

Theme Area

Environment – Industry -

Plan Section – Ravelrig Quarry

This section considers issues relating to Ravelrig Quarry

Summary

Ravelrig Quarry is a site to the north west of Balerno village. The quarry will be operational until 2050. There is currently no prospect that it would be extended beyond that date. Reinstatement of the site at closure would be the responsibility of the operator, currently Tarmac UK.

Balerno residents showed strong support for nature-based restoration through rewilding, woodland and grassland, with high demand for public access with some interest in destination leisure uses including climbing etc.

There was strong opposition to landfill and housing development, and concern to ensure management and legal guarantees of restoration.

The Plan Proposal is for a rewilded country park

Local Context

Balerno has a long history of, in particular, dolerite quarrying. Ravelrig is the largest and been operational since Tarmac's licence to quarry at Ravelrig was extended in 2025 and will expire in 2050 when viable reserves are exhausted. The quarry is located next to its nw side a historic monument site. Dalmahoy Hill Fort is a scheduled prehistoric and early medieval fort near Balerno, featuring a 0.08ha oval summit enclosure (~43m x 25m) with 3.6m thick, heavily robbed walls. Located on a 235m-high craggy volcanic sill, it is surrounded by outer terraced enclosures spanning 2ha.

Dalmahoy Hill Fort is publicly accessible, free-to-visit site, featuring faint paths, a 2.0-hectare area, and steep sections near rocky summits. The best access is via a moderate 1.5–2 hour walk starting near Ravelrig Quarry, commonly combined with adjacent Kaimes.

Tarmac UK, the operators are in the middle of a process to conclude a Good neighbour Agreement with Balerno Community Council under

Good Neighbour Agreements (GNAs) in Scotland are voluntary, legally binding contracts under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) between a landowner/developer and a local community body. They are used to manage environmental impact, restrict nuisance, or ensure community information, often regarding industrial sites or major developments.

Tarmac UK anticipates staying at the Ravelrig Quarry site for an additional **24 years** following the approval of an extension in April 2025, with final restoration of the site expected around **2049–2050**.

The long-term plan, often referred to by local reports in 2025, involves closing the site by 2050, after which the area is intended to be restored, potentially including the creation of a small lake, walking paths, and bike trails.

Summary of consultation responses

1. Strong preference for nature-based restoration

The dominant theme is:

- Rewilding, woodland, grassland, biodiversity
- Letting nature reclaim the site or actively restoring habitats

People used phrases like:

- “return to nature”
- “rewilded area”
- “restore biodiversity”
- “wildlife sanctuary / nature reserve”

👉 This is the clearest consensus: **the site should feel green, natural, and ecologically valuable.**

2. High demand for public access and recreation

A large portion also want:

- Walking paths
- Cycling routes / mountain biking
- Dog walking
- General open space

Some suggested:

- Nature trails
- Inclusive paths (elderly/disabled access)
- Outdoor gyms or play areas

👉 Key idea: **not just nature, but nature people can access and enjoy.**

3. Interest in “destination” leisure uses (secondary but notable)

A smaller but recurring group proposed:

- Climbing facilities
- Outdoor activity centres
- Water-based features (lake, reservoir, swimming)
- “Lost Shore–style” development
- Tourism-focused attraction

👉 These ideas emphasize:

- Jobs
 - Local economy
 - Making Balerno a destination
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4. Moderate support for hybrid solutions

Many responses blended ideas:

- Nature + trails
- Parkland + biodiversity
- Leisure + conservation

👉 This suggests **people are open to balanced development**, not extremes.

5. Clear resistance to certain uses

Repeated concerns:

- ❌ No landfill
- ❌ No housing development
- ❌ Maintain green belt character

👉 Strong protection sentiment: **don't urbanise it.**

6. Governance and long-term management concerns

A few thoughtful responses highlighted:

- Need for clear definition of “restoration”
- Long-term legally binding management
- Potential partnerships for maintenance

👉 Important: **people care about what happens after restoration, not just the design.**

7. Minority / outlier ideas

Less common suggestions:

- Agriculture
- Solar farm
- Residential development
- Aqua park / large commercial builds

👉 These are not dominant but show some openness to alternative uses.

Key Insight

There's a **clear hierarchy of priorities**:

1. **Nature restoration (core expectation)**
 2. **Public access (very important)**
 3. **Recreation (important, but should fit landscape)**
 4. **Commercial/destination uses (acceptable if sensitive)**
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Proposals

Option 1: Rewilded Country Park (Best Fit with Majority)

Core features:

- Native woodland, wildflower meadows, wetlands
- Walking & cycling paths
- Viewpoints and seating areas
- Limited infrastructure (car park, signage)

Why it works:

- Matches strongest public consensus
 - Protects green belt character
 - Lower long-term impact
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Option 2: Nature + Recreation Hybrid Park (Balanced Approach)

Core features:

- Rewilded zones (biodiversity priority areas)
- Managed parkland for access
- Trails for walking, cycling, MTB
- Small-scale facilities (café, toilets)

Optional additions:

- Outdoor gym / play areas
- Dog-friendly zones
- Accessible paths

Why it works:

- Meets both nature and recreation demands
- Inclusive and community-focused
- Still environmentally sensitive

Option 3: Landscape-Led Adventure Destination (Controlled Development)

Core features:

- Retain quarry rock faces for:
 - Climbing
 - Adventure activities
- Add:
 - Trails
 - Water feature (lake)
 - Small visitor hub

Constraints (critical):

- No large-scale commercialisation
- Blend into landscape
- Strict biodiversity protection zones

Why it works:

- Captures economic benefits
- Aligns with nearby activity hubs
- Supported by a vocal minority

Option 4: Ecological Reserve with Limited Access (Purist Approach)

Core features:

- Minimal intervention
- Habitat restoration priority
- Restricted but controlled access

Why it works:

- Maximises biodiversity
- Lower maintenance footprint

Downside:

- Doesn't meet strong demand for recreation

Cross-Cutting Recommendations

Regardless of option:

1. Define “restoration” clearly

- Ecological targets
- Landscape outcomes

- Public access levels

2. Guarantee long-term management

- Legal agreements
- Funding mechanism
- Possible partnerships (community + conservation orgs)

3. Phase development

- Start with land stabilisation + planting
- Introduce access gradually
- Add facilities later if appropriate

4. Community involvement

- Ongoing consultation
- Local stewardship opportunities

Bottom Line

The community isn't divided—they're layered.

- **Everyone wants green/nature**
- **Most want access**
- **Some want activities**
- **Almost none want housing or landfill**

👉 The safest and most supported direction is:

a rewilded, accessible country park with carefully integrated recreation.