

Minute of the Meeting of Birsay Community Council held in the Birsay Community Centre and via Teams on Thursday, 19 February 2026 at 19:30

Present:

Mr R Delday, Miss K Coghill, Ms D Clouston, Mr E Harvey, Mr S Spence and Mr F Tulloch.

In Attendance:

- Councillor J Stevenson.
- Councillor O Tierney.
- Councillor D Tullock.
- Mrs J Montgomery, Empowering Communities Liaison Officer.
- 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 Mrs V Sinclair and Councillor R King.

2. Adoption of Minutes

The minute of the meeting of Birsay Community Council held on 20 November 2025 was approved, being proposed by Miss K Coghill and seconded by Ms D Clouston.

3. Matters Arising

A. Birsay Whale Bone

An update had been received from Birsay Heritage Trust which had been circulated advising members that the Whalebone subgroup was in the process of commissioning a replacement bronze monument to be erected on the original site. They had requested a letter of support to strengthen their application to the Orkney Town Fund for funding and had also enquired if Birsay Community Council would be in a position to donate to the project, and it was:

Resolved:

1. To note that a letter had been sent offering full support from Birsay Community Council.
2. That Birsay Community Council would provide support in principle as the project develops.

B. Market Green

It was reported that the facilities at the Market Green were now open and being used on a regular basis by the community. Orkney Islands Councils had asked that the community councils take the lead on the official opening ceremony and 3 May 2026 had been proposed as the opening date at the Harray and Sandwick Community Council meeting.

In response to the items raised at the previous meeting the pavement and kerbs on the Hillside Road entry to the Dounby School had been completed. Roads had approved a design solution for the standing water issue and the builders had been instructed to arrange the necessary road closure order, with works anticipated to be completed by the first week of February.

It was also reported that during the Festive break the toilet blocks had been locked for a period at both Christmas and New Year. This had been raised both on social media and also directly to the Community Council, and this matter had been raised with Orkney Islands Council as originally the Community Council had been advised that the block would only be locked at Halloween. They were advised that the closures had been publicised in The Orcadian and on social media.

The Clerk advised that Harray and Sandwick Community Council had discussed at their recent meeting the possibility of purchasing a container to be sited at the Market Green, to store CC-owned items, and it was:

Resolved:

1. To note the update.
2. That Birsay Community Council would be happy contribute 1/3 of the cost to purchase a suitable storage container.

C. Steering Group – Birsay Place Plan

It was reported that draft funding applications were in the process of being completed by the consultants which, if successful, would mean that some of the 'quick wins' from the Birsay Place Plan could be addressed. These included benches and defibrillators in various locations around the parish, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the report.

D. Visibility Concerns

The visibility concerns which had previously been raised with Orkney Islands Council had been addressed and properties contacted and asked if they would cut back the vegetation for safety reasons. At present there were no concerns, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the report.

E. Passing Place – Wilderness, Hillside Road

The condition of the road surface in the passing place at Wilderness had been raised previously via business letter. The Roads Support Team Manager had advised that there was no update available at present and given the current backlog they couldn't give a timescale for the work to be done, and it was:

Resolved to note the update provided.

F. Fencing at Quilco

A requested had been submitted via business letter to replace the fencing along the pavement from the village to the Quilco housing estate. Images had been supplied to Orkney Islands Council to identify the issue, and it was:

Resolved to note that the work had now been completed.

G. Birsay War Memorial

The Chair updated members that he was still awaiting the quote from W D Mechanical to enable the grant application to the War Memorials Trust be completed for the required repairs to the chains and posts at the War Memorial in the Birsay Cemetery. He advised that he had also contacted Michael Swanney for a quote, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the report.

H. St Magnus Kirkyard – Rabbits

Following discussion at the last meeting relating to the issue with rabbits in the St Magnus Kirkyard, a quote had been requested from W D Mechanical to adjust the gates to keep the rabbits out. Mr E Harvey advised that he had been in contact with someone with ferrets who would be keen to assist, and it was:

Resolved:

1. To ensure that the rabbits do not have myxomatosis before any further action was taken.
2. To note that the CC was yet to receive a quote for the required adjustments to the gates.

I. Birsay Heritage Trust – Old Meal Mill

The Clerk advised that the funding request from Birsay Heritage Trust for the restoration of the Old Meal Mill at Barony Mills had been retracted as they had decided not to pursue with funding at this stage, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the above.

J. Ministry Huts – Turning Area

Following discussion at the previous meeting, volunteers from the community council had agreed to fill the potholes. Aggregate had been ordered and delivered to the site and the work completed with the assistance of Dave Moar. Notes of thanks had been received from both the Transport Team and Stagecoach, and it was:

Resolved:

1. To note the information provided.
2. To note that a letter of thanks had been sent to Dave Moar.

4. Correspondence

A. Scottish and Southern Electricity Network Distribution

Correspondence had previously been circulated to members from Scottish and Southern Electricity Network Distribution about a Community Drop-in Session to provide residents with an opportunity to learn more about the proposed works to improve network capacity, security and resilience, and it was:

Resolved to note that the event had now passed.

B. Application for Variation of Premises Licence – Swannay Brewery

Correspondence had previously been circulated to members from Orkney Islands Council advising members that an application had been submitted from Swannay Brewery for a variation of premises licence, and it was:

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

C. 20mph Speed Limit

A letter had been received and circulated from Chief Executive's Service, Orkney Islands Council, giving written notice of the 20mph Speed Limit to come into operation on 8 December 2025. The introduction of the lower speed limits would improve road safety for pedestrians, cyclists, walkers and all other road users for all of the roads specified within the orders, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

D. Birsay Bus Shelter

An email had been circulated to members asking for a location for a bus shelter which Orkney Islands Council had available for use in the Birsay parish. Members were unanimous that it should be sited near the Ministry Huts. The Service Manager, Transport, had confirmed that the shelter would be located next to the Ministry Huts in a location that would not interfere with the reversing of the bus and other vehicles. This had been discussed and agreed by the landowner and those renting the sheds, and it was:

Resolved to note the correspondence and the discussion around a bus shelter.

E. Community Transport Small Grant Scheme

Correspondence had previously been circulated from Marine Services and Transportation inviting applications for the Community Transport Small Grant Scheme. The purpose of the scheme was to assist Groups and Trusts with the objective of delivering community transport services, for social and leisure purposes, to improve connectivity and reduce isolation, where or when there are no conventional public transport services available or accessible, and it was:

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

F. Service Users Representative

A request had been received from Orkney Integration Joint Board who are responsible for planning and delivering community health and social care services in Orkney. They are requesting individuals to join them on the Board to represent the view of service users, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the above.

G. Scottish and Southern Electricity Network – Storm Warning

Correspondence had been received from Scottish and Southern Electricity Network ahead of Storm Bram advising members of potential outage and how they had activated their contingency plans to deal and minimise disruption to the community, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the above.

H. SEPA – National Flood Risk Assessment – 2025 Report

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency had released their National Flood Risk Assessment for 2025 which had been circulated to members. The latest assessment of flood risks shows a sharp rise in properties at risk across the country, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the report.

I. Burial Ground Grass Cutting

A briefing note had been received and circulated to members advising the outcome of the responses received from all Community Councils in relation to the proposed reduction in Burial Ground Grass Cutting. The outcome for the Birsay burial grounds would be St Magnus Cemetery would reduce from twelve cuts per year to two cuts per year and the New Birsay Cemetery would reduce from twelve cuts to eight cuts, and it was:

Resolved:

1. That Birsay Community Council would pay for the additional four cuts in the New Cemetery and the ten cuts in the St Magnus Cemetery from the Community Council Grant Scheme.
2. To review this in 2027 when the tender would be due for renewal.

J. Thank You Letter

Members were advised that a letter of thanks had been received from Birsay Drama Group for financial assistance provided, and it was:

Resolved to note the thank you letter.

5. Consultations

A. Historic Environment Scotland – Properties and Collections Strategy

Correspondence had been received and circulated from Historic Environment Scotland asking for members to share their views on the Properties and Collections Strategy. HES were keen to collate the opinions of how individuals feel about the approach they take in protecting the historic sites and collections, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the consultation.

B. SEPA – Safeguarding Scotland’s Water Environment

Following consideration of correspondence from Scottish Environment Protection Agency launching a public consultation on Safeguarding Scotland’s Water Environment, the purpose of which was to address issues that were having a significant adverse impact on the condition of the water environment, it was:

Resolved to note that the consultation was open until 3 March 2026.

C. EMEC Limited – Fall of Warness Tidal Test Site

Correspondence had previously been circulated to members from European Marine Energy Centre Ltd advising of an application which had been submitted to the Scottish Minister to construct and operate the Fall of Warness Tidal Test site adjacent to the island of Eday, and it was:

Resolved to note that the deadline had since passed.

D. Burgar Hill Wind Farm – Replacement Turbines

Following consideration of correspondence previously circulated to members from Burgar Hill Wind Farm advising of the proposal to replace five of the wind turbines at Burgar Hill, and advising that the applicant would be hosting consultation events, it was:

Resolved to note the schedule dates.

E. Scottish Islands Federation – Digital Connectivity Resilience

Following consideration of correspondence previously circulated from Scottish Islands Federation advising members of an evidence session on digital resilience which was being held to improve broadband and mobile connectivity across Scotland, it was:

Resolved to note that the deadline had now passed.

F. SEPA – Flood Risk Management

Correspondence had been circulated from Scottish Environment Protection Agency asking members to share their experiences of local flooding issues to help inform how flood risk was managed in their communities, and it was:

Resolved to note that the deadline for completion was 22 April 2026.

6. 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 £8,380.54 as at 5 February 2026.

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 £16,148.09 as at 5 February 2026.

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 £555.51 and the balance in the additional capping limit was £780 as 5 February 2026.

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 £8,981.09 as at 5 February 2026.

7. Applications for Financial Assistance

A. John Banks – P7 Hoy Trip

Following consideration of correspondence received from John Banks requesting assistance for his son to attend the P7 Hoy trip, it was:

Resolved to award £50 from the General Fund.

B. John Banks – P6 Outdoor Education

A completed application had been received from John Banks on behalf of his son to attend the P6 Outdoor Education, and it was:

Resolved to award £25 as per policy from the General Fund.

C. Dounby Community School – Primary 7 Hoy Trip

Following consideration of an application from Dounby Community School towards the cost of four pupils from Birsay parish attending a 4-day trip to Hoy, it was:

Resolved to award £200 from the General Fund.

D. Birsay Drama Group – Northern Divisional – Blairgowrie

A completed application had been received from Birsay Drama group requesting assistance for their junior team to compete at the Northern Divisional competition in Blairgowrie, three of the cast resided in the Birsay parish, and it was:

Resolved to award £50 per child as per policy from the General Fund.

8. Publications

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

- VAO – Newsletter – December 2025 and January 2026.

- VAO - Training and Funding Update – December 2025, January and February 2026.
- ORSAS – Quarterly Newsletter – February 2026.
- NHS Orkney – Near Me Appointments.
- SSEN's Stakeholder Engagement Workshop.
- SCDA – Orkney District.

9. Any Other Competent Business

A. Bench at Broch of Birsay

At the recent meeting of the Birsay Steering Group it was discussed that a bench at the Broch of Birsay had been removed, leaving stumps which could be trip hazards. This matter had been raised with Orkney Islands Council who had confirmed that they had not removed them. The Chair advised that he had put turf over the stumps to avoid injury and would make enquiries into the whereabouts of the bench, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the discussion.

B. Official Opening Market Green – Sunday, 3 May 2026

Members were advised that the Official opening of the Market Green in Dounby had been provisionally set for Sunday, 3 May 2026. The date and plans would be finalised at the next meeting of Harray and Sandwick Community Council on 11 March 2026 which members of Birsay had been invited to attend, and it was:

Resolved that a reminder would be circulated ahead of this date.

C. Bridge Chevrons – Hillside Road, Dounby

Mr S Spence brought to the members attention that the chevrons at the end of the brigs on the Hillside Road from Dounby had been removed, and it was:

Resolved to query this matter in a business letter.

D. Slip at Point of Buquoy

A member of the public had raised with the Chair the ongoing issue with both the sand being washed away at the bottom of the slip and the underside being damaged at the Point of Buquoy during periods of bad weather, and it was:

Resolved to note that this was being discussed with the Birsay Steering Group as one of the major issues to be considered.

E. Road Flooding – A967

Mr E Harvey raised the issue of the road flooding between the Twatt Kirk and the turn off to the Birsay Antique Centre along the A967. Members felt that this was not a drainage issue but rather an issue with the road camber, and it was:

Resolved to request via business letter that this matter be investigated.

10. 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 21 May 2026 and 10 September 2026 at 19:30 in Birsay Community Centre and via Teams.

11. Conclusion of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 20:45.