

ST MONANS AND ABERCROMBIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the St Monans and Abercrombie Community Council
held on Monday, 21 June 2021, at 7.30 pm by video conference

Present:

| | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| V Salvage (Vice Chair) | S Bridges (Secretary) | W Morris (Treasurer) |
| M Ashworth | M Syme | H Ironside |
| S Collier | B Buchan | Cllr Holt |
| Cllr Docherty | N Cowie (co-opted) | |

Apologies: Cllr Porteous

Members of the public: 11

1. Welcome and apologies

No declarations of interest were noted at the beginning of the meeting and the Secretary confirmed the meeting was quorate.

2. The Community Larder project presentation

Mrs Salvage invited Rev Hugh Wallace to provide an update on progress with the St Monans Community Larder scheme. A summary of this report is attached as an appendix to these minutes.

3. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising.

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2021, were taken as read. Under matters arising:

3.1 Lack of lairs within St Monans Cemetery

Cllr Docherty confirmed that Fife Council has identified cemetery funding and plans are being developed to extend cemetery capacity throughout Fife. More details to follow.

Cllr Docherty

3.2 Water supply at St Monans Cemetery

Cllr Docherty and Mrs Salvage are still waiting for a response from Fife Council (Bereavement Services) concerning the reconnection of a water supply at St Monans cemetery.

Cllr
Docherty/
V Salvage

3.3 SNP party manifesto commitment to fund play parks

Cllr Docherty said he received information about the Scottish governments proposal to fund outdoor playparks - approx. £60 million to be distributed among the 32 local authorities. The local authorities would, in turn, be responsible for determining how the monies would be distributed. Cllr Docherty also noted that Fife Council had

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distributed £320,000 as part of the outdoor community play fund as part of the wider national play strategy. This was not the same as the money announced by the Scottish government. In response to a question from a member of the public, Cllr Docherty noted that there were 430 playparks in Fife alone but couldn't answer how much would be made available to the community as clearly at this point, Fife Council had not made any decision on how this additional money would be allocated.

3.4. 'Welcome to St Monans' pack

Mr Collier reported that the new sections were being added to the document and he had been in discussion with Victoria Riding from the parish church regarding additional content. S Collier

3.5 Fife Council Rewilding project

Cllr Holt has now circulated the report by Fife Council on its rewilding proposals to the Community Councillors. Cllr Holt reminded the meeting that the Community Council needed to provide Fife Council with a list of areas that should not be rewilded.

Mr Collier confirmed that he had emailed the Community Council members to confirm that Fife Council had agreed to reverse re-wilding in areas of the village that the community deemed necessary. The meeting agreed to his suggestion that any area used for community purposes, children's recreation and tourism as well as areas that may present a danger to residents and visitors should not be subject to rewilding. He suggested the following area for a return to maintenance:

- The Mair
- The play park by Newark Street
- The play park by the old railway line
- The flat grassland leading from the Rose Street Car Park towards the Windmill
- The Salt Pans area
- The area adjacent to the Burn from the Church car park bridge

Mr Collier concluded by reminding the meeting that the community did want rewilding, but it had to be sensibly located and the need for local knowledge in relation to where these areas should be sited, was crucial. In response to a question from Mr Buchan, Mr Collier said he was planning to rework the proposed rewilding map of the area and redistribute it to Community Council members and submit a copy to officials at Fife Council.

There being no other comments, Mrs Syme proposed (Mr Morris supported) that the minutes be adopted. This was approved.

4. Acting Chair's report

4.1 Right of way route (Braehead/Station Road)

Mrs Salvage advised the meeting of the ongoing discussions with Fife Council's Access Officer regarding the right of way from Braehead to Station Road. Mrs Salvage provided some historical background to the pathway. The route was known as 'Takin' the Back Brae' right up until around the 1930's. For several hundred years, St Monans fishermen had to dry their nets to stop them rotting before they were repaired and stored at the change of seasons - when the fishing nets changed for spring/summer and autumn/winter. The nets belonging to 'West the Toun' fishermen were brought up the Broad Wynd and by 'Takin' the Back Brae to the Brae-head where the nets were dried. (The 'East the toun' nets were dried up on the Mair.)

The right of way appears to have been undermined by years of neglect and poor maintenance by Fife Council and of being undermined by previous building work in or around 2009. She noted that she had a letter from Fife Council going back to that year, where Council officials had given an undertaking to keep monitoring the land and take necessary enforcement action to maintain the route. Unfortunately, this never materialised and the community was now looking at the probability of having to securely close off the route at both ends, due to legitimate health and safety concerns.

Mr Bridges confirmed that Fife Council had advised that the repair costs would be considerable as it would require significant structural work, including drainage and retaining walls. He was also advised by the Access Officer that Fife Council had been unable to find the original owner of the land. The neighbour of the adjacent garden had also failed to track down an owner. However, regardless of who owned the land, Fife Council confirmed that any landowner did not have any legal responsibility to repair the damaged land. He was also advised by Fife Council that it would take 20 years of non-use for the right of way to be permanently lost.

Mrs Salvage concluded that she hoped to see what funding was available to repair and safely re-open this route. Cllr Docherty suggested that she approach Scottish Natural Heritage (using their Nature Scot website) to see what grants were available for such a project. The meeting reluctantly agreed with Mr Colliers observation that it made sense to make the route safe and secure meantime and to work on a plan to repair the right of way.

4.2 Co-option of Mr Norman Cowie onto the Community Council

Mrs Salvage then proposed (Mr Bridges supported) that Mr Norman Cowie, in his capacity as Senior Manager at the ENeRGI charity, be appointed as a co-opted (and non-voting) member of the Community Council. The meeting voted and agreed to this appointment with only one dissent.

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Mr Cowie then provided a brief introduction about himself and the work of the ENeRGI charity. He noted that a considerable amount of work was spent on people with mental health, drug and alcohol dependency issues; the work of the drop-in centre (currently closed due to Covid restrictions) and the cause for concern of drug dependency issues here in St Monans. He also promoted both the Men's and Women's befriending service organised by ENeRGI.

Cllr Holt suggested that the drop-in centre should now be open and asked Mr Cowie to get in touch with her to discuss this further.

She also advised that in connection with recent drug related incidents, Fife Council was aware of the current increasing problems and had started looking for funding to replace the community worker role previously undertaken by Sonja Potjewijd. Also noted responsibility for the Braid Court Action Group had been taken over by the Community Learning and Development team at Fife.

5. Secretary's Report

It is hoped that the next meeting of the Community Council would be a public facing one, venue either at the town hall or the church hall (subject to national Covid restrictions). He also noted that the Community police team had written to advise that they would be willing to attend the next public meeting.

6. Treasurer's Report

An outstanding invoice to Pathhead nurseries had now been paid. Otherwise, it was noted that there was no movement in the accounts for the previous month.

7. Members Reports

- i. *Planning matters:* Mrs Syme noted there was nothing of significant concern in any planning applications submitted for the previous month.
- ii. *Community support initiatives:* Mr Collier's reported that anti-social behaviour had been recorded in and around East Street. Some new drugs were appearing within the village and there had been an increase in drug dealing activity. He was saddened to report that there had been one drug related death reported in the last few weeks. In addition, two further incidents had been reported to him concerning the activities of drug addicts – one being seen trying to befriend children around the playpark and nursery areas. A spent needle had also been found on the long grass at the Mair. All incidents had been reported to the police by Mr Collier. But rather disappointingly, some of these incidents had not been reported by other members of the public or nursery staff who had witnessed the incidents. Again, the Community Council urged residents to report every incident and

suspicion immediately to the police. The incident had also been reported to the local Head teacher, who has responsibility for the nursery.

- iii. *New Children's playpark at the Mair:* Mrs Ironside provided a brief update on progress with plans to create a new playpark within St Monans:
 - Bowhouse have confirmed availability for the committee to fundraise at their 11/12 July weekend market (and not June as advised at the previous meeting)
 - Falkland Performance & Auto Centre had very kindly donated £500 towards the funding.
 - Members of the committee had met again with Iain Wilson (Parks Development Officer at Fife Council) to complete a final site visit and discuss next steps. Subject to confirmation of a significant donation, the committee believed it was ready to commence the work over the summer. Iain Wilson has suggested that it will take at least ten weeks from ordering the equipment to having it available for installation. It was therefore important that the existing equipment was not removed too early over the summer period.
 - A new QR code has been activated with PayPal to allow donations to be provided electronically.
 - Local businesses have been approached for donations.
- iv. *Beach clean day -27 June:* Mrs Ashworth was pleased to report that Fife Council had now relented and will allow 32 adults to collect rubbish at the annual beach clean event. Covid secure arrangements are in place. Kick-off is at 11am.

8. Councillor Updates

Cllr Docherty was pleased to report that there was no a phone number available for residents to call to book a time for an appointment for the Pittenweem recycling centre booking service. The number is 03451 55 55 50. Cllr Docherty suggested that further announcements regarding recycling centres were about to be proposed at the next subcommittee of Fife Council. Cllr Holt expressed her disappointment about the ongoing Council commitment to online bookings. She had created a public petition on Change.org and so far, had collected 2,400 signatures to object to online collections. She also noted that the Fife Courier had followed up on this story. It was also pointed out that the company which owns the Fife recycling centres is an 'arms-length' company and had recommended the continuation of the online booking system and that Fife Council had endorsed their recommendation.

Mr Bridges read out Cllr Porteous' report:

- As summer holiday start, both parents and careers of school children should remind children of the dangers of farming equipment and construction equipment around the villages.

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- Many will have seen the excellent article in the Courier magazine regarding Sea pools. Fife Council will be visiting the St Moans Sea pool with Cllr Porteous in approximately three weeks' time
- Following a recent North East Fife Area meeting, Fife Council had agreed to produce a public briefing note on the implications of the East Neuk and Landward becoming the next national park in Scotland.

9. Public Questions

Mrs Salvage then invited questions from the public.

- i. *'Secretary's email correspondence:* A resident opened his remarks by stating that he had been personally responsible for organising the cutting of the grass on the Mair and despite being asked not to do so by Council officials, he had gone ahead to positive feedback from local residents. He then stated that through his communications with Fife Council, he was aware that a meeting was to take place between Fife Council and community representatives to discuss the rewilding concerns and that in email correspondence between the Community Council, the elected Councillors and Fife Council, the Secretary had prevented him (the resident) from attending this meeting. Citing that he had "been defamed", he demanded to know what right the Secretary had to prevent him from attending this meeting.

Mr Bridges expressed surprise that the resident had been made aware of the email correspondence given its limited circulation, but pointed out that it was a proposed private meeting arranged for local Councillors and Community Councillor's as elected representatives of the community. He reminded the resident that he was not a representative of any community group and noted that not even the Chair of the Residents Association had been invited to this meeting.

Cllr Holt stated that Mr Bridges was being disingenuous and that he had implied the resident was a rabble rouser and trouble maker in the email exchanges and that she didn't believe it fair that Community Councillors were doing this. She was disturbed about the content of the emails as it had caused her a lot of trouble with Council officials. She also stated that the resident could ask for copies of the correspondence to be made available as a subject access request to the Community Council.

Mr Bridges disagreed with Cllr Holt's accusations and expressed disappointment in Cllr Holt not raising any concerns directly with either himself or the Chair at the time of the email exchange, relying instead on raising it at the public meeting. At this point, the Chair agreed that this matter should be taken out of the public meeting and moved to the next question.

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- ii. *Gourley Crescent parking:* Mr Buchan raised a concern about dangerous parking in the corner of Gourlay Crescent. Cllr Docherty agreed to follow this up.

Mr Buchan also reported a car in the lock up area at Inverie Street and Queen Margaret St which was believed to be abandoned as the owner has permanently left St Monans.

- iii. *Castle Street 'shrine':* Mr Buchan also noted what he considered the beginnings of a shrine in a garden on Castle Street. However, a resident respectfully suggested that this was not the case and invited Mr Buchan to go round and take a closer look at the items on the garden.

B Buchan

- iv. *Lochay Homes development:* Two residents raised fresh concerns about Lochay Homes lack of engagement with the community with documented disruptions (trees and shrubbery being ripped out on land outwith the development site, dumping of rubbish in front of the nearby play park etc) being reported but not actioned. Mr Bridges mentioned that the Community Council had formally written asking for engagement with the developers at the beginning of the works, but had not received any response. It was also noted that Cllr Porteous had been trying to approach the senior executive of the company as well. One resident asked for the Community Council to publicise this lack of engagement with the local press. The other noted the photographs she had taken as evidence of Lochay Homes unreasonable behaviour.

It was agreed that Mr Morris and Mrs Salvage would visit the site and try and seek a meeting with local foreman to express resident concerns.

S Salvage/
W Morris

Mrs Syme also asked that Mr Morris raise the matter of poor drainage and a sudden and unexplainable level of excess grey water appearing at the back of Newark Street. It was noted that inadequate drainage had been an issue raised at the planning stage and perhaps it was a connected issue.

10. AOCB

- i. *Vacancy on Community Council:* Mrs Salvage noted the vacancy and asked for members of the community to consider standing as Community Councillors. Interested candidates can submit their names to Mrs Salvage or Mr Bridges, together with a short description of the candidate (max 50 words please) before 12 noon on Monday 16 August. Candidates could also address the meeting if they wished. A secret ballot would then be taken at the meeting by the Community Councillors
- ii. *Abercrombie and Stenton right of way.* Mrs Ashworth noted that the local farmer used to cut the grass along this right of way and asked whether Fife

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Council would now take this task on. Cllr Docherty suggested contacting Scott Clelland at Environment Services. However, Mr Morris also offered to come up with his strimmer and complete the job himself.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Community Council will be on **Monday 16 August 2021** at 7.30pm. Hopefully this will be a face-to-face meeting. Details will be publicised on the Community website and on social media.

There being no other business, Mrs Salvage closed the meeting.


Chair