

# BALLATER & CRATHIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL (B&CC)

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Minutes of a Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2016, 7pm in Crathie Church Hall, Crathie

<p><b>Present:</b> James Anderson (WJ) - Vice Chair Jane Angus (JA) - Secretary Pat Downie (PD) - Treasurer Ian Cameron (IC) Iain Latta (IL) Phil Swan (PS) Sheila Sedgwick (SS)</p> <p>Cllr Geva Blackett (CGB)</p> <p><b>Apologies</b> Francis Duguid - Chair Cllr Katrina Farquhar</p>	<p><b>Also present:</b> Jack Coull (JC) - Ballater Royal Deeside Limited Tony Cox (TC) - Ballater Community Plan PC Donald McLeod - Police Scotland Moirra McDougall (minutes)</p>
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## 1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

## 2. Emergency services

PC McLeod reported that crime levels remained relatively low, although there had been reports of theft and attempted theft. Diesel had been stolen from diggers at Micras and enquiries were ongoing. Four males were in custody regarding thefts from properties between Banchory and Ballater. Professional criminals are aware of the situation in the Deeside area and it is important to report suspicious behaviour to Police Scotland either on 101 or 999 if urgent. He urged the community to ensure property and cars are properly secure. The police have also been monitoring vehicles on the road without MOT or insurance.

### AGM

FD was unable to make the chairman's report due to illness. WJ will ask FD to make the report at the May meeting of the CC.

PD was unable to present a financial report as papers still remain in storage following the flood. She is waiting for a reply from the Bank in order to be able to reconcile the bank statement.

3. Minutes of March's meeting were not approved and will be re-presented at the May meeting. The Minutes from the March meeting should not be put on the website until approved.

## 4. Matters arising from March's meeting

IL asked if JA had received a response from the Post Office with regard to the PO counter in the Co-op. No reply had been forthcoming. CGB continued to receive many complaints about the siting of the PO counter, in particular concerns about customers feeling vulnerable when

handling financial or confidential matters. **PD** raised the problem of lack of signage for the PO counter, in particular for visitors. **JA** mentioned that the board for wheelchair users to use when writing at the PO counter was still not available. **JA** will raise these issues again with the PO. [ One e-mail has now been received and a further letter will be sent to the Post Office]

## **5. Reports**

### **BRD**

Aberdeenshire Council has undertaken and funded the clearing of the main area of damaged caravans. The CO of the Royal Guard has offered the assistance of his soldiers to continue the clearing up of rubble and debris from the static caravan area. The static area will be fenced off to hide any remaining clutter & debris. New stances for touring caravans are being prepared with hard standing separated by grass areas with electricity supply at every 4<sup>th</sup> stance.

The original touring area will be enlarged to provide 40 stances eventually and it is hoped that each might be sponsored by groups, shops, individuals at a cost of £300 each thereby raising a sum of £12k. The Toilet Block is finished and looking superb. A play area will be adjacent along with a campers' kitchen, Deeside Log Cabins providing a wooden shelter. **IL** asked if there were any plans regarding the reinstatement of static caravans. **JC** pointed out that the existing static stances are in the wrong position as current legislation requires them to be 6 metres apart and they are 5 metres apart at present. This would mean realigning water/sewerage and electrical supply at considerable cost.

Roads have been repaired, new paths created and new standard lighting installed.

Funding has come from Birkhall, Hilton Grand Vacations, Aberdeenshire Council and Flood Relief, the Boy's Brigade etc. The park hopes to open on 18<sup>th</sup> May.

The one remaining static van has been repaired and installed for the use of the wardens. [A map of the proposals for the lay-out has now been received by the secretary if anyone wishes to consult it. ]

The transfer of the Dalmochie project is expected to be completed very soon, with Fraser & Mulligan appointing a new partner solicitor to deal with this matter and in contact with Mackinnons.

BRD has retained the £5000 grant to COAT to assist with the Seven Bridges Walk as there is no possibility of the work being completed within the agreed timescale. Likewise, the Monaltrie Park Toilet Block refurbishment grant has been returned to BRD. However, Cllr Katrina Farquhar has written to BRD to confirm that she has found someone willing to pay for the existing toilet block refurbishment and is awaiting a quote for the work. She has asked BRD to be the account holders for the project. Aberdeenshire Council has agreed to open, close and clean the toilet block as previously agreed.

The incorporation of a heritage centre/museum in the exhibition area of the Old Royal Station has been approved.

Finally, the defibrillator planning applications preceded the new ruling by Aberdeenshire Council stating that defibrillators will not be placed on listed building, so will go ahead on the Victoria Hall.

## **Aberdeenshire Council**

**CGB** had spoken with the local head of Royal Mail. He had said that the Ballater sorting office would close and that mail would be sorted in Aberdeen according to the Ballater routes.

**CGB** requested confirmation of this in writing but as yet had received nothing.

**CGB** had approached Aberdeenshire Council with regard to the two large piles of stones left on the north bank of the river opposite Abergeldie Castle following the building of the new road. However, the Director of Infrastructure informed her that this was a matter for the landowners, Invercauld Estate. Angus McNicol, the Invercauld Factor, informed her that he had allowed access to the contractor dredging the river, David Smith Contractors, on condition that all debris would be removed afterwards. **CGB** suggested that the **CC** might contact the contractor to query their intentions with regard to the removal of what would surely be a valuable resource to any contractor.

**CGB** had recently attended two meetings - firstly the BBA where Beverley Tricker of Tricker PR had spoken of the need to respond tactically to the media. The second meeting had been to the Ballater Business Regeneration Group who are currently putting together a bid for £10,000 from Foundation Scotland to fund a strategy to ensure better communication with each other, the media, VisitAberdeenshire and other Destination Management organisations.

**IL** had spoken with Janelle Clark with regard to the re-building of the Old Royal Station and had been assured that it was a priority item. **CGB** confirmed that all the plans were now in the community view and it was hoped that the planning application could go forward to Aberdeenshire Council to allow work to start as soon as possible. During the recent consultation **JA** had pointed out that no Natural History section had been proposed, and she had rock specimens available, as well as historic moth-lists of the oak wood. Trees would reduce the much needed parking space available in the square. Cycle racks were needed.

**IL** hoped that there would be no loss of parking which was already at a premium in the village. The possibility of parking behind Deeside Candies on was again raised as this had the potential for 40 cars and already had entry and exit routes.

**IL** wished to know who had endorsed the Etape Royale event in 2015. **CGB** believed that Aberdeenshire Council and Moray Council had done so, through their Roads Departments. **CGB** felt that David Fox-Pitt had listened to community concerns and there would be fewer road closures, better information with regard to bus services available as well as avoiding the Aberdeen holiday weekend. Furthermore, there had been a number of local meetings, with a further meeting scheduled for 26<sup>th</sup> April at 5.30pm at the Deeside Inn. David Fox-Pitt was keen for other events such as local food suppliers, ceilidhs etc to be part of the Etape experience. **IC** expressed disappointment that the Etape would take place after the disruptions of 2015. **TC** asked if anyone in local business wished to have the Etape. **CGB** pointed out that BBA had been involved in meetings at an early stage of the 2016 event and the overall feeling was that it could only benefit the village.

## **CNPA**

No report.

## **Ballater Resilience Plan**

John Boulton and Tony Cox continue to work on this.

## **Ballater Flood Group**

**TC** outlined some of the work done by Jim Sunley, Ian Cameron and Gordon Riddler in response to the flood of 30<sup>th</sup> December. This group consulted as widely as possible with locals in order to convey flood concerns to SEPA and Aberdeenshire Council. There is considerable local fear that the damage to the river means that it is unlikely to contain any future spate. Flood studies have been brought forward to 2016-2022, but it does not seem as though Ballater is a priority in spite of the severity of the flood. **TC** has written to the leaders of all political parties asking for a manifesto from each with regard to future flood programmes for this area. **CGB** advised **TC** to send his letter to Dennis Robertson MSP in order to ensure that the response received from the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, would be dealt with by the SNP and not by the bureaucracy surrounding the office of First Minister. **TC** felt that Ian Cameron, as a historian of the river, could contribute greatly to the discussion regarding the response to the flood - **TC** had spoken to respected hydrologist Douglas Johnstone.

**WJ** asked about the removal of debris round the pier of the Ballater Bridge. **CGB** reported that Donald McPherson, responsible for bridges with Aberdeenshire Council, had accompanied the Principal Construction Engineer on his examination of the Bridge. They had identified 3 static caravan chassis along with trapped debris. It would be necessary to remove the trapped debris before the chassis could be removed. A Safe System of Work had to be put in place to complete the task made difficult by awkward access and the consideration of environmental issues. **IC** also pointed out that the granite paving beneath the bridge, upon which the bridge rested, had been eroded by the force of the flood, which could mean that the piers were not resting on a stable foundation. **IC** said the Ballater Bridge acted as a dam during the flood and that perhaps a new bridge, with a single span would prevent the build-up of debris. Alternatively, if the bridge were to be retained, then further culverts would be required at either side.

In discussion **IC** and **JA** pointed out that debris removed from the flow-altering stone banks could provide useful material for suitable contractors and decrease the danger of future erosion and flooding. A Finnish machine had been brought to the attentions of Marr Area if access was not possible for normal diggers, and **JA** suggested physical crowd-picking of stones could make a start at several places - like above the bridge on the north side and below it on the south also and across from the Riverside Garage, for the A93 bank's support.

**CGB** reported that the Gairnshiel Bridge had been damaged in the floods and would close for repairs, with a bailey bridge being installed in the interim. She has invited Richard Lochhead to visit in early June to view the bridge.

## **6. Community Council Elections for 2016**

The CC elections will take place on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> June. An advert will appear in next week's Deeside Piper. The closing date for nominations is 12<sup>th</sup> May and withdrawal of nominations must be made by 19<sup>th</sup> May. There are 10 vacancies for Ballater and 2 for Crathie. Nomination forms will be available from Ballater Library and Crathie Post Office and must be returned to the same point. Any queries for further information should be made to **JA** or **PD**. An advert advising the date and times of the election will appear on 27<sup>th</sup> May. **CGB** suggested using

Facebook to advertise the election in order to encourage young people to be involved. **PD** would consult with Alford to ascertain what type of advertising would be allowed. The current **CC** will carry on until June. **PS** suggested as much as possible should be done to attract younger members.

## **7. Planning Matters**

Nothing to report

## **8. Correspondence**

No response from **PO**. The Cairngorm Nature Festival would take place on 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> May. A Bug Life conference would take place on 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> June from the Halls to Dinnet probably. The **BBA** are hosting a Duck Race and Fun Day on 22<sup>nd</sup> May. No response had come from the Co-op and Post Office. [An e-mail has since been received, but without the information given to **Cllr** Blackett ]

## **9. Finance**

Nothing to report

**10. AOCB PS** congratulated **WJ** on his first chairing of the Community Council.

**PS** was concerned at the lack of awareness of the severity of the flooding in Ballater in the wider world and suggested that substantial future investment was required. **PS** also asked **CGB** to verify if the aluminium flood brackets & barriers which he had seen advocated by Aberdeenshire Council on 2<sup>nd</sup> April would in fact be approved by Aberdeenshire Council Planning, in particular for the conservation area of the village. **PD** had found that Aberdeenshire Council Planning had required persuasion to consider PVC double glazing in the flood area within the conservation zone as Planning would usually have insisted on wooden frames.

**JA** hopes that a member of the Landscaping Dept will be in contact over the changes to the ground of the old road bend between the Crathie School and Kirk , where heathers and *Pinus contorta* have been removed without consultation with the **CC** and where the concept of a wild-flower meadow had been started but had been obliterated almost at once by the 'maintenance' cutting.

She had attended a meeting run by Bell Ingram on the North Angus and South Aberdeenshire Deer Management Area and had the document detailing their activities. Numbers had been reduced by over 1,000 head. The excellent maps which had been displayed at the Hall day and some were passed on to assist the Ballater Churches, and Resilience Committee.

**PD** recommended local events organisers to contact Colin Mackenzie in Inverness with regard to liability insurance for events.

**CGB** will find out if **COAT** or Aberdeenshire Council are the responsible body for the cycle path to the east of the village from the Old Royal Station.

**CGB** apologised in advance for her absence at the May meeting due to family commitments.

The meeting closed at 8.45p.m.

The next meeting will be 9<sup>th</sup> May 2016 in the Albert Hall, 7-9pm.