

Unst Community Council

Chair

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Baltasound
Unst
Shetland

Clerk

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Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 30TH September 2024 at 6.30 pm in the Baltasound School Music Huts and by MsTeams

Present:

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

Attending:

Mairi Keith, SIC Project Manager – Childcare (MsTeams)
Rebecca Geisler, UHI Shetland
Tanya Riley, UHI Shetland
Frances Browne, Community Involvement and Development Officer
Gordon Thomson, Unst Partnership Ltd
Josie McMillan, Clerk

01/09/24 Apologies

David Cooper
John Peterson
Duncan Anderson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio)
Ryan Thomson, SIC Councillor (ex-officio)
Michael Duncan, Community Council Liaison Officer

Claire said that Julie Thomson had resigned from the Community Council. It was agreed to write and thank Julie for her years of service on the Community Council.

02/09/24 Declaration of Interest

Janice declared an interest in 16/09/24.1 Energy Isles UCC Representation.

03/09/24 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes from the meeting held on Monday 12th August 2024 were proposed by Janice and seconded by Caroline.

05/09/24 Early Adopters Community (EAC) Update – Mairi Keith, Project Manager – Childcare, SIC

Mairi Keith, SIC Project Manager – Childcare, introduced herself and went on to give a presentation on the Early Adopter Community Project. She explained that Shetland had received Scottish Government funding, to become a pilot project for the Early Adopters Community scheme. The project is to develop childcare provision in areas within Shetland that need it the most, the areas identified are the North Isles and West Mainland. The major focus of the project is that “An all-age childcare system is co-designed with people who use services and the people who deliver them.” Ms Keith said they will work with these communities to determine what is

important to them. She said that it is likely that delivering local outcomes will lead to them designing different solutions in each area. One example of what can be done was the introduction of a Breakfast Club at school, which runs from 8.15 to 9am. There have been discussions about running a targeted childminders campaign in the North Isles to support childcare for 0-2 year olds. The project is currently recruiting a Support Worker. Ms Keith was asked if there was funding available for training, she said that this was included in the budget. Members suggested that it would be really useful for Ms Keith to come up and meet with school representatives, parents and under 5 groups, information about the scheme and a meeting could be distributed through the school and also the Under 5s community group. She is very keen to come up and meet with these groups and individuals. Frances will email the contact details for this to Ms Keith. The privately run local childcare provider was no longer viable once the Scottish Government introduced the 1,140 funded hours of care for every eligible child, aged 3 and over. Ms Keith said to email her if there were any other questions that came up after the meeting.

Claire thanked her for attending the meeting.

06/09/24 UHI Shetland - Local Insight on Marine Restoration and Enhancement Projects - Tanya Riley and Rebecca Geisler

Tanya Riley and Rebecca Geisler, Marine Spatial Planning, UHI Shetland introduced themselves and explained they were conducting research into a Marine Restoration and Enhancement Action Plan for Shetland. The project is aimed at “shaping the future of Shetland’s marine environment. The project focuses on how local communities and stakeholders can play an active role in the restoration and enhancement of the region’s marine ecosystem.” Ms Riley said there were four key themes to guide these discussions, these were Active Restoration or Enhancement; Access; Research and Communication. There was a discussion based on these themes. For Active Restoration and Enhancement, there were concerns about the debris which will fall into the sea after satellite launches from SaxaVord Space Port. There was a suggestion about placing trackers on the debris to monitor it. There were concerns raised about coastal erosion, particularly in Uyeasound. Also about debris washing up on the shore and dog fouling on beaches. For the second theme of Access there were concerns raised about commercial fishermen entering conservation areas and disabling tracking devices to avoid detection. For the third theme of Research the tidal turbines being trialled in Bluemull Sound were discussed, It was unsure what the environmental impact of the turbines is. There were concerns raised about other offshore wind turbines as well. One Councillor explained that previous ESA schemes for crofts had resulted in unintended consequences, such as increased grass growth leading to the disappearance of birds. Concerns were expressed about whether future restoration projects could have similar effects on habitats that have adapted to current conditions. The fourth theme was Communication, Ms Riley explained that sharing information and raising awareness was very important. There were some additional points raised, these were concerned with the tourism industry and the illegal dumping of chemicals into the sea, especially near unofficial caravan parking sites. Mainly the disposal of Portaloo chemicals, this is happening at Norwick Beach and Hermaness Car Park and probably at other sites on Unst. Ms Riley was asked how this project was being funded. She explained that they had applied for funding from the Scottish Government: but for ongoing restoration then Marine Developers will pay. If there are identified restoration projects on Unst the restoration money could be spent locally instead of somewhere else. Ms Riley explained that they have been approached already by 5 businesses that are interested in investing. After the first stage of the project which is consulting with communities and Community Councils, the next stage is writing up the information gathered, bringing all the ideas together and prioritising them. This will then be available online. Claire said it would be good to see what other areas come up with as well.

Claire thanked Tanya Riley and Rebecca Geisler for attending the meeting. They left to catch the ferry.

04/09/24 Matters Arising from last minutes

15/06/24.1 Unst R100 Deployment

Work is continuing on laying the ducting for the fibre cable. One Councillor had been told that the new fibre broadband could be live in three weeks time. Although someone had been told that BT weren’t taking on any more customers just now. Gordon said that there have been no cables laid out the Westerpark Road so far. The Clerk will email Adam Swift, Clerk of Works for the project, about this and also ask for an update on the project.

01/07/24.1 Housing Meeting

The follow up letter about Housing, which was composed by Gary and David, was sent to Maggie Sandison, SIC Chief Executive. There has been no reply yet: the Clerk will follow this up. The SIC had said in the past that there was no land available or construction firms to do the work in rural areas like Unst. Members believed that these obstacles could be overcome. Gary and David met with Emma Perring and Frances Browne, SIC, to discuss Island Impact Assessments. This had been very interesting and is ongoing work for them.

04/09.24.2 Transport

Elaine Park, SIC Transport Contracts and Operations Officer, replied to our email and said that she had updated Community Councillors on the figures UCC had requested after the last meeting, when the SIC “surveyed the Overland passengers in mid August at a public session held at Unst Leisure Centre.” She said “the numbers that were being sought were the number of people who had requested a Sunday service from the isles. Of the consultation responses received during the exercise that fed into the tendering for the current contracts (started 2020), there were no requests of this nature.” A transport petition to gather signatures in support of an integrated return bus service to Lerwick on Sundays was circulated at the Unst Show Day. 234 people signed the petition. It was agreed to send the results of the petition to the following:- Alistair Carmichael, MP; Beatrice Wishart, MSP; Moraig Lyall, Chair SIC Environment and Transport Committee; Community Councils: Michael Craigie, ZetTrans and Elaine Park, SIC Transport Contracts and Operations.

07/09/24 Ferries/Fixed Links

07/09/24.1 Tunnel Vision Meeting – Baltasound Hall, Monday 19th August 2024

There had been more people at this meeting. There is not much progress at the moment, but everything is moving along. The SIC Consultants will be meeting with the group in either October or November. It is a case of keeping the momentum going. The AGM is on 10th October 2024 at 7pm in the Baltasound Hall.

07/09/24.2 Ferries

There was a discussion about the ferry disruptions which have been causing problems on both Bluemull and Yell Sound this year. Yell Sound was running a single vessel several days because of crew sickness and mechanical problems. Bluemull Sound was running a Saturday timetable with no booking all the time the Geira was having technical problems and the Bigga, which should have been back at the beginning of September, was having gear box problems while still in dry dock. The Bluemull Sound disruptions came at a time when crofters were shipping lambs and other livestock to the sales in Lerwick or further afield. The disruptions caused the cancellation of many services coming to Unst. And anyone with an appointment in Lerwick or further afield or travelling south had to travel down the night before or leave with the early ferry. It is making it really difficult for workers to travel from or to Unst for their jobs. The ferry situation is having a negative effect on businesses on Unst with many people, groups and tourists not coming up because there is no guarantee they will be able to get back to the mainland. With the ageing ferry fleet these problems will only get worse. Members also said that shift patterns are very different between Bluemull and Yell Sound. On Yell Sound ferry crews have to work fewer weekends than the crews on Bluemull Sound. Robert said that he had attended the Ferry Resilience meeting on 9th September 2024. He felt that the crewing plan is coming together. There will be regular reports to all the stakeholders. Robert said there was a whole list of things to look at. It was agreed to write to John Smith, SIC Director of Infrastructure Services, Moraig Lyall, SIC Chair Environment and Transport and Maggie Sandison, SIC Chief Executive. Claire thanked Caroline for keeping the Facebook page up to date with ferry issues and compiling all the ferry information.

08/09/24 SIC North Isles Councillors Update

Robert said he had been at the Ferries Resilience meeting and had also had a lot of correspondence about ferries. He was asked if he had attended an SIC closed meeting. Robert said there hadn't been any closed meetings recently. He explained that when there is a closed meeting it is because there is confidential/sensitive information being discussed. Ryan emailed in a report, he said he missed the full council meeting last week due to ill health. He said that at the Education and Families meeting, the main topic discussed was 'Mothballing a School and Reopening a Mothballed School Procedures'. While the policy was eventually approved, he had raised concerns about how school capacity is calculated. This is important because, under the policy, if the

school roll falls below 20% of capacity, it would trigger an investigation into mothballing the school. Ryan also said he is dealing with ongoing issues with EE regarding signal problems in the North Isles (and most areas of Shetland). He said he had received countless emails and correspondence from concerned residents about the current ferry situation.

Caroline and Hazel left the meeting at 8pm.

09/09/24 Unst Partnership Ltd (UP) Update.

Gordon said that the Skip Day on 21st September went well, with two skips filled completely, and there were white goods left for taking away. The next Skip Day is Saturday 9th November. John Clarkson (Home Energy Scotland) is working his way round the houses in Unst (and North Yell) interested in Air2Air heating. Some applicants may be eligible for other heating grants too. He hopes to complete the visits to houses in Unst and Yell by mid-November. The UP Shop has now been trading for six years, having opened in September 2018. Business has been very steady all that time, despite the Covid restrictions, and continues to bring in a regular income to support the shop manager and their other activities. UP's other income comes from Skip membership and sponsorship, Feed in Tariff payments from a 6Kw wind turbine and the column in the Shetland Times. The AGM will be taking place in the near future when UP will report more fully on this year's activities. UP has not had a current Community Development Plan for some time, something expected of all development groups, especially in times of change. UP has applied to the Community Led Local Development (CLLD) scheme for funding to carry this out. UP hopes to hear the outcome of this application in October, with the work to be completed by March 2025. If funding is agreed, this will then mean the community will be consulted as to what they see as priorities for 2025-28, in what is a time of change with Unst, given the Spaceport development and the mounting demand for Fixed Links and Housing. The plan could also fit in with the requirements of Local Place Plans, something the SIC is keen to see from communities. UP has contacted Luke Fraser from North Ronaldsay Development Trust to give them a quote for a Housing Study. He is working on a similar project for North Yell at present and has a lot of experience with housing projects in rural areas. There was a discussion about Energy Isles plans for a Community Benefit Fund. This will not come into operation until 2030, so there is a fair bit of negotiating to go on before distribution can be agreed. It is important to have a Community Council representative attend Energy Isles meetings to keep the Community up to date on what is happening. And take part in the decision making process.

10/09/24 Community Involvement Update

Frances suggested having a separate meeting to discuss the Local Place Plans (LPP) and Community Development Plans (CDP). It was agreed that this would be very useful, it would give a better understanding of what is involved with each of these plans. No one from the Community Council was able to attend the training event in Yell. Frances had been, she said that there will be online training available soon. LLP have to be prepared by the community. She will send a copy of the Nesting LLP so that members can see what a worked plan looks like. Both the LLP and CDP are really important when it comes to applying for funding for projects. The last CDP plan shows that Unst has the lowest median income.

11/09/24 Shetland Community Benefit Fund (SCBF)

David sent information to say that SCBF representatives hadn't attended Unst or Yell Shows because of the lack of personnel. There was an email from SCBF showing the projects which had been funded by Unst Community Council's allocation of funds. For this financial year, to September 2025, UCC is getting £6,515.00 plus the balance carried forward from last year £1,448.28. Giving a total of £7,963.27 for local projects.

12/09/24 Community Council Scheme Review Update

It was agreed to advertise the four vacancies which will be on the Community Council at the end of November. A closing date of Friday 1st November will be put on the notices. If there are not enough people who come forward it was agreed to speak to individuals who might be interested.

13/09/24 Applications for Planning

There were no applications for planning.

14/09/24 Application for Donations

There were no applications for donations.

15/09/24 Application for Unadopted Road

There were no applications for unadopted roads.

16/09/24 Correspondence

16/09/24.1 Energy Isles UCC Representatives

This was covered in agenda item 09/09/24 Unst Partnership Ltd (UP) Update.

16/09.24.2 ASCC meeting - 6th November 2024

One of the items on the agenda for this meeting is the future funding on Community Councils. Claire has said she can attend.

17/09/24 Community Council Finances

Voluntary Action Shetland have audited the accounts and found them to be in order. A copy of the accounts has been sent to Michael Duncan, SIC Community Council Liaison Officer.

18/09/24 A.O.C.B.

18/09/24.1 Police Report

There were 2 incidents reported in June/July 2024 Police Report for Unst.

18/09/24.2 Roads

The grid at Shirva is in a dangerous condition, it is sloping to one side. The Clerk will write to SIC Roads about this.

18/09/24.3 Viking Genes – Professor Jim Flett Wilson, Edinburgh University

Claire and Janice met with Jim Wilson. He had applied to SCBF for funding to continue his Viking Gene research in Shetland. His application was turned down. Mr Wilson's research has identified three genes which are prevalent in Unst. He had proposed carrying out screening in Shetland to identify individuals who are carrying faulty genes. Members thought that this was a project which would have had positive benefits for the whole of Shetland. It was agreed to ask David to feedback Unst Community Council's views to SCBF, he is one of the directors.

19/09/24 Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting is Monday 4th November 2024

Chair: _____ Date: _____

Clerk: _____