

BALLATER & CRATHIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL (B&CC)

www.ballaterandcrathiecommunitycouncil.com

Minutes of a Meeting held 13th December 2021 in Michael Sheridan Room at 7pm

Present:	Apologies	Also present:
James Anderson - Chair (WJ)	Geva Blackett (CGB)	Cllr Paul Gibb (CPG)
Jo Croll (JC) - Vice Chair	John Burrows (BRD-JB)	Cllr Peter Argyle (CPA)
Richard Frimston (RF) - Secretary	Linda Drever	Scott Peacock - CAN (SP)
William Braid (WB)	Lewis Macdonald	Ron Drever (RD)
Pat Downie (PD) - Treasurer	Ellie Kinghorn	Helen Miskelly - resident
John Bannerman (JB)		
Tom Flynn (TF)		
Nadine Stuart (NS)		
Gareth Johnstone (GJ)		

1 Welcome

2 **Emergency Services** no crime reported. Public urged to ensure cars are road-worthy for winter weather.

3 Approval of Minutes

Minutes of November meeting were approved.

4 Matters arising from previous meeting.

Nothing

5 Action Tracker Update

CPA to follow up on position of signage on Glen Muick road. **RF** to speak with **CGB** regarding setting up a whatsapp group for road closures in conjunction with CNPA. **CPA** will follow up tree trimming on Glen Muick road. **RF** to ask **CGB** on update for painting of Royal Station.

6 Reports

BRD

BRD-JB sent in a report to BCCC on the recent BRD AGM.

BCE

Maintenance work now underway following a successful season attracting many visitors to the village. The caravan park was able to assist in the aftermath of Storm Arwen with their stock of gas canisters.

Aberdeenshire Council

CPG has spoken with Shona Horne from SSEN who will deal with applications to the Community Resilience Fund held by SSEN. All those who lost electric power will receive a cheque in due course automatically from SSEN, but should submit claims for

hotel and other expenses incurred to SSEN. It should be noted that there will be no need for any third-party to assist in making claims and members of the public should be wary of any scams.

CPA reported that Storm Arwen had been a difficult period for the council, due to the failure of communications and the lack of full information from SSEN regarding the number of properties affected and when the power was likely to be restored. Due to the worsening covid situation, all council meetings will return to being conducted remotely. He also reported that the Scottish Government would release the settlement figures for councils in the next few days. It is unlikely that there will be any increases and Aberdeenshire Council should be able to release its budget and any implications that might have on Council Tax by 14th February 2022.

CGB had sent a report outlining her consultation with MP Andrew Bowie regarding the recent storm event, in particular local concerns regarding the proposed plans by BT to make the telephone system digital, thereby making analogue phones redundant. There had been no means of communication for many communities during the blackout. The proposed total dependency on electricity for vehicles and heating systems in council housing and properties needs to be looked at in relation to the resilience of the system to provide power.

Resilience Group

RD read a report submitted by Linda Drever to BCCC. Storm Arwen had been the first major event since Storm Frank in 2015. Communications had been a major issue with only one analogue line in the Halls plus the public telephone box. The role of the Resilience Group is to set up a refuge in the Halls and Ballater was the first Refuge centre ready & operational in the aftermath of Storm Arwen in Aberdeenshire. **WJ** asked how big an area is covered by the Resilience Group. **JC** and **RD** made clear that nobody was turned away and visitors and residents were able to take refuge, obtain hot water and food, regardless of where they were from. However, it is important to note that the Resilience Group's brief is to prepare the halls as a rest/refuge centre in the event of an emergency. Resilience volunteers will then provide assistance to Aberdeenshire Council/Emergency Services as & where instructed.

During the Saturday morning the limited number of volunteers carried out house visits within the village of Ballater.

It would have been difficult to contact Crathie & other outlying Hamlets within the B&CCC area, given road conditions and lack of mobile/internet communications on Saturday morning. The Resilience Group is required to follow the rules of GDPR in terms of gathering information about those in need of assistance during events and maintaining a 'watch list' would greatly expand the role of the Group. Guidance is currently being sought from Information Commissioner's Office on how best to proceed.

RD reported that it was gratifying how many people came into the Halls to highlight any concerns they may have had for neighbours etc. **JC** suggested that support from

BCCC should be offered to Mike Forbes and Geoff Feeney to set up a Resilience Group in Crathie so that there should be a similar centre for the community to gather for support during any major events. **CPG** reported that Janelle Clark intended to bring together a meeting of Community Councils to create a response to issues regarding the SSEN, Digital Phones, GDPR and any other matters arising from recent experiences. **RD** said that it had been frustrating not to have a local supply of gas and diesel available, but this was being investigated.

The BCCC gave sincere and heartfelt thanks to Linda Drever for all her hard work under very difficult circumstances over a long period of time.

Thanks should also be given to the Auld Kirk, who provided hot meals throughout, along with other community volunteers.

JC reported that the Resilience Group would like to make an applications to the SSEN Resilience Fund and received agreement that the application should be through BCCC. A list is currently being compiled on equipment needed eg replacement of batteries for emergency lighting, etc.

There had been frustration that when the generator arrived on Saturday evening, it did not have the correct connections for the Hall, especially as the external connections had been installed under SSE advice. Until that time, the Halls had been given the use of the generator being used for the Winter Festival Carousel.

JC said it was important to get the message across to the community that if a major event occurs and usual communication networks are down, then the Halls will be set up as a place for the exchange of information. An article will be submitted for the spring edition of the Eagle.

RF proposed that Resilience should form part of the usual agenda for the BCCC.

CNPA Nothing to report.

FIG

Scottish Flood Forum had visited Ballater on 10th December to give further information on Property Level Protection. A free property assessment had been offered and taken up by 32 households. The Scottish Flood Forum is a charity with Scottish government funding so there had been no manufacturers of flood protection equipment available. Scottish Flood Forum has experience of flood issues over the whole of Scotland and could be an important link to other communities suffering similar issues. Scottish Flood Forum suggests that sandbag deployment should be a last resort and that individual property protection should be a first line of defence. FloodRe is also keen to visit in the New Year.

TF will give a brief presentation in January or February, outlining the effects of climate change on the Dee Valley and the implications for upstream storage of water for both flood and drought. He had been greatly assisted in this work by **Paddy Wright** who has sadly passed away. Paddy was a great colleague to work with - very knowledgeable but also great fun.

RF thanked **CPA** for his efforts in obtaining funding into a report regarding modelling for any future flood defence work on the river.

WJ reported that **SSEN** were at work on riverbank to move the hydro pole in danger of being washed away.

CAP

RD had created a list of local groups and contacts for the provision of local community care, which would be available in the Hub.

Halls

Ade has had a very positive impact on the Halls, getting messages out to the community as to what is happening, both on noticeboards, websites and facebook pages. The Resilience Group were particularly grateful to **Ade** for his knowledge of the Halls in setting up the Refuge centre.

CAN

SP highlighted the work of an App - Toogood2go - free for consumers with a small charge for businesses, which allows a business to advertise on the app any goods which would be available to consumers if they were at their best before date. The Facebook page BallaterCAN2021 is growing, and **SP** urged the BCCC to have a look. Tree planting continues and many acorns were collected and planted.

Improvement Group Nothing to report.

Paths

BCCC to contact Forest Scotland to request better communications regarding planned footpath closures on Craig Coillich. The recently installed signage had been removed, damaged and in one case lost, with no alternative routes put in place.

Helen, a new resident, raised a question regarding the footpath beside the river. Until the report is received from Aberdeenshire Council regarding the feasibility of restoring a bund beside the river, thereby safeguarding a footpath, no work will be done to restore it.

7 Planning Matters Nothing to report

8 Correspondence Nothing.

9 Finance No change.

10 AOCB

WJ raised the issue of parking by local businesses in front of the Co-op. **GJ** will speak with the business.

TF reminded the BCCC of the importance of completing a response to the CPA Partnership Plan, both as a CC (which is given greater weight) and as individuals. The closing date is 17th December, but **CPA** advised that he would request an extension for the BCCC. The consultation covers initiatives in Nature, People and Place, the last covering such important areas as housing, roads, transport, and infrastructure. The aspirations are commendable, but it is uncertain how achievable. The BCCC will look at the CAP and meet to answer relevant areas on behalf of the community. **FIG** was concerned that **CNPA** offers an opportunity to view the entire catchment area, yet

there seemed to be little interest in looking at engineering solutions to potential flooding. **CPA** said it was important to do so, as the final Partnership Plan would be signed off by the Scottish Government.

JC would report no lights in Station Square or Monaltrie Road.

Helen (a resident and veterinary surgeon) raised the issue of dog fouling on the streets, pointing out that it is a crime. **WJ** asked **CPG** to contact the dog warden. Although there were numerous bins and plastic bags available, it was still a problem. Helen offered to write an article for the next issue of the Eagle highlighting the health issues for both dogs and the public if this continued. **JC** offered to put the article on the community Facebook page as well.

The meeting concluded at 20.50. The next meeting is scheduled for 10th January, 19.00 to 21.00 hours, probably via ZOOM.

Approved