

# Association of Shetland Community Councils (ASCC)

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**Minute of the ASCC meeting held on  
Tuesday 11 March 2025, 6.00 pm,  
Town Hall Chamber, Lerwick and online using Microsoft Teams**

**Present**

Ian Walterson	Association of Shetland Community Councils (Chair)
Shayne MacLeod	Association of Shetland Community Councils (Vice Chair)
Lindsay Tulloch	Bressay Community Council
Niall O' Rourke	Burra & Trondra Community Council
Alastair Cooper	Delting Community Council
Helen Moncrieff	Dunrossness Community Council
Irvine Burgess	Dunrossness Community Council
Lucy Cummings	Fetlar Community Council
Ewen McPherson	Gulberwick, Quarff & Cunningsburgh Community Council
Jim Anderson	Lerwick Community Council
Willie Simpson	Nesting and Lunnasting Community Council
David Brown	Northmaven Community Council
John Priest	Sandsting & Aithsting Community Council
Bryan Peterson	Sandwick Community Council
Lawson Bisset	Scalloway Community Council
Mark Burgess	Scalloway Community Council
Andrew Archer	Tingwall, Whiteness & Weisdale Community Council
Annette Jamieson	Yell Community Council
Laurence Odie	Yell Community Council

**Officers in Attendance**

Vaila Simpson	Executive Manager – Community Planning & Development, SIC
Michael Duncan	Community Council Liaison Officer – Community Planning & Development, SIC
Jan Riise	Executive Manager – Governance & Law, SIC
Liam Drosso	Outdoor Access Officer – Planning, SIC
Frances Browne	Community Involvement & Development Officer – North Isles, SIC
Shannon Boston	OPEN Project, Peer Research Development Worker
Rhiannan Burns	OPEN Project, Peer Researcher

**Officers Observing**

Joanne Fraser (note taker)	Community Involvement & Development Officer - Lerwick & Bressay, SIC
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## **1. Introductions**

Ian Walterson welcomed all present

## **2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Unst Community Council and Whalsay Community Council.

Apologies were also received from Ana Arnett, Frances Browne, Roselyn Fraser and Lynsey Hall all from Shetland Islands Council.

Bryan Peterson advised he would have to leave Meeting early.

## **3. Declarations of Interest**

Shayne McLeod – Open Project because he is a peer mentor for the organisation.

## **4. Professor Jim Wilson – Viking Genes Study updates**

Michael Duncan confirmed that Professor Wilson was unable to attend meeting due to a private matter but advised that Professor Wilson is scheduled to attend the June meeting of the ASCC to present findings on the Viking Genes study.

It was agreed to bring forward the OPEN project research on the agenda to allow the presenters to leave the meeting early in order to catch ferry connection.

## **6. OPEN Project – Research on Alcohol and other drug use in Shetland**

Shannon Boston and Rhiannan Burns from the OPEN Project delivered a presentation about the Alcohol and other Drug Peer group research project. This project was carried out by OPEN Project, in partnership with the Shetland Alcohol and Drug Partnership.

The presentation covered a range of aspects about the research including the process carried out, the methods used to gather data and the findings from the research. The focus of the research was not purely on what alcohol and drugs are being used by young people, but why alcohol and drugs are being used and what the impacts are on young people. The research also sought view from young people of using and being around drugs and alcohol.

The presentation put forward ideas from young people about how to improve and change Shetland's alcohol and drug culture. A "Live action" working group has been formed from this research, which has 11 members, and the group is working to action ideas for change, using an impact matrix.

Shannon Boston closed the presentation by raising awareness of community conversations that are run by the OPEN Project and asked Community Councils to keep eye out for next rounds of community conversations. Following the presentation, ASCC members were invited to ask questions.

Ian Walterson asked if there were any concerns around number of vapes available in Shetland?

Shannon Boston responded that this topic was not raised during the research but that may be because young people were not specifically asked what substances they use; young people were only asked for reasons why they use alcohol or drugs. OPEN Project are aware issues with vaping, but it is just not something that has been researched during this project.

Ian Walterson further asked do OPEN Project think there are a lack of recreational activities & facilities for young people and is this something private sector should/could support with?

Shannon Boston responded that funding and capacity are both issues for recreational opportunities and the information coming from young people is that they wish there was more intergenerational activities happening. It was also noted if “red tape” could be removed could this help provide more recreational activities and events for young people.

Bryan Peterson asked do OPEN Project think the nostalgia of previous generation’s alcohol consumption culture prevents Shetland moving away from this now?

Shannon Boston responded that she could not speak on behalf of young people to this question as this has not been researched but possibly yes but it is not to take away from what was, it is just to shift the culture to have more opportunities and aspirations. Some aspects of the culture are already seeing change, driven by the young people themselves for example Up Helly Aa and Christmas and older people following the example young people are setting.

Ewan McPherson asked what age group of young people were involved in the research, and was there a divide between rural and urban?

Shannon Boston responded the age range consulted was 14-25 years and one of the surveys completed reached a wide range of rural and urban young people. In the main, the survey was responded to by young people located in central Shetland.

Lindsey Tulloch asked how could Community Councils help reduce stigma?

Rhiannan Burns responded by suggesting using less stigmatising language within the community and not making sweeping judgements about individuals. Shannon Boston added that compassion was very important and not making assumptions.

Alastair Cooper queried if the OPEN Project was a local organisation or national. Alastair Cooper added that boredom is prevalent within the younger community but how do you put on an event where regulations are not impinging on community who it is for?

Shannon Boston responded that the OPEN Project is a local organisation having been active for 11 years, initially operating as part of Voluntary Action Shetland. OPEN became an independent charity 2 years ago. Shannon Boston advised that the OPEN Project previously held an under 16s event and that started a few other areas doing similar events. Transport to travel to and from events has to be considered for providing community events, and transport is a big issue for many young people. However there are no answers around how to remove ‘red tape’ from running such events.

Jim Anderson suggested that young people should make events happen by asking and telling older people what they want and be more proactive? Jim Anderson suggested that young people could hire transport where no public transport is available. Shannon Boston agreed that being proactive is a good thing.

Annette Jamieson thanked the OPEN Project for its presentation. Annette Jamieson added that volunteer fatigue is prevalent amongst community halls and other voluntary organisations so asked is this an opportunity to get young people more involved in these organisation, including Community Councils?

Shannon Boston responded that organisations with vacancies and opportunities could be sent to the OPEN Project and they could share them with young people. OPEN Project is currently training young people to run a board, learn committee skills, so there could be mutual benefits and opportunities going forward.

Lawson Bisset thanked the OPEN Project for sharing its research. Lawson Bisset asked how do young people currently afford/fund alcohol and drugs?

Shannon Boston responded that this was not a question that had been asked by OPEN as it was not part of the information being researched. Lawson Bisset queried if a follow up survey was needed to identify how this is funded? Ian Walterson pointed out that if these questions were asked the young people would most likely not speak so freely.

Laurence Odie advised that Burravoe Public Hall put on a Halloween function yearly and it is very well attended and popular amongst young people. This function needs between 15-18 volunteer supervisors to run it safely.

Irvine Burgess added that his local community hall used to run 2 or 3 events of this nature per year, however the hall found it increasingly difficult to sustain as less and less volunteers were willing to give up time/commitment to operate events such as this.

Ian Walterson asked Shannon Boston that anyone who was interested in joining Community Councils should be put in contact with the ASCC.

Bryan Peterson left the meeting.

Ian Walterson thanked Shannon Boston and Rhiannan Burns for their time and both left the meeting.

## **5. Core Paths Plan Review**

Liam Drosso from the Council's Planning Service delivered a presentation on the Core Path Plan review including background to Core Path Plan.

Shetland's Core Path Plan was originally agreed by Scottish Ministers in 2010 and there are over 400 km of path routes throughout Shetland. There are no set physical standards for core paths, but there is a list of criteria to be considered before a core path can be designed as a route, but does not necessarily need to a path itself.

Core paths are a means of crossing land to facilitate, promote and manage access rights under the Land Reform Act. Shetland also has a plan of access routes which are separate to Core Path Plan – often to give access to point of interest, these are less formal and there is no consultation process. Some of these routes may be considered for updating to a core path in the Review.

The Core Path Plan Review been instigated in line with Land Reform Act requirements. The aim of the Review is to ensure that the Core Path Plan continues to provide basic framework. This Review may also look to amend some routes, add some routes and/or remove routes from current plan.

The Local Access forum is a requirement of the Council via Land Reform Act. At present there are approximately 25 individuals on the forum from a range of bodies who have an interest in outdoor access. The Local Access forum will play a key role in this Review, starting with approving a revised criteria.

This Review will undertake three phases;

- first phase - informal consultation with stakeholders;
- second phase - access forum to sign off draft plan
- third phase - 12 week public consultation in line with Land Reform Act section 20.

Liam Drosso advised that the draft plan should be ready for consultation by early 2026. It was also pointed out that no new paths will be constructed, with the focus instead on already established/existing routes.

Liam Drosso asked Community Councils to help identify any mapping errors in the Plan. Any new routes in your area that could potentially be added. Also it would be helpful to know if any local routes are being used differently. Liam Drosso confirmed that feedback to be sent to him by 11th May 2025. Following the presentation, ASCC members were invited to ask questions.

Ian Walterson asked would each Community Council be notified of the Review and plans be sent to them to look at?

Liam Drosso agreed this would be done and any information fed back from Community Councils would be most welcome.

Andrew Archer queried if Community Councils could share this out to the wider public for comment?

Liam Drosso advised that the public would be fully consulted in Phase 3. The current stage is only involving stakeholder and organisation engagement.

Niall O'Rourke queried who is responsible for maintenance of core paths?

Liam Drosso advised the Core Path Plan and Access Route Plan has a budget to maintain infrastructure on core paths but there is no obligation on Council, the public or land owners to maintain the physical path itself. This situation may change if a core path was to become blocked and unusable, as the Council has a duty to ensure paths are passible. If a core path becomes a health and safety issue, there are things that can be done. Community groups are encouraged to seek funding to improve any particular local situations and Liam Drosso would be keen to work with any community groups looking to do this.

Lawson Bisset questioned will this review run the risk of raising the expectation of the general public that new routes are to be added or that core paths will be maintained. How will this be managed?

Liam Drosso advised the Council is very aware of this and all information provided states that no new paths are to be created. Better promotion of what currently exists is what this Review is principally about.

Alistair Cooper highlighted the Sparl Road in Voe, which links Lower Voe to central Voe. This route has been an issue for decades and nothing has happened. As a result people may not be willing to engage in the Review as they will feel nothing has been done in past.

Liam Drosso advised that they can support community groups with funding applications and improving community areas. It was also suggested Community Councils submit information on paths that have issues.

**7. Note of the previous meeting held on 6 November 2024 for approval.**

Proposed by Alistair Cooper

Seconded by Andrew Archer

**8. Matters arising from previous minute not on the agenda**

Mothballing of rural schools – Michael Duncan confirmed that correspondence has been received from the Council's Childrens Services Department. This correspondence to be circulated to all Community Councils.

Action: Michael Duncan to forward correspondence to Community Councils

Response from SCBF – Michael Duncan confirmed that correspondence has been received from Shetland Community Benefit Fund. This correspondence to be circulated to all Community Councils.

Lawson Bisset noted that correspondence arriving on the day of an ASCC meeting was disappointing and means it will be another ASCC meeting cycle before it can be discussed.

Action: Michael Duncan to forward correspondence to Community Councils

Local Place Plans - Michael Duncan passed on an update from Bryan Peterson who was looking into possibility of funding a paid resource that could be made available to all Community Councils who are working on Local Place Plans. Bryan Peterson had advised that a Shetland wide resource was unlikely to work. Instead, the 3 South Mainland Community Councils have decided to come together to look at options for this area.

Bryan Peterson also encouraged Community Councils to utilise the training sessions and resources offered from Planning Aid Scotland. Bryan Peterson noted that the process of applying for funding and then employing/contracting a Project Worker requires a lot of time and effort to raise funds required to put a paid resource in place, and suggested that it may be more time efficient for Community Councils to forget about this route and carry out Local Place Plan tasks themselves.

Ian Walterson highlighted that concerns were raised previously about how much time and resource is involved with developing a Local Place Plans and that volunteers are not forthcoming to help carry out the tasks involved. It was acknowledged that there is value in having a Local Place Plan in place.

Lawson Bisset agreed the time and resource to undertake a Local Place Plan is considerable and asked could ASCC could contact all Community Councils to see what position they are in for carrying out a Local Place Plan? This feedback may give an indication of what additional support or assistance is needed? Ian Walterson agreed this was a good idea and sought the view of other ASCC members.

Jim Anderson highlighted that David Wood from Planning Aid Scotland is available to support groups undertaking Local Place Plans.

Mark Burgess advised the first task to carry out is identifying a person or persons to take the lead to ask the local community what they want to see from a Local Place Plan. This can take time and resources, but offered to share Scalloway Community Council's experience and Mark Burgess added he was happy to speak with Community Councils with questions. Mark Burgess added that it was also possible to attend existing local events such as Sunday teas, where there is plenty of footfall attending, and use these events as an opportunity to survey participants as part of the consultation process.

Planning Aid Scotland training states that no Local Place Plans should overlap in terms of geographic area and if two plans do overlap then this must be addressed before Local Place Plans can be agreed or accepted by the Council.

John Priest advised that Sandsting and Aithsting Community Council does not have capacity to carry out a Local Place Plan at this stage due to members all being very active in their community already. Ian Walterson pointed out that it is not compulsory for Community Councils to undertake a Local Place Plan.

Ewan Mcpherson asked if there was merit in reviewing previous information and local plans as this information should only need updating. This approach may prove less labour intensive as starting from beginning again. Ian Walterson agreed this may be best way for some to carry this out.

Lawson Bisset reiterated the request to contact all Community Councils to find out where all are placed with regards undertaking a Local Place Plan. Andrew Archer agreed with this suggestion and supported the point raised by John Priest regarding volunteer resource. Information gained by asking all Community Councils should identify gaps and this could be used to potentially request further support from Shetland Islands Council.

Lucy Cumming stated that Peter Mogridge from the Council's Planning Service is providing very helpful support but as highlighted similar concerns about the impact of time required by volunteers.

Lindsay Tulloch added that the resources being provided by the Council are good but stated that the capacity of volunteers is one of the main barriers to moving forward.

Jim Anderson highlighted that the timeframe for Local Place Plans to be submitted clashes with Community Council elections towards the end of 2025 and asked if the Council is aware of this and could the Council potentially extend deadlines to allow more time to carry out Local Place Plans.

Ian Walterson suggested that the ASCC should contact Peter Mogridge to inform him of the concerns and find out what could be done to assist.

Action:

Michael Duncan to contact all Community Councils to establish their position with regards undertaking a Local Place Plan and to ask if deadlines are a pressing factor.

Action:

ASCC to contact Peter Mogridge to inform him of Community Council concerns and see if more time and support was possible.

## **9. Community Council Scheme Review – update**

Michael Duncan advised that the Community Council Scheme Review Phase 3 consultation responses have been collated, analysed and reviewed. The Project Board has met and agreed a number of recommendations. The next stage is a report setting out these recommendations is to be presented to a Special Council meeting on 25th March 2025, which if agreed will become effective immediately.

Michael Duncan added there is a further recommendation in the report which is seeking to temporarily relax the co-option limit for Community Councils until the 2025 Community Council Election period. A number of Community Councils have requested the co-option limited be eased to help them with recruiting to vacant seats.

Michael Duncan noted that the Community Council elections were due to take place later in the year. In advance of the elections, it is proposed that a period of promotion take place to help raise awareness of the elections and assist with recruitment.

Michael Duncan asked if any Community Council member was willing to participate in a short life working group to pull together ideas for an Election awareness raising campaign. Michael Duncan confirmed that the role was not onerous, as Community Planning & Development staff would carry out the work. However it was important that Community Councils provided input into the process, if this was agreed by the ASCC. All agreed and Michael Duncan to put a request directly to Community Councils seeking volunteers for the working group. An update on the Community Council Election awareness raising campaign will be brought back to the ASCC meeting in June.

Alistair Cooper asked will Community Council grant aid budgets be increased for next financial year 2025/26. Alastair Cooper advised that Delting Community Council may not be able to offer financial assistance towards adopted roads as they do not have the funds available, and noted that the next step may have to be to reduce clerk hours.

Michael Duncan responded the proposal within the report is to merge the two existing Community Council grant schemes funds, which the vast majority of Community Councils agreed made sense during the Scheme Review consultation process. Michael Duncan added that the new Scheme still has to be agreed at the Special Council but confirmed the Council has approved a cash standstill budget for 2025/26 for the Community Council grant budgets. All Council departments are having budgets closely monitored. Michael Duncan added under the recommended new grant scheme, Community councils should not end up with less budgets than what they currently receive from the Council for its core funding and Community Development Fund distribution fund.

John Priest highlighted that over the years clerk's wages have increased in line with the Council salary scales, but this has eroded Community Council funding levels which have remained static.

## **10. Items for future meetings**

### Inter-island ferries

Lucy Cumming proposed discussing the situation with Inter-Island ferries. Fetlar Community Council are concerned of a potential crisis that is looming in the coming summer months. Frances Browne supported this suggestion on behalf of Unst Community Council, and Laurence Odie agreed from Yell Community Council and also highlighted further ferry related issues.

### Transport connection to mainland

Lindsay Tulloch highlighted ferry and transport connections between Shetland and the Scottish mainland is also a concern, and asked if this could be discussed.

### Roads disruptions

Alistair Cooper raised the effect that disruption will have on the roads heading north, whilst work is being carried out on upgrading the energy supply network. Alastair Cooper asked could real time information be available when the work and disruptions get underway.

Ian Walterson commented that these suggested topics could merit arranging a special ASCC meeting to discuss the ongoing concerns around both internal and external transport links.

John Priest enquired if there could be a community representative on the Transport forum. Michael Duncan advised there is opportunity for someone to attend the External Transport Forum which meets quarterly.

Mark Burgess asked whether Area Transport Forums could this be reintroduced.

**11. Date of Next Meeting**

10 June 2025  
9 September 2025

Meeting closed at 8.05pm