

Birse and Ballogie Community Council

Meeting in Birse Hall on 27th October 2025

Minutes of Ordinary Meeting

1. Attendees

Present: - Dave Bracegirdle (DB), Cllr Ann Ross (AR); Yvonne Allan (YA); Eryn Inglis (EI); Sam Colley (SC); David Williamson DMW (Chair), Cllr Yi-pei Chou-Turvey (YCT)

Apologies:- Paul Montgomery (PM); Davie Winton (DW); Duncan Caird (DC)

2. Minutes of Meeting on 1st September 2025

These were proposed by DB and seconded by EI.

3. Treasurer's Report

The treasurer was not present but provided his report ahead of the meeting. Funds remain largely unchanged from the previous month at 30.09.25 stood at £3095.38.

On 29th August an email was sent to all community councils which places conditions on the use of the administrative grant in this financial year. The general thrust of this email is that the administrative grant henceforth can only be used for administration and nothing else. If we don't spend the full grant Aberdeenshire Council will seek to recover the balance from us at the end of the period. This was not felt to be a welcome development which would have a negative impact on B2C2 activity.

DMW had since the last meeting sought clarification on this matter whilst also conveying the general discontent felt regarding this measure. The view was this provided no incentive for B2C2 to manage their costs within the grant. The strategy agreed was that the committee members should claim all admissible expenses but may exercise the option to donate the equivalent amount back into the B2C2 account. Given the distances that all committee members travelled to attend meetings it was agreed that any travel costs on B2C2 business including travel to and from meetings could be expensed. The chair and treasurer would claim for provision of Microsoft 365, stationery costs, printer cartridges etc.

4. Ballogie Nursery

AR reported that at the recent ECS (Education & Children Services) meeting, she had asked the Director of Education, Laurence Finlay for an update as to what was happening regarding the nursery review. He stated that he had met with the Scottish government to discuss the national work looking at guidance for temporary closure which is to be updated nationally. A report will be coming the ECS meeting on 29th January 2026. Whilst there is no immediate threat to Ballogie Nursery, the general view was that we might expect a further attempt to mothball or close in 2026.

Sam Colley is now chair of the PTA. SC reported on the campaign to market Ballogie nursery in the wider area, hold open days and coffee mornings to ensure higher numbers in the coming year. B2C2 would remain supportive. AR informed the meeting of the budget cycle which will lead to forthcoming budgets being set in February for schools and nurseries. DMW indicated that he would set up a meeting with AR, SC and Guy Haslam (Chair of Finzean CC) to agree forward actions and maintain alignment on this issue.

ACTION DMW

5. Aboyne Bridge

B2C2 continue to monitor reporting from Aberdeenshire Council on the bridge repair. A more detailed schedule is required. The latest update is as follows:-

General Update on Testing and Programme

The following testing, targeted to focus on the main areas of concern, has now been completed:-

- ground penetrating radar (GPR) scan of the main span deck*
- further investigations of the hinge on the main span and the Southern flood arches*
- laboratory testing of reinforcement samples to confirm the yield strength*
- following review of the data gathered from the GPR, trial pits were excavated to verify the results by examining the condition of the concrete and exposed reinforcement in key areas*

Our Consultants are continuing to progress with the design, supported by the outcome of the testing to minimise the interventions required.

The updated anticipated Programme:

Design and independent check – March – January 2025

Tender – February 2026 (Subject to Committee Approval and available funding)

Award – April 2026

Construction – May 2026 – December 2027

6. Parking/ Congestion at Potarch

As discussed at the last B2C2 meeting, on certain days during this summer's hot weather period, the Potarch area attracted a very large number of visitors. Local resident Tracey Stanton raised the concern initially about the number of parked cars, which were blocking access to her property whilst also restricting access up the road to Shooting Greens. Tracey took a lot of photos to illustrate the problem. B2C2 committee member Eryn Inglis also witnessed one event where the police were involved. The police were attempting to get car owners to move the cars which were dangerously parked but were inhibited by the fact that car owners were not present to move their cars. There was a genuine fear that the parking would lead to a serious road traffic incident. It was clearly a situation which was fundamentally unsafe.

Tracey Stanton, Eryn Inglis and DMW met at Potarch on Saturday 6th September to

discuss the events and also make some suggestions about how the situation might be improved in the future. Clearly, we cannot prevent people from visiting the location and equally we have desire to stop or limit people from using the facility. The area is available for everyone to enjoy, however the safety of public needs to be preserved. The underlying problem is inadequate parking capacity combined with a sudden unplanned huge demand for parking which leads to car owners parking just where ever they can find space irrespective of the hazards. On both occasions cars were parked on both sides of the road leading to the junction with B993 opposite Potarch lodge effectively reducing the road to single file small vehicles.

Two lines of solution were proposed whilst there may be other ideas out there. Firstly restrict parking say by limited double yellow lines in the most dangerous areas to enable safe traffic flow and secondly provide more parking capacity. There is already quite a significant parking capacity but the main parking area capacity could be increased possibly by a factor of two or more. The main parking area represents quite a large area, which has an area at the centre with a few small trees and bushes. There are no designated areas for parking and this means that cars are parked randomly around the periphery of the area. The parking area is rutted and the surface is in a poor condition. The feeling was that increased capacity could be achieved by removal of the central island, resurfacing the whole area and marking designated parking spaces. This will significantly increase safe parking capacity and thereby reduce the road parking issue.

There is clearly a significant problem when there is a sudden influx of very large numbers to Potarch in good weather. We need to use the coming months to look at options, consult stakeholders and effect solutions before next summer. This is not a problem which is going to disappear without concerted action.

It was agreed that AR would follow up. Following this meeting AR reported back with a potential meeting with the Principal Landscape Services Officer.

ACTION: AR/ DMW

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 for a significant number of years. "Temporary" toilet facilities had been provided in the form of a Portaloo. The current B2C2 committee were not aware of the root problem with the permanent facilities. As a first step it was proposed that AR engage the council with a view to at least visiting the site and discussing a way forward to explore whether the "permanent" facilities can be re-instated at some point in the future.

ACTION AR/ DMW

8. Emergency Resilience

Storm Amy precipitated a partial mobilisation of the Resilience Team. There had been a power outage of around 12 hours but no significant issues arose. It was a useful reminder of the impact of power outages. DMW attended the Aberdeenshire wide resilience conference held at Bridge of Don in early October. A Resilience leads meeting was to be held on 28th October. The Resilience Plan would be updated and key messages distributed within the community during November.

ACTION DMW.

9. Defibrillator Maintenance

DC has now taken on the responsibility to periodically check on the condition of the defibrillator at Ballogie Nursery. B2C2 committee agreed that we should maintain all three defibrillators in good working order. Hitherto B2C2 had used its administration grant funding to cover B2C2. To the dismay of B2C2, Aberdeenshire council has directed B2C2 not to use funds from the Administration grant for maintenance of these essential community life saving devices. It was agreed that while funds remain available B2C2 would continue to fund maintenance.

10. Grit Bins

B2C2 had previously been informed that grit bins would no longer be maintained and may be removed. EI had indicated that her immediate area in Marywell wished to retain and maintain the local grit bin.

ACTION EI

11. Neighbourhood Watch

The WhatsApp group seems to be working well. Currently there are 75 subscribers and it has proved to be useful in engaging the community to provide action on areas of concern. It had been very useful in the recent Storm Amy event during the period when internet remained available during the power outage. Progress on restoring power had been communicated.

12. 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. This would give us 3 community notice boards.

ACTION DB

b. Website/ Facebook

DC continues to maintain the website.

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.

13. Police & Road Safety

a. Police Report

Nothing to report.

- b. 20 mph Speed limit** - the designated 20mph areas came into operation on Sept 22nd. The notice to this effect was circulated to the full community by email.

14. Community Hospitals

AR explained that Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership are holding a review of all community hospitals in Aberdeenshire. They have already conducted a Deeside Strategic Needs Review of which included both Glen O'Dee & Aboyne Community Hospitals and this is an additional review Aberdeenshire wide. AR did not support the inclusion of Deeside community hospitals in this review.

AR explained that community hospitals are in the heart of our community. The GPs from Aboyne look after the in-patients along with day case patients. AR encouraged the committee and everyone to complete the Aberdeenshire H&SCP's survey: <https://engage.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/community-hospitals...> The closing date for the survey is 16th November, 2025. DMW offered to promote this through the B2C2 email distribution.

ACTION DMW

15. Next Meeting – Monday 15th December at 1930 online

It was agreed that we hold this next meeting as an online event.

16. Proposed Future Meetings – all 1930 at Birse Hall

- 9th Feb 26
- 13th April 26
- 15th Jun 2026 (AGM)
- 31st Aug 2026