

APPROVED Minutes of the AKCC Meeting held in Avoch Pavilion at 7.30 pm on Monday 3rd March 2025.

Present:

Members: Derek MacIver, Chair (DM), Fraser Brunton, Vice-Chair & Minutes (FB), Tim Phillips, Treasurer (TP), Rosie Brunton, Secretary (RB), Stuart Bruce (SB)

In Attendance: David Brims (DB), Alistair Adie (AA), Jenni Carmichael (JC), Caroline Eccles (CE), Debbie du Preez (DdP)

Apologies: Cllr Morven-May MacCallum (MMM), Nicolaas du Preez (NdP), Drew Mann (DMn)

- | 1. | Welcome and apologies | Action |
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| | DM welcomed everyone. Apologies were as above. | |
| 2. | Minutes of the Meeting held on 3rd February 2025 | |
| | The draft minutes of the meeting held on 3 rd February 2025 were proposed by RB and seconded by DM as an accurate record. | |
| 3. | Matters Arising from the Minutes of 3rd February 2024 | |
| | FB thanked those who had provided updates on their matters arising in advance. He referred to the Matters Arising Register and reported the following progress by exception. Matters Arising covered by agenda items were covered later in the meeting. | |
| | 3.1 Item 5c(iii)/020924: Safety of Pavilion Bridge – DM understood that Rosehaugh Estates had no responsibility for the bridge. MMM was investigating if Highland Council owned it. DM had not managed to discuss the matter with Avoch Amenities Association as there had been no recent meetings. DM to contact Andy McLeman to discuss and to obtain AAA meeting dates. DB agreed to follow-up RB’s suggestion that Avoch Men’s Shed might be able to carry out a visual inspection of the bridge. | DM to contact AMcL

DB to contact Men’s Shed |
| | 3.2 Item 5c(iii)/071024: Railway Footpath – The Highland Council Access Committee member that MMM tried to contact had been ill, so she had sought an alternative. As the Council did not own the land, it may be unable to provide support for any works. TP referred to the excellent work being undertaken on the north part of the footpath by Lucy Vaughan and others. TP said he would circulate details of the programme of works, which was being supported by Fortrose and Rosemarkie Community Council. | MMM to advise

TP to circulate Lucy Vaughan’s report |
| | 3.3 Item 11/020924: Christmas Lights Testing – RB said that she had met with SB and NdP and that she was in the progress of completing the risk assessment. | RB to complete |
| | 3.4 Item 5a/041124: AKCC Bank Charges – TP had been considering changing banks to avoid the new bank charges of £50 pa, now being levied on AKCC’s account. It was suggested that the matter be raised with the Black Isle Community Council. Although there was support for TP’s view that the charges should be accepted as the bank provided a good service, he said he would contact the bank to ask for the charges to be waived, before a final decision was made. | TP to discuss charges with Bank |

3.5 Item 3c(ii)/290424: Brae Steps – It was agreed that AA and CE would investigate if the Community Group that had cleared the vegetation above Lazy Corner would be willing to take on further community projects (see Item 10 below). AA said he was willing to help with the Brae Steps.

**AA/CE to investigate
AA to help with Steps**

3.6 Item 5c(ii)/161224: Community Grit Bin – DB confirmed that additional Grit Bins had been provided in Ormonde Terrace.

3.7 Item 5c(iii)/030225: Flooding in AKCC Area – FB said he had circulated a provisional list of potential flooding sites and had received a considerable number of helpful comments. The main concerns included the area around Avoch Burn inland from the shore; the area around the Avoch end of the Corrachie Road ('The Den'); Mannsfield Place (including the A832 below it, the school, the adjacent buildings and the playing field); the steep bank above Ormonde Terrace/Henrietta Street; Killen Bridge; the A832 between Avoch and Fortrose; and parts of Rosehaugh Estate.

MMM had reported that Highland Council was appointing a new member of staff, whose work would include clearing the considerable debris from Avoch Burn. TP said there was correspondence in 2023 between AKCC and Highland Council regarding local concerns about the lack of adequate drainage sumps and increased flooding below Mannsfield Place, affecting the school and surrounding area. At that time, Highland Council had been unable to help to solve the problem or provide support to address the impact of recurrent flooding on the school, its pupils and their education. FB had visited Killen Bridge where fallen trees and branches were obstructing water flow and exerting pressure on the bridge parapets.

DMn offered to support the work being undertaken to identify local flood sites and raise awareness of the associated issues. It was subsequently agreed that FB and DMn would visit the potential flood sites and appeal for photographs of associated damage to support the work being undertaken. Residents had already raised concerns about the recent flooding with Highland Council. RB had contacted the Highland Council's Resilience Team and discussions would be held with other stakeholders.

FB and DMn to visit flood sites

3.8 The remaining Matters Arising from the meeting on 3rd February 2025 had either been completed or were minuted below under the corresponding agenda item.

4. AKCC Action Plan Update

RB had circulated v15 of the AKCC Action Plan, which had been updated to reflect recent progress on the key issues, including the Avoch Toilets; and to include the Avoch & Killen Nature Plan and Flood Plan. FB said he would continue to present verbal summaries at AKCC meetings.

5. Recurring Community Council Matters

5a Finance Update – TP said that AKCC's financial position had not changed significantly since the February meeting. He said he would send future finance reports to RB, a month in arrears, so she could circulate them with the meeting papers. TP was uploading finance reports for 2024/25 to the AKCC network drive. Highland Council funding had been received.

TP to add reports to AKCC Drive

TP said he would renew AKCC's Public Liability insurance and that he had

contacted the North Highland Funding Initiative about the funding available for community projects such as the Avoch Public Toilets.

5b Planning and Related Issues

5b(i) FB referred to the Environment Scoping Opinion consultation request (25/00226/SCOP) about the proposed expansion of the current Ardersier Port development. CE said she had contacted RSPB. FB had met TP and replied to the consultation, acknowledging receipt of the extensive document describing the scope of the proposed Environmental Impact Assessment, which supported the developer's application to increase the footprint of the existing site. The outcome was awaited with interest.

5b(ii) It was reported that some land in the vicinity of the Corrachie may have been zoned for housing, although the details were unclear. **FB to clarify**

5b(iii) It was confirmed that the land opposite the Avoch Scotmid used as a car park was being sold. It had been hoped that Scotmid might purchase the land, which was a local focal point, convenient for shoppers and those visiting village businesses nearby.

5c Community Concerns Arising

5c(i) Dog Waste Concerns – There was increasing community concern about the small minority of dog walkers, who failed to dispose of dog waste responsibly. RB had investigated options for new notices for the dog waste dispensers and had found a supplier of new, low-cost dispenser boxes that could supplement current coverage and help raise social awareness.

MMM had contacted the Highland Council Dog Warden about emptying the dog waste bin at Alexander Street and scheduling visits to Avoch. She had also investigated placing a dog waste bin near the boatshed on the track between Avoch Industrial Estate and the Water Works. It was acknowledged that adding bins alone would not solve the current problem.

MMM to investigate provision of further dog waste bin

MMM had provided RB with details of the arrangements for requesting special collections of diverse types of waste.

5d Police Report – RB had received a police report confirming that there had been 13 incidents in the Avoch area since February 2025, two of which required the allocation of a police officer. These incidents involved an assault and a communications offence. No incidents were recorded for the Killen area. JC said there would be another 'Coffee with a Cop' meeting at No.19 and that she would confirm the date.

RB had received an email, dated 3 March 2025, from Chief Inspector Calum Smith, North Highland Area Commander, Police Scotland, to Community Councillors and Councillors.

He acknowledged Community Councils' concerns about the seeming lack of police engagement and said they would now receive monthly reports. Each community council was also to be invited to send one or two representatives to quarterly meetings with the local police inspector. If there were specific concerns, then a police officer could be invited to attend a council meeting.

5e Correspondence – Secretary's Report (RB)

5e(i) Notification from NHS Highland offering 2-day courses on Mental Health First Aid, between April - December at Golspie (April), Dingwall/ **RB to advertise**

Invergordon (June), Fort William (August) and Inverness (September & December). She planned to post details on Noticeboards and Facebook.

- 5e(ii)** Email dated 3rd March 2025, from Laura Donnelly, Project Officer (Transition Black Isle) advertising an event on Saturday 8th March about sustainability and zero waste collection. RB to circulate details
- 5e(iii)** Email dated 19th February 2025, from Maria Gonzalez Garcia, a BA Honours student in Business & Management with Finance, UHI, seeking information for a dissertation examining how UK government debt impacted on businesses in rural regions, with a focus on the Scottish Highlands.
- 6. Avoch Amenities Association (AAA) Update**
It was understood that AAA had not met recently. RB had contacted Andy McLeman (Chair) requesting meeting dates and if a quarterly report could be provided but had not received a reply. AKCC agreed it wanted to support AAA if possible. DM said he would discuss the situation with AMcL. **DM to discuss with AMcL**
- 7. Black Isle Community Councils & Black Isle Place Plan Update**
TP said the next meeting was to be held later in March 2025. It was agreed that DM or TP would attend. **DM/TP to attend**
- 8. AKCC Website Update**
FB reported on the progress being made by CL. He had circulated a revised draft web structure based on the combination of the existing site and the menu structure proposed by TP. FB said it had been agreed that the working title for the site would be 'Avoch and Killen Live.' DdP asked if the Primary School could be highlighted and offered to provide information. **TP to contact DdP**
- 9. Avoch Public Toilets Working Group Update**
RB said a Public Engagement Survey, prepared with DMn's help, had been undertaken seeking views on the main options. She said 112 responses had been received so far. The next meeting was on 17th March.
- 10. Brae Steps & Railway Line – Improvement Works and Volunteers**
There was discussion about the work needed on the Brae Steps and on the Avoch section of the Railway Line. DM reiterated his concerns about the increasing presence of weeds in Avoch and the need to tackle them.
- The excellent projects being undertaken by various community groups and individuals were widely appreciated in Avoch. RB asked if one or more community volunteer groups could also be formed to take on the work, supported by AKCC, to improve the Brae Steps, Railway Line, weed clearing, etc. CE said she would like to participate in community projects but not in a co-ordinating or leadership role. AA and CE agreed to meet to discuss how RB's suggestion could be taken forward. **AA and CE to meet**
- FB thanked AA for his interest and participation in the various environmental projects, including supporting work on Himalayan Balsam and the Railway Line. FB proposed that AA became a full member of AKCC with responsibility for leading on environmental matters and supporting the work of community groups. AA was pleased to accept the nomination, which was seconded by DM.
- Removal of rubbish from Avoch beach had started. Kathy Taylor had obtained beach cleaning equipment and a wooden storage box from the Moray Firth Community Partnership.

- RB had prepared a helpful health and safety crib sheet for volunteers undertaking work on behalf of AKCC. She said she would circulate it to members and associate members for information and requesting that they raise health and safety awareness when supporting the work of volunteers. **RB to circulate H&S crib sheet**
- 11. Avoch and Killen Nature Conservation Plan**
 Caroline Eccles (CE) referred to the latest draft, which included photographs and had been publicised on social media, etc. It provided an excellent framework for community projects, which could be owned by the community; supported by AKCC, AAA and other stakeholders. Its purpose was to create local awareness and understanding of the local environment; encourage community support, appropriate management and promote responsible enjoyment and appreciation of the local surroundings.
- DM raised concerns about the plan's farming inferences. Although CE said that the plan was about nature rather than farming, she said she would review the plan and amend as required to address any concerns. DM and CE agreed to discuss the matter separately. **DM and CE to discuss**
- 12. Avoch Sharing Shed Update**
 TP had given details for the proposed walk-in storage shed (floor area approximately 6 feet x 8 feet) to the joiner, who built the Cromarty Larder. TP said the anticipated cost was approximately £1000. He said Scotmid had generously granted £500 and that he would also contact the North Highland Funding Initiative (NHFI) for support. FB referred to the previous agreement that AAA, who owned the land, had asked to see details of the design before the new storage shed was constructed. TP said he had purchased a moisture absorber for use in the Sharing Shed. **TP to contact NHFI TP to send storage design details to AAA**
- 13. AKCC Assets**
 Due to other commitments, SB had been unable to make progress with the Asset Register, records and maintenance schedule.
- The need to replace the faulty Christmas light strings was discussed. SB said he would provide contact details for a Glenrothes supplier and for the supplier used by Highland Council. RB suggested that AAA could be approached for support with funding when costs were known. **SB to provide contact details**
- 14. AOCB**
 RB said she had met the Highland Council Emergency Planning Officer to discuss the proposed Resilience Plan for Avoch and Killen. The plan, based on the Highland Council resilience template, would describe the arrangements for providing community support in various emergency situations, including flooding. She said she would circulate the plan for discussion when it had been developed further. **RB to prepare Plan for discussion**
- 15. Date of Next Meeting**
 Monday 7th April 2025 at 7.30 pm in Avoch Pavilion.