



Eskbank & Newbattle Community Council

Minutes of Meeting, Wednesday 13th October 2021 at 18:30 at Edinburgh College.

Community Council (CC) attendees: Alan Symon, (Depute Chair), Robin Barclay (Secretary), David McNeill (Treasurer), Mo Price, Christina Harley, Andrew Matheson,

(by Zoom) Brian Wailes (Chair)

Midlothian Councillors: Cllr John Hackett,

Nick Price (Edinburgh College, Director of Communications Policy and Research and Board Secretary)

Apologies: Jane Wailes, Rebecca Lewis, Brian Farrell, Joy Godfrey, Cllr Peter Smaill, Cllr Stuart Mackenzie

Welcome & Apologies: Alan Symon, (Depute Chair) welcomed all. Apologies were received as above.

1 Approval of Minutes & Matters arising: the minutes from meeting on 8th September were proposed by David McNeill and seconded by Christina Harley. There were no matters arising not covered in the agenda.

2 Engagement with Edinburgh College: Nick Croft of Edinburgh College had set up the College's PC located in the Boardroom, linked to a wall-mounted display, for remote access via Zoom – which enabled Brian Wailes to participate remotely (no others participated remotely). This worked well. Nick then addressed the meeting to say that Edinburgh College wished to offer facilities to the community, that it was open from 7am to 9pm with rooms available which could be used for community and/or 3rd sector group activities, and that the College intended to also make use of its external environs such as replanting grassed areas as community orchards with trees and fruit bushes, starting a regular farmers market, and was open to other suggestions. Nick will write a summary of proposals for engagement with the local community which ENCC will publish on its website.

3 Police Report: A police report is due quarterly, and the next will be due in December when we hope it will be spoken to in person by a police representative. Meantime we expect to receive monthly reports from the Midlothian Community Action Team (MCAT) as requested by Cllr Peter Smaill (which he stated at our September meeting that he would request), and we presume that none has yet been forthcoming at the time of this meeting.

3 Planning Issues: Robin Barclay had reported extensively on interests and actions on planning issues at our last meeting in September (see minutes) and nothing new had arisen on the Planning Portal with regard to those applications (we note some publicity around the first Sheriffhall South application published recently in Midlothian View where the developer purports to have answered some of the communities' – not just ENCC – concerns, but nothing new has been published on the Planning Portal since May). In this last month an application for a development of 6 houses on Melville Road (ref: 21/00746/DPP) has been submitted. This is a "brownfield site" used during reinstatement of the Borders rail line and includes the "Squirrel Warehouse" shed (which it is proposed to demolish). There is a consensus in ENCC that the development, on a sensitive site on the approach to Eskbank, would

be an improvement on what is there currently, but there is significant concern over the access to/from the site between two blind corners and opposite a section of road marked with a central double white line. Since this is in our ward the consensus is that we will convey our concerns to Planning as statutory consultees but stop short of an outright objection, and leave it to other consultees and experts to resolve these concerns. Robin (ENCC Secretary) will draft our consultation response taking into account an extensive draft circulated by Community Councillor Brian Farrell (not present tonight) and circulate that to members.

4 Environment: Brian Wailes attended the last ERIG meeting (13th September) since our usual representative Joy Godfrey could not attend. We expect that the draft minutes of ERIG meetings will now be published soon after meetings (on MSP Colin Beattie's Website at <http://www.colinbeattiemsp.org/>) rather than waiting until they are approved at a subsequent meeting, and so can be discussed at our next ENCC meeting. We note that ENCC member Rebecca Lewis continues with her role locally with the Citizen Science group Riverfly on the Esk. We note their collaboration with Esk Valley Trust and that the Riverfly on the Esk group's contribution to our understanding of the local river has been recognised by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) as a valuable resource. They will be working together, alongside the Esk Valley Trust, to help protect and deepen understanding of the ecology and environmental pressures on the River Esk. There has been a further seepage of raw sewage from the manhole cover on Newbattle Road, close to the junction with Ancrum Road, leading to effluent running down the road. Scottish Water attended and a CCTV examination has confirmed there are no blockages. What further can be done to prevent future problems is as yet unknown. There was also flooding following heavy rain at the Abbey Rd/Newbattle Rd junction. This was due to blocked drains, which Midlothian Council has the responsibility to keep clear. Cllr John Hackett said the Council had rejigged the priorities of the Neighbourhood Services team, which was now working towards preventative maintenance and a proactive, rather than reactive, way of working.

5 Communications: Christina Harley reported that the target date for a newsletter should now be in the Spring of 2022. Meantime we should proceed with purchase of a noticeboard to be sited at Newbattle Abbey Crescent (David McNeill verified there were no planning constraints) and with the refurbishment of the existing noticeboard on Eskbank Road at Eskbank Toll. Christina will also seek speakers to address our monthly meetings on relevant subjects.

6 Roads and Road Safety: Brian Farrell has circulated comprehensive notes to ENCC members on the road safety issues around the Melville Road planning application (above).

Cllr John Hackett stated that the 20mph measures introduced in the Borders and East Lothian (but not Midlothian) under Covid lockdown mitigation measures were introduced using Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTRO) to make changes without having to complete as many procedures as are normally required for TRO's. As the name suggests, they are only supposed to be used as temporary measures so additional legal steps still must be taken if Borders or East Lothian Council want to make them permanent. Midlothian will start from scratch to introduce permanent 20 mph measures, but due to oversubscription Sustrans does not have currently available funding. Council officials are in talks with Sustrans to attempt to secure funding for some of the measures soon.

7 Active Travel: Andrew Matheson expressed a desire for more community engagement in Council decisions (as has been advocated by Cllr Hackett). Cllr Hackett had previously suggested arranging a meeting between Andrew and Brian F to talk to Russell Imrie and/or Derek Oliver about how to better

use community input and knowledge in decisions around road safety and the path network, but that has not yet taken place. Andrew also advocated the possible use of an interactive map (he had seen elsewhere) to get input of ideas from the community.

8 AOB: Our AGM is due in December (since we have not held it earlier as proposed at previous AGMs due to our focus on reintroducing face-to-face meetings and other Covid-restriction related matters). It was proposed that since we now meet on the second Wednesday of a month we could have a meeting in January since that Wednesday will be after the holiday week around New Year, and we could hold our AGM then. A decision will have to be made on this at our next meeting.

We should consider hosting hustings for the forthcoming Council Elections in May 2022.

9 Date of Next Meeting: the next meeting will be Wednesday 10th November in the Boardroom at Edinburgh College at 6.30pm (to 8:30pm).

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm.