Findochty Community Council Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, 5 October 2026
Time: 7:00 PM
Venue: Findochty Town Hall

Attendance

Community Councillors:
Anne Braidwood (Chair), Paul Steel (Secretary), Paul Kerrison (Treasurer), Ron Dawson
Associate members: None
Members of Public: Ten
Moray Council: None

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1. Welcome

The Chair, Anne Braidwood, opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees.

The Chair advised that the meeting would be recorded for the purpose of assisting with the preparation of accurate minutes.

The Chair noted with sadness the recent death of Jeff Masterson. A tribute is recorded under item 9.

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2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Sonia Warren (Moray Council).

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3. Approval of Previous Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2026 were approved as a true and accurate record.
Proposed by: Ron Dawson
Seconded by: Paul Steel

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4. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

To note progress on actions recorded in the minutes of 7 September 2026.

4.1 Crooked Hythe Benches

Members had previously agreed to repair the ten damaged sections. An estimate for complete renewal of all the benches and the picnic table (108 slats) was presented: £1,325 for Douglas Fir timber, £181 for stainless steel bolts and £129 for stainless steel nuts, a total of £1,635. Larch is available for slightly more.

Members discussed the choice of timber (the supplier recommended Douglas Fir for lower maintenance and a better finish; others considered Larch more durable and readily available locally) and of fittings (stainless steel is most durable in the salt air; hot-dip galvanised fittings would be cheaper, and a builders' merchant was suggested as a cheaper source). A total budget of around £2,000 was indicated.

The local tradesman (Tim) is unavailable until next year. A concern was raised about public liability and ensuring the structure is sound; others considered the work straightforward, as the existing frames would be kept and only the slats replaced. It was hoped to settle the costings by the next meeting so that work can get under way.

Action: Continue pricing, including the Larch option and cheaper fittings, and take the tradesman's advice, aiming to settle the costings by 2 November.

4.2 Seaview Road Picnic Area

A quote of £2,975 was received from a local tradesman for levelling the area and associated groundworks, excluding the benches. No decision was taken at this stage.

The tradesman noted an access issue: a concrete block wall alongside the footpath has a large crack, and widening the gap would allow a digger in; the wall could be repaired at the same time.

Action: Paul Kerrison to forward the quote to all members for discussion at the next meeting.

4.3 School-Area Grit Bin

Seafield Estates (David Greer, Property Director) copied the Community Council into an email enclosing the original 1935 feu disposition for the school site. The deed provides for construction and maintenance of the road until it is adopted by the local authority, and Seafield's position is that the bodies named in it, Banffshire County Council and Findochty Town Council, now both fall within Moray Council.

A member's review of the deed and of the local government reorganisations of 1975 and 1996 reached the same view, that the obligation passed to Moray Council, although this is not a legal opinion. Cllr Stuart and Cllr Warren replied that there is no update, as the officer dealing with the matter is on holiday. A request has been made, via the ward councillors, for a grit bin to be provided before winter so that the road can be gritted without either side accepting liability.

Action: Follow up with Moray Council on the provision of a grit bin before winter.

4.4 20 mph Speed Limit Signage

Moray Council's Service Manager (Transportation) replied to the Community Council's letter. The Council accepts that the larger terminal signs marking the start of the limit are not yet in place, and that only the smaller repeater signs are. Installation is delayed by overgrown hedgerows, which are the landowners' responsibility. A list of all such locations across Moray is being compiled as a matter of urgency.

It was reported that the Service Manager agrees with the Community Council's concerns, but that no action has yet been taken. Members noted that, as matters stand, the limit is not enforceable.

Action: Monitor Moray Council's progress on installing the correct signage.

4.5 Netherton Terrace Dropped Kerbs

Members recalled that the matter dates from around 2018–2019. No correspondence has been found in the Community Council's emails, and the item has now been on the agenda for two meetings.

Action: Paul Kerrison to work through past minutes and, if no record is found, to raise a new request.

4.6 Dog Waste Bag Dispensers

Some dispensers remain to be fitted, repaired or renewed, including those that went missing.

Action: Paul Steel to fit, repair or renew the remaining dispensers.

4.7 Community Council Laptop

An email from Debra Duke (Moray Council) confirmed that all requests have been passed to the IT department.

Noted: Action by the IT department is awaited.

4.8 Garage Plots

Cllr Warren advised who to contact at Moray Council about a garage plot for a community shed. That officer is leaving for another post, so a follow-up email has asked that the matter be passed to their successor.

Action: Paul Kerrison to send a further reminder in about two weeks.

Andrew Hall, Service Manager (Learning Estate), has replied to the Community Council's letter, which included detailed parental input. The letter raised concerns that Findochty and Portessie primary schools cannot fairly be compared like for like, as one has a higher but declining roll and the other a lower but rising one, and they may be level within a few years.

The response states that no decision has been made on any changes to schools in Buckie, and that no option for Findochty Primary School has been developed, agreed or recommended. The September committee report sought approval only for a methodology and framework, which does not predetermine the future of any school. Any specific proposal would require separate evidence, appraisal and statutory consultation. The points raised, including utilisation benchmarks, suitability ratings, community sustainability, whole-life costs and decision triggers, will be considered through the framework.

Noted: The response will inform the Community Council's approach to any future consultation or survey.

4.10 Stripe Steps Clean-up

Cllr Warren was to arrange a community clean-up with the Community Payback team. Its status is not known owing to her absence from the meeting.

Action: Obtain a status update from Cllr Warren.

5. Community Updates

5.1 Community Police Update

No bi-monthly Community Police report was available; an update was received by email from Sgt Lucy Cuthbert. Police Scotland advised that residents who experience alarm or distress should report it to the police, and that reports will be dealt with robustly.

Concerns were raised about ongoing antisocial behaviour in the village. Residents spoke of feeling unsafe and of community tolerance wearing thin. It was noted that the police and other agencies have been more proactive since the last meeting, but that there is little feedback to the community, no clear information on how the agencies are coordinating, and uncertainty about the boundaries within which the community can help.

Action: Paul Kerrison to write to a senior Police Scotland contact seeking clarification on how the situation is being managed, what multi-agency arrangements are in place, and what residents are expected to do.

5.2 Treasurer's Report

The bank balance was £6,902, comprising:

- Admin Grant: £1,816
- Events Fund: £623
- Maintenance Fund: £1,780
- General Fund: £2,682

No income was received since the last meeting. Expenditure totalled £522.90: the defibrillator battery and pads (£450, due to be delivered in about a week), an honorarium (£30), and a replacement noticeboard (£42.90) outside the chemist, where the previous cork board had come away; the new board was fitted by two members.

5.3 Correspondence

Correspondence received was noted and taken under the relevant agenda items.

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6. Community Feedback (Submitted in Advance)

6.1 Jubilee Terrace Grass Cutting

A resident approached the Treasurer on behalf of several Jubilee Terrace residents who are willing to keep the grass tidy but are deterred by having to bring a mower across the village each time. They asked whether a small shed and mower could be provided at Jubilee Terrace.

A small lean-to shed holding a push mower and strimmer was suggested, sited alongside the toilet block or on the green out of sight, with a lockable box and a code so that volunteers can use it. Members noted that the cost should be modest relative to available funds, and that it can be built in alongside the other projects once quotes are in.

Action: Price a lean-to shed and a push mower for Jubilee Terrace and report back.

6.2 Lighting on the Old Railway Line

A suggestion received through the Facebook page asked for solar lighting on the path to Buckie, similar to that on the Portknockie to Cullen path. Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (formerly Sustrans) advised that the path belongs to Moray Council, and that a Scottish Government grant for the upkeep of such paths is expected but not yet distributed. Moray Council replied that it has no funding available at present, but that its Sustainable Travel Officer will consider the proposal for inclusion in future funding applications.

Action: Follow up if funding for paths is announced and the Community Council is not included.

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7. Items Submitted by Community Council Members

7.1 School Christmas Event

The school's parent support group asked whether the Community Council would again buy ice creams for the children at the Christmas pantomime, including those taking part in activities at school. This was not done last year because the Community Council was not then established and could not distribute funds.

Agreed: Fund the ice creams, at a cost of £150.

7.2 Village Welcome Sign

The welcome sign fitted last year, a printed sign carrying the Findochty crest, is coming away after water got under its edges. Moray Coast Customs will replace it free of charge, and has already measured up. The new sign will read "Welcome to Findochty", the official name of the village. Mock-ups will be provided for approval.

7.3 E-bike Infrastructure Feasibility

WeGoShare suggested partnering with HITRANS, which is rolling out e-bikes in Elgin. HITRANS asked to be contacted in October, and the Elgin bikes are now in use, so contact will be renewed after a reasonable period for the Elgin scheme to settle. Neighbouring community councils have been approached about four stations with a small number of bikes between Cullen and Portessie: Buckie was positive, Portknockie unsure, and Cullen open but wanting more detail.

The Community Council could not fund this alone, as the cost is at least £100,000. As an extension of the Elgin scheme on the North Coast Route 1 it may be possible, but would depend on substantial funding and the involvement of others.

Action: Paul Kerrison to re-contact HITRANS.

7.4 Winter Planting

Bulbs must be planted before the end of October. About 150 are needed, and the cost with compost is estimated at £30–£40.

Agreed: A budget of up to £100 for bulbs and compost, from the Maintenance Fund.

Action: Purchase and plant the bulbs.

7.5 Asset Register

Assets identified include the main mower (held at the Men's Shed), a petrol push mower, a strimmer and associated equipment, and the village planters. A value of £400 was agreed for the planters, based on an estimate of £378 for 14 new planters.

Action: Paul Kerrison to submit the completed asset register to the insurer.

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8. Reports

8.1 Local Councillors

No Local Councillors were present. Cllr Stuart and Cllr Warren had written to the Treasurer to say there is no update on the grit bin (item 4.3).

8.2 Resilience Group

The first version of the Community Resilience Plan was submitted to Moray Council two and a half years ago, and the promised desktop exercise has not yet taken place. Debra Duke has offered to run the exercise alongside other community councils, and has asked the Community Council to explain how it developed its plan, which is more comprehensive than many others. The Community Council has not yet replied. Members were content with this approach.

8.3 Member Responsibility Updates

Harbour Advisory Group (CC representative update)

The Harbour Master plans to repaint the lighthouse, as mentioned previously. The crumbling road at the head of Sterlochy Pier was raised again and remains an ongoing matter. Fishermen have complained that sand build-up in the harbour limits the tidal window for access, and a steel ladder is needed for one fisherman. A new Harbour Manager, Lolly Piper, has been appointed.

Maintenance / Gardening

Some strimming is being done, the boat feature is looking in good condition and the flowers are still going strong. See also item 7.4 (Winter Planting).

Defibrillator

The battery is at 10% capacity. A new battery and two sets of pads have been bought from a VAT-exempt charity (Lucky2Be ere), saving £80, and are due in about a week.

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9. Any Other Competent Business (AOCB)

Tribute to Jeff Masterson

Members discussed a suitable tribute. A plaque on a bench was suggested, and the bench behind the public toilets, a favourite of Jeff's, was proposed. The Buckie sign shop could produce the plaque.

Action: The Chair to bring back suggested wording.

No other business was raised.

10. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 2 November 2026 at 7:00 pm

Meeting Closed

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 8:05pm

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