

Minute of the Meeting of Kirkwall and St Ola Community Council held in the Friends Room, St Magnus Centre, Kirkwall, and via Teams on Monday, 26 January 2026 at 19:30

Present:

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

In Attendance:

- Councillor Sandy Cowie.
- Councillor Kristopher Leask.
- Councillor Leslie Manson.
- Councillor John Ross Scott.
- Councillor Ivan Taylor.
- Jenny McGrath, Community Council Liaison Officer (via Teams).
- Hazel Flett. Clerk.
- 2 members of the local press.

Chair:

- Lynne Spence.

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1. Apologies

Resolved to note that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Steven Heddle and Gwenda Shearer.

2. Adoption of Minute

The Minute of the Meeting held on 1 December 2025 was approved, being proposed by Tom Rendall and seconded by Rosemary Rhodes.

3. Matters Arising

A. Kirkwall Post Office

Following consideration of correspondence from Liam McArthur MSP and the Post Office in response to the Community Council's concerns regarding operating hours at the Kirkwall Post Office, Junction Road, following the transfer to a franchise operation, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

B. Urban Weeds

Councillor John Ross Scott advised that discussions were ongoing regarding potential community engagement in tackling urban weeds, and it was:

Resolved to note that Councillor John Ross Scott would provide a further update at the next meeting.

C. Community Council Pin/Lanyard

The Chair advised that, although an enhanced version of the Community Council's coat of arms had now been produced, the lanyards were not yet available, and it was:

Resolved to note the position.

D. Former Balfour Hospital – Garden Memorial Building

Following consideration of correspondence from Orkney Islands Council regarding the process for listing buildings, as well as support for retaining the Garden Memorial Building for social and historic reasons, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved:

1. That the Clerk should write to NHS Orkney advising that, as the Garden Memorial Building was an important part of Kirkwall's heritage, consideration should be given to retaining the building within any redevelopment plans for the larger site.
2. That the Clerk should write to Orkney Heritage Society seeking their views on the Garden Memorial Building.

E. 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.

F. Share Your Views on Tourism in Orkney

Following consideration of correspondence from Orkney Islands Council regarding the recent stakeholder interviews and workshops seeking views on tourism in Orkney, which would result in a Visitor Management Plan for Orkney, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note that further correspondence had been received from Orkney Islands Council suggesting an indicative timetable for development of the Visitor Management Plan, as follows:

- March-April 2026 – draft Visitor Management Plan.
- May-June 2026 – public consultation.
- September 2026 – Visitor Management Plan submitted to Policy and Resources Committee, Orkney Islands Council, for adoption.

G. Historic Environment Scotland – Properties and Collections Strategy

The Clerk advised that a submission, based on proposals drafted by Chris Matthews, had been made to Historic Environment Scotland in respect of their proposed Properties and Collections Strategy, by the deadline of 23 January 2026, and it was:

Resolved to note the position.

H. Laing Street, Kirkwall

Councillor John Ross Scott advised that Laing Street was not currently on any asset replacement programme and that resources were prioritised according to the outcomes of course visual inspections (CVI) on the network. The Service Manager (Roads and Grounds), Orkney Islands Council, would be requesting that a CVI be carried out in due course to allow the condition of this section of the network to be reviewed. The Council would thereafter identify and carry out any minor patching repairs as required in advance of possibly adding this to a future programme of works, and it was:

Resolved that the Clerk should write to Orkney Islands Council support the request for a CVI to be carried out on Laing Street.

I. Pedestrian Crossings in Kirkwall

Councillor John Ross Scott advised that zebra crossings were included in the relevant routes for inspection and, where defects were identified, those would be added to the programme of works accordingly. Should the Community Council identify any areas of concerns, ad hoc inspections could be carried out and appropriate work undertaken, and it was:

Resolved to note the position.

J. Street Lighting at Meadowbank

Councillor John Ross Scott advised that there were no reported issues with street lighting in Papdale, however the matter raised at the previous meeting was lighting throughout Meadowbank, not Papdale East, and it was:

Resolved to note that Councillor John Ross Scott would walk round Meadowbank to locate any dark and/or unlit areas, and report back to the next meeting.

K. Missing Door on Phone Box at Pierhead

The Clerk had advised that she had been provided with a contact at BT, however photos of the phone box were required, as well as a detailed description, and it was:

Resolved to note that the Clerk would progress this matter.

4. Standing Items

A. Ferry Replacement Programme and Harbours Masterplan Phase 2

The Clerk advised that the presentation on the ferry replacement programme and phase 2 of the Harbours Masterplan was now scheduled for the meeting on 23 March 2026, and it was:

Resolved to note the position.

B. Carness Road Sea Wall

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

C. Former Street Names

Robert Leslie advised that he had made contact with Spencer Rosie and that discussions were ongoing, and it was:

Resolved to note the current position.

D. Local Place Plan

The Chair advised that the first meeting of the Place Plan Steering Group was held on 12 January 2026, where it was agreed that a new place plan covering Kirkwall and St Ola should be developed, with Your Kirkwall being used as a reference point, and it was:

Resolved:

1. To note that applications for financial assistance towards consultancy costs associated with producing the local plan would be progressed.
2. That powers be delegated to the Place Plan Steering Group to determine the specification for consultancy, seek tenders and accept a tender for consultancy services to develop a local place plan for Kirkwall and St Ola, subject to a full funding package being secured.

E. Benches

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

F. Sand at Scapa

Following consideration of correspondence from Orkney Islands Council regarding clearing sand from the road around Scapa, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved:

1. To note the points raised by Orkney Islands Council, as follows:

- That, although sand had been cleared back last year, this had accumulated again over the Christmas period, with options to cut back the dune slightly to maintain the road width to 3.5 metres being looked into.
- That Orkney Islands Council was also liaising with NatureScot to determine how best to manage the dune, although it was believed the best time to remove and replant marram grass was March/April.
- That Orkney Islands Council hoped to cut back the dune whilst also maintaining the route structure of the marram grass to hold it together.

2. That the Clerk should write to Orkney Islands Council seeking clarification on the requirement for a width of 3.5 metres, which was considered inadequate, particularly for larger vehicles, including school and public bus services, travelling one way, and when meeting pedestrians, with children and/or buggies, and cyclists, and stressing that road safety was considered more important than protecting a dune and marram grass which had been allowed to develop, when the wall, which was the natural boundary with the beach, had been allowed to be covered with sand.

Councillor John Ross Scott left the meeting at this point.

G. Winter Fest

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

H. Policy on Financial Assistance

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

I. Green Plaque for Carnegie Library

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

5. Correspondence

A. EASE App for disabled people at work

Following consideration of correspondence from the Scottish Union of Supported Employment regarding development of an app to connect disabled employees to support and resources, with the aim of empowering them to stay well and succeed in their jobs, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence, which had also been passed to Voluntary Action Orkney.

B. SEPA – National Flood Risk Assessment 2025 Report

Following consideration of correspondence from SEPA advising of the publication of the National Flood Risk Assessment report for 2025, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

C. Call for Views – Visitor Levy (Amendment)(Scotland) Bill

Following consideration of correspondence from the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee, Scottish Parliament, seeking stakeholder views, by 26 January 2026, on the Bill which proposed to give local authorities further flexibility in designing and implementing the visitor levy and to provide clearer rules to support its future operation, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that the Clerk should respond indicating that consultation between 14 and 26 January 2026 was considered totally inadequate to allow the Community Council to submit a considered response to the proposed amendments to the Visitor Levy Bill.

D. Call for Views – Visitor Levy (Amendment)(Scotland) Bill Financial Memorandum

Following consideration of correspondence from the Finance and Public Administration Committee, Scottish Parliament, seeking views, by 26 January 2026, on the estimated financial implications as set out on the accompanying Financial Memorandum, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that the Clerk should respond indicating that consultation between 14 and 26 January 2026 was considered totally inadequate to allow the Community Council to submit a considered response to the accompanying Financial Memorandum to the Visitor Levy Bill.

E. Conservation Area Appraisals for Kirkwall and Stromness

Following consideration of a briefing note from Orkney Islands Council providing information on a technical study underway for Kirkwall and Stromness conservation areas, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence and how this might interact with the proposed local place plan for Kirkwall and St Ola.

F. PEPA – Letter of Support

Following consideration of correspondence from the Papdale East Playpark Association requesting a letter of support to submit to funding bodies for Phase 4 of the development at the Papdale East Playpark, namely the installation of equipment, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that the Clerk should submit a letter of support.

6. Hanging Baskets

Following discussion on the provision of hanging baskets throughout Kirkwall Town Centre for 2026, it was:

Resolved:

A. That the Community Council should continue the scheme to provide floral hanging baskets in the town centre during 2026 for private businesses and households only.

B. That a grant of £2,000 be awarded towards the provision of hanging baskets, subject to assistance from the Community Council Grant Scheme being approved.

C. That businesses and private individuals participating in the scheme should be requested to meet the cost of a basket, less the Community Council Grant Scheme funding.

D. That the Clerk should make the necessary arrangements to secure contracts for the provision of hanging baskets and load testing the brackets for the 2026 season.

E. That the Clerk should seek to identify external funding to assist with the cost of load testing the brackets and, should no alternative funding be identified, the cost should be shared between all the businesses taking part.

F. That powers be delegated to the Chair and Vice Chair to accept tenders for the provision of hanging baskets and load testing the brackets.

G. That the Clerk should contact the successful tenderer to agree the length of time the hanging baskets should remain on the buildings.

7. Planters at War Memorial

Following discussion on the continued provision of flower tubs at the Kirkwall and St Ola war memorial, it was:

Resolved:

A. That the Community Council should provide flower tubs at the Kirkwall and St Ola war memorial containing Royal British Legion colours.

B. That a grant of at least £150 be awarded towards the provision of the flower tubs, subject to assistance from the Community Council Grant Scheme being approved.

8. Financial Statements

A. General Finance

Following consideration of the General Finance statement as at 12 January 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the estimated balance as at 12 January 2026 of £9,957.22.

B. Community Council Grant Scheme

Following consideration of the 2025/26 Community Council Grant Scheme statement as at 12 January 2026, 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 12 January 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

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

9. Financial Requests

A. Kirkjuvagr Dancers

Following consideration of an application from D Ritchie requesting financial assistance towards her daughter participating in the Tanya Horne Christmas Competition held in Wick on 7 December 2025, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that a donation of £30 be given.

B. Highland Dancing

Following consideration of an application from T Paterson requesting financial assistance towards her daughters participating in the Tanya Horne Christmas Competition held in Wick on 7 December 2025, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that a donation of £30 be given in respect of each participant.

C. Badminton

Following consideration of an application from L Leask requesting financial assistance towards her son participating in badminton competitions and training camps in February, March and April 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that a donation of £30 be given in respect of each competition and training camp attended.

D. Badminton

Following consideration of an application from L Leask requesting financial assistance towards her daughter participating in badminton competitions and training camps in February, March and April 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that a donation of £30 be given in respect of each competition and training camp attended.

10. Consultations

A. SEPA – Safeguarding Scotland’s Water Environment

Following consideration of correspondence from SEPA seeking views on significant water management issues, for which responses were due by 3 March 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that Chris Matthews should review the consultation documentation and, if deemed appropriate, draft a response from the Community Council.

B. Ayre Offshore Windfarm – Offshore Consent Application

Following consideration of correspondence from Thistle Wind Partners advising of the Marine Directorate’s consultation on the offshore consent application in respect of the Ayre Offshore Windfarm, for which responses were due by 8 February 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

C. EMEC – Fall of Warness Tidal Test Site

Following consideration of correspondence from the Marine Directorate, Scottish Government, regarding the EIA Section 36 consent application submitted by EMEC in respect of the Fall of Warness tidal test site, for which responses were due by 31 January 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

D. Application for Provisional Premises Licence

Following consideration of correspondence from Orkney Islands Council seeking comment on the application from The Orkney Wine Bar Ltd for a provisional premises licence in respect of Berstane Farmhouse, St Ola, by 28 January 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to make no comment.

E. Application for Variation of Premises Licence

Following consideration of correspondence from Orkney Islands Council seeking comment on the application from Orkney Distilling Ltd for a variation to the premises licence in respect of the Orkney Distillery and Visitor Centre, Ayre Road, Kirkwall, by 28 January 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to make no comment.

F. Application for Variation of Premises Licence

Following consideration of correspondence from Orkney Islands Council seeking comment on the application from Kirkjuvagr Ltd for a variation to the premises licence in respect of Lanes, 18 Bridge Street, Kirkwall, by 28 January 2026, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to make no comment.

11. Publications

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

- VAO – Training and Funding Updates – December 2025 and January 2026.
- Scotland’s Towns Partnership – December 2025 Newsletter.
- Scottish Rural Action – December 2025 Newsletter.
- NHS Orkney – Near Me Appointments (Press Release).
- SEPA Updates – Season’s Greetings, January 2026.
- VAO Newsletter – December 2025.
- Walking Scotland – eNews – December 2025.
- HIAL – E-News.
- SSEN – Whole System Newsletter, January 2026.

12. Any Other Competent Business

A. Festive Lighting in Kirkwall

The Clerk advised that an Expression of Interest had been submitted to The Orkney Fund in respect of the provision of festive lighting along Ayre Road and Pickaquoy Road, and it was:

Resolved to note the position.

B. Road Surfaces in Kirkwall

Members expressed concern regarding the deteriorating condition of roads and pavements around Kirkwall, and it was:

Resolved that the Clerk should circulate the Annual Status and Options Report (ASOR), which explained the inspection regime and associated costs for road maintenance.

C. Problems at Kirkwall Airport

It was reported that, during the recent period of inclement weather when passengers remained at Kirkwall airport for extended periods of time awaiting information on whether flights were operating, there were limited facilities for food and drink, as the café operator was also unable to attend, and it was:

Resolved that Tom Rendall should raise this matter at the next meeting of the Airport Consultative Forum.

D. OIC Comms Team – Snow Week

After discussion regarding the positive communications from Orkney Islands Council during the recent inclement weather, it was:

Resolved that the Clerk should write to Orkney Islands Council thanking the Comms team for the good humour and excellent information shared on social media.

E. Cornerstone – Equipment Upgrade

Following consideration of correspondence from WHP Telecoms Ltd in respect of pre-application discussion relating to equipment upgrade to a radio base station sited near Corse Farm, St Ola, in order to provide 5G coverage, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved to make no comment.

F. Bus Shelter at Carness Road

Following consideration of correspondence from Orkney Islands Council seeking views on the siting of a bus shelter on Carness Road at the new housing development near Boray Drive and Enzie Road, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that the Clerk should write to Orkney Islands Council supporting the provision of a bus shelter and asking that it be sited appropriately, bearing in mind prevalent wind directions.

G. Digital Connectivity Resilience Enquiry

Following consideration of correspondence from the Scottish Islands Federation advising of a survey, which was open until 13 February 2026, which would collate experiences on the impact storm and subsea cable damage could have on digital infrastructure in island communities, copies of which had been circulated, it was:

Resolved that members should respond to the survey on an individual basis.

13. 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, 23 March 2026, commencing at 19:30.

14. Conclusion of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 21:00.