

# Unst Community Council

## Chair

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## Clerk

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## Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at 6.30 pm in the Baltasound School Music Huts and by MsTeams

### Present

Claire Priest, Chair  
Caroline Hunter, Vice Chair  
Gary Betney  
David Cooper  
John Peterson  
Janice Priest  
Hazel Spence  
Robert Thomson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio) (MsTeams)

### Attending:

Frances Browne, Community Involvement and Development Officer  
Fiona Farquhar, Resources Manager, Marine & Air Operations - SIC  
Andrew Inkster, Executive Manager, Ferry & Airport Operations & Port Infrastructure  
Moraig Lyall, Chair, Environment and Transport Committee - SIC  
Sheena Summers, Team Leader Ferry Operations - SIC  
Josie McMillan, Clerk

### 01/06/24 Apologies

Patrick Fordyce  
Julie Thomson  
Duncan Anderson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio)  
Ryan Thomson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio)  
Michael Duncan, Community Council Liaison Officer  
PC Dana Jamieson  
Gordon Thomson, Unst Partnership Ltd

### 02/06/24 Declaration of Interest

Janice and Frances declared an interest in 07/06/24 SaxaVord Space Port (SAXA).  
Janice and Frances declared an interest in 12/06/24 Application for Planning – Saxavord Space Centre Ltd

### 03/06/24 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes from the meeting held on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024 were proposed by Caroline and seconded by Janice.

### 05/06/24 Ferries – Andrew Inkster, Sheena Summers, Fiona Farquhar SIC Ferries and Moraig Lyall, Chair Environment and Transport Committee

Claire welcomed them to the meeting. Caroline had compiled a list of questions which had been received from the community. The first question was to ask if there could be a bookable service when Bluemull Sound went down to a single vessel and followed the Saturday timetable. Mr Inkster said that if there is a buildup of traffic, the ferry can put in extra runs to clear the backlog, they can't do that if they are running to the timetable. There was a discussion about this, many people have had to wait hours before getting on the ferry. One journey from Unst to Whalsay took six hours. People needing to get to work, appointments, off Shetland would far rather be able to book, as they do on a Saturday already. Mr Inkster said their priority was to keep the service running, he is going to ask the crews for feedback. Caroline asked if they could run a trial using a bookable timetable and if that doesn't

work then revert back to suspending the bookings. Mr Inkster said that if they run to the timetable there can be no shuttles. He was told that anyone travelling with livestock needs to be able to book ferries. They were asked why, when it goes to the Saturday timetable during the week and bookings have to be suspended, could they not change the online booking system to the Saturday timetable so people could then book. Ms Summers said that with the present online booking system it doesn't allow runs to be deleted. This system is labour intensive. Mr Inkster said that they are looking at a new booking system called Telegram, the one already being used by NorthLink. They are evaluating this system at present. Mr Inkster was asked what the timescale would be before they get this new system in place. He said that he has to write a report for Ms Lyall, Chair of Environment and Transport, this will then be presented to the full Council. It is hoped this will be looked at in September. Claire said we are glad they are looking at a new system.

Caroline asked if it could be changed from Bluemull on the timetable/online and say Fetlar/Unst instead. Mr Inkster said this could be done. They were asked why you couldn't book the ferry less than 30 minutes before a run, Mr Inkster said that the crews need to get the information. The new system can be set for a shorter booking time before runs. The Saturday timetable on Bluemull Sound does not link well with Yell Sound. This can mean vehicles racing through Yell to get a connection. The online system states that runs are N/A, which causes confusion. Although the run isn't bookable it does still run.

There was a discussion about the problems with the generator the night of the Folk Festival event at the beginning of May in Unst. Mr Inkster said that the generator was faulty and an engineer from DH Marine had to travel from Lerwick to work with it. The people waiting at Gutcher were kept up to date by the ferry crew who also checked that everyone waiting was alright. At the Belmont side there was no information at all. Mr Inkster said the coastguard is notified immediately once there are problems like this with the ferries.

The problem of lane markings was also discussed. Once vehicles are parked on the numbers, visitors using the ferries do not know which lane to queue in. At Gutcher there isn't a sign at the top of the car park. Mr Inkster said that if they change to the new system, they will be able to send out a map showing the lanes along with the confirmation of booking.

There was a discussion about upskilling the existing workforce. Mr Inkster said that any staff that want to upskill will be accommodated. Engineering tickets are different for each of the ferries. All legislation must be adhered to.

Mr Inkster was asked about vehicle loading inconsistency, sometimes ferries do load 5 minutes before but often they do not. Vehicles arriving into the booked queue 4 minutes before sailing, can be put to the back of the unbooked queue, but this does not happen all the time. And when ferries leave late it has knock on implications for catching the linking ferry. Mr Inkster said they had had similar complaints from Yell Community Council. He was asked if there could be someone checking that the ferries run to the published times, he said they do not have the staff to do this. He said most of the department's time is spent in "firefighting" trying to maintain the service. Mr Inkster said that the agency provides lists of suitably qualified staff and that they need agency staff to keep the ferries running. Ms Lyall explained that a comparison with Care Workers and their pay increases was not valid in the case of ferry crews. Care Workers duties have changed significantly in recent years. Ferry crew's duties have remained the same, on the whole.

Mr Inkster said that there is ongoing meeting with the Unions, who believe they are under paid, and they would like better terms and conditions. They have benchmarked the SIC's conditions with two separate companies and found them to be similar. There is legislation which has to be followed in their working conditions. There is a lack of qualified seafarers all over the UK. Mr Inkster said that a lot of their time is spent trying to hold a fragile service together, everyday there are issues which need to be resolved. Claire said that if they are constantly firefighting, they will not be able to be looking at the bigger picture. They were asked why people higher up in the SIC were not doing more to resolve these issues. Robert said that Ms Lyall has called for a report on Ferry resilience to be brought to the next Environment and Transport committee. He is disappointed at the big gap with no meeting in the middle of the year. He thinks that if a superintendent did go out occasionally this would be helpful. Interaction between them and staff might help build better relationships. Robert said there is no cover vessel, which is a real worry. If something happened to one of the Yell ferries when the other was in drydock it would be a disaster. Mr Inkster said there were 140 ferry crew, 2 Marine Superintendents and 2 Technical Superintendents. He was asked when

there would be a review into the service, he said that the service is constantly under review. There is work being done on the Island Strategy Review. Ms Lyall said that the SIC had got 23 million pounds from the Scottish Government for running the ferries. One of the conditions is that the SIC shouldn't seek to increase the service. Ms Lyall said that in the last 18 months there had been 5 meetings with the Scottish Government, they had talked to three different ministers so there was no continuity.

Frances said that she realized how hard they were working but one thing that hadn't been discussed so far was the impact on the island economy. Unst is reliant on commuting teachers and workers. In the last school year there has been on average one day lost every week for teachers/workers because of ferry problems. It is also affecting businesses, local shops, Post Office and Tourism etc. All of these have suffered loss of trade, with delays in getting goods and cancellations of bookings. People do not want to travel to Unst if they are unsure when they will be able to get ferries back.

Ferries were high up on the agenda when the three North Isles Councillors were campaigning to be elected, but several years down the line everything seems to be at the same stage, with the ferries being that much older. The Community Council met with ferry officials on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2022 and very little progress has been made on any of the issues raised then. Ms Lyall said that when consultations open up, encourage as many people as possible to respond. They need to build a Business Case. The consultation will begin in June/July, already a year late and will run for 18 months, to identify the best solution for each route. Then they need to build a Business Case following the right procedures, there is no shortcuts to doing this. They were asked how many agency staff were now working on the ferries, Ms Summers said that they got monthly updates and at the moment there are 14. They were asked if it would be possible to get a breakdown of who works at Sellaness. Mr Inkster said he would provide that. Ms Summers said that they are looking for pool staff, she said there are 18 applications for the last job that was advertised. If they go with the new booking system, they can send out a more detailed explanation of the disruption. Sellaness will take over sending out notifications of problems. Mr Inkster asked who would be the first point of contact for the Community Council, it was agreed to send the message to the Facebook page and the Clerk.

Mr Inkster explained that they were scouring the world for spare vessels, they had looked at two, but these were unsuitable. There is one in Faroe which might be sold next year, the SIC will be notified when it comes up for sale. He was asked when they could order a new vessel, would it be 3 to 5 years? He said that he couldn't make any promises. He was asked who the Community Council should be putting pressure on. Mr Inkster said the elected members. Ms Farquhar was asked about the Community Hire which the Community Council requested for Unst Fest. She said that they have been unable to get a crew to man the ferry, so they were not able to accommodate the run. The Community Council gets an allocation of 4 Community Ferry hires which are usually used for big community events. It is looking very unlikely that these can be used if crews can't be found to man the runs. The Ferries Department has advertised for a person for 6 weeks general labour, this would be a person to work at the Belmont ferry terminal. Claire thanked them for attending the meeting.

Andrew Inkster, Sheena Summers, Fiona Farquhar and Moraig Lyall left the meeting at 8.20pm to catch the ferry.

#### **04/06/24 Matters Arising from last minutes**

##### 15/01/24.3 Roads and Baltasound School Sign

It was agreed to email Neil Hutcheson, SIC Roads to ask when the white line painting will be done. And also, as if it is possible to get a copy of the surveys that are conducted by the Road Engineer.

##### 13/02/24.3 D-Day 80 – 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024

The Beacon lighting on the Thursday night and the D Day concert were a great success. The concert raised £3,220 for SSAFA (Soldiers', Sailors', and Airmen's Families Association). The Community Council would like to thank the committee for all their hard work, these were Gary Betney, Claire Priest, Joan and Dave Bailey, Jaclyn Thomson, Geoffrey and Carol Priest, Lorraine Thomson and Steve and Janice Randall.

##### 15/05/24.3 Social Housing Meeting

This meeting is to be held on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024 at 6.30pm in the Baltasound Hall Library. A MsTeams link will be circulated as well. The hall does have broadband so it will hopefully work. David and Gary will make up a fact sheet. The Clerk will email Anita Jamieson, SIC Housing, again as we have not received an answer to the additional questions from them. There was a discussion about insulation in social housing. Robert gave an example of no

extractor fans in the bathroom or kitchen in houses in Cullivoe. It is not always a problem with the houses that cause dampness. It can often be what the tenants are doing, e.g. drying clothes inside.

Robert was asked about figures from ZetTrans for the years 2010/2015/2020. He said he will try to find this information and pass it on.

#### 17/05/24.2 Scottish Fire and Rescue Service – Shaping our Future Service – Your Say

Caroline will email comments to be included in Unst Community Council's response.

#### **06/06/24 SIC North Isles Councillor's Update**

Robert said that at the last Harbour Board meeting there was discussions about expanding the cruise liners out to SIC ports, which includes Baltasound. This would increase cruise liners numbers visiting Unst. Robert was asked about the Pontoon he said that he was in discussions about this. Frances is also trying to organise a meeting to discuss this.

#### **07/06/24 SaxaVord Space Port (SAXA)**

There is no update. It was agreed to take this item off the agenda.

#### **08/06/24 Unst Partnership (UP) Update.**

Gordon sent in the update as he wasn't at the meeting. He said that UP now have over 60 households signed up to the Skip Scheme plus £2,000 of sponsorship from Cooke Aquaculture to cover costs. That should be enough for the 2024-25 scheme. The first skip day was on 1<sup>st</sup> June and 2.4 tonnes of bruck was taken away, the highest ever total, largely due to metal now going into the skips. 17 "White Goods" items were set aside for SIC pickup on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June and all were taken away successfully, although this cost an additional £120. The next Skip Day is on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> August. John Clarkson, Home Energy Scotland, will begin visits to households in Unst interested in an Air to Air heat pump project on 10<sup>th</sup> July, visiting 3 out of the 13 properties on UP's list. Once all 13 have been checked out for insulation, we will then apply for grant aid to see if we can carry out a project to get the Air2Air heating installed. This will be linked to a similar project in Yell.

#### **09/06/24 Community Involvement Update**

Frances has been working with the Unst Boating Club, who had their re-opening event on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June. She has also been discussing housing with the North Yell Development Council and working with the Heritage Trust. Gary spoke to Michael Duncan as he wanted clarification about some transport and housing issues. He has arranged a meeting with someone from that Department to discuss this. Frances is helping with this.

#### **10/06/24 Shetland Community Benefit Fund (SCBF)**

David said that SCBF are edging closer to getting money into the fund. They are planning to publicise this fund by sending leaflets to every household in Shetland. They will also put this information on their website at the end of July. Directors will also be attending the Agricultural shows. The Brae School Parent Council have applied to the Shetland Aerogenerators Community Benefit Fund for science projects for all the schools and also to restart the School Science Festivals in 2026. David said that SCBF had award £6,000 towards the refurbishment of the renewed Unst Boating Club.

#### **11/06/24 Community Council Scheme Review**

##### 11/06/24.1 UCC – Terms of Office

All Community Councillors have been sent a letter to ask if they want to stay on the Community Council for an additional year until November 2025. Claire is standing down as chair at the meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> November and from the Community Council on the 28th November 2024.

Robert left the meeting before we discussed the Planning Application.

#### **12/06/24 Applications for Planning**

<b>Planning Ref:</b>	2024/129/PPF
<b>Proposal:</b>	Proposed satellite ground station incorporating six radomes and associated infrastructure.
<b>Development Type:</b>	10b. Other developments
<b>Local Address:</b>	Land To The South East Of Baltasound Airfield, Baltasound, Unst, Shetland ZE2 9DT
<b>Applicant:</b>	Shetland Space Centre Ltd
<b>Date of Consultation:</b>	11 June 2024

There were no objections.

Robert rejoined the meeting.  
Frances left the meeting before the next item.

### **13/06/24 Application for Donations**

#### 13/06/24.1 Unst Festival Committee

After a discussion it was agreed to give a donation of £1,000 to the Unst Festival Committee towards their insurance and publicity costs.

Frances came back into the meeting.

### **14/06/24 Application for Unadopted Road**

#### 14/06/24.1 George Rodger, 2 Gue, Baltasound

The application is for limited repair to the road to 2, Gue, Baltasound. It was agreed to give up to £200 on the production of receipted invoices.

### **15/06/24 Correspondence**

#### 15/06/24.1 Unst R100 Deployment

Mike Curran, Senior Contract Manager from Circet UK (Scotland) met with several Community Councillor and UP directors to discuss the R100 deployment. He said that the work has to be finished by March 2025. Mr Curran left some maps of Uyeasound showing the proposed work. He said he would forward the rest of the maps, but as yet he hasn't. The Clerk will email him again about this. There are two teams working in Unst, and there have been several issues with the pipelaying with phone lines and water pipes being cut. Their material is stored around the galley burning site, at the Shalder Taking, Uyeasound and is starting to creep onto the road. Robert said to let him know about any issue as they need to keep pressure on the company to repair all the damage. Mr Curran said that "the full build for Unst will include over 60km of new telecom infrastructure, circa 85km of new fibre cables, plus roughly 25km of new main spine fibre, and cover approx. 470 individual premises."

#### 15/06/24.2 Vallafield Road

The Community Council has been contacted about the state of this road. After a discussion it was agreed that the hill committee can apply for a road grant to repair the road.

#### 15/06/24.3 National Trust for Scotland – Houlland Update

Clea Warner, Regional Director, NTS emailed to update the Community Council on the plans for the Houlland and Da Laggan properties on Unst. NTS is now progressing with its plans to put both up for sale, to support their ongoing project at Halligarth. Ms Warner said that "a review of the building contents has been carried out and a small collection of items at Houlland have been removed by their collections team and will be safeguarded by NTS at their stores. The other contents of both properties, having no heritage value, will be removed, and disposed of by CWJ Plant Hire Ltd between 7 and 10 June. This will exclude any agricultural items which they intend to reach out to local Shetland organisations to see if there is any interest in acquiring the items. They will also carry out work to tidy up the properties. Houlland and Da Laggan will be put up for sale on the open market in July, with funds from the sale of the properties being reinvested in the Trust's Halligarth project. Stewart Douglas, National Trust for Scotland Development Manager for Unst will manage the process and will be the main point of contact for the project going forward."

#### 15/06/24.4 Shetland Amenity Trust – Colvister/Environmental Improvement Service

Mhari McLeman, Natural Heritage Manager, Shetland Amenity Trust replied to our query about the scrap car removal saying that SAT is reviewing the approach, in light of changing regulatory and economic factors. She said that "as far as is possible, their commitment is to ensure continuity of service to the community, and they are working with their staff, contractors, and partners to ensure that alternative provisions are in place before any changes are made. It is their commitment to ensure that the arrangements regarding abandoned vehicles, vehicle owner obligations and the national car recycling schemes are clearly communicated." Ms McLeman said SAT are removing the depolluted vehicles from the Colvister Quarry in Yell for onward disposal on the Scottish mainland. There was a discussion about what SAT's legal obligations were. Frances said that SAT is a charity so are not obligated to do things, unlike the SIC.

#### 15/06/24.5 RNID – National Hearing Loss Charity within the Shetland Isles

This as noted.

15/05/24.1 SIC - Local Place Plans

Claire attended this online meeting. She said it will be a big undertaking, but there will be help available. And Frances can offer support. It was agreed to discuss this further at the next meeting.

15/06/24.6 ASCC Meeting – 11th June 2024

Claire attended this meeting. She said there had been a lot of discussion about the digital switch over. There is now a delay in the switch over because of the issues with homelinks. BT is looking at hybrid alarms and other options.

**16/06/24 Community Council Finances**

The Community Development application for £3,000 was approved. There has been no expenditure since the last meeting. It was agreed to add two more signatures to the bank account. Caroline and Janice both agreed to be added.

**17/06/24 A.O.C.B.**

17/06/24.0 Vodafone Network Developments

James Cunningham, Executive Manager of ICT, Performance & Improvement, Shetlands Islands Council contacted the Community Council to say that they have invited their Vodafone Public Sector Account Manager for an initial meeting to discuss the general performance of the Vodafone network in Shetland and seek some assurances around their commitment to further infrastructure development. He is wanting information about problem areas/postcodes. One of the areas identified is South Unst/Belmont, where recent changes seem to have diminished the Vodafone signal strength in this area. The signal strength has gone from 4 to 1 in South Unst. The signal has also got weaker in Baliasta and Baltasound as well. The Clerk will write with this feedback.

24/06/24.2 North Booth, Westing request for metal rubbish bin

The clerk was contacted about this. There is very limited turning at the North Booth, Westing. If the essay kart sees there are vehicles parked in the turning place it doesn't collect the rubbish as it can't turn. The residents have asked if it is possible to get a metal bin put there in case black bags aren't collected. The Clerk will contact SIC Environmental Health.

**18/06/24 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is set for Monday 12<sup>th</sup> August 2024 (rescheduled date).

There was a discussion about proposed dates. The school is unavailable through the holidays because there is electrical work being done. It was agreed to move the meeting scheduled for the 5<sup>th</sup> August back a week to 12<sup>th</sup> August. The September meeting will move from the 16<sup>th</sup> September 2024 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024 (the clerk is on holiday on the 16<sup>th</sup> September). The meeting scheduled for 28<sup>th</sup> October 2024 will be moved back a week until 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024. The Clerk will email Michael Duncan with these changes.

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

Clerk: \_\_\_\_\_