

Minute of the Meeting of Kirkwall and St Ola Community Council held in the Friends Room, St Magnus Centre, Kirkwall, on Monday, 1 December 2025 at 19:30

Present:

Lynne Spence, Chris J F Matthews, Steven Brodie, Moyra Gordon, Cathleen A Hourie, Robert F Leslie, John R Mowat, Tom Rendall, Rosemary Rhodes and Neil P Tait.

In Attendance:

- Councillor Sandy G Cowie.
- Councillor Steven B Heddle.
- Councillor W Leslie Manson.
- Councillor John A R Scott.
- Councillor Ivan A Taylor.
- 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 Elspeth Seatter and Councillors Kristopher D Leask and Gwenda M Shearer.

2. Adoption of Minute

The Minute of the Meeting held on 6 October 2025 was approved, being proposed by Cathleen Hourie and seconded by Chris Matthews, subject to the following amendment:

Bonfire and Fireworks

Resolved that paragraph 3(j)(2) of the Minute should be amended to read as follows:

“That the Winter Fest group should consider arrangements for the management of any road closures during any events which might be arranged.”.

3. Matters Arising

A. Ferry Replacement Programme and Harbours Masterplan Phase 2

The Clerk had received correspondence from the project team advising that, as there was very little progress to report meantime, the presentation would be deferred to early 2026, and it was:

Resolved to note the position.

B. Kirkwall Post Office

Following consideration of correspondence from the National Consultation Manager, Post Office Limited, advising that, due to unforeseen operational reasons, Universal Office Equipment had reduced opening hours at the Kirkwall Post Office, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that the Clerk should write to the Post Office Limited and Universal Office Equipment, with copies to the MP and MSP, expressing concern and disappointment at the reduced opening hours, including non-opening on a Saturday, in the run up to the busiest time of the year, acknowledging the impact on other post offices, including Papdale Stores, who were unable to provide the full range of services which should be available at the Kirkwall Post Office.

C. Lithium-Ion Batteries – Electrical Safety-First Grant Fund

Following the previous meeting, the Clerk had shared information on the electoral safety-first grant fund with Age Scotland Orkney, who indicated they were not aware of this funding opportunity and thanked the Community Council for passing on the details, and it was:

Resolved to note the position.

D. 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.

E. Urban Weeds

Information relating to the Path Pirates, a community group who tidied up areas within Aviemore, including weeding, had been circulated to members, and it was:

Resolved:

1. That any member who noticed areas around Kirkwall and St Ola where weeds were causing an issue should make this aware to the Chair
2. That Councillor John Ross Scott should feedback on discussions with the Convener of Orkney Islands Council regarding possible community engagement and involvement in cleaning up public areas, with the Council providing containers and disposal, as had previously happened with Bag the Bruck.
3. That the Clerk should arrange publicity for the funding available from the Community Council to community groups for events such as Bag the Bruck.

F. Community Council Pin/Lanyard

The Chair advised that she had purchased lanyards and would arrange for the Community Council's coat of arms and some basic information to be printed, for distribution at the next meeting, and it was:

Resolved to note the position.

G. Former Balfour Hospital

Following consideration of correspondence from the Chair of the Board of NHS Orkney advising that surveys and site assessment were currently being arranged and, until those were complete, no decision would be made about what elements of the former Balfour Hospital site could be safely retained, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved:

1. To note that, as demolition of the former Balfour Hospital was anticipated for Summer 2026 and, given that timeline and the uncertainty regarding what could be preserved, NHS Orkney had indicated it was too early to make firm plans for marking the centenary of the Garden Memorial Building in April 2027.
2. To note that NHS Orkney had indicated they would keep the Community Council updated as plans progressed.
3. That the Clerk should write to Orkney Islands Council suggesting the importance of the Garden Memorial Building and whether it was worthy of consideration of potential listing.

4. Standing Items

A. Carness Road Sea Wall

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

B. Former Street Names

Tom Rendall advised that Orkney Heritage Society would be supportive of a project to record former street names in Kirkwall, and it was:

Resolved that Robert Leslie would follow up direct with the Chair of the Orkney Heritage Society in the first instance.

C. Local Place Plan

After hearing an update from the Chair regarding progress with development of the Local Place Plan, it was:

Resolved:

1. To note that the meeting of the Steering Group which was scheduled for 24 November 2025 had been cancelled and would be rescheduled to 12 January 2026.
2. To note that Chris Matthews and Rosemary Rhodes had attended the online session held on 11 November 2025, organised by the Improvement Service, and suggested that members look at the material on the Community Council Scotland website, which was very helpful to community councils wishing to develop a local place plan.
3. To note that the Clerk had submitted an Expression of Interest to the Council's CCLD Fund in respect of consultancy costs for producing a local place plan.

D. Island Games Legacy (Benches at Peedie Sea)/Benches

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

E. Sand at Scapa

Although Cathleen Hourie had posted on Facebook asking for any photos of the road past Scapa beach, it had been suggested that the road at the Orphir end had never been double carriage width, and it was:

Resolved that the Clerk should write Orkney Islands Council seeking further information on dune management which Hayley Green had previously agreed to investigate and report back on.

F. Winter Fest

After discussion, it was agreed:

1. That any ideas for a winter festival or events should be sent to the Chair.
2. That Chris Matthews should contact Thurso Rotary Club to ascertain the cost of a laser light show which they had recently held.
3. That Moyra Gordon should find out further information on a winter festival held in Shetland.
4. To note that the Kirkwall BID had indicated it would be willing to consider any future event within the BID area, in partnership with the Community Council.

G. Policy on Financial Assistance

Resolved to note that the Finance Sub-committee had met to review the policy on financial assistance and would submit proposals to the next meeting for consideration.

H. Green Plaque for Carnegie Library

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

5. Correspondence

A. Scapa Deep Water Quay

Following consideration of correspondence from Orkney Islands Council providing an update on the Scapa Deep Water Quay project, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

B. Logistics Base Development

Following consideration of correspondence from the Marine Directorate, Scottish Government, advising that marine licences had been requested under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 regarding the proposed logistics base development at Hatston Pier, for which representations were required to be submitted by 8 December 2025, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

C. EMEC – Section 36 Variation – Fall of Warness

Following consideration of correspondence from the Marine Directorate, Scottish Government, regarding an application submitted by EMEC for a variation to the existing section 36 consent for the construction and operation of the Fall of Warness Tidal Test Site, for which responses were required by 20 November 2025, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

D. Burial Grounds Grass Cutting

Following consideration of correspondence from Orkney Islands Council regarding options for grass cutting in burial grounds, for which responses were required by 28 November 2025, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that the Clerk should write to Orkney Islands Council expressing concern at the wording of the options, as it was not clear that "do nothing" was, in fact, the status quo, together with the following additional comments:

- The status quo for St Olaf's Cemetery should be maintained, namely 12 cuts per annum, funded in full by Orkney Islands Council, in light of statutory requirements on local authorities to maintain burial groups. Income was received for internments, and that funding should be used for the upkeep, including grass cutting. It was not considered acceptable to ask Community Councils to take on this additional burden from their very limited funds.

- The Community Council was heartened to hear that St Magnus Cathedral kirkyard would be maintained to the existing standard, given its unique central location as part of the tourist attraction at St Magnus Cathedral.

E. Historic Marine Protected Area Scapa Flow

Following consideration of correspondence from Historic Environment Scotland advising of the designation of Scapa Flow as a Historic Marine Protected Area, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

F. Northern Isles Ferry Services User Surveys

Following consideration of correspondence from the Ferries Directorate of Transport Scotland asking for support in promoting route specific Northern Isles Ferry Services user surveys that would inform the future services provided to Orkney and Shetland communities, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved:

1. To note that the surveys, which ran until 9 January 2026, formed a key part of the Community Needs Assessment and would help gain a deeper understanding of the travel needs of individuals who used NorthLink services.
2. That the Clerk should write to Transport Scotland advising that the Community Council had promoted the surveys through this meeting and the local press.

Councillors Steven Heddle and Ivan Taylor left the meeting at this point.

6. Financial Statements

A. General Finance

Following consideration of the General Finance statement as at 21 November 2025, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the estimated balance as at 21 November 2025 of £10,750.77.

B. Community Council Grant Scheme

Following consideration of the 2025/26 Community Council Grant Scheme statement as at 21 November 2025, 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 21 November 2025, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

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

7. Financial Requests

A. Orkney Islands Junior Golf Partnership

Following consideration of an application from S McAlister requesting financial assistance towards her son participating in the Orkney Islands Junior Golf Partnership and receiving professional coaching at Dornoch Golf Club on dates between November 2025 and March 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that a donation of £30 per coaching session be provided, subject to confirmation of attendance.

B. Glaitness Primary School

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

Resolved that a donation of £375 be provided, subject to confirmation of 16 pupils taking part in the residential trip.

C. Netball Orkney

Following consideration of an application from C Gilmour requesting financial assistance towards her daughter participating in a netball trip to Glasgow on 22 and 23 November 2025, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that a donation of £30 be provided, subject to confirmation of attendance.

D. Swimming

The Clerk had received an application from K MacLeod requesting financial assistance towards her son competing in the Highland Swim Team Autumn Meet in Inverness on 8 and 9 November 2025, and it was:

Resolved that a donation of £30 be provided, subject to confirmation of attendance.

8. Meetings/Events Attended by Members

A. Share Your Views on Tourism in Orkney

Lynne Spence declared an interest in this item, in that, due to unforeseen and exceptional circumstances, she had facilitated one of the workshops at the Pickaquooy Centre.

Following consideration of correspondence from Orkney Islands Council regarding online stakeholder interviews and workshops held during October and November 2025 as part of the Our Orkney, Our Story project, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved:

1. To note that Chris Matthews, Moyra Gordon and Steven Brodie had attended the online stakeholder interviews and workshops.
2. That the Clerk should write to Orkney Islands Council asking to be provided with any feedback and/or reports produced as a result of the engagement activity, including the draft Visitor Management Plan.

B. Planning for Kirkwall

Lynne Spence and Rosemary Rhodes had attended a workshop on Planning for Kirkwall held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Kirkwall, on 5 November 2025, where allocations and development opportunities in Kirkwall were investigated, and it was:

Resolved to note the position.

C. Orkney Coastal Change Adaptation Plan

Orkney Islands Council and Mott MacDonald had arranged an online introduction event on 11 November 2025, for those who were unable to attend the various workshops regarding the Orkney Coastal Change Adaptation Plan, and it was:

Resolved to note the position,

D. SSEN Distribution/Freedom Community Drop-in Session

Freedom, the delivery contract partner for SSEN Distribution in the Orkney Islands, had arranged a community drop-in session in the Firth Community Hall on 24 November 2025, to provide further detail on the upcoming programme of essential works in Finstown, Hatston, Quanterness and St Mary's, and it was:

Resolved to note that Steven Brodie and John Mowat had attended.

E. Scottish Islands Federation

Following consideration of correspondence from the Scottish Islands Federation advising of an online meeting to discuss island digital connectivity resilience on 24 November 2025, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

F. Scottish Islands Federation

Following consideration of correspondence from the Scottish Islands Federation advising of online engagement sessions for the Islands Business Resilience Fund held on 25 and 27 November 2025, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

9. Publications

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

- SEPA Updates – 8 and 29 October and 25 November 2025 and EASR Special Edition.
- VAO – Training and Funding Updates – October and November 2025.
- PTSN switch off information.
- Scotland’s Towns Partnership – October and November 2025 Newsletters.
- Walking Scotland – eNews – October and November 2025.
- VAO Newsletters – November and December 2025.
- ORSAS – Quarterly Email Newsletter – November 2025.
- SSEN DSO – Whole System Newsletter, November 2025.
- Scottish Water – Stakeholder Edition Autumn/Winter 2025.
- Improvement Service – Free training sessions for rural and island community councils.
- Scotland’s Towns Partnership – Events Special.

10. Any Other Competent Business

A. Historic Environment Scotland – Properties and Collections Strategy

The Clerk had received correspondence from Orkney Islands Council regarding Historic Environment Scotland’s consultation on its new Properties and Collections Strategy, for which responses were required by 23 January 2026, and it was:

Resolved that the Clerk should contact Historic Environment Scotland requesting a copy of the survey questions, in order to determine whether the Community Council should submit a response.

B. Laing Street

Following discussion on the current condition of the surface of Laing Street, it was:

Resolved:

1. That Councillor John Ross Scott should ascertain what works were proposed and report back to the next meeting.
2. That Councillor John Ross Scott should also raise the condition of pedestrian crossings in Kirkwall with relevant officers at Orkney Islands Council, and report back to the next meeting.

C. Street Lighting at Meadowbank

Chris Matthews reported that street lighting had been removed from the gable ends of properties within Meadowbank, and, after discussion, it was:

Resolved that Councillor John Ross Scott should raise the matter with the relevant Council service and report back to the next meeting.

D. Community Transport Small Grant Scheme

The Clerk had received correspondence from Orkney Islands Council regarding the Community Transport Small Grant Scheme for 2026/2027, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

E. Public Phone Boxes

Following discussion, it was:

Resolved:

1. To note that, following representations, BT had responded to indicate that the public phone box at Queen Sonja Kloss would be retained, although the one at Islands View Road would be removed.

2. That the Clerk should contact BT Openreach asking for the door to be replaced on the phone box at the Pierhead.

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, 26 January 2026, commencing at 19:30.

12. Conclusion of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 21:25.