



CROMAR COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF ONLINE MEETING 19th April 2023

Present: Simon Welfare (Chairman), David Ellis (Secretary/Treasurer), Sandra van Heusden, Joyce Lovie, Carmela Earle-Wright, Councillor Sarah Brown

Apologies: Andrew Wilson and Juliet Allam

1. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the on-line meeting held on 22nd March 2023 were approved. Approval was proposed by Sandra van Heusden and seconded by Joyce Lovie.

2. Tarland Burn Restoration

Dr Susan Cooksley joined the meeting to provide an overview of the proposed Tarland Burn restoration. Susan is a member of the Wetlands Group which is part of the Tarland Development Group and is on the project team (with Kathy Dale, Simon Power, RSPB). She said she had worked in the area over the last 18 years via the Dee Catchment Partnership and the James Hutton Institute. During that time, the stretch of the Tarland Burn between the village and the Coull bridge was always thought of as a site where there was a potential for improvement, since it is in a 'poor state environmentally'. The current Tarland Burn is so far from being a natural burn that it has the same classification (a 'Heavily Modified Waterbody') as Aberdeen Harbour, is ecologically quite poor, and contributes to water quality problems downstream.

The new Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund has provided an opportunity to explore what could be done at the site. Susan emphasised that no one had fixed ideas about how the burn should be restored and that there was no plan to turn it into something from the past. Rather a compromise is sought which will enable a more natural watercourse, improve water quality and provide a range of habitats that will encourage and support wildlife - while maintaining the current footpath access.

Susan explained that the restoration is not a natural flood management project (a much greater area of land would be required for this), however the project team is working with Aberdeenshire Council to ensure that their upcoming flood management studies can link to the restoration.

The purpose of the recent drop-in session and consultation had been to get ideas and input from the community at a very early stage in the hope that this would then allow a design to be developed that reflects the interests of everyone. The team has received a large number of emails and written comments (over 60) expressing views and putting forward ideas. A wide range of supporting, opposing and other detailed comments have been received. All those who have asked questions have had these responded to individually.

The next step is to take the comments and use these to help shape a design. The design will be offered to the community for further input. It will be presented to the landowner, The MacRobert Trust estate, and it will be up to the estate to decide, after due consideration, whether or not to take it forward to a planning application. *Update - Simon Power, Manager of the MacRobert estate, wished to correct this section. The ideal scenario, which I hope we can achieve, he said, is that the Trust will make a decision about whether it is content with the final preferred option after hearing the response to the proposals from the community and after consulting its farm tenants. If, after that, it is the case that the Trust is content for a project to proceed, then the TDG can start the process of applying for grant for the delivery stage which, if successful, will commence with a planning application; this will give the community a further opportunity to comment. Even if the Trust were not happy to proceed with the project it is still possible for the TDG to seek variations to the final proposal to arrive at one that is acceptable to the Trust and the community.*

Susan explained that in any such planning process, Aberdeenshire Council and the SEPA flood team are incredibly rigorous in terms of the modelling work that is required to show that there will be no increased flood risk either upstream or downstream of the footprint of the project and therefore any design produced would be modelled, adjusted and remodelled until flood risks were eliminated.

The Chairman said that the Community Council would be willing to organise a meeting so that any issues arising from a design could be discussed. Susan welcomed this suggestion and in particular the opportunity to ensure that such a meeting would be managed to ensure a productive and constructive discussion in which all would be able to be heard respectfully. In terms of the timing of such a meeting it is a Catch 22 situation. If held soon then there would not be a design that had been through the modelling process for flood risk management and Susan was concerned that people would feel this was something that needed to be established ahead of any meeting. However if the meeting is held once a design has been taken forward to a modelling process people may feel that they are being ignored. Due to the short timescale for the funding the project group feels it is best to create a design based on the considerable feedback already received, then once this has been through the flood risk assessment take it back to the community to discuss. This design would be an example of ONE possible design that could bring the desired environmental benefits while not increasing flood risk to land or property.

Susan is involved in running a guided walk covering similar work that was done on the Beltie Burn at Torphins and all are welcome to book tickets for this. She said she would be happy to provide a separate guided walk for people from Cromar and/or to

take people round individually if requested. This would enable discussions about the need and benefit for stream restoration while enabling people to see the kinds of works that are being proposed.

3. Police Report

Sergeant Masson joined the meeting. The Police Report from the 2nd April was discussed. There were a large number of incidents reported, some as a result of activity of the Roads Police Team. It was reassuring that many of the incidents were shown as having been “detected”. It had been surprising to everyone to hear of the cannabis cultivation in Aboyne. This showed that it was not only isolated rural properties that might be involved in this illegal activity. The police had had a recent orientation session on the Tarland Trails 2.

Sergeant Masson described the Junior Cop initiative where primary school children used a speed gun and speeding drivers could opt for a dressing down from the children in place of a fine.

4. Councillors’ Reports

Cllr. Sarah Brown reported that she had met with the Roads and Services Manager of Aberdeenshire Council. She had expressed the disappointment of the community about the failure to repair the many potholes in Tarland Square and also about the length of time it was taking to have the broken street light outside the Paper Shop replaced.

5. Cromar Report

Roads, Drains and Bridges

It had been reported that the yellow lines opposite the entrance to the Commercial Hotel had not been reinstated following recent work. In addition a member of the public has raised concerns regarding vehicles parking on the hill in Aberdeen Road and thus restricting traffic flow.

Nothing has yet happened with the promised improvements to road signage and marking at Coull Bridge.

The MacRobertTrust Estate had reported that they were awaiting a quotation for the repair or replacement of the pedestrian bridge across the Tarland Burn.

The need for additional parking for both cars and bikes close to the village centre was discussed. Several suggestions were put forward as to possible locations. It was noted that bike parking in the Square had not been a serious issue since the opening of Tarland Trails 2 but these were early days and the Community Council is discussing the provision of bike parking with Aberdeenshire Council in any case. The Square was also being used for parking by walking groups who use the extensive network of paths throughout Cromar.

Resilience Plan

The draft wording of the resilience plan had been reviewed by the head of the resilience team of Aberdeenshire Council who confirmed that no changes were

needed. The Chairman was still trying to obtain delivery charges from the Royal Mail.

Broadband Improvements

The Secretary provided an update on the public meeting held on the 30th and 31st March. An application had been made by Broadway to the Department of Science, Information and Technology. This was expected to take eight to twelve weeks for a decision. This timetable would mean an answer might be given between the end of May and the end of June. Approval would then allow the installation of the first hardware, probably near the Market Stance in Tarland.

It was reported that the Scottish Government had begun an “open market review” of how it might support providing a 1 gigabit connection to properties in Scotland. Nothing was expected from the review in the short term and the possible delivery timetable had not been determined.

Broadway Broadband have asked residents of Tarland, Logie Coldstone, Coull and the wider Cromar area to register their interest in having a faster connection at the Broadway Broadband website. This can be done by registering at the website <https://broadwaybroadband.co.uk> and can be done with no obligation.

Social Media

Sandra van Heusden reported that her dexterity issues were limiting what could be posted on the Community Council’s Facebook page. There had been no change to the website.

Bellcote Restoration

The Chairman was awaiting a reply from Cheryl Roberts of Aberdeenshire Council to the enquiry made previously concerning the restoration of the Bellcote of the Auld Kirk in Tarland.

Treasurer’s Report

The account is showing a balance of £1325.01.

6. Logie Coldstone Trust

Joyce Lovie said that all was well with the Trust. The Community Café has restarted and is going well. This is to be held on the first Friday of the month, the next being 5th May. The annual duck race will take place on Sunday 7th May.

7. Tarland Development Group

The Community Council wished to congratulate the TDG on the successful launch of Tarland Trails 2. The “soft launch” had allowed usage to build up over a number of days. Sandra van Heusden explained that there may be a delay in producing the minutes of TDG meetings until she had the use of both hands to allow her to use a keyboard and mouse.

8. Planning Applications

An application had been submitted to renew one existing planning permission.

9. Any Other Business

Aileen Longino has very kindly agreed to plant the hanging baskets as she has done so successfully in earlier years. Bedding plants will be made available for planting in Logie Coldstone. The Secretary said he would inquire from Landscape Services when the plants might be available.

There are a number of vacancies on the Community Council. The deadline for submitting nominations is 31st May. Members were asked to approach those who might wish to serve on the Community Council. More participation from residents of Tarland village was particularly needed.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held via Zoom at 6 pm on Wednesday 24th May 2023.