

Birse and Ballogie Community Council

Meeting in Birse Hall on 2nd June 2025

Minutes of Ordinary Meeting

1. Attendees

Present: - Cllr Ann Ross (AR); Cllr Yi-pei Chou Turvey (YT); Yvonne Allan (YA); Eryn Inglis (EI); Davie Winton (DW); Paul Montgomery (PM); David Williamson DMW (Chair)

Apologies:- Duncan Caird (DC); Dave Bracegirdle (DB)

2. Minutes of Meeting on 7th April 2025

These were proposed by YA and seconded by WI.

3. Treasurer's Report

Funds at 31.03.25 stood at £2645.71. Funds received were:- Annual Administrative Grant £579 and £2400 Communications Grant. The expenditure since the last meeting was £1800 for radios for Resilience Communication.

4. Ballogie Nursery

At the end of March 2025, parents were advised that the Ballogie nursery would be "mothballed" at the end of the forthcoming term. This decision came with no prior notice or consultation. Since this announcement B2C2 Chair has worked very closely with Finzean Community Council (Guy Haslam) and parent teacher group to coordinate efforts to reverse this decision. This has involved meetings with parents and all Ward councillors (Ann Ross, Yi-pei Chou Turvey, Eileen Durno), community association reps, two separate petitions have been raised, numerous emails to councillors, MPs and MSPs, press releases, FOI requests etc. A major obstacle has been the information available and our understanding of the processes involved.. The education department have been given the responsibility for this issue. They have been generally slow in responding to requests for information. The clock was ticking meanwhile on the mothballing at the end of this term. On 16th May DMW with Abby Nicol attended a meeting with Director of Education to attempt to explain our concerns. Following this, DMW and Abby Nicol spoke at the Education and Children's services Committee on 22nd May 2025 in favour of reversing this decision.

The main points expressed were:-

- The real intent is not "mothballing" but closure and this approach has been adopted to circumvent consultation requirement. Consultation is fundamental.
- The impact assessment has not been conducted objectively and fairly. It distorts the picture.

- The decision to “mothball” has significance to the wider community. It will have a serious impact on Finzean school status which in the longer term may lead to closure. It is a measure which discourages families with young children from moving to the area. This has implications beyond education and decisions should be taken by elected representatives.
- The associated cost savings are not transparent and further work is necessary to examine all the options.

B2C2 is very appreciative of the support, help and advice provided by Cllr Ann Ross throughout. Efforts are still ongoing to overturn this decision. A further meeting is being held with full council on Monday 9th June.

5. Aboyne Bridge

Since the March 12th 2025 the announcement which will see Aboyne Bridge undergo limited strengthening and repair to enable it to re-open with an 18-tonne vehicle limit. We have been told that the project is expected to take 22 months to deliver from the date of their approval (ie early 2027).

There have been no recent updates. It was agreed that a transparent schedule was necessary to be able to monitor progress.

ACTION: AR To request this

6. Emergency Resilience

The issue of maintaining communications during a power outage has been an ongoing issue. The Resilience group has acquired 8 higher powered radios and these have been distributed to the 8 groups. A meeting was held on 10th April to distribute radios and discuss protocols. Further drills will be undertaken.

DMW circulated within the Resilience leads the possibility of applying for more funding up to £2k per area. The only suggestion so far is the possibility of installing a generator at Birse Hall. DMW is in contact with Birse Community Association to explore this possibility.

ACTION: DMW

7. Glenskinnan Wind farm

DMW was invited along with other local Community councils and area groups to attend an online meeting held by Local Energy Scotland on 21st May. The Scottish govt are trying to encourage shared ownership on renewable projects. This meeting was not set up by the Developer. DMW had previously replied to the initial invitation, explaining that he felt there was little point in exploring this as we had no money to make an investment of this nature. However, DMW was persuaded to attend and felt obliged to explore any potential avenues for future income. The option was explained

and there was a general consensus that there was little prospect of B2C2 participating in shared ownership.

8. IJB Budget proposals

At the last meeting, Liz Bracegirdle gave an impassioned description of the work and situation within the care sector. Donside Community Council had highlighted their concerns in an email to many local community councils. DMW undertook to follow up with Donside Council and Councillors to check status. We were informed that we were the only CC to respond to that email. Since then the way forward has been announced. The consensus was that whilst this is an important issue, B2C2 have limited influence to bring to this issue and no further action is proposed.

9. Neighbourhood Watch WhatsApp

The WhatsApp group seems to be working well. Currently there are 64 subscribers and it appears to be proving useful in engaging the community to provide action on areas of concern.

10. Communications

a. Notice Boards

The old Ballogie notice board was recovered. DB is attempting 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

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

11. Police & Road Safety

a. Police Report

Nothing to report

b. Cattie Burn to Shooting Greens Road

Repairs have recently been undertaken.

- c. **Speed limit on the B976 through Ballogie** - No change from previous meeting. This item is on hold pending the 20mph review.

d. Talk on Digital fraud – at Finzean Hall Wed 16th Apr

PC Mike Urquhart from NE crime reduction team gave an informative talk on digital fraud at Finzean hall. Finzean CC had invited B2C2 to participate in their session. The invitation had been circulated and there was representation from B2C2 area. Fraud is very common and is conducted on an industrial scale. About £1m/ month is lost in Aberdeenshire alone. Most people are too embarrassed to admit their losses. This is very difficult to police with perpetrators often in foreign countries. The key messages were to avoid using public wifi and never use it for financial matters. Online banking apps are the most secure method of executing financial matters. There is also a reality that fraudsters are now employing AI in pursuit of their gains. The message is that we all need to be extra vigilant.

12. Planters

The previous meeting agreed to remove existing planters with the exception of those planters adjacent to DB, DW and EI properties, where they will be maintained by DB,DW and EI respectively.

ACTION: DMW/ DB to visit and remove as appropriate.

13. Date of Next Meeting –

18th August at 1930 at Birse Hall.