

## Welcome from John Oldham, Chair



As I write this ‘warm’ welcome to the Spring Newsletter the snow is falling outside – again! With luck, though, by the time that you are reading these lines the snowy times will be fond memories of

magnificent views in the countryside and a bit of relief that the nuisance of wintry disruptions is behind us. While I was litter-picking on the road the other day (a nuisance far more annoying than snow) I could see that the wild garlic and wild onion beds that form a carpet of green on the woodland banks around the Bilston and Hewan Woods (and many other places) are bursting through. So Spring really is around the corner; we just have to be a bit patient this year.



Patience is also a necessary virtue as we continue to progress the plans for the North Esk Way. I hope that our ideas for an improved route between New Hall and Penicuik will become an ‘aspirational core path’ as a result of Midlothian Council’s review of the Core Path Network that is just beginning. I joined a meeting about that at Vogrie House recently. We shall also be meeting with representatives of Dalkeith Country Park in March to discuss options for our path through the Park and on towards Musselburgh.

The route of the North Esk Way links Melville Castle to Dalkeith Country Park via the Kings Gate. You may well be aware of the awful accident in December in which a lady out jogging near to the Kings Gate was hit by a car and died. While the Esk Valley Trust

exists to encourage people to be out and about this accident serves as a terrible reminder of the need to take great care wherever paths and roads meet – and of the need for safe crossings to be installed in places that are hazardous. The exit from Kings Gate is one such place.

Elsewhere the Sherriff’s hearing about access through Cairnbank Road in Penicuik has concluded the hearing of evidence (in January) but still has to await the presentation of legal arguments (in June). No date has yet been set for the written judgement. Patience can be stretched!

On a much more positive note, I am delighted to welcome Ben Miller as a new Director of the Trust. Ben lives in Dalkeith and has a professional background in policy and communications. He has worked for an MSP group in the Scottish Parliament and is now in the energy industry. He has a strong interest in the local area and the outdoors. If we could attract someone from the Penicuik area to join the Board too our geographical representation would be even better – and if that person helped the gender balance on the Board (how can I say this? – there are more males than females at present) so much the better.

Lastly, the AGM will be in St David’s Hall, Dalkeith on Friday 11 May 2018 and our speaker will be Professor Bruce Whitelaw (see details below). I hope to see you there.



## Springfield Mill Weir and the Ecology of the Esks

In the first week of February the weir at Springfield Mill was breached. The concrete face of the weir fell forwards revealing the internal timbers. After the weirs at the Gunpowder Mills near Roslin and at Polton this is the third weir on the North Esk to collapse in recent years. While there will be those who regret the loss of these remaining features of the industrial heritage of the river the overall health and ecology of the river may benefit. That was, after all, the purpose of the plan (that is currently suspended) to remove a number of weirs along the river, including this one. It seems that nature is taking action even without support from SEPA!



It was, one presumes, a pure coincidence that Tommy McDermott (an independent ecologist well known for his work with the Forth Fisheries Trust) had presented an

evening talk about the Ecology of the Esk rivers to the Trust in November 2017. Tommy outlined the evolving ecology of the rivers and highlighted the importance of the weirs in restricting some ecologically desirable changes. Many thanks to him for an excellent talk and discussion.

## Scotland's Land

On a broader front one of our Directors, Professor Roger Crofts, recently presented the Annual Peter Wilson Lecture at the Royal Society of Edinburgh. His theme was "Scotland's Land: Successes and Failures, Challenges and Solutions" and he tackled many of the issues and controversies surrounding the strategies (or lack of them) for managing the land for various purposes over time. If you would like to hear what he said you can listen to the talk on <https://www.rse.org.uk/event/joint-annual-rsescrr-peter-wilson-lecture-scotlands-land-successes-and-failures-challenges-and-solutions>.

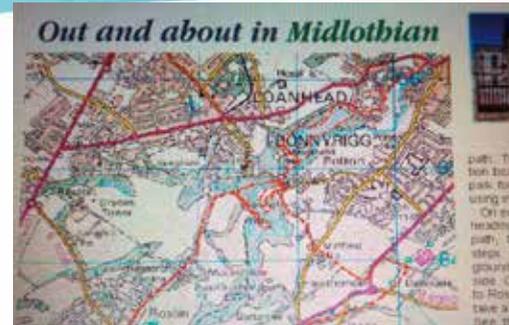
## Midlothian Outdoor Festival

Midlothian's Walking Festival that has been held for the last ten years has been transformed into the Midlothian Outdoor Festival and this year will be held during August 4-12.

**Esk Valley Trust Walk** The Esk Valley Trust will lead a circular walk from Roslin to Lasswade and back (taking in various features along the way) on Sunday 5 August.

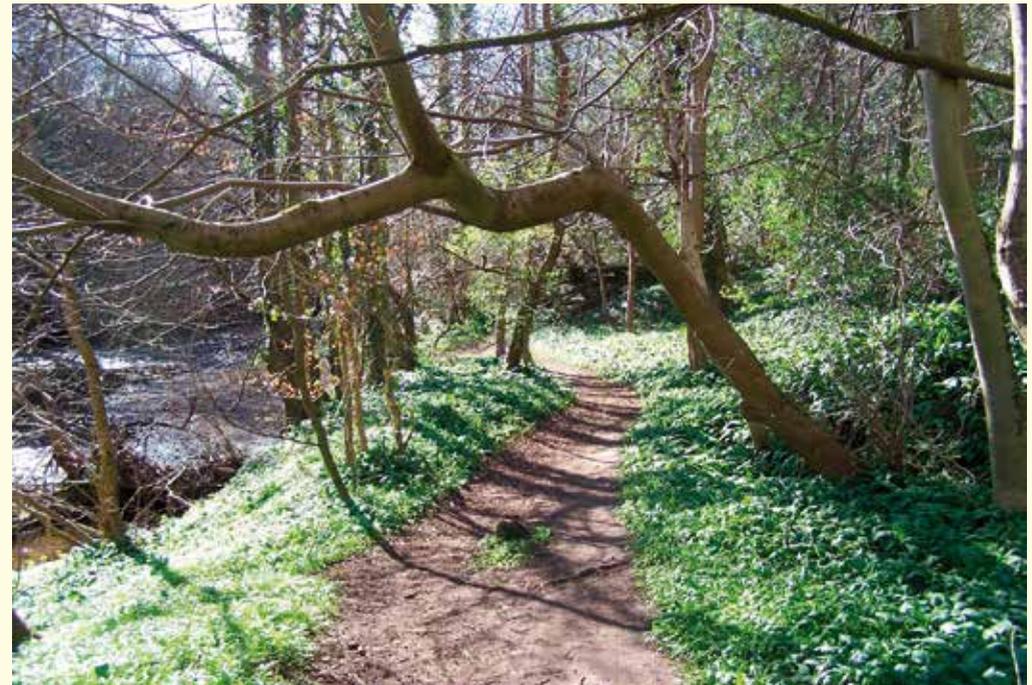
**Esk Valley Trust Talk** We are also hosting a talk on the art of the Esk valleys on Friday 10th August. This will be given by Dr Joanna Soden, former Collections Curator of the Royal Scottish Academy and will focus on the work of Sir William Gillies, the influential artist born in Haddington in 1898

## A Curious Thing along The Way



Thanks also to Dr Ian Brown for another excellent evening talk in February. Ian was a GP in Bonnyrigg for many years and in recent years has achieved a profound knowledge of the paths and associated features of Midlothian's countryside. Ian's talk picked out some of the curious features along some of the paths near to the Esks. There are few, if any, paths in Midlothian that he hasn't walked (and tracked with his GPS). He was a prime mover in publicising walks in Midlothian and these can be found via [https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/200226/walking\\_and\\_cycling](https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/200226/walking_and_cycling).

## Newbattle Woodlands



The woodlands around Newbattle which form part of the original Newbattle Estate were put up for sale at the end of last year. The areas for sale do not include the Ancrum woods which are owned by Newbattle Abbey College but all the surrounding bits of woodland which the local community enjoys and which are a vital green space for wildlife along the River South Esk..

A meeting attended by 80 people gave support to a group being set up with the aim of taking over these areas and forming a Community Woodland,

in a similar way to the Esk Valley Trust at the Hewan Wood. A closing date was set for the sale and a proposal was submitted, but to date there has been no response from the owner. If we don't succeed in our proposal we will have a group in place ready to take on the woodlands when the opportunity arises in the future.

If you are interested in finding out more about this and how you might get involved please email [pat.frankland@btinternet.com](mailto:pat.frankland@btinternet.com).

# 2018 AGM and talk

The 2018 AGM will be held on Friday evening 11th May 2018 in St David's Hall Dalkeith.



## GUEST SPEAKER

Professor Bruce Whitelaw, Deputy Director and Head of the Division of Developmental Biology at the Roslin Institute, University of Edinburgh

### *“The Esk Valley - a cradle for world leading genetics”*

Bruce's interests lie in the development of genetic techniques for biomedical and agricultural applications. He is currently very active in the field of genome editing and has a strong personal interest in public engagement in the development of science. He is a regular presenter and discussant in Edinburgh Science Festival events. So Bruce is well accustomed to explaining these complex scientific theories to the masses!

## Forthcoming events

May 11th	AGM
May 27th	Hewan Wood Spring clearing
August 5th	Midlothian Outdoor Festival Roslin circular walk
August 10th	Midlothian Outdoor Festival Evening Talk at St David's Hall
September 4th	Hewan Wood Autumn clearing (with the Midlothian Paths Team)

## 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.

## Esk Valley Trust Executive Committee

### Chairman

John Oldham                      Loanhead

### Company Secretary and Treasurer

Rennie Frazer                      Fairmilehead

### Directors

Roger Crofts                      Musselburgh

Pat Frankland                      Dalkeith

Shelagh Jenkins                      Loanhead

Peter Raine                      Carlops

Ben Miller                      Dalkeith

### Contact us at

The Esk Valley Trust  
c/o Edinburgh and Lothian's Greenspace Trust  
109/11 Swanston Road  
Edinburgh  
EH10 7DS

Email [enquiries@eskvalleytrust.org](mailto:enquiries@eskvalleytrust.org)

Website [www.eskvalleytrust.org](http://www.eskvalleytrust.org)

Face book [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)