

**Notes of the meeting of “Bathgate Together” held on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February, 2025, in Room 11, Jim Walker Partnership Centre.**

**Attendees:**

Jim Easton / Little Boghead Nature Reserve

Robert Gemmell / Boghall Parish Church,

Lucy Lawson / Bathgate Market

David W. Main (note-taker) / Bennie Museum

Jenna McGuinness / Bathgate Centrepont Church

Hazel Orr / Breast Friends and Family

Alastair Small / Bathgate Churches Together

Donald Stavert (Vice-Chair) / Bathgate Community Development Trust / Bathgate Community Council

**Apologies:**

Derek Brown / Bathgate Band

Billie Hamilton / Bathgate Cyrenians

Pauline Stafford, councillor

**Corrigendum “Dawn Westwood” rather than “Don” is the name of the new minister to be inducted at Boghall Parish Church.**

**Billie / Bathgate Cyrenians** (in absentia) mentioned the fact that there was to be a coffee morning next Wednesday (4<sup>th</sup> of March) between 10-12 where the topic to be discussed will be the proposed new “Banking Hub” which is to be established in the town in March. Billie also noted that the first of a monthly series of meetings of a recently formed “Men's Group” will be held on the second Wednesday of each month, beginning on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March.

**Pauline Stafford, councillor** (in absentia) reported on progress in the work of the Bathgate Community Garden Group – a public meeting of which is to be held in the former Guides' Hall in Mid-Street to solicit the views of the wider community in the proposed establishment

of a “community garden” on the site of the former Miners' Swimming Baths in Mid-Street. This meeting is to be held in the Hall on the 7<sup>th</sup> March between 2-6 p.m. – all welcome!

**Hazel Orr / Breast Family and Friends** introduced herself to the Group and was warmly welcomed. Hazel gave a brief account of the aims and activities of the Group which although based at St. John's Hospital in Livingston has a shop in Bathgate – The 'Heart' along Glasgow Road – which provides a range of goods for women suffering from breast cancer and its aftereffects. Entirely run by volunteers the Group holds several events a year to raise money for their work in supporting women in coming to terms with breast cancer. It is hoped to start up a Men's Group at some point in the future.

**Robert Gemmell / Boghall Parish Church** – spoke about the forthcoming induction of the new minister – Dawn Westwood – to Boghall Parish Church on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March.

He also mentioned that the church had recently held a conference which some fifty people attended from a wide range of organisations and bodies to do with supporting refugees who have sought sanctuary in West Lothian and are currently housed in the “Cairn Hotel” in Blackburn / Bathgate. The conference was deemed a success and it is hoped that a “follow-up” event will take place in June / July.

**Alastair Small / Bathgate Churches Together** mentioned that several of the local churches had produced a calendar of events over the next six weeks detailing the location and timings of several services being held in Bathgate and Boghall in the run up to Easter.

In addition, Alastair advised the Group on the recent efforts to save for the town two Bibles – both from the 1600s' – which as a result of the efforts of several local individuals as well as local organisations have been successful with both Bibles now on display to the public in a special cabinet in the town's Partnership Centre. Emma Peattie – the Council's Museums and Archives Officer – is to prepare a suitable accompanying text for the display cabinet. This was noted with keen interest by several members of the group who recalled that it was at a meeting of this Group last year (?) that the threat posed to the Bibles for their removal from the town altogether was first aired.

**Jenna McGuinness / Bathgate Centrepont Church (aka “St. David's)** was pleased to inform the Group that the Church was now at the stage of issuing tenders for various renovations and repairs requiring to be made to bring the church building to bring it up to date with health and safety requirements.

She also mentioned that in collaboration with colleagues from “Regal Radio” members of the Church are to present their own radio show between 11-12.

Finally, the Church is to hold an “Easter Egg” hunt nearer the time.

**Lucy Lawson / Bathgate Market** confirmed that she had signed the lease for another year thereby allowing her to continue to operate the market in the town which has proven to be very popular both within and outwith Bathgate.

To capitalise on the market's success, Lucy is to stage an "Equestrian Market" – the first of its kind in Scotland for many years! – to be held on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April at which a full range of items in connection with horses and horse riding will be on sale –although, **not** horses, alas!

**Donald Stavert / Bathgate Community Development Trust** outlined several initiatives that the Trust was involved in – from "wrestling" with Network Rail over plans to redevelop the former railway station in Bathgate to seeking funding from the National Lottery to allow them to carry out a survey to set up a "community garden" in Boghall via producing a business directory for the town, the Trust and its members are being kept busy.

With his Community Council hat on Donald then spoke about the proposed introduction of parking charges in Bathgate as set out by West Lothian Council. As such, the Council or a private contractor will take over the supervision of whatever method is chosen from the Police although the Police will still be responsible for enforcing traffic regulations and breaches of the law. It is the necessity of paying for this supervision and enforcement that requires the levying of parking fees. The response of the Community Council has been to suggest that the Council do not charge for the first two to three hours. A petition organised by the Community Council to that effect would then be made available via social media to gauge popular support -or not! -for this idea.

**David W. Main / Bennie Museum** nothing of substance to report from the Museum as such. However, he did speak about ongoing plans to convert St. David's House into a mosque to accommodate more comfortably the town's / area's growing Muslim opportunity which he suggested might well provide the town with a range of economic and social opportunities. The mosque would be by some way the largest of its kind in the county as well as one of the biggest in the Central Belt. Having been in touch with one of the trustees of the mosque he has also been informed that the exterior of the mosque building will not be painted in black – a concern which had been previously raised at meetings.

**Jim Easton / Little Boghead Nature Park** detailed the involvement of the Bathgate Hills Venture Group and the Bennie Museum as well as the National Museums of Scotland to organise an exhibition of fossils – including "Lizzie" – to be held in Bathgate sometime next year. This news was very much welcomed by several members within the Group since it would provide not only an economic boost to the town if it was suitably publicised but also highlight the significance of part of the county in terms of its unique geology. Where then should such an exhibition be held? Suggestions welcome!

He also reported that a further 98 saplings had been planted at Little Boghead. (Thankfully, very few of the trees there had been affected by recent stormy weather.)

Jim also confirmed that Lottery funding had **not** been secured for the completion of the "Bathgate Water Meadows Project" which would have given a significant boost to the local environment around the town. The actual reasons for its rejection after so much time and effort had already been invested in the project still remains unclear so a further explanation from both the Council and the Lottery is being sought.

On a more positive note, there is still £3m from SEPA which is to be spent up so some parts of the proposed upgrade to the local estuarine environment might still proceed.

#### **AOCB:**

Alastair advised the Group that a coffee morning is to be held in St. Mary's Church Hall in the 7<sup>th</sup> of September.

Coincidentally, Donald agreed that the Community Council would donate £150 to St. Mary's in line with the recent decision by the Community Council to make 'one-off' donations to the mosque trustees and the congregations of Boghall Parish Church and Bathgate Centrepont Church.

Meeting closed at 20:08 p.m.

DONM – 26/03/2025 RM.11, Jim Walker Partnership Centre, at 7.00 p.m.