Unst Community Council

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Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 31st August 2026
at 6.30 pm in Room 2, Baltasound School and by MsTeams

Present
Caroline Hunter, Chair
Adam Doull
Janice Priest
John Peterson
Ingram Thomson
Brydon Johnson
Robert Thomson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio)

Attending
Gordon Thomson (Unt Partnership)
Fi Hadden (Community worker)
Elizabeth Johnson (Space Centre)
Millie Robinson (Oxford Student)
Joseph Neev (Oxford Student)
Lynette Spence, Clerk

1. **Apologies**
   Alec Priest
   Frances Browne
   Ryan Thomson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio)

2. **Declaration of Interest**
   Janice Priest – items 4, 5, and 13
   Ingram Thomson – items 5 and 13
   Robert Thomson – item 13
   Elizabeth Johnson – item 5

3. **Minutes of the Last Meeting**
   Proposed – Janice Priest
   Seconded – Adam Doull

4. **Matters Arising from last minutes**
   - Brydon confirmed that Valerie has applied to adopt the phone box at the Post Office.
   - Still waiting for a reply from Mervyn Smith about signage for HMS E49.
   - Environmental Health reply – Environmental Health have said they could put up signs. The UCC suggested that signs giving information about the nearest toilets and disposal of caravan waste could be looked into.
   - Unst Show Ferries – there were extra runs put on and no complaints have come in about the ferries.

- Neil Hutcheson has passed on the query about a road sign for HMS E49 to Mervyn Smith.
- Update on Roadworks from Neil Hutcheson:

The Westing road and the Minister's road have been on the resurfacing programme for a number of years. Unfortunately, these jobs have had to be postponed to prevent further congestion on the Bluemull Sound ferry crossing. We will be discussing ferry bookings for next year with Ferry Operations, possibly looking at April or early May before the tourist season is fully underway. However, availability will be dependent on whether there are any works elsewhere in Unst at these times that require materials to be ferried in from Mainland or Yell.

The road at the cattle grid at the foot of Saxavord is to be repaired by the spaceport. I understand that they have a contractor in place for this so the repair should be done before the end of August.
The road into Norwick will be repaired when the spaceport has completed the North Dale link road and the Holsen's road is no longer required to access Lambaness. The contractor referred to above will also be undertaking the works on the link road. This should mean that the repairs to the Norwick road can be undertaken from next year either by the Roads Service or by the spaceport's contractor. Either way they will be required to meet the cost of the repairs.

The Skaw road, at the Lambaness junction, is also to be repaired by the spaceport's contractor in the next month or two. The remainder of the road to the north will be inspected and any patching that is required will be done before the winter.

Also, the Lund Road has been surface dressed and widened at the corner leading down to the graveyard, which has been a big improvement. Adam has discussed the road with Dennis Johnson, and the need for cattle grids. **Lynette will contact Burials for an update on the road works and cattle grids, and contact SCBF to ask if funding can be used for cattle grids.**

5. Space Centre Update

Elizabeth Johnson gave an update on the Space Centre:

- There have been queries about using drones. This is something that is regulated by the CAA and they insist on it, however there are numbers to phone to ask if someone can have permission to use a drone for a particular reason.
- Unfortunately, RFA didn't make their launch window but more information will come soon about when their next one will be. The second client is waiting for dates for their launch window - it is hoped it will be before the end of the year.
- Work at the North Dale link road will be starting soon.
- Resident passes are almost ready to go out.

(Elizabeth left the meeting)

6. Oxford Students Study

Mille Robinson and Joseph Neev are two students from Oxford University who are working on Geology and Geophysics Masters projects around Unst. They have been putting seismic nodes into the ground which use ambient noise to learn more about the rocks underground. For example, there was a 2.2 earthquake in Grimsby and the nodes would have picked up that data. They are also doing some chemical testing on rocks, and looking at the age of the granite at the east side of Unst. They intend to send their reports to the UCC to share the information and are planning a winter talk with the Unst Geology Group.
Caroline thanked them for coming to the meeting and sharing what they are doing. (They left the meeting.)

7. **Ferries/Fixed Links**

There will be a meeting on Tuesday 1st September with Andrew Inkster to discuss communications around ferries, which Caroline and Adam will attend online. The intention is to draw up a policy that will be used to standardise communications and make sure everyone knows what is happening. The UCC agreed that if a ferry isn't running people need to know asap so they can prepare and make other arrangements.

The UCC has been sent the festive timetables. After looking at the connections, it was felt that it may be better to change the 0930 from Ulsta to 0945, and the 1000 from Toft to 1015, in order to give more time, especially if there is bad weather. The timetable appears to have some mistakes as there is 0840, 0915 and 1715 which seem to be in the timetable in error.

There was also an email about changes to the Winter Timetable, which included the early Fetlar run becoming 'bookings only' – it was agreed this was a good idea. The 1715 ferry that goes from Gutcher to Belmont to Fetlar is going to change to a direct ferry from Gutcher to Fetlar at 1710, unfortunately this will mean that cars on both the 1630 and 1715 ferries from Toft will all be going for the 1740 ferry into Unst, which means it will be very busy. The changes made with having a whole extra crew gives very little gain to Unst. Fetlar got more extra ferries than Unst.

Lynette will contact the Ferries Department about ferry issues.

8. **SIC North Isles Councillors Update**

Robert has not heard back about Housing work but he will chase this up. It's important to keep houses that are in bad condition in use so they don't deteriorate further.

There has been a lot of discussion about tunnels and there is a meeting on 23rd September to hear more about priorities. North Isles would be a single project to put in place both tunnels, and the aim will be to complete them within two years of each other to prevent bottle neck issues but it all comes down to money. Funding is needed from both Scottish and UK governments. Hannah Mary has been helpful and it sounds promising that it will go ahead eventually. The Space Centre is very important for getting funding for the tunnels as it becomes a national priority.

Replacement ferries will be needed before tunnels are in place but the SIC will be trying to keep the terminals and old ferries going as long as possible to avoid double spending. After the replacement ferry that has been ordered, the next ferry will be for Unst.

Robert reminded the UCC that local elections will be taking place next year and it is important to find good candidates to put their names forward.

9. **Unst Partnership Ltd (UP) Update.**

Gordon introduced Fi Hadden (Community Development Officer) to the UCC members.

- Last week's skip day went well; the next skip day will be Saturday 19th September. The one after that is 14th November, with 2 more next year in January and March. UP is still keen to sign up a few new members in order to cover costs.
- Community Development Officer, Fi Hadden is now in post and has set up discussions with Luke Fraser and Davie Campbell about their recent Housing Needs Assessment report. They are visiting Unst on 16th September.
- Fi has been in discussion with Tyst Hertoghs from Bressay about energy efficiency across Shetland. A meeting has been arranged with Anne Byers who is undertaking discussions regarding Cruise Ships business. This led to discussions with Steve Mathieson (Shetland tourism Development Manager) who highlighted the resource UP have in Skidbladner. Fi has been investigating the possibility of arranging further Viking experiences that would be chargeable, perhaps attracting more visitors from tour companies and cruise ships.

  The UCC members agreed there could be potential for business opportunities around cruise ships.

- Fi has also undertaken some Digital Marketing training and so will be looking at relaunching the social media offering for UP and the shop over the next month.
- Viking longhouse site: One more "knee" still needs to be completed on the galley. Painting of the deck and new knees will take place once completed. Solicitors are in discussion with Shetland Amenity Trust regards purchasing the site for the community.
- Halligarth: NTS Project officer Angus Murray has now engaged a firm of surveyors to compile a report on options for Halligarth. He said (26/8) "I am pleased to confirm that this work will commence next week on a swift 20 day timescale. We will then be appointing an architect to take forward this report's recommendations to its next stage of action. "
- Baltasound Hotel: UP is still waiting to hear from the Scottish Land Fund about a grant for the Feasibility study on the hotel.
- UP charity shop: Directors decided to move the shop to a "Volunteers only" operation after August. The present Shop Manager's post expires at the end of this month and it was decided, in view of the low level of sales over the past two years, to move to this model as the shop was not covering costs. More volunteers to work in the shop are always welcome.

10. **Community Involvement Update**
    Frances Browne was not attending the meeting so no current update.

11. **Shetland Community Benefit Fund (SCBF)**
    David Cooper emailed to remind the UCC that there is funding that Unst hasn't been using to full potential.

12. **Annual Report**
    This year there has been a new task for Community Councils to provide an Annual Report. Lynette has produced a draft copy and asked for any suggestions for amendments or additions. The final draft has to be submitted by the end of September.

13. **Applications for Planning**
    There have been two applications or accommodation for the Space Centre to be placed at/near the astroturf. These would be temporary buildings for 5 years. The UCC had no objections to either application.

14. **Application for Donations**
    N/A

15. **Unadopted Roads**
    Charlie Clark has applied for the Millfield Road. This was agreed and Ingram will measure the road, speak to John Duncan for clarification, and contact Lynette.

16. **Correspondence**
    N/A

17. **Community Council Finances**
    Print out given out of current account details.

18. **Online Banking Application**
    Lynette informed the UCC members that in order to apply for online banking there has to be unanimous agreement from the members.
    All members agreed that online banking should be applied for by Lynette.

19. **A.O.C.B.**
    - There was recently a meeting about windfarms for Community Councils. Caroline couldn't attend, but she did put in a note of support to pause further developments for now until current developments are complete.
    - There is a Shetland Partnership Plan meeting coming up and Caroline will attend.

20. **Date of next meeting – Monday 26th October 2026**

Chair: _____ Date: _____

Clerk: _____