

BALERNO FORUM

BALERNO COMMUNITY COUNCIL'S **FREE** QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



Issue 5

January/February/March 2013

44 & 44A—Time for some changes

The old Balerno bus terminus was replaced in December under Edinburgh Council's Public Transport Capital Bus Infrastructure budget.

This money was allocated specifically to undertake improvements to bus stop infrastructure at key locations across the city, and is especially designed to improve access to buses for those affected by mobility issues and to satisfy the requirements of The Equality Act (2010). Overall, the works at Balerno cost £93,238.40

Balerno Community Council (BCC) applauds measures which will improve access for those affected by mobility issues. However we are not impressed by the process engaged by CEC in this development.

At BCC's November meeting it was clear that none of the City Councillors had been consulted about this project, and neither had BCC. CEC should at the very least notify the local community sufficiently in advance to allow for meaningful consultation; this project involved diversion of the 44 route for some four weeks. BCC does not criticise the undertaking of improvement works directed at making transport safer and more accessible. However we would be very concerned if



The failure to consult in the case of the works to the bus terminus does not encourage confidence that CEC takes the idea of community consultation seriously. One of the consequences of the works was the temporary re-routing of all Balerno-bound 44's around the Johnsburn loop. This temporary measure allowed residents on the west side of Cockburn Crescent and on Johnsburn Road to experience what they have long campaigned for, namely a regular and frequent bus service without the necessity for, in some cases, a 15 minute walk to Mansfield Road. At

the same time, of course, it meant that residents on the eastern side of the village had a reduced level of service. The rerouting was, of course, temporary, and came to an end on Wednesday 19 December when services reverted to the ordinary routes and timetable. BCC has encouraged Lothian Buses to take advantage of the temporary measure to consider a scheme for provision of a better 44A service. We hope that may result in an increase in provision on the 44A route to allow for a 30 minute frequency in place of the current hourly service. Overall the number of buses would, however, remain as it is.

If you have views on the 44 and 44A service then please let us know.

Road Safety - continuing concerns over speeding and need for crossings

Road safety is a matter of continuing concern for BCC and rightly features at most Council meetings.

The risk to pedestrians has been brought into sharp focus by the tragic accident in early December. Minnie Hamilton, 94, was walking in Bavelaw Road on Monday 10th December when she was apparently hit by a blue Citroen C8. Very sadly, she died two days later in hospital. The circumstances of the accident on 10th December have been the subject of a police investigation and the cause of the accident remains to be established. However it is the case that the accident scene is close to the location identified last year as suitable for a pedestrian crossing, and BCC will continue to support the campaign for a safe crossing on Bavelaw Road/ Mansfield Road.

BCC is also seriously concerned about speeding in the area. BCC asked for action in particular in relation to observed speeding on Johnsburn Road and Cockburn Crescent in relation to which it is commonly accepted that there is a real problem. Edinburgh Council along with the police carried out a speed survey on Johnsburn Road in 2012 but concluded that there was in fact no problem, with average speeds on that road at only a little over 30mph.

Average speeds of above the legal limit are not acceptable so far as BCC is concerned; they indicate regular instances of far higher speed, and anecdotal evidence suggests speeds of over 50mph on Johnsburn Road and Cockburn Crescent are by no means exceptional.

BCC also noted that in carrying out the tests the relevant recording strips may have been positioned at the corner of Johnsburn Road near the junction with Glenbrook Road where speeds could reasonably be expected to be less extreme.

The Council considered that such a location was more likely to record a lower mean speed than on any of the major

Balerno Community Council meets in public at 7.30 pm on the 1st Thursday each month except January, at Balerno High School.
www.balerno-communitycouncil.org.uk

What is to become of 501 ?

At its November meeting BCC heard a presentation by representatives of Messrs Mactaggart and Mickel on their outline proposals for development of the sites at 501 to 505 Lanark Road West. Local residents thereafter set out their concerns about the future of the properties at BCC's December meeting.

BCC has for some time been concerned about the increasingly dilapidated state of 501 Lanark Road West, which is clearly visible from the road at what is generally considered to be the entrance to the village.

Two applications have been lodged by Mactaggart and Mickel in relation to this site, since 2010, and before that applications for planning permission had been made covering both 501 and 505. In 2008 permission was sought for development which included four split-level 3-storey houses, six 3-storey houses and nine 3-storey flats.

The site at 501 to 505 Lanark Road West is amongst the most sensitive in Balerno, being at the south west side of the junction of Lanark Road West and Bridge Road and on the northern edge of the Balerno Conservation Area.

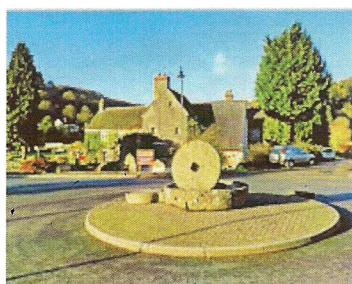
The boundary of the conservation area, designated in 1975, was amended in 1987 and re-designated in 2003. The Character Appraisal agreed by CEC in 2001 specifies two distinct areas of character in Balerno with one which includes 501 and 505, comprising the open approach to the village. It refers to 'a secluded location, the stone walls and buildings creating a sense of a gateway to a country estate and the rural approach to the village with open fields and mature trees.' BCC is anxious to ensure that that character can be preserved.

BCC is also very concerned about access to and from the site, as suggested by Mactaggart and Mickel, which they suggested was likely to be on and from Lanark Road West. BCC thinks that access to and from the properties using the proposed access points could be hazardous, given in particular that the site fronts on to Lanark Road West at what is substantially a blind bend west of the traffic lights at the junction with Bridge Road.

In the meantime BCC has written to Mactaggart and Mickel asking that steps be taken to improve the appearance of 501.



photo - Ian Gidney



Roundabout solutions sought

And if we are talking about improving the appearance of our village perhaps we should look again at the roundabout. A discarded Christmas Tree blowing around in late December amongst the weeds hardly fits the bill. We would like to hear your views. So let's start with a few options.

BCC would like the Balerno community to say what they would like to be done with the roundabout, within reason. We show here a few possibilities. For example the picture above shows a roundabout paved with setts and featuring several mill wheels.



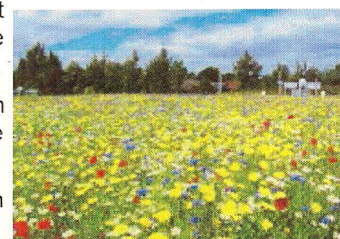
Then there is what might be called the minimalist option, or the wild flower approach, below, but at least the scope for Mare's Tail is reduced. The Council have also considered a tree as the centre piece. In deciding the way forward of course we have to take safety into account. The speed of traffic on Johnsburn Road in particular, and on the approach to the roundabout especially, does seem to be high. Parked cars on the north side mean that sight lines are difficult, and for elderly residents of Larchfield Neuk, crossing can be a problem. There are clear safety implications, and we also have to bear in mind road layout requirements to allow for buses etc to negotiate the roundabout.

It may even be that traffic lights might be a solution although we would prefer to retain a roundabout as more in keeping with a rural area. What is clear however is that the roundabout as it is a disgrace and unless the problem is addressed we will be left with an eyesore rather than a potential adornment.

CEC are on record as having said that 'The roundabout with its multi-coloured markings is very urban in character and inappropriate as an approach to an historic village. It dominates the view to the church and needs a more sensitive and simple approach.'

We agree, just as we agreed at the time that Planning Committee published that statement in the Conservation Village Character Appraisal on 30 January 2001 - twelve years ago.

That's long enough really. Tell us what you would like to see at the roundabout.



Good Intentions

Odds and ends from

•EDINBURGH•
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

In mid January Edinburgh Council began to circulate details of the new red and blue box collection schedules.

The old schedules expired at the end of 2012. One of the key aims of the City's Environment Department is 'to engage with the community through partnership, consultation, information and education.' Still a little to do on that then.



Main Street - A great start by BVT Volunteers !



Community Council welcomed the involvement of Sustain Balerno volunteers in October and November, weeding the planted areas on the east and south sides of Main Street.

Sustain Balerno is a project of the Balerno Village Trust which aims to develop a more sustainable community and BCC are working with BVT to support their various projects. In October some thirty volunteers worked on the morning of the Farmers Market and a similar number turned out again on the morning of the November market and the area was looking much better cared for as a result.

The next step will be for BCC to discuss a planting plan for those areas with Sustain Balerno and arrangements are in hand for that to take place. In the meantime it will soon be time to start on the spring weeding and planting and BCC look forward to Sustain Balerno's continued enthusiasm and involvement.

BCC is of course concerned that Edinburgh Council should continue to address the requirements for management of the Main Street areas as well as all the other landscaped areas around the village for which they have responsibility.

At its November meeting BCC noted that new arrangements are in prospect and looks forward to further details becoming available from Edinburgh Council.

Major Planning Application in prospect

Barratt David Wilson Homes have started a process to seek planning permission to build an unspecified number of houses on two fields immediately to the south of Cockburn Crescent. The application gives no detail of volumes of housing involved but refers to "residential development with associated landscaping, footpaths, open space, parking etc". It is classified as a major planning application meaning that the applicant is required to undertake a consultation with the community. The notice indicates that planning permission in principle will be sought by the applicants. The land is zoned as Green Belt. BCC's general position is that development ought not to be permitted on Green belt land.

The area covered by the application would, in rough terms, be equivalent to the area between Highlea and Mansefield Road, which comprises something over 300 housing units. The application if granted would accordingly have a very significant effect on the entire community in Balerno.

The applicants will hold a public exhibition on 28th February in the Community Centre between 4.00 pm and 8.00 pm as required under the planning application processes; the event will be advertised in the press in week commencing 18th February.

BCC will consider the situation at its February meeting.

Clochmerle again

In the Autumn issue we drew attention to the absence of public toilets in Balerno.



There are 32 public toilets in Edinburgh; the nearest to Balerno is Currie. That's only 1.6 miles away, and it's only another mile to Juniper Green. But the absence of a public convenience means not only that Balerno must be seen as less than completely welcoming to those who have trekked or are about to set out across the Pentlands, but more importantly that traders in the village are in effect expected to provide this service free *gratis* and for nothing.

Nobody really wants to live next to a public toilet; but if we want Balerno to cater for visitors - and indeed if we want it to cater properly for its own residents - then providing public toilets is pretty basic.

Fairtrade Village status a real possibility



BCC voted at its January meeting to support the proposal that Balerno should seek Fairtrade Village status.

This initiative has been developed since May 2012 by the Balerno Fair Trade Village Steering Group, building on 8 years work by the Balerno Fair Trade Group. Local groups and organisations have been 'questionnaired' by Balerno High School students to seek their support, with a very encouraging response to date. Balerno Parish Church and St Mungo's are already Fairtrade Churches and the High School, Dean Park and Harmony are all involved. It is hoped that an application to the Fairtrade Foundation before Easter may bring success in the early summer.

BCC welcomes the development of this venture which further strengthens the idea of Balerno as an outward looking and caring community.

All weather pitch

In the Summer issue of Forum we drew attention to the fact that Balerno was alone in Edinburgh as a community without an all-weather playing surface. Even leaving any other consideration aside that amounts to a real unfairness in Edinburgh's treatment of this community.

Balerno Community High School shares grass pitches, behind the School and over the Water of Leith, with Currie Rugby Club. These pitches are often churned up due to training and practicing by the rugby teams. The pitches have very poor drainage and this can also put them out of use. There is a small enclosed area with old grey ash and a sports hall. The ashed area is no use for any competitive sports and the hall is out of use half the time due to being used for exams etc. We gather that lack of proper playing surface means that the High School is unable to field a football team.

As we reported in the summer 2012 edition of the Forum, Dean Park Primary School's football pitches also suffer from poor drainage making their use also problematic.

The Community Council believes that Edinburgh Council should be supplying proper sports field facilities. The failure to address this is scandalous and smacks of total neglect.

New rules on entertainment licenses

CEC consulted in 2012 on proposals for a new set of public entertainment licensing rules. Briefly the proposals would:

- Make permanent the current interim measures which exempt certain 'free to enter events' from the need to obtain a public entertainment license, provided the capacity of the venue is less than 500 and the organisers are a community group or similar.
- Exempt any public entertainment event where the capacity of the venue is less than 250 and the organisers are a community, youth, political or religious group. This would apply even if an entrance fee is charged.
- For any remaining events organised by community groups - introduce a revised fee structure, which would allow these groups to apply for a licence for 12 months at approximately 50% discount.

BCC believes that it is important that local communities have as much freedom as possible to promote activities in their own areas, and welcomes the proposals.

BCC were invited by CEC on 19th December to respond to the consultation; when BCC endeavoured to do so in early January, however, the consultation was marked as closed. Not too encouraging really?

Notes from Councillors

Ricky Henderson's column

Council Services and how they are Funded



The Council has now set its budget for the financial year 2013/14 and in doing so has also set out its service priorities for the year ahead, in a difficult financial climate. Reduced funding and increased demand for services mean that difficult decisions have had to be made and many more lie ahead.

We are living longer these days, which is a good thing, however we are living longer with more complex health issues and care needs, which is not so good. Coupled with the desire to keep people as independent as possible in their own homes (another good thing), there is a need to fund more community based social care services and the Council has allocated extra resources to this. In addition, there are more people with mental health issues and also those with learning disabilities and physical disabilities who require appropriate care and support and this too has attracted more funding.

As Balerno folk will be aware, our roads and pavements would benefit from additional investment and the grounds maintenance service also needs to be improved.

Add to that a list of outstanding repairs for our schools, much needed investment in sports facilities and a legacy of recent budget cuts to school staffing arrangements and you can see that deploying a declining council budget to accommodate the pressures above, not to mention many others, including inflation and utilities costs, is something of a challenge!

"Doing more with less" will continue to be the mantra for a few years to come out of the Council and your local councillors remain committed to providing high quality public services and involving communities more in the important decisions affecting them.

I've deliberately avoided using detailed figures in this article as it would be pretty meaningless unless considered within the context of the city wide budget, but I'd be happy to provide more detailed information should anyone wish to contact me.

Dominic Heslop writes



May I start by wishing you all a very Happy New Year and all best wishes for the months ahead. Over the last few months one of the main issues brought to my attention by Balerno residents has been the matter of the 44 bus. The message I have been receiving from the majority of people has been the 'popularity' of the temporary re-routing of the 44 onto the (infrequent) existing 44A circuit. I therefore do not see why Lothian Buses cannot make this one-way route round the village a permanent fixture and I will continue my discussions with Lothian Buses to get the best deal for Balerno residents. Frankly, at the moment, I agree with one constituent who described the 44 as 'one of the worst services in Edinburgh.' Obviously the other headache which continues to cause problems in Balerno is the move to fortnightly bin collections. While this is not a problem exclusive to this area, there do seem to be anomalies whereby certain stretches on particular roads, eg Johnsburn, are missed out and this applies to all types of bins! Hopefully the new year will see this 'service' bed-in.

One activity I enjoyed undertaking in December was the planting of a tree to commemorate 25 years of the Pentland Hills Regional Park. I took this opportunity to speak with various rangers regarding footpaths to the Hills and the fact that Balerno is clearly the gateway to our fantastic Regional Park. Balerno continues to be a vibrant and lively community and I regard it as a great honour to be one of its representatives. From the excellent Farmers' Market to activities such as the Music Festival, this village is a great example of how an area can come together and I pay tribute to the Community Council for all their work in contributing to make this possible.

A message from Bill Henderson

Balerno under attack by Housing Developers



Since I was elected in May 2012, I have been constantly highlighting how Balerno was threatened by large and small scale housing developments. The threat to our green spaces was and is real. Recently, a well highlighted application to build flats and houses beside the Water of Leith at the Old Mill was rejected. This has now gone to appeal so may well happen. My fear then would be that other developers will claim that the water of Leith should be the edge of the greenbelt and all the fields to the south of the Lanark Road West between Balerno and Currie will be up for grabs as developers also claim that a precedent has been set

A planning application is to be lodged to build 6 houses at the junction of Bridge Road and Lanark Road West with access to and from the houses onto the A70 just to the west of the traffic lights. This area is well known for excessive speed by vehicles.

The most recent proposal is to build on the fields to the south of Cockburn Crescent. This promises to be a large development of about 200-300 houses. If granted a large increase in traffic would be guaranteed all heading to bridge Road and the A70. There could also be a drainage issue with water which previously seeped into the soil being directed down sewage pipes which already flood in heavy rainfall.

Where is next? Glenbrook Road? Newmills Road? Curriehill Castle Drive? What do local people feel about these attempts to build on our greenbelt? Where does Balerno Community Council stand? This question is important as the Community Council never objected to the proposal to build at the Old Mill which is greenbelt.

Where do your Councillors stand on this issue/ Once again this is very important. My stance is clear — I oppose any proposal to build on designated greenbelt areas but there are three other Councillors.

I urge anyone who is concerned about the future of Balerno to attend the public exhibition for the Cockburn Crescent proposal which will be held in Balerno Community Centre on Thursday 28th February 2013 between 4 pm and 8 pm and make your views known to the developers, Community Council and Councillors.

This is our village (I live in Balerno), we have a right to have our say and to be listened to.

Balerno Forum

This is the fifth issue of **Balerno Forum**, the newsletter of the Balerno Community Council, which aims to keep you in touch with what BCC is doing and also with what Edinburgh Council and other relevant authorities may be doing which might directly affect Balerno. BCC wants Balerno's voice to be heard, and that means your voice. We hope that the issues we discuss in the Council are those which are also important to you. It's quite possible also that there are other things which we may miss, and we rely on you also to make sure that we have got the right issues on our agenda. Please come and ask questions at our monthly meeting, or come along to the BCC stall at the monthly Balerno Farmers Market where we have been sharing a stall with Balerno Village Trust for the past few months, or contact us through the BCC website. We look forward to hearing from you.