



**Minutes of Meeting, 7 pm on 4th February 2021.
Held by video-conference due to Covid-19 social distancing restrictions.**

Community Council (CC) Attendees: Brian Wailes (Chair), Robin Barclay (Secretary), David McNeill (Treasurer), Alan Symon, Mo Price, Jane Wailes, Christina Harley, Brian Farrell and Joy Godfrey (ENCC Associate and ENCC representative on ERIG)

Elected Representatives: Cllr. John Hackett, Cllr. Peter Small

Residents: Gerry Goldwyre, Geoffrey Alderson, Gordon Chisholm, Rajesh Hiremath

Apologies: Brian McGuff (Midlothian Council CLL).

Welcome and Apologies. Brian Wailes (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting. Residents who had applied to attend by Zoom were welcomed.

1. **Approval of Minutes and Matters Arising.** The minutes of the meeting of December 3rd, 2020 were proposed for adoption by Mo Price and seconded by Jane Wailes. No matters arising not covered by items on the agenda were considered.

2. **Covid Update.** All relevant information which we have received and is currently available has been posted on the ENCC website and we will continue to publish anything relevant and useful. Midlothian Voluntary Action also sends out frequent detailed updates which we receive which contain useful information and we will ask them if they can provide a link that we can publish (we understand that they do not currently publish those on their website, but they are revising that and may do so in the future).

The vaccine programme appears to be rolling out smoothly locally (a few of us in the over-70 group have already received first doses at the Community Hospital). Free transport is available to anyone who has difficulty in attending their appointment and that information is on the ENCC website. We encourage all who are eligible to take up their offer of vaccination.

We remind the community that we should look out for our neighbours who might require help during lockdown restrictions, and that neighbourhood groups (operating through Facebook and/or WhatsApp) were formed to provide an additional

source of help at local level. We remind residents that that informal help should be the first call for anyone having difficulties. During the first phase of lockdown informal help by neighbours and local groups dealt with all help requirements, and there were no calls on the volunteers that offered to go on the register held by Midlothian Council CLL. That list of volunteers has been revised (to those who opted in to remain on it) and sent to Brian McGuff at CLL. The central helpline is operated there, and details are on the ENCC website.

3. **Roads & Paths.** Brian Farrell reported that batches of 30mph bin stickers had been received from Safety Cameras Scotland (East) in December, and some of ENCC's councillors had distributed those door-to-door in the Lasswade, Bonnyrigg and Dalhousie Roads targeted, and that sufficient stickers were available to distribute to Newbattle Road and Abbey Road. The Cameras organisation warned that those should only be affixed to wheeled bins and not to fixed street furniture, but we have since received approval from Midlothian Council that they can be affixed to streetlamps. There are only a few stickers left but more can be supplied when Camera Unit staff return to working in-office, so we may proceed with further distribution (e.g., Eskbank Road) and affixing to streetlamps. The campaign received publicity from Midlothian View and Dalkeith Advertiser.

Brian also reported effective deployment of the [Mobile Camera Unit](#) on Dalhousie Road, but deployment on Lasswade Road awaits a traffic monitoring report – and Midlothian Councils' device for conducting that has developed a fault and needs to be remedied. There is also a

requirement for suitable parking places for the Unit on Lasswade and Bonnyrigg Roads. The initiation of hand-held radar speed checks by the local police may take place when the days are lighter (referred to at a previous meeting).

Alan Symon and David McNeill have been attending meetings of Midlothian Federation of Community Council's MTRaP subcommittee (Midlothian Traffic Roads & Pathways) and reported back on recent discussion there on lighting and gritting. Joy raised concerns over a report that certain LED bulbs fitted to new street lighting were overly attractive to insects and asked if Midlothian Council could be made aware of that. It was also noted that paths & pavements needing attention should be reported – and potential pathways for construction in future years could be nominated.

Alan and David also host ENCC's active travel subcommittee, with some local resident volunteers, and recent meetings of that have stressed that a main priority of local cyclists is to establish safe cycle routes to Edinburgh, interfacing with the city's cycle routes for onward travel. They have had initial contact with Midlothian Council's Lindsay Haddow and Dave Kenny. It was noted that provision of an off-road cycle route from the King's Gate of Dalkeith Country Park to the A7 is specified in requirements for any development of land at Sheriffhall South (to the north of Melville Gate Road), but that could take years before any development took place. John Hackett suggested Alan and colleagues should meet informally with him and Russel Imrie to push proposals and/or promote establishment of an Active Travel subcommittee of MTRaP to focus specifically on improvements for cyclists. It was also noted that line markings (e.g. cycle lanes) were deteriorating in places – if those are reported to ENCC we can relay those. John also reported that such works should be completed "in house" by Midlothian Council rather than subcontracted.

Gordon Chisholm asked what had become of the proposed cycle path between Newtongrange and Eskbank. It was explained that funding (from the Scottish Government) had been available at short notice and within a short time frame for spending (this model of funding was criticised). The landowner had not been amenable to selling a strip of land between the Sun Inn and the King's Gate (Newbattle Abbey Crescent estate) on which to construct part of the path, and rather than lose the

funding it was allocated to repair of the Penicuik Town Hall roof. Gordon informed the meeting that an old bridge built by the TA existed downstream of the Sun Inn and could be brought back into service for, e.g., an alternative path running through the woods. It was recognised that the roadway and pedestrian access in that area, especially by the Sun Inn and nearby caravan park is generally in need of improvement. Similar hazards exist by the entrances to Newbattle Abbey and Newbattle Abbey Crescent. John Hackett suggested that a workshop meeting on these problem areas should be set up. There was no new information on the A7 urbanisation (from the Hardengreen roundabout to the Sheriffhall South roundabout). The Sustrans requirements seem impracticable because of the nature of the verges and embankments. Mo Price reminded the meeting that some years ago Chris Matson had drawn up plans for a crossing for bus stop and caravan park access by the Sun Inn.

4. **Police Liaison.** The local area quarterly report was submitted immediately before our December meeting by Grant Grey and is available on our website. Further follow up advice and information has also been published there. With *stay at home* during Covid lockdown, crime is generally reduced in the area. However there has been a rash of car thefts, especially by theft of car keys left inside residents' front doors and doors left unsecured. These may be opportunistic or premeditated and residents are warned to be mindful of their security. Residents were also advised to shield radio-operated key fobs in suitable containers (and/or not left near front doors) as devices exist which can clone these fobs from outside the property and then access vehicles.

5. **Environment.** The minutes of the January 18th meeting of ERIG have not yet been received but we assume they will be published on Colin Beattie's website at <http://www.colinbeattiemsp.org/esk-river-improvement-group> when available. Because of a cyber-attack on SEPA affecting their website and email, we have not submitted advance questions to them, as intended. Joy reported that there was little new information reported by SEPA and Scottish Water and they continue to recycle old data. We will discuss possible questions to be submitted before the next ERIG meeting. Rentokil have been seen to be active around Newbattle Abbey and may be conducting sewage debris clear up as they are subcontracted to do.

6. **Finances.** David McNeal (Treasurer) reported no recent spend except reimbursement of the first year's website (start-up) costs to Robin Barclay. The website hosting is up for renewal and the best discount can be achieved by taking a three year plan, which was approved. It is intended to renovate the existing noticeboard by the Eskbank roundabout and purchase new noticeboards for sites to be identified. It was clarified that the planning department stated that planning permission was not needed (but we resolved to be mindful of aesthetics especially in conservation areas). Permission would be required from owners of any sites identified. The primary targets for location are Newbattle Abbey Crescent (probable) and Kippielaw (possible) – we need to ascertain feasibility and residents' wishes. David has received costings.

7. **Planning.** The agreement between ENCC and Bonnyrigg & Lasswade CC made over two years ago over the change of boundary (essentially to run along the A7, incorporating land to the west of Eskbank off Lasswade Road, and east of the A7, into the ENCC ward) was not ratified at the meeting of Midlothian Council on December 15th because of incorrect wording of the description, but the amended version can be ratified by approval of Midlothian Council's legal officer and the Provost (Cllr. Peter Smaill). We understand (since our meeting) that this has now been completed. This will mean that ENCC is the designated consultee by the planning department when it comes to development in areas east of the A7 (instead of BLCC, as has happened with the recent Dandara development, under the old boundary).

It was noted that Midlothian's planning officers consulted all neighbouring community councils on a recent preliminary development application for offices on Green Belt land at "Sheriffhall South" (by Melville Gate). We had constructive discussion with our neighbouring CCs (by Zoom) regarding this, and we have each submitted our consultation responses, which appear on the Council's Planning Portal (see reference 20/00869/PPP). On balance our consultation concluded that the proposal constituted urbanisation of a sensitive site in the Green Belt and by the North Esk Valley and should be opposed in its current form. The site is zoned for development but because it is in the Green Belt there are many constraints within the local plan which (according to the Council) should be

observed. We await with interest to see how this is resolved.

A preservation order has been imposed on a mature tree in Ancrum Road which the property owner proposed to fell but which was of concern to residents.

It was noted that a national planning workshop would be held soon and Brian Wailes volunteered to attend.

Robin reported that ENCC had had notification from a resident of Elginhaugh Gardens that the residents there were concerned about a proposal by Dandara to create a path between their neighbouring development (under construction) and their estate. Ensuing discussion advised that this is a legal (not planning) matter regarding ownership of the land. It is not clear whether the ownership passed to the residents or was retained by their developer or passed to a factor, and they need to ascertain that to see what action they can take. There is also policy on connectivity between developments to take into consideration. It was noted that many new developments are maintained by factors and there may be many different arrangements. The Council has no role in most – even down to supplying grit bins. Residents need to be aware of their local conditions.

8. **Communications.** We have funding for more noticeboards as discussed above.

The website has been renewed under a three-year contract (with some annual add-ons costs) and Robin should submit the invoice within this financial year.

ENCC intends to publish a Newsletter, projected for Autumn 2021 (maybe to coincide with resumption of normal face-to-face meetings?) – and use that as part of a recruitment drive for new community councillors. A subcommittee should be set up to proceed with this.

7. **AOB.** The X95 (via Heriot and A7 to Eskbank) bus service will not be withdrawn, according to Borders Buses and no further action is required at this time.

A council by-election including this ward is likely.

8. **Next Meeting.** The ENCC's next scheduled meeting will be on Thursday March 4, 2021 by Zoom. Residents who attend must use video so that they can be recognised.