

BALLATER & CRATHIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL (B&CC)

www.ballaterandcrathiecommunitycouncil.com

Minutes of Meeting held 11th July in Mike Sheridan Room at 7pm

Present:	Apologies	Also present:
James Anderson - Chair (WJ)	Nadine Stuart	John Burrows (BRD-JB)
Jo Croll (JC) - Vice Chair	Iain Henderson	Cllr Sarah Brown (CSB)
William Braid (WB)	Gareth Johnston	Cllr Geva Blackett (CGB)
John Bannerman (JB)		Linda Drever (LD) - BRG
Ellie Kinghorn (EK)		Ewan Venters (EV) - CEO of Art Farm (Hauser & Wirth)
Tom Flynn (TF)		Scott Peacock (SP) - CAN
Richard Frimston (RF)- Secretary		Alistair Cassie
Janet Feeney (JF)		
Lewis Macdonald (LMD)		

- 1 **Welcome**
- 2 **Emergency services** - no report

WJ welcomed Ewan Venters, Chief Executive of Artfarm Group Limited, to address BCCC.

EV apologised for the lack of communication and consultation with the BCCC and wider community regarding plans for properties in Ballater & Crathie. Stephen Cowie, owner of Craigard Nursing Home, had made it clear to EV that Craigard House was not viable going forward as a nursing home, requiring significant investment to ensure compliance with the Care Commission. There had been considerable public and private pressure regarding standards at the Home over several years. According to Mr Cowie, it would be extremely unlikely that the Care Inspectorate would agree to the re-registration of Craigard as a care home without in effect re-building the property.

The Fife requires around 120 to 140 staff, currently employing approximately half that amount from the local area. To attract staff from elsewhere in the UK and further afield, it was essential to be able to offer attractive accommodation.

Acquiring small one- or two-bedroom properties in the area is not viable and reduces housing stock available for locals. A property such as Craigard House would enable Artfarm to create approximately 16 staff bedrooms along with social facilities for tenants. There would be 14 parking spaces and Artfarm had invested in a minibus to provide staff transport. Artfarm has also acquired the Gordon Tearooms in Braemar with the intention of continuing to trade as a tearoom. The former Rothesay Rooms had been acquired in Ballater and would open as a fish restaurant and fish-monger later this year. **EV** then invited questions from BCCC.

Alistair Cassie questioned the parking facilities in the summer when the Royal Guard would be in residence, plus the further development of Old School Housing. **EV**

suggested that the 14 parking spaces would be sufficient due to younger staff preferring not to run vehicles and the provision of transport to the hotel by Artfarm. **TF** requested confirmation that Craigard would only be bought by Art Farm should the planning consent for change of use be successful. **EV** confirmed that Craigard is still owned by Stephen Cowie, pending planning permission.

RF raised the issue of the condition of properties currently owned by Artfarm. Moorside on Braemar Road in Ballater and Schiehallion in Braemar both looked neglected. **EV** replied that there had been challenges to infrastructure and logistics due to covid. However, it is Artfarm's intention to maintain back of house operations, such as staff housing, to the same level as front of house at the Fife Arms. **JB** pointed out that currently properties do not reflect the standards of the hotel. **EV** indicated that teams within the hotel, living in the staff accommodations, were keen to set up gardens and allotments within the properties. **JB** asked if there was a budget set aside for this on a formal basis and **EV** said there was. **EV** assured BCCC that he was fully aware that changes needed to be made and that hospitality is a competitive employment sector so essential to ensure staff are happy both in the workspace and their personal living space. **EV** also aware that local community needed to be consulted on these matters.

TF asked about the planning application for staff accommodation to be built at Fife Braes. **EV** indicated that it was now felt that it was not beneficial either to residents or to the staff themselves to have accommodation directly adjacent to the workplace. Artfarm were now considering using the space for a training facility and meeting-rooms for staff.

RF asked about plans for the former Rothesay Rooms in Netherley Place. The restaurant would be to the left of the property and the fishmonger to the right of the property. The restaurant would be open Tuesday to Sunday and the retail shop Wednesday to Saturday. This should be of benefit to both visitors and residents. The average length of stay at Fife Arms was 2.7 days and visitors wanted to explore more than just the hotel, so providing alternative places to eat was essential. **LD** pointed out that there were already two businesses delivering fish to the village. **EV** said that Artfarm had been in contact with both businesses, and it was not their intention to drive other firms out of business. The combination of retail and restaurant should ensure 0% wastage as the kitchens would create fish pies etc for retail/freezer.

WJ thanked **EV** who assured BCCC he would be happy to return and answer any further concerns.

3 Approval of June minutes.

4 Matters arising

JF asked about way forward for CAP, due for renewal in 2023. **WJ** said there would be a series of meetings to review current CAP, verify what had been achieved and look at what needs to be done in future for the community. Also in discussion regarding Place Plans in relation to CAP.

5 Action Tracker Update

CSB has been told that the plans for the improved road crossing at Bridge Street - Station Square should be forthcoming (no69). **CGB** is meeting with Head of Roads to discuss traffic safety at Cambus o'May (no96) and will meet with resident of Cutaway Cottage to discuss speed and local buses using their drive as a bus stop. **CGB** suggested that No 104 and No 108 should be combined as the work on the Crathie School carpark and verges would automatically trigger a speed review. **CSB** had been told that bins were still serviceable but **JC** queried this and **CSB** will photograph bins and go back to council. Nos 105 and 106 are all in hand re signage. Regarding No 95, **CGB** will meet with **JC** and Head of Roads to discuss the lack of yellow lines outside Co-op - during the Duck Festival, the service bus had been blocked for 45 minutes due to parking on yellow lines. The position of the bus shelter (no 6) will also be raised. **TF** pointed out that parking restrictions are not being enforced by issue of parking tickets by police. The rubble had been cleared at the mast at Crathie, but **JF** reported that the verges were still uneven, and needed to be swept and seeded with grass. **CSB** would follow this up. **CGB** to request update on painting of Old Royal Station from Janelle Clark.

6 Sub-committee Reports

FIG

JB reported that Scottish Flood Forum had returned to Ballater and had completed flood reports on over 30 properties. FIG would now try to follow-up on the reports to find out how many property owners were able to follow the recommendations for property protection. BCCC would meet with Head of Infrastructure services to update him on option 3A. The RPS report on Dooker corner should be ready by end of September, with the possibility of a community meeting in the autumn, although Aberdeenshire Council Flood Team were not willing to attend any such public meeting. **TF** said meetings had taken place with groups in Braemar and Aboyne to get a collective response to flood/drought issues on Deeside. Contact had also been made with scientists from the James Hutton Institute (JHI) - catchment level hydrologists & modellers. In recent years, JHI has become increasingly involved in the response to drought. Dee catchment level action on upstream storage would in the view of JHI need to be preceded by a major study to map the upper reaches of the Dee Catchment and consider feasibility.

BRG & CRG

LD reported that a grant from Johnston Oil through BRD had been used for the purchase of display boards. Still awaiting word regarding the application for a grant from SSEN.

7 Crathie issues

The application for a noticeboard is being processed. There is a temporary board at the Information Centre. **JF** asked **CSB** to investigate the possibility of replacing the seat which had been removed at Crathie Kirk-yard.

8 Other Reports

BRD

JB-BRD reported that the Duck Festival had been extremely successful with £2,736 being raised on the tote alone. The event had been well attended and benefited from glorious weather and start of school holidays.

The second power tower has been installed and awaiting connection from SSE. The Green is much in use over the next few months.

BRD is looking at possibility of finding someone to employ to water plants in village centre. Awaiting benches and new sign-posting for walks. BRD is also looking at providing support for Busy Bees to improve continuity.

Also looking at linking up with other Paths Groups on Deeside to improve the reporting process for repairs and maintenance.

The issue of the toilets at Monaltrie Park was raised. This should feature in the new CAP so that the whole of Monaltrie Park might be reviewed. It was ridiculous that Aberdeenshire Council was not willing to take out liability insurance for the toilets so that they might open, but it was not possible for community to take ownership as things stood. **WJ** has been cutting the grass at Monaltrie Park, as Aberdeenshire Council has not been doing so.

Aberdeenshire Council

CSB suggested that BCCC might like to attend the Area Bus Forums which were being re-started to discuss commercial bus service requirements in the Mar Area.

CGB and **CSB** had attended Ballater Farmers Market to remind people to complete with Strategic Needs Assessment - this is still open for groups to complete until 12th August.

CGB will discuss her concerns with Head of Roads regarding the A939 once the new bridge opens when increased traffic will result in challenges when heavy vehicles start meeting on narrow sections without formalised passing places.

CGB has initiated talks with Braemar Butchers regarding her Xmas Food project. She is looking for extra freezer space so that Butchers might be able to process hinds donated by estates over a longer period and freeze products. She anticipates greater demand than ever before.

CNPA

No meetings in July but following concerns about food security and the National Park Plan (food production versus tree planting), there had been a meeting with James Withers of Scotland Food and Drink. For those interested, there is a report via <https://www.gov.scot/publications/short-life-food-security-and-supply-taskforce->

[report/](#). The current situation in Ukraine is worrying as they would normally produce food for 500 million people.

CGB also highlighted the Growing Living Greenspaces initiative at

https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/environment/greenspace/growing-living-greenspaces/?fbclid=IwAR3YFPXZdvKn0I2oS8mCC4UqPkQtpeOC8TIGWLFV5a_R_0XCDRyxsdg5k70 to encourage individuals to grow their own fruit & vegetables.

CGB has been nominated by Aberdeenshire Council to replace Peter Argyle as a CNPA member at the beginning of October. Should this nomination be approved, then **CGB** will resign as a directly elected member. However, the directly elected seats will not be up for re-election until March 2023.

Finally, there is a Scottish Government Land Reform meeting being held in Ballater - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/land-reform-in-a-net-zero-nation-public-meeting-ballater-tickets-382916342087>.

CAP

Under review.

Halls

WB reported that rates to use the Halls were under review.

CAN

SP said the most recent litter-pick had only 3 participants. Litter-picks are on the noticeboards and meet at the Hub between 2 and 4 pm every second Saturday and listed in Victoria Week brochure.

P6 and P7 from Ballater school had attended a litter pick at Monaltrie Park with success.

CSB would contact **SP** with all areas accepted by Aberdeenshire Council for wildflower planting. **TF** commented on how well road verges looked following wildflower planting on the Stonehaven turnoff east of Banchory.

TF and **SP** had attended a meeting looking at potential for geothermal development.

BRD-JB suggested looking at local development plan on CNPA to locate potential future housing sites as also potential geothermal development sites.

9 Planning Matters

EK will prepare lists of all planning applications to be posted on Ballater and Crathie noticeboards and on Facebook to ensure that the community is made aware of all applications.

JB suggested that **BCCC** should write to Ewan Venters of Artfarm to seek written assurances that a maintenance process would be in place for staff properties along with continued consultation with the community. It was noted that Artfarm's offer to consult was not necessarily confirmed by their previous actions.

10 Correspondence

Nothing to report.

11 Finance

Pat Downie had submitted the audited accounts.

12 AOCB

The meeting ended at 21.15

The next meeting is planned for Monday 12th September at 7pm in the Mike Sheridan Room.

Approved