

Minute of the Meeting of Birsay Community Council held in the Birsay Community Centre and via Teams on Thursday, 28 November 2024 at 19:30

Present:

Mr R Delday, Miss K Coghill, Mr E Harvey, Mrs V Sinclair and Mr S Spence.

In Attendance:

- Councillor R King.
- Councillor O Tierney.
- Councillor D Tullock.
- Councillor J Stevenson (via Teams).
- Mr T Hadley, Community Engagement Officer, Orkney Native Wildlife Project.
- Mrs J McGrath, Community Council Liaison Officer (via Teams).
- Mrs H Keveren, West Mainland Link Officer/Clerk.

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1. Apologies

Resolved to note that apologies for absence had been received from Ms D Clouston.

2. Adoption of Minutes

The minute of the meeting held on 12 September 2024 was approved, being proposed by Mr E Harvey and seconded by Mr S Spence.

3. 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 also advised that Birsay has 1,100 traps and have caught 657 stoats and 1143 rats. The project has 8,860 active traps and caught 7,045 Stoats and 22,000 rats across Orkney. The figures for 2024 were lower than 2023 which proves that the project is 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 are constantly working to increase public awareness, giving talks, attending public events and have set up a youth forum for 16–30-year-olds.

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

Resolved:

- A. To note the information provided.
- B. To request a presentation from Orkney Geese Group at a future meeting.

The Community Engagement Manager left the meeting at this point.

4. Matters Arising

A. Local Place Plan/Quiet Routes

It was reported that, at the recent joint meeting with Harray and Sandwick Community Council, the Service Manager, Development and Marine Planning, advised that all funding had been removed for the 'Quiet Routes' project. They would instead continue to collect data such as vehicle movement and speeds from the markers in place and then a decision would be made about what to do with this data.

The Service Manager, Development and Marine Planning, had also advised that a Local Place Plan had already been drawn up for Dounby and copies of maps highlighting walking and cycling routes along with existing infrastructure were circulated to members.

Some of the suggestions from members had been:

- Additional footpaths – Northbigging route.
- Accessible footpaths – ensure that essential routes can be accessed by all (Roads Department to review).
- Zebra crossing – (roads standards may not always fit with Orkney's requirements).
- Options to slow down traffic – raised platforms or textured areas.
- Parking – additional parking required in the village.
- Hub based approach for the West Mainland.
- Recycling Centre – use some of the additional area owned by OIC to develop and incorporate an entry / exit system.
- Walkway through Vias Moss – development of the unused land into an attractive area in the village.

Following discussion, it was:

Resolved to note that members were interested in being involved in the plans.

B. RSPB – Marwick Bay Access

An update had been received from the Orkney Sites Manager for RSPB, advising that initial plans remained the same and whilst they did not wish to restrict vehicle access, if fly tipping remained an issue, they may have to put barriers up to avoid repeat incidents of illegal dumping. This would not restrict access to core path users, and they were in the process of liaising with OIC staff on the matter. After discussion, members felt that whilst they did not condone fly tipping, bollards would restrict emergency access, and it was:

Resolved to contact RSPB to find out which team within the Council RSPB were liaising with so that information could be passed to Councillor R King who would then pursue the matter.

C. Treatment of Causeway

Members were informed that no further updates were available at present, and it was:

Resolved to note this would be reviewed again at the next meeting and that Councillor R King expressed her interest to be involved.

D. Speeding in Dounby – Smiley Faces

Members felt that the 'Smiley Faces' speed indication devices would be beneficial for Dounby and heard that they are on a rotation around villages so Dounby will get them in due course to trial. The Community Council Liaison Officer also advised that one set had been out of action being repaired so the rotation was taking longer than usual. Councillor R King stressed that speeding was a matter for the Police, and it was:

Resolved that a letter would be sent to Police Scotland expressing the concerns of Birsay Community Council.

E. Birsay Whale Bone

Councillor D Tullock updated members that at present no progress had been made however, Birsay Heritage Trust were meeting in December, and it was:

Resolved to note that an update would be available at the next meeting.

F. Dounby School Play Park

Members heard that Mr D MacBeth from the Dounby School Parent Council had given a presentation on the project to replace existing equipment at Dounby School playpark at the joint meeting with Harray and Sandwick Community Council held on 24 September 2024. It had been reported that the primary aim was to create a safe, engaging, and inclusive space where children could play, learn, and grow. It would feature a variety of play structures designed to cater for different age groups and abilities, including swings, slides and climbing frames.

The total estimated cost of the project was in the region of £25,000, covering planning, equipment purchase, installation and initial maintenance, however if they were able to secure additional funding, the group would like to cost for better equipment. They had received positive feedback from OIC that £25,000 would be funded by them through the playpark fund, but they would be grateful for any funds that the Community Council could contribute. The Chair advised that he had attended their recent Parent Council meeting where they had discussed funding options. Members agreed that they were keen to put money towards the project and ideally would like to purchase an item, and it was:

Resolved to note the above information and to discuss further at the next meeting.

G. Dounby Tree Lighting

It was noted that members from Birsay Community Council had attended a joint meeting with Harray and Sandwick Community Council where all plans for the Tree Lighting ceremony were discussed and agreed. The Tree Lighting ceremony would be held on Friday, 6 December 2024, and it was:

Resolved:

1. To note that the tree would be located on the Market Green as per usual and the purchase of the tree will be funded by Birsay, Harray and Sandwick Community Councils from their General Funds.
2. To note that a road closure for the Hillside Road – B9037 had been requested and the cost was estimated at £1,307. After discussion members felt that for safety reasons this year, whilst space was limited on the Market Green, a road closure should also be requested for the main road through Dounby – A986 for the duration of the ceremony provided the cost for both did not exceed £2,000 which would be split equally between the Community Councils from Grant Scheme.

3. To note that the additional lights had been received and a quote had been received from E Frasers, Electricians, for the cost of £1,402 to erect and dismantle the lights. The quote had been accepted and will be paid from Grant Scheme. The Chair of Harray and Sandwick Community Council had questioned if the braid lights could stay connected throughout the year similar to those in Stromness to save costs in future years of having to re-connect, and two extra sets of tree lights had been requested.

4. To note that members of Birsay, Harray and Sandwick Community Councils had agreed to split the cost equally from the General Fund for the selection boxes, hire of the church and the donation to the Town Brass Band who had kindly agreed to play.

5. To note that the Ministers of the Milestone Kirk had agreed to deliver the Christmas Message, children of the school had been advised of the event and will learn the songs at school, song sheets will also be available at the lighting ceremony, and that two members of the Dounby Boys Brigade were to be asked to switch on the lights.

6. To note that members of both community councils had been asked to assist with putting the tree up on Tuesday, 3 December and also at the Tree Lighting ceremony on Friday 6 December.

H. Birsay Kirkyard Repairs

Members noted that the loose stone in the shed and the coping stone off the wall at the Birsay Kirkyard had both been reported, and it was:

Resolved to note the above information.

I. Slip at Point of Buckquoy

Further to a letter being sent to Historic Environment Scotland on 14 September 2024 (as a regular user of the slip to gain access for equipment to maintain the Historic Scotland site on the Brough of Birsay), it was queried if Historic Environment Scotland would be prepared to contribute towards the upkeep of the slip or, on this occasion, arrange for the necessary works to be carried out. An email of acknowledgement had been received on 27 September 2024 and, despite a response being chased ahead of the meeting, no further correspondence had been received. Discussion followed and it was suggested that this work could be included in a Place Plan for Birsay. Councillor R King suggested that a steering group could be formed to move this forward, and it was:

Resolved:

1. To await a response from HES.
2. That Councillor R King would provide advice on forming a steering group.

J. Orkney West Mainland Agricultural Society

It was reported that members from the Orkney West Mainland Agricultural Society gave a presentation at the joint meeting with Harray and Sandwick Community Council held on 24 September 2024 and had enlightened members about the

proposed feasibility study on the Dounby Showpark and pavilion. They had also advised how the facilities could be developed to increase the use from just a few days a year to being utilised more often by both the Society and the wider community.

They explained that the current facilities were not up-to-standard and a first aid and welfare unit along with disabled toilets would be a priority in the proposed plans.

Funding for the feasibility study had already been secured from CDF and the Crown Estate to fund the majority of the feasibility study however they had a shortfall of £2,780 which the Society was appealing for assistance with. Members felt that the facilities required upgrading and that the proposal would benefit the whole community, and it was:

Resolved to donate £500 from the General Fund to OWMAS for the feasibility study.

5. Correspondence

A. Winter Service Plan

Correspondence had been circulated to members with the results of the consultation process held earlier relating to the Winter Service Plan along with relevant comments from the Roads Department, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

B. Sustrans Scotland – Friends of Dounby

Following consideration of correspondence received from Sustrans asking for the wider community of the Dounby village to engage with them to form a group 'Friends of Dounby' to move forward the plans to develop better facilities in the village for 'Walking' Wheeling and Cycling', The Chair, Vice Chair and Councillor R King all expressed an interest in being involved, and it was:

Resolved that the Clerk would make contact with Sustrans to add the Chair, Vice Chair and Councillor R King to the 'Friends of Dounby' group who were due to meet on 6 December.

C. Market Green Update

Members considered correspondence, copies of which had previously been circulated, from the Council's Senior Quantity Surveyor. At the time of writing, the works were halted awaiting the results of a contamination survey. It was hoped that works could continue as soon as possible. Discussion followed and it was noted that contractors were back on site and making good progress, and it was:

Resolved to note the above information.

D. Dounby Parent Council – Meeting Invite

Following consideration of correspondence from Dounby Parent Council inviting representatives from the Community Council along to their meeting on 14 November,

the Chair advised that he had attended and that the group were looking for additional funding and members to assist with moving the project forward, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the discussion.

E. Thank you letters

Members were advised that letters of thanks had been received from Birsay Heritage Trust, Kirkwall and St Ola Community Council and Birsay Community Association for the assistance provided to both the Birsay Lunch Club and Bairns party, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the letters.

F. Scottish Water – Protect Property and Pipes from Water Damage

Members considered correspondence from Scottish Water highlighting the damage that can result and the importance of reporting any suspected leaks on the public water network, checking any empty properties, business premises, field troughs or garden taps to keep the network running as smoothly as possible as the poorer weather starts to appear, and it was:

Resolved the contents of the correspondence.

G. Royal British Legion Industries – Christmas Lamp Post Signs

Following consideration of correspondence recently circulated advising members of Lamp Post signs which were available to show support for war veterans, it was:

Resolved to note that Birsay CC would purchase 4; two to be displayed in Dounby and one at each of the Churchyards in Birsay.

6. Consultations

A. Orkney Towns Fund – Online Community Engagement

An invitation had previously been circulated to members advising them of an online event being held by Orkney Towns Fund requesting community engagement in helping to shape the future of our community. Discussion followed as clarification was being sought as to whether the funding could be extended beyond Kirkwall, and it was:

Resolved to note that the event had now passed.

B. Boundaries Scotland Consultation

Correspondence had been previously circulated to members advising that Boundaries Scotland had published its Further Proposals for constituency boundaries and Provisional Proposals for new region boundaries for the Scottish Parliament. Publication of the proposal was followed by a consultation period whereby comments concerning the proposals were invited, and it was:

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

C. Voluntary Action Orkney

Following consideration of correspondence previously circulated from Voluntary Action Orkney appealing for charity organisations and community groups to complete a survey to help identify how they can provide support going forward, it was:

Resolved to note that the deadline for completion of the survey had now passed.

D. Heather Anderson – University of Stirling – Research on Private Water Supplies

Communication had previously been circulated from Heather Anderson, a researcher at the University of Stirling, who was investigating private water supply quality in Scotland. Anyone in the community who currently or previously had a private water supply were invited to complete a survey relating to the quality of their water and how effective the current support was for improving private supplies, and it was:

Resolved to note that this information had been circulated to the wider community.

E. Offshore Wind Power Ltd – West of Orkney Windfarm

Following consideration of correspondence previously circulated from West of Orkney Windfarm relating to the proposed offshore windfarm to be located 28km West of Hoy, members heard that various items of additional information had been submitted by the developer which required public consultation, and it was:

Resolved to note that the deadline for responses is 3 December 2024.

F. Orkney Matters 2 – Online Conversations

Members had previously been sent an invitation to Orkney Matters 2 which followed on from Orkney Matters, a community engagement programme held in 2020-21 which saw partners from across the Orkney Partnership meet with communities across Orkney to identify key issues to these areas. Everyone was invited to take part and talk about what was most important to them and their community, and it was:

Resolved to note that the event had passed.

G. Insights on Community Resilience in Emergencies

Members considered correspondence previously circulated from the Scottish Government Resilient Communities Team, in partnership with the Improvement Service, requesting members' insights and information on a range of resilience issues and how the Community Councils were supporting local people through emergencies and challenging situations and what further support might be needed. Following discussion, it was:

Resolved to note that the deadline had passed.

H. OWMAS – Dounby Show Park Survey

Following consideration of correspondence previously circulated from Orkney West Mainland Agricultural Society requesting members complete a short survey on how to enhance and develop the facilities to extend the use of the Show Park, it was:

Resolved to note that members were encouraged to complete the survey to assist the committee with their project.

I. 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 was 16 December 2024.

J. 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 was to be held on 11 December 2024.

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 £10,961.93 as at 14 November 2024.

B. Birsay Energy Fund

Following consideration of the Birsay Energy Fund, copies of which had previously been circulated, it was:

Resolved to note that the estimated balance was £26,598.09 as at 14 November 2024.

C. 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 £2,517.88 and the balance in the additional capping limit was £15.00 as at 14 November 2024.

D. 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 £9,831.09 as at 14 November 2024.

8. Applications for Financial Assistance

A. Orkney Pilgrimage – St Magnus Way

Following consideration of correspondence received from the Orkney Pilgrimage, appealing for assistance with the general upkeep and running costs incurred in maintaining the St Magnus Way, part of which runs through Birsay, it was:

Resolved to donate £250 from the General Fund.

B. S Spence – Outdoor Activities - Evie School

Following consideration of correspondence received and circulated via email from Susie Spence requesting financial assistance for her daughter who attended Evie School and would be taking part in the Outdoor Activities being organised, it was:

Resolved to note that members had agreed via email to award £25 from the General Fund as per policy.

C. Birsay Community Association – Kids Christmas Party

Following consideration of correspondence received and circulated via email from Birsay Community Association, requesting assistance to organise a Kids Christmas party this year again for the kids in the parish, it was:

Resolved to note that members had agreed via email to award £300, subject to CCGS approval.

D. Birsay Community Association – Christmas Lunch Club

Following consideration of correspondence received and circulated via email from Birsay Community Association, requesting assistance towards supplying a Christmas lunch for the members of the Lunch Club in December 2024, it was:

Resolved to note that members had agreed via email to award £500, subject to CCGS approval.

E. Harray Young Farmers – North Area Junior Speechmaking

Following consideration of correspondence received and circulated via email from Harray Young Farmers, requesting assistance for the one member of their Junior Speechmaking team who resides in the parish of Birsay to attend a North Area Junior Speechmaking competition, it was:

Resolved to note that members had agreed via email to award £50 as per policy from the General Fund.

9. Publications

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

- VAO – Newsletter – September and October 2024.
- VAO - Training and Funding Update – September and October 2024.
- ORSAS - Quarterly Newsletter – October 2024.

10. Any Other Competent Business

A. Kirkyard Maintenance – Contract 2025

Members were advised that an advert for tenders for the Grass Cutting at both the Birsay and St Magnus kirkyards would need to be advertised, following discussion it was agreed to request tenders for 2 years, and it was:

Resolved to note that the notices would go up advertising the tenders with a closing date just prior to the next meeting so that tenders could be considered.

B. Birsay Community Council Vacancy

Following the resignation of one member of Birsay Community Council, a discussion was held on advertising the vacancy, and it was:

Resolved that potential candidates would be approached with a view to holding a public meeting to elect to the vacancy in the near future.

C. Marine Services and Transportation – Birsay Palace Bus Shelter

Members discussed correspondence previously circulated from the Transportation Service Manager asking for suggestions on a suitable location for a Bus Shelter near the Palace in Birsay. A shelter had been requested by a member of the public who frequently uses the bus facilities. Discussion followed and members felt that this was something that could be considered as part of the Local Place Plan, and it was:

Resolved to note that this would be considered once a steering group had been formed, and to advise the Transportation Service Manager via the business letter.

D. Benches – Various Locations

Following consideration of quotes received for the provision of benches, it was noted that a seat was already situated at the RSPB site at Hundland, but members agreed they would like to purchase one for the Listening Wall and two for Vias Moss, and it was:

Resolved to arrange to order along with Harray and Sandwick CC to secure the quoted price.

E. Dounby Senior Citizens

Members considered correspondence from Dounby Senior Citizens, who had previously been awarded £300 for a lunch for members. They had only spent £240

so were enquiring if the remaining amount could be used towards items for their Christmas party, and it was:

Resolved to note that this would be agreeable upon evidence of receipts.

F. 20mph Public Consultation

The Community Council Liaison Officer advised members that the survey was available on the Council website relating to the proposal to change all existing 30mph areas to 20mph and, as feelings were mixed on the proposal, members and the public were encouraged to have their say, and it was:

Resolved to note that the information would be forwarded to members and posted on the Community Council Facebook page.

11. Dates of Future Meetings

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

Resolved that the next meetings of Birsay Community Council would be held on Thursdays 27 February and 22 May 2025 at 19:30 in Birsay Community Centre and via Teams.

12. Conclusion of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 21:53.