



## **PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the 236th meeting held on 27th February 2006 in Portobello Baptist Church Hall**

**Present:** Celia Butterworth, Maureen Child, Dawson Currie, Maria Devoy, Alix Gaffney, Robert Gatliff, Kathleen Hart, Bob Jefferson, Lawrence Marshall, Brenda Molony, Margaret Munro, Tom Nimmo, Avril Scott, Margaret Smith, Tom Smith, John Stewart, Nick Stroud.

**Apologies:** Susan Deacon, Brian McCrow, George Murray, John Smart, Sandy Smith, David Turner.

**In attendance:** Kenneth Anderson, Julia Brook, Diana Cairns, Lezley Cameron, Derek Connelly, Agnes Cowan, Kathleen Gillon, Stephen Hawkins, Hatsuki Hayashi, Sheila I'Anson, Peter Lake, John McAreavey (BL Developments), Gordon McCulloch, Stephen McIntyre, Margaret McRae, Joe Madden, Ken Marshall, Phil Myerscough (BL Developments), Brenda Robinson, A. Ward, Ian Wilson, Emma Wood.

#### **236.1 Chairman's welcome:**

Robert Gatliff welcomed everyone to a packed meeting, and announced two departures. Ron Dymond of the City Task Force was being transferred into Edinburgh and we would need to get in touch with his replacement; the Chairman thanked him for his efforts on Portobello's behalf. Brian McCrow was moving away from Portobello, after rejuvenating the local Neighbourhood Watch and masterminding the establishment of our community development planning. He too was warmly thanked for his work.

\* **Action:** Secretary to contact Ron Dymond's successor in the Task Force.

#### **236.2 Guest speaker: BL Developments**

Phil Myerscough, Managing Director of BL Developments, gave a short presentation on his company's aspirations for the Scottish Power site, bought from Duddingston House Properties. The City Council was developing a design brief for the whole of western Portobello, and there would be many opportunities for local community input. BL is a residential developer, and would be working in parallel with the Council, and consulting extensively with local politicians, organisations and the public over a six to nine month period to devise an acceptable design for the site. After a similar exercise for the Shrub Hill site in Leith Walk, ten letters had been sent to the Council in relation to the planning application, eight of them in support.

There was a general welcome for this approach, compared with that of the previous owner. Phil Myerscough made several further points in response to questions. He was aware of the Council's plans to replace the King's Road roundabout with traffic lights, and of the need to minimise the traffic impact of a new development. BL approached each site individually, using a team of architects and engineers to create plans sensitive to the locality, with a mix of affordable housing, flats, small mews houses and large family houses. There could also be small shops, workshops and artists' studios. He was aware of the Lottery application to have an Eden-style development on the site.

The developers were keen to hear from anyone who wanted to make a point or ask a question: tel 624 6610, email [phil@bldev.co.uk](mailto:phil@bldev.co.uk), Web <http://www.bldev.co.uk/>

#### **236.3 Re-A-Pier**

Stephen Hawkins outlined the latest state of the Lottery application to create an iconic landmark structure in Portobello. The application had got through to the second stage, and the Lottery Commissioners would want to see evidence that the community could run a big project worth up to £25m. A 'community interest company' was being set up to develop a business plan and analyse possible revenue streams. There wasn't

yet a precise plan for what would be created, in order that as many ideas as possible should be gathered first (a 'pier' was only one possibility). If the project passed the next hurdle it would receive £250,000 to hold a design competition and formulate detailed plans. The project was supported by the Forth Ports Authority but would need most support from the City of Edinburgh Council, in conjunction with the 'boardwalk' proposals. A certain amount of funding would have to be raised locally to support any Lottery award.

This report was warmly received, and the group congratulated on its achievement.

### **236.4 Minutes of the 235th Meeting:**

Bob Jefferson pointed out that he had not "dismissed as idealistic" the high level of support expressed at October's public meeting for keeping Portobello's open green spaces. With this inaccuracy corrected, the minutes were accepted: Proposed: Margaret Smith, Seconded: Brenda Molony.

### **236.3 Matters Arising:**

**236.3a High Street phase 2:** Work was due to begin in mid-March and continue until early July. Further details were provided in Cllr Child's report.

- \* **236.3b Joppa Tennis Courts:** There was no further news of the plans to renovate the clubhouse. Ongoing.

**236.3c outstanding bills:** the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils is to be funded differently in future, so no longer required a membership subscription from us.

**236.3d vehicles on the beach:** there was no information from the Police about the legality of taking vehicles on to the beach. There is a possibility that new gates will be put up at King's Road to prevent such access.

**236.3e petition to the Parliament:** the Secretary had obtained a form of words for an ePetition to the Scottish Parliament about jet-skis; Diana Cairns agreed to be the petitioner.

- \* **Action:** Secretary to send words for ePetition to Diana Cairns.

- \* **236.3f signage on the Prom:** Maureen Child thought that Lawrence Marshall should be the one City Councillor to request better signage for the Prom to discourage antisocial use. Ongoing.

**236.3g anti-graffiti measures, and graffiti in Joppa Quarry Park:** Ron Dymond was due to move to a new role in Edinburgh city centre, and would be replaced locally by Andrew Hunter.

- \* **Action:** Secretary to contact Andrew Hunter about ongoing actions concerning the adoption of street furniture to be 'adopted' and graffiti to be removed in Joppa Quarry Park.

- \* **236.3h plastic cows or haggises:** Dawson Currie had found a small cow in the City Chambers but nothing on the expected life-size; it was suggested that there might be on in the Scotsman Hotel. Bob Jefferson said that cows are given to artists who make good enough proposals to decorate them. The Chairman agreed to ask Big Things on the Beach about this.

- \* **Action:** Chairman to ask Big Things on the Beach if they would help to round up a full-size painted cow.

**236.3i Boardwalk proposals:** Bob Jefferson had put the report of the coastal walkway plans on *Porty Online*, but was still waiting for a copy of the accompanying Powerpoint slides. Lawrence Marshall agreed to ask for this, and suggested that the project leader attend a future meeting of the Community Council.

- \* **Action:** Lawrence Marshall to try and obtain a copy of the Boardwalk presentation for Bob Jefferson to put in Porty Online.

- \* **Action:** Secretary to invite Stephen Hadjucki to a future meeting.

**236.3j community council boundaries:** the Chairman had responded to the City Council's request that we align our boundaries with the new ward boundaries. There had been no objections to this in principle, so he had accepted the boundary changes but asked that the beach be included and the relevant section be moved from the railway line to the A1. The former had been accepted but not the latter. Since we now represented a smaller population our numbers of community councillors would be reduced from 20 elected members and 20 group representatives to 15+15. Tom Nimmo pointed out that local redevelopment proposals could increase the local population significantly. Lawrence Marshall regretted the loss of the area north of the railway line from King's Road to Seafield, as this was an integral part of Portobello, but accepted the

pragmatic nature of the changes. The Chairman had established that it would still be acceptable to have staff and pupil representatives from the High School, even though that was outside our new area.

- **Action:** Secretary to bring nomination papers and election information to next meeting.

## **236.4 new schools for Portobello**

The Chairman announced that he had received more communications on this subject than on any other, expressing a range of views, from keeping all existing green sites and schools through to building new housing everywhere. It was clear that the Community Council would not be able to find a position which would represent all the opposing views, but he hoped that it would be possible to discuss all the issues in a constructive way for onward referral to the City Council. He reported the outcome of a meeting already held by the Amenity Society (PAS), which had wanted to retain as much open space as possible, and which had agreed that the proposed new golf course would be too remote, especially for children and young people. PAS would prefer to see St John's rebuilt on a new site so a new High School could be built on the combined sites of the existing schools; they wanted to know what other sites had been considered, and called for the fullest possible public consultation before a final decision was made.

It was suggested that there was enough room for a new High School alongside Holy Rood School, and that this site had many advantages over the golf course, while St John's could be combined with Duddingston Primary School, itself in need of redevelopment. Further rationalisation of local primary schools might make more sites available for redevelopment. It was however pointed out by others that there were planning constraints which prevented major additional development at Holyrood.

A member of the public hoped that the Community Council would support the City Council's initiative to get new schools, that it would agree with the view that the High School and St John's were now beyond their reasonable lifespan, and that it accepted local aspirations for the education of our children.

Another member of the public urged the Community Council to support the High School Board and the City Council, if these agreed that there was no alternative to building on the golf course. Everyone ought to be excited by the prospect of achieving new state-of-the-art schools for Portobello.

Anxiety was expressed at the possibility of having over 2,000 children on one site, and of their all getting to and from the site.

Asked about the architectural merit of the present schools, John Stewart said that he couldn't see any in the High School buildings, but that he would be sorry to see St John's go, although he realised that the classrooms were not suitable for modern teaching. He didn't think either of the buildings were listed.

It was pointed out that the government was trying to encourage more people to take part in sports, and was actually putting a lot of money into this to try and reverse worrying health trends. While the principle of having new schools was understood, it would be a shame if these were obtained at the expense of the golf course and football pitches which were currently well used. Lawrence Marshall believed, though, that there would be plenty of sports facilities in the new development.

Lawrence Marshall noted that there were several other possible sites for a new school. While these might not be as 'self-funding' as the golf course proposal, we needed to have much clearer information about how the present position was reached, and the advantages and disadvantages of these other sites. Robert Gatliff added that other options as well as other sites needed to be considered, as it was not clear that playing fields had to be provided on the school site, nor that a single large school would be more suitable than two medium-sized ones.

A member of the public was concerned that the proposed new golf course would not be as good as the old one, and that it would be far more expensive to create a new one than to dig up an old one. The Chairman agreed and said that the new golf course should be built before any work started on the old one. Asked if the new golf course would be a full 18 hole one, Lawrence Marshall said it might be two six-hole courses as these appeal to American women.

Stephen Hawkins pointed out that the Council had successfully refurbished several residential tower blocks in the city, and he asked for figures showing the cost of refurbishing the High School. He also reminded the meeting of the possibility of PowerLeague taking over the football pitches alongside the golf course, and he

wondered what impact this would have on the proposed redevelopment, and how the proceeds of some sales of Portobello's assets would be guaranteed for local investment when others could not.

A member of the public emphasised that fact that 1,400 children were now being taught in an apparently unfit school. The Chairman accepted this important point, though asked why the Council had allowed this to happen.

John Stewart wanted far more detail about the plans and likely roll for the High School for the next 10–20 years, and he wanted to know precisely why further development at Holy Rood was not possible.

The Chairman asked about the timescale for the proposals. Maureen Child replied that there was no pressure on time since this was the very start of the process, and she pointed out that the local councillors were among those who needed more information about what were at present still very sketch plans. She admitted that the High School had been built 40 years ago with an expected lifespan of 30 years, and that a huge investment would be required to bring it up to scratch. The City Council's view was that refurbishment was worthwhile at Towerbank, for example, but would not be at the High School. The Council had been trying for two years to find a way to get a new high school for Portobello; it had narrowly missed getting a PPP arrangement, so the majority of the High School Board was now in favour of the golf course redevelopment proposal. The City Council had already bought a section of green belt land for the new golf course, and now had to find a site in Portobello for the new school. Redevelopment of the present school would mean having to decant 1,400 pupils for two years, and with no extra income to pay for it.

Councillor Child invited anyone who had questions about the proposal to send them to her and she would try and get them answered, and emphasised that the plans were not even ready for informal consultation yet, let alone a formal one. There would be plenty of meetings in the coming weeks at which interested parties could express opinions and gather information. There was however an urgent need to find a way of getting the best possible education for our children.

The Chairman felt it was too soon to hold a public meeting on the issue, and everyone agreed that there was an urgent need for more specific information, covering funding models and the extent of the new housing, as well as the schools themselves.

Dawson Currie was interested to know why the school had failed to get PPP funding if it were in as bad a state of repair as was being presented. Lawrence Marshall responded that the eight schools which included in the PPP scheme were all deemed to be worse off than Portobello, the implication being either that they were actively crumbling, or that Portobello wasn't. Avril Scott actually works in the High School, and she was concerned that there was too much scare-mongering about the state of the building; she felt that new or potential parents of High School children were being deliberately misinformed in order to increase the pressure for a new school. It was also pointed out that the senior staff of the School who are so keen to get a new building do not live locally, and are therefore not aware of the harm they might do to the local community.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions to the discussion, appreciated the anxiety felt by everyone with so little definite information available, and looked forward to continuing the debate at future meetings.

**Action: Chairman and Secretary to summarise the views expressed at the meeting and forward them to the City Council.**

## **236.5 Reports**

**236.4a Police:** no representative at this meeting.

**236.4b Treasurer:** Treasurer's Account: £5,730.12; Joppa Tennis Courts: £5,488.28.

The Treasurer asked that all expense claims be submitted promptly so that the annual accounts could be completed at the end of March, as required.

**236.4c Joppa Tennis Courts:** no report this time.

**236.4d Task Force:** no report this time.

**236.4e Planning:** John Stewart reported that the application to build six houses on the Prom had been turned down by the City Council, while an application to build a new house in Bellfield Lane had been granted.

The developer who had planning consent to build 96 flats next to the College was now selling on the land, to cash in on having been allowed to build on recreational land. .

**236.4f Councillors:** Maureen Child circulated her monthly report at the meeting. Lawrence Marshall mentioned that Phase Two of the High Street upgrading would begin in March, and be more disruptive than Phase One had been; the result would be correspondingly more obvious.

**236.4g Signs, Plaques and coade stone:** Celia Butterworth reported that the application for Lottery funding to erect the Coade Stone pillars in the community garden had been successful, though it would probably be several months before the pillars were put in place. John Stewart commended the local sponsors who had contributed £800 to the project. Some of the money would be used to sponsor talks and events to draw attention to the significance of the pillars. Celia was congratulated for her achievement.

**236.4h Portobello Traders:** no report this time.

**236.4i Portobello Neighbourhood Watch:** no report this time. Since Brian McCrow was moving away from Portobello it was agreed to ask Betty Young if she would take over this group.

\* **Action:** Chairman to talk to Betty Young about future of Neighbourhood Watch.

**236.4j Portobello website:** Maria Devoy reported the meeting due to take place on 3rd March at which Porty's Internet TV station would be launched, with the screening of three films by local directors. The TV station would then be available through the website. She thanked the members of the sub-committee who had managed to attend the meeting and promised another meeting soon.

**236.4k Community development planning:** ongoing.

## **236.5 Any Other Business**

**236.5a Ship-to-ship oil transfers in the Forth:** The Chairman reported recent activity on this subject, with the Forth Ports Authority approving such transfers in the Forth where they could be controlled rather than in the open North Sea. Alix Gaffney asked that booms be placed around any vessels involved in oil transfers.

**236.5b The police station clock:** Bob Jefferson reported that the clock had been chiming 15, but was now working correctly again. He asked if the Community Council would consider formally adopting a New Year celebration opposite the Police Station, and this was agreed.

\* **Action:** Community Council to arrange New Year event at the Police Station.

John Stewart asked what had happened to our first civic clock, which had been removed from the Baptist Church, but no one knew.

\* **Action:** Lawrence Marshall to find out where this clock is.

## **236.6 Future meetings**

Meetings are held on the final Monday of each month, except July and December, at 7.30pm, in Portobello Baptist Church Hall, 185 Portobello High Street.

The next meeting is on 27th March 2006.

Subsequent dates are: 24th April 2006  
29th May 2006  
26th June 2006  
28th August 2006