

Background information

This note gives some of the background about what Balerno Village Trust is, what we do, how we do it and what we would like to do in the future.

Our vision and mission

Balerno Village Trust's *vision* is for a thriving, resilient and sustainable community for Balerno, and its *mission* is, in partnership with others, to help to make the community of Balerno stronger and more sustainable in environmental, social and economic terms.

Balerno

The name, Balerno, derives from the [Scottish Gaelic](#) Baile Airneach, meaning "townland/town of the hawthorns". The earliest written records of Balhernoach or Balernach are found in the late 13th century. The 18th Century brought substantial development to the area, with many new flax, snuff and paper mills springing up around the [Water of Leith](#) (evidence of flax production can be seen in Harlaw Woods). These mills were a prominent feature of village life until fairly recently. After the First World War house building began in earnest in the area and since then residential pressures have significantly challenged commercial and industrial ones. There was [a short loop railway](#) running over what is now the [Water of Leith Walkway](#).

With a population of around 6,500 Balerno is arguably the most rural part of The City of Edinburgh. While only a 20-minute drive from the City Centre and populated by those working across the city, it is surrounded by farmland and abuts onto the neighbouring Pentland Hills Regional Park.

Balerno is a thriving community with a substantial number of diverse local groups and associations. It is the home of Currie Rugby Club, Scottish Premiership Champions in 2007 and 2010, and also a thriving Bowling Club and separately a Lawn Tennis Club. In 2014/15 a 3G playing pitch for rugby and football was built. On a different tack, it is also home to the SSPCA's Animal Rescue and Rehoming Centre, and Mallery Garden is a Scottish National Trust treasure open to the public. Balerno Parish Church hosts the Balerno Village Screen community cinema as well as the Mill Café, amongst several other organisations and activities.

Origins of BVT

Balerno Village Trust was founded in 2009 and over its 8 year existence it has gained a high reputation in the city and beyond as a positive role model of what a local Development Trust can offer in terms of sustainable new initiatives, building volunteering and community cohesion and raising awareness of climate change.

The Balerno Village Trust grew out of Balerno Village Conservation and Development Forum which was founded in 2003 as an initiative of the Balerno Community Council the purpose of which in general terms was to assist in the conservation and development of Balerno. Its principal aim in 2003 was to try to arrest the economic decline in the community, and its initial aim was to secure the refurbishing of Balerno Main Street to provide a more attractive village centre. BVCDF became a development

trust and changed its name to BVT in 2009 and was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in November of that year. It became a registered charity in 2013.

BVT's Aims and objects

BVT's charitable objects are set out in its Articles of Association as follows

- o To advance community development within Balerno through the provision of activities and services that will improve and regenerate the physical, social, cultural and economic life of the community and to encourage individuals, groups and organisations to actively participate in the life of their community,
- o To advance environmental protection and improvement through the provision of activities, services and information that will promote and encourage sustainable development and the use of renewable energy within the area of benefit,
- o To advance education and promote the health and well-being of individuals living, working and volunteering in Balerno through the provision of educational, social and recreational activities and events, and
- o To provide grants, as funds allow, to other organisations for the provision of activities and services in support of the purposes detailed above.

BVT's achievements

Amongst BVT's achievements to date are –

1. Balerno Farmers Market

The market was launched in April 2005 and it has run continuously since then on the second Saturday of each month (No market in January). There are 15-20 stalls the majority of which are local artisan producers with the remainder devoted to community groups. The Market is recognised not only as a local meeting place but also as a hub around which other community activities cluster, for example the Fair Trade Event, Friends of Main Street,, Balerno Music Festival, Balerno Christmas, while some Markets are also specifically themed to attract footfall,

BVT has managed to maintain the market's sustainability in the difficult financial climate since 2008 by reducing overheads through fundraising for our own stalls and by passing these savings as reduced charges to traders and community groups. The market covers its costs comfortably most months and contributes a small amount to BVT running costs of around £1,800 per annum. The market also generates income for many other local youth and community groups by offering fundraising stalls at low or no cost. In this way a further £2-3,000 is generated for local groups every year.

2. Tattie Day, Apple Day, Balerno Bee Hive and Friends of Main Street

Sustain Balerno was the legacy of a multi stranded project funded by the Climate Challenge Fund in 2010/11 directed at carbon reduction schemes. The project marshalled a large and highly motivated group of volunteers who have participated in the planting of a community orchard, engagement with schools and community groups, encouraging horticulture, bee keeping and chicken-keeping, and separately encouraging carbon efficient transport including cycling.

These community events founded by Sustain Balerno are now run alongside the Farmers Market and every month we try to have a community event at the market. These events are greatly appreciated by the stall holders and the community. They

now include, The Scarecrow Trail, Honey Bee day, All the Fun of the Fair and this year we are running a Macmillan coffee morning.

Balerno Bee Hive group established three bee nuclei in July 2013. The group now look after three hives and are developing their membership after a successful training initiative in spring 2015. The project's aims are to create a teaching resource, safeguard the threatened bee population and also over time develop a saleable honey source to cover the costs and allow for development. Honey bee day at the market in August allows us to showcase our bee programme and sell Balerno Bees Wax candles. Friends of Main Street have developed from an informal programme to look after the planted beds in Main Street. Now with the some input from the City of Edinburgh Council the beds have been replanted and this year they have been working with the nurseries in the village to plant up the Main Street planters and provide hanging baskets.

3. Harlaw Hydro

BVT established a sub group in 2010 to investigate the viability of a micro hydro scheme to be located on the Bavelaw Burn at Harlaw Reservoir in Balerno. Feasibility studies showed that such a scheme could produce power economically which could be sold in to the National grid and would be sufficient to power 56 homes. Planning permission was secured in 2013. In 2013 the group was incorporated as Harlaw Hydro as an Industrial and Provident Society in order that the project could secure community based funding through a share issue. While any achievements in the project following incorporation of Harlaw Hydro are rightly the achievements of that body, BVT is proud to have been able to host and develop the project to the stage at which it became a reality.

All free proceeds of operation of the hydro scheme are by agreement between BVT and HH, transferred to BVT for use in furtherance of its charitable purposes. In 2016-17 BVT received £10,000 directly from HH, of which it has agreed to re-distribute 10% in small grants to community groups.

4. Balerno Music Festival

BVCDF started planning work in late 2005 with the first festival being held in October 2008. The Festival is now the responsibility of the Balerno Music Festival Society and is delivered effectively by a partnership of local organisations including the local Parish Church and Episcopal Church, the Balerno Folk Club, Pentland Singers, Balerno Bowling Club as well as BVT. It is now an established feature of the local calendar and is self sustaining through ticket sales and sponsorship. BVT is proud to have been the driving force in the establishing of the Music Festival.

5. Balerno Photo

In early 2015 BVT partnered with Balerno Parish Church in sponsoring and running a very successful photographic competition and exhibition which attracted over 90 entries. The competition is being run again in 2017.

6. Malleny Garden Vegetables 2017

In 2016 BVT started to speak to the National Trust Scotland with the plan of creating a community growing space within the vegetable plot contained in Malleny Gardens. A lease was obtained and in our first Growing season we have produced radishes,

salad, potatoes, peas and onions which are available to purchase at the Farmers Market.

7. **Community Consultation/Plan**

In June 2017 BVT launched the findings of it's Community Consultation and Action Plan as follows:

A Better Balerno: Community Action Plan 2017 – 2027

Who We Are

Balerno Village Trust represents local people. We are made up of unpaid volunteers who live in the area.

Our role is to support the local community – we organise the Balerno farmers' market, as well as a range of other projects and events. We set up the Balerno Music Festival, now in its 10th year, and initiated the Harlaw Hydro project. We work closely with other community groups, and are responsible for distributing Community Benefit Funds from Harlaw Hydro.

What We Did

In 2016, Balerno Village Trust decided to undertake a community consultation to establish clear priorities for the village that local people could feel part of. Part of this was deciding how community benefit funds from the hydro scheme should be invested. A community plan was commissioned and we tried to speak to as many local people as possible. We spoke to nearly 250 people at open meetings, events, and focus groups, and we held lots of one to one discussions with local groups. At the end of the process, local people were invited to vote on priorities.

What You Said

People told us that Balerno is a fantastic location to live in, with easy access to both Edinburgh and The Pentlands. Local people value the schools, the sense of community, and the number of activities and events that take place in the village.

Issues identified included public transport links to West Lothian, a lack of vibrancy on Main Street, a lack of things for young people to do, and a desire to protect the green belt from ever larger housing developments.

What This Led To

As a result of this information we have drafted a long term vision for the community of Balerno. Please see the table overleaf.

Further Information

We want more local people involved in this vision. For more information on what we are doing, please visit our website or find us on Facebook.

www.balernovt.org.uk

<https://www.facebook.com/BalernoVillageTrust>

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	Priorities	Priorities	Priorities	Priorities
S h o r t T e r m	<p>Develop small grants scheme for local groups to bid in to</p> <p>Generate ideas for projects to promote village integration</p> <p>Generate ideas for projects to motivate people to use the village centre more</p> <p>Tidy the village centre (litter)</p>	<p>Work with the Balerno Playpark Improvement Project to upgrade the Play Park</p> <p>Support the Tennis Club pavilion project</p> <p>Community gardening project</p>	<p>Advertise Balerno better making use of Water of Leith & proximity to The Pentlands</p> <p>Improve signposts around the village</p> <p>Maps of local walks</p>	<p>Work with housing developers to embed Community Benefit Clauses in contracts</p> <p>Lobby the Council for improved pavements, roads and cycle paths</p> <p>Lobby the Council for safer road crossings by the schools</p> <p>Lobby the Council for public toilets</p>
M e d i u m T e r m	<p>Better provision for young people</p> <p>Work with Scotmid and CEC to revamp the car park and passage to Main Street</p> <p>Encourage more local shops</p> <p>Encourage more restaurants and cafés</p>	<p>More and better cycle paths</p> <p>Outdoor education projects</p>	<p>Develop the Harlaw Visitor Centre project</p> <p>Create a safe foot and cycle path from the village to Harlaw Reservoir in partnership with relevant agencies</p>	<p>Work with City of Edinburgh Council & other partners for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved public transport services – regular buses to Livingston & The Gyle - Improved infrastructure & services to support new housing developments
L o n g T e r m	<p>Refreshed Community Centre, including public toilets</p>		<p>Run the Harlaw Visitor Centre as a community run asset – including additional services like bike rental, a shuttle bus to the reservoir etc.</p>	