



[Notes on activities of ENCC following the implementation of coronavirus emergency measures – March to May 2020.](#)

Background

Following the ENCC meeting of Thursday March 5 when a number of resignations of ENCC councillors had been received, leaving a depleted council of 8 members, we were swiftly overtaken by the coronavirus (Covid-19) infection crisis and the introduction of emergency measures. The social distancing aspects of that means that physical meetings of community councils are suspended until further notice, and informal face-to-face meetings of councillors cannot take place. Since Midlothian Council delegated many aspects of the Covid-19 resilience response to community councils, the main business of ENCC since late March has been to engage with that process. We have done that collectively through emails, telephone calls, and by informal working meetings via Zoom video-conferencing. This is a summary of the actions and initiatives undertaken between the announcement of lockdown on March 23 and our formal meeting on June 4.

Website and Email

As discussed at the last (March 5) public ENCC meeting, a website has been created at <https://eskbanknewbattlecc.org> which is being used to publish relevant ENCC information and information received by ENCC. The Facebook page, started by Bill Kerr Smith when he was secretary of ENCC and before his recent resignation, is not the property of ENCC and remains Bill's responsibility. As the former email used for ENCC communications was Bill's own personal email, a new ENCC email address has been set up at [mailbox@eskbanknewbattlecc.org](mailto:mailbox@eskbanknewbattlecc.org).

Early Covid-19 resilience activities – March

- Midlothian Council's Communities & Lifelong Learning (CLL) team began setting up their help centre and volunteer database and initially had mistakenly communicated with Joy Godfrey, a resident of ENCC ward, who was independently setting up a series of neighbourhood resilience groups via Facebook.
- Established contact with the CLL team, agreed the groups Joy was establishing were a useful way of providing another layer of help and invited her to join an ENCC Covid-19 resilience sub-committee.
- Established a series of independent neighbourhood groups and publicised them on our website at <https://eskbanknewbattlecc.org/neighbourhood-groups/>. They cover the whole ward except for Kippielaw, where we have not been able to establish a contact.
- Contact with CLL regarding recruitment of volunteers and delivering help.
- Ongoing difficulties with the Royal Bank of Scotland in changing the signatories on the bank account were actively pursued by Treasurer, David McNeill. This made it impossible initially to receive the £10,000 emergency funding given to each of Midlothian's community councils to cover expenses incurred in delivery of help (such as food, transport, shopping), to reimburse volunteers, or any other Covid-19 related expenditure.
- successful experimental and informal online Zoom meeting on March 26. For practical, security and equality of access considerations, Midlothian Council advised that the public should not attend such meetings, and that any decisions taken were valid. In addition, it was

advised we did not record meetings where sensitive personal information might be discussed and that we should inform residents of the proceedings and decisions of such meetings.

- Agreed to continue with weekly Zoom meetings, but suspend any formal ENCC meeting until we could determine how best to do that. ENCC councillors have also attended Midlothian Federation of Community Council meetings (MFCC), held weekly by Zoom; no other Community Council in Midlothian was planning to conduct a council meeting with public attendees.
- Agreed to meet as a working group for the initial part of our meetings, then invite Joy Godfrey to the final part, as a Covid-19 resilience sub-committee meeting.
- Brian Wailes, nominated and approved as Chair for the March 5 meeting when the former depute-Chair unexpectedly resigned, was confirmed as Chair. Robin Barclay was nominated and confirmed as Secretary. David McNeill continues as Treasurer. The office-bearers were notified to Midlothian Council and are published on their website.

#### Covid-19 resilience activities – April

- Coronavirus information page established on our ENCC website, together with updates and a volunteer form. Information was requested by Midlothian's CLL team and added to their volunteer database. ENCC's CLL contact Sharon Dalgleish sent out documents to volunteers, including instructions and advice, risk assessment and authorisation.
- Agreed all volunteer requests in our ward would be handled by CLL. Contact details for the central CLL help/response team were publicised on our website, and our neighbourhood groups were encouraged to leaflet their areas with information containing those details and local contacts. This was to ensure that everyone in the ward was able to request assistance.
- Launched a campaign for donations of TVs for the residents of Midlothian Council's Highbank Care Home in Bonnyrigg Road, who had been confined to their rooms due to the coronavirus pandemic. By early May, every resident in the home had access to a TV in their room. The generosity of both residents and Esk Valley Rotary Club members was overwhelming. Books were also kindly donated by Tesco (Hardengreen) and art/craft materials by WH Smith (Dalkeith High Street). Books, puzzles, cards and DVDs donated by residents were donated to Glenesk Sheltered Housing.
- Continued to pursue establishing neighbourhood groups where none yet exist, and provided help with the designing, printing and delivery of leaflets for groups who needed it.
- Continued to liaise with CLL through Sharon Dalgleish and to receive advice and information from Paul Johnson. Continued participation in weekly Zoom meetings of the MFCC.

#### Other business:

- Planning: objected to a variation in the planning consent submitted by Dandara for their development off Lasswade Road, to allow an increase in the number and style of properties constructed on that site. Community councils advised to remain vigilant for developers making unwelcome applications, particularly while the community consultation process has been temporarily suspended. Concerns regarding the amount of tree-felling in the area.
- Update sought (via Paul Johnson, CLL) on the status of the timetable for the introduction of Place Planning; no advice has been returned other than the Planning Department are short staffed and prioritising issues introduced by the coronavirus emergency measures. It is

anticipated that the Scottish Government timetable will be postponed.

### Covid-19 resilience activities – May

- Issues regarding the changing of signatories on the ENCC account were finally resolved on May 25, following a complaint and strenuous efforts via various contacts. Once a statement was obtained, it was found that the £10,000 funding from Midlothian Council for the coronavirus resilience response had not been transferred to the ENCC account. However, it was available if requested.
- Ward now covered by neighbourhood resilience groups, except Kippielaw where we still have no contacts. 32 individuals came forward to volunteer with Midlothian Council's CLL service through the ENCC website. To the end of May, there were no requests for help to CLL from ENCC ward residents, and no volunteers had been called upon. Their help may yet be required as Council staff are re-deployed to normal duties.
- Active Travel and Roads sub-group established, chaired by Alan Symon and assisted by David McNeil (both ENCC), with residents Andrew Matheson, Michael Aubertel and Ian Archibald. They have been focussing on suggestions to Midlothian Council's response to the Scottish Government's allocation of funds via Sustrans for temporary measures to improve active travel (cycling, walking) during the Covid-19 lockdown.
- Agreed to organise a public meeting when allowed, post-lockdown, to address the issue of many recent complaints about speeding traffic within the ward.
- Fantastic community response to provide TVs to Highbank care home and other donations to Glenesk sheltered housing was much appreciated and publicised in the Midlothian Advertiser and Midlothian View.
- Card writing scheme was implemented by two councillors and a young volunteer, sending messages of support to isolated residents and those providing essential services.
- Unanimous decision to hold a formal ENCC meeting on June 4 by Zoom, despite guidance from Midlothian Council and MFCC that there was no requirement to hold such meetings when normal physical meetings of community councils were suspended. Also advised that it would not be practical to allow public participation, largely due to concerns about security of access, and equal access, as some residents might not have the technology to allow participation. Elected representatives, Councillors Hackett and Smaill, and Midlothian Council Communities liaison Paul Johnson, were invited to observe and participate and residents were invited to make submissions on any matters they wished to raise. Residents were notified through our mailing list, website and community notice board. A provisional agenda was drawn up and placed on our website, together with draft minutes of previous meetings requiring approval.