

Blackness Area Community Council
Minutes from Community Council Meeting 8th December 2016

1 ***Attendees:***

Council members: Merv Archibald (MA), Martin Watt (MW) Kathryn James (KJ).
With an additional three members of the public.

2 ***Apologies:*** Councillor Adrian Mahoney, Dave Lawson, Martin Knott, Nick Paul

3 ***Approval of Previous Minutes of 16th November 2016***

Approved MA, seconded MW
subject to the following amendments:

Councillor Report: Councillor Mahoney mentioned that he is standing down ahead of this years Councillor elections. He was warmly thanked for his valued assistance to Blackness Area Community Council over the years.

Councillor Mahoney also mentioned that Falkirk Council had responded to the recent airspace change consultation, with a balanced response making reference to the issues with airspace noise now being experienced in communities such as Bo'ness and Blackness.

Regarding the Council budget, Councillor Mahoney made it clear that since 2007, there have been no compulsory redundancies. Such action would be a very last resort for the administration to consider as colleagues are against making anyone compulsorily redundant.

4 ***Community Police Report***

4.1 PC Greg Cruickshanks in attendance. One crime reported – possession of illegal drugs found in a car parked at the foreshore.

The Police warned residents to be vigilant for possible break-ins with associated vehicle theft. There had been a spate of such crimes in Linlithgow and Bo'ness. Residents are reminded to keep car keys out of sight and away from the front door.

No speeding offences noted near the school. Residents would continue to monitor any issues with speeding n the B903 or B9109 and report to the police as appropriate using 111.

Greg was warmly thanked by the Community Council for all his assistance over the years and was asked to pass on our thanks to his colleagues.

5 ***Actions from Previous Minutes***

5.1 Neighbourhood Watch. Signs have now been erected. Thanks to MA and MK for attending to this.

5.2 Noted that the BACC noticeboard in the village near the Guildry has been damaged. Awaiting an estimate from Falkirk Council for reglazing.

6 *Future Events/Fundraising*

6.1 **Christmas Fair:** Another highly successful event – the fair was very well attended, thanks to all who contributed.

6.2 **Carol Service:** Due to the church being unavailable for the Annual Service of 9 Lessons and Carols, the service will be held in the Community Hall on Wednesday 14th December at 7pm. The Minister also being unavailable to conduct the service means that a wider range of readers have been approached, including: Provost Pat Reid, Cllr Adrian Mahoney, the President of the SWRI, as well as representatives of Blackness and area. As the School have said that, due to budget cuts, they cannot be involved this year, the Parent Teacher Council has stepped in to organise the children to sing some Christmas songs. Cathy Smythe will read a lesson on behalf of the PTC, and Anne Smith will give the blessing at the end. The piano accompaniment will be provided by Vicky Sharp. Afterwards, Dave and Louisa Lawson will host for mince pies and mulled wine.

Volunteers needed for decorating the hall and on the door, and clearing up afterwards. MW and Andrew Jamieson will help, NP and HP will help set up the hall with MA and MH.

MA was congratulated on rescuing the event at very short notice.

6.3 **Hogmanay Ceilidh:** This will take place in the Community Hall, Kim Kidd is organising.

6.4 **Spring Ceilidh:** Scheduled to take place on 18th March 2017.

7 *Community Projects*

7.1 **Public Toilets:** Badly in need of some restoration. The Council still need another risk assessment for any work to the roof, but further BACC input will depend on the Council's ability to continue to keep them open. Decision likely next month when the results of the Council budget cuts are announced.

7.2 **Blackness is Beautiful:** Ongoing

8 *Budget*

No update at meeting as DL was unable to attend.

9 *Councillors' Update*

None

10 Community Safety Team Update

No Report received.

11 Planning Update

11.1 P/15/0644/FUL - 4 West Terrace. The planning reporter has allowed the appeal and the application has now been approved.

11.2 19B Mannerston Holdings – Seeking retrospective planning permission for hard standing area adjacent to agricultural shed – no application yet received by Falkirk Council

Action: MA to chase the Council on requesting a retrospective application and will enquire if a Building Warrant is required.

12 Flight noise over Blackness

12.1 Flight noise over Blackness

Consultation on Airspace Change Process: The airport has now published the numbers of responses received (over 6000) and whether these were for, against or neutral. As the consultation asked a long, open-ended question, instead of a simple yes/no one, it is unclear how the airport determined whether responses were for, against or neutral. The majority were against the proposals to change the airspace.

The Airport has recently published a draft Masterplan for ground-based development. The consultation ends on 23rd December. The document contains several statements that do not bear scrutiny – for example “the airport operates without public subsidy”. However, the £41 million public investment in the Edinburgh Gateway station to allow rail passengers from Fife to travel to the airport without going through Haymarket is one example of where the airport clearly benefits from public funds.

The need for expansion and the economic benefits of doing so were then discussed at the meeting. On the former, it was noted that based on CAA data, the airport is not operating any more planes today than it did 10 years ago, and it had plenty of spare capacity then – so no obvious need for expansion.

On the latter, as Edinburgh is a regional airport and not an international hub, most flights are internal, where train might be a viable alternative. While Edinburgh airport says it is increasing the numbers of places it flies to, these are mostly tourist destinations such as Greece, Spain or the Canary Islands. Most passengers on non-domestic flights are Scottish people holidaying abroad, rather than tourists arriving here. From Government figures, it has been calculated that every passenger departing the airport takes the average equivalent of £600 with them. So, on balance, rather than supporting an influx of wealthy foreign tourists to the benefit of the Scottish economy, the increase in foreign flights results in a Tourism Deficit in Scotland of £1.6 billion – that is, the difference between what Scottish people spend abroad, compared with what tourists bring to the Scottish economy.

MA reported that the airport has finally sent the flight data it promised in March. However yet again, key elements appear to be missing. This is particularly disappointing, given that the reason for our request for the data was clear – residents dispute the airport line that “nothing has changed” in relation to aircraft noise over our area – and that the airport has the experts who could clearly explain what has happened and why.

Noise Management Board: The airport is about to set up a NMB. The proposed terms of reference, remit and composition appear inadequate to give the body sufficient power to properly independently scrutinise the airport. BACC should respond, as it would appear that there will be no representation from Falkirk district area

13 Any other Business

- 13.1 Proposal by Historic Scotland to install a gate on Castle Road. Following various comments from residents, Historic Scotland may be able to send a representative to our next meeting on 18th January to present the proposals to residents and gather feedback. Suggestion that we send out a Community Newsletter in early January to include details of this meeting, as well as review of Christmas and New Year, and the Spring Ceilidh date. Action MA.
- 13.2 Pavement continuation from School along towards the Strip. Noted that there used to be a pavement all the way to Champany, and that this would help with road safety for pedestrians and may encourage more walking. While this could be raised with the Council, budget constraints may make such a project impossible. Such a pavement could help with establishing other routes through the farmland to link with the John Muir Way and create a network of recreational footpaths around the area. Mandy Brown at Falkirk Council deals with Core Paths and may be the first point of contact.
- 13.3 Noted that there was flooding of the Back Burn during high rainfall in November in various places. This could be due in part to the burn needing cleared further downstream. Noted that this is the responsibility of each owner to ensure the burn is running freely.
- 13.4 A brief discussion of rural development in Sweden was discussed, as a member of the public who attended has a special interest in this area. In particular how to manage rural areas for the benefit of residents, for example by developing projects that can gain commercial income. Eg woodland, power generation projects etc.

14 Date of next meeting: Wednesday 18th January at 7pm in the Community Hall. All welcome.

MA thanked attendees, and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. The meeting closed at 8.50pm.