



APPROVED MINUTES

A meeting of NCDC was held on Wednesday, 30th July 2025, in the Club Room of the Ollaberry Hall.

Present – Bob McGeady, Margaret Roberts, Alistair Williamson, Bill Manson,

In Attendance – Charlotte Anderson, Karlyn Garrick & Michel Tordoir (Hillswick Shop)

1. **Apologies Received:** Kelly Robertson & Craig Johnson
2. **Approval of Previous Minutes**
 - Minor correction noted: Clarification regarding spelling of “Michel.”
3. **Election of Vice Chair**
 - Discussion on Stephen’s resignation.
 - The board agreed that there weren’t enough board members present to appoint a new Vice Chair — will be added to next meeting’s agenda.
4. **nortenergy update**
 - No new Director’s meeting held due to cruise season, therefore no new minutes to issue.
 - P&L for the first 3 months reviewed; shows were encouraging
 - Terms & Conditions of Sale have now been set by Margaret Roberts & Maree Hay.
5. **Hillswick Shop update**

Final P&L Result:

Net loss of £27,700 for the fiscal year, worse than previous estimate due to late discoveries. Accounting is now considered complete (though unaudited).

- Included Adjustments: Depreciation, deferrals, and approvals were finalised. Historical transactions may impact current year figures (e.g., HMRC payments).
- HMRC Payments: Duplicate payment (approx. £3,000) possibly for a previous period; booked under salaries but origin unclear.

Water Invoices:

A significant increase noticed: £1,700 last year and £1,300 this year vs. historic £400–£600 annually. The service is handled by Business Stream, invoices directed to NCDC. No login credentials known for online account access; MT has one invoice from this year. No one knows who set up the direct debit.

Action:

- **Investigate past payments to HMRC via the recovery company - MT**
- **Contact Business Stream for account access and clarity on water billing and consider requesting a metered setup for future billing transparency - MT**

Stock Variation Discussion

- Margaret Roberts queried the “almost £10,000 stock variation.” MT clarified that last year’s stock decrease was £12,000; this year shows a –£10,000 change because he replenished the shop’s inventory after starting his role.
- A higher opening stock value now leads to a stock increase figure of –£10,000 (closing minus opening).
- Positively, this aligns with a rising gross margin percentage: despite lower turnover, gross profit has increased.

Solar Panels Discussion

- The solar array was installed around 2021, likely alongside upgrades at Bruckland.
- Panels are operational and connected to the shop, but there’s no metering/export measurement, so credits or generation figures aren’t being captured.
- Electricity bills have decreased from prior highs (£5,000–£6,000) back toward pre-upgrade levels (around £380), suggesting some solar offset—but it’s not formally tracked. The new chills and lights should be helping cut down on energy usage.
- Questions remain on panel capacity (kW rating), export tariff registration, and whether any feed-in tariff or Smart Export Guarantee payments are due.

Actions:

- 1. Review monthly electricity invoices to quantify the year-to-date reduction and infer solar generation impact - MT**
- 2. Inspect the solar panel inverter or installation paperwork to determine total capacity (kW) and ask the installer for export meter options – MT/Hillswick Shop Board**
- 3. Contact the solar provider or the electricity supplier to set up an export meter/export tariff under the Smart Export Guarantee – MT/Hillswick Shop Board**

Depreciation & Building Costs

- £4,000 one-off bookkeeping savings this year from A9 work on last year’s building project; this cost will disappear in future periods.
- Bank charges are in line with historical levels.
- Depreciation has nearly doubled due to the new refrigeration unit and LED lighting installation.
- Current depreciation policy retains 15% of an asset’s residual value indefinitely, preventing full write-down.
 - Computers, software and other IT still carry a £7,000 book value since shop opening.
 - Writing off fully would trigger a minimum £1,000 loss under the residual-value approach.
- Audit consideration: review whether certain assets should be fully depreciated over standard useful lives (e.g., 10 years) rather than carrying residual values.

Forecasting & Departmental Reporting

- Next meeting (end of July) will include: Full fiscal-year closure for April–July, Department-by-department P&L analysis.

- No material surprises expected for the April–July period; figures should accurately reflect current operations.

Turnover & Margin Analysis

- Average Daily Turnover Change (Year-on-Year):
 - April: –4%, May: +15%, June: +17%, Projected July: +18%
 - Overall average increase per day: +9%
- Margin Improvements:
 - Product-by-product margin uplift of +5% implemented since shop refit.
 - Waste levels have materially decreased, supporting higher gross profit despite flat turnover growth.
- Weekly Trading Patterns:
 - Thursdays and Fridays are peak trading days.
 - Friday not only highest in absolute turnover but also shows near-top percentage growth—indicating rising customer traffic

Visibility & Sat Nav Listings

- AW raised the point that the Hillswick and Ollaberry Shops don’t appear in vehicle Sat Navs when searching for nearby fuel—only Brae Garage does. This could be due to the fact that all shops may not be properly listed or tagged as fuel providers on platforms like Google Maps.

Actions - Confirm the Hillswick Shop is claimed on [Google Business Profile](#) As well as update listings to include fuel services, opening hours, and amenities – MT

**Consider signage at key junctions (e.g. Eshaness Road) to attract passing tourists – MT/
Hillswick Shop Board**

Tourist Footfall & Craft Sales

Tourist Impact:

- Mobile home visitors browse extensively but spend modestly. Cruise ship traffic has mixed financial impact—better for crafters than core shop revenue. The craft sales are strong, and visitors engage deeply with local products.

Funding Opportunity:

CA mentioned The Rural Shop Fund is open again—offers up to £10,000 for upgrades that improve efficiency or community access. The idea of 24hr fuel was discussed as this is how the Brae Garage got theirs. This would be valued by early morning customers and could enhance community convenience and retention.

Historical Accounts Clarification

- MR queried –£5,500 in 2021/2022 listed as “profit/loss on sale of tangible assets.” Sale of the van, resulting in a recorded profit.

6. Growing Local Update

- Veg has been delivered to the Hillswick shop for several weeks now with plans to extend the scheme to Ollaberry later this week.

- Discussions with Stucca residents about forming a Residents Group.
- MR was still concerned that the current staffing costs for the project are not fully grant-funded, leaving NCDC to subsidise salaries.
- CA & MR had come across the Garfield Weston Fund, which may be able to fund the remaining money for the project.

Action: CA & MR to draft Garfield Weston Fund application outline

7. Finance Update

- WM is satisfied with the financial position; July figures may still evolve.
- Staffing costs for Kev & Luke's gardening project have been correctly reallocated into "project costs," including wages, pension, and PAYE.
- WM said there were no immediate concerns, but a deeper review with Charlotte is planned to explain cost fluctuations.

Action: Finalise July financial statements and cost analyses

8. Bruckland

- A customer is repeatedly purchasing large volumes of donated items to resell on Vinted, depleting shelf stock.
- This practice affects availability of high-need items for genuine beneficiaries.
- Suggested approach: Directly question the customer about resale intentions.
- If confirmed, enforce a purchase limit or refuse future transactions

Action: CA/KG to confront customer about resale at Bruckland and set policy

9. Project Proposal: Summary & Governance Framework

- MR said there was a need for a single, concise project summary that clearly outlines scope, objectives, stakeholders, and deliverables—useful for both the community and internal teams.
- Multiple iterations of the housing project have created confusion; a standardised flowchart or one-page overview will anchor conversations.
- A gated approval process is proposed:
 - Gate 1: Concept approval and budget for initial design work
 - Gate 2: Detailed design and community sign-off
 - Gate 3: Funding release and implementation
- Growing Local's original proposal can serve as a template for structure and formatting.
- CA has contacted Alice from DTAS to find out if they have any examples/templates to follow, however she was on annual leave.

Action: CA to follow up email to Alice from DTAS

10. Housing Project Update

RM said the council has requested a formal proposal for the housing site, originally due end of June, now pushed to late August/early September. He has drafted a letter outlining our interest in social housing and key financial assumptions has been shared with Luke and Davie for feedback. Once their comments arrive this week, the letter will circulate to all directors for final approval. The site was valued back in April 2024 at

£150,000, it'll cost approximately £100k to get the house up to EPC C/B standard, alongside approximately £50k for demolition of the old classroom. The proposal emphasizes that social housing must avoid creating fuel poverty—new homes will be designed for very low electricity bills. With combined refurbishment and demolition costs equalling the site value, NCDC cannot offer a significant purchase price. It is proposed to pursue a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) to secure the site for free, highlighting the clear community benefit. The proposal will be submitted to the Assets/Estates department, with Cllr Andrew Hall enlisted for political support. Assets may consult Housing (Anita) on financial expectations, and the head of Assets is likely seeking a cash return (circa £10,000). The group is prepared to counter with a nominal offer (£1) predicated on the community value of the project.

Malcolmson's design team is scheduled to start work in August on housing specifications and a site design brief. Once the brief is drafted, the design will be presented to the community for feedback and endorsement. Community members will be asked if they wish to sign off on the project to ensure buy-in and shared ownership.

The site is already allocated for housing in the local plan, reducing planning risk. A question was raised about making the offer conditional on securing planning permission.

Consensus: at a nominal purchase price, conditions are likely unnecessary.

Risks and Next Steps

- Await feedback from Luke and Davie on the draft letter.
- Finalise and distribute the proposal to directors.
- Submit the proposal to the Assets/Estates department and secure political backing.
- Receive design brief from Malcolmson's and organise a community consultation.
- Decide whether to include planning-permission conditions based on final purchase terms.

Action: RM to circulate letter to the board of directors once Luke & Davie have given their feedback.

11. Tourism.

1. Eshaness Lighthouse Licence

- CA asked the board to apply for a short-term licence to operate Eshaness Lighthouse as a hostel. The group agreed this could diversify accommodation between Johnnie Notions and the hotel level.
- MR was going to Unst for the weekend so would make contact with Gardiesfauld Hostel to discuss licensing challenges and pricing structures.

Action: CA to proceed with applying for short-term licence for the Eshaness Lighthouse
MR to contact Gardiesfauld

2. Johnnie Notions

- The Johnnie Notions building is nearly operational after recent cleaning of the kitchen and toilets. Grant Anderson has strimmed surrounding grass and the Amenity Trust will repair the broken lockbox and clear the blocked drain.
- A potential professional booking for August is pending confirmation of guest health.

3. Northmavine Way

- CA met with SIC Access Officer Liam Drosso, who offered his help to cost gates and stiles as well as linking routes to existing core paths.

- A meeting is scheduled for 20 August to discuss integration with the proposed Shetland Way with Steve Matheson.
- It was agreed by the board that landowners must be engaged early to secure permissions and avoid disputes later.
- CA said that Liam Drosso had mentioned maintenance schedules for gates and stiles need to be defined once locations are mapped.
- CA wants to meet with Craig Johnson at the next available time to discuss this project further and come up with a business plan, though NCDC stands to make nothing from this but WM said the financial gain should be seen throughout the whole of Northmavine either through shops, café/hotels etc.
- CA would also like to offer similar to the West Highland Way with a bag drop off/pick up, Mavis Grind could be the drop off point and the van could pick it up and drop it off at the hotel/Johnnie Notions/Braewick Café.

Action: CA to meet with Craig Johnson

4. Information Signage Update

- KG is waiting for Perspex to be printed with stickers at Art Machine. Signs have been chased up today, with an expected completion shortly. A solar light has been purchased for the Tail of the Heog phone box. It's still unclear if the light still works in the Hillswick phone box and where this comes from.

Action: KG to contact John Alex about the electricity of the Hillswick phone box.

- RM asked if the Roads dept had come back about land rental pricing, SIC Property Manager – Mike Taylor had replied to KG to say the £125 p/a was their flat rate price for any piece of land.
- MR had suggested approaching Addie Doull to site an Information Polycrubb near existing benches at Mavis Grind.

Action: KG to enquire with Addie Doull about Polycrubb on their land at Mavis Grind.

5. Phone Box Repurposing

CA said that BT plans to decommission the last 2 remaining phone boxes in Northmavine, Heylor and Sullom. Similar could be done to what has been done to the 2 phone boxes NCDC currently own, though the board agreed that the Sullom one was in a state of disrepair and in a poor location. There was uncertainty about the one at Heylor.

12. R100 – no update

13. Matters Arising:

- Stucca – No update
- Youth Board – CA said no update but will be in touch with them in the new school term
- Business Ring – no update, will be taken off agenda.

14. AOCB

- Grass Roots Project

The board discussed revitalising community engagement by tackling a few small, visible projects that residents care about.

These grassroots efforts aim to showcase tangible improvements by NCDC and encourage wider community participation.

Areas which have been brought to NCDC's attention recently include:

- Sullom Kirk Plaque – this was a plaque which was in the kirk before it was sold, the community would like to place it in the graveyard. They think it could be approximately £2000-£3000 for a plinth
- North Roe War Memorial Fence, the fence is in a poor state and the sheep can get in. CA has already obtained a quote from John Hughson for £1850.
- Heylor Road – a popular visitor attraction in Northmavine, though the road is needing a bit of work done to it, the ditch at the side of the road is blocked, causing water to run over the road. The work needing done would mainly be ditching and patching.
- Hillswick Cootch Kettles – NCDC were contacted last year about the rubbish that had been dumped in and around them. KG cleared them last year however they are full of rubbish again. Suggestions were made to put chicken wire under the grates to stop rubbish being poked down the gaps in the grates.
- RM suggested an addition to the next newsletter for the community to suggest areas of upkeep.
- CA & RM interviewed Franzi Steinhoffer for the finance job. She had approached CA about the job after the closing date. Franzi has accepted the job, and will be able to cover 28-30hrs a week. RM said she could be starting around the 1st of September if the board were in agreement, which they did.
- MR highlighted that Polycrub can't pay for NCDC staff with the new staff wages projection given the new projected figures from nortenergy for this coming year.
- MR spoke of her trip to the NORA Conference in Stornoway earlier in July. The conference brought together Shetland, Orkney, Greenland, Faroe, Iceland, the Lofoten Islands, Denmark & the Western Isles. They all spoke of similar struggles with the young people leaving, with some returning back to their homeland, though this was mainly men that returned. The population demographic is going downhill, there are more career paths for men, not many for women. WM asked if any of the countries had found a solution, MR said that Faroe found that if people could travel there was a better chance for the folk to commute, so they obviously have tunnels linking up all the islands. Another factor is the reduced number of locals returning is due to housing as many is bought for second homes/ AirBnB. Greenland has zones where tourists can go, partly can go, and can't go. While Faroe has great infrastructure, elsewhere is lacking in this. There were positive stories about young people doing their own thing and building their own businesses. The Isle of Lewis is set to have offshore windfarms, and the Lewis council is looking to have a stake in it going forward, as well as the Galston Estate Trust where the infrastructure will be brought onshore at.

The meeting ended at 8:45pm, the next meeting of the 17th September was cancelled.