

## **Biggar Community Council**

### **Bonfire Subcommittee Meeting**

**4/10/21**

Present: Lesley Craise  
Al Stewart  
Peter Rae  
Laura Shirley  
Jimmy Ritchie  
Neil Ingram  
Councillor Ian McAllan  
7 members of the public

Noted that it would be better to hold these meetings in the evening.

#### **Background**

During the preparation for this year's bonfire, it became clear that SLC would not be happy to provide insurance for the bonfire through the Community Council as has happened in the past, unless the Community Council is named as the organising body in all official paperwork. The Events Safety Advisory Group, a new body which came into existence in 2019, wanted to make accountability clear. Historically, accountability has lain somewhere between the Community Council and the Cornet's Club, which has done most of the work. The first thing that was done was to try and get a committee together consisting of community council and cornets. In the course of trying to do that, it was discovered that, under the terms of South Lanarkshire Council's Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils, it is not possible for a subcommittee of a Community Council to contain member who are not Community Council members. we ended up making a subcommittee of the Community Council called the bonfire committee, which is Lesley Craise, Al Stewart, Peter Rae, Laura Shirley, and Jimmy Ritchie. Lesley emphasised that there was no intention that the Community Council would take over. The Cornets do an excellent job in running the bonfire and if we can cope with the demands of the paperwork, the bonfire should be able to run much as usual.

#### **Paperwork**

1. Events plan – Al is working on this
2. Parades License had to be resubmitted because it was submitted in the name of the Cornets. This has been done.
3. Temporary Public Entertainment License also had to be resubmitted for the same reason. This has been done. There may be a £30 admin charge for this, but Lesley is attempting to resist this.
4. Insurance Proposal Form. A draft of this has been sent. The Community Council has never previously had to fill in a proposal form, but this has been asked for this year. Insurance is obviously key to running the event. It might be possible to get private insurance, but it is likely the cost of this would be at least 3k.

5. Risk assessment, a big piece of work which is still to be completed. Luckily, the risk assessment done last year gives an excellent steer. The ESAG are particularly concerned about the location of the gas pipe which runs underneath the site of the bonfire. The pipe has been there since 1993 and bonfires have been lit on top of it every year. When the Events Safety Advisory Group came on board in 2019, they were not happy about it, so this is probably the key part of the risk assessment. There are mitigations in place, like the layer of gravel which goes down and in 2019 the bonfire was moved a few feet so that is not actually over the pipe. We have been asked to provide a risk assessment for the event of a major explosion. The possibility of insurance will depend on the risk assessment.
6. TTRO (Temporary Traffic Restriction Order) Historically, this has been dealt with by Amey and the police. Police Scotland have taken a policy decision not to support traffic management for events like this so we will have to pay for hiring a traffic management company. Al is working on this. Cost will be in the thousands.

Questions raised by Isobel Lindsay which she suggested Councillor McAllan and the other councillors could help with.

What are the other events in South Lanark shire covered by SLC's Community Council insurance?

Why have the arrangements for traffic management changed? They have changed because of a change of policy in Police Scotland.

Isobel stated that there needs to be some challenges to the recent changes in policy. Local government needs to be an enabler for community development, community activity and community events. The location of the bonfire was discussed when the High Street Renovation took place. Considering there is parking on that site, the risks presented by a gas leak must be present all the time.

Ian agreed to challenge SLC on these issues.

Peter wondered if the traffic diversion was necessary. Lesley stated that she felt we would not be allowed to run the event without it. Ian will speak to the Police chief about Police Scotland's change of policy. The change in policy is recent. (Around August 2020)

### **How and when do we challenge these decisions?**

Initially we should cooperate and give Ian time to see what he can do. We should keep planning as if the bonfire is going ahead as normal. Ian agreed to report back within a week. Peter asked about the document written by Robin McAlpine and if this would be used. It was agreed this would be an excellent tool to raise awareness of, and challenge, the issues. Al made the point that, of the many agencies attending the ESAG, only Scottish Gas and the Fire Brigade have had difficulties with the event. The police have been complimentary about how well the event is run. A difficulty with the ESAG is that the representatives from the agencies keep changing.

Jimmy wondered about trying to push the gas board to move the pipe, but it was felt to be unlikely that this could happen this year. There is also the question of who pays for this. Our position would be that they should pay for this because they knew about the bonfire when they laid the gas pipe. Agreed that the priority is to get this year's bonfire up and running and Scottish Gas should be approached early in the New Year. They will be asked to test for a gas leak as close to the bonfire being lit as possible. Cost of moving pipe would be around

140k. Scottish Gas Networks are saying they only became aware of the bonfire in 2018. There has been a change in the agency responsible for the gas network. Peter made the point that nobody from the EASG attended the event. Peter raised the possibilities of an alternative to the bonfire. This has not been ruled out. Ian stressed the importance of keeping things moving. Stevie asked about the insurance position. Lesley clarified that SLC had not ruled out the possibility of insurance using the Community Council policy. There have been risk assessments in place for the bonfire for a number of years. Is there a role for the wider community? Yes. If current tactics do not work, we will need a community campaign. If Ian does not get satisfactory responses, then we need to move into campaign mode and then we will need the whole community to get behind the campaign.

### **Risk Assessment**

Lesley had wondered about having a control point at the bottom of the town. From here evacuation procedures could be communicated to the crowd and muster points identified. Various muster points were discussed. Cornets have radios and we could use these and will explore PA equipment at the bottom of the town. Stevie said that having a PA system at the bottom of the town might be helpful with the bottleneck that develops there and the splitting of the procession which tends to happen. Ideal would be to have the PA system in the Cross Keys. The cornets will explore this. Covid. Agreed to ask the public to wear masks and to have masks available. Discussion about numbers allowed. We are estimating numbers at under 4000 and therefore we do not need to ask for vaccine passports which are not practical.

Date of Next Meeting to be arranged