

Minute of the Meeting of Firth and Stenness Community Council held in Stenness Community Centre and via Teams on Thursday, 1 May 2025 at 19:30

Present:

Ms B Scollay, Ms W Dunnet, Mr M Marcus and Mrs A Stevenson.

In Attendance:

- Councillor R King.
- Councillor J Stevenson.
- Councillor O Tierney.
- Mr T Hadley, Community Engagement Manager, Orkney Native Wildlife Project.
- Mrs J McGrath, Community Council Liaison Officer/Interim Clerk.

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1. Apologies

Resolved to note that apologies for absence had been received from Mr R Crichton, Mr R Hourston and Mrs R Lyon and Councillor D Tullock.

2. Presentation – Orkney Native Wildlife Project

The Community Engagement Manager provided information to members on the ONWP or “stoat project” as it has been sometimes called locally. He explained that the project, which began in 2019, was a partnership between RSPB Scotland, NatureScot and Orkney Islands Council with support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the EU’s LIFE programme and NatureScot. He advised that there were four phases – preparation, knock down, mop up and monitoring, and that in some areas, they were entering a trial of the mop up phase.

The Community Engagement Manager reported some data in that in Firth, 447 stoats had been removed from 580 traps, and that in Stenness 519 stoats had been removed from 599 traps. Many rats had also been removed. He went on to explain that studies of native wildlife had shown that their numbers were steadily increasing, and it was hoped that this was as a result of the work of the ONWP. He explained that it was more important than ever at this stage of the project that the public continued to report sightings so that they could achieve complete eradication. Following a short discussion, it was:

Resolved to note the report and thank the Community Engagement Manager for the information provided.

The Community Engagement Manager left the meeting at this point.

3. Adoption of Minute

The minute of the meeting of Firth and Stenness Community Council held on 13 March 2025 was approved, being proposed by Mr M Harcus and seconded by Mrs A Stevenson.

4. Matters Arising

A. Finstown Cleanliness

Resolved to remove this item from the agenda as it was now an ongoing project.

B. Finstown Shore

Resolved to note that no further update had been provided, but that it could be something to incorporate into the Firth Place Plan so should be removed from the agenda.

C. Quarry Group

Resolved that no update could be provided as Mr R Hourston was not present at the meeting.

D. Festive Lighting

Members discussed a response from the Head of Neighbourhood Services which advised that members should refer to the Column Mounted Decoration Policy and provide the appropriate information to OIC so that they could advise on the next steps. Members discussed further lights for Finstown, and it was:

Resolved:

1. That members would identify which columns they wished to install more festive lighting and pass information to the Interim Clerk so that the relevant service could be advised.
2. That further consideration would be given to the purchase of more lights and the matter discussed at the next meeting.

E. Lochside Viewpoint – Benches

The Interim Clerk advised that the supplier had been unable to supply the benches that had been chosen originally, and that subsequent agreement had been obtained via email to purchase two picnic style benches from Gillocks, to be funded via CCGS. Mr M Harcus agreed to arrange the siting of the benches once they were ready for collection.

The Interim Clerk advised that Environmental Health had supplied a sign which read "no dog fouling" and that it could be displayed as appropriate, and it was:

Resolved:

1. That the Interim Clerk would contact Mr M Harcus when the benches were ready for collection and distribution.
2. That members would arrange the display of the sign.

F. Firth Park Donations

The Interim Clerk advised that no response had been received from Baikies regarding a collection tub, and that enquiries were ongoing regarding the QR code. Ms W Dunnet offered to visit Baikies with a tub, if one could be sourced, and it was:

Resolved:

1. To note the information provided.
2. That the Interim Clerk would arrange a collection bucket and pass to Mrs W Dunnet.

G. Firth Place Plan

The Chair advised that a funding application had been submitted in the name of Firth and Stenness Community Council, and that a tender brief had been done and sent out. Letters of support had also been requested. One tender had been received. Following discussion, it was:

Resolved that members were in agreement to proceed with a place plan, providing funding could be sourced and a suitable tender chosen.

H. Stenness Place Plan

The Chair advised that the Stenness Place Plan was close to being ready for submission to OIC for adoption, and that the group were now looking at potential actions, some of which could be delivered by the community council. Once the plan had been submitted, Stenness Community Association could present it to a future community council meeting for discussion. Following discussion, it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

I. Stoneyhill Road

The Head of Neighbourhood Services had provided an update on the Stoneyhill Road ahead of the meeting, which advised that the Council had experienced some issues with the surface dressing work and were still looking into the cause of these failures. A representative from the emulsion supplier was coming up to review the sites with them. She further advised that specific defective areas would be repaired following routine safety inspections, but that there were no plans to resurface large sections of this road. Following discussion, where members stated that they were pleased the Council had acknowledged this issue, it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

J. Car Park at Firth School

The Interim Clerk advised that the car park was not the responsibility of OIC Roads and that it would be more appropriate for the school to bring up the issue of capacity via the School Travel Plan. She suggested that a letter from the community council be written to Friends of Firth School (parent council) to support this being looked at, and it was:

Resolved that the Interim Clerk would draft a letter to be approved by members in relation to the car park at Firth School, which would then be sent on to Friends of Firth School.

5. Correspondence

A. Improving the Cancer Journey

Members had previously been emailed details of the new Improving the Cancer Journey service within NHSO, which had been put in place to support anyone affected by cancer with their non-clinical needs, and it was:

Resolved to note the correspondence.

B. Response to CC Comments on Verge Maintenance Plan

OIC Roads responses to the comments made as part of the recent CC Consultation on the VMP had previously been circulated. It was noted that a number of community councils had objected to the number of cuts being reduced to one.

Members also commented that the problem with ragwort seemed to be getting worse and that the reduction in cutting would make this worse as the weeds would have gone to seed by the time the cut was carried out. Following discussion, it was:

Resolved to monitor the situation.

C. Wedding Ceremony

A request had been received and circulated to members from S Macleod in relation to permission to hold a wedding ceremony in Firth Park in August 2025, and it was:

Resolved that the Interim Clerk would respond and advise that there was no issue with this, if the area was left tidy and that the group may consider a small donation towards the upkeep of the gardens.

D. Letters of Thanks

Resolved to note that letters of thanks had been received from K Chalmers, K Gilmour and Orkney Folk Festival for financial assistance provided.

6. Consultations

A. Visitor Levy Survey and Public Engagement Sessions

Members had previously been sent correspondence regarding a series of public engagement sessions looking more closely at the feasibility of a visitor levy on overnight stays in certain accommodation in Orkney, and it was:

Resolved to note the correspondence.

B. Northern Isles Freight Vessels Replacement Project – Public Events

Members had previously been sent correspondence regarding a public engagement session in March in relation to the replacement of the Northern Isles Freight Vessels, and it was:

Resolved to note the correspondence.

C. Stenness Local Place Plan

Members had previously been sent the draft Stenness Local Place Plan for consultation, and it was:

Resolved to note the draft plan and that the deadline had passed for any comments.

D. Visitor Levy – Full Islands Act ICIA Required

Members had previously been sent correspondence in relation to signing the letter from Tim Eagle MSP to Kate Forbes MSP with regards to the Visitor Levy legislation, and it was:

Resolved to note the correspondence.

E. Winter Service Plan 2025

Members had been previously sent a copy of the WSP 2025 for comments. They discussed the designations for P1, P2 etc. and that areas where there were elderly people requiring care visits should be prioritised. They believed that requested changes were rarely incorporated into the plan, so a consultation was unnecessary. Following further discussion, it was:

Resolved to note that the consultation was open for comments until 30 June 2025 and that comments could be forwarded via the Interim Clerk.

F. SATE Survey

Members had previously been sent information from the SATE team, who were keen to work with community councils across the country to understand what communities would like to see from Scotland's sustainable aviation sector as it continued to grow. A link to a survey had been included, and it was:

Resolved to note that members could still complete the short survey as individuals if they wished to do so.

7. Finance Statements

A. General Fund

Following consideration of the general finance statement as at 14 April 2025, it was:

Resolved to note that the balance was £-2,223.89, which included funds of £5,000 from the Rennibister Wind Turbine Community Fund.

B. Community Council Grant Scheme

Following consideration of the 2024/2025 CCGS statement as at 14 April 2025, it was:

Resolved:

1. To note that the main capping limit had been exceeded by £1,506.07, which would come out of general funds, and that £390 remained available for allocation in the additional capping limit.
2. To note that a new statement would be ready for the next meeting, showing the relevant financial year with new capping limits.

C. Community Development Fund

Members considered the CDF statement as at 14 April 2025, and it was:

Resolved to note the total remaining available for allocation of £6,115.63.

8. Financial Requests

A. K Gilmour – Netball

Following consideration of a request from K Gilmour, copies of which had previously been circulated, for financial assistance towards the cost of F Aberdeen representing Stromness Academy in a Scottish Schools netball competition in Inverness on 17 March 2025, it was:

Resolved to make a general fund donation of £30.

B. Stenness School – Bag the Bruck

Members had previously been sent correspondence from Stenness School, advising that they would be carrying out a litter pick, and asking for sponsorship. Members agreed that it would be fair to split the funding between the two schools in the CC area, and that Firth School should be approached to see whether they wished to be sponsored for a litter pick event too. If they did not respond, the full £300 available through CCGS would be allocated to Stenness School, and it was:

Resolved:

1. That the Interim Clerk would contact Firth School.
2. That this item would be considered again at the next meeting.

C. R Lyon – Highland Dancing

Resolved to note that R Lyon had returned a grant of £30 as her daughter had not attended one of the trips that she had received funding towards, and that this had been paid back into the general fund.

D. K Chalmers – Highland Dancing

Mrs A Stevenson declared an interest in this item and left during discussion thereof.

Following consideration of a request from K Chalmers, a copy of which was read out by the Interim Clerk, for financial assistance towards the cost of attending a Highland Dance Festival in Caithness on 25 May 2025, it was:

Resolved to make a general fund donation of £30.

E. K Chalmers – Highland Dancing

Mrs A Stevenson declared an interest in this item and left during discussion thereof.

Following consideration of a request from K Chalmers, a copy of which was read out by the Interim Clerk, for financial assistance towards the cost of attending the Thurso Festival of Highland Dancing on 8 June 2025, it was:

Resolved to make a general fund donation of £30.

F. Stenness Community Association – Stenness Outdoor Community Space

Ms B Scollay declared an interest in this item and left during discussion thereof.

A financial request was read out, reporting that SCA were in the final stages of the SOCS project and would soon be ordering equipment and engaging with contractors. They were asking if the community council would consider providing funding towards the equipment, either a dedicated piece of equipment or straight funding in the pot towards the project as a whole. As Ms B Scollay had declared an interest, the remaining members were not quorate to make a decision, and it was agreed to circulate the request to Mr R Hourston and Mr R Crichton via email for agreement, and it was:

Resolved that this item would be discussed via email and a decision noted at the next meeting.

G. Repair in Firth Park

Ms W Dunnet reported that there were some repairs required in Firth Park, and that a quote for materials of £25.80 including VAT had been received, and it was:

Resolved to fund £25.80 towards materials needed for the repairs, subject to CCGS approval.

H. Counterweight and Flag for Flagpole

Ms W Dunnet reported that the counterweight within the Flagpole at Finstown required to be replaced, and a new Orkney flag was required, and it was:

Resolved:

1. To fund the cost of £35 towards the new counterweight, subject to CCGS approval.
2. That Mr M Marcus would visit a local supplier to see if they could source an appropriate flag, and that CCGS would be applied for on any cost.

9. Publications

The following publications were noted, having been previously emailed to members:

- VAO - Training and Funding Update – March 2025.
- VAO – Newsletter – March 2025.
- Scottish Rural Action Newsletter – March 2025.
- SEPA – New Surface Water Flood Maps Published.
- Island Games Sports Schedule.

10. AOCB

A. Bay of Firth - Northbay Innovations

Members noted that at a recent public event, details of a container to be sited at the Finstown slip had emerged, in relation to the proposed modular oyster hatchery. There were mixed feelings on this, and it was:

Resolved to await further information and keep an eye on the application appearing on the weekly list from the planning department.

B. Damage to Roads

Members noted that some damage was being done to the roads and verges as a result of the increased traffic on the roads whilst the substation was being built. Councillor R King advised that SSEN were keeping a note of any damage so that the roads could be made good after the project was complete, but members felt that some areas needed to be seen to sooner, and it was:

Resolved that any damage should be reported to SSEN via the Interim Clerk as soon as possible.

Councillors R King and J Stevenson left the meeting at this point.

C. Finstown Car Park

Members discussed traders' licenses at Finstown Car Park, and that one catering van had been left in the vicinity but had not been operational for some time. The Head of Neighbourhood Services had provided a response which said that any interested parties looking to trade from the car park could get in touch with Roads Support directly to receive further advice, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

D. SSEN Liaison Meetings

Members noted that SSEN had held a meeting of the Community Liaison group the previous evening, and were willing to hold another, but it would be held via Teams. The next public meeting was due to be held in Stromness due to the project moving forward in that direction. Community Council members discussed the movement of vehicles, and the speed large lorries were travelling. They advised that the situation of stones on the road had improved since the last meeting. They also voiced concerns about workers walking along the main Kirkwall to Stromness Road, but it was thought that SSEN were not willing to put in a path to Finstown, and it was:

Resolved to note the comments and monitor the situation.

11. Dates of Future Meetings

Resolved to note that the following meeting dates for Firth and Stenness Community Council were 3 July, 18 September and 27 November 2025 at 19:30.

12. Conclusion of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 21:55.