

balerno



the magazine and newsletter of Balerno Parish Church; for the Church and for the Community

FREE

Blether



COMING TOGETHER SLOWLY

The Kirk Sessions of Balerno Parish Church and Currie Kirk met together on Wednesday 25th February in a Joint Meeting the purpose of which was to progress the journey towards Union mandated by the 2023 Edinburgh and West Lothian Presbytery Plan. That plan had originally instructed that Currie and Balerno should form a Deferred Union, but that decision was later modified such that Currie and Balerno became linked charges pending achieving union, which is currently envisaged for a date in 2027.

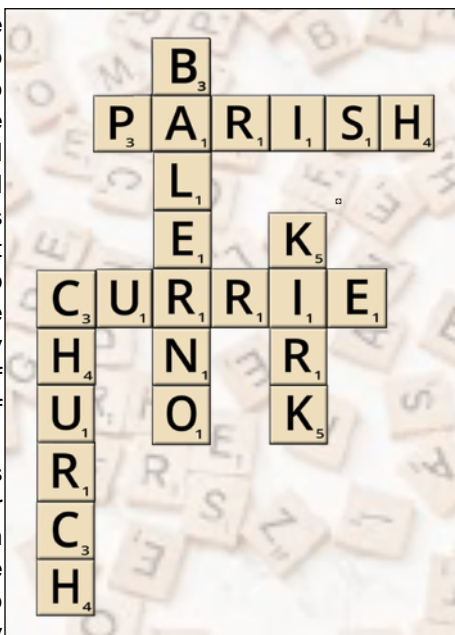
It has been nearly 9 months since the linkage of the congregations of Currie and Balerno and it would be understandable for people to be wondering if any advance has been made towards the completion of their intended union. Our regular readers will have followed the chronicle of joint events and services which have been held over this period but there comes a point where the 'getting to know you' exercise has to move on to more substantial conversations if there is to be any progress and so there was a sense of expectation in the air at the joint meeting of the Kirk Sessions on 25th February.

At the risk of dragging out this report, it is worth pointing out before we go any further that this is a process which is going on in many other congregations at the present time as churches are being obliged to go into unions with their neighbours. It is not easy

and there is no guarantee of success. Examples of unions which have been met with inflexible resistance are not uncommon and have inevitably sometimes put stress on relationships.

Here we have two churches, the youngest of which – Balerno – is approaching its 200th birthday. They both have their own well-established traditions and ways of doing things, all of which probably arose for perfectly good reason and it can be understandable if members are a bit apprehensive about what the future holds.

At the core of the discussion was the proposal that the two congregations should, for a trial period until the end of June, worship together every Sunday, with the place of worship alternating each Sunday or each month. At the core of this proposal was the idea that the members of the two congregations might be able to worship at a more convenient time as well as to get to know each other better through more regular contact. However, there was a fear expressed by some that the effect on our communities would be to create the impression that, despite the temporary nature of the proposal, one of the churches was closing and that worship might be less accessible. Elders were invited to consider whether a united congregation might not be stronger and more effective than two smaller ones. In the course of the discussion it was apparent



that there were different visions of the future being presented in the meeting and when the matter was put to a vote it was evident that there was no clear support for a change in the time or organisation of worship at the present. This means that we will continue to worship in Balerno at 9.30 on Sunday mornings and that this arrangement will be reconsidered the end of June. We will continue to have joint services on the 3rd Sunday of each month. However, it was agreed that both congregations should come together on Easter Sunday to celebrate Holy Communion and hear, what we hope will be, the joint choir's performance of the Easter Cantata, Olivet to Calvary.

A Strategy Group has been set up with 4 members each from both congregations. It has a remit to look into some of the formalities / legalities of the union process and to make recommendations to the Kirk Sessions for the way forward. There were more volunteers to participate in this work than there were places and the membership of the group reflects a balance of gender as well as between elders and non-elders. There is a Moving Forward Group which has members from both congregations and has been looking into the possibilities of employing an outreach worker. Both congregations have had past experience in the management of outreach workers and the Presbytery's Mission Plan is encouraging the congregations to consider this sort of initiative for ministry in the area. There have already been discussions in the hope of securing some financial support for such an enterprise and the group have undertaken to share a possible job description with the Kirk Sessions.

It was agreed that there should be an invitation extended to allow any elder who was interested in receiving some training for leading worship to contact the minister with a view to some discussions with interested volunteers.

So, while the meeting of the 2 Kirk Sessions may not have made spectacular progress, it was progress. It is also worth noting that there was general surprise and satisfaction to discover that, thanks to the guidance of our Interim Minister, the meeting had only lasted 90 minutes. Thank-you, Roy.

Strategy Groups, Unions and Currie Kirk and Balerno Parish Church

What does the appointment of a Strategy Group mean for the impending union of Currie Kirk and Balerno Parish Church?

With the appointment of a Strategy Group the process towards Union takes on a more structured form. But what is likely to be the result? That depends on the remit given to the Strategy Group.

In general the remit agreed by the Joint Kirk Sessions on 25th February is to develop, support and progress the union of both Churches in the months ahead, and the most important aspect of that is completion of the Basis of Union; back to that in a moment.

Decisions on union are variously for Kirk Sessions and congregations. The Strategy Group is an adviser or facilitator and it cannot make the final decisions.

There are subsidiary tasks for the Group some related to the union and others not so obviously. We'll come back to those as well.

The Union is prescribed in the Presbytery Plan and the principal guidance on what the union is to look like will be found in the Presbytery Plan. The Plan is for the most part couched in terms of encouragement to Balerno and Currie on how to pursue mission work, rather than how to achieve the union in structural terms. There is some instruction in the Plan as to the 'what' - eg focus on reaching young families - and a little on 'how', eg fund a local post. But there is little or nothing on structure or governance. You have to look at the Basis of Union for that; and the task of completing that is the first in the Strategy Group's remit.

The Basis of Union is effectively the legal agreement to form the union; both congregations have to sign up to it. The Group has to complete the draft Basis of Union document. That makes it sound straightforward and easy; just sign on the line. Could it be that simple?

The Basis of Union document - a legal and procedural agreement - outlines the terms of union, including the new church name, governance structure, parish area, and ministry arrangements. It typically includes provisions for property, finances, manse arrangements, and for the appointment of a new Kirk Session. What the Group has before it is a 1349 word template document, within which there are optional paragraphs - sort of 'pick-n-mix' style - and if you refine it down then you're looking at about 700 words. Get's better all the time?

The document itself is presented by the Presbytery as a template with blank spaces for completion by each congregation. There is no general invitation for tabling of amendments although it may be adjusted when in operation, but only, of course, under authority of Presbytery.

The Strategy Group would be unable to complete the document without authority from Kirk Sessions. They will recommend a form for signature. So far so good.

But congregations will want some idea of how the new church is going to operate. So, arrangements for services have loomed

large and will obviously be very important. Some discussion may also be expected on for example, the size of the new Kirk Session, and importantly on how that Session will actually work. To some extent that will depend on how the new Session and congregation view Mission, and on that point it's useful to remind ourselves of how Presbytery viewed the mission responsibilities of the united congregations. The Presbytery Plan advises that

'Balerno and Currie will serve and care for their communities, 'spreading the Word of God by traditional means and new contemporary approaches.' This they will do through community engagement and working in partnership to meet pastoral and social needs.

The Presbytery Plan recognises that in the arrangements for Currie and Balerno (and for Juniper Green and Colinton) it is addressing four communities. It continues;

They will retain a sense of continuity as they connect with their neighbourhoods.'The four congregations are thus asked to build upon the Water of Leith locale, pursuing the mooted idea of a 'pilgrimage route' and, given the connections created with the local schools, to continue sharing mission in and with the school communities.'

Note also in relation to Buildings

'In light of the missional possibilities described above, it is proposed that all of the buildings in this area (Currie, Balerno, Colinton and Juniper Green) be designated 'A'.'

Buildings listed as 'A' are to be retained, and the expectation is that they will be used

The Presbytery Plan aims congregations to work with their communities. By envisaging two church campuses, Currie and Balerno it implicitly envisages continuity. Thus a close connection and co-operation between Currie and Balerno, and with Juniper Green and Colinton. And it envisages both Currie and Balerno campuses being used to the full for that purpose.

That would suggest that the organisational structures within the new union must be apt to encourage and facilitate community working. So how might that be done? Well, in the absence of a sudden turn of mind by the Presbytery and retention of a linkage, a union of Currie and Balerno will involve a single, united Kirk Session. But that single Kirk Session will necessarily involve local management structures (committees) for each site, provided such a structure is approved by the Presbytery. And there is no reason to suppose that Presbytery would not agree given that such a structure facilitates the mission as set out by the Presbytery Plan, while respecting the distinct identities of both congregations.

The model of separate sub-Session structures can include eg appointing local committees or "building sub-committees" within the new united parish structure to manage the maintenance, usage, etc of retained buildings. Realistically that would probably be necessary in the case of Currie and Balerno.

There's so much more to communication

A series of articles in the earlier years of the *Blether* raised questions about how we communicate and whether there were things that could be done to ensure that messages could be received across the community whether or not the intended audience was on line or whatever.

For whatever reason that initiative ran into the sand and so there are still communications breakdowns when messages aren't received. There is near universal agreement that communication is important; but somehow organisations don't seem to want to face up to the

problems in putting it right. A communications strategy would allow communications in the broadest sense to be considered. It might well enable a new united congregation in Currie and Balerno to be confident that messaging within and across the church, and importantly between the church and the community worked to the benefit of everyone with an interest.

However, if the Strategy Group decides to look at the issue, communication is not, and never has been, simply about magazines and newsletters.

"Lent comes providentially to re-awaken us, to shake us from our lethargy."

Pope Francis

This year you had no time at all to recover from failed New Year Resolutions before you were cast into the season of Lent. Is it fair to ask whether you're getting on any better? Just in case you missed the start, that was on Wednesday 18 February and Lent goes on until Thursday 2 April, followed by Good Friday. But what is Lent?

The word "Lent" derives from the Old English word *lencten*, meaning "spring" or "springtime". It originates from West Germanic roots (*langitinaz*), literally translating to "long days" or the "lengthening of the day," referring to the vernal equinox (20 March) when days become noticeably longer; and then the clocks go forward on 29 March.

Lent does apparently have pre-Christian origins but is now rightly known as the forty day period of fasting marked in most Christian practice although the precise dates do differ. For instance in the Orthodox Churches, Great Lent is observed continuously without interruption for 40 days starting on Clean Monday, the sixth Monday before Palm Sunday and ends on Lazarus Saturday which this year is on 4 April.

We can also note that Ramadan - 17 February to 16 March - in some ways reflects the essence of Lent. Both Lent and Ramadan are sacred, annual periods of fasting, prayer, and spiritual renewal that focus on deepening one's relationship with God, fostering self-discipline, and building empathy for the less fortunate. While they differ in duration and specific rules, both promote charity, repentance, and self-reflection.

Lent is considered a solemn religious season and period of preparation in the Christian calendar, rather than a "festival" in the celebratory sense. There is as one might expect, a direct, historical, and functional link between Carnival and Lent. Carnival immediately precedes Lent and acts as a final, intense period of celebration, indulgence, and feasting — often called "farewell to meat" - *carne levare*. The period of Lent is marked by three pillars: Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving. It encourages self-reflection, repentance, and simplicity, and traditions around Lent focus on the giving up of luxuries, eating simply, and contributing to charity.

Observance of lent is central to the liturgical calendar of Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans/Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, and Moravians. Eastern Christians may observe a stricter fast (Great Lent), which can include abstaining from dairy, eggs, and wine, and they may not count Sundays in the 40-day tally.

Lent has not been central within Presbyterianism although there are signs that it may be growing in significance within the Presbyterian tradition. Based on recent trends, and while the observance of Lent in the Church of Scotland has remained consistent, there has it seems been a slight resurgence, rather than a decline, compared to, say, ten years ago, with many congregations observing it. It is seen as a time for prayer, reflection, and, in some cases, giving up luxuries.

On that theme of resurgence, and for example, Stockbridge Parish Church hosted Sanctuary First's 'Windows on the Resurrection' art installation for the week surrounding Ash Wednesday. Twelve people involved with Sanctuary First painted a window and each recorded a prayer to accompany it. Each depicts a different scene from the story of the Resurrection of Christ. Together with an ambient soundscape, it invited people into an immersive spiritual experience, through light, sound and art. Unfortunately it is in the nature of the beast that such events tend to be reported on after the event; but it may be that there is something to succeed it next year.

Next - Should there be a fixed date for Easter?

So, why can't we have a fixed date for Easter?

Why is it virtually impossible to track when Easter is going to fall. Of course it's not that difficult; it's just why can't it settle down like Christmas

Easter changes every year because it's tied to the lunar cycle, specifically the first Sunday after the Paschal Full Moon, which is the first full moon on or after the vernal (spring) equinox (March 21st). This system, established by the First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, links Easter to the Jewish Passover commemorating Jesus' crucifixion around that time, making its date shift based on the moon's unpredictable cycle within the solar calendar.

The Christian church has made several attempts throughout history to fix the date of Easter, or at least to standardize the complex, moon-based calculation (known as the *computus*) to ensure all churches celebrate on the same day. While Easter remains a

"moveable feast" that shifts annually between March 22 and April 25, there have been significant, concrete efforts to lock it into a set date, particularly in the 20th and 21st centuries.

There was for example The Easter Act of 1928. The League of Nations and the UN had a go. However The proposal received support from some Protestant churches, but the Orthodox and Catholic churches were hesitant to break with the tradition of the Nicaean formula.

Pope Francis and Orthodox leaders expressed strong interest in a unified, fixed date for Easter, particularly to coincide with the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea in 2025.

So, for now anyway, it seems we'll just have to keep going with the *computus*



The Fight Between Carnival and Lent. Pieter Bruegel the Elder Year. 1559.

The Church of Scotland recognises that in a changing world, simply being in, and therefore part of a community, is a vital asset. Mere presence can, in itself, be an aspect of mission.

There is a tension between that position and the church's apparent policy of withdrawal from community through closure and disposal of its estate. It is difficult to view that policy positively, especially given press reports in particular about property disposal favouring commercial development rather than community support. It may be that there are case specific reasons, but looked at in the round, disposal for commercial development means withdrawal and loss of even mere presence from a locality; it ought then to be the absolute last option.

It may be that falling numbers mean that closure becomes inevitable. But if mere presence itself is mission one might think that the Church might wish to develop models by which 'mere presence' can be maintained even when it appears to withdraw by closure. Partnerships within the affected communities are an obvious opportunity.

Our Union with Currie is coming,

We are enjoined to do mission, which if you like, is, at the absolute minimum, an

obligation to maintain even just 'mere presence'. How will we do that?

We will for a start have to start to plan better for an uncertain future; not just for the next five or ten years, but for the next, twenty, thirty or even fifty years.

Edinburgh City is at present starting development of CityPlan2040, which will be promulgated probably some time after 2028.

Balerno Community Council are also preparing Balerno's own Local Place Plan to feed into CityPlan2040. Both are looking into the, in relative terms, distant future. Planning for the future is an inexact science, which doesn't mean it should be avoided. Only by scenario planning can we possibly provide for the future.

Balerno Parish Church and Currie Kirk will also have to look into the crystal ball, and agree what they want our two communities to look like. We know that there will still be two communities in fifty years. They may look different, but there will still be people here. Those communities will still need an infrastructure of support. By 2076 Balerno village will likely be much less of a quiet residential "commuter" spot and more a "digital hub" with intense, but localised, daily life. Daytime population levels will be higher. The average age of residents will be higher -

the projections are for over 27% of the population at large to be over 65 in 2072 - and the need for a care environment will be higher. at present only 16% of Edinburgh population is over age 65 while the figure for Scotland as a whole is 20%. Traditional hubs like the pub, the church etc may begin to evolve into 'village mobility hubs' combining retail, transport and community services. In some senses the Mill is light years ahead of its time.

Now, bringing this back to a local perspective, and as union discussions begin in earnest, a critical issue for both Currie and Balerno congregations will be whether we are planning for that future or simply for ourselves now in 2026. Mere presence is the bare minimum but it still means that you start with maintaining what there is in terms of presence.

Signs on church doors which proclaim 'no service today' are a first step towards the withdrawal of mere presence.

In absolutely practical terms a 'Strategy Group will have to look at how even mere presence is maintained, and in developing a vision for the future its work must involve factoring in much greater co-operation and planning with and across the whole community.



**Come and visit The Mill Café at the St Joseph's Centre.
Open Tuesday to Friday,
9.00am to 2.00pm.**

**(and the 2nd Saturday of the month
when the Farmers' Market is on)**

There is something for everyone at the Mill Café. A warm welcome awaits families, walkers, locals – in other words, the whole community. It is bright and spacious, and the food is fantastic. You will find good quality coffee, freshly baked scones, delicious cakes and much more besides. Try it once and we guarantee you'll be back.



Every day we have two varieties of soup, lovingly made by our Mill volunteers and staff. Try our baked potatoes, bacon rolls, roll and sausage or toasted sandwiches and paninis, with a variety of tasty fillings to choose from.

We use Fairtrade products wherever possible.

The Mill Café, St Joseph's Centre, 2 Main Street, Balerno EH14 9EH

Applications are invited for the 2026 Award of the Louise Duncan Bursary

Commemorating the life and work of former minister, Louise Duncan, our eponymous bursary provides £500 to a young adult aged 17 to 25 (inclusive), living in or near Balerno, to help meet the cost of travelling out of Scotland to take part in voluntary work which has an aim of benefiting disadvantaged communities.

Application forms are available from Balerno Parish Church website:

<https://www.balernochurch.org.uk/for-others/louise-duncan-memorial-bursary/> or

by contacting bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk

Completed applications should either be emailed to:

bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk

or posted to: Balerno Parish Church, 2 Main Street, Balerno, EH14 7EH.

Closing Date: Applications should be sent so as to be received at or before midnight on Wednesday 25 March 2026.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview in April 2026 with the successful applicant announced by the end of April 2026. Travel supported by the Louise Duncan Bursary must take place during the calendar year it is awarded.

When they have returned home, recipients of the bursary are invited to the talk to the congregation, telling us about the experience the money has helped provide.

In previous years we have heard from successful applicants who travelled to teach young children in Cambodia for two months and who went to Bolivia for a year-long placement with a human rights NGO. 2025's recipient travelled to Honduras with Project Trust.



Balerno Police Station?

EdinburghCPTSouthWest@scotland.pnn.police.uk

Balerno may have lost its Police Station, but there was a welcome Police presence at the February Farmers Market where both the Community and Crime Prevention officers were present, offering advice on domestic security and also a bike security marking service.

Police Scotland will be back possibly at the March market in case you missed them last month. They are also available via email at the above address.

Meanwhile at the former Balerno Police Station work has started on

refitting and modernising for its reopening both as a Community Hub and also as an after school child care centre. It is hoped that the refit can be completed in time for the start of the autumn school term in August.

The after school child care services will be provided by Simply Play. Simply Play was established in 2010 in partnership with West Lothian Council and currently operate in Broxburn, Livingston, East Calder, Wester Inch, Craigsfarm, and also at a fully outdoors woodland nursery at Harburn.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in Balerno?

News in brief from
Balerno Community Council

Those of you who attended the February Farmers Market may have noticed the Community Council stall and may have had the opportunity to chat about the Community Council's Local Place Plan consultation. The Council agreed the process for preparing a draft Plan involving an initial stage of face to face meetings with residents and also with local groups and organisation.

This would be followed by preparation of a draft Plan during April which would be submitted to the City Council by the end of June. If you missed the February Market the Council will be continuing the conversations at the March Market and there will also be public meetings during March. In the meantime here's the QR code for the LPP on the Community's Council's website.



A copy of the short questionnaire published by the Community Council in connection with the LPP process is carried on the back two pages of this issue of the Blether

Producing a Local Place Plan gives communities a chance to shape the future of their local area by creating a plan that addresses local needs or concerns. The City Council would be bound to take a Local Place Plan into account when drawing up its next Local Development Plan which, believe it or not, would be CityPlan2040 on which the City Council have already started work.

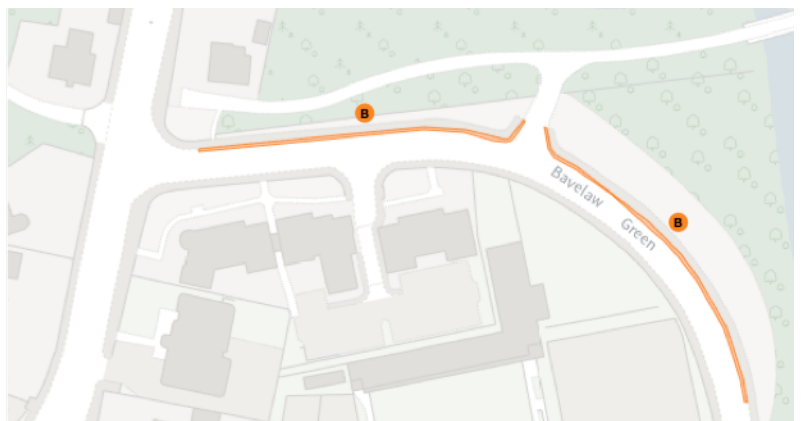
It was also agreed at the February meeting of the Community Council that the Council should take forward the formation of a Liaison Group with Tarmac which operates Ravelrig Quarry for which extensions both of the area of operation and of the lifetime of the project were granted by the City Council in the summer of last year.

The Council were also updated by City Councillors on the next steps towards introduction of parking restrictions in the area of the Penland Hills Regional Park and linked parking charges at Harlaw and Threipmuir Car Parks. The affected roads are

- **Harlaw Road** from the 30MPH sign at Malleny to Wester Kinleith Farm and including the access road to the car park;
- **Mansfield Road** from the entrance to the Scottish Water Water Treatment Works to Redford Bridge and along the length of East Rigg Farm Road to the entrance to East Rigg Farm.

The process towards implementation of parking restrictions is likely to take at least a year for legislation to be passed. The TRO Timetable, including the period for objections, has not yet been published. Parking restrictions will be indicated by signs adjacent to the roads affected rather than yellow lining.

Below is the map plan for a separate TRO process; TRO 23/34 - yellow lining for No Waiting at any time on Bavelaw Road. The period for objections for TRO 23/34 opened on 13 February and expires on 6 March.



Notes from Roy



More than a few people have brought words of Pope Leo XIV to my attention recently.

In a longer piece about the different kinds of Lenten fasting and abstinence, he added:

"A very practical and frequently unappreciated form of abstinence: that of refraining from words that offend and hurt our neighbour."

"Let us begin by disarming our language, avoiding harsh words and rash judgment, refraining from slander and speaking ill of those who are not present and cannot defend themselves ..."

"Instead, let us strive to measure our words and cultivate kindness and respect in our families, among our friends, at work, on social media, in political debates, in the media and in Christian communities."

"In this way, words of hatred will give way to words of hope and peace,"

For such a deceptively simple idea it has me wondering what my life be like, yours too, if we all did that?

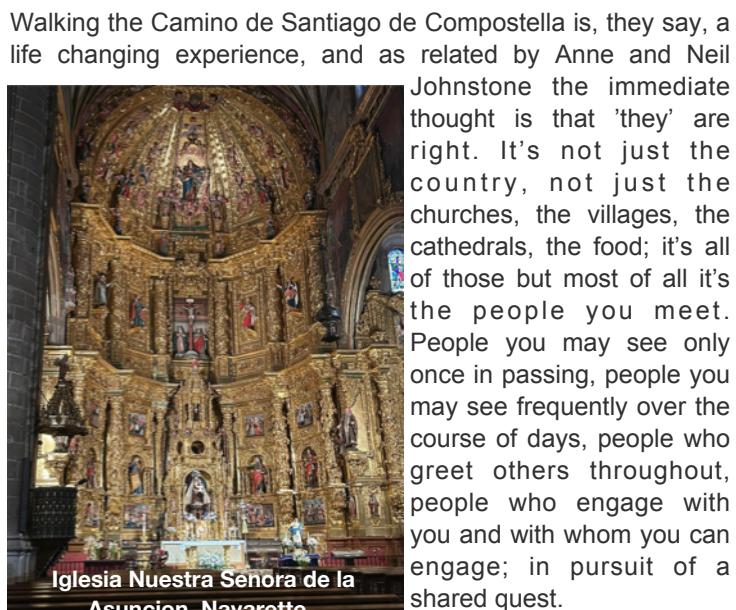
A Lenten prayer:

*Lord God, you have created us for yourself,
you have called us into being,
you have offered us your love.
We give ourselves our souls and bodies,
and all that we do, to you in love;
through our saviour Christ our Lord. Amen.
(David Adam, Radiance of His Glory.)*

Half way to Santiago de Compostella

A sandal and a trainer

Neil and Anne Johnstone are walking the pilgrim route from St Jean to Santiago de Compostella, and on 4 March they told a well attended Guild meeting about the first three stages of their quest, which they have been pursuing since 2024. This is a listeners impressions of their talk



Walking the Camino de Santiago de Compostella is, they say, a life changing experience, and as related by Anne and Neil Johnstone the immediate thought is that 'they' are right. It's not just the country, not just the churches, the villages, the cathedrals, the food; it's all of those but most of all it's the people you meet. People you may see only once in passing, people you may see frequently over the course of days, people who greet others throughout, people who engage with you and with whom you can engage; in pursuit of a shared quest.

Why do people walk the Camino? Why do they go on pilgrimage? There is something compelling about the story of a journey with a purpose. To walk in the footsteps of thousands, indeed millions, before you. It changes the way you look at the world.

The Guild start their meetings with a hymn, a reading and then a prayer. They chose 535 'Who would true valour be to be a pilgrim' and followed it with the reading about the Road to Emmaus. The theme of transformative pilgrimage was therefore right at the start before Anne and Neil embarked on their account. They took turns to lead us through three stages of the 500 mile journey from St Jean-Pied-de-Port and Santiago, taking us up and over the Pyrenees and on to Leon to which Anne and Neil hope to return in May of this year to enjoy the remaining 40% of the Camino Santiago; it's only another 300kms (180 miles).



Those first sections were accomplished over three trips. First there was a three day 'test' run in May 2024 followed by a longer section in September of that year, and then another still longer section in May 2025. First of all, they had to register at the Pilgrim Welcome Office, St Jean. 54,000 people passed through in 2025, and the long queue at 39 Rue de La Citadelle bears testimony to the popularity of the Camino.

The first day, leaving St Jean, following the Napoleon Route, is probably the toughest walk of all involving the climb up to and over the Col de Lepoeder, which at

4800ft is 400ft higher than Ben Nevis. Some of the descent path crosses bare rock which is treacherous in wet weather. There's about 28 kilometres to cover and most of that is uphill before you get to the first overnight stop, just beyond Roncesvalles. So that was the test section; for Anne and Neil to see whether they thought they could do this. Well, they weren't going to say no, were they, and the audience in the Ogston Hall sensed our two speakers were pretty happy with that performance. Yes, you're right Charlemagne was there in 778 only he was going the other way, and on a much lower route, and he'd just lost his rearguard; so he wasn't happy. Napoleon wasn't too happy either since by 1813 he was in retreat from Spain. That's history, however; it provides some context, and there's lots of history on a route which has been trodden since the early 9th C following the discovery of the remains of Saint James the Apostle in 813 AD.

But the Camino is pre-eminently about faith, belief, tradition, today and about people. It's about singing Sur le Pont d'Avignon to a French party occupying a bench, who gladly made space, or about encountering two Australians with splendid parasols attached to their rucksacks, or the meetings over dinner, or being blessed by Sister Maria in a gesture which was deeply spiritual. Or about the flower festival at Burgos, or the five day festival of Santo Domingo whose Saint's Day celebration our walkers joined in with. Or the surprise or is it wonder at the extravagant beauty of the Iglesia Nuestra Senora de la Asuncion at Navarete. Or tending the blisters of a lady whose companion had traded her sandal for the other's matching trainer when the trainer was no longer wearable or bearable. There's something of the genuine parable about that.

The advice from the speakers, take it slow, take your time, absorb, ponder. A Polish lady they met wished she and her friends hadn't done the whole route in a 'oner' so to speak over 23 days. The books say it ordinarily takes 30 to 35 days.

Doing the Camino is about taking time to meet, to speak, to reflect and to learn.

Thank you Anne and Neil for taking us a lot of the way to Santiago.

We look forward to completing the journey with you !



FRESH (adj)

New, Renewed, Additional, Replacement, Other, different (slang) - cool, stylish, new, or impressive

START (n)

Beginning, Birth, Foundation, Commencement, or, together, (and in plain language),

a collection of household goods to benefit people setting up home for the first time.

EARLY NOTICE

is hereby given

(giving warning, or information sooner than you might have expected, thereby allowing you time to prepare, mitigate risks, and take action.)

OF AN IMPORTANT EVENT

(being a significant occurrence causing major change, shaping a narrative, and having lasting impact on individuals, societies, and history, acting as a turning point, a milestone and a catalyst for development).

For more on this exciting event, should you require it, see the Balerno Blether or BPC FaceBook!

The Balerno Parish Church Spring Collection

in aid of

Fresh Start

will be held on

Friday 24th and Sat 25th April 2026

between the hours of

10.00am and 12 Noon

and within the building commonly known as

THE OLD HALL

More information from Susan or Malcolm Ogilvie

Susanogilvie61@hotmail.com
malcolm.ogilvie@hotmail.co.uk

do you have a minute, Lord?



Lord, what do these adults think they are doing? I get a hard time from my parents for being on social media and I am getting fed up with hearing the words, 'I know how you feel.' Contrary to what they may think, I do have an idea about what is going on in your world. We seemed to have got to a point where there was a recognition and acceptance that we could not go on using fossil fuels for ever without imperilling our planet but now there are all sorts of people saying that looking after the planet by using more renewable energy is too expensive!

Does that mean that all that was being said about global warming was untrue? Does it mean that the politicians who want to ignore the advice about global warming don't care? Does it mean that the people in power just spin selected facts to suit their own convenience? I am expected to tell the truth at home and in school - and I get in trouble if I don't - but people in positions of power just seem to get away with saying what suits them even when it is obvious that they are avoiding responsibility for their actions.

There seems to be a double standard here. I think there was something in the Ten Commandments which said something about honouring your father and your mother so that you could have a long life, but how can I respect people who seem to go along with this double standard? OK, maybe my parents don't exactly go along with the double standards if my dad's comments about the news is anything to go by, but the people in the news do seem to be well practised in the art of misdirection in order to avoid inconvenient truths. They would require others to have a 'duty of candour,' but . . . and they think we don't notice!

So, I'm frustrated; I want the world to be better, but I don't know exactly what to pray for!

(contributed)

Calendar announcements & chit chat

Unless otherwise notified Sunday worship is at 9.30am every Sunday at Balerno Parish Church

March 2026 Services

Date	Time	Place	Service
1 st March	9.30 am	Balerno Parish Church	Communion
	3.00 pm	"	Communion
8 th March	11.15 am 9.30 am	Currie Kirk Balerno Parish Church	
15 th March	11.15 am 9.30 am	Currie Kirk Balerno Parish Church	
22 nd March	11.15 am 9.30 am	Currie Kirk Balerno Parish Church	
29 th March	11.15 am 9.30 am	Currie Kirk Balerno Parish Church	
2 nd April	11.15am 7.00 pm	Currie Kirk	Maundy Thursday
3 rd April	7.00 pm	Balerno Parish Church	Good Friday

March 2026 Events

Date	Time	What		Where
1 st March	pm	Help required to clean the Ogston Hall kitchen		Ogston Hall
1 st March	3.00 to 4.00pm	Lenten Studies		Session House, Currie Kirk
3 rd March	10.00am	Currie Guild -	'Golden Threads' with Jackie Grant	
4 th March	7.30pm	Balerno Guild	One World Shop/ Fairtrade with Karen Dorward	Ogston Hall
7 th March	10.00am to 12 noon	Fairtrade Event	Stalls, fun and refreshments	St Joseph's Centre
8 th March	3.00 to 4.00pm	Lenten Studies		Session House, Currie Kirk
15 th March	3.00 to 4.00pm	Lenten Studies		Session House, Currie Kirk
17 th March	2.00pm	Currie Guild	St Margaret's Chapel with Olivia Begbie	
18 th March	7.30pm	Balerno Guild	AGM & Social evening	
21 st March	2.00pm to 4.00pm	Currie Guild	Daffodil Tea	
22 nd March	9.30am	Stated Annual Meeting	Follows immediately after 9.30am service	Balerno Parish Church
	3.00 to 4.00pm	Lenten Studies		Session House, Currie Kirk
31 st March	3.00pm to 4.30pm	Palm Cafe	A space for people with dementia and their carers	St Joseph's Centre

Kirk Session Notes

Balerno Parish Church Kirk Session met on Wednesday 25th February in advance of the Joint Session meeting with Currie Kirk also on 25th - see front page. The main business was to consider and as appropriate to approve the provisional annual accounts for Balerno Parish Church for 2025. The provisional accounts were presented by the out-going Treasurer, David Booth, who was also warmly thanked for all his work over many years in his two periods as Treasurer of Balerno Parish Church.

Kirk Session were also advised that as part of the Statistical Returns to be made to Presbytery for 2025, the Roll of Balerno Parish Church included 375 members along with 174 others on a Supplementary Roll. The Supplementary Roll is a record managed by the Kirk Session to list regular worshippers or adherents who are not on the main Communion Roll (full members). It allows for pastoral care and inclusion in the life of the church for those with a consistent connection, but who have not formally joined.

The Kirk Session will next meet on 13 April in a Joint Meeting with Currie Kirk Kirk Session at Gibson Craig Hall, Currie.

The (former) Treasurer's Thumb progress towards £50

Now, I know that you are all fit to burst waiting to hear whether that Thumb thing has got away with it and is going to retire to the South of France on the proceeds from the red bucket in the Mill. Well, even though e's a gradely fein lad, he's not here himself right now. So I was asking myself whether he'd done a bunk already; but then if he had I'd be there as well, wouldn't I?

Anyway you'll remember that he said that if there was £50 donated in February then he'd be off, and I suppose he expected me to go too, although he didn't say as much, and I suppose while I might be tempted, they don't really go for Guinness down there, and I haven't quite developed the palate - that's the word in't it? - for that Provence wine. It has some resemblance to Guinness I know - black wine it's called - but it's not remotely like Guinness. So I think I'll just stay here instead, and that would probably scupper his plans; I don't like to think what would have happened if it doesn't.

But I don't really think in fact he's on for a long trip anyway, because while I did see one £10 note going into the pot on publication day, (and I won't say who it was, except it was like the Vpice or something if you know what I mean) But I don't think the hot money is backing him.

Which of course brings me back to what happens next. Curiouser and curiouser, as Alice may have said, or cried, or not. Although maybe it was Cecil in *Molly Bawn* (Margaret Wolfe Hungerford), who misquotes it. But that was in 1878, and *Through the Looking Glass* was in 1865. It doesn't appear in the original *Molly Bawn* which was in 1799 but that's not the sort of poem you want to print in the *Blether* anyway. (*Hang on! Is this going anywhere? Ed*) So we return as we must once again to the deep question of the age; what happens next? And we are talking only of course about, the Thumb. So, and here I am assuming that £50 has not found its way into the red pot by the due date, we have an important question to answer. Is the absence of £50 from the pot because you the readers, do *not* want the Thumb to disappear? That is a plausible theory given the limited response to the *Blether* Survey puts the Thumb way ahead in your ratings.... We shall see, oh yes oh yes, so we shall.

Hang on! Was that you, Thumb? Thumb? Hello! Earth calling Thumb!Thumb!



I hear that the Church of Scotland is losing members and money what is it doing about it?

Yes the Church of Scotland has a great many buildings, some large and many in places where they are no longer being used effectively. You ask what the church is doing about it . . . well . . . it has initiated a nationwide radical plan to reduce the number of churches and the full-time ministers

Sounds painful, but your congregation is active . . . this won't affect you – will it?

Your right our church is active and in fact we are part of the 20% of congregations that are able to help fund the wider work of the church as well as ourselves.

So in a business sense you are helping to keep others afloat - they will be leaving you alone then rather than risk losing more?

Not that simple, all congregations are involved in the plan, and we are to be united with the church in the neighbouring community.

Are they struggling and needing your help?

No, like us they are active and part of the same 20%.

So will uniting mean you will get more members and be able to help fund more of the wider work of the church?

You'd like to think so but bringing two or more congregations together usually means that some members opt out and the collection is smaller.

So there must be some other benefit – will this help you to do more in your community or reach more people to tell them about Jesus . . . or?

We're not being told to sell off the buildings so they can continue to be used by church and community but instead of having two ministers we will have one and he/she will have to split their time over two communities and congregations.

So that's a NO then – the plan is to reduce the number of members and sources of income – this is a plan for the future?

My brain hurts or as OB1 might have said 'My head is hard of thinking'. Can we talk about something more understandable. . . the weather, Scotland's rugby prowess

Hearsy/Heresy is temporarily under different authorship

Woof

And once again a very good day to all of you, my ever faithful followers !

So, after the snow "and now for something completely different", well, sort of. I don't know whether it was just melted snow or plain, boring rain. Whichever, it was extremely WET and certainly not doggie-friendly.

A man called to deliver a package, and I could see the rain bouncing on the garden path – 'stotting' I think is how it's referred to. I had the bright idea to look out from an upstairs window, surely the water level couldn't be as deep there. To my amazement, some pals were being 'walked' – yes, in weather totally unsuitable for such exercise. Do their owners not suffer as we do? Trust me, a quick 'pee' against next door's fence is all I need in that sort of weather.

There are, of course, downsides to that theory, not least my being unable to sample the butcher's generosity and as the seagulls wouldn't be out and about it probably didn't matter. I had an horrible dream last night in which three of my prized (and I thought quite secure) bones could be seen floating away in the flood, but no matter how hard I tried none of my recovery plans seemed to work. Just how unsafe must my doggie Fort Knox have been? I could imagine much less scrupulous dogs chasing through the water and harvesting my treasure for themselves. Let's face it though, after all those hours in the water their smell wouldn't be strong enough to make a search worthwhile.

After last month's optimistic outlook this has been a real let-down so if any of you, my readers, has a good idea for rectifying this disaster, I shall be glad of your help.

For now, then, woof, woof – It'll soon be Easter !

woof! woof!



Why do you go to Church?

"Because I have friends there," was the answer given to that question when it was raised in a discussion a few years ago. A group of churchgoers were seated around a table and they all had different responses to the question. That doesn't mean that they disagreed, they were simply reflecting their own perspective on what the church meant to them and why they came. It was one of those eye-opening occasions when you get an insight into how other people think and it becomes evident that there isn't necessarily a 'right' way to do things.

Sitting around that table the respondent explained that she was drawn to the church because she had many friends there; if she didn't come to the church, then that would be a major upset to her social life as she would lose touch with many people and families who were dear to her. Did that mean that, for her, the church was just a social club? No, it was a lot more than a social club, but trying to explain faith and a relationship with God was a personal thing and much harder to explain than the simple response to the question of why she came to church. Anyway, her faith, she felt, was not dependent upon coming to church.

This provoked others in the group with contrasting explanations of why they came to church. Some admitted to perhaps coming out of habit, because they would feel something was missing if they didn't come, while for others there was an imperative to attend because of their belief that Jesus Christ was their Saviour and Lord as reflected in the narrative of the Christian creeds. It was a response which prompted someone else to ask if that meant that coming to church was something that was done out of a sense of obligation rather than because of the appeal of the worship?

An interesting discussion ensued which, at the end of the day, may not have led to agreement about why we all come to church, but it probably helped those around the table to appreciate that we all have our own valid reasons for being church members and, like apples and oranges, we are all

different; it had to be agreed that any reason for coming to church is a good reason.

Now, some years after that conversation, there are less people coming to church. At the time when membership of the church was booming, there were plenty of congregations to choose from unless you were in a remote part of the country. Some congregations were identified as being Evangelical which perhaps was not really helpful as there weren't any congregations who didn't see themselves as being evangelical – but with a small 'e'. Congregations could choose a minister who was attuned to their 'wavelength' on a notional Evangelical-Liberal – whatever that means – spectrum. In an urban setting, people generally could choose to join a nearby congregation in which they found worship and fellowship which was meaningful and comfortable for them.

With the closure of so many churches, we are moving into a changed environment with new challenges. It is not uncommon to find congregations which are reluctant to enter a union with their neighbours because of perceived differences and the belief that their neighbours are not on the same 'wavelength' as them.

Such a reaction is understandable where there has been contrasting style of ministry in adjacent parishes and it suggests that there needs to be time and opportunity for people with different perspectives to get around another table and come to understand each-others point of view if a union is to harness the energy of all those involved and fulfil its full potential.

That could present a challenge; getting people around a table is not always easy. However, there may be a further challenge for the ministers of the future whose larger parishes bring together

church members with a wider experience of worship. The challenge for them may be to try to ensure that the missiology of their new composite congregation is presented on the 'wavelength' upon which the largest number of people can get good reception. Now there's something that is more easily said than done!



Balerno Fairtrade Village Group

Big thanks for putting in your diary Balerno's Fairtrade (FT) Morning, Saturday 7 March, 10 am – 12 noon; a much-loved local landmark, now into its third decade. This 'Blether' appears 6 March, just the day before: thank goodness you're quick readers! Here's an instant plan.

In St Joseph's, please support great FT Craft and Food stalls, pedal yourself a tasty FT Banana Smoothie on Edinburgh Bicycle Cooperative's famous Smoothie Bike, use your skills to compete for a lovely 'Mill' cake, admire the prizewinning work from the Balerno Schools FT Art Competition, and at 11 am cheer on the young winners at their presentation by Depute Lord Provost Cllr Lesley Marion Cameron, who'll remind us how much it matters to go on caring about FT, and each other, both locally and right around our world.

In the Ogston Hall, refuel with the Guild's refreshments and brilliant homebaking; gifts of your own baking, ideally individual, nutfree small bakes, are most welcome too, from 9.30 am on the day. The Guild aren't selling the refreshments or baking, but requesting donations, with all profits going to Transform Trade and Scottish Fair Trade's Youth Collective. Kind Dean Park staff also have a children's activities table in the Ogston, well away from hot drinks, of course.

Thank you so much again for all your support for this really worthwhile, enjoyable event. See you there!

Balerno Fairtrade Village Group - always delighted to hear from new supporters.



Letter to the Editor

Dear Lesley,

Some of the congregation may remember me introducing my grandson Nick and his new wife Chelsea when they visited Scotland from Australia to do some hill walking and photography. The choir very kindly sang the Gaelic Blessing for their marriage to mark the occasion. They were made very welcome by the congregation who all seemed to have family in Australia.

Last month they produced another great grandson – Fergus James – for me. They are very happy and send their greetings to Martin, the choir and the congregation.

Avril Fraser



Picture of the month March 2026

Those of you who trundle across the Green Bridge on occasion - possibly to see the snow drops in the Malleny Estate (and they are well worth a visit) - may have noticed a plaque has been attached to the bridge on the north parapet and at the west end - (apologies but we don't have a grid reference). It's only about three inches across and it's been placed there to signify that at long last the bridge is, almost complete.

For a variety of reasons there hasn't been a formal opening and in some senses that is a pity. It is three years this month since the bridge was installed, and it took another two and half years thereafter before it could be opened. If you look at the plaque you will see a name; it's the only name on the plaque, and it's there because way back in about 2018, just a year or so after the Green

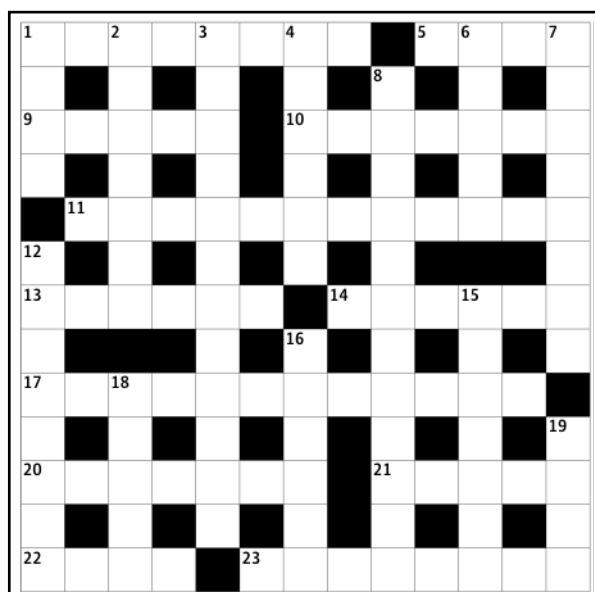
Bridge was closed by the City Council. Jean Barton gave the Community Council £500 towards the cost of a replacement bridge. Jean is remembered as a faithful member of the congregation and a long standing member of the Balerno Fairtrade Village Group. She lived at Garden Cottage, just across Bavelaw Road from the old Green Bridge.

In 2017 the Balerno Community had made clear to Edinburgh Council, through a Community Survey, that replacement of the Green Bridge was amongst their top priorities. It was obvious however by 2018 that the City were not going to rebuild the bridge; they said it would cost over

£150K. But Jean, was adamant that the bridge would reappear. In the end the bridge was paid for mainly through government grants. But Jean had in effect ensured that that would happen by making a substantial donation. She didn't want a fuss made about her generosity. But her gift made sure that something would be done. In large measure the Community Council's Green Bridge project was pursued because of Jean's drive and determination that it should be. It is entirely appropriate then that her involvement be recorded on the plaque and that her involvement be remembered.



Crossword Corner - March puzzle



Across

Down

- 1 Professional hand treatment (8)
- 5 Positive quality (4)
- 9 Difficult question (5)
- 10 Amusement park (7)
- 11 Assert authority suddenly or forcibly (5,3,4)
- 13 Look up to (6)
- 14 Holy (6)
- 17 Free and easy (5-2-5)
- 20 Lockjaw (7)
- 21 Fool (5)
- 22 Disturbance of the peace (4)
- 23 Old child or young adult? (8)

- 1 Be miserable (4)
- 2 Patent medicine (7)
- 3 Openly registered as a member of an institution (4-8)
- 4 Disprove (6)
- 6 Line for controlling a dog (5)
- 7 Pieces scattered by the bursting of a shell (8)
- 8 Very old-fashioned (from before the Flood?) (12)
- 12 Medical tube (8)
- 15 Slight hint (7)
- 16 Solute (anag) (6)
- 18 Paved area adjoining a house (5)
- 19 Commotion (4)

Crossword corner February answers

C	L	O	O	U	O
M	M	K	I	G	N
E	X	P	O	F	L
T	P	Y	N	E	E
O	R	A	L	L	A
P	W	U	B	E	I
A	P	E	R	T	U
S	S	A	I	R	V
S	C	O	U	R	G
M	C	H	S	I	Y
G	E	T	H	I	C
H	E	D	E	D	



Useful Numbers

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Balerno Community Council - Balerno Local Place Plan

Balerno Community Council (BCC) are producing a Local Place Plan (LPP) for the village to input to City of Edinburgh Council as they prepare their City Plan for 2040.

We aim to submit our LPP by July 2026 and these **community-led** plans outline a community's vision and proposals for an area.

What is a Local Place Plan (LPP)?

Local Place Plans are community-led plans setting out proposals for the development and use of land.

Local Place Plans are part of the Government's wider work on planning reform and implementation of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 (the 2019 Act). They offer the opportunity for a community-led, collaborative approach to creating great local places.

Local Place Plans can support community aspirations plans will set out a community's aspirations for its future development and on the big challenges for a future Scotland.

Why is a Local Place Plan important?

It is vital that local people have the opportunity to engage meaningfully and have a positive influence in the future planning of development in their areas. The aim is to significantly enhance engagement in development planning, effectively empowering communities to play a proactive role in defining the future of their places.

Registered LPP are community-led documents which **the City Council is legally required to consider** when preparing the new Local Development Plan (City Plan 2040).

How do you play a part?

The Place Principle promotes a shared understanding of place, and the need to take a more collaborative approach to a place's services and assets to achieve better outcomes for people and communities. BCC want to understand what Balerno wants.

Therefore, this is an **important opportunity for you to direct the future development of Balerno to something you, as local residents, want.**

Input to the LPP is welcomed from those who live, work, or volunteer in Balerno.

This page and the following page carry copies of a Local Place Plan Survey questionnaire published by Balerno Community Council in February 2026, BCC invites you to complete and return the questionnaire as indicated above via the box in the Mill Cafe. Hard copies of the form can also be obtained at the Mill Cafe

BCC are seeking your thoughts on the following areas:

- Infrastructure
- Local Business
- Green Belt
- Young People
- Active & Safe Travel
- The Pentlands.

You can also note another area if you feel we have missed something

This **question page** and **questionnaire** will be followed up with **public meetings** in February and May to discuss and outline the community's views and wishes.

We would be grateful if you could take the time to answer the questions below.

If you wish, you can also complete the full questionnaire by using the QR code. You can answer as much or as little as you wish.



• **What do you like about the area?**

• **What would you like to see improved in the area?**

• **If you had three dreams for Balerno in 2040, what are they?**

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

• **How would you rank the following areas in terms of how important you feel they are (1=high; 6=low):**

Infrastructure	_____	Green Belt	_____
Young People	_____	The Pentlands	_____
Local Business	_____		
Active & Safe Travel	_____	Other	_____

You can return your answers via a box in the Mill, hand it to any BCC member, or email your answers to balernocc@gmail.com