

## Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council Minutes – April 2005

*Approved*

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**Chair:** Donald Macgregor

### 0. Co-option

Meeting decided that there had been insufficient time for possible co-optees to come forward as the letter calling for volunteers had only appeared in *The Citizen* three days previously.

### 1. Attendance

#### Community Councillors

Bette Christie, Ken Crichton, George Davidson, Richard Douglas, Ken Fraser, Chris Lesurf, Pete Lindsay, Murdo Macdonald, Donald Macgregor, Keith McCartney, Elise Methven, Joe Peterson, Bruce Ryan, Penny Uprichard.

#### Students' Association

Bonnie Ryder, Alex Yarbrough, Frederick St Johnstone.

#### Nominated

Ewen Sparks, Chloe Belcher, Keir Lawson.

#### Fife Councillors

Sheila Black, Jane Ann Liston, Frances Melville, Bill Sangster.

### 2. Minutes of March 2005

**Approved**

### 3. Presentations

#### 3.1. Central St Andrews Residents Alliance

Angela Montford introduced CSARA (<http://www.csara.org.uk/>) and told how it grew out of the Queen's Gardens residents group as an umbrella for town centre/conservation area residents.

They intend to ensure attention is given to town centre problems and promote a "mixed and balanced" community. The group is determined to be apolitical and is not anti-student. Some of her best friends are students, she said. A major concern is Houses in Multiple Occupation.

Donald McGilchrist then took up the subject of CSARAs view of problems faced by the town centre. While intending to concentrate on HMOs he did note the problems on South Street over the summer, when the students were away he emphasised, caused by groups from outwith St Andrews in the late evening until early morning congregating at the fast food shop which was operating outwith its licensed hours.

Turning to HMOs he said that, dissatisfied by the outcome and implications of a licensing refusal and subsequent successful appeal by the property owner concerned, CSARA had researched the question of HMOs more widely. He cited the breakdown of the community in Headingley, Leeds, due to the student population pressure and sale of properties to landlords. The number of permanent residents fell and the local primary school closed. While he didn't think it would get that bad in St Andrews there was concern about the increase in HMOs and about proposed legislation in Westminster promoting buy-to-let investment through tax concessions. He noted that some St Andrews landlords were asking £1,000 per person per month (services included).

He pointed out that people of all ages and conditions, not just the elderly, suffering from anti-social behaviour by students had rights; that they were not alone, as many had thought before the initial CSARA meeting.

The group has had talks with the MP, MSPs, Principal of the University and been sympathetically received. They had suggested to the Principal ways in which the university might expand its dedicated accommodation at limited cost though Private Finance Initiative-style schemes such as being used by Glasgow University.

Drawing parallels with problems with students in unlicensed premises in Belfast he suggested that legislation in Westminster or the Scottish Parliament would solve the problems posed by student residents.

There are some 28 groups across the UK fighting to maintain their community in the university towns. It is not just St Andrews, it is virtually universal, he said.

Passing on to new developments such as West Port Court and Southfield he suggested that they were not suitable for students either. West Port Court has inadequate rubbish facilities. He was concerned that at Southfield, there were HMO applications for all the 10 flats and all notices were in the same handwriting, which to him suggested a conspiracy between the developer and the range of property owners – individuals and businesses located outwith St Andrews from Boarhills to Glasgow. This was not how CSARA thought such business should be conducted.

Donald Macgregor drew attention to a route for concerns about student behaviour through the Town

Gown Liaison Committee, either through himself or Chris Lusk of the Student Support Service.

David Middleton then made a presentation on behalf of CSARA on the Transport Plan consultation, speaking from the following paper:

I appreciate that the Community Council will be giving a great deal of attention to the Local Plan, the Transportation Plan and all the other associated documents which are being consulted upon at the present time. Our time is short so I would wish to pick out a few points from the transportation plan which are of particular interest to CSARA.

We think that the broad sweep of the transportation plan policies are in the right direction, particularly the reduction of motor vehicle congestion in the town, but feel that the detailed policies will not in any way achieve the overall objectives.

With the year on year increase in motor traffic, and very limited proposed changes to the way things are done, the present traffic, congested at best, and gridlocked at worst will only get worse. We feel that much more radical measures are required, which will start from a concern for environmental considerations.

Bearing in mind that the transport plan will shape things to come for up to ten years and beyond, what is laid down now should take account of likely legislative developments within that time frame. I would mention the European Union Ambient Air Quality legislation 96/162/EC which came into effect at the beginning of this year and which will lay down progressively stringent standards for air quality in city streets, with a view to protecting and improving public health, and the environment in general. The legislation applies initially only to conurbations of over 100,000 people, but it should be advisory now for smaller communities, unless you feel that the health of St Andrews residents is less important than those in Edinburgh or Glasgow.

Of equal relevance is the Environmental Assessment bill currently going through the Scottish parliament. This proposes to "green-proof" all public programmes by ensuring that all public sector plans, strategies and programmes are scrutinised for their environmental impact. This, the minister states, will avoid public authorities making expensive mistakes.

Clearly these considerations should be very much at the forefront in shaping the transportation policy for St Andrews. There is no mention of either the EU legislation or the proposed Scottish Parliament legislation in the transport plan.

I would suggest that sustainable, green policies should be at the heart of the transport plan. They get only a passing mention, and it is difficult to see any detailed proposal, which reflects these considerations. The present proposals are really only analogous to rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.

If we start off from the environmental considerations, we would exclude as much motor traffic from the town as we can. We would prioritise the building of a ring road, whether or not the bean counters feel that it is justified financially. We would demand green, frequent, sustainable energy, park and ride transport. We would then pedestrianise all the city centre streets in St Andrews to keep people away from motor vehicle emissions. We would prioritise narrow streets like Bell Street, with constantly backed up traffic for complete pedestrianisation, rather than extending the footpaths so that people were in greater proximity to the backed up traffic than they are now.

We would demand a green rapid transit system from Leuchars to cut down car commuting traffic, which would in any case increase dramatically, if as planned. Leuchars/Guardbridge is developed as a satellite town for St Andrews. We would ignore any suggestion that this was not viable, by pointing out the impossibility of developing a satellite town without a fast transport link, and ignoring the environmental effects of increased car and bus traffic into the town. If this was said to be either financially or technologically impossible, we would point to experience elsewhere. Basle and its environs have a fast light rail tram link. Elsinore in Denmark is linked with its smaller coastal resorts by a light railway running along a former train track. Even in remote and lightly populated Islay has a wave bus an electrically powered bus which is charged up from wave and tidal energy.

St Andrews has the presence of its major industry, the university, with world renowned research into the practical applications of fuel cells, and links with industrial firms such as Rolls Royce. It has the Gatty Marine Laboratory, with its expertise in the coastal environment. Money is available from government for demonstration green transport initiatives. Scottish enterprise was willing to sink money into St Andrews to make it world class. It is difficult to argue that the synergy is not present to develop green transport for St Andrews. As a coastal community we have a great deal to lose from global warming, a rise in sea levels of up to 88 cm has been forecast during the present century. Tidal surges and floods are expected to put 1000,000 houses at risk of flooding in Scotland alone. What would St Andrews be without the Old Course? Already its sea defences are under threat. There was never a truer application of the phrase that if you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem!

I would suggest that we should not be tinkering with the traffic problems. Certainly we need to ensure that the bus station has a built in link with a prospective rapid transport link to Leuchars, but maybe we should see this extending to the East Neuk towns to bring them into the prosperous hub that St Andrews has become. We also need to look at detail such as a bicycle route from Fife Park to Kinburn through university grounds, instead of the ridiculous proposal to close Doubledykes Road to vehicle traffic in order to favour cycles. Even during its temporary closure, traffic on Argyle Street is backed up to Hepburn Gardens

in the morning rush hour.

However, we need to avoid being diverted by detail, which can have us arguing for years, and really put our influence and resources behind a green transport policy which is suitable for a technologically advanced nation in the 21st century. We hope that the community council will support this approach.

## **Discussion**

During the questions following the presentation Cllr Frances Melville said that Fife Council had heard the comments on the HMO issue and is working on a response as part of the Local Plan process.

Murdo Macdonald had been disappointed by the response of some of the residents groups in the centre of St Andrews when the Town-Gown Liaison Group was formed. Only one group put forward a representative at that time. He noted the problems were those generally attributable to young people, not just students. On the matter of HMOs he wondered if the need for registration had not just brought the numbers of properties involved to light, rather than representing a sudden increase in actual numbers.

Ian Goudie suggested that HMOs should be separated from the issue of student occupancy. The legislation itself is very valuable in ensuring accommodation is of adequate safety standards, recalling a death in St Andrews in presumably inadequate accommodation. On the other hand the numbers of flats occupied by students had increased over the last 15 years, the increase could not be sustained. He drew CSARA's attention to considering the effects of the Structure Plan's proposed 16% increase in 10 years.

On the Transport Plan comments he welcomed the position on a rail link, but noted that the community council would be rather more cautious on the matter of pedestrianisation, citing the complex nature of the traffic flows in central St Andrews and the need of community council to consider the effects on all of St Andrews not just the benefits to one group in the centre.

David Middleton suggested the proof of the pudding would be in the eating in pedestrianisation, citing other pedestrianised city centres in Scotland. The critical factor would be an effective Park & Ride.

Bonnie Ryder asked whether whether the association was just open to owners or whether residents such as students were welcome? Donald McGilchrist replied that meetings were open to everyone to express an opinion, but it had been set up by permanent residents who lived and worked in St Andrews. Students would, of course, be welcome to come along.

## **4. Fife Councillors**

### **4.1. Frances Melville (West)**

#### **4.1.1. Chaos in St Andrews**

She welcomed the community council newsletter drawing attention to the various consultations on the future of St Andrews, copies of which were circulated at the start of the meeting.

Ian Goudie spoke about the concerns that had led to it, essentially to make the town aware of the two major documents out for consultation. The Local Plan is like no local plan that has gone before; not for nothing has the Planning Service been renamed the Development Service. It is crucial that there is a large response, as there was at the time of the Strategic Study. The Structure plan is the primary document that needs response as it sets out the requirements which the Local Plan must, legally, meet for numbers of houses. The newsletter does also cover the Local Plan of course, and also the currently live issue of the Hospital application for the southern hillside on Largo Road. The community council has consistently backed the St Leonard's Fields site for the last 12 or so years. Both the Health Board and Fife Council had this as their preferred site at various times. The local plan makes clear the effect of the Largo Road site; it would permit piecemeal development moving gradually eastwards from the hospital across to the Grange Road. There is a swathe of land left inside the proposed green belt boundary for this in the draft Local Plan. It is described as being for light industrial/business use, but he drew attention to the history of the area which in 1993 saw a Muir Group proposal for 1000 houses. Muir is providing part of the land for the proposed hospital site.

#### **4.1.2. Consultation Response Form**

Following an enquiry by a local businessman concerning the need and availability for a specific form to respond to the various plans Donald Macgregor passed on the information he'd had earlier from Cllr Frances Melville that no form was necessary. People wishing to comment could write, fax, email or whatever to Fife Council.

#### **4.1.3. Housing Development**

Finally getting a word in edgeways Cllr Frances Melville said that across the East Area the concerns seemed to be not housing development as such but the huge numbers and areas proposed. It seems consultations of the 1990s have been ignored under pressure from the Scottish Executive.

#### **4.1.4. Development Services: St Andrews Withdrawal**

Due to pressure of work on the plans and consultations there will be no Development Services presence in the Local Office for day to day work over the next few months (was a half-day every week). It is emphasised that this cutback is intended as a temporary measure. Service is 5 planners short. Position to be reviewed in June.

#### **4.1.5. Bruce Embankment Roadworks**

These will continue until 20th June.

#### **4.1.6. West Sands**

Murdo Macdonald was concerned about the state of the beach, asking if it could be raked and tidied. She will ask.

Donald Macgregor added that he had written about the lack of community council involvement in West Sands plans [March 4.1.1]. While he had received no reply he hoped that the message had got through. Cllr Melville will check the message was received.

#### **4.2. Sheila Black (South)**

##### **4.2.1. Bus Shelters**

A couple of the proposed bus stop shelters are to be set in different location from the original proposals as buses don't pass the original sites...

Ian Goudie didn't think the project was handled very well, a prime example of a rush job to use up budget at the end of a financial year. He drew attention to the lack of notification of the proposals to the householders outside whose property the shelters were to be erected until work commenced. No-one came out of the rushed process very well; community council clearly didn't know where the buses currently run nor did the Transportation Service.

#### **4.3. Bill Sangster (Centre)**

##### **4.3.1. Residents' Associations**

Welcomed the formations of various RAs in St Andrews; he will help any way he can. Shows the depth of feelings on the various issues of concern.

##### **4.3.2. Town Sign**

[March 4.3.4] Has been remounted. Joe Peterson was concerned that though the sign was up the damage to the wall had not been repaired.

##### **4.3.3. Bins**

Environmental Services have taken away bins left obstructing pavements for extended periods. Householders can reclaim them by contacting Fife Council.

##### **4.3.4. Roads: Holes and Markings**

He has spent a morning checking the town centre and will be passing on a number of potholes and worn-away markings for zebra crossings, junctions etc. He hope these will be fixed before the Open.

The meeting was reminded that Fife Council's policy was to fix potholes over 40mm deep in the road, 20mm in pavements and cycle paths.

##### **4.3.5. Kinnessburn Report**

[March 4.3.1.] While the councillors have seen a summary, which he described as very eye-opening, they have been told to say nothing as yet until Fife Council has answers to some of the questions raised.

Donald Macgregor asked when the people of St Andrews would get to find out what is happening in their town? Cllr Sangster was sympathetic but could say nothing further.

##### **4.3.6. Hospital Bus Shelter**

Ken Crichton again raised the question of when a shelter would be provided for the hospital bus stops. Cllr Sangster has spoken to Transportation about this need.

#### **4.4. Jane Ann Liston (South East)**

##### **4.4.1. Town Hall Upgrades**

She asked for an indication, in principle, whether the community council would support an application to the Common Good Fund for new curtains for the Supper Room. The Town Hall is a Common Good property, though fortunately maintained and subsidised by Fife Council. She didn't have the actual costs for the curtains though those would be made clear in the formal application if one were made.

**Agreed**

##### **4.4.2. Green Belt**

Asked what the formal position of community council was on a green belt vs the green wedges that it endorsed in the days of the Strategic Study. Ian Goudie went over the evolution of community council thinking on the subject. He understood that "green wedges" has a rather more precise technical meaning to planners than intended by community council in the 1990s. Community council at that time opposed the "green corset" approach to green belt which left St Andrews no room to grow at all and would leave all areas equally vulnerable to development challenge. The wedge idea was just a way of describing allowing for controlled growth in some directions, to better protect others such as the southern hillside.

##### **4.4.3. Warrack Street**

Scottish Water are to start work on the persistent leaks here at long last.

##### **4.4.4. Bins**

The bin purge removed nearly 40 bins, left on the street, from Argyle St, Bridge Street, Melbourne Brae and Largo Road. Affected households have been written to in the past about keeping their bins off the street. Bins will only be returned on agreement to keep them properly. If they chose not to reclaim the bins the householder will be responsible for their own disposal, having opted out of Fife Council's service. Leaving bags of rubbish on the street is illegal dumping and will be pursued.

#### 4.4.5. Kinnessburn Report

Choosing her words carefully she said that something will be done in response to the report, but there is a question of statutory processes. Transportation Service will come to explain the situation once these are cleared. They have been presented with an analysis of a problem. They now have to work out the response before answering public questions on the subject.

#### 4.4.6. Kilrymont Chip Van

The appeal on the licensing restrictions (100m exclusion zone around Madras boundary) should go to court in late April.

#### 4.4.7. Lade Braes / Bridge Street crossing

Noted from the Transport Plan that a new pedestrian crossing is scheduled here, in the current financial year. Penny Uprichard was concerned that this would cause traffic difficulties with hill starts from the south and congestion to the north. A couple of people felt that drivers who couldn't control their vehicles on a hill start shouldn't be on the road. Pete Lindsay said that when this crossing was first raised some years ago community council had opposed the idea initially, in part for the reasons she had given, until it was pointed out that a pedestrian had been killed crossing there, perhaps ten years ago now. Ian Goudie was concerned that again this crossing was not being considered in the overall view of the St Andrews traffic system; how a crossing here interacting with other schemes by Transportation Service for the West Port roundabout. He feared St Andrews would end with a crossing every five yards. Pete Lindsay reminded the meeting that community council had in the recent past called for better pedestrian facilities at the south side of the West Port roundabout as part of the flats development.

#### 4.4.8. Old Guardbridge Road Cycle Route

Since coverage of the closure issue in the press she has been contacted by several regular users who will be inconvenienced and endangered by this change for the Open. Ian Goudie noted that if Fife Council had adopted the route favoured by the community council, the Sustrans route south of the A91, the problem would not have arisen.

#### 4.4.9. Madras Kilrymont Pond

Murdo Macdonald reported that he had seen the pond being cleared of years of accumulated rubbish; several truck loads, taking two days to remove. He hope it would not be allowed to get that bad, verging on a health hazard, again.

### 5. Planning Report

Ian Goudie gave updates on four items not covered in the report.

#### 5.1. 80 North Street

Conversion of the Salvation Army hall to restaurant. It had been the intention to object to an inappropriate glass walled addition, but unfortunately this had been overlooked. Informal comments had been made to planning officials instead. However the Planning Service report for the Development Committee meeting did not include these and recommended approval.

#### 5.2. 33 Fraser Avenue

Loss of public open space. Again recommended for approval, despite an objection (in time) from community council. There is an issue with the encroachment of extensions and conservatories onto what was designed as an open-plan environment, he felt. If it is the case that Fife Council is happy to sell off land to save maintenance costs on grass-cutting it is important to have a rational scheme for such things. In this case the ground being enclosed not only fronts the applicant's property, but also encroaches onto the frontage of a neighbouring property. This was a major concern for the planning committee. He suggested that such sell-offs should only be permitted for the immediate frontage.

#### 5.3. David Russell Hall

While supporting the principle of the University building more residence places for its students, the community council had already objected to lack of parking for the original scheme because of the possible problems of on-street parking at peak times of year; this application added three blocks but no parking space. Some of the students representatives felt that the parking space at the new hall would be inadequate at the peak times of start of the academic year and the conference season.

#### 5.4. Recycling Centre

Community council support this application in broad terms and have supported the requirement for a recycling centre so for a decade or more. The current concern centres on the lack of pedestrian access. In response to the comment Should people have to get in their cars and drive from the nearby Winram Place to access the recycling site?

### 6. Matters Arising

#### 6.2. St Andrews Walks Project Map

Despite the challenge represented by the new glossy Cupar Walks map no-one was able to take this on.

#### 6.4. Patras Book

Pete Lindsay asked for permission to organise a a small reception and hospitality to tie in the formal hand-over of the book with the visit to Scotland and St Andrews of some of the Greek people involved with the Mackies' visit to Patras.

Agreed

## 7. New Business

### 7.1 Constitution, 7.2. Picture

May

### 7.2. Bandstand Concerts

**Murdo Macdonald, Elise Methven**

### 7.4. Voting Systems

Pete Lindsay and Ian Goudie argued for specific support for 'open list' systems for candidates so the voting public had more say in who represented them rather than closed list where the political parties chose the order in which representative would be considered (such as the Holyrood list MSPs).

**addition agreed,  
Ken Fraser to write**

### 7.5. Web Space, 7.6. Local Channel

May

### 7.7. Honorary Citizen

Jack Nicklaus proposed by Keith McCartney, 2nd Murdo Macdonald.

**Pete Lindsay to ballot all members**

Following a suggestion that considering one golf-related item at a time was enough the proposal concerning Peter Thompson was withdrawn.

### 7.11. Pressured Area Status

This covers issues like suspension of right-to-buy for council and housing association tenants to stop the haemorrhaging of the rented and social housing stock. Community council has supported the general idea in the past.

**Planning**

### 7.12. St Andrews in Focus

**Donald Macgregor to co-ordinate**

## 8. Office Bearers

## 9. Reports

### 9.2. From Representatives

#### 9.2.1. Water Customer Council

[March 7.7] Bette Christie tried to attend this in Joe Peterson's place, but disabled access to The Scores hotel was blocked.

#### 9.2.2. Kate Kennedy Parade

Richard Douglas reminded the meeting that the parade was Saturday 16 April. Donald Macgregor asked community council members who wished to attend formally and sit on the platform outside Holy Trinity church should contact him.

#### 9.2.3. Harbour Trust

Donald Macgregor, *ex-officio* representative as Chair of Community Council, reported that Cllr France Melville was stepping down as Chair of the Trust after 6 years.

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