

ROYAL BURGH OF WICK COMMUNITY COUNCIL



Location: Mowat Room, Wick Assembly Rooms

Date: Monday 4th October 2021

Time: 7:00pm

Minutes of monthly meeting held in October 2021.

The names of those present highlighted in grey were present virtually, via Zoom.

Present

Elected members:	Joanna Coghill (<i>JC</i>)	Chairperson
	Allan Farquhar (<i>AF1</i>)	Vice-Chairperson
	Kimberley Miller-Rosie (<i>KMR</i>)	Treasurer
	Wendy Campbell (<i>WC</i>)	
	Alastair Ferrier (<i>AF2</i>)	
	David Dunnett (<i>DD</i>)	
	Doreen Turner (<i>DT</i>)	
Co-opted members:	Allan Bruce (<i>AB</i>)	
	Eswyl Fell (<i>EF</i>)	
	Claire Mackenzie (<i>CM</i>)	
	Roy Mackenzie (<i>RM</i>)	
Ex-officio members:	Cllr Jill Tilt (<i>Cllr JT</i>)	Highland Councillor
Non-members/Public:	Jayden Alexander (<i>JA</i>)	Secretary
	Andrew Henderson (<i>AH</i>)	Noss Power Station Representative
	David Scott (<i>DS</i>)	Press Reporter (NOSN Newspapers)

Apologies

Sergeant Brian Hamilton
Cllr Raymond Bremner

1. Welcome and apologies.

Due to the absence of the chairperson (Joanna Coghill), AF1 took the chair and welcomed everyone to the meeting. A vote of thanks was given to those who had joined virtually via Zoom.

2. Local Police Report.

JA stated that a no apologies had been received from Police despite their not being a representative in attendance, and no report had been received although a representative from the Police had intimated that a report would be sent in advance of the meeting, JA confirmed that this had not been received.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting.

JA circulated the draft minutes of the previous meeting which was held on Monday 6th September to RBWCC members.

Approval and adoption: The minutes had been proposed by WC and seconded by AB.

Outstanding actions: JA confirmed that he will start to work on creating an action list which would be separate to the minutes following AB's suggestion. JA and AB will work together on this, hopefully to be ready for the next meeting.

Matters arising: The matters arising from the previous minutes concerned the Highland Council, and the concerns raised had been touched on in the report received from Cllr Raymond Bremner.

4. Correspondence.

Several items in the correspondence for October required a response, all had been dealt with except from the ongoing communications with Highland Council for a town walkabout and / or meeting to discuss the current state of the town centre which carries on from September.

AF1 suggested a separate list of the correspondence received be created for meetings, separate to the minutes. JA confirmed he would work on this, hopefully for the next meeting.

5. Highland Councillor's Report.

A report was received from Cllr Raymond Bremner in advance of the meeting due to his apologies. No reports were received from Cllr Willie Mackay or Cllr Andrew Sinclair. Jill Tilt kindly advised that she would liaise with Highland Council on the following issues for an update:

Report received from Cllr Raymond Bremner:

Play Parks

Local Councillors met with the Amenities Officers this week and visited the four of the five main play parks in the town:

1. The Nold play park
2. Hillhead play park
3. Green Road play park
4. The Grizzly play and skate park

The fifth play park that wasn't visited was the Riverside play park.

CC members will know that there is £40,000 that has been set aside for play parks in Ward 3. Another £230,000 has been given to the Highland Council from the Scottish Government and this was recently reported at the full Highland Council meeting in September. Caithness will receive an element of this and could be in the region of an additional £25,000. I've also mentioned that, at the end of the financial year, unspent COVID monies could be repurposed and at this moment approximately £15,000 remains in that fund for Ward 3, to the best of my recollection.

My motion to put in place a proper, effective and sustainable play park strategy was successful at the last full Council since the last meeting of the RBWCC.

What will now happen is as follows:

1. The strategy will be put in place and this will consider all avenues of possible funding and support for play parks across Highland Council

2. In respect of Caithness, the last of the play parks are being surveyed by the officer commissioned to do this and that is expected to be by the end of October
3. A number of the play parks have already been evaluated and a number have had their equipment condemned
4. In respect of Wick, the officers will now give us a report for each play park, what equipment needs to be removed, what equipment is in store that can be installed, what costs may be anticipated for the works, how we can distribute the funding as beneficial as possible and what the plans going forward for each play park will be


As soon as I get that information, I'll make sure that you get a copy. I expect the information to be gathered over the next couple of weeks and for the update / costs discussion to be at the next Ward Business Meeting for Councillors.

Sustrans Submission

Happy to say that, following the discussions with the Executive Chief Officer (ECO) for Caithness, a project manager was appointed, a number of meetings / discussions were held and the final submissions for the Wick Street Design project were sent to Sustrans on 23rd September. A full copy of the submission was sent to me, Joanna Coghill and Alan Farquhar. We now await the outcome of the panel review in November however, there may still be communication in respect of any clarification that the panel may require relative to our submission which I believe is a positive thing. If the submission is successful, we will then have £150,000 at our disposal to move to full design stage which would be submitted to qualify the funding for the delivery of the proposals. Highland Council have already stated that they will support the proposal if it is successful and the funding bid would be based on delivery costs of approximately £1.2m. Again, this is an exciting stage to be at – a lot of letters of support were received recently in addition to the initial letters of support at an earlier stage of the process. It has been decided that we would await the outcomes of this stage before issuing an update by way of a press release to the wider community.

Town Centre Ancillary Works

A number of discussions have been held since the last RBWCC meeting including those where Joanna was in attendance. These discussions were held with those who are supporting the various projects being worked on in the town centre including the Public Conveniences, CCTV, Sustrans Project etc. The project officer for Sustrans has an overview for discussion with the



ECO for Caithness. The overview and a selection of the images of the town centre taken over a number of months were also given to local members with discussions now focussing on:

1. Having a designated support officer to co-ordinate the acknowledged projects
2. Identifying the services needed to carry out the operations
3. Identifying the programme of works
4. Agreeing the funding split for the programme of works
5. Agreeing the appropriate method of delivering the works (Council, agency, community pay back, volunteers, etc) and the scope of the works
6. Agreeing the design proposals where appropriate (Co-ordination of colour / design schemes)
7. Agreeing how the plan will be implemented (including any tendering/material supply/machinery)
8. Putting a plan in place for the programme to be sustainable (co-ordinating service provision going forward)

The next step is to discuss the designated support officer and the officer appointed by the ECO for Caithness will discuss that with the ECO and I in the next few days. The invitation will be sent to the Chair of RBWCC so that the CC are involved in the way forward.

Whitechapel and Camps Public Convenience

This project continues to move forward. Since the last meeting of RBWCC, the design stage has been completed. This was after a couple of meetings to review the initial proposals over a couple of weeks. The final proposals were presented at a meeting where the Chair of RBWCC was in attendance. These proposals are now being costed and the costs will be presented at a meeting this Wednesday. The costs will be on a modular basis in order that additionality can be considered – what do we want to remove / keep based on the costs involved.

The discussions continue in respect of the funding and how we can successfully deliver the project. These will include:

1. Moving forward with the Outline Business Case (OBC) presented to Council
2. Considering the next tranche of funding for Tourism at Highland Council including any consideration of the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF) that may be realised
3. Discussions with the Regeneration Officers at Council in respect of the next stage of Town Centre funding from Scottish Government or similar replacement funds
4. Commercialisation of the surrounding area in support of any capital borrowing that may be requested of Council

5. Other funding sources that the Council officers consider may be accessible.

Again, we need to realise that this project is **NOT** the turn on of a tap and the opening of a door to provide access to a public toilet. This is a fully considered, integrated project as part of a bigger picture within the town centre of Wick and the greater service provision for the town, locals and visitors alike. One of the key points that will need to be stated is the requirement for support for this project and the vision it is part of. We know it is frustrating that Wick, a town of 7,000 inhabitants doesn't have a public toilet but we have said this enough times that we need to focus on delivering the vision that not only satisfies the needs of the community but delivers a first class amenity and facility that is sustainable and something that we never thought we would get to a stage where it may be realisable. When I first took on this project, I had no idea it would lead to regular meetings with nearly every available officer in attendance to get this vision over the line. I'm committed to it and we need everyone else to be committed to it. That's another reason why the RBWCC are at all the main meetings now and that is something we should encourage in other areas – greater involvement of Community Council representation at such a level 😊

Roads and footpaths

The monthly roads' meeting that I host was held last week. It was hugely informative. Nearly a third of the capital listing presented to Caithness Councillors in March has been completed. That is the full programme that was committed to. It has been delivered, and more.

In respect of the Capital Programme, the attached spreadsheet shows the completed tasks. Some of the tasks that are not included that have been added since the programme was done are in respect of roads in Greenland / Barrock area. There are other areas that have been added to the programme on a casual basis in respect of their recognised priority.

There are a number of other works that are also now being undertaken and the full update that was received is as follows:

- *The capital programme for roads is coming to an end with the seasonal weather change meaning that Council has to prepare the fleet and make ready for the winter maintenance programme - that work on the fleet is under way.*
- *Ditching works are planned for this month.*

- *The arborial works (hedge, tree and verge trimming) programme is coming to an end but is still being carried out at the moment.*
- *Spaces for People works - the path to Milton is now complete.*
- *The work to purchase, relocate, replace etc bus shelters with the funding that has now been allocated, is with the team now responsible for delivering that.*
- *Road lining including junctions, yellow lines, etc - the list for doing by Markon continues to be put together and we'll get an update on when this will be undertaken. DYLS are confirmed at Sunbeam Terrace in respect of the list to be done and that has been clarified by Shane Manning.*
- *Traffic radar and traffic surveys for local community councils and groups - these are being undertaken as requested.*
- *In respect of traffic surveys and information about traffic speeds, a number of communities have requested that their area be put forward for speed reductions and these requests are now being forwarded altogether to the appropriate section of Council – most of Wick is now subject to a 20 mph speed limit.*
- *Coastal erosion at John O' Groats - the works for this will now start this week coming, week beginning 4th October.*
- *Work continues with the flashing 20 mph signs in and around schools and the road works for the traffic calming plans in Henrietta Street have now been approved and will be implemented.*
- *.Bral Terrace, Halkirk - the completed programme of capital works is now being reviewed in respect of the cost of delivery against what the budgeted cost was - any funding that is realised as left over will be spent repairing Braal Terrace, Halkirk which will be good news for folks in this area.*
- *Bilbster Bends - the same will be considered for this area once the costs have been reviewed.*
- *The first JCB Pothole Pro machine is destined for Caithness and the staff will be trained in its use.*
- *The jet-patcher will be in Caithness in October and will undertake revenue repairs including Union Street and other areas in the town of Wick; Lybster, Durran, Castletown and Harlkik among other areas and we will receive updates as these works are undertaken.*
- *Bignold Park drainage issues in Wick are ongoing because the weather has been really dry in recent weeks - a camera will be put up the drainage piping to investigate.*
- *Public paths - a number of these have been highlighted over past weeks and mentioned at a number of community councils. A consideration will be put forward to use the additional £200,000 for next year's capital programme in respect of public path improvements and a similar capital listing for public paths will be created. This will include the path outside the Post Office in Wick.*
- *The Market Square slabs issue in Wick and the barriers around them - the barriers and large slabs will be removed and permanent patching undertaken to remove the risk of personal injury.*

The above list is not in any way exhaustive but very much indicative of all the other works that the Council's roads' teams have to undertake in Caithness over and above the roads capital works.

Hope that helps – there's loads more as there always is but catch up at the next meeting. Let me know if there is anything else in addition that needs to be looked at or any other queries in the meantime.

6. Report from Noss Power Station.


A representative was not in attendance, however, RBWCC members who had attended the site visit mutually agreed that the visit was very interesting and "well worth it"

7. Treasurer's Report.

- Wick Christmas Lights: CM gave a small report in advance of the meeting due to her apologies. It was stated that the current account bank balance sits at £3,500.66.
- Wick Flower Baskets: Due to the absence of Joanna Coghill, a report was unavailable.
- HAPPY: AF1 stated that the current account bank balance sits at £732.81.

8. Sub-Group Reports.

- Wick Christmas Lights: CM stated in her report that a fantastic response was received after ticket sales were announced for Santaland (450 tickets were sold in two minutes).
- Wick Flower Baskets: EF stated that more volunteers had been found and that they have six trees available for planting as part of the Queen's Green Canopy for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, AF1 suggested planting trees in Wick Play Parks. This is to be investigated by Wick Flower Baskets Committee, and permission will have to be granted from Highland Council.
- Wick Paths Group: A report was received in advance of the meeting by John Bogle which was circulated by JA, this is as follows:



The Paths Group held its second monthly work night on the first Wednesday in September when there was a fantastic turnout of 18 volunteers. The existing tarred path from Market Street leading up towards High Street was cleared of overhanging vegetation and rubbish. a short section of new path was dug out and filled to connect the existing path to High Street. A viewpoint was dug out and filled with tar chippings at Broadhaven, the surrounding area was strimmed and later a concrete base was installed—a recycled plastic bench has been purchased by the Friends of the John o’Groats Trail, the bench has been delivered and will be installed at the viewpoint shortly. Also on the work night, the Old Lifeboat Slip beside the Medical Centre was cleared of rubbish and the weeds were reduced, a litter pick was carried out on both sides of the river from the Harbour Bridge up to the Salvation Army building. Photos attached. It is now dark early in the evening so future work events will be held at weekends, the next one will be at the end of October when encroaching trees and bushes will be cut back from paths at the Riverside, we will also be joining with the Riverside Volunteers for a litter pick, members of the public are invited to join in. We have held a site meeting with SSE and they hope to have scraped the path to Newtonhill by the middle of October, once this has been completed we will inspect the path to decide if any further improvements are needed. Planning is ongoing for our next big projects—the path through the South Head quarries and the path from the Trinkie road end to the old rifle range.

HAPPY: AF1 stated that feelers were issued to local musicians for a new year party, however, not so much response was received. The committee have also asked Wick RBLs Pipe Band if they will be available. Risk assessments will also be carried out.

9. Wick Community Campus and Noss Primary School.

AF1 stated he had nothing further to report other than what was reported in September. The firm who installed the acoustics had been contacted and they were gracious enough as to confirm what is required to improve the acoustics.

10. Council Business.

Caithness Club Corner: This is still ongoing. Gerry Henderson is to be asked when the panels will be installed.

Common Good Fund: RM confirmed that there are now over two hundred artefacts in question. A letter which is dated 1476 is currently being located. Six old items are housed in Caithness Horizons and the riverside islands had never been officially transferred legally to Highland Council.

Wick Riverside Fountain: Highland Council is to be contacted regarding the repair for the chains attached to the wooden posts.

Wick Community Market: AF1 submitted an application to SSE BOWL to secure fourteen marquees. AF1 stated that hopefully it will be ready before the December fun day. AF1 has liaised with Thurso Development Trust about borrowing marquees for this.

Dog Fouling Campaign: AB received the posters from Colin Stewart. A local press article is to be arranged.

11. AOCB.

- **Queen's Green Canopy**
JC is to contact Cllr Willie Mackay to confirm how many trees are required.
- **Parking at Wick Harbour**
DD stated that Highland Council hadn't gotten back to RBWCC on the parking issue at Wick Harbour.

JC thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting closed for private discussion for RBWCC members and the secretary only.

Next meeting

Location: Mowat Room, Wick Assembly Rooms

Date: Monday 1st November 2021

Time: 7:00pm