



# Lasswade District Civic Society

## Summer Newsletter 2010

### **Introduction:**

Welcome to the Summer Newsletter of the Lasswade and District Civic Society. Thanks to many people we have been busy. At our spring AGM we heard a fascinating account of the history of the area by Neil Stuart. In June we cleaned up rubbish and lorry tyres from the river between Polton and Lasswade and the villages, only to see them and piles of black bags promptly removed by Midlothian Council while we barbecued in the park. People have worked hard on the community garden which enhances the middle of the village. We have responded to planning applications, started a collaboration with other groups along the River North Esk to utilise its flow to generate renewable electricity along its length, worked with Historic Scotland over the future of the Mavisbank grounds, and opened up a campaign to improve the broadband of Lasswade and Polton. A big thank you to Sarah Barron and David Smith who stepped down from the committee this year and a warm welcome to Sheila Murray who joins us from Loanhead and Adam Landsdown from Polton. As always do come and join us. Full details are on the web site

<http://www.lasswadecivic.com>

(David Sugden, Chair)

### **Footpaths**

#### **Access to Mavisbank grounds from Polton**

We are trying to solve a problem of local access to Mavisbank grounds from the Polton end. The people living in the houses at the entrance believe that the route goes through their gardens and is therefore private. Others have enjoyed walking the circular route through Mavisbank grounds and the river path and are frustrated not to be able to link the two at the Polton end. In consultation with the Esk Valley Trust and the Access Forum we are pushing for an alternative path skirting the outside of the walled garden linking the track to Mavisbank House directly to the river path. The Esk Valley Trust see this as an orbital path off the Esk Valley Way providing access to Mavisbank, one of Scotland's jewels. On the 8th June, 2010 members of all parties (EVT, LDCS, local inhabitants, Historic Scotland, Access Forum) met and agreed to the plan. Moreover, Historic Scotland agreed to such an alternative path on their ground. But they argued that the path has to be fully accessible and protected from horses and thus the cost is estimated to be

£23,500! The Access Forum is considering the next move. In the meantime please discuss this with anyone who might be able to help. Surely it should be possible to implement a commonsense solution!

**Annual Cheese and wine party** This was held in March and was reasonably well attended by our members. Rosemary and Martin Mackay provided superb "nibbles" which helped everyone enjoy themselves. We were caught by a change in the licensing laws so this was a donations event and we will use the money collected (about £50) to replenish the community garden and plant spring bulbs round the Dobson's bench. If you have not sat on their bench it is worth a few minutes of quiet contemplation. It can be found near the War memorial in Lasswade park.

### **AGM**

A superb talk and slide show was given by Neil Stewart, Honorary President Bonnyrigg and Lasswade Local History Society. Neil took us for an imaginary historical walk from Lasswade to Cockpen using slides from archives. He spoke with knowledge and anecdotes and I think we all walked around the locality with a new focus after his talk. We hope he will talk to us again in the autumn and I would really recommend coming.

### **Spring Clean up**

On Saturday June 12<sup>th</sup> about 15 intrepid members gathered in Polton and Lasswade. Some were armed with just black sacks and litter pickers while others wore waders and wellies! Our focus was to clean up the river between Polton and Lasswade as well as litter pick along paths and roadsides. We were all pleased with the mountain we had collected before enjoying a barbeque in the sunshine. Two of our ladies were struggling a little with an old bike they had hauled out of the river when some "youth" offered to help them. Their suggestion was a quick fix "dump the bike in the river"! Many thanks to all who helped and also those who helped with the Community Garden. Check the diary dates so that you can join us next time!

### **Planning Information**

An objection was lodged to Planning Application No 09/00515/PPP the subdivision of an existing plot and development of a new house at 43 Polton Road, Lasswade. This development would adversely affect the Broomieknowe Conservation Area and result in a loss of trees to the locality. The application is going to appeal.

You may have read about Garden grabbing legislation in England. This is something we hope to look into and see if the legislation may help us with the issue of sub-

division of gardens within our conservation area in the future.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/8728633.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/8728633.stm)

The much larger planning proposal has recently been lodged with Midlothian Council, Application No. 09/00636/PAC to **develop the Kevock Vale Park Caravan Site in Lasswade**. The proposal is to remove the existing static homes and replace them with 66 new houses. We hope as many members have made their views known so that any planning application granted will have local views considered. The Society is concerned about development and its implications so we have objected. If you wish to see this letter in full please refer to our website

<http://www.lasswadecivic.com>

Specific information is also available through the online planning system at Midlothian Council and from the Planning Officer dealing with this application Mr. Kingsley Drinkwater on 271 3315.

Remember if you have a Planning Application reference number all applications should be available to view on the Midlothian Council Planning Website.

### **New Lasswade High School Community Campus**

LDCS are attending the consultations within the community as this project moves forward. A design and engineering company have been appointed who are working with Midlothian Council. BDP have a web site where you can look at other projects they have designed and showcase

<http://www.bdp.com/Projects/By-Sector/?category=17>

The budget has been set aside by the council and will allow the library and pool to be re built at the high school. There is a new consultation organized through the computerized "viewpoint" programme. This will allow all interested people a chance to give an opinion on the pool. The survey is very simple, giving three options. The plan is for the terminal to be in the following places at the following times. Please let others know!

Bonnyrigg Leisure Centre (9<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> August)

Lasswade High School Sport centre (16<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> August)

Lasswade High School entrance foyer (23<sup>rd</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> August)

### **Broadband: Limited bandwidth**

It has become clear that parts of Lasswade and Polton have a bandwidth capacity of only 0.5 Mbps (Mega-bytes per second). The reason for this is our distance from the Dalkeith Exchange. This compares with the commitment by the UK government to make a 2 Mbps service universally available by 2012 and present

plans to provide capacity of up to 20 Mbps in many locations. As a local youngster said, "Broadband in Lasswade is simply rubbish".

This limited capacity is an important impediment. It discourages new businesses, it prevents youngsters from embarking on internet business from their home base, it makes people travel to Edinburgh to work, thus limiting the possibilities of home working, and is counter the Scottish Government's low-carbon policies.

The crux of the problem has been explained in a letter to us by Ian Shanks, Head of Scottish Affairs - BT Scotland, PO Box 234, Edinburgh, Midlothian, EH12 9UR, dated 12th June, 2010-07-14:

"The only way to increase speeds obtained by people in Lasswade would be to deploy different technologies - satellite, wireless or the delivery of broadband by fibre cable. BT have a massive £2.5 billion programme under way to deliver broadband speeds to 66% of the population by 2015 via fibre links to street cabinets. I am not able to say at this time whether Dalkeith Exchange and Lasswade will be included in that programme. We are of the view that it will only be commercially viable to roll out the new service to 66% of households and that extension of the scheme to the final third of the population will require public sector intervention and support."

Clearly we should be pressing to be included in this latter programme and the strong hint is that we need to approach politicians at the UK and Scottish level. David Hamilton, MP for Midlothian (House of Commons, London, SW1A OAA) has already been very supportive. If you are affected by limited bandwidth, please write to him. He needs a folder of letters to boost his case. Rhona Brankin is the relevant MSP (P.O. Box 11, 95 High Street, Dalkeith, EH22 1AX). If you want to test your upload and download speed try <http://www.speedtest.net/>

### **Diary dates**

**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> September** Autumn clean up with food and drink afterwards. Meet in Lasswade Park at 10 am. Please bring gardening tools

**Friday 8<sup>th</sup> October** Autumn outing Dark Deadly Dalkeith, ending in the Watch Tower at Newbattle Abbey led by Rae McGhee. Cost approx. £5.00 per ticket. Evening meeting point in Dalkeith to be confirmed. Contact Bridget 0131 663 9707

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> November** Autumn talk, Lasswade Pavilion

