

BALLATER & CRATHIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL (B&CC)

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Minutes of BCCC meeting, Village Meeting held at Michael Sheridan Room,
Ballater on Monday 14th July 2025

Present:	Apologies	Also present:
James Anderson - Chairman (WJ)	Cllr Geva Blackett	Ray Riddoch - BCT (RR)
John Bannerman - Vice Chair (JB)	Cllr Sarah Brown	Atholl Bowman
Richard Frimston - Secretary (RF)	Jo Croll	Jenna McLugash
William Braid (BB)	Simon Mearns	Martin Ellison
Jennifer Davidson (JD)	Ellie Kinghorn	Andrew Wright - Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, Area Commander & Local Senior Officer for Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire & Moray
Calum Halhead (CH)	Scott Peacock	
Linda Drever (LD)	Lewis Macdonald	
Kate Allum (KA)	Weston Main	
	Whit Romilly	

1 Welcome and apologies by WJ

2 Emergency Services Report

Following the house fire on Provost Craig Road, Andrew Wright from Scottish Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS) attended the BCCC meeting to respond to community questions & concerns. **JB** asked if there had been a debrief of the event and any lessons learned. Andrew Wright (**AW**) explained that Ballater Fire station was part of a strategic cluster including Braemar, Strathdon and Balmoral, which would always try to ensure that at least one station was available for the area. However, on the day in question, Ballater, due to its wildfire specialisation unit, was attending a wildfire in Moray. There was still an appliance available within the area at this point.

Unfortunately, shortly before the fire call came in, this appliance became unavailable due to personnel booking off. Approximately 30 minutes after the fire call a further 2 appliances in the area became available due to personnel booking back on. These appliances were then assigned and mobilised to the incident. When there is a lack of cover in the area due to availability then SFRS would look to transfer an appliance into the area from elsewhere, including Aberdeen city, to ensure minimum coverage. In the event, Tomintoul was first on the scene with Stonehaven, Braemar and Balmoral also arriving. **KA** asked if there were any plans to rethink the system going forward, as increased wildfires would suggest that Ballater would be most likely to be called out more frequently. **AW** replied that both historical and current data is being reviewed

to ensure that the right resources are in the right place – not only for wildfires, but also electric battery fires. Currently, if the ATV is called out on a wildfire, then the fire engine will also follow, but this may be reviewed in future. SFRS is also improving the system for retained firefighters to log their availability. The appliances are useless without personnel and vice versa. **WJ** pointed out that part of the problem 2 weeks ago had been a result of one station having a crew, but no driver, and the other station having a driver, but no crew and asked if joint mobilisation of stations might be a way forward. **AW** confirmed that this was being looked at. It is important to understand that on-call availability of personnel varies daily and even hourly, as it did in this case. While Ballater has had retained volunteers for many years, **AW** reported that SFRS is looking at ways to attract more volunteers, possibly by offering different contracts with reduced stipulated hours, as currently 120 hours a week is demanding. Ballater is fortunate in that full-time permanent firefighters stationed in Aberdeen also offer hours as retained firefighters in Ballater. To man each fire appliance on each call requires a minimum of 4 – a driver, a supervisory officer (OIC) and two others. **AW** pointed out that the current fleet in the local area is aged, but sadly not in line for replacement. It is his understanding that, nationally, the Fire Service should renew 20 fire appliances each year. In the last year, only 5 were replaced. A Class 1 engine would cost in the region of £350,000. SFRS is reviewing the types of appliances in different locations where the possibility of 2 smaller appliances may be more efficient. The service is also reviewing the training undertaken by each station to ensure that personnel meet the risks of each area. **AW** said that the risk profile in this area is relatively low, which is good news, but makes it more difficult to argue for investment in new facilities and appliances. **RF** asked if there was any way in which BCCC could support SFRS in ensuring that the area received adequate services. **JD** asked about the potential closure of any fire stations. **AW** told BCCC that currently within the options for consideration in the Service Delivery Review none effect the area. This means that the current station footprint, staffing and resources within Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray will remain unchanged at the moment. This may be reviewed again in future. SFRS is approaching the government this year with a request for a budget over 3 years rather than 1 year, as this would allow for better long-term planning and allocation of resources. **AW** confirmed that he would be happy to write a report for The Eagle about SFRS regarding concerns raised at this meeting and would also be happy to return at a later stage to answer any other concerns about SFRS's response to, for example, flooding. It was also suggested that any report in The Eagle should also touch on recruitment of local firefighters. **WJ** asked if SFRS would welcome a local inquiry into the incident and **AW** assured him that this would be possible. Jenna Maclugash asked if SFRS had any conversation with local firefighters who were currently facing questions in the community about the event. **AW** said that this had not yet taken place. **RF** suggested that BCCC should meet with local councillors and

CNPA to discuss strategies to ensure local fire risks are being addressed. **AW** said he had welcomed the invitation from BCCC to attend the meeting.

3 Approval of Minutes of June 2025 meeting and AGM.

4 Conflicts of interest would be declared as and when they arose during the meeting.

5 Action Tracker

There was still no news regarding the main funding for the cinder path. There is however a letter of agreement with Abco regarding future maintenance of the path. The recycling boxes for the blister packs were in place in the Hub & surgery with the main kerbside recycling box in the back car park at the Station, therefore no 142 could be removed.

6 Sub-committee reports

Housing and Planning

A Planning

Nothing to report.

B H1

Nothing to report.

Flooding Issues Group (FIG)

JB reported that FIG would be meeting CBEC next week to finalise the mathematical model report and agree on the next steps which will involve selecting which option/options should be initially modelled. A budget will need to be established and related funding secured. John Morrison reported that 5 local contractors had visited the Scottish Flood Forum stand regarding the possibility of certification to undertake flood resilience work & repair. However, some of the courses required to gain certification would cost more than £3,000.

Ballater Resilience Group

LD reported that they are nearing a solution to storage of gas canisters to provide hot water during emergencies.

Following the fire in the village, Inspector Masson had authorised the opening of the Victoria Hall where the Resilience Group looked after 10 evacuees. Due to several new police personnel attending the emergency there was an element of confusion and possibly lack of awareness over access to the halls. As the Victoria Hall was on the same electricity phase as the houses on fire, this meant the kitchen was without electricity, although it was then discovered that the Albert Hall still had power, being on a different phase. Bottled water was also required as the water turned brown due to the Fire Service using the water. The response from Abco Resilience Office was very slow and disappointing. They were informed at 8pm that emergency accommodation would be required. Abco responded that nothing was available and suggested that householders should contact their respective insurance companies. There will be a report into Abco's lack of response to the event. Cllr Geva Blackett was in contact with **LD** the following day and had been very helpful. There had also

been a lack of communication regarding the structural safety of the buildings, with information only coming through on the Tuesday following the fire. **RF** suggested that a meeting with local councillors and CNPA should raise these concerns.

LD also thanked Ade Scripps for his support on the evening.

JB asked that thanks to Linda Drever and the Resilience Group as well as Hall Trustees should be minuted.

Crathie Resilience Group

Nothing to report.

Economy

RF was feeling more optimistic about the Visitor Centre in the Royal Station following meetings he & Kate Allum had with Tim Steven, the new Marr Area manager.

Roads & Paths

Nothing to report.

7 Crathie Issues

CH had received several reports of concerns about overseas drivers coming out of Balmoral car park and junction on the wrong side of the road. **KA** said that a recent report suggested that there had been 37 fatalities in Scotland in the first six months of the year due to this - and the only response seems to be improved signage. To be raised with Abco and Balmoral Estate.

8 Finance

Nothing to report.

9 Correspondence

WJ had a note from David Cobban who is concerned about the speed of vehicles on the Tullich Straight, especially for residents emerging from their driveways on to the main carriageway. **BB** had received a note from Cllr Sarah Brown to confirm that weed killing on pavements would be undertaken in villages, but primarily on main roads, within current budgetary constraints.

10 Other reports

Abco

Nothing to report.

Cairngorm National Park Authority

Nothing to report.

Community Action Plan

RF confirmed that Dan Harris from CNPA would attend the September BCCC meeting to discuss the Local Development Plan and advise on how community councils could influence the LDP.

Ballater (Royal Deeside) Ltd - Ballater Community Trust

RR reported that the Trust had contributed to the Hardship Fund, Tennis Camp, and the upgrade of the chain fence at the war memorial, among other things. **KA** reported that the Trust would pay for the work to be done on trees identified by Abco as requiring removal or treatment.

Ballater Community Enterprise

RR said the caravan park continued to be very busy with excellent feedback, particularly regarding the online booking system. He also acknowledged all the hard work of the staff in looking after the park and visitors.

Halls

BB reported that a grant from the Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) had been received to install an air-source heat pump and solar panels at the Albert Hall.

Ballater Golf Club

The Bingo Night had raised £1010 for the Hub, bringing a total of £5410 being raised for local 'Good causes' since February. A fundraising event on 12th September would be held for Ballater GC and A Bear Named Buttony. Golfers who wish to submit a team of 4 can contact Bill Yule, Professional at Ballater GC. Ballater GC membership overwhelmingly voted to pursue additional revenue streams through a bike storage facility in conjunction with the Community Trust and installation of 10 motorhome pitches for which a planning application would soon be submitted.

Ballater School

Nothing to report.

Climate Action Now

Nothing to report

11 AOCB

KA thanked **WJ** for assistance in installation of the log cabin for a second-hand book stall which has resulted in increased sales. **WJ** confirmed it will be moved for Games Week. **KA** confirmed that Nestrans & AECOM are looking at all aspects of transport problems before coming back to the BCCC. **KA** was also concerned about the Orienteering Event at the end of July, especially regarding parking on registration day, 26th July. **KA** will continue to press for further information. **RF** reported that the Halls has acquired ownership of the Phone Box next to the Albert Hall, minus the telephone. **JD** was concerned about the overgrown verges at the cycle path at Eastfield as it restricted visibility for traffic coming round the corner to the possibility of pedestrians/cyclists crossing the main road on the route.

The meeting concluded at 20.30

The Next meeting will be held on 8th September at 19.00 to 21.00 hours in the Mike Sheridan Room, Ballater.