

FIRRHILL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING: 26 OCTOBER 2009

Minutes of meeting held at the Colinton Mains Community Centre.

Members: H Levy (Chair), A Hunter; G Hunter; L Lynn; P Podd; S Liddle; M O'Brien; J Napier;

In Attendance: E Aitken (Cllr); J Rust (Cllr); E Barry (Cllr);

Apologies: M Milne; D Crawford (Oxgangs Police); P Wright; N Tinlin (Fairmilehead Community Council);

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting: held on the 28th September 2009

Following a short interval for the minutes to be read, they were approved by P Podd, seconded by L Lynn. There were no amendments.

2. Matters Arising:

Hunters Tryst Development – the Chair reported on a meeting she had that morning with Dunedin-Canmore where she expressed the concerns raised over the Housing Association's actions in registering with the City Council a proposal of application for a major development when it appears the purchase of the land has not yet taken place. The public consultation exercise carried out by the Association, following the notice, lacked any real detail as to their proposals other than an intent to build 'affordable' housing.

The HA re-affirmed the development was for approx 100 to 120 residential units for a varied occupancy of social housing and rented/partial ownership. There was at this time no decision on the actual percentage although the figure of 70% social occupancy has been mentioned. The CEC are pushing for the maximum number of units to be built as this would increase the price they will get for the land.

Dunedin-Canmore has now agreed to a 'Communications Group' being formed.

The re-instatement of the footpath between Oxgangs Green and Oxgangs Bank is not assured. As this is not a private development, the community benefits which may have been obtained under the section 75 provisions, whereby a developer would bear the cost of providing improvements to the infrastructure, does not apply.

Colinton Mains Park and Pavilion – The Chair reported that with the third and last phase of the central Oxgangs regeneration about to start, the developers (Dunedin Canmore) have erected a safety fence on the park side of the site (where the shops and garages are in Oxgangs Crescent between Oxgangs Drive and Firrhill Drive). The fence cuts across one of the new football pitches. This situation has apparently occurred due to the plans used by the different factions not being properly aligned.

Cllr Rust provided an update on the refurbishment of the park and advised that there was still work to be carried out on the new drainage system. Work was due to start on the two new playgrounds in March 2010. (See **Appendix 1**)

Cllr Barry confirmed the tender was being pulled together for the refurbishment of the pavilion.

Decision: In view of all this activity and the length of time since the last meeting, that a meeting of the stakeholder group be arranged to ensure everyone is clear on the decisions being taken. Chair/Secretary to contact S MacKay (Carillion).

Flood Prevention Work – discussion on the progress that had been made in particular to that area between Colinton Mains Drive and Oxgangs Road North (Reach 2).

3. Community Police Report: D Crawford

McCarthy Stone Building Site - The complaint regarding their encroachment on to the pavement blocking pedestrian right of way had been picked up by the Police Liaison Officer at Firrhill High School and the matter has been discussed with the site manager.

Reported that during this month, specifically between the 13th and 15th, a spate of vandalism has resulted in a total of 12 vehicles (the total number reported to the police) damaged whilst parked in Firrhill Drive, Firrhill Park, Oxfangs Crescent, Oxfangs Drive and Oxfangs Row. Each vehicle had two tyres – predominantly on the passenger side, punctured by the use of a sharp circular instrument. Two vehicles were damaged in a similar fashion in the Colinton Mains area about the 22nd, but it's unknown at this stage if there is a connection to the above crimes.

The owners of these vehicles, apart from the inconvenience, also had to face the costly replacement of tyres, some of which were sport and commercial vehicle types. The overall cost of damage is easily a four figure sum.

At this stage, enquiries have revealed that the culprit may be local, male, white, 5:6 – 5:8, 17-20, slim build, dark hair, wearing a white zip up jacket. His accomplice is of similar description, slightly taller and was wearing a dark jacket. They may have been out and about in the area anywhere between the hours of 11:15pm on 14/10/09 and 01:15 am on 15/10/09.

Anyone who has any information on this incident should contact PC Crawford directly.

Again on the theme of vandalism – on the evening of Monday 26th October, 3 houses in the Colinton Mains area suffered damage to living room windows. A vehicle passing through Colinton Mains Drive also had a window damaged whilst it was moving – an extremely reckless act. It is known a large number of youths were out and about in the central area that night dressed in their ubiquitous “hoodies” and were in the locality of these incidents. Any information as to their identities would be appreciated.

On a more positive note, Halloween passed by without any real incidents of note being reported.

On other crime related matters – the following occurred during October :

- On the 6th, an attempt was made to break into a flat in Oxfangs Gardens.
- On the 8th, a male was found in possession of drugs in Oxfangs Street.
- On the 11th, an attempt was made to break into a vehicle in Oxfangs Road North.
- On the 13th, an attempt was made to break into a property in Colinton Mains Drive.

In case of doubt, Oxfangs Police Station is open with officers working 24/7 from the station attending to incidents reported by the general public. Following a recent review, the opening hours for the station is now 8am to 8pm Monday to Saturday. Sundays are 10:45am to 7pm. The station is closed for staff breaks between 11:30 am and 12 noon as well as 4pm to 5pm.

4. Councillors' Report:

Cllr Aitken - She had attended Oxfangs Care's A.G.M, of which she is a Director, one of the topics under discussion is new office space for staff and projects

Green Triangle development: progress has been delayed due to a boundary issue. This is the triangular site on the other side of the Braid Burn from the lochin between Firrhill Drive and Greenbank Crescent on which it was intended to develop a community garden.

Action was being taken to clean out the street gulleys to resolve the flooding problem in Firrhill.

Cllr Rust - Pentland Hills Regional Park funding – see Appendix 4

SW Community Learning and Development

Road Crossing at Oxgangs Avenue – project has slipped down the priority list

Orchard and Shipman – meeting to discuss problem issues in Colinton Mains

Clr Barry - Stair cleaning service – some will, some won't (pay) – causing friction

Bonfires and fireworks – Pentland Community Centre, 5th Nov @ 7:30pm

Hunters Tryst development – Dunedin Canmore would prefer 106 units on the site but the CEC are looking at a higher number.

Junction at Oxgangs Avenue and Oxgangs Rd North – looking at feasibility of a mini roundabout to resolve the traffic problem at the junction

5. Treasurer's Report: P Podd

There has been no meeting with the bank but a bank statement was received showing a balance of £2610.58p but no interest. Perhaps it is a good time to change banks in order to be able to supply proper treasury account reports. To this end I have contacted two banks neither of which have had past financial problems.

- 1) **Nationwide Building Society** - They do not issue a cheque book only a savings account and the interest is negligible at 0.01%. Cheques can be drawn at a branch and 4 signatories are needed.

This did not sound like a good option so went no further.

- 2) **Barclays Bank plc** - This would be free of charge if under £100,000. Their current account is a non-interest account but a savings account can be opened to run alongside it. They issue a cheque book and a paying in book; a debit card can be applied for. They also have on-line viewing and telephone banking. Accept 3 Signatories with ID; there is a pack to complete but Barclays is happy to do the changeover. Monthly statement if required.

This sounded a better option!

It was also proposed that the treasurer purchase a rubber stamp for the Community Council to validate its documents.

Decision: that the Treasurer a) progress the option in favour of transferring the Community Council's funds to Barclay's Bank, and b) procures a rubber stamp bearing the text 'Firrhill Community Council'

6. Planning Report: J Napier

Report on the Weekly Planning Bulletins for Ward No.08. The period covered is from 28 Sept to 19 October 2009, during which there was 1 decision and 2 applications related to property within Firrhill Community Council's area reported in the Bulletins:

- The application to install a run-in for car parking with a drop kerb for a house in Colinton Mains Green has been granted.
- A planning application has been registered to install air source heating in a house in Oxgangs Road.
- A planning application has been registered to build a conservatory on to a house in Colinton Mains Road.

The following proposal relates to major development outwith our area:

- Proposal for a residential development comprising between 70-80 units; the proposals will be for a housing association and be occupied by older people (age 50+) at 69 Inglis Green Road.

7. Firrhill Community Council Website: J Napier

A written report providing a description of the website layout was issued at the meeting (see **Appendix 2**). The website is located at <http://www.firrhillcommunitycouncil.btik.com> and was built by J Kerr making use of a free website facility made available by Recipero Limited for charities, volunteer groups and non-profit making organisations.

The site has been updated and is available to view. The names of the Community Council's elected members have been listed on the 'People' page but no contact details have been inserted. The 'Guestbook' and 'Enquiries' pages are now functional and the former will be monitored. It is available to view and members are requested to promote the website address and its use as appropriate.

Decision: to defer to next meeting to allow members time to view the website and give consideration to its use, management, development and promotion.

8. The Peak: H Levy

The Chair reported that a meeting had been held with the main stakeholders of the 'Peak' newsletter. The publication of the newsletter has been the responsibility of the Oxgangs Community Forum but as this group were closing down there was a need to find a new group to take on the responsibility. For some reason there was a reluctance to accept the Community Council as the fund holders for the 'Peak' but the City Council and Dunedin Canmore were prepared to accept Oxgangs Care. Dunedin Canmore agreed to a further £5,000 to fund the next issue.

Discussions have been held with Andrew Chapman (editor: Colinton Mains Parish Church newsletter), Steve Aitken, who was a retired editor and Cllr Barry, to form an editorial team to collaborate on and maintain this local community publication. The outcome has been positive.

There is still a need for people who can take on the responsibility of getting articles. The news is out there but there is a job of work involved in building up a contact list and communicating with them on a regular basis. Equally the 'Peak' will have to be self-supporting through advertising.

Decision was to re-affirm the Community Council's support for the continuation of the 'Peak' newsletter and to seek to enlist a consortium of people to support the editorial team in its production.

9. Meeting Reports – provided by P Wright (handed out to attendees before meeting)

a) Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership Conference

Conference held in the Easter Road Stadium on 30th September 2009. This was an all-day Conference with the title "Going Forward Together" for reps from all NPs in the city, City Councillors, Council officials, reps from the voluntary sector, young people, and youth workers. It was attended by Heather Levy and myself. See **Appendix 3** for report.

b) Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership Environment and Transport Group. Meeting held in the South West Neighbourhood Office on 5 October 2009. See **Appendix 4** for report.

10. Correspondence: Secretary

The following correspondence has been received since the date of the last meeting:

1. "The Community Councillor": Journal of Assoc. Of Scottish CCs (2 copies).
2. Edinburgh Community Reps Network: 'Employability' (one of the criteria for Fairer Scotland Funding) Training Seminar – Saturday 7 November, 9.30 am-3 pm at Cafe Camino, St. Mary's Parish Centre. Book place on 0131 625 0045.
3. Booklet re 'The People's G20', St. Andrews, Saturday 7 November: starts on beach at 11.30 am, then University for talks, workshops and cultural events "exploring and celebrating positive alternatives for a global economy which Puts People First" (Jobs, Justice, Climate). [Info booklet on how to get to venue from Edinburgh.]
4. 'SEPA View' (Magazine of Scottish Environment Protection Agency) Autumn '09.
5. Eileen Hewitt: a) City of Edinburgh Council Scheme for Community Councils.
b) Model Constitution for Community Councils :
c) Model Standing Orders:
d) Notice of Induction Training Session for new Community Council Members (+ those who want to refresh their skills): Sat 5 December, 9.30 am, City Chambers (details to follow).
6. 'The Nature of Scotland@ (Scottish Natural Heritage Mag.) Autumn '09.
7. 'Working Capital'. Edinburgh's Joined up for Jobs mag., October '09.

By E-mail

8. Rachel Somerville : re forwarding CC Newsletters
9. Eileen Hewitt: Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 & '09 – Consultation on changes to secondary legislation; supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice.
10. Heather Levy : letter in support of WREN funding for new play equipment.
11. Norman Tinlin: Community Safety Presentation.
12. Diana Potter: minutes of E & T Group meeting on 5 October
13. Eileen Hewitt: Tree Warden Scheme [forwarded to P I Podd]
14. Norman Tinlin: Neighbourhood Watch News for Fairmilehead area.
15. Eileen Hewitt: Scottish Govt – Changes in the Scottish Planning System
[forwarded to J Napier]
16. Sheona Lawson: Student Volunteering (in the community) Event – 18 Jan '10, 6 pm – 8pm. In Volunteer Centre Queensferry Street Lane.
17. Eileen Hewitt: Learning and Networking in Regeneration Event, 24 Nov, 10 am – 4.30 pm, in Raploch Community Centre, Stirling [forwarded to H Levy]
18. Diana Potter: Colinton Mains Park Refurbishment Update.
19. Scott Neil: Pentlands NP Funding Panel – details of applications + suggested re-scheduling of meeting from mid-November to 3 Nov (before PNP Business Meeting) [forwarded to H Levy]

20. Pauline Podd: Treasurer's Report re options for moving FCC's account to another bank

11. A.O.C.B.

Sand/Grit Bins: A Hunter referred to previous discussions on the need for this resource to be made available in the area of the new bridge over the burn on Oxfangs Rd North and the Primary Schools. He said that P Wright has managed to move things on through the SW Neighbourhood Office (see item 3 in her Report on the PNP Environment & Transport meeting of 5 October).

12. Date and Venue of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Firrhill Community Council will be held in the Colinton Mains Community Centre on Monday, 23rd November 2009 at 7pm.

Refurbishment Update October 2009

Colinton Mains Park has undergone significant refurbishment over the last three years with the installation of a new drainage system, sports pitch construction and path ways. At the moment we have two full size football pitches, two junior football pitches and one junior rugby pitch

Recent surface drainage improvements to the sports areas in the form of sand slits have now been completed and the installation of additional underground drainage work is to commence in the immediate future. It is envisaged that this additional work will assist in the pitches being available for use more often.

Future developments for this park are planned and include new litter bins, new seats and signs and new lighting from Oxfords Road North to the Dunedin Canmore development. there is also plans underway to install new teen and toddlers play equipment and further landscape enhancements during the next year.

In addition, the Council has taken the decision to reinstate the pathway in the park on a permanent basis and work is currently underway to align this with the other improvements listed above. In the interim, a temporary pathway will be installed to provide continued public access across the park.

The completion of these works will provide the residents of Oxfords/Firrhill with a fantastic community park.

For further information about this park contact:

Craig Dunlop, South West Community Parks Officer on 0131 527 3896 or at craig.dunlop@edinburgh.gov.uk, or

Stewart Farquhar, Local Environment Manager on 0131 527 3850 or at stewart.farquhar@edinburgh.gov.uk"

1. Introduction

The website is located at <http://www.firrhillcommunitycouncil.btik.com> and was built by Joanne Kerr making use of a free website facility made available by Recipero Limited for charities, volunteer groups and non-profit-making organisations. Whilst it is a free website there are terms and conditions that apply and there are limits on the amount of information we can promote on the site. Not a problem at the moment but unless we manage what we are doing then it may cause a problem in the future

The website presently consists of the following main pages

- Home
- About Us
- About the area
- News
- Calendar
- Minutes and Agendas
- People
- Guest Book
- Enquiries
- Useful Information
- Links

2. Homepage

The 'Home' page currently provides a welcome introduction along with information on when we meet and contacts details for Chair and Secretary. Propose this page be used to highlight any prominent business.

3. About Us page

The 'About Us' page has been revised to provide summary information on the Council's statutory purpose and membership. It also provides links to other pages titled – People; Meetings; Boundaries; About Community Councils; Other Community Councils. All except 'People' are additional pages providing information or links to other websites.

b) Proposed revision

about firrhill community council

Firrhill Community Council was constituted in 1981 under the terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and represents the districts of Colinton Mains, Firrhill and Oxfords, which formed the old City of Edinburgh Council Ward 44 – Firrhill. It is now the central part of the new enlarged Ward 8.

Its statutory purpose is to ascertain, co-ordinate and express to the Local Authority for its area and to public authorities the views of the community which it represents, in relation to matters for which those authorities are responsible.

The composition of a Community Council consists of a specified number of elected and nominated representatives. In general -

- Community council elections are organized by the Local Authority for its area. Representatives elected by this process are required to be resident in and appear on the electoral roll for the area of the Community Council.
- Nominated representatives may be appointed by local interest groups registered with the Local Authority for its area. Nominated representatives need not appear on the electoral roll for the area of the Community Council provided that they remain active voluntary members of the nominating group.

If fully established, Firrhill Community Council should have 12 elected and 6 nominated members. There is currently a shortfall in the number of elected and nominated members and we are keen to fill these vacant spaces. If you are interested in representing your local community or business, please contact the Secretary for information, or come along to our meetings to find out what it is all about.

4. About the Area page

The 'About the Area' page provides a colour-coded hand-drawn layout of the area and information on its geography. Joanne has been a lot of work on this part of the website with underlying pages providing links to maps or information on streets, etc. It was presumably her intention to add information specific to Colinton Mains, Firrhill and Oxfangs, so if any historian amongst us who is interested in progressing this – feel free.

5. News page

The top half of the 'News' page provides links to the websites of the BBC News and local papers Evening News and Scotsman. There is also an intended link for the local 'Peak' newsletter so hopefully an electronic copy will be made available for future publications. It may be worthwhile developing this and building an archive store for the newsletter unless someone has already taking this on board.

The bottom half of this page is headed 'Local News' and is for the purpose of posting news items about events generated from, or taking place, within the Community, however we may need to define this.

6. Calendar page

The 'Calendar' page will provide a list of events in chronological order and allows for additional details to be inserted as a description. Clicking on the event opens another page which can contain relevant information relating to that event. I put this meeting in the calendar and the agenda in this underlying page but it can contain information such as contact and venue details, pictures, posters for printing out, etc. May need to give some thought to posting information about an activity on both the 'News' page and the 'Calendar' page. The practice may highlight the event but creates duplication which may switch off people browsing the website.

7. Minutes and Agendas page

The 'Minutes and Agenda' page is based on the same template as the 'Calendar' and therefore has the same layout. I have started identifying prominent business items in the description to assist people to locate specific items. Clicking on the title takes you to the underlying page where you click on the document to open it. As with the previous item a lot more could be inserted into this underlying page but all the information is contained in the document. Suggestions welcome.

To widen the scope of this page I propose to change the label to 'Documents' which is in fact the title on the page. Our meetings will be recorded on the Calendar and information can be added to it where necessary prior to the meeting. The 'Documents' page will hold the Council's minutes

and reports but can also hold documents or newsletters received from other groups, etc. It is possible to categorise the publications thus enabling them to be easily identified. Where possible documents will be put on the website as Adobe Acrobat (pdf) documents.

8. People

This page originally held the contact details of the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer duplicating the contact information that is on the homepage (other than the Treasurer). It has been revised to provide a list of the Council's member and identifies its office-bearers. No contact information is provided at the moment.

There is a need to define the purpose of this page. Our primary contact details are on the homepage, there is little benefit in simply duplicating that information here. Do we wish to: -

- keep it as a page for listing the elected and nominated membership of the Council, with or without contact information, or
- use it as a page for identifying the various groups of people, including our members, who are prominent in our business, i.e., local councilors, politicians, police, etc., and including temporary stakeholders, i.e., contacts for flood prevention work, Dunedin-Canmore, etc.

Information regarding the Police and Politicians is currently provided on the website under the listing of 'Useful Info'.

9. Guestbook page

This page enables people to make leave a message or comment for the Community Council. Basically it is for use where the individual is not looking for a service but simply expressing an opinion, possibly in response to information on the website or other local matter. The Council's email address from this page has been amended to my address. The sender does not need to identify themselves and messages will be checked before they are displayed on the website.

10. Enquiries page

This page is for use when people are making an enquiry and therefore looking for a response. They need to provide some contact information in order that we can respond to them directly. As we have provided the email addresses of both the Chair and the Secretary on the home page, I am not sure that this adds anything to what is already there however as with the previous page the email address has been amended.

11. Useful Information page

The headings listed on this page are 'Transport', 'Police' and 'Politicians. Again a lot of effort has gone into developing the information provided. My only concern will be ensuring the information is kept accurate. There is room for improvement here especially if a proposal concerning the 'People' page is accepted. Suggestions welcome.

12. Links page

Links to other websites (and resources) that may of interest to people who are using our website. There is room for development here and suggestions are welcome.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIPS CONFERENCE

Appendix 3

Report on Neighbourhood Partnerships Conference: 30/09/09, in Easter Road Stadium

This was an all-day Conference with the title “Going Forward Together” for reps from all NPs in the city, City Councillors, Council officials, reps from the voluntary sector, young people, and youth workers. It was attended by Heather Levy and myself.

“Time to Thinktastic!” was the theme of Mike Stevenson, a successful entrepreneur and professional motivational speaker, challenging us to seize new opportunities and to think differently about the future of Neighbourhood Partnerships, making what is good about NPs even better. ‘Brainstorming’ on this theme followed. After lunch, we were assigned two seminars (chosen by us in advance) out of five, with professionals doing the presentations:

- Influencing Where the Money Goes (How to set the priorities) re groups bidding amongst themselves for funding, with the community voting for the ‘winners’. [But we already have a say in devolved investment for communities through NPs.]
- Innovative Ways of Involving People (using a Participatory Appraisal approach): inspiring people in creating a neighbourhood vision and setting local priorities through community participation (as used successfully in South Queensferry). [This was what is normally a week’s full-time training condensed into an hour!]
- Places, People and their Vision (Cultural Planning in practice) – building a community rather than just a place; putting people at the heart of some large-scale regeneration projects - [as in Oxfangs?]
- Voices of the Future (Involving young people in shaping the future): imaginative ways to bring younger voices and ideas into local decision-making so that they are helping create their future rather than just inheriting it.
- Get Connected - Using the power of online social networking to allow us to connect with a wider range of local people, at times convenient to them, providing a forum for views, ideas and events to be promoted and expressed. [Apparently, all young people were allocated this seminar – but most got bored quickly. Facebook, Twitter, etc is all so familiar to them that they could have given the presentation!]

A further session from Mike Stevenson, challenging us to think about how our own leadership and influencing skills can be brought together for greater impact in Neighbour-hood Partnerships (and therefore in our communities), was followed by talks from Councillor Tom Buchanan (Convener, City Development) and Mark Turley, Director of Services for Communities. Although there were opportunities during the day, at coffee breaks and lunch, to ‘network’ and socialise, a Networking Reception was held at 4.30 pm.

Some points made on the day, which gave food for thought and can apply to City Council, Neighbourhood Partnerships and Community Councils: * Break the mould of formality at meetings - an informal approach is less intimidating; * Make decisions quickly and give feedback, otherwise people lose interest; * Make use of the Neighbourhood Office; * Community Newspapers are good vehicles for communication; * Community Councils & Neighbourhood Partnerships should advertise themselves often and widely; * Decisions made should be economically viable and socially acceptable; * Without a positive attitude you’ll get nowhere; * Councillors at Neighbourhood Partnership meetings should not be party-political in decision making; * The way a meeting is run is more important than who runs the meeting.

Peggy Wright

PENTLANDS NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT GROUP**MEETING HELD ON 5 OCTOBER '09 IN SOUTH WEST NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICE**

This meeting was chaired by Diana Potter, Services for Communities Partnership Development Officer and attended by Community Council reps on Pentlands NP and Mike Ferrigan, PIPER.

1. Presentation by John Moore, Lothian Community Transport Services

John talked about services in Edinburgh specifically for elderly, disabled, ethnic groups, and special needs children. In 2000, groups came together to discuss community transport; led to Council Transport Unit including PEP, SEAG, Dove and Handicabs; voluntary sector + Council partnership approach. "Congestion Charging" monies would have been used to supplement the £1m from Scottish Executive & SESTRAN to Council. Main problem facing older people is transport that meets their needs; generally, they just want to travel within their own community or city but may find it difficult to get to nearest bus stop. Research into improved public transport for disabled people commissioned by the Scottish Executive was carried out in 2006* and found that a disabled adult was 50% less likely to travel than an able one.

Concessionary fares have helped but there are many barriers to travel for the disabled not just finance. Since this report, changes to bus designs have been made and helped. Lothian Buses' fleet of low floor buses is years ahead of legislation - makes for easier access by elderly and disabled [though P Wright pointed out that a certain design of bus now in use, which is inclusive for wheelchair users, is much more difficult for the elderly and/or infirm to use because of the long gap in the passageway where there is nothing to hang on to]. In 1985 buses became a commercial concern: will now only go in 'corridors' where there are most potential passengers; do not fill a social need if not profitable; voluntary sector can fill some of the gaps, e.g., in rural areas, by providing a bus to the nearest town/market and back; other routes which are deemed socially necessary by the Council may be subsidised by them. e.g., giving access to hospitals.

* A printout of this study was handed out to attendees; it was suggested that money from the Community Grants Fund could be used by TRi (Transport Research Institute at Napier University), which was involved in the 2006 study, for a pilot scheme.

2. Presentation by Pentlands Regional Park Management Team

Although a report on problems such as vandalism and fire-raising in the Pentlands Regional Park had been presented at a previous meeting, this was our first opportunity to meet two of the Team - Alan McGregor, Regional Park Manager and Susan Falconer, Senior Ranger - in order to take forward partnership working, as part of the Pentlands Regional Park lies within the Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership area. Alan gave an overview of the Team's work over the 45 sq miles of PRP and on its multiple ownership (47 different owners comprising of Councils, MoD, farms, Scottish Water and other landowners); retaining the essential character of the hillside; caring for and enhancing the habitat and landscape; encouraging responsible enjoyment of the area; co-ordinating uses of the park with minimal conflict. The Park Service exists because of minuted agreement between City Council + Midlothian &

West Lothian Councils: funded by all three, but mainly Edinburgh City (the employer) with no financial grant aid from Scottish Natural Heritage, as in previous years. Susan has operational responsibility for the day-to-day running of the Park, along with five full-time rangers, each ranger having an area of responsibility. Sixty miles of paths with signage; education; interpretation and information: biodiversity, including wildlife surveys. Forty fully trained volunteers also help + there is a "Friends of the Pentlands" Group. Skilled work on drainage and pathways is always needed because of the number of walkers, cyclists and riders who use the paths - a drain on resources, so that withdrawal of finance from SNM this year, and Midlothian Council from next year, is a big worry. [Diana Potter suggested that Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership might lobby Midlothian Council: also, perhaps £5k from the Community Grants Fund could be proposed for work on paths, etc.]

3. Of even more local interest - I had previously e-mailed Diana re the fact that grit bins are badly needed on Oxgangs Road North in the Oxgangs Primary School area: last year the pavements and new bridge (now much steeper) were treacherous, but no gritting was done in spite of it being on a "Safer Routes to School", and many parents had complained. At this meeting, Diana said that she had contacted someone on the Roads Dept and we could definitely have one bin (maybe even two) and asked where it should be sited. I suggested the best place would probably be alongside the junction box on the pavement where the new path from Colinton Mains Drive comes out just beside the bridge. A second one could be sited at the other side of the road, for the benefit of school pupils + residents who now have to climb a steep flight of steps or a steep incline since the road was raised to align with the new bridge.

4. Next Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership meeting will have an Environment theme (will include Winter Maintenance and a presentation on "Piper", which has just won a Green Community Initiative Award). This will be on 8 December in Colinton Primary School.

5. Next Environment & Transport Group meeting: an extra one is being squeezed in on 27 October to again discuss the Action Plan, but this time to get something tangible on paper.

Peggy Wright, Firrhill C'C rep,
Pentlands Neighbourhood
Partnership