a Cursiter Quarry Public Liaison Group, however he had spoken to a number of interested residents, and it was:

Resolved that Mr M Marcus would take this item forward, and that it would be discussed again at the next meeting.

C. Firth Place Plan

Mr M Marcus advised that there was to be another place plan meeting on 2 February and that the consultants were working all the information up into a survey which would then be promoted, and it was:

Resolved to note the update.

D. Stenness Place Plan

Resolved to note that there was no update on this item.

E. Community Council Clerk and Vacancies

The Interim Clerk advised that there were now three vacancies on the community council and suggested that a public meeting should be held at the next meeting date of 26 March 2026. In addition, the role of Clerk was also still vacant, and members should actively see if they could source a willing candidate. Councillor R King advised that Firth Parent Council was also looking for a Clerk, and it was:

Resolved:

1. That the Interim Clerk would arrange for the public meeting to be advertised for 26 March 2026, ahead of the next community council meeting.
2. That members would look to actively seek prospective community council members and candidates for the role of Clerk and feed back to Democratic Services.

F. Burial Grounds Update

The Interim Clerk advised that an update was due from OIC officers shortly regarding budgets and number of OIC funded cuts, and it was:

Resolved to await a further update from OIC.

G. Firth Play Park

Mr R Crichton asked if there was an update received from the Firth Play Park committee regarding their financial request as per the last meeting, and it was:

Resolved to note no update had been received, but the Interim Clerk would ask for another update to the next meeting so that further consideration could be given to this request.

H. Stoneyhill Road

Members asked if there had been any update regarding the road surface on the Stoneyhill Road which was raised at the last meeting via the business letter to Democratic Services, and it was:

Resolved to note there was no update, and to leave on the agenda.

6. Correspondence

A. Finstown East Works Householder Letter

Members discussed correspondence advising of 17 weeks of road works through Finstown and reported that the work had now commenced, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

B. OWHS Programme – Stenness Movement Study

Members considered correspondence regarding the Stenness Movement Study which will look at the feasibility of walking, wheeling and cycling around the area, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

C. SEPA National Flood Risk Assessment 2025 Report

Members considered correspondence from SEPA regarding the National Flood Risk Assessment, and it was:

Resolved to note the information required.

D. West Mainland Bowling Club – Letter of Support

Members considered correspondence from the West Mainland Bowling Club looking for a letter of support towards a funding application, and it was:

Resolved to provide a letter of support.

E. Letter of Thanks

Resolved to note that thanks for the financial support provided had been received from the 1st Dounby Guides and the Firth Community Association.

7. Consultations

A. EMEC – S36 Variation – Fall of Warness

Members had previously been sent information from EMEC regarding their application for the Falls of Warness Tidal Test Site, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

B. Consultation Events - Repower of Bugar Hill Wind Farm

Members considered correspondence regarding two consultation events being carried out by the Bugar Hill Wind Farm, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

8. Finance Statements

A. General Finance

Following consideration of the General Fund statement as at 16 January 2026, it was:

Resolved:

1. To note the estimated balance of £9,915.42, which included funds of £6942.47 from the Rennibister Community Wind Fund.
2. To note that a community benefit payment of £2,942.47 had been received since the last meeting.
3. That the Interim Clerk should query the community benefit paid, given that the bench mark recommended by the Scottish Government was £5,000 per megawatt per year for community benefits.
4. That consideration would need to be given to setting a criteria for use of the Wind Fund.

B. Community Council Grant Scheme

After consideration of the Grant Scheme statement as at 16 January 2026, it was:

Resolved to note the balance remaining for approval was £308.38 in the main capping limit and £405 in the additional categories.

C. Community Development Fund

Following consideration of the Community Development Fund statement as at 16 January 2026, it was:

Resolved to note that £6,115.63 remained for allocation.

9. Financial Requests

A. K McIntosh – Netball – Inverness

Following consideration of a request from K McIntosh, copies of which had previously been circulated, for financial assistance on behalf of J McIntosh to attend the Scottish Schools Netball game on 17 December 2025, it was:

Resolved to award £30 from the General Fund towards the trip.

B. FCA – Firth Tree Lighting

Following consideration of a request from Firth Community Association to provide financial assistance towards the Christmas Tree Lighting Event, it was:

Resolved to award a donation of £66.97 from the General Fund.

C. M Brown - Hoy Trip

Following consideration of a request from M Brown, copies of which had previously been circulated, for financial assistance on behalf of T Brown to attend the Stromness Academy S2 Hoy Trip in May 2026, it was:

Resolved to award £30 from the General Fund towards the trip.

10. Publications

The following publications had all previously been emailed to members and were noted:

- VAO - Training and Funding Update – December 2025 and January 2026.
- SRA Newsletter – December 2025.
- NHSO - Near Me Appointments.

11. AOCB

A. 20mph Signs

A member asked if there was a timeline for the new 20mph speed limit signs to be erected, and it was advised this would be soon as they were to be in place by the end of the financial year. Councillor J Stevenson advised the 'smileys' would be recalibrated to 20mph and the flashing 20mph lights at the schools would remain. In addition, she also advised that the faulty 20mph signs had been sent back to the suppliers for fixing, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

B. SSE Local Contact

It was advised that Jeni Herbert had now left her role as Community Liaison at SSE for the Finstown project, and that Natalie Henderson had replaced her, and it was:

Resolved:

1. To note the information provided.
2. That the Interim Clerk would ask Natalie Henderson if she could attend a future meeting to provide an update on the project.

12. Dates of Future Meetings

Resolved to note that the next meeting of Firth and Stenness Community Council had been set for 26 March 2026 in Firth Community Centre.

13. Conclusion of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 20:42.