



Minutes of the Meeting in at St Drostan's Hall, Inch

on Monday 27 January 2025

1. Present: – Andy Miller (Chair and Oyne), Wally Rhodes (Treasurer and Leslie), Janette Taylor (Inch), Mark Worsley (Chapel of Garioch), Lynda Bain (Secretary and Chapel of Garioch), David Wyllie (Premnay), Gill Walker (Rayne), Gordon Hood (Inch), Duncan Thow (Balquhain and Chapel of Garioch), Fiona Heinonen (Bennachie Leisure Centre), Vikki Pattis (co-opted Inch), Fran Moldaschl (co-opted Inch), Alan Simpson (Leslie).

Councillor Sam Payne.

Councillor Moray Grant, Kevin Shand (Vice Chair and Culsalmond), Gill Bishop (Durno) by Zoom link

Members of public: Linda Reid, Emma Rattray, Sarah Morbey, Rosie Leggas, John Whalen, Rev. Ian Manson.

Apologies – Frank Musgrave (Oyne), Diana Muriel (Rayne)

2. Approval of previous minutes: Proposed by GH , seconded by DT.

3. Police report – no report.

4. Shevock Burns Allotments (Rosie Leggas and John Whalen) – no allotments currently in Inch. RL donating the land. If successful there is scope to enlarge the current proposed area of 3000m². Non profit making; for individual and groups; communal area provided; car parking area needed; water pump needed; tool shed needed. Application will need to be made to the council for change of use from agricultural land. Cost £4000. Application for funding will be made to the Glens of Foudland Windfarm by the end of the month. AM suggested contacting Area Manager for help with planning as this could tie into the Local Place Plan. Suggestions made – ask for whole area to be allocated, Big Lottery Fund, St James' Place, NESCANs, Men's Shed tie in, speaking to other allotments and Allotment Association. FH offered help to find funds and write applications.

5. a Financial statement - £2561 at start of next financial year.

b. Resilience – no power cuts locally in recent storm. Chapel of Garioch generator up and running. 18 February – meeting at look at Premnay Hall as a resilience hub. JT posts several posts in the run up to a storm. JT approaching other halls to become hubs and then will look at risk assessments, GDP etc. Sandbags in Inch running low. Plastic bags better than canvas ones which fall apart.

c. Newsletter – next one will be out end of March.

d. Social Media – small number of road works to post. The date the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone came into operational in Scotland was Saturday 25th January. This means it is a legal requirement for all bird keepers to follow strict biosecurity measures to help protect their flocks from the threat of avian flu.

6. Roads and Transport – no useful progress with buildout and exit from Rothney Court. Both a danger.

A96 – thanks go to FM for his work in reading the 2000 page review of the A96 corridor. The impact will now be limited in the BCC area. FM has offered to draft a letter to MSPs.

FM's report to BCC – *“As the proposal to dual the A96 has progressed BCC has been actively involved at every stage of the project, representing environmental, social and financial issues of concern to residents, but all options for the A96 dualling come through BCC area so we have not previously supported one any one option. However the recommendations of the A96 Corridor Review are beneficial and have no signify downsides for BCC residents. I recommend that BCC supports the proposals of the review, asks local MSP's to support the recommendations of the Corridor Review and makes a submission in the public consultation supporting the outcomes of the review.*

This will save avoid years of disruption, prevents the dual carriageway construction encroaching on Bennachie Special Landscape Area, and destroying ancient woodland and some of the best farmland in Scotland and will be £2.billion to £4 billion cheaper than unnecessary dualling of the road.

In **December 2011** the Scottish Government announced a plan to dual the A96 from Aberdeen to Inverness, by 2030 completing a dual carriageway network between all Scottish cities. Objectives included improving journey times between Aberdeen and Inverness, improving road safety, supporting sustainable economic growth and reducing the environment effect on communities.

In **December 2020** Transport Scotland published the **preferred final route**: south of Inverurie, over the existing A96 bridge at Inveramsay, past Pitscurrie, through native woodland at Logie, through some of Scotland's best arable farmland north of Old Rayne , with access / egress at Colpy and then broadly following the existing A96 route through the Glens. **This route was agreed by the Scottish Government in August 2021.**

As part of the “Bute House Agreement” in 2021 the Scottish Government initiated an **A96 Corridor Review**. The review was scheduled for completion by the end of 2022, but was actually published in **November 2024**. The review only covered the A96 from Aberdeen to Nairn as dualling from the Nairn has already been agreed, following a Public Enquiry detailed engineering is in progress. The Review recommended a **“Refined Package of Interventions”**, comprising Active Communities; Improved Public Transport Passenger Interchange Facilities; Investment in Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) and Mobility as a Service (MaaS); Linespeed, Passenger and Freight Capacity Improvements on the Aberdeen to Inverness Railway Line; Elgin Bypass; Keith Bypass; Targeted Road Safety Improvements; and A96 Electric Corridor. The refined package it estimated to cost in the range of £501 million to £1 billion at 2022 prices, which compares with a range of £2.5 billion to £5 billion for dualling the A96 from the east of Nairn to Aberdeen. The Minister announced a 12 week public consultation period, closing on February 21st 2025 and will hold a face to face briefing with local MSP's.

The review is supported by 2,000 pages of engineering reports, which are available on Transport Scotland website and which I have read. The process is very well structured. The way forward has to conform to 20 national strategy/policies, 6 regional and 5 local policies. Criteria are defined by within the relevant strategies and policies so the outcomes are objective. The review recognises many issues we had previously raised: lack of public transport in rural areas,

disabled access to transport, traffic levels between Inverurie and Elgin do not meet Transport Scotland's threshold for dualling; reduction in commuting and business travel since the pandemic; tension between car reduction to meet climate change targets and increasing road capacity by dualling, increasing rail capacity; need for "joined up" local bus and rail services. The contractor undertook detailed development of 13 options for improvement. Different combinations of improvements were considered which identified the 8 components of the Refined Package as delivering the optimal economic, environmental and social benefits. A bypass for Inverurie was considered but was not justified- this alleviates an original concern of ours that the proposed Inverurie bypass destroyed valuable environmental areas around Aquorthies, encroached on Bennachie and did nothing to relieve the congestion in Inverurie.

There will be minimal impacts on Bennachie Community Council area. Loss of native woodland at Logie and highest quality arable farmland north of old Rayne will be avoided. There will be some local works- on to the existing A96 route. "Targeted Road safety Improvements" will include overtaking lanes and junction improvements which will cause some disruption, but very minor compared to dualling and the "A96 Electric Corridor" will include the installation of electric chargers. which again are immaterial compared to dualling and which may provide local business opportunities.

The A96 Corridor Review Refined Package of Interventions is much better for the BCC area than full dualling and I recommend that BCC supports this. If Community Councillors agree to this I will draft a BCC submission for the consultation for endorsement by the officers. Most MSP's have been critical of the Scottish Government so I recommend that we also contact all local MSP's to make our views known. I will also prepare a draft a letter to go to relevant MSP's."

7. BCC subgroups

a. Health

FM has written to Alex Pirie of AHSCP to ask for confirmation:

1. That a meeting will be held as promised including the chair and officers of the IJB, FOIH and BCC to review the overall health and social care situation in Inch and district following the closure of Inch Hospital
2. To ensure that this meeting is held sufficiently in advance of any IJB full meeting discussion of a wellbeing hub so that there is time for BCC to arrange to attend the IJB meeting and, if BCC consider it appropriate, request to speak to the meeting.

b. Bennachie Area Community Action Plan – The draft CAP was circulated prior to the meeting and all that needs to be agreed now is the time frames for the actions. JT to update and recirculate these for comments. JT gave a quick run through of the presentation given at the meeting looking at Development Trusts.

A meeting was held with local groups to look at the possibility of setting up a development trust. JT will arrange a meeting with Huntly Development Trust and DTAS for information. Although it would be quick to set up it could take 5 years to get fully up and operational and earning money. Huntly have income from a wind turbine. There will also be a green space meeting next month.

c. Correen Hill Windfarm Development – discussion regarding joint letter with Donside CC and Tap O'North CC to Land and Forest Scotland asking them to pause planning process for a

stakeholder and community consultation. Majority decision to sign the letter. No application has been lodged yet.

d. Paths Group – part of Green Space group which will meet in February

8 Aberdeenshire Council

a Insch Library – Following talks between the Institute Trustees and the Aberdeenshire Council Library services there has been an offer made by the Institute Trustees which provides savings for the Council and makes it more favourable for the library to be located within the Institute. This proposal has to go to the various committees to be agreed but is seen positively by all parties concerned.

There is no intention of reducing opening hours or services. Additional opening hours to allow working families to access the library will be explored and run on a voluntary basis. Volunteers can be trained up to allow this to proceed.

The utilisation and sustainability of the Community Centre at Insch is going to be reviewed and Aberdeenshire Council will be in contact with the Bennachie Community Council and Community to discuss this further.

The current library assistant hours at Insch are 7, despite the fact that all FOI requests have stated that Insch has 5 library assistant hours. The five hours are the library opening times, with the assistant using the remaining two hours for outreach i.e. Bookbug sessions, book clubs etc. It was suggested that rather than the library assistant using the two hours on outreach, that these would be better spent in public facing time on a Saturday morning (restoring the library's pre-covid 10-12am opening slot), with volunteers filling the outreach quota.

A report will go forward to the Garioch Area Committee and then progress to the Communities Committee on 13 February. The decision will rest with the Communities Committee. The report suggests changes to the library estate in Insch, Kintore and Newmachar. Concern that some of the report appendices would not be seen by the committee. *Action Cllr Grant to ask about missing figures.* A FOI request has shown that 8 of the libraries facing closure, one of which is Insch, have seen growth. A request to speak can be made. It was noted that Insch Primary has no library and Insch Library has an excellent local history section.

B Insch School Playground – the surface is breaking up, there are holes and problems with drainage in the playground. There is no budget this year for improvements. Historically previous works paid for by the PTA were substandard. The state of the playground could become a health and safety issue. The playground is currently rated as a

Level C state and needs to be a Level A or B to get priority for work to be done. BCC agrees it is unacceptable for the playground to remain in the current state.

There is little space for PE inside the school (hall is used as overspill dining room). A planning application for a new nursery freeing up space was approved but this has lapsed. What is happening regarding this? Previously too expensive to hire BLC. *Action FH to discuss current costs at BLC.*

9 Chapel of Garioch/Pitcaple – Chapel of Garioch Village Hall now has an SSN funded generator ready for use. Discussion over security. The hall will be closed for 10 days for asbestos to be removed.

10 Culsalmond/Colpy – currently surveying to find out views on the future of the community education centre. Problem with fence which may need to be cemented down.

11 Durno/Whiteford – Cllr Grant raised the lighting issue between Whiteford Bridge and the A96 with the Roads and Infrastructure team. He received a reply (dated 7.1.24!) stating that the council is waiting on SSE. However, according to a local Whiteford resident, the same question was raised in 2022 and the exact same reply received on 11.2.22 (enquiry no 666426). This seems very unsatisfactory. Can the Roads and Infrastructure team be pressed further on this? It might be a small section that is impacted but it is a significant safety issue for Whiteford/Durno residents.

FORK has nothing further to report – they continue to liaise with a number of charities and are working on a Business Plan. The Church of Scotland has not communicated any further progress with regard to dates of the planned closure of the church.

12 Leslie – the Men's Shed has started. They hold fortnightly meetings on a Thursday. It was agreed they could present at the next meeting.

13 Oyne – has grant funding from the area committee for paths. *AM to meet with Roads to discuss speeding – as Chair of BCC.*

14 Premnay – JT and DW meeting 18 February to discuss Premnay Hall becoming a resilience hub.

15 Rayne – pavements not cleared in icy weather so parents with prams forced onto road which is cleared. There were a couple of near misses. JT to share information about Snow Warden Scheme.

Black bins were not emptied for 6 weeks. Has been logged but nothing has happened. *GW to contact Cllrs Payne and Grant.*

Speeding traffic is a problem. Flashing signs are not deterring speeders. *AM to pick up with Roads when he meets them.* Queried whether Rayne would be included in 20mph rollout.

16 Insch – covered previously.

17 Planning and Consultation

GH has circulated comments on each application. This week's Oyne application requires justification from the applicant.

Crematorium – the applicant has to ensure that air quality standards are met –

03.04 the cremator that is installed meets those determining parameters and emissions the are detailed within Table 4.1 and 4.2 within the Air Quality Assessment of Emissions to Atmosphere from Glack Crematorium, Mains of Glack, Aberdeenshire produced by ADM Ltd

Reason – to ensure the air quality is not adversely impacted by the development, ensuring that there is no undue loss of amenity for surrounding properties.

10 – Prior to occupancy of the hereby approved development, a formal surfaced footway (kerbed, surfaced and drained) link is to be constructed from the proposed footpath within the application site to the bus shelter on the C77c. The footway is to cross the B9001 NE off, and adjacent to, the field access to the SUDS basin.

Reason- to ensure safe access for pedestrians.

BESS – ER attended the public meeting about the BESS on 4 December. There was a lack of forewarning with some people only hearing the day before. The land has been offered. There is no plan for getting power to and from the site. There is a problem with a shared path. The company do not yet know what batteries they are going to use. Batteries will need to be swapped out every 15-20 years. No transformer etc.. The plan might therefore need to double or triple the site. SSI site next door which means there are wildlife issues. A traffic survey would be done in December which would not show a true picture of year round traffic. There are another 2 battery sites in Rotheinorman. The feeling is this is a land opportunity and therefore a poor site. Fire retardants would be very harmful for the SSI area. A suds pond would be required. There will be further consultation on February.

18 Date of next meeting Monday 24 February 2025.