



## BALLATER & CRATHIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL (B&CCC)

[www.ballaterandcrathie.org.uk](http://www.ballaterandcrathie.org.uk)

Minutes of a Meeting held on 11th January 2016, at 7pm  
Beaton & Craigie Room, Victoria & Albert Hall, Ballater

<p><b>Present:</b> Francis Duguid (FD) - Chair James Anderson (WJ)- Vice Chair Jane Angus (JA) - Sec. Pat Downie (PD) Sheila Sedgwick (SS) Ian Latta (IL) Cllr Katrina Farquhar (CKF)</p> <p><b>Apologies</b> Ian Cameron (IC) Phil Swan (PS) Cllr Geva Blackett (CGB) Cllr Peter Argyle (CPA)</p>	<p><b>Also present:</b> Alan Harrison (AH) - Ballater Royal Deeside Limited Gordon Riddler - Ballater Royal Deeside Limited Tony Cox (TC) - Community Action Plan Faye Swan Lee Haxton (LH) - CNPA Murray Ferguson (MF) - CNPA Moirra McDougall (minutes)</p>
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### 1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

FD expressed his thanks, on behalf of the community, to all for their help following the flooding of Ballater on 30<sup>th</sup> December. In particular he praised the response of fire, police, mountain rescue and ambulance services, Abco, the local Churches, the Ex-servicemens' Association, supermarkets and local traders for their donations and assistance.

### 2. Emergency services

CKF reported that the Police Office would re-open on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> January in the upstairs rooms of the station. The Fire Engine, following the damage to the Fire Station, would be located at the Victoria Barracks. All pagers for firemen are now working. The Ambulance Service would remain in Aboyne until Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> January.

3. Minutes of December's meeting were passed

4. No matters arising from December's meeting.

5. Co-option of new members to the Community Council

TC did not wish to be considered for co-option.

### 6. Reports

#### BRD

AH reported that the Caravan Park Office and computer had escaped the worst of the flooding. The refurbished toilet block was also relatively undamaged. Although the removal of the static caravans was the responsibility of the individual owners, BRD and Abco were working together to assist in the removal of the damaged caravans. FD remarked that it seemed a pity that the caravan owners should be financially penalised for the removal of the caravans, bearing in mind the considerable financial contribution made to the village by the site.

**AH** agreed that the static caravans were the core of the caravan park income, but it was unclear at present how many owners would wish to return to the site without assurances of flood prevention. BRD is working closely with Abco to ensure that the site is at least open to touring caravans and tents by the Spring. **CKF** believed that the infrastructure of the site (the electric and water utilities) were insured by Abco, but that the site as a whole was not insured for flood damage.

### **Aberdeenshire Council**

**CKF** had spent the last 12 days since the flood in Ballater and had been impressed by the way Abco, Fire, Police and other community groups had worked together in terrible conditions. The temporary repair to the A93 opposite Abergeldie Castle is nearing completion, although work remains to be done on the river bank. The bridge at Invercauld should be open by Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January. The Ballaterach Bridge on the South Deeside road had lost a central pier but the water level was still too high to assess the extent of the damage and the road remained closed. Both bridges at Cambus o'May and Pohollick had been damaged.

**FD** asked if there would be any reduction in business rates to those affected by the flood.

**CKF** would ask and report back. Council tax rebates were available to those forced to leave their homes as a result of the flooding.

### **CNPA**

**MF** was impressed by what had been achieved by the community in a very short space of time. The CNPA has been happy to make space available in their Ballater office. CNPA will liaise with SEPA and the Marr Area Partnership to look at the longer term needs of the community, in particular any funding which might be required. There is certainly a case to be made for key tourism investment and John Swinney has already been approached. In the short term, in order to ensure visitor access to the area, the CNPA would concentrate in working with COAT to assess popular foot-paths and prioritise repairs in order to re-open access as quickly as possible. As most of building work in the near future will be to replace and repair, both Abco and CNPA would be aiming to minimise any hindrance to work. The development of new footpaths on the river banks, however, would require careful management to ensure no further erosion occurred.

The CNP Partnership Plan would be an ideal platform to discuss the management of rivers and land as the head waters of the Tay, Dee, Don and Spey were all situated within the area of the CNPA.

SEPA, together with Abco, published a flood plan for the North-east of Scotland a few weeks before Christmas and it had proved to be correct in its assessment of which areas would flood in Ballater. **MF** felt it was important for the community to set up a Community Flood Group in order to assess what has happened and then plan for any future events. It would be a good idea for Sepa (Malcolm Thomson) and Abco (Colin Gray - Resilience Officer) as well as SSE to meet with local groups to find out what happened, examine local videos and photos and learn what might work in future. **CKF** pointed out that Huntly and Stonehaven had set up excellent local Resilience Groups. **MF** suggested that once there had been a meeting to assess what had happened, there might be a meeting of those interested in setting up a Community Flood Group in order to determine how to proceed in future. **CKF** had been told that the collapse of Red Brae had led to the river being dammed at that point and thereby diverting down the 14<sup>th</sup>

fairway of the golf course and through to Golf Road beside the Chapel. **GR** commented that the river had been rising in level for many years, with the recent flood level being 1.5 metres above the previous highest flood at Balmoral. **WJ** questioned the placing of large sand bags at the tennis courts on Saturday, which only seemed to protect properties already flooded and further endangered properties on Golf Road which had escaped the earlier flood. **FD** remarked that the footpath adjacent to the river along the golf course should never have been raised so high, as this prevent water flooding the golf course and instead diverted it to the village. He suggested that future work on the rivers should be with a view to protecting communities as well as the environment. **JA** felt that more attention should be paid to the natural geography of the area before any building was undertaken. **GR** asked if there might not be a means of setting up an early warning system as many residents were unaware of the danger until water engulfed their property. **TC** reminded the **CC** that Ian Cameron had a considerable dossier on the Dee, including maps showing historic river beds and it would be important to include knowledge like his as part of the examination into what went wrong. **AH** remarked on the miracle that there had been no loss of life.

The CNPA was very aware of the need for a coordinated restoration plan for tourism in Upper Deeside, not only as a result of the flooding, but also in response to the fires at the Darroch Learg and Old Royal Railway Station. To this end, Lee Haxton would be in the Ballater office, usually every Monday and Friday, to offer assistance. There would also be a meeting on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> January, under the auspices of the Marr Area Partnership, CNPA, BBA and all other interested community groups to find a way forward as a whole for the village.

## **7. Planning Matters**

There was nothing to report.

## **8. Correspondence**

No reply had been forthcoming from Royal Mail and **FD** would pursue this matter.

## **9. Finance**

There is no change.

## **10. AOCB**

**IL** wished to express thanks for the amount of donations of food and clothing. There had been donations sent to Crathie and Braemar.

The lack of mobile phone coverage in the village was raised, especially in the light of many people losing their land lines as a result of the flood. **MF** agreed to explore the question of site-sharing by mobile phone companies in the CNPA area.

In due course, work on clearing the river bank would begin and Abco had been offered the assistance of Community Justice volunteers.

**MF** recommended the radio programme *Out of Doors* broadcast on BBC Radio Scotland on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> January, which had featured Ballater and the emotional cost of the flooding.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm

The next meeting will be 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2016

Beaton Craigie Room, V & A Halls, 7-9pm