

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

[www.ballaterandcrathiecommunitycouncil.com](http://www.ballaterandcrathiecommunitycouncil.com)

Minutes of BCCC meeting held at Michael Sheridan Room, Ballater, Monday 9<sup>th</sup>  
December 2024 at 7pm

<b>Present:</b> James Anderson - Chairman (WJ) Richard Frimston - Secretary (RF) William Braid (BB) Kate Allum (KA) Simon Mearns (SM) Linda Drever (LD) Calum Halhead (CH) Jo Croll (JC) John Bannerman (JB) - vice chair Tom Flynn (TF) Lewis Macdonald (LMM) Scott Peacock (SP)	<b>Apologies</b> Cllr Geva Blackett Valerie Stoddart	<b>Also present:</b> Cllr Sarah Brown (CSB) Cllr Anouk Kloppert (CAK) Weston Main (WM) Paul Gibb - CNPA (PG) Sergeant Allan Masson - Police Scotland Ray Riddoch - Ballater Community Trust Edwin Third - River Dee Trust Whit Romilly Atholl Bowman Malcolm Croll Jennifer Davidson
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### 1 Welcome

**2 Emergency Services Report** Sergeant Masson reported a low level of crime in the area with good detection rates. He urged rural community to be vigilant as there had been cases of machinery stolen locally and transported to other areas. Towbar locks and trackers on equipment all help. A leaflet had been circulated to BCCC on staying safe in winter. The clearway on Distillery Brae had been installed. He had been in discussion with traffic police on how to best monitor this. He suggested that anyone spotting vehicles parked on the Brae should photograph the vehicle, showing its number plate as well as its location and e-mail this on Police Scotland website with time and date of infringement. It would be possible for the police to arrange for such vehicles to be towed away. **WJ** suggested that the Clearway should be advertised on the Ballater Community website.

### 3 Orienteering event proposed for 27<sup>th</sup> July to 1<sup>st</sup> August 2025

Nic Crossley, a representative of the Scottish Orienteering Association, addressed the meeting. She was concerned about obtaining parking in the village for the event as she had been informed that Monaltrie Park was no longer available due to development. **KA** suggested that she should contact Ken Regan of Aberdeenshire Council, with full information of what the event entailed. Abco would give information about numbers and prioritised sites. Based on **KA's** experience with Thrive, it would be essential to

provide information on signage, marshals, trade waste bins, public lavatories, potential damage to park (eg, wet weather contingency plans) and to acknowledge that Ballater Highland Games would be using the same area in the following 2 weeks. **LD** urged the Orienteering Association to keep in close contact with the Games Committee. **WJ** said that BCCC would be happy to support the Orienteering Association in their application for Monaltrie Park to be used for car parking as any parking in the village would be very unwelcome. It is anticipated that there would be around 800 participants in the event, which is aimed at families, including age groups from young children to senior citizens.

**4 Approval of November 2024 minutes. Also approval of minutes taken at November 2024 FIG update public meeting,** following the addition of 2 questions from the public.

**5 Conflicts of interest would be declared as and when.** **RF** had found Scottish Government guidance on conflict of interest which he would circulate to the group.

#### **6 Edwin Third from River Dee Trust on Save the Spring Project**

Edwin introduced himself to BCCC. He had been a River Operations Manager for over 30 years with prior experience in nature conservancy. He currently lives in Birkhall, born and brought up on Upper Deeside, with a strong stake in the local community. The Save the Spring Project is a 2-part programme to save the spring run of salmon, which are the most endangered salmon species, and to save the spring flows of the river. They are attempting to restore the natural progress of the river, reducing water temperatures and reducing the impact of flood and drought on the river. Out of 100 salmon which leave the river for the Atlantic, only 1 or 2 now return compared to much higher figures in the 1960s. One project involves removing smolts before they reach the sea and keeping them in saltwater until maturity before returning them to the river to lay eggs.

The Project is looking at the headwaters of the Dee, west of Aboyne, covering 1200 square kilometres. Research has shown that the riverbed is no longer as stable as it once was, resulting in greater amounts of debris flowing through in high waters. The headwaters are rising in temperature, with some parts of the Gairn rising to 27C. As the Atlantic Salmon is a cold-water fish, this is disastrous for their survival. The reduction in winter snowpacks also means that there is a reduction in Spring flows, so we have drought levels earlier and longer.

To date, the trust has planted nearly half a million trees, created 200km of buffer strips, built 417 large wood structures to push the river out into its flood plain and to reduce the flow of the river in high water events. Streams have been re-wiggled (eg where they had been previously straightened as drainage channels), and wetlands have been created.

The planting of native trees has created shade on the river, thereby reducing water temperature as well as creating a roughening of the flood plain. Such woodland also increases bank stability and biodiversity.

Leaky dams have been created to slow the flow; these are relatively simple to create with the help of volunteers and hand tools, rather than heavy engineering.

When the Cattie Burn had been straightened to act as a drain, it had resulted in blocking and required it to be maintained. It has now been rewiggled. Similarly, the Aultonrea Burn resulted in all gravel being washed out through fast flow, so no gravel beds for salmon to lay eggs.

There is a 20-year programme going forward. A full catchment audit will be undertaken examining the flow of the river down to Aboyne. This baseline audit will be useful to a number of groups involved in working on the River, including SEPA, Scottish Water, flood modellers, Salmon Trust etc. This is taking a whole catchment approach.

Edwin pointed out that reduced numbers of Fresh Water Pearl Mussels, eels and salmon were all early indicators of the ill health of the river and the need to act. He believes that the Dee Fisheries Board has a proven track record of cost-effective delivery of solutions.

**CAK** asked if the leaky dams were like beaver dams. Edwin replied that they operated in a similar way, but that beaver introduction could be contentious in some areas.

Malcolm Croll asked if slowing the flow might not result in higher water temperatures.

Edwin admitted that might be a result, hence the need to provide shading with trees.

Whit Romilly asked if the fish gauge at Glen Muick could be set to show any increase or decrease in number of salmon. This would require some financial input. Edwin

reported that there had been 65 salmon and 80 sea trout through the Glen Muick ladder compared to only 11 salmon in 2023. **SM** asked if finance was the biggest drawback in completing the project. Edwin agreed that the 2 biggest drawbacks were financial backing and ensuring riparian cooperation along the length of the river.

**SP** asked if there was any check made on the survival rate of trees planted. Edwin replied that a team of two surveyed trees, replanting where necessary. The smaller enclosures were the most difficult to maintain, especially if deer numbers were high.

They were looking at developing small teams of volunteers to look after specific sections of the tree-planting. Ray Riddoch asked how much the entire project would cost.

Edwin replied that a Danish river, seeking to restore its reputation as a top salmon river, spent over 50 million euros to do so.

As the River Dee is a pilot project, Edwin believes this might be key to unlocking funding.

## **7 Action Tracker**

While there are concerns about the location of parking for tourist coaches, it was agreed that this should not put a stop to going forward with bus stop relocation plans (no 6). The application for a banking hub had been refused (no 127). The reason given was that there were fewer than 40 retail businesses in the centre of the village. **RF** had appealed that by his count there were about 60 retail businesses. **KA** suggested that **BCCC** should query the definition of a retail business as many service businesses

also used cash. With regard to the fencing at Red Braes (no 128), CNPA had been unable to persuade Balmoral Estate to install fencing, although warning signs had been put up by the estate. **SM** intends to speak with the Nursery and Primary School to discuss a project on dog fouling (no 132). **RF** asked if the bin at the corner of Salisbury Road and Anderson Road had been moved. **CSB** would investigate this. Water was still pooling at the corner of Queens Road and Viewfield Road, resulting in further damage to the road surface. **WJ** suggested installation of a life buoy in case of accidental drowning (no 135). Abco had undertaken a survey of Ballater pavements in the summer and were not willing to return to meet with BCCC. **SM** would e-mail **CSB** with concerns and she would ask Abco for their report to compare.

## **8 Sub-committee reports**

### Housing and Planning

#### A Planning

**BB** reported that CNPA had called in the application for a mobile phone mast in Glen Muick. Invercauld Estate had also sought planning permission for a house at Crathie.

#### B H1

No further developments

#### Flooding Issues Group (FIG)

**JB** reported that there had not been a large turn out for the FIG update report meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> November - around 40 people attended. Possibly might have to look at additional advertising for the next meeting.

#### Ballater Resilience Group

**LD** reported that no progress had been made yet regarding gas heating. A Starlink system has been purchased which should help with communications in the event of emergency. Also purchased 2 extra large power packs.

#### Crathie Resilience Group

**CH** will contact Geoff Feeney to find out if there are any developments. **LD** also asked if there might be an update on the list of assets held by CRG.

#### Economy

**RF** reported that the banking hub and the future of the Old Royal Station used by VisitScotland continue to be main areas of concern. Cllr Geva Blackett will meet with Janelle Clark in January 2025 to discuss the situation. It is understood that VisitScotland will be seeking to sublet the building. It is understood that the library will remain open, but only 2 and a half days per week when it is staffed. Apparently, 72,500 people visited last year, with an income of £45,000 to VisitScotland. **JC** said that visitors could gain access via the Rothesay Rooms, who are open just one day less than VisitScotland currently. **RF** has approached The King's Foundation as well as the local MP to try and get a discussion started.

#### Roads & Paths

**SM** setting up an action calendar with Ken Gibson.

## **9 Crathie Issues**

**CH** confirmed that parking was still a problem on the Distillery Brae but he had noted Sergeant Masson's advice on reporting infringements. **RF** asked about the Dee Forestry Plan for Abergeldie and **CH** agreed that this could be presented at the January meeting of the BCCC.

## **10 Other reports**

### Aberdeenshire Council

**CAK** had submitted her report to the BCCC.

**CSB** had been informed by Abco Roads Department that they currently cleared the verge at Tullich by 1 metre. Any further concerns to contact **CSB**. NatureScot are to introduce an Invitation to Pay Parking Trial at Muir of Dinnet to reinvest in visitor facilities. **CSB** also highlighted waste services across the festive period. Bins scheduled for collection on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> December should be put out for collection on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> December. Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> January bins will be collected on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> January. If bins are not emptied during the festive period, then bring them back in. Details about missed collections will appear on [www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/binsdisruptions](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/binsdisruptions).

### Cairngorm National Park Authority

**PG** reported that the Cairngorm Resilience Group would be meeting.

### Community Action Plan

**KA** reported that a social media strategy was being created. With over 10,000 followers, there would be highlights on future events and local businesses.

### Ballater Community Trust [Ballater (RD) Ltd]

**RR** reported that new directors had introduced new blood to the group, but further volunteers would be welcome, both as directors and at such events as the Duck Festival and Walking Week. The Trust had supported over 14 clubs and associations over the past year. The Johnston Oil Club, with 270 participants, was a bonus for the community. Greens Management continues.

### Ballater Community Enterprise

The Caravan Park closed at end of November following an excellent year with high occupancy rates. **RR** reported that there is a 2-year waiting list for seasonal pitches and 2025 forward bookings are very good.

### Halls

**BB** reported that December continues to be busy for the Halls. A new Food Pantry shed was located next to the Beaton Craigie Room, maintained by Jenny Macmillan and her husband. It is open 24/7. The Cairngorm Offices below the Albert Hall had been re-decorated.

### Ballater School

Valerie Stoddart is still looking for community projects to involve the school.

### Climate Action Now

**SP** reported that a new project called Food Waste Management has been set up in collaboration with The Pantry and, with a BCT grant, a food surplus "hut" has been

placed at the side of the Beaton Craigie room entrance, to enable easy and all hours access to food that would otherwise be wasted and sent to the Aberdeen incinerator. **CSB** had suggested the Too Good to Go app, which allows food businesses to highlight when they have waste food to dispose of. There was concern that items might be removed from the Food Pantry Shed, but **JC** pointed out that there had to be an element of trust to ensure that those who were in need could gain access easily. **KA** noted that the Co-op had found, more so perhaps in urban areas, that you had to accept that some might take who were not in need, but in order to reach the right people, the system had to remain open.

#### Other

Nothing to report

#### **11 Correspondence**

There had been an e-mail regarding the Tall Ships event in Aberdeen seeking young volunteers who might be interested in participating.

#### **12 Finance**

**EK** was pleased to report that she had finally been able set up online banking and had a system in place.

#### **13 AOCB**

**WJ** presented a gift voucher to Moira McDougall, in thanks for taking minutes over the last year. This was gratefully received.

**WJ** expressed concern at the lack of snow clearing and gritting on the A939. On the recent snow event on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November, it had taken him over 2 hours to cross over to Donside. This involved rescuing several vehicles stuck at various points on the road, including a BT engineer and German tourists in their mobile van. **CSB** would check with Abco roads, as she had received an e-mail in January 2024, indicating that the road should be gritted as an A-class road and school route, although at that time it did not appear on their maps for such treatment: this would be rectified. **CSB** to verify. **BB** mentioned that the gates at Glenshee and the Lecht appear regularly on Facebook to show when open or closed so something similar might be useful at Gairnshiel.

The meeting concluded at 20.40

The Next meeting will be held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 19.00 to 21.00 hours in the Michael Sheridan Room, V&A Halls, Ballater