

Blair Atholl & Struan Community Council

Virtual Meeting – Tuesday 18 January 2022

MINUTES

Present: Donald Isles (Chairman), Tony Dowson, Fiona Gordon, Viv Cree, Amy Liptrott, Lynda Mutch (Minutes), Cllr John Duff, Cllr Xander McDade, Alistair Smith (Heartland Multimedia), Susan White

1. Apologies for Absence

Louise Fisher, Cllr Mike Williamson, Police

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the meeting of 9 November 2021 were approved.

3. Matters Arising/On-going Issues:

3.1. Trinafour 30mph speed limit – Nothing to report. JD will chase up.

3.2. Village Hall Wi-fi – Village hall committee are interested in applying for grant from Digital Inclusion Fund and will take this forward. CC is willing to support application and possibly explore ways to fund ongoing costs. School does not have spare dongles. AS recommended that village hall committee contact Heartland's IT specialist who can advise on scope of project to ensure what is required is actually what is applied for. VC reported that the application is a short one with only three questions. DI will look at application in the next few days. Many organisations use village hall and would benefit from wi-fi.

3.3. Co-option of Members – Confirmation has now been received from PKC of VC's validity to join the Blair Atholl & Struan CC as from 1st December 2021. The committee therefore wish to co-opt her onto the committee.

3.4. Train Service – 10:15 Southbound service is now operational.

3.5. Road Adoption – LM confirmed that the opposite end of the road discussed is owned partly by herself, the garage and one other property. We have been informed that RM intends to write out to owners with an interest, but this is not an issue for CC.

4. Finance

Nothing to report.

5. The Atholl Glens (formerly BAATA)

Nothing to report

6. Resilience Team

Group has been moth-balled but can be called on in the future if needed. Generator currently being fixed. It will allow the village hall to be used, if necessary, as a community resource at times of future electricity breakdowns.

7. Heartland FM

Heartland are progressing their news project which will be set up as a separate company providing Scottish news. Heartland's sports journalist, Nathaniel Goddard, is interested in hearing from any local sports teams who may wish to be included in sports bulletins and programmes. He can be contacted at sports@heartland.scot. Heartland is celebrating 30th birthday in March and AS thanked local community for support.

8. Queen's 70th Jubilee June 2022

Nothing to report. School taking this forward.

9. Etape Caledonia

Will be held on 15 May 2022 and will revert to usual route. Road closures including road names and times would be useful on the map which is issued annually. JD will follow this up with appropriate officers.

10. CNPA

Consultation on the 5-year partnership plan closed on 17 December with between 1,200 and 1,400 responses. Wide engagement is very positive, although some challenging topics to be considered. Final plan should be available in summer 2022. Currently setting up for year ahead. Last season's increase in Ranger activity helped to improve visitor behaviour.

11. Update Reports

11.1. 2022 Budget – All 32 local authorities have expressed considerable concern over their budget settlements for the year ahead. Reserves have been depleted in recent years and the scale of cuts is therefore likely to be much more severe than previously. Cllrs encouraged residents to write to their MSPs before final reading in parliament.

11.2. Winter Gritting – two hand carts were issued in Blair Atholl. More can be made available if required.

11.3. Storm Arwen – Council was busy pre-Christmas dealing with storm Arwen response and are looking at lessons learnt around that. Many residents in this community lost power for several days. Following the organisational response, it was widely agreed that the different levels of government in Scotland could all work

better together in the future and there will be enquiries as to how to improve that communication and improve the delivery to residents.

12. Surgery

The situation with the closure of the hospital in-patient ward is not related to the closure of the satellite GP surgery in Blair Atholl, and NHS Tayside are fully committed to re-opening this ward as soon as possible, but only when it can be safely staffed.

119 residents in the village signed the petition to keep the Blair Atholl surgery open. DI, VC and AL recently met with the surgery practice manager and two GPs. They explained that the issues are primarily lack of staff (having gone from six GPs to four), but also the suitability and condition of the building.

AS had tried to get information regarding the responsibility of providing a local surgery in Blair Atholl, but was not able to get answers from NHS Tayside or the surgery themselves. AS was keen to engage with members of the public and the practice to publicise this story on Heartland's platforms. XM clarified that the surgery is run by the GPs under contract between NHS Tayside and Health & Social Care Partnership. NHS Tayside has a wider responsibility to provide health services but they do not directly run the Pitlochry surgery. The contract between NHS Tayside and HSCP currently requires the Pitlochry practice to provide a branch service in Blair Atholl and would require a variation on their agreement to permit closure or suspension.

XM explained that any changes to the contract between the Health & Social Care Partnership, NHS Tayside and the Medical Centre would have to go to the HSCP Board for approval. As yet, no application has been made. HSCP meetings are public and minutes are available online. Long term matters are considered by the HSCP Board, but the surgery is able to make short term operational decisions on safety grounds without specific authorisation. It was agreed that VC would write to the surgery urgently asking that any application to alter the service offered in Blair Atholl recommended suspension rather than permanent cancellation.

XM explained that there had been changes to the GP contract which puts service obligations onto GPs, and they have a financial responsibility and liability in taking on partnerships in GP practices. There are also other issues restricting the recruitment of GPs to rural areas such as Pitlochry including the remote location, and lack of suitable affordable housing. XM confirmed that budgets for additional doctors had not been cut.

In the meantime, the Atholl Medical Centre has confirmed that they will work with patients from Blair Atholl requiring appointments fitting in with bus times, and they are also happy for patients to wait in the surgery for return buses or other transport.

13. AOCB

13.1. Xander McDade – XM informed the CC that he would be standing down at the next Council elections and is willing to speak to anyone who is keen to stand as an independent candidate.

13.2. Maintenance - Trees growing out of the bridge over the River Tilt have previously been reported but are not considered a priority. All PKC maintained structures are inspected at least bi-annually.

13.3. Highland Action Partnership – DI still interested in hearing from anyone keen to represent the community on the Highland Action Partnership. HAP brings together all communities in Highland ward with the principle aim of tackling inequalities in the area, identifying priorities and supporting delivery within the ward. AL would like more information and JD/DI will provide this.

14. Next Meeting

Next meeting will be held on **Tuesday 8 March 2022** at 7.30pm. As so much time was lost due to IT issues at the start of this meeting, it was hoped that we could have a face-to-face meeting, with a possible hybrid option.