



November

NEWSLETTER

2017

A NEW CHRISTMAS LIGHTS COMMITTEE

Exactly a year ago at this time we were in despair at the sudden last minute notification from the Council that they would not be mounting decorative motifs on the lampposts on Main Street. The message was that the Council could not afford the cost and that in future if out of town communities such as Davidson's Mains wanted decorative lights they would have to raise the funds and organise things for themselves. For the first time in fifteen years Main Street was in relative darkness and we had to cancel our switch-on ceremony which had become increasingly popular with families. There was genuine concern about a small community such as ours being able to raise the funds to buy new lights and to meet the annual costs of the exercise. However, in our May Newsletter we asked the question if local residents wanted to have Christmas Lights to find out if there was sufficient interest and enthusiasm to form an organising committee to undertake fund raising and support Christmas lights on an annual basis. We have to say we have been absolutely delighted with the response. A group has been formed with a mix from local youth groups supported by both local schools and some local residents who are determined to continue the annual tradition of having Christmas Lights on Main Street. They have started to fund raise for the purchase of new light fittings and are also organising a significantly more ambitious switch on ceremony for this year.

The initial plan had been to draw up a contract for the new lights for this year, but only 48 hours before it was due to be signed, the Council took a belated decision to reverse the budget cut and to provide Christmas Lights for this one year, but for this year only. This last minute u-turn was absurd, with questions being asked about it in full Council and an apology being given, but it now means that the fund raising effort can start this festive season and continue on to next year when the new lights will be required. The Christmas Lights Committee have set a target of £10000 which will at least cover the cost of fittings for the 13 lampposts on Main Street which have the necessary electrical connection plus the cost of mounting, demounting, insurance, and call out service. Any surplus will go towards the cost of purchasing more fittings and converting more lampposts to take the fittings because the vision of the Committee is to extend the decorations to cover the full length of Main Street and to parts of Corbiehill Road and Quality Street, as has been the situation in the past. It is unlikely, but if the Council continue to fund some Christmas lights in the future all donations will be used to purchase extra lights.

It is hoped that the enthusiasm and commitment of the new committee can be matched by the generosity and support of local residents and businesses and that we can all continue to benefit from festive decorations in the village in future years. A flyer about this year's event is enclosed with our Newsletter and details of how to donate to the Christmas Lights Fund are given on the back page of the Newsletter.

THE BOLLARDS ON EAST BARTON AVENUE

A few months ago residents in East Barton Gardens were unable to have vehicular access to their properties for several hours when the police closed the access to East Barton Avenue during the investigations into the regrettable fatal accident at the pedestrian crossing on Main Street. The residents were understanding of the situation but the fact was that if the bollards on East Barton Avenue at the entrance to the park had been the modern removable type the residents could have had temporary access for vehicles via Barton Avenue and need not have been inconvenienced. Removable barriers might also be an advantage for temporary access for emergency vehicles given the restricted access through the entrance from Main Street and the numbers of vehicles which at times can be parked on East Barton Avenue. More recently another reason to introduce removable bollards has arisen. The new Christmas Lights Committee are organising a switch-on event with a range of attractions which is expected to attract a large crowd, with perhaps 400 or 500 being present. The new committee had wanted to close off East Barton Avenue for additional space for events but it had not been possible due to the access considerations for East Barton Gardens and the need to comply with statutory notice periods and regulations. They now hope to proceed with a temporary road closure for the event in 2018. The additional space would be an advantage plus it would eliminate any risks from moving vehicles among the crowds attending the event. The Association has written to the Locality Transport and Environment Manager to request that the fixed bollards be replaced with the modern removable type and that priority be given to ensuring the works are completed before this time next year.

LOCAL BUS SERVICES

Residents will remember that in our May Newsletter we expressed concern at the sudden withdrawal of the 32 and 42 bus services from Davidson's Mains without any prior notice or consultation. Both changes had been linked by Lothian Buses to the introduction of the new 200 service from Ocean Terminal to Edinburgh Airport and had been accompanied by the dubious spin in press releases that the overall effect of the changes represented an improvement in services. With regard to the 32, it is alleged that Edinburgh Airport had been offering to provide a promotional commercial subsidy to Lothian Buses to re-brand one or more local bus routes as an Airport link and that, plus the availability of a green bus grant for new low emission vehicles provided Lothian Buses with a financial advantage to replace the unsubsidised 32 service with the subsidised 200. The new service is little more than the former 32 in Airport Link guise. It is far removed from the direct Airport link out the A90 corridor for which our MSP had been campaigning, but in lip service to his campaign the new service was routed along the Queensferry Road, to the detriment of bus users in Davidson's Mains. We disagree completely with the change but unfortunately it has to be accepted that it would be unrealistic to get the decision reversed given the impact of any financial subsidy on the decision and the fact that service level and financial contract agreements will have been signed by both parties. However, the 42 service is another matter. It appears to have been a victim of a reduction in the funding by the City Of Edinburgh Council for support to non profitable routes. It had been our policy to campaign for the 42 to be extended from Davidson's Mains to Cramond and Barnton to reinstate a broken link in direct bus services between the villages but the withdrawal of the service ended any chance of that being achieved with the 42. Cramond and Barnton CC share our concerns about the absence of the direct connection, particularly as the only bus service from Cramond into the town, the 41, uses a circuitous route via Barnton and the Queensferry Road with passengers also having to cope with significant congestion and delays on that route. We jointly believe there is now a case to be made for the 41 to be routed from Barnton via Cramond to Davidson's Mains to provide a more direct route from Cramond into the city and that other bus services should cater for passengers on the Queensferry Road. For Davidson's Mains residents it would provide the missing connection to Cramond. We are to have a meeting soon with Lothian Buses to discuss the recent changes and plans for the future and the change of route for the 41 will be high on the agenda.

YOUTH DISTURBANCES

We know that many residents are becoming increasingly concerned about the high levels of youth disorder in our area. It has now been ongoing for several weeks with the worst of it being targeted on Cramond Road South, Main Street and, East Barnton Avenue. In recent weeks the local community policing team have been supplemented at times by mobile response units from across the city, and for the 5th of November police leave was cancelled and a special identification unit was operating in our area to assist in obtaining evidence to bring charges against some of the miscreants. Nevertheless there is little doubt that police resources are currently being stretched beyond the limit. The youths who are causing the trouble are using social media to arrange where to meet up in large groups, and then scarce police resources are tied up monitoring their activities and to try to prevent risks of danger to the public. We are perhaps fortunate that the levels of disorder, while serious in themselves, have not yet escalated to the extreme levels which have been reported from elsewhere, including a serious assault on a police woman, but locally we have seen instances of unprovoked assaults on innocent members of the public and a pattern of threatening and intimidating behaviour from some of these youths. The police are fully understanding of the concerns of local residents and have assured the Association that our area will continue to benefit from targeted patrols while the current problems continue and that additional mobile units will be called in if serious trouble arises. The strong message from the Police to residents is to always report any concerning behaviour or incidents on 101, and if it is judged to be serious to dial the 999 emergency number. One action which has been requested by the Association, and directly by some local residents, is for the mobile CCTV unit to be sited again at the former RBS corner to act as a deterrent to troublesome youths congregating in the village. This is supported by the Police and a formal request has been made by them for its use in the village. In reality it is accepted that to a degree the mobile camera just moves the trouble on to other locations but even so it would provide some welcome respite to residents in this area.

SILVERKNOWES ROUNDABOUT

Works are now progressing on the long awaited upgrade to the roundabout and residents will be aware that the road traffic orders to restrict vehicle access and movements at the roundabout will now be in force until 3rd December. The initial delay to the start of the main works on the carriageway due to the need for a re-design to take account of legitimate safety concerns from cycling organisations was unfortunate and the communications from the Council to residents about the initial start date and then the reasons for the delay left much to be desired. More recently the communication has been much better. The restrictions at the busy roundabout are a significant inconvenience for local residents and for through traffic but it must be said that this project was designed in response to a whole raft of complaints about it over recent years. In no particular order of priority, complaints to the Association had made reference to the badly degraded road and footway surfaces, the absence of a safe crossing to the bus stops, the unsatisfactory entrance and exit at the golf club car park, the poor line of sight along Silverknowes Parkway for drivers approaching from the south end of Silverknowes Road, and above all else it's shabby and run down appearance. The project will eradicate all of these problems and on completion will be a big improvement.

VEHICLE LENGTH LIMIT INFRINGEMENTS ON LAURISTON FARM ROAD

We have reported previously that the frequency of vehicles infringing the 10m length limit on Lauriston Farm Road had appeared to be on the increase and so in August the committee, with the welcome help of some local residents, decided to undertake a survey to record details of the transgressions. In the seven hours between 8 am and 3 pm no fewer than ten individual infringements were observed and recorded. We ended the survey at 3 pm because by that time infringements had stopped and we had assumed that the drivers' grapevine had been in operation with warnings being circulated about our activity. It was presumed that drivers had instead reverted to using the correct advisory route via Queensferry Road, Telford Road, and the West Granton Approach Road. We followed up by contacting each of the ten companies and for nine of them we had positive responses to acknowledge the infringements, with undertakings from the managements to reinforce the message to their drivers that the advisory route should always be used. The parent company for one of the vehicles could not be identified from the vehicle markings and it was passed to the police to be identified from the national vehicle registration database and for the police to take the follow up action. One issue which came to light in communication with one of the companies was that the length restriction was missing from a database of route restrictions which is widely used by operators, and the omission has now been rectified. Improved signage to give advance warning of the restriction is to be provided on the approaches to the Silverknowes Road roundabout and from Queensferry Road on the approaches to Quait Street and this will counter criticisms from some drivers that they were unaware of the length limit until it was too late to avoid the junction. In summary, the exercise was a success and we plan to have a follow up to check that the promises made by operators have been honoured.

FRIENDS OF DAVIDSON'S MAINS PARK.

The Friends took a stall at the Davidson's Mains Children's Gala this year. The display outlined the role of the Friends group, together with results from the recent Art competition and a nature quiz based upon items from the Park. It is unlikely that further draining work will be carried out around the wetland area in the SE corner. It was decided that a Friends work group would make improvements by clearing dead branches as impromptu dams were impeding the flow of water in the area. This, in conjunction with the removal of some standing trees, has opened up the area, allowing more light and oxygen in the water to reduce algae growth. Two tawny owl boxes were produced by the pupils of the Royal High School, and have now been installed by CEC Park Rangers. One is in the wetland area, and the other is situated in the copse on high ground west of the grassland area. It is hoped that these will be adopted by the resident owls at the appropriate time of year, normally February/March. An owl watch will be established to monitor activity. A second bat survey was recently conducted over three consecutive nights at the end of September. Results were recorded on compact disk and sent back to the British Bat Survey for analysis. The Park Rangers have carried out more weed clearing at the east entrance, in preparation for more careful replanting of bulbs and ground cover in the winter. Wildflower and woodland bulbs are now available from CEC to facilitate this. For information about the group contact Dan Smith, Chair, dmainspark@gmail.com e-voice.org.uk/dmainspark
Tel: 0131 312 8330 Mob:07713099010

ACTION ON THE LOCAL LITTER PROBLEM

We have stated before in Newsletters that litter in our area is a continual problem because of the number of take-away and fast food outlets and the regrettable attitudes among some who do not see litter as an abuse of the local environment. The Association makes regular complaints about the problem on behalf of local residents who care about the appearance of our area, and will continue to do so, but recently for a change there has been a smidgeon of good news. Tim Mitchell, a member of the committee, took the initiative to organise a meeting for local residents from the Barnton Avenue and East Barnton Avenue areas with the Police, the Head Teacher from the RHS, and pupil representatives from the school, to discuss the general litter problem and the negative impact on our area. It has to be said that the Head Teacher from the school and the pupils were very open in acknowledging the problem, as has always been our experience in dealing with them in the past, and undertook to reinforce the message that litter should not be thrown away onto the streets. The good news is that since the meeting there have been more frequent litter collections by the Council and a number of residents have commented that the area does seem tidier. The initiatives by the RHS have also made a significant contribution to the improvement and they should be praised for their actions. The problem is highly unlikely to disappear but this success is worth highlighting.

NORTH WEST HERITAGE – OUR LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Talks are held alternately between St. Columba's Church, Blackhall and Davidson's Mains Parish Church, Quality Street at 7.30 pm. The remaining talks for this session are:

18 January 2018: "Mills on the Water of Leith". Speaker from Water of Leith Conservation Trust. Davidson's Mains.

22 February 2018: "Living Memory Association". Speaker Miles Tubb,.St Columba's.

15 March 2018: "Restoration of the Cold War Bunker at Granton Quarry". Speaker Grant More. Davidson's Mains.

19 April 2018: AGM followed by a talk on "The Royal Palace of Stirling—a Grand Design",
Speaker John Donaldson, Wood Carver of the Stirling Heads in Stirling Castle. St. Columba's.

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

PROBLEMS WITH OUR LOCAL ACTION LIST

It is straying into the politics of funding for local services and the reduction in staff resources associated with Council restructuring, but there is no question that the effects are having an adverse impact on the delivery of a number of local projects which had been agreed for progression by the Council and which are now subject to extended delays. A prime example is the project to upgrade the junction of Lauriston Farm Road with Cramond Road South to replace missing and damaged safety bollards and which has now been subject to successive missed deadlines accumulating to over two years. We are also concerned about delays in undertaking promised surveys into parking problems on Corbiehill Road at the junctions with Corbiehill Avenue and Main Street and on Corbiehill Crescent on the bend, all of which need to be completed and assessed before the case for double yellow lines at these locations is considered. Meanwhile the problems and dangers associated with inconsiderate parking continue. We will continue to press the case for these and other projects to be done but increasingly we are being told that staff resources are the issue. A full list of all our projects with their current status is on the notice board and website for those who want more information.

HOUSE BREAKING CRIME— PUBLIC MEETING

In recent months the biggest law and order problem in our area has been the youth disturbances and anti-social behaviour but there has also been an upturn in the numbers of housebreakings, including garages and out houses. In response to the concerns of local residents, the Police have organised a public meeting to discuss security and crime prevention at Holy Cross Church Hall from 7 to 9 pm on Tuesday 28th November. It will be lead by a specialist Crime Prevention Officer and it is hoped that the local community police team will also be represented. There are more details on our notice board and web site for anyone who would wish to take up this opportunity to obtain advice.

HOW TO CONTACT US

We are always very interested in hearing from residents on local issues and welcome relevant comments that any resident cares to make. The best way to contact us is via our website, or 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. 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. Contact details are as follows:

Via the website www.dmsa.org.uk

Chair, Rod Alexander, Tel: 0131 336 3856

Secretary, Charlotte Cowe, 151 Main Street, EH4 5AQ. Tel: 0131 336 2494 email: charlotte@dmains.co.uk

HOW TO DONATE TO THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS FUND .

We hope as many people as possible will give a donation to buy new Christmas Lights for Davidson's Mains. You can do this in either of the following ways:

1. Donate to the Davidson's Mains Christmas Lights Just Giving Page at <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/dmainschristmaslights>
2. Make a payment to the Davidson's Mains and Silverknowes Association by sending a cheque to our Secretary or making a direct banking payment to our account: sort code 83-18-47, account number 00250433.