

Skerries Community Council (SCC)

Minute of meeting held at 2.00 pm on Friday, 23rd May 2025

In Skerries Community Hall

Present:

Paul James (Chair)
Marina Anderson
Janice Hughson
Marina Tait

In attendance:

Alastair Inkster
Neil Henderson – Economic Development
Councillor Robert Thomson – joined through Teams link
Violet McQuade - Clerk (notes)

1) Apologies

Jilly Ash, Michael Duncan, Lynsey Hall and Kia James,

Paul welcomed everyone to the meeting; after a round of introductions the meeting commenced.

2) Declaration of Interest to any agenda Item

Chairperson asked for declaration of interests – there were no declarations of interest to any item on the agenda.

3) Minutes of last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 11th April 2025, were approved.
Proposed by Janice Hughson, seconded by Marina Anderson.

4) Matters Arising/Actions from last meeting

4.1 Look into getting more trees or planting

Paul has been looking into the possibility of getting of more trees to plant in Skerries.
This is ongoing.

4.2 Draft up Local Place Plan

Paul has recently attended two training sessions on drafting a Local Place Plan. Clarification is still needed on whether the Place Plan is just for the islands (land), or does it include some of the seas around the islands. This is ongoing.

4.3 Contact Burial Services

Paul has been in contact with Burial Services. They have informed him that they are looking at replacing the gate in the old kirkyard, with a galvanised gate. They will also attempt to deal with the rabbit burrows there as well. Burial Services have asked if there is anyone who has an appropriate firearms licence that would be able to help keep down on the rabbit population.

5) Economic Development Service – Roadshow

Neil thanked the Community Council for inviting him to today's meeting.
The Economic Development Service have been mainly looking at how they can help community development with grant support, and are also linked to Business Gateway, a free government service for anyone wishing to start or develop a business.

Last November they went around Shetland and set up in village halls for a day. This was a success, they went to 12 places and had about 50 enquiries. For the Islands With Small Populations, it is not as easy to administer the service, but they have been working closely with Community Support Workers, and working lately with Lynsey Hall, who suggested reaching out to the Community Council to make a presentation. Neil has information with him that he will leave in the hall, and is happy to come back and set up for a day, if that is what the community wants. Some people may want to speak on a one-to-one, confidential basis – that can also be accommodated.

Neil spoke about the Shetland Rural Retail Services Scheme, which replaces the Village Shop Scheme. Money came from the UK Government for this scheme; this is the second year that this money has been available and several shops around Shetland have applied for help through the scheme. It is a good intervention rate, 75% grant, which can be used for purposes such as renewable energy schemes, premises upgrades, new fridges, etc. Neil is aware that one of the shops in Skerries is closing/closed.

Councillor Thomson joined the meeting at this point – 2.10 pm

Paul said there have been a number of meetings about the situation with the shops. One outcome was that it was agreed to poll the whole island to find out what people want to do, and how best to meet the needs of the islanders. There will come a point when somewhere will be needed to store items and decide on staff cover. Help may be needed to look at how to set up a business cooperative, it is hoped that by autumn there will be an Options Report to put to the Community Council, and to the entire community. Neil will be able to help with the process, and there are business advisors available through Business Gateway, who would be able to provide support and advice. Other places have had similar issues. Paul asked for Neil's help and advice with identifying anything that may have been missed, and for interpreting the data accurately. This situation will affect residents, visitors, suppliers and ferry services.

Neil will liaise with Lynsey, to discuss the possibility of putting in support; he asked if there is a timeframe in mind. The surveys were to have been conducted a few months ago, but there have been so many other things happening. The Council resilience manager could also be contacted. Paul said that when he took over the SCC he wrote a document, Where do we go From Here; that basic overview could be a starting point.

Paul is scheduled to have a meeting with Shetland Islands Council (SIC) Chief Executive and the Director of Community Health and Social Care; this is one of the issues that he intends to discuss with them. Paul also runs an Issues Log, and Risk Register, there are a number of items sitting on the Issues Log that should possibly be escalated to the Risk Register.

Being able to liaise with Lynsey has been extremely helpful. The Economic Development Service is available Monday to Friday, 9.00 to 5.00, by phone, visit the website, or email. They are happy to go out to meet people and try to help with any queries. If the community feels they would like a pop-up day, they would be happy to come out to do that. Paul suggested he could send Neil a brief synopsis of everything that is happening, Neil agreed.

Action: Paul send Neil all relevant information.

6) SCC Membership

Due to Bertha's resignation there is currently a vacancy for a full-member of the Community Council. As the next elections are due to take place in November it has been suggested that until the elections the Community Council could appoint Associate Members; if there needs to be a decision made and another voting member is needed a Co-opted Member can be appointed; the stipulation that Skerries cannot have a Co-opted Member has been lifted until the November election takes place. This was agreed. Paul said that currently there are four people interested in joining the Community Council.

A form for joining the Community Council has been received from Dianne Hughson. The appointment was agreed to, proposed by Marina Anderson, seconded by Paul James.

7) Risks

No changes to the register.

8) Issues

No changes to the log.

9) Correspondence Received

All correspondence has been circulated, electronically.

10) **AOCB**

10.1 Dog fouling

There have recently been instances of dog fouling near houses in the West Isle. This has been a recurrent issue in Skerries.

It was noted that the same issue has been brought up at several other Community Council meetings. Councillor Thomson said that Billy Mycock, Antisocial Behaviour Co-ordinator, from the council has been offering advice. Some areas have been looking into getting the dispensers for disposal bags, and dog-foul bins. If there is provision of bins and bags available, then there is no excuse. But funding would be needed. Some of the ordinary waste bins in Skerries are needing to be replaced, it has been reported to the council, but nothing has happened. Paul will contact Mr Mycock to ask for advice, and in the meantime put a message on the messenger board.

Action: Paul contact Mr Mycock/put message on board

10.2 Community Fishing Development Plan

Alaister spoke about a proposal that he had been working on, setting up a Community Fishing Development Plan, for which he has had a lot of positive feedback

A discussion was held on the current situation with the fishing industry, points noted included:

- Fishing has been under threat ever since the UK joined the Common Market.
- If a Community Fishing Development Plan goes ahead, it would need a representative from each port.
- It was suggested that it could be started in Skerries, then try the other isles, to see how it progresses.
- The idea was put on the chat page; people say it is a good idea, but will take a lot of work.
- Looking at getting support from the Scottish Government, who up to now have given little support.
- It could be said that the Scottish Government are working against the fishing industry.
- 50 years ago there were five boats fishing from Skerries, keeping over 20 families, the school was open, and the community was thriving, now there is only one boat left, and the school is closed.
- Foreign boats do not seem to be policed the same way that local boats are.
- Over the decades a lack of trust has built up.
- The fishing industry is very important, for every fisherman at sea several people ashore are employed as a result.
- The SSMO in Shetland has been relatively successful, which has to do with the salmon industry, maybe this could be expanded.
- There is the Islands Act to consider as well.
- Marine Scotland don't appear to have got a National Plan in place yet and have been no help.
- Perhaps it would be better if Shetland had devolved control over its own seas.
- There is added threat due to offshore development for renewable energy.
- Shetland has no control over anything outwith the 12-mile limit.
- More threats to the fishing industry are coming from renewable energy.
- The salmon industry is busy at the moment encroaching on the fishing grounds.
- The Scottish Government's aim to rejoin the EU is another threat, this will ruin the industry more.

A classic example of what can happen is the recent case of what took place with the *Genesis II*. Recently the *Genesis II* was fishing off Muckle Flugga for nine days; they broke down and one of the other boats towed it to Lerwick. The *Genesis II* left their nets on the seabed - 45 miles of net lay on the seabed for 17 days, until another boat went and retrieved them. Legally nets should not have been left unattended on the seabed for any longer than three days, a massive amount of fish would have been destroyed in that 17 days. The Scottish Government were contacted, their response was that no further action will be taken, even though what happened was illegal. This boat is not going to lose the destroyed fish from their quota, which would have been two to three-weeks good fishing for a local boat.

10.3 Shetland Visitor – incorrect information

It was pointed out the ferry timetable for Skerries is still wrong in the Shetland Visitor – it states that the ferry runs to Lerwick on Wednesdays and that there are no ferries on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This has been raised before, and the correct information was sent to the publishers. Wrong information is worse than no information.

Action: Paul to contact the publishers

10.4 Salmon Farm debris

The salmon farm debris was discussed at the last meeting. Since then, the Political Leader of Shetland Islands Council has been made aware of the situation, and supporting finding a solution. Councillor Thomson is keeping in touch with the SIC Coastal Zone Manager and has also been giving the new Harbourmaster an update regarding the abandoned debris, which comes under the harbour area.

10.5 Meeting / Wi-Fi in Waiting Room

A discussion was held on holding meetings in the waiting room instead of the hall, and whether to try to get Wi-Fi in the waiting room. It was agreed that, as visitors use the waiting room most Fridays, holding a SCC meeting in there on Friday afternoon would not be practicable.

10.6 Healthcare/resilience issues

Paul informed members that a date has been set for his meeting with the Chief Executive, SIC, and the Director of Community Health and Social Care. The meeting is scheduled to take place on the 3rd June. He intends to raise the community's concerns about healthcare provision, fire and rescue and community resilience. If there is time he will speak about the fishing and the situation with the shops and will report back to the community after the meeting has taken place. People should let Paul know by the 2nd June if there is anything that anyone wants to be brought up at the meeting,

11) **Date of the next meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled to be held at 2.00 pm on Friday, 4th July 2025.

The meeting concluded at 3.35 pm

Actions:

Paul:

- Send Neil all the relevant information re shops, etc (Item 5)
- Contact Mr Mycock/put message on board – re dog fouling
- Contact Shetland Visitor publishers, re wrong information on ferry timetable

Chair Signature

Signed.....