

BALLATER & CRATHIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL (B&CCC)

www.ballaterandcrathiecommunitycouncil.com

Minutes of Meeting held at Michael Sheridan Room, Ballater on Monday 12th February 2023 at 7.00pm

Present: Jim Anderson - Chairman (WJ) Richard Frimston (RF) - Secretary Pat Downie (PD) - Treasurer Bill Braid (BB) Ellie Kinghorn (EK) John Bannerman (JB)	Apologies Jo Croll Ian Henderson Tom Flynn Gareth Johnston Simon Mearns Ray Riddoch Scott Peacock Cllr Sarah Brown Cllr Anouk Kloppert	Also present: Cllr Geva Blackett (CGB) Linda Drever - BRG (LD) Kate Allum (KA) Ben Allum Andy Ford - Director of Nature & Climate Change, CNPA Paul Gibb (PG) - CNPA Bruce Lawson (BL) Dougal Morgan Ron Drever Richard Watts Athol Bowman Calum Halhead Weston Main
--	--	--

1 Welcome

WJ welcomed all to BCCC meeting.

2 **Conflicts of interest.** WJ would indicate any conflicts of interest during the meeting.

3 Emergency Services Report

No report received.

4 **January minutes were approved** with date correction.

5 **Matters arising from previous meeting.**

6 **Andy Ford, Director of Nature and Climate Change, Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA)**

Andy explained that CNPA does not own or manage any land with Cairngorms. It has limited statutory powers, primarily access and planning. CNPA acts to bring together various groups to ensure that all are pulling in the same general direction for the benefit of the area, within the terms of the National Park Partnership Plan which is written every 5 years. This involves consultation with government on future legislation, with local communities and landowners, with people both living and working in the area, and visiting the area. There are 3 main parts to the Plan - Nature, which

includes biodiversity, woodlands, farming etc; People -which includes communities, skills and training and volunteering and Place, which includes visitor management, sustainable transport and affordable housing. The Plan is delivering all three. The Nature part of the Plan is seeking to make the Park more resilient in the face of the effects of climate change, which we are already aware of in terms of flooding and drought. This can involve looking at how land use is changing in terms of woodland expansion, peatland management, deer management, while at the same time ensuring that people and communities are also in a good place going forward. It also involves the protection of species, including re-introduction of species such as wild cat and beaver. The CNPA seeks to find a common ground between such bodies as SEPA, Scottish Water, Scottish Forestry, Agriculture, Peatland Management, local landowners and local councils.

JB asked Andy about CNPA's views on promoting catchment solutions for flooding and drought. CNPA has started a series of meetings at CEO and Director level with various bodies who have an interest in this subject - BCCC has been invited to join these meetings. They have now had 3 meetings and are beginning to identify interventions and what effect such interventions might have and at what cost. For example, riparian tree planting might reduce the temperature of the River Dee and might slow some flow, but would not in itself prevent major flooding. Likewise, efforts to increase the storage of Loch Muick by damming it might resolve flooding in Glen Muick, but might not be as beneficial to the biodiversity of the glen. While CNPA does not control the majority of public money coming into the Park, it can try to ensure that all relevant public bodies are working together in the same general direction. However, it is clear, that creating strategies is one thing, but putting these into action requires considerable effort. Andy urged members of the council and community to make contact should they have any queries.

7 Action Tracker Update

CGB had received an e-mail from Gordon McKnight regarding the snowgate camera at Gairnshiel. She asked **RF** to take this forward to Ballater (RD) Ltd (BRD) to find someone willing to drive this forward and ensure installation goes ahead (no 121). There are still ongoing issues with the ATM situation in the village following a failure of ATM in the last few weeks. People were complaining to the Co-op staff, but this was outwith their control. **KA** also reported that there were difficulties in ensuring sufficient cash holdings in the store to meet the demands of people requiring cash. There is the potential for a Co-op ATM within the store, but nothing is certain yet. It was suggested that there should be a notice at the ATM, on the community Facebook page and possibly also in the Eagle, urging members of the public to complain about the lack of service. **RF** reported that Andrew Bowie, MP, is aware that there are only 2 bank branches left in his constituency, but it would be helpful to ensure that he also knew of any complaints about ATM services. **BB** reported that the Bank of Scotland would continue to be in the Hub on Monday mornings until the end of July, although

the representative does not have access to bank computers and cannot deal with cash lodgements or withdrawals (no 127). The pavement has been repaired outside Strachans, so no 131 may be removed.

8 Sub-committee Reports

Housing & Planning

- a) No contentious applications.
- b) **EK** had met with Scotia. The planning application has now been put back to April. No 3d plan is as yet available. Games Committee had been consulted and the plan encroaches on the Games Park, and Scotia have been notified of this.

Flooding Issues Group (FIG)

JB reported as follows:

The P&J have issued an article on the project in today's paper - the online version is more complete. The article suggests FIG are "flood experts". FIG clarify that they are NOT flood experts just a group of volunteers trying to get things done on the ground that will progressively protect Ballater from varying levels of flooding.

The scope for the phase 4 of the Hesco Box box project has been agreed, maintenance on the existing boxes, a modest 25 meter extension of the boxes, consolidation of the "dry" side of the boxes, improvement of the lower overflow and clearing/stocking some windblown trees which have been washed into the subsidiary channel. This work should be completed by the end of Feb.

While the new bund is "good news" and has proved its worth during the recent high water, it won't protect the village from the type of river flow rates experienced during Storm Frank. Additionally moving forward, it will require maintenance and consolidation to be sustainable.

It's obvious to all that the river in the vicinity of the SSEN crossing continues to evolve - BRD have contracted a hydrology company, CBEC, to visit this Thursday to give a view on the evolution of this change and the associated risk and what if anything can/should be done in the short term.

At the same time, fund raising, coordinated by BRD, continues in order to be able to contract a specialist company to provide outline designs for defences that will further protect the village.

Anyone who is interested and has time to dedicate and would like to join FIG should contact a member of the FIG team.

BRG - Ballater Resilience Group

LD reported a flood warning was received on 21st January 2024, resulting in Halls being set up by midnight, although no members of the public needed the facility, and it was stood down at 6am. Fire & Rescue Services were already monitoring river levels and patrolling the village, checking on properties at risk. **LD** expressed gratitude to the Bund builders, whose efforts played a major role in ensuring the safety of the

village. Mobile communications had been difficult throughout the exercise and BRG are in talks with the Ofcom Resilience Team regarding the withdrawal of the analogue telephone system and looking at alternatives. The mobile network cannot be depended on during stormy weather and power cuts. LD would also speak to Andrew Bowie MSP regarding the effect of power outages on communications. Currently, the only analogue phone in the Victoria Halls is linked to the lift. BL suggested satellite telephones, although this would be expensive. BRG is also reviewing their insurance which is due for renewal. Six new volunteer members had received induction training. JB reported that SEPA were aware that a flood warning at 11.25pm was not ideal, but it had been a difficult decision as the river Dee was rising due to snow melt, while the Muick and Gairn were not affected in the same way. Ron Drever said thanks were very much due to the Fire & Rescue Service who were superb on the evening.

CRG - Crathie Resilience Group

Nothing to report.

Roads and Paths

KA and RF had been in discussion with Red On Group regarding a proposed gravel bike event to be held in Ballater in the summer 2024. It was suggested that 2025 would be a better timescale. The organisers were anticipating attendance of 2,500 people. While it is good for the local economy to encourage diverse visitor experiences, RF pointed out that this must also be balanced against the demands of locals for peace and quiet. Richard Watts suggested that a more realistic figure for attendance would be around 500. He pointed out that gravel bike racing is the fastest growing sport in cycling in Europe. It has a low impact on the environment and should usually mean very few road closures, so less disruption for the local community. He also suggested that most such events would start advertising at least 8 months before the proposed event. He also mentioned that Thrive (the September bike event which has been held previously in the village) was looking at introducing a gravel racing day at the request of some of the bike manufacturers attending the event. This might prove to be a good way to test drive the potential for a larger gravel riding event.

9 Crathie issues

Nothing to report.

10 Other Reports

Aberdeenshire Council

CSB had submitted a report to the BCCC. As recently reported in the Press and Journal, the Council is setting up its budget for next year. The Council must find savings of £67 million, which has led COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) to seek a meeting with the Scottish Government, which is pushing local authorities into financial risk by cutting the cash available to local government while still insisting that public services must be maintained.

CGB also reiterated the challenges facing councils to create a budget which still delivers essential services. She also highlighted a visit from the Director of a charity,

Almost a Pavement Away, which offers hospitality training to individuals facing homelessness for whatever reason, then finding jobs for them within hospitality businesses and mentoring individuals and businesses going forward. He will be giving a talk at the Fife Arms in Braemar on 21st February at 3pm and would welcome anyone interested.

CNPA - Cairngorm National Park Authority

CGB had been in talks to find ways to increase affordable housing in the CNPA, although this also must be supported with sufficient infrastructure such as ambulances, surgeries and schools. **PG** reported that they had been speaking with developers about potentially offering a greater part of any development to people already living and working in the area, although they must be careful not to give undue assistance to any one group. **EK** and **JB** reported that Scotia had been happy to take that on board during their planning talks for H1. **PG** also reported discussions on introducing a bye-law to the CNPA to limit the setting of fires by wild campers. This would also potentially affect moor burning.

<https://cairngorms.co.uk/working-together/authority/about/corporate-plans/fires/>

PG will send is the link for consultation.

CAP - Community Action Plan

BL reported that he has been looking into a Car Share Club for the village. A survey will be launched shortly on the community page to establish if there would be sufficient interest. **BL** had also received a complaint about early morning noise from the Bus Garage on Pannanich Road. He had spoken with Stagecoach and had been assured that they would try to limit the noise, but the buses had to be left to run for checks to be made before going on the road. **BB** raised the issue of the reversing alarms being used in the early morning. **EK** would forward an e-mail to **BL** that she had sent to Stagecoach outlining breaches of planning regulations over 2 years ago.

BRD - Ballater (RD) Limited

Ray Riddoch has taken over as Chair of BRD. **PD** queried BRD noticeboard charges and insurance charges for notice board. **RF** will investigate this.

BCE - Ballater Community Enterprise

BL is to be a new director of BCE.

Halls

BB reported that Halls have been busy.

CAN - Climate Action Now

SP sent in a report from CAN. Community awareness - There is an Eagle article being prepared on tool sharing and repair.

Litter picking - next event 17/02.

Recycling - pill boxes can be recycled at the Hub.

Squirrel bridge - BRD in principle support one crossing - liability/insurance issues being worked on.

CAN support to the environment and energy portion of focus area 4 of the community action plan

Energy - Home energy efficiency, Eagle article and online information packs being prepared.

Allotments and composting - on going.

Other

Weston Main, Vice President of Ballater Golf Club was welcomed to BCCC. He reported that a new caterer had been appointed. The Golf Club looked forward to working in tandem with FIG to deal with ongoing flood issues. There would be a meeting with SSEN regarding the electricity poles on the golf course crossing towards Glen Muick.

11 Correspondence

RF reported that there would be a meeting with Andrew Bowie MSP on 13th February. Abco had also written to ask that CC elections be moved to 19th September 2024, with the next meeting thereafter to be held by 11th October, which would mean before the usual 2nd Monday of the month. There would also be changes in the way that insurance was paid, as BCCC will now arrange and pay for insurance to be then refunded by Abco. **JB** encouraged as many people as possible to stand for the CC elections to ensure democracy in action.

12 Finance No change other than outstanding insurance.

13 AOCB

The meeting ended at 20.35

The next meeting will be held on 11th March 2024 at the Mike Sheridan Room, Station Square, Ballater at 19.00hours.