**Councillor's Report**

**Maureen Child, Labour Councillor for Portobello/Craigmillar**

**May 2014**

**Portobello Park Private Bill Progress**

As widely reported, the City of Edinburgh Council’s Portobello Park Private Bill in the Scottish Parliament took another significant step along the way to becoming law and changing the Common Good purpose of part of the park from ‘recreation’ to ‘education’. The consideration stage report was published by the Scottish Parliament Committee recently and those MSPs gave the Council’s proposals their seal of approval, setting aside the objections. The next Committee is on 12 June where amendments will be considered. The Parliament could then debate the Bill on 26 June, its last session before summer recess. All being well, I am advised that the Council could still be on track to deliver the new Portobello High School on the Park in time for current P5s at the feeder primaries to be the first S1 pupils to enjoy their longed-for and much-needed new school building in August 2016.

**Richmond's Hope Expands**

I was delighted to be invited to attend a reception for at Richmond’s Hope Church in Craigmillar recently where some really great work is done with families and new facilities were on display. From very small beginnings in Craigmillar, Richmond's Hope children’s bereavement charity is now expanding well beyond our City’s boundaries. The charity was set up by local people over eleven years ago and in that time the organisation helped 2,500 children cope with the grief a death in their family. It is the most fantastic service, conceived at the grass roots in Craigmillar, growing organically to meet a need for young people to have a safe place to grieve and come to terms with personal loss in their own way.

**A Whale’s Tale**

The stranding of a young adult sperm whale last year sparked widespread interest in these fantastic big mammals, which we very rarely see since they generally belong in the deep seas. The Scottish Marine Animals Stranding Scheme's Director and whale expert Dr Andrew Brownlow will give an illustrated talk on the whales of the Firth of Forth at Portobello Amenity Society's Annual General meeting on Wednesday 18 June in the Baptist Church Hall, 185 Portobello High Street at 7.30pm. All are welcome.

**Edinburgh Marathon Portobello**

There was a very warm welcome all the length of Portobello and Joppa for the 30,000 brave Edinburgh Marathon runners who ran along Portobello Promenade this year, clocking up the first 6-7 miles of their over 26 mile challenge. Many were running for very good causes and were swept along with lots of cheers and encouragement from the spectators. One commented later that their very best crowds for cheering them on were in Portobello, Joppa and Musselburgh.

**Historic Plaques for Local People**

Portobello has a number of plaques up to mark where notable people have been born, lived or died over the years, thanks to a dedicated team of Community Councillors and Portobello Amenity Society Members who continue their valuable work. They plan a new one to remember William Hay (1818 – 1888) restoration architect of St Giles Cathedral who lived at 18 Brunstane Road North. Another group of Portobello residents are planning a plaque to Eric Lomax 'The Railway Man' who grew up for a while in Bedford Terrace.

**Hunters Hall Park**

Plans for a £2 million cycling hub are developing, hoping to meet the needs of both high flying cyclist and those who want just to play around and have fun on a day in the park – and everyone in between. Local Councillors were presented with four possible options which will be reported to culture and sport committee members shortly. The proposed investment was announced in February last year and Hunter's Hall Park, home of the Jack Kane Sports Centre and Community Wing, is the preferred site for a regional track cycling facility and closed one-kilometre road circuit and BMX track. The ambitious plan is in response to discussions with agencies, the cycling community and local people about the need for facilities and opportunities they offer. A final recommendation will be made to the culture and sport committee in August. City culture and sport convener Richard Lewis said: "Plans to build a new cycling hub are still very much in their infancy but the council is considering four main options."

**Widening the Wisp**

It was agreed as a condition of a planning consent ages ago, but work begins soon to widen the junction of the Wisp and Newcraighall Road/Niddrie Mains Road allowing more free flow of traffic, particularly from the south. The finance for this project came through planning gain from the partial redevelopment of Fort Kinnaird quite some time ago. The current eastern boundary wall of the Wisp with Hunter's Hall Park will be rebuilt with the same stone, but further into the park, shaving off a bit of the woodland to create a wider carriageway and footpath.

**Fort Kinnaird Appeal Lodged**

An appeal has gone in against the refusal by the majority of Councillors on the City of Edinburgh Council's development management subcommittee to give consent to a third Edinburgh store being built for Debenham's at Fort Kinnaird in Newcraighall. Those objecting to the proposal were mainly those from City Centre and Leith who felt this would compete with their own shopping centres in Edinburgh, despite strong evidence to the contrary. This third store would be complementary to the current two stores’ operation and - in view of Portobello and Craigmillar Community Councils and all local elected representatives - should have been granted. I have written in support of the appeal.

**Castlebrae Astroturf Available for Hire**

From May 31, Castleview Community Centre, Craigmillar Castle Avenue (aka Sandy’s) will be providing weekend access to the Astro-turf in the grounds of nearby Castlebrae High School. The pitch will be available from 10-4pm, both Saturday and Sunday, and changing facilities will be available at the centre. For charges and booking information, please contact Chris Robinson by phone on 0131 661 4064.

**Pedestrian Crossings**

Good to see progress on the construction of the pedestrian crossing on Duddingston Park South. Work on the crossing at Abercorn Terrace opposite St Philip's Church should start in late summer. The other requests I have had have been assessed but knocked back as they do not meet the threshold, one at Joppa Road at Coillesdene Drive, the other Newcraighall Road at Fort Kinnaird across to the Craigmillar Arts Centre. Neither location scored high enough in the priority assessment. Any new crossings on Niddrie Mains Road will be part of the redevelopment of the Town Centre. There are no plans to change the sequence of the lights at central Portobello although it is still being monitored at peak periods and the timing has been tweaked several times. I am very willing to arrange a site meeting with Council officers at rush hour for those who still feel the balance is not right or fair.

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