

Westhill Community Council

Newsletter January 2012

Contact us: admin@westhillcc.co.uk

Welcome to this first newsletter from the Westhill Community Council (WCC), in which we aim to provide a brief report of our activities in relation to what is going on in the area.



*Dr Donald Boyd
Chairman
Westhill Community Council*

All the issues covered in this newsletter, and much more, have been discussed at WCC meetings – so come along and have your say!

About your Community Council

The Community Council gives you an opportunity to make your feelings known about local issues, particularly concerning the provision of local authority services such as planning, policing and so on. It's your community. It's all about where you live, and the Community Council is stronger with your support. The WCC is particularly keen to attract 'new blood' to the committee, particularly from school students. So if you're interested in joining the WCC, or simply want to know more about local issues and how decisions are made by your local authority, the Community Council is a good place to start.

You can come along to meetings held in the Community Lounge at Cradlehall Primary School on the second Wednesday of each month (except July and August), starting at 7.15pm. These meetings are held in public and are also attended by the Community Police Officer and Councillors for the Inverness South Ward.

For more information, agendas and other documents, see the website at:

www.westhillcc.co.uk

Local Project Finance for Local Groups

The WCC has a small budget to assist groups or individuals with the cost of local projects likely to be of benefit to the Westhill community. This financial assistance may be used to fund a project or to help obtain additional finance from other sources.

If you are interested in applying for WCC funds please send an email to admin@westhillcc.co.uk outlining your proposal.

Beechwood Campus Access Road - Update

The prospect of the new campus at Beechwood is excellent news, particularly HIE's intention to make the Campus' sports facilities available to local communities. This was one of WCC's priorities during the planning application discussions.

On the likelihood of increased traffic congestion to the already heavy flows in the Inshes area in the mornings and evenings, the WCC repeatedly pressed for additional, separate access, perhaps including a roundabout or new road entrance directly off the southbound slip road connecting the A96 with the A9, but this was not to be, at least in this phase.

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Disappointingly, and against the WCC's wishes, Highland Council has recently decided that the principal access to the campus will, for the time being at least, be via a cross-roads at the top of the slip road off the southbound A9, where it meets the B9006 at Inshes.

Despite Highland Council's intention to install a "smart" system of traffic lights at the junction to regulate traffic flows, the WCC remains deeply concerned that this will prove inadequate to manage the expected increased traffic volumes.

However, all is not lost. Our pressure resulted in a meeting in October with Highland Council, HIE and Transport Scotland, plus six other Community Councils where, following some robust but constructive discussion, the Community Councils were able to secure HIE's agreement to consider further the A96 interchange/A9 sliproad access option. **This will be discussed at our February meeting.**

Pedestrian Crossing on Tower Road

The WCC has recently secured Highland Council's agreement to provide a pedestrian crossing on Tower Road near The Codfather chip shop. The crossing should be installed by early February.

This proposal was first discussed 18 months ago. Then and subsequently, we were advised by one Inverness South Ward councilor that work was unlikely to begin soon due to lack of Highland Council funding. He advised that Scottish Government funding may be available through the "Safe Routes to School" scheme. We're delighted that funding is now available for the crossing, but could all this have happened much earlier?

A New Pharmacy for Cradlehall?

The WCC has supported an application to the NHS for a pharmacy at Cradlehall. Here's hoping!

Beechwood Rail Halt

The WCC supports the call for a rail halt at Beechwood, plus a dedicated rail shuttle service into town. As well as providing easy travel into town for students and other campus users, the shuttle service will provide a welcome "Park & Ride" facility for the public.

This proposal was also discussed at the October Beechwood Campus meeting (see above). As a result, Highland Council, Transport Scotland and Community Councils will be meeting soon to take the idea forward.

East Inverness

(Highland-wide Development Plan)

The Highland Council's proposed Highland-wide Development Plan (HwDP) envisages creating a new and vast retail, housing and office development on what is currently agricultural land lying south of the A96 on both sides of Barn Church Road. A project of a similar scale is proposed for Tornagrain.

The WCC argued vigorously against these plans because of likely increased traffic congestion, uncertainty over infrastructure financing, the impact on Inverness City Centre of such a huge, out-of-town retail park and the loss of agricultural land.

Disappointingly, the Scottish Government has recently broadly endorsed the Highland Council's proposals, including those for East Inverness. The next stage will be a public consultation on HC's proposed Inner Moray Firth Development Plan, late in the Spring. This issue will be on our agenda in the coming months.