

Sandsting & Aithsting Community Council

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Minutes of a meeting of Sandsting & Aithsting Community Council held in Bixter Community Hall on Monday 9 September 2024 at 7pm.

Present: J Priest Mr J D Garrick
Mrs S Deyell Mrs J Fraser
Mrs L Johnson Mrs O Jamwal-Fraser

By invitation: Prof Jim Wilson, Viking Genes
Michael Craigie re Shetland public and school bus services

In attendance: PC Graham
PC Rowan
Mrs L Fraser, Clerk

Mr J Priest presiding

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were received from Ms D Nicolson, Cllr L Peterson, Mrs R Fraser, Community Involvement & Development Worker and Mr M Duncan, Community Council Liaison Officer.

MINUTES & REPORT: The minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2024, having been circulated, were taken as read and were approved. Moved by Mrs L Johnson, seconded by Mrs S Deyell.

POLICE: The Chairman welcomed PC Graham and PC Rowan to the meeting. PC Graham informed the members that there had been 3 incidents in this area in their most recent report. He then asked whether any of the members had anything to bring to their attention.

None of the members had anything but it was suggested that they carry out a speed check at Tresta from time to time.

The Chairman asked whether the Police had had any success with their recruitment drive and PC Graham replied that they had not.

The Police Officers left to attend to other matters.

The Chairman then welcomed Professor Jim Wilson, Professor of Human Genetics, who works for the University of Edinburgh.

VIKING GENES: Professor Wilson explained that he started the Viking Genes research project over 20 years ago and has now studied the genetic make up of 10,000 Scottish islanders. He organised a study in Shetland in 2013-2015 and, as part of the research, they have championed the return of 'actionable' results to those individuals they have identified with a higher risk of developing life-threatening conditions. Armed with this knowledge, several islanders have been treated to remove cancers they didn't know they had, whilst others have opted for preventative surgery to reduce their risk of developing

cancer later in life. Many family members have also now been tested by the NHS, helping even more people to take action against cancer and heart disease.

He explained that not everyone who has the gene variants will develop the diseases but that they are at greater risk. He gave details of some of the variants and said that they only study those which are actionable.

The heart rhythm problem, Long QT Syndrome, has been found in the Aith area and in Unst and some people from this area have already been screened. Together with a number of other genetic diseases, these findings have convinced Prof Wilson that the most cost effective and beneficial solution would be to screen everyone in Shetland who would like it for a selected set or panel of variants.

The Viking Genes study have discovered new insights into the genetic history of the Scottish Isles and where their ancestors came from. Many of the island populations have their own unique gene pools that are quite different from that of mainland Scotland and there is still much more to uncover. They are working, with their NHS partners and collaborators, to try to ensure that these high-risk populations get prioritised screening and similar pro-active healthcare provision as other high-risk groups currently get within the NHS. They are lobbying to have UK and Scottish healthcare policies adapted to ensure islanders and their descendants, who inherit the same genetic risks, can be screened irrespective of where they live within the UK.

They are now looking to set up a team to carry this work forward. He has appointed a PhD student, Ben Fletcher, to begin the work of designing the panel of variants and Ben will start work on 1st October. Prof Wilson has costed this work and finds that they will need approx £1.8 million over 5 years. He has approached the Shetland Community Benefit Fund but his study does not fit within their criteria. He has also approached Shetland Charitable Trust and will receive the result of that application before the end of this year. He has received a £10,000 grant from the Charity shop, Shoard, in Whalsay and is very grateful to them as this will help to pay the student.

The members present agreed that Shetland people are often very generous when donating for causes similar to this and that 'word of mouth' proved most useful. The details can be added to the Community Council Facebook page. Viking Genes also have a Facebook page and members accepted leaflets from Prof Wilson to circulate to anyone interested. Prof Wilson was due to visit Yell and Unst the following day, followed by an event in Lerwick.

The Chairman thanked Prof Wilson for such an interesting talk and wished him well with the project and in his fundraising. Prof Wilson then left.

BUSINESS ARISING: Community Council Scheme Review: Ongoing.

Road Matters: Road past Garderhouse: The barriers are almost complete and some ditching and fencing is being carried out. It is hoped that the next section of barriers will be carried out at an early date as parts of them are in poor condition.

Gritting of the road network: This had been discussed at the Roads & Transport Committee meeting earlier in the day.

Shetland Community Benefit Fund (SCBF) and Viking Community Fund: A message was received from Mrs E McKay, Administration Officer, giving details of the 26 projects, totalling £199,697.86 which this Community Council has supported from the AGS scheme. The SCBF AGS ended on 31st August and we had £302.14 of unspent funds. These have been added to the SCBF Community Grant Scheme (CGS) allocation of £32,575, giving a balance of £32,877.14. The CGS is now open for applications.

Funding: Funding details have been received from Mr M Duncan and circulated to the members.

Community Development Fund – 2024/25: This grant was paid into this Community Council's bank account this week.

Local Place Plans (LPP): The Chairman, along with Mrs O Jamwal-Fraser, had represented this Community Council at the recent meeting in the Bixter Community Hall which was organised by

Mr P Mogridge, Planning Officer, Development Plans and Heritage. They both felt that it could be of benefit to our area but agreed that it would be a lot of work.

Skeld Camping Bod: A message was received from Mrs H Sutherland of Shetland Amenity Trust saying that they are still discussing the possible takeover of the Bod but haven't yet reached an agreement.

SHETLAND PUBLIC AND SCHOOL BUS SERVICES: After some false starts, Mr Michael Craigie joined the meeting virtually but the reception could only support the audio. However, copies of the slides Mr Craigie was using had been sent to the Clerk just prior to the meeting and were available for members to follow.

The Chairman welcomed him to the meeting.

Mr M Craigie explained that the current bus contracts started in August 2020 and run to the middle of August 2025. ZetTrans has commissioned Stantec to support them in the development of a Business Case for the next 5 to 10 years. They want to consider problems and gaps and highlight opportunities to improve the network. They have spoken to all Community Councils in Shetland and also held drop-in sessions.

Mr Craigie explained that there are 28 timetabled services and 30 timetabled Dial-a-Ride services provided by 15 Operators. Foula, Fair Isle, Whalsay and Skerries do not have any on-island scheduled or Dial-a-Ride bus services.

In this area 10 of the 14 bus routes offer Dial-a-Ride services and the No 12 bus serves Anderson High school. There are no Sunday services.

What is available at present –

Service 9 provides a key link from the west connecting Walls with Lerwick. Service 12 connects Aith with Lerwick.

Service 9F provides a feeder service between Bixter and Walls in the late afternoon to enable the Service 12 to be back in Lerwick in time for the 1710 trip. The 12C and 12F provide a feeder service between Aith and Bixter through the day (connects with Service 9). Service 13 and 15 provide connections between Skeld/Selivoe and Bixter respectively. Service 13 provides a shopper service to Lerwick on Tuesdays and Service 15 on Thursdays.

The Dial-a-Ride Service 91 provides a connection between Gruting and Bixter, for access to the Health Centre and shop. Service 92 provides a connection from Aith to Bixter for access to the Health Centre.

Information giving details of passengers, etc on the existing bus services were listed.

Covid changed the way people work and how they access work. Under 22s now have free travel which has caused increased use by that group.

This is the final drop-in session and 17 September is the end of the consultation so comments are required by that time.

The Chairman asked about the usage of services and Mr M Craigie replied that all the services are used every week and added that they will be analysing this information further.

Mrs O Jamwal-Fraser enquired about the bus timetables placed in the local bus shelters and said that she found them very difficult to understand e.g unless you know the area, there is no detail of where the bus shelter is situated. She suggested that ZetTrans provide an app and that the information be sense-checked by the Tourist Office.

It was pointed out that it is difficult to get from Skeld to Aith and Mr M Craigie agreed that it is easier to get to and from Lerwick and that the Dial-a-Ride service is better suited to connecting the communities.

Concern was also expressed about students having to go to Lerwick in order to get to the Scalloway College, especially since UHI is to move there within 2 or 3 years.

The regular service is only suited to people working 9-5 and there is no service on Sundays.

Mr M Craigie said the lack of services on Sundays is entirely due to cost but with the other services, they are addressing the need to rebalance connections across Shetland.

The Chairman thanked Mr M Craigie for attending the meeting.

Mr Craigie said that he is getting a sense of how the network is shaping up and is pleased to have feedback. Any other points can be fed back to him within the next week and individuals can also give a response.

Mr Craigie then left the meeting.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS: The following applications were considered and welcomed:-
2024/212/PPF Siting of a mobile home for residential purposes including creation of base slab, utilities and drainage at Grindins, Westerskeld by Mr Ivan Hackett.
2024/222/PPF To erect single storey dwellinghouse; instal air source heat pump; create new access track, parking and turning area; instal land infiltration system South of Gillside, Aith by Ms Susan Nicolson.

VAS AWARDS: A message was received from Voluntary Action Shetland giving details of the Willin Haands and Peerie Trows VAS Volunteering Awards. The closing date for nominations is 15 September.

LOCAL INSIGHT ON MARINE RESTORATION AND ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS: A message was received Ms Tanya Riley, PG Marine Scientist at UHI Shetland, saying they have recently secured funding to develop a Marine Restoration and Enhancement Action Plan for Shetland from the Scottish Government's Marine Directorate. This project aims to identify and prioritise areas of the sea or coast which might benefit from restoration or wider seas measures and initiatives which might promote mobile species restoration. She would like to attend our Community Council meeting on 14 October to present the project and gather our input. Those present agreed to invite her to the meeting.

REDUNDANT VEHICLES IN SHETLAND: Shetland Amenity Trust (SAT) sent a leaflet for communities to aid understanding of roles and responsibilities surrounding disposal of redundant vehicles in Shetland. SAT is no longer contracted with the CareTakeBack Recycling scheme and the responsibility for abandoned vehicles sits with the SIC's Environmental Health Dept. They have new arrangements in place for uplifting vehicles reported as abandoned. The Trust has now stopped removing redundant vehicles and other scrap, but there are other operators in the community and many local businesses with appropriate vehicles that can assist with uplifts. The leaflets will be added to our Facebook page.

NHS SHARE: A message was received from the SHARE Deputy Program Manager at the University of Dundee Medical School saying SHARE – The Scottish Health Research Register and Biobank - is a Register of people who are happy to be sent information about health projects. They need people to sign up to the SHARE Register. They also have posters giving details of how to take part. This will be displayed on the Community Council Facebook page.

YOUR POLICE 2024-2025 SURVEY: PC Carole Smith at Police Scotland sent a note saying that they are inviting the public to join them in a conversation about 'Your Police'. The 'Your Police' 2024-2025 survey has been designed to listen and better understand the views and priorities of communities by giving them the opportunity to share their thoughts about policing and safety in their local area. She gives details of what is included and says the survey can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/89dv9n3>.

INVITATION TO SSEN TRANSMISSION: An email was received from Ms Thea Groat, Community Liaison Manager for SSEN Transmission (SSENT). She has been working on SSENT projects, including the HVDC Link and Substation at Kergord and the Grid Supply Point which is currently in construction at the back of Ocean Kinetics in Lerwick. She would like to meet with our Community Council in-person and, at this time, the projects that will be discussed run from Kergord up to Sullom meaning there should be no disruption to our area. The formal consultations will be held next year and it was decided that it would be more appropriate to meet with her at that time.

DIGITAL HELPLINE PROMO: Information regarding a Digital Helpline was received from the Scottish Government's People Know How Communications. They can give you help to use a computer, tablet or smartphone or give advice to stay safe or manage finances online. Their phone number is 08000590690.

STOURA OFFSHORE WIND FARM PUBLIC EXHIBITION: Stoura Offshore Wind Farm is located off the East Coast of Shetland. An exhibition is being held in the Shetland Museum, Lerwick on 19 September from 2-8pm. Members of the Stoura Project Team will be available at that time to discuss the project.

DRAFT FINANCIAL STATEMENT: The Financial Statement for 2023-2024 is presently being checked but a copy of it was circulated to the members. Approval was proposed by Mrs O Jamwal-Fraser and seconded by Mrs S Deyell. If it is found to be correct, It will be forwarded to Mr M Duncan, Community Council Liaison Officer.

HIE COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING RESEARCH: 'The Voice of Communities Survey' has recently been launched by Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE) in order to share their aspirations, plans and challenges.

EXTRA BUS SHELTER NEAR CHAPELSIDE, REAWICK: The Chairman had received a request for a bus shelter near Chapelside in Reawick as a number of people in that area use the bus service. This request will be passed on to the Roads Dept.

SAND BUS SHELTER DAMAGED: The damage done to the bus shelter at Sand was reported to Mr N Hutcheson and remedial work requested.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be held Bixter Community Hall on Monday 14 October 2024 at 7.30pm.