

Longstone Community Council

Secretary's Report for 2023-24

Membership

Following the resignation of elected members Stuart and Margaret Campbell during the year our membership fell beneath the threshold required for a community council. An election was called and an extraordinary general meeting was held in December 23 at which 6 new members were elected, bringing the total of elected members to 8. Alan Gordon was appointed as Secretary, Ray Donnelly as Treasurer and Des Loughney continued as Chair with John Allan as Vice-chair. Our thanks for Stuart's and Margaret's years of service was expressed after their decision to step down.

Meetings

Meetings have been held in the Session Room of Slateford/Longstone Church apart from a special meeting in private, held on zoom. Including the 2023 AGM & EGM, we held 10 meetings during the year. Apart from an AGM, the minimum number of meetings required is 6. Grateful to the support of the church team for facilitating our public meetings.

Police

Despite the pressure on police resources, the community police team have attended our meetings when able, as well as initiated a new forum at which members from different community councils can attend to discuss or raise matters. The SW police team also issue a quarterly newsletter covering activities and initiatives in the locality.

CEC Councillors

We've enjoyed the support of our local councillors who attend meetings when able and who often pursue matters on our behalf with council officers and speak on matters at CEC committee meetings, backing the community council's deputations. We are grateful for their support and the traction they have brought to local matters.

AGM

The 2023 AGM was held on 19/06/23, at which the following were reappointed: DL as Chair; JA as Vice-chair; SC as Secretary and AG as Treasurer & Engagement Officer. As already noted in the membership commentary, an EGM was later held in Dec 23 at which the following were appointed: DL as Chair; JA as Vice-chair; RD as Treasurer and AG as Secretary & Engagement Officer.

Planning & Development

The redevelopment of the former Booker site in Inglis Green Road was granted planning permission, following deputations by LCC, Water of Leith Conservation Trust and our local councillors after which the developer (Smarts) agreed to contribute monies towards a new bridge connection over to New Mart Road. LCC and Cllr McKenzie have since followed up on this with deputations at the Transport & Environment Committee where it is now on the work programme to be progressed.

The proposed building of student flats in Inglis Green Gate was rejected by planning officers due to the impact on trees on the site. An appeal has now been lodged by the developer which we await the result of.

The proposed development on the site of the Longstone Inn as 23 flats and a commercial unit was refused permission due to numerous concerns. The site is in a dreadful state now, unsecure and a vandalism target. LCC is pursuing action on this.

Slateford House is letting all the originally proposed residential apartments on Airbnb, and have currently applied for 'change of use' from 'commercial units' to 'serviced apartments'. LCC remain concerned about the protection required to the memorial plaque but cannot get a response from the owner. We have also requested the external clock is fixed so the correct time shows on it's different faces.

Despite the owner of 'The Kingsknowe' having permission to demolish it and redevelop the site for housing, nothing has changed and we're pleased to see the pub continuing to function. Permission expires in August 2025.

The redevelopment of the Westside Motors site in Slateford as student flats has shown little progress, other than its demolition. A security cctv sentinel has recently appeared on site, perhaps signalling something might be about to happen.

The planning application for a flatted development on the site of the former Lanark Road Nursery was refused permission mainly due to it failing to preserve or enhance the Colinton Conservation Area.

Environment

Safer School Streets – We understand that CEC is currently working with Longstone Primary and Redhall School to refresh the 'travel plan'. LCC has been trying to get the council officer to attend a meeting to discuss in more detail what improvements might be made and how to balance the concerns of local residents while ensuring local children can travel to school safely.

The pavement parking ban came into force at the start of the year and has had a big impact locally. Both 'red flagged' streets, Redhall Place & Kingsknowe Crescent have ceased to have cars parked on the pavements. Redhall Drive has also shown a big improvement.

The hedge blocking the pavement on Redhall Grove was finally cut back after Cllr McKenzie pursued the matter for months. A key route to school for children and parents, it's made a huge difference with them no longer being forced out into the road between parked cars.

The proposed lighting in Hailes Quarry Park has been approved and it now expected to be implemented before the darker months begin this year. This will mean the key pedestrian route from Longstone to bus services on Murrayburn Rd will be fully lit as well as solar spot lighting between Longstone and Dumbryden and key junction points in the park being lit.

The Burnside Bridge was finally re-opened after years of closure when CEC agreed to make temporary repairs after pressure from LCC and local councillors. A key pedestrian route connecting us to Saughton/Stenhouse and well used by locals. Alarming a sink hole has now opened up in the Stenhouse Mill Lane path following torrential rain and a diversion is in place. Accessibility improvements to this diversion are now being sought.

Lanark Road pedestrian crossing is being pursued by LCC. Following a Road Safety Audit and design considerations, officers currently expect to proceed further in July when officer resource becomes available again, when designs will be finalised and issued for tender.

Scottish Water sewer upgrade works have been ongoing on Longstone Rd/Inglis Green Rd most of the year. Works have taken longer than expected but are now due to complete by end of September 24.

Similarly, Scottish Water works on the Redhall School site have taken longer than they expected but are now due to be completed prior to summer 2024. The impact of these works has been felt keenly by local residents, but will resolve historic flooding issues experienced by Peatville Terrace householders.

Lanark Road was patched up and surface dressed with the traveling safely scheme reinstated subsequently. Revised ETRO expected to be readvertised soon and also cover Longstone Road and Inglis Green Road.

LCC had a couple of graffiti successes with park of the aqueduct being painted over on which a heritage plaque had been sighted. Graffiti on the gable end of the tenement on Longstone St, next to Hailes Quarry Park entrance was painted over by CEC too. We also had a few bus stops on the #20 route straightened, missing hydrant points reinstated or protected, collapsed trees and shrubbery cut back, fly tipped rubbish collected, burnt out motorbikes retrieved and faulty pedestrian crossing points fixed next to Sainsburys.

Memorial

We joined the remembrance ceremony, laying our wreath, alongside local cllrs and veterans on Saturday 11th November.

Duncan Colquhoun Award

Des (Chair) presented the award and £50 book token on 27/06/23 to two sisters, (pupils at Longstone Primary) who raised money towards charities that were supporting their 2 year old brother, who was diagnosed with leukaemia earlier in the year.

Community Parks (Redhall / Dovecot / Hailes Quarry)

In November 23 LCC teamed up with Friends of Redhall Park to plant spring bulbs which looked great this spring around the tunnel area. We then teamed up for spring clean litter pick in March 24. Support of the CEC Parks team much appreciated.

LCC also worked with the Parks officers to identify areas for tree planting around Dovecot Park and have ordered the tree saplings to be planted this Autumn (2024).

LCC are working with SW20 to instigate a 'Junior Park Run' every Sunday around Hailes Quarry Park. We recently met with the Park Run rep and they are now pursuing funding to this end. A call for expressions of interest, both as participants and volunteers by LCC & SW20 was really well responded to. Once funding is secured then training of marshals and planning to launch the event will progress.

Bike racks were installed in Redhall Park and Hailes Quarry Park after LCC spoke with the Parks officer and the active travel team. Good to see them being well used.

AG June 2024