

Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council

Minutes – July 2004

Approved

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Chair: Murdo Macdonald

0. Patras Report

As well as mounting a display of photographs of the occasion Ian Mackie spoke briefly to thank community council for supporting his family's trip. They were very pleased to be able to carry the scrolls and flags on St Andrews' behalf. The family had been very warmly received by the Mayors of Patras and Rion in memory of their father, lost at sea just off Rion in 1944 during the liberation of Greece. A wreath was laid at the site of the wreck from a Greek Navy Vessel. The trip and wreath-laying was well supported by our diplomatic and military representatives in Greece.

Patras will be European City of Culture in 2006. On the basis of the hospitality the Mackies received he was sure that any representatives from St Andrews would be well received particularly in the aftermath of the media coverage their visit had received.

He added that various of their Greek hosts would be in the UK in 2005; he hoped that should they be able to get to St Andrews we would give them a warm greeting.

1. Attendance

Community Councillors: Laurel Aquilar, Ken Crichton, Richard Douglas, Ken Fraser, Ian Goudie, Joe Lamb, Chris Lesurf, Pete Lindsay, Dennis Macdonald, Joe Peterson, Bruce Ryan, Ewen Sparks, Cynthia Tero, Penny Uprichard,

Students Association: Simon Atkins, Ben Reilly, Bonnie Ryder

Fife Councillors: Sheila Black, Jane Ann Liston, Frances Melville, Bill Sangster

Apologies: Donald Macgregor, Bette Christie, Archie Strachan, George Davidson, Ian Hamilton.

2. Minutes of June 2004

Accepted

3. Presentations

3.2. Leuchars Briefing

Sqn Leader McCord, OC Business Management, (handling the noise grants scheme amongst other things) was accompanied by Sqn Leader Smith from the flying side. Rather than make a formal presentation they took questions.

Asked about the possibility of civilian flights in and out of Leuchars Sqn Ldr McCord explained the plans are currently quite small. Though there was some interest from the 'budget' airlines it seemed that they were just interested in bringing pressure on Edinburgh to reduce fees.

Having three squadrons resident Leuchars doesn't have much space for operating airliners and the numbers of passengers involved. Looking rather more at the business/executive jet market-which fits better with what spare capacity there is, probably no more than 6 planes at a time for now. Capacity will be rather dependent on future defence policy. He agreed with a point made that a military base might be unsuitable for scheduled civil operations due to unexpected crises arising. Another problem is differences in planning timescales between military and business planning. The RAF's long term is 5 years, where business look at 25 years for airport facilities. That is why they are taking commercial involvement slowly; so they don't get into something one or other side may regret in 15-20 years time.

The main constraint at the moment on size of aircraft that can operate from Leuchars is number and type of fire engines, and the size of aircraft they can handle.

When recent correspondence in the press concerning holding night operations at the height of summer was raised Sqn Ldr Smith pointed out that it was necessary to train for night operations all year round to maintain levels of preparedness for real operations which might occur at any time.

On a question about possible pollution of the countryside by jet fuel Sqn Ldr McCord said that he had asked the Leuchars Environmental Protection Officer about this. It seems that legally there are no obligations on the RAF. It is a matter for the local authority. He did point out that RAF personnel work with jet fuel all the time to no ill-effects. There is a survey ongoing in Moray to determine levels of unburnt fuel in the countryside surrounding Lossiemouth. Leuchars would be likely to be similar. They have asked Fife Council to undertake a similar survey locally to assess the situation.

Asked about rumours of more squadrons coming to Leuchars and the effects this would have on schools and accommodation in the area, Sqn Ldr McCord confirmed that it is only a rumour. Eventually there will be normal rotation of squadrons in perhaps five years time, and re-equipping to the Typhoon Euro-Fighter but there will be about the same number of planes. Sqn Ldr Smith added that there was speculation that an RAF station will close as a result of defence reviews. As stated earlier when talking about capacity for civilian flights, there is no room to take more planes at Leuchars; the excess planes will probably be mothballed.

A point was made about the undesirability of unannounced low-flying, such as the Red Arrows display recently for the Royal & Ancient. As it was unadvertised the low aircraft caused some alarm to people not expecting them.

4. Fife Councillors

4.1. Frances Melville (West)

4.1.1. Bruce embankment

Mostly of the proposal was approved, but the design of the railings to be further discussed. She has asked for community council specifically to be included in this.

Penny Uprichard & Richard Douglas

4.1.2. South Street

Despite what was said last month by Scottish Enterprise Fife she now understands that a planning application is some way off. She would like feedback from community council on the proposals.

Trees: she understands that even if only the sick ones are taken down now the others may well have to be replaced in 5 years for the other reasons mentioned; such as roots damaging services.

The proposed works will be phased, avoiding the 2005 Open Golf Championship, from Bell St eastwards. Though it was said the work could be done without stopping traffic flow in South Street; she could not see how that could easily be achieved.

Penny Uprichard gave a personal view. Starting with the trees she explained that though there had been discussion at the recent planning committee of seeking an independent view on the state of the trees and their effects on the roads, pavements and buildings she had obtained an informal assessment from a third party already. This concluded that 52 big trees are in fine condition. 18 small trees planted in recent years are in trouble though the four 4 small trees nearest the West Port are doing well. She did not think this justified cutting them all down.

She went on to make some points about traffic. The increase in traffic in St Andrews is unsustainable; yet there are even more housing developments on formerly uninhabited sites; the tourist industry want to bring in more visitors all the time; the University wants to develop in the centre. Yet the council is reducing the parking in the town centre. Petheram car park is no answer, it is too far for the elderly or disabled to walk to the centre. There are not even parking rights for residents of the centre. She warned that though use of cars in the centre could be reduced through the combination of reduced access and increased development-generated traffic pressure it would destroy the town centre as a commercial entity.

4.1.3. Cowes Coachworks

Development committee were unhappy with the lack of parking space provided within the proposal to build flats on this site; residents seem to be expected to park their cars on public ground at the entrance to Cockshaugh Park.

4.1.4. Lamenting the passing of the TMP working groups

While they were not perfect by any means, at least the old Tourism Management Plan working groups gave a better link with the likes of Scottish Enterprise than is seen at the moment.

Ian Goudie endorsed Cllr Melville's comments. The groups were one place that transport issues were discussed, which does not happen now. More and more funding and related projects are coming through unelected and unaccountable bodies. He has read in the press that Scottish Enterprise is to spend around £1.6M on projects in St Andrews, but there has been no consultation with the community. There should be an overall consultation on the various plans for Bus Station, South Street, Petheram Bridge and car parking rather than the current piecemeal approach, picking plans off one by one and regarding them in isolation.

4.1.5. St Andrews-Guardbridge Cycle Track

Noted the problems of briars breaking through the tarmac; work is to be done to repair the affected section.

4.2. Sheila Black (South)

4.2.1. Bless the community

[June 6.7.] There will be some gardening work done at Gibson House, possibly including chip spreading. Joe Peterson also mentioned that there would also be entertainments at Balnacarron and others. He is still working on arranging something for the sheltered housing areas.

4.2.2. New tenancy agreement

Noted the introduction of a new tenancy agreement; this does not affect right-to-buy.

4.2.3. Sheltered homes

Have now been linked in to the community alarm system.

4.2.4 Fence Repair at Viaduct Walk

Is underway and very nearly complete.

4.2.5. New Recycling Facility

Drink cans recycle point at Safeway/Morrisons.

4.3. Bill Sangster (Central)

4.3.1. Pavement Cleaning

Fife Council now have a steam cleaning machine which is bringing the flagstones up 'as good as new'.

4.3.2. Floral Displays

These are now all up for the summer.

Joe Peterson noted that Alec Rintoul was watering the planters at the war memorial on top of his other watering tasks and suggested community council should send a letter of appreciation for his assistance. This was agreed

Joe Peterson to write

Some new heavy planting tubs, a result of the extra funding reported a few months ago, are to be placed on various sites such as roundabouts and perhaps other roadside spaces, with the assistance of Fife Council for the heavy lifting and positioning. As there are still one or two tubs to be used Joe Peterson asked for suggestions for locations to be passed to him.

4.3.3. Argyle St rose beds

These have been replanted with flowers, courtesy of Transportation Service. Cynthia Tero pointed that while the Argyle St entrance beds were replanted, the Viaduct Walk/Lade Braes end were still in a very sad state.

4.3.4 Bus Stop Shelters

Showed pictures of the type of shelters to be erected at the Hospital and at St Mary's Place.

The St Mary's Place shelter was scheduled to wait for the Market St improvements, but as those are some way off Cllr Sangster will press for doing this sooner.

4.3.5. Pelican Crossing at South St

A box of spare parts has been found for the audible warning so the crossing does not need to be replaced.

Cllr Frances Melville confirmed that as a result of representations this crossing will not be replaced with a Zebra as proposed as part of the South St upgrade.

4.3.6. Litter at Blackfriars

Murdo Macdonald raised the problem of wind-blown rubbish collecting around Blackfriars Chapel. It did not seem to be being cleared.

Cllr Sangster has already reported this; the street sweepers should be clearing it.

4.3.7. Library and Disabled Toilet Access

Murdo Macdonald passed on reports that access to some of the toilets for disabled people in Church Square was only available when the Library is open because of some problems over keys.

Cllr Sangster will investigate.

4.3.8. Blocked Drains

Murdo Macdonald had noticed that a number of drains in the town centre seem blocked – water is running over the top not down. He asked when they were scheduled to be cleared.

Cllr Sangster replied that he understood that drains were not cleared routinely, only as and when they were reported as blocked or slow-draining. Contact the Local Office with location details.

4.4. Jane Ann Liston (South East)

4.4.1. Craigtoun 25th vintage rally

This had to be abandoned as unseasonably heavy rain overnight had softened the ground too much. Cllr Liston speculated on the likelihood that climate change due to carbon dioxide from fossil fuels (ie petrol and diesel) might be an ironic contributory factor. It is likely that the anniversary rally will be rescheduled later in the summer.

4.4.2. St Andrews Citizen Archive

Following up a recent letter in the Citizen she has asked for the microfilm archive to be returned to St Andrews from Cupar where it had joined various other historical resources. While accepting this was done with the best of intentions she has asked for it to be returned to its natural home in St Andrews, which has been agreed.

4.4.3. Representation of Young People

Following from various attempts by community council to increase youth involvement over the years and discussions at a recent Madras School Board she asked whether community council would consider invite Madras to nominate a representative. The Rector says there are people 'queuing' to come along as representatives to community council.

4.4.4. Lammis Market

The next working group meeting will be held in St Andrews later in the week, following the pressure she and Cllr Sangster put on to have it moved from Cupar so community council and other local representatives could attend easily.

Dennis MacDonald asked whether the fair would be open on Sunday again as last year? Councillors will report back on this.

4.4.6. Flat Clearing

There seemed to be a lot of piles of black bags and overflowing bins on the streets at the end of June – the annual mess of student flats being emptied. As most students have left it is suspected the flat owners/managers are responsible. She is asking whether flat clearing can be tied in to the HMO licence.

4.4.7. Special Uplift

Despite an article in The Fifer pointing out fly-tipping of domestic waste is silly as there are free uplifts in the centre and east areas, there is a report coming to Fife Council on introducing charging, so far without consultation.

Murdo Macdonald felt that there should be no charges, at least until the Amenity Centre is running.

4.4.8. Rail Link

Discussions with Stuart Nichol, Fife's Strategic Manager for environment and development, confirmed that a possible rail route into town by the A91 is being preserved and is not compromised by the University proposals for the North Haugh.

Ian Goudie cautioned that while he was pleased to hear this he did not trust assurances, and wanted to see the rail link firmly committed to in the Structure and Local plans. He noted the university did want to develop immediately alongside the A91, which seemed to contradict the assurance.

4.4.9. Madras Kilrymont Burn

Murdo Macdonald reported that the surface of the burn/pond was choked with rubbish, which does not present a good impression to visitors such as the CLAN gathering.

4.5. General

4.5.1. Mysterious Smell

Joe Peterson and Cynthia Tero commented on an unpleasant smell noticeable about the town over the last few days. They did not think it was the occasional rotting seaweed that sometimes occurs over the summer, noticing a sewage-like component. Others hadn't noticed or thought it was just an aspect of the natural seaweed smell.

5. Planning Committee

5.1. Minutes

5.1.1. Craigtoun Hospital

[Appendix A.14] There was discussion of the etiquette of keeping Cameron CC informed of our objection here as it is in their 'territory'. Richard Douglas pointed out that this would be easy given his links to the Fife Councillor for the area, Peter Douglas.

5.1.2. New Picture House Phone Mast

[Appendix A.8] Pete Lindsay put the case against a "broader notice ... [on] possible health risks". He felt that it would constitute scaremongering, as there is no serious evidence of risk, and that he felt that purported concerns over health was only a tactic to attack an otherwise inconspicuous and inoffensive mast.

Penny Uprichard responded that there were widespread concerns among the public over health and masts. Cllr Frances Melville reminded the meeting that a majority of the East Area Development committee consistently opposed all applications for TETRA masts because of health worries amongst the public. It was noted that this is not a TETRA mast.

Chris Lesurf said that her husband, Dr Jim Lesurf of the Physics Department, had looked at the question of effects of radio emissions from mobile phone systems and concluded that if there was any risk it was from the phones themselves, held pressed against people's skulls, rather than a mast tens of yards, or miles, away.

Penny Uprichard closed by pointing out that lack of proof of harm was not the same as proof of no harm and suggested that the "precautionary principle should apply.

As Chair Murdo Macdonald called for a show of hands on whether to comment publicly on possible health risk: For 7; Against 8; Abstain 2.

No Action

5.1.3. South Street Trees

Murdo Macdonald suggested that Penny Uprichard's remarks on the trees earlier should be refined and presented as a paper to community council so that a position could be reached on the subject.

Dennis Macdonald suggested Brian Roger, owner of the Garden Centre on South Street and a qualified arboriculturalist, could be used for a professional opinion. It was felt however that given his business location, amongst other reasons, he might not be seen as independent enough.

5.1.4. Kinburn Park Bench

[Appendix I.6] This should have been noted as No Comment.

5.1.5. University Arts Building

Ian Goudie explained planning committee had looked at this for aesthetic and parking issues. Location of the site is back from major public view; so no comment on the aesthetics. Parking – could see there might be a case there, have argued with university in the past on its lack of provision, but in the absence of viable alternative transport people will use cars. The community council argued the parking case at David Russell Hall, which was extreme, but got no joy. This proposal is, relatively, a lesser issue. He noted though that there was perhaps a certain amount of 'objection fatigue' on the committee following repeated lack of success on this subject.

5.1.6. Planning Consultations

[Appendix I.6] Ian Goudie circulated the following for information:

Public consultation on Planning Applications for St Andrews

Records on the planning database of the Community Council suggest that the public's opportunity for comment on planning applications may be being curtailed. Members of the public can comment on applications for up to 14 days from the date on which the application is registered. Often, however, the public will only know that an application exists when the weekly list is published. The nominal publication day for this list is usually a Friday, but often it does not appear in St Andrews until the following Monday. Data showing the number of days "delay" between registration of applications and the nominal Friday publication date have been obtained for applications in St Andrews from one of the Community Council's databases. (Note that the data for 1997 are incomplete, and that, to give a fair picture, applications arising over the Christmas period have been omitted.)

Year	Total number of applications	Number of applications with more than 4 days delay	Longest delay (days)	Mean number of days delay
1997	56	0	4	0.8
1998	234	0	4	1.8
1999	224	11	24	2.5
2000	213	114	24	6
2001	240	130	16	5.8
2002	267	145	38	5.8
2003	259	129	17	5.9
2004	117	60	18	5.8

So, in 1997 and 1998, most applications were being notionally registered on Thursdays or Fridays, giving the public the better part of a fortnight in which to comment. Since the year 2000, on average around six of the 14 days have elapsed before the application is notionally advertised on the Friday. Often 9 of the 14 days have gone before the list appears in St Andrews. Note that, as the Council does not work at weekends, a delay of more than four days implies that the application was registered the previous week, or earlier.

Experienced community councillors will realise that comments made after the 14 day period will often be taken into consideration. Members of the public are often not aware of this. Indeed the stimulus to gather these data came from an overheard comment in the Local Office in connection with the recent Craigtoun chalets application.

There is, apparently, no statutory obligation on a Council to issue a list of planning applications, but clearly good democratic practice would suggest that the public should be given an adequate opportunity to respond. This matter was raised by my wife with Mr Winter on April 19 (though we did not have these detailed statistics at that point). A reply from Mr Birrell on May 5 indicates that he intends to seek data from all three area offices, and that a revision of the text on the lists is being considered. Nevertheless I thought that local members, in particular, might find the above information of use.

Penny Uprichard added that one factor in the shortened period for comment was the use of the date of writing of letters from planning officials for starting the consultation period rather than date of receipt.

5.1.7. Bruce Embankment Railings

Ian Goudie commented on a letter that recently appeared in The Citizen concerning someone being swept off the embankment and drowned. He mentioned that he was in the area the afternoon the fatality occurred. He thought there might be some misunderstanding of the location being discussed in our objection to extending the railings at the Bruce Embankment. There is no objection to, and indeed is support for railings at the bottom of Golf Place, by the Car Park, but rather the objection is to extending them all the way up to the Swilken Burn.

6. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

6.1. Bandstand Concerts

Kilrymont Rotary Club will now to run the concerts starting next weekend, omitting 25th July (St Andrews Highland Games). Thanks to all who volunteered.

6.2. St Andrews in Focus

Chris Lesurf's offer to take over was accepted. She was asked to check her copy with Chair and Secretary as Dr Riddell had done.

Chris Lesurf

6.3. Frank Riddell

Chris Lesurf added that Frank would be happy to receive visitors at Cameron Hospital. Having difficulty reading, time weighs heavy.

6.4. “World Class” interviews

Laurel Aguilar
Ken Crichton
Simon Atkins

7. New Business**7.1. “Children’s Library” Window**

Agreed

Pete Lindsay

7.2. Projector

Some discussion on type of projector and concern at the amount of money being mooted, but agreed that negotiations could be opened on a community resource.

Pete Lindsay

7.3. Scottish Civic Forum

Annual subscription £20 agreed

Pete Lindsay

7.4. Waste collection

Mrs Willsher confirmed the correspondence was ‘for information’.

7.6. Forum on Discrimination

Chris Lesurf and Simon Atkins are attending in their own right.

8. Reports from Officers**8.1. Chair****8.2. Treasurer****8.3. Secretary****8.3.3. Town Hall Seating**

Some concern about St Andrews getting second-hand seating – why does St Andrews not get the new and Rothes Halls the second-hand? Also concern that Rothes Halls seating being replaced before it has to be – is this Best Value? (However no one suggested we refuse the deal).

8.3.4. Letters etc sent

Add: letter to Frank Riddell thanking him for his work on community council.

9. Reports**9.1. From Committees****9.1.1. Recreation**

No formal report, but a call to let Joe Peterson or Ken Crichton know of any good gardens etc worth consideration for the annual gardens/displays competition.

9.2. From Representatives**9.2.1. University Estate Vision**

Laurel Aguilar had attended this last month (at the expense of missing June’s community council). The University sees three areas to be developed: East Sands, Town Centre, North Haugh. She has asked for a copy of the presentation and will pass it to the planning committee when she has it.

9.2.2. Community Safety Panel

Ken Crichton reported on some issues raised recently: State of the cycle path to Leuchars; Abandoned bike removals; Abbey Walk parking restrictions (yellow lining work); New personal alarms available for £2.50; Kinburn Park call for enforcement of a 2 hrs parking limit; Disabled parking – currently unlimited, should it be restricted to reduce abuse by the able-bodied?

10. Any Other Competent Business**10.1. Home Front Recall**

Ken Fraser drew attention to this National Lottery grant to fund schemes involving recollection of the ‘home front’ during WWII. He suggested it could be examined by the recreation committee to see if anything could be made of it. Agreed.

Recreation

10.2. Flags

Cynthia Tero queried the lack of a flag at the West Port. Pete Lindsay replied that this had been raised by Keith McCartney too. Though in the 1980s community council had supplied the flag, according to Keith McCartney, the last time community council had contacted Historic Scotland on the subject (late 90s) and offered to supply a flag they had not been receptive – at the time they'd been wanting to remove the pole altogether as it was unsafe. He added that the Town Hall flag, lack of, had also been queried and he'd passed on his understanding from previous community council meetings that this pole was unsafe/inoperable.

Pete Lindsay then mentioned the flag at Leuchars Railway Station being in poor condition, which was unfortunate at a major transport interchange serving St Andrews. Cllr Jane Ann Liston responded that it hadn't been clear whose responsibility this was but Economic Development Service were taking it on now.