

# Stornoway Community Council

Minute of Meeting held in the Failte Centre, Bayhead Street, Stornoway  
on Thu 26 June 2025 at 7:00 pm

<b>Present</b>	Robert Doig (Chair) Mike Macleod (Secretary) Ian Minty Cllr Rae Mackenzie Cllr Frances Murray	Josh Gibbens (Treasurer) Betty Jappy Morag Smith Cllr Duncan MacInnes Cllr George Murray
<b>In Attendance</b>	Kirsten Macinnes (Community Development Worker) Sharon Reid (Community Development Worker)  Six members of the public.	Kaleigh Macleod (Community Development Worker)
<b>Apologies</b>	1 Kenneth Burns Cameron Thompson Cllr Angus McCormack	Janet Macdonald Cllr Malcolm Macdonald
<b>Minute of Meeting of 27 May 2025</b>	2 This was adopted with the amendment that on page1 - Apologies, Kenneth Burns should be added. Proposed by the Secretary and seconded by the Treasurer.	
<b>Matters Arising</b>	3 It was agreed that the written report circulated by the Secretary should be taken as read and incorporated into the Minute. Proposed by Morag Smith and seconded by Betty Jappy.  Closure of Stornoway Crown Post Office – We have had a reply from Torcuil Crichton MP. As we know he has raised this matter in Parliament, engaged with the responsible minister and government colleagues and the Post Office itself to try to ensure that Stornoway retains the full range of services which a Crown Post Office brings. At present the Post Office continues to evaluate the best solution for the Stornoway branch. Angus Campbell who runs the other two Post Office franchises in town in Newton and the Cearns, is not interested in taking on another franchise. Torcuil has written to the Co-op enquiring whether they would consider offering Post Office services through their Cromwell Street branch. Torcuil continues to engage with the relevant Government minister and with the Post Office team who are overseeing the conversion of Crown Post Offices to the franchise model nationally.  Item 4 – Macrae Place Parking Places – As instructed we wrote to HHP explaining that we would not be contacting the private property owners and asking them to pay their share of the costs, or contributing towards the cost ourselves. We await a reply.  Item 6 – Comhairle Finances – Stornoway Town Centre Legacy Fund – the Secretary decided we did not need to write to Malcolm Burr (Comhairle Chief Executive) on this after we were informed that Comhairle Officer Anne Murray had received written confirmation from the Scottish Government that the funds from sale of property were not ring-fenced.	

**Matters Arising  
(contd.)**

- 3 Item 6 – Comhairle Papers – We did have to write to Malcolm Burr on a variety of issues and included a request that if practical, Comhairle papers that relate specifically or mainly to Stornoway should be forwarded to the Community Council before meetings.

Item 7 – Removal of BT Payphones – We wrote to Torcuil Crichton MP after doing a bit more research, and followed up with speaking to his staff at some length this Monday. We found that BT has completely missed off their spreadsheet detailing the 47 callboxes to be closed, two callboxes – on Westview Terrace and remarkably on Keith Street just at the entrance to Murray Place – i.e. just a few yards from BT's Office along the road. These callboxes are marked inside for closure like the others. We put forward an argument that the callboxes should be kept open for at least six months after the changeover to Digital in the Western Isles which will happen in December 2025. Torcuil has replied – he himself is deeply concerned about this issue, notes the points we made and will write to BT.

AOCB – Faire Alarm System – we have written to Malcom Burr about this (in a letter which covered a number of issues).

**Stornoway Port  
Authority**

- 4 The Secretary reported that we did not get around to writing to them until last week. On Tuesday 17 June Councillor Gordon Murray wrote by email to Stornoway Port about the non-operational Passenger Access System and copied in Alasdair Allan MSP, the Scottish Transport Secretary .... and ourselves. We followed up same day with a two page letter on this issue by email to Stornoway Port, fully backing up Cllr Murray. We began to make preliminary enquiries about costs etc., for venues and advertising for a Public Meeting.

Shortly afterwards Stornoway Port made the announcement that they are now going to replace the Passenger Access System as per the front page of the Stornoway Gazette. At the moment it seems we do not immediately need to have a Public Meeting but we will keep this option in reserve. Clearly we will have to continue to pursue this issue and keep encouraging Stornoway Port to provide updates.

Regarding the very legitimate concerns raised at the last meeting on the infectious disease which arrived in Lerwick on a Cruise Ship, and what protocols should apply. On 18 June we wrote to Stornoway Port and for good measure asked about their plans to combat flood risk – SEPA maps show serious risk to the town centre, Newton and the causeway to Goat Island amongst other parts of town.

We have followed up by including control of infectious disease from cruise ships and Stornoway flood risk in our substantial letter to Malcolm Burr, and also wrote to Western Isles Health Board on the disease issue.

The Secretary said that most concerningly, in today's Gazette, we read that the same cruise ship which had the outbreak of gastroenteritis in Lerwick had attempted to enter Stornoway Harbour but been advised not to do so, due to the ongoing presence of an infectious disease amongst its passengers. Cllr George Murray reported that the ship has now left for Iceland.

*\*\*\*\* Kaleigh Macleod entered the meeting.*

**Stornoway Port  
(contd.)**

- 4 Cllr Rae Mackenzie stated that the broken Passenger Access System has been brought up at the Comhairle on a number of occasions. It is all very well for them to say they are looking into it. It was brought up again at the Transportation Committee last week. There seems to be more urgency from the Port Authority now, but it will be a long haul. There seems to be more consideration given to cruise ship passengers than to the general public. The Chair stated that we do of course have to wait for Stornoway Port to have one of their regular board meetings.

A member of the public pointed out that the Passenger Access System was an island-wide issue. The Chair suggested that we incorporate this thought into our discussion under item 5. Charlie Nicolson suggested that rather than write to the Stornoway Port Chief Executive, we should write to the Chair, and copy the board members, also following up with the MP and MSP.

The difference between cruise ships and the Loch Seaforth was discussed. Cllr Duncan Macinnes stated that height was part of the issue, there is only one passenger door on the Loch Seaforth, whereas cruise ships will have multiple doors.

Cllr Frances Murray discussed the composition of the Stornoway Port Board, and the desirability of having a community representative as of right. However it was agreed that this would require primary legislation.

Morag Smith suggested a minibus would be appropriate to help disabled people. A member of the public stated that the more people who write to the Port Authority about this, the better. What annoys her is the way they say it, giving the impression that it is just today it is not working. It was agreed that we should remind Stornoway Port of our suggestion that there should be a large notice near the departure door, making passengers with restricted mobility aware that help is available to get them through the car deck.

It was agreed that the Community Council should write again, this time to the Chair of Stornoway Port

**Possible  
discussions with  
other Community  
Councils about  
renewables**

- 5 The Chair mentioned that Ian Minty had suggested having meetings with other Community Councils on matters of common interest. The Secretary remarked that he had received a similar suggestion from a community representative on the West Side. Ian Minty suggested, not just the West Side, but bring together all the Lewis Community Councils.

Cllr Frances Murray pointed out that there is a Western Isles Association of Community Councils but this was dormant – it has had no meeting since 2020. Sandwick Community Council had paid £200 as their subscription towards this Association, but the Association only held one meeting after that – the structure is still there but dormant.

A member of the public referred to a meeting about renewables on the mainland where 53 Community Councils attended. This asked for a moratorium on the main SSEN transmission line to Beaully until “we have a proper electricity policy”. We should be pressing the Scottish Government hard for a better deal. The Council is saying they have a 20% buy-in policy – but this could easily go pear-shaped.

It was agreed to contact Shona Hadwen with a proposal that island Community Councils should discuss matters of common concern.

- 6 The Secretary explained that this planning application could go for consideration soon. His clear understanding is that residents of the most recent HHP development at Sinclair Avenue seem very happy with their homes, which are well insulated and cheap to heat. The Secretary's thoughts were that we should support this development in principle, since the island definitely needs more modern, energy-efficient homes.

The Treasurer expressed his concern that a development of this kind will attract a younger population with children and this in turn will impact schools. Cllr Frances Murray stated that they had been told, there was capacity at Stornoway Primary. The Treasurer asked if it was known what the forward projections for school entry are? Morag Smith stated that Bayble had capacity. The Treasurer stressed the requirement for developers to contribute to infrastructure and mentioned the possibility of an agreement between Comhairle and the developer under s75 of the 1997 legislation. Kirsten Macinnes stated that with Mackenzie Park, the developer added a play area eventually. HHP have taken on board what people have said. Cllr Rae Mackenzie stated that with Mackenzie Park there were no facilities to start off with, in fact a shocking lack of facilities.

Charlie Nicolson said that infrastructure is not going with new housing developments. Some of the Mackenzie Park residents had stayed previously at Plasterfield, and found the cost of heating was much lower than at Plasterfield. We need to get infrastructure in from the start. He stressed the importance of having IT and Internet – even the mobile signal is poor. When he was a Councillor, Charlie had had to write to the Chair of BT before it improved. There were also concerns about the bus shelters. There could be forty to fifty young people waiting for buses but there is only one bus shelter which can only take a few people. They will need cover in the winter. Kirsten Macinnes stated that a bus area is to go the space next to Mackenzie Park. We should ask that provision of playing areas should be a planning condition. Cllr Frances Murray pointed out that Sandwick Community Council was against the development.

On the Secretary's proposal, seconded by Morag Smith, it was agreed that the Community Council would write to support the development but the concerns discussed here should be included and we should also write to the MP about the internet/mobile signal conditions. Secretary to circulate our response, including Charlie Nicolson and Rae Mackenzie before sending.

- 7 The Secretary outlined two possibilities for a Community Consultation – in addition to online, a printed form to be hand-delivered to 2,300 houses, which would require a print run of at least 3,000 or a Royal Mail Door 2 Door Delivery to over 3,600 premises costing £254, this would necessitate a print run of 4,500. The forms to have a QR code. He outlined some questions including on Sunday opening.

Ian Minty said are we putting the cart before the horse here, do we in fact need a community consultation? A member of the public stated that you would be lucky to get a 35% response rate. Around ten years ago a survey was carried out in the "Stornoway West" area – this found in favour of Sunday Opening. The Chair said if we don't do it, we have not made an effort to find out what the community wants.

- 7 Morag Smith stated that the Comhairle did a Survey in 2017 – but the data was lost in the cyber attack. The Treasurer pointed out that the duty of a Community Council is to ascertain the views of the community. Cllr Rae Mackenzie stated that he was supportive – it would be a good thing to find out what the community thought. Kirsten Macinnes proposed that we could go out to centres, and help people complete the questionnaire.

*\*\*\*\* Cllr Frances Murray left the meeting.*

Another member of the public stated that the Comhairle should do it. Cllr Rae Mackenzie stated that it would be a good exercise – it would benefit the Community Council to know what the situation is. Tearlach Wilson said people need to know that their Community Council is active and engaging with them. The possibility of having drop-boxes at the Library or Doctors, where people could leave their completed forms was discussed. Morag Smith stated that it should be delivered to every home and business and two or three of us should go out to collect them. One question she would like to see included is – do people feel safe in the community? Tearlach Wilson is willing to translate the form into Gaelic.

It was agreed in principle to proceed with a Community Consultation. Morag Smith, the Secretary and the Treasurer will make a start on it. The Secretary to obtain information from the Community Development Workers and begin collating some questions.

**AOCB**

- 8 Anti-Social Behaviour – Cllr Rae Mackenzie asked how the situation on the Kennedy Terrace area was. The Chair stated that some residents had come in to report a noticeable improvement. Kaleigh Macleod stated there had been a lot of agency involvement as well. The Chair said that teenagers were being given other opportunities. Kirsten Macinnes said there was a big focus on early intervention – the Community Policeman was involved – intervention was as early as P6 – P7. There was very positive feedback on the Community Policeman. Cllr Duncan Macinnes reported that funding for the Community Policeman had been extended for another year.

Areas of Linguistic Significance – Tearlach Wilson reported that the Scottish Languages Bill has been passed by the Scottish Parliament. Amongst other matters, Areas of Linguistic Significance will be established – these will have the same impact as Areas of Special Scientific Importance – Kirsten Macinnes said there are things you are not allowed to do in conservation areas.

Correspondence with MP – Morag Smith reported that she has been approached by two people who had each separately written to Torcuil Crichton MP about Cuts in Welfare Benefits and not had the courtesy of a reply. The Secretary explained that, while it was common knowledge that he was a Labour Party activist, he would write a strong letter of enquiry to the MP on this concerning matter and would liaise with Morag to ensure that the letter met with her approval.

Care Home Charges – A member of the public expressed concern that when the Comhairle has to recover home charges from the estate of an elderly person who has passed away, they will not sell croft houses, but will sell houses in Stornoway. Cllr Rae Mackenzie stated that this was not correct, they had to be treated the same. This was confirmed by Cllrs George Murray and Duncan Macinnes.

## AOCB (Contd.)

- 8 Coastal Communities Funding – Charlie Nicolson asked how this was proceeding. Cllr Duncan Macinnes stated that all the successful applicants will be notified soon. Charlie said we need to look at volunteering – consider how best to take this forward – currently we are going back the way – we should put it on the agenda. Kirsten Macinnes suggested inviting Volunteer Hebrides to a future meeting.

Church Street/Kenneth Street – Tearlach Wilson explained that he had met with the Comhairle Transport Department today and expressed his concerns. Cllr Rae Mackenzie stated that he had consulted with people at the lower end of Church Street and the difficulty is that there is not a clear unanimity of views. Tearlach expressed his wish for a full and open consultation. Cllr Duncan Macinnes expressed his hope that a meeting can be held with all stakeholders.

Town Centre Legacy Fund – Cllr Rae Mackenzie asked about the outcome of the £450k which had been taken away from the Legacy Fund. The Secretary explained that once it was confirmed that the Comhairle had received written confirmation from the Scottish Government that this money was not ring-fenced, we could not go any further with this issue.

Newton Battery Energy Storage System – Cllr Rae Mackenzie asked for an update on this. The Secretary reported that we had been in contact with Alasdair Allan MSP, who had been very helpful in writing a number of letters. We had separately been in contact with Jamie Dobson, the LibDem candidate here in 2024, who has persuaded Willie Rennie MSP to take up the enquiry. The Scottish Government has now commissioned a study to provide the planning guidance for BESS schemes. We had now discovered that the most pessimistic of the SEPA Future Flood Risk maps indicates that the causeway/road to Goat Island will be at risk, perhaps as soon as the 2040s, which makes the proposed location for the BESS at Newton even more problematic. Melinda Gillen mentioned that Climate Hebrides is separately doing work on flooding. Brian Whittington would be happy to come along and do a presentation on flooding. It was agreed the Secretary will discuss this with Brian.

## Close

- 9 The Chair thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting.