



# Shieldaig Community Council

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D R A F T

## Minutes of meeting Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2025

**Present: Highland Councillors:** Chris Birt. **Community Councillors:** Jim Alexander, Julia Böger, Ian Livingstone, Richard Munday, Daniel Sharp. **Members of the public:** Kalie Wilkinson.

**Apologies:** Hugh Gosling, Laura Mackenzie

**Community councillors approved the minutes of the previous meeting of 28<sup>th</sup> November.**

### 1. Matters arising

#### 1.1. Fish Farming

The meeting noted that the report of the Scottish Parliament Rural Affairs and Islands Committee follow-up inquiry into salmon farming in Scotland was published on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2025. The report acknowledged that progress in tackling the impacts of salmon farming was slow but stopped short of calling for a moratorium on new sites or expansion at existing sites.

The report can be viewed here: <https://www.parliament.scot/-/media/files/committees/rural-affairs-and-islands-committee/salmon-farming-in-scotland-report.pdf>

Following Dougie MacLeod's attendance at the previous meeting to discuss Bakkafröst's local operations, the Community Council agreed that arranging subsequent updates would be a good thing and to include MOWI as well, if possible. It was noted that Dougie had mentioned the possibility of arranging an on-site visit. **Action: Community Councillors** to express an interest to Daniel regarding an on-site visit. **Daniel** to contact Dougie.

#### 1.2. Hybrid Meetings

**Action: Daniel** to test feasibility by setting up a remote meeting via a laptop in the Hall prior to the next Community Council meeting.

#### 1.3. Visitor Levy

The meeting discussed the Visitor Levy. Cllr Birt advised that it is almost certain that the Levy will be going ahead; some aspects of it are fixed in law, others are dependent on how the Levy is implemented. Imposing the Levy as a percentage charge of the cost of board, but not including any food, is part of the legislation, and including the charge as a part of a business turnover is apparently necessary according to current HMRC rules. The possibility of the imposition of a simple standard charge per room per night is not included in the current legislation. No decisions on how to implement the Levy in Highland have yet to be made, but informal discussions have indicated that Highland residents might be completely exempt from the Levy, and other exemptions might also apply (e.g. when residents from outwith Highland need to stay in Inverness for hospital-related reasons, or when workers resident outwith Highland are working on contracts requiring them to be in Highland, etc.).

The Community Council expressed its concern that the complexity and further bureaucracy required to collect and account for the Levy may become a disincentive to small local businesses, and that some may decide to cease trading as a result. However, Cllr Birt pointed out that (apart from the use of a percentage charge) the Scottish legislation merely brings Scotland into line with normal European practice.

Those choosing to camp with vehicles outwith campsites are not included in the Levy legislation, and the Community Council was concerned that this might lead to an increase in informal camping, and to the associated problems which could follow this. Cllr Birt acknowledged this concern, and he expressed the hope that the Scottish Government would introduce new legislation to cover motorhomes, etc. He also hoped that the Highland Council may be able to provide more special

parking areas (maybe in campsites) for motorhomes. He reported that he had seen proposals regarding how cruise passengers coming ashore might be taxed. The consultation on the Visitor Levy runs until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 and submissions can be made via the Highland Council website:  
[https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1457/tourism\\_and\\_visitor\\_attractions/1142/visitor\\_levy](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1457/tourism_and_visitor_attractions/1142/visitor_levy)

## 2. Finance

The Community Council was grateful to Jim for opening its new bank account, which was needed as our previous provider had decided to impose account charges. Jim advised that the Bank of Scotland account was closed, and the new Virgin Money account was open with the balance of £5,415 transferred. Online access to the account was set up and a cheque book issued. Jim and Richard are already account signatories and Julia volunteered to be a third.

## 3. Housing

Richard informed the meeting, having received an update from Kirsty Campbell, Interim Senior Development & Investment Officer at Albyn Housing Society:

- 3.1. Fire reinstatement at Baile Shuas:** work was progressing well, with the aim of completion in April/May. Albyn would take up the issue of the abandoned caravan.
- 3.2. Progress with funding and buildability studies for 4 new Albyn units:** awaiting a future progress update on this from Albyn.

The meeting discussed local housing concerns. Councillor Birt advised that Highland Council aimed to have 24,000 houses built within the next 10 years, of which 7,000 would be social and 17,000 for purchase. Highland Council was keen to support building in western communities and would like local communities to express their needs and suggest locations.

Richard reminded the meeting that previous liaison had taken place with The Highland Council Housing Officer via Boyd Alexander at Highland Council, and this had confirmed the demand for housing in Shildaig and that there was no requirement for a housing needs assessment. The aim was for seven units in total: four social units and three for purchase. The preferred local location was agreed with Albyn for the four social units and the location was in the Area Place Plan, but awaited progress on funding and buildability studies (see 3.2 above).

## 4. Road Safety and Road Maintenance

### 4.1. Reduction of 40 mph speed limit on the “top road” (A896)

The Community Council’s ongoing demand for a reduction of the current 40 mph speed limit was discussed and the urgency considering the frequent fast-moving traffic on the road, which many children, particularly from Baile Shuas, must cross on their way to school. The stark contrast between the 40 mph limit in Shildaig and the 20 mph limits on the roads through Kinlochewe, Torridon and Lochcarron was again highlighted. The meeting discussed the possibility of putting adhoc warning signs in place to reduce speeding as an interim measure but agreed that a proper long-term solution was the best approach.

The Community Council thanked councillor Birt for his efforts in lobbying those responsible at Highland Council. He informed the meeting that the Ross and Cromarty Area Roads Team, responsible for existing 40mph limits, had advised that there are currently eleven traffic regulation orders in the area, of which the top six would be prioritised for consideration and that Shildaig would be added to the list, although it is unclear as to what priority would be given. Once again councillor Birt’s efforts were appreciated by all, but given the lack of progress so far, and the importance and urgency of the matter for the Shildaig community, the Community Council decided to publicise the matter more broadly to see if this might gain some traction. **Action: Richard** to contact The West Highland Free Press.

### 4.2. Safer Route to school

The meeting emphasised the need to implement the safer route to school, proposed in the community council’s road safety document.

### 4.3. Road Maintenance

Councillor Birt explained the workings of the Highland Council's road maintenance budget, which as part of the capital programmes was £7 million, but was then added to, to give a final total in the region of £21-22 million. This was subject to the budget's approval by the Highland Council.

#### 4.3.1. Coast Road

The meeting again discussed the poor state of the Shildaig to Applecross coast road, particularly towards the Shildaig end. The Community Council was pleased that councillor Birt had raised this at the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Committee meeting, held on 20<sup>th</sup> January, when considering the list of planned road maintenance work. Although not currently on the approved list, he had a high level of confidence that it would be added once the final budget had been approved.

In relation to the coast road, the Community Council expressed its thanks to the Highland Council roads department for its work to keep the road clear during the recent wintry weather. This also highlighted once again, the importance of the road, since when the Bealach na Bà is closed, either for planned works such as those to lay cabling from the Allt na Moine Hydro Station to Kishorn or due to bad weather, the coast road was then the only road in and out of the Applecross peninsula. The increase in heavy traffic to and from the hydro scheme was noted and the impact it would have on the already poor road surface.

#### 4.3.2. Clearance of the school brae drain

A member of the community has raised the issue of the blocked drain beside the road from the school towards the village hall and the resultant issues it is causing when there was heavy rain. The Community Council acknowledged this and asked for it to be a priority when funds are available.

## 5. Woodland Management

### 5.1. Woodland Trust - Gleann Shildeag

Work to install the two cattle grids in Gleann Shildeag on the A896 was progressing well. As part of the Woodland Trust's plan to plant 300,000 trees in Gleann Shildeag this spring, there is a Community Tree Planting Day scheduled for Saturday March 1<sup>st</sup>. Those wishing to take part can register here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/gleann-shildeag-community-planting-day-2-tickets-1220861131509?aff=erellivmlt>

### 5.2. Kinloch Woodlands

Richard provided an update on the community woodlands. Under the partnership between Kinloch Woodlands and Edinburgh University, a first visit by the Edinburgh team has taken place. Future visits are expected; a priority would be joint work with the Primary School.

Although the main emphasis would be on extending the woodlands by natural regeneration, there would also be a small-scale annual planting programme, and volunteers would be welcome to help with the work. Please contact Richard if you are interested.

Julia asked about accessibility of the woodlands for children and whether they could be involved in the tree planting activities. Safe and easy access would be important. **Action: Julia** to discuss with Tom O'Halloran whether this is something the school would like to get involved in.

## 6. Planning

The meeting discussed recent planning applications submitted to the Highland Council for approval within the Shildaig Community Council area including the proposed eco-pod at Kinloch (for which Richard declared a family interest). No concerns were raised.

## 7. Any Other Business

### 7.1. Community First Responders

Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council is looking to set up a community first responders scheme in the local area. An information evening will be held at the Torridon Community Centre on March 20th at 7pm. Anyone interested in becoming a Community First Responder and wanting to attend are asked to contact Jackie at [councillor5@tkcc.scot](mailto:councillor5@tkcc.scot) **Action: Daniel** to advertise this on the Community Council website and Shildaig Community facebook page.

## 8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be at 7pm **Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2025**