

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

Present:

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

In Attendance:

- Councillor G Bevan (via Teams).
- Councillor J Park (via Teams).
- Mrs J McGrath, Community Council Liaison Officer (via Teams).
- Ms S Smith, Island Link Officer (ILO)/Clerk.

Order of Business

1. Apologies	2
2. Adoption of Minutes	2
3. Matters Arising	2
4. Correspondence	3
5. Consultations	6
6. Financial Statements	8
7. Financial Requests	9
8. Reports from Representatives	9
9. Publications	10
10. Any Other Competent Business.....	10
11. Date of Next Meeting	11
12. Conclusion of Meeting	11

1. Apologies

Resolved to note that apologies for absence had been received from Mr A Sinclair and Councillor L Hall.

2. Adoption of Minutes

The minute of the meeting of Graemsay, Hoy and Walls Community Council held on 18 November 2025 was adopted, being proposed by Mrs I Mathieson and seconded by Mrs T Avis.

3. Matters Arising

A. Bus Shelters

Correspondence had previously been circulated to members, advising that the Council would be installing a new shelter in the vicinity of French Road, and that it would be in place soon, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

B. Adoption of Payphones

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

C. Core Paths

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

D. North Walls Swimming Pool

The Community Council Liaison Officer advised that she was unsure what stage discussions were at but that this issue was still firmly on the agenda within OIC, and it was:

Resolved to await further updates on this matter.

E. Grit for Graemsay Roads

Mrs I Mathieson confirmed that the grit bins in Graemsay had been filled and that someone was assigned to do that on an ongoing basis, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided and to remove this item from the agenda.

F. Ditch Cleaning in Graemsay

Mrs I Mathieson advised that there had been no progress with getting the spoil removed from the verges, but that she was not aware of any further complaints in this regard, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided and to remove this item from the agenda.

Councillors G Bevan and J Park joined the meeting during discussion of this item.

G. Aggregate for Hoy

The Clerk advised that there had been 12 applications made to the 2025/2026 Hoy and Walls Aggregate Scheme. Community Council members requested this be checked against last year's allocation as there was a criterion in place that individuals would not be eligible for an award through the scheme in 2 consecutive years, and it was:

Resolved:

1. That the Clerk would undertake a check of applicant eligibility.
2. That the Clerk would seek updated costs from the local haulier.
3. That the Clerk would work with the Community Council Liaison Officer to progress the project.

H. Graemsay Scrap Cars

The Clerk advised that there had been 3 applications made to the scheme with a total of 7 cars. This did not reflect the number originally reported, and it was proposed that the requirement that each vehicle needed to be accompanied by a V5 may have been a barrier. The Community Council Liaison Officer advised that this was not necessarily required, and it was:

Resolved:

1. That the Clerk would repost the call for expressions of interest with this amendment.
2. That Mrs I Mathieson would speak to members of the Graemsay community directly.
3. That the Community Council Liaison Officer would request an update from Orkney Ferries with regards to chartering the new top loader vessel for the scheme.

4. Correspondence

A. EMEC – Section 36 Variation – Fall of Warness

An email from the Marine Directorate at Scottish Government had been previously 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.

B. Service User Representative - Integration Joint Board

An email had been received from Orkney Integration Joint Board, and circulated to members, seeking expressions of interest from individuals to join the board to represent the view of service users. Following discussion, it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

C. Community Transport Small Grant Scheme

Correspondence from OIC Transport had previously been circulated to members, inviting applications for the 2026/2027 round of the Community Transport Small Grant Scheme, the closing date for which was 25 January 2026. The ILO advised that the information had already been shared with the local community via social media, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

D. North Walls Community School Roll - August 2026 Information

Members had previously been forwarded an email from North Walls Community School, notifying of the recent Teaching Establishment Staffing Review and the implications of falling pupil numbers below thresholds that could affect class staffing for the 2026/2027 school year.

Mr A Trafford updated members that a new family had enrolled for the coming school year which would sustain current staffing but explained that the same situation would occur in 3 years when some pupils would progress to secondary schooling on Orkney mainland. A discussion followed, exploring barriers to the immigration of young families to the island. Access to suitable housing was raised as one of the key barriers and its effect on the staffing of essential services as well as the school roll was noted. Commitment within the OIC Housing Strategy to providing new homes on the isles and policies to promote reuse of unoccupied properties were discussed with Councillors G Bevan and J Park and it was suggested that an update of the Housing Strategy could be requested by the community council and invites could be extended to the Housing Officer and Empty Homes Officer to attend the next meeting. It was also recommended that the community council request information with regards to the current waiting list for the islands. The importance of a joined-up approach between local groups and addressing economic health was also noted, and it was:

Resolved:

1. That the Clerk would request an update from OIC Housing Department on how the Housing Strategy applies to the areas of Hoy and South Walls.
2. To extend an invite to the Housing and Empty Homes Officers to join the next meeting.
3. To request housing waiting list numbers for Hoy and South Walls.

E. EASE App - for Disabled People in Work

Correspondence from the Scottish Union of Supported Employment had been previously sent to members, seeking individuals to test the Ease App, designed to support people with a disability within employment, and to feedback to its developers, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

F. OHAL Consultation on Changes to Rental Allocation

An email from a member of the public had been received, informing community council members of the OHAL consultation on the allocation criteria for its properties in case it was of interest. Members noted the email, and that the closing date for comments of 17 December 2025, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

G. St John's Burial Ground, Hoy - Gate Removal

Members had been forwarded an email from Democratic Services to make members aware of the imminent removal of the gate at St John's Kirk by contractors for renovation with a plan for it to be rehung in the new year, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

H. Insurance Costs Information – Breakdown of Support Provided

Information from Democratic Services had been forwarded to members, showing the list of awards and amounts made by Graemsay, Hoy and Walls Community Council over the past three years as requested by the group, with a summary of the historical context of those decisions.

A brief discussion followed with the suggestion that a smaller working group could be assigned to analyse the data along with criteria developed by other community councils, with the view to developing a proposal that could be discussed by the full council, and it was:

Resolved:

1. That Mr A Trafford would analyse the data and report back to the community council members at the next meeting.
2. That the Clerk would forward financial assistance criteria adopted by other community councils.

I. Request for CC Representative for Hoy Nurse Interview

An invite from Orkney Health and Care for a member of the community council to sit on the interview panel for the Hoy Nurse post and represent the views of the local community had previously been forwarded to members. Ms L Crowson as Health and Care Representative had agreed to take on this role and advised members that the interview had been delayed due to the applicant withdrawing. Orkney Health and Care would notify her when the interview was to be rescheduled, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

J. Orkney Ferries - Longhope Regatta

The Clerk advised that a request had been received asking for a proposed date for Longhope Regatta, and it was:

Resolved to note that the Clerk had responded to Orkney Ferries prior to the meeting.

K. National Flood Risk Assessment 2025 Report

An email had been received from SEPA and circulated to members, advising of the National Flood Risk Assessment tool which identifies flood risk areas. This data underpins Scotland's Flood Resilience Strategy and the development of National Flood Risk Management Plans in 2026, and subsequent Local Flood Risk Management plans by 2028. It also advised that public consultation in affected areas would start in 2026, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

L. Scottish Water: Invite to be consulted

Correspondence from Scottish Water had been circulated previously to members, inviting them to be part of an upcoming consultation on services. Those interested could contact Turquoise Thinking by telephone, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

5. Consultations

A. Online Engagement Session - Islands Business Resilience Fund

An email from the Scottish Islands Federation had been previously circulated to members, with an invitation to three engagement sessions seeking updated evidence on how ferry-related disruption was affecting island businesses, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided and that the sessions had since passed.

B. Trust in Government

An invite from the Scottish Community Development Centre on behalf of the Scottish Government to facilitated sessions on 26 November, 2 December and 4 December 2025 had been previously circulated. The sessions looked to explore what trust meant to attendees and how it relates to positive and negative experiences with government, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

C. Draft Winter 2026/2027 Ferry Timetables

Resolved to note that the draft timetables had been sent to members and that this would be discussed within the Transport Representative report.

D. HES - Properties and Collections Strategy

An email had been received from Historic Environment Scotland, and circulated to members, inviting members to complete their public consultation on their new Property and Collections Strategy. The online survey closing date was 23 January 2026, and it was:

Resolved to note the information and that Mrs T Avis and Mr A Trafford had completed the survey as individuals.

E. SEPA Safeguarding Scotland's Water Environment

An invite from SEPA to their public consultation on safeguarding Scotland's water environment from pollution, development and extraction had previously been forwarded to members. It also advised that information gathered would feed into the River Basin Management Planning, and that the closing date was 3 March 2026, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

F. Planning Application - Houton Terminal

The Clerk had forwarded a consultation request notification for planning application reference 25/315/PP, which related to an application for permission to create an access road, footpaths, temporary accommodation and welfare units on land near to Houton Ferry Terminal and toilets. The closing date for comments from Graemsay, Hoy and Walls Community Council had been extended to 30 January 2026 to allow this item to be discussed at this meeting.

A discussion followed, clarifying the location, developer and purpose of the proposal and potential future developments once the temporary accommodation was not required. Members of the community council requested reassurance that the proposed development and any future developments would not create additional burden or risk to passengers and vehicles accessing the Houton Pier and residential properties in the area; in particular highlighting that vehicles turning into Houton from the A964 were often travelling at the upper end of the speed limit and would have less chance of being able to slow down for a vehicle exiting this new junction. Following discussion, it was:

Resolved that the Clerk would prepare a response to be submitted to Development Management in relation to planning application reference 25/315/PP.

G. EMEC – Section 36 Application – Fall of Warness

Members had previously been sent an invite from the Marine Directorate at the Scottish Government to comment on EMEC's submission for a Section 36 consent at the Fall of Warness project, the closing date for which was 31 January 2026. Following a short discussion on the impact and relevance of this project to the residents of Graemsay, Hoy and Walls, it was:

Resolved:

1. To note the information provided.
2. That the Clerk would submit a request to be removed from planning consultation for this project.

H. Ayre Offshore Windfarms

Members had previously received an invite from Thistle Wind Partners to participate in a consultation on their offshore consent application for the Ayre Offshore Wind Farm development, the closing date for comments being 8 February 2026, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

I. Digital Connectivity Resilience Enquiry – SIF – Survey

Following consideration of an invite from Scottish Islands Federation to provide evidence and examples of challenges and solutions to the impact storm and subsea cable damage can have on the digital infrastructure in island communities, the closing date for which was 13 February 2026, it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

J. SSEN Stakeholder Engagement Workshop - ED3 Price Control Transmission strategy

Members had previously been forwarded an invite from Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks to stakeholder workshops seeking views on the overall business strategy to proposed improvements to the low voltage network (increasing reliability and allowing customers to connect low voltage technologies more easily), to customer support and to network resilience and reliability, and it was:

Resolved to note that the webinar would take place on 26 March 2026 should anyone be interested in joining.

6. Financial Statements

A. General Fund

Following consideration of the General Fund statement as at 12 January 2026, it was:

Resolved to note the estimated balance of £20,746.46.

B. Community Council Grant Scheme

Following consideration of the CCGS statement as at 12 January 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 12 January 2026, it was:

Resolved to note the balance of £7,800.68 which remained available for allocation to projects.

7. Financial Requests

A. St John's Kirk SCIO – Overall Costs

Following consideration of an application from St John's Kirk SCIO for financial assistance with their overall costs, copies of which had been previously circulated, it was:

Resolved to award £1,040 subject to CDF approval.

B. Longhope Sailing and Rowing Club – Insurance and Costs

Following consideration of an application from Longhope Sailing and Rowing Club for financial assistance towards insurance and other club costs, a member pointed out that the group had already received assistance with the cost of insurance within this financial year. Following discussion, it was:

Resolved that the Clerk would respond to Longhope Sailing and Rowing Club asking for additional information so that the request could be further considered by members.

C. Gable End Film Society - Support for Children's Films

Following consideration of a late request from the Gable End Film Society, which hadn't been circulated to members prior to the meeting, asking for assistance with the cost of putting on films for children, it was:

Resolved:

1. To award £280 subject to CDF approval.
2. That, in future, there should be a cut-off date for financial applications, and that any request to be considered by members should be with the Clerk no less than one week prior to the meeting.

8. Reports from Representatives

A. Transport Representative

Mrs G Robertson advised that she had attended the Transport Forum Meeting on 21 January 2026 via Teams, having already submitted a summary of feedback received from the local community with regards to the draft winter 2026/2027 ferry timetables. She had also received a response to these, which detailed that there was no capacity within the crew hours and training requirements to extend the Saturday timetable during the winter months. The value to local economy of the ferry being crewed from the island was raised and again the importance of an adequate ferry service and a joined-up approach attracting working population and providing housing was identified. It was noted that the next consultation for the 2027 Summer Timetable would be held in August 2026 and early engagement and methodology were discussed. The effect of reduced capacity on the MV Thorsvoe was raised with the suggestion that a request for additional sailings during planned cover such as during the MV Hoy Head refit be made. A request for a breakdown of the monthly passenger and vehicle statistics for Hoy and Flotta was requested, and it was:

Resolved:

1. That the Clerk would request detailed ferry statistics from Orkney Ferries.
2. To continue discussion at the next meeting.

B. Planning Representative

Resolved to note that the Clerk/ILO would be undertaking the role of Planning Representative and that there were no additional updates to those already discussed earlier in the meeting.

C. Health and Care Representative

Resolved to note that there was no update at this time, but that another Joint Isles Health and Care meeting was due to be held on 31 March 2026.

9. Publications

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

- Scottish Islands Federation - November Round Up and News.
- VAO – Newsletter – November and December 2025.
- VAO – Training and Funding Update – December 2025 and January 2026.
- Orkney Ferries - Statistics - November and December 2025.
- OHAC - Near Me Appointments.
- New Powers for Scotland’s Community Councils – Newsletter No.3.

10. Any Other Competent Business

A. Supply of Grit Bins

The Chair raised the supply of grit bins on the Rackwick Road at Hoy. A short discussion was had regarding the current Winter Service Plan and its review. The community council were advised that support of resident’s requests and additional information on location would be useful. Members expressed their appreciation of the assistance provided by individuals within the local community during recent snow conditions and it was agreed that the Clerk should arrange for a formal notice to be posted on social media, and it was:

Resolved:

1. That Councillors G Bevan and J Park would represent the request for grit bins at the upcoming Winter Service Plan review with officers.
2. That the Clerk would submit a request to OIC, via the business letter, supporting allocation of grit bins and detailing location.
3. That the Clerk would draft a notice of appreciation and circulate it to community council members before adding to the Facebook page.

B. Dog Waste around Longhope

A member expressed concern around the amount of dog waste being left on the verges and pavements around Longhope and subsequent risk to public and animal health. Following a discussion on measures available to address this, it was:

Resolved:

1. That the Clerk would request an additional waste bin at the surgery end of the village.
2. That the Clerk would request the supply of anti-fouling signs from Environmental Health.

11. Date of Next Meeting

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

Resolved:

- A. That the next meeting of Graemsay, Hoy and Walls Community Council would be held on Friday, 27 March 2026 at 19:00 in the North Walls Centre.
- B. That consideration would be given to setting meeting dates for the remainder of 2026.

12. Conclusion of Meeting

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