

Stornoway Community Council

Minute of Meeting held in the Newton Ward Rooms, Seaforth Road, Stornoway
on Thu 31 July 2025 at 7:00 pm

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| Present | Robert Doig (Chair)
Josh Gibbens (Treasurer)
Ian Minty
Cllr Frances Murray | Kenneth Burns (Vice Chair)
Mike Macleod (Secretary)
Cameron Thompson
Cllr George Murray |
| In Attendance | Brian Whittington
(Climate Hebrides)
Kirsten Macinnes (Community
Development Worker) | Carol Raeburn
(Scottish Flood Forum) |
| | Five members of the public. | |
| Apologies | 1 Betty Jappy
Cllr Duncan Macinnes
Kaleigh Macleod | Morag Smith
Cllr Angus McCormack |
| Minute of Meeting
of 26 June 2025 | 2 | This was adopted, proposed by the Treasurer, seconded by Ian Minty. |
| Matters Arising | 3 | <p>It was agreed that the Secretary's email update on Stornoway Port should be taken as read: As regards Stornoway Port Authority and the broken Passenger Access System. We wrote to their Chair explaining that we hoped to hold a Public Meeting, and also to our MP, MSP, the Labour Holyrood Candidate, Conservative and Lib Dem representatives and Councillors. The Stornoway Port Chair has replied, explaining that they plan to hold their Annual Public Meeting around mid-September, and also that they must remain neutral and avoid participating in events that may be perceived as political in nature. That is, Stornoway Port would not be able to attend a public meeting of the kind we had suggested. Realistically one possible way forward would be for us to encourage as many people as possible to attend the Stornoway Port meeting in September, and then consider at our regular meeting at end-September whether we will hold our own public meeting in late October (to keep it well away from the Mod).</p> <p>The Secretary confirmed that we had contacted Shona Hadwen of CNES regarding meeting with other Community Councils, and discovered there is to be a meeting of Lewis Community Councils on 11 August. The Secretary and Treasurer hope to attend.</p> |
| Future Flood Risk
for Stornoway | 4 | The Chair introduced Mr Brian Whittington of Climate Hebrides and Ms Carol Raeburn of the Scottish Flood Forum. Brian explained some of the background of Climate Hebrides – it had its origins in the Community Planning Partnership – Climate Sub Group, and was founded after a meeting with a number of young people who were concerned about climate change. Climate Hebrides now has 230 members in the Western Isles – both private individuals and businesses. |

**Future Flood Risk
for Stornoway
(contd.)**

- 4 Brian Whittington explained that Climate Hebrides has a map put together with some Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) data. Looking back there had been major flooding in Stornoway in 1974, then again in 2013. They have data on three areas in the islands, each with 5 km radiuses, between 1961-1990. There is a one degree temperature increase across the Highlands & Islands, rainfall went up for North Uist in the Summer, while Winter saw a fairly uniform rainfall increase. There are 22.4 days a year of extremely bad weather at present. By the 2050s there will be an extra four additional days on top of the existing 22.4. By the 2090s there will be another nine days. Two generations ago the islands were generally self-sufficient in terms of food, they only had to import items such as tea and sugar. Now the majority of foodstuffs have to be imported. Stornoway can expect a 30% increase in rainfall in winter. In Spring there could be an increase of between 13% and 27%. In Summer, possibly a 5% reduction.

Brian explained that Climate Hebrides had been charged with getting a mapping programme set up, gathering data from across the islands. There are implications for services if a road is flooded. The mapping is supplemented with real data from individuals. He gave an example of the difficulties at Sandwick Cemetery. And this was with only a 15 cm increase in sea level over the last 25 years. The expensive part will be in fixing the infrastructure that is there now. Climate Hebrides goes into schools, runs Climate competitions and gives Climate Cup Awards.

Carol Raeburn explained that the Scottish Flood Forum is a Charity funded by the Scottish Government to support individuals who have issues with flooding. They support people who have to make insurance claims and offer advice. Their Resilience Team can offer advice on protecting homes and businesses from flooding. It is clear that Stornoway is susceptible to flooding from rivers, sea and rainfall. Carol gave the example of Perth last week – there was a Yellow Weather Warning – 55 mm of Rain fell in 2 hours. Changes are coming with weather patterns.

Carol explained that you can go onto the SEPA Flood Map – put in your own postcode/address and find the risks for your property. Flood risk will hit you in your pocket as insurance premiums go up. If you live in a flood area it will limit your options – fewer insurers will take you on. There is a knock-on effect of flooding for insurers and mortgage providers. There is an option for insurance policies – you can check out a flooding option which is in existence until 2039. Her suggestion was that if you are in a flood-risk area, get your insurer to amend your policy as regards flooding.

The Scottish Flood Forum offers help under the 'Build Back Better' scheme – this offers up to £10,000 to improve your home's 'recoverability'. This can help you get a bespoke flood-door which can cost £5k-10k. You can also get automatic air bricks, flood prevention guides, free assessments on your property. The cost of floods is significant – between £35k – 48k, and you can be out of your home for anything up to 18 months. Carol would be happy to come back and talk at a later date.

Cllr Frances Murray asked if there were flood maps for other areas. Brian stated that there were examples all round the island chain, Uist in particular. Ian Minty referred to the incident near the Baleshare Causeway in 2005 when large areas of land were lost to severe storms.

Future Flood Risk for Stornoway (contd.)

- 4 Kenneth Burns referred to flooding incidents he had encountered in Glasgow. Carol Raeburn gave the example of a flood in Brechin in 2023 – 200 homes had been impacted. Brian Whittington stated that we need a comprehensive Risk Register. Along with SEPA data, there is NHS data – the NHS is terrified of flood risk. Carol said many insurance companies use SEPA flood maps which will give you probability – used to be 1 in 200 years, now its 1 in 50, even 1 in 33. Insurers sometimes have even more detailed maps than SEPA – it is advisable to start shopping around for insurance – essential to read the insurers’ questions very carefully. As regards adaptations and retrofits – we need to think about heat pumps. Also to consider what calls we put on emergency services. Tearlach Wilson pointed out that a lot of the projected flooding will affect the Stornoway Conservation area – and there are restrictions on what property-owners can do there.

Brian said that it comes down to having information on risk, and getting better at understanding risk. Carol stressed the importance of community resilience. She mentioned silicon sandbags. Brian mentioned that Climate Hebrides is able to offer £1,000 per group for projects. The Secretary suggested a Round Table approach – getting stakeholders together to get agreement on the scale of the challenges and the remedial actions required. Brian said the Community Council has a leadership role here – Councillors need to take a role – an event of this kind is exactly what the fund is here for. The Treasurer has seen a local flood risk plan – he will find it and circulate. The Secretary will write to Malcolm Burr of CNES suggesting a localised meeting for the Stornoway area. Carol will do further research.

Scottish Languages Act – Implications for Stornoway Businesses

- 5 Tearlach Wilson explained that by now he had hoped to have a meeting with the relevant Council officers and stakeholders, but this meeting will not take place until tomorrow. The Secretary expressed his concern that if Stornoway is not designated as an Area of Linguistic Significance (ALS), then local businesses which perform outreach work on Gaelic will miss out on potential funding opportunities. Tearlach said this was about protecting our intangible cultural heritage. Cllr Frances Murray confirmed that she has spoken to the relevant Comhairle official – the position is that the whole of the Western Isles should be designated an ALS. Tearlach mentioned that Highland Council is considering designated Ullapool as an ALS. If all of the Western Isles was an ALS then this would be the only Council in Scotland.

Update on Proposed Community Consultation

- 6 As the Secretary has not been able to progress, agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

AOCB

- 7 Stornoway Port Authority – Broken Passenger Access System – The Secretary reported that CalMac had now put up displays in Stornoway and Ullapool explaining how the Luggage Van system works, and giving drop-off and pick-up points. After discussion, it was agreed that the Secretary should write to CalMac suggesting that they should add a further display board, explaining that assistance from CalMac staff is available for any foot passenger who is disabled or who has mobility issues, for when they negotiate the Car Deck. Also that an explanation of this should be given verbally when foot passengers are asked to stay on board until all the motor vehicles have disembarked at Stornoway.

AOCB (contd.)

- 7 Stornoway Port Authority – Infectious Diseases Risk – The Secretary reported that Stornoway Port had replied to our enquiry, Mr Malcolm Burr of CNES had verbally acknowledged receipt of our letter and committed to reply. However there had been no reply from Western Isles Health Board. It was agreed that the Secretary should write to Alasdair Allan MSP if necessary to pursue this.

Financial Report – The Treasurer reported that we now have a bank account and have received funds from CNES. Agreed that the Secretary should write formally to Shona Hadwen of CNES to thank her for all her help.

White Ribbon Campaign – Cllr Frances Murray explained that this was an International organisation, which had started in Canada. The aim was to make men and boys aware of crimes of violence against women. There is an invitation-only launch event – they are looking for “Champions” to progress this initiative.

Western Isles Islands Games Association – agreed that the Secretary should write to congratulate the team and organisers on the good performance by the Western Isles Team in Orkney.

Visit by First Minister on 15 August – The Secretary confirmed that he had received an invitation to meet John Swinney in An Lanntair.

Close

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