

Minute of the Meeting of Birsay Community Council held in the Birsay Community Centre and via Teams on Thursday, 21 May 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 R King.
- Councillor J Stevenson.
- Councillor D Tullock.
- Mrs J McGrath, Community Council Liaison Officer (via Teams).
- Mrs H Keveren, West Mainland Link Officer/Clerk.
- Mrs B Balcombe, Community Engagement Officer, Orkney Native Wildlife Project.

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1. Apologies

Resolved to note that apologies for absence had been received from Mrs V Sinclair and Councillor O Tierney.

2. Presentation - Orkney Native Wildlife Project

The Community Engagement Officer for Land Access gave an informative update on the Orkney Wildlife Project to eradicate the Stoat population in Orkney. She explained that they were six years into the project with the aim to restore Orkney wildlife prior to stoats with a projected completion of 2027.

The project was in the 'knock down' phase in the West Mainland, which was targeting and responding to sightings, and they had introduced new methods to help achieve this. They currently had two teams of dogs with another two coming; field thermal cameras were being used which identify activity resulting in the development of different types of traps – yellow boxes which were now being distributed. Drones had also been used, again using thermal imaging.

They were in regular contact with Landowners to try and gain access to areas not previously permitted to target. Information available had detected that Orkney vole, Hen Harrier and Short Eared Owl numbers were all on the rise since the project began.

Birsay currently had 1,109 active traps and in the last year 123 stoats had been captured and 335 rats. There were 8,970 traps across Orkney and in the last 12 months 8,542 stoats had been removed.

A general discussion followed with various questions from members, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

The representative from the Orkney Native Wildlife Project left the meeting at this point.

3. Adoption of Minutes

The minute of the meeting of Birsay Community Council held on 19 February 2026 was approved, being proposed by Mr E Harvey and seconded by Mr S Spence.

4. Matters Arising

A. Birsay Whale Bone

A request had been received from the Birsay Heritage Trust (Whalebone subgroup) updating members that a project had been launched to secure funding to replace the Whalebone with a bronze replica, and an application had been submitted to Birsay Community Council for financial support with the project. Members felt that they would like additional information ahead of deciding, and it was:

Resolved to invite a representative along to the next meeting on 10 September to give a presentation.

B. Market Green

There had been a great turnout from the community to assist with the Market Green Tidy up ahead of the Official Opening of the Market Green being held on Sunday, 10 May. Despite the weather, the opening had been well attended by funders, officials and the community.

The purchase and siting of a container at the Civic Amenity Site had received no objections and Birsay Community Council agreed to purchase the container contributing 1/3 share from the Community Development Fund.

Orkney Islands Council were happy to leave the toilet facilities open over the festive period so long as the public accept and were aware that they wouldn't be cleaned during that period and had suggested that signage be put up for the short period.

It was raised that the cleaning schedule of the toilets should be done around tours using the facilities as a member raised concerns about the cleanliness, and it was:

Resolved to request via business letter that the cleaning schedule be revised in the summer months.

3. Steering Group – Birsay Place Plan

The meeting of the Birsay Steering Group which was due to be held on 21 May 2026 had been postponed as the outcome of the CCLD application had not been received. However, an email had been received at the start of the meeting confirming that the application had been successful with up to £9,000 (revenue) to Birsay Community Council and Birsay Heritage Trust for the capacity building project.

Birsay Community Council had also been awarded funding from The Orkney Fund for Specialist Capacity Support which would enable them to progress priority areas including project feasibility, project delivery, community engagement, governance, and sustainability. These priorities had previously been identified by the organisations, the wider community, and through the local place plan process, and would include areas such as community capital projects, tourism, heritage, enterprise, transport, and community facilities.

Funding had been secured from an application for the purchase of 7 benches and 3 defibrillators which had been ordered. The location of the benches had been agreed as follows:

- Marwick Head carpark
- New Graveyard.
- HMS Tern.
- Kitchener's Walk.
- Fisherman's Hut, Marwick.
- Costa Head – St Magnus Way.
- Barony Mill.

Mr S Spence and Ms K Coghill agreed to distribute the benches, with the Clerk seeking permission from landowners where required. The delivery of the

defibrillators would be chased up and the locations were agreed with permission being sought:

- Palace Shop.
- Kirbister Museum.
- Swannay Brewery.

Following the update, it was:

Resolved to ask via business letter if Orkney Islands Council would allow a defibrillator to be sited at Kirbister Museum.

D. Passing Place – Wilderness, Hillside Road

The condition of the road surface in the passing place at the above location had been raised previously via business letter. The Roads Support Team Manager had advised that there was no update available at present but it was on their list to investigate, and it was:

Resolved to note the update provided.

E. Birsay War Memorial – Chains and Posts

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 had also contacted Michael Swanney for a quote, and it was:

Resolved:

1. That the Chair would chase up W D Mechanical and Michael Swanney.
2. That the Chair would contact W R Redland and Michael Leslie to see if they would be able to assist.

F. St Magnus Kirkyard - Rabbits

Following a previous discussion 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 after the area had been secured, and it was:

Resolved to request a quote from W R Redland for the required works.

G. Missing Bench – Broch of Birsay

Members had been advised at the previous meeting that the Bench from the Broch of Birsay had been removed however had since been returned, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the above.

H. Bus Shelter – Ministry Huts

Orkney Islands Council had erected the new bus shelter at the Ministry Huts which had been well received by the general public, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

I. Bridge Chevrons – Hillside Road

The chevrons which had been removed from the Bridge on the Hillside Road had been brought to the attention of Roads and Grounds and, as they had been unaware they were missing, they will now make arrangement to replace them, and it was:

Resolved to note the report.

J. Road Flooding – A967

It had been reported at the last meeting that, during the wet weather, two areas between Twatt Kirk and the turn off to the Birsay Antique Centre had experienced excessive flooding on the road at Lower Stanger and the Quarry. The Service Manager, Roads and Grounds, had advised that this would be investigated with the design team, and that drainage investigations were ongoing. Once completed, any remedial works would be undertaken, and it was:

Resolved to note the report.

5. Correspondence

A. OIC Meet the Buyer Event

Correspondence had previously been circulated and highlighted to the wider community via Facebook about an event being hosted by Orkney Islands Council inviting locals to a 'Meet the Buyer' event to discuss the quotation opportunity to supply services to assist with planned and reactive roads maintenance during the period of 2026/2027, and it was:

Resolved to note that this event had now passed.

B. Scottish Islands Federation – Events and Consultations

Information had previously been circulated to members from Scottish Islands Federation advising of events and consultations being hosted which could be joined via Eventbrite, and it was:

Resolved to note the information.

C. Orkney Marine Planning – Stakeholder Update

Correspondence had been forwarded to members from the OIC Marine Planning team advising of the news that Orkney Islands Regional Marine Plan had formally been adopted by Scottish Government, establishing a new statutory framework for managing marine activities out to twelve nautical miles from the coast, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the correspondence.

D. Nisthill Wind Farm – Met Mast Installation

Correspondence had been received and circulated to members providing an update on the Nisthill Wind Farm proposal. Plans were underway to install a met mast at the site to collect wind data to assist with the select and procurement of wind turbines should the wind farm be consented, and it was:

Resolved to note the correspondence.

E. Royal British Legion – Best Kept War Memorial

Correspondence had been received from the Royal British Legion advising members that the competition to find the Best Kept Memorial was now open and entries were welcome from the parishes, and it was:

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

F. Marine and Transportation Services – Birsay Turning Point

Correspondence had been received from the Transportation Service advising that the 'No Parking – Buses Only' signage had been removed/stolen from the turning point at the Ministry Huts. New signs had been ordered and were now in place, and it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

G. Robin Barr – Vermin at shoreline in Birsay

Various updates had been received and circulated from Mr R Barr, a resident in the Palace, Birsay, which had been sent to the Environmental Health Department advising them of an outbreak of rats noticed on the shore at the 'gabions' which protect the graveyard of St Magnus Kirk. This had been investigated by multiple Council departments and members of Community Council felt that they had suitably addressed the matter and that individual pest control was not something they could enter into.

Mr Barr had also raised the issue with overflowing bins at the Palace, and Orkney Islands Council were giving consideration to the size of bins, and it was:

Resolved to respond to Mr Barr advising him as appropriate.

H. EMEC - Fall of Warness Tidal Test Site

Correspondence had previously been circulated from European Marine Energy Centre Limited advising members that the Scottish Government had approved an application to increase the duration of the site from 10 to 12 years, and it was:

Resolved to note the above information.

I. Scottish and Southern Electricity Network – Storm Dave

A circular had been received from Scottish and Southern Electricity Network advising members that the company was prepared for Storm Dave which was scheduled to move across much of Scotland during Easter weekend, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the above.

J. Stagecoach – Ministry Huts

A letter had been received and circulated to members on behalf of Stagecoach, requesting that Birsay Community Council arrange to fill the potholes at the Ministry Huts with the remaining aggregates. Mr D Moar had been contacted and had kindly arranged. A letter of thanks was received from Transport for arranging this, and it was:

Resolved to send a thank you to Mr D Moar for his continued support.

K. Harray and Sandwick Community Council – Place Plan

Members had received for their consideration a copy of the Harray and Sandwick Place Plan prior to submission to the planning authority. As a neighbouring parish, feedback was welcomed with the 28-day consultation period, and it was:

Resolved to note that the deadline had now passed.

L. Annual Grants

Correspondence had been circulated from Democratic Services advising members that the Community Council Annual Grants had been approved for the financial year 2026/2027 with an increase of 2% realising an allocation for Birsay Community Council of £4,177.05. The Community Council Grant Scheme capping limits for 2026/2027 would be £3,992 for the main capping limit and £796 for the additional capping limit. Following consideration, it was:

Resolved to note the information provided.

M. Heritage Network – Invite

An invite had been received and circulated from Heritage Network advising members of an event being held to highlight the work carried out by them, which involved providing advice and support to people who were rescuing and reusing historic buildings and space for their communities, and it was:

Resolved to note that the event was on 26 June 2026.

N. Thank You Letters

Members were advised that a letter of thanks had been received from John Banks, Dounby Community School and Dounby Senior Citizens for financial assistance provided, and it was:

Resolved to note the thank you letters.

6. Consultations

A. OIC Winter Service Policy

Members had been circulated from Orkney Islands Council the Winter Service Policy for 2026-2031. The plan detailed the schedule of treated roads and the route priority

along with salt spreading ratios. Consultation comments had been requested ahead of the deadline, and it was:

Resolved to note that the deadline had now passed.

B. OIC Verge Maintenance Plan 2026

Correspondence had been circulated to members requesting feedback on Orkney Islands Council's Verge Maintenance Plan for 2025-2030. The first year of the 5-year plan had now been completed and the Council requested that areas of injurious/noxious weeds or problem areas be highlighted for the safety cut list in 2026, and it was:

Resolved to note that the deadline was now passed.

C. Forest Policy Group – Shaping the Future of Scotland's Forests

A consultation had been received from the Forest Policy Group requesting members supply feedback on how Scotland's Forestry can become more diverse, community focused and ecologically resilient, and it was:

Resolved to note the deadline on 5 June 2026.

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 £6,845,73 as at 5 May 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 May 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 fully allocated and the balance in the additional capping limit was £780 as 5 May 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 May 2026.

8. Applications for Financial Assistance

A. Milestone Community Church – Bag the Bruck

An application had been received from Milestone Church for assistance for the Bag the Bruck which they planned to carry out during April at Skail beach and verges around the parish of Birsay, and it was:

Resolved to allocate the £300 available from Community Council Grant Scheme.

B. Orkney Folk Festival – Birsay Concert

A funding application had been received and previously circulated to members from Orkney Folk Festival towards the costs of hosting a concert during the festival in the Birsay Community Centre, and it was:

Resolved to award £300 from the General Fund.

C. Dounby Senior Citizens – Christmas Meal

Dounby Senior Citizens had submitted a funding application towards their Annual Christmas Meal for the group. This had previously been circulated to members, and it was:

Resolved to note that £400 had been allocated from Community Council Grant Scheme.

9. Publications

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

- VAO – Newsletter – February, March and April 2026.
- VAO - Training and Funding Update – March, April and May 2026.
- ORSAS – Quarterly Newsletter – March and May 2026.
- Community Payback Unpaid Work Scheme.
- Police Scotland Recruitment Event.
- Orkney Springboard – Local Assembly.
- SURF Awards Shared Learning Workshops.
- Scottish Water Ltd – Stakeholder Edition.
- Scottish Community Council – Wealth Building Webinar.

10. Any Other Competent Business

A. Road Conditions - A986 leaving Dounby

A request had previously been submitted that the issue with road conditions after the outside contractor CGU had been laying cables was unsatisfactory and should be

raised with the Roads team. The Roads Department had passed this onto the contractor to repair the road back to the required standard, and it was:

Resolved to note this information.

B. Birsay Energy Fund

The Chair mentioned that no payments had been received into the Energy Fund since 2023, whilst it was not a continued obligation and can be withdrawn, it was:

Resolved to write a letter to enquire.

C. Report It Portal

The Community Council Liaison Officer provided members with an insight and demonstration on the benefits of the Orkney Islands Council portal 'Report it'. She explained how it saved time to log issues ahead of meetings which could then be resolved in a timelier manner. Members of the public should be encouraged to use or contact customer service with issues, and it was:

Resolved to note the contents of the above.

D. Community Council Vacancy

Members were advised that if someone had not attended a meeting or given apologies for a period of 6 months, they are assumed to have resigned from the position. As this was pertinent to one member, they would be contacted thanking them for their contribution and a suitable replacement would be sought, and it was:

Resolved to request via business that a letter be sent.

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 10 September and 19 November 2026 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 21:28.