

# **Skerries Community Council**

**Minute of meeting held at 2.00 pm on Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2021.**

**Meeting held through Web-ex**

**Members present:** Douglas Anderson (Chair), Marina Anderson, Frances Anderson, Janice Hughson.

**In attendance:** Pat Christie, Community Involvement & Development Officer, Andrew Inkster, Executive Manager, Marine Infrastructure & Airports, Marvin Smith, Commercial Development Officer, Violet McQuade, Clerk.

**1) Apologies**

Bertha Anderson, Marina Tait and Michael Duncan.

**2) Declaration of Interest to any Agenda Item**

Chairman asked for declaration of interests - none received.

**3) Minutes of last Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021, were approved, proposed by Janice Hughson, seconded by Marina Anderson.

**4) Matters Arising**

**4.1 Waiting Room**

DITT are expecting to be in Skerries with the concrete on Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> May. Work expected to be completed over the next few days. Douglas will inform Andrew Inkster after the keys have been handed over, then electricity and water connections can be carried out.

**4.2 Camping/Caravans**

This is on the agenda for the Skerries Development Group meeting, due to be held on Monday, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021. Pat has been in touch with Ken Allan, who is happy to attend a meeting once there has been a discussion by the group on what the community would like to do.

**5) Update on Skerries Broadband**

**5.1 Connections.** Most people who have been connected are happy with the service.

Marvin has spoken to Vodafone about the potential of boosting the signal. They have agreed to try and then get back to him, so far there has been no further communication from Vodafone.

**5.2 Poor signal.** So far, two houses are still not getting a good service.

Marvin suggested that anyone not getting a good signal could try putting the aerial outside.

**5.3 Scottish Government's R100 scheme.** Expected to hear by the end of January regarding which areas would be getting improvements, but the announcement has still not been made; may hear something by the end of July.

R100 is about reaching 100 percent connectivity. There was a press release about where the undersea cables are to be laid; Skerries was not included. If there are premises that connectivity is not going to get to then there is to be an offer of a £5,000 grant, with the potential of an additional £1,500, from Government, to help buy an alternative broadband solution, but currently there is no other solution. Where that is the case, the community could look at the possibility of a Community Build scheme.

**5.4** There was an announcement yesterday that there will be an extra £3.5 million invested in an infill programme, in which there would still be a plan to put a mast on Skerries, but no information has come through about actual sites being developed.

- 5.5 So far, no one has tried video conferencing into meetings or events. It was suggested that this should be tried; it makes meetings feel more 'normal'. The VC link is included in the Web-ex invite.

*Marvin left the meeting.*

6) **Transport/Ferry**

- 6.1 Filla. The Filla is back in service following her refit.

- 6.2 Getting a replacement run if cancellation due to bad weather. There was a discussion regarding the note in the IWSP issues log from 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021, where it said, '*Informal arrangements now in place; crew will try and provide additional sailings following bad weather if possible*'. This would rely on the goodwill of the crew; they cannot be forced to work on days they are not contracted to work. The crew may have plans for their day off; also the crew will have to be paid overtime for such a run.

- 6.3 Shetland-wide service, and possibility of reinstatement of services previously removed. Since the Scottish Government have given full ferry funding this year there have been calls from several communities to resume the old timetable. This cannot be done with existing shift patterns, if shifts are added crew would end up working above the number of hours that are allowed, and taking on extra crew would incur additional costs. Currently all options are being investigated. Andrew hopes that soon he would be able to meet up with members of the community to go over things in more detail. The council is actively looking at improving the service. It was noted that the community's aim is to get fourteen return ferry trips per week, not necessarily two per day, but at least one per day, with some days up to three trips.

- 6.4 Online Booking. Due to Covid, progress has been slow. The software company have agreed the changes are possible. Currently, the manifest closes ½ hour before sailing, which suits most vessels, but does not suit the Skerries run; the vessel needs to leave two hours before bookings are placed. There is also the human element, whereby the crew would have to get up two hours before sailing time, to check if they are going, which would be outwith their contracted hours. There is still some work to do on that. Andrew asked what the benefits of the online booking system would mean so he could look at other ways round the problem.

- 6.5 Weekend Booking. In answer to the difficulties under 6.4, the main problem is not being able to book at all on Sunday, and not knowing if the ferry is running if you need to get from A to B, you could turn up at Vidlin to try and catch the ferry (if there is room on it), only to find there is no ferry running, and no way to find this out. After discussion, two options were suggested; (1) open the booking office on Sunday, possibly from 10.00 until 14.00, or (2) make a Sunday run mandatory. Because the ferry (if it is running), is scheduled to leave Vidlin at 10.00 on Sunday, it was felt the best option would be to make the Sunday morning run mandatory.

Douglas pointed out that, going back to the days of the Spes Clara, the Skerries people opted for a 'bookings only' service, so that the council wasn't spending money unnecessarily running an empty ferry. This has been turned around, so now you don't appear to have the right to walk onboard unless you are booked. It has been distorted that far; he emphasised that he did not want to see the council spending money needlessly, he would rather see it well spent. As a short-term solution, Andrew suggested setting up a temporary improved service for the summer months. After he has spoken to staff and colleagues, he will come back for a meeting with representatives from the Skerries community. This was agreed to. Andrew will contact Douglas or Violet after speaking with his team; Pat to be copied into correspondence.

**Action: Andrew to contact Douglas/Violet re meeting arrangements**

- 6.6 Ramp. The ramp is no longer causing any problems. The area has not been tidied up yet. It has not been forgotten about; Andrew will be speaking to the contractors again about this, and hopes the work will be done over the summer.

*Andrew will be back in touch within a couple of weeks - he left the meeting.*

**7) Update from Skerries Development Group**

There were no updates; the next meeting is due to be held on Monday, 31<sup>st</sup> May.

**8) Update on Community Nurse / Nurse House**

8.1 Nurse. Post was advertised, the closing date was the 10<sup>th</sup> May. There were no applicants.

Post was re-advertised, with the closing date the 14<sup>th</sup> June. Edna Watson had suggested meeting up before the 14<sup>th</sup> June, Violet has been trying to get dates and times from her so that a meeting can be arranged. So far no response, Violet will keep trying to make contact.

8.2 Nurse House/Clinic. Violet got photos of the nurse house, showing where repairs and maintenance is needed. The photos and a report were sent to Edna Watson and Lawson Bisset, Head of Estates, NHS. Lawson has acknowledged the report and photos, and is to give it due consideration. So far no reply from Edna. If there is a successful applicant for the job, the repairs will likely be carried out before the new person starts in post.

**9) Update on Salmon Cages**

9.1 The owner of the salmon cages has been in Skerries twice recently, but has not done anything with the cages. He currently has two employees in Skerries carrying out work, but they have done nothing with the cages either. No update has come through from Simon Pallant; Pat will get in touch with him this week.

**10) Kirk**

10.1 General situation. There was a christening in the kirk two weeks ago. The service went well. The kirk is just the same, apart from a few things that appear to have been moved or removed; for some reason the font was not used for the Christening. The only disappointment with the service was that, due to Covid restrictions, locals could not attend the service. The minister held a service later in the day for those who could not attend the Christening.

10.2 Meeting. After discussion, it was decided to go ahead and organise a meeting with Beatrice Wishart, MSP. The aim is to get a meeting arranged for a Friday if possible, so that one or two people can attend in person. In addition, to try to set up a Web-ex for those who cannot attend in person.

**Action: Violet to organise (invite Pat)**

10.3 Ownership. Pat mentioned that other island communities were having the same problems, and some, like Skerries, thought they owned their kirk. There is also the question of Title Deeds.

**11) Update IWSP**

Items discussed included:

- Connectivity – this was discussed under Item 5
- Housing – Neil Grant going to do a study. Violet to contact him to find out what is required.
- Transport/ferry – discussed under Item 6.
- Problems with ferry bookings at weekend – discussed under Item 6.
- Online bookings – discussed under Item 6.
- Salmon cages – discussed under Item 9.
- Nurse Job – discussed under Item 8.
- Kirk – discussed under Item 10.
- Fire safety provision. Suggestion was to use a helicopter to transport firefighters and equipment in the case of a fire breaking out on one of the remote islands.

**12) Correspondence Received**

All information and correspondence has been circulated to the SCC. Correspondence included:

- Community Conversations. Date for Skerries meeting is the 30<sup>th</sup> June. Pat Christie is organising this and will be in touch beforehand.

- Local Plan Regulations. Consultation with island communities. There is a survey included in the email. Any comments to be back by the 25<sup>th</sup> June.
- Defibrillator. An email arrived about defibrillator, which prompted questions about where it is situated. It has been confirmed that it is accessible, and is situated in the waiting room of the nurse house/clinic.
- Beatrice Wishart and Alistair Carmichael plan to visit Skerries during the summer – they will be in touch regarding dates.
- Shetland Renewable Connection. There will be a virtual consultation. List of dates and time are in the email that was circulated.

**13) AOCB**

- 13.1 Accounts are back from the accountant. Everything is in order. Douglas to sign them while Violet in Skerries at the weekend.
- 13.2 ASCC Meeting, to be held on the 8<sup>th</sup> June. After discussion, it was agreed that Violet would attend the meeting.
- 13.3 Frances spoke about parts of the play park that needs attention. Douglas informed Frances which person to contact, and will pass on their contact details after the meeting. Some of the grips that need replaced have to come from south; they have been ordered and after they arrive in Shetland they will be sent to Douglas. Frances to report that one of the seats on the seesaw is broken. Douglas will take photos of the seat and send them in. Douglas has already replaced some of the metal grips, etc, in the play park that were damaged. The council is looking at removing the concrete blocks that are still in the play area.

**14) Date of next meeting**

It was agreed to hold the next meeting at 2.00 pm on Thursday, 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021.  
The meeting will be held through Webex.

**Meeting dates for 2021:** 20/08, 21/10, 02/12.