

**Biggar Community Council**  
**Minutes of the meeting held at 7pm on 20/9/21 via Zoom**

**Present: BCC Community Councillors** Lesley Craise (Chair), Laura Shirley, Jimmy Ritchie, Roger Curtis, Peter Rae, Gillian Gardner, Bobby Colquhoun.

**BCC Associate members:** Anne Lindsay, Neil Ingram, Al Stewart.

**Ex Officio** Cllrs Ian McAllan and Alex Allison – South Lanarkshire Council (SLC).

2 members of the public.

**Apologies:** Mairi McAllan MSP, David Mundell MP, Jerry Sumpster, Janet Moxley\*, Ben Waine

\*As Janet's Zoom account is used for BCC meetings, she was logged into the meeting, but due to illness she did not participate after notification of apologies. Her video camera, microphone and speaker were switched off. Janet subsequently accessed the recording of the meeting to prepare the minutes.

**1) Minutes of the Previous Meeting (16 August 2021)**

Proposed: Roger. Seconded: Jimmy

**2) Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes**

None

**3) Matters raised by members of the public**

The lack of benches around the town is making it difficult for people who can only walk short distance to get about.

**4) Police report 14/08/21 – 20/9/21**

46 Incidents recorded. For comparison, in the same period there were 179 incidents recorded for Lanark and 303 for Carluke.

8 crime reports raised – 4 crimes of dishonesty (none involving residential properties) thefts (of which three were shoplifting), 2 cases of vandalism, 1 sexual offence (detected) and 1 case of culpable and reckless conduct (detected).

The police stated that there is nothing to indicate any specific trends that should cause any concerns to the local community.

Enquiries are ongoing into a recent incident of vandalism on the High Street. Scene of crime investigations have been arranged as it appears the person responsible touched the window with a hand prior to it being hit.

**5) SLC Councillors' Reports**

Cllr Allison

A lamp post on Biggar Mill Rd in the Burnbraes has been knocked but this is not unsafe. Lamp standards have been installed for the new lights on the path between Campsie's steps and the Boghall Estate.

Cllr McAllan

Still working to move forward the project for murals on the walls of Clydesdale Close.

Has contacted BEAR about the suitability of the proposed informal crossing on the A702 by the War Memorial. The chances of BEAR changing the design are low. Thelma Ingram reiterated that that a crossing without lights is likely to be of limited use to people with sight or mobility issues.

## **6) Treasurer's report**

### Account balances

1. Business Account Final balance £505.43. No change since previous meeting.
2. Clyde Windfarm Account Final balance £3521.32. Repayments of unused grants from the Community Fayre and Friends of Burnbraes, and payment of microgrant to the Rugby Club.
3. Incentive Account. Final balance £3993.50. There are four active funds within this account
  - i. Glenkerie Windfarm Microgrant Fund. Final balance £1735.52. Funds have been transferred in from the Glenkerie COVID account and reimbursement of unspent Community Fayre grant. Payment has been made to the Rugby Club.
  - ii. BCC Incentive Fund. Final balance £544.52. Reimbursement of unspent Community Fayre grants was made to the Clyde and Glenkerie accounts.
  - iii. Clyde Extension COVID fund. Final balance £1670.27 No transactions since last meeting.
  - iv. Community Action Plan fund. Final balance £43.19. Payment to leaflet holders where were dispatched incorrectly has been refunded and payment made for banner stickers.

Online banking Bank of Scotland offers free dual authorisation online banking. Agreed to pursue this.

## **7) Microgrants**

No new microgrant applications have been received since the last meeting.

**Action: Janet to post on Facebook reminding people of available microgrants.**

Reapplication within 12 months A group which has received funding from both the Clyde and Glenkerie funds within the last 12 months enquired about making a further application. It was agreed that this should not be allowed as it would be unfair to other groups. However, they are welcome to reapply to each fund 12 months after their previous applications.

## **8) The Bonfire**

Lesley has been in contact with SLC's Events Safety Advisory Group (ESAG).

Community Council insurance is only valid if the Community Council's name is on the application for insurance, and the event has to be organised by the Community Council. Lesley proposed that a Bonfire Sub-committee of Biggar CC be formed consisting of Jimmy, Peter, Laura, Lesley and Al (Only BCC members or Associate Members can sit on CC sub-committees). Paperwork for the insurance for the bonfire would be submitted by this sub-committee. SLC would then approach the insurance broker. It would be up to the broker to decide whether they can accept the risk. It was agreed that the bonfire sub-committee should be set up.

SLC will make the final decision on whether to allow the bonfire while considering the recommendations of ESAG. SLC allowed the bonfire in 2019 despite knowing the location of the gas main.

Al has been checking archive copies of the Gazette from the 1990s to see whether there are any records of discussion or consultation when the gas main was moved to its current location.

David Mundell has offered to lobby Scottish Gas in favour of the bonfire. Agreed that support from any elected members would be helpful. To date there has not been a concerted effort to galvanise public opinion, but this might be required in due course.

AI has approached the Farmer's Club and they would only allow a bonfire on the far corner of the showground, which is too far from the town. The site of the former West End bonfire at the top of the Rowhead Terrace slopes in the Burnbraes is too small and there are power cables in the vicinity.

If SLC do not give permission for the bonfire other options for Hogmanay entertainment will be considered, however holding the bonfire as normal remains the strongly preferred option.

### **9) Health and Social Care**

Anne reported on moves to improve integration of health and social care via strategic commissioning. There will be consultative meetings about the new strategy. It is important that there is good attendance at these to ensure that service users are heard.

**Action: Anne to keep BCC informed about dates of these meetings.**

Social care, in particular, is under-resourced. There needs to be increased funding from both UK and Scottish Government and this needs to be ring-fenced. There is a particular issue in the rural area where carers have to travel considerable distances between visits. Many residents are struggling to get care, and hospital discharges are being delayed because of lack of care.

### **10) Anti-social behaviour at Pentland Reach/Bizzyberry Hill**

There is often noisy anti-social behaviour from younger teenagers around Baird Way/ Bizzyberry Loan. There have been similar issues in the quarry and Lindsaylands Rd.

**Action: Cllr McAllan to contact the police.**

Roger pointed out that some young people are very concerned about environmental issues, but this doesn't always translate into not littering which is a problem in various areas.

**Action: Caz to approach Biggar High School to ask them to reinforce anti-littering messages to pupils.**

### **11) Planning Matters**

None of note.

### **12) Winter Resilience planning.**

This year SLC have offered insurance and equipment for volunteers carrying out snow clearance in areas not covered by council teams. This is very welcome.

Last year Biggar Community Action Group (BCAG) co-ordinated snow clearance volunteers at Millstone Park, Langvout Square, Leafield Rd and Westercrofts Gardens. BCAG are happy to do this again and hope to also be able to clear the path through Clydesdale Close to the Coop. More volunteers are needed to do a 2 hour shift on snowy mornings. Gareth Kirk (Westercrofts) and Bobby (South Back Road) offered to assist. Anyone else interested in helping should contact Lesley Craise. Individuals needing assistance should also contact Lesley.

North Back Rd is not gritted regularly but is on the main pedestrian route from Pentland Reach. Bobby noted that South Back Rd isn't gritted, although it is on SLC gritting map.

**Actions: Neil to raise these issues with SLC.**

**Neil to send gritting map to Roger**

Pentland Reach has grit bins, but they are empty as the roads have not been adopted by SLC

**Action: Neil to raise this with Story Homes.**

Emergency contact info for organisations involved in winter resilience will be posted on the BCC website and social media.

**Action: Neil to pass up to date contact info to Janet to post.**

### **13) Biggar Burn**

There have been comments on Facebook about the litter and vegetation in the Burn. There are strong feelings both for and against renaturalising the Burn.

There have been changes to the management of the Burn and the banks over the years e.g mowing frequency has been reduced to allow more natural vegetation to grow on the banks.

There is a healthy invertebrate population in the water and plenty of river trout, but sea trout are unable to get up the burn because of issues downstream. There are orchids in the vegetation by the burn in several places which flower if they do not get mown. The vegetation supports a range of insects and birds.

The Burnbraes, including the burn, is well used and use is increasing. There is an issue with rubbish being dropped in the Burnbraes at lunchtime and after school, although other park users usually pick this up. When the bank-side vegetation is mowed back the litter blows into the burn and is harder to collect. Friends of Burnbraes volunteers recently collected half a carrier bag of litter from the burn in the Burnbraes.

Bob Brownlie and Alan Jones are planning to clear vegetation and litter from the Burn in the War Memorial area on Mon 11<sup>th</sup> Oct ahead of the Remembrance Day. Members of the public are welcome to join them. Jimmy has heard from Alan Michie, the British Legion rep that the Remembrance Service may not take place.

SEPA and the Tweed Forum are now progressing their Biggar Burn Restoration Project which has been delayed while waiting for SLC's flood risk assessment which in turn has been delayed by COVID. The project has been exploring opportunities to improve the Biggar Burn and reduce flood risk. Upstream of Biggar, SEPA will work with landowners to reduce the amount of sediment entering the Burn. Within Biggar, the main focus will be the Burnbraes and towards the golf course and caravan site.

### **14) High St Pavements**

A slab outside Brownies had lifted and had been a trip hazard but has been removed and repaired with black tar. Black tar has been used for several pavement repairs, including outside the Corn Exchange and SLC had said that they are sourcing suitable replacement slabs. However, it now appears that they may not do this until it is clearer whether the bonfire will proceed as normal. Lesley emphasised the importance of reporting pavement defects.

**Action: Janet to post on BCC social media on to encourage reporting of pavement defects.**

### **15) BCC Newsletter**

Lesley offered to draft a newsletter, which will include winter readiness phone numbers and an update on the Community Action Plan.

**Action: All to give Lesley ideas for content. Lesley to draft newsletter.**

## 16) AOCB

- i. Seats Jimmy has been approached by people who would like to provide new benches to replace one of the “summer seats” between Millstone Park and the Boating Pond and also by Cadger’s Brig. However, SLC have a policy of not allowing new benches. Cllr Allison confirmed that SLC will only allow benches to be donated to cemeteries.  
**Action: Jimmy to find out why SLC will not allow benches to be donated outwith cemeteries.**
- ii. Conduct of BCC members. Lesley emphasised that members should not make comments which question the integrity of other members either in public or in private communications. Members should attempt to resolve issues by discussion between themselves, and if that fails the issue should be referred to the Chair.
- iii. Format of future meetings It was suggested that lack of face to face meetings might be leading to increased tensions within BCC. The pros and cons of face to face meetings were discussed. Lesley emphasised that it was important to use a format that everyone was comfortable with rather than simply taking a majority vote.  
**Action: Janet to include future meeting formats on the next agenda.**
- iv. Resignation of the Secretary. Janet tendered her resignation as Secretary shortly before the meeting, to allow members the opportunity to elect someone new to this post but offered to stand for re-election if this is the wish of other BCC members. Peter proposed that Janet remain as Secretary, and Bobby seconded this. There were no votes against.
- v. Main Windfarm Grants Peter asked why minutes of the main windfarm grant panels have not been circulated for some time. Lesley explained that the Clyde Windfarm panel uses an online system to decide grant applications and doesn’t hold meetings. The Clyde Extension fund panel does meet and has agreed to inform CCs of successful applications.  
**Action: Lesley to ask the Clyde Windfarm panel whether information on successful applications can be shared and share information on successful Clyde Extension applications.**
- vi. Community Action Plan Survey results An update on this will be available shortly after the survey closes on 30<sup>th</sup> Sept. Gareth Kirk, a member of the public, offered to help with data analysis as he has professional experience of this.

**Date of next meeting** Next 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 7pm via Zoom