

DUNVEGAN AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING ON Tuesday 24th June 2025 at 7:30pm

Present – John Laing (JL), Donna Campbell (DC), Sylvia Meyer (SY), Christine Brennan (CB), Mandy Boswell (MB), Drew Millar (DM), Katy Lawrence – Dunvegan Trust (KL)

Apologies – Philippa MacRae (PM), Tim Wallis (TW)

1	Chairman's Welcome – JL opened the meeting, welcomed those present and gave apologies.
2	Declaration of Interest – None were declared.
3	Minutes of last Meeting – The minutes were agreed. Proposed by SY seconded by DC.
4	Stone Celebration Day – The meeting agreed it was a successful day. JL thanked all – both members of Dunvegan and District Community Council and all those who contributed so generously their time and baking. It was agreed that a good time was had by all.
5	Treasurer 's Report – Bank balance at the moment is £6,392.83, some of which is earmarked to Dunvegan Trust. The finance for the Stone Celebrations is yet to be finalised and will be reported on at the next meeting. MB made application to DC in regard to annual fees for skye.scot £89.13.
6	Council Update –DM informed the meeting that the road improvements are still progressing, sometimes they're back and forth. He said he thought Neist Point is now finished. The Feorlig Road has been repaired. JL commented that the Harlosh Road is very good. More white lining has been done in lots of places, what a difference that's that made. They're due you to come back and paint white line on the roads that have been surface dressed. MB said that work had commenced on the carpark at the Coral Beach. DM confirmed it was a partnership undertaking by Highland Council and SCRIPID. It is thought it is just the carpark at present – not the toilet block. DM said that Ewan Macpherson from the Scottish Government was very good at obtaining funding for projects such as this. DM said to save money and prove efficient that spoil from the carpark was going to be used to lengthen and increase passing places along the Claigan Road. The meeting agreed that the start of work was great news. MB asked if there is a date for the passing place work as at present the wrap signs have not been put in place to avoid damage during road works. She also reiterated the need for no parking in passing place signs to be fixed to all passing places and that there are some passing places (including one on a bad bend) which have no post whatsoever, let alone any signage. There's a meeting on Thursday and one of the items is the Highland Investment Plan, where Dunvegan School's funding is from. JL brought to DM's attention another agenda item which is another resident's complaint about the speed of vehicles travelling through the village. DM confirmed that it's a police matter. KL said that

	she'd had complaints during her recent canvassing and that it had been suggested we get LED vehicle activated smiley face radar speed signs. MB is to email Inspector Alistair Mackenzie and ask him if we can have a couple of days of police presence to enforce the limit and to ask if he'd support installation of the vehicle activated smiley face radar speed signs (copy to DM). MB is also to write to Mackenzie Sutherland (copy to DM) in regard to installation of vehicle activated smiley face radar speed signs. MB pointed out that it's a very long way from the start of the 20 mph zone at Castle Crescent to the other side of the medical centre and therefore we'd need more than three , the meeting agreed. SY pointed out that Emma Jane Morrison had also mentioned speeding traffic near the new play park as had the owner of the Alpaca shop, Sandra Powell. JL expressed his thanks to Highland Council and to Drew for all their efforts at road repairs and white lining of roads.
7	Trust Report – KL said she'd a few exciting things to report. <u>Community Transport Feasibility Study</u> – the trust have got CLLD funding a survey on community transport. It's going to be a survey that targets visitors as well as locals – including the community council, and healthcare providers. The Trust want to have a look at setting up minibuses that can connect people to the bus routes to Portree as well as making sure people can get to health care if they can't drive. Scope of the study is just within the Dunvegan Community Council area and the outcomes of the study will include the size of car park that we might need to support such a project. With this information we'll take it to the common grazings committee and Macleod Estates to look at land transfers or leases. <u>Orbost Farmhouse</u> – Things are progressing well on this project. The Trust now have architect's plans for farmhouse conversion in to two units. One of them with the upstairs being two bedrooms and the other being a three bedroom unit. <u>Gaeltec</u> – work is still ongoing in regard to the transfer. <u>Community Action Plan</u> – The Trust intend to have the first draft of that out in July, which will be shared with the community council before it's printed. The Trust have a local graphic designer who's going to create it into a proper booklet so it can be widely distributed. KL asked DCC for letters of support in respect of the minibus application and Orbost Farmhouse. <u>Nearest Neighbours – Muirhall</u> JL asked about “Nearest Neighbours” and “Skye and Raasay Renewables Fund”. KL said that it was agreed to streamline the people who are involved and negotiating with Muirhall Energy for the Community Benefit Fund. It's now Geoff Semler (Struan CC), Faye MacLeod (Portree/Skeabost), Graham (Minginish), Alastair Danter (Edinbane) and Katy Lawrence (Dunvegan) – representing each of the five nearest neighbours and they've established a

remint for the group and a letter is to go to Muirhall this week. The group are asking for a percentage share of the revenue as well as baseline of community benefit following a report about what's fair and achievable based on a report that came out two weeks ago by Equitable Energy

JL said he was delighted to see a narrowed down group taking ownership of the Muirhall negotiations, as previously he'd felt that there were too many involved.

The Skye and Raasay Community Benefit Fund – The aim is to get all 15 community council areas represented on this working group because potentially a percentage of the upcoming community benefit funds will go into a central pot so that all of the communities can benefit.

In this case, with Muirhall Energy it has been agreed at 20%. If future it might be more with a different metric for distribution. EDP/Wind 2 have also suggested that they would be willing to offer a percentage of their community benefit to the Skye wide fund.

The community councils and the community organisation have been asked to send a representative. KL said that Mali MacLellan could represent Dunvegan Community Council as well as Dunvegan Trust, but if Dunvegan Community Council can send our own representative that might be advantageous. There are two meetings this year, one in August, one in November.

KL said there were about ten different community council areas currently represented. She went on to say that the remit for The Skye and Raasay Community Benefit Fund was different to the Nearest Neighbours because they're not negotiating for the set benefit, they're working out how to set up a strategic plan for the whole of Skye and Raasay. Hopefully one day, if the fund is big enough, there'd be a paid development officer who's running the fund.

KL said once there's a working group that represents the whole of Skye and Rassay, the group would have more decision-making confidence.

JL said that, as he's been involved since the start, he's willing to be represent DCC. This was agreed.

MB asked if what had been discussed thus far covered David Salt's email. KL said that his email regarded the offer by Foundation Scotland to hold an agreement for the 20% ward section and some of the communities not yet involved with the working group were concerned that they didn't want an agreement to go ahead separately to the Nearest Neighbours Agreement. She confirmed that this idea has been paused/is not happening now. KL said that the reason that this was put in place was not because anyone had negotiated a separate agreement, but because the group had been told that Muirhall might sell and if they did we might not get the same benefits. Currently Muirhall are offering £7k per MWh, there was a fear that we'd miss out on the offer of £7k, but decided that they are willing to take risk to ensure that there aren't two different negotiations are going on .

KL said she'd now liaised with David Salt/Skeabost, Faye MacLeod and Broadford who all had the same concerns and the negotiations are not going forward.

	JL said he recalls Muirhall saying some time ago that no agreement was necessary about the Skye and Raasay Fund. KL reiterated that if Muirhall sell with no agreement in place then then there's no telling what might be the outcome. KL said there's an awful lot of work involved when the farms are not under shared ownership. JL offered thanks for all the work she's put in. KL went on to say that there's a meeting on Ben Sca, 2nd July Community Benefit – Shared ownership. KL said she felt it would be another five years before anything came on. JL to attend. MB asked about the webinar on 1st July. KL said it was put on by the Equitable Energy; she felt it was worthwhile event. It's a presentation of the report already shared with us.
8	Planning Matters – Wind Farms – JL said there were a number of windfarm applications, he asked DM about any conflict and DM confirmed he could listen, but could not comment. JL confirmed we have been asked to comment on the following windfarms, although outside our area: <u>Balameanach Wind Farm</u> – Erection and Operation of a Wind Farm for a period of 40 years, comprising of 10 Wind Turbines with a maximum blade tip of 149.9 metres, access tracks, borrow pits, substation, control building, and ancillary infrastructure. Site: land 2400 metres NE of An Cleireach, 8 Balmeanach, Struan. Response date 25th July 2025. <u>Ben Sca Redesign Wind Farm</u> – Erection and operation of a wind farm for a period of 40 years, comprising of 9 wind turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 149.9 metres, access tracks, borrow pits, substation, control building, and ancillary infrastructure. Site: 2800 metres SW of Edinbane Primary School. Response date 18th July 2025. <u>Glen Ullinish II Wind Farm</u> – Construction and operation of a wind farm for a 40 year operational period, comprising of 33 wind turbines (as amended) with a maximum plate tip height of 200 metres, a 120MW capacity battery energy storage (BESS) facility, access tracks, up to six borrow pits, two anemometer masts, substation, and ancillary infrastructure. Site: 3070 metres north of Amer Farm, 5 Totarder, Struan. Response date 27th July. JL said that he had no objection, DC agreed. SY said she objected, CB said she was undecided and MB said she was undecided because she felt she didn't know enough about it. The subject of planning guidance training was brought up. MB said she'd attended the online Planning Aid Scotland Energy Training. She said it was about 90 minutes of presentation followed by an un recorded question and answer session which became extremely heated. The general understanding of those attending was that when it comes to the very large applications you might as well save your breath, because if central government wanted them to go ahead nobody – county council, community council, nor action group were going to stop them. She said that at the open forum was an absolute “bun fight”, particularly with some from northeast Highlands. The unhappiness and distrust and general lack of support and the feeling that they're being walked over and have no voice. Although the attendees were

respectful to the presenter, she admitted there was no point in growling at her – and the only way of dealing with the matter was in next May’s Holyrood election.

KL said that there were now people employed within Highland Council to provide information to us in regard to renewable engagement.

JL said we could approve, give no objection or no comment. MB said she felt we could all get ‘bent out of shape’ and central government would do what they want regardless. JL went on to say that we’ve all benefited greatly from the community benefit fund due to Ben Aketil.

The meeting went on to discuss the upgrade/repowering of Ben Aketil and that instead of replacing like for like turbines the applicant wants to increase the size of turbine – necessitating new foundations, and the meeting questioned whether promises to remove the current concrete foundations would be honoured. KL mentioned that in the Cowal Peninsula permission was not granted for a similar repowering with larger turbines – and the community put in a right to buy and are now installing smaller turbines on the original bases and making the considerable funds for community benefit.

The cost of the “curtailment” benefit paid to wind generators was also discussed that more wind generated electricity would lead to more curtailment. KL said that the technology for generating electricity far outstrips the technology for transmitting it and that the grid simply can’t cope. JL pointed out the new line to be installed and there’s concern that if all the applications are improved that the new line won’t even be able to cope with the electricity generated! It is felt that there’s a rush on to “mark territory” and not all the applications will proceed.

The meeting also discussed that with England encouraging small nuclear power stations to generate electricity there won’t be such a demand in the future for wind generated electricity. The introduction of smart grids and regional grids will all have an impact too. MB asked if it wasn’t smart regional grids that had caught Spain out recently with their country wide black out. The answer was sort of!

The meeting then went on to discuss the importance that these developments to leave a legacy of jobs (perhaps by apprenticeships) and infrastructure (homes and facilities). MB said she believes the village around Broadford should be sustainable and outlive the short-term need of builders and engineers working on the new line – with kit built houses there is no reason that they could not be. She said the pier at Caroy should be built to last and provide recreational benefits for the future.

JL went on to say that previously community benefit money could not be used for infrastructure that one could and should expect to be funded by the government or local government. Things are changing and there’s talk of community benefit money being used to fund local housing, schools and roads. JL said he was all for it and DC said where else would communities get the funding to do what organisations like Dunvegan Trust and in turn our Community Council are providing (thanks to the community benefit fund). It was confirmed that none of these farms are within our area and are all new farms.

	The discussion went back to Ben Aketil and the public enquiry regarding its repowering. MB pointed out that in 40 year's time our grandchildren would still be reaping the benefit. JL said that community benefit should not be the deciding factor. CB said they might be enjoying the benefits of the money but not the ecological impact of the farms. The meeting revisited the decision and after considerable debate, the majority (JL, DC, MB) agreed that we would not object to the three applications, however our response would be predicated by a statement that we felt more time, guidance, and support should be given to community councils to help with decisions of this magnitude and that satisfactory community benefit terms should be agreed.
9	Planning Matters – Other <u>18 Roag</u> – MB said she had no idea what happened on Highland Council's Planning Department website on 10th June 2025 saying "prior approval IS required". The meeting discussed that the website shows 25/01797/PNO as "Decided" and shows "Prior Approval IS Required" and that this was a quick action – but nobody knows what it means! MB and DC both said that work was still ongoing. DM said he'd ask what this means and would email JL. <u>School</u> – MB confirmed she's written off to Highland Council about the application which includes Colbost in the new school's address and asked that it be corrected to Kilmuir. Colbost isn't even in Dunvegan and District Community Council's area. DM said that he'll ensure that this is corrected.
10	School update – DM has said that he intends that providing there are no objections to the planning application he will ask for the decision to be made by delegated decision. The intention is that building work would begin next year with the school opening be in time for new school year late summer 2027. Next stakeholder meeting is 10th September.
11	Highland Council Phase 2 of Community Council Restructure – response needed by 13th August – MB to reply to say we're content with the changes suggested.
12	RTS Switch Off – the meeting discussed whether we've residents who may be effected by this switch off and we concluded that we do. DC said she knew of someone who's meter was due to be changed today in preparation. DC said she feared it was mostly old people who don't understand what's going on – probably mostly Economy 7 and Economy 10. Apparently, the implementation is being delayed again because there are so many meters that need to be replaced. KL said she thought Citizens' Advice Bureau in Portree were helping. It was agreed that we'd put something on Facebook but also, for the benefit of those who aren't social media users, notes on bulletin boards referring to CAB in Portree. KL said CAB have an Energy Support Service.
13	Wrap Signs – MB confirmed that she's not heard from Bridget from Highland Council Outdoor Access who emailed on the 4th of June saying she was away until the 17th of June and we were not to do anything until her return (in regard to having additional signs printed for use on Scottish Government land). MB said she'd been back and read our sign and can not see anything short of 'a crofter might shoot your dog' that might be a trigger to somebody; it doesn't even take a pop at wild camping so she really doesn't see what Highland Council are concerned about.

	JL said if we don't get moving it will be too late for this year. MB also said she'd written to Mackenzie Sutherland (Highways Highland Council) to ask when the passing places were to be extended and increased on the Claigan Road as the signs have not been put back yet due to fear they'd be damaged during works. DM said he'd check with Mackenzie. MB presented DC with invoices for the coming year for skye.scot- £89.13. There'll be a similar bill next year, but after three years a sizeable bill for web hosting.
14	Any Other Council Business BT Removal of Telephone Boxes – DM said he felt that if a phone box hadn't been used at least 20 times in a year then BT could remove it. The meeting then discussed the concern about the loss of copper land lines and the implications of loss of power and communication in an emergency event. Kilmuir Community Council – Emergency Boxes – MB read an email from Kilmuir Community Council regarding emergency boxes that they were restocking. DM suggested they contact SSEN. KL mentioned resilience funds might be available if we wanted to. Sandbags were mentioned as being useful. Citizens' Advice Bureau – Donna attended a CAB event and exchanged details about what we might be able to help with and learned more about what the CAB could do to. KL mentioned that it was hoped that once Gaeltec Building was complete that CAB would have an outreach office there once or twice a week. DM said that later in the year CAB were moving into Tigh na Sgire in Portree. It was agreed they do a fantastic job; quietly, gently and discreetly.
15	Next Meeting – Next meeting is 29th July at 7:30pm. It was decided that the community council would not meet in August 2025.