

Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council

Minutes – October 2009

(Copies of Agendas and Minutes of the Community Council are held at Fife Council's Local Office, St Mary's Place and the Town Library, Church Square. Those from late 1997 on are on line at <http://www.standrewscc.net/>)

1. Attendance

Community Councillors

Ken Fraser, Patrick Marks, Ian Goudie, Carol Ashworth, Marysia Denyer, Ronnie Murphy, Catherine Rowe, Henry Paul, Dave Finlay, Judith Harding, Larry Reed, Izzy Corbin, Kyffin Roberts, Derek Skelhon, Ray Pead, Penny Uprichard

Students' Association Representatives

Holly West

Nominated

Fife Councillors

Frances Melville, Bill Sangster, Robin Waterston, Dorothea Morrison

Apologies

Larry Reed, Ken Crichton

2. Minutes of September 2009 Meeting

10.1. Legal Challenge to Structure Plan

It was agreed to delete the final sentence in the previous minutes.

3. Presentations

3.1. Presentation by Anne Williams of Fife Society for the Blind

Anne Williams gave a short presentation on the difficulties facing persons with visual impairments while walking round the streets of St Andrews. She distributed a number of photographs of obstacles, consisting of various types of street furniture, such as wheelie bins, A Boards, tables/ chairs and cars parked with fronts over the pavement edges. She queried the effectiveness of the planning regulations. She was aware of a meeting several years previously on this issue, which in her recollection had come to nothing. She hoped that her presentation would help to raise the profile of the issue so that something could be done to address it. She felt that it was an obstacle course getting through the town, not only for partially sighted citizens, but also wheelchair users, families with buggies etc. She felt that something should be done before someone was seriously injured. She quoted from a 2003 guideline Planning Policy Guidelines Display of Advertisements which said that "signs which obscure or conflict with directional warning signs and signs which distract motorists attention etc". She recognised the difficulties of policing such measures. Dr Goudie felt that the photographs put forward the argument as forcefully as anything. Cllr Melville commented about a previous report that was drafted up to go before the Environment and Transportation Committee which had been pulled. Fortunately Cllr Sangster found evidence of the report, and combined with recent comments from Community Councillors, Cllr Melville said that a policy would go to the Environment and Transportation Committee to be actioned. Cllr Morrison added that there would be a member/ officer group working on a policy to be firmed up in the near future. She acknowledged the problem of items like "A" Boards and hoped that given the disability aspect this issue would be taken more seriously. Anne Williams commented about the differences in different local authorities to the problem, citing the example of Perth where the Council removed offending boards from in front of shops.

Dr Goudie thanked Anne Williams for her useful presentation. He also commented upon the potential difficulties where areas identified for cycle racks might not have wide enough pavements for disabled users.

Miss Uprichard commented upon the fact that Dundee had a no "A" Boards policy and that Fife didn't have any policy, she felt it was curious that when the chargeable "Local Holidays Parking Charges" issue was aired with the comment that we had to be in line with other local authorities, why it wasn't possible to put forward a policy, saying no "A" Boards? Dr Goudie acknowledged that this was probably the predominant view in the meeting. Dr Goudie thanked Anne Williams for raising the issue and hoped that there would be a resolution in the near future.

3.2. Presentation by Robbie Blyth on recent West Sands Outhead proposal

Robbie Blyth made a presentation. He started by describing his remit as the Beaches Coastal Officer with the responsibility for the Blue Flag Beaches in Fife, as well as other recreational beaches. Robbie gave some background to the issue, citing historical and current problems, such as Global Warming. He acknowledged the work of the Links Trust in protecting part of the coastal area, because of the impact upon the golf courses. He reminded the meeting that the last 800 metres of the road up to the Outhead was an old municipal dump. Studies of the dump haven't shown any current risk to the dump becoming a hazard for the public. However he acknowledged that there were a lot of access issues in the area. He wanted to increase responsible access to the area. However he added that increased use of the area by wheeled vehicles caused erosion, which was wearing out the natural dune formation from the land side, on top of natural erosion from the seaward side. He acknowledged that damage was caused by a variety of users. He also commented upon the need to encourage sensible access, partly by encouraging people to walk from recognised car parking areas.

He felt that there needed to be controlled access to the most sensitive areas, which would be badly damaged otherwise. He discussed various alternatives, such as concrete barriers, acknowledging that these would not be popular. He felt that the best solution to management of the area was to encourage the dunes to grow, adding that this was the best form of coastal defence, as well as the cheapest. He reminded the meeting about previous areas fenced to protect continuing dune erosion and the gradual regeneration if these areas as a result.

He also acknowledged the past mistakes made by Fife Council in management of the beaches, which included the cleaning of the beaches of all material, including seaweed. Leaving the seaweed would allow better dune regeneration. He also commented upon the damage done to the dune area by other forms of uncontrolled public, citing the recent heavy use during the Leuchars Air Show, at which time he made members of the public aware of damage by vehicle parking on the fragile marram grass. He felt that it was fair enough to encourage the public to park at the designated parking areas, and walk the last part to the Outhead. However vehicle access to the final stretch should he felt be limited to allow regeneration of the dune area.

He described that with some money left over from the West Sands project, it was felt to be a good idea to repair the last stretch of road because of its hazardous condition and create a cycle track as well. Mr Blyth did have some reservations about encouraging increased access to the area, but recognised the need to allow access to emergency vehicles and limited mobility groups. There would be an unlocked gate at the entrance to the area for cyclists/walkers and emergency vehicles. Grass would not be cut in the main area, apart from a small width beside the road, also to allow dune regeneration.

In conclusion he felt that the proposal was about safe sustainable access, and that it would also have benefits in a number of other ways from economic to environmental and social.

Mr Blyth thanked the Community Council for the opportunity to do the presentation. The meeting was then opened up to questions on the subject by Dr Goudie. A representative of a group of Kite Boarding enthusiasts present asked if he could make some points. Dr Goudie asked the Community Council for its view on allowing some points to be made. Ms Harding felt that it was a good idea. Mr Paul suggested that because of concern about time, after a few questions, discussion could be continued between the Council officials and the representatives from the Kite Boarding group.

The first question was about who would be considered eligible for access to the area to be fenced off to allow access from there to the beach. Mr Blyth replied that he was prepared to discuss this outside the meeting and added that there would be a period of consultation, before any final decisions would be made about how to manage access. He felt that the only way the gate could be closed would be if there were health and safety concerns. He felt that if users could park just before the area, they could still access the area with the kite buggies etc. He reassured users with kites about access points

A further question related to the suddenness of the decision and the apparent lack of public consultation. Mr Blyth acknowledged that the original plans had been to do the road up to the Jubilee Sheds and that was the basis of the original public consultation. However as some money was left over following this work, and the contractors were still on site that the road past the Jubilee Sheds should be resurfaced. Mr Blyth pointed out that this stretch has had a basic resurfacing, which is not the same quality as the earlier work, which involved a major realignment. Then once the resurfacing had reached the old dump further money became available and it was decided to continue the resurfacing. At that stage when he became aware of this possibility, Mr Blyth said that he attempted to do some consultation with as many people as possible in the very short time scale available. Time was limited by the availability of the contractors who were still on site.

The representative from the Kite Boarding Group queried the level of erosion risk to the Outhead area, citing a report by consultants employed by Fife Council, dated May 2009 which stated that the risk of erosion at the dump was low. Mr Blyth in his reply, said that he was not an expert on capped municipal dumps, but he felt that he knew a bit about what was happening on the land. He said that there was a serious erosion issue, which while not an immediate problem would without proper management become one. Erosion would come from both the seaward side and from heavy use on the landward side. The representative from the Power Kiting group commented upon their usual access point and acknowledged that there were problems, which needed addressing if the area was to remain useable. Mr Blyth offered to meet the Kite Boarding group representatives on the site to look at the issues raised. His colleague Mr Strachan added that the problems with the dunes weren't recent and that the report cited by the Power Kiting representative had a very tight remit. He didn't entirely agree with the report's conclusions.

Dr Goudie thanked the Power Kiting representatives for their points about the nature of the consultation, and supported a more thorough consultation when timescale permitted it. He wanted to see a more coherent plan for the West Sands as a whole, adding that there were some very divergent issues, which needed to be taken on board. Mr Roberts queried the timing of the decision, feeling that it was curious that it came so close to the temporary encampment of the Travellers. Mr Blyth refuted this, saying that for him there were a variety of factors, which lead to the decision. The problems at the Outhead area had also been discussed by the West Sands Liaison Committee on a number of occasions. The use by the Travelling People had not influenced the decision.

Ms Uprichard couldn't understand the decision to tarmac the road on the Outhead stretch, feeling that the previous pot holed road was a natural defence against speeding drivers. She queried why money was spent on tarmacing, then restricting access to the area and not on improving the dunes. Mr Blyth acknowledged that it wasn't the best way to make a decision. He acknowledged that when the matter landed on his desk, the best compromise he could come up with was to make it a pathway and a walkway and to ensure that vehicles which had to get down there, could get down there.

Dr Goudie asked about access, commenting that one group who might be affected were the elderly drivers, who might drive up to get a view from the present parking area. Mr Blyth acknowledged the issue, but replied that there could also be a problem if an elderly driver's car was parked on a dune if it collapsed. He thought that even wheelchair users would be able to gain access through the gate, if their car was parked in the parking area just before it. Special concessions for other disabled users could be looked at in more detail during the consultation period. He acknowledged that it was a difficult balancing act.

Dr Goudie thanked Mr Blyth and Mr Strachan for the presentation. Dr Goudie commented that the presentation had been useful. He recognised the need to get the motivation behind the plans recognised, but added that the needs of special groups needed to be taken into account.

4. Fife Councillors

4.1. Frances Melville

4.1.1. Traffic Regulation Order - Lawhead School

This order is due to be implemented. The order will be monitored by Transportation Services for possible problems before and after the order is implemented. The order will then be reviewed in 6 or 9 months.

4.1.2. Alison Grant Report

Miss Uprichard asked for views about the Alison Grant Report on the critical views which must be protected in St Andrews as part of the development strategy. This report went to the Central Planning Committee the previous week, accompanied by a report from Mr Keith Winter. Miss Uprichard quoted two sentences from Mr Winter's report, "the objectives of the project were to assess which views might be

compromised by development and recommend mitigating measures”, and “identify other potentially developable areas within the proposed Green Belt which may give offer scope for development”. Cllr Melville in reply said that the Central Planning Committee had agreed to go out to consultation on the report. Cllr Melville had also asked for a computer analysis, which was part of the report to be made available at both Cupar and St Andrews local offices. While acknowledging that it was a good report, she said that she’d been a bit disappointed at the narrowness of the remit of the presented report, as it had concentrated on the west of the western area, and had only peripherally mentioned other areas. The period of consultation will be for eight weeks from a date later in October she thought. In conclusion she was disappointed that the report had been skewed to one area, namely the views from the Strathkinness High Road/Low Road to Northbank Farm, leaving out other potential areas for development. Ms Uprichard in reply commented that the information reported by Cllr Melville, were in her opinion “driving a coach and horses through Tildesley’s Landscape Assessments which will be a material consideration in the Local Plan and through the strategic study which is also a material part of the Local Plan.

4.2. Bill Sangster

4.2.1. East Sands Leisure Centre – Free Swims

Cllr Sangster reported that there had been 10010 free swims during the six week holiday period.

4.2.2. Scottish Local Government Forum Against Poverty

Cllr Sangster is to represent Fife Council on this forum.

4.3. Robin Waterston

4.3.1. Meeting with the Transportation Service

All four local members had a meeting a few weeks ago with the Transportation Service about the next phase of the Parking Plan. Cllr Waterston reminded the meeting that the first phase of the Parking Plan had been completed, and that there had been a consultation about the bigger picture, which had included the extension of the charging area and also an improved system of residents and other parking permits. A report had also been written responding to the significant volume of consultation responses that had been made at the previous stage. The new plan is now ready for further consultation, and Cllr Waterston and his colleagues couldn’t see why this couldn’t take place, so that further comments on the proposed changes could be garnered. He acknowledged the difficulty in satisfying everyone, but added that there were never going to be enough parking places. In the longer term he hoped that an improved Park and Ride might be possible.

Mrs Harding asked if there was going to be anyone on the consultation from the University, given the numbers of students and staff who drive into St Andrews daily. Cllr Waterston replied that the consultation would be a public one, with no stakeholders excluded. Ms Uprichard was interested to hear that there was now a report on the responses to the first consultation, and hoped that the Community Council would be able to obtain several copies when it was available. She also wanted a reassurance that a report on the new consultation would be available before the plans were actioned. Cllr Waterston wasn’t certain when the report would be available, but hoped that it would be soon. He recognised the need for copies of the report to be made widely available, but thought that there might be a charge for hard copies at cost price. With regard to the follow on from the new consultation, he replied that the consultation process would certainly generate a further report and should be available before any work was done to action it. He said that it was acknowledged that there had been an error in procedure after the previous consultation when the consultation comments hadn’t been dealt with before work had started. He hoped to get more details about the time frame when the Councillors meet with the Head of Transportation, Bob McLelland in a few days.

4.4. Dorothea Morrison

4.4.1. Proposed Waiting Restrictions for Pipelands Road

Due to an increase in people parking along this road, which is causing some difficulties for drivers coming out of Kinnessburn Road, an order will soon be published.

4.4.2. Temporary Road Closure – St Andrews to Pitscottie Road

This closure for road work is on the Low Road, so drivers will have to come in via the High Road or Craigtoun Road for a period of time. The road will be shut from 2-27th November. Work will be from the roundabout at Lumsden Crescent to the junction at Pitscottie.

4.4.3. Request about publicising activity of St Andrews Community Council in St Andrews Citizen

Cllr Morrison had received a request from someone to ask if the news from the Community Council could be published in the town news part of the Citizen. There was a feeling that local people didn't know what the Community Council was doing each month. Dr Goudie acknowledged the problem and commented that the Council had been better covered in the Courier than the Citizen in recent years.

5. Planning Committee

5.1. Planning Committee Minutes – see Appendices B, C & D

6. Matters Arising

6.1.

6.2.

6.3.

6.4. Reports from Representatives

7. Committee Reports

7.1 Recreation Committee

7.2. General Purposes Committee

7.3. 200 Club

7.4. Health, Education and Welfare Committee

8. New Business

9.3 Secretary

9.3.1. Correspondence – see Appendix A.

10. Any Other Competent Business