

BALERNO FORUM

BALERNO COMMUNITY COUNCIL'S QUARTERLY NESLETTER

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

Issue 3

Summer 2012

First Bus—Journeys End

In March of this year First Bus withdrew their Sunday service on the 44 route. On June 10th they withdrew their 44 bus service in its entirety.

Balerno Community Council contacted First Bus at the beginning of May when we became aware that First Bus were withdrawing the 44 service completely. First Bus told us on 17th May that the current economic climate, high fuel prices and cuts in external funding meant that it was no longer possible to fund the service from other parts of their business.

BCC also contacted Lothian Buses to try to ensure that Balerno continued to receive a bus service at a frequency and capacity able to meet the local demand.

Lothian Buses have now introduced an X44 service, providing two limited stop morning and evening services, and promise further service improvements from 24 June, including a Sunday service running at 15 minute intervals.



It is too early to say whether Lothian's improved service, while not unwelcome, will fully deal with the pressure on peak time travel arising from an effective halving of bus services. We will continue to monitor Lothian Buses service.

Neither the Community Council nor local City Councillors were contacted by First Bus prior to the closure announcement, which followed apparently from the reduction in the level of Bus Service Operators Grant by 17% from 1st April 2012. In the Spring issue of Balerno Forum, Councillor Ricky Henderson had pointed to the effect of reductions in the level of BSOG on bus fares.

Removing 50% of the services between Balerno to Edinburgh and 100% on some East Lothian bound routes, is a swingeing cut. We recognise that increases in operating costs may make routes unsustainable, but we are concerned that this cut was introduced without consultation with the community.

If you are affected by the withdrawal of First Bus services for Balerno then we would like to hear from you.

City decides that Balerno's Community Hubs are Wester Hailes and Oxcgangs

Balerno Community Council believes that a local lending library is a vital part of a community and is therefore alarmed by proposals to locate Balerno's Community Hubs in Wester Hailes and Oxcgangs and to reduce the hours of opening at Balerno Library.

Edinburgh Council undertook a strategic review of library provision for the city in January of this year. The outcome of that review included proposals to establish Community Hubs which are to be "the first place for residents seeking information, trusted one stop neighbourhood hubs for engagement, employability, leisure and learning." The Community Hubs for Balerno are at Wester Hailes and Oxcgangs. Balerno Library is to be closed on Thursdays, probably from October.

The Community Council is not confident that centres at Wester Hailes and Oxcgangs are ever likely to be effective as community hubs for Balerno. Travelling time by public transport is about 50 minutes to either.

The Community Council will be discussing the proposals with Edinburgh Council and in the meantime will seek to ensure that the proposal is 'put on hold'.

Why is there no all-weather pitch in Balerno?

At its May and June meetings the Council discussed the state of playing fields at Deanpark Primary School where the parents are pressing for work to be done on the football pitches, which are often unusable owing to drainage problems. Edinburgh Council are to carry out a survey of the pitches, and Deanpark PTA are planning some upgrade work themselves. But BCC are concerned that a drainage problem which has apparently been continuing for some years should have taken so long to be addressed by Edinburgh Council.

Last year BCC also considered the absence of an all-weather playing surface at Balerno High School. We believe that Balerno High School may be alone amongst Edinburgh secondary schools in not having an all-weather pitch on site. BCC has expressed concern in the past about a situation which necessarily means that students will have poorer

opportunities for outdoor sport than might be the case at other local authority schools.

The Council understands that whilst requests for an all-weather pitch for Balerno High School have been made by the BHS Parent Council, money which might have been available in 2011 for that purpose was reallocated by CEC, thereby removing any realistic possibility of such a development until at least 2015.

We are seeking confirmation from City of Edinburgh Council that Balerno is indeed the only secondary school which does not have an all-weather pitch available to it, and what plans they have to address that situation.

If you have had difficulties accessing playing fields in Balerno and think that an all weather facility would be an answer then please let us know. And please tell us also what you think about this problem.

Election hustings in Balerno - almost a full house

The local elections in May 2012 are now a receding memory but Balerno Community Council was proud to be able to contribute to the local democratic process by hosting the Hustings on 23rd April at Balerno Parish Church.

An audience of over 100 were entertained - that is after all the point of a hustings - by speeches and a Q & A session involving six of the seven candidates; Mike Ferrigan who also styles himself as Professor Pongoo, unfortunately had the date wrong in his diary and the event was therefore denied a possible penguin presence.

Cliff Beevers, Chair of Juniper Green CC, chaired the evening, continuing the successful pattern developed in the 2010 General Election and 2011 Scottish Elections, and ably controlling the potentially unruly but overall well-behaved gathering.

One candidate suggested that he could not answer a question about a planning application at Muirwood Road. The reason? To answer would disqualify the candidate if elected from being involved in the matter if it came to Planning Committee. The candidate, Ricky Henderson, was duly returned on 3rd May.

Other questions to the panel ranged from trams to planning to congestion charging to centralisation of decision-making.



The hustings were jointly promoted by BCC, Currie CC and Juniper Green CC, while Martin Bone supplied the son et lumiere. Overall the Council were pleasantly surprised by the turn out and is now looking at options for a similar event in 2013 possibly to discuss the issues in the referendum promised for 2014. BCC would be interested in your views on whether BCC should organise such an event.

The overall turnout in Pentland Hills ward in 2012 was 44.4% as opposed to 61.5 % in 2007 and Pentlands had the 7th highest turnout in the Edinburgh elections; room for improvement there, and if you have ideas as to how BCC can help raise turnout then please let us know.

BCC will also be discussing with C&B News and the neighbouring Community Council whether we might organise further opportunities in which Balerno residents may be able to hear from their representatives on the issues which matter.

Balerno Forum

Balerno Forum aims to keep Balerno residents up to date with what the Community Council is doing on their behalf. We need your help however in telling us what you think needs to be done; please let us know either by contacting us at the Farmers Market, coming to our monthly meeting - 7.30 pm on the first Thursday of each month at Balerno High School - talking to us at the Farmers Market or leaving a message on the website; www.balerno-communitycouncil.org.uk.

Edinburgh Council is struggling at present with budget cuts. What we can expect from the City is bound to have to be modified. Equally however we have to be careful that Balerno does not lose out in the allocation of resources. We all think from time to time that Balerno is forgotten about by the City Council; things like the absence of an all weather pitch, poor maintenance of the roundabout and planted areas along with inadequate grass cutting, the decision on library closure coupled with apparently making Wester Hailes and Oxburghs the Community Hub for Balerno, all of these taken together suggest an absence of concern with Balerno in the City Chambers. We cannot blame the loss of First Bus services on Edinburgh Council, but we can expect that the Council should do its best for this community, to plan its programmes properly with this community in mind, involving the community so far as possible, spending money prudently and encouraging participation. However unfair it may sound, Edinburgh Council isn't giving the impression at present that it actually cares.

Balerno a Fair Trade Village?

A Fairtrade Town is any community in which people and organisations use their everyday choices to increase sales of Fairtrade products and bring about positive change for farmers and workers in developing countries.

At its June meeting Balerno Community Council considered a proposal that Balerno should apply for accreditation with the Fair Trade Foundation as a Fair Trade Village. The proposal was put by Tony Allen who had attended an Information evening organized by Balerno Fair Trade Group

on 22nd May, along with Marion Milne and Richard Henderson. The initiative is now being taken forward by the Fair Trade Group and the Council will consider a formal resolution in due course in support when the plan has been developed.

The Council is enthusiastic about the prospect of Balerno securing Fair Trade Village status and is keen to assist in any way that it can. If you'd like to help then let us know.

An Emblem for Balerno

At its June meeting BCC unveiled its new logo. The plaque was designed by Gemma Robertson, a pupil at Deanpark Primary School who in August will move to Balerno High School.

Ian Hynd, Chair of BCC is pictured thanking Mrs Rehanna Shanks, Deputy Head of Deanpark School and the artist, Gemma Robertson, for allowing the Community Council to use Gemma's design as the basis for its new emblem.

Gemma's design is already firmly embedded as Balerno's identity; it is based on the plaque which she designed in 2010 and which was set into Main Street when it was redeveloped in September 2010. Gemma explained that she researched the history of Balerno before coming up with the design.



Ian Hynd in thanking both Deanpark and Gemma said that the Council had been looking for some time for an emblem which would help to represent Balerno in the correspondence and communications which the Council carries on. 'The truth is that the answer was under our feet all the time. Gemma's design for the Main Street plaque perfectly represents the character and setting of Balerno and the Council is very proud to be allowed to use it in its correspondence and branding.'

Balerno Community Council also handed a cheque for £50 to Deanpark School to mark the occasion. Mrs. Shanks said that the School was very proud that one of its pupils should be responsible for creating a lasting legacy for the community.



Searching for the pathway to the Pentlands

The Spring issue of Balerno Forum referred to the Council's long-term interest in securing a safe pedestrian route to the Pentlands from Balerno. At its June meeting the Council heard from Alan McGregor of City of Edinburgh Council and also from Charlie Cumming of Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust. Alan gave a detailed presentation on the current situation of the Park Service, now reorganised into the Natural Heritage Ranger Service.

The commitment is to maintain the same level of service with no net gain or loss in resources. The underlying approach will be to maintain what there is, maintaining existing paths and trying to develop better approaches to events management. It is unlikely that there will be funds in the near future for the development of the Pathway to the Pentlands. At present the route up Bavelaw Road is listed as a core path even although it runs along a busy road with dangerous corners to negotiate. BCC will continue to investigate options for securing the Pathway to the Pentlands in the interests of safety and amenity, using the study completed with the assistance of the Greenspace Trust.

The Council welcomed Alan's clarification that the City Council are likely to consider the composition of the Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum, with the possibility of a greater involvement for the local community in decision-making.

No prizes for maintenance of the village

In the spring issue we congratulated Edinburgh Council on the work they were doing to repair paths. At our June meeting we discussed Edinburgh's record since then in relation to routine maintenance; there is a long list of complaints where service has broken down, including,

- painting work on the community centre not completed;
- grass cutting not being undertaken, leading to health hazards in some places;
- planted areas in Main Street overgrown with weeds;
- the roundabout - yes the roundabout again - overgrown with mare's tail and other weeds;
- road surfaces deteriorating.



The City is having to work with less money and is having to make cuts in services, but we expect them to consult with the community in deciding on the impact of those cuts. We also expect that available budgets will be spent in a planned

manner. We are not aware, for example, of a plan or schedule for grass cutting and planted area maintenance work.

There are limits and simply not doing the work cannot be an option. BCC is pressing the City to get it right first time.

A message from Ricky Henderson



I was absolutely delighted and very proud to have been re-elected to represent the Pentland Hills ward at the recent Council elections. It has been a privilege to represent Balerno for the past five years and I look forward to working with everyone again for the next five.

I'm also looking forward to working with our new Councillors, Bill Henderson and Dominic Heslop. I'm pleased to report we have already met to discuss ways of working together and I am confident that we will work well as a team.

It is widely acknowledged that there are challenging times ahead with funding to local Councils and other public bodies expected to continue to decline. Therefore, we need to make better use of the resources available and I feel part of the answer is to allow communities to have a greater say in how Council resources are used locally.

It makes sense for local people to have more of an input in setting local priorities when it comes to such basic services as grass cutting, street cleaning, fixing holes in the roads and pavements. I know from experience that there is an appetite for this in Balerno and I am hopeful that we can make progress on this in the months and years ahead.

Here in Balerno we also have the added challenges of a need for more affordable housing and protection of the green belt. Achieving both are not necessarily contradictory in that there are sufficient brown field sites across the city to meet our housing need but a difficult economic environment for both the private and public sectors to deliver the much needed homes for Edinburgh people. I hope to see some progress on this too in the months ahead.

I intend to continue to take a close interest in all relevant issues in Balerno and if anyone would like to raise anything with me I can be contacted by telephone on 0131 529 3269 or by e-mail at ricky.henderson@edinburgh.gov.uk or in writing at the City of Edinburgh Council, City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh, EH1

Bill Henderson's column



Make no mistake the greenbelt is under threat again. The Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan including alterations has already taken areas out of the greenbelt. The plan is for about 1,000 houses in the Newbridge/Kirkliston and Ratho areas alone. That is not the end of the story though. The Edinburgh and the Lothian's Structure Plan 2015 specifies that, in addition to the existing supply of housing land, new land for around 18,200 houses will be required. Nearer

to Balerno, it is already well known that Muirwood Road field in Currie has a planning application being submitted.

So what about the area covered by Balerno Community Council?

In Balerno developers have suggested three sites where they want to develop, the main one being the field to the South of Cockburn Crescent. Two others at Glenbrook Road and to the East of Bavelaw Gardens are also in sight of developers.

No one is saying that all or any of these sites will get the go ahead to build on but we should be vigilant. This is where the community council plays a major role. The community council is able to have a say on all planning applications and this is one of the vehicles the residents of Balerno should use to ensure their opinion is heard.

Yes we need more housing but not at any cost. It is my opinion that brownfield sites eg North Sighthill and Harvesters Way should be the first choice and the Greenfield only used as a last resort.

Notes from Dominic Heslop



Well the dust has settled and the local elections are over for another five years. Indeed next year is unusual in modern Scotland in that there will be no elections at any level for the first time in five years so those of us who are 'political anoraks' will get a bit of a break!

I would like to thank everyone who voted in this election, not just those who voted for me but those who voted for my fellow candidates. The greatest

danger facing local democracy is apathy and indifference so I have always believed it is important to exercise your right to vote.

I would also like to put on my record my thanks to my predecessor as Conservative Councillor, Alastair Paisley and his wife Inez for all their support and kindness. We fought a positive campaign based on local issues and I look forward to working with my ward colleagues, Ricky and Bill.

The last month has been a whirlwind of activity with various training sessions at the City Chambers. I have also been appointed to four committees – Planning, Regulatory, Finance and Health and Social Care, so I'll be kept busy! I have been getting round the various Community Councils which make up this ward from Ratho to Clovenstone, as well as attending events such as Balerno Gala and the Farmers' Market.

The months and years ahead will be challenging but with your support I will do all I can to promote this area.

Gordon attends Responsible Parking Bill launch

I attended the launch of the Proposed Responsible Parking (Scotland) Bill held in the Scottish Parliament with interested parties. This Private Members Bill, introduced by my colleague Joe Fitzpatrick MSP, aims to help pedestrians to travel along the pavement and cross roads free from obstructions caused by vehicles.

This Bill aims to help pedestrians – including blind and partially sighted people, older people, disabled people, as well as families with pushchairs – who experience issues on the pavements and in extreme cases can leave people unable to enter or leave their homes.

There will be exceptions on the face of the bill such as for streets with extra wide pavements, and Local Authorities will be able to make exemptions based on local circumstances.

The Bill could also potentially save local authorities money. City of Edinburgh Council spent over £40 Million in the last 5 years on pavement repairs and compensation claims related to accidents caused by damaged pavements.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/gettinginvolved/49061.aspx>

Office Bearers

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

Elected Members

Tony Allen
Jack Kerr
Peter Reekie
Lauchie Scougall
Ken Stephens
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 Bill Henderson
Cllr Ricky Henderson
Cllr Dominic Heslop

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

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

