

## Longstone Community Council

### Secretary's report to 2017 AGM

This is a review of most activities during the year but is not exhaustive.

#### *Planning applications:*

The main planning issue during the year has been the attempts by 'Lanark Road Living Ltd', an unregistered company, to build student flats in Slateford, firstly on the sites of both Westside Motors and the Blue Goose Country Pub and secondly on only the Westside Motors site. After seeing the objections from Craiglockhart Community Council and the Water of Leith Conservation Trust we determined to support these objections. After a site inspection the planning committee debated the application and it was refused by a narrow majority on 7 December 2016. However, the applicant did not give up and applied to develop just the Westside Motors part of the proposal. In February we submitted our comprehensive objection to that proposal. We still await the planners' recommendation and a date for a meeting of the Committee.

Throughout the year progress continued on the construction of flats on the site of the former Longstone Centre (69 Inglis Green Rd).

In May we heard that our suggestion regarding the siting of a new nursery school in the grounds of the primary school had been accepted, albeit with a different orientation. Our suggested roof design was ignored and planning permission was granted 18 August. Construction began on ... and is well under way. Later we objected to the proposal to remove a large section of the boundary wall and fencing and this was subsequently retained and the plan altered accordingly. I also reported that I had applied to Historic Environment Scotland to have the school and its boundary walls and gates listed. Construction began on 13 February and is expected to be complete on 7 August 2017.

In November I reported the application to demolish the Kingsknowe Roadhouse and replace it by a development of three town houses and a block of 13 flats. Subsequently I submitted our objection to this application and it was refused on 10 January. Later the applicant asked for a review, which was heard and refused on 27 March. We may expect another application for redevelopment of this site.

Another application was made to build a small block of flats at the top of Inglis Green Gait and this was successful. But so far there is no sign of development.

Not exactly a planning matter but, at the time of the last AGM, the outcome of the appeal by Wellbeing Pharmacies regarding their application to open a pharmacy in an unused part of the Scotmid's store in Longstone was not known. But in May last year we heard that the appeal was rejected.

*Environment:*

Regrettably, nothing has yet been done to stop the water leaks in Inglis Green Road under both the aqueduct and the railway viaduct. All year I have urged the City engineers to get some action. However, Scottish Canals had admitted that the Canal was leaking and that they would install a drain to take water from leaks to the roadside. This has not yet been done. We had other contact with Scottish Canals regarding litter and fly tipping. Fly tipped rubbish between Lanark Road and the Canal was eventually removed by CEC and/or Scottish Canals.

Network rail were reluctant to admit that water was leaking from their property but I was able to demonstrate to Road Southwest that this was the case and am still waiting for action on this matter.

Graffiti continued to be an existential problem but I have kept up pressure on the owners of the properties involved and had some success at removing the tags. Police were always advised but had no success at tracing culprits. With the Council's agreement, I purchased cans of spray paint to deal with graffiti on Virgin Media's cabinets after I found that VM had no intention of removing graffiti.

Dog fouling continues to be a menace and one concerned resident in Redhall Drive was directed to the environmental wardens for assistance.

Improvements were made to Hailes Quarry Park with the planting of water-tolerant plants in a managed wetland area at the east end.

During the year we complained about the fiasco regarding the planting of trees in Redhall Park beside the war memorial without any provision to water them. The result was 12 dead trees which then had to be removed. We subsequently expressed our concern at the waste of money involved (£1750 for planting and removing the dead trees) and were assured that, in future, there would be a regime which would make provision for watering/weeding/mulching, etc. It would also reduce bark stripping damage caused by strimmers/mowers. We were told that this 'extended living landscapes' should help many tree groups and that a winter programme of base mulching or protective stobs will also be considered. We never found the cost of removing the roots and stumps of the dead trees.

In August I reported being approached by a Kingsknowe resident about road safety near the junction of Lanark Road and Kingsknowe Road South, where there had been some accidents and near misses (there is no traffic island by this junction). Except for a promise to upgrade the island at the junction with Kingsknowe Park (not yet done), subsequent correspondence with CEC's road safety officer produced no action on this matter.

During the year we had discussions with Network Rail about their proposal to upgrade the level crossing barriers and they came to present their ideas to our November meeting. Work was undertaken between 18 December and 2 January, with shuttle-buses provided to transport pedestrians to the opposite side of the

crossing. Now we have to suffer long waits when the barriers are down.

Our November meeting was attended by Greig Robertson who sought our support for Wester Hailes Edible Estates, a project of the Health Agency, a health and wellbeing organisation operating in SW Edinburgh. He referred LCC members to a video on their website ([www.edibleestates.co.uk](http://www.edibleestates.co.uk)). Subsequently we determined to support the idea in principle, although we had doubts about the practicality of finding anywhere suitable for an allotment in our area.

#### *Community council elections:*

Because the council had to be re-elected last September, the appointment of officers, usually at the AGM, was delayed until after the election. Concerned about the possibility of not having enough members elected to keep the community council going, it was decided to have a leaflet printed and circulated, outlining our work and urging people to get elected. There were some problems with printing but the leaflet was distributed to most of our area during September and I placed CEC's notice around the area. Unfortunately it resulted in no new members unless you count my wife who was persuaded to apply in case we needed the extra member. However, we managed to find enough members to elect a new community council at our October meeting. At this meeting, Des Loughney was elected Chair and John Allan Vicechair. I had previously resigned as Vicechair to take up the post of Treasurer after the death of Jim Scott in February of last year.

#### *Ward boundaries:*

During the year we heard that our objection to the proposal to move the ward boundary between Sighthill Gorgie ward and Fountainbridge Craiglockhart, into which our southern half was moving, had been accepted and the boundary would return to the railway line, as before. This change occurred on 4 May 2017 at the time of the City Council elections. It also resulted in a change in our ex officio members as City councillors from Pentland Hills ward were replaced by those of Fountainbridge Craiglockhart ward.

#### *Remembrance Ceremony:*

This was held on 12 November, organised in association with the Royal Artillery Association and the 51 (Scottish) Signal Squadron. A bugler and piper were supplied. In Mike Frew's absence, it was conducted by Rev. Bob Henderson. Our wreath was laid by the Chair. During the year we discovered that CEC's Cultural Services Dept had steam cleaned the memorial in 2015. They had also installed a gate in the small fence. A request to Historic Environment Scotland to schedule the monument was declined but it still has protection as.

*No 20 bus:*

The continued operation of this bus service has been welcomed by residents, as has the addition of service no. 36, now running through Longstone.

Steuart Campbell

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