

Stornoway Community Council

Minute of Meeting held in Newton Ward Community Rooms, Seaforth Road, Stornoway
on Thu 19 Dec 2024 at 7:00 pm

- Present**
- | | |
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| Robert Doig (Chair) | Kenneth Burns (Vice Chair) |
| Josh Gibbens (Treasurer) | Mike Macleod (Secretary) |
| Cameron Thompson | Cllr Rae Mackenzie |
| Cllr Frances Murray (by Zoom) | |
- 6 members of the public
- Apologies**
- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Betty Jappy | Janet MacDonald |
| Ian Minty | Morag Smith |
| Cllr Duncan Macinnes | Cllr Angus McCormack |
| Cllr George Murray | Cllr Gordon Murray |
| Kirsten Macinnes | Alex Macleod (Stornoway Port) |
- Minute of Meeting of 28 Nov**
- 2 This was adopted, proposed by Josh Gibbens, seconded by Kenneth Burns.
- Matters Arising**
- 3 *The written report by the Secretary was taken as read:*
- Item 4 – Matters Arising – The Secretary contacted the Children’s Report, who signposted him to Children’s Hearings Scotland, who oversee the Children’s Panel. We hope to arrange a meeting in the New Year.
- Item 6 – Proposed Closure of Stornoway Post Office – The Secretary has written to the Post Office itself and Alasdair Allan MSP. The Treasurer has emailed Torcuil Crichton MP. No replies as yet.
- Item 7a – Tourist Office Options – The Secretary has emailed Cllr Iain Macaulay as lead for the Traders Association (unfortunately this was done only very recently).
- Item 7b – HHP Maintenance of Properties – The Secretary has written to HHP. No reply as yet.
- Item 7d – Early Years Childcare on Stornoway – The Secretary has written to Donald Macleod, Director of Education and Children’s Services whose secretary has replied confirming that he will be able to attend our January meeting in person. The Secretary has also written to Gordon Jamieson, Chief Executive WIHB, but no reply as yet.
- Item 7f – Traffic Management Macaulay Road – The Secretary has emailed Mr David Macleay, Secretary to Stornoway Area Forum, cc to Mr Calum Mackenzie, the responsible officer at the Comhairle. No reply yet.
- Stornoway Port Authority**
- 4 The Chair related how, after our letter to Stornoway Port Authority and Press Release had gone out, he had had a lengthy and very informative telephone conversation with their Chief Executive Alex Macleod. Mr Macleod had explained that Stornoway Port had already finalised their plans for a van to take passengers luggage to and from the ferry, and it was purely by chance that they announced this shortly after our letter and press release. Mr Macleod had apologised for being unable to come to this meeting, but is willing to come to our February meeting.

Stornoway Port Authority (contd.)

- 4 A member of the public described an accident which a family member had had on the walkway to the car deck. After complaining they eventually received a letter of apology. Kenneth Burns mentioned how when the issue with the Passenger Access System first arose, they used to let the passengers go off first, but then a car got scratched, so they changed to the present arrangement. Stornoway Port were extremely lucky that there have been no fatalities in any of the incidents when people had fallen. The Chair suggested that they may need to scrap the existing Passenger Access System.

The Secretary suggested that Stornoway Port could have large notices placed in prominent positions, making clear that there were wheelchairs and assistance available for any passenger who has mobility issues. Kenneth Burns stated that the whole point of the Passenger Access System was to keep passengers totally encapsulated, also people with young children.

Cllr Rae Mackenzie stated it was ridiculous the amount of time this has taken. The Port Authority is the responsible body for getting people on and off the ferry – they should know by now if the replacement is coming. A member of the public asked, why can't they put something onto the ticket, for people to tick if they need help. Cllr Mackenzie asked, what about a minibus for passengers? The Secretary confirmed that we had suggested it. The Chair explained that the weather conditions here were a challenge. The design of the Passenger Access System originated in Spain, the Mediterranean, which does not have much tide. The high range of tide levels which the system had to cope with here was part of the issue.

It was agreed that we should email Alex Macleod as the Chief Executive, try and arrange an appointment, and include our suggestions.

Newton Battery Development

- 5 The Secretary confirmed that this development had been approved by the full Comhairle. He expressed his gratitude for the approach taken by Cllrs Rae Mackenzie, Frances Murray and Gordon Murray in opposing the development. The Secretary related the controversy over the Battery Energy Storage System in Danestone, a small village of 4,000 near Aberdeen. A Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) had been proposed on a brownfield site, even closer to housing than in Newton. Locals were also concerned about the closeness to the River Don – if the BESS were to go on fire, chemicals would pollute the River Don. Despite 58 objections, planning permission was granted in September. Resonances with the concerns which people in Newton had were obvious.

Kenneth Burns stated that when Councils have had controversial issues in the past, a moratorium was the solution. A BESS in the Borders made Reporting Scotland recently, the installation was to be almost up to someone's garden. On this development, the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service were consulted but did not reply. Cllr Rae Mackenzie expressed his concerns about the development, he had said he wasn't happy and put forward a motion. The Secretary referred to the difficulties Point & Sandwick Trust had had with the Stornoway Trust over their first windfarm, this had made them reluctant to go for the Arnish Road End development site which was the alternative. The Chair stated that it needs the Scottish Government to take some action. A member of the public expressed his concern about the accuracy of some statements made by Councillors during the debate prior to approval.

**Newton Battery
Development
(Contd.)**

- 5 After further discussion, it was agreed that we should write to Alasdair Allan MSP, asking him to lobby the Scottish Government to 'call in' the Newton and Danestone BESS developments, to impose a moratorium on BESS developments that are within a mile of residential housing, and to make the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service a Statutory Consultee on BESS projects. It was understood that our MSP may need to recuse himself from his ministerial duties. It was also agreed to write to the Highland & Islands List MSPs. The Chair asked if there were any last words on this. Cllr Rae Mackenzie said – Yes, we don't want it there (to laughter).

**Kenneth Street
Traffic**

- 6 The Secretary explained that a member of the public had expressed their concerns about the current situation – large articulated lorries will drive along Kenneth Street at some speed, causing buildings to vibrate, will then park at the alleyway into the back of the small Co-op, often obstructing traffic to some extent, while a forklift takes items down to the small Co-op.

The Chair explained that historically lorries would even reverse down the small close to where the small Co-op is now, until his uncle stopped this by putting some stanchions on his property. Members of the public expressed their concern about the situation. The forklift seems to be louder even than the lorry itself. There are significantly more than two deliveries per day. A petition had even been raised in Tigh Ceilidh against this, there was also concern about traffic and parking on the section of Church Street between Kenneth Street and Cromwell Street.

Josh Gibbens stated that there is a dangerous junction at Church Street. Without a traffic warden, the whole town is getting worse and worse. Kenneth Burns stated that the whole town needs to be designed better. It needs the Comhairle to have some discussion with the Community Council. Church Street between Kenneth Street and Cromwell Street should be a Pedestrian Precinct.

Cllr Frances Murray expressed regret that Cllr Angus McCormack had not been able to be present, as he knew most about the situation. There had been a Protocol in place, that carriers were not to bring articulated lorries into the town centre, but the protocol cannot be found now. A member of the public said they had witnessed a few arguments in the street because of this situation.

The Chair asked if it was possible to impose a weight restriction? These streets were not designed for articulated lorries. A member of the public stated that once they had spoken to the Council, deliveries are permitted from 7 in the morning to 11 at night. Concerns were expressed about the safety of the large lorries, especially as regards what could happen with the doors in extremely windy weather. The possibility that they could offload at the front of the Co-op was discussed. Cllr Rae Mackenzie confirmed it can take nine months for a Road Traffic Order to be set up.

It was agreed that the Secretary should email David Macleay of the Stornoway Area Forum and cc Calum Mackenzie, Cllr Frances Murray, Cllr Rae Mackenzie, and separately also write to DFDS as well.

AOCB	7
Stornoway Area Forum	<p>7a Cllr Rae Mackenzie referred to the Crown Estate funding of £100k which the Comhairle plans to improve the Pedestrian Precinct by adding bollards, and also cleaning up the town. The cleaning will start in the Spring. He had counted 20 cars yesterday in the Pedestrian Precinct. Charlie Nicolson stated that the Council is investigating a one-way system for Stornoway – Calum Mackenzie the man to see there as well. He referred to the Inverness system of bollards. A member of the public mentioned problems with bikes – left chained to drainage pipes, lampposts. HITRANS give grants for active travel stuff. We are seeing exponentially more cyclists, and need a cycle-park somewhere. Charlie Nicolson suggested asking the Free Church if they would allow a cycle park – they have a lot of space there.</p>
Melbost West Housing Development	<p>7b The Secretary reported visiting the Hebridean Housing Partnership at Sandwick Hall on 16 December. While HHP do not have the funding yet to begin the development, there is the prospect of up to 160 modern, energy efficient homes, and he thought we should support this development. The meeting agreed, but Cllr Rae Mackenzie pointed out that children’s facilities had not been adequate on the first development (Mackenzie Park).</p> <p>A member of the public stated that the path to connect Mackenzie Park with the football pitch had to be built afterwards. There was the potential for SSEN to come in and invest – HHP will get the houses afterwards, and ideally this will encourage young people to stay. Charlie Nicolson stated that he had to write to BT to get another broadband cable put in – good internet connections were needed for Health Service staff who might have emergency callouts etc. We need environment of a shop and other facilities. The Secretary is to write to HHP setting out these points.</p>
Childcare in Stornoway	<p>7c Charlie Nicolson explained that the Sandwick Group are looking at a Community Hub, working with An Lanntair, possibly pre-school – they were well ahead in their plans. Cameron Thompson said as regards An Cotan – Early Years Childcare – the Health Board’s involvement was still on the cards. The Health Board had got conflicting legal advice and had to clarify this – by the time they did, An Cotan had closed. It was now a bigger task because it mean restarting it, but the door has not been closed, from the Health Board’s perspective.</p>
Post Office Closure	<p>7d Charlie Nicolson said that next door to the Post Office we lost the TSB not so long ago. An agreement had been made with the Post Office that TSB customers could take cash in or get cash out there. We could use this argument as a follow-up.</p>
Treasurer’s Account	<p>7e Josh Gibbens gave an update on the delay the Community Council had encountered opening an account with the Royal Bank of Scotland. Charlie Nicolson stated that other voluntary organisations had been waiting nine or ten months. One had even taken out an account with the Credit Union instead. The Secretary agreed to call in and find out if this was an option.</p>
Close	<p>8 The Chair thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting.</p>