

Sandness & Walls Community Council

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Draft minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Sandness and Walls Community Council (SWCC) held at Walls Hall on Tuesday 1st September 2026 at 7:00pm

Present: Members - Sorley Johnston, Angie Nichols, Haydn Robertson, Jane Haswell (online), David Sinclair (online), Andy Holt (online), Jane Puckey (online), Robert Smith (online), Jonathan Laing (online)
Cllr Liz Peterson
Clerk - Gill Nadin
Michael Duncan – SIC External Funding Officer / Community Council Liaison Officer
Neil Hutcheson – SIC Executive Manager – Roads Service

Apologies: None

1. Chair's welcome

Sorley Johnston chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone present.

2. Declaration of interest – none declared.

3. Police report - No report received.

4. Previous minutes and actions

One correction to the minutes was noted – 17.3 should read 'The single sheet agenda can go on the Community noticeboard' (not Hall noticeboard). With this amendment, adoption of minutes from 4th August 2026 was proposed by J Puckey and seconded by A Holt.

The Clerk confirmed that all actions had been completed, except:
Re. 6.2 of 6/26 – still to reply to Sandwick CC re. funding queries

Action: Clerk will reply to Sandwick CC after funding proposals finalised.

Re 6.2 of 8/26 – Island Communities Place Programme posters received, but still to be distributed for display

Action: Clerk to arrange for poster display

Re. 7.1 of 8/26 – Bank Closure issues- letter to MSP drafted, but not finalised

Action: Clerk to finalise letter and send

5. Matters arising not on agenda

5.1 *Re. 14 of 6/26* - Active Travel update

Robina Barton has advised that the final report should now be available before the end of this month.

5.2 *Re 8 of 8/26* – Missing passing place signs

A list of signs was compiled by S Johnston (14 total) and reported online by The Clerk.

5.3 *Re 17.2 of 8/26* - Internet at Papa Stour school

A Holt contacted the person Cllr Peterson suggested to be told that the service previously provided had been a trial which had now expired. It was agreed that internet should continue to be available at the school, as it is required for potential meetings, as well as SIC employees (including A Holt), when in Papa Stour. Cllr Peterson advised that she would make some further enquiries.

5.4 *Re 17.4 of 8/26* – Gruting Hall, for potential document display and future meetings

The Clerk had spoken with the treasurer (Mary Johnston). SWCC meetings used to be held in the Hall, but this stopped as there are no IT facilities, no WiFi, and no mobile phone signal in the Hall to allow hybrid meetings. They do not have a display board either. Members discussed the possibility of supporting Gruting Hall if they wish to install such facilities and it was suggested to invite them to a future SWCC meeting to discuss further.

Action: Clerk to contact Gruting Hall to invite to a future meeting

6. Roads

6.1 West Burrafirth Junction to Walls road improvements

N Hutcheson advised that the outline business case was presented to the Transport Committee and the decision was taken not to proceed.

As the full Named Capital Scheme will not now go ahead, the Roads Department fallback position is to make some improvements within existing budgets, particularly to the Murrister bend and the Murrister straight. The Capital Reconstruction budget is already allocated for the next 3 years for the Cullivoe and Levenwick roads, but after that could be directed to the Westside main road. Design and specification will be according to guidance for any improved sections. It will be planned adjacent to the existing road to assist in keeping costs down by avoiding a full Environmental Impact Assessment and BT cabling. The initial design work and conversations with landowners will now proceed.

The section from the Staneypond bend to Sandness junction would be more difficult to do in sections, needs to be a named Capital Scheme, and hence an approved business case. It requires rock to be taken from the corner to fill in the gap, and the most cost-effective way to do this is within a single project. N Hutcheson also explained that an assessment of the state of the Brig is now planned as part of the fallback plan, as it is overtopped at some high tides and carries considerably more traffic than it was ever designed for.

As well as the Brig survey and the planned improvements above, N Hutcheson agreed to look at the following safety issues on the main road:

- Improvements to the change from double to single track at the Murrister bend. Members agreed that this was a regularly highlighted safety concern and was difficult to navigate, even for those who know the road.
- Measures to encourage speed reduction to 30mph at the entrance to Walls and potential extension of the 30mph zone. Thorough discussion highlighted safety issues, including the reduction from 60 to 30 mph as this is the busiest section of the village road, with Hall and Kirk access, and associated parking. Discussion on road markings concluded with Neil suggesting a change of colour of tarmac (as in Bixter) and reinstating the second 30mph sign. A request was made for a full safety survey of this section of road.
- Use of 'smiley faces' to encourage speed reduction in Walls, and it was agreed that Walls be put on the waiting list for these.
- Consideration of a 20mph zone in Walls when the current village pilot projects are concluded and Shetland-wide decision is made.

Cllr Peterson raised concerns that the proper decision-making process does not appear to have been followed when the decision was taken not to proceed with the outline business case for the Capital Scheme. Her understanding was that the SIC should follow the Gateway Process for all business cases and that the Asset Investment Group (AIG) has two options; they must either reject the business case for lack of information or recommend that it goes forward to the next stage. The AIG recommendation was that the business case be paused – an apparent deviation from the process – and this recommendation was then agreed by the SIC elected members. It is disappointing and frustrating that so much work was put into the original business case in 2012, with more comprehensive information provided this time around and it is unclear how, when or if this 'paused' process can now move forward. The full road upgrade is seen as vital infrastructure for the area, and it was agreed that the SWCC will continue to push for it.

Cllr Peterson plans to write to the Chief Executive to seek an explanation of the process followed. It was agreed that the SWCC should access the accurate report and wording of the meeting decision in the first instance. The minutes of the AIG meeting will be obtained by the SWCC, before deciding on how it should proceed.

Action: Cllr Peterson will forward the minutes from the AIG meeting.

6.2 Roads Winter Planning

N Hutcheson explained the schedule of gritting for a 'standard' frosty morning in January 2026 in the Sandness and Walls area, with GPS data and a map of the road prioritisation. From a 6:24am start at Murrister, priority 1 roads (Murrister to Walls, back to Brig O Walls and into Sandness) were complete by 6:54am. Priority 2 roads (Dale of Walls through Mid Walls into the village, out to Brunatwatt, the pier, Whitesness and Burrastow) were then complete by 7:56am. If there is ice or snow, then the side roads (priority 3) are done at this stage, by going back to Sandness via Dale and Mid Walls.

Members were concerned that the snow clearance in the past couple of years did not appear to be as effective as previously, but N Hutcheson explained that the

conditions had been particularly severe, following several winters with relatively little snow. Experienced operators had reported the worst conditions they had seen in over 30 years, and the Roads Teams struggled to keep priority 1 roads open at times due to the drifting snow. During snowfalls he confirmed that the ploughs are out all day but may not get priority 3 roads cleared (or even priority 2) if they need to focus on the priority 1 roads. The situation at the Bixter cemetery in January 2026 was highlighted as an example, with just one lane cleared and the plough struggling to keep that open.

Use of contractors (with tractors, JCBs, loading shovels, etc) for snow clearance was discussed and N Hutcheson confirmed that the Transport Foreman has the authority to call on contractors from an approved list, as soon as the conditions are deemed to require it. If there is a considerable snow build up, loading shovels, etc. must be bought in, as ploughs cannot push snow into an existing snowbank, so it must be lifted over the drift for effective clearance – all methods are used as required. The quality of road clearance was raised, with a layer of hard packed snow sometimes being left. N Hutcheson explained that as more folk have 4x4 vehicles and can get about in the snow, Roads Teams are finding the roads are then covered in more hard-packed snow than previously. This cannot be ploughed and the shovels need to be brought in to clear it.

The issue of passing places not being cleared was raised. This makes it difficult for anything other than a 4x4 to get through. N Hutcheson explained that on the plough's first pass through, they need to go as quickly as possible, so passing places would not be cleared until the second run if conditions then allow.

The SIC continues to issue communications to the public about winter driving preparedness, encouraging folk to check vehicles and tyres, etc. Schools regularly utilise information from the Roads Teams to assess their response to winter weather and any decisions on closures.

The possibility of night-time snow clearance was raised, but N Hutcheson explained that the Roads Teams and contractors were working long days (sometimes out from before 6am to well after 10pm) in very difficult circumstances, when the weather is at its worst. UK driver regulations must be complied with and although there is an exemption for snow (not for ice or frost), driver welfare must be a priority too.

Members appreciated the opportunity to discuss the challenges faced by the whole community during wintry weather and the work of the Roads Department in managing the issues raised. They reiterated their thanks to the gritting and ploughing teams out on the road. Neil brought a copy of local clearing plan & this will be displayed in the minutes folders etc.

Action: Clerk to ensure local clearing plans are in minutes folders

6.3 Horse signs

Loose horse signs had been requested by a member of the public in 2025 and again by SWCC via email in April 2026. Ridden horse signs were also requested by the SWCC in April. N Hutcheson agreed to check on the progress of both.

Draft Minutes of the Sept 2026 Meeting of the Sandness & Walls Community Council subject to approval at the next meeting

6.4 Blind crest signs

These had been requested by SWCC via the online reporting mechanism in June 2026. N Hutcheson again agreed to check on progress.

Action: The Clerk will continue to log road issues using online procedure.

6.5 Norse Heritage Road Signs

SWCC had received an email from Paul Moar about Norse Heritage Road signs. The email suggested that Community Councils around Shetland had arranged to get them installed as the 'Welcome to' signs for their communities. However N Hutcheson confirmed that such signs could be requested from the Roads Department as a 'Village Gateway' sign.

Action: Future SWCC meeting will consider these sign options further.

6.6 Driving safely in Shetland – information for visitors

It was asked if information for visitors was being promoted, eg. correct side of the road, single track road etiquette, etc. N Hutcheson advised that wristbands, leaflets and windscreen stickers promoting driving on the left, have been well used by the car hire companies. Northlink has posters reminding drivers too. He advised that the LPA have a campaign on passing place etiquette for cyclists from the cruise ships. He agreed to consider producing a general leaflet promoting safe driving in Shetland which could then be distributed around the Islands. It was asked if these promotional materials could be sent to the SWCC for distribution locally.

On behalf of the SWCC, S Johnston then thanked Neil Hutcheson for attending the meeting and asked him to thank the whole Roads Department for their work throughout the year. It was also noted that the SWCC appreciated that Neil had attended in person and had been responsive to local knowledge and the raising of concerns.

N Hutcheson left the meeting at 8:03pm.

Action: The Clerk will summarise agreements from tonight's meeting and send to Neil Hutcheson as a means of record.

7. Correspondence not on agenda – none

8. Finance report

The finance report was circulated before the meeting. No queries were raised, and members approved the report.

9. Planning and licencing

9.1 Walls Bakery - Planning Application Ref. 2025/173/PPF

The applicants submitted a notification for review to the Planning Department, in relation to the refusal of planning permission – this was forwarded to SWCC members on 21st August. Any further representations by the SWCC were required to be made by 28th August. The Chair notified the planning officer that the SWCC's previous representation was still applicable and should be considered when determining the review.

10. Councillor's report

Some houses on New Road in Walls are on the Strategic Housing Investment Programme to be refurbished, and Cllr Peterson is in contact with a constituent to provide support in this process.

11. Funding applications and grants

11.1 Da Voar Redd Up grant

The new draft application form was approved. Shetland Amenity Trust has provided details of the groups completing this year's Redd Up survey. Three groups have indicated that they would like to apply for SWCC funding and will be sent the application form. A further three groups did not request SWCC funding; they may not have realised they could nominate a local organisation to receive the grant. The Redd Up grant will therefore be offered to all six groups where appropriate contact details are available. For 2027, the grant will be promoted more clearly so that everyone taking part in the Redd Up is aware of the available funding options.

Action: Clerk to send grant application form to groups completing the Redd Up survey.

11.2 War Memorials – update

It has been confirmed that wreaths for Remembrance Sunday are required for 6 memorials around the area.

Action: Clerk to order and distribute wreaths in good time for Remembrance Sunday.

Criminal Justice have advised that they are able to paint the War Memorial in Walls between 24th September and 6th November, if the weather is suitable. The SWCC agreed to supply paint, paint brushes, brush cleaner, etc.

Action: Clerk to liaise with Criminal Justice to ensure supplies available when required.

11.3 SCBF application Tier 2 - CGS0081 - Walls Marina Users Association (WMUA)

Further information was received from WMUA, which indicated they had identified appropriate funding opportunities for phase 2 of the project and the offer of £3000 funding towards the project was therefore approved.

11.4 SCBF funding update

The SCBF funding year is 1st September to 31st August each year. The SCBF update shows that SWCC has a balance of £3720.95 to be carried forward to 2026-27. Allocation for 2026-27 is £6757.00, with a CPI uplift due, meaning the total funding available for the next 12 months is £10,477.95 as of 1st September 2026.

SCBF have provided an update on the funding approved by the SWCC in 2025-26. This is available in poster format for promotion and has already been posted on Facebook. It was agreed that a similar poster should be developed for the SWCC (non-SCBF) grants that have been awarded in 2025-26.

Action: SCBF poster to be distributed

SWCC grants awarded 2025-26 poster to be developed

Draft Minutes of the Sept 2026 Meeting of the Sandness & Walls Community Council subject to approval at the next meeting

11.5 Defibrillator grant application form and poster

The form was previously agreed at the meeting on 7th July 2026 and the poster was approved. Applications can now be accepted.

Action: Poster to be distributed

11.6 Grants from SWCC – ‘Information for Applicants’

A draft ‘Information for Applicants’ document was approved and will be sent to anyone enquiring about local grants. A draft promotional poster for SWCC grants was also approved.

Action: Poster to be distributed

11.7 General SWCC grant application form

An updated draft application form had been sent to M Duncan the previous week for comment, feedback or approval as appropriate. He advised that the original form was designed to ensure adequate grant governance across all Community Councils. He was content in principle for individual CCs to update the form, subject to his approval and within agreed parameters. He intends to raise the matter at the ASCC in November.

M Duncan considered the draft presented by SWCC was good and will confirm within the next week or so whether any changes are required. It was highlighted that the inclusion of SaferShetland website was a good opportunity to promote this valuable source of information and free training.

12. **Community Councils Energy Convention - 22nd August - update**

D Sinclair and J Puckey attended, with D Sinclair reading a prepared statement on behalf of the SWCC. The Convention has been quite comprehensively reported in the local media and neither member had very much to add. They felt it had been important to raise the issues and for elected politicians to hear it directly, but that it was likely to have limited, if any, effect. They were thanked for attending.

D Sinclair left the meeting at 8:40pm

13. **Defibrillators update**

The Papa Stour defibrillator is now registered on The Circuit. The Clerk should soon get notification from The Circuit that routine checks are required on the West Burrafirth defib, so this will indicate how well the system works.

14. **Shetland Communities - Energy Network update (26th August)**

J Haswell attended the meeting and advised that it is the Community Development Groups that will form the network, rather than CCs getting directly involved. The Network will be a good source of information for the community and John Clarkson has offered to put on a household energy information session, so this can be discussed at the next meeting.

15. **New Tesco Grant.**

Schools, registered charities and not-for-profit organisations supporting children and young people can apply for up to £1,500 for projects that include an element

Draft Minutes of the Sept 2026 Meeting of the Sandness & Walls Community Council subject to approval at the next meeting

of healthy eating or food growing. J Haswell suggested that the SWCC could assist the schools to apply for the funding, by having a small group of members working directly with the schools (and other organisations) to develop an application.

Action: It was agreed that S Johnston and J Haswell will work on this, and contact the schools in the area

16. Royal National Institute for the Deaf - Near You sessions.

There are new sessions at the Café In Da Kirk, on the third Friday of every month, 11:30-12:30pm. Posters have been received for distribution.

Action: Poster to be distributed

17. Shetland Cruise Impact Study

As part of a wider socio-economic study of the cruise tourism market in Shetland, consultants working for Shetland Islands Council are seeking input from local businesses and organisations. They are keen to hear from as many folk as possible and the agency offered to attend a future CC meeting. It was agreed that the SWCC will promote the survey via its Facebook page and a link will be emailed to all members to forward within their network. The meeting heard that small cruise liners had included Foula and Papa Stour in their itineraries. Inviting the agency to a meeting was not considered a high priority for the SWCC.

Action: Clerk to forward link for survey to members, which will be posted on Facebook

18. AOCB

18.1 Poppies for British Legion at Walls Shop

J Haswell had received a request for the SWCC to get involved with the sourcing and administration of poppies at the shop, as the previous person who volunteered for this role has now passed. It was agreed that this is not a role for the SWCC, but the British Legion needs to find an individual within the area who is happy to take this on. It is often a local ex-service person.

Action: British Legion to be informed of the situation with an offer of a Facebook post on the SWCC website to promote the need for a volunteer, directing them to the British Legion. J Haswell will respond to the requestor advising this is not a CC role.

18.2 Foula School / Hall

R Smith raised the issue of community access to the Hall in the Foula School building. Historically the community has used the Hall as a community facility, but there are ongoing issues of access being problematic. There are 2 entrances to the building – the main school entrance and a 2nd entrance at the rear giving access to the Hall, kitchen and toilets. It is possible to lock the doors to the classroom, so that a key for the rear door would grant access only to the rear toilets, kitchen and Hall. There appears to be no formal agreement in place, facilitating community use of the Hall. There is no Hall committee, with the community members simply getting access to the Hall when they need it, via direct communication with the teacher.

Draft Minutes of the Sept 2026 Meeting of the Sandness & Walls Community Council subject to approval at the next meeting

J Puckey advised that she had experience of the situation when she taught in Foula. Community access could be problematic during the school day, as safeguarding issues had to be fully considered, and security of confidential information had to be assured. R Smith explained that some community events (eg. cruises ship calls) involved opening the Hall to visitors in the middle of the day for meet and greet type events with craft stalls.

Members agreed that the situation required dialogue between the community and the Education Department in the first instance. M Duncan offered to make enquiries via the SIC Education Department to seek clarification of current agreements in place for access.

Action: M Duncan to contact Education Department and feedback to R Smith via the Clerk

19. Date/Venue of Next Meeting

The date of next meeting was set for **Wednesday** 7th October at 7pm.
Venue – Walls Hall and TEAMS.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and participation

Meeting closed at 9pm

We welcome your contact

- Do you have any community issues or concerns you would like us to discuss?
- A safety issue or an idea for improving the area?
- Do you wish to discuss or apply for funding?

Please get in touch by email - sandnesswallsc@gmail.com



or speak directly to any member via <https://tinyurl.com/yhwa3wus>