



# PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## **DRAFT Minutes of the 255th meeting held on 28th January 2008 in Portobello Baptist Church Hall**

**Present:** Margaret Munro (Vice Chair), Nick Stroud (Secretary), Kathleen Hart (Treasurer) Celia Butterworth, Diana Cairns (PCATS), Dawson Currie, Maria Devoy, Caroline Hosking, Bob Jefferson (Porty Online), Peter McColl (PEDAL), Lawrence Marshall, Tom Nimmo (Brighton Residents), David Scott, Margaret Smith (Portobello Labour Party), Tom Smith, John Stewart (PAS), David Turner (Portobello Amnesty Group), Sean Watters (PFANS), William Wilson.

**Apologies:** Robert Gatliff, Jet Cameron (PPAG), James Hunter (CEC), Nora Mackenzie, Brenda Molony (Porty Reporter), Sheila Scott (Merchants & Hoteliers).

**In attendance:** Jonathan Bendit, Cllr Maureen Child, Doug Fleming (Stagecoach), Cllr Stephen Hawkins, Iain Henderson (CEC), Arthur Jeffery, John B. Lau, Alastair Macleod, Kenneth Owen (Police), Anne Ward, Margaret Williamson (Portobello High School).

### **255.1 Vice Chair's welcome**

Robert Gatliff was away on business, so Margaret Munro took the Chair and welcomed everyone to the first meeting of 2008. She announced that Stephen McIntyre had been forced by pressure of business to resign from the Community Council, then introduced speakers from Stagecoach to talk about the proposed hovercraft service.

### **255.2 Proposals for a hovercraft service**

Doug Fleming of Stagecoach announced that there would be a public meeting to discuss the plans in February, then introduced marine consultant Alastair Macleod to go through the proposals in detail.

Mr Macleod summarised the results of the pilot service in July 2007: 32,000 passengers had been carried in 12 days, at an average loading of 85%; long queues had developed, yet the overall satisfaction rate had been 94%. 1,250 feedback forms had been analysed: 40% of passengers would otherwise have used a car, 31% train and 26% bus. The hovercraft option had been chosen because of ease of access at each end without major infrastructure development, speed, stability even in the 2.5 metre waves experienced during the trial, the lack of a wash, emissions falling well within legal standards, and easy interconnection with bus services.

The hope now was to launch a permanent service with one craft providing up to 19 trips a day in late 2008 and with two craft offering 26 trips a day from Summer 2009. The intended benefits were to encourage a modal shift from car journeys with a consequent reduction in toxic emissions, to provide better access to employment opportunities on both sides of the Forth, and to give more options to holidaymakers and day-trippers. Three route options being explored with SEStran were Burntisland to Granton (the shortest), Kirkcaldy to Leith (with major technical challenges at the Leith end to get the hovercraft over a breakwater), and Kirkcaldy to Portobello until the Leith terminal was ready. The crossing time to Leith or Portobello would be about 18 minutes, with ready access to buses and in due course to trams at Leith. The company was discussing its plans with key stakeholders such as the Scottish Government and Scottish Natural Heritage, carrying out trials in late February to assess the impact on wintering birds, and looking at future links to Alloa and Methil.

Several further points were made in response to questions. It would be a top priority to minimise inconvenience to people using the Promenade, with access closed for less than a minute for each arrival or departure. There would be a ticket-booking system like the one presently used for megabus, to guarantee a seat; admission procedures had been changed four times during the trial period to try and cope with demand, and it was regretted that some people had had to queue for so long to travel. Ticket prices had not been

finalised, but would be similar to the cost of the rail journey at peak times, and less at off-peak times. Although it was planned to use Leith as the southern end of the route, and abandon Portobello, there were significant challenges at all points and timescales could not be guaranteed; the aim would be to maximise community benefit and minimise inconvenience. Noise was not thought to be a problem, since the Portobello terminal was around 250 metres from the nearest residences (compared with 100 metres for an Isle of Wight service which had a 15 minutes service); Lawrence Marshall, who lives in one of the closest flats, confirmed that he hadn't found the noise to be a problem. Although the pilot service had taken place in July, there had been such strong commitment to it from commuters that it was felt that a year-round service would be commercially successful. Wheelchair access would be provided. A traffic analysis as part of the detailed planning procedure would help to ensure minimal congestion.

Iain Henderson of the City Council's planning department reported that the Council was broadly in favour of the hovercraft initiative, provided all points relating to it could be resolved satisfactorily.

- \* **Note:** public meeting now arranged for 8pm on Monday 18th February in the Community Centre, Adelphi Grove.

### **255.3 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes were approved: proposed Peter McColl, seconded Tom Nimmo.

### **255.4 Matters arising from November meeting**

#### **255.4a Updated membership list and constitution (minute 254.3a)**

- \* *In process.*

#### **255.4b Protection for Portobello shop fronts (minute 254.3d)**

- \* *Robert Gatliff to write to Kenny MacAskill.*

#### **255.4c Secretary to supply missing minutes to website (minute 254.3e)**

- \* *Ongoing.*

#### **255.4d Joppa Shore tourist leaflet (minute 254.3g)**

- \* *Awaiting confirmation from Robert Gatliff.*

#### **255.4e Keys for Community Council noticeboard (minute 254.3h)**

- \* *Awaiting confirmation from Robert Gatliff.*

#### **255.4f Secretary to invite Stagecoach (minute 254.4)**

*Done.*

#### **255.4g Diana Cairns to draft letter to City Council about waste disposal strategy (minute 254.5)**

- \* *In hand.*

#### **255.4h Maureen Child to circulate number of responses to Viridor application (minute 254.5)**

- \* *Awaiting confirmation.*

#### **255.4i Chairman and Secretary to apply for a 'communication' grant (minute 254.7b)**

- \* *Ongoing.*

#### **255.4j James Hunter to seek better maintenance for the 'unnamed square' (minute 254.7d)**

*James Hunter reported by email that this has been set in motion.*

#### **255.4k James Hunter and John Stewart to coordinate bulb planting (minute 254.7d)**

*John Stewart confirmed that this was happening.*

#### **255.4l James Hunter to provide statistics on littering and fines (minute 254.7d)**

*James Hunter reported by email that the following Fixed Penalties had been issued in the Portobello area since 1st July: dog fouling, 1; fly tipping, 0; littering, 4; trade waste, 5; and domestic waste, 5.*

#### **255.4m All, to suggest new locations for litter bins (minute 254.7d)**

*This can be done at any time, to 0131 529 7914.*

**255.4n James Hunter to confirm City Council’s strategy for replacing old trees (minute 254.7d)**

*James Hunter reported by email that the diseased elms in Rosefield Park had been felled, and replacement planting would be assessed in the next planting period, next Winter. There were no plans to remove healthy trees, but experience suggested that infection might spread quite quickly.*

**255.4o Secretary to arrange more efficient meetings (minute 254.8a)**

*Ongoing.*

**255.4p Secretary to include contents of noticeboards in January agenda (minute 254.8d)**

*Done.*

**255.4q Stephen Hawkins to find out about Baptist Church clock (minute 254.8e)**

\* *Ongoing.*

**255.4r Secretary to include ‘communicating with communities’ in January agenda (minute 254.8f)**

*Done.*

**255.4s Chairman to discuss display of Calor Gas awards with Librarian (minute 254.8g)**

\* *Ongoing.*

**255.5 Plans for Community Council guest speakers, meetings and activities**

Suggestions included the Lothian & Borders waste strategy, at an appropriate point, and Kenny MacAskill. Kathleen Hart offered to take a group down Edinburgh High Street in the Summer, in her capacity as an official tour guide. Suggestions for future meetings can be sent to the Secretary at any time. People who give reports to Community Council meetings were asked to submit them a week in advance so they could be circulated to save time.

\* **Action:** All, to suggest topics for future meetings to the Secretary.

\* **Action:** All people who make reports, to send them to the Secretary a week in advance if possible.

**255.6 Portobello Master Plan**

Caroline Hosking summarised the major concerns identified by PMAG (the Portobello Masterplan Action Group):

- removal of Baileyfield Road cottages and replacement with a ‘raised linear park’ and ten-storey flats.
- shops and possibly small supermarkets at the west end of the High Street.
- flats and the Library built on the PowerLeague site.
- the community centre to become a community hall in the cafe area of the Bowling Centre.
- loss of Council land at the burn, and loss of the car park and Unnamed Square, all to flats.
- high-rise flats around the Kilns.
- a great increase in traffic
- move of Tower Amusements to existing open space.
- the Plan is difficult to read, poorly laid out, and inconsistent.
- comments from residents have been ignored.

The results from the survey arranged by PMAG were being collated, and would be circulated shortly.

Diana Cairns pointed out that four groups of design students from Heriot-Watt University would shortly be publishing their plans for North West Portobello, and these might provide useful suggestions to feed into the process.

John Stewart was drawing up a response to the consultation on behalf of the Amenity Society and would circulate this for the Community Council’s information. He was particularly worried about the probable increase in traffic and the loss of the linear park between Prom and High Street. Tom Nimmo thought the traffic wouldn’t be a problem in Portobello itself, though could be in the access roads, and he thought that such a large influx of people should bring a lot of additional business to the local shops.

Margaret Williamson observed that the High School's size is being reduced from 1,400 pupils to 1,200, and that all the proposed housing was bound to increase the demand for school places; Towerbank was also said to be at capacity.

Maureen Child said that the Plan was not a strait-jacket to define precisely what could and could not be built, but a guide to developers – if and when it was passed. Stephen Hawkins pointed out that if the accepted Plan included ten-storey blocks of flats, it would be very difficult for the City Council to prevent these being built; he emphasised the importance of everyone talking to the planning officials currently based in the Library.

Caroline Hosking was afraid that people might by now be suffering from 'campaigning fatigue', with so much going on, and she urged everyone to make their views known.

Lawrence Marshall was concerned that the planners had underestimated the range of activities carried out in the Community Centre, which could not be accommodated in the Bowling Centre. Margaret Munro mentioned the City Council's announcement that it would not pay for the support worker at the Community Centre when the present incumbent retired.

Peter McColl was worried that the community didn't have a clear enough idea of what developments it wanted to see, and was therefore in the weak position of reacting to the consultants' plans, instead of being in the stronger position of putting forward its own suggestions. Intending developers have been very positive, and the community should be, also.

- \* **Action:** Diana Cairns to circulate information about the Heriot-Watt design plans, and consider arranging a meeting with the students.
- \* **Action:** Secretary to circulate the draft PAS letter being written by John Stewart.
- \* **Action:** Secretary to circulate the summary of the PMAG survey.
- \* **Action:** Secretary to write to the City Council, deploring the loss of the support worker at the Community Centre.
- \* **Action:** Secretary to circulate draft letter from PMAG to summarise objections.
- \* **Action:** All, to write individual letters of objection.
- \* **Action:** All, to try and discuss the plans with the planning officials in the Library at these times:
  - Monday 4th February, 1:30pm to 4:30pm
  - Tuesday 5th February, 5pm to 8pm
  - Wednesday 6th February, 10am to 1pm

## **255.7 Communicating with communities**

Dawson Currie explained the thoughts behind his original proposal last year. An information point in the Library would help people who don't use the Web for publishing or receiving news of local groups and activities. There would be great flexibility if each group had a small electronic screen (costing about £50 each), or a single large plasma could be used for a rolling display. A small sub-group was suggested, to develop the idea and follow up the various funding sources that were thought to be available. Bob Jefferson mentioned that around 60 groups were represented on the website so demand could be rather high. Nick Stroud pointed out that single sources of information should be used wherever possible for ease of maintenance, and suggested that a screen in the Library could be used to display information from the website. Dawson Currie agreed to develop ideas for a display in the Library, the contents of the Community Council noticeboards, and a newsletter to be distributed with the Party Reporter, with help from Bob Jefferson and Peter McColl.

- \* **Action:** Dawson Currie, Bob Jefferson and Peter McColl to suggest an outline for a communication strategy at the February meeting.

## **255.8 Chairmanship of the Community Council**

Robert Gatliff had had to miss several meetings, including this one, because of pressure of work, and had asked if the Community Council would prefer to elect a new Chair who could attend more regularly. It was agreed to continue with the existing arrangement until the AGM in May, and to review the situation then.

## **255.9 Brightening up Brunstane train station**

Nick Stroud asked if anyone would like to join a group to help maintain new landscaping at Brunstane train station, if Scotrail were to make that investment. John Stewart pointed out that a few PAS volunteers already work hard to maintain hanging baskets at the Town Hall in the Summer. Diana Cairns suggested that low-maintenance plants be used.

## **255.10 Reports**

**255.10a Police:** Kenny Owen reported that a special operation in December had managed to halve the number of youth-related and vandalism calls received by the police compared to the same period a year earlier. The Community Safety Officer was always looking out for ways of making improvements, and had been patrolling with environmental wardens to assess the level of antisocial littering and cycling. Overall crime figures were down, but house-breaking had increased. The football sessions at the PowerLeague pitches had failed to happen because of a lack of interest from young people. In response to a question about littering and dog-fouling in children's playparks, PC Owen said that he didn't know if environmental wardens covered these areas, but he would find out.

\* **Action:** Kenny Owen to find out if environmental wardens check children's playparks.

**255.10b Treasurer:** Treasurer's Account: £3,364.51; Joppa Tennis Courts: £7,533.29.

All other reports were held over to the February meeting.

## **255.11 Any Other Business**

Most items of business were held over to the February meeting.

### **255.11a Portobello Sailing Club**

Jonathan Bendit reported that he had received planning permission for his sailing club and was now setting up a committee and raising funds. He hoped the club would be open by the Summer.

### **255.11b Funfair at Fishwives' Causeway**

The City Council has apparently granted permission for a Funfair in the Scottish Power site at Easter, the event which caused a great deal of trouble for local residents in 2007. People who wish to object to this were urged to write to Susan Clark, Senior Solicitor, Licensing Section, 249 High Street, Edinburgh EH1 1YJ.

## **255.12 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 25th February 2008.

Subsequent dates are: 31st March 2008  
28th April 2008  
26th May 2008  
30th June 2008