

Minute of the Meeting of Harray and Sandwick Community Council held in the Milestone Community Church and via teams on Wednesday, 29 January 2025 at 19:15

Present:

Mr D Hamilton, Mr C Kirkness, Mr G Brown, Mrs E Grant, Mr E Grieve, Mr K Groundwater, Mrs K Ritch and Mr S Tait.

In Attendance:

- Councillor R King.
- Councillor O Tierney.
- Councillor D Tullock.
- Councillor J Stevenson.
- Mr T Hadley, Community Engagement Officer, Orkney Native Wildlife Project.
- Mrs J Montgomery, Empowering Communities Liaison Officer.
- Mrs H Keveren, West Mainland Link Officer/Clerk.
- Ms C Kelday, Community Council Liaison Assistant.

Order of Business

1. Apologies	2
2. Presentation - Orkney Native Wildlife Project – Update.....	2
3. Adoption of Minutes	2
4. Matters Arising.....	2
5. Correspondence	5
6. Consultations	7
7. Financial Statements	9
8. Applications for Financial Assistance.....	9
9. Publications	10
10. Any Other Competent Business.....	10
11. Dates of Future Meetings	12
12. Conclusion of Meeting	12

1. Apologies

After successfully being elected on to the community council, Mr Erlend Grieve and Mr Steven Tait were welcomed by the Chair and the meeting commenced, and it was:

Resolved to note that no apologies had been received.

2. Presentation - Orkney Native Wildlife Project – Update

The Community Engagement Manager, Orkney Native Wildlife Project, gave a presentation and update on the project to eradicate stoats from the island. Members were advised that the second phase of the project commenced in March 2024, which was aimed at pursuing individual stoats and, due to the original success of phase one, it was now possible to chase individual sightings.

He advised that Harray had 560 active traps and had caught 313 stoats and 974 rats. The project had 8,440 active traps and had caught 7,272 Stoats across Orkney. The figures for 2024 were lower than 2023 which proved that the project was a success. He also reported that the team had conducted half a million trap checks.

The Community Engagement Manager reported that all data was backing up that the eradication was increasing other wildlife figures, and that the team were constantly working to increase public awareness, giving talks, attending public events and had set up a youth forum for 16–30-year-olds.

He was extremely confident that this round of funding would see this project to completion and with the continued engagement with the community they could work towards complete eradication.

He was then questioned on a number of issues from members including the issue of landowners denying access to land, and it was:

Resolved:

A. To note the information provided.

B. To request a presentation from Orkney Goose Group at a future meeting.

The Community Engagement Manager left the meeting at this point.

3. Adoption of Minutes

The minute of the meeting held on 13 November 2024 was approved, being proposed by Colin Kirkness and seconded by Evelyn Grant, subject to the following amendment, “remove a fuel tank” to be replaced by “fill in a fuel tank”.

4. Matters Arising

A. Dounby School Play Park Fund

Mrs E Grant reported that she had attended the Dounby Parent Council meeting on 14 November 2024, and they were setting up a subgroup to concentrate on the

funding for the School Play Park. She had advised them if they were to pick an item for the Play Park that the Community Council could then assist them with the purchase. Mr E Grive, who was assisting them on financial issues, agreed to represent Harray and Sandwick Community Council at future meetings, and it was:

Resolved to note the above information and that regular updates would be provided by Mr E Grieve.

B. Buses on Linday Road

The regular use of buses on the Linday Road was discussed and it had been requested to the Council to erect a 'No Buses' sign. It was reported that this was not an option as you cannot stop the busses going that way and it would require a Traffic Regulation Order to put up signs. Members were advised that this issue should be highlighted on the following consultation documents – Cruise Ship Levy and Open Visitor Levy. Mrs K Ritch reported that buses had stopped using the Linday Road as frequently, and therefore the situation was no longer an issue, and it was:

Resolved to note the above information.

C. Speed Check Lights - Dounby

The rotation of the Speed Check lights 'Smiley Faces' was discussed, and it was confirmed that whilst Dounby was not on the Council's temporary schedule, if funding became available it would be beneficial to have permanent ones similar to what was in situ in Finstown, and it was:

Resolved to request via the business letter that at least two permanent 'Smiley Faces' would be the preferred option for Dounby.

D. Neighbourhood Services and Infrastructure CC Attendance

A request had previously been submitted to Neighbourhood Services and Infrastructure, enquiring if they would attend the opening of community council meetings to discuss relevant issues. It was advised that they had agreed to attend one meeting in person each year and were in agreement to send an officer if required for specific items, and it was:

Resolved to notify them as and when their attendance was required.

E. Lochside Viewpoint – Stoney Hill

The Chairman confirmed that the Lochside Viewpoint was in Stenness therefore the issue of the benches in need of repair had been brought to the attention of Firth and Stenness Community Council. Discussion resumed on the benches required for other areas within Harray and Sandwick parishes, and it was agreed to purchase two for Skail and one for Strathborg, and it was:

Resolved to order three benches locally and fund from the Community Council Grant Scheme.

F. Speed Limits A986 Harray to Dounby

Members were advised that the counters had been in place on the A986 outside Dounby and the results were distributed to members. Whilst they showed heavy periods of traffic during certain times, the average speeds were within the National limits, and it was:

Resolved to forward this information to the resident who had raised the issue.

G. Sustrans – Friends of Dounby

Members were advised that Sustrans Scotland had held an initial Hybrid meeting on 6 December in the Milestone Community Church, and that those in attendance conducted a walking tour of the village identifying the issues with the infrastructure already in place. Council members who had been present would now report the findings back to Sustrans and another meeting would be announced in due course. It was requested that the next gathering be in an evening to enable those working to attend.

Councillor King brought up that areas around Dounby, and in particular the area in front of the Market Green houses, could be developed as part of a future project so it would be beneficial if both the Community School and Smiddybrae House had a Travel Plan in place which could be submitted to Sustrans for inclusion at future meetings, and it was:

Resolved to note that both the local School and Care Home would be asked for a copy of a Travel Plan to be submitted to Sustrans.

H. Market Green Update

An update prior to the festive break was received and circulated to members advising that work was progressing at the Market Green and if the weather was favourable when work resumed in 2025 that it was hopeful for completion at the end of March, however this may be unrealistic. Another update was received at the meeting, advising that the concrete floor was in place for the amenities, steel erected and block work had commenced. Work had also progressed on paved areas, and, at this stage, the end of April would be a more realistic completion estimate, however, if weather permits, March may still be a possibility.

The Chairman advised members that, as part of the development work at the Market Green, they were incorporating anchors in the concrete for the Christmas tree in future years, and it was:

Resolved to note the updates provided.

I. Community Council Vacancies

It was noted that sufficient interest was expressed to enable Harray and Sandwick Community Council to advertise the vacancies, and that ahead of this full meeting, two new members were elected to the Community Council, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

J. St Peters Carpark

Members were advised that the contractor was hoping to complete the work at the carpark at St Peters Carpark as soon as the weather allowed, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

K. Festive Lights

Following the request to the Council to have the braid lights lit all year around, members were advised that this had been approved and the Dounby braids would remain lit accordingly, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

5. Correspondence

A. Idox – Branching out Fund

Following consideration of correspondence from Idox advising of funding available to deliver tree-planting projects during 2024/2025 planting season, it was:

Resolved to note the deadline had passed.

B. Scottish Water – Protect Property and Pipes

A letter had been received and circulated from Scottish Water ahead of the periods of colder weather, advising the community on how to locate and remedy leaks and bursts which could otherwise impact on their ability to maintain water supplies, and it was:

Resolved to note this information and that a post had been uploaded to Facebook to advise the wider community.

C. Scottish Water – Ongoing Water Demand Issues

Correspondence had previously been circulated from Scottish Water providing an update on the ongoing demand issues on Orkney. While there was no customer impact Scottish Water were continuing to take measures to ensure this did not change and had ten tankers on the island at the time to maintain supply to customers, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the above information.

D. Scottish Water – Normal Service resumed

Correspondence had been circulated to members from Scottish Water advising that normal service had resumed after the period of additional demand and could report that the Water Treatment works had returned to normal operation, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

E. My Orkney

Following consideration of correspondence previously circulated from Orkney Islands Council advising members of the services of 'My Orkney', the online Council portal offering individuals a quicker and easier way to report faults, make payments, apply for services as well as many other services, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence and that a post had been uploaded to Facebook, and information cards distributed at the Dounby Post Office.

F. Request for additional Bus Shelters

Members considered correspondence previously circulated from a resident of the parish highlighting the need for additional bus shelters throughout the area of Harray and Sandwick. The resident mentioned the additional buses which had been added to the timetable and were well supported but the lack of even the most simple of shelters was an issue. Discussion followed and members agreed that a reply should be sent to the individual asking for additional information on where they would like to see bus shelters/potential usage, and it was:

Resolved to note that a response would be sent requesting this information ahead of the next meeting.

G. AbilityNet Event

Correspondence had been previously circulated advising members of a digital voice Roadshow hosted by AbilityNet, a charity offering assistance to older and disabled people building a digital world accessible to all, and it was:

Resolved to note that the event would be held on 30 January 2025.

H. Rural and Islands Poverty – Webinar

Correspondence had previously been circulated advising members of a webinar being hosted by the Improvement Service and representatives from the Poverty Alliance with the topic of Poverty in rural and islands communities being discussed, and it was:

Resolved to note that the event had now passed.

I. VAO – Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults

Following consideration of correspondence received from Voluntary Action Orkney advising members that the Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for Adults had opened for a second tranche of applications, it was:

Resolved to note the deadline for applications of 3 February 2025.

J. Dounby Parent Council

Correspondence had previously been circulated from Dounby Parent Council inviting members to their next meeting. As discussed at item 4A above, Mrs E Grant had attended, and it was:

Resolved to note that Mr E Grieve would attend future meetings.

K. Scottish Water – Responding to impacts of Storm Eowyn

Following consideration of correspondence previously circulated from Scottish Water advising that their teams had worked to maintain essential service for customers wherever it would be safe to do in the face of the extreme weather conditions during Storm Eoywn, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

L. Dounby Community School – Crossing System

Following consideration of a letter previously circulated from the Head Teacher at Dounby Community School requesting the community council consider a crossing system and additional safe walking paths in and around the crossroads area of the village, members agreed that the village needed to be a safer area for all and felt that whilst they had tried on numerous occasions, footfall was not sufficient to warrant crossings.

It was therefore felt that the letter should be forwarded to Sustrans for inclusion in their reports and request engagement from the Dounby Community School to attend the 'Friends of Dounby' meetings so that the community could work together to make the village a safer place, and it was:

Resolved to note that the letter would be forwarded to Sustrans and the Community School asked to attend future meetings of 'Friends of Dounby'.

M. Ron Bailey – Safety of Lithium-ion Batteries

Following consideration of correspondence previously circulated asking for support from the Community Council for the safety surrounding the use and disposal of Lithium-ion batteries, members agreed that the batteries were extremely dangerous if not disposed of appropriately and it was:

Resolved to note that a letter of support would be submitted.

N. Thank You Letters

Members were advised that a letter of thanks had been received from Orkney Pilgrimage, OWMAS and Dounby Senior Citizens, for the assistance provided to them, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the letters.

6. Consultations

A. Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2024

Following consideration of correspondence received from Orkney Islands Council requesting feedback on the current polling stations which were used earlier this year and whether location, accessibility and ease of use could be improved, it was:

Resolved to note that the deadline for comments had now passed.

B. Scottish Islands Federation – Cross Party Group on Islands

Following consideration of correspondence previously circulated from the Scottish Islands Federation advising members of an online session for the discussion of issues relevant to Scotland's islands and the resident of island communities to improve links between the Scottish Parliament and island communities, it was:

Resolved to note that the event had now passed

C. Orkney Islands Council – 20mph Survey

Following consideration of correspondence circulated from Orkney Islands Council advising members that a public consultation was now underway asking for feedback on the Scottish Government proposal to implement 20mph speed limits on all appropriate roads within Orkney by the end of 2025, and it was:

Resolved to note that members comments had been submitted.

D. Orkney Islands Council – Verge Maintenance Plan 2025

Members considered correspondence previously emailed requesting members of the community council submit their comments on the Verge Maintenance Plan for the 2025 season. The main change would be that a single cut would now be done in September/October each year with additional safety cuts scheduled for all A Class Road visibility splays at junction and bends in May/June. Following discussion, it was:

Resolved to note that the closing date for opinions was 28 February 2025.

E. Scottish Government – R100 Broadband Evaluation

Following consideration of correspondence previously circulated to members from the Scottish Government requesting members complete a survey on the role out of faster broadband across Scotland, and it was:

Resolved to note that the details had been shared on Facebook for the community to submit their opinions and the deadline for feedback was 3 March 2025.

F. Orkney Islands Council – Forest and Woodland Strategy

Following consideration of correspondence circulated from Development and Marine Planning, Orkney Islands Council, asking for feedback on the Trees and Woodland Strategy, despite there being no forests in Orkney it was a requirement of the local authority to submit, and it was:

Resolved to note the consultation.

7. Financial Statements

A. General Fund

Following consideration of the General Fund statement, copies of which had previously been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note that the estimated balance was £13,407.69 as at 9 January 2025.

B. Community Council Grant Scheme

Following consideration of the financial statement for the Community Council Grant Scheme, it was:

Resolved to note the balance remaining available for approval in the main capping limit was £1,448.30 and the balance in the additional capping limit was £765 as at 9 January 2025.

C. Community Development Fund

Following consideration of the financial statement for the Community Development Fund, it was:

Resolved to note the balance remaining available for allocation was £5,000 as at 9 January 2025.

8. Applications for Financial Assistance

A. Sandwich Community Association – Christmas Parties

Following consideration of correspondence previously circulated to members via email from Sandwich Community Association, requesting assistance towards their annual Christmas party for the children in the parish and also a Christmas lunch for the Senior Citizens, it was:

Resolved to note that members had agreed by email to award £550, subject to approval, from the Community Council Grant Scheme.

B. Island Games - Legacy Banner Project

Following consideration of correspondence previously circulated to members via email advising that the Islands Games are working with the schools to twin each school with one of the visiting teams and asking them to make a banner to be displayed during the event and then presented back to the School as a memory of this once in a lifetime event. Each banner was expected to cost £200 members agreed to fund this project along with Birsay Community Council, and it was:

Resolved to award two thirds of the £200 from Harray and Sandwich Community Council Grant Scheme funding, subject to approval.

C. Dounby Community School – P7 Trip to Hoy

Following consideration of correspondence received from Dounby Community School, copies of which had previously been circulated, requesting assistance

towards the Primary 7 planned trip to Hoy in June 2025, the Chairman advised that, in order to allocate funding appropriately, a list of names was required to ensure all children were resident in the parish and had not had a previous claim, and it was:

Resolved to note that a letter would be sent requesting the information and a decision would then be made by email ahead of the next meeting.

D. Stenness Community School – P7 Trip to Hoy

Following consideration of correspondence received from Stenness Community School, copies of which had previously been circulated, requesting assistance towards the P7 Trip to Hoy planned for June 2025, it was noted that one pupil was resident within the parish, and it was:

Resolved to award £60, as per policy, from the General Fund.

9. Publications

Resolved to note that the following publications had been forwarded to members:

- VAO – Newsletter – December 2024.
- VAO - Training and Funding Update – November and December 2024.
- Scottish Water – Newsletter – Winter Edition.
- OIC Transportation Service Statistics – 2024.

10. Any Other Competent Business

A. Milestone Kirk Grit Bin – Dounby Bazaar

Members were advised that there had been an issue with the grit bin on the day of the Dounby Bazaar when the Milestone Kirk carpark had been in treacherous conditions and a local contractor had agreed to grit. The Chairman had written a letter of dis-satisfaction to the Council that additional grit had not been available when the Council were in the village filling up other bins. Discussion followed, and it was:

Resolved to note that the Milestone Kirk car park was private property and that OIC protocol had been adhered to.

B. Road Closure – Tree Lighting

It was reported that, following the recent tree lighting in the village and the cost incurred with the road closure, the Chairman had noted that some cars were still getting through, and the road closure had not been for the full duration of the event. After discussion it was agreed that this was a one-off due to the work being carried out on the Market Green and that the 2025 tree lighting would be contained within the upgraded facilities of the new Market Green, and it was:

Resolved to note the discussion.

C. Proposed Closure to Dounby Amenity Site

Following circulation of an online survey on budget cutting measures by OIC, members requested that a letter of dis-satisfaction be submitted to the Council in light of their proposed closure of the Dounby Amenity Site. A letter was submitted on 28 December and copied to all four West Mainland Elected members. A request for a Freedom of Information on the actual running costs had also been requested which had revealed that the running costs were £12,000 per year. Discussion followed and members felt that, in future, community councils should be advised on community issues prior to going to public consultation. They felt that the running costs of the Amenity site was minimal, the facilities were well used in the village and the closure would be detrimental to both the village and the wider community, and it was:

Resolved to request by business letter that any major items relating to the area covered by the Community Council be relayed to them ahead of public consultation.

D. Christmas Tree

Members were advised that all the Christmas lights from the tree were damaged by the extreme winds in December 2024. The Chairman had asked the Clerk to obtain a quote for replacements and spares from the same company as previously used. The lights were currently on discount and the cost for 6 sets including VAT and carriage would be £987.36. Discussion followed, and it was:

Resolved to note that the lights would be purchased along with Birsay, with Harray and Sandwich paying two thirds from the Community Council Grant Scheme.

E. Drainage at Sandwich Cemetery

A member of the public had brought to the attention of the Community Council that there was an issue with drainage in the new Sandwich Cemetery which resulted in flooding during the recent periods of heavy rain. Discussion followed, and it was:

Resolved to note this would be raised via the business letter.

F. Dyke behind Smithfield Hotel

Mr C Kirkness advised members that the dyke at the back of the Smithfield Hotel was in a dangerous state. He queried if this was private or council property. Members agreed that it would be best to knock down the dyke to avoid a potential incident, which Mr C Kirkness agreed to arrange, and it was:

Resolved to query via the business letter who was responsible for the dyke.

G. Strathborg Trees

Members discussed if the trees which had been planted at Strathborg last year required any maintenance this year. Mr G Brown agreed to seek advice and report back to members, and it was:

Resolved to await clarification from Mr G Brown on whether maintenance was required at Strathborg.

H. Grass Cutting Tender

Mr C Kirkness queried about the grass cutting tender for Harray and Sandwick. The Clerk confirmed that, last year, a three-year tender was accepted for the work, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

I. 50mph Consultation

The Chairman raised the issue of the Scottish Government 50mph consultation which he had heard about on the local radio. After discussion, it was felt that members should submit their views online, and it was:

Resolved that the Clerk would forward the link to all members.

11. Dates of Future Meetings

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

Resolved that the next meetings of Harray and Sandwick Community Council would be held on Wednesdays 12 March and 14 May in the Milestone Community Church and via Microsoft Teams.

12. Conclusion of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 21:45.