

AVIEMORE AND VICINITY COMMUNITY COUNCIL
Minutes of the meeting on Thursday 12th August 2021 at 7pm
via Microsoft Teams

1. Present

Peter Long (Chair), AVCC
Al Dargie (Vice Chair), AVCC
Elspeth Byrne (Secretary), AVCC
Beth Hay, AVCC

Joe Kirby, AVCC
Bill Lobban, Highland Council
Willie McKenna, CNPA
Johnnie Grant, Visitor

2. Apologies for absence

Kathleen Cameron (Treasurer), AVCC Sally Devlin, AVCC

3. Welcome and introductions – Peter Long welcomed everyone to the meeting.

4. Meeting etiquette – Peter Long reminded everyone about meeting etiquette.

5. Declarations of interest – none.

6. Minutes of July meeting

The minutes of the July 2021 meeting were accepted – proposed by Beth Hay and seconded by Peter Long.

7. Matters arising from July meeting

Weeds on roundabouts. Bill Lobban said that the Highland Council had been in recess. Carried forward to next meeting.

Litter pick on 7th August. Peter Long thanked everyone who took part in the successful litter pick – 15 people including 4 children. The remainder of the grant for equipment has now been released. Peter Long said that we would hold another litter pick around October.

8. Treasurer's report

The Treasurer's report was accepted – proposed by Elspeth Byrne and seconded by Joe Kirby.

9. Business

a. Cairngorm Mountain meeting

Peter Long and Willie McKenna had attended a meeting with Susan Smith and Jim Cornfoot of Cairngorm Mountain. Susan Smith gave a presentation about what had been done and what was still to do. Peter Long said that it was a positive meeting and it was reassuring that there was understanding of the challenges ahead taking into account the objective of making the mountain a year-round attraction. He was impressed with the career progression of staff. The full Community Council will be invited up at the end of this year/beginning of next year for an update.

b. Rothiemurchas update and CNPA Visitor Management meeting

Rothiemurchus update

Johnnie Grant gave an update on the Rothiemurchus visitor experience. He said that having 3,000 people visiting sensitive land was a challenge. For many years Rothiemurchus practice has been to look after people so that, hopefully, they look after the area, and they are continually improving this. People's expectations of what they can expect are realistic. Any negative feedback is reviewed. Issues include lack of toilets and path maintenance. The Capercaille Project is funding a survey this summer – 1,500 questionnaires – to find out the needs of different groups of people including visitors and locals. The results will be provided to the Community Council. This will enable Rothiemurchus, Glenmore and Abernethy management to adapt to provide a better experience for the different groups.

Peter Long had received the survey from Ann Nicol. He has invited her to attend a future Community Council meeting to provide an update on the project.

Action: Elspeth Byrne to circulate survey

CNPA Visitor Management meeting

Al Dargie had attended the meeting on behalf of the Community Council. They were given an overview of what has been achieved this year. CNPA were disappointed that they had not been able to deliver all requirements for the start of the season. Ongoing problems included parking at Glenmore and the lack of a bus services especially at the weekend when there was none.

Forestry and Land Scotland is the Scottish Government Agency responsible for managing our national forests and land. The meeting was concerned that this Agency's track maintenance is not up to the standard of other estates, and some of the tracks are now unsafe. The number of bikes in use has increased dramatically this year. There are also ongoing maintenance problems including litter, parking and fly-tipping by contractors.

Action: Johnnie Grant will ask the rangers for figures on bike numbers and will email the information to Peter Long.

Action: Peter Long to write to Peter Crane CNPA and to Forestry and Land Scotland raising issues of track maintenance and safety.

Issues with camping and fires showed a marked improvement this year. There was potential for old toilet blocks to be brought back into operation. The National Lottery Heritage Horizons Award will provide funding for a number of infrastructure projects.

Al Dargie said that there would be ongoing contact regarding visitor management.

c. Potential cycling projects

Peter Long said that, following last month's meeting, Sally Devlin has been looking at projects to promote cycling and has a few options which she hopes to provide to Peter in the next few days.

Action: Peter Long to arrange for cycling project options to be circulated.

d. Village Green opening

Peter Long said there would be a small-scale event on Saturday 28th August, from 12 to 4pm, to mark completion of work at the village green. The Community Council, Aviemore Community Enterprise and other community organisations will take part. Bill Lobban will carry out the official opening. A number of local groups will have stalls including a home

baking stall and a bottle stall. We are looking for donations to the bottle stall. We are still looking for other groups to run stalls. Cairngorm dance studio will put on a display on stage and there will be an 'Open Mic'.

Peter Long asked AVCC members who are able to help with the event on the day. AVCC members should meet at 10am at the village green to get the tents out. This will be a useful 'dry run' for future events too. This is a great opportunity to use the facility and see people using the stage.

Joe Kirby said that the West Coast Harley group had planned to use the village green on 27th and 28th August. This would be scaled down from the normal event. They will now use the Myrtlefield/Aldi grassed area and will make a donation to the ACE Ice fund. Concerns were expressed that this informal Harley weekend was going ahead without the normal organisers being involved and thought this might bring challenges for other agencies.

10. Reports from other organisations

a. CNPA report

Willie McKenna gave the report. An off-road mountain bike group had met with the manager of the Capercaillie project to discuss the unofficial paths that were being made at Badaguish. There was agreement that existing tracks will be shut if they want new tracks.

Willie McKenna said that another meeting had been held between Kinveachy, Seafield and Abernethy estates to discuss visitors to the estates and Capercaillie conservation. Heather was being removed to allow blaeberrries to grow for the Capercaillie.

Willie McKenna suggested that the off-road mountain bike group and Caroline Robertson be invited to AVCC meetings.

Action: Elspeth Byrne to arrange for invitations to future meetings.

b. Highland Council report

Bill Lobban gave the report. He said that the Highland Council had been in recess during July. An important current issue was lack of housing. The housing market had changed significantly with homes for permanent occupation decreasing and an increase in short-term lets and holiday lets. Staff who work in local hotels and catering etc cannot get houses and young people are moving away as, although they can get jobs, they cannot get anywhere to live. Bill Lobban said that it could be two years before the council could implement changes that would address this problem.

It had been reported that a local hotel was using multi-occupancy caravans for housing their staff and that this possibly breaks planning rules.

Action: Peter Long to write to the Planning Officer at Highland Council, copying the letter to Gavin Mills of CNPA, asking what the rules are.

Bill Lobban said that people had expressed concern as to whether the A9 dualling will go ahead and the negative effect on the economic future of the area if it did not. The completion timeline of 2025 had been changed to an open-ended timeline.

c. ACE board member report – none

d. AGCT report - none

11.AOCB

Village Green notice board

Beth Hay had received a quotation for £700 to replace the notice board. The meeting discussed current use of the notice board and whether social media, the Badenoch & Strathspey Herald, etc, were more useful.

The meeting agreed that the notice board should be removed as it is unsafe.

Action: Peter Long, Al Dargie and Beth Hay would remove the notice board.

Action: Peter Long to arrange for a plaque on the village green saying that it is managed by AVC.

Food support

Beth Hay said that a new group called 'Badenoch & Strathspey Food Hub' had been formed and that this new group would work with 'Where 2 Today'. Bill Lobban said that the remainder of Covid funding will be used to support 'Where 2 Today'.

Future meetings

Peter Long said that it was likely that future AVCC meetings would take place in person. Guidance is awaited from Highland Council. The previous meeting room at the Community Centre has no windows. Rothiemurchus church hall was suggested as a possible venue.

Action: Peter Long to arrange for costs of alternative meeting venues to be obtained.

Cairngorm Advisory Group

Peter Long said that there was a meeting of this group, hosted by HIE and B&S Community Partnership, on Thursday 26th August. He was not able to attend.

Action: Peter Long to arrange for someone from AVCC to attend.

12. Date of next meeting 9th September 7pm.

13. Closure 8.30pm