

Minutes of the Braemar Community Council meeting held on Monday 17th October 2016 at Braemar Primary School at 7.30pm

SEDERUNT: Councillors: Mrs Carole Paterson, Mrs Joanne Morris, Mrs Caroline Hadley Smith, Mrs Sue Sherrard, Alastair Colquhoun, Mrs Selena Hill, Miss Kim Neilson and Trevor Garlick. Also Cllr. Geva Blackett.

In attendance: Angus McNicol (Invercauld Estate), Simon Blackett (BCL), David Geddes (BRHS), Federica Bertolini (Highlands Hospitality), Mark Skilling (Aberdeenshire Council) and 5 members of the public.

APOLOGIES: Cllr. Katrina Farquhar, Michael Holley, PC Jeff Hall and Brian Wood.

MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD 15th August 2016:

The minutes were proposed by Sue Sherrard and seconded by Caroline Hadley-Smith.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 15th August 2016

In the absence of PC Hall Carole Paterson wanted to remind everyone to continue to be vigilant.

Carole Paterson advised the meeting that the “Green Dog Walking” scheme was going well and wanted people to spread the word.

Carole Paterson advised that Michael Holley is continuing to look at the options with regard to a satellite phone.

The matter of Crathie joining with Braemar Community Council will be deferred until the December meeting although Carole emphasised that the initiative will have to come from the Crathie residents. Simon Blackett said he thinks that this will no longer happen and Crathie will stay with Ballater Community Council.

John Macpherson asked to speak about parking in the Games Park. He just wanted to reinforce what was in the last minutes. He stressed that during the summer months there was often no cars/coaches parked inside the Games Park. He suggested replacing all the parking signs with signs showing FREE parking at Games Park. Also he felt that the signs outside the Games Park didn't really encourage people to go in and he was going to bring this up at the BRHS meeting on Friday. He stressed that we were fortunate in Braemar to have a space such as the Games Park which could be used for free parking.

The Etape Royale cycling event was a success and the buses ran as normal.

VILLAGE PARKING:

Mark Skilling from Aberdeenshire Council was at the meeting to speak about the car park next to the Mews building across from the Fife Arms. Mark said he was aware that there were temporary parking issues in the village as a result of the work to the Fife Arms Hotel, but his main concern was putting in place permanent arrangements for the future once the Fife Arms is reopened. He explained that the lease agreement was put in place 30 years ago between Mar Estate, the Brewery, who owned the Fife, and the Council. The arrangement was put in place to encourage coaches into the village and Aberdeenshire Council was keen to see this continue.

Mark felt that Braemar still required coach parking in the village centre and the Council did not have any funds to build an alternative coach park. He said he would be interested to find out the actual numbers of coaches stopping in the village and the economic benefit that they brought to the village.

Mark explained that the options with regard to the car park are as follows:

- Could continue as in the past with coach bays marked out.
- Could allow coaches with time restrictions e.g.: 10am to 4pm.
- Could limit all vehicles to one hour per day.
- Could take coaches out of the coach car park.
- Could give over a section to the Fife Arms Hotel.

He stressed that the lease in place allows for use of the car parking spaces by everyone, including coaches.

Federica Bertolini from Highlands Hospitality spoke. She said that the lease clearly states that the car park should be used as public parking, including coaches, with unlimited access for residents of the Fife Arms Hotel. She explained that when the Hotel opens the guests will arrive in cars and so the spaces will be taken up with them. Federica felt it was in everyone's best interest for coaches to use alternative parking. She agreed with John Macpherson that if all the coaches were encouraged to drop off their people in the centre and then park in the Games Park this would make sense and would be far less confusing.

Federica has been monitoring the coaches arriving in the village and in her experience the most coaches in any one day was 3 or 4. She felt there were two types of coach visitor. One type that just wants to stop, use the public conveniences and perhaps a café and then get back on the coach. They do not seem interested in looking around the village. The other type is interested in the history of the village and wants to walk around and explore the various attractions. She felt that this type of coach visitor was more likely to contribute to the local economy of the village.

Mark Skilling said his concern was that the car park was currently a public car and bus park and it would not represent good value for money if Aberdeenshire Council handed over a public car park for exclusive use by a private hotel.

Cllr. Blackett asked if arrangements could be put in place whereby between 10am and 4pm two spaces were reserved solely for coach use and the coaches could stay for 1-2 hours. Federica pointed out that she could not guarantee that the hotel guests would have left by 10am and also if the spaces were occupied by coaches it may deter other coaches from stopping and the situation would get confusing.

Carole Paterson asked if there was any time that the coaches would not be able to park at the Games Park. David Geddes (BRHS) said the Highland Society did not have a problem with the coaches parking in the Games Park and the area was available throughout the year except for Games Day. At the end of next summer there may also be a problem if the building of the new visitor centre goes ahead.

Cllr. Blackett asked if there could be more parking spaces created in front of the Mews. There was agreement that the pavement was unnecessarily wide and this could be one solution, possibly as a drop off point for coaches. Mark Skilling pointed out that there could be a problem with some coach visitors stepping out onto the road.

David Geddes asked if the front of the Fife Arms was going to be returned to parking spaces. Federica confirmed that as far as she was aware this would still be council parking and Mark Skilling agreed that this area is in fact part of the road. He also stated that Aberdeenshire Council will not be able to give a space for a luggage drop off point.

Trevor Garlick asked for it to be minuted that the majority of Community Council members felt the best solution would be for coaches to park in the Games Park with perhaps a couple of spaces reserved in the Mews car park. This was duly minuted.

Simon Blackett pointed out that we have too many disabled parking spaces and some of them are never used. Mark Skilling advised that the Council's policy was for 5% or 2 spaces to be made available for disabled use.

Carole Paterson thanked Mark Skilling for coming along on behalf of the Council. At this point Mark Skilling left the meeting.

POLICE:

PC Jeff Hall was on holiday.

REPORT FROM BRAEMAR COMMUNITY LTD:

Simon Blackett reported the following:

Castle: The castle will remain open till the end of October. This season the visitor numbers have been up. BCL is now looking to appoint a new administrator for the castle. The Leader application is currently on hold.

Auchtavan: The final open day of the year saw 30-40 visitors to Auchtavan.

Braemar Outdoor Group: On Tuesday 18th October there will be a group working on the paths in the Birkwood.

Braemar Community Hydro: Electricity is now being generated and so far this project is a huge success.

BCL are holding their AGM in November and all are most welcome. Notices will be around the village nearer the time advising of the date and time.

REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER GROUPS:

Cairngorm Deer Advisory Group: Alasdair Colquhoun attended a meeting at Glen Feshie. He expressed concern that at Glen Feshie the annual deer cull figure was expected to be between 400-600 deer. He advised that so far this year the number of deer culled has been 1400.

Association of Cairngorm Communities: Alasdair Colquhoun attended the meeting. Scottish Water were also at the meeting as a number of communities in Speyside were unhappy with the taste of their drinking water. Also the meeting discussed the responses to the CNPA Big 9 consultation.

Playpark: Joanne Morris advised that she is still waiting for the £35000.00 from Aberdeenshire Council before she can order the new equipment. This is holding up the whole project. Meanwhile Invercauld Estate have now cleared the site and Joanne wanted to thank the Estate for their assistance in removing the old equipment.

Invercauld Estate: Angus McNicol advised that the old Strachans shop has now been repointed and the Estate is awaiting the planning decision. They are also in discussions with prospective tenants. The planning consent has now been received to carry out the extension to the site office at the Caravan Park. Angus pointed out that the Lade is now looking much tidier.

Bus Forum: Carole Paterson attended the meeting. She is confident that the bus to Blairgowrie will run next summer. Carole has suggested a link bus to the Linn of Dee as it would be popular with the many walkers. This will be looked into. She also asked if the timetables could be made less confusing and again this will be looked at. Carole reported the light in the bus shelter which has never worked. Carole asked at the meeting about the possibility of an express bus which would run straight through to Aberdeen, thereby making the journey time much shorter. She was told that the service from Braemar to Aberdeen was mainly subsidised by the majority of its customers coming from Banchory, so an express bus which didn't go around many of the streets/estates in Banchory was out of the question.

Rural Housing Fund: Carole attended this meeting which explained that Estates could apply for grants to provide low cost housing. Carole had the literature from the meeting for everyone, in particular Invercauld Estate, to look at.

REPORT FROM C.A.P:

Trevor Garlick is leading the team looking at updating the Community Action Plan. Trevor explained to the meeting that the CAP is an important document and many groups have reported that having such a plan in place has helped them get the funding needed for their community project. Trevor reported that the CAP refresh evening held in the village hall last month was a great success, with the various ongoing projects able to update the community with progress made and it was also an opportunity for these projects to get feedback from the villagers. Dale Johnson is helping Trevor by providing photographs for the updated CAP.

Trevor advised that there were two areas of the CAP that they were struggling with. The Youth section was proving difficult to update as the youth had so far not been very forthcoming with their ideas. Trevor is planning to meet with Jim Wood who leads the Scout Group to see if he can give some input. Also the affordable housing section was difficult as it was largely dependent on whether the Gordon Land Development of affordable houses goes ahead.

Cllr Blackett wanted to stress that with regard to affordable housing the community needed to ensure that Gordon Land Ltd were not able to walk away from their responsibility and instead just pay a fine. The fine would be paid to Aberdeenshire Council and would not necessarily come to Braemar. Cllr. Blackett suggested that one solution would be for BCL to take on the role of Responsible Social Landlord to ensure that the new low cost houses get built.

REPORTS FROM ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCILLORS:

Cllr. Blackett advised that she has been involved in running a "Made in Marr" project which provides pop up venues for local craft people to sell their produce. One such event was at the recent Etape Royale and proved to be a success so the feeling is that people would like to see it continue.

Cllr. Blackett advised that there is some concern that tourist numbers in Deeside are on the decline. Ballater Business Association have employed a marketing person to look at ways to reverse this decline. One thing they have done is to film along Deeside, between Aboyne and Braemar, and this has been made into a 4 minute video entitled "You can do". This video will also be on You Tube and can be uploaded onto your own business website. Cllr. Blackett is currently in discussion with Aberdeen Airport about showing the video in the airport.

CNPA UPDATE: No-one was present from CNPA.

PLANNING:

TRE/2016/0051 Birchwood Chapel Brae, Mr Falconer. Removal of 3 Poplar trees and replaced with Birch trees. No objections raised.

APP/2016/2370 Braemar Caravan site, Invercauld Estate. Full planning permission for alterations to main reception area to increase retail area. No objections raised.

APP/2016/2383 2 & 4 Invercauld Road Braemar, Invercauld Estate. Full planning permission for change of use from vacant shop to Public house, including alterations, extension and formation of a roof terrace. No objections raised.

APP/2016/222 Whole site to the north of St Andrews Terrace, Gordon Land Ltd. Full planning permission for erection of 30 dwelling houses without compliance with condition 18. All the BCC members were concerned that over the past 12 months this whole site has been subject to flooding from the River Dee, in particular during Storm Frank at the beginning of the year. As such BCC felt that it was no longer appropriate to build on this site. Alasdair Colquhoun sent a written representation to the planning dept. together with pictures of the site under flood waters. A letter dated 13 October was received from Aberdeenshire Council planning department. The letter advised that following discussions with the Council's Roads dept. and CNPA it was decided that there was not sufficient justification to insist on the provision of Heritage Lighting (Condition 18) and the applicants have therefore decided to withdraw their application as both the Council and CNPA will not seek to enforce condition 18. The letter advised that the Council has carried out its duty by bringing the potential flooding issue to the attention of the applicants. The original planning application will therefore stand and does not expire until 29 April 2017.

APP/2016/2778: Fife Arms Hotel, Highlands Hospitality. Full planning permission for relocation of 4 underground gas tanks and erection of walls and enclosure. No objections raised.

Liquor Premises Licence: The Gathering Place, Invercauld Road. This major variation is to amend the hours that they are able to serve alcohol. The new hours will be 11am to 11.30pm Monday to Friday, 11am until midnight on a Saturday and 11am to 11pm on a Sunday. The application is also for seasonal variations during Games weekend and New Year and also to allow for outside drinking areas. No objections raised.

PAYPHONE BOX REMOVAL:

BCC received notification on 20th September 2016 from Aberdeenshire Council that BT are planning to close the public phone box at Inverey. All the BCC members had agreed that this pay phone provides a vital service. Carole Paterson read out a letter to Marr Area Office sent from BCC explaining the reasons why the Community Council felt that this pay phone should remain. The letter explains that often there is no mobile reception in that area and although the population of Inverey is very small there are a large number of tourists, mainly hill walkers, passing through towards the Linn of Dee. The phone box at Inverey may be the only place where they can call for a lift or more importantly contact the Emergency services.

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY:

Carole Paterson advised that John Macpherson has agreed to co-ordinate this. There is an additional standard flag this year and John Macpherson suggested that it was carried by a member of BCC. Carole Paterson advised that she was still looking for a member of the community, preferably an elderly person, to lay the wreath on behalf of the community.

CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES:

The SWRI will be organising this year's Christmas Fair in the village hall on Sunday 27th November. There will also be the Xmas Lights switch on in the evening which Sue Sherrard and Selena Hill are co-ordinating.

BRAEMAR IN BLOOM:

Caroline Hadley Smith advised that the next phase is to tidy up the planters and then fill them with bulbs ready for the spring. The main problem this year was the lack of watering for some of the tubs so next year she is planning to allocate the tubs to people who will be responsible for watering!

CO-OPTED MEMBER:

Caroline Hadley Smith proposed that Jane Watson is co-opted onto the Community Council. Jane has confirmed that she is happy to be co-opted. All BCC members were in favour of Jane being co-opted.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Email dated 31st August received from Mr Pete Mulvey asking if BCC has any objections to a web camera being installed in the river Clunie to monitor river levels at the bridge. The camera was going to be installed by a company called Farson Digital Ltd. No one had any objections.

Email dated 16th Sept received from Brian Wood on behalf of the St Margaret's project. The email advised BCC that unfortunately St Margaret's had been unsuccessful in their HLF bid for funding. However they had been advised on ways to improve their application and were going to reapply.

Letter and certificate dated Oct 2016 from Gerry Robb on behalf of the RAF benevolent fund. The certificate was to thank the Braemar Community as since the "Braemar Bomb" was installed in 2009 the sum of £5772.00 has been raised for the benefit of the RAF Benevolent fund.

Email dated 11th October 2016 from Aberdeenshire Council. The email advised that the revised Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils will be presented to the Aberdeenshire Full Council meeting in November, after which we will be updated further.

A.O.C.B:

Carole Paterson: - Carole advised the meeting that progress was being made in respect of the new signage and she showed the meeting some examples of the new signage. Carole has also received a few comments from villagers complaining about the taste of the water. Also she wanted to let people know about the Open Evening for the Braemar Care Initiative which was going to be held in the village hall on Wednesday 26th October.

Joanne Morris: - Joanne wanted to thank Rosy Wood and the rest of her Knitter Natter team for all their hard work in creating yet another fantastic knitting display in the village during the Braemar Creative Arts Festival week. The display was certainly creating a lot of interest amongst both villagers and tourists.

Date of next meeting: Monday 19th December 2016. Meeting closed at 21.00 hours