

MINUTES OF MEETING OF STOW & FOUNTAINHALL COMMUNITY COUNCIL ON 2.12.13 AT STOW TOWN HALL.

Present: Inspector Mike Wynn (Police Scotland), PC Blacklock (ditto), J. Horan (BAM), Robin McMillan, D.Muir (chair), J. Mushlin (Secretary), A McNeilly (Treasurer), J Mackenzie, A Riddell, Cllr S Aitchison, C Hendry

Apologies: T Miller, Cllr B White

Robin McMillan updated the CC on the work he has been carrying out on the Old Kirk – the restoration he has achieved, and the work that remains to be done. He has worked his way around the building inside, and has finished the north wall; some of the east wall not quite finished. Historic Scotland's intervention meant he lost 3 weeks' good weather while he was working on the south wall – they were insisting on the correct paperwork being submitted and signed. Historic Scotland were unable to suggest how to seal the walls but Robin went to Tantallon Castle to inspect how they had sealed the ramparts, using old fashioned lime, which needs a temperature of 6 degrees in order to set; so the work will have to wait until the spring to finish. He has discovered some unusual stone carvings in the bell tower and the north wall. He commented on the amount of tourists who stop for a look – especially people looking for ancestors; a group of S Africans came to scatter a relation's ashes there. The CC presented Robin with a hamper as a token of thanks for his dedication to this work. Once completed, he said, it would still need a few days' maintenance each year.

In Stuart McKay's absence, J Horan attended on behalf of BAM to update the CC on the railway. Wheel washers have been commissioned at Falahill & Fountainhall, but not yet at Stow. Lorries are still putting up stones which fly very fast; Roads Dept have still not replaced white lines. Where lines are covered in mud it is extremely dangerous as lorries in particular do not keep to their side of the road.

A member of the CC had witnessed the Citisweep road washer operating when the temperature was 0 degrees – and it was suggested that signs saying 'Mobile |Roadworks' or similar, be put up to warn drivers of this. There are signs north of Falahill warning of slow traffic but better and more frequent signage is needed to warn road users. Inspector Wynn & Michael Moore had been to Falahill to watch the road washers. The police do send a traffic car up and down between Dalkeith and Gala to report on road conditions – but once a day only. One Friday when no white lines were visible, lorry movement was suspended while police cars came out with road washers and closed the road while it was thoroughly washed. BAM have a supply of grit for the A7 in addition to SBC Roads Dept.. BAM and the police to liaise – the police contact BAM when they receive reports or complaints about bad road conditions. There is too much traffic on the road but Inspector Wynn says that they cannot advise people to use the A68 instead as they would be liable if an accident occurred involving someone who had used to the A68 rather than the A7 on their advice. It was suggested that a mandatory 40mph speed limit be imposed on the A7 for the duration of the works. J Horam said that there were 800 trucks a day a fortnight ago – but this quantity had reduced to 450.

It was stated that the road at Heriot, where the traffic lights are situated, is too narrow, and that the quarry entrance on the bend at Falahill is extremely dangerous. Therefore yellow markings will be painted on the southbound carriageway here.

Work is stopping from 20.12.13 to 6.1.14, during which time the road will be cleaned. It was noted that this would be a good time to replace the white lines. Inspector Wynn stated that the priority of the police was Safety.

J Horam said that the transporting of the ballast for the track would be June-August next year – the work would be continuous, but not very high volume in terms of truck movement. The track will be laid in Aug, after which engineer trains will be used as transport instead of lorries.

Citisweep are the cause of many complaints from the public, eg drivers of the sweeping lorries talking on their phones. This will be addressed by BAM. The incident of a motorist from the Borders being fined £100 in Edinburgh for having a dirty numberplate was mentioned. Inspector Wynn expressed disappointment that this had occurred.

BAM were asked to let people living along the back roads know in advance when there was going to be increased traffic. J Horam informed the CC that the new road at Fountainhall is scheduled to be finished in the middle of next year.

Inspector Wynn was asked if there are more accidents on the A7 at the moment; there have been 3 within the last month – none of these due to mud on the road. He will get more information to the CC as to whether or not the accident rate has increased over the period of the works as a direct result of them.

It was felt that the speed camera in Stow was wrongly positioned. It was also stated that there has been no police presence at a CC meeting for a while. Inspector Wynn has appointed 3 new community police officers (including PC Blacklock) who will be trained to use a speed gun.

Regarding crime: there has been a fair bit of rural crime – eg thefts of chainsaws, bikes, quad bikes, oil from tanks, tools etc. However, Stow is not regarded as a crime hotspot at the moment. The police know who most of the offenders are – teams from Midlothian – but need to catch them redhanded. They will willingly come and give advice to individuals on making properties secure.

They would welcome any information on a dog killing 2 sheep at Muirhouse last month.

The Minutes of the last meeting were approved (proposed A McNeilly, seconded D Muir)

Old Station House will be used by 10 maintenance workers, instead of Transport Police. Stow Parish Trust are waiting for the lease agreement.

General Matters:

A letter of resignation from Gordon Saunders has been received by the CC.

Charlotte Hendry (Symington Mains, Fountainhall) was co-opted onto the CC, proposed by J Mushlin, seconded by D Muir. Stuart Jeffries (Galashiels Rd, Stow) was co-opted onto the CC, proposed by J Mackenzie, seconded by A McNeilly.

Town Hall: various users have received letters informing them that they need to pay performing rights fees. This especially affects Keep Fit – but they already have a licence which they have paid for. Cllr Aitchison will look into this.

Layby: Cllr Aitchison & A Riddell will go and see Donald Scott about this – and Cllr Aitchison will arrange a meeting with all concerned.

Park flood prevention: this will have to be carried out in March.

Park draining: there will be a meeting on 5th Dec. with Craig Blackie & Jason Hedley from SBC; it is going to be a bigger job than previously anticipated.

Traffic wardens: Police Scotland are proposing to cease employing them and would like SBC to take over parking/traffic policing. This is not straightforward.

Stow Parish Trust: J Mackenzie stated that he has now joined this .

Eildon Area Committee

J Mackenzie reported from the last meeting that:-

1. The Local Plan is now out for consultation until 3rd March 2014. It mentions regeneration of town centres. Stow needs regeneration as a village.
2. It also suggests maintaining the A7 between Gala and the Border to a better standard. Cllr Aitchison will obtain a copy of the Local Plan for the CC.
3. Prohibition of Alcohol (in public places): the consultation on this is on going. D Muir will respond on behalf of Stow that we do not have problems here and do not see a need for this to be enforced here.
4. Bus timetables from Hawick to the BGH are to be altered.
5. There are now parking restrictions in some of the BGH carparks.

Christmas Tree: the CC funds will pay for the Stow one. (email from H Hunter on this subject)

Newsletter: Wendy Ball requested an upgrade to the paper used for this, amounting to £11 per quarter. This was agreed.

Local Plan: it was agreed that when we respond to this, the CC will fully support the completion of Wedale View.

Planning: Douglas Helm , erection of 2 dwelling houses with integral garage at Halltree

Christine Davidson, erection of dwelling house (renewal of previously granted consent)

Correspondence:

1. Gordon Saunders' letter of resignation
2. Charlotte Hendry requesting money for Fountainhall Christmas party - £60 from CC funds agreed.
3. Electricity Act section 36: addendum proposed (Girthgate Windfarm)
4. SES Plan – supplementary guidance & review of SES plan planning process
5. Clare Malster: Wealth Gap – Youth; Home Energy Scotland; Commonwealth Games baton bearers
6. Launch of consultation on Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill
7. Kevin Sewell – Notes from Resilient Communities Training
8. Mobile apps released for Tell Me Scotland
9. Safer Borders

Fountainhall Community Resilience: The CC will pay for the rental of Fountainhall village hall for First Aid training (2 hrs) on receipt of an invoice.

The CC thanked A Riddell for organising the hamper for Robin McMillan

Cllr Aitchison will ask for the sign at the Subscription Bridge to be renewed.

The next meeting will be on Monday 13th January 2014 at 7.30 pm in Stow Town Hall.