

Minute of the Meeting of Graemsay, Hoy and Walls Community Council held in the North Walls Centre and via Teams on Tuesday, 27 March 2026 at 19:30

Present:

Mrs G Robertson, Mr A Clark (via Teams), Mrs T Avis, Mrs I Mathieson (via Teams), Mr A Sinclair and Mr A Trafford.

In Attendance:

- Ms F Troup, Head of Strategic Housing, Housing Operations and Homelessness (via Teams).
- Mr A Hamilton, Service Manager, Resources (via Teams).
- Ms L Shields, Hoy Warden, RSPB Orkney (via Teams).
- Councillor L Hall.
- Councillor J Park (via Teams).
- Mrs J McGrath, Community Council Liaison Officer (via Teams).
- Ms S Smith, Island Link Officer (ILO)/Clerk.

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1. Apologies

Resolved to note that apologies for absence had been received from Ms L Crowson and Councillor G Bevan.

2. Adoption of Minute

The minute of the meeting of Graemsay, Hoy and Walls Community Council held on 27 January 2026 was adopted, being proposed by Mrs T Avis and seconded by Mrs G Robertson.

3. Housing Discussion

Members had invited representatives from Orkney Island's Council to discuss local social housing provision and empty home incentives having raised housing as a barrier to the immigration of young families to the island and its effect on the staffing of essential services and the school roll.

The members were provided with an explanation of social housing provision and allocation procedures and how it can be applied to support local communities. The representative explained that the combined number of social rental properties on the island provided by Orkney Islands Council and Orkney Housing Association was 38, 10 at Lyness and 28 at Longhope, and that this was considered a good proportion for the size of the population.

They also explained that when a property became available it was allocated to persons on the waiting list. Priority Passes were available to persons requiring to live within a particular area and in some circumstances a property could be advertised to find a household size that fits the property but opportunities for OIC and OHA to attract immigration and target specific populations were limited. The representatives highlighted the potential for Community Councils and Development Trusts to do this through privately rented accommodation and that there were funding streams and support available to help them do this.

The representatives also explained a piece of work underway to bring empty homes back into use through support from an Empty Homes Officer and a new loan scheme of up to £25,000. These properties would need to be brought up to the Repair Standard and be available for rent to essential workers for a period of 10 years. In an island context the definition of an essential worker is broader and could refer to any role that was essential. It had already been identified that some empty property owners did not live on the island and the question raised as to whether any additional support could be offered by local community groups. The representatives explained that the homeowner would need to undertake the renovation but there was scope for local community groups to act as an agent to letting the property out.

Ongoing information and support relating to the topics discussed was offered to the members.

Members took the opportunity to clarify the information provided and thank the representatives. Representatives provided reassurances that short-term letting provision was being jointly monitored between Planning and Housing departments

with the aim of balancing housing availability and tourism income to the island. Following the discussion, it was:

Resolved to continue discussion at the next meeting.

Mr A Clark joined the meeting during this item.

The Head of Housing, Housing Operations and Homelessness and the Service Manager, Resources, left the meeting at this point.

4. Presentation – RSPB Hoy Reserve Management Plan

Members were provided with a summary of the proposed management plan for the reserve for the years 2026-31 from the Hoy Warden for RSPB Orkney. She explained the objectives and proposed work to protect and develop the three habitats of heath, cliff and woodland within the reserve. She explained that two further objectives resulted in improvements to them being able to access specialist knowledge for the work that they undertake and the continued management of archaeological assets with advice from their resident archaeologist.

The representative also provided an overview of what had been happening on the reserve since the last presentation and her plans for the next year. They provided an update of the eagles which included a pair of Golden Eagles and the return of a pair of White-Tailed Eagles to the reserve for the first time since 2020, plus knowledge of a second pair off the reserve signifying a significant increase in the Orkney population. Volunteers from the public, local businesses and the army had supported repairs and improvements to paths and removal of climber's rope and a placement of a new fixed line on The Old Man of Hoy. Members were advised that the representative hoped to be able to engage face to face with the community this year delivering guided walks and working alongside the school. A member suggested that the recently acquired telephone boxes could offer a small public information space for the society. Following the presentation and discussion, it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

The RSPB representative left the meeting at this point.

5. Matters Arising

A. Bus Shelters

Clarification on the location of the bus shelter had been sought and shared with members prior to the meeting, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

B. Adoption of Payphones

Confirmation of the transfer of the telephone boxes to the Community Council and requested signage was shared with members prior to the meeting.

A short discussion followed clarifying signage details and contact information. Members were keen to receive ideas from the community as to how the boxes might be used, and it was:

Resolved:

1. That the Clerk would amend the posters and display them within each phone box.
2. That the Clerk would advertise acquisition of the phone boxes and invite ideas from the local community to bring back to the next meeting.

C. Core Paths

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

D. North Walls Swimming Pool

Councillors J Park and L Hall updated members that funding for the renovation of the swimming pool had been discussed at a recent OIC Asset Management subcommittee meeting and things appeared positive however it would be important to await a public briefing for confirmation which could then also be shared with the local community and community groups. They also highlighted the value of maintaining ongoing interest in the project from the aspects of funding and staffing of the facility. A member emphasised the North Wall Centre SCIO commitment to the project, and it was:

Resolved to await official update from OIC as to the status of this project.

Mr A Clark left the meeting during this item.

E. Aggregate for Hoy

The Clerk advised that a majority of members had, by email, elected to waive the criterion that applicants are not eligible for aggregate in consecutive years, due to the late delivery of the scheme and the potential for confusion. She also advised that the aggregate had been ordered and invoices forwarded to Democratic Services for payment. Following the update, it was:

Resolved that the Clerk will send out acceptance letters to applicants and request remittance.

F. Graemsay Scrap Cars

The Clerk advised that a total of 19 cars had been registered for the scheme which was far nearer to the predicted number expected. The Community Council Liaison Officer advised that the Toplander vessel would be covering the Graemsay refit and that Orkney Ferries would be keen to assist if it could be coordinated during this schedule. She explained that confirmation that vehicles were fit to be moved and coordination of the cars being at the pier for collection would be required.

Because this work would need to happen in the new financial year the Community Council Liaison Officer proposed that funding for the planned Graemsay aggregate was applied to this financial year's allocation instead of the funding for the removal of

scrapped cars. This would facilitate efficient use of the Community Council's budgets. A short discussion followed, and it was:

Resolved that the Community Council Liaison Officer would utilise the budget allocated to the removal of scrap cars to purchase aggregate for Graemsay, any excess being put towards the Hoy Aggregate Scheme following that.

G. Supply of Grit Bins to the Rackwick Road

The Clerk advised that What3Word references for troublesome locations had been submitted to relevant officers within the Roads Support team, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

H. Dog Waste – Longhope

Resolved to note there was no update on this item.

I. Housing Concerns

Resolved to note that this had been covered during the discussion at Item 3 above.

6. Correspondence

A. Briefing Note – Burial Grounds Grass Cutting

A Briefing Note from Infrastructure and Organisational Development had been previously circulated to members, summarising the responses received from the consultation on the maintenance costs associated with grass cutting in active and inactive graveyards and informing community councils of the number of cuts allocated to each location following consideration of that data. Following discussion, it was:

Resolved to note that the number of cuts allocated to each of the cemeteries within the Graemsay, Hoy and Walls CC area had been maintained at 8 per annum.

B. Public comment re Kirkyards

A public comment had been received and circulated to members, with regards to the condition of the grass at Osmandwall Cemetery. The Clerk presented some photographs to the meeting. A discussion followed with regards to the areas within the contract and the possibility for the members to allocate funding for an additional earlier cut, and it was:

Resolved

1. That the Clerk would seek clarification of the area within the tender.
2. That the Clerk would circulate tender information and the photographs to allow members to make a decision.

C. Prepaid Paper Tickets and Bookings

Correspondence from Orkney Ferries had been previously circulated to members, informing them that prepaid books of tickets had now expired (as per the sale terms) and would no longer be accepted as a means of payment on board their vessels. Members were also reminded a prepaid system for travel was in place however the organisation continued to offer cancellation up to an hour before the sailing and customers wishing to present without a booking can still do so but should be aware that travel may not be possible if the vessel is fully booked. Following discussion, it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

D. Meet the Buyer Event

An email from Procurement Services had been received and circulated to members, with regards to a Meet the Buyer Event on 9 March, which had been arranged to support individuals interested in working with Orkney Island Council to deliver planned and reactive roads maintenance. The Clerk advised that event had been publicised through local social media channels and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

E. Orkney Marine Planning Stakeholder Update

An email from Marine Planning had been previously circulated to members, with an update that the Orkney Islands Regional Marine Plan has been formally adopted by Scottish Government Ministers. Thanks were extended to stakeholders for their input that had helped shaped the plan along with an ongoing commitment to ensure the plan remains responsive to environmental, social and economic changes within the county. Following consideration, it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

F. Isles Part-time 20mph update

A Briefing Note from Infrastructure and Organisational Development had been received and circulated to members, with regards to safety issues associated with the variable signage equipment allocated to schools within the county including North Walls Community School. A plan to fit temporary fixed 20mph signage whilst alternatives could be sought was made.

Members discussed their concerns with regards to fixed speed restriction and questioned whether it was necessary outside of school hours however Councillor L Hall advised that in the longer-term fixed restrictions would be adopted in place of all variable speed limits in the county, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

G. Royal British Legion Best Kept War Memorial Competition

An email from the Royal British Legion had been received and circulated to members inviting them to enter the Best Kept Memorial Competition along with additional information on classes and rules which had been requested by the Clerk.

Limitations to the improvement of accessibility to the memorial affecting the ability to enter the competition in the past was raised by a member, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

H. Scottish Islands Federation - Events and Consultations

An email from the Scottish Islands Federation had been previously circulated to members, with regards to upcoming consultations and events. The Clerk advised members that she had watched a recording of the Engaging Communities Webinar, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

I. EMEC Ltd – Fall of Warness Tidal Test Site – EIA Section 36 Consent Application

An email from the Marine Directorate at Scottish Government had been received and circulated to members, regarding a previous consultation for Section 36 Variation at the Fall of Warness project, advising that they would be assuming a nil return from the community council, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

J. Greener Orkney - Bag the Bruck

Notification from Greener Orkney had previously been circulated to members, with regards to the upcoming Bag the Bruck event. A member advised the Clerk of their intention to apply for bags and listed the community groups that traditionally participate and receive a community council donation in return. The Clerk advised members that applications for funding would need to be submitted ahead of any beach clean taking place and that capping limits for this type of activity were set at £300 total per annum. She also advised that this information had been shared with the groups who usually applied and that four applications had been received, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided and consider the applications later in the agenda.

7. Consultations

A. SEPA - Flood Risk Management Plans

An invitation from the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency to share experiences of local flooding issues had been previously circulated to members accompanied by a pdf of the survey questions to support discussion. It was noted that the closing date for the survey was 22 April 2026, and it was:

Resolved to note the information and that Mrs G Robertson had completed the survey as an individual.

B. OIC - Verge Maintenance Plan 2026 Updates

A request for comment on the safety cut list within Orkney Islands Council Council's Verge Maintenance Plan 2025 – 2030 was circulated to members. A short discussion followed, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

C. OIC – Winter Service Plan 2026 – 2031

An email had been received from Infrastructure and Organisational Development inviting members to comment on the Winter Service Policy 2026 - 2031 and the associated appendices 1A, 1B, 1C, 2 and 3. Councillor L Hall advised members that he and Councillor G Bevan had advocated for recategorisation of the Rackwick Road however there was no scope for adjustment due to the impact that would then have on other similar roads within the county. Members discussed the plan, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

Mr A Clark rejoined the meeting during this item.

8. Financial Statements

A. General Fund

Following consideration of the General Fund statement as at 10 March 2026, it was:

Resolved to note the estimated value of £21,397.65.

B. Community Council Grant Scheme

Following consideration of the CCGS statement as at 10 March 2026, it was:

Resolved to note that the main capping limit had been exceeded by £396.51, the Island Capping Limit was fully allocated, and there remained £780 in the additional capping limit.

C. Community Development Fund

Following consideration of the CDF statement as at 3 March 2026, it was:

Resolved to note the balance of £6480.68 which remained available for allocation to projects.

9. Financial Requests

A. Longhope Sailing and Rowing Club – Equipment Costs

Following consideration and discussion of an amended application from Longhope Sailing and Rowing Club for financial assistance with equipment costs, copies of which had been previously circulated, it was:

Resolved to award 50% of the funding, being £317.07, in the next financial year, subject to CCGS approval.

B. North Walls Community Centre – MUGA Project

Mrs G Robertson and Mr A Clark both declared an interest in this item and abstained from the discussion and vote except to answer questions where required.

Consideration was given to an application from the North Walls Community Centre SCIO – MUGA Project for financial assistance towards the outstanding balance. The remaining three members acknowledged the scale of the project and the significant work already undertaken by the group to secure the substantive proportion of the funding, and it was:

Resolved:

1. To propose a motion to award 100% funding, being £8,794.90, taking £6,480.68 from the existing balance of the CDF, subject to approval, and the outstanding application balance of £2,314.22 from the General Fund.
2. That the Clerk would forward the proposal to members that were not present for their consideration and response and inform all members of the outcome.

Mrs I Mathieson left the meeting during this item.

C. Bag the Bruck Applications

Applications from the RNLI Guild, Graemsay Community Association, North Walls Community School and the RSPB for donations in return for undertaking beach cleaning were considered collectively, and it was:

Resolved to award a CCGS donation of £75 to each group in the next financial year, subject to approval.

10. Reports from Representatives

A. Transport Representative

Mrs G Robertson advised members of the proposed measures put in place by Orkney Ferries for the duration of the Graemsay Dry Dock. She advised that Northerly Marine had been approached to cover the passenger services on the same basis as the Northerly Explorer had last year and the MV Toplander would provide a freight service on the usual scheduled days.

Councillor L Hall also advised members of discussions that had taken place with regards to the MV Toplander providing additional freight capacity during the MV Hoy Head dry dock and that whilst this had not been able to be offered this year due to crew shortages this may be available for the next dry dock period. And it was:

Resolved that the Clerk would forward the email from Orkney Ferries to Mrs I Mathieson to share with the Graemsay community.

B. Planning Representative

The Clerk advised members of correspondence received from Mrs L Baird informing them of her intention to seek a revoke of the planning consent reference 25/315/PP for temporary accommodation to be sited at Houton and inviting them to be part of that action. And it was:

Resolved to note the information provided and that that members were happy to be kept informed.

C. Health and Care Representative

Apologies had been received from Ms L Crowson. The Clerk advised members that interviews for the Hoy Nurse had been rescheduled. Mrs P Avis also advised the next Joint Isles Health and Care meeting was due to be held on 31 March 2026. And it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

11. Publications

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

- VAO – Newsletter – January and February 2026
- VAO - Training and Funding Update – February and March 2026.
- SCDA – Drama Festival Programme.
- Orkney Ferries – Statistics – January and February 2026.
- ORSAS - Quarterly Newsletter - February 2026.
- Public Sector Network - Newsletter – February 2026.
- Scottish Islands Federation – News – February 2026.
- Electrical Safety First- Electrical Fire Safety Week 2026.
- OIC - Community Payback Unpaid Work Scheme.
- Police Scotland - Recruitment Event Flyer: 26 March
- VAO – Invite to Volunteering Event: 31 March.
- OIC – Special Collections Notice.
- New Powers of Scotland' Community Councils – Newsletter 5.
- Public Service Network – Newsletter - March 2026.

The Clerk advised members that Orkney Ferries statistics included a breakdown between travel to Lyness and Flotta from Houton as requested at the last meeting.

Members discussed ideas for Community Payback Unpaid Work Scheme, identifying washing down of the bus shelters and painting the climbing frame at North Walls Community School, and it was:

Resolved to note the information and to feed back ideas through the business letter.

12. Any Other Competent Business

A. Presentation - Community Council Funding

Mr A Trafford distributed an analysis of community council funding for members to consider, which summarised the allocations made over recent years and his suggestions for future awards. Members thanked Mr A Trafford and agreed to look at this in respect to the next financial year, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided and add to the agenda for the next meeting to allow further consideration and discussion.

B. Defibrillator Equipment

The Clerk informed members that they had been contacted regarding defibrillator sundries and requested clarification as to whether Graemsay Hoy and Walls Community Council were responsible for the provision of defibrillator equipment within the ward. Members advised that funding may have been granted for defibrillators in the past but that there was no commitment for supply or maintenance of devices and it was resolved that no ongoing management was required as part of the Clerk or members roles, and it was:

Resolved to note the discussion and that the Clerk would respond to the correspondent.

C. Administration Items

The Clerk requested feedback as to whether members felt the scheduled email process useful and whether there was an appetite to reduce paper by moving to a digital agenda pack. Members advised that they were happy with the scheduled email arrangement. Some members had experience of a hybrid model whereby members had a paper copy of only the agenda, minutes and finance sheets and a single full printed agenda pack was available for consultation during the meeting if required. Following discussion, it was:

Resolved to maintain scheduled emails where possible and to trial a reduced paper agenda pack.

D. SSPCA Changes

A member expressed concern with regards to the SSPCA's decision to remove the dedicated officer from Orkney and the detrimental effect that could then have on wildlife and cruelty issues in the county. Members agreed, and it was:

Resolved that the Clerk would compose a draft letter of concern on behalf of the community council which she would email to members for consideration.

13. Date of Next Meeting

Following consideration of dates for the next meeting, it was:

Resolved that the next meeting of Graemsay, Hoy and Walls Community Council would be held on Friday, 29 May 2026 at 19:30 in the North Walls Centre.

14. Conclusion of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 22:10.