

Welcome from John Oldham, Chair



When I was penning my introduction to the last Newsletter it was still snowing. Now Autumn colours are appearing after a wonderful Summer, albeit a bit too dry for some of the time. This seems to be a year of well-defined, almost exaggerated, seasons.

The North Esk Way – Dalkeith Country Park

Shortly after the last Newsletter Roger Crofts and I met Remko Plooi, the Commercial Director at Dalkeith Country Park, and Cameron Manson the Ranger at the Park. We discussed the possibilities for improving pathway access into and out of the Park especially at the northern boundary. It was a good start to reopen interactions with the Park but as with all of the 'blocking points' along the North Esk Way dramatic changes may not happen overnight.



Penicuik Estate

Our actions with the Penicuik Estate and other landowners to find and agree an improved pathway between Newhall Estate and Penicuik have slowed a bit over the summer but are still very much at the centre of attention. In October a group of the EVT Directors will walk a potential new route through the Penicuik Estate with Scott Hall, the Estate's the Business Director, and Charlotte the Ranger. If we can then agree the route and the means to achieve it we hope to work together to bring this improvement to the North Esk Way to reality.

Melville High Drive

And speaking of 'blocking points', Pat Frankland

highlighted a nice circular walk that uses the Melville High Drive on the Eskbank and Newbattle Community Forum Facebook site (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/eskbank/>) in May. It has prompted more people to walk the High Drive. As you know it is very important to maintain use of pathways even where landowners do their best to be difficult so this is a good stimulus – and it is a lovely walk. Thank you Pat.

Hewan Wood Litter

Thanks also to Miguel Parades Bandes, one of our members, who single-handedly has volunteered to place, and remove when necessary, litter bags in the Hewan Wood. The effect seems to be very beneficial to the extent that there was almost no litter to be found lying around during our last Hewan Wood Working-Party day earlier in September. If only all users of paths and highways were as caring for the countryside as Miguel is. Muchas gracias Miguel.

As you will see elsewhere we were delighted to read the Sheriff's judgement on the right to access the Penicuik Estate via Cairnbank Road in Penicuik. This judgement supports a very important principle of access and Midlothian Council are due a big 'thank you' for their willingness to stand up (at considerable financial risk) for community interests. It is also good to know that Peter Smail, the new(ish) Provost for Midlothian is keen to see improved paths and access across Midlothian as a feature of his term in office. I learnt this in my first meeting with him earlier in the summer and was pleased to hear that he sees the Esk Valley Trust as one of the important groups that he wants to work with in this regard.

You will read more about Trust activities and future events throughout this newsletter. Thank you for your continuing support



Midlothian Outdoor Festival

This was the first year that the event, previously called the Midlothian Walking Festival, was expanded to include a broader range of outdoor activities. The Festival ran from 4-12 August and the Esk Valley Trust helped with two (of the 71) activities. First was a circular walk starting from Rosslyn Chapel and following the river North Esk to the far end of Mavisbank policies before returning via Bilston Wood to Roslin; about 8 miles overall. We had planned to walk as far as Lasswade but there was so much to talk about on the way that we agreed to cut it a little short. The 20 walkers all enjoyed themselves.



Thank you Shelagh Jenkins

Many of you will know Shelagh who has been associated with the Esk Valley Trust since its very early days. She helped to identify the options for the North Esk Way by tramping established pathways and exploring new routes (some of which were more than challenging) with other enthusiasts, organised EVT events, represented the EVT on the Midlothian Access Forum (also becoming its chairperson) and has been a Trustee/Director for many years. Earlier this year she decided that it was time to stand down as a Director/Trustee. The Esk Valley Trust owes Shelagh a big debt of thanks for all of the time and effort that she has put into helping the Trust to achieve its objectives. Thank you Shelagh.

Of course that opens an opportunity for someone new to become a Trustee/Director and help the Trust to achieve its future goals. Nominations are welcome.

Our second contribution was to host a talk on the artist Sir William Gillies who lived in Temple for much of his life. Dr Joanna Soden, former collections curator at the Royal Scottish Academy gave a fascinating talk to a full house at St David's Church Hall in Dalkeith. Joanna has said that she would be willing to make another contribution to next year's Festival.



Sheriff's judgement on Cairnbank Road, Penicuik

If you are familiar with Cairnbank Road you will know that local residents erected a barrier across the path that leads from this private road into the Penicuik Estate some time ago and have since refused to take it down despite the actions of the Midlothian Access Forum and Midlothian Council. The details are complex but the issue resulted in a case being raised at the Sheriff's court in Edinburgh. The Sheriff issued her judgement on 6 September and found in favour of Midlothian Council who argued for access through this road and path to be restored. At this time of writing the responsibility for payment of costs has yet to be decided and we do not know if there will be an appeal. However, subject to these caveats, this is good news for the upholding of rights of access under the Land Reform Act and for the (potential) restoration of access to this short part of the North Esk Way. You can see the judgement at <https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/docs/default-source/cos-general-docs/pdf-docs-for-opinions/2018scedin50.pdf?sfvrsn=0>.

Introducing our new Committee member – Ben Miller



'I'm very pleased to be getting more involved with the work of the Trust at this crucial time for our local environment.

Midlothian and East Lothian are expected to be the two fastest growing council areas in Scotland over the coming decades. Whatever you think of

the expansion in housing, there's a big opportunity ahead to get far more people out and about, benefiting from and exploring the beautiful river environment on their doorstep, at the same time as we work to enhance both the Esks as healthy corridors for nature amid the new developments.

From the John Muir Way to the North Coast 500, there's a clear appetite for 'packaged up' routes that both locals and visitors can plan a trip around. I want to help get a sense of momentum going as the completion of the North Esk Way route gets closer.

Autumn is by far my favourite season and I'm looking forward to taking my one-year-old daughter, who has

become a very good walker in the last few weeks, to some of my favourite spots.

There's something quite magical about a dewy, sunny, leafy autumn day and whether it's Ironmills Park, Mavisbank, Maiden Bridge or Gunpowder Mills, we are all spoilt for choice along the Esks. From the grand landscapes of the Dalkeith and Penicuik estates to our own tranquil spot at Hewan Wood, there are hidden gems from source to mouth.

I think the challenge for the Trust is to share our knowledge and passion for the river and its history with more people, and then in turn encourage them to be advocates for its future.'

Sale of Newbattle Woodland

We received the good news that the landowner has taken the woodland areas off the market for now, although apparently he does intend to re advertise some of the areas at a future date. We are looking at options for a Community Woodland scheme.

More Hewan Wood Working Parties – and the reopening of the Roslin Glen path



It seems a long time since the spring clear-up when ten volunteers cleared the paths in the Hewan Wood, strimmed the steps, cleaned the information boards, pulled up knotweed, collected litter and enjoyed each other's company in the warm May sunshine. More recently, on September 4th, we were joined again by the Midlothian Paths Team to deal with all of these things again after a summer of plentiful growth, and also to make good some of the wobbly steps, to straighten up fencing, remove rusting debris and enjoy cake. Our thanks to Jo Cooke and the Paths Team for their help.



It is worth noting that Jo's team have now completed signage and consolidation of a path from Rosslyn Chapel into Roslin Glen that avoids the dangerous landslip on the old Roslin Glen path. So once again a path from Roslin to the Hewan Wood along the river in the glen is open. A real joy of a walk.



News from the South Esk

Thank you to Joy Godfrey for bringing attention to the problem we have at Newbattle of raw, sewage being allowed to flow into the River South Esk. This has been happening for years and SEPA are aware. There is growing pressure on Scottish Water to look at improving their infrastructure as it just doesn't cope with the new houses built in the surrounding area. If you walk in Newbattle and have seen (or smelt!) the pollution and waste products in the River after rain, please do complain to Scottish Water and SEPA. Also, please do remember not to flush anything down the toilet apart from toilet paper. The photo shows that wipes are not flushable (despite what it says on the packet).



Forthcoming events

Midlothian Science Festival Talk hosted by Esk Valley Trust

'Human Prion Disease in 2018'

*(a history of the BSE outbreak and its
consequences for the human population)*

on Friday 12 October, 19.30

in St David's Church Hall, Dalkeith

The talk will be given by Dr Neil
McKenzie of the National CJD
Research and Surveillance Unit at
the University of Edinburgh.

Guided walk of Dalkeith Country Park

On Saturday 3rd November, Cameron Manson, Ranger at Dalkeith Country Park, will lead a guided walk through the Park.

The walk will start at 10.00 am, starting at the main gate to the Country Park and will last for about one and a half hours. Good footwear and relevant weather gear will be needed. Numbers will be limited to 20.

If you want to attend please email Victoria at
enquiries@eskvalleytrust.org.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting for 2019 will be held on the evening of Friday 10 May 2019 in St David's Hall, Dalkeith.

Don't forget the website

Remember to keep an eye on the Esk Valley Trust web site (<http://www.eskvalleytrust.org/>) which is where information on all items of interest are placed. We are going to update the website in the coming months to make it easier to find information.

Esk Valley Trust Committee

Chairman

John Oldham Loanhead

Company Secretary and Treasurer

Rennie Frazer Fairmilehead

Directors

Roger Crofts Musselburgh

Pat Frankland Dalkeith

Peter Raine Carlops

Ben Miller Dalkeith

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