

# Unst Community Council

## Chair

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## Clerk

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## Minutes of the rescheduled meeting held on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024 at 6.30 pm in the Baltasound School Music Huts and by MsTeams

### Present

Claire Priest, Chair  
Gary Betney  
David Cooper  
Patrick Fordyce  
John Peterson  
Janice Priest  
Hazel Spence  
Julie Thomson

### Attending:

Frances Browne, Community Involvement and Development Officer  
Duncan Gray, Unst Tunnel Action Group  
Alice Mathewson, Unst Tunnel Action Group  
Gordon Thomson, Unst Partnership Ltd  
Josie McMillan, Clerk

### 01/01/24 Apologies

Caroline Hunter, Vice Chair  
Duncan Anderson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio)  
Robert Thomson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio)  
Ryan Thomson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio)  
Michael Duncan, Community Council Liaison Officer  
PC Dana Jamieson

### 02/01/24 Declaration of Interest

Janice declared an interest in 05/01/24 SaxaVord Space Port (SAXA) and 13/01/24.3 Energy Isles & Beaw Field Wind Farms CLG. Frances declared an interest in 05/01/24 SaxaVord Space Port (SAXA).

### 03/01/24 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes from the meeting held on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023 were proposed by Claire and seconded by John.

### 04/01/24 Matters Arising from last minutes

#### 15/10/23.1 Dental Services – Mid Yell

There was a discussion about dental service provision in the North Isles. It is still difficult to get an appointment, with only three days open for appointments in December. It was agreed to write again to Antony Visocchi, NHS Shetland Dental Director, and ask for another update.

#### 13/12/23.2 Association of Community Councils Meeting Report – 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023

This item will be carried forward to the next meeting.

**09/01/24 Fixed Links – Alice Mathewson and Duncan Gray, Unst Tunnel Action Group**

Alice and Duncan attended the meeting to give an update on Fixed Links, fundraising and their visit to the Faroe Islands. The Unst and Yell Tunnel Action Groups held an online auction at the end of 2023 and raised £10,000 towards its funds. They are hoping to have another auction in the spring of the year. Alice and Duncan spoke about their self-funded fact-finding visit to the Faroe Islands. They had met with officials from various agencies, companies and had also spoken to members of the communities. The Faroese have prioritised linking communities with bridges, tunnels and roads. And have a total of 22 tunnels, 4 of which are subsea. The latest tunnel to be opened there is Streymoy to Sandoy which is 10.8 kilometres long. In comparison Bluemull Sound would be between 2 – 2.5 km and Yell Sound 4.5 – 5 km. Alice and Duncan met with the mayor and members of the Sands Community in Sandoy. Their experiences in the Faroes were very positive. They were told how linking communities had increased the population in rural areas, with the average age of people in the areas decreasing. The school population was increasing and young people have come back to these areas as they can commute to other areas to work. There is a Faroese residents' toll for using the Fixed Links, which is lower than what is charged for businesses or tourists. Alice and Duncan were asked if there was social housing being built in these areas. They said that there was no social housing on the Faroes Islands. They said that the Municipal Council in Sandoy are preparing serviced sites in readiness for when the tunnel opened in December and there were people wanting to return or move there and build houses. There had been some amalgamation of services, but young people were staying in the area. Duncan said that there had been a tunnel built to link a community of 14 people. They said that the bus services were good as well and also the Public Toilets. They were asked whether the geology was different and if that would affect the fixed links here. They explained that although the geology is different the underlying principles of the work and data to be collected are the same. Shetland Islands Council is going to give the Tunnel Action Groups all the previous information gathered on Fixed Links. Funding for Fixed Links will need to come from the UK Government. In the Faroe Islands all the subsea tunnels are publicly owned by tunnel companies. The figures quoted by the UK Government to construct a tunnel was 4 times more than the Norwegian quote. Alice had attended a meeting about transport with Katrina Wiseman, Area Manager, Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The development of the Spaceport will add to the case for Fixed Links. Both Alice and Duncan believe it is a political problem that has to be overcome. Douglas Ross, Conservative MSP, signed the petition for Fixed Links. The Faroese have a different attitude towards its islands and rural communities and are very forward thinking. Members were impressed with what has been achieved by the Tunnel Action Groups in such a short timescale.

Claire thanked Alice and Duncan for attending the meeting. A copy of their report "Subsea Tunnels Are we crazy" can be found at <https://shetlandtunnels.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Subsea-Tunnels-Are-We-Crazy-Report.pdf> on the internet.

**05/01/24 SaxaVord Space Port (SAXA)**

Elizabeth Johnson, External Affairs Manager, emailed the following report on behalf of SaxaVord Space Port, and also answers to the questions raised at the last Community Council meeting. She explained that "the licence has been signed and is a historic first. The launch build up will see increased activity on the site and will also involve various public notifications leading up to the launch. She said that the launch companies are their customers, within that the launch companies have their own customers – the satellite companies. There are three main types: 1. Earth observation; 2. Position, Navigation, and Timing; 3. Communications. Elizabeth explained that Rocket Factory Ausburg arrived back on site before Christmas and will have a team there very regularly during the coming months. The launch campaign for orbital launch is targeted for the last quarter of this year. SSC are now looking towards a formal opening of the Spaceport around April/May. SSC envisage this to be a high profile event and will endeavour to involve the community as much as appropriate and possible. SSC are working closely with the Government regarding investment in the infrastructure including fixed links and power." The report said that the Secretary of State is very supportive. Work will start on the North Dale Road within a few weeks. There was a discussion about the Space Port and the article that had been in the Shetland Times last week outlining SSC financial position. Members asked if there was any progress on the accommodation or new hotel. There was a query as to whether SSC would need to consult with the community if the number of launches increases to 30 a year. There were concerns about the state of part of the road in

Norwick, from Roadside to the Brig at the bottom of the Strodie before heading up to the agricultural sheds. It was agreed to email SIC Roads and ask when this part of the road would be repaired. There was also a query about the North Dale Road and whether this would be a private road or adopted by the Council. The Clerk will email SSC and ask about this.

Gordon arrived at 7.25pm.

#### **06/01/24 Unst Partnership (UP) Update.**

The final "Ootnaboot" activity took place at the Baltasound Hall on 13<sup>th</sup> January (Auld New Year) in the form of a chip supper night followed by a raffle, music from Peter Wood and dancing led by the South Mainland dance group. UP are planning no further events as there are more community events on now, unless there is a feeling that there should be other events organised. After a discussion members said that all the events were well attended and "one-off" and all had received positive feedback. Gordon was asked if UP has done a feedback survey. They haven't as yet. Thanks go to Kathleen Johnson and Joan Bailey for the organisation of all these events. The next Unst community skip day is this Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> January. The UP shop continues to trade 2-4pm on Thursdays and Saturdays. Donations always welcome. UP recently completed a Housing survey in conjunction with the Community Council. There are a significant number of people interested in moving to new or different properties on the island. After a discussion it was agreed to organise a separate meeting to discuss the subject of housing, before meeting with SIC Housing Dept and Hjaltland Housing Association. It was also agreed to contact other bodies e.g. Social Care, School, Health Centre and employers such as Saxavord Space Centre and Cooke Aquaculture to try to identify their future housing needs before organising the separate meeting. Gordon, David and Frances will meet to draw up questions to ask. The Partnership has now taken out initial membership of the Development Trust Association of Scotland (DTAS) and one of their tasks for the new year is to produce a new Community Development Plan with plans/ideas for the community over the next three to five years. This will involve community consultation as UP will be asking residents what sort of improvements or developments they would like to see in that period. Delivering on such a plan depends on time and money. Not everything in the plan is likely to come to fruition (see, for example, the recent Community Recycling Hub plans which are on hold due to the costs involved.) However, UP should be trying to look ahead and to see what benefits/improvements could be made in and for the community. UP will welcome input from groups and individuals.

#### **07/01/24 Community Involvement Update**

Frances explained that the Local Profiles have now been published online. The Shetland Partnership has more information about areas than was included in each snapshot. This information is very useful to back up grant applications etc. There was a query as to why the Unst profile states there are 5 shops on Unst. Frances will get this clarified to say 3 general merchants, 1 Post Office and the UP charity shop. She was asked where the statistics for the Profiles have come from. She explained that the information was gathered by SIC Community Planning Department and it was drawn from National Statistics. Frances will email the study which explains the methodology for gathering this information. Frances has organised "Winter Pop-ins" in Yell/Fetlar for people to meet and have soup and sandwiches and a social get together between 11am and 3pm. Frances asked whether she should try and organise a couple of these events in Unst. There was a discussion and it was agreed that she should try them in Unst. The funding for these events finishes at the end of March 2024. Frances is going to speak to SIC Ferries about the Emergency Timetable before another meeting is organised. The poor weather has meant that she has had to cancel 2 meetings because of the weather.

Claire, Hazel and Julie left the meeting at 8pm. David took over to chair the rest of the meeting.

#### **08/01/24 Shetland Community Benefit Fund (SCBF)**

David said that there was nothing to report. He said groups can continue to make applications; all grants will be honoured under the current agreement. David also explained the Community Council can apply to fund apprenticeships in partnership with a local business. The Community Council will look into this.

## **09/01/24 Ferries**

### 09/01/24.1 Ferry Questions

Andrew Inkster, SIC Ferries, replied to the email and answered the questions about the Emergency timetable. He said that he understood that the suggestions put forward so far have been reviewed by the Route Master and Masters on Bluemull, and these present some operational difficulties. He said that “the Community may have to accept that whilst not ideal, the current arrangements provide the best service to both islands when a single vessel service occurs. SIC Ferries will continue to look at this with Frances though.” Mr Inkster explained that he would answer the rest of the questions in the email shortly. It was agreed to email him and ask what operational difficulties would occur with the suggested Emergency timetable. And if there were minutes of the meeting that was held about this. And to thank Mr Inkster for his preliminary reply to our questions and that the Community Council is looking forward to receiving the rest of his answers. It was also agreed to email Robert Thomson and Ryan Thomson, SIC Councillors to ask if they knew when the online booking service would be upgraded so that it can accept bookings when the service goes down to one ferry.

### 09/01/24.2 Ferry Docking Schedule

The ferry docking schedule for 2024 has been circulated. The Bigga is going to be off at Unst Show time again this year. The Bigga is off from 12/08/24 to 07/09/24; Fivla 16/9/24 to 15/11/24 and Geira 25/11/24 to 19/12/24. The show is one of the biggest events in Unst, with many people travelling from the mainland. It was agreed to email Andrew Inkster, SIC Ferries, and explain that the show needs to have extra ferries for the show day to enable exhibitors and visitors alike to get to Unst. Last year the notification that extra ferries would be available came too late for several trade stall holders and visitors who had already cancelled coming because they couldn't get ferry bookings. The uncertainty of not being able to get ferry bookings is causing the Show a loss of custom.

## **10/01/24 Community Council Review Scheme**

The first stage of the consultation has now been completed. There has been no feedback on the results of this yet.

## **11/01/24 Applications for Planning**

There were no applications for funding.

## **12/01/24 Application for Donations**

There were no applications for donations.

## **13/01/24 Correspondence**

### 13/01/24.1 Housing Questions – SIC/Hjaltland Housing Association

It was agreed to hold a special meeting to discuss social housing and prepare questions for SIC/Hjaltland Housing Association. There was a discussion about how to bring the SIC/HHA houses up to standard for heating. And whether a local company could have someone trained and get certification to enable them to install heating/insulation. There are grants available for heating/insulation. There was a suggestion that an impact assessment should be done to estimate the numbers in Unst/Yell. Gary and David will draft a letter to SIC/HHA.

### 13/01/24.2 Lerwick Lanes Consultation

This consultation was posted on the Community Council Facebook page and also circulated to members. The consultation is now closed.

### 13/01/24.3 Energy Isles & Beaw Field Wind Farms CLG

Gordon explained that he is invited to attend these meetings. The next meeting is on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024. He explained that is very important for the Community Council to have a representative at these meetings. Gordon said that they are discussing the Community Benefit Fund and how this money will be allocated. This fund could be in the region of £800,000 a year.

13/01/23.4 Bench Donation – SSE

Julie Graham, Stakeholder Engagement Manager, Scottish and Southern Electricity, emailed to ask if the Community Council would like to receive a donated bench which will be produced and supplied by the Community Service Team. It was agreed to put this on Facebook to ask if any group would like to get a bench. The group would be responsible for the bench and its maintenance.

13/01/23.5 Police Report

There were three incidents recorded in Unst in December, a neighbour dispute, theft and a dog bite.

13/01/23.6 PSTN Switch Over

The Public Switched Telephone Network (PTSN) analogue telephone network will be retired by the end of 2025. Maggie Sandison, Chief Executive Officer, Shetland Island Council emailed members to explain “that measure will be put in place to protect vulnerable households, particularly those using person alarms, known as telecare. All providers have agreed to not forcibly move customers onto a new network unless they are full confident, they will be protected.”

**14/01/24 Community Council Finances**

The budget for 2023-2024 has been spent.

**15/01/24 A.O.C.B.**

15/01/24.1 Unst Health Centre Query

There was a query from a member of the community as to what the stock levels were for normal medications at Unst Health Centre for holiday/bad weather periods. It was agreed to email Unst Health Centre and ask.

15/01/24.2 Community Ferry Hire – Shetland Folk Festival 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> May 2024

There was an application for a late ferry from the Shetland Folk Festival Committee. It is for the 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> May. It was agreed to approve this application. The Clerk will email Fiona Farquhar, SIC Ferries, to book the ferry, which will come out of next year’s Community Ferry Hire allocation. The ferry runs will go ahead if SIC Ferries can get crews to do these runs.

15/01/24.3 Roads and Baltasound School Sign

There were several road matters discussed. The road in Norwick, from Roadside to the Brig at the bottom of the Strodie heading up towards the agricultural sheds on the way to Skaw is in a poor condition. The left hand side of the Setters Road as you are travelling up the road is very worn away on several sections. The Baltasound School Sign has never been put up at the crossroads at Nordalea. It was agreed to write to Neil Hutcheson about these matters.

15/01/24.4 Wild Skies Shetland

Wild Skies Shetland would like to attend a meeting to give an update. Members agreed this would be good. The next meeting has someone attending, so it might first be the March or May meetings.

15/01/24.5 D-Day 80 Celebrations 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Gary has started speaking to people about this event. He has booked the Haroldswick Hall. It will be discussed further at the next meeting.

15/01/24.6 Thank you letters

It was agreed to write and thank the Gritter crew, Sandisons and Unst Plant for all their hard work keeping the roads clear during the recent snowy spell.

**16/01/24 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is set for Monday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

Chair: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk: \_\_\_\_\_