



Minutes of Meeting, 7 pm on 4th March 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, Jane Wailes, Christina Harley, Brian Farrell, Rebecca Lewis and Joy Godfrey (ENCC Associate and ENCC representative on ERIG)

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

Residents: Rajesh Hiremath

Apologies: Mo Price (ENCC); 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. **Finance.** David McNeill (treasurer) reported that no financial transactions had taken place since the February meeting. Settlement of a claim by Robin Barclay for costs he met for renewing the website hosting and registration are in train.

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

3. **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. This might benefit from review and tidying up.

There was some concern that Midlothian may be behind other areas (in Scotland and UK) in vaccine delivery, but consensus was that it was within the forecast targets and dependent on vaccine supply (some patchiness was forecast in supply and Midlothian is no different in receipt from other areas). In general, the vaccine programme appears to be rolling out smoothly locally.

There were concerns about reverting to a tiered system and travel restrictions preventing leaving local authority areas (that has been superseded by the Scottish Governments approach since on lifting restrictions)

JH says that there is a relationship between poverty and Covid cases/spread and a number of new grants have been made available from Scot.Gov. through MVA to get bids for support. He is also of the opinion that furlough is currently largely holding employment together in Midlothian and it is a huge relief that the scheme will be extended to September. Many people have never sought help previously so when they contact the council staff are encouraged to do a full review. The council should be contacted by telephone or through their website (that information has been published on ENCC website under Covid information – but may benefit from review).

There is no clarity on foreign travel but residents are requested to fully comply with any quarantine measures if those apply to them when travel is allowed.

4. **Roads & Paths.** Alan reported that the ENCC Roads & Travel subgroup, principally concerned with cycling at this time and specifically with routes into Edinburgh, are waiting on a preliminary informal meeting with John Hackett and Russell Imrie before meeting Lindsay Haddow. John said he hoped that could take place within the next fortnight. John also hopes to get better systems in place for moving communication into action and has been in discussion with Derek Oliver over this.

It was reported that some road signs were becoming obscured by vegetation, and that should be reported directly to Midlothian Council. If a resident has concerns, they should ring **Midlothian Council's Contact Centre** (on 0131 270 7500) and get a **reference number**. The complaint should then

be forwarded internally to the appropriate department. If nothing has happened in a reasonable time, call back, quoting the reference number (this applies to other complaints too). If it is not dealt with, they can contact ENCC to pursue it but in the first instance complain to Midlothian Council. John Hackett said that Midlothian Council were investing in a customer relations management system, to yet be implemented, which was intended to improve complaint management.

A resident has complained about potholes close to the side of roads that are particularly of concern to cyclists. Peter Smaill replied that some are well known and that, within resources, the Council is trying to deal with them, but that they cannot prioritise potholes close to the kerb. The Council works on a safety-first prioritisation. John Hackett said that it is estimated that it would take £25 million to properly fix Midlothian's roads and other local authorities have similar problems.

John Hackett announced that problems around Eskbank Toll had been escalated by the Council to the status of commissioning a report on safety and how to solve it, with consultation of a range of experts. This would be handled by Lindsay Haddow, who would be looking to make contact with ENCC soon so that the community's input and suggestions on problems and solution options can be canvassed. Initially we should set up a meeting between ENCC and Lindsay Haddow to explore how best to take this to residents, rather than try to slot it in on the agenda of one of our regular meetings. It would probably be a couple of months before she can meet with us.

It was reported that road markings on Newbattle Road, especially the narrow stretch before the entrance to Newbattle Abbey College, were faded and hard to see. John Hackett said that road marking was subcontracted by the council and he would check if it is on the procurement list. He further said that it may be desirable to bring such work back "in house" by Midlothian Council and ultimately that team could bid for contracts themselves (e.g. in constructing roads for private developments).

5. Environment. The minutes of the January 18th meeting of ERIG will be published on: Colin Beattie's website at <http://www.colinbeattiemsp.org/esk-river->

improvement-group when approved at the next meeting of ERIG on 16th March, so we have not seen them. Joy received a copy of the draft minutes last night. It was noted that the next meeting of ERIG was the last before the Scottish Government elections on May 6th and so ERIG, chaired by MSP Colin Beattie, would be dissolved. We do not know when and where the minutes of the March 16th meeting will be available. We believe ERIG should continue (and assume Colin Beattie will re-convene it if re-elected as MSP). However while we recognise advantages in having our MSP chair such a group and getting bodies such as SEPA and Scottish Water (which are Government bodies, not answerable to local authorities) to attend, this may not be ideal, and suggest that it could be chaired by someone not political but supported by our MSP. We strongly advocate that ERIG continue. It meets quarterly so the next meeting would be due in June. Joy will discuss with Rebecca and Robin questions she may raise at the meeting, particularly for Scottish Water and SEPA as we are still concerned about sewage discharge into the Esk.

6. Planning.

There was a question on whether the Council had come to any view about what to do with Highbank Care Home when its replacement (in Bonnyrigg) was completed, and the care facility moved there. The answer was no no consideration had been given to that yet.

Brian Wailes had attended an on-line meeting (Scotland-wide) on planning and had been surprised at the lack of community appeal, concluding the process was still weighted in favour of developers. Recent new legislation on planning, to be implemented, had not included that. Community views were supposed to be accounted for in the formulation of Local Plans. We have not had any input, either at local community level or across Midlothian, on the formulation of such plans in conjunction with Midlothian's Planning Department, and the Covid crisis has obscured the timetable for implementation of Local Plans. John Hackett said that the Planning Department currently has 8 staff vacancies and is under a lot of pressure. We hope that ENCC community does not miss out on the opportunity to have input to Local Plans and this should be acted on soon.

7. **Police Report.** Our chair wished to congratulate our local police in detaining two suspects in relation to recent criminal activity, and commends residents who helped with this by provision of CCTV evidence.

8. **Communications.** 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. Robin is happy to again undertake assembly of this, but articles are needed - and informed/interested sources should be found to write articles. A subgroup should be formed and meet soon.

7. **AOB.** David McNeill asked if we can consider undertaking some action, annually, like we did last year in sourcing TVs for residents in Highbank)i.e, an active project rather than just talk). We should consider possible actions.

Rebecca Lewis is now freer of commitments, to give more time to ENCC, and was welcomed and unanimously co-opted as a full community councillor on ENCC.

It was decided that the second Wednesday of the month would suit more attendees of ENCC meetings, and that our regular meeting times be changed accordingly.

9. **Next Meeting.** The ENCC's next scheduled meeting will be on Wednesday May 12, 2021 by Zoom. Residents who attend must use video so that they can be recognised.