

DRAFT MINUTE OF BIGGAR COMMUNITY COUNCIL ZOOM MEETING
Monday 15th March 2021

1. Present/Apologies

Community Councillors: Lesley Craise (Chair), Janet Moxley (Outgoing Treasurer, Secretary elect), Laura Shirley, Jimmy Ritchie, Peter Rae, Caz Alcorn, Gillian Gardner, Roger Curtis, Bobby Colquhoun, Jerry Sumpster (Treasurer elect).

Associate Members: Neil Ingram, Ben Waive, Robin Laing, Anne Lindsay

Ex Officio members: Cllr Alex Allison, Cllr Ian McAllan

Apologies: Al Stewart (Assoc), Aileen Campbell (Ex-Officio), David Mundell (Ex-Officio)

2 members of the public were also in attendance.

2. Welcome

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, which directly followed on from the AGM/EGM.

3. Declaration of A.O.C.B.

a) Litter – Ben Waive

b) Clyde Mission – Janet Moxley

c) Slipperfield Quarry planning application – it was agreed that as this is outwith the BCC area, in the next Local Authority area BCC would not seek to comment/respond.

ACTION - Janet will communicate this decision to the member of the public who raised it with her.

4. Adoption of Minutes of meeting held on 15th February 2021.

Minutes adopted.

5. Matters Arising from minutes –

a) Meeting with neighbouring Community Councils

Virtual meeting held between BCC, Q&T CC, Duneaton CC and the newly formed Carmichael CC. on 8th March. This was a useful initial meeting and further meetings are expected, since much of what is done by CCs has a cross boundary impact. Biggar is also very much a hub, with residents from neighbouring communities visiting for activities and services.

b) Offer of Land from Story Homes

Investigations are ongoing, with John Riley trying to put together a ‘business plan’ for a community growing area. BDCH have also been discussing this, and Roger Curtis advised that at a recent BDCH meeting the consensus appeared to be that without a water supply it is unlikely that BDCH would be willing to take this on. Other gardening groups may be interested.

Caz Alcorn mentioned that Story Homes administer a “Community Fund” and the costs of water installation might feasibly be found from this fund.

Awaiting Business Plan from John Riley and final decision from Story Homes re water supply

ACTION – Lesley will ask Story Homes about their Community Fund

c) Community Action Plan

First meeting of this 'collective' is to take place, virtually, on Monday 22nd March, and involves representatives from BCC along with many of the 80+ local groups approached. The intention is that those in attendance at the meeting form a Steering Group.

d) Station Road Junction

Resurfacing completed last weekend.

6. Police Report (if available)

No report received from the police. It is understood that they should be up to full numbers and be able to provide a written report in time for next month's BCC meeting.

7. Matters raised by members of public

None.

8. Request for support for grant application to Clyde Extension Fund from 1st Biggar/Tinto Scouts

Scouts have made an application to the Clyde Extension Fund, for assistance with the purchase of a new van, previous van now expired. All agreed.

ACTION – letter of support from BCC to be sent to the Group Scout Leaders for inclusion in their grant application.

9. SLC Councillors' Reports

Cllr Alex Allison – SLC has set the annual budget through consensus by most parties.

Of particular interest:

- Increase to Roads/Pavements budget
- Increase to Education budget; there are to be programmes to help pupils recover from a year of disruption due to the pandemic.
- Increase to climate change initiatives budget.

In addition, there has been a directive from the Scottish Government re Participatory Budgeting: Councils must consult local communities on how 1% of the council's total budget is spent. Whilst at this stage SLC Officers have identified what budget lines this might best work for, for this coming year, there will be an ongoing need for local communities to be involved in future, identifying suitable budget lines. Thereafter communities would then be consulted on which 'projects' should be prioritised. It is accepted that there may be conflicts of opinion between neighbouring communities and even between community groups within the same community(ies).

Certain 'SLC micro-grant schemes' would count towards the measure of the 1% of budget that has been consulted upon.

Questions for Cllr Allison:

- a) Jerry and Lesley asked Alex to expand, expressing concern that within Biggar the Windfarm micro-grant funds come direct from SSE (and Glenkerie) and are not within the SLC mandate or wish and so should not form part of the calculation of the 1%.

Alex explained that there are some micro-grants available across the whole of SLC area that do fall within the ultimate control of SLC, but recognised that the windfarm funding referred to does not.

- b) It was suggested that children returning to school seem to be re-starting with exactly the 'learning' that they were set to do either through Home-schooling or Online, thus potentially disadvantaging those school children who had made an effort versus those schoolchildren that had not made the effort.

Alex responded that with the schoolchildren only now returning to schools, schools/teachers need to evaluate the progress that schoolchildren have (or haven't) made during this disruptive period. The extra funding referenced in Alex's report then being used to create suitable programmes of learning for schoolchildren, which will make it easier to deliver appropriate continuation of (tailored) education for those schoolchildren that have progressed and those that have not.

A member of the public reported that some children had experienced difficulties with some aspects of the system for submitting school work online. There was also concern expressed, that the school might have prioritised senior year pupils and those with identified greater needs, over others.

Cllr Ian McAllan – Ian echoed Alex's comments regarding budget, and in addition acknowledged and recognised the expressed concerns regarding education, reiterating that there is recognition from the very top of SLC and there are plans in place to address them. Vaccinations: current progress in SLC area is 235,000 individuals have received their first jab, with 75,000 outstanding.

For 'Phase 2' NHS Lanarkshire has chosen to use Supercentres, on the basis that this is a faster route to getting everyone vaccinated. Current estimates suggest that the use of Supercentres will allow 200 clinical staff to return to their normal hospital work two months earlier. This estimate was supported by the following:

Supercentre	100 vaccinations in 4 hours
Local Centre	100 vaccinations in 7.5 to 8 hours
Mobile Unit	100 vaccinations in 20 hours
Home visit	100 vaccinations in 50 hours

The Supercentres for Biggar are in East Kilbride and Ravenscraig, with the nearest Local Centres being Lanark and Stonehouse. It is recognised that there can be transport challenges, and NHS and SPT are liaising in an effort to make journeys as easy as possible, in addition VASLAN and the 'Shotts Healthy Living Centre' are using volunteer drivers to assist those experiencing transport challenges.

Residents are urged to make every effort to attend their scheduled vaccination appointment, but where it is just not possible to attend their allocated appointment then it can be rearranged either by calling the National COVID Vaccination Helpline (available from 8am to 8pm seven days a week - 0800 030 8013), or by using the main NHS Inform Internet hub ([vacs.nhs.scot/csp?id=csp_registration](https://www.nhs.uk/vacs.nhs.scot/csp?id=csp_registration)). In addition, help and advice is available via the SLC Community Wellbeing Helpline (0303 123 1009).

(Note - If you're trying to rearrange your appointment online and there are no vaccination appointments available, please check again later. The COVID-19 Vaccination Helpline will be unable to offer alternative appointments as they use the same online booking system.)

A question regularly asked, is whether the Municipal Hall in Biggar will be used again? This is wholly dependent upon the take-up of vaccinations in the Supercentres and Local

Centres, and remains potentially possible, but undecided. Without doubt, the faster everyone is vaccinated the less chance there is for COVID variant to get a foothold.

- a) Roger commented that after being urged to avoid crowds it seems counterintuitive for NHS to be asking people to attend Supercentres, where by their very nature, many people will gather. Ian responded that the uptake at Supercentres has been remarkable, and that Ravenscraig Supercentre had appeared on the TV News that evening and was shown to be “safe and open”. He advised that NHS are aware of these concerns, and are using experts to administer the vaccine in the safest possible way.
- b) Lesley commented that the NHS appointment system appears not to release vaccination slots very far in advance, rather, each evening slots (for the next day) are released. Accordingly, people are more likely to be successful in rescheduling appointments in the evening or early morning.
- c) Bobby commented that he felt it important that there was a central website providing all of the detail regarding vaccination appointments including guidance what is happening and when (e.g. when each age group is likely to be called for vaccine) and on how to rebook. Ian agreed that communication is key, and that BCC will have a role to play in the overall communication process. Ian and Alex will check with SLC/NHS and if an appropriate website is not yet available, will lobby to ‘get it done’ and will provide web links for BCC to publish.

10. Questions from New Members

New (and returning members) gave a brief outline of their areas of specific interest.

Jerry Sumpster (Community Councillor) – Former and now returning member of BCC. Keen to work with other Groups in the Town and also expressed an interest in Community Resilience Planning and Local Action Planning forums.

Robin Laing (Assoc Member) – Primary focus is around the provision of facilities for the young people in the area to be able to use their skateboards, bikes and scooters. A small group has been created in connection with this ‘project’ and once it is clearer as to whether there will be a need to purchase/own land then a decision will be made as to whether to form a more formally constituted group/SCIO. In the longer term would be interested in helping out with Community Action Planning, particularly as regards connecting the local communities (Biggar/Thankerton/Symington).

Caz Alcorn (Community Councillor) – Lived in Biggar for 10 years, formerly commuted to Edinburgh working for the Cyrenians Homeless Charity, and retains a passion for how we can help the vulnerable members of the community. Chair of the management committee of the Gillespie, also involved in Biggar Kirk and a member of a local book club. Loves living in Biggar, which she feels is blessed by an amazing community.

Anne Lindsay (Assoc Member) – Has background as former chair and subsequently vice-chair of the Clydesdale Social Care and Health Partnership. Anne stepped back somewhat last year for personal health reasons; indeed, the Partnership activity was somewhat constrained over the year as a direct result of the pandemic. Anne hopes to act as a link between BCC and the Partnership and hopes that a member of BCC will be prepared to sit on Partnership when things are able to restart.

Roger Curtis (Community Councillor) – Formerly worked in HR, a specialist in Psychometric and Personality Testing, and often worked overseas. Formerly Bishop of the Dalkeith Church community for 6 years, has now lived in Biggar for 17 years. Loves Biggar and hopes to be able to make a positive contribution to it.

Ben Waine (Assoc Member) – Lived in the area for 2 years, wife is from Biggar. Wife's Granny was Elsie Galbraith, former schoolteacher who sadly passed away last year. Has two children under the age of 5 years and has a big desire to keep the town as it is, beautiful. Has a big issue with litter. Has joined BCC with two main objectives, to get help with more active litter team, and also Ben is the Regional Coordinator for the Clydesdale Foodbank and hopes that BCC will be able to help in drumming up more support for the foodbank.

Bobby Colquhoun (Community Councillor) - asked what are the expectations of new members, and how and where could they help. Lesley answered that we could perhaps spend some time discussing this at the next meeting, specifically any roles that could be picked up by new members, Lesley is in the process of compiling a list of things that different members may wish to get involved with. Bobby has lived in the area for approaching 30 years, the last two in Biggar itself. Bobby is a member of the Biggar Men's Shed Group.

Jerry suggested that it might be useful to new members if existing members provided a thumbnail of their background, interest and membership of other groups, suggesting this be done offline rather than at the meeting.

ACTION – Add to next agenda

11. Campsies Steps Survey

Following a proposal to use approximately £8000 of from Biggar Common Good fund to install improved lighting on the path between Campsie's garage and the Boghall estate, BCC carried out a survey of public opinion. 93 responses were received.

There was very strong support for this proposal from residents of in the Boghall/Coulter Rd area (95% of responses from those postcodes), and also from people in the Tinto View/Causeway End area (90% of responses from that area). Responses from residents elsewhere were more mixed, although there was still a small majority in favour of the proposal (57%).

A number of respondents highlighted other issues with this path/steps (the full report/analysis of the survey are available on the BCC website News page).

There were a number of survey responses, suggesting that it was SLC's responsibility to provide and pay for street lighting, so Lesley explained the differences between "Statutory Duties", where the duty must be performed, and "Statutory Powers" where a group can decide whether or not to do something. Street/Pavement lighting falls into the latter.

Some discussion then followed around further quotes; it was felt that this will be covered in accordance with the SLC procurement process.

Caz questioned whether BCC would have an ongoing maintenance responsibility, and Lesley explained that the basis of the quote from SLC was that once installed the lamp-posts would be adopted by SLC (Repairs/Renewals/Electricity supply).

ACTION - Ian and Alex to ask whether SLC will reconsider, and pay for the installation works from their own budget lines.

ACTION – Janet to email the SLC Head of Roads, similarly asking that SLC reconsiders, and forwarding the survey report to show the strength of feeling within the community.

ACTION – Janet to forward the survey report to the SLC Council Officer who original asked BCC to seek the community’s view on use of Common Good fund, as this would need to go to committee(s) for any final decision. In this communication Janet will stress that ideally, we would wish SLC to reconsider and finance this without recourse to the Biggar Common Good fund.

12. Grant Applications

Since the last meeting a £250 Clyde Windfarm micro-grant has been awarded to BDCH to assist with the costs of footpath improvements to the path from the Biggar Sewage Works to Pyatknowe, on the upper valley road.

Similarly, a further £100 micro-grant from the Glenkerie fund had been approved, to the Cornets (on top of the earlier £500 from Clyde fund) in connection with the survey of the ground under the site of the bonfire.

Neil has a further application for which he awaits further information, which has been requested from the applicant.

Lesley explained, for the benefit of new members, the role that Neil undertakes in connection with the various micro-grants administered by BCC.

13. Planning Report (written unless comment needed)

Crown Fire Escape – it was noted that the application, by Greene King, had been withdrawn.

14. Treasurer’s Monthly Report

This had been missed from the agenda, but a written report had been circulated prior to the meeting. *A copy of the March Treasurer’s Report is available (by request to any member of BCC).*

Summary of the balances held across the various accounts follows:

*Business Account: £ 0.00

* The next Admin Grant from SLC will be paid after the year’s accounts (to end March 2021) have been submitted and approved by SLC.

Clyde Windfarm Account: £2,465.02

Incentive Account: £4,605.71

The Incentive Account held four funding streams:

Glenkerie Windfarm micro-grant fund	£ 43.92
Incentive Fund	£ 761.52
Clyde Extension COVID fund	£2,300.27
Glenkerie COVID Fund	£1,500.00

BCC Assets Register: 1 x Canon Printer and 4 x BCC Banners.

- a) Peter commented that following a grant of £1,000 provided for the creation of a website, ‘What’s on in Biggar’, nothing appears to be happening on the website. Janet expressed similar concerns, that the site does not appear to be publicising on-line events that are taking place during lockdown. The £1,000 grant (from Clyde Extension COVID Fund in mid-2020) was towards the costs of creation of the site, and thus has been spent.

ACTION – Lesley will talk to Karen Pilpel, to whom the grant was made, to gain an understanding of the mechanisms in place to publish events on the site, and her plans to make to site more dynamic.

15. Scottish Government Strategic Transport Project Review – propose Janet to draft comment

This is a Scottish Government consultation regarding strategic transport priorities until 2042 and covers all modes of transport including road, train, bus and active travel. As a result of an initial appraisal last year cases for change and lists of options to achieve required changes have been developed at a local and national level. The case for change and options review are rather lengthy documents which have been circulated to all BCC members by Lesley. Robin has already commented.

Janet mentioned that the section regarding patient transport in Clydesdale seems to make the assumption that Biggar residents are 10 minutes away from a 'key' hospital. The suggestion that the Kello hospital is a key hospital, alongside the likes of Wishaw and Monklands needs to be challenged.

ACTION- Janet (with help from Neil) to pull together a BCC response. Any member who wishes to read the report and to comment should therefore feedback to Janet.

- a) Anne asked whether there was someone from the Health Authority in the Scottish Transport Group. Janet advised that she is not a member of the group mentioned, and that this Review is being done by the Scottish Gov and SPT. **ACTION - Anne will go back, through her Health & Social Care Network Group, to ask whether it might be possible to have a link bus from Biggar straight to Wishaw, Hairmyres and Monklands. Janet will include these points in the BCC response to the consultation.**

16.A.O.C.B.

- a) Litter – Ben Waine

Ben is very keen to keep he town beautiful and has concerns that some of the surrounding roads are heavily littered. He is considering setting up a Facebook page in an attempt to organise help to undertake more regular (perhaps fortnightly) litter picking.

Neil commented that the Civic Society generally organise two litter picks a year in Biggar and that from time to time the Primary School organise litter picks in the town centre (as do the Cubs & Scouts). The main A702 is the responsibility of the Trunk Roads Authority, who perhaps do not undertake clearance as often as they should. Outwith the speed limit areas there are clearly some safety issues. Peter commented that, in the past, groups of individuals with Community Service Orders has undertaken litter picking which may be an option to explore. Jimmy believes that such groups have in the past been supervised by someone who lives in the town, and that he would look out his contact details and pass back to the CC.

This is a big subject that it is suggested is deferred to a future meeting.

ACTION – Janet to seek to provide a copy of the Civic Society Risk Assessment, which can be plagiarised.

ACTION – Place as a distinct item on next month's Agenda

b) Clyde Mission Survey – Janet Moxley

This is a Scottish Gov project for revitalising/regenerating land within 500 metres of the Clyde. This links to potential for improvements to the area-wide network of paths, cycleways and bridleways, a topic that was discussed at the recent inter-CC meeting. A more extensive path network could benefit local residents who are walking and cycling more since COVID and boost tourism.

ACTION – Janet will pull together a response and circulate to members (deadline for responses 29th March)

17. Date of next meeting.

19th April 2021

Business Meeting Closed