

DUNVEGAN AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING ON Tuesday 29th July at 7:30pm

Present – John Laing (JL), Donna Campbell (DC), Sylvia Meyer (SY), Tim Wallis (TW), Christine Brennan (CB), Mandy Boswell (MB), Drew Millar (DM), Mali MacLennan – Dunvegan Trust (MM)

Apologies – Philippa MacRae (PM)

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	Treasurer 's Report – We took £2095 at the Millennium Stone event. We have £5,948.70 in the bank about £2,000 of which is ringfenced for the hardship fund. There have been no further applications to the hardship fund. It was confirmed that we'd received our grant from Highland Council £750 on 29th May, as well as £1000 from Dunvegan Trust on 4th June. We discussed making a donation from the raffle prize money. MB suggested waiting to see what needy cause came to our attention, but DC was keen to make a donation immediately. After discussion it was agreed that we would donate £500 towards the Dunvegan and Struan Christmas Dinner Club, and we'd consider another donation to a local charity later in the year. DC mentioned she'd booked Calum MacPhail for an evening in November and suggested proceeds might be given to the Community Council.
5	Council Update – DM said the summer recess is on and that's held things back a bit but the road squads are still out working. There are negotiations ongoing with SSEN to get funding towards repairing the Hornival Road – the road that passes the substation. DC and JL discussed that the repairs to the Feorlig and Harlosh Roads have not lasted, and that potholes are reappearing. DM said that there's hope the council will get access to a jet patcher to provide quicker and more long lasting repairs. JL mentioned that there's a lot of water on the Feorlig Road which can't help the situation. Speeding in Dunvegan – DM said he's spoken to Mackenzie Sutherland about this, particularly at Castle Crescent and around the school and he said Mackenzie was considering traffic calming options. MB said she would not like to see speed bumps – we've only just got rid of the negative speed bumps – the potholes! Claigan – DM said that Mackenzie Sutherland has been speaking with Dunvegan Estate who are receptive to working with the council. The first cattle grid (nearest the castle) is to be removed (a steel plate has covered most of it for over ten years).

The carpark at Coral beach has been levelled out; the signage for the passing places are ready to go up once other work is done. MB asked when, DM said he didn't know but was sure it would be by the end of 2025. DM said he had insisted that these were proper don't park in passing place signs (the current ones refer to laybys and are not on every passing place – nor does every passing place have a post or any signage).

DM said there'd been a hold up at the school caused by Scottish Water which in turn has held up work at Claigan. DM said Gordon MacDonald is back on site at Claigan. MB said that local gossip is that they'd hit rock that they weren't expecting to find and that it will be harder job than expected.

JL introduced a letter circulated to the community council from the owners of No 1 Claigan – the house nearest the car park. JL said they've a number of issues and a copy was given to DM; JL pointed out that the email had been copied to others. MB said that the email was copied to Jason Andrews who is apparently the west of Skye's new ranger (his appointment was news to everyone present).

JL read some of the letter to the meeting. In summary they feel that repairs must be made to the old carpark because it's in such a poor state of repair – there are accidents almost daily. They said they feel it dangerous and not fit for purpose.

They said that the toilet needs to be built as soon as possible because of pollution in this area from human waste and toilet paper. They said that they have seen men urinating openly in the car park and also stopped by their side of the road, urinating and people's gardens.

They went on to say that they've seen a big increase in parking offences this year, and that there is urgent need of for additional passing places and lengthening of existing ones. The new carpark will alleviate some of the problem – but in the meantime we need more monitoring and prosecutions.

They also went on to talk of lack of communication between Highland Council and the residents. Last year's road works were very badly communicated locally. They feel residents should be informed of the works and when they're to happen – and this must not just be via a social media post.

DM is to pass the email to Ewan MacPherson at Scottish Government and Mackenzie Sutherland at Highland Council.

“Wild” camping – JL brought up the documents we'd been sent by Highland Caravan and Campsites Association about unlicensed camping. DM said he felt they were concerned about Highland Councils' initiative for voluntary payments for overnight parking in carparks. The meeting went on to discuss the concerns that if campervans or motorhomes pay to stay in a recognised campsite, for fire safety they have to be a designated distance apart. But when they camp informally (even if they pay the council a notional fee) the fire safety regulations (about not parking too close together are disregarded).

MB asked the meeting why is it that Argyll and Bute Council and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar can insist that visitors use recognised campgrounds, but Highland Council will not. DM said he felt that that would be very difficult for the council to enforce such a restriction. The meeting discussed

	that the local campsites are NOT all full and TW said he'd seen laybys near Sligachan where he wondered how they'd got so many vehicles into the available space. MB said she feels that the Outdoor Access Code is misinterpreted and that Highland Council and VisitScotland don't have the backbone to say what is not acceptable. She said that selling visiting the Highlands on the come and stop where you like and do what you like encourages thoughtless tourism and antisocial behaviour. DM said that people seem to do what they want. He talked of encouraging additional facilities. The meeting discussed the Countryside Ranger (whom we all learned of because of the email from the owners of No 1 Claigan) and discussed the difficult job he'd have covering Claigan, Neist Point, Glenbrittle and Elgol. JL mentioned it is late afternoon and evening that he needs to be operating and what a good job the previous ranger had done (Gordon Willoughby). DM said that the road improvements at Glenbrittle had made a huge difference and that the residents were relatively content.
6	Trust Report – Membership – MM encouraged us all to recruit new local members for the Trust as it's vital that we increase the proportion of local members. For some funding applications the members who live within the Dunvegan Community Council area must be at least 75% of the overall membership. Minibus application – MM thanked the council for our letter of support. The application has gone off this week, and the Trust should be informed of the outcome in September. Local Transport Study – A small amount of funding has been received to research options for community transport. Apparently Sleat have a community car (funded and insured by Highland Council). MM said she'd had a meeting with Neil Campbell (ex-paramedic) talking of the helipad and he's keen to sort out a community car for Portree and one for the north west. TW said that he knows of someone in Aberfeldy and there they have a community social media page where if someone's making a trip (e.g. to hospital) and could take someone else they post it to the page. It seems to work quite well. JL asked MM if she'd ever looked at Hitrans, and she confirmed that she was in communication with them about community transport and is signed up for meetings to learn more. DM said that there were a lot of problems recently of hospital transport being cancelled which is very distressing for patients getting up early, getting all ready and then not being able to get to hospital. And, of course, not good in regard to use of valuable NHS resources – as well as delaying what could be vital hospital consultation. MM went on to speak about a Scottish Government scheme for subsidised taxis. DM said that it was in operation a few years ago, for example to run someone to Staffin if they'd come in on the Glasgow bus when there's no public transport to get them home. MM said that the Trust were preparing a visitor survey about public transport to see what visitors thought of the current provision and whether they'd be amenable to using a shuttle bus service to places if that was available. She said she hopes local businesses would promote the survey.

Parking at the playpark

MM said she'd received an email today from the Alpaca shop and Cath Waters' shop about playpark users parking outside the shops. MM had suggested that they come to this meeting, but they'd not. People using the park are parking in the bays outside the shops, which loses them custom. MM said she'd posted to social media asking people not to park outside the shops when they're using the playpark. JL said the church car park was the sensible place to park – MM said for as long as the church is happy with that. MM said she'd talk to them. MB asked if there was signage outside the shops which reads parking for patrons only. MM said she'd check. They'd mentioned about cutting the tree branches back too.

Orbost Farm House and Cruachan Woods– MM said that there's a stage 2 application in for funding to buy these two properties. A meeting is scheduled for Thursday; she's looking forward to the conclusion of matters. She thanked the community council for their letter of support.

Gaeltec Building – Finalisation still ongoing. Some legal documents got lost in the post between solicitors! All going to plan – just later than hoped.

Newsletter – The Trust are in the process of writing a newsletter to update about ongoing projects, they do this on line frequently but feel that once or twice a year it should be on paper – and she asked if the community council might like to collaborate. JL said we could pull something together. TW wondered if a small amount of advertising might be offered/taken up to offset printing costs. He also suggested adding useful information like phone numbers and surgery opening times and dates to make it a more useful document.

Tool Library – Bryony and MM are going on a PAT testing course and there should be a tool drive soon to gather tools for lending from the tool library which will be located at the Gaeltec building.

School and sports pitch – SY went on to say that a meeting in regard to the sports pitch has been rescheduled for 8th August 2025. And that there had been an objection to the planning application of the school.

Police House – DM asked about this and MM confirmed there's an application in but local membership of the trust needs to increase to show local support.

Overhanging branches – Thanks to SY, CB and Joan (from Blas) for their urgent work. JL said that there's a problem throughout the village about overhanging branches – including in the car park. He wonders if with Keep Dunvegan Beautiful something could be done as a joint effort.

JL said that it would be a great community thing to clear it; including the hall committee. DM said that there's still money in the discretionary budget and it's good to show partnership working and also matched funding. The matched funding can be in the form of volunteer community hours. Tot up the hours spent by volunteers – and that adds up to a significant sum of money.

MM said that some of the ash trees at Orbost are diseased.

JL pointed out that the onus is on the landowner to look after trees and his thoughts were about a community tidy up day later in the year when things have calmed down. He said that the biggest job was scraping back the weeds. CB asked if we had to ask Highland Council's permission (as

	they'd done for the clean up last week), and it was decided best to tell them – relations are good! The Council were thankful for the work done by the Community Council to clear the pathway. TW asked if it would be sensible to issue a written reminder to those whose land abuts the main road of their need to cut the bushes back to keep the pavement clear. MB suggested including an offer of help if it's required. JL said that he doesn't feel there are many individuals involved – not really residential properties. MM said that it's really the trees which worry her. JL said he doesn't think that there are any trees on public land which we should be worried about. To be brought forward at our next meeting. MM said she'd look at the playpark. JL confirmed that the castle had done a great job with the pavement between the pier and the castle and that it looks quite good.
7	Planning Matters – 18 Roag – Agricultural Shed – The meeting discussed this building and that it is yet another application for the same croft as other applications which have caused considerable concern. MB said she thought that an application wasn't needed for an agricultural shed, JL confirmed planning is required if it's within 25 metres of the road. TW said that he'd heard from other residents of the area that the applications are being made piecemeal and it is felt that the applicants have not been completely straight about what their overall plans are. All concerned would be more comfortable if they knew what the final objective was – all made in one application. With multiple new applications and amendments to existing applications it's difficult to work out what is really going on. TW said that he'd heard that a planning inspector had been to visit the site recently, whether this was because we'd asked that all past and current planning applications for that croft were considered at one time, we do not know. MB suggested that we should use the same objection that we'd used for the last application for this croft that we'd like the planners to look at all applications for the croft and try and ascertain the 'big picture' rather than be misled by piecemeal applications. JL said he'd not want to stop a crofter from building a shed; MB asked if they've got any animals. It was thought not at present. SY showed the application which is for 18 Dunvegan – not 18 Roag. A confusing/misleading address. MB said she'd like to know why Highland Council don't insist that all applications have a valid postcode. MM said that she'd noticed this with the planning portal. It was unanimously agreed that we'd make the same objection as last time and that MB would write to Lisa MacDonald copy to Drew Millar saying that we'd like to see a definitive plan of what's intended for that croft. Claigan – JL asked that these minutes note the concerns raised via email on 1st July 2025 regarding planning application 24/00229/PIP and that the community council consider the application given the concerns expressed. Due to time constraints, action was required prior to this community council meeting; the email was shared amongst the committee and JL sought the members' views and it was agreed that the community council should register an objection to the application. MB and DC abstained; the community council's objection was noted on 10th July 2025.

8	RTS Switch Off – the meeting agreed that the project is a total shambles, but there's nothing more the community council can do.
9	Wrap Signs – MB confirmed that she'd had an email the day before the meeting confirming the changes Highland Council would like to have made to the signs. The meeting discussed that it was August on Friday and no point in rushing the signs now when they'll not be completed before the end of the season. MB said she'd progress with this for them to be printed in February or March next year ready for the 2026 season.
10	Any Other Council Business Speeding in Dunvegan MB confirmed that an email from the local police inspector who said that he'd ask for more speed checks to be done in and around Dunvegan. He said that they'd support any speed deterrents we'd like put in place (laser smiley face warning signs). Police attendance at meeting MB is to advise the Inspector of our next meeting, and he'll try and get someone to attend or at least send a report prior to the meeting MB to send date of September meeting. TW said that he'd been driving in to Portree last week and witnessed first hand the efficacy of the flashing speed signs. A foreign visitor braked hard when the 20 mph sign flashed at him.
11	Next Meeting – Next meeting is 30 th September at 7:30 in Dame Flora Lounge