

BALERNO FORUM

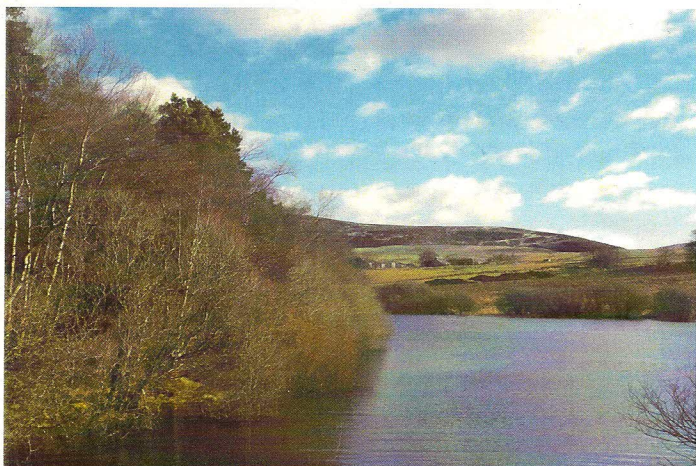
BALERNO COMMUNITY COUNCIL'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

<http://www.balernocommunitycouncil.org.uk>

Issue 2

Spring 2012

Car parking charges; what is Edinburgh playing at?



Threipmuir and Harlaw—still free to view

In late December Edinburgh City Council agreed to start the process by which parking charges could be levied at the Harlaw and Threipmuir car parks.

In March of this year it became clear that the proposals had not been properly thought through. Failure to take account of VAT liability meant apparently that Edinburgh Council could not count on any net income at all; in other words to have proceeded could have meant that it might actually have cost Edinburgh Council to have charged drivers for parking. The upshot appears to be that this recent proposal for parking charges is now dead in the

water. BCC had opposed the scheme and therefore we can be pleased with that result. However we would always prefer that important decisions are taken on the basis of a proper consideration of the options rather than as a result of a failure in administration leaving no option other than abandonment of the scheme altogether.

We take greater comfort from Midlothian Council's more substantive rejection of the scheme. They have apparently concluded that a likely consequence of charging was an increase in off site parking raising real safety issues at their Flotterstone car park and that for that reason they will not proceed with it. It is disappointing therefore that the decision on charging at Harlaw and Threipmuir has been taken on the basis that the preparation of the scheme was defective. But what concerns us more is what this episode says about Edinburgh Council's capability to undertake even relatively minor projects.

Elections for Edinburgh Council will take place on 3rd May 2012. They provide you with a chance to hold the Council to account and to ensure that your voice is heard in the appointment of an administration which can take administration in our area seriously. BCC are organising an election hustings for 23 April at Balerno Parish Church. That will be an opportunity for the residents of Balerno to ask candidates just what they would do to ensure that the City administration matches the challenges which we face.

Pathway to the Pentlands still needed

The debacle over parking charges may mean that we do not face an immediate risk of having to pay to park at Harlaw and Threipmuir but it does nothing to resolve the continuing problem about safety for walkers trying to get from Balerno village to the Pentland Hills. The absence of a pathway means that pedestrians compete with cars on a twisting and narrow road which at times also seems to be used as a race track.

In December we drew attention to the need for a safe pathway from Balerno to the Pentlands. While charging for parking would in our view have led to more parking of vehicles outside the official car park and made the case for a safe pathway even more compelling—the absence of charging will not mean that road safety concerns have disappeared. Mansefield Road remains a dangerous pedestrian route and BCC will continue to press for a pathway to be built.

Let us know what you think.



Parking outside the car park on a bright February Sunday

Community Council Meetings

Balerno Community Council meets at 7.30 on the first Thursday of the month at Balerno High School—all meetings are open to the public. Each meeting includes time for the members of the public to raise points with the Council.

Pathway upgrade in Marchbank Park

Maintaining the village

BCC meets regularly with Edinburgh Council officials and local councillors at 'walkabouts' during which difficulties and problems can be pointed out and remedial action agreed. We were very pleased to note the work on the planted areas beside the car-park at the top of the Main Street, during February when shrubs were pruned back and the area tidied up. This area can rapidly become an eyesore when litter is allowed to gather in the middle of bushes, and it needs to be attended to on a regular basis. BCC member Jack Kerr has a keen interest in the maintenance of our parkland and green space areas around Balerno.



Residents using the pathways in Marchbank Park will be pleased to know that following BCC representations, the CEC embarked on A Right First Time activity in February and March in order to repair a large number of areas of the path network. We have been promised that this will be high quality work and not simply a temporary repair. Jack has also received a commitment by the CEC to examine and repair a section at the western end of the path that regularly floods following heavy rainfall. BCC wants to hear from Balerno residents who have concerns about other areas of paths in our area.



Council Budget Setting and Local Implications

By Cllr Ricky Henderson

Notes from Councillors

The Council recently set its budget for the forthcoming financial year (2012/13). In total Edinburgh Council spends around £1bn per year (including around £110m per year to service Council debt which has now reached a record £1.5bn) on local services and one might wonder what benefits communities like Balerno derive from such a large budget.

The main services such as Education, Social Work, Health and Social Care, Refuse Collection etc consume most of the resources and are almost taken as read. Much of the debate therefore tends to focus on the periphery of the spending. This year, for example, in spite of the current squeeze on public sector spending and a recent history of cuts (notably to schools) Edinburgh was the beneficiary of a "windfall" cash bonus of around £22m, largely due to an amendment to the formula for allocating funding to Scottish Councils.

Leaving to one side the political theatre of the Council's budget meeting in February, the outcome is that an additional £4m will be allocated to schools maintenance (albeit there is currently a £9m backlog of repairs across the city) and £3m on "road repairs" to tackle an unspecified backlog needing to be tackled.

One could debate whether or not either of these represent additional investment in service areas that are so obviously underfunded in the first place. But nonetheless we need to ensure that this community has access to a fair share of the funding that could readily be put to good use locally. I would expect both Balerno High and Deanpark Primary to receive an allocation that they can use for fabric repairs—but I'll also be arguing for the £3m citywide to be distributed in a way that allows local communities to have a say in how it is spent, with a couple of local projects being obvious contenders.

Speaking up for Balerno

Welcome to the second issue of "Balerno Forum" the newsletter of the Balerno Community Council. Our aim is to keep you up to date with what BCC is doing on your behalf. In this Spring edition we feature the question of car park charging, as well as planning decisions and road safety issues. We think these are major issues, but we need to know from you whether you agree and what you think we should be concentrating on. Let us know.

We want to know what you think, what you want to see happening and what you'd also prefer didn't happen. You can come along to the Council meetings - 7.30pm on the first Thursday of the month in Balerno High School - or you can email us at our web address - on page 1. Or you can speak to us at the Balerno Farmers Market on the second Saturday of each month.

2012 is an important year in local government terms. The local elections in May will be the first elections for local councils since 2007 having been deferred in 2011 to avoid coinciding with the Scottish Parliament elections. The 2012 local government elections will be for a five year term for the new councils. BCC urges you to come to our hustings on 23rd April and to vote in the 3rd May elections.

Whatever the outcome of the elections, two of the current three members for the Pentlands ward are retiring in May and BCC would like to place on record its appreciation of all the hard work all of our Councillors have put in on behalf of the community over the past five years. We thank all of our councillors for their service to the community particularly we thank Ron Cairns and Alastair Paisley who are retiring from the City Council in May.

Is this the best place for a telecoms mast?

Planning



In January the Scottish Government Reporter decided to allow an appeal by O2 and Vodafone against a refusal by Edinburgh Council for permission to put up a telecoms mast just east of the junction of Bridge Road and Lanark Road West.

The Reporter's decision clears the way for the 15 metre mast to be erected in the middle of the areas of Balerno which in Spring is a carpet of daffodils. Balerno Community Council objected to the original application and Edinburgh Council had rejected it. The Reporter to whom the decision on the appeal had been delegated by Scottish ministers found that "the proposed installation would not be unacceptably prominent in this location and would have an acceptable impact on its immediate surroundings and general landscape setting." O2 and Vodafone were perfectly entitled to appeal the refusal of permission and

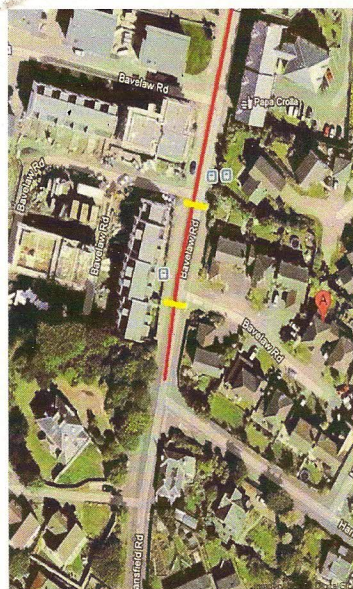
the Reporter was perfectly entitled to conduct the case as he did. The system however does not allow the local community to be part of the process: BCC find that strange and unsettling especially where the reporter appears not to have been aware of the character of the site as signifying the arrival of Spring in Balerno with its blaze of daffodils.

We think that local people should have the chance to contribute to important questions which affect them. What do you think? Let us know.

Safety first—a pedestrian crossing on Bavelaw Road?

Road Safety

BCC are very concerned about safety for pedestrians, and especially children, crossing Bavelaw Road from Bavelaw, Millbank and Malleny to get to Deanpark Primary School and to the Main Street.



Site for possible crossing

Edinburgh Council carried out safety assessments (known as PV2 assessments), in 2003, 2004, 2006 and again in 2010 to see whether a crossing was warranted. A PV2 assessment, involves looking at the degree of conflict between pedestrians and vehicles, and is arrived at by counting the number of vehicles passing the site in both direction, and the number of pedestrians crossing the road along a length

extending at least 50m on each side of the proposed crossing site.

The 2010 assessment, for a site at 59 Mansfield Road, which was thought to be the best location, produced a lower score than the earlier tests and resulted effectively in Bavelaw Road being removed from their list of priority sites.

There is a series of bends on Bavelaw Road—but that doesn't seem to be taken into account on the scoring. Moreover, PV2 at present does not differentiate between pedestrian users but counts every pedestrian as needing the same whatever their age or ability, and not allowing for little children or slower walkers actually crossing. Pedestrian crossings elsewhere in Balerno at Deanpark Brae and at the Annexe were listed as numbers 75 and 77 out of 250 in a priority list by Edinburgh Council in 2008. In 2003 a planning condition was recommended in relation to a planning application for 46-50 Bavelaw Road which would have required installation of a "Puffin" crossing had the application been approved. BCC are working closely with other groups and will continue to press Edinburgh Council on this matter—once more we would like to know what you think.

Local election hustings!

Balerno Community Council is taking the lead in organising a Pentland Hills Ward "hustings" in connection with the City Council elections on 3rd May.

In partnership with Currie Community Council and Juniper Green Community Council, and sponsored by C&B News, BCC will chair a meeting at which all of the local candidates will be presenting their cases for election.

This is your opportunity to question the candidates directly, so come along at **7.30 pm on Monday 23rd April to Balerno Parish Church** and get all the answers!

Meet and chat to BCC members at the Balerno Farmers Market

Bus Fares and Why They've Gone Up by Cllr Ricky Henderson

The recent increase in bus fares was extremely disappointing. For public transport to be viewed as a viable option for travellers (work/college/shops etc) it has to be affordable as well as efficient. The Lothian Buses fare increases were accompanied by some service changes implemented throughout the city although none that directly affect Balerno.

It's worth taking a minute to understand Lothian Buses rationale for these decisions. The Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) is funded through fuel tax and paid to local bus companies to sustain public transport services.

Notes from MSP and Councillors

Unfortunately, Lothian Buses' grant has been cut by the Scottish Government by £14m causing them to review their services across Edinburgh and increase fares (now £1.40 for a single). In addition, the budget for the free Concessionary Travel Scheme has also been frozen meaning that it is not fully funded and operators must bear some of the costs. Again, disappointing, particularly considering that there was no consultation before any of these decisions were taken. However, we do still have a valuable life line to the city centre and we should recognise its value to the local community.

A big thank you

Thank you for the opportunity to say a big thank you to all Balerno residents as I prepare to demit office on May 3rd. I will not be seeking re-election after sixteen years as a councillor.

I have been fortunate in representing Baberton Ward and latterly Pentland Hills Ward which includes Balerno. Balerno is quite unique in being a village but clearly near to the city which is a dual attraction. Balerno is also fortunate in having so many local volunteers who promote the village and organise so many interesting events to suit all tastes.

To list all the events would be such a long list but I should mention the very active Community Council who take their statutory duties very seriously. Very little escapes their close attention which ensures the best interest of residents is protected. The Village Trust organise many and varied events for the community, the Farmers Market, The Music Festival and many other events of interest.

I have been given the utmost courtesy and help to enable me to carry out my Councillors duties for which I am very grateful.

There are many aspects of being a councillor I shall miss but I will now be able to spend more time with my wife Inez and in my garden.

Councillor Alastair Paisley

MSP Opens Constituency Office in Pentlands

Gordon Macdonald MSP for Edinburgh Pentlands has opened his constituency office at 69 Inglis Green Road in the old Longstone shopping centre next to Mr. Lee's Chinese takeaway.

The constituency office will provide accommodation for Gordon Macdonald MSP and his staff. It consists of a waiting area, interview room and general office. It is intended that in addition to weekly surgeries there will also be the option to arrange an appointment at the office by telephoning 0131 466 5810.



Gordon with his team, Lorraine Henderson and Stewart Dredge

A Note from Cllr Ron Cairns

I would like to say a big "Thank you" to everyone in the area for making me so welcome when I became your SNP Councillor four and a half years ago. I have enjoyed working with so many dedicated people who love Balerno with such passion. I have some wonderful memories of your Festival of Music, Galas, School plays etc. I wish Balerno all the best for the future.

Important contact information

Police	0131 331 3131
Pentland Medical Centre	0131 449 2142
Balerno High School	0131 477 7788
Deanpark Primary School	0131 449 4529
Balerno Library	0131 529 5500
City of Edinburgh Council	0131 200 2327
Lothian Transport	0131 554 3269
Social Services	0131 469 2801
St. John's Hospital	01506 523000



Office Bearers

Acting Chair	Ian Hynd
Secretary	Trudy Allan
Treasurer	Hugh Watt
Minute Secretary—	Kathleen Fiddes

Elected Members

Tony Allen
Jack Kerr
Peter Reekie
Lauchie Scougall
Ken Stephen
Ken Shade

Nominated members

Bill Stark
Balerno Bowling Club
Max Downie
Currie Rugby Club
Marion Milne
Parent Teacher Council
Richard Henderson
Balerno Parish Church

Ex officio members

Alistair Darling MP
Gordon Macdonald MSP
Cllr Ron Cairns
Cllr Ricky Henderson
Cllr Alistair Paisley

**Meet BCC at the Balerno Farmers Market
on the 2nd Saturday each month**