

## Approved Minutes

Meeting of Braemar Community Council on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June

Meeting was held via video Conference and there for was not open to the public.

**Attendees** – Community Councillors – Alasdair Colquhoun, Aimi Blueman, David Sherrard, Ian Fowler, John Torrance, Shaila Daniels,

Aberdeenshire Councillors – Geva Blacket, Paul Gibb

Apologies – Jackie Maclean

**Minutes of meeting April 20<sup>th</sup> 2020** – Approved – Ian Fowler

Seconded – David Sherrard

### **Matters Arising from Minutes**

- Gate where the clunie river walk crossed the A93 has now been installed.
- Village Plant have now arrived and all the plants from volunteers have been planted, again thanks to all those involved and to Mar and Invercauld estate for their donations to buy some of the plants.
- Search for the Admin on the community face book page has drawn a blank so at this point it seems that it is not possible to gain an active admin control for the page. Councillor Blacket has suggested the creation of a second page for the community which would be more targeted at the local population and have a greater control over the content. The purpose of this to keep important information more in the reach of the public domain. Another possibility suggested by John Torrance is to incorporate this into the new community website. The topic will require further discussion.

### **Update from Braemar Care**

- Currently has 4 active carers who are working daily, wish to express huge thanks to them.
- 1 carer currently inactive due to other employment at coop, who is also leaving to pursue a career as a nurse.
- Currently looking to recruit more carers, training at this time poses a challenge, any volunteers should get in touch.
- Currently have a supply and supplier for PPE, this may become a problem if the situation escalates.
- Contingency plans are being made for Carers and clients in the event that Covid reaches the village.
- Requirement for volunteer assistants remains the same as in the previous couple of months.
- A cash free system for paying for food has been implemented and is working well.
- Braemar Care is assisting with the delivery of lunches in cooperation with BRHS and delivering around 27 meals per week.
- Braemar Care shares the concerns of the potential risk of the Virus spreading to the village as we open up for tourism in the coming weeks, and also people traveling further afield to do their shopping, they ask that everyone take every precaution they can to minimise the spread of the virus and that Kindrochit Court be kept as isolated as possible.

- They would like to express grateful thanks to their carers, Volunteers ,BRHS for the lunches and special thanks to Susie Farquharson their care co-ordinator.

### **Report From Aberdeenshire Councillors (covers Geva Blacket and Paul Gibb)**

- Geva Blackett Continues to post relevant updates on Social media and other platforms.
- Paul Gibb Continues to send regular updates and relevant information to CC members for circulation.
- Thanks to both for keeping us all well informed with valuable updates from Aberdeenshire Council.
- Hardship fund – 40% of applicants are ineligible and not a huge take-up.
- There will be support and guidance for all businesses as we move forward, Scottish Government to provide sector specific guidance which will be referred to on Aberdeenshire website.
- There will be a joint approach which will see all businesses required to complete and submit their own specific risk assessments, to be submitted to environmental health to be reviewed and guidance given where needed.
- People should be encouraged to use to extensive guidance available on the Aberdeenshire website.
- New cross-party Covid 19 recovery reference group to be set up, consist of 14 councillors and senior officers.
- Chief Executive – Phase 2 discussions at cabinet on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup>, Phase 2 likely to be staggered over 2 – 3 weeks.
- Likely to be a £30 million gap in council fund for this year, council will need to look at which services will be impacted to cover others.
- Education – Work ongoing on blended learning, individual school plans are being worked on to be sent to parents as soon as possible. Work being prepared based on 2 meter rule but also contingency for 1.5 and 1 meters in case rules are changed.
- Transportation issues also involved with how many can be fitted onto school buses.
- Grass cutting regime has restarted but there are issues around fitting people into vans.
- Pavement weeding will not be happening this year,still waiting to hear if individual shops and residents can carry out this work and the process and liabilities involved if they do.
- Health and Social Care – increased testing in care homes even where there is no Covid 19 present.

### **CNPA Report**

- Huge amount of work being done across the park area and beyond to give confidence to communities, employees, and visitors for when restrictions are lifted to ensure we can cope with the expected visitors coming for day trips.
- Initial plans for re-opening the park have been agreed with estates, CBP, visit Aberdeenshire, Fire and Rescue and online meetings with community councils across the park.
- There is an overall plan for the CNP and a more localised plan for Deeside.

- Plans include – how to deal with parking issues, extra parking, potentially closing some roads for tourist use but still allowing them to be open for residential use, signs, what public toilets can be opened and what to do where they can't be opened and how to deal with rubbish.
- CNPA is employing 8 seasonal rangers to start on 15<sup>th</sup> June with a view of being fully operational by the end of June, 3 rangers in Deeside and 4 rangers in Badenoch and Strathspey, with 1 floating ranger.  
This prompted some questions from the CC with regard to what the roll of the rangers was going to be, what their remit was, where they would actually be based and how they would interact with the public.
- Geva to find job description and send it to the CC.
- Green Recovery Plan approved, this is a flexible plan and the board will be updated regularly.
- Green Recovery – is to ensure that as we rebuild the economy of the national park we do so in a way that ensures we protect and replenish our natural and social capital.
- Braemar Community Housing Project continues, discussions around transferring the land ownership are beginning to move forward.
- CBP and CNPA have developed a framework for communicating confidence to visitors and follows 4 key principles. **Know the Guidelines, Plan Ahead, Be Flexible and Be Kind.**

#### **Braemar Community Limited Update**

- Braemar Castle grounds now open for local use, further opening of the grounds aimed for mid July.
- Keen to open Castle in August but social distancing creates a lot of issues, more research and discussion required.
- Raising the Standard/HLF lottery fundraising project ongoing with one year delay.
- Working with Clan Farquharson for virtual clan visit in August.
- Hopeful to open Auchtavan for 2 days in August and September.
- Housing project progressing. Application submitted to Scottish Land Fund, flyers distributed and Buzzard article had good response.
- Topographic and arboriculture surveys complete, next steps are further community consultation leading to a planning application, loan application and transfer with the landowner.
- BCL working on new website and hoping to be an element of the new proposed BraemarScotland Website.
- Braemar Outdoor Group on hold but still pressing for Deeside way extension from Brig of Dee to the village.

#### **Update from Mar Lodge Estate**

- Mar Lodge itself remains closed with all lodge staff furloughed, weekly checks and basic maintenance have continued and the building can be reopened at short notice.
- Physical barriers at car park at Linn of Dee and Linn of Quoich have been removed, however external message remains “stay local, stay safe”.

- Mar Lodge coordinating closely with CNPA to ensure a consistent message across National park on reopening.
- Key consideration is that reopening will see a surge in visitor numbers, while ongoing social distancing measure and safety issues will see many visitor facilities and services remaining closed. This could give rise to issues with human waste, littering and fire risk.
- Now working towards reopening the Mar Lodge for self catering holidays on 15<sup>th</sup> July, this is dependent on government guidelines.
- Most weddings/events for this year have been postponed, unlikely that any will go ahead this summer, however self-catering bookings for the lodge remain very strong for the remainder of the year.
- Stalking and shooting bookings for this year are still in the diary, but at this stage it is unclear as to whether or not these will be able to go ahead.
- Almost all 2020 wedding bookings have re-booked for 2021, and new enquiries for next year are also strong.
- Covid crisis has brought particular challenges to NTS with more than half its total workforce currently at risk of redundancy. Mar Lodge has seen a short term impact from the crisis but hope to emerge from the current crisis in a position of strength.

### **Planning Update**

- 2 current planning applications
- APP/2020/0957 – Braemar Mountain Sports – erection of Coffee Kiosk for takeaways  
It was noted by members of the BCC that this development has been started before planning permission has been granted, apparently with consent from the planning department, and while in the current climate there was no wish to make complaint about this there was some concern about the wider implication for the future.
- APP/2020/0973 – Myrtle Cottage, alterations and erection of garage, the garage is offset from the road.
- BCC submitted a supporting comment to the Gairnsheil Bridge application on the CNPA website, Pending
- BCC objected to the Gowanlea fence application due to lack of gate giving parking access, A gate was subsequently included. Bcc withdrew their objection and the application has been approved.
- Due to the current absence of face to face public meetings the latter two actions were agreed by email as per the guidance note from Aberdeenshire Council on 20<sup>th</sup> March.

### **Pheonix Fund**

- This is a one off Grant being made available to eligible town centres across Aberdeenshire to support the re-boot of our town centre economies following the Covid 19 lockdown.
- Geva Blackett brought together the 3 main organisations in the village, BCC, BCL and BTG.
- Following discussion and consultation with the members of the 3 groups a meeting was held to discuss proposed projects that the fund could be used for to the benefit of the village and who was best to take the application process forward.

- In conclusion to the meeting it was decided that the fund was best to be used on a new upgraded website for the village and that as the BTG had already looked at this as a BTG project they were best suited to progress the application. One of the requirements for the Grant is also that it needs to be led by the private sector.
- A small group comprising representatives from BTG, BCC, BCL and the Fife Arms Hotel will for the steering group for this project and updates will be provided.

### **Police Report and Traffic Issues**

- Crimes such as housebreaking and thefts continue to remain at a very low level in the upper Deeside area. Patrols continue across the various areas in an effort to deter and disrupt criminal activity.
- Police aware of the Dramatic increase in Motor bikes in the local area, especially with Covid 19 restrictions being relaxed as of Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May. This is being monitored, however road safety remains a priority for the police and the roads are being patrolled extensively in the area.
- Police are aware that many people are querying why people are not being turned away from communities when they have travelled in excess of 5 miles. The travel rules are guidelines only, they are not in law, therefore are not enforceable by the police.
- Although not in the Police report it was noted that there had been a break in at the mountain sports shop and that a number of items had been stolen from the premises.
- Traffic Issues – it was brought to the attention of the BCC that there has been some concern in recent weeks regarding the number of motorbikes travelling along the Glenshee road. While no one has issue with motor bikes there has been great concern over the noise created and safety issues relating to the speed they seem to be traveling at, especially through the village.
- Although it has been mainly motorbikes causing the problem it is also noted that cars, vans and lorries have also been speeding along the empty main roads.
- Police are aware of the issues and are putting more emphasis on motor bikes and police patrols in the area.
- Suggested that we should monitor the situation, but give the police a chance to put patrols where they need to be.

### **Opening for Visitors**

- Alasdair and John attended a video meeting with other CCs from around the national park area, the meeting was held by the CNPA with the topic of Opening for Visitors.
- Notable that the rest of the CCs in the National park have all had similar experiences during the lockdown as Braemar has had.
- Focus of the Meeting was A FrameWork for Communicating Confidence for Communities, Employees and Visitors.
- Opening up of public toilets is one of the main priorities for opening up for the public, this is currently unresolved and poses a couple of challenges with cleaning and safety for those using them.
- Fife Arms Hotel is hoping to open up from 1<sup>st</sup> August

- Businesses are waiting to hear on Thursday when they will be allowed to move into phase 2 of the road map to recovery.

#### **AOCB**

- Dave Sherrard – raised the issue of the high number of jobs at risk at Mar Lodge Estate due to the threat of redundancies. He proposed that the CC write a letter to the Chief Executive of the NTS highlighting our concerns about the impact the loss of these positions would have on the local community and those who potentially face redundancy.
- After discussion it was decided that Dave would write a letter the Chief Executive.
- John Torrance – reported on the complaint that had been raised by a member of the CC against another member of the CC. An EGM was held and the complaint was dealt with under a stage 1 investigation as is set by the scheme of establishment. The CC and area command are happy that the complaint has been dealt with appropriately.

#### **Date of next Meeting.**

- **Monday 17<sup>th</sup> August**