



# Firrhill Community Council

Issue 6      **Newsletter**      June 2012

## Annual General Meeting

Firrhill Community Council is holding its Annual General Meeting in Oxgangs Neighbourhood Centre on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2012 at 7p.m.

Everyone is welcome and I urge you to come along to find out what community councils are all about. Learn about the work community representatives carry out on your behalf, meet your local City of Edinburgh councillors and Scottish Parliament member.

You can use the event to meet other members of the community in a relaxed atmosphere and talk about issues that concern you or simply to express a point of view on the matters being discussed.

Whilst we are always looking for more members, *the more people we have the more the load is spread*; we are particularly keen to interact with people in the local community. It is only by having contact with people that we can be sure we are truly reflecting the views of the community.

This newsletter will give some idea of the range of issues that we become involved in. Some of them are purely social as the article in the adjacent column shows, where we are lending support to a local group. Other articles reflect our representative role when new developments are being proposed by an authority for the area.

It is the community council's role not only to advise you of such developments but to ensure your views are reflected back to the authority. To achieve that aim there has to be channels of communication, whether through attending meetings or by other means.

***Please contact us and let us know your views***

## Contact Us

By e-mail on our web site,  
[www.firrhillcommunitycouncil.btik.com/p\\_Home.ikml](http://www.firrhillcommunitycouncil.btik.com/p_Home.ikml) or



or contact our secretary- Peggy Wright 477- 4400

## Our Community Comes Together

By Heather Levy  
Chair Firrhill Community Council



As many of you will know I work for Oxgangs Care as well as Chair Firrhill Community Council. With my 'work hat' on I project manage four 'Older People's groups' where we often do reminiscences work. This year 2011/12 we recorded some of the member's memories of growing up during World War II and secured funding from the Pentland Neighbourhood Partnership to have these memories made into a booklet and professionally printed.

We held an official Launch of the 'Oxgangs Care WWII Memories' booklet in May 2012 and a wonderful afternoon was had by all, the sun shone and the china glistened.

With my Firrhill Community Council 'hat' on some of the Firrhill CC members were delighted to support this event not with money but with 'People Power'. **Thanks** to Al, Vice Chair for picking up the Booklet from the printers, **Thanks** to Peggy and Pauline for sitting in amongst the tables keeping conversations going, **Thanks** to Grace and Lesley for serving teas and coffees and the many other volunteers that helped to make it a special day.

The 120 people that gathered on the day was a reflection of 'OUR' community, some of whom were our local CEC councillors - Elaine Aitken and Jason Rust; MSP Gordon MacDonald; Chair of Lochan Residents Association - Mary McMillan and Oxgangs Care director June White, to name but a few.

*Continued on back page*

## Flood Defenses-

### And They Think It's All Over!!!!!!!!!!!!

We have all been affected in one way or another by the Flood Defense work over the last decade. It seems to have been a permanent item on the agenda of our meetings. At the April 2012 meeting it was decided that a list of concerns be compiled as well as a walk along the length of the Braid burn that runs through the Firrhill Ward.

The article below attempts to set out some of the Working Group's key observations on the issues that have arisen as an outcome of the Braid Burn flood prevention works. **A copy of the full report will be on our website**



An unresolved matter is the question of recording, within the deeds of properties, the responsibilities of property holders whose boundaries include the flood prevention wall and of relevant Authorities for the care and maintenance of the flood wall. Unlike most boundary walls and fences, the flood wall will not belong to the occupiers of the property but to the "Authority". It is understood there are certain obligations under law regarding the care and maintenance of the flood wall, drains or soakways, sumps and pumps, as well as restrictions in activities such as the type of plants that can be planted in the vicinity of the wall. Occupiers should have a document covering the issue of liabilities, other responsibilities/restrictions and contact details of a responsible person representing the "Authority" on matters appertaining to the flood wall. The document should contain instructions on how it should be held to ensure it is brought to the attention of new occupiers or tenants to the property.

SEPA have lettered relevant householders inviting them to sign up to their 'Floodline' direct warning service. This service notifies those who register when a river flood warning is issued for this area, thus giving people a chance to prepare and protect their property and reduce potential damage.

***Are there any arrangements for the regular updating of this service to ensure new tenants/occupiers are similarly invited?***



The south side of the burn, known as the Bridal Path, was to be developed as a wild meadow and secure from general trespass. On completion of the initial works to construct the flood wall, this area was restored and presented a landscaped grassy area for further development.

Local consultations and meetings took place in 2009 on the development of a landscape design that would be fit for purpose and ensure it complemented other works/plans that are in progress or about to commence. The aspiration is that the landscaping should not only enhance the immediate local area but link into the wider community, e.g., Pentland walk way, the Hope Triangle Garden, The Lochan and Braid Burn Valley.

However the initial landscaping was destroyed by heavy plant and vehicles using it as an access route to carry out additional works required at the rear of nos. 2 & 4 Colinton Mains Road. ***We want to know what action is being taken to repair this damage and complete the landscape designs previously approved?***

A metal gate is fitted at the Colinton Mains Drive end but is not secured. On inspection it was noted that whilst the gate does close, it has dropped preventing the sliding bolt from properly locating in its keeper. The hinges are adjustable thus this problem should be easily sorted. Action is needed to realign the gate and provide a padlock for security.



A public footpath runs along the north side of the burn and work has been done here since the completion of the flood prevention works to improve the public safety. A chicane barrier was installed during the original works at the paths entrance exit at Colinton Mains Drive. At the request of the Community Council a second chicane barrier has been installed near to the junction with the Colinton Mains Green path to slow down cyclists on the main pathway.

Behind the east end of the path is an area of ground designed to act as an overspill flood plain for the burn. The land is bound by the burn itself, raised embankments at the rear of Colinton Mains Green and Oxgangs Primary School and a flood wall along Oxgangs Road North and is enclosed by a high fence. Its purpose is to enable excess water in the burn to overflow into this site reducing the risk of flooding built up areas.

The land's use was formerly a playing field and this is liable to continue but it has been noted that areas of the ground remains saturated with water long after each rainfall. The water is not coming from the burn but from rainfall and results in large pools forming across the surface area. It is also a concern that excess water from this area may be attributing to the ground saturation problems experienced by the low level houses in Oxgangs Road North and Firrhill Crescent close to the reconstructed bridge between the two Reaches

The Working Group believes this land to be designated community land and as such should be accessible to the community. With this in mind we are suggesting that the fence erected to stop access onto this land be removed. As it has been vandalised several times since it was erected this should benefit the public purse. In place of the fence consideration should be given to the planting trees and shrubs which may soak up some of the excess water lying in this area and improve its condition for community use

There is also an overflow pipe running over the floodwall at the rear of Nos. 2 & 4 Colinton Mains Road. This appears to come from a sump and pump house built in the rear garden of those properties. It is understood that there are other pumping stations in the near vicinity. **We want confirmation that these pumping stations have been connected to the electrical supply and would like information on their future maintenance**

The short stretch between the bridges at Oxgangs Road North and Firrhill Crescent, where the Braid Burn changes its course lies between Reach 2 and Reach 3 and it is in this area that major flood prevention works were carried out. The burn is contained in a narrow channel between two high flood walls with major underground drainage works on either side. The front and rear gardens of the properties in Oxgangs Road North and Firrhill Crescent referred to above are all reported to have saturation problems which have increased since the flood prevention work was carried out. **We want to know if the Authority has a record of those properties affected by the flood plain and what arrangements are being made to resolve this problem.**

Occupiers of the cottages on the corner of Firrhill Drive and Firrhill Crescent were concerned at the loss of privacy caused by the raised pathway running behind their property. The pathway was raised as a result of flood prevention work. Action was taken to plant a screening hedge of fast growing leylandii trees at the rear of the cottages. An unfortunate consequence of this work, which was carried out without notice to the community council, was to destroy the bulb planting work carried out by local volunteers and school children by digging up hundreds of the bulbs that were planted in this area. **In order to show that the work carried out by local volunteers was not in vain, the Working Group consider that the city council should be asked to repair the damage done by replacing the bulbs.**

The dumping of items and in particular Tesco trolleys continues to present an eyesore to those who use the burn path for recreational purposes. There is a need for some arrangements for the care and maintenance of the burn and its embankments. An attempt last year to arrange for local volunteers to spend a day carrying out a cleanup was abandoned for health and safety reasons after it was discovered the Parks Department had sprayed a weed killer along the embankments, this needs to be reaped twice a year, Spring and Autumn to try and control the Fools Rhubarb/Hog Weed that is running rampant along the burn. The Working Group considered that there is a need to determine in conjunction with those who are responsible for the various sections the arrangements for maintaining the burn itself, its banks and landscaping. **Is there an interest to create a 'Friends of the Burn'**

## PNP Health Sub Group Report

*By Mary-Jo O'Brien (Firrhill CC Rep.)*

On 5 July 2011 a development event for Edinburgh Neighbourhood Partnership (NP) Health sub Groups was held. This was a joint initiative between Edinburgh Community Health Partnership and the City of Edinburgh Council Services for Communities. There were 68 participants including a mix of public, voluntary and community stakeholders. The event represented the first step in an ongoing process to support the development of health subgroups across the city. The discussion/work carried out is being taken forward with action recommended at both local and city wide levels. Each NP health sub group is being asked to consider and progress the findings outlined in the report of the event.

For the Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership Health Sub Group this produced the following priorities:

- Healthy Eating
- Exercise
- Mental Health Wellbeing

Over the past few months the Health Sub Group has been meeting and consulting with partners and community representatives to identify programmes which could be implemented locally in support of these 3 priorities.

Healthy Eating to support this priority the PNP Sub Group is working with Edinburgh Community Food to offer classes in healthy eating. Currently an application for funding has been made to the funding panel and classes should begin in June.

Exercise

The PNP Health Sub Group will work with NHS Lothian and Edinburgh Leisure who currently offer a number of Community health groups set up to engage with the community to encourage people to lead healthier lifestyles.

For the Pentlands NP area they will offer:

Ageing Well  
Healthy Hearts  
Healthy Active Minds  
Youth Exercise Referral

There are of course other forms of exercise activities available in the local communities through sport organisations, associations and clubs.

## Mental Health Wellbeing

To support this priority the PNP Sub Group is working with NHS Lothian to offer a Stress Control programme. This is a six week Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) course. The programme is currently operating in Currie. Likely timescale for operation in Firrhill is October 2012. It will be important to measure the impact and success of these initiatives as they are implemented and feed back any concerns or issues to the PNP Sub Group and delivery partners.

## The Firrhill CC Secretary's Role

*By Peggy Wright*

My work generally follows a routine, and mainly involves the computer, answering e-mails from elected Councillors and Council officials, and forwarding them on to Firrhill CC members.

In preparing the papers for each monthly meeting, I liaise with the Chair on compiling the Notice/Agenda; collect any Reports and the draft Minutes from the previous meeting, and make up a list of all correspondence for the month. These are then e-mailed to Firrhill CC members, Councillors, MSPs, Police, and other interested parties. I also print out and take them to the library to photocopy multiple copies, some of which I deliver to members without e-mail, the bulk being taken to the meeting for distribution. A load was taken off my shoulders when a Minute Secretary, Jim Napier, was appointed.

We sometimes also have to write letters for Firrhill CC on behalf of residents, regarding, for example: objecting to the construction of mobile 'phone masts in a place which we feel is not suitable, as well as issues to do with the Braid Burn and Colinton Mains Park. Recently, a 'phone discussion with a BT manager, and a letter to BT and the Council's Planning Dept were necessary to try to persuade BT to overturn their decision to remove the payphone at Oxfords Crescent. This was a successful intervention, as they hadn't realised this is the only payphone in the community accessible to wheelchair users, or that the next nearest one at Oxfords Broadway is up a very steep hill, and is an example of how the local knowledge of Community Council members can be so useful, and how it makes being a volunteer on Firrhill Community Council so worthwhile.

## **Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership (PNP) & its Sub-groups - By Peggy Wright**

In 2007, the map of the City's many small Council Wards was re-drawn to form much fewer 'Super Wards'; so the local Firrhill Ward (from which our Community Council took its name) of Oxgangs, Firrhill and Colinton Mains was joined to the Wards on either side to become the Colinton/Fairmilehead Ward, resulting in our having three City Councillors instead of just one. The old Local Development Committees were then replaced by Neighbourhood Partnerships of at least two adjoining Wards, Pentlands NP consisting of our own Ward + Pentland Hills Ward, ie, it stretches from Balerno to Fairmilehead. Each NP holds Meetings in Public at venues throughout the area, which anyone can attend. Residents were also given more say in the running of their communities by the forming of sub-groups of every NP throughout Edinburgh; these meet bi-monthly and consist mainly of reps from local Community Councils and City Council officials. CC reps can advise and/or give recommendations to Council Departments on issues in their areas but not make binding decisions. The Meetings in Public and Business Meetings are generally the only ones attended by elected City Councillors. Any business relevant to the PNP is overseen by Council Officials in the SW Neighbourhood Offices at Wester Hailes.

## **Environment, Infrastructure & Transport (EIT) Sub-group**

Meetings consist of talks from officials and discussion on any issues to do with local trees/woods, parks/green spaces and allotments, pathways and roads, streams/ponds and waterways, as well as re-cycling, and we liaised with the City Council on the Edinburgh Development Plan Environmental Report 2011. Unfortunately, Public Transport is one area in which we are unable to have much input, apart from making suggestions, because the bus companies are commercial organisations.

An off-shoot of the EIT Group is the Neighbourhood Improvement Programme (NIP). The central roads fund still finances major roads improvements/repairs and infrastructure work, but an annual sum of around £80k was allocated to the PNP to carry out local improvements to add to the value of Council assets and benefit residents. As the two Wards Pentlands NP are around the same size, half the money is allocated to each, and so 'bids' are put in to the SW Office for the Colinton/Fairmilehead Ward's share of the money, then the reps from Firrhill CC, Colinton Amenity Assoc., and Fairmilehead CC, as well as our local Councillors and the SW Roads Manager meet once a year to discuss the list, and decide who should get what, as £40k does not go far!

Local projects that have been funded from this NIP budget, through the bidding process, are:

- the paths and railings at Oxgangs Library;
- the railings and re-surfaced path at Cock-my-lane;
- the lighting through Colinton Mains Park;
- the chicane rails put up for safety on the Braid Burn path and, most recently,
- the pedestrian refuge on Oxgangs Avenue.

## **PNP Community Safety**

*By Alistair Hunter (Firrhill CC Rep)*

Meetings are held in Oxgangs Neighbourhood Centre every two months and attended by representatives from the Police, Residents Associations, Community Councils as well as the community safety manager for the district and our local City of Edinburgh councillors. A good cross-section of the whole Pentland Neighbourhood Partnership area.

At every meeting there is a proposed list of community priorities as well as feedback from previous priorities. It is common to find that what you think is a priority for our area is a similar situation throughout other wards. These are dog fouling, graffiti, pot holes, over grown hedges, bad lighting etc. There has been a spate of Garden Shed break-ins. To address this issue Shed Alarms are now available from Oxgangs Police station £10 and personnel attack alarms are available at £4 each.

As well as these priorities there are *hotspots* identified throughout the partnership area. In the past these have been irresponsible parking such as parking on zigzags at schools or near bus stops. Litter is another regular issue. *Hotspots* are identified and then targeted by the Community Safety Wardens

There are now six new police officers to service the existing force in the partnership area.

We have an intelligence lead Police force and they cannot get warrants if they do not have sufficient information. For that reason we keep promoting the following message.

***Use the Crimestoppers number 0800 555 111 if you see or hear anything suspicious but wish to remain anonymous.***

## Planning Applications

*By Jim Napier, (Firrhill CC Rep)*

Perhaps reflecting the austere financial times we are currently living in, there has been very few planning applications for building alterations or new builds within the Firrhill parish. The few consist of the usual mix of residential applications from attic conversions to driveways and a few business applications for changes of use. The Tesco superstore applied to change their external signage and install a storage pod and canopy.

The Community Council made comment in respect of two applications. The first related to the installation of a telecommunications mast and ground units on the pavement near Tesco on Colinton Mains Drive. Our objection related only to the siting of the development, which was on the public footpath, when there were alternative locations in the immediate vicinity. Unfortunately the landowners (Tesco / MOD) for those alternative sites were not prepared to make arrangements with the applicant. The application was initially refused as it reduced the width of the pavement below the required guidance standard; however the applicant revised the original proposal reducing the depth of the ground installation and this was accepted by the Authority.

The second application relates to the Good Companions Public House and a proposal to convert the upper floor of the premises to House of Multiple Occupancy accommodation. The Community Council were concerned at the lack of communal space for the occupants of the proposed 16 bed-sits and commented on this.

The Community Council acknowledge that the new Welfare Reform Act will make this kind of property development an attractive proposition. Many unemployed or low paid single persons, on finding their housing benefit cut, may be forced into this type of accommodation. Sixteen people sharing a kitchen and no communal space is not conducive to encouraging a good lifestyle. The application is still pending consideration.

Development Management Sub-Committee – New Procedures

Community Councils were consulted on a review of the decision making process by the Planning Committee and as a consequence, information sheets were prepared to assist stakeholders attending Sub-Committee meetings and site visits and participating in hearings. Copies of the three guidance notes covering general procedures; hearings and site visits are also available on the Council's website at [http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/180/planning-applications\\_warrants\\_and\\_certificates/1443/about\\_planning\\_permission/6](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/180/planning-applications_warrants_and_certificates/1443/about_planning_permission/6)

## South West Area Board

This sub group of the Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership, works between both the South West and Pentlands Partnerships. Its role covers Environmental Projects, Landlord Performance/ Housing Activity and Communications. I first attended those meetings in October last year and have now represented the Community Council at three of their meetings.

A review of the City's housing allocation policy had been out for consultation during the month of August and covered the following aspects:

- Recognising additional bedrooms for registered foster carers,
- Adding waiting points for applicants from armed forces,
- Age restricted multi storey blocks
- Local connections applications in outlying areas, i.e., Ratho, etc.
- Use of sensitive lets and matching housing needs to the stock available
- Letting policy of mid market rent and affordable housing. Mid market rent is below private rent and above social rented properties
- Proposals for under-occupancy – a single person or a couple will be entitled to 1 bedroom and impact of Welfare Reform Bill

A copy of the review is available on the City of Edinburgh Council's website, accessible through their "closed consultations" webpage. The recommendations from this consultation were made to the Health, Social Care and Housing Committee meeting that took place on 11 October 2011.

A presentation was given on the Welfare Reform Bill that has been introduced to Parliament and if adopted will legislate for the biggest reform of the welfare system for many years. Copies of the presentation have been provided for members to read.

Walkabout Review

The process of neighbourhood walkabouts carried out by Neighbourhood Partnership stakeholders City of Edinburgh Council officers and local community representatives 'walking' round an area for the purpose of identifying areas for improvement action. A recent review into the practice has been carried out and identified problems with the internal administration process.

*Continued on pg7*

*Continued from pg6*

Personnel from the South West Neighbourhood Office have been carrying out a pilot scheme to share out information during the actual walkabout by means of 'tweeting' on a mobile phone (app). The lead officer 'tweets' on issues found during the walkabout and receive responses from people in the community regarding them or other issues that they may wish to raise.

They are hoping to promote this service in the near future. Go to the Pentlands Neighbourhood Partnership website and on the home page, click on the *Twitter and Facebook* for contact information.

All we need now is for the calendar of dates for walkabouts to be issued so that we can make arrangements in good time to participate.

#### Neighbourhood Environment Programme

The Neighbourhood Environment Programme (NEP) enables local communities to identify and fund local projects that enhance their local environment. The NEP is funded from the capital budget to improve local roads and pavements and from the Neighbourhood Improvement Programme (NIP), which is funded from within the Housing Revenue Account for environmental improvements within housing areas.

This report will provide an update on projects selected by the Environment Forum and Area Board Sub Group. Both Sub Groups oversee funding streams which make up the Neighbourhood Environment Programme.

#### List of completed or scheduled NEP projects

- Kitchen and bathroom programme: in year 3 of the programme (2012), 133 tenancies in Oxgangs are scheduled to have this upgrade work done.
- Oxgangs House: consultation with residents is due to be carried out in December on the plans for installing a door entry system and ground level security; they are looking at 3 possible options. Also intend to look at refuge solutions for the building and repairs to the flat roofs of the external tower staircases.
- Oxgangs Gardens drying area security fence.
- Cock my Lane footpath.
- Oxgangs Bank footpath.
- Oxgangs Avenue: provision of off-road car parking on the refurbished tarmac space enclosed by the Avenue and Oxgangs Crescent has been completed with exception of lighting.
- Oxgangs Avenue:— installation of a central refuge traffic island between the Crescent (W) and the Green has been completed.

- Braid Burn footpath: installation of a chicane barrier on the main path at the east side of the junction with the path from Colinton Mains Green. action taken to improved safety and has been completed.
- Braid Burn footpath: drainage problem causing minor flooding along part of the footpath resolved.
- Colinton Mains Park: lighting along the burn footpath on the eastern edge of the Park. Extending the lighting may help resolve recent reports of anti-social/criminal activities along this side of the Park.
- Pentland Community Centre: upgrade of footpaths leading to the centre.
- Oxgangs Avenue: upgrade of the Chatterig footpath which runs down the east side of the Catholic Church from Oxgangs Avenue to Oxgangs Crescent. Included in other works and completed.
- Oxgangs Avenue: provision of a slip road at the end of Oxgangs Avenue to make it easier for traffic turning left into Oxgangs Road North. This proposal has been listed but has been deferred to provide funding for another project.

#### The Firrhill CC Treasurer Report

After our insurance premium was paid we received a grant from Edinburgh City Council of £657 for the financial year 2011/12.

Over the years we have accumulated a small reserve due to changing and upgrading bank accounts which we are currently using to fund the Newsletter publication.

We have also used this reserve to give donations towards events organised by local bodies to provide refreshments for public meetings and events such as the Health Debate organised by the Community Council.

Our expenditure for the year 2010/11 was £1070.20 of which half has been on funding the Newsletter. This year we have received a grant to enable us to provide this special issue of the Newsletter which will duplicate as an annual report for our annual general meeting this month.

We would hope to continue providing the people of Firrhill, Oxgangs and Colinton Mains with this quarterly report of events and activities in which the Council is involved.

Continued from front page

## Our Community Coming Together

Pentland Primary School P7's entertained us with some topical songs and readings from the booklet.



The afternoon epitomized a community coming together to celebrate its memories and its strengths.

## Remembrance Day

For the first time ever Firrhill Community Council laid a Poppy Wreath in Dreghorn Barracks on behalf of the Firrhill Ward. They were joined by a representative of Oxfangs Care who also laid a wreath and Eric Barry gave a poignant speech and assured everyone there that the Barracks is very much a part of our community.



I would like to Thank Eric Barry for all his hard work and ongoing support and extend him my best wishes for the future.

## Hope Triangle update

Firrhill Community Council is leading the working group for this project and is in the process of applying for funding for four Art Therapy sessions to make the Hope Triangle sign supported by many community volunteers. These sessions will be targeting children and their parents who have experienced loss. We are also looking for volunteers to assist with gardening projects such as creating a 'Meadow Plant' area and sensory planting corridor. Watch out for the posters and if you would like further information please contact either Elaine Aitken on 07718666446 or Heather levy on 445-3332 or check out the Firrhill CC website.

## Sports Pavilion update

At last! We have a Sports Pavilion. The keys were handed over to Edinburgh Leisure on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2012 and I would like to take this opportunity to thank CEC Sports Officer Graham Croucher for all his hard work and support with this project, which at times looked like it would not happen.

To celebrate the completion of this project, Firrhill CC will support AC Oxfangs hold a 'Community Fun Day' on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2012, where they will be recruiting new members and for the first time, because of the new changing facilities they are looking to recruit GIRLS! Watch out for the posters/adverts.

In conclusion we have had our usual busy year with lots of 'firsts'. Firrhill CC in partnership with CLD and Oxfangs Neighbourhood Centre hosted a 'Roles & Responsibilities' Event where Pentland MC, ONC, Lochan Residents Assoc., Oxfangs Care, Aging Well, Tryst Patchwork and local councillors got together to discuss volunteering in your community and how best to support each other, as well as other topics. The evening was a great success and we hope to repeat this event this year.

Thank you to all those people that support the Firrhill Community Council and we look forward to seeing you on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2012 at our A.G.M.

This issue of the Firrhill Community Newsletter has been funded by the Pentland Neighbourhood Partnership and is a record of the Firrhill CC activities for the year 2011/12.

