

## BALLATER & CRATHIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL (B&CCC)

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Minutes of Meeting held at Michael Sheridan Room, Ballater on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 7.00pm

<b>Present:</b>	<b>Apologies</b>	<b>Also present:</b>
Jim Anderson - Chairman (WJ) Richard Frimston (RF) - Secretary Pat Downie (PD) - Treasurer Bill Braid (BB) Tom Flynn (TF) Simon Mearns (SM) Gareth Johnston (GJ) John Bannerman (JB) Jo Croll - Vice Chair (JC)	Cllr Geva Blackett John Burrows Ellie Kinghorn Lewis Macdonald	Cllr Sarah Brown (CSB) Paul Gibb (PG) - CNPA Murray Ferguson - CNPA Dougal Morgan (DM) Linda Drever (LD) Ian Henderson (IH) Scott Peacock - CAN (SP) Bruce Lawson (BL) Angus McNicol Murray Ferguson - CNPA Calum Halhead (CH) Michael Kitts (MK) Whit Romilly (WR) Atholl Bowman (AB) Lucile Verrot (LV)

### 1 Welcome

WJ welcomed all to BCCC meeting.

2 **Conflicts of interest.** WJ had helped on flood mitigation works on River Dee.

### 3 Emergency Services Report

No report received.

4 **November minutes were approved.** Minutes from Public Meeting on Flood Issues were also approved.

### 5 Matters arising from previous meeting.

### 6 Murray Ferguson - Director of Planning & Place, CNPA

Murray had been invited to give an overview of CNPA Planning & Place. CNPA has been in existence for nearly 20 years. He was pleased to note a synergy between the Local Community Action Plan and that of the CNPA. The Park Authority is an organisation, and the National Park is a geographical area - important to note that CNPA is not a landowner. The CNPA consists of a board of elected members - directly elected such as Paul Gibb, or appointed from local Councils, such as Cllr Geva Blackett plus some

Ministerial appointments. There is then a staff which provides the analysis and information for the board to make decisions. Core areas for the CNPA are to produce a National Park Partnership Plan every 5 years; run the Planning system for the area and act as an Outdoor Access Authority. The Partnership Plan seeks to ensure that People and Nature thrive together, covering people, nature and place. Visitor access and services are also core to CNPA.

With regard to planning, CNPA looks at creating a spatial plan for development over the entire Park eg allocation of areas suitable for housing as well as considering planning applications which might be larger or more contentious within the CNPA area. Usually only 5 or 6% of planning applications would be called in by CNPA, the remainder are dealt with by AbCo, both authorities considering the applications under the same conditions and requirements. CNPA seeks to manage the area for sustainable tourism and in fact the area is highly regarded in Europe as being successful on this front. The aim is to create an economy which provides well-being for both people and for businesses in harmony with the environment.

On the visitor side of things, Ranger services had been diminishing pre-Covid, but intense use of the countryside post-Covid has resulted in an increase in Ranger services throughout the area. There are now 14 employers of rangers within the area, coordinated by CNPA. Local communities are doing well in working with CNPA to maintain old footpaths and develop new networks. A major issue going forward is the risk of fires during hot and dry spells of weather. CNPA hopes to introduce consultation throughout the park to consider the introduction of by-laws to restrict wild camping and the setting of fires. An Integrated Fire Management Plan is being set up to ensure that fire services throughout the area have the correct equipment and contacts to fight widespread wildfires. CNPA also seeks to manage areas where there has been an increase in visitor numbers putting pressure on local services such as parking eg the Balmoral Cairns.

CNPA hopes to announce a new initiative later this year, Cairngorms 2030 which will have access to £46 million to spend on a range of nature, climate and community managed projects. **MF** invited questions from the BCCC. **SP** asked about the CNPA response to litter control and waste management. **MF** pointed out that this was part of AbCo's responsibility, but the Board had recently approved the setting up of a Litter Network to coordinate litter-picking groups to ensure they had the right equipment and training. Enforcement of anti-litter laws was important but a challenge. **AB** raised concerns about the CNPA publications being centred on the northern part of the Park Authority with little mention of Ballater or Braemar. **MF** noted it was important to get good geographic cover of stories and would feed that point back - ideas for stories were always welcome.

Whit Romilly suggested that CNPA needed to make improvements in communicating to people how they might comment on and contribute to action plans. **MF** agreed and also suggested that it was more difficult to engage communities on the policy development

part of planning than on specific planning projects. **TF** asked about staffing levels in the CNPA office in Ballater. **MF** replied that it had initially been the office for planning for the whole Park, but this had not proved feasible and it had moved more than 5 years ago to Grantown. The office remains in use by CNPA staff, by RSPB and as a Hub for Marr Area Partnership. **TF** was also concerned at the expansion of second homes and AirBnB properties in the village and asked if CNPA had any plans to keep these properties as affordable as possible. **MF** pointed out that this is being dealt with in part by the Licensing Scheme introduced by local authorities. Councils have also been given the power to create Short Term Let Control Areas, which is happening in Badenoch & Strathspey. **SM** asked how local groups might have access to funds from Cairngorm 2030. **MF** would be happy to return to BCCC to further explain. A summary of the Cairngorms 2030 programme is also available on CNPA website. **WJ** thanked Murray Ferguson for his time - **MF** stayed for rest of meeting to gain an understanding of local concerns.

## **7 Action Tracker Update**

**CSB** will seek an update on bus stop relocation (no 6). Tenders are being sought for the road crossing on Bridge Street with work scheduled for early 2024 (no 69). **JC** had spoken to AbCo as a client regarding the maintenance of the Royal Station, but to avoid a conflict of interest requested **CSB** to speak on behalf of BCCC regarding this matter (no90). The work on the Invercauld underpass to be removed from the Action Tracker. Meetings were continuing between BCCC, AbCo and Balmoral Estates (no 124). Issues regarding banking and ATMs in the village were worsening. Royal Bank of Scotland would be withdrawing their weekly van visiting the village. The ATM had run out of money on several occasions and there had been mechanical issues with it. **RF** would continue with Kate Allum to pursue responses from Bank of Scotland and Link. **PD** reported that she had gone to the Banchory branch of Bank of Scotland and had to wait for over an hour to see a teller. There were also queues at the ATM. **AB** suggested that Link should have a digital audit trail for the ATM by this time, showing when it ran out of funds or was out of order. **RF** said it was still difficult to find a contact with Link. **RF** had spoken to Balmoral Estate about erosion on the Seven Bridges Walk at Red Braes and Balmoral would look at signage and fencing (no 128). Balmoral had informed **IH** that AbCo had repaired the War Memorial at Crathie in the past. He would seek answers from AbCo and the War Graves Commission. (no 129)

## **8 Sub-committee Reports**

### Housing & Planning

- a) No contentious applications.
- b) **GJ** and **DM** had attended a meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> November with Scotia and put forward the questions raised at the previous BCCC meeting. **GJ** would consult Games Committee as Scotia had indicated that their development would encroach on Monaltrie Park. The 3-D visualisation should be available in January. Invercauld Estate had been positive towards the suggestion of

business units, but this would depend on success of housing development. **JC** asked Murray Ferguson to confirm that BCCC should contact Gavin Marr, CNPA Strategic Housing Planning Director, to gain guidance on what BCCC's role and responsibilities should be during the planning process. He suggested that BCCC should request to speak at any planning meeting and that it might be appropriate for the meeting to be held locally in Ballater rather than over in Grantown. **JB** asked how strict the requirement would be for 45% of the development to be affordable housing. Murray Ferguson pointed out that the developer would have to make compelling arguments for any reduction in that percentage. **PD** asked if the entrance point remained Craigview Road. This would be the case, with the suggestion that moving the Deeside Way would result in better protection against potential flooding for existing houses. **JB** asked when the Statement of Community Benefit from the developer and Impact Assessment from AbCo would be available. This would be at the time of the planning application, currently scheduled for February.

#### FIG -Flooding Information Group

**RF** thanked all those who attended the Public Flood Issues meeting in November. It had been very positive. Thanks to Paul Gibb and Sandy Bremner, Lucile Verrot and **RF** had met with CNPA, and it was good to see that water management was a key issue. **JB** had met with Caravan Park and Fire & Rescue along with **LV**, who had been helpful in assisting with questions which both needed to ask SEPA regarding flood warnings. Enthusiasm for Property Level Protection had been increasing - residents on Anderson Road, for example, were working together on flood defences. Working together, there had been a possibility for discounts on flood gates. Option 3A remained a stalemate, but people now realise they need to convince politicians that there needs to be an alternative.

The Estates and 15 BRD FACT volunteers had been amazing in filling the Hesco boxes which should hopefully reduce the risk of water flowing down the 4<sup>th</sup> fairway into the caravan park and down Anderson Road. **TF** said the public meeting had resulted in volunteers coming forward as well as a community effort in writing to MPs about the issue. It is planned to engage a hydrology company to come up with a range of modelled and costed designs to deal with flooding issues, which can be put to the community.

Richard Bush had been in discussion with AbCo about the Royal Bridge prior to the Aboyne Bridge concerns. While more work is probably needed, over £100,000 had already been spent on the Royal Bridge repairing two of the piers.

Bruce Lawson thanked Richard Frimston for chairing the Public Meeting.

#### BRG - Ballater Resilience Group

**LD** reported that the Halls and AbCo had signed a Memorandum of Understanding, but discussion is still ongoing with BRG. There are still over 300 properties to register

regarding ownership and residence in the event of flooding. The survey has highlighted how many second homes there are in the village. Tarland and Torphins had been in touch to discuss setting up their own Resilience Groups.

#### CRG - Crathie Resilience Group

Nothing to report.

#### Roads and Paths

**SM** would create a map of the main walking routes to the school in consultation with parents. Ken Gibson hoped to have a decision on funding for the Cinder Path from the Ian Finlay fund by January. Bruce Lawson asked about the possibility of an off-road footpath along the Long Straight on South Deeside Road on Seven Bridges Route. **PD** had been asked to highlight the dangers of parking on the Braemar road just above Orka, both for children and parents crossing the road and for cars entered and leaving the village. **JC** had witnessed an individual falling on to the road in front of Strachans on Golf Road due to a faulty kerbstone. She had reported this to AbCo, only to be informed that this was deemed a low priority defect. **JC** will send the report reference number to **RF** to insert on Action Tracker and **CSB** will follow up.

#### **9 Crathie issues**

Nothing to report.

#### **10 Other Reports**

##### Aberdeenshire Council

A report had been received from **CSB**.

Pavement Parking Prohibition comes into effect today and there will be no exemptions. AbCo had looked at Sir Patrick Geddes Way, but deemed it wide enough for cars to park on the road and still permit access for emergency vehicles. **CSB** has requested an update from Police Scotland on speed monitoring in the village. **SM** will act as contact for BCCC when AbCo come to examine issue of mismatched dropped kerbs. **JC** also pointed out that dropped kerbs on Golf Road and Victoria Road tended to be where the roads flooded making it impossible for wheelchairs, prams etc to pass.

##### CNPA - Cairngorm National Park Authority

Paul Gibb urged any members of the community to contact him with any CNPA concerns.

##### CAP - Community Action Plan

There is a lot going on. Still waiting for a decision on BBA continuing to lead on the economy section of plan. **MK** summarised the work to date on assisted care in the community with John Burrows. They had been looking at four main areas: defining well-being, both physical and mental; sharing and linking of data and impact of GDPR; coordinating how to deal with ensuring the well-being of the community and finally how to deliver care, both in terms of health and social care and community care. **LD** suggested an article in the Eagle and **JC** suggested on BCCC Facebook page.

##### BRD - Ballater (Royal Deeside) Limited

**RF** reported that BRD's AGM would be on 13th December. They had been very supportive of the Hardship Fund. **JC** reported that 25 households had applied for the Christmas Parcels and they had received generous donations from local businesses and the estates.

#### BCE - Ballater Community Enterprise

The Caravan Park is closed.

#### Halls

**BB** reported that AGM will be the end of January. Dr Glass and Ed Bushnell will be standing down as trustees.

#### CAN - Climate Action Now

**SP** reported on bulb planting along with Horticultural Society.

#### **11 Correspondence**

**GJ** asked about gritting priorities as during the recent cold spell, the route to the school via Station Square and Monaltrie Crescent had been very dangerous and ungritted. He felt that access to school should be a priority. He was also concerned that the late opening of the school had been sent by e-mail at 11.15pm the previous evening. **WJ** also asked about the gritting of the A939, which appears to be gritted from Donside but not from Deeside. **CSB** said that gritting links can be put on Facebook or viewed on My Aberdeenshire and it is possible to see where gritters are working.

**12 Finance** No change

#### **13 AOCB**

**PD** had received complaints about lack of gritting in front of Halls. **BB** was investigating potential gritters. **WJ** had been contacted about a battery train. **BL** had attended a recent Bus Forum via Zoom, hosted by AbCo and Stagecoach. Reliability and maintenance of the fleet remain issues. The Braemar service is not necessarily integrated with the Ballater service to Aberdeen, so that when the Braemar service was running late, the Ballater to Aberdeen service did not wait until it arrived. Also the electronic timetable information should not be trusted. It works based on the buses using mobile phone signals to give their location. However, mobile phone signals in Banchory are poor, with the result that the system believes the buses are running 20 minutes later than they are in fact.

On behalf of AbCo, **CSB** presented Pat Downie with a Certificate of Community Council Service Award for over 20 years of service.

**The meeting ended at 21.00**

**The next meeting will be held on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at the Mike Sheridan Room,  
Station Square, Ballater at 19.00hours.**