

BALERNO FORUM

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

Issue 6

<http://www.balerno-communitycouncil.org.uk>

May 2013

Time to start thinking seriously about the future

Edinburgh Council consults on Local Development Plan

Edinburgh Council is currently working on its new Local Development Plan covering Balerno. This will replace the Rural West Edinburgh Development Plan, adopted initially in 2006. The development plan will set out how places should change and what they could be like in the future. It will say what type of development should take place where, and which areas should not be developed. It will set out the best locations for new homes and businesses and protect places of value to people or wildlife. The plan will also help development to take place quickly by describing how any new or improved facilities, such as roads, schools and parks, will be provided.

The Local Development Plan (LDP) is of vital importance to everyone in Balerno and to the future of our community. The Community Council urges everyone in the village to become involved with the process.

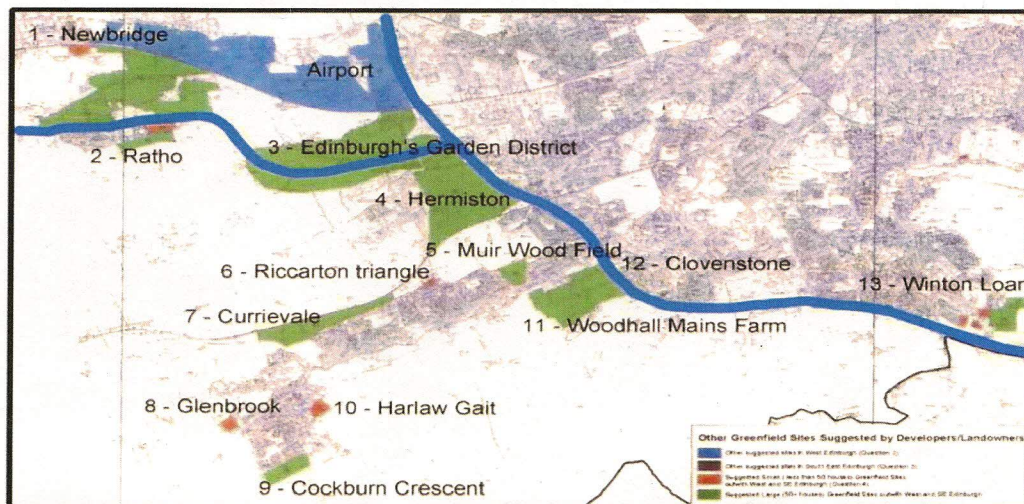
In preparing the LDP, Edinburgh, like Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee, has first to prepare its Strategic Development Plan, known as SESplan, which is at present being scrutinized by Scottish Government. SESplans may be approved by Ministers by August 2013. It is supposed to be a blueprint for the next twenty years, while the LDP on the other hand sets out detailed policies and proposals.

The LDP was approved on 19 March by Edinburgh's Planning Committee and will be put out for consultation by the City Council between 1 May and 14 June. Thereafter the LDP will be reviewed by the City Council before a revised draft is submitted to Scottish Ministers in December 2013. After that there may be a public Inquiry, and the provisional timetable suggests a final decision in 2015.

The draft LDP does not at present propose any further housing or other development for Balerno. However the Community Council recognizes the need to reinforce arguments for that position.

In the run up to the approval of the draft LDP housing developers expressed interest in developing land at Cockburn Crescent, Glenbrook and Harlaw Gait, all of which are Green Belt land.

At a special meeting in February, Balerno Community Council reiterated its absolute commitment to the Green Belt and associated development policies.



The Community Council is aware that the Scottish Government may request Edinburgh Council to amend SESplan to include provision for more land to be allocated for housing than is currently envisaged. The Scottish Government is understood to be looking for 'generous' allocations of land for housing; this suggestion is taken by Edinburgh to mean 'more than you need'.

BCC expect that interest in Cockburn Crescent, Harlaw Gait and Glenbrook will be renewed in the consultation process. Balerno, Currie, Juniper Green and Ratho Community Councils, along with Colinton Amenity Association are discussing co-ordination of action in responding to the LDP. None of those bodies are aware of any reason why additional housing provision, beyond that catered for by Edinburgh Council in SESplan might be deemed necessary nor why the Scottish Government may have indicated a requirement for 'generous' housing land allocations.

BCC believes that the first port of call for new housing should be brown-field sites. Only if the case is absolutely essential should green-field sites be used, while Green Belt sites should be excluded altogether.

BCC are not convinced all available brown field sites are being properly considered by developers. Development on green field sites is always a simpler course of action.

BCC believes that Edinburgh Council's proposals in the LDP should be supported.

It urges residents to express their support for the proposals in the LDP by responding directly to the consultation.

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

Cockburn Crescent Planning Application

At its March meeting the Community Council discussed the public exhibition put on by Clarendon Planning and David Wilson Homes on 28 February in the Community Centre as part of the Proposal of Application Notice procedure relating to possible housing development at Cockburn Crescent. Members of the Council who had attended the exhibition were so far from impressed either by the proposals or by the exhibition itself, that at the February meeting the Council decided to write to the developers about various issues arising from the exhibition.

The Council was seriously disappointed that the developers had not addressed the Green Belt character of the site in the exhibition other than through a passing reference on one diagram.

The Council thought that failure to address this issue more fully in the exhibition meant that people left the exhibition with a very limited picture of the issues.

So far as the Council was concerned the exhibition did not try to explain how the development might reasonably be expected to conform to Green Belt policies. When asked at the exhibition, however, representatives of the developer appeared to accept that the proposals were not compatible with the Green Belt status of the site.



Community Council not impressed

The Council also raised with the developers concerns over the questionnaire distributed at the exhibition. The Council had received a significant number of critical comments from visitors to the exhibition and in particular about the leading nature of questions.

The Council in addition questioned the accuracy of information displayed or implied in the exhibition, and also raised with the developers the question of the timing of the proposal given that the Local Development Plan process is underway.

Finally the Council invited the developers to discuss the matter with the Council at a public meeting, in the event that they were to lodge a planning application for the Cockburn Crescent site.

To date the Council has received neither an acknowledgement nor a reply to its letter to the developers.

Having reaffirmed its commitment to the Green

belt and associated policies the Council does not recognise any application as trailed by the developers at the February exhibition. So far as the Community Council is concerned, it does not at present believe that there is any significant body of opinion in the community which favours the proposals.

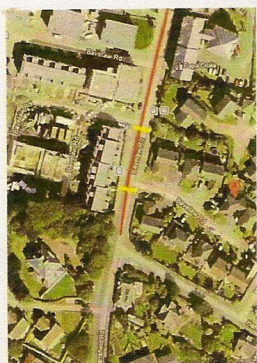
Buses—New Timetables

The Council welcomed both Lothian buses new timetable and also the enhancement to the 44A service for which we have been asking for some considerable time.



The revised timetable effective from 24 March, provided extra journeys Monday to Saturday and new Sunday service on the 44A route and also introduced additional am & pm journey to and from Balerno on the X44 route.

Mansfield Road crossing update



We reported in our Spring 2012 issue on concerns over road safety on Mansfield Road especially at the Harlaw Road junction, and we again reported on the issue in the Autumn issue. Sadly, in early December a traffic accident at that junction resulted in a fatality. Police investigations continue, but the Community Council understands that Edinburgh Council now intend to install a vehicle activated "Children

Crossing" sign, with a flashing "SLOW DOWN" message plate on Mansfield Road. This sign will be activated by passing vehicles and will warn drivers of the likelihood of children crossing the road.

The sign will be situated on the approach to the bend south of Harlaw Road and will be programmed to operate as the children are going to school. Edinburgh Council say that they expect this work to be carried out in the summer holidays.

Changes at Balerno Community Council

Ian Hynd has stepped down from the Chair of the Community Council because of study requirements, which mean that he cannot unfortunately, be available to chair Council meetings over the Summer, prior to September. Tony Allen, Vice-Chair has been appointed Acting Chair of BCC in the interim and Richard Henderson has been appointed acting Vice-Chair.

Elections to the Community Council are also due to be held in the autumn of this year, having been deferred in July 2012 by Edinburgh Council to avoid clashing with the Council's own elections in 2012. More details in Summer issue of the Forum.

Edinburgh Council is currently carrying out a review of the Community Council Scheme and will approve a new scheme in August in time for elections in October. We hope to have details of timing in time for the Summer issue of the Forum.

Balerno Community Council members

Chair (Acting)	Tony Allen
Vice-Chair Acting)	Richard Henderson
Secretary	Trudy Allan
Minute Secretary	Kathleen Fiddes
Treasurer	Hugh Watt
Planning Committee Convener	Ken Shade
Members	Max Downie
	Ian Hynd
	Marion Milne
	Bill Stark
	Finlay Anderson
	Joan Graham
	Jack Kerr
	Lauchie Scougall
	Ken Stephen

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

Congratulations to



Balerno Village Screen

A COMMUNITY CINEMA • FREE ADMISSION • FUNDED BY DONATIONS
www.balernovillagescreen.com



Balerno Community Council was pleased to be able to support Balerno Village Screen's application to the Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership for grant funding to enable them to develop the village cinema idea.

The scheme aims not only to provide a local cinema experience but also to provide educational opportunities by encouraging children and young people to become involved with and develop their own film skills, to develop a programme of training and workshops for children who want to learn more about making film.

Looking to the Future



The Community Council is to meet with Balerno Village Trust and Harlaw Hydro at its June meeting to look at the progress on various BVT projects and other related issues.

The Council believes that development of Harlaw Hydro's plans for a micro-hydro scheme on Bavelaw Burn with income coming to the Village Trust as a result will open up significant possibilities for development of new initiatives across the village. The Council and the Trust, as well as Harlaw Hydro are anxious both to ensure that the planning for that stage and beyond involves the village at large.

All weather pitch

The Council has been hugely encouraged in its campaign for development of all weather playing surfaces in Balerno by news that the Council are in discussion with SRU and Sport Scotland about the prospect of match funding. The matter has been taken forward by Cllr Bill Henderson who has kept us informed of progress in his discussions with City officials and others.

Shall we go round again? More fun at the roundabout

As spring arrives the weeds in the roundabout will be preparing to reappear, although BCC understands that their days could be numbered. A project for refurbishment of the roundabout is now listed amongst possible projects by the Neighbourhood Partnership, with a price tag of about £9K. We are awaiting definite plans, but at last it does seem as though the need for serious investment to tidy up this annual eyesore, has been recognised.

A moving scene

Main Street is pedestrianised which means that parking, except for disabled parking and access, is prohibited. Despite this the norm appears to be for cars to be left in Main Street at all hours and overnight. Two drivers however may have returned to Main Street to recover their cars on 9th March to find them gone.



Parking wardens and the towaway team had been called out early since the street was due to be used for the Farmers Market, which couldn't be set up before the vehicles were removed.

The Council not infrequently raises illegal parking in Main Street as an issue with local police officers and we are told that traffic wardens make regular checks.



Progress towards Fairtrade Village status



BCC was delighted to note at its March meeting that Deanpark Primary School had been awarded joint first position in the Lord Provost's Fairtrade Schools Award and the Council has written to the Head Teacher offering congratulations.

The Council has also written to the Balerno Fairtrade Village Steering Group in support of the application to the Fairtrade Foundation for grant of Fairtrade Village Status for Balerno. The Council was also pleased to note at its April meeting that the application for Fairtrade status for the village had now been submitted for consideration by the Fairtrade Foundation. The result may not be known for several months.

Is Balerno getting a fair share of the roads budget?



After a winter that didn't seem to want to end no doubt people will be looking forward to spring cleaning and repairs. Edinburgh Council has a fair mileage of roads to look after and a lot of potholes to fill in after seemingly months of frost.

However the Community Council wonders whether those in the City Chambers really have the condition of roads above the snow line in their minds. We know that city centre roads have a higher traffic loading than rural roads around Balerno, but the condition of Cockburnhill Road and the Rigg Road for example are a disgrace. Repairs to Cockburnhill Road have been estimated at £18K and the City Council is aware that drainage has been a problem in the area for some time with little option to improve this from the maintenance budget. But that project is now on hold pending clarification of capital budgets from Central Roads.

The Council is concerned that decisions taken by the City will once again concentrate funding closer in to the centre leaving rural areas to deteriorate still further.

The Council therefore encourages everyone to report potholes and the need for road repairs when they see that; only by sustained pressure are we likely to get improvement. If you don't tell them then who will?

Ring Clarence on 0800 23 23 23,
or e-mail to clarence@edinburgh.gov.uk

Car parks, potholes & maintenance

In much the same vein the Council has drawn to CEC's attention the condition of the Scotmid car park which the Council understands to be City Council property and therefore their responsibility so far as maintenance is concerned. The Council has regular 'on site' meetings with City Council staff and Councillors during the quarterly 'walkabouts' and at the March meeting the attention of officials was drawn both to the general state of the car park and also to the absence of effective parking space markings.

Like most people in Balerno the Council believes that the condition of the car park is getting beyond a joke with large and deep potholes regularly opening up near the entrance, caused we believe in all probability by delivery vehicles unavoidably having to manoeuvre in the area. Although high speeds are unlikely in a car park, when filled with water, as they invariably are, these potholes can be dangerous.

The absence of markings in the car park also means that on occasion its capacity is significantly reduced as drivers leave their cars sometimes with inadequate space for another vehicle to park beside them.



Ricky Henderson's column

Welfare Changes Set To Cost Edinburgh £223m

The UK Government is in the process of implementing its Welfare Reform changes. It is estimated that benefit recipients in Edinburgh are set to lose more than £223m (more than £400m if calculated on a cumulative basis) over 5 years as a result. The biggest benefit changes are for people with disabilities, people previously deemed unfit for work, social housing tenants and low income families. All are set to have often already low living standards reduced further by the controversial use of capability assessments, the ongoing devaluation of Child Benefit and the so called "Bedroom Tax". The flawed capability assessment process, recently criticised by the National Audit Office as being of poor value with far too many wrong decisions, will come under further scrutiny through the introduction of the Personal Independence Payment.

More than 90% of benefits income is spent locally and removing £223m over 5 years from the local economy presents immense challenges for retailers and providers of services. It is possible that the black hole in accounts caused by the benefit losses will accelerate a downward spiral of service reduction, business failure, unemployment and under-employment. Static growth will not deliver the work opportunities that the welfare reform programme is allegedly predicated on.

Locally, Edinburgh Council has been working on preparations for the changes for some time although many are not directly connected to Council services. More than £400k has been allocated to advice services, both Council and voluntary sector, to try to cope with the increased demand from people needing help. There is concern that many voluntary sector organizations are already overwhelmed with representing people with disabilities at tribunal cases.

Other partner agencies such as Housing Associations, the Police and NHS are also braced for the impact of welfare reform.

Edinburgh has agreed a "no eviction" policy where tenants have accrued arrears due to the Bedroom Tax and have made all reasonable efforts to pay their rent. In any event it is debatable whether a court would evict a tenant based on the fact that their only offence was that the government had moved the goal posts on them.

And although much attention has been focused on the Bedroom Tax it is important that we don't lose sight of the much larger financial impact of other measures. Indeed those who may be on different benefits could suffer a multiple whammy as benefit cuts affects other entitlements.

Dominic Heslop writes



One of the most exciting and ambitious projects for this area, possibly for a generation, is the Harlaw Hydro Scheme which formally launched this month. As a fan of hydro as a form of renewable energy I believe this well-considered proposal will bring huge benefits to the Balerno community and to individual Balerno residents.

The concept of making ordinary people shareholders is not lost on me as a Conservative!

One of the key features of hydro is that it is not visually intrusive and it is sustainable. This particular scheme has the added bonus that the infrastructure already exists at the Harlaw Reservoir dam.

While I think we always need to be striving to get the right form of energy mix, many of us will have concerns at the march of applications for wind turbines in the Pentland Hills. These giant structures can destroy an area by their size and design and all too often in Scotland beautiful, panoramic views have been lost by the presence of wind farms. My other concern is that evidence suggests that one of the problems with wind turbines is that they don't generate enough energy to make them viable. And who can forget that stunning photograph from a couple of years ago of a wind turbine in Ayrshire bursting into flames ...because of too much wind!

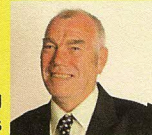
As a member of the Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership Funding Panel, it was good to secure funding for various projects in our area such as the Balerno Childrens Gala (which I am sure will be another great success) and the Balerno Village Screen.

I was very interested to attend the briefing session regarding the proposed new indoor riding centre for Ravelrig Riding for the Disabled which will greatly enhance the facilities and allow far greater activities than are currently available.

Finally I would like to add my congratulations to one of Balerno's rising stars, namely that of Nina Nesbitt whose Stay Out EP was recently released. I was also very interested to read of her return to her Alma Mater, Balerno High and other schools where she has been performing and promoting the benefits of music to young people. I can't wait for her debut album out this summer!

A reminder that I hold my Balerno surgery on the fourth Monday (term time) of each month in the High School.

A message from Bill Henderson



A Great Wee Village

The renaissance of Balerno continues at breathtaking speed. The number of community led ventures is awesome. How many villages can boast of a Farmer's market, Village Screen (cinema), Music Festival and in the very near future, Harlaw Hydro and the Walled Garden projects will be established?

Green Spaces

There is still much to be done however. The maintenance of our green spaces and roads leaves a lot to be desired. The biggest problem I had in the first two months after I was elected was the seeming inability of the council to keep the grass cut. Yes the heavy rain played havoc but as many people pointed out West Lothian seemed to be coping a lot better than Edinburgh. Along with your other councillors we met with the management team to put in place a plan for improvement. It is too early to judge but the signs are that the strategy is working. There was a marked improvement at the end of the year which will hopefully continue.

Road Repairs

Through necessity road repairs have become my speciality. Having spent many hours reviewing scoring systems, road classifications and pothole repair methods, it became apparent to me that due to living in a rural area, lower footfall and vehicle numbers, meant that roads and pavements in a poor condition would never get properly repaired under the present system. I highlighted this problem every opportunity I could and in February the council agreed to allocate an additional £12 million to roads and transport, a near doubling of the budget and at the same time gave a commitment to begin to remedy the particular issues in rural west Edinburgh. This is a commitment I will hold them to.

All Weather Pitch

On election day last year my ear was quite rightly bent about the lack of an all weather pitch in Balerno. Following on from this "discussion" I've had many site visits and meetings with the view of remedying this. I've fought for funding for the pitch which could be used by the schools, rugby club and the community. The funding by the council has now been agreed which means that the design and costing process has been instigated. Once this is complete, matched funding will be requested (talks have already taken place) and if all goes to plan, in the near future, Balerno will at last have an all weather pitch.

Greenbelt

On a final note, I live in Balerno, I like the village way of life and its rural setting. Going by the number of e-mails I receive, the community council meetings and talking to people, I'm not alone. That is why I have opposed and will continue to oppose the many attempts to build on the green belt around Balerno. The greenbelt is there for many reasons e.g. prevent coalescence, provide countryside for recreation, and to maintain the landscape setting of the city.

Balerno Forum

Welcome to the sixth issue of **Balerno Forum**. The main focus in this issue is on the Local Development Plan process which could have far reaching effects for Balerno if housing development were to be permitted on Green Belt land. The Council agrees with those who take the view that the Green Belt is there for a purpose and that once the Green Belt is gone it is gone forever.

There is a real risk that Scottish Government may try to force Edinburgh to make greater provision for new housing. The Council is not aware of any case for that. As Alison Johnstone writes in the April C&B News there has to be a better debate than at present about housing needs, and communities must make their voice heard. Not only we, but also the City Council and Scottish Government, need to know what you think.

Balerno is an active community. The proposals for Harlaw Hydro promise significant opportunity for the community and development of Balerno Village Screen demonstrates an active community, if we were ever in any doubt about that. However the Community Council does need to know what you think so please come to our monthly meeting, or come along to the monthly Balerno Farmers Market (2nd Saturday, 9.00am to 1.00pm, Main Street, Balerno) 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.