

Comrie and District Community Council

Annual General Meeting

Secretary's Report – April 2007 to March 2008

The members of the Community Council met on each of the ten published dates during 2007 and 2008 with a good attendance each time. All meetings during 2007/08 were attended by a loyal group of Comrie residents who continued, by invitation, to offer their opinions and views which undoubtedly enriched the sessions for everyone. The Strathearn Herald attended the meetings on many occasions, but fewer than previous years, due entirely to the domestic arrangements of their main reporter. Our congratulations to her for the successful addition to her family!! We, the Community Council have always advocated that it is important our activities are accurately and objectively reported and reports in the local newspaper will undoubtedly raise the profile of the Community Council. A high profile, in our opinion, is essential if we are to function effectively and with the support and understanding of all Comrie residents and seasonal visitors. Minutes of every meeting are posted in the Library, the Post Office and on the notice board in the southeast window of Low Cost Stores in Melville Square. Full minutes and other details of the Community Council are now available on the Comrie web site on www.comrie.org.uk

Policing Matters

For a couple of years now we have reported that the youth problem in Comrie was getting out of hand with too many incidents of under age drinking, wanton vandalism, intimidation of others and down right anti-social behaviour. For very many months, following liaison with the Community Council, the police have worked towards putting a lid on the very serious problems and eventually the prolonged attention they gave to Comrie at weekends had an effect. It must now be said that the youth problem Comrie experienced during the last twelve or eighteen months has been reduced to such a low level that it must be acceptable to all but the most disheartened residents. The Community Council would like to offer their congratulations to the Police for their outstanding success in this area.

Representatives from the Police attend most Community Council meetings and make a full report of the incidents that have occurred during the preceding month and the actions they have taken, or propose to take, to remedy them.

Flooding/River Ruchill

The situation has not materially changed since the last report a year ago. The river, generally, continues to deteriorate and the threat of some flooding as a result is always possible. The long awaited flood prevention survey, which was commissioned in the spring of 2006, was finally unveiled in October 2007 and John Thomson from P&K came to the Community Council meeting that month to present its findings. The summary was that Comrie and Greenloaning were the only two successful proposals locally and they will secure funding for flood relief as money becomes available but for Comrie, maybe not until financial year 2009-10.

A local landowner, Dr James Irvine, has finally expressed a keen interest in getting the problems resolved as soon as possible and is now happy for rock armour to be installed along certain parts of the riverbank to prevent further erosion. Issues over land access to the river have yet to be resolved. These issues remain with Dr Irvine.

Throughout the year fallen trees, roots and general debris have had to be removed from the river course at regular intervals at a considerable cost to the P&K Council.

Road Matters - Scotland Transerv

Communications with this body have been as unrewarding as with the previous incumbents. Despite the Community Council's requests for repairs and upgrading on certain sections of the A85 trunk road

and surrounding infrastructure, responses from ScotlandTranserv have been as difficult to extract as teeth from an unwilling dental patient !!

However, P&K on the non trunk road requests, has been generally very good. The relining of the B827 from mid Langside to Comrie was a tremendous improvement and they have been congratulated on this. The department has generally been responsive to requests for repairs and improvements and we are grateful for this. However, the resurfacing outside the cemetery on the South Crieff Road, which has long been promised, is eagerly awaited.

Public Toilets

The toilets are still open and remain under the control of Perth & Kinross Council. Negotiations for the Community Council to take over their running have proceeded at a glacial pace. P&K are still insistent that the Community Council should shoulder the full amount of fixed overhead and this amounts to around £5,500 per annum. In return they are only prepared to grant CCC an allowance of £3,000 per year towards these costs. The Community Council is aware that the toilets cannot be fully funded on the grant money so the project to take them on will, most likely, be abandoned. It is then almost inevitable that the toilets will be closed and demolished. P&K are continuing to explore 'comfort partnerships' with local hoteliers and retailers although there seems to be little interest from any quarter. The good thing about this is that while comfort schemes are unresolved the toilets will remain open and funded by P&K.

Core Path Planning

P&K are under a Government obligation to develop a local system of path networks that should have the end result of making the countryside more accessible to residents and visitors. They are intent on creating an off road cycle path through Comrie to link up with the grander east/west route plan. Although the idea has considerable merit, it has little support from the local landowners affected by the 'land grab' that such a route would entail. The whole procedure has had the waters muddied by far too many bodies and individuals being involved. A clearer process of consultation needs to emerge so that a representative body from Comrie can talk to a similarly fledged body in Perth. We will try to assist the developments in this respect.

Special thanks to Neill Aitken who represented the Community Council to P&K and others in this complicated and somewhat confusing birth of a national path network that many did, and some still do, consider unnecessary but who are now recognising its merits as being beneficial to the community as a whole.

First Response

A local Comrie resident, Alan Moffat, presented an idea to the Community Council in January 2007 for the formation of a First Response unit which would act as a back up to the Ambulance Service and would treat a limited number of very specific killer conditions – for example heart attack and stroke. The Community Council was supportive of this scheme and donated an initial sum of £500 to help to get the project up and running. The First Response scheme was successful in getting further backing and went on to become a viable organisation within the village. The Community Council donated a further £500 to assist with further set up costs. First Response now helps the whole community by ably supporting the emergency ambulance service and you can understand more about what they do by visiting the Comrie website. Our thanks and congratulations are passed to Alan Moffat and his First Response colleagues.

Christmas Lighting

The Christmas Lighting Committee continued to increase the number of lights displayed above the main streets of the village during the festive season. The Community Council, as always, placed festive coloured lights in the tree to the east side of the Parish Church and also arranged for Christmas trees to be presented to the Church, the school and the Royal Hotel. The lighting display has been generally well received and the Community Council would like to congratulate the Lighting Committee for their efforts in improving the festive appearance of the village during December and early January – such dark months.

Hay Ride

The Hayride took place on Sunday 12th August. The weather was good to start with but marred by a torrential downpour later in the afternoon towards the end of the proceedings. However, everyone undoubtedly had a good time as usual. Useful money for the Community Council was raised from the raffle and several donations. Thanks again to the food and drink sponsors and especially the tractor and trailer drivers who provided the transport to and from the event. However, the health and safety concerns of the Police, who were licensing the tractor procession, may mean that the venue will have to be more carefully chosen next time. The safety risks and the public liability insurance aspects will need to be fully considered and properly evaluated.

Community Groups in Comrie

We should not ignore all the community groups in Comrie who do such a good job to support and enhance the quality of life within the village. Obvious Groups that should be mentioned, but in no particular order, are the Comrie Fortnight Committee, the PTA, Comrie in Bloom, the Flambeaux Committee, the Pipe Band and the Thursday Club. However organisations like the Cancer Shop, who help others by donating very large amounts of money to Cancer Research, should not be forgotten. There are many other worthy organisations in Comrie who, without doubt, equally deserve a mention in this report.

Departing Community Council member

Joan Carmichael decided not to stand again for the elections held in March last year and duly retired from the Community Council after a very distinguished fifteen years of service. A short presentation was made to Joan at the October meeting outlining her history with the Community Council and a gift of an engraved cut glass bowl was given to her to mark her service. A subsequent letter of thanks was received from her.

Summary

All the usual thanks again to Community Councillors who gave up their Thursday evenings and, in some cases, much more other time as well. We are all, I know, trying to help Comrie develop and grow and are looking toward improving the amenities and quality of life for all those who live here or visit on a seasonal or regular basis.

Thanks to Caroline Boxer and the Strathearn Herald for representing relevant views in the paper each week as she and her colleagues deemed appropriate.

Tim Lucas
Secretary – Comrie Community Council
13th March 2008