

BALLATER & CRATHIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL (B&CC)

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Minutes of a Meeting held 8th February via Zoom at 7pm

Present: Jo Croll (JC) - Vice Chair Richard Frimston (RF) - Secretary William Braid (WB) Pat Downie (PD) - Treasurer Ellie Kinghorn (EK) Gareth Johnston (GJ) John Bannerman (JB)	Apologies James Anderson (WJ) Lewis Macdonald (LMD) Lisa McMahon (LMM)	Also present: Cllr Paul Gibb (CPG) Cllr Peter Argyle (CPA) Cllr Geva Blackett (CGB) Tom Flynn (TF) Liz Henderson, CNPA (LH) Angus McNicol, Invercauld (AMN)
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1 Welcome and Apologies for Absence

2 **Emergency Services Report** Anti-social driving had been reported. Also be aware of ongoing scams and fraudulent behaviour

3 Matters arising from previous meeting and Action Tracker update.

January minutes passed.

CPA asked for suggestions for dog waste bin to be located on Victoria Road. **JC** will check and pass on information to **CPA**. **PD** suggested near the tennis courts. **WJ** to follow up with Donald MacPherson regarding poor workmanship on Bridge of Gairn.

RF to write to Inspector Smith on behalf of BCCC regarding concerns about abandoned vehicles in Ballater.

There is no possibility of a pedestrian crossing at Eastfield. **CGB** offered one of the mannequins donated to Braemar to assist in reducing speeding in the village. **JB** agreed to assume responsibility for dressing, locating, and maintaining the mannequin in position at Eastfield. **CPG** reported that research is ongoing regarding a pedestrian crossing on Bridge Street.

RF will write to Balmoral Estate to query ownership of electronic sign at entrance to Glen Muick so that it might be possible for the Ballater website to link to the sign when the car park is full or when the road is closed. There had been reports of cars parked on the side of the road, hindering snow-clearance traffic and resident access. **LH** reported that CNPA is also seeking to put out information to discourage visitors from hotspots such as Glen Muick.

RF reported that the access roads to the Old School project had suffered some damage due to heavy traffic delivering to the site. **CPA** has noted the problem.

JC reported considerable local concern regarding the smell of sewage in the Co-op. **CGB** had contacted Scottish Water, but the problem also seemed to be located within the store, which meant SEPA could not deal with it. **RF** will contact **LMD** to seek a meeting with local Co-op management to see what is being done about it, followed up with a written notice of concerns. **JC** suggested that once further information had been received, this might be posted on social media to keep locals informed.

CPA reported that trees on South Deeside Road would be trimmed when weather improved.

EK will assist **WB** to review and regularly inspect the defibrillators in Ballater and Crathie. **WB** had replaced the emergency batteries in both Ballater units, but access due to snow had been difficult. **CPA** will contact snow clearing teams to ensure that access to the units is maintained. **RF** will write to thank June Smith for her offer of assistance in the maintenance of the units, but that currently the BCCC has sufficient volunteers, but would appreciate her assistance on a stand-by basis.

Before moving on to reports, **CGB**, backed by **CPA** and **CPG**, paid tribute Jane Angus, who recently passed away, having served the communities of Ballater and Crathie so tirelessly over so many years. **CGB** mentioned Jane's welcome to her and her family on arrival on Deeside, along with her customary Gingerbread. **JC** said that tributes had been made to Jane and to Martin Holroyd, another stalwart of the Community Council in the past, in the forthcoming Community Council report in the Eagle. **PD** would forward the condolences of the BCCC to the families of Jane and Martin.

4 Reports

Housing

AMN reported that Invercauld Estate are in discussion with a developer regarding a site at Eastfield for a future housing development. He wished to know if the BCCC would be interested in setting up a Local Lettings Initiative for the allocation of affordable rented accommodation. **JC** had been involved in the process for the Old School Development with Grampian Housing Association and would ask for further information from them about this. **LH** and **AMN** would speak with the Braemar group to find out if they had any suggestions regarding setting up a bespoke initiative for Ballater.

Paths

AMN asked council members to report any major issues with footpaths in the area to either himself or Ken Gibson. It was also proving challenging to utilise

the funding available to replace way-marker posts given the current weather conditions and covid restrictions. **LH** advised him to return to his nominated officer and discuss an extension to the funding beyond 31st March.

BRD

No update on opening Cambus O'May Bridge. **BCE** hope to open the caravan park on 1st May and will open for bookings shortly. There was a discussion about a twinning programme between Ballater and other locations.

Aberdeenshire Council

CPA had met with the interim Director of Infrastructure Services, Alan Wood, formerly Head of Finance. The prolonged cold weather, combined with covid working restrictions, had made the task of keeping roads clear even more difficult. It was also proving challenging to keep routes open so that the vaccination programme could continue. Salt & Grit supplies were holding out. **CPG** had requested a meeting with Philip MacKay regarding the road clearing operations and hoped to discuss alternative ways of dealing with the problem, especially in remoter, rural locations, so possibly using local farmers/contractors to respond more quickly to the problem. **PD** had reported to him that there had been problems of access for the local ambulance crews and he had been in touch with roads regarding this issue. There was a question whether the emergency exit at Sluie Mhor had been cleared.

CGB announced that Inspector Smith and Angela Funk had agreed to the installation of Snow Gates on the B976, possibly above the Bush Farm. **JC/WJ** suggested that snow gates would also be a good idea on the Glen Muick road and **CGB** had already taken this on board.

PD asked when the large deposits of snow might be removed as residents were concerned about a fast melt resulting in flooding. **CGB** and **CPG** had both expressed concern about when gullies had been cleared. There were multi-agency discussions ongoing at council level regarding potential flooding.

CNPA

The Heritage Horizons Lottery Bid is to be discussed at the end of the week. **LH** said that this was a multi-million-pound bid, concentrating on different strands of climate policy for the benefit of the CNPA.

LH also reported that 7 seasonal Rangers were being recruited in order to manage visitors to the park in the forthcoming season as it was recognised that while visitors were essential, they did need to be carefully managed during the ongoing covid crisis.

FIG

RF and **TF** have started the next stage of the report regarding economic and other consequences of the flood, in conjunction with longer-term plans for flood resilience.

TF and **JB** raised the issue of the container in the school car park which contains sandbags and Hesco barriers (250 metres). The Resilience Group has a key for the container, as has Jim Anderson, but there does not seem to be a plan in place to access and utilise the contents. **TF**, **RF** and **JB** will examine the contents of the container and contact the Resilience Team, Aberdeenshire Council Flood Team and the Fire Brigade in order to make sure that a plan is in place. **JB** emphasised that joined-up thinking was required to ensure that the hesco barrier could be filled and set out as quickly as possible. This is a matter of urgency as a quick snow melt could be disastrous for the village and the contents of the container could be a successful pre-emptive measure. **CPA** urged BCCC to ensure that sandbags were fit for use. **CPA** suggested that a numbered padlock should be purchased as soon as possible to ensure that access to the container was available to the community. **PD** agreed that the BCCC had funds available.

Halls

The drawings for the basement modifications and bin storage area have been sent to Aberdeenshire council.

Enhancement Group and Improvement Group

Plans have been submitted for work on the Green.

5 Planning Matters **AMN** agreed to return to the BCCC to report on the Hut development at Crathie following the planning meeting to be held in March.

6 Correspondence

Nothing to report.

7 Finance No change since last meeting.

8 AOCB

PD had received telephone calls from residents concerned that holiday cottages were being used and that there seemed to be an increase in visitors to the village. **CGB** indicated that while unnecessary travel was not advised, house-owners were entitled to justifiably check on their properties and undertake any maintenance work, although overnight stays were not recommended.

PD reported that there was now an Openreach engineer resident in the village.

The meeting concluded at 20.42 hours. The next meeting is scheduled for 8th March, 19.00 to 21.00 hours, possibly by Zoom.