

Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council

Minutes – October 2005

Approved

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Chair: Donald Macgregor

1. Attendance

Community Councillors

Les Beech, Ken Crichton, George Davidson, Richard Douglas, Ken Fraser, Ian Goudie, Stuart Holdsworth, Pete Lindsay, Dennis Macdonald, Donald Macgregor, Keith McCartney, Bruce Ryan, Carole Tricker, Penny Uprichard.

Students' Association

Frederic St Johnston, Ben Reilly

Nominated

Ewen Sparks

Fife Councillors

Sheila Black, Jane Ann Liston, Bill Sangster

Apologies

Bette Christie, Elise Methven, Maggie Stracey, Alex Yabrov, Frances Melville

2. Minutes of September

Approved

3. Presentations

3.1. Multimedia Project

Ken Cochran, who has recently returned to the St Andrews area after living in the USA for some years, re-introduced himself for the benefit of new members. He hosts one of the community council web sites and produced one of the first St Andrews web sites, and CD-ROM of St Andrews in aid of the Pier Project.

His latest project is a documentary DVD on St Andrews. As a step towards that he is working with Rev Rory Macleod of Holy Trinity on a multimedia presentation on St Andrews, to be shown during St Andrews Week. He is looking for individuals enthusiastic about St Andrews to take part in some 'talking head' style interviews as part of this. He thought community council might well represent such a group... He asked for anyone who would like to take part to contact him and gave his phone number.

4. Fife Councillors

4.2. Sheila Black (South)

4.2.1. Viaduct Walk Lights

Richard Douglas asked about the lighting problems which have left the walk in darkness. Cllr Black handed over to Cllr Liston who has been dealing with this as a frequent user of the path. Cllr Jane Ann Liston said officials had told her that there was a problem with the mains box which may need to be replaced. This might take until Christmas. She is pressing for temporary lighting until full repairs are effected.

4.3. Bill Sangster (Central)

4.3.1. Buchanan Gardens

Is being resurfaced which should improve life considerably for road users, especially cyclists.

4.3.2. Park & Ride

Over 31,000 passengers this year, down considerably because of the suspension over the period around the Open.

4.3.3. Toilets

The toilets in Church Square have now closed for several weeks for a rebuild. There is some problem with access to alternative sites. The town library is allowing elderly and disabled people to use their facilities. The town hall cannot open to the public at some times due to some new legislation which applies when parts of the hall are booked for classes etc involving children. During the week there is the Local Office but that is closed at weekends, but the West Port toilets are open. He is unhappy that there is no notice giving alternatives at the site.

Donald Macgregor attacked the closure of the toilets in the centre without adequate alternatives or, he felt, consultation. Cllr Sangster agreed that the situation was unsatisfactory, and has objected. He felt that visitors in particular had been ignored, although there were still tour buses arriving. In effect, he said, the closure was six or seven weeks too early. Penny Uprichard said that with 700,000 visitors a year toilet provision was inadequate. In this situation there should at least be Portaloos; Cllr Sangster broke in to say

that he'd asked for them. Stuart Holdsworth added that Portalooos could be on-site within 48 hours of ordering.

4.3.4. Madras South Street Crossing

[September 4.3.9.] Having checked the time split between pupils crossing at their break times and cars passing over the cars do have slightly over 50%, which he finds quite acceptable. Though he did see that it might be frustrating for those in a hurry, but advised that any one who is in a hurry should not schedule a journey through South Street at that time.

4.3.5. School 20mph Zones

Ken Crichton complained that motorists had to obey the 20mph speed limit when the lights flash whether or not there were children visible in the area. Cllr Sangster agreed this was the case but pointed out the lights were set with a safety margin to allow for pupils going to school late, or early.

4.4. Jane Ann Liston (South East)

4.4.1. Phone Box

Mike Robinson, Head of Local Services, is still pushing BT to restore the light to the box at the Canongate/Largo Road junction (BT say they have, but anyone looking at it at night knows they have not).

4.4.2. Town Hall Curtains

The cost of replacement curtains needed in the Town Hall will be about £1,500. She asked if community council would be inclined to support an application for this amount to the Common Good Fund (the Town Hall is a Common Good property).

Meeting thought this should be considered favourably by the Common Good committee.

Ken Crichton thought Fife Council should bear the cost as he thought they gained all the revenue from hall hires, rent, etc. Cllr Liston said out that they also maintained the building without charge to the CGF, which considerably outweighed the income from hires. If they did not the town hall would be bankrupt. Pete Lindsay noted that whenever the subject of expenditure on the town hall came up Ken Crichton made the same challenge and got the same response.

4.4.3. South Street Notice Board

Transportation Service are talking of "rationalising" the notice boards on South Street. On the assumption that this means removing the only existing open, free, uncensored and heavily-used notice board in the town centre she has stated her opposition.

4.4.4. East Bents Trampolines

She has suggested that some new 'Quality of Life' funding be used to transform the old trampoline pits at the East Bents to some form of flower bed perhaps maintained as a community effort by the schools.

Ken Crichton felt that the trampolines should be put back into operation if someone could be found to operate the site. The last operator could not afford the overheads such as insurance, he said. Other people agreed that operating trampolines (and the associated putting green) would be preferable, but saw that an operator was unlikely. Ewen Sparks suggested that the play area nearby be extended and into the area and the equipment upgraded or refurbished. As mentioned in other recent meetings and shown by Bette Christie's photos last month, the equipment is rather run down. Carole Tricker suggested community council should put some of its own funds into upgrading/extending the play area.

On an informal show of hands a strong majority preferred for any money to be spent on improving the play area.

5. Planning Committee

5.1. Minutes

Minutes of 26 Sep were circulated at the meeting, but minutes of 12 Sep were not available due to a mix-up, so were given as a verbal summary.

12 Sep

1. 'Blue Stane' Plaque	Some concern over the wording	PL comment
2. Dean's Court	install hand rails, disabled parking	NC
3. 10a Gibson Place	Boundary railings and gate	NC
4. 14 Berry Place	Conservatory Extension	NC
5. 94 Hepburn Gardens	extension to dwelling house incl new and replacement doors and windows	NC
6. 3 Kinburn Place	demolish redundant flue	NC
7. 14 The Links	install hand rail	NC
8. Lade Braes Path	proposal to improve access and make shared use. Supported by a majority of the committee, but called for a cycle path south of the burn to reduce possible conflict between pedestrians & cyclists	

Ewen Sparks asked whether there would be a white line to distinguish cycle from pedestrian sides of the path? Ian Goudie thought that it would be a good idea as it worked well on Viaduct Walk, but Penny Uprichard's recollection of the consultation meeting in the town hall was that there would probably not be one. Ewen Sparks felt the absence would make cyclists more cautious.

Planning Meeting – 26.9.05

Present: I Goudie, R Douglas, G Davidson, P Uprichard. Apologies: P Lindsay, B Christie.

1	Old Course Hotel	extend/alter hotel to form new spa facilities, including partial demolition	N.C.
2	12 Howard Place	alter and extend flatted dwelling house, including alterations to boundary wall and formation of parking bay	N.C.
3	53 Hepburn Gardens	erect garden shed, including removal of existing	N.C.
4	11 Kilrymont Road	erect garage	N.C.
5	44 Hamilton Avenue	erect extension	N.C.
6	24 Watson Avenue	rear extension	N.C.
7	8 Lawmill Gardens	porch extension	N.C.
8	30 Windsor Gardens	conservatory extension	N.C.
9	12 Sandyhill Road	extension	N.C.
10	St. Mary's Place	pavement extension, tree planting, replacement surfacing and street lighting upgrade	N.C.
11	58 South Street	repair of roof structure and reinstatement of internal finishes	N.C.
12	209 South Street	external alterations to public house and alterations to flat (Drouthy Neebors). Extension to bar into neighbouring pend. OBJ. to windows and design	OBJ R.D.
13	13a Hope Street	5 person HMO	N.C.
14	2 Livingstone Crescent	dormer extension	N.C.
15	7a Greyfriars Garden	change of use of dwellinghouse to HMO	N.C.
16	15 City Road	form two windows	N.C.
17	29 Bell Street	change of use, Class 1 retail to Class 2 estate agent	N.C.
18	31a South Street	replacement windows	N.C.
19	12 Church Street	internal alterations and new lettering (TSB to Lloyds TSB), remove existing signs. New counter	N.C.

5.2. Hospital

Ian Goudie was of the opinion that the decision in favour of the Largo Road site was more politics than planning driven. He drew attention to an analysis of points ignored in the decision, made by Penny Uprichard (Appendix MA). His particular concern was the Environmental Statement, described by Development Service as 'acceptable' despite making no attempt to compare alternative sites, as required by legislation.

He said that recent years had been marked by a string of major departures from the development plan: Kingask, 7th golf course, and now the hospital site. Departures from the plan are supposed to be an exception; they are becoming the rule, particularly where large, rich or powerful organisations are involved.

With politicians voting for fear of losing votes, and officials prepared to alter their stance depending which way the wind is blowing, there appears to be little rôle for those who believe in rational planning. Last week's decision has rendered worthless much of the work of the planning committee over the 12 years he has served as convener. On reconsideration of how usefully he spends his time he has determined to resign as convener of the planning committee at its next meeting.

He spoke his gratitude at being able to do the job for the last 12 years, and his thanks for the work and support of the various members of the committee over that period.

Donald Macgregor thanked him for the enormous amount of work he'd put in over the years, which was solidly backed by applause from the meeting.

6. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings**6.1. Primary Schools**

Les Beech was unhappy with the turnout of people for the school inspection tours of the four primaries arranged recently. He had been the only member of the public at one school he visited and was outnumbered by the guides. At another there were only three other people. He felt there was apathy on the subject.

Donald Macgregor had heard that the consultation meetings at the schools had been well-attended and 'lively', which did not sound like apathy. Ewen Sparks had not gone on any of the tours as he couldn't see what the point was. Donald Macgregor agreed that he'd heard similar comments; comments to Fife Council would be more useful than counting tour numbers.

Cllr Sheila Black said the members of the Children's Services committee would themselves have a series of 'site visit' tours before the decision (24 Nov) so they would be fully aware of the layout issues. She agreed that comments to education service were the best way of making a case.

6.4. Honoured Citizen / Honorary Citizen Scheme

November

6.5. St Andrew's Day Reception

Agreed to go ahead in conjunction with the Fairtrade group.

**Pete Lindsay, Bruce Ryan
and various volunteers as necessary**

6.6. Civic Award

[September 7.1.] This proposal has been positively received. Ken Crichton suggested an award of certificates, engraved quaichs (£95 + engraving), and a soft drinks reception at 6.15pm before the Monday 7 November meeting of community council.

Agreed

7. New Business**7.1. Scout Hall Renovation Funding**

Agreed to fund a specific part of the project for them to identify, up to £500.

Pete Lindsay

7.2. Award Proposal

withdrawn

8. Reports from Office Bearers**8.1. Chair****8.1.1. St Andrew's Day Holiday Bill**

Donald Macgregor and St Andrew's Day representative Keith McCartney unable to attend the press conference due to work commitments. Ken Fraser volunteered.

Ken Fraser

8.2. Treasurer**8.2.1. Disbursements**

Ad hoc committee to recommend procedures to November's meeting.

8.2.2. Signatories

Proposed: that incoming treasurer, Carole Tricker, replace Bruce Ryan as signatory to the community council bank account. Proposed Bruce Ryan, seconded Pete Lindsay. Carried unopposed.

**Remove Bruce Ryan
Add Carole Tricker**

8.3. Secretary**8.3.1. August Minutes**

Report accepted; August minutes accepted in full.

8.3.2. Standing Orders

Adoption of the circulated paper Proposed: Pete Lindsay, second Donald Macgregor, carried unopposed.

Standing Orders adopted

Agreed to look at expanding the informational side of SO; people with queries on procedure, or who have made such queries in the past, to contact PL.

8.3.3. Constitution

As the Hon. Cit. scheme has not been sorted out this will remain on the back burner for now.

8.3.4. Trust Fund

Donald Macgregor enlarged on the original reasons for the trust fund. It was originally set up to receive a gift from the Royal and Ancient Golf Club in such a way that it did not interfere with the annual maintenance and administration grant from the North East Fife District Council and as a charitable trust it would not be subject to tax.

9. Reports**9.1. From Committees****9.1.1. Recreation**

Ken Crichton gave a verbal report:

- Art and Photographic Exhibition: preview Tue 29, the exhibition proper from Wed 30 Nov – Sat 3 Dec
- Senior Citizens' Christmas Tea: 3.30-5.30pm, Tue 20 Dec
- Floral Awards: St Andrews received two gold medals and two certificates (circulated for inspection). Bill Sangster as Chair of the St Andrews in Bloom committee and Donald Macgregor thanked all those involved in working on this year's displays and gardens etc.

He has approached Fife Council about cleaning up the war memorial; it will be inspected and a cleaning programme devised.

9.2. From Representatives

9.2.1. Scottish Language Dictionaries

Ken Fraser attended the AGM. The dictionary is published in an online form at www.dsl.ac.uk. The operation runs on a shoestring so even our small annual subscription is very welcome.

10. Any Other Competent Business

10.1. Students' Association Community Representative

Frederic St Johnston introduced himself, and said a few words about his remit. He hopes to promote a greater degree of interaction between the town and student communities, for instance through societies with mutual interests and publicising 'town' events in the student newspaper, etc. He'd also like to turn around the impression some in the town have that students are represented only by those who are heard between 12 midnight and 2am in the centre.

10.2. Western Cemetery

The wrought iron gates are in bad state, and only one side opens. It is so bad that she has even made an offer, some months ago, to pay for repainting but has heard nothing.

Cllr Bill Sangster will investigate

Appendix MA – Hospital Site Decision

The St Andrews Hospital Decision By The East Area Development Committee

27 September 2005
P Uprichard

I should like to comment on this Committee decision and the papers which were involved.

The ES Review

Fife Council commissioned an independent review of the Environmental Statement (ES) from the Centre for Environmental Assessment and Management. There was a brief statement in the Planning Report that this review had been 'satisfactory'. The Review document itself was not handed out to Councillors. I was able to get hold of a copy of this document, and was surprised to find that it contained criticism of a great many omissions and inadequacies. Some of the comments in the Review said:

1. ... clarification of the size of the development is required
2. a gas main and overhead power lines are to be diverted. The ES should have undertaken an initial investigation identifying where these could be diverted to ...
3. It is not clear what proportion of the site is designated as a development site and what proportion is designated as countryside ...
4. ... construction noise levels and ... construction traffic could have been predicted.
5. ... of particular importance is the lack of commitment to traffic mitigation measures.
6. ... The ES states that ... we will be committed to achieving the highest environmental standards ... The Review says that ... clarification should have been provided as to the type, duration and frequency of monitoring.
7. ... The ES states that the hospital will not affect views to the historic skyline landmarks of St Andrews except from nearby viewpoints, provided that there are no tall or landmark buildings within the development ... [My comment is that they don't yet know the height of the buildings, so the ES statement is unreliable. P.U.]
8. A consultee response has identified that the loss of land for employment purposes should have been considered
9. ... conclusions are drawn as to the acceptability of the development proposal ... it should be noted that the ES should not draw conclusions on the acceptability of a proposal.

Having read this document, I was surprised that the ES was rated as 'satisfactory (c), despite omissions and inadequacies'. I telephoned the Centre which carried out the Review, and asked how many of their reviews were rated C or above. The answer was 84%. Obviously it is difficult to get a D (unsatisfactory) rating.

The Planning Report

The first Planning Report I remember clearly was Mr Birrell's 60 page Report on Kingask, which had not one sentence against the development. Then there was the Report on the 7th golf course, where the words of the Structure Plan had been altered to provide even stronger support for the development, its huge shed, its parking for 100 cars, and its club house, all in potential Green Belt.

The Hospital Planning Report is similar; its only aim is to ensure the development goes through. There were 20 objections, and only one support letter. The list of statutory consultees on the front page includes the Community Council, and other consultees have also made strong objections. (The Preservation Trust and the Green Belt Forum have only entered comments, despite a report in August by the Green Belt Forum that the Preservation Trust 'was starting initial preparations for a formal challenge to some of Fife Council's central assumptions'.)

Scottish Natural Heritage 'objects to the proposal though conditions will address. Views into and out of the site will be seriously affected... Scale and massing of the building inappropriate ... Position and size of the site inappropriate for this type of building ...'. In a later objection SNH says that it is concerned 'that

due to the proposed position of this development, any decision made by Fife Council regarding its appropriateness may be prejudicial to future Green Belt policy for Fife’.

Since the meeting it has learnt that SNH intend to maintain their objection.

Scottish Civic Trust ‘site could be used to greater advantage ... A reconfiguration of the site is needed to avoid the impact on the slopes to the south ... The boundary, of the town against the rural landscape at this point is very important ...’

Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland ‘[this will be] a precedent for future expansion of the town in this direction. Explanations given for not proceeding with the St Leonards site are not sufficient ... A different design is required.’

In addition the Rt. Hon. The Lord Cameron of Lochbroom, writing for the Royal Fine Art Commission, says ‘The design proposals submitted with the Environmental Statement are not encouraging.’

Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland ‘Concerns regarding the design concept. An east/west axis would be better. ... Less impact on historic view of the town.’

I understand that Fife Council should discuss the concerns of the statutory consultees with them.

3.2.4 of the Planning Report says ‘Reflecting the exceptional urgency of delivery required...’ For 16 years (or 12 – nobody is sure) the development has been plodding along, with as far as I know no frantic appeals from Councillors to speed it up. Now suddenly it is of ‘exceptional urgency’.

3.2.7 says ‘where a development project is important and needs to encroach into the countryside the Council’s various development plan policies are generally supportive.’

3.6.2. says that ‘there is a potential for the development to affect the distant views of the historic centre.’

BUT 3.6.5 says ‘In essence the development of this site will not seriously affect the views into or out of the historic town centre or the wider landscape setting of the town.’

3.6.8. says ‘It is considered that the development can fit into, the landscape in an acceptable way.’ In my late objection, I included this sentence, and asked ‘Because the writer says it is so, does that make it so?’

A phrase that occurs more than once in the Planning Report is ‘the emerging Local Plan’, which is said to have ‘identified this area of the preferred site for the hospital.’ But the next Local Plan is far from being at the stage where it can lend influence to matters like the Hospital site. When it becomes a Finalised Draft Plan, then it will be able to do so. At the moment officials are still ploughing through 1,350 objections, and in addition have 3,000 letters of comment which have to be answered. The emerging Local Plan is still in embryo, and may well change considerably before it is finalised.

None of the Councillors commented on this point.

From the beginning of the decision meeting it was clear that the matters of real importance to the town – Green Belt, the southern hillside, traffic, etc – were not going to be addressed. Ten minutes was spent discussing car parking, and Transportation was able to leap into the breach and promise to transfer 30 spaces from reserve into actuality. With one exception, not a single objection was mentioned, and it seemed clear, to me anyway, that most of the Councillors had not read most of the papers. One Councillor spent five minutes repeating the developers’ assessment of the site selection process, without referring to Dr. Goudie’s very detailed and convincing paper which included that subject. The Councillor nearest to my seat had a copy of my latest letter to his right. He never looked at it.

The one exception to this depressing scenario was Councillor Liston. She made a brave effort to bring up the matters which concern the whole town,, including the possibility of the Muir Group building up to 1,000 houses on the southern slopes, and the fact that Lamond Drive is again going to be punished by construction traffic as it was during the Kingask development. She also had worries about public transport, and extra traffic generation. She proposed refusal, but failed to get a seconder.

Protection for St. Andrews and its landscape setting is being whittled away. It is said in the Planning Report that the new Local Plan, unlike the present one, will have no provision saying that development proposals will not be acceptable, if they have an adverse impact on the St Andrews medieval skyline.

A Councillor said, in the decision meeting, that although she still had concerns over some issues such as Green Belt, the contour of the land, and the St Andrews Strategic Study, she felt that these were now overridden by need. This statement could be very damaging.

The Green Belt proposed by the Scottish Executive in the 2002 Structure Plan, ‘encircling the town’, has not been established. Fife Council have now proposed a much weaker Green Belt in the draft Plans, and may well be encouraged by this statement.

The Strategic Study is the only document expressing the wishes of the people of St Andrews nearly 1,000 people contributed to it. It cannot be overridden in the way that is suggested, because it is a material consideration in the Local Plan. However, this statement will encourage Fife Council to overlook it.

If Green Belt and the Strategic Study can be overridden in this way for a hospital, what happens in 2 years when the question of affordable housing comes up – equally important, equally emotive? In a few years, what will be left of St Andrews?

There are other questions still to be answered – why did Fife Council, who in 2003 strongly supported St. Leonards Fields as the best site, change their minds? There is still no answer to that. Did Mr Muir come into the picture at that point? Has there been some arrangement by somebody somewhere? The statutory consultees have posed strong objections and as yet have apparently had no answers. Will the developers be able to put right the many problems which, according to the ES Review and the consultees, still remain to be addressed?

Despite the recent mini-hysteria over delay (after 16 – or 12 – years) – which, suspiciously, started after the Departure Hearing and at the point when further objections and comments were called for – we are in

fact well provided for. We have the Memorial Hospital, we are near a teaching hospital, Ninewells, and we are near Kirkcaldy. Dr Kilpatrick was quoted in the *Citizen* as being 'desperate' to get started.

With only one letter of support for the Hospital application, there is no sign that people in St. Andrews and the East Neuk are 'desperate' for the new hospital – they seem content to wait until it happens. What they have expressed a view on is the right site. But the name of St Leonards Fields was not (as far as I can remember) mentioned at the decision meeting.

I find it very worrying that the Councillors (bar one) totally ignored the objections and the considerable amount of information in them. Instead they allied themselves to Fife Council and the developers. Who represents St Andrews residents?
