

Kiltearn Community Council

Minutes –

Held in Diamond Jubilee Hall



Held on Tuesday 17th June 2025

PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS THE PLANNED ROAD CLOSURE A862 Dingwall - Ardullie TTRO for Scottish Water Mains Renewal

PRESENT

Elected Members

John McHardy (JM)
Shelagh Dennett (SD),
Annelie Graham (AG) & Minute Taker
Mike Finlayson (MF)
Gabrielle Buist (GB)
Sarah McNair (SM)
Susan Crookes (SC)

Dingwall Community Council

Nigel Greenwood

Councillors

Cllr Sinclair Coghill
Cllr John Edmondson
Cllr Tamala Collier

Highland Council

Iain Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager
Michelle Lawrie, Roads Operations

Scottish Water

Heather Campbell, Water Infrastructure Dept,
Scottish Water
David Trotter, Construction Manager,
Caledonia Water Alliance
Clive Duncan, Customer Manager,
Caledonia Water Alliance,
Gavin Steel, Corporate Affairs, Scottish Water

Email: watercomms@SCOTTISHWATER.CO.UK

Public

Approximately 130 members of the public

Apologies

Apologies noted from Mandy MacLeman (MM)

Welcome

John McHardy welcomed everyone and introductions were made.

DISCUSSION

Scottish Water

Heather Campbell laid out the main overview of the project, referring to the information sheet handed out to everyone in the hall (attached on the end of this Minute). The planned work is part of a wider programme for Scottish Water to replace a number of small diameter mains water pipes in the area which are in a state of deterioration which has been affecting customer supply and is causing pressure fluctuations and an increasing number of bursts. In this instance approx. 2.5km of new water main is being replaced along the A862 for the supply of 4 properties.

Heather Campbell continued, the route is along the road due to engineering challenges which will lead to road closure as the road is too narrow to allow one way traffic, there is limited verge, on one side is a gabion reinforced hillside and the railway, the Firth on the other. Scottish Water did try to engage with Network Rail to run alongside the track but they rejected the possibility.

Dave Trotter advised that Pat Munro will be carrying out the work. The road has to be closed due to the width of the carriageway and the safety of the workforce has to be ensured and to maintain productivity. The site has presented engineer challenges. There will be a couple of squads working onsite with extended working hours during the week and half day on Saturday. Emergency services will have access.

Heather Campbell advised that the summer months had been chosen predominantly to do with the school opening times, particularly children travelling to Dingwall Academy. They have looked at the immediate area and have tried to choose timings that minimise impact. Winter closure would have had too many challenges with less daylight hours and weather issues. The work will overshoot the school summer holidays but it was deemed that this is nonetheless a more appropriate time.

Highland Council – Roads Operations

Iain Moncrieff advised that the TTRO (Temporary Traffic Road Order) for this closure is still out for consultation and has not yet been signed off by Highland Council. A number of issues and concerns were raised at the meeting with Kiltearn Community Council last month, some of which still need clarification. For instance, why can't the new water main be located through the fields? If the new main is such a small diameter (63mm) why can't it be laid at the edge of the road rather than down the middle, which would possibly allow for a convoy closure system? Could the work be deferred until next Spring to allow for all concerns and options to be further explored?

Dave Trotter said that they did consider going through the fields but it was ruled out due to steepness of bank, trees and no suitable culverts. The properties being connected are on the bottom road so access is still needed on the road. The option of the pipe going along the road – they will further investigate this possibility, although the road is still not wide enough for a convoy even if they are digging the verge. Also a convoy system would slow the work down. It is also thought that doing the work in the school holidays would be less intrusive than delaying until the Spring.

Clive Duncan added that they are doing the work in the summer as later on there is more likelihood of unfavourable weather which would be challenging not only for the work being done but also for all the traffic travelling via the diversion. The safety of the workforce is crucial.

Iain Moncrieff said that with a convoy system there would be a 10mph limit creating a good safety zone for the workers.

Questions from the public

A representative from the Strathpeffer Community Council – there are concerns that the back road and the other two small roads on the other side of the Cromarty Firth will become rat runs. Folk are likely to not follow the recommended diversion. Could these small roads be made one way systems?

Hector Munro (farm on back road) – increased traffic on the back road will cause major chaos as this is a very busy time of year for his farm and the other farms on the road. There are will be continual artic lorry loads of produce, trailers and tractors negotiating the road over this period. It is the worst possible time to be closing the bottom road as traffic will increase on the back road.

Susan Crookes – could a direct bus be laid on to take the children to Dingwall Academy to decrease parents using cars to transport their children.

Fiona Gilchrist – the safety of the workforce is very important, but what about the safety of the people who will be driving in both directions on the back roads. The two small roads on the other side of the Firth involve then having to cross the A835 to Dingwall which is very dangerous.

Kenneth McKenzie (Highland Farm Café) – to close the bottom road at the start of the summer holidays is the worse time of year from a hospitality perspective. 50% of their annual turnover happens in those three months. If the back road were to be closed as well due to safety concerns then the café could not survive.

Helen – this community has already been hit by a lot of restrictions including the recent closure of the back road. It is recognised that the new water pipes are important but everyone has to get to and from work, school, doctors etc and the diversion will add a huge amount of time to the journey. For some it will be impossible for them to continue their livelihood. The Highlands are built on communities and the public rights to continue their lives has to be considered. Businesses can't be destroyed in the name of progress, that is no progress at all. The people have to be put first.

Munro Sawmill – six artic loads go to Invergordon every day from the sawmill. The diversion will double the journey and it is estimated this will incur at least a £20K extra cost – will that be compensated?

Rebecca (Alness) – Will the buses go on the diversion via Tore?

John McHardy advised that he had contacted the bus company for comment but had not yet heard back.

Bill (retired engineer) – where is the present wayleave? Is it north or south side of the railway?

Dave Trotter advised that this had been considered. The existing pipe runs to the north side of the track but there is banking and private property. The road will have to be crossed.

Bill – with the long diversion the vast majority of folk will use the back roads and should an accident happen on the bridge then the whole north of Scotland will be shut off with the only route being via Ullapool.

Dave Trotter advised that BEAR had been consulted with reference to an accident happening on the Cromarty Bridge and they said that this would be a 'police issue' to deal with.

Dave Trotter added that Scottish Water have no intention of closing the back road and he does not know where that information came from.

Rachel Bews – Have NHS Guidelines relating to primary care been factored in – a patient can be no more than 30 mins away from care. The division would not allow this. Have Dingwall Medical been consulted?

Moira McKenna (Dingwall Medical) – the Practice have been informed about the works but were not consulted. The GPs already have very tight schedules and this would cause an enormous amount of disruption.

Susan Crookes – Could the pipe not be run in the Cromarty Firth?

Dave Trotter advised that this had *not* been considered. It would be very difficult to do and from an ecological view point.

Gavin Steel advised that Scottish Water has only a small number of subsea pipes.

John McHardy said that there are already pipes going through the Cromarty Firth.

Nigel Greenwood (Dingwall Community Council) – If there was an accident between the Cromarty Bridge and Evanton then the only route to take would be the back road. The other concerns are with reference to the school children and those going to and from work. It's harvest time for the farms so the roads will be very busy. The tourist season will be in full swing. To move the works to Spring would be better weather than winter. Nigel Greenwood also asked if the work would really take the full 3 months – it seems a long time to close the road.

Dave Trotter advised that the work would be done faster if possible.

Member of the public – what are the planned working hours of the workforce?

Dave Trotter advised that it would be from 7.30am – 6pm and no nightshift.

A member of the public – could a school bus be allowed through at set times of the day. The whole thing is going to have a massive impact in terms of time and cost for the community.

Jo Newton – the state of the back road is not good enough for extra traffic. It has poor and ill marked passing places and is very narrow. There will be accidents. Has any consideration been given to putting in place a slower speed limit during this time on the back road.

Richard Cross – there was a water pipe put across Nigg Bay recently so putting the pipe in the Firth should not be an issue. The small pipe could be put inside a bigger one to allow protections and maintenance.

Hector Munro – it seems feeble to not have considered the foreshore at all and it would be advisable to replan the work along those lines. There will be much more traffic along the back road and it has deep ditches on either side. If one of his tractors meets a large vehicle or bus then they would not be able to pass.

Cllr Sinclair Coghill – why is it necessary to get the pipe off private land and onto the public road.

Dave Trotter advised that this would allow for easier access for Scottish Water.

Cllr John Edmondson – Scottish Water are simply shifting their costs onto everyone in the room. From studying a map of the infrastructure the properties concerned are served by a pipe coming down the bank so why does the new pipe have to go along the road.

Cllr John Edmondson - Are there any opportunities for the road to not be closed the whole three months but to have periods of time when it can be open.

Sarah McNair – in the summer there are only a few hours of darkness so could the workforce either work at night and the road be open in the day, or at least an additional shift work through the night to then reduce the project timescales.

Cllr Tamala Collier – all alternative options have been ignored. Why can't work be carried out on a night shift, apart from this increasing costs of the project. If the road was closed at night but open in the day then it would be safer for everyone. This option has been in action throughout the Highlands in other areas and minimises disruption, so why not here.

Cllr Tamala Collier – will there be any compensation for the extra miles that people and businesses will have to take going via the diversion.

Mike Finlayson – it seems that Scottish Water are only interested in getting the pipe into the ground and they have not taken into consideration the views of the public. In addition, there is a great increased danger to the many cyclists on the back road. Also for those who do choose to travel via the diversion via Tore, and not the back road, this will increase the amount of traffic turning out of Evanton onto the A9 which is already a very dangerous junction.

Gary Payne (Evanton.online) – it's clearly not just the people in Evanton who will be affected but a large surrounding area and tourists. The diversion adds on an extra 20 miles. Scottish Water should look at a different plan.

Gabrielle Baruti (Evanton)– consideration should be given for those properties to have a private water supply put in instead, via a bore hole.

Heather Campbell advised that Scottish Water can only supply to the public standard of water. The properties are already currently connected to the mains so Scottish Water cannot legally change that to a private supply. It is an existing network. A private supply does not have the same quality levels as that required by Scottish Water and the law. Also if the replacement pipe was not put in and the 4 properties were left on their current main pipe then the pipe would continued to deteriorate with increasing bursts and this would have knock on effects to other water supplies and would impact on the new network of pipes that has already been put in place.

Kenneth McKenzie (Highland Café) – how much is the project costing?

Heather Campbell advised that the costs are built in so they do not know.

Simon Hindson – with reference to going through private ground, have compulsory options been explored? Culverts under the railway track could be via micro boring – surely Network Rail would be open to investigate this option. For a project of this scale and the impact it will have, could further consideration not be done in looking at alternative ground routes.

Simon Hindson – to ensure traffic safety the Scottish Water vehicles should not use the back road.

Simon Hindson – the previous works carried out by Scottish Water on the back road overran, would this project also be likely to overrun for longer than 3 months?

Jock (farm on back road) – what about the land between the railway and the road. Why can't the pipe come straight down from the Highland Farm Café, under the railway?

Dave Trotter said that they have had various consultations with Network Rail.

John McHardy commented that there have been a lot of really valid and intelligent suggestions from the local landowners for an alternative route for the pipe which must be considered.

Finnian Munro (Foulis Farms) – what is the water pressure like on the pipe, can that be altered instead?

Dave Trotter advised that the pressure has already been reduced.

Finnian Munro (Foulis Farms) – the 4 properties could be installed with storage tanks and pumps, which has been done numerous times before in other locations. This is a very cost effective option to consider. He added that the back road will be gridlocked with tractors in the next few months and the road will not be able to cope.

CONCLUSIONS

John McHardy commented that there is clearly a huge amount of concern about the traffic on the back road and the length of the diversion. The general consensus is that the front A862 road should not be fully closed.

Iain Moncrieff, Highland Council, advised that many of the ideas on alternative options put forward have been very interesting. Scottish Water should consider the Red Book convoy system which can be done without a Safety Zone. Then the road could remain open with traffic lights and a convoy system.

Heather Campbell said that she hoped that they had managed to answer all the questions. There have been a lot of interesting ideas and suggestions and they will review the situation. Some of the options they were already aware of but some they were not. They will also discuss the options with Highland Council Roads.

A member of the public – will there be any compensation as some people will struggle to get to work and businesses will lose out in various ways.

Heather Campbell advised that Scottish Water have a clear policy and process regarding compensation which is found on their website.

John McHardy said that Scottish Water will speak to Highland Council and then feedback to Kiltarn Community Council. The project has major and profound implications on the community and surrounding area so the Community Council urge Scottish Water to delay the work until the Spring. There are a lot of queries and suggestions that need to be answered and investigated and a less disruptive option needs to be sought.

A pause to allow for further dialogue with the community is needed.

Do those here today agree?

There was a full majority show of hands in agreement to this statement.

Nigel Greenwood (Dingwall Community Council) – currently the TTRO has not yet been signed off so this indicates that there would already be a delayed start.

John McHardy – more time is needed to get everyone on board. Hundreds of comments have been received to the Kiltarn Community Council from the public with concerns about the closure and only one person has been in favour of letting Scottish Water go ahead as planned. Originally the plan had been for a one lane closure with traffic lights, but Kiltarn Community Council were only informed in May 2025 that the proposal was now a complete closure of the road.

Rachel Bews – what is the full cost benefit analysis?

Heather Campbell said that all the project options go through a cost/carbon calculator. As a public water supplier, it is Scottish Water's public duty to supply water to the 4 properties.

Cllr Sinclair Coghill – has the cost to the community been calculated, this would be a much bigger calculation.

John McHardy – Kiltarn Community Council are here to represent the views of the community just as Scottish Water is to serve the public. Scottish Water is urged to speak to the landowners to find a better solution.

A member of the public – has an analysis been done of the road usage?

Iain Moncrieff – counters are currently in place on the back road to give a baseline figure of normal traffic flow - this is still underway with no data yet. After the works have started the traffic will be measured again and appropriate action can then be taken according to the figures.

John McHardy – this is no comfort to the people to take action long after the work has started. The locals know what will happen with the road closure and the safety issues of increased traffic on the back road being inevitable. The back road is simply not suitable for any increase in traffic.

Heather Campbell said she would like to thank everyone for sharing their concerns and thoughts.

John McHardy thanked everyone for attending and decisions will be fed back to the public as soon as they are known as a matter of urgency.