



**Minutes of Meeting, 7 pm on 12th May 2021.
Held by video-conference due to Covid-19 social distancing restrictions.**

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

Elected Representatives: Cllr. John Hackett, Cllr. Peter Smaill, Cllr Stuart McKenzie

Residents: Tom Buchan, Jim Matson

Apologies: Brian Wailes (ENCC Chair), Jane Wailes (ENCC); Brian McGuff (Midlothian Council CLL).

Welcome and Apologies. Alan Symon (Depute 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 April meeting were proposed for adoption by Mo Price and seconded by Christina Harley. No matters arising not covered by items on the agenda were considered.

It had been decided at an informal meeting of ENCC that individual community councillors would henceforth speak to different headings of the agenda.

2. Finance. David McNeill (treasurer) reported that no expenditure had taken place since the April meeting, and that we were in receipt of the 2021-22 grant from Midlothian Council in the amount applied for.

3. Planning. Robin Barclay reported that no applications of note within the ENCC ward had been notified to us since our meeting of the previous month.

Of interest a major development of housing at Redheugh Farm west of the A7 near Gorebridge was noted, and the effects of that on the South Esk river was speculated on.

Totem signage for the Greggs and Starbucks drive through developments by Tesco's Superstore (applications 21/00290/ADV and 21/00180/ADV)

were deemed intrusive and inappropriate, deliberately designed to be visible from the nearby A7 over the screening hedging which is there to hide such developments, and should be objected to.

Concerns were raised over the lack of any interaction with Midlothian's planners and this (or any other) community council over Local and Place Plans. We have no information on whether the timetable for submission has been changed from the September deadline because of Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, and are aware that the time for implementing such discussion is short. Since this is a Midlothian-wide problem it may best be addressed through Midlothian Federation of Community Councils rather than just ENCC, but ENCC is concerned that since there is no right of appeal under the new planning act it is important to identify areas which the community value, for protection against possible future attempts to develop.

4. Environment. Rebecca Lewis reported on various initiatives that she, as an environmentalist, is engaged in which aim to preserve and improve remaining remnants of the existing environment. Her main interest is the Riverfly group monitoring sites on the South Esk as indicators of river health. Rebecca has attracted and is training a number of local volunteers, and ENCC has supported this by funding training pack costs. She is engaged with SEPA, Anglers Association (Musselburgh) and the Scottish Wildlife Trust in various related initiatives

which in general support biodiversity and climate resilience.

Concerns were raised as to whether ERIG, chaired by MSP Colin Beattie, would resume after its suspension during the Scottish Parliamentary Election run-up. We note that Colin Beattie has been re-elected for this constituency and we presume, until we hear to the contrary, that ERIG will resume meetings. We are represented on ERIG by Joy Godfrey, who has indicated that if we might be better represented there by Rebecca Lewis (who has professional knowledge in this field) she is willing to stand aside. That will need to be decided.

5. Police Report. Since we now get this quarterly there was no police report to consider. That should be submitted before our June meeting.

6. Communications. Christina Hartley reported on the status of our noticeboards. The noticeboard at Eskbank Toll will be removed for refurbishment (by David McNeill, as soon as he can find time and get some help) and restored there.

There are no obstacles for placement of a new noticeboard near the bus stop at Newbattle Abbey Crescent (cleared with Planning, Residents Association and developer), and David McNeill can place an order for a suitable one.

Robin Barclay (as editor/manager) will review and tidy up the website (in particular the stream of Covid-19 information that was delivered over the past year).

A subcommittee to proceed with development of a newsletter for publication around October needs to be formed, and articles by contributors for inclusion need to be sought (from councillors, residents and experts – anyone with something of interest to the community). This is budgeted for.

7. Roads and Road Safety. Brian Farrell reviewed recent history of communications and implementation of enforcement activities. From his communications with the local chief inspector and the Road Safety Camera Unit (some of which preceded his joining ENCC). The Safety Camera Mobile Unit was deployed on Dalhousie Road for a

period of 3 months following a speed check assessment and identification of a suitable site (lines of sight, etc). A further deployment awaits a subsequent speed check (by Midlothian Council Road Safety officials). Numbers and times of offences identified are not publicly disclosed as those can indicate periods of activity to potential offenders. A site for location of the Camera Unit on Lasswade Road has been offered by Dandara at the access to their southern development plot, before work starts there. Deployment requires a speed check assessment, but unfortunately Midlothian Council's equipment has failed, the manufacturers no longer trade, and an alternative supplier needs to be sourced. We have not been notified on how this is progressing. A suitable site for the Mobile Camera Unit has not been identified on Bonnyrigg Road but hopefully the Police radar checks can be carried out there now that we have extended daylight hours. We would infer that speed checks have not been carried out on Bonnyrigg Road if there is not yet suitable equipment to carry this out.

It was discussed whether efforts should be made to mitigate speeds on the roads feeding in to Eskbank Toll, and not to rely on enforcement alone. Brian stated that his efforts to engage with Midlothian's Road Safety team on mitigation have not met with any constructive response. We note that a major survey of road problems at and around Eskbank Toll has been initiated by Midlothian Council under the leadership of Lindsay Haddow, and that the community will be consulted in due course (we await communication). We understand that various experts are now surveying the location to report back on the situation and possible solutions and costs, and we expect to be consulted soon and then extend that consultation to residents. We propose that a major component of problems at Eskbank Toll is the speed on the approach roads and that mitigation rather than enforcement should be used to control this.

Meantime we note comments on road width, parking, condition of pavements, as well as speeding, etc – especially on Bonnyrigg Road. Peter Smail said that since Lindsay Haddow had been unavailable, he had escalated such complaints up to Derek Oliver, in overall charge. It was noted anecdotally that the bin stickers appeared to be having some effect on reducing traffic speeds on the days bins were put out, but no monitoring has taken place.

It was noted that Newbattle Road is also of concern regarding speeding between the Abbey Road junction and Eskbank Toll, and that road markings beyond that towards the Abbey need restored. Plants overhanging the walls along there, impeding pavement access, need cut back.

There was further discussion on the opportunities for re-engineering at roundabouts to mitigate speeding which could come with the A7 urbanisation, and also on implementation of 20mph limits, but no further information.

8. Active Travel. Andrew Matheson reported that there was a need for individuals and groups to be able to use a local forum which put them directly in touch with local officials at Midlothian Council (similar to those in East Lothian and Borders), as there is a sense that it is hard to track down who is responsible for what, and there is a strong sense that nobody is listening to legitimate suggestions and complaints. He also suggested that it would be useful if concerned councillors also participated in such forums, and someone from the Roads team.

Pavement defects should be reported through the Council forum – Andrew was going to supply the link.

There were complaints, mainly from pushchair and pram users, that the waste collectors were dumping wheelie-bins back on pavements so as to obstruct them.

A plea was made for removal of “chicanes” between the entrance to the Harden Green Industrial Estate and the entrance to the College and Eskbank Station as these severely impeded cyclists and pushchair users. These barriers should be replaced with something which can block vehicular access but not impeded other users, such as a bollard. It was noted that this land belongs to Network Rail.

Tom Buchan enquired about the Ironmills steps access. Since this land continues to slip it is considered impossible to ever restore access for Eskbank residents to Ironmills Park by the steps to the bridge, and alternative access routes/bridges should be explored. ENCC had met some years ago with Justin Venton of Midlothian Council and at the time it was inferred that it might be possible to reopen the steps if the land stabilised, but that now

looks unlikely. Alternate routes and funding for them should be actively pursued.

9. AOB. Alan Symon stated that he was in discussion with Edinburgh College about conditions which would allow face-to-face meetings to resume, possibly by our next (June) meeting for those who choose to attend, with the proviso that access by Zoom would need to be provided for those not comfortable with attending in person. He will report back.

Alan also raised the possibility of mutual representation of each others’ councils at meetings of ENCC and Dalkeith and District CC (as used to happen not many years back). No response to this has yet come from DDCC.

It has also been noted that schoolchildren have been congregating far above recommended numbers (by Covid-19 restrictions) in King’s Park play area after school. Although this is in DDCC ward that is the local school for many of our residents’ children. What can be done?

There was also discussion of whether local groups can undertake to maintain their areas weed-free and ask Midlothian Council not to employ chemical herbicides in those areas. Discussion were conducted of what conditions Midlothian Council required for that to be implemented, and whether local groups might emerge to seek that.

10. Date of next meeting is Wednesday June 9. Venue and time will depend on Edinburgh College availability, Covid restrictions applicable and individuals’ comfort with mode of attendance.