

Eskbank and Newbattle Community Council
Minutes of Meeting, 6th February 2020 @ 1830.
At Edinburgh College, Dalhousie Rd.

Community Council (CC) Attendees: Mo Davidson (Chair), Bill Kerr-Smith (Secretary), Mo Price, Robin Barclay, John Webster (Vice Chair), David McNeill (Treasurer), Jane Wailes, Brian Wailes, Krissy McKale, Leigh Seath, Susan Goldwyre (Associate), Tommy Joshi.

Elected Representatives: Cllr. Peter Smaill.

Other Attendees: Donna Mackie (Newbattle Abbey College), Alexandra Forrest (Sustrans), Roslynn Newman (MLC Schools Active Travel), Alan MacDonald, Tom Buchan, Chris Matson, Ian Archibald, Rob Coleman, Michael Aubertel, Andrew Watson, Margaret Watson, Joy Godfrey, Andrew Matheson, Kirsty Towler. (Some attendees did not sign in and are not recorded).

1. Apologies and Introductions

CC Mo Davidson (Chair) opened normal business proceedings, welcoming everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were submitted by: Cllr. John Hackett, Cllr. Kenneth Baird, Christina Harley (ENCC), Alan Symon (ENCC), Orsolya Keru (MLC Active Travel Officer), Rebecca Lewis.

2. Approval of Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the December meeting were put forward for adoption. The minutes were proposed for approval by John Webster, seconded by Mo Price, and adopted.

3. Newbattle Abbey College Overview

Donna Mackie provided an overview of the College and its range of activities:

- The College is a commercial venture, but all earnings are ploughed back into the upkeep and funding of the college.
- They have recently launched a Forest College and a number of activities under their Forest Ranger.
- The College is taking back ownership and responsibility for Lord Ancrum's Wood, following the expiry of their agreement with the Forestry Commission.
- They would welcome input from the community on what kinds of events we would like to see at the College.
- They have already run one literary event and have another one planned for October.
- In April they will hold a Film Night. The chosen film is "Robert the Bruce", to celebrate the 700th Anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath.
- The College is fully-accessible and guided tours are run every Tuesday @ 7:30 p.m.
- The College also hosts afternoon teas and Funeral Teas, plus acts as a venue for weddings, conferences and meetings.

Alan MacDonald raised the potential for including the College in the annual Walking Festival and it was agreed he would liaise with Donna.

ENCC was invited to keep in touch with the College regarding the possibilities of hosting a Summer Fair or being involved as a venue for Local Place Planning support.

4. Active Travel

Alexandra Forrest (Sustrans) and Roslynn Newman (MLC) addressed the meeting on this topic.

Alexandra explained that Sustrans is a Charity targeted on making it easier for people to walk and cycle and that she belonged to the Infrastructure Programme, called "Places for Everyone". The programme currently supports over 230 projects all over Scotland. And they have funding available to support many more projects. 100% funding can be provided for pre-Construction works (including feasibility studies), while 50% funding is available for construction works.

Funding is made available quarterly and Community Councils must have a good relationship with their LA to qualify for support. The focus is on "everyday journeys" (i.e. not really applicable for tourism or leisure projects) and CCs can apply for funding to develop a local strategy.

In response to a request to clarify how ENCC could work with MLC to deliver the Midlothian Active Travel Strategy, it was suggested that it would be helpful to have the Midlothian Federation of Community Councils (MFCC) adopt the Active Travel Action Group as a sub-group of the MFCC. This would make it easier to raise topics at the Access Forum (which meets quarterly and is coordinated by James Kinch).

- The status of the Eskbank - Newtongrange proposed cycleway was discussed. The funds allocated for this work have now been diverted to another project because it was not certain that the project could be delivered within the deadline. The main cause of delay has been the inability to establish communications with Lord Kerr

regarding the possible purchase of a piece of land.

- Concern was expressed that the decision to redirect the funds was taken without any discussion with, or notification to, the two Community Councils who were partners in the project.
- The project is therefore suspended but it was agreed that this could be taken up with Sustrans for future consideration.
- ENCC was asked to try to establish the status of correspondence on the issue.

5. Privacy Policy

- It was agreed that the Communications sub-group should follow-up.

6. “Planning Matters”

- This event was held on 25th January, at Dalkeith Arts Centre.
- Clare Symonds and Daya Feldwick from Planning Democracy (www.planningdemocracy.org.uk) presented sessions on:
 - Local Place Planning, and
 - National Planning Framework (NPF4)
- Roland Playle from the Community Chartering Network (<https://www.communitychartering.org>) presented a session on the Declaration of Kinlochard.
- ENCC presented the RAMPS Planning Monitoring System.
- The event was very well-attended with 8 ENCC participants and total participation of 28.

7. Place Planning

The importance of ENCC beginning preparation of a Local Place Plan (LPP) was agreed and two key points were suggested as a focus for the plan:

- We should prioritise what it is that we want to protect, and
- We should identify what would make our lives better.

It was agreed that we should sign up to the Declaration of Kinlochard (Proposed BK-S, Seconded, BW).

It was also agreed that ENCC should apply for funds, from Scottish Government, to begin preparation of our LPP.

ENCC will establish a sub-group to focus on LPP.

Concern was expressed that we have already lost many of our green spaces to development.

It was noted that Colin Beattie, MSP, has asked residents to make him aware of any issues they want to have taken into consideration as NPF4 is being developed.

8. Communications

It was agreed that we would target production of the next ENCC Newsletter to happen in April, with delivery in May and that we would seek more volunteers to help with production and delivery.

9. Esk Pollution

It was noted that Colin Beattie, MSP, has recently visited the area again, with Scottish Water, and it was established that the main source of pollution is coming from the new Hopefield development. It is clear that failure to provide adequate infrastructure for new developments is a significant factor in the increasing incidences of sewage spillage into the Esk.

Stuart Forbes is currently preparing a document about the issues, noting that this is a UK-wide problem recently featured on Channel 4.

Volunteers are being sought for the river-fly project being carried out by Newbattle Abbey College, seeking to identify how healthy the Esk is.

10. Planning - Hardengreen House

The government-appointed Reporter visited the site in January, to determine the appeal, by the developers, to overturn the MLC decision to refuse planning permission. His final decision concluded that there were not sufficient grounds to overturn the decision of MLC and that decision to refuse was upheld.

A comment was made that the site was “a tip” and that development might have been better than allowing the site to continue in its degraded state. Kirsty Towler, a former MLC planning officer, advised the meeting that even a degraded Green Belt site is still Green Belt. The community has the option of asking for a “Wasteland Notice” to be issued to have the site cleaned up.

11. AOCB

It was noted that a letter of thanks had been received from Alzheimer Scotland, in recognition of the donation of £100, which was generated from donations at our recent public meeting on Local Authority Finance.

Chair, Mo Davidson, thanked all attendees for participation and contributing to positive discussions, then closed the meeting at 20:00.

Next Meeting: This will be on 5th March 2020 at 1830, in Edinburgh College, Room L2-08.