

Blackness Area Community Council

Minutes of Meeting Wednesday 20th January 2016, in the Community Hall

Attendees:

Council members: Nick Paul (NP), Dave Lawson (DL), Sharman Faulds (SF), Martin Watt (MW) and 6 members of the public were also present.

PC Greig Cruickshanks, Community police Officer, attended his first meeting to deliver the Police report.

Apologies: Merv Archibald (MA), Kathryn James (KJ), Martin Knott (MK), Cllrs Adrian Mahoney (although Cllr Mahoney arrived later)

NP opened the meeting at 7pm by welcoming all those attending.

Approval of Previous Minutes of 16th December 2015

Approved, proposed DL, seconded MW – subject to one amendment – the financial report appended to the minutes as originally distributed was for November rather than December. This has been rectified.

Actions from Previous Minutes

- Tree planting to maintain landscape structure - ongoing
- Neighbourhood Watch – The new signs have been erected. Thanks to MA and MK for making this happen.
- Third signatory for bank account – now done, new signatory has been agreed by the bank.
- Progress on benches – ongoing.

Community Police Report

- No crimes reported in the area since the last meeting.
- Following reports at the previous meeting, the Police are continuing their increased patrols during darkness around the Castle, but have nothing to report so far. Residents did not report any further suspicious activity.

Future events / Fundraising

- Hogmanay Ceilidh in the Community hall. £150 had been raised for Community Funds, an excellent effort. MA and DL to discuss how to record this in the financial records.
- Spring Ceilidh – **DATE CHANGE** now **Saturday 12 March 2016** to avoid the Easter weekend. Volunteers to assist ahead of time selling tickets, on the day to set up the hall, and at the event itself will be welcomed.

Community Projects

Use of land around church:

- Questionnaire on car park proposal - responses now in and analysed. 30% response rate. 60% of respondents were in favour, 30% against, 10% either didn't know or wanted more information. 4 residents have offered to assist in the development of the project. Issues identified by residents included traffic, access, loss of parking spaces around the access, concerns that car park might attract anti social behaviour. Suggestion that landscaping be used to ameliorate resident's concerns re being overlooked. Further to these results, it is clear that there is support for the project in the village and the outlook for moving forward has improved.
- Painting and repairing the outside of the Public Toilets the risk assessment required by Falkirk Council is ongoing. MA and NP working on this. DL offered assistance. Council has stipulated that as working at height scaffolding would be required, however it has been agreed to use harnesses and lanyards. DL will be able to supply these. Expected that we should be able to carry out the work in the spring.
- Blackness is Beautiful – thanks to everyone for their work in refreshing the planters with some winter colour and spring bulbs– noted that the spring bulbs are now popping their heads up!
- Goal Posts in park – will tackle repainting these in Spring – may need to be primed and painted with a rust inhibiting paint
- Noted that there was a strong smell last weekend which appeared to emanate from the landfill site at Lathallan, a number of residents had noticed it. HP will contact Environmental Health to advise.

Budget

DL updated the meeting. See attached statement.

Councillors' Update

At this point in the meeting, no Councillor was present. Concerns expressed re the Council budget and where the likely cuts may fall, and what implications this might have for our Community. It was felt that it would be helpful for the Councillors to update the meeting with the financial key facts.

However – soon afterwards, Cllr Mahoney arrived and was able to update the meeting.

Falkirk Council (FC) will be setting their budget in February, still awaiting full details of the Scottish Government grant amount and what it will cover.

Issue of cuts is related to Council Tax (CT) Freeze now entering its 9th year. Other Councils intend to disregard the freeze and increase their CT rates, despite the resulting financial penalty from the Scottish Government.

CT used to raise around 20% of local government expenditure, the figure is now nearer 12%.

Cllr Mahoney voiced concerns about the level of cuts, expected to be £25m this year, and what this would mean for local services, and Council employees. There is hope that there will not be any compulsory redundancies, despite the Council looking to shed 800 jobs. By law the Council must set a balanced budget, but as FC the second lowest CT in Scotland, this is becoming increasingly difficult without using reserves, which have to be maintained by law.

Efficiency savings have already been made at a rate of £10m a year, but there is little scope for any more without cutting expenditure. Some areas of expenditure are ring-fenced by statute, so cannot be cut e.g. Education.

The full picture will be clearer by the time the budget is set in February. Cllr Mahoney made the point that as Councils are bound to implement government policy, in this election year, government needs to be clearer with voters about how local government should be financed. Local democracy is better served if more of the budget can be raised locally.

Blackness Castle – some positive news, the combined effects of the JMW and Outlander filming have led to an increase in visitor numbers at the Castle. Some discussion about improving the visitor experience, a cafe would be ideal. There are unused buildings at the site which may be suitable for conversion to various uses, which would in turn raise revenue. Historic Scotland is now known as Historic Environment Scotland and is currently consulting on its future direction and Strategic Plan.

JMW – figures indicate over 2000 people have walked the entire route, with around 250,000 people walking parts of the path. It has been a huge success, bringing many people in to Falkirk district. Now looking at establishing more circular walking routes in the area incorporating the JMW. Sustrans have used the Blackness section in a promotional video. Various other ideas also being explored to further promote the path – e.g. a model scheme that is working well at Hadrian's wall, where local people "adopt" a section of the Way.

April – 2 events planned – JMW Walk on 16th, followed by a James Watt celebration on 22nd when Kinneil House will also host an open day. Friends of Kinneil is also celebrating its 10th birthday this year.

Planning Update

P/15/0644/FUL 4 West Terrace: application for extension

Application has not been re-submitted, no discussion took place.

Any other Business

- Possible JMW walk April 2016 – Cllr Mahoney reported that the Carriden residents are keen on taking part - would the Boat Club be able to assist with providing refreshments again?
- Jim Slavin Testimonial – the meeting heard with some sadness that Jim and Valerie will be leaving the area on 11th February. We all wish both of them very well and will miss them, and before they go, we would be delighted to host an evening out in a suitable local hostelry for him and Valerie. Jim will let MA know when and where would be convenient.
- On behalf of BACC, MA will be attending the National Scottish Holocaust Memorial Event in Falkirk Town Hall on 27th January. Others may attend if they wish.
- Flight path trial: HP updated the meeting – we are still awaiting the "Findings Report" from Edinburgh Airport with the results of the TUTUR Flight Trial. We had been advised by Martyn Day MP that he had expected the report to be available "before Christmas". We can only speculate as to why the report has been delayed, although there is some information available that the reason for it may be because some of the noise data

gathered during the trial indicated noise levels were higher than expected.

Residents are continuing to report serious issues with flight noise that simply were not experienced in the Blackness area before the trial began. Other residents of other areas in West Lothian report the same. The airport continues to maintain that nothing has changed. Clearly both statements cannot be true – the airport has been asked to release historic flight data which could establish the correct position, but has consistently refused to do so.

Cllr Mahoney reported that he was also experiencing more aircraft noise than previously and had received a number of complaints about the matter from constituents – more in Blackness than in Bo'ness which could be due to the relatively higher background noise levels in Bo'ness.

It is VITAL that anyone who is being disturbed by aircraft noise continues to complain to the airport about it, and while they may not receive a satisfactory answer, the numbers of complaints are collated and published.

**Airport Complaint Line (24 hour answering machine) 0800 731 3397 or via email:
edicomunications@edinburghairport.com**

The SEAT (Stop Edinburgh Airspace Trial) campaign has written to all Community Councils in advance of the report being published, in a bid to ensure Community reps are appropriately briefed ahead of any invitation to the airport.

The meeting felt that it would be more appropriate for the airport to be invited to attend a public meeting in Blackness to announce the findings to residents and hear their views, rather than CC reps attending at the airport. However, if a meeting of Community Councillors is arranged by the airport, it would be important for the area to be represented.

- Beach Clean planned for 6th February at 10am – meet at the Back Shore. Marine Conservation Society will be undertaking another beach survey. Noted that following the recent storms, more debris and rubbish has been washed up. The sea wall at the Back Shore has also been breached and is now being eroded at high tide. MW to take a photo and send to Historic Scotland to ask what action is proposed to repair it.

Date of next meeting

- Wednesday 17th February 2016 at 7pm in the Community Hall

NP thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9.00pm.

Blackness Area Community Council

Budget: - For Meeting Wednesday 20 January 2016

Balance from December meeting **£4,981.18**

BACC Monies Held BACC Christmas Fair

BACC Monies Raised (For info. purposes)	Amount
Raised at Colind Saturday 23 March 2013	£378.00
Raised at Colind Saturday 22 March 2014	£432.00
Raised at Colind Saturday 28 March 2015	£377.55
Total	£1,187.55

BACC Monies In	Amount
Total	£0.00

BACC Monies Out	Amount
Card Service Catering	£27.40
Card service CDs, print consumables - paper, ink, card, flyers etc.	£151.23
Total	£178.63

BACC Monies Pending	Amount
Neighbourhood Watch Signs	£89.75
Linux Hosting & domain name renewal - website	£103.99
Total Pending	£193.74

Christmas Fair Held	Amount
Raised at Christmas Fair 2011	£645.38
Raised at Christmas Fair 2012	£672.36
Raised at Christmas Fair 23 Nov 2013	£780.05
Raised at Christmas Fair 22 Nov 2014	£766.48
Raised at Christmas Fair 21 Nov 2015 (Hall rental to deduct - Tbc)	£774.03
Total	£3,638.30

Christmas Fair In	Amount
Total	

Christmas Fair Out	Amount
All Groups has agreed that cost of planters can come off monies held as this was deemed a good local cause (deducted January 2013)	£183.66
Total	£183.66

Total Balances (Split) BACC Christmas Fair
£1,347.91 £3,454.64

Account Balance as Tues. 19 January 2016 **£4,802.55**

