



November

NEWSLETTER

2016

CANCELLATION OF CHRISTMAS LIGHTS EVENT

The Management Committee very much regrets that it has been necessary to cancel this year's switch-on event for the Christmas Lights. Those who have attended in the past will know that the Blue Lights in two of the trees in the grounds of the Episcopal Church are essential in providing a focus for the switch-on, since the nearest visible street light decoration is some distance away on Main Street. Earlier this year there was an incident when some of the Blue Lights appeared to have degraded and to have broken up creating a dangerous situation for children from the local nursery who were playing in the grounds of the church. This incident raised doubts about the integrity and safety of the lights but issues subsequently arose about who was responsible for their maintenance and operation and most importantly who was liable for their safety. The committee fully understand the concerns and interests of the other two parties involved, the Church and the Council, as well as those of the Association but it has just not been possible to resolve these issues and under the circumstances there was no option other than to cancel the event for this year. The committee fully understands the cancellation of the local switch-on will be a big disappointment to many local residents who look forward to it each year. It has developed over the years from an occasion where a few people would turn up just to see a local celebrity (our Councillor Jim Lowrie!) say half a dozen words and throw the switch, into a very enjoyable social occasion for which the Association has been indebted to Holy Cross Episcopal Church, the Royal High School Choir, Davidson's Mains Primary School Choir, Davidson's Mains Pipe Band, Tesco, the Council and others to make it a success. We hope this is a regrettable blip and that the switch-on event can be re-instated for next year, although we also think this would now be an opportunity for local residents and groups who have a particular interest to form an Events Committee to take responsibility for planning and organizing it. We will be trying to promote and encourage that idea for next year. For this year, the Association has paid the third party liability insurance to the Council for the street lighting display, but the switch-on will be at a time of the Council's choosing.

LOCAL PARKING PROBLEMS AT THE GREEN

The number of complaints about parking in our area is continuing to increase. There are many locations on or close to bus routes which are particular hot spots which are seen by commuters from further out of the city as providing attractive unofficial free park and ride facilities to avoid restrictive and expensive parking in the city centre. These motorists are not doing anything illegal but it is a pain for local residents who may be unable to find parking spaces outside or near to their properties. This is the background to one particular problem location at The Green. In addition to providing on road parking space for residents in a street which has few driveways, The Green is also important in providing local parking for customers and clients of many of the local shops and businesses on Main Street, who rely on the trade from the regular churn and turn-over of patrons who use their own transport to visit these premises. Without it there would be a question about the viability of some of these enterprises. The reasonable expectation of available parking space at The Green being available during the day is important both for residents and for local business and yet that is being put increasingly at risk by motorists who leave their cars early in the morning until they are picked up again in the evening. This has led some residents to ask us about introducing a permit system for restricted parking for non residents during the day. These systems allow parking for residents at any time but non residents are not allowed to park for a short period during the day to prevent the location used for all day parking. This type of system operates in other parts of the city to deter all day parking with the restricted time being set to suit local circumstances, usually for a period of up to a couple of hours. We would be interested to know what local residents think about this idea, particularly those who live in The Green and who are vehicle owners. Local business owners may also wish to comment about the effect of restricted parking on themselves and their customers. The cost of a resident's permit for priority parking is dependant on vehicle size and CO2 emissions but as a guide based on charges in other parts of the city it is likely to be in the range of £32 to £95 per year. Some residents may see this as a cost worth paying to improve the chances of finding a space during the day, while others will object in principle to having to pay for the cost of a permit. There are likely to be differing views so let us know what you think. It must be stressed that if this proposal was to be considered by the Council, they would need to go through a formal planning notification and consultation before it could be introduced.

LOCAL ACTION LIST

Over the past two years it is a fact that it has become progressively more difficult to get local project work undertaken and the once excellent relationship we had with the local Neighbourhood Team has become increasingly strained. The main factor has been the shortage of technical staff and engineers to design and manage these projects and more recently the problem has been exacerbated by a major re-structuring of the Council's Neighbourhood Support Teams and a significant reduction in staff numbers driven by the need to make cost savings. These changes are still ongoing and a further problem has been that available local staff numbers have at times been allocated to give priority to city centre projects. We have been extremely concerned that the successful model we had been operating to obtain local residents' views on local improvement work and then to engage meaningfully with the Council to try to get things done had completely broken down. Recently, with progress being made on technical staff appointments to the new Council structure, members of the committee met with the new Locality Manager and the Transport and Environment Manager to discuss the question of outstanding projects for our area and to try to get some understanding of what future commitments could be given so that we could have reasonable expectations that the work would be carried out. Given the difficult background, the meeting was reasonably constructive in agreeing targets for some projects which had been on our priority list for some time and for which various deadlines had passed, although we were obliged to accept that other projects on our list would have to be given a lower priority. It must be stressed that we were not agreeable to any of the projects being removed from our list. It is clearly not possible to mention all the projects within the space available in our Newsletter, but two projects which have created a lot of local comment and concern are worthy of particular mention. We have been promised that the badly faded road markings at the busy junction of Quality Street with Queensferry Road, which has significant road safety implications, will be re-painted by the end of December and replacement of the bollards at the junction of Lauriston Farm Road and Cramond Road South will be undertaken some time in the second quarter of 2017. For the bollard project it has been agreed that discussions are to take place regarding the optimum design following recent incidents. There is much more information about planned local projects on our notice board and website, including some major projects such as Silverknowes Roundabout modifications which it looks like may be programmed for 2017/18. We are planning to meet the Transport and Environment Manager again to discuss the repair programme for local roads and footpaths. The condition of many continues to generate a consistent and justifiable level of complaints.

LOCAL POLICING ISSUES

The Police attend our monthly meetings to provide a verbal report to the committee on matters of local importance to them, and it gives us the opportunity to raise any issues relating to law and order which have been drawn to our attention by local residents. Unquestionably the major issue over the past few months has been the level of motor cycle theft and associated crime in Muirhouse and Pilton which has had an impact across the North and West of the city, and of course, we see some of the effects and risks for residents in our own area, not least highlighted by the fatal accident of a youth on a stolen motor cycle in Silverknowes in June. We have discussed these serious matters with the local Police on a number of occasions and have accepted that they are allocating a high level of resource to the problem. Their response has resulted in over 30 individual arrests although there are suggestions that the sentences available to the courts or their interpretation by the judiciary are resulting in inadequate punishments for offenders and that some of the crime is by repeat offenders. You can contact your local police officers to discuss or report any non urgent problem at EdinburghAlmondCPT@scotland.pnn.police.uk or by using the 101 number. If the situation is immediate, 999 should always be used for emergencies or 101 for non emergencies.

UPDATE ON LOCAL TREE PLANTING

In our May Newsletter we carried an article about an idea from a local primary school teacher to plant trees in Silverknowes as part of an educational project to help children understand the importance of trees to ecology and the environment. The intention was to apply to the Woodlands Trust to obtain a pack of trees and we asked residents where they would like trees to be planted. We had an excellent response with suggestions for possible locations in both Silverknowes and Davidson's Mains where new trees could be planted to replace trees which had been damaged or removed. The application to the Woodlands Trust was made and was subsequently successful but unfortunately it transpired that the trees to be provided would be too small and insufficiently developed to have any realistic chance of survival in an urban environment. This was initially seen as a problem but it has been resolved by deciding to plant the very young trees in quiet and sheltered locations at Cramond near to the foreshore and Davidson's Mains Park where each of the local primary Schools will be able to plant them and watch them grow and develop. The trees are to be delivered shortly and are to be planted over the next few weeks. There was so much interest in the possibility of replacing damaged trees in our area that we are investigating other possible methods of funding although the cost of buying larger trees will be much more expensive and it will probably require support and assistance from the Council to help get them planted. This idea has some way to run.

GROUND MAINTENANCE POLICY AT DAVIDSON'S MAINS PARK

In 2015 the Council introduced a revised maintenance policy for public open spaces which included a strategy to significantly reduce the extent of grassed areas which were cut regularly, partly for ecological reasons but principally to reduce costs. The implementation of the policy resulted in a significant reduction in the manicured grass area at Davidson's Mains Park, with a large area of previously trimmed grass being left to grow without any cutting. From an aesthetic point of view the resulting appearance is very much a matter of personal opinion but it has resulted in complaints to the Association. We have heard from residents who think that the balance is now completely wrong and that there is not nearly enough trimmed grass area for children to play on without straying into the longer grass. When they do so they risk encountering the problem of dog mess which may not be visible in the longer grass, and it seems fair to comment that there are a minority of dog owners who may clear up any mess when it is visible but might be inclined to leave it if it cannot be seen. Parents of young children also need to be wary of other hidden dangers such as the possibility of broken glass. Another consequence of the change of policy is that the grassed area around the main entrance and adjacent to East Barnton Avenue was left to grow over the summer and it resulted in what has been described to us as a carpet of weeds. There is a view that where previously manicured and well maintained grass areas are allowed to grow the effect might be generally acceptable and non contentious but where the grass surface has been poorly maintained or has a body of weeds which had previously been controlled to a degree by cutting, the resulting affect looks very scruffy and unkempt. There are legitimate concerns about the first impressions visitors to the park are now given at the entrance and from East Barnton Avenue. The Association has raised these matters with the local Transport and Environment Manager and we are awaiting a response. We also hope to engage with the Friends of the Park so that there can at least be a review before next year. In the meantime we would be interested to hear from any residents who have views on these issues.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH IN DAVIDSON'S MAINS AND SILVERKNOWES

Over the past year there have been a number of developments affecting Neighbourhood Watch, at the local level and at the national level. Locally, the Almond Community Safety Panel (ACSP) has been formed to provide a quarterly forum for neighbourhood watch coordinators in Almond Ward and nearby areas to meet local police and Neighbourhood Watch Scotland to share concerns, information and best practices relating to crime, security and safety. The quarterly ACSP forum helps define local police priorities, with the top current priority being housebreaking, much reduced compared to last year, but still with some break-ins to houses, garages and sheds with favourite targets being high value bicycles and keys for performance cars. Across the North and West of the City, youth joyriding on stolen motorbikes is a continuing major concern as is mentioned in the Police article. ACSP also puts watch coordinators in immediate e-mail contact, allowing rapid sharing of information at the local level. If you are not in a neighbourhood watch, do consider joining or forming one, and make sure it links to ACSP. Nationally, Neighbourhood Watch Scotland and Police Scotland have signed a Memorandum of Understanding, reinforcing their collaboration and leading to the use by Police Scotland of the Neighbourhood ALERTmessaging platform to provide up to date crime information to local neighbourhood watches and communities. For more information, see the Neighbourhood Watch Scotland website at <https://www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk/> or e-mail Tim Mitchell at timmscot@gmail.com.

LOCAL WASTE RECYCLING FACILITIES

Most residents will be aware of the range of concerns about the management by the Council of re-cycling facilities across the city. The Evening News has been running a "Bin Watch " campaign which has highlighted truly appalling conditions at numerous communal waste facilities, particularly in the central parts of the city. We have a couple of local problems which we are pursuing with the Council following complaints by residents. At Tesco there have been complaints that the waste paper bin is frequently full, and that even when this is reported to the Council it can take several days before it is emptied . This inevitably results in waste paper being left beside and on top of the bin and in bad weather it can degrade and be blown about the site creating a mess. It would appear that there is no regular uplift of waste paper from the site and there is a question about the capacity of the site in relation to the volume of waste. We have written to the Council to ask about these problems which cause a loss of amenity for local residents who are trying to be responsible in re-cycling waste. In business terms any disincentive to re-cycle waste results in a potential loss of income to the city. At the Re-cycling facility at Silverknowes, access to the paved area around the bins from the car-park is over a short section of unmade ground which last winter became a sea of mud in bad weather. Local residents had provided a piece of old carpeting to cover the gap but following complaints from us to the Council it was agreed they would provide a hard surface before this winter. It is disappointing that this work is still outstanding but we recently received an assurance that some priority would be given to getting the job done as soon as possible.

CAMMO AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT SITES

It was disappointing (if not a surprise) that in June the Reporter to the Scottish Government decided that the green belt land at Cammo should be zoned for new housing as part of the Local Development Plan for the city. With about 600 houses proposed for Cammo this means that there are about 5000 new houses planned for the north western side of the city at locations at Cammo, Maybury, South Queensferry, Kirkliston and elsewhere over the next five to ten years. We have made this point before but all these developments create a further significant traffic load on the Queensferry Road corridor which is already operating at capacity and on a daily basis we see the local effects of serious congestion at peak hours on Main Street, Quality Street, Cramond Road South and Lauriston Farm Road. At some point it would appear that some form of traffic management will become a necessity at the Lauriston Farm Road/ Cramond Road South junction. The suggestion of a more imaginative solution to provide a relief road round the north side of Lauriston Castle is unlikely to ever be cost justified. It is ironic that while Planning Legislation lays down very strict and demanding criteria about creating appropriate supporting infrastructure within new developments to ensure a high quality environment, the same protections are not given to mature residential and urban areas where the local amenity is damaged by the additional traffic flows and congestion caused by such development.

NORTH WEST HERITAGE – OUR LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Talks for the Session: 2016-2017 all at 7.30 pm

Thursday 17 November : 2016 “Edinburgh Trams”, speaker George Murray at D’Mains Parish Church

Wednesday 18 January 2017: “Broughton through the Ages”, speaker Richard Love at St. Columba’s Blackhall

Thursday 16 February 2017: “Mansions & Estate of Muirhouse”, speaker Bill Weir at D’Mains Parish Church

Wednesday 15 March 2017: “Scotland’s First Oil Boom” Shale Mining in West Lothian, speaker Harry Knox St. Columba’s Church

Thursday 20 April 2017: AGM followed by a talk on “Old Leith”, speaker Jim Tweedie Chair Leith FHS. D’Mains Parish Church

For further information contact the Secretary Charlotte Cowe, 336 2494 or charlotte@dmains.co.uk

CONTACT WITH LOCAL RESIDENTS

We are always very interested in hearing from local residents on local issues and welcome any relevant comment that any resident cares to make. It helps us to keep in touch with local opinion and what people see as local problems so that we can pursue the matter with the Council, the Police, the MP or MSP or any other responsible individual or authority. We have a policy of always trying to follow up on enquiries and to provide appropriate feedback. The best way to contact us is via our website www.dmsa.org.uk or by contacting Charlotte or Rod by whichever method suits. We have been circulating members of the Association with email communications about important local issues which appears to have been welcomed. As a result we are proposing to increase the quantity and frequency of these communications. A number originate from the Council but we will always ensure that those we circulate are of direct relevance to residents in our area. If you are not a member and would like access to our communications it is still possible to join the Association for the modest sum of only £2 per annum. New members would be very welcome. If you are interested or just want to support the work we do you can apply for membership by downloading the form through our website, completing the comment slip on the website or by contacting Charlotte directly.

CAN YOU HELP THE COMMITTEE?

This is now a re-occurring theme in each of our Newsletters but the management committee of the Association has so much on its plate that we could do with some more members to help. We are still a relatively small group and it would be really helpful to have more support. Many residents tell us they appreciate the work that we do to represent the interests of the local community but nevertheless we find it difficult to attract residents who are willing to give some of their own time to act on the committee. The duties need not be onerous and it is an opportunity to become actively involved in decisions which can make a difference to our local area. If you are interested in the local community and environment, the only other attributes required are a bit of common sense, an ability to understand different points of view and an ability to work with other people. If you would be interested in becoming a member of the committee please contact Charlotte or Rod for more information.

CURRENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairperson:	Mr. Rod Alexander	336 3856
Honorary Treasurer:	Mr. Gordon McGregor	336 5875
Honorary Secretary:	Mrs. Charlotte Cowe	336 2494
151 Main Street, EH4 5AQ	email: charlotte@dmains.co.uk	

Mrs. S. Edgar Mr. B. Flanagan Mr. C. Gardner Mrs. J. Lowther Mr. T. Mitchell Ms. Laura Thomson