

KCC Chair report 2025/2026

We were fortunate during the last year to add to our membership. Tasha Houchin, our planning associate for the past two years, and Emily Semple, our minute secretary, joined us in the autumn as co-opted members, and then as full members earlier this year. We are delighted to have them both.

The past year has again been busy, and again dominated by concerns around planning, both specific local issues, and wider concern.

There have been strongly held views expressed that Stirling Council planning decisions can appear inconsistent, and when conditions appear to be breached, enforcement seems difficult to apply.

Particular and widespread concerns exist around the felling of trees for development, and the lack of protection afforded to wooded areas, which, once lost, will diminish local biodiversity.

KCC met with Sharon Marklow, head of planning and enforcement at Stirling Council, to discuss residents' concerns. We heard that our concerns are shared in other areas, and she is involved in the development of a Stirling-wide tree and woodland strategy, aimed at improving accountability across all council departments regarding their duty towards tree and woodland preservation. This is welcome news, as there is indeed wide local concern that our trees are worthy of protection, and that current tree protection orders (TPOs) do not go far enough. Trees within the conservation area are automatically protected, but beyond, few individual trees are. We have requested, and have been granted, an early review of trees in the village and immediate area, and are hopeful that this will take place in short order.

In wider news, Stirling Council are in the process of preparing their local development plan (LDP), to be in place from 2028-2038, and which will set out which areas should, and should not, be developed over the whole council area, excepting that part which sits in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. The local place plan (LPP) which took up much KCC energy last year, feeds into this plan, by providing local opinion.

The most recent development towards the LDP was the council's call for sites; open to all landowners/ individuals to present ideas for development. This call is now closed and the proposed sites published; five proposed sites fall within Killearn's area. Stirling council have emphasised that all sites offered are published to maintain transparency - none are as yet endorsed by the council, or approved by the planning authority. Work will now be done by the council

on each site proposed, to examine suitability for development per se before specific use of the land is considered.

In addition, two surveys are currently live.

One, the Spatial Strategy Survey, looks at the proposal to create hierarchies of importance among specific settlements, which will inform the distribution of new infrastructure and resources. Under this scheme, Balfron would form a hub, with smaller villages such as Killearn, forming satellite settlements.

The second, the Site Option Survey, seeks views on the individual sites themselves, regarding local views on development.

While this assessment takes place, Stirling council are hosting drop in sessions in Killearn, and all the local villages, to explain the process further, and receive views and opinions.

The surveys both close on 23/7/26, and can be accessed on Stirling council website.

Speeding remains a huge cause of concern, with both lack of enforcement and lack of signing causing frequent comment. Some improvement is expected; the current 20mph zone is to be extended along Balfron Road, out past the last house heading towards Balfron, with a 40mph buffer zone created beyond that. A similar 40mph buffer zone will be in place from the end of the 20mph zone beyond the Branziert, along the A875 to Westerton Farm.

Speeding surveys were also promised in Killearn and neighbouring villages, the results are awaited.

There has been a significant change in the status of Beech House, the Blackwoods' run residential home on Beech Drive (formerly Abbeyfield). Residents were advised in autumn 25, that services would start to be withdrawn, with a view to the property's closure. KCC made representation to Stirling Council and received significant support from councillors McGarvey and Fraser. Conversations were held between the council, the owners and HSCP, and the possibility of finding new care providers for the house was explored. Residents were subsequently reassured that no services would be withdrawn while they remained, but unfortunately, it has not been possible to transfer to another provider, as the size and configuration of the building mitigates against its economic viability. Given the fairly recent closure of Strathendrick care home in Balfron (now housing) and the change of plan to build such a unit alongside the housing on the old hospital site, this loss will represent a significant diminution of health and social resources in the local area.

In happier news, the new road signs of Graham Road, Bruce Court, Teasdale Street and Templeton Avenue were erected at Ballagan Woods, the new housing on the old hospital site. The names had been proposed by friends and

family of previous staff, and CALA held a reception for the event, to allow friends and families to celebrate it. It was a very happy occasion.

Change is also planned at Balfron Household Waste recycling centre – a new, more efficient unit will be built on the footprint of the current building. The work is planned for 2027, and a period of closure of a few months will be needed, but the new facility will recycle more, and be easier to use.

Road related problems remain, in particular around the Blane Smiddy Bridge, and the road conditions either side of it.

The bridge itself reopened after significant repair, and the traffic light were removed. This led to many expressions of anxiety that the priority system was inadequate to ensure safe traffic flow. Stirling council reviewed the situation and recommended no change to the road layout, and no traffic light requirement. However, shortly afterwards, the bridge sustained further vehicle damage, and the traffic lights are back...

There has also been concern generated by the council's decision to cut Killearn nursery places, on the basis of sufficient places being available between local villages and private providers. Unfortunately, this has pushed some local families to greater reliance on private providers only, to ensure childcare on the days they are required, and because other village nurseries are not necessarily easy to reach. Stirling council are aware of the negative effects of this decision, and it remains under review.

As always, I am so very grateful to the KCC committee for all their help and support in dealing with the concerns and challenges brought to us, and look forward to another busy year, when we return in September.

Elizabeth Jones
KCC chair