Findochty Community Council Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, 7 September 2026
Time: 7:00 PM
Venue: Findochty Town Hall

Attendance

Community Councillors:
Anne Braidwood (Chair), Paul Steel (Secretary), Paul Kerrison (Treasurer), Ron Dawson
Members of Public: Six
Moray Council: Cllr Sonia Warren

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1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed attendees, confirmed that a quorum was present and advised that the meeting would be recorded to assist preparation of the minutes.

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2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: Jeff Masterson

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3. Approval of Previous Minutes

The previously circulated minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

Proposed by: Ron Dawson
Seconded by: Paul Steel

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4. Matters Arising

4.1 Crooked Hythe Benches

An estimate of £2,000 for full timber replacement was considered unaffordable. Members preferred repairing the ten damaged sections using standard pressure-treated timber, estimated at £100–£106.
Agreed: Repair the ten damaged sections using pressure-treated timber.
Action: Obtain a final costed estimate and progress the repair

4.2 Seaview Road Picnic Area

The proposed lease will not proceed. Picnic benches range from £250 for an A-frame design to £390 for a round-table design, with delivery of three tables estimated at £238. Two adult tables and one children's table would cost approximately £1,200–£1,400 including delivery, excluding the required slab base.

Agreed: Establish the full project cost over the coming months, with a view to progressing it early in 2027

4.3 Ride-on Mower

The donated ride-on mower has minimal monetary value and remains in storage.

Agreed: Drain, inhibit and prepare the mower for winter storage.

Action: Launch a volunteer recruitment campaign in February/March 2027, before the next grass-cutting season.

4.4 Route 35 Bus Service

Early departures, missed pick-ups and breakdowns continue, although complaint levels have reduced. Stagecoach's response was considered unaccommodating, and its operational data remains inconsistent with evidence submitted by residents, including approximately 130 survey responses.

Moray Council's transport chief has agreed to pursue improvements with Stagecoach. HITRANS has also offered to raise persistent issues where supporting evidence continues to be provided.

Agreed: Continue collecting evidence and consider escalation through HITRANS.

4.5 School-Area Grit Bin

Moray Council has agreed to install a grit bin near the school but will not permit its use on the adjoining unadopted road. Members considered this restriction impractical, as parents and children must cross that section to reach the school. All three ward councillors agreed to raise the issue.

Agreed: Continue pressing Moray Council for a practical resolution.

4.6 20 mph Speed Limit Signage

Moray Council's transport manager has acknowledged concerns about inconsistent speed-limit signage but has not provided a substantive response despite reminders. Drivers entering from either end encounter a 30 mph limit, reducing to 20 mph only at one lamp post near the bus stop, making the restriction effectively unenforceable in either direction. The 20 mph limit is also widely disregarded and unenforced in Findochty and Buckie.

Action: Continue pressing for a resolution and appropriate transitional signage.

4.7 Netherton Terrace Dropped Curbs

No previous correspondence could be found. Members recalled that the issue concerned accessibility and possible funding constraints but could not confirm the details or outcome.

Action: Continue searching archived correspondence and emails and revisit the matter when further information is available.

4.8 Dog Waste Bag Dispensers

Several dispensers have been vandalised, one is missing and others remain to be reinstated. The financial impact has so far been minimal, but replacements cannot continue indefinitely if vandalism persists.

Agreed: Reinstate the outstanding dispensers during the winter and monitor the position.

4.9 Overgrown Trees

This matter has been resolved and no further action is required.

4.10 Bin Condition Audit

The harbour bin, which had been repeatedly moved, has been chained and relocated. A village-wide condition audit remains outstanding, including consideration of whether larger-capacity bins are required.

Action: Complete the bin audit and identify any bins requiring replacement or increased capacity.

4.11 Community Council Laptop

An application has been submitted to Moray Council's equipment replacement fund, as the Community Council laptop runs Windows 7 and is no longer fit for purpose. A follow-up enquiry has been sent.

Noted: Moray Council's response is awaited.

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5. Community Updates

5.1 Community Police Update

The Community Police update is provided on a bi-monthly basis. There was no update this month.

5.2 Treasurer's Report

The bank balance was £7,425, comprising:

- Admin Grant: £1,889
- Events Fund: £623
- Maintenance Fund: £2,230, including £500 ring-fenced for defibrillator costs
- General Fund: £2,682

Income of £194 was received from the Key Store donation box. A duplicate payment of £308 was returned to Moray Council.

Missing whistles and megaphone batteries were replaced in the community resilience bag at a cost of £20.87.

Noted: The Treasurer's Report was accepted without further comment.

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6. Community Feedback (Submitted in Advance)

Correspondence was received concerning the derelict former chip shop on Station Road, including the overgrown site, planning status and protective barriers.

Moray Council's Head of Rural Planning and Climate Change advised on 11 September 2025 that:

- a building warrant had been issued but had expired;
- safety works had been undertaken, although not all work covered by the warrant was completed;
- Building Standards does not currently consider the property dangerous, with no loose masonry or material at risk of falling;

- the site is protected by Heras fencing and subject to periodic checks;
- further action could be taken if new safety concerns arose, but Building Standards cannot compel work unless the building becomes dangerous;
- the building is within a conservation area but is not listed, and the Council cannot require its redevelopment;
- planning permission granted around 2017 for conversion to a dwelling with a first-floor extension and balcony was not progressed;
- the site does not qualify for an amenity notice, which applies to land requiring tidying rather than a building requiring redevelopment; and
- routine weed spraying of public land has ceased.

Noted: Residents' continuing concerns are formally recorded, but there is currently limited scope for further action unless the building becomes dangerous.

Agreed: Consider the site for inclusion in a future Local Place Plan.

7. Items Submitted by Community Council Members

7.1 Common Good Fund

Approximately £4,000 is available, of which around £3,000 could realistically be accessed. The Seaview Road picnic area and pétanque court remain potential projects but are not sufficiently developed for an application.

7.2 Asset Register

The register is being updated to include all community-owned assets, including street furniture and planters. The completed register will be provided to the Community Council's insurer.

Action: Members to notify the Treasurer of any unrecorded community assets.

7.3 E-bike Infrastructure Feasibility

The General Manager of Wegoshare confirmed that the proposal is feasible and suggested working with HITRANS. Further engagement is on hold while HITRANS completes its Elgin rollout.

Four/Five stations are provisionally estimated to cost approximately £100,000, with funding yet to be identified. The proposed route would cover approximately 25–30 km and connect with the emerging North Coast Route One.

Agreed: Resume engagement with HITRANS following completion of the Elgin rollout.

7.4 Garage Plots

Current lease conditions require garage-plot tenants to own and insure a vehicle. Moray Council's asset manager has agreed to confirm ownership of the relevant plots and consider whether lease conditions could accommodate non-vehicle use. The matter is urgent because the current Council contact is due to leave shortly.

Action: Follow up with the asset manager before Friday, 11 September 2026.

7.5 Petanque Court

The sport's Scottish development officer, based in Macduff, provided guidance and plans for an international-standard court costing approximately £2,000. A simpler and cheaper surface would be suitable for local recreational use.

A possible partnership with Findochty Bowling Club was discussed, potentially using an associate-membership arrangement similar to Macduff. Possible sites include land near the bowling club and the caravan site.

Agreed: Survey the community to assess interest and preferred location before undertaking further work.

7.6 Winter Planting

Winter bulbs were proposed for village tubs and planters to supplement the summer displays. This will require volunteer support and could involve the primary school, nursery and Interplay/Payback team.

7.7 Village Signage

Water ingress has caused lettering on the welcome sign to peel. A more durable replacement will be designed for 2027 using cut-out lettering sealed with varnish. The alternative spelling of the village name may also be included. The need for continued maintenance of the boat feature was noted.

Action: Develop the replacement sign design for 2027.

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8. Reports

8.1 Local Councillors

Route 35 bus service: See item 4.4.

Buckie ASG school proposals: Proposals remain at an early stage, with no decisions expected before the next Council elections. Concerns remain about the adequacy of consultation with smaller coastal schools.

Consultation methods: Moray Council's schools consultation was criticised for leading questions, predetermined framing and discrepancies in published figures. A letter setting out these concerns is being finalised for submission.

Local Development Plan and Local Place Plan: The Local Development Plan is expected to go to committee in November 2026, with consultation from 23 November 2026 to 23 February 2027. Communities were encouraged to prepare a Local Place Plan, even a modest one, as it would be a material planning consideration.

Agreed: Consider a Local Place Plan over the winter, focusing on accessible housing, tourism assets and the former chip shop site.

Bridge congestion: Delays at the Spey Bay/Fochabers bridge continue, with queues of up to 45 minutes reported. Representations are continuing to Moray Council, MSPs, MPs and Transport Scotland, which is responsible for the bridge.

8.2 Resilience group

The resilience bag was audited and missing items replaced, as recorded at item 5.2. The walkie-talkies remain to be checked. Formal acceptance of the Community Resilience Plan and the associated desktop exercise have been outstanding for approximately 18 months.

Action: Complete the walkie-talkie check.

Action: Send another letter to Moray Council seeking acceptance of the plan and completion of the desktop exercise.

8.3 Member Responsibility Updates

Harbour Advisory Group (CC representative update)

A meeting with the new Harbour Manager, Lolly Piper, who succeeded Cameron McPhee this week, remains to be arranged. Acquisition of a new excavator is understood to be among her priorities.

Members raised concerns about Scottish Water's failure to give advance notice of recent works, including the Commercial Street closure for sewage works, which affected residents without warning. The Harbour Authority confirmed that utility companies are not required to notify the Community Council.

Action: Continue seeking a more reliable advance-notification arrangement.

Maintenance/Gardening

Summer begonias have been removed. Geraniums remain and should last for several more months. Many timber planters are rotting and their metal bands have failed. An estimate is being prepared for maintenance-free replacements suitable for the salt-air environment.

Tim Smith has offered to help source planters at a better price and apologised for being unable to complete this year's spraying programme because of other commitments.

Defibrillator

The defibrillator pads require replacement by 28 November 2026. A national shortage is affecting availability. Members agreed that the pads and battery should be replaced together to maximise service life.

Agreed: Replace the pads and battery together.

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9. Any Other Competent Business (AOCB)

Overgrown vegetation at the Stripe steps is obstructing drainage and lighting and creating a flood risk. The handrails are also reported to be rotten. A similar blockage was linked to village flooding approximately ten years ago; the area was last cleared around eight years ago.

Agreed: Undertake a community clean-up and consider longer-term flood-prevention measures.

Action: Cllr Warren to coordinate the clean-up with Moray Council and the Payback team.

No further competent business was raised.

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10. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 5 October 2026 at 7:00 pm in Findochty Town Hall.

Noted: The Chair indicated that meetings may move to a 6:00 pm start when winter hours begin, subject to confirmation.

Meeting Closed

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 8:25 pm

These minutes are subject to approval at the next meeting of Findochty Community Council.