



# **Blackwood Primary School & ELC Parent Council**

**Blackwood Primary School, Carlisle Road,  
Blackwood, Lanark, ML11 9AT**

**Blackwoodparentcouncil@gmail.com**

## **BLACKWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL**

**Minutes of Parent Council Meeting – Wednesday 27th November 2024**

### **Present**

Emma McGeachie – P5/7, Donna Neeson – P7, Lisa Tweed – P2/5, Tori Sommerville – P7, Julie Smith – P7, Christine McMillan BPS, Jenny Bowman – BPS, Ruth Colquhoun – BPS, Erin Illingworth – BPS and Viv Colquhoun – BPS, Kimberley Miller – P2, Chloe Main – P2, Cllr Ross Gowland, Jo McGuigan – P4/7 and Vivienne Stewart.

### **Apologies**

Wendy Thomson, Laura Watt and Lynsey Clark.

### **Welcome**

Emma opened the meeting and thanked everyone for coming.

- We discussed the parent survey results, which were useful to note but not as beneficial as hoped as only 9 families from 186 in the school and 29 in the ELC responded and three were at the meeting! The parent council attended the parent's night and managed to get more families to complete the survey. Any further suggestions welcomed regarding attendance and contribution to the parent council.

### **Correspondence**

No correspondence since last meeting.

### **Treasurer's report**

Donna gave us a financial update -

Since the last meeting we've received an easy fundraising cheque for £168.89 and four bonus ball payments of £59 each, so total income was £404.89.

We paid out expenses for Halloween/Christmas treats of £401.57.  
Leaving a total balance at 27/11/24 of £6,284.87.

We also received a cheque for £500 from the Blackwood co-ordination group to assist families through winter, this will be cashed and transferred directly to the school to buy items as they see fit.

Ruth spoke about the literacy version of Sumdog and the parent council funding the license for same. Feedback from pupils and staff are very positive regarding using Sumdog. Also the new literacy version includes age appropriate free access to Disney plus for all Blackwood Primary families. Agreed Parent Council happy to fund this again next year and Ruth will liaise with the parent council to get this paid.

## **Christine invited Vivienne Stewart to discuss the Proposed Solar Farm –**

### Information for Schools

#### **PROPOSED 98MW SOLAR AND 100MW BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM AT ROGERHILL FARM, BLACKWOOD ESTATE.**

During a recent meeting with the developer, they advise they intend to submit their proposal to South Lanarkshire Council before Christmas 2024. The following outcomes were also noted:

**Jobs:** NO long term full time jobs.

**Community Benefit:** Greenswitch Capital have stated they will pay a total of £10,000 per year in community benefit. This equates to £50 per MW instead of the recommended level of £5000 per MW currently paid by wind farms.

**Fuel Bills:** No reduction in local fuel bills.

**Traffic:** During construction, it's estimated 135 construction vehicle journeys per day will be made, including HGVs. It may be many more on any given day. Estimated construction time is 18 months. This is a total of 73,912 vehicle journeys, of which 20,805 will be HGVs. There will be 2 site access points (1) Strathaven Road via Thornton Road (2) New road constructed just past the entrance to Blackwood Estate.

**Battery Energy Storage System (BESS):** Located next to Loch Wood children's outdoor learning area, this will comprise 3.8 acres of containers filled with Lithium-ion batteries.

**Safety:** There is a new plan for a large electricity substation sited over shallow mine workings in a Coal Authority 'development high risk area', and close to homes.

**Scale:** The development will cover 342 acres, one of the largest in the UK. The proposal is contrary to our local community plan in relation to preservation of our easily accessible green space.

**Education:** Loch Wood is the only natural green space accessible on pavement from Blackwood/Kirkmuirhill within 30mph limit. All other spaces involve walking through 60mph roads without pavement.

Pupils from Blackwood and St John's primaries walk to lessons at Loch Wood every week. This can be over 200 children per week. BECA has arranged funding for bus transport from Bent Primary. Lesmahagow High inclusion unit has weekly lessons with forest ranger. Our local children also regularly use Loch Wood for play in a familiar, safe, (mostly) litter free environment.

The future of access to Loch Wood outdoor learning areas for our children is at risk and will be significantly diminished if the development goes ahead. Its unlikely schools would send children there due to perceived public safety risks and noise from lithium-ion battery containers immediately next to the outdoor learning areas and estate road. There will be 8ft security fencing along the road and around all fields each side to the road and learning areas. There has been no consultation with schools or pupils on the impact of this development – contrary to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

If development is consented, BECA is likely to close down. BECA has raised almost £400k for the local community in the past 5 years and is developing a funded wildlife education programme for local schools in 2025, based on the results of its' wildlife surveys this year. All this would be lost. Why would BECA close?

BECA is a registered charity and must generate income to maintain its charitable status. Any reduction in use, projects or volunteers risks insolvency and closure.

What can YOU do?

You can complete a short survey to inform the Kirkmuirhill, Blackwood and Boghead Local Place Plan, which South Lanarkshire Council are consulting on. This asks for your views about where you live, including access to local greenspace – have your say and make your views known about the proposed solar development at this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KBB-LPP-Survey>

Even though the application has not yet been submitted you can write to your local political representative to express your views.

Imogen Walker MP: [Imogen.walker.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:Imogen.walker.mp@parliament.uk)

Mairi McAllan MSP: [Mairi.McAllan.msp@parliament.scot](mailto:Mairi.McAllan.msp@parliament.scot)

Brian Whittle MSP: [Brian.Whittle.msp@parliament.scot](mailto:Brian.Whittle.msp@parliament.scot)

Mark Horsham Councillor: [Mark.Horsham@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:Mark.Horsham@southlanarkshire.gov.uk)

Ross Gowland Councillor: [ross.gowland@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:ross.gowland@southlanarkshire.gov.uk)

Ross Lambie Councillor: [ross.lambie@southlanarkshire.gov.uk](mailto:ross.lambie@southlanarkshire.gov.uk)

Vivienne reminded the parent council, recent applications she submitted for £500 which have been approved, are for vulnerable children at Christmas. Christine advised this has been looked into.

### **Head teachers report**

**Message from HQ:**

*Further to the recent Deputy Director (Education Resources) update to you regarding the Executive Director's absence and the recruitment process we were commencing for the Interim Executive Director's post, I am writing to provide you with an update on the outcome of that process. I am delighted to advise you that Anne Donaldson has been successful in being appointed to this post. I am sure you will join me in congratulating Anne on her appointment and wishing her every success in her interim role.*

**Thanks** – Thanks to the Parent Council for funding the Halloween Day. Our school helpers were amazing, and the hall decorations were spooktacular!

We have some goodies left over which will be used at Christmas with a few top ups.

Sumdog has been very well received and the literacy aspects are being used across the school. Mrs Colquhoun will make a further request after this report.

### **Staffing (not in ELC)**

- Most of this term we have had a 0.6 FTE absence which has been managed internally as per SLC policy with no paid supply provided.
- Additional staffing absences we have been running some weeks at 1.2FTE short
- This week we have been allocated 0.6FTE cover centrally funded

### **School Improvement Plan**

- All teachers have participated in Stephen Graham training on Guided Reading - 3 of 5 sessions completed.
- P1-3 families were invited to Attend Read, Write and Count on 20<sup>th</sup> November – thanks to Miss Colquhoun for organising
- SLC focus on attendance - we are working on addressing this. For us the pattern is odd days and family holidays. Thanks to Mrs Bowman for leading on this.

- Transition events with LHS are underway – Cross Country visit on 11<sup>th</sup> October – Blackwood retained the trophy!
- Reading Schools -Bookfair has raised around £600. This is used to keep our library books current. Our reading ambassadors led our Book week celebrations (18.11.24). Look out for the book fairies in the community!
- Sustainability - Our JRSO's led our schoolwork during road safety week.
- Assemblies – Primary 6 launched Rights at their assembly on 25<sup>th</sup> October and Primary 5 showcased the importance of being you on 22<sup>nd</sup> November.
- Residential - this has been reviewed and the dates are now 24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> February- 5 days and 4 nights. Kit lists have been issued with a meeting arranged on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> January at 4pm.
- Sustainability – Rag Bags Collection on 28<sup>th</sup> November. We have investigated the potential of an outdoor bin. Coalburn have one at the sports centre and it is a problem with litter ... looking at getting it removed.

#### **Cost of the School Day**

- Cash for Kids £2400 for FME families
- SIMD 1+2 and FME lettered for winter essentials
- £500 received from Community fund – thanks to V Stewart for highlighting this to our Parent Council

#### **Participatory Budget: £3000:12**

- P5 & P6 took part in Climate Day Education and followed this up with a trip to the Science Centre
- P1 and our Supported classes have attended Purves Puppets in Biggar (26.11.24)
- P7 & P7/6 will visit Edinburgh and take in Joseph and his amazing Technicolour Dream Coat (19.12.24)
- All stages will have experienced an education excursion this financial year.

#### **Ongoing :-**

- Masterclasses are now finished for this term. Primary 6 have completed Bikeability.
- Primary 5 have completed 12 weeks of swimming – thanks to Lisa Tweed who helped with this.
- Hoodies - P7 have been lettered about this
- Students across our school community
- H & S – ongoing issues with a few areas in our playground
- Children in Need - we raised £350 pounds
- Poppy Scotland - £87.02
- Tesco – Following a stock take -Huge thank you to TESCO in Carluke and Lesmahagow for donating new school uniform. This will be free for all at our Carols Around the Tree to collect.
- Bins - budget is available through Replacement Equipment so these will be ordered up after the next class meeting.

#### **Looking ahead**

- Church on 4<sup>th</sup> December
- Primary 1 Class assembly on Friday 6<sup>th</sup>
- Christmas Lunch -17<sup>th</sup> December
- Christmas Party days

- January will see the launch of our new behaviour strategy based on “Be Ready, Be respectful, Be safe!”
- 150 Year celebrations - Parent Forum Surveyed at our concerts & pupils too
- Blackwood Gala Day (7.6.24) – Queen, and 5 other court will represent Blackwood Primary at this event.
- Miss Meldrum Returns to work on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> January and will work Wednesday, Thursday & Friday. Mrs Colquhoun will stay in post until April and then be with us on a Monday and Tuesday.

Wish everyone a very Merry Christmas, Best Wishes and Good Health for the new year.

### **Any Other Business**

- Councillor Ross Gowland apologised for some of the issues raised in the head teachers report and has offered to support Christine McMillian in looking into these further. Ross also advised he holds a surgery on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month in the Fountain hall in Lesmahgow where any issues can be discussed further.
- Preparations for the 150<sup>th</sup> celebrations will need to start
- Lisa advised, £2832 is the total raised from the bonus ball so approx £1400 has went to PC & £1400 as prize money
- Google form was created by the Parent Council to encourage increased uptake of the bonus ball; a second board would secure a sustained income for the parent council so we can be less dependent on annual fundraising events. There are more details on the Google form but we would love to hear any ideas regarding this from parents.
- Lisa discussed the Asda cash pot and how this has will end in December. So far it has raised over £400 for the school which will be paid out in January.
- On behalf of other parents, Donna asked why the evening performance of Carols around the tree wasn't going ahead. Christine advised this was due to the reduced amount of children attending the show however will get feedback after the show and consider this in the future.
- Sustainability - Outdoor recycle bin - The school currently have an indoor bin. We looked into an outdoor bin option as rag collection is another way for the school to secure regular sustainable funding. After consultation with other local primary schools who have outdoor rag bins they have advised that littering has been an issue & are currently looking to replace them with an indoor alternative. Christine to look at improving the collection schedule to include regular rag collections & make these dates available to Blackwood Primary families via the school newsletter.

### **Next meeting**

- Dates of next meetings
  - Wed 12<sup>th</sup> Feb – Online Microsoft Teams
  - Wed 7<sup>th</sup> May – Face to Face

### **Close**

Emma again thanked everyone for coming, and for their input.

**Blackwood Parent Council 2023/2024 –**

Emma McGeachie (Chair), Laura Watt (Vice-Chair), Donna Neeson (Treasurer), Kimberley Miller (Secretary)

**In support of -**

Blackwood Primary School, Carlisle Road,

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Head Teacher – Ms Christine McMillan

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**In collaboration with -**

South Lanarkshire Council Education Resources

Almada St, Hamilton ML3 0AA

Executive Director **Tony McDaid**

[www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk](http://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk)

