

Birse and Ballogie Community Council

Meeting Online on 9 February 2026

Minutes of Ordinary Meeting

1. Attendees

Present: - Dave Bracegirdle (DB), Cllr Ann Ross (AR); Sam Colley (SC); David Williamson DMW (Chair), Davie Winton (DW); Duncan Caird (DC)

Apologies:- Eryn Inglis (EI); Cllr Yi-pei Chou-Turvey (YCT)

2. Minutes of Meeting on 15th December 2025

These were proposed by DB and seconded by DW.

3. Treasurer's Report

DW confirmed that funds remain largely unchanged from the previous month at 30.09.25 stood at £3110. There remain a number of outstanding expenses which need to be claimed eg mileage, MS365. Given the earlier Aberdeenshire Council directive on Administrative grants, DMW proposed that B2C2 create and submit a budget for 2026-27. This will be circulated to B2C2 committee for comment/ approval.

ACTION: DMW/ DW

4. Aboyne Bridge

Two drop in sessions were held in Birse Hall (29 Jan) and Aboyne (4 Feb). The purpose of these sessions were to communicate the results of the failed attempt to repair the bridge. Council are now proposing two main options to provide a vehicular crossing.

DMW was unable to attend either drop in session as he was out of country. DMW spoke to Tim Stephen on two occasions before and after the drop in sessions and shared the content of those discussions. Tim Stephen, who is Marr Area Manager, has been detailed to provide a council managerial focus for this issue. Despite pressure to hold a public meeting which was being called for in some quarters, we agreed that the drop in sessions would provide a good forum to discuss the facts and get feedback. Tim had stated that 45 people attended the Birse session and 80 Aboyne. Council was still processing the feedback. The feedback was slightly different at the two sessions. Overall, there was general discontent and disappointment with the current status. The sentiment from the Birse meeting was that a vehicle access solution was required as soon as possible. The Aboyne response was more concerned about traffic flows. DMW understanding was that council would continue to work both options and would do so until a final decision is taken. There is a need to confirm the viability of each option, consider SEPA input, land ownership issues and provide more information before that decision can be taken. Council will consider the inputs and preferences from the community, but the decision will be made in accordance with normal council business.

Time is of the essence here for the community but at this stage council were not waiting for anything from the communities or action groups at this point.

DB had visited the Birse drop in session and felt that the session was very informative although the timescale for effecting either option was still uncertain. Different timescales were mentioned during the meeting which reflects the reality that absolute timescales are not known at this time.

Tim Stephen had made an offer of a meeting with B2C2 committee. He will be present at MDCC meeting on 26th Feb and DMW undertook to attend that meeting and report back. This meeting is open to the public and therefore other B2C2 committee members may attend. DMW has had discussions with MDCC to ensure alignment. DMW will keep the B2C2 committee informed on developments.

ACTION: DMW

At the previous meeting DMW raised the issue from resident David Simpson. QUOTE "Having to manage our life around the bridge's closure to traffic, is proving very time consuming, costly and very hazardous. To compound that, the road and pavement between St Mary's Well house and the bridge has not being maintained over the period since the bridge closed. The path is becoming more difficult to navigate due to it being over grown with weed/nettles and people are starting to walk on the road at this dangerous bend also the salt and grit on the roadside has been there since last winter causing drain blockages. I would have thought that the bridge and the small length of path at the south side of the river should be kept to the standard of that of the north side. Is it possible you could advise on how we get the said pavements kept in a reasonable condition?" UNQUOTE YCT had been on the bridge during the previous week and noted that extra grit bins had not been added. YCT stated that she will follow up with the officers to promote actions to assist the communities across the bridge to cope with the situation. YCT was not present at this meeting but an update is required.

ACTION YCT

5. Ballogie Nursery

Whilst there is no confirmed threat to Ballogie Nursery, the concern is that we might expect a further attempt to mothball or close in summer 2026. In anticipation further discussion is ongoing with AR, SC (Chair of PTA), DMW and Guy Haslam (Chair of Finzean CC) to maintain alignment on this issue. There are two strands to this effort. The first priority is to defend the current position with the Council run nursery. The second strand is to develop a plan for the nursery which can sustain this facility into the future. This is being worked by SC, DMW and Guy Haslam from Finzean.

ACTION: DMW/ SC

6. Parking/ Congestion at Potarch

As discussed in previous meetings, on certain days during this summer's hot weather period, the Potarch area attracted a very large number of visitors. A meeting had been

arranged with the Principal Landscape Services Officer in mid November. This meeting was called off due to snow. A second attempt was planned for 8th January but due to snow it was held online. The notes and actions from that meeting are still awaited. One comment made in the meeting was that the lease from the estate contained the requirement that toilet facilities are maintained there. SC will follow up with the estate to check whether that statement is correct. There will be a further meeting to discuss the way forward.

ACTION: DMW/ SC

7. Potarch toilets

The provision of adequate toilet facilities is seen as an essential element for the Potarch green amenity. The permanent toilet block at Potarch has been closed since 2010. AR had facilitated engagement with the council with a view to discussing a way forward to explore whether the “permanent” facilities can be re-instated at some point in the future. The following more detailed response had been received:-

I can advise that the “superloo” at Portach was installed in 2002 with this being a unit which was relocated from Oldmeldrum Recreation Ground. Drawings indicate this as being a Bradco unit (part of the then W + G Sissons/Franke group). A Review of project file documents also make reference to Cannault Semi Automatic Toilet however Google is not showing this in any searches. Our records also indicates that W + G Sissons were involved in the recommissioning of the facility.

The Super Loo was closed circa 2010 and from information held, it was operated via a mini computer which was obsolete at that time. Unfortunately the keys cannot be sourced, therefore to break into the unit would involve a lock smith and repairs to resecure the building.

I am advised that the entire control system and electrics would need replaced and as we have no specific detail on the unit, therefore it is difficult to assess the extent of cost or whether this may be possible. There are some record photos which show the stainless-steel interior and control switches for the various functions of the unit but it is understood that nothing would be functional.

If the community council want to further investigate, we are happy for you to do so, but our own thinking is that the building is now obsolete and needs to be removed. As you are aware there a portaloos located at Potarch.

This statement at least clarifies the situation. There were no immediate ideas about how this could be taken forward.

8. Local Place Plans (LPP)

DMW was contacted by Banchory CC with respect to B2C2 buying in to a Development charter which would guide individual LPPs. B2C2 along with Finzean had not contributed to this statement but DMW attended a meeting with other local CCs and also provided input into the charter. With regards to LPPs, it is evident that B2C2 is

alone in respect of not having such a plan in place. The content of these LPPs varies according to community council. DMW undertook to share content of LPPs and the creation of an LPP would be discussed at the next meeting.

ACTION DMW

9. Emergency Resilience

Nothing to report

10. Defibrillator Maintenance

B2C2 has three defibrillators in the community. Aberdeenshire council have been clear that we should not use the Administrative Grant for maintenance of defibrillators. The meeting agreed that these defibrillators need to be maintained in working order with pads and battery replaced as required. B2C2 will seek funding for replacements items but in the event of failure to secure additional funding would be prepared to use existing funds to maintain while those exist.

ACTION DMW

11. Birse hall

BACA had held its AGM recently and has approached B2C2 with two issues for consideration.

Firstly, the battery and pads for the defibrillator at Birse Hall need renewing. B2C2 had funded the previous replacements in 2021 and the BACA had requested that B2C2 would do this again. The battery is £280 and the pads are £67. B2C2 had been instructed that future administrative grant funds should not be used for this purpose. It was agreed however that B2C2 had some residual funds and would continue to use these for essential replacements on defibrillators.

Secondly BACA had proposed that Birse Hall costs are covered in future by payment of a specific invoice rather than the current ad hoc arrangement of B2C2 making a donation for the use of Birse Hall. The proposed cost per meeting of £30 seemed reasonable. DMW undertook to respond to BACA.

ACTION DMW

12. Grit Bins

B2C2 had previously been informed that grit bins would no longer be maintained and may be removed. EI had previously indicated that her immediate area in Marywell wished to retain and maintain the local grit bin. The deadline of December 19th was highlighted and EI would follow up if interest remained.

ACTION EI

13. Neighbourhood Watch

The WhatsApp group seems to be working well. Currently there are 76 subscribers and it has proved to be useful in engaging the community to provide action on areas of concern.

14. Communications

a. Notice Boards

The old Ballogie notice board was recovered. DB has completed refurbishment. The intent is to position this notice board in the Potarch area probably on the toilet block. This would give us 3 community notice boards.

ACTION DB/ DMW

b. Facebook

No new actions re Facebook. Helen Jackson continues to successfully operate B2C2 Facebook site on behalf of B2C2 committee. Helen's continuing support is much appreciated.

c. Website

DC continues to maintain the website but it is difficult to maintain and the technical support by Scottish Tech Army has been discontinued. DMW suggested that given the fact that the costs associated with generating and maintaining a website were admissible under the administrative grant that B2C2 should generate a new website using a WIX subscription. DMW would discuss with DC. This cost would be included in the budget for next year.

ACTION DMW/DC

15. Open Reach

Openreach, in an effort to showcase the work being done, and to engage with communities still to benefit from the planned works, were bringing a roadshow session to Aboyne on 11th February. DMW would attend. *QUOTE At this event, Openreach team members will be bringing along a showcase van, fully equipped with examples of fibre infrastructure, and information on the work that has been carried out, as well as plans for their work in the coming months and years. This would be a prime opportunity for local residents, local businesses, community groups, and various other stakeholders to speak directly with Openreach, and get more information on what full-fibre broadband is, hear about the benefits better digital connectivity can bring, and understand the future plans for the area. This event also gives the public an opportunity to ask questions directly to Openreach. UNQUOTE*

16. Police & Road Safety

Nothing to report.

17. Westhill & Echt – Aberdeenshire Council Funding Share

Westhill & Echt CC are leading a campaign to secure more equitable funding for Aberdeenshire. They specifically asked for our support to a prepared statement on this. At the last meeting AR provided some explanation of the role of COSLA and the negotiation. DMW passed on these observations to WECC. They had responded last week to the effect that they generally understood that situation but were still working to achieve the objective. They indicated that a revised statement was imminent. DMW undertook to circulate when received.

ACTION DMW

18. Next Meeting – Monday 20th April 2026 at 1930 Birse Hall

19. Proposed Future Meeting Timetable – all 1930 at Birse Hall

- 20th April 2026
- 15th Jun 2026 (AGM)
- 24th Aug 2026
- 2nd Nov 2026
- 11 Jan 2027