

Unst Community Council

Chair

Caroline Hunter
Shirva
Uyeasound
Unst
Shetland

Clerk

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Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 10th March 2025 at 6.30 pm in the Baltasound School Music Huts and by MsTeams

Present

Caroline Hunter, Chair
Gary Betney
Adam Doull
Alec Priest
Janice Priest
Ingram Thomson
Robert Thomson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio)(MsTeams)

Attending

Frances Browne, Community Involvement and Development Officer
Josie McMillan, Clerk

01/03/25 Apologies

David Cooper
John Peterson
Duncan Anderson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio)
Ryan Thomson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio)
Michael Duncan, Community Council Liaison Officer
Gordon Thomson, Unst Partnership Ltd

02/03/25 Elect Chair

Caroline agreed to be chair until the elections in November. She was proposed by Janice and seconded by Gary. The election of the Vice Chair has been carried forward to the next meeting.

Co-option of Community Councillors

Alec Priest agreed to be co-opted onto the Community Council.

03/03/25 Declaration of Interest

Janice declared an interest in 15/03/25.2 Energy Isles Update.

04/03/25 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes from the meeting held on Monday 27th January 2025 were proposed by Janice and seconded by Ingram.

05/03/25 Matters Arising from last minutes

04/01/25 NHS Shetland - Thrombolytic Drug Request

There was a discussion about the information that was given by the NHS Shetland Representatives at the last meeting. Gary had been unable to attend that meeting and had several additional questions about the

comparability of ECG machines used by Unst Health Centre, the ambulance and Coastguard Helicopter, and also the level of training needed. He will compile a list of questions which the Clerk will send to all the NHS Shetland Representatives that attended the meeting.

06/03/25 Ferries/Fixed Links

06/03/25.1 Ferries

Caroline said there are massive concerns in the community about the big reduction in capacity on the Belmont to Gutcher route with the proposed summer and future timetables. Robert explained that he is meeting with Andrew Inkster tomorrow, so he would ask him any questions brought up at this meeting. He confirmed that there are now 5 crew members on the ferries. Robert was asked if the Geira could be used more. He said that this point had been brought up already but he would ask again. Members said that the ferries aren't coping with the volume of traffic at the moment, they asked how they will cope with increased tourist traffic in the summer and with more Space Port traffic as it prepares for its first launches. SaxaVord Space Port are needing vast amounts of concrete, which is all coming in from Gutcher with mixers trucks that take up 6 car spaces. A 100 cube pour of concrete will literally half the ferry capacity for the day.

Motorhomes, caravans etc. will all have to be lashed down. At present vehicles are lashed down in the middle of the ferry, this means that they take up anywhere between 4 and 6 spaces. Artic lorries can take up 8 spaces, leaving only 2 other spaces on what is a very busy route. Members asked if it was possible to have vehicles lashed at either side of the deck. It was discussed that ferries are only taking bookings for one vehicle over 3.5 tonnes per ferry run. There have been no notifications about this to the Community Council or the public.

Businesses in Unst were hit really hard last year when there were so many disruptions to the ferry service, with many tourists not coming to Unst because of the uncertainty of travelling back to the mainland. Many tour buses choose not to come, which resulted in cancelled bookings and loss of income for tourism businesses. Businesses are very worried about the effects the reduced services will have on them. Last year when there was a week of ferry disruptions in summer a local shop's takings were down about £4,000. Which is a massive hit on small rural businesses that depend on tourist footfall in the summer months to counter the losses made during the quieter winter months. One business manager had tried to book out of Unst one day and there were 8 ferries consecutively that were showing fully booked.

Members believe that the MCA ruling should be challenged. Their decision has been "catastrophic" and is putting the whole community at risk. MCA and SIC Ferries need to look at this in an holistic way. The accident on the Bigga could have been so much worse. The vehicle involved was not a standard vehicle, it was a rotary mixer, carrying a liquid load with a high point of gravity, on a pinch point converted trailer towed by a tractor, it should have been lashed down. Members asked if this vehicle had any kind of inspection certificates or if it was covered by any Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) inspections or transport certificate. It is totally unlike any rigid wheeled trucks and big vehicles which regularly cross Bluemull Sound. Skippers in the past made the decision on lashing down vehicles and this worked well for many years. Members wanted to know what will happen at sheep sale time, when animals are taken to the sales in Lerwick or further afield. Livestock trucks can't hold animals any longer than absolutely necessary and certainly not sitting waiting for space to become available on the ferry.

Members asked if crews could be provided with battery ratchet guns and new straps to decrease strapping down time. The ferry fleet is well over its useful life, which results in frequent breakdowns and high maintenance cost. And the Ferries Department has to rely on agency staff to cover the service. There was also a discussion about the new booking system which Andrew Inkster spoke about at the Community Council meeting in September. This system would discourage users from booking multiple ferries and not using them.

Robert said that there are a limited amount of vessels and resources. If new vessels are ordered this will still be 2 or three years down the line. Robert said they were looking at two different options - a new vessel similar in size to the current spare ferry Fivla, and a larger vessel, similar in size to the Linga, which would allow the current Whalsay ferry Hendra to act as a second spare vessel. The Linga sized vessel would not be able to work on Bluemull Sound. He said that MacDuff Naval Architects were commissioned to work on specifications for the Fivla class of vessel. SIC Ferries are trying to find a balance. Robert will put all these points to Andrew Inkster tomorrow. It was agreed to organise a meeting with SIC Ferries and also invite MCA. Robert will ask about this as well. He will email an update after the meeting.

06/03/25.2 Fixed Links

Alec said that the Norwegian consultancy firm, Norconsult, has signed the contract to carry out the sonar investigations in Bluemull Sound and Yell Sound. Norconsult is a leading consultancy firm in this field and have been involved in subsea projects in Norway and in Faroe. Alec said this is a big step forward for the tunnel project. All the funds raised to pay for this survey came from businesses and individuals. No money has come from the SIC. Alec said that these surveys have to be done to build up a full picture of both Sounds. Norconsult will provide a detailed map which can then be used in future to determine where the tunnels could be built. The Council will have access to Norconsult's findings.

Frances said the SIC inter-island transport connectivity event in the Baltasound Hall on Wednesday 5th March had been well attended and that there was interesting information at the meeting. Robert said that all this information would be made available on the SIC webpage.

07/03/25 SIC North Isles Councillors Update

Robert said that he had been busy with ferry issues. He was asked what progress had been made on the the Shetland Public and School Bus Business Case. Elaine Park, SIC Transport Contracts and Operations Manager, emailed a copy of the Shetland Public and School Bus Business Case Report. She explained that the existing service contracts have been extended for 12 months to allow all the feedback received to be processed. Robert said that one suggestion was no core runs through the North Isles, instead relying on Dial-a-Ride. He believes this is not suitable and that the Dial-a-Ride service is not that much cheaper than the full bus service. Robert said that the challenge is to provide a service which meets peoples needs within the allocated budget. He said that the Impact Assessment can only be done once the changes to how the bus service is run are decided.

08/03/25 Unst Partnership Ltd (UP) Update.

Gordon sent his apologies to the meeting. He emailed the UP Report and Community Action Plan. He said that the next UP skip day is on Saturday 22nd March and this will be the last one for the present membership scheme. UP hope to start again in May/June if a sponsor can be found. The UP shop continues to trade well on Thursday and Saturday afternoons. Douglas Westwater, the Consultant from "Community Enterprise Ltd" has put together the final Draft version of the Community Action Plan (CAP), funded by the CLLD or Coastal Communities Fund. It still needs design/photos/proofreading but has been sent to UP Directors. UP will launch the plan at a public event once it is finalised. Luke Fraser is planning to be in Unst at the end of this month to carry out the Housing Needs Assessment funded through Cooke Scotland, the Sandison Trust and UP. Based on the results of these two studies, UP will then look at how best to carry out the suggestions/conclusions in the reports. Members of UP and the Community Council met recently with Angus Murray, Area manager for National Trust for Scotland and Alan Barrow, Estates manager. The properties at Roselea and Houlland are all still going through the legal process of being sold. Halligarth is to be surveyed in the near future to see what the best option for it is, with plans for developing the area around the house as a Citizen Science site along with some digital interpretation also being made. UP has submitted a quote for preservative/paint for the Viking longship, Skidbladner, to Shetland Amenity Trust, who have agreed to cover this cost, roughly £1700. A local group to look after the site is to be formed, as labour will be needed to apply the preservative. Some of the wooden kabes are

badly rotted and the decking will need to be lifted to paint the underside of the boat, which will almost certainly need to be cleaned and dried out. The property still belongs to SAT who UP hopes will continue to cover insurance, maintenance and grass-cutting costs.

09/03/25 Community Involvement Update

Frances said there were two community pop ins in February, these had been well attended with representatives from Citizens Advice and Adult Learning. Frances had organised the Transition Turriefield workshop at the school. This was fully booked with several people unable to get places on the workshop.

09/03/25.1 Community Resilience Plan

There was a lot discussion about a Resilience Plan for Unst. Frances had examples from Yell, both a Community Resilience Plan and also the Individual Household Resilience Plan. It was decided that the best way to take this forward was to organise a meeting. Frances will try to organise this before the end of March, as the first draft of the Resilience Plan has to be submitted shortly. She will invite representatives from the Hall Committees, Health Centre, Care Centre and businesses. It will take a bit of work to develop the plan but once this has been done it will be a really useful document. The template that Yell used is fairly straightforward and could be followed. Members said that a message to get across is to be prepared and be more aware of what can happen. There was a discussion about solar panels for the halls, which need no fuel or maintenance. Generators need to be started regularly. Frances will email details of the meeting to the Clerk.

10/03/25 Shetland Community Benefit Fund (SCBF)

10/03/25.1 Nomination for Director

All directors of SCBF have to stand down after three years so David has to stand down this time. It was agreed to nominate David again, who is happy to stand again. The Clerk will email SCBF.

11/03/25 Community Council Scheme Review Update

The Community Council Scheme Review has been completed. The recommended changes will be put to a meeting at the end of March for approval by the Council and if approved will come into force immediately.

12/03/25 Clerk's Job Update

There were two applications for the Clerk's job. The next stage is to organise interviews. Several members agreed to take part in the interview process. Caroline asked Josie if she would stay on until the new clerk is in place, she said she would.

13/03/25 Applications for Planning

There were no applications for planning.

14/03/25 Application for Donations

There were no applications for donations.

15/01/25 Correspondence

15/03/25.1 ASCC Meeting - 11th March 2025

No one was available to attend this meeting. The Clerk sent in apologies.

15/03/25.2 Energy Isles Update

There is a meeting of Energy Isles tonight. Adam has agreed to be the Community Council representative on the Energy Isles Committee.

15/03/25.3 NHS Engagement Advisor Communities – Healthcare Improvement Scotland

An email was received from Alison McCrossan, Engagement Advisor – Communities (North Region), Healthcare Improvement Scotland. She is the new Engagement Advisor (Community) within Healthcare Improvement Scotland. She covers the North Region which encompasses Argyll & Bute, Highland, Western Isles, Orkney, Shetland and Grampian. Ms McCrossan wants to attend a Community Council meeting. It was agreed to invite her to a future meeting.

15/03/25.4 R100 Evaluation

This was circulated to everyone. There are also posters in the shops and on Facebook.

15/03/25.5 SJS Fishing Ltd - Baltasound Pier Crane

Unst Community Council were copied into an email which SJS Fishing Ltd sent to SIC Ports and Harbours, asking about the possibility of installing a small landing crane at Baltasound Pier. Members agreed to write a letter of support. The pier at Baltasound is one of a small number of SIC owned piers that doesn't have a crane. A crane would benefit other pier users.

Tax Levy on Accommodation Providers

There has been no further update on this.

16/03/25 Community Council Finances

The Clerk explained that the budget for this financial year has been spent. She will prepare the accounts to be audited by Voluntary Action Shetland after the end of March.

17/03/25 A.O.C.B.

17/03/25.1 Da Voar Redd Up

It was agreed to sponsor groups taking part in Da Voar Redd Up again this year, which will run from the 19th to 25th April. Letters will be sent to all groups that took part last year.

17/03/25.2 Roads

There were a lot of road issues raised. It was agreed to email Neil Hutcheson, Roads, again asking when the white lines will be done in Unst. They haven't been painted for two years. There have been complaints about the lack of white lines causing problems when vehicles pass on the road and also when driving in foggy conditions. There were several complaints about trenches dug across the roads by the R100 contractors at the White Brig and Maundeville. These issues will be sent to the R100 Broadband Clerk of Works. There were also complaints discussed about the drainage problems on the road from Brookpoint to the White Brig, and the conditions of the Dale Road; the Troal Road; Crossroads at the Camp to the Holsens, Norwick and the junction to Outer Skaw from the grid. The Community Council has written about these road issues in the last few years. It was agreed to write to Neil Hutcheson, Roads and also SaxaVord Space Port, who are responsible for repairing most of the road issues listed.

17/03/25.3 Snarravoe House, Uyeasound

Someone has contacted the Clerk about the ruined house at the Westside of Uyeasound. They would like to buy the property and do it up. They have applied for proof of title with both the UK and Scottish Land Registries and established that there is no direct entry. Residents on the Westside of Uyeasound have also been trying to find out who owns the property because of a drainage issue.

18/03/25 Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is Monday 21st April 2025.

Chair: _____ Date: _____

Clerk: _____