



## Thornton Community Council (TCC)

Minutes of the public meeting held on

02/08/2023 @ 7pm

In Thornton Pensioners Hut

### 1. Meeting Attendance:

<b>Community Councillors</b>	Dorothy Herd (DH) [Chair], Euan Ross (ER) [Treasurer], Jean Laird (JL), Christine Ross (CR), Dawn Taylor (DL), Izzy Anderson (IA), Heather Paterson (HP), Kelly Coull (KC), Rae Duncan (RD)
<b>Fife Councillors</b>	Ross Vettraino (RV), Daniel Wilson (DW), Derek Nobel (DN), Peter Gulline (PGu)
<b>Apologies</b>	John Laing (JoL), Community Police
<b>Invited Guests</b>	Peter Grant (PG) MP, Jenny Gilruth (JG) MSP, Owen Campbell (OC) (Communications Manager) Network Rail, Martin McKinley (MM) (Senior Sponsor for delivery of the Levenmouth Rail Project) Network Rail, Gavin Harrower (GH) Mucky Riderz
<b>Absentees</b>	

### 2. AGM including Treasurers Report:

Treasurer ER presented his Treasurer's Report and shared hard copies of the accounts for the year as he talked over the accounts -see Appendix 1. DH invited questions regarding the accounts, but none were asked. DH thanked ER for his hard work as Treasurer over the last year.

DH raised that Secretary Tracy-Anne Bruce had submitted her resignation from TCC and the position by email to TCC members on 17/07/2023. Tracy was not present at the meeting. It was therefore necessary to enrol a new Secretary. JL was proposed for the position of Secretary by HP, and this was seconded by CR. JL was delighted to accept and take on this role. DH asked JL to source minutes of last year's AGM from the previous Secretary. JL to arrange a 'handover' of materials, communications, and any other relevant paraphernalia with the previous Secretary.

DH welcomed KC to her first meeting as a Community Councillor with TCC.

### 3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting:

<b>Held on:</b>	05/07/2023		
<b>Proposed by:</b>	JL	<b>Seconded by:</b>	ER

**4. DoubleDykes:** Network Rail were introduced by JL who welcomed them while also expressing that Network Rail's consultation with TCC was non-existent and their engagement to date was weak. JL also expressed that Network Rail's attendance at TCC was long overdue. HP and several other members of TCC and the public hand delivered affidavits confirming the existence of all three rights of way at DoubleDykes, Tullybreck and Waulkmill, to MM of Network Rail. They demanded that one safe crossing is retained at DoubleDykes and that access over DoubleDykes is not hindered or impeded in any way. OC then spoke suggesting there had been offers from another Network Rail Communications Manager to attend meetings. However, JL reported that TCC records and correspondence show that these offers had not been fulfilled and there had been non-attendance, with no apology, from Network Rail at previous meetings. This was despite the invitations having been accepted by Network Rail. ER recalled that the only Network Rail representation had been at the May 2022 meeting, attended by Kirsty Rider. Kirsty was asked directly by ER about the maintenance of the railway crossings and claimed to know nothing about any potential issues. She undertook to return to TCC to confirm but failed to do so, with the first news of potential closure being mooted on social media by local groups some 2-3 months later. OC went on to outline progress with the Levenmouth Rail Project. The track is in place now from Thornton Junction to the Railway Heritage Centre. No planning is in place for Leven Station. OC shared Network Rail's position on the legality of closing DoubleDykes Crossing in that Network Rail believe they can legally close the crossing and don't recognise the Rights of Way. OC also stated that Network Rail build what they are told to build and deliver the project they are asked to deliver. OC stated that the project and process had been led by Fife Council and Transport Scotland. OC then went on to speak on behalf of Fife Council and to say that Fife

Council's views chimed with Network Rail's stance. OC stated that Fife Council don't see DoubleDykes as a priority. JL interjected and asked at this point that OC speak only on behalf of Network Rail as there were Fife Councillors in attendance who could comment of this. OC agreed.

The following points were then raised:

- GH outlined his belief that Fife Council did not actively seek to propose the closure of DoubleDykes but instead there has been some sort of oversight.
- RV stated that Fife Council have not taken a position on the closure of DoubleDykes Crossing. He also stated that there was no date of commencement on the 1984 Act which was intended to extinguish the right of way at DoubleDykes, rendering this supposed extinguishment ineffective.
- DN stated that he had been actively involved with the Levenmouth Rail Link including the one TCC meeting that Network Rail attended May 2022. DN stated that Network Rail were not leaving a positive legacy but instead a bad taste in the community.
- DW outlined that he had never heard of any engagement with Network Rail other than this one. He asked Network Rail who they were getting information on Fife Council's position on Double Dykes from. MM responded that it was Fife Council Officers that were outlining the position. DW explained that he had asked at Full Council for a Fife Council position on DoubleDykes and it did not match what Network Rail were sharing.
- JG shared that she had heard several interesting points so far. She also outlined that the number of changes in the Scottish Government leads for the Levenmouth Rail Project had probably not been helpful and that this had included several different Transport Ministers over a short period of time. JG stated that she hoped to bring a resolution to this issue and that she had written to Fife Council to see if a solution could be found perhaps through establishing links to Active Travel Networks. JG shared that she had written confirmation from Scotways that three rights of way exist at DoubleDykes, Tullybreck and Waulkmill. JG also wondered if the land Network rail had purchased could have been part of a resolution before

Network Rail had taken ownership of the land. JG suggested the land might instead have been transferred to community ownership.

- PG stated that the Fife Council Active Travel Plan for the Levenmouth Rail Project was not built around the railway but instead was built around the new stations and this is why DoubleDykes was not included. PG also shared that he believed that should a group Community Council or individual pursue legal action regarding retaining the right of way then they would have a decent chance of success, but that this was not a situation that was desirable. He shared his view that it was important that Fife Council retained what they had in terms of rights of way and did not just look to build new paths. PG also conveyed the fact that Fife Council Officers can give views but don't decide what Fife Council's priorities are. PG reiterated that the Glenrothes Area Committee are strongly supporting that the rights of way remain open and that there is broad support from other Councillors. PG stated that it was important to find a way to identify funding to retain the right of way. Finding a resolution should be a priority, rather than finger pointing regarding a mistake that has been made somewhere.
- GH shared that Active Travel is anything including walking cycling and scooting and does not need to be overseen by Fife Council with special paths being laid and maintained.
- Members of the public asked why the level crossing at DoubleDykes couldn't be retained as there were other similar crossings at Ladybank and Pitlochry where the speed limits were much higher than at Doubledykes? Network Rail responded that it was their policy not to include level crossings on new lines. This was then disputed as Network Rail are sometimes referring to DoubleDykes as a new line and sometimes as an existing line. Regardless, Network Rail seem happy to throw the dice with individual safety in the knowledge that they are creating a situation which is likely to result in illegal trespassing on the line due to their planned enforced closure of Doubledykes on the back of Walkmill & Tullybreck
- A member of the public stated that although DoubleDykes was no longer part of a Core Path it was part of a Core Path long after 1984 when Network Rail assert that the right of way was

extinguished. It was also noted that someone has been removing Scotway signs near to DoubleDykes.

- A member of the public stated that he was a keen mountainbiker and preferred to ride off-road using the right of way from Coaltown of Balgonie over DoubleDykes right down to the Fife Coastal Path regularly to maintain his physical health. If DoubleDykes crossing is closed, then he and many others would be forced onto the Standing Stane Road which is much more dangerous than crossing a level crossing.
- OC then shared that private land had been bought to extinguish the landowner's right of access over DoubleDykes. He said this was a financially efficient way of operating. This was challenged vigorously by a member of the public.
- A member of the public expressed dismay that this situation can be when this right of way has been in use since before the time of Mary Queen of Scots. She asked that someone does the right thing.
- A member of the public raised that the crossings at DoubleDykes Waulkmill and Tullybreck had been maintained and upgraded by Network Rail as recently as 2012.
- HP raised the issue of safety. Then HP shared that there have been no deaths on branch line level crossings in the last five years. However, HP stated that there is a real danger of trespass by people of all ages onto the railway at DoubleDykes if the crossing is closed and that trespass on the railway has resulted in numerous fatalities. Several members of the public expressed similar feelings that a safe crossing must be provided to solve this safety issue.
- ER raised the issue of fly tipping with Network Rail as there has been fly tipping in the area near to DoubleDykes. ER and asked that Network Rail attend to this and manage vehicle access to the area responsibly like other landowners do. This is the first time he has seen fly tipping in the area and attributes this to the change in ownership and management of the land.
- The environmental impact of the galvanised fencing being erected by Network Rail was raised by a member of the public. This was raised not only as an eyesore but as having a detrimental impact on wildlife.

- A member of the public raised that the historical significance of the area, roads and crossings should be recognised and considered, and appropriate bodies involved.
- PGu raised that Network Rail should look at and alter the existing scope of the project to deliver a safe crossing at DoubleDykes.
- HP asked if the issue of safety had been raised with local schools. OC stated that Network Rail had tried to engage with all local schools.
- JG suggested that she would look to arrange a meeting with the Scottish Government's Transport Minister, TCC and other stakeholders.
- JL thanked Network Rail for attending and explained that the community's work to retain the rights of way through a safe crossing being in place at DoubleDykes would continue.

**5. Highland Games:** ER raised that local people are keen to see the reinstatement of Thornton Highland Games which has not taken place since 2019. However, there is a complete lack of engagement from the existing Highland Games Committee who are believed to now be acting contrary to their constitution. A public meeting has been held regarding the Highland Games with a reasonable attendance of around 25 people. This meant that the threshold was exceeded for the 15 members of the public required to request the existing Highland games committee to hold a Special General meeting. The existing Highland Games Committee have been given reasonable notice and opportunity to engage with the community and to hold a Special General Meeting but continue not to do so. Questions and points were raised by a member of the public regarding the existing status of the existing Highland Games Committee and its legal compliance and operation. No new committee has been officially formed but another public meeting is planned. ER has had advice and support from the Royal Scottish Highland Games Association on a way forward. DH commented that it would be good to see the Highland Games revived and reinvigorated. DW offered to call one of the existing Highland Games Committee members to discuss a possible resolution of the situation. ER and other members of TCC and the public present agreed that it was commendable that community efforts are being made to ensure that Thornton Highland Games runs in 2024. DW

alluded to the fact that some funding may be available from Fife Council.

ER stated that he would also be applying for a Micro Grant to fund start up costs for the new Highland Games and Committee. RD felt that Thornton Highland Games is a great event for the village and it is important that we see it reinstated.

**6. Fife Councillor's update:** Nothing specific this month.

**7. AOCB for Councillors:** HP asked about a planning matter relating to network Rail building a compound at DoubleDykes. RV suggested contacting the head of planning- [Pam.ewen@fife.gov.uk](mailto:Pam.ewen@fife.gov.uk). JL to make contact. DH raised a complaint regarding a weedy plot causing weeds to seed in another resident's garden in the vicinity of Main Street and Orchard Road. RV agreed to investigate.

### 8. Secretary's update

Planning applications submitted -Noble Foods	
Address	Application summary
Strathore Road Thornton	Change of use from agriculture to food processing

Planning applications approved-NONE	
Address	Application summary
Nil	

Planning applications rejected-NONE	
Address	Application summary
Nil	

- No comments or objections regarding the Noble Foods planning application.
- Safety improvement works at Bankhead Roundabout will result in road and lane closures on A92. See Appendix 2.

**9. Memorial Park -younger children's facilities:** DH and ER suggested that KC take this forward as a project. KC agreed to do this.

- 10. Mackie's Mill Footbridge-** JL shared that she had spoken to John Adam the farmer at Tullybreck and that he was happy for the bridge to be repaired but he was keen that TCC speak to Savills. JL spoke to and emailed David Gane of Savills who was keen to be kept updated on plans. JL has also emailed Thornton Golf Club regarding the proposed repair to the footbridge but as yet has had no response. HP shared that Scotways should be consulted when working on a right of way like this. JL to contact Scotways and to contact Thornton Golf Club again.
- 11. Station Name Update:** JoL has submitted an FOI request to Network Rail, in the same vein as his request to Scotrail, but still awaits a response.
- 12. Post Office-**DH shared that there was nothing new to report on this project.
- 13. AOCB**
- ER shared that a new generic email has been set up for all emails to TCC.
  - ER shared that TCC are now registered with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) This will allow us to take advice / support from the organisation and additional exposure to available grant funding from many areas
  - KC delivered a letter to TCC asking for a memorial post to be erected in the park. TCC have no objections to this happening.
  - RV raised that Community Council elections are coming up. ER said we were aware and would keep TCC members and everyone else updated on any action required.
  - ER proposed Kelly Easton be co-opted onto TCC RD seconded and Kelly was welcomed onto TCC.
  - ER to circulate applications for Speedwatch volunteers.
  - A member of the public spoke regarding speed watch guns and cut out police people. TCC appeared keen on the idea of purchasing a one or two of the cut outs.
  - Two members of Tullis Russell band attended and discussed with TCC that they would be keen to strengthen their relationship with the community as they are now based at the old fire station on Strathore Road. TCC warmly welcomed this.



- RD raised ongoing issues with road and pavement repairs and speeding. DH said we would revisit this topic at the next meeting.

#### 14. Date and time of next meeting:

06/09/2023 @ 7pm

#### 15. Microgrant applications (Closed session)

A microgrant of £500 was applied for by ER to help with reestablishing Thornton Highland Games, the group is currently known as THG2.0 in the interim, with plans to establish a constituted group within the next month. This will cover set up costs including advertising to ensure inclusion throughout the community. DH proposed , RD seconded and the grant was awarded.

#### 16. Actions

Action no.	Details	Owner	Target date
23.08-01	Secretary's handover	JL	10/08/2023
23.08-02	Contact Fife Council Head of Planning	JL	10/08/2023
23.08-03	MM footbridge-contact Scotways	JL	10/08/2023
23.08-04	MM footbridge-contact Thornton Golf club	JL	10/08/2023
23.08-05	Raise awareness and seek volunteers for community speedwatch	ER	25/08/2023
23.08-06	Attempt to contact Thornton Highland Gathering Committee in an effort to mediate	DW	06/09/2023
23.08-07	Continue investigations into play equipment for Memorial Park	KC	Update 04/10/2023
23.08-08	Weed situation at Orchard Road area to be investigated	RV	06/09/2023