



## MEETING MINUTES

**Venue:** The David Mowat Room, Wick Assembly Rooms

**Date:** Monday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2023

**Time:** 19:00

<b>Present</b>			
Grouping	Name	Initial	Position <i>(If Applicable)</i>
Elected Members	Joanna Coghill	JC	Chairperson
	Allan Bruce	AB	Elected Member
	Wendy Campbell	WC	"
	Doreen Turner	DT	"
	Norma Craven	NC	"
	David Dunnett	DD	"
Co-opted Members	Eswyl Fell	EF	N/A
Ex-officio Members	Jayden Alexander	JA	Secretary
Non-Members	Sabih Huq	SH	Member of Public
	Lena Forbes	LF	WHS Pupil
	Carly Rosie	CR	WHS Pupil
	Aaron Eves-Munro	AEM	WHS Pupil
	Jonathan Miller	JM	WDT Representative
	David Scott	DS	NOSN Reporter

<b>Apologies of Absence</b>	
Name	Position <i>(If Applicable)</i>
Rona Morrison	Co-opted Member
Brian Hamilton	Police Sergeant, Wick
Allan Farquhar	Vice-Chairperson
Cllr Jan McEwan	Highland Councillor
Roy Mackenzie	Co-opted Member

## 1. Welcome and Apologies

JC welcomed everyone who was present to the meeting and thanked everyone for joining whether in person or online.

JC extended a welcome to three of the WHS pupils who were in attendance and made them aware of what the volunteers do to help improve the town. AB gave an insight to all present of what JC and AB presented to WHS pupils which included an introduction to RBWCC, the council sub-groups, the projects RBWCC is aiming towards including the improvements to the Playparks, and the issues we have with The Highland Council including their non-obligation to fix various things in the area and the benefits of volunteering for different activities within the community. LF advised that several pupils were keen to claim their free bus passes and to obtain a Highlife Membership card after their presentation. CR advised that some pupils had mixed opinions on the bottle recycling scheme (i.e.- is it really benefiting the environment?). AB advised that RBWCC are very keen to work alongside the High School, perhaps having contact with the pupil councils. NC asked if the pupils if they had discussed how they could volunteer in the community and what they would like to see. LF, CF and suggested a community café that is open in the evenings. JC suggested contacting Wick Youth Club about the possibility of holding this. CR said that they had attended one of the Teen Scene nights at PPP, however, felt that the High School weren't advertising things such as this. LF suggested a drop-in centre similar to what is in Alness. SH suggested that the pupils collect ideas for what they would like to see in the town which can then be feedback to RBWCC.

## 2. Review of Documents

- **Approval and Adoption of Previous Minutes**

The minutes of the previous meeting were distributed to members by the Secretary, three were raised, and the minutes were approved and adopted as follows subject to two amendments raised which JA will amend:

Proposed By: AB  
Seconded By: WC

JC advised to publish the minutes despite not having received a report from any of the Highland Councillors.

- **Monthly Correspondence List**

All members reviewed the monthly correspondence list, and no points were raised except for two items which are on the agenda for later discussion.

- **Action List**

AB is to contact Cllr RB with regards to obtaining a condition report on the All-Weather pitch in the Campus grounds.

JC advised that a great response was received on the Facebook post requesting desired opening times for the swimming pool from the public. AB received correspondence relating to the charges that they receive for hiring the facility. WC asked why the Wick facility has different opening times to other facilities in the Highlands. JCs suggested writing to Highlife Highland to request an urgent Zoom meeting to discuss membership fees and why they are the same despite Wick having different opening times, rental, and why it is only open until 2:30pm. All agreed.

### **3. Local Organisations' Update**

- **Local Police**

Police Sergeant, Brian Hamilton provided a report the Secretary which was circulated amongst members prior to the meeting. EF voiced how sad the statistics are. AB advised that he is keen for local Police to do a meet and greet, as this has been done in various other locations in the Highlands. JC suggested writing to the local Police to suggest doing a meet and greet at the community market.

- **East Caithness Community Campus and Noss Primary School**

No update was provided due to the absence of Allan Farquhar.

- **Friends of East Caithness Cemeteries**

WC advised that the group now have a motorised wheelbarrow, and the edging machine was funded through the Go Fund Me page. Cllr RB advised that this is now the group's sixth season. Cllr RB also advised that The Highland Council will be reviewing the cemeteries rules with regards to vehicles gaining access to the Cemeteries as the vehicles accessing it are causing disturbance to the edging and gravel.

- **Friends of Green Road Park**

Allan Farquhar provided the following update in advance of the meeting: *"May need some assistance from Paths group to cut back the path edges through from green road to coach road. Trees arrive over next couple of weeks, to be planted easter weekend in liaison with Noss Primary. Need to confirm such with Head Teacher . Confirmed ok to plant them do so with Evan Sinclair. GMR Henderson to do a CAT scan for us"*.

- **Wick Development Trust**

JM advised that the Campsite has been the main focus for the past few months, JM also provided some printouts of the Campsite plans which outlined the planned works. This covers electrical hook-up points, going from x23 to x64 hook-ups in total. However, the electrical supply is not strong enough, so a new electrical supply is being installed hence why Riverside Drive is currently closed off. New access roads have also been installed. New electrical bollards are also being

installed, and each of these bollards will have a new LED light on top which will provide sufficient lighting. The toilet block is an ongoing project which has been tidied up for the meantime with the hope that it will be upgraded for the 2024 season. JM advised that all the works have been a big investment. New staff will be starting at the beginning of April. Bookings took in 1350 last year, there have been over 1600 bookings for the new season. A new project manager is due to start next week. EF asked when the WDT trust would foresee the funding being used for the former cinema site. JM advised that all of the funding raised from the Campsite will be re-invested into the Campsite for the meantime until the development has been completed. Cllr advised that the Nold and playparks have now been re-opened. £94,000 has been earmarked for these Playparks with the following year gaining £100,000. Cllr RB urged an involvement with WDT for this to seek monies to match-fund this. The Highland Council and RBWCC are unable to complete an application for this due to insurance, however, would be a good aim for WDT. AB thanked JM for the update, however, requested an update on the bus stance opposite the Norseman Hotel. JM advised that the new bus stop has been installed. Cllr RB advised that the contractors are doing refurbishments for all the bus stops, the Norseman bus stop will have new lower panels in to protect the bus stance from vandals. JM advised that it will not be completed anytime soon due to prior commitments. AB asked JM about the signage, JC suggested a joined letter with WDT to the Roads Department of the Highland Council with the aim of gaining a response. JM advised that the Directors are working at very short notice, depending on when people are available, but JM will communicate a date. JM also advised that the planning permission for the World War II project is in hand.

- **Association of Caithness Community Councils**

AF advised that the next meeting is on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> March, with good announcements hopefully being made.

#### **4. Council Business and Matters Arising**

- **Spring Clean (Beautiful Scotland 2023)**

AB advised that this will begin on 17<sup>th</sup> March. X3 black bags of rubbish had been collected around Caithness General Hospital. 19<sup>th</sup> March will be conducted by Wick Paths Group. 26<sup>th</sup> March will be conducted by RBWCC where the Airport area will be tackled. 16<sup>th</sup> April will be everyone where we will meet at the Norseman Car Park. Old Pulteney are on board and will be assisting during the week. AB advised that all in all, a difference is being made. AB advised that this is predominately about litter picking, however, it would be good to select x4 areas in Wick to target which could be a good focus for brightening them up. AB voiced how good the employees of The Highland Council are doing with pressure washing and cleaning different areas. AB and Cllr RB voiced that if the community make an effort, then the Council have less work on their hands and are finding more time to go out and complete jobs. All agreed that this has been a big success.

- **Wick Common Good Fund**

JC advised that RBWCC are waiting on a meeting being held between the Caithness Ward Manager and the Common Good Fund Officer so that a date can be set for a meeting to be held between RBWCC and Highland Council representatives. Cllr RB stated that a member of the public is not permitted, however, a committee would be permitted to feedback to the Common Good committee.

- **Harbour Sheds Project**

Colin Stewart has been asked to complete samples of colours for the harbour sheds and Alex Paterson is ready to start work on sanding the sheds down. JC suggested costing out what materials would cost.

## **5. Highland Councillor's Report**

Cllr RB provided the following report in advance of the meeting:

When is the CCTV repairs going to happen to allow town centre coverage

Update requested from Roads and CCTV officers, will let you know the response:

*Hello everyone*

*Can I get an update on this for the local community council tomorrow evening please?*

*I'm aware that there was a need to undertake road works at the bridge because of a cabling issue meaning that one of the main cameras in the town is out of commission. Is that still the case? Can I get an indication of timeline please?*

*Kind regards*

*Raymond*

*Update 6th February – The repairs to the ducts have been completed and the Council's CCTV contractor hopes to be by the end of this week which will restore images from the one camera currently out of operation at the corner of High Street and Bridge Street. All other cameras are currently operational.*

*Update 6th March – All works completed, all cameras now fully functional*

When is the CCTV going to be installed down at the riverside carpark

As previously advised, this will be looked at along with the CCTV installation in the new public toilets which is still in progress

*Update 6th February – this remains the position*

*Update 6th March – this remains the position*

Update on WhiteChapel (you already stated that night, costs increasing but tenders are out) Whitechapel Rd – the tenders are out and some have been received. I can't comment on the prices submitted but certainly, there is an expectation that costs have substantially increased for this project as with many other infrastructure projects. Options continue to be looked at including modular build options. We need to ensure that we are getting the best return for any investment. Regular meetings are held (at least once a month) to review progress.

*Update 6th February – modular building has been dismissed after review. Renovation still preferred option. Caithness Committee approved £134,098 towards the increased costs of the project from the Caithness Regeneration Fund. Review of the tenders is being undertaken to see if there are any cost savings that can be realised. Award of contract should be soon and project delivery is expected to be 12 weeks.*

*Update 6th March - We await confirmation about the business case for the loan financing and I expect information about this, this week. Energy consumption info has been sent to the architect to see if the payback from installing solar panels is worth the investment. We have confirmation that the base of the building should be adequate with a foam uplift. We are looking to finalise tenders, if at all possible by 17th March and the next meeting of the team is tomorrow.*

Bus Shelter installed but when is it going to be reinstated down at the Riverside CarPark I'm hearing that some bus operators may actually be using it. New contracts have been awarded to operators and members received an update on that at the end of last year. I've asked (and have received this morning) for copies of the routes, operators and timetables. I believe that HiTrans are amalgamating and arranging for timetables to be put in bus shelters following the award of contracts and bus operators are arranging for timetable leaflets to be available. I also believe that Travel Line have the timetables available online, this has moved at pace in recent weeks.

Stagecoach committed to using the Bus Shelter at riverside when some issues had been attended to. These issues, as far as I am aware, have now been addressed. I have requested a discussion with officers to now progress discussion with bus operators to start returning to the riverside area. That will be after the first route revision discussions take place by which I hope will be around about the end of February. There is a procedure that has to be followed now so we will await the outcome of those discussions.

My most recent communication has been forwarded to the community council for their reference.

*Hello folks*

*Happy New Year to all of you who I haven't yet had the chance to say that to.*

*The new bus shelter has been installed at Wick Riverside. The raised table and the anti-slip surface has been put in place for the gradient on Whitechapel Road. The top of the road has been narrowed to restrict cars from parking there.*

*Stagecoach stopped going down there after one of their buses slid into the superstore there. They stated issues with the Council's gritting programme not servicing that area early enough for their bus use as being an issue. They also stated that parked cars at the top of Whitechapel Road were causing a problem. They stated at a meeting of the Caithness Transport Forum that they would return to the riverside when these issues were resolved.*

*We have had multiple complaints about the bus stop on the bridge – totally unsuitable given that it is open to all the elements and a pedestrian pathway.*

*I note that the contracts for public bus services have been awarded.*

*Can we please meet to now arrange for the bus services to return to the riverside area of Wick please?*

*Can I have responses please from each of you in respect of how we facilitate this?*

*The local community council are aware of this and are copied for information. It will be discussed at their meeting tomorrow night.*

*Rebecca – can you arrange a meeting inviting all of the above to attend within the next fortnight please, on teams?*

*Thank you all*

*Kind regards*

*Raymond*

*Update: The Council's Public Transport Officer has acknowledged that he will be speaking to the bus service operators and the traffic commissioner about the reintroduction of bus services to the riverside bus stance. However, there are a number of reports coming back to me that the operators have already returned to the bus stance. I've also asked if it is possible to look at a number of other points raised by members of the public including the reintroduction of a service that operates between Staxigoe, Papigoe and Wick; a Saturday service from the north to Wick and small minibus/mini-coach town service. I'm hoping that some of these will be fruitful.*

*Update 6th March – I'm aware that the installation of bus shelters by the contractor is continuing – the next shelter at Barrock has been installed. The new shelter at the High St is part of that installation contract.*

Papigoe Footpath - safer route to school path - you mentioned Joanne Sutherland  
Joanne Sutherland and I have discussed this following a follow up email communication today and it progresses. Neil Young has requested costs and identified areas for the path with a view to trying to identify funding from the Active Travel programme. This, and an area in Staxigoe is being considered by officers with a view to putting to members in respect of the update capital programme list. Any funds that members consider will come from capital funds for roads. Those discussions will happen before the new financial year. Once the cost of the path to Papigoe is evaluated and after we get clarification if Active Travel funding can be accessed, we will have a clearer picture on options for repair this year.

*Update 6th February – I have had discussions with Roads' Officers, HiTrans, Council Officers responsible for Safer Routes to School and Council Officers for Active Travel. I am really hopeful that we can identify funding for a number of improvements to footpaths and crossing areas that are key to providing safe routes to schools not only in the town but in some rural areas. I have arranged for a multi-partner meeting to see what funding we might be able to make available but I'm hopeful.*

*Update 6th March – I have had the multi-partner meeting to see what funding and opportunities there might be to enable improvement projects to happen in our area. I visited all the areas with roads / paths officers including key crossing points in Wick en route to the campus and the whole pathway from Elzy Road in Staxigoe into the town beyond Seaview Nursing Home. All the routes that I highlighted to officers are now being costed to allow a decision process to be undertaken in respect of what might be affordable. In terms of funding, there are number of possible ways to fund the projects but the size of that fund and to what limit we could realise highlighted projects is what we are looking at. The Council budget has recently been passed and the element for Caithness could also be looked at to support the projects.*

Town Ancillary Works list update on "jobs completed"

I've requested this from Mark Greig. I've also asked for Nicky to attend a Teams meeting to agree how we take this forward for the better weather.

*Hello Mark – Happy New Year to you!*

*Hope the new job is working out for you 😊*

*Can you let me know if there is an up-to-date version of the spreadsheet for the ancillary works?*

*Nicky – you'd planned to come to Caithness towards the end of the year but both arrangements had to be cancelled. Can you let me know when we can catch up asap please?*

*Mark was great at assisting us with taking the ancillary works programme forward but given his new position, we're really needing some sort of continued support with this. I know that it's not ideal weather just now at this time of the year but it would be good to get something in place looking forward to lighter nights and better weather.*

*Perhaps a catch up on Teams folks? Just to get an update on where everything is at? ☺*

*Kind regards*

*Raymond*

*Update 6th March – the most recent meeting took place on 16th February. We went through a spreadsheet that details all the works that are being looked at in terms of various ancillary works – members of the Community Council were in attendance and it was a very informative meeting. Continued actions were agreed although we really need to wait on better / warmer weather.*

*Town Officer monies - we have heard nothing regarding our invoices but you mentioned Liz only on the case recently*

*This is a matter for the ACCC. I've forwarded and received the following clarification:*

*Hello Mack*

*RBWCC have sent me an email communication in which it states:*

*"Town Officer monies - we have heard nothing regarding our invoices but you mentioned Liz only on the case recently"*

*Draft minutes have been sent to the Chair for verification and in the minute it states:*

*"Maisie enquired in respect of the funding that the ACCC holds for Community Councils to draw down against, particular to funding for village officers. Anne stated that Watten CC were not happy that they have not been able to pay for 2022 because no decision has been made that they are aware of. Ron stated that an extra £1,000 had been made available for the 2 years of COVID.*

*After discussion, Raymond managed to call Mack Sutherland, Ward Manager, into the meeting. He clarified that the extra money was given to the ACCC for Community Councils to draw down against during COVID. It was previously noted that not all Community Councils drew down against the funds awarded. Since then, it had been agreed that a report would be made to the Ward Manager from the ACCC detailing which Community Councils were drawing down the funding, what funds remained with the ACCC in respect of discretionary funds given to the ACCC in order that members could use this to determine their consideration of discretionary funds for 2022. This hasn't happened and therefore no decision has been made and no funds awarded to the ACCC.*

*The matter will be discussed at the next Area Business Meeting for members to make a final decision. That meeting will take place Monday 7th November."*

*An email was received by me, as Secretary of the ACCC at the end of November, copied to the Chair of the ACCC. It stated that she would be attending to the request re the information required to allow you to meet and address with members.*

*As I understand it, this is the current status.*

*Kind regards*

*Raymond*

*The response received:*

*Good afternoon Raymond, et al*

*This is my recall of the status as well. We await the confirmation (statement) prior to Members making the call on future payments.*



*Many thanks*

*Mack*

*Update 06.03.2023 – Members met this morning at an Area Business Meeting and this was discussed. Mack will inform the Community Councils of the outcomes to members' discussions at the next meeting of the ACCC this Wednesday 8th March.*

Sustrans gone too quiet but you mentioned that the Grant lady was coming north with the new Project Manager, (Mark replacement)

The Executive Chief Officer has been requested to meet via teams. Two meetings had to be cancelled prior to the festive season because of budget priority. I note that Allan Farquhar received the following clarification from one of the project team, Garry Smith:

*Good to hear from you, I hope you are going to get a chance to have some time off during the festive period. I know I am looking forward to my holidays. On a personnel note, I have been appointed as the lead officer for infrastructure across Highland and am now looking after multiple capital programme teams and projects. The team in Drummuie is working hard on the project and I know that they had a design review catchup with Sustrans earlier this week. The design and the landscaping proposals are on-going.*

*We will circulate some details in the new year with the updated design.*

*Regards*

*Garry Smith CEng MICE*

*Lead Officer (Infrastructure)*

*Infrastructure, Environment & Economy*

*Project Design Unit*

*Drummuie, Golspie*

*KW10 6TA*

*Update, 6th February – I met with one of the Council's Officers that is involved in the team working on getting the Wick Street Design bid over the line. I can confirm that the bid was completed by the Council's team in the last couple of weeks and submitted directly to the Scottish Government. When I worked with former Cllr Nicola Sinclair on the initial bid and after we were successful at stage 1, there was a consideration that the bid would see an investment of about £1.2m in the physical transformation of the town centre. That figure increased to £1.7m and I'm aware that, nearly five years on since we made our initial move to try and secure investment in our town centre, the bid for final stage funding of construction delivery was for a total of £2.6m. I hope to hear about the outcome within the next few weeks. I have all my fingers and toes crossed. The investment would be transformational and I hope would be a catalyst to attracting commercial investment in the town centre which we desperately need given news that yet another High St retailer is closing down.*

*Update 6th March – a presentation was made to members at the Area Business Meeting this morning. The draft final drawings were reviewed and these should be finalised for the end of March. Because they were in draft form, they were not available for being made public at the moment. We should hear the outcome of the submission by the end of March.*

Pocket Lanes Sustrans award, again, very quiet - we had won £40k ??

As I understand it, it isn't £40,000 but the award letter was sent to the Chair of the RBWCC. Following this up we are advised that the lead officer at HiTrans has moved to another position. The new person responsible for the Pocket Lanes funding has stated:

*Raymond,*

*Apologies that you hadn't heard from us sooner, but this was due to staff resourcing constraints. I am pleased to say that our team is now back up to full capacity and we are keen to get begin working on the Wick Lanes programme with a view of starting the inception phase in April 2023.*

*Best,*

*Serge Neumann*

*Manager | Co-Design | Sustrans Scotland*

*Working hours Mon-Fri 9:00am-5:30pm*

*Update, 6th February – I have had confirmation from Sustrans that the current budget allocation for the Pocket Lanes project is £50K but this is yet to be fully signed off and is also subject to the outcome of the inception phase. Again, I'm really hopeful that this money will help transform the adjoining lanes to the town centre. Those lanes are clearly needing repair and this investment comes at a key time. I'm just hoping that the physical regeneration, going from knowing that we have secured the funding to actual delivery of the project won't take too long.*

*Update 6th March – this continues to be ongoing*

Trees cut back in George Street - folk walking that area find it very dark as branches obscuring lampposts

The following has been received in response to follow up communication. Email to the Community Council with attachments:

*Hello both*

*For your information and reference.*

*If you can respond to me with the information requested here, we can take it from there.*

*Kind regards*

*Raymond*

Initial response from Kyle Mackie:

*Hi Raymond,*

*As discussed with Allan. From my experiences in the past the public can get very defensive and sometimes hostile when it comes to having trees/hedging cut*

*We do have a letter which can be sent to the residents. Informing them they have 28 days to trim the trees/hedges etc.. back to the boundary as per Section 91 of the Roads Act 1984 (please see attached snippet). I have never had to do this but I believe after the 28 days we are then within our right to have the work done and a bill sent to the resident to cover the costs. We would like to try a softer approach, by asking them first. Which I believe Allan has said the community council has done, so if there is no joy from that, then we can progress onto sending out the letter. Unfortunately like everything, this can be a lengthy process before we can physically get anything done.*

*If you and/or the CC can let me know what columns are being affected I can arrange for our foreman to have a look and get a note of the addresses.*

*Thanks*

*Kyle*

*Kyle Mackie*

*Senior Lighting Technician*

*Lighting and Communications*

*Infrastructure & Environment*

*Highland Council*

Once I get the response from the Community Council, I'll forward on.

*Update 6th March – I trust that this has been forwarded?*

Are you happy for the Wick Flower Baskets to donate 4 trees for the riverside carpark but HC install them, seeing HC ripped out the 8 we had planted at great cost when the carpark improvements started (with no notification to the Flower committee)

and

Play area upgrades for Bignold Park etc - you were unhappy with contractor works and was chasing this

I forwarded the request Roads and Amenities:

*Hello everyone*

*I've received the following from the local community council and wonder if you would like to comment? At the time we were looking at the redesign of the car park, the community council were there and said about helping with the landscaping:*

- *Are you happy for the Wick Flower Baskets to donate 4 trees for the riverside carpark but HC install them, seeing HC ripped out the 8 we had planted at great cost when the carpark improvements started (with no notification to the Flower committee)*

- *Play area upgrades for Bignold Park etc - you were unhappy with contractor works and was chasing this*

*John – can you or Evan give an update on where the play park works are at?*

*Kind regards*

*Raymond*

The following response was received:

*Hi Raymond,*

*We should be able to plant the trees, the best thing would be for the group to speak to Evan to arrange it.*

*We are expecting G&R back this week to finish off the job, and will keep you updated.*

*Evan has been in the Bignold and said it is as wet as he can ever remember, its at the point of needing welly boots in places. I am not sure who is the responsible service for this, but as its run by HLH, I would think the it would be E&L. We will pass this on.*

*Kind Regards*

*John*

*Update 6th March – the Nold and Hillhead playparks are now fully open. We had a meeting with amenity officers this morning and we are aware of money that will be available soon for playpark investment as part of the Scottish Governments support funding. As far as I am aware the available amount for Caithness this year will be around 2021-2022 was £22,813.00, 2022-2023 was £23,898.00, 2023-2024 £47,582, 2024-2025 £73,789.00 and 2025-2026 is £126,097. Grand total 294179. Since this funding has now crystalised, the total for the three years to 2023-2024 is now realised at £94,000 meaning £47,000 for each ward for this year. For the following year I believe it will be over £100,000 which will mean approximately £50,000 for each ward. As already indicated, members in Ward 3 have already committed to prioritise the Grizzy Playpark and will consider what these funds may achieve. I would urge a discussion with the WDT to see what collaboration could be had in submitting an application to the Caithness and North Sutherland Fund and the Halsary Fund to be able to supplement this years funds.*

Police Report – representation made to the RBWCC from Raymond re the CAC meeting

*Update 6th March – ability to raise at the ACCC on Wednesday 8th March.*

Caithness NHS Redesign – send papers to Joanna – see if there is a summary that can be reported?

*Update 6th March – attached to the email with this report is the most recent update to the Caithness NHS Redesign Board. Not for onward distribution or for publication but for noting in respect of the work that the Redesign Board is currently undertaking and progressing.*

Breadalbane Terrace and across from Breadalbane Crescent – derelict buildings on the corner

*Update 6th March – not able to identify these building owners*

Glamis Rd will not be able to take the heavy vehicles – why do we not open up Port Dunbar one way system

Bottom of Ackergill Crescent has been narrowed

*Update 6th March – Awaiting responses on the above two items.*

Common Good Fund – update

*Update 6th March – Mack is co-ordinating getting a time that suits everyone. Sara Murdoch isn't available in the evenings and is prepared to give up her lunch to have the discussion.*

*Mack will be in touch in respect of this.*

Roads – increased funding

*Update 6th March – Council agreed to increase revenue funding by £1.266m for a dedicated pothole squad that will concentrate on potholes only in areas throughout the Highland. Now that the funding has been agreed, the team will be put together for the new financial year and the programme will be advised in due course. Council also agreed to increase the capital funding from £7.2m to £20m. The amount of increase is to be split – 40% by allocation according to the distribution formula and 60% by strategic allocation. The funding allocation by formula would mean that Caithness should see about £1.2m of the increased base amount which is £12.3m. On top of this, £5.5m will be distributed to areas where it is needed most. If this amount was to be distributed by formula only, Caithness would realise an increase of about £0.7m. That would be a total of about £1.9m. That would be a substantial increase on funding in previous years. Capital funding and any increase in capital funding will be primarily used to increase the amount of tar on roads, not purchase of machines etc. Final clarification will be required now that the budget has been agreed but the early indications are that Caithness will have an increase in capital funding of at least about 27%. There will be a discussion about what this increase will mean to the amount of projects that will be able to be done on the capital list. I'll update folks on that when I get the information.*

## **6. Council Sub-Group Reports**

- **Wick Hanging Baskets Committee**  
AGM was held and there are x3 new volunteers. Funding is adequate at present, and fresh displays are planned for this year.
- **Wick Community Market**  
No report was provided due to the absence of Allan Farquhar.
- **Wick Christmas Lights**
- No report was provided due to the absence of Claire Mackenzie.

- **Wick Paths Group**

The following report was received from John Bogle in advance of the meeting: *“Subsea 7 generously donated materials and labour (Alun Arnold) to assist WPG Chairman Willie Watt to improve safety on the March Road Path. At the castle end of the path it crosses the mill lade on railway sleepers but these could be very slippery particularly in winter. The photos show a non slip grating supplied by Subsea 7 being fitted to the sleepers. The group are also busy getting ready for the spring and summer ahead with planned litter picks, fence line repairs and extensive maintenance for the path network around the town. Additional equipment has been procured and donated to assist with the work ahead and as always we are keen to see more volunteers assist with our goals. Pupils at the two town primary schools have been invited to submit their ideas for a logo for the group which will be used on letterheads, hi-vis vests, etc.”*

- **HAPPY**

No report was provided due to the absence of Allan Farquhar.

## 7. Treasury Reports

- **Royal Burgh of Wick Community Council**

£

£963.35 (Businessmen’s Corner Project)

£3,000 (Riverside Fountain)

£18,056 (F

£6,950 (Beatrice COVID fund)

£126.63 (Wick Riverside Volunteers)

Willie Watt suggested replicating the Distinguished Visitors plaque that is on the wall around Caithness General Hospital. All agreed that this was a great idea as the plaque is in an area which can’t always be seen. JC will obtain quotes for this.

A cheque will be written to Wick Flower Baskets for £500.

- **Wick Hanging Baskets Committee**

£1,875.24

- **Wick Community Market**

£776.94 (Held in RBWCC’s current account in the meantime until a bank account has been opened). This sum does not include income from indoor markets in Caithness House run by John Bogle in 2019.

- **Wick Christmas Lights**

£4,879.05

- **Wick Paths Group**

£12,983.07

- **HAPPY**  
£1,884.82 Cheque 000176 13/02/20 £200 issued to Penny Lane band has not been presented. Cheques 000177 (£30 ) & 000178 (£30 ) are to be issued to the pipers who played at the Hogmanay Street party. Instead of running two insurances ( one for HAPPY and one for Market) the HAPPY insurance now covers both realising a saving of approximately £500.

HAPPY also expecting ring fenced income from AOCC on submission of accounts. PMN Payment of 2023 HAPPY Reviver Band £300 and Pipers £100 made by personal payment by AF1 as cheques are exhausted and not being replaced by RBOS. In due respect of the above although the HAPPY account shows £1884.82, thus £1009.13 remains unrestricted.


## 8. AOCB

- **Upper Dunbar Street Project**  
JC advised that she contacted the Caithness Ward Manager to ask if planning permission would be required to re-site the bench in the area.
- **Post Office**  
AF is to investigate a contact for the Co-Op, who had expressed interest prior to Kevin Milkins taking over the service.
- **Deposit Return Scheme**  
It was agreed to postpone this item to the next meeting due to the absence of Allan Farquhar.
- EF asked if there were any plans in place for to celebrate the King's Coronation. Willie Watt approached JC with regards to this. It was felt that the Provost should be involved with this as Civic Leader and JC will make contact with Willie Watt about this.
- SH advised that the rebuild for Caithness General Hospital is getting closer, with the last parts of decision making in hand. Drawings were showed; however, nothing was agreed, however, a radical change will be made. SH suggested doing a get-together / meet and greet. NC asked what is happening with the dental services in the Highlands, as one practice in Invergordon is prepared to take NHS patients, the rest are not. NC argued that there are people in Caithness who don't have transport so how could they be expected to travel. SH advised that he would attempt to find a reason for this. JC asked SH if he could find out who is responsible for the litter around CGH as AB and JC.
- NC advised that the access road into Wick Retail Park is getting worse. AB has contact details and will follow this up.

- JC advised that she obtained a quote for a planting container to put in place of a bollard on High Street. It was felt that this would be much nicer than a bollard and JC will contact The Highland Council with regards to this.
- AB advised that The Highland Council have confirmed that it is a cable fault that is causing the lighting problem at the Cliff.
- Allan Farquhar provided the following points in advance of the meeting: *“Riverside Granite Blocks- Lowest tide over next few days if anyone is keen to retrieve them in this weather. Risk Assessment Available. Roads- FOI to Orkney Council revealed 1 payout of £750ish over the last four years. I have submitted at FOI to HC to establish what the payouts are for Caithness...FOI is now overdue.Town Centre- Awaiting response from Garry Smith re progress on Street Upgrade...scheme design due end of march but we haven't received any updates on progress...something for our ward councillors to ask”.*

JC thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting closed for private business discussion.

**Date of Next Meeting:** Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023

These minutes were approved and adopted as follows:					
Date	03/04/2023				
Location	The David Mowat Room, Wick Assembly Rooms				
Proposer	Wendy Campbell				
Seconder	Alastair Ferrier				
Signed		Name	Jayden Alexander	Position	Secretary