

Meeting Minutes

Meeting on Wednesday 16 July 2025 at Rafford Village Hall

FCC members present:

Peter Taylor (PT), Tom Hardie (TH), Tony Pinner (TP - **Chair** of meeting)

Also present:

Paul McBain (PMcB), Kathleen Robertson (KR), Juli Salt, Carol Bennett Buttacci, Howard Stollar, Carol MacRae, Joanna Taylor, Carlo Miele.

1) Apologies:

Scott Lawrence, Howard Davenport (HD), Anna Gatward (AG – Treasurer), Anne Parkinson (RVH)

2) Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes agreed with **Correction** to item **3 f Resilience**:

Rafford Village Hall have agreed to store Resilience Equipment, but they need to confirm a suitable location and FCC (HD) are to provide a suitable container.

3) Current Standing Items

a) Traffic Safety in Rafford

- **Provision of pavement in Upper Rafford**

- The bank has been planted with wild flower seeds
- The redundant post will be removed
- Road markings will be installed

- **Vehicle Activated Signs**

TP reported on his review of VAS data; operational reliability remained poor; detailed communication was under way with the sign suppliers.

Such data as was available year on year suggested that no appreciable impact on traffic speeds had been made since installation of the signs. TP has a dataset of downloaded information, which he will add to FCC Dropbox. (**Action: TP**)

It was agreed that TP was mandated to try to revoke the agreement on grounds of the suppliers' failure to deliver reliable (ie fit for purpose) equipment; any recovery of purchase cost would be returned to the original benefactor: the FINDERNE Development Trust.

KR noted that Dyke CC were considering installing VAS, and so might well be interested in any data on reliability and efficacy. (**Action: TP to liaise with Dyke CC to share data**)

- **Village Entrance Signs**

Project remains on hold, pending results of Moray-wide 20 m.p.h. speed limit consultation (q.v.).

- **20 m.p.h. Speed Limits**

Elaine Penny (MC) confirms that the consultation on a 20 mph limit project for Moray is going ahead, across the county.

Paul McBain confirmed that the cost of the consultation and any proposed roll-out was funded by Holyrood; but no commitment to the ongoing maintenance and other recurring costs of any new installation were currently included in the Government's offer.

- **Road Safety on C14E road, Lower Rafford to Dallas Dhu.**

Following the onsite meeting of 5 June, Elaine Penny had confirmed that further consultation on a roll-out of a 30 mph limit would be undertaken as part of the 20 mph review process.

Meanwhile, signage would be added by the Roads department "*in the near future*" just west of the Dava Way railway bridge, to warn of pedestrians (ie on the Core Path section of the road).

(Action: EP/Roads)

Alternative speed restriction measures would be discussed in ongoing liaison with Roads

(Action HD/PT)

Full note of agreed facts and recommendations to be reported to next FCC meeting. **(Action PT)**

Residents commented that signage alerting drivers to the road being a "*Narrow Road with Passing Places*" would be helpful, although the fact that in the residents' view the Council was not maintaining those passing places might be a reason why visibly signing such an advice was not a measure the Council favoured.

b) Broadband

Rollout of fibre was ongoing, most recently along the C14E Rafford to Dallas Dhu road, but access to and information about the network remained patchy.

Some residents had been offered compensation as a result of suppliers (Openreach) failures to follow through on connection opportunities.

c) Brockloch Field Development

TP reported that construction tenders have been received. Further funding will be needed prior to Construction Phase. The Rural Housing Trust had not yet committed to the proposed match-funding.

FDT had met with Tim Eagle who is to try to get funding from the affordable housing programme at Holyrood.

d) Windfarm Developments

No significant items to report.

e) Joint Community Council

JCC and the Community Liaison Officer were offering help to promote Council membership in advance of the approaching elections/renewal of Community Councils in September.

PT had attended a combined stall at the Highland Games, but the value of that initiative was undermined by the poor location (behind the beer tent and in the middle of the solo piper tuning areas) and general visibility of the stand. Footfall was accordingly low.

f) Resilience Planning

PT's request for permission to use OS mapping in our resilience planning remains outstanding.
(Action: DD/MC)

The experience of the recent wildfires (see discussion below under AOB) prompted a reminder that the "powerpacks" needed to be regularly charged up.

g) Forres Health Services

TH has continued to experience a reticence on the part of the Forres health Practices to engage with the public formally.

E-consult is assisting in some cases, but the system has glitches (occasionally dropping out enquiries when the system reaches capacity).

Because Forres health practices are private entities, not Council-managed, any progress must be through the NHS system, not Moray Council.

4) Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

a. A940 Road Junction at Edinkillie Church

AM will send his evidence to PT, who will then liaise with TMC Roads Dept.

(Actions: AM, PT)

b. FCC membership

The recruitment of new members was discussed. The efforts to work with JCC and Debra Duke were noted. Leaflets had been made available for distribution. Copies were available at RVH and Edinkillie Community hall.

PT and Joanna T would explore the possibility of a house to house distribution in likely areas of recruitment.

The difficulties of recruitment to "public service" in Edinkillie had been evident at the meeting of the ECA attended by PT earlier in the year. It appeared that a "new" chair to replace Roy Dennis at the ECA had however been found, to take forward ECA's transition into a SCIO.

The "Welcome to FINDERNE" leaflet was also made available to the meeting.

c. Local Place Plan

TP confirmed that although the LPP had been officially "filed", it was meant to be an "evolving" document, and not set in stone. He would therefore be adding to our submission an observation about the increased traffic volumes and speed on the Dallas Dhu road (see above). **(Action TP)**

d. Lower Rafford Mini-Wetland

No update.

e. Path to Rafford Church

A further work party to be organised to complete the work, after the nesting season. **(Action: TH)**

f. Smart Meters

Information had been included in the Community Newsletter.

It was reported that digital switchover had been put back to 2027.

g. Scheme of Establishment

PT's comments had been relayed to Debra Duke:

- Allowance would be made for the Council to provide funding for insurance for community assets held by Community Councils, particularly as title to such assets would revert to Moray Council in the event of the relevant Community Council failing to re-form after September.
- Licensing was being made a discretionary rather than mandatory item of consultation. (It was noted by TP that no consultations were being made of Finnerne CC in relation to licensed premises in any event at present.)

5) Planning Report (TP)

No significant planning matters had been reported.

6) Secretary's Report (HD)

Summary of correspondence received by email to 16 July 2025 that was not already covered in the meeting:

- 5-Jun: email from D Duke say she has contacted Kevin Belton, TMC Systems Manager, who will sort out a licence for FCC to use OS and share OS mapping.
- 6-Jun: Note from Matthew Watt TMC Planning Officer, telling us that our LPP is ready to be registered, and will be used to inform the forthcoming Local Development Plan.
- 6-Jun: FCC newsletter issued, coving FDT Bus service, Digital Voice, New Forres Academy, and other items.
- 9/10-Jun emails from James Mackie expressing concern for proposals to extract Spey River water for Hydrogen Production and links to SEPA background information
- 10-Jun: FCC sent comments on CC Scheme of Establishment to D Duke
- 11-Jun: email from SSEN issuing Draft Annual Engagement Plan, feedback by 29th June.
- 12-Jun:email from Alison McLaughlin acknowledging our response to Chief Execs offer to come along to one of our meetings.
- 12-Jun: updated FDT bus timetable issued to community members
- 12-Jun: email received from Peter Mitchell regarding Giant Hogweed spotted beside Rafford Burn during footpath maintenance work-party. HD suggested contacting FN&L Rivers Trust, and offered FCC help in publicising any work parties organised to deal with this.
- 18-Jun: email from NHS Grampian publicising the launch of a new Public Involvement Network.
- 19-Jun: email for Scottish Government launching a consultation on an updated Offshore Wind Plan, which runs to 22nd August.
- 25-Jun: email from RVH, with concerns about ongoing funding to Defibrillator and car park grit. Answered by PT, explaining FCC funding position, and role of FCC generally
- 26-Jun: received minutes from IA Chorlton for the FDT/RVH/FCC joint meeting held on 24th June.

- 27-Jun: FCC sent notes on meeting of 5 June with Elaine Penny on speed limits and road safety on Lower Rafford-Dallas Dhu Road.
- 28-Jun onwards: various emails regarding responding to Dava Wild Fires
- 3-Jul: notice of next JCC meeting on 11th or 14th August from D Duke (t.b.c.)
- 7-Jul: email from RVH, expressing some thoughts on the use of RVH as a community hub in the case of emergency.
- 8-Jul: notice from RVH that MSP Douglas Ross will be holding a surgery in RVH from 9:00 am to 10:00 am on Thursday 14th August.

7) Treasurers Report (AG)

AG had provided the following update, based on report issued prior to the meeting:

Bank Balance £21,707.81

- £20k SSEN.
- £803.34 Moray Council Admin Grant balance.
- £240 Stocksigns compensation. (earmarked for sign maintenance)
- £664.47 balance of funding from FDT for LPP

It had been agreed at a previous meeting that new signatories were needed for the FCC bank account; AG invited "continuing" members to liaise with her to effect change **(Action: AG/PT/TH)**

(Post-meeting note: PT, TH and AG have – 24 July 2025 - started the process with RBS; Carlo Miele's consent is required as a former signatory)

8) AOCB

- a) A wide-ranging discussion was held about the recent wildfires
- b) KR reported on an ongoing investigation at Moray Council into the response of authorities and agencies to the crisis as regards communication with the public
- c) Many residents had reported failings in the system that was (?) operating in that regard, and multiple examples given from those who had been closer to the fires and their effect.
- d) There was universal agreement that the response from those in authority so far as communication with the residents of Finnerne had been very poor indeed.
- e) Councillors present noted that communication with them from officers had not been much better; an internal report was under preparation with urgency
- f) After some debate as to whether or not FCC should at this time make any post-crisis communication to residents, it was agreed that
 - i) The crisis was in fact not yet "over", as outbreaks were recurring and could be expected to do so for some time
 - ii) A more searching and general inquiry had been announced at an interagency level, alongside the Moray Council internal investigation
 - iii) It would be more appropriate to communicate the results of those investigations once concluded, rather than offer part-complete views
- g) PT had made a report to KR on his own perspective (as FCC Resilience Coordinator in waiting – the Resilience Plan being still a draft only) of the communication issues
- h) PT had (unofficially) been in close contact with Edinkillie Community Hall volunteers and visitors to the Hall on the Sunday, Monday and later in the week.
- i) Edinkillie Hall had opened on the Monday (after an unfortunate miscommunication from Moray Council press department on the Sunday) and had received support and supplies from the ad hoc Tesco/Aldi initiative.
- j) The willingness of volunteers to assist had not been matched by a comparable engagement with such volunteers by those managing the response of the uniformed services; whether, and if so

where and how such voluntary assistance could be deployed was badly directed, if at all. Communications were contradictory, frequently out of date, and lacking in specificity for local residents.

- k) PT undertook to continue to liaise with KR and feed in appropriately to the Resilience Planning process.
- l) KR noted that one element emerging from the most recent incidents was the likelihood that, however willing and enthusiastic the support and efforts of people on the ground, the use of immediately local resources such as village halls etc. might NOT be the most appropriate response, as the occupants of such facilities might themselves be subject to evacuation and relocation. A more remote location (such as Forres) might be deemed more reliable/resilient. This would be looked at as part of the internal inquiry that was now under way.
- m) The development of “networks” of local communication and “cascades” of information was agreed to be a valuable tool, although the identity of the relevant network members might be required to be very different in the event of (say) a snow-day (and school closures) – which process currently operates quite effectively on a tried and tested basis – or of an incident other than wildfires – where learning would emerge from the recent incidents, but might not be applicable to eg pollution or riverine incidents.
- n) Further work is required to extract relevant learning and filter it into the Resilience Planning exercise **(PT/KR/DD)**

9) Next meeting

Next meeting: 7:00 pm – Wednesday 27 August 2025, at Edinkillie Community Hall.

(PLT 24.7.25)