

BALLATER & CRATHIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL (B&CC)

www.ballaterandcrathiecommunitycouncil.com

Minutes of BCCC meeting, Village Meeting held at Michael Sheridan Room, Ballater on
Monday 8th September 2025 at 7pm

Present:	Apologies	Also present:
James Anderson - Chairman (WJ) John Bannerman - Vice Chair (JB) Richard Frimston - Secretary (RF) William Braid (BB) Jennifer Davidson (JD) Calum Halhead (CH) John Bannerman (JB) Linda Drever (LD) Kate Allum (KA) Lewis Macdonald (LMD)	Cllr Geva Blackett Cllr Sarah Brown Simon Mearns Ellie Kinghorn Scott Peacock Jo Croll Paul Gibb Ray Riddoch Bruce Lawson	Eric McQueen (EM) - BCE Martin Ellison Gordon Riddler Ron Drever Sgt Allan Masson Weston Main - BGC Lucile Verrot Cllr Anouk Kloppert Dan Harris (DH) - Planning Manager CNPA Christine Davidson

1 Welcome and apologies by WJ

2 Emergency Services Report

Sgt Masson reported that it had been a busy quarter, but it was very much a case of key individuals generating the most crime. There had been an increase in the number of road charges, such as dangerous parking at Cambus o'May, as well as the serious road accident on Tullich Straight which had resulted in charges. The house fire in Swann Place had been particularly challenging, especially waiting for arrival of fire engines. Sgt Masson thanked Linda Drever and the Resilience team for their work in the Halls in response to the fire. There had been a busy start to Mountain Rescue call outs in the summer, in particular responses to mountain bike incidents have increased amounting to almost one third of all call outs. **WJ** asked if this was perhaps due to over-confidence in users of e-bikes, but Sgt Masson felt it was as much due to increased popularity of Ballater as a cycling destination for all age groups. **KA** suggested that the forthcoming Thrive event in the village would be an opportunity to put across the message to cyclists to be aware of risks and to manage their abilities, especially as Thrive would be attended by Police Scotland, Mountain Rescue and Scottish Fire Service. **RF** asked about parking issues on Distillery Brae. Sgt Masson

thought that increased signage plus posts on the edge of the road had made parking more difficult, thereby reducing the problem.

3 Dan Harris – Planning Manager CNPA – New Local Development Plan

The last Local Development Plan had been made in 2021, but new legislation from the Scottish Government meant changes in the way in which a Local Development Plan would be created. The new Plan should be ready by May 2028 with a life span of 10 years and should be less policy based, more place based. CNPA are currently at the end stages of creating the Evidence Report which lists planning objectives along with land allocation. This is submitted to government ministers who appoint a Reporter to assess for approval. This is then followed by bringing in local community stakeholders and landowners to consultation. **WJ** asked if it was possible to propose land for development, without necessarily being the landowner. **DH** said this would certainly be possible, with CNPA being able to approach both private and public landowners. **RF** asked about the timescale for refreshing the Community Action Plan and it was suggested that the end of 2026 would work. **BB** asked if CNPA was aware of any progress in the H1 development, however **DH** could only say that the applicant had to go back to square one to address earlier concerns. **DH** said that the Local Development Plan was aiming for 170 to 200 houses within the CNPA area of Deeside & Donside, over and above the H1 development. This would require looking at current and potential land available for housing. It would also mean looking at, for example, electricity capacity in communities for further development. **DH** is aware that SSEN are proposing a new substation for Braemar which would allow for an increase in housing in that area. **JB** asked if the Local Development Plan also looked at plans to adapt land to cope with climate change, for example removing bunds to allow the river to connect to its natural flood plain or creating areas for material water storage. **DH** said that this did play a role, but not necessarily as a 'must do' objective. There is a protective element in planning in the creation of a nature network to increase biodiversity within the Park.

EM felt there was a risk that the same discussions on housing might still be taking place in ten years' time. He asked if it would be possible to put aside land ownership and assess whether it was possible to meet the planned housing demand before bringing landowners together to find long term solutions within Ballater or potentially creating new communities.

BB asked about the parameters set by the Scottish Government which CNPA must adhere to. **DH** pointed out that rural housing policy allows for a tailored approach and space to find own policies and solutions.

4 Approval of July 2025 minutes and matters arising

KA and **RF** had met with Fire Officers Andy Wright and Niall Caddell. SFRS are working on new joint working protocols that are in place in other parts of Scotland so that crews from 2 stations could potentially man a vehicle, with this hopefully being in place within 6 months. Also, a new computer system is to be installed within 12 months which should make it easier to manage manning levels on stations with more immediate and accurate information as to officers available for service. While the risk of house fires is reducing, the number of wildfires is increasing which has an impact on the local Ballater station. **KA** emphasised it is important to maintain contact with SFRS, both at local level and management level. It would also be useful to engage CNPA in the dialogue due to wildfire concerns. **RF** had asked how BCCC could ensure capital support for the requirements of the local station.

5 Conflicts of interest would be raised as and when during the meeting

6 Action Tracker

KA reported on the latest proposal on relocation of the bus-stop which should be due by end of September with possibility of AECOM attending the October CC meeting (no 6). The road surface on Queens Road continues to worsen. Leanne at Marr Area has been putting pressure on Abco (no 135). **KA** suggested that Nestrans intended to ensure all road-markings would be repainted following the bus stop relocation (no 139). **RF** reported that the work due on the cinder path had been put to tender, awaiting possible funding from Paths for All, along with £40,000 from CNPA, with work due to be finished by March 2026 (no 141). **KA** proposed retaining no 143 under the heading of Fire Risk in Ballater area.

7 Sub-committee Reports

Housing and Planning

A Planning

BB reported work was ongoing to convert the former Green Café into an independent wine and whisky merchants. A planning application had been made to convert Strachans shop into a restaurant with chef accommodation.

B H1

Scotia say they are still proceeding with their proposed planning application.

Flooding Issues Group (FIG)

FIG continue to work on the complementary approach of local defences and upstream catchment level water storage to ultimately improve the resilience of Ballater to flooding.

Following some queries from a local resident, FIG would like to again state our position, that while Nature based solutions (NBS) and Natural flood management (NFM) have their place in adapting the Dee catchment to the challenges of climate change (flood and drought) they will not fully protect Ballater from flooding if Storm Frank levels of rainfall and snow melt are experienced.

Local Defences

Ballater Community Trust has now received the final report of phase 2 (the development of the mathematical model) of the CBEC work. Details of the project are set out on the Community Trust website.

Phase 1 and phase 2 reports are available either via the Community Trust website or from the Ballater & Crathie Community Council website.

<https://www.ballaterandcrathiecommunitycouncil.com/flood-issues>

The proposal of phase 3 is to model in detail the following options (see Phase 1 Report for Option details) and combinations of them;

- Option 8 - with the caveat that interventions such as swales are not on the golf course playing area.
- Option 3 - redirect high river flows away from the North Bank
- Option 11 - intervention to keep flow in the channel in Dee Street and the caravan park. (This is an additional option added after phase1)

FIG report that the CNPA have agreed, subject to the signing of a formal agreement, to partner with BCCC and BCT re CBEC phase 3 and subsequent phases i.e. design and construction of a chosen option(s) if additional flooding resilience with no detrimental impact can be demonstrated.

Upstream water storage

CNPA have recruited a project manager to work on water management at catchment level. FIG on behalf of the 3 community councils, Ballater and Crathie / Mid Deeside and Braemar plan to meet the new project manager asap.

Ballater Resilience Group

LD reported that provision of hot water during emergencies continues to be an issue. KA proposed a meeting between interested parties to discuss options. LD has been asked to help set up a Resilience Group in Tarland following flooding in the village.

Crathie Resilience Group

Nothing to report.

Roads & Paths

SM had submitted a report outlining review of core paths., issued.

8 Crathie Issues

CH has moved to Braemar, so must resign from BCCC. RF and WJ thanked him for all his efforts on behalf of Crathie community.

9 Other Reports

Abco

CSB had submitted a report to the BCCC. Her report reminded BCCC that new 20mph speed limits go live from 22nd September.

CAK reported that Individual Resilience Month is due to start, and highlighted Climate North East as well as Restaurant Week in November. She also reported issues with location of grit bins which she would continue to monitor.

CGB Hopeful the 20mph sign in Dee Street propping up someone's gutter is being moved.

I have received a complaint about a 201 refusing a bike over the weekend despite the rack being empty. This is being investigated.

Cairngorm National Park Authority

Paul Gibb - Report attached.

Community Action Plan

RF confirmed that Eric McQueen would review the Community Action Plan. Tim Stephen from Marr Area issued the following statement in response to concerns about the Old Royal Station closure:

"Visit Scotland will shortly be vacating the Ballater Railway Station (October). Aberdeenshire Council is working with the existing tenants (Café and Library) with a view to maintaining services in the short term whilst we:

*a) look at options with those tenants as to how they like to improve their profile and
b) explore how the library can operate as it has been doing in synergy with VisitScotland.*

In addition, we will also be looking at a variety of options for configuring the building with a view to attracting future tenants to the building who ideally will complement the services delivered by the existing tenants and ensure the longer-term financial sustainability of the building.

Realistically it is fair to say that the building will operate with the two existing tenants for the coming winter period, but we do aspire to attract new businesses to the building in mid 2026."

From October, the Library will only be available for 15 hours, compared to 45 hours when self-service was available when VisitScotland was open. KA suggested that Abco should be challenged on the reduced library services. Eric McQueen asked if the Station could be opened on a voluntary basis, however LD advised there may be insurance implications and other conditions imposed by Abco.

RF reported that BT had informed him that his appeal to retain the phone box had been successful a month after BT had removed the phone from the box and the Hall had already purchased the phone box. BT will buy back the box and reinstall the phone. RF reported that the ATM had run out of cash on Saturday morning and was still empty 2 days later. This had been reported to Link and to Andrew Bowie MP.

Ballater (Royal Deeside) Ltd - Ballater Community Trust

KA reported that the team of volunteers working at the Hub to ensure it was open every day had done a tremendous job. A Memorandum of Understanding had been signed with Abco for the Greens. Work on the condemned trees would be started soon - this work had been agreed with Abco on a health & safety and environmental basis. Replanting would be required, but it would be difficult to find suitable trees given the compacted earth and dry conditions. BCT are committed to keeping the Greens as an asset to the village, but it had been difficult to make clear to Abco that BCT would not be operating as a maintenance contractor. JB reported that Moxon Architects had come up with a design for a path with footbridge to replace riverside

path at the hesco boxes. The path would be relocated to the golf course side of the bund. CNPA were happy to look at this.

Ballater Community Enterprise

Eric McQueen reported that the caravan park had been operating at full capacity, although this meant that it had also been turning away potential visitors. For this reason, there had been talks with local estates and Abco with a view to creating Campervan Aires in the vicinity of Ballater. A bike storage unit is to be installed at the Caravan Park with space for adaptive bikes as well as 20 standard bikes, thus cementing Ballater's reputation as a destination for cycling. The current social media presence of the caravan park is quite limited. To this end, BCE has been in discussion with the Hub to expand their profile and to provide training courses for staff, which would possibly be open to other interested parties.

Halls

BB reported that Air Source Heating had been installed at Albert Hall to be followed by condenser unit in due course. Solar Panels will be installed in November. A committee is working very hard on 150th Anniversary celebrations for the Albert Hall. A new flag has been designed by pupils from Ballater Primary School. The Halls website has been revamped to make online booking easier.

Ballater Golf Club

Weston Main reported that there will be a fundraiser for the Golf Club on 12th September with members of Aberdeen FC present. A bingo fundraiser for Crathie School is planned on 19th September. There will be a basket supper & dance to Shamrockle on 27th September.

Ballater School

Nothing to report.

Climate Action Now

SP Submitted a report. Six people attended the August litter pick. Sadly, cigarette bins are not being used and there seemed to be more litter than usual along the riverside fence at the caravan park.

Other

Bruce Lawson had asked RF to highlight that the Ember bus service to Dundee via Glenshee would stop in Ballater from 1st October. It is possible to book on the app ten minutes before arrival to ensure bus will stop for passengers as it is not allowed to use

the Stagecoach bus stops. Up to 2 bikes can be accommodated on board. There are currently 2 services per day.

10 Correspondence

JB reported that Feughside CC had invited BCCC to attend a meeting in Stonehaven on 11th October regarding renewable energy projects. **JB** would contact Mid Deeside CC to find out if anyone might be able to attend.

Orienteering Scotland had asked for feedback on their recent visit to Ballater. **WJ** suggested that BCCC should reply that Ballater would be delighted to host a similar event, but there had been some concern about the urban race which had participants running on pavements without due care, crossing roads, again without due care, and entering private drives.

There had also been confusion about the signage for parking charges in the village car parks as it was felt that the voluntary aspect had not been clearly made.

11 Finance

Westhill and Elrick CC had been in touch to report that Aberdeenshire Council and NHS Grampian were historically underfunded per capita.

Abco funding of CC would in future require receipts and if grant not fully spent then would request a refund. However, insurance and renting meeting space meant that BCCC never had any surplus funds.

12 AOCB

BB had been asked for confirmation about who was responsible for dry stone dyke between Riverside Garage and the responsibility of Invercauld Estate. **JD** proposed a vote of thanks to the team of volunteers who look after the War Memorial following their recent success as Best Kept War Memorial within a small community with gardens category.

RF proposed that BCCC should look at list of CC candidates at last election with a view to co-opting the candidate with most votes to replace Calum Halhead on his resignation.

WJ had been approached about the possibility of restoring the path through the wood at Dundarroch Road, but it was suggested that all tenants should agree on what they wanted done with the space.

JB proposed that thanks should be given to all those responsible for the great display of hanging baskets in the village this year. **KA** suggested that a letter should be written to David & Wendy Cobban to mark this. **JB** also wished to thank the team who produced the Eagle. Ron Drever said that the magazine depended on a great team of

contributors. **WJ** commented that it was one of the best places to advertise as it reached every household in the village.

KA reported that she was still working with Abco to restore the old water fountain on the Greens to make it easier for the volunteers to water the hanging baskets and planters.

LD reported that the Games Committee were aware of the broken fences at Monaltrie Park surrounding the hard-standing and repairs were in hand. **LD** also reported that attendance at the games was 7610, nearly 1000 more than in previous years.

The meeting concluded at 20.50

The Next meeting will be held on 13th October at 19.00 to 21.00 hours in the Quarry Studios, Crathie

CNPA REPORT

The **Dava wildfires** have prompted a lot of concern and generated much activity. Issues currently being discussed with estates and others include water provision, evacuation plans and funding for equipment breakages incurred by the private sector when fighting the Dava fires. BBC Landward have filmed a piece on Dava to be broadcast in September.

Fine weather in late June and the move into the school holiday period saw an increase in ranger activity that reflected the increase in visitor numbers to some of the Park's pressure points. This includes joint patrols with Police Scotland at weekends. As is typical numbers and related issues fluctuated with the weather with notable spikes on the fine weekends of 12/13 July and 2/3 August which saw increases in numbers camping and, also fires / barbeques.

Fires continue to be a hot topic. The byelaw proposals are currently sitting with the Scottish Government for approval, but preparatory work is under way internally as well as continuing the current advice and education approach. Encouragingly the numbers of fires do appear to be declining compared with previous years with the no fires message being pushed quite strongly by both Park Authority rangers and partner ranger services.

Work has begun to deliver a series of priority projects using a £1.2 million grant from Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund [NRF]. The projects cover aspen, montane, capercaillie, freshwater pearl mussel, wood ant, narrow-headed ant and **an Upper Dee Catchment audit** to help identify what changes could make the River Dee more resilient to flooding and climate change.

<https://www.gov.scot/news/6-million-for-scotlands-environment/>

Dee Catchment Working Group – Dr Rachel Helliwell has accepted the role of the River Dee Catchment Project Officer, with a start date of 24th November. Rachel is currently based at the James Hutton Institute and is [Director of CREW](#)

Here is her summary profile: 'Rachel is known for her contributions to water science and policy and her commitment to advancing sustainable water management and policy, both in Scotland and internationally. As Director of the Hydro Nation International Centre, she plays a crucial role in fostering collaboration between academia, government, and the private sector to address the complex challenges of water management. By leveraging Scotland's leadership in water innovation, she works to shape both local and global water systems, particularly in the face of climate change and economic development pressures.'

The latest batch of topic papers for the Evidence Report for our next **Local Development Plan** have just been published for consultation. They cover the following topics:

- Housing
- Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods
- Flood risk
- Retail and town centres
- Climate change
- Site assessment methodology.

You can access these and provide feedback on our dedicated engagement website at:

<https://cairngormsldp.commonplace.is/>

The consultation runs until 26 September.

We are due to launch a £42,500 **Communities and Cultural Heritage Fund** shortly. This is an open fund for community organisations and focuses on the key themes of community support and cultural heritage, under the strands outlined by communities themselves in their Community Action Plans. We have offered both Marr Area Partnership and Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey grants to support community development and social enterprise for 2025/26.

Any questions or comments, please let me know.
Regards

Paul

Paul Gibb

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