

Monthly Meeting, 11th October 2022

Elgin Town Hall

Attending:

Alastair Kennedy, James Wiseman, Steve Christie, David Chapman (Associate), Brian Irvine, Richard Dyce, Graham Jarvis, Neil Alexander, Alison Stockley, Katherine Bowditch, Councillor Graham Leadbitter, Councillor John Divers, Councillor Sandy Keith, Councillor Peter Bloomfield, Councillor Amber Dunbar, Hazel Lawson, Sophie Ward, PC David Baird, PC Michael Jonstone

Apologies

Councillor Jérémie Fernandes, Jo Mullen, Gordie Wells

Minutes:

1. Police

1. PC David Baird and PC Michael Jonstone presented the Police report supplied by Insp Neil Morrison. PB noted that there had been two bin fires reported outside Grigor & Young on North Street and asked if this was known to the Police. Does CCTV cover that area? PC MJ: Noted that currently there was no coverage on the High Street from Boots westwards. The camera at top of Lossie Wynd was inoperable, and there was a camera missing at North Street due to building works. All CCTV faults have been reported.

2. Sophie Ward – Millbuies & The Wards Projects

1. SW – SW was part of the Council Climate Changed team, who manage the Nature Restoration fund. The projects used grants provided from a 5 year fund. JD noted that Milbuies was under discussion as it was under The Elgin Common Good fund. SW noted that there was a bio-diversity crisis. Last winter 2 consultants drew-up plans to restore nature at both sites, and looked at wider improvements. The 1st year of funds had been of a broader nature, including improvements to site access. This had now switched to focussing on nature restoration alone. AK asked to SW to define the crisis. SW noted that Species and habitats were in decline, with a 25% drop in the number of species, and that the loss of habitats such as peatland and woodland, was linked to Climate change. Minor actions had started last year, but the options available constrained by funding, with only £60k spread across both sites. GJ asked if funding was based on submitted plans SW replied that no, funds were through direct grants, and that sadly, neither site has been actively managed for a long time.
2. Wards: SW noted that the pond boardwalk was in disrepair, not covered by NRF. Wetland function was important for storing carbon. The current project was concentrating on restoring the existing pond. This was being achieved in 2 stages, with half the pond being restored each year to allow for the safe movement of species. FW noted that there was a bike in pond. SW agreed that fly-typing was a problem, but that the Positive Action Group are doing great work at the wards. BI asked if the boardwalk was still safe? SW replied that it was not an immediate safety issue. JW had noticed that the boards were creaking. SW noted that the projects were focussed on the nature of the site. The Pond had dried out, and there was a tendency for ponds to become a woodland. It was important to retain the character of the Wards, through managing water levels. Monitoring points – dip wells – would be going in, and sluice dams may be required. It was hoped to create some wetland scrapes – to create more homes for wildlife. There was also a plan to possibly create an additional pond. There was however a funding issue for

infrastructure. BI wondered if the treeline was taking over the wetland. SW noted that 7 young willow will be taken out, and that they will continue to monitor and remove trees. AK noted that the plan to plant Queen's Canopy trees would have been a bad idea. SW agreed, that yes, this would have acted to dry out the pond. SW wondered if the community had a view about character of the site. JW noted that the fence along the railway was cleaned up, and wondered if that was that the right thing to do? There was something appealing about the open view of the railway, but brambles that were cleared fed the animal and provided cover. SW asked if the committee had any issues with the planting of native shrubs? JW felt it was question of maintenance, especially concerning nettles and overgrowth. Could they be planted to reduce interventions? Deer could often be seen at the Wards. SW noted that that stretch was more managed. RD wondered about the introduction of Whins and whether that might lead to fires. JW was concerned by the proliferation of litter and shrubs. BI asked if there was a need to attract wildlife? PB wondered what sort of animals do we want to attract? SW was clear that they wanted to attract more migratory birds, hence the building of scrapes. AK asked if the second pond be lower down? SW said that they were looking at the North Eastern end, as it was lower. JW mentioned the wild flower meadow, and the discussions re verges and pathways. PB suggested that SW contact [[Colin Bell]] JD also suggested REAP as a good contact for SW to make. RD suggested Rebecca Kail as a good contact given her work with the allotments. PB suggested Peter Wilson as a good contact with regards to community service workers. SW was worried that when funding came in there was a concern that they hadn't contacted the community. JW noted that there was a network of officials in contact with the community council. AK wanted to get the Positive Action Group to investigate JustTransition funding. GL suggested that Greenwards School or Scouts might be willing to be involved. SW had an email contact for local schools, but it had been difficult to get contact. PB was meeting with Elgin Primary next week and would bring it up. RD suggested contact with PC Yvonne Squair re Police cadets.

3. Millbuies: SW noted that there would be felling in the coming years, both to raise income, and to create more space for natural planning and continuous cover, which protect against habitat loss. Path improvements at Millbuies were subject to separate funding. SW wondered if there are any community groups interested in QR codes for parking. GJ wondered if the refreshment concession at Millbuies was paying income to the Common Good fund? SW confirmed that they were.
4. SW also noted that the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative would be looking for volunteers to clear hogweed in the Sheriff Mill area, and asked the CC to please spread word. AK thanked SW for her presentation, and noted that obviously there was some long-term thinking going on.
3. Welcome & Apologies
4. Minutes of last meeting: Proposed by SC, seconded by GJ
5. Matters arising:
 1. Regarding Letters to the Health secretary, there had been no reply as yet.
 2. PB has meeting with Simon Bokor-Ingram and will ask him for updates. RD asked PB to press him for statistics on successful Maternity choices.
 3. RD felt that their visit at the last meeting had been a box ticking exercise.
6. Remembrance Sunday – AK was given permission to fund the wreaths. BI volunteered to lay the wreath on the Planestones, RD volunteered to lay the wreath in New Elgin. JD noted that the march started from the Museum at 10:20am.

7. High Street Parking: GJ noted that at one point Batchen Street had 8 cars parked on it. He felt that the only solution was Traffic Wardens. PB noted that the issue will be resolved when bollards added to bottom of Batchen Street. GJ was concerned as to when that would be happening. PB noted that the Council were reviewing timescale for updating the signage. GJ felt that offenders were simply just paying the tickets because they were so infrequent, say once a month. AK felt that the fine was too low. RD noted that parking in the Cooper Park was run by the Council, for which council wardens were issuing fines, and if an unintended consequence of this was that people were parking fines were lower and being more infrequently issued, i.e. on the High Street. JD noted that the problem was on parking on streets. GL noted that Sunbed customers on Batchen Street were an issue. JD noted that Elgin BID put out consultation to find out the footfall during the multi-story free parking trial. JW wondered if it was Advising shops – folks no where parkings is. SC noted that anecdotally during the 12 days the free trial, car parks had been busier, but there had not been an increase in footfall.
8. Gulls update: AK noted that the management plan was for the center of Elgin only, and was not an Elgin-wide plan. BI will take it on. JD will speak to Jim Grant in the Council.
9. Tug of War – AK
 1. AK had been in email communication. The organisers main question was whether there 300 beds available in Elgin? JD noted that during the pipeband championships, competitors had been able to spread out to places surrounding Forres. It was felt that 300 beds was not an issue for Elgin.
 2. RD & AK to meet with Tug of War organiser on Friday at 3pm.
 3. DC wondered if Gemma Cruikshank from Tourism should be involved? AK to email her.
10. Planning update: nothing
11. Community Heating: AK will put Jo Mullen in contact with Community Heating.
12. Resilience / Warm Banks – BI : Council was having a meeting about the warm banks. SK & AD: the council did not want to duplicate work of other organisations. The first stage was to identify what was being done. There was another meeting planned for 2 weeks time. SK noted that the Cost of living working party were looking at short term solutions. BI was keen to emphasis the need for short term thinking now, as people were starting to panic. Old folks were buying stoves and gas. SK noted that the Chief Executive was instructed to get on with work on Free school meals, the uptake of bus pass, and the clothing grant. PB had a meeting with the Salvation Army's Major Nick Hannover (07896 122179) who were already preparing. GJ noted that it would be 'bloody cold' by next meeting. SC felt that asking folk to move between home and warm bank was counter-productive, in terms of transport cost, and it was better to find ways for them to stay put. JW pointed out that there was grant funding for PV and insulation. AK said that this was starting in Rothes. BI felt that a multi-agency approach was better. JW noted that as the cost of living went up travel was the issue. JD discussed the fact that the Moray Fairer Forum, involving groups such as the foodbank, and various council departments – had made it clear that Elected members involvement was unwanted. BI will go to resilience meeting on November 24th Nov, 10am to 2pm at the Townhall KB, BI, and RD will attend.
13. Just Transition. AK presented an outline of the timeline for Just Transition Project funding:
 - Applications open 29th September
 - Stakeholder events – development and deliberation – pre application

- Closing Date 14th November at 5.00pm
- Technical assessment of projects – 22nd – 25th November
- Notification of projects going forward to public vote
- Marketplace event – 28th / 29th November, 1st December 6.00pm – 8.00pm Elgin Town Hall
- Opening of online voting 28th / 29th November, 1st December
- Closing online voting 16th December
- Announcing result of vote – 22nd December
- Get the money! – week commencing 9th January
- Celebration event – mid to late January tbc
- Successful applicants supported to ensure successful project completion – Jan to March
- Spend the money! – by 31st March 2023

AK had also had confirmation that the funding given could include any installation charges. JW noted that it was currently being advertised on KCR, and KCR will broadcast a show on how to proceed. GJ take up and management will be important for impact. JW hoped that larger things might be funded next time.

AK noted that funding was for community groups only.

14. Bus Revolution: AK noted that Nicola Moss had new manager in post. JD had not yet been informed of this.
15. Banking: The current account stands at £6269, less the £42 for the meeting. [[Gordie Wells]] and [[Paul Briggs]] had asked that the New Elgin East, “Community Loves Action Now” group be allowed to use the account for their funds, on the understanding that they are will do their own accounting.
16. AK had been asked if we wanted to use the chambers, but not the microphones. AK has booked Town Hall for the next two years.
17. Website: RD apologised and said that development was ongoing. He hoped to have a demo shortly.

18. Elected members update

0. JD noted that the Council was in recess.
1. SK had attended the cost of living working party. The Bollards on the High Street had now been removed: Upkeep had difficult for street cleaning. The road widening was planned for early in the new year. AK asked re street sweeping why don’t drivers clean the corners? SK will investigate. A Toucan Crossing will be added to Morriston Road shortly, and to Thornhill Rd after the new year. It should have a traffic-calming effect. GJ felt that a 2 metre of raised roadway would be more useful, as Thornhill Road has been an issue for some time. GW noted that there could be no raised tables on a bus or lorry routes.
2. PB raised the issue that the Reserve and Cadet Association at the TA Hall will not be funded anymore. RD asked who was funding it currently PB replied that it was the MOD BI was worried for the cadets affected. PB said that LL Seymour Monroe was aware and had raised the issue. AK asked if it was worth the ECC writing to Seymour Monroe? PB replied that it was. JW noted that the TA was something important to lots of Elgin residents.

19. AOCB

0. GJ was pleased that the Council Annexe was now open, and that the removal of the bollards was to be welcomed. AK had been to a Community Engagement Group meeting with SSE who had discussed the New Transmission line from Bieulie to Black Hillock – connecting in to various projects including the Solar Energy farm. Elgin Energy and Transport Scotland.

1. BI noted an increase in crime vandalism in Elgin. JD noted that Elgin BID was aware that there was an increase, probably as a result of young people using the Under 23 card. BI also noted that there were properties in the high street that was home to squatters. JD noted that there had been financing for the removal of vegetation but there had been little uptake from property owners.
 2. SC LIDL Last Asda. BI – CCTV – police haven't come back to us. Iron bar was used. Reported it. Police called back from Dundee. PB Please contact Simon Reid. JD ask for meeting. PB has had a meeting with Kate Stevens and Simon Reid. BI – there was a perception. PB had a meeting ACC Emma Bond.
 3. AK noted that there was a Corporate Plan discussion scheduled for Weds 16th November, 6:30pm. BI, SC, RD, AK, KB, and AS will attend.
 4. Moray CAB are providing a new service. RD forward details.
 5. Development Manager wants to meet the Community Council. GJ noted that this sounds like another box-ticking exercise.
20. Date of next meeting: 8th November.