The Committee will consider the following current petitions—

**PE900** Petition by Jade Allison, on behalf of Save Dalkeith Park Campaign, calling for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to ensure that the proposal for the Dalkeith Northern bypass is comprehensively and properly assessed with data from 2005 and that the results are published and consulted upon before any contract is let.

**PE928** Petition by Margot Russell, on behalf of Dalkeith and Danderhall Labour Party, calling for the Scottish Parliament to support the Scottish Executive proposal to build the Dalkeith bypass.

**PE860** Petition by Marilyn de Blieck, on behalf of Ayrshire Voices, calling for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to develop a coherent national policy in relation to the teaching of singing and in particular to ensure adequate provision of vocal tuition for young people across Scotland.

**PE911** Petition by Paul Nolan, on behalf of Craigmillar Community Council, calling on the Scottish Parliament to consider and debate the implications of the Scottish Executive’s support for market led urban regeneration projects and the operation of privatised urban regeneration companies and in particular to consider the mechanisms in which local communities can influence and hold such companies to account.

**PE812** Petition by Caroline Paterson, on behalf of ‘Stirling Before Pylons’, calling for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to acknowledge the potential health hazards associated with long-term exposure to electromagnetic fields from high voltage transmission lines and to introduce as a matter of urgency effective planning regulations to protect public health.
PE920 Petition by Helen Smith calling for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to commit further resources to the provision of NHS dentistry, in particular for the recruitment of NHS salaried dentists to provide emergency and comprehensive care and for the provision of dedicated NHS dentistry facilities.

PE922 Petition by Peter Thomson calling on the Scottish Parliament to look at implementing a different model to the current plan to ensure that NHS dentistry is available in remote and rural areas in the medium to long term.

PE885 The Petitioner requests that the Scottish Parliament amend Scots criminal law relating to sex offences so that (a) there is a statutory offence of male rape in line with the rest of the United Kingdom and with Ireland; and (b) there are no offences that may be committed exclusively by gay men and all sex offences apply equally to everyone, whether man or woman, gay or straight. The criminal law (save some aspects, such as treason) is within the competence of the Scottish Parliament under Schedule 5 of the Scotland Act 1998 (c.46).

PE840 Petition by Judith McCrorie calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to review its policy in relation to traffic calming measures, such as road humps and road cushions, in order to ensure the impact on disabled users and the elderly is adequately addressed.

PE776 Petition by John Macpherson, on behalf of Braemar Community Council, calling for the Scottish Parliament to investigate the merits of proposed new arrangements for “Out-of-Hours” Medical Services in remote rural communities such as Braemar.

PE814 Petition by John MacPherson, on behalf of Killin Community Council, calling for the Scottish Parliament to consider and debate the implications for rural areas of the introduction of NHS24 services, particularly in relation to ambulance cover and timescales in getting medical assistance to patients in these areas.

PE826 Petition by Mr W D R Chalmers urging the Scottish Executive to ensure that NHS Services in rural areas such as Mid and Upper Nithsdale are adequate, equitable and ‘acceptable’ as required by the NHS Reform (Scotland) Act 2004, especially in relation to Out of Hours Services.
Public Petitions Committee – a template for e-petitions

Should you wish to submit an e-petition allowing signatures to be gathered online on the Public Petitions Committee e-petitioner web pages please complete the template below. Before submitting your e-petition please consult the Guidance on submission of public petitions for advice on what is and is not admissible. You may also seek advice from the Clerk to the Committee whose contact details can be found at the end of this form.

### Details of principal petitioner:

*Please enter the name of person and organisation raising the petition, including a contact address where correspondence should be sent to.*

Jade Allison

### Text of petition:

*The petition should clearly state what action the petitioner wishes the Parliament to take in no more than 5 lines of text, e.g.*

The petitioner requests that the Scottish Parliament considers and debates the implications of the proposed Agenda for Change legislation for Speech and Language Therapy Services and service users within the NHS

The petitioners request that the Scottish Parliament urge the Scottish Executive to ensure that the proposal for the Dalkeith Northern bypass is comprehensively and properly assessed with data from 2005 and that the results are published and consulted upon before any contract is let.

### Period for gathering signatures:

*Please enter the closing date for gathering signatures on your petition, which we would usually recommend is a period of between 4-6 weeks*

Closing date: 30 November 2005
Additional information:

Please enter any other information relating to the issues raised in your e-petition, including the reasons why the action requested is necessary. The text entered in this field should not exceed 2 pages. However, you may wish to provide further sources/links to background information.

The Dalkeith Northern bypass has a long history. Planning permission for a single carriageway road was first granted in 1993 following a public local inquiry. In 1996 following a further inquiry permission was given to construct a dual carriageway. The road was not constructed and in 1999 the Strategic Roads Review put the scheme in abeyance. The review considered that the scheme had generally negative ratings on environmental factors including global air quality, water, ecology, visual impacts, heritage and landscape character. On 16 June 2005 Nicol Stephen the then Transport Minister announced that the scheme should proceed "as a matter of urgency". The proposed bypass will cost in the region of £30m to £40m.

Any evidence available at the time of the decision to proceed supporting the construction of the bypass and the proposed route was 10 to 15 years old. The latest environmental assessment was carried out in 1995.

Council Directive 85/337/EEC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Private and Public Projects on the Environment came into force in July 1988. It imposed a requirement on all EU States to consider whether applications for planning permission required an assessment of the effects on the environment and the submission of an environmental statement which reports on the impact of the proposed development. No such statement has been produced in the case of the Dalkeith northern bypass and consequently there has been no public consultation on the environmental information gathered as required by the Directive. Dalkeith Park which will be bisected by the bypass is also included in the Historic Scotland Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes which ensures that this aspect requires to be taken into account. The environmental assessment that was carried put in 1995 was on the basis that Dalkeith Park was not a designed landscape and therefore this cannot have been considered.

Since 1996 and the last public inquiry there have been considerable changes to the infrastructure of the area that will impact upon the need for a bypass and the proposed route. The A1 has been dualled, there is now an A7 bypass to the south of Dalkeith and the plans for the Borders rail link are progressing. From the original assessment it is only estimated that traffic in Dalkeith would be reduced by 39%. The congestion on Edinburgh City bypass which the Dalkeith bypass would feed on to is likely to nullify any time savings that might have been achieved. Traffic volumes in Dalkeith that formed the basis of the decision to dual the road have not been met. For example it was predicted that by 2000 in mid - afternoon there would be 139 queuing vehicles at the junction in Dalkeith on the A68. This has not happened which calls into question the entire basis of the case for the bypass as it cannot be justified by traffic volumes.

The Scottish Executive claim that they have taken account of developments such as the Borders rail link as the proposed road has been reduced to a single carriageway. Yet it is evident from a Freedom of Information request that the real reason is that they do not have the statutory powers to proceed with a dual carriageway. There has in fact been no assessment of the impact of the Borders rail link on the proposed bypass.
Without the intervention of the Scottish Parliament the Scottish Executive will proceed with this development on the basis of inadequate and out of date information. There can therefore be no guarantee that the decision to spend £40million of public money has been taken on a sound basis.
Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting an e-petition:

Before submitting a petition to the Parliament, petitioners are expected to have made an attempt to resolve their issues of concern, by for example, making representations to the Scottish Executive or seeking the assistance of locally elected representatives, such as councillors, MSPs and MSPs. Details of those approached should be entered.

Over 2500 people have contacted their MSPs or written to the Scottish Executive. The Scottish Executive maintains that as the statutory processes have been completed they will proceed with the construction of the road. A public meeting where over 280 people, mostly opposed to the road has also been held.

A group has been formed to Save Dalkeith Park from the bypass the website for which is: www.save-dalkeith-park.org.uk

Comments to stimulate on-line discussion:

Please provide at least one comment to set the scene for an on-line discussion on the petition, not exceeding 10 lines of text.

The Scottish Executive proposes to proceed with the Dalkeith Northern Bypass on the basis of evidence that is at least 10 years old. No account has been taken of changes such as the dualling of the A1 or the prospect of a Borders rail link. To spend £30 to £40 million on a road where there is no up to date information as to whether it is still necessary or whether the proposed route is still the best option is not prudent government. At the same time they propose to introduce legislation to require local authorities to review development plans every 5 years. The Executive should be asked to practice what they preach.
Petitioners appearing before the Committee

The Convener of the Committee may invite petitioners to appear before the Public Petitions Committee to speak in support of their petition. Such an invitation will only be made if the Convener considers this would be useful in facilitating the Committee’s consideration of the petition. It should be noted that due to the large volume of petitions it has to consider, the Committee is not able to invite all petitioners to appear before the Committee to speak in support of their petition.

Please indicate below if you do NOT wish to make a brief statement before the Committee when it comes to consider your petition.

I do NOT wish to make a brief statement before the Committee

Signature of principal petitioner:
When satisfied that your petition meets all the criteria outlined in the Guidance on submission of public petitions, the principal petitioner should sign and date the form in the box below. Other signatures gathered should be appended to this form.

Signature ....Jade Allison

Date

....20/10/05.................................................................

For advice on the content and wording of your e-petition please contact:

The Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131 348 5186 Fax: 0131 348 5088
e-mail: petitions@scottish.parliament.uk

Note
Completed e-petition forms should also be sent to petitions@scottish.parliament.uk
Public Petitions Committee – a template for public petitions

Should you wish to submit a public petition for consideration by the Public Petitions Committee please complete the template below. Please refer to the Guidance on submission of public petitions for advice on issues of admissibility before completing the template. You may also seek advice from the Clerk to the Committee whose contact details can be found at the end of this form.

Details of principal petitioner:
Please enter the name of person and organisation raising the petition, including a contact address where correspondence should be sent to, email address and phone number if available

Margot Russell

Text of petition:
The petition should clearly state what action the petitioner wishes the Parliament to take in no more than 5 lines of text, e.g.;

The petitioner requests that the Scottish Parliament considers and debates the Implications of the proposed Agenda for Change legislation for Speech and Language Therapy Services and service users within the NHS

Petition by Margot Russell, on behalf of Dalkieith and Danderhall Labour Party, calling for the Scottish Parliament to support the Scottish Executive proposal to build the Dalkieith bypass.

Additional information:
Any additional information in relation to your petition, including reasons why the action requested is necessary, should not be included here. However, it may be appended to the petition and will be made available to the Public Petitions Committee prior to its consideration of your petition. Please note that you should limit the amount of any additional information which you may wish to provide in support of your petition to no more than 4 sides of A4.
Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition:

Before submitting a petition to the Parliament, petitioners are expected to have made an attempt to resolve their issues of concern by, for example, making representations to the Scottish Executive or seeking the assistance of locally elected representatives, such as councillors, MSPs and MPs. Please enter details of those approached below and append copies of relevant correspondence, which will be made available to the Public Petitions Committee prior to its consideration of your petition.

This organisation has sought assurance from Rhona Brankin MSP that the road programme will proceed. However, it was felt that with all the adverse publicity from the Save the Dalkeith Park protestors and the fact that they have presented a petition to the Petition Committee, that it would be useful for the Committee to receive a petition in support of the Dalkeith bypass from local residents and groups.

Petitioners appearing before the Committee

The Convenor of the Committee may invite petitioners to appear before the Public Petitions Committee to speak in support of their petition. Such an invitation will only be made if the Convenor considers this would be useful in facilitating the Committee's consideration of the petition. It should be noted that due to the large volume of petitions it has to consider, the Committee is not able to invite all petitioners to appear before the Committee to speak in support of their petition.

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Signature of principal petitioner:

When satisfied that your petition meets all the criteria outlined in the Guidance on submission of public petitions, the principal petitioner should sign and date the form in the box below. Other signatures gathered should be appended to this form.

Signature

Date

Please note that any additional information, copies of relevant correspondence and additional signatures should be appended to this form and submitted to:

The Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee,
The Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131 348 5186 Fax: 0131 348 5088
e-mail: petitions@scottish.parliament.uk
Dalkeith and District Community Council

We would wish to advise the Public Petitions Committee that PE900 has angered a great many of people who live, work or play in the Dalkeith area.

Dalkeith and District Community Council, along with many other organisations and individuals, have worked for a by-pass for Dalkeith for many years. **We are the local community council**, and we were very pleased to hear that one was happening at last.

Dalkeith is an ancient market burgh. It is bisected by the A68, in particular through the town centre with an extremely sharp Z junction. Here, the buildings are old and an important part of the town’s heritage. There are continually subjected to the impact of traffic - vibrations, pollution, impact, not to mention the salt put down at this time of year causing damage to the sandstone walls.

The juggernauts cannot turn and are forced to use the other side of the road. They often mount the pavement. Safety barriers recently erected at this point on the trunk road have already been demolished in a road traffic accident.

Air pollution is another concern to the locals. A monitoring box is now a permanent feature in the town centre. The build-up of traffic can be horrendous - this can be witnessed by anyone, particularly at the peak times of evening rush-hour.

There is genuine surprise then, that this is the route chosen by so many large vehicles. Questioning of their drivers by community councillors found out that they used this route because it was the shortest, and hence the cheapest, in regard to fuel costs.

But there are other factors which seriously damage the quality of life to locals.

Elderly folk find it difficult to cross the road despite the various crossing points that have been put in. Indeed, it is somewhat ironic that sometimes the only way traffic can exit onto the A68 from different parts of the town is by waiting until a pedestrian button is pressed.

Young children in buggies are at risk. A local nursery has for quite some time now had to use a most circuitous route to the local park simply to avoid the exhaust fumes from waiting traffic.

School children have to find a safe route to school and this is more and more a concern with the opening of the new Dalkeith Schools Community Campus to the east side of the A68.

The National Cycleway passes through Dalkeith. It was only after a fatality on the A68 entering Dalkeith from the north that traffic measures were put in place. We were glad that it did not take another fatality before the A68 by-pass was
agreed. However, there have been fatalities in the past, particularly on the stretch of A68 entering Dalkeith from the south.

Dalkeith is the bridging point of the Rivers North Esk and South Esk. Both bridges prove to be the focus of traffic congestion. The bypass requires only one bridge. Dalkeith and District Community Council support the work of the Esk Valley Trust and can see a lot of benefit in freeing the river crossing points from their present excessive volumes of traffic.

Street lighting has been increased in intensity and this has caused some problems for local residents. But it is the noise and vibrations which mainly cause a detrimental effect - from as early as 3 a.m. till nearly midnight.

So, the local Community Council welcomed and supports the decision to build the A68 by-pass.

All these points were made at the public meeting mentioned in PE900 by our chair, Ann Stewart-Kmicha. Subsequently no one has objected to the Community Council about the by-pass. Rather the opposite, local residents and traders have expressed surprise and disbelief that a protest should be raised. They fully support the bypass. Even the fact that a bypass usually is followed by a drop in trade is not something that has caused local businesses to protest. Rather the contrary, they feel that the improvements to the environment of Dalkeith Town Centre will far in the way compensate for any temporary lull in business.

At no time has the Save Dalkeith Park group made contact.

However, Dalkeith is the hub of Midlothian and other Midlothian communities have expressed their views. The Midlothian Federation of Community Councils supports the by-pass, and indeed in its recent reply to consultation on the new Local Plan stressed the need for the A68 bypass.

Lastly the route does not go near the valued Adventure Park or Dalkeith Palace. Most of the Country Park will be unaffected by it. There has been a lot of misinformation, and biased interpretation, with regard to this. Local wildlife has been promised to be protected. Archaeological work will be done as well. Given that the by-pass will be single carriageway the impact should be minimal. There are equestrian facilities that will feel the impact and this seems to be the source of the protest, not the local community of Dalkeith.

Thank you for reading this.

Ann Stewart-Kmicha
chair.

e-mail address: dalkeith_a_d_c_c@yahoo.co.uk
Dear Dr Johnston

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE900
A68 DALKEITH NORTHERN BYPASS

Thank you for your letter dated 14 December seeking our comments on the issues raised in petition PE900 submitted by Jade Allison, on behalf of Save Dalkeith Park Campaign.

In relation to the terms of the petition, I would advise that the statutory processes that authorise the construction of the road are complete and the land has been acquired. Two reports, “Traffic and Economic Assessment Report” and “Environmental Mitigation Report” set out contemporary assessments to supplement the considerable volume of earlier work. Both of these reports have been published on the Transport Scotland Website and can be viewed at [http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/defaultpage1221cde0.aspx?pageID=180&rID=20](http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/defaultpage1221cde0.aspx?pageID=180&rID=20). The Environmental Mitigation report includes a summary of the consultation responses in response to the study.

Background

The proposed single carriageway road is approximately 5km in length and will bypass Dalkeith to the north east turning into a new junction on the A720 Edinburgh City Bypass east of Sheriffhall and to the A68 at Fordell Mains, to the south of the town. The route of the proposed bypass was established following publication of draft orders for comment and the consideration of alternative lines to the east and the west at a Public Local Inquiry held in 1992. Under the terms of European and domestic legislation at that time, the bypass did not fall into a class of road which would require the publication of an Environmental Statement, nevertheless an Environmental Assessment had been prepared in accordance with STEAM (Scottish Traffic and Environmental Appraisal Manual) which represented best practice at that time. This was available for consideration at the Public Local Inquiry.

In 1994, in preparation for Local Government Reform, the trunk road network was reviewed and the consultation paper “Shaping the Trunk Road Network” proposed that the A7 should be detrunked.
leaving the A68 as the sole trunk road linking Edinburgh to the Borders towns. In association with this, Ministers proposed that the Dalkeith Bypass be repromoted as a dual carriageway. The original Environmental Assessment was reviewed and updated in accordance with volume 11 (Environmental Assessment) of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, a document published jointly for (then) the Department for Transport, the Scottish Office, the Welsh Office and the Northern Ireland Office. A number of further and supplementary studies were undertaken to support the new proposals, which were again, reviewed at Public Local Inquiry following the publication of draft road and compulsory purchase orders. The scheme had been scheduled for construction and significant investment made in preparation work, land acquisition and advance works including ground consolidation, main sewer diversion and the construction of access tracks. In 1997, a moratorium on all new road construction halted the finalisation of statutory approvals for the dual carriageway scheme and remitted the project to the Strategic Roads Review. In 1999, Sarah Boyack, then Transport Minister concluded that “the scheme offers significant journey time savings and some accident reduction benefits. It rates well in terms of accessibility and integration. There would be noise and local air quality benefits but there are generally negative ratings on other environmental factors, including global air quality, water, ecology, visual impacts, heritage and landscape character.”

This was one of three schemes which were considered to be reasonably worthwhile projects but to have a less strong claim for earlier attention than the projects separately mentioned which would proceed to construction (improvements on the A1, A78, A830, A96 and the extension of the M77 to Fenwick.) The Executive concluded “that the three schemes should be held in abeyance so that they can be considered alongside other emerging priorities for inclusion in a future trunk road programme. It is envisaged that future appraisals will be conducted using a multi modal approach which will allow potential trunk road schemes to be considered alongside other potential transport improvements in the area.”

With the exception of the A96 scheme (Fochabers-Mossthodloch) which is currently the subject of a Challenge to the Court of Session, the other projects for construction have been completed.

In June 2005, Nicol Stephen, the then Transport Minister, announced that preparation should be completed for the construction of the A68 Dalkeith Bypass. That decision was taken against the background of the prior agreement to provide financial support to the Borders Railway providing modal options for access to the Border towns. Given these options, the Minister decided that a single carriageway standard was appropriate for the bypass.

Tenders have been invited for the construction of the bypass with a view to awarding a contract in spring and the completion of the work in 2008.

Effects of the Work

The revised Traffic and Economic Assessment study has been developed from the Transport Model for Scotland, a multi modal model of Scotland’s strategic road and public transport networks maintained by Transport Scotland to provide the basis for testing the effects of new transport schemes. It includes recent and anticipated future major changes to the transport network including the completion of the A1 dabling between Haddington and Dunbar and the proposed Borders Rail Link. The economic benefits of the bypass have been reassessed and continue to indicate a positive return on proposed investments. Moreover, an assessment of the fuel impacts across the network indicate now a reduction in carbon dioxide arising from the construction of the scheme. More importantly, the bypass will effectively reduce the volume of through traffic passing through
Dalkeith and increase the options available to Midlothian Council for pedestrianisation and redevelopment of the town centre.

The environmental impacts of the line of the bypass are reported in the Environment Mitigation Report. Additional mitigation measures identified within this report have been included in the Employer’s Requirements for the construction of the bypass. Addressing the petitioners concerns, the road will be sensitively landscaped along its length, including the section through Dalkeith Park. A new bridge will carry the bypass over the River Esk and its banks to allow the preservation of wildlife corridors and to preserve access north and south of the river between the formal and the areas of Dalkeith Country Park and Home Farm. In addition, a bridge will carry the main access track between the Country Park and Home Farm over the line of the new bypass. The new road is being promoted with the support of Buccleuch Estates, the owner of the land affected.

The provision of access through Dalkeith Park Estate was dealt with through the successive Public Local Inquiries. The design proposals currently include two crossings within the Dalkeith Park Estate which will have the effect of maintaining access for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians. The existing access tracks on the west side of the River Esk will be realigned and diverted under the proposed River Esk Bridge. This will provide a safe crossing of the Bypass on the west side of the Esk. On the east side of the River Esk it is intended to maintain the north/south access along the Home Farm road by providing a bridge over the proposed A68. In addition to these two accesses an additional access within Dalkeith Park Estate on the east side of the River Esk will be constructed under the proposed River Esk Bridge. Along the length of the entire scheme the design will include nine crossing points over or under the new road which will facilitate the recreational activities currently undertaken in the area.

**Conclusion**

The Scottish Executive and Transport Scotland would invite the Committee to note that two studies have now been published updating the extensive trail of studies undertaken during the long gestations of this road scheme, and that these studies confirm the justification for constructing the bypass and update information on the need for mitigation measures which will be incorporated into the construction contract.

Transport Scotland has the operational responsibility for this area, and can be contacted for more information if required.

Yours sincerely

Jackie McCaig
6 February 2006

Dr James Johnston
Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
TG.01
Parliamentary Headquarters
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

Dear Dr Johnston

Consideration of Petition PE900

I refer to your letter of 14 December 2005 to which I have been asked to respond.

The Public Petitions Committee agreed to seek the comments of this Council in regard to the issues raised in Petition PE900 by Jade Allison on behalf of the Save Dalkeith Park Campaign.

I attach to this letter a summary of the Midlothian Council comments as requested.

This written submission will also be provided in electronic form.

Yours sincerely

David Williamson
Head of Planning
david.williamson@midlothian.gov.uk

Enc

cc Councillor Jim Muirhead, Cabinet Spokesman for Transport
Trevor Muir, Chief Executive
A68 Dalkeith Northern Bypass

Comments of Midlothian Council with regard to issues raised in Petition PE900

1 Midlothian Council fully supports the Scottish Executive's decision to build the A68 Dalkeith Bypass.

2 The case for building the A68 Dalkeith Bypass was accepted at the 1992 and 1996 public inquiries at which the Council gave evidence. The inquiry decisions to endorse the Bypass followed scrutiny of all pertinent environmental and traffic data prepared at that time.

3 More recently, the Scottish Executive has fully updated the environmental and traffic data relating to the Bypass. The information was published in January 2006 in the following reports:-

- Dalkeith Northern Bypass Environmental Mitigation Report.

4 With regards the Environmental Mitigation Report, the Council is satisfied that the various mitigation measures identified are comprehensive and appropriate, and the Council will be working with the Executive where appropriate to ensure that the measures are properly carried out.

5 With regards the Traffic and Economic Assessment Report, the Council notes and welcomes the main finding, namely that the A68 Dalkeith Bypass continues to represent value for money and is a sound economic investment. Moreover, it is noted that the economic efficiency of the A68 Dalkeith Bypass is if anything underestimated due to operational constraints at Sheriffhall roundabout, and that further network gains are likely to arise from improvements at that junction.

6 In light of the above reports, the main assertion by the Petitioner that the A68 Dalkeith Bypass is proceeding "on the basis of inadequate and out of date information" is considered to be without foundation.

7 The Petitioner also questions the likely traffic impact of the A68 Bypass on central Dalkeith. However, the above reports confirm that the Bypass will bring significant benefits to Midlothian's county town, principally by reducing traffic flows by more than 50% with consequent air quality and noise improvements in the town centre.

8 The Council is committed to the regeneration of Dalkeith town centre, and its proposals, which include the pedestrianisation of the High Street, are at an advanced stage. The opening of the A68 Dalkeith Bypass will be a major boost to the regeneration proposals, and the removal of through traffic from the town centre will allow the Council to consider extending the pedestrianisation further.
along the High Street and/or into South Street. Creating traffic free areas is considered to be pivotal in the revitalisation of the shopping and commercial heart of the town.

9 The Petitioner also states that the decision to proceed with the Bypass on evidence that is over 10 years old is inconsistent with proposals to review development plans every 5 years.

10 In response, it is worth highlighting the fact that the case for the A68 Dalkeith Bypass was not only endorsed by two public inquiries, but that the road scheme has also been a key proposal in each of the following statutory development plans produced, with public consultation, over the period:-

- **Lothian Structure Plan 1994** – approved by the Secretary of State for Scotland in July 1997.

11 These Structure Plans identified Midlothian as a location for substantial development growth (4,500 and 2,200 houses respectively) up to 2015, and linked this growth to investment in key infrastructure such as the A68 Dalkeith Bypass. The choice of sites allocated in Local Plans for these houses has been made on the basis that the Bypass is to be built.
Dr James Johnston
Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
TG.01
Parliamentary Headquarters
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Ref: pa/14/2

30th January 2006

Dear Dr Johnston

Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee ~ Consideration of PE900

Thank you for your letter of 14th December 2005 inviting the Woodland Trust Scotland to comment on petition PE900.

Introduction

The imminent construction commencement of this road proposal, that first saw the light of day in the mid 1980s and that was later amended in the mid 1990s, is unusual in that it was approved over a decade ago applying lesser standards. The Woodland Trust Scotland (WTS) is certainly not aware of other such time delay for a major infrastructure scheme. Knowledge of both environmental factors and traffic issues has considerably advanced since the second Ministerial approval in 1997, and we would contend that justifies an argument for time-limited previous consents to ensure that modern best practice is reflected in the outcome i.e. 9 years on, scientific knowledge can be outdated and habitats/species etc. circumstances may have changed on the ground.

In this case, the original scheme put forward in 1987 was significantly revised in 1989 following promotion by local objectors of three alternative alignments. The fact that the preferred route, subsequently recommended in 1993 by the Reporter after a Public Inquiry, was effectively based on one of these alternatives. It is interesting to note that even when the road proposal was revised to dual carriageway standard which led to a further Public Inquiry in 1996, technically guidelines did not require an Environmental Statement to be submitted. However we note that non legislative Environmental Assessment was undertaken on the basis of 'good practice' for the period 1988 to 1996.
Protection of the environment

Over the last decade, the importance of protecting the environment has become significantly more important in public opinion and also by the Scottish Executive and predecessor bodies. For example, planning, policy and legislative documents which currently relate to the protection of ancient woodland include:

1. National Planning Policy Guidance NPPG14: Natural Heritage sets out how the Executive’s policies for the conservation and enhancement of Scotland’s natural heritage should be reflected in land use planning. NPPG 14 states that ‘planning authorities should seek to protect trees, groups of trees and areas of woodland where they have natural heritage value or contribute to the character or amenity of a particular locality. Ancient and semi-natural woodlands have the greatest value for nature conservation.’

2. PAN 60 identifies the value of native woodland as reservoirs of biodiversity. It goes on to state that ‘It is Government policy to expand the forest resource, especially the area under native woodland.’ It also recommends that A Forest Habitat Network framework is drawn up to identify a model for native woodland expansion.

3. UK Forest Partnership for Action commits the Scottish Executive to the establishment and management of protected areas, to ensure that all ancient woodland is adequately protected.

4. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan identified the need to ‘Protect and manage ancient semi-natural woodland to conserve their character’ as well as encourage the extension and creation of new native woodlands.

5. Biodiversity is the indicator of a healthy environment and this is recognised by the Scottish Executive. The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 contains a provision that it is ‘the duty of every public body and office-holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity.’

6. The Scottish Forestry Strategy notes that ‘Scotland is one of the least wooded countries in Europe’ and sets out a plan to increase Scotland’s woodland cover to 25% of the land area by 2050. It also states that ‘there is world-wide recognition of the importance of conserving natural forests, which provide the richest and most diverse terrestrial ecological systems. Scotland’s ancient semi natural woodlands include scarce remnants of its natural forests...’ and that ‘The remaining ancient semi-natural woodlands have a high conservation priority.’

7. The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy states that ‘the main changes in biodiversity experienced in Scotland relate to the felling of ancient forest, the grazing of sheep and deer, the intensification of agriculture and commercial fishing, the planting of non-native conifers, the spread of urban development, the introduction of fish farmer, and the increase in pollution.’ In the draft Implementation Plans document, strategy objective 3: landscapes and ecosystems calls for:

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1 Scottish Executive, Planning Advice Note 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage s.30, 31
2 UKFPA 2002, p6
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
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<tr>
<td>Minimise losses of biodiversity occurring through fragmentation and loss of woodland due to development and other land uses</td>
<td>Review and strengthen • Planning policies • Legislation • Planning and other relevant guidance • Consultation procedures to ensure biodiversity if fully taken into account including adequate protection for ancient and semi-natural woodlands</td>
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8. The Rural Development Plan for Scotland (version 4) which was updated in December 2003 sets out a description of rural Scotland, with particular emphasis on the agricultural and forestry sectors, with strategic priorities for the investment of EU and domestic funds. The Plan states that “Ancient semi natural woodlands must have high conservation priority”.

Current situation
We are faced with an approved road scheme that, back in 1992, was considered to “still be imposing detrimental environmental impacts at certain locations”. The supplementary Environmental Mitigation Report, issued recently, states “Dalkeith Park remains the area of the highest quality habitat which is predominantly the Esk corridor” and “woodland is a key habitat in the study area”. We acknowledge that this later Report was voluntarily commissioned by the Scottish Executive in partial recognition of this time delay since the 1997 decision but also note that it is not intended to comply with current Environmental Statement standards, therefore its value must be questionable in the circumstances.

WTS Opinion
In the opinion of the Woodland Trust, had this road proposal been put forward for consultation in the present era a different conclusion than the scheme now being progressed would have been reached.

The proposed route of the Dalkeith Northern bypass directly and indirectly affects extremely important ancient and semi-natural woodland. In the surrounding area and indeed far beyond, they are highly regarded not only for biodiversity value but also for landscape, recreational and cultural value. This is land that has been continuously wooded for many hundreds and often thousands of years. Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) holds the inventory of Ancient, Long Established and Semi-Natural Woodland in Scotland which shows that native woodlands of natural origin now cover only 1% of Scotland’s land area.

It is the opinion of WTS that ancient and semi-natural woods are our richest, most important...
sites for a vast range of insects, birds, animals, flowers and trees and are home to more threatened species than any other UK habitat. However, this is not just our conviction. SNH is explicit about the importance of such woods and one of the major threats – fragmentation (see evidence provided by SNH to PEB53). They state that the age of a wood is a well established proxy for its natural heritage value. SNH have promoted the need for protection of these high-value, non-designated sites for some years. They highlight the fact that these sites are vulnerable to inappropriate development. SNH Natural Heritage Futures: Forests and Woodlands 2002 notes that ‘A large proportion of Scotland’s biodiversity is associated with tree cover and this is particularly true of native and mature woodlands... The National assessment: Species lists some 263 species which have been identified as endangered to some degree, all associated with trees and woodland.’

When considering an ancient or semi-natural wood, it is important to consider more than the trees. Each wood is associated with long periods of evolution, with most of the ecological value being retained in the soil. The effect of disturbance, fragmentation, traffic, pollution, light, noise and spray from the road will have untold damage on the integrity of the surrounding woodland. In addition, quiet and peaceful recreation will become impossible. Although this cannot now be tested, we are adamant that there would have been a different outcome at Dalkeith as the quality of the Esk valley and the adjacent woodland together with Dalkeith Park has been recognised. Fragmentation of such a corridor containing a complex ecosystem is no longer considered to be acceptable in 2006 – but it should be recognised that this corridor also forms part of an important wider habitat mosaic. Even if this is disregarded, the unnecessary destruction to ancient woodland on south eastern periphery of Dalkeith Park which arises from the realignment of the A6094 could easily have been avoided by routing this link further to the east. Similarly, slight variance in the route could also have avoided ancient woodland to the north west of the Esk, positioning the road on improved farmland of lesser value.

**Conclusion**

WTS does not support development that results in loss of ancient and semi-natural woods, and we do not support the construction of the Dalkeith Northern bypass on that basis (see www.woodsunderthreat.org.uk).

Under the Nature Conservation Act (Scotland) 2004 it is ‘the duty of every public body and office-holder, in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity.’ In future, we wish to see all public bodies protecting our most biodiverse habitat rather than destroying what remains.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Fairbairn
Development Manager

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Natural Heritage Futures: Forests and Woodlands, Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002
Public Petitions Committee – a template for public petitions

Should you wish to submit a public petition for consideration by the Public Petitions Committee please complete the template below. Please refer to the Guidance on submission of public petitions for advice on issues of admissibility before completing the template. You may also seek advice from the Clerk to the Committee whose contact details can be found at the end of this form.

Details of principal petitioner:
Please enter the name of person and organisation raising the petition, including a contact address where correspondence should be sent to, email address and phone number if available.

Marilyn de Blieck
Ayrshire Voices

Text of petition:
The petition should clearly state what action the petitioner wishes the Parliament to take in no more than 5 lines of text, e.g.

The petitioner requests that the Scottish Parliament considers and debates the implications of the proposed Agenda for Change legislation for Speech and Language Therapy Services and service users within the NHS

Petition by Marilyn de Blieck on behalf of Ayrshire Voices calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to develop a coherent national policy in relation to the teaching of singing and in particular to ensure adequate provision of vocal tuition for young people across Scotland.

Additional information:
Any additional information in relation to your petition, including reasons why the action requested is necessary, should not be included here. However, it may be appended to the petition and will be made available to the Public Petitions Committee prior to its consideration of your petition.
Please note that you should limit the amount of any additional information which you may wish to provide in support of your petition to no more than 4 sides of A4.
Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition:

Before submitting a petition to the Parliament, petitioners are expected to have made an attempt to resolve their issues of concern by, for example, making representations to the Scottish Executive or seeking the assistance of locally elected representatives, such as councillors, MSPs and MPs. Please enter details of those approached below and append copies of relevant correspondence, which will be made available to the Public Petitions Committee prior to its consideration of your petition.

John Scott MSP
Constituency Office
1 Wellington Square
Ayr

Request to speak:

Petitioners may request to appear before the Public Petitions Committee in support of their petition, although it should be noted that requests to speak will only be granted if the Convener considers that a brief statement from the petitioner would be useful in facilitating the Committee's consideration of the petition. Due to the large volume of petitions being considered the Committee will usually only hear presentations on up to 4 new petitions at each meeting.

Please indicate below whether you wish to request to make a brief statement before the Committee when it comes to consider your petition.

Yes / No

*Delete as appropriate

Signature of principal petitioner:

When satisfied that your petition meets all the criteria outlined in the Guidance on submission of public petitions, the principal petitioner should sign and date the form in the box below. Other signatures gathered should be appended to this form.

Signature ..

Date 22/05/08

Please note that any additional information, copies of relevant correspondence and additional signatures should be appended to this form and submitted to:

The Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee,
The Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131 348 5186  Fax: 0131 348 5088
e-mail: petitions@scottish.parliament.uk
Additional Information

LOCAL BACKGROUND TO THE PETITION – PROVISION OF SINGING TUITION IN SOUTH AYRSHERE BY AYRSHERE VOICES

Ayshire Voices was founded by Raymond Bramwell and Marilyn de Bieck in the mid-1980s; the organisation was specifically designed to cater for the educational needs of young singers at a time when singing was rapidly disappearing from the state school music curriculum. The Keynote Trust was set up in Ayshire at around the same time as a charitable organisation dedicated to arts promotion and education with a special remit for young people and the performing arts.

By 1996 Ayshire Voices had developed considerably and required increased financial support to meet the increasing demand for its services. Responding to this need, the Keynote Trust recognised that priority should be given to the Trust’s educational aims through support for Ayshire Voices and its considerable numbers of school age singers.

By 1998, two years after the Trust took up the cause of Ayshire Voices, some funding for the Trust’s educational work was achieved from South Ayrshire Council via the Ayr Common Good Fund. With a basic council funding package in place, the Trust then succeeded in acquiring project funding from the Scottish Arts Council Lottery Fund. This enabled a three-year programme of performance and outreach work to take place which included three new commissioned operas on Scottish themes for young people (Sir Patrick Spens 1999, Lochinvar 2000, and Hamish Prong 2001) as well as a programme of classes in Girvan, Maybole and Barassie in addition to the existing Ayshire Voices classes in Ayr, Prestwick and Troon. The project was described by its external assessor as “a model of its kind.”

With the ending of Lottery project funding in 2001 the Trust and Ayshire Voices once more faced the funding gap which had become an all-too-familiar pattern over the years, despite the acknowledged quality of the partnership’s work and its track-record of excellence in both tuition and performance. The threat that the Trust would cease operation brought home to key individuals at South Ayrshire Council the loss to the community which would ensue.

In 2002 a three-year Service Level Agreement was put in place between the Keynote Trust and South Ayrshire Council which for the first time ever was based on a realistic assessment of the costs of administering, managing and staffing the partner organisations as well as teaching the students and promoting concert performances. This meant that core costs were covered, allowing management to concentrate on additional project fundraising for the performance and outreach programme. By this time Ayshire Voices was dealing with 200 – 300 singing students every year, most in regular weekly and fortnightly classes, with additional intake for special, separately-funded performance projects. The Trust was in addition running the new South Ayrshire Boys Choir on behalf of the Council.

All of these benefits ceased when South Ayrshire Council announced in February 2004 as part of a package of budget cuts, that the element of funding for the Trust sourced from the council’s Education Budget (almost 50%) would be withdrawn in the expected third year of the Agreement, the 2004/05 financial year. Because the Trust had no warning of this serious funding loss, there followed a period of difficulty in the course of which the infrastructure for staged performances built up over the previous 20 years was lost as a result of a major downsizing exercise.

Following continuous discussion and representations from a wide range of parties throughout 2004/05, in March/April 2005 South Ayrshire Council agreed to continue funding the Keynote Trust/Ayshire Voices Education Programme for young singers from Ayr Common Good Fund at the previous year’s reduced level. This will enable a 2 term programme to take place in Ayr in 2005/06, thus protecting the core activity. This funding may be used to run classes only within the town of Ayr itself, where the Ayshire Voices programme currently teaches 200 students aged from 5 to 18.

What does Ayshire Voices do?

Ayshire Voices is a grassroots organisation which provides a model for the training of young singers both as choral singers and as soloists. It fills a major gap in an area where secondary school choirs in particular are few and far between, providing a structure for young singers to progress from age 5 to school leaving age in a high quality educational extra-curricular environment. The Ayshire Voices structure is in certain respects unique, notably in achieving a balance between the needs of choral and solo singers; the model is flexible enough to integrate large choral groups and particularly talented individuals alike, ensuring that the needs and requirements of every singer, whether in possession of a
potential solo instrument or not, are met throughout their school years.

What are the wider implications?

1. Financial

During a period when local authorities have been encouraged to enter into partnership with community organisations to ensure quality service provision, the Keynote Trust has been a modal partner in its field. This however could not prevent the Trust’s operation from being extremely vulnerable to external financial pressure on its local authority. Local organisations dependent on local authority funding are inevitably the first to suffer in these circumstances because the local authority naturally wishes to preserve its own internally-run services. This applies even when, as here, the service partner is clearly best placed to deliver a competitively priced and high quality service. The funding difficulties experienced by the trust over the last 20 years can be extrapolated from the local to the national situation with ease. They highlight the difficulties experienced by many independent organisations providing a service to the community. Project funding can be obtained from a number of sources. Core funding is extremely difficult to achieve – and to maintain.

2. Educational

Singing has in recent times been the poor relation in terms of music education provision, partly because the best teaching structure for the singer may not be the same as that for the instrumentalist. (The string, woodwind or brass player starts with individual tuition and progresses to ensemble and orchestral groups, while the singer starts in the choral group, where basic skills are learned, and only then progresses to solo status. The implications of this are perhaps not sufficiently understood.) The Executive’s recent Youth Music initiative has done something to change this situation, since it has proved impossible to achieve the set targets in the time available except by increasing the singing element within the primary school music curriculum. Provision however remains fragmented and of mixed quality, while the link between choral and solo tuition in most areas remains unexplored. While it is true that the bedrock of provision is probably best delivered through the primary school system, I would argue that a structure which incorporates extra-curricular tuition for singers as the norm would represent not only the most effective but probably the most cost-effective option. I would further argue that, while flexibility is undoubtedly needed to allow for local conditions, unless the Executive lays down a national framework for provision, the needs of singers will remain unmet in many local authority areas.
Richard Hough  
Assistant Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee  
TG.01  
Parliamentary Headquarters  
EDINBURGH  
EH99 1SP  

17th April 2006  

Dear Mr Hough  

Consideration of Petition PE860  
Comments on responses received  

I enclose my comments on responses received from various parties to the above petition, and apologise for the delay in replying. The last three months have been almost all about negotiations with South Ayrshire Council over funding, and unfortunately I had to deal with a funeral in my husband's family as well. I have finally been able to put together some thoughts, and hope that they will be helpful to the Committee.  

Please convey to Committee members my thanks for considering the petition, and for giving me a thoughtful hearing. Not having had dealings with Parliament before, I was not quite sure what to expect, and am extremely impressed by the way in which the Committee deals with business. I am also grateful to the Clerk, Dr James Johnstone, for his advice in the early stages of the process.  

Yours sincerely  

Marilyn de Bieck
SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE860

BROUGHT BY
MARILYN DE BLIECK
ON BEHALF OF
AYRSHIRE VOICES

COMMENT ON RESPONSES RECEIVED BY THE COMMITTEE FROM LOCAL AND NATIONAL BODIES

BY MARILYN DE BLIECK
APRIL 2006
Background

The petition was brought before the Committee against a local background of decreasing funding from South Ayrshire Council for the work of Keynote Trust/Ayrshire Voices in educating and training young singers in South Ayrshire. This situation remains essentially unchanged; a new political administration is currently grappling with a large budget shortfall and has so far agreed only six months funding for The Keynote Trust and other similar local arts organisations for financial year 2006/07. Bearing in mind its legal responsibilities, the Trust is currently scheduled to close in December 2006.

My concern in bringing the petition, however, was to address the wider national situation. It seemed to me that young singers in every part of Scotland were advantaged or disadvantaged depending on the attitude of their particular local authority, their director of education, or even their local school, and that while each area requires to retain some flexibility according to its geographical and demographic layout, it ought not to be impossible to establish a national framework which would go some way to ensuring fairness in basic provision.

I was also concerned to address the question of quality of provision; it is one thing to increase the number of singing instructors, for example, and quite another to ensure that the tuition which they give is of an acceptable level. This is a particular problem in the context of the secondary school, where singing is often taught by tutors who are qualified to teach another instrument, and are then shoe-horned into teaching singing either by default or because it is considered an "easy option" for examination candidates at Standard Grade and above. As a singing specialist, I would not dream of teaching brass or keyboard instruments, but the reverse situation is common.

While it is inevitable that the provision of basic singing teaching for young people of school age, particularly in the primary sector, will tend to focus on school time, I am not convinced that an overall framework should concentrate only on this. The curriculum is already a very busy place, and I should like to see more emphasis placed on out-of-school singing activities which are linked to and supported by schools and local authorities, though not necessarily run by them directly.

Comment on responses received

HM Inspectorate of Education

This, which was one of the shortest responses sent to the Committee, was nevertheless, in my view, one of the most important, as it summarised the current situation accurately.
Points to note from the Response:

- "At the secondary stage, exposure to singing is determined largely by individual choice".

- "Some schools encourage high participation, whereas in other schools participation might be very low".

- "Provision is variable and often determined by local interest and the motivation of individual teachers".

- "Visiting singing tutors are to be found in schools less frequently than is the case with other instrumental groups".

- "It is fair to say that approaches across schools vary and, whilst there is some outstanding work in some schools, in others one would not detect a strong culture of singing".

These comments, which authentically represent the situation "on the ground", without bias, echo my own concerns exactly. I am in favour of individual choice, but I do not believe that a young person who wishes to use the singing voice as their choice of musical instrument, and who happens to attend a secondary school where the "motivation of individual teachers" is not present, or where the school does not "encourage high participation", has any choice at all, particularly if his or her financial resources are limited.

**Response from Ayrshire Local Authorities: North, East and South Ayrshire**

The responses from the three Ayrshire authorities point the contrast in provision for singers in neighbouring local government areas, and support the view that, so far as singing is concerned, everything hinges on which local authority area you happen to live in.

- North Ayrshire has a huge amount to be proud of in its music tuition in general, and its choral provision in particular. The Council funds its Music Service properly, has a strategic view of what it wants to achieve, and regards singing as a high priority within the strategy. As a result large numbers of young people of all age groups are able to participate in music making of every kind, and additional project funding is being levered in for added value. The North Ayrshire "scene" is a lively one which values singing highly and which seeks to address perceived gaps in provision, for example by forming a treble boys choir to encourage boys to sing together from an early age.
- East Ayrshire is working hard to achieve a balanced provision in an area which was historically dominated by brass instruments, and is succeeding in drawing in larger numbers of young people to music and to singing despite a disparate geographical profile and large areas of deprivation. It is interesting to note, however, that the 4 FTE music instructors teaching singing also teach keyboard and piano, and it would be helpful to know just how their time is divided between the three instruments (See Background above).

- South Ayrshire has historically been dominated by string instruments; it has used its Youth Music Initiative funding to expand the provision of primary music specialists, and to increase its vocal tutor provision in secondary schools from 1 to 2, as well as increasing the numbers of instrumental tutors. It has also entered into short-term partnerships with "national organisations involved in vocal instruction". None of this, however, has altered the traditional bias in favour of orchestral instruments, or significantly affected the incidence or quality of vocal tuition in secondary schools. Choral provision for young people in South Ayrshire effectively stops after primary school, where in any case it varies according to the views of the individual head teacher; to my knowledge not one of its nine secondary schools has a Senior Choir, and quality choral provision for young people is entirely in the hands of Ayrshire Voices, which, while funded by the Council through non-education budget sources, has no direct access to singers via secondary schools, where "one would not detect a strong culture of singing" (See HMie response above).

Response from VOCAL

Apart from observing with a degree of irony the choice of title for this organisation, I note the low priority given to singing encapsulated in the statement "Several councils.....have supported the teaching of singing but others consider they do not currently have sufficient resources". Looked at from the financial point of view alone, singing is the cheapest form of music tuition available – the instrument already exists within the child, there is no need for the purchase of expensive equipment, and the only essentials are a space with a decent acoustic, a piano and a skilled tutor. In addition, in a choral situation, large numbers of children can be taught simultaneously. Of course I recognise that an organisation such as VOCAL, like COSLA, is bound to give priority to other, more pressing, matters.

Response from the Scottish Arts Council

Points to note:
The Scottish Arts Council was, until recently, focused almost entirely on the financial support of professional performance groups in Scotland; the proportion of its resources allocated to education or grassroots activity was very small. This situation has changed to some extent with the emergence of YMI and Lottery funding, but it is still a relatively recent phenomenon. It is worth pointing out that since Lottery funds are indeed devoted to "short term project funding" there has been no point in applying to these funds while the Keynote Trust's core funding was in jeopardy.

Youth Music Initiative funding to the so-called "informal" sector is also short-term, however much we would all wish otherwise, and it was certainly, at the time of my last application to the fund, (2004) bound to be subject to the Arts Council's perspective on the reduction in core local authority funding recently suffered by the Trust. The criterion of "sustainability" could not be met by the application not because of the nature of the project itself but because there was no sign of improvement in the Trust's core funding situation in the foreseeable future. In the circumstances, I was not entirely surprised that the application was unsuccessful; what did surprise me was the fact that the Scottish Arts Council showed no interest in finding out more about the situation in South Ayrshire, given the Trust's record in quality provision in the area for many years, and in particular after a 3-year Lottery project described by the external assessor as "a model of its kind".

There was never any possibility of applying to the Scottish Arts Council for funds towards "the sustaining of the Keynote Trust as an organisation", since their funding is not, and never has been, able to be utilised in this way by a local, rather than a national organisation.

Response from the National Youth Choir of Scotland

The NYCoS response is an interesting one and I cannot but agree with many of the general points raised, particularly in the first three sections. However it should be remembered that this is a national organisation with a "top-down" philosophy, and that it is fully engaged with the Kodaly method of choral singing. Zoltan Kodaly was undoubtedly a genius, but it is questionable whether the methods adopted in Hungary with Hungarian voices in mind are necessarily suitable for Scottish children. The central European choral tradition and sound are very different from those of the UK, emphasising as they do the lower ranges of the singing voice, and using a very limited repertoire which my own young singers, for example, would find unutterably boring within a very short time.
A coherent national policy and adequate provision for vocal tuition

A way forward – some suggestions

The HMI response summed up the present national situation for choral and solo singers of school age; it is a fragmented picture. There are some areas of excellence and good practice, and many areas of the exact opposite. The frustrating thing is that Scotland used to be a singing country, with a strong and vital choral and solo singing tradition. Many of these skills have been lost in recent times, and need to be rebuilt, and singing currently suffers from a classic "double whammy" – it is either considered to be so difficult that no-one (except Pavarotti or his like) can do it, or so easy that anyone can do it (without any training). Neither is the case.

Most local authorities deal with singing through their instrumental services. These are inevitably dominated by instrumental specialists, many of whom have very limited knowledge of singing. In most cases, they are attempting to fit an increased amount of singing into an existing structure which works well for instrumentalists, but which I would like to suggest does not work well for singers. Increasing the numbers of singing tutors in secondary schools is not, ultimately the answer if they continue to operate within the current structures. We need a new approach, a new model, one which works for our young people wherever they are.

Part 1. - Choral

- Whole class singing in primary schools undertaken by primary music specialists. This could start at age 5 or possibly earlier, although the benefits to the child of singing from a very early age are in my view doubtful, as the vocal instrument is not sufficiently developed at this stage.

- Talent identification in order to form school and area primary choirs. This should be done at the P4 stage, not much earlier.

- Area choirs should encompass both boys and girls. It is known that boys have a much greater commitment to singing if they sing in their own treble voice groups, so there should be at least one boys' choir in the area, as well as groups for both boys and girls. Good age ranges for these choirs are:

  8/9 years to 11 years
  11 years to 14 years

- The 11 to 14 years area groups would contain both primary and secondary students, thus avoiding the problems which arise with the transition to secondary. If children begin singing in primary and singing
groups are provided for them which bridge the primary/secondary gap, they are much more likely to continue singing into their teens. These choral groups would learn to sing in two or three parts. The existence of such area choirs would increase opportunities for those children whose secondary schools do not have a strong singing culture, and would put them in touch with other young singers from different schools. This is extremely important in decreasing the young singer’s sense of isolation, and is very helpful in keeping boys singing through the primary/secondary transition.

- There should then be a four-part (SATB) area choir which girls join at the age of 14 and which boys join as soon as their voices start to change and deepen. There is a huge undersupply of male voices in both youth and adult choirs in Scotland, and this is largely because provision for boys changing and changed voices is inadequate. It is essential that boys who have sung as trebles continue their singing life without a break as it is very difficult to reclaim them for singing once they have stopped.

Part 2 – Solo Vocal

- Continuous talent identification of young singers from P4 upwards should be undertaken in the school, school choir or area choir context in order to identify voices of solo potential. For these students there should then be a parallel structure of solo skills tuition in a small group environment in order to deepen and enhance the basic technical singing work done in the choirs and to instil the confidence which they require as soloists. The talent identification programme should be a rolling one, so that children can be brought into the solo skills tuition structure at any stage from age 9 to age 14 and above.

- Especially talented students would move gradually from the small group situation to individual tuition via classes of 4, 3, and 2 students, and would begin solo tuition at the earliest in Secondary 4. This would be the norm for most students, but there would be flexibility in the system so that singers with particularly well-developed voices might move up earlier. Experience suggests that the bulk of young singers do not require to move to individual solo work before Secondary 5, provided they have progressed through the choral and group solo skills structure before that age.

- Much of this structure would operate outside school curriculum time; only the foundation elements – whole class singing in the primary school and the primary school choir – involve school time, and they are crucial to the success of the model. If there is no culture of singing in the secondary field, students can still sing in an area choral structure, thus increasing opportunity and choice from age 14 up. What matters is that they should
have been singing from primary years onwards, and that there should be a vehicle whereby they can access singing at area level if the school does not have a choral culture.

A structure such as this is very flexible, and would allow for local differences to be built in from the start, especially in areas where the population is geographically scattered or where there is a high level of deprivation. Project work can be built in for added value, but it is essential that the core work takes place on a regular basis, with choirs meeting weekly and solo skills groups fortnightly. Young voices need to be looked after if they are to enter adulthood in a healthy state, and contribute to the choral and operatic scene in Scotland, and short intensive courses, while helpful for student bonding, can easily result in vocal exhaustion or damage which is difficult to repair.

**And Finally**

On a personal note, I should like to thank the Committee for dealing constructively with this petition and for giving me the opportunity to air an issue which does not have a high public profile, but which I regard as of great importance for the development of young people in Scotland.

_Marilyn de Blieck_

_17th April 2006_
Public Petitions Committee – a template for public petitions

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Details of principal petitioner:
Please enter the name of person and organisation raising the petition, including a contact address where correspondence should be sent to, email address and phone number if available.

Paul Nolan, Chair, Craigmillar Community Council

Text of petition:
The petition should clearly state what action the petitioner wishes the Parliament to take in no more than 5 lines of text, e.g.

The petitioner requests that the Scottish Parliament considers and debates the implications of the proposed Agenda for Change legislation for Speech and Language Therapy Services and service users within the NHS

Petition by Paul Nolan, on behalf of Craigmillar Community Council, calling on the Scottish Parliament to consider and debate the implications of the Scottish Executive’s support for market led urban regeneration projects and the operation of privatised urban regeneration companies and in particular to consider the mechanisms in which local communities can influence and hold such companies to account.

Additional information:
Any additional information in relation to your petition, including reasons why the action requested is necessary, should not be included here. However, it may be appended to the petition and will be made available to the Public Petitions Committee prior to its consideration of your petition. Please note that you should limit the amount of any additional information which you may wish to provide in support of your petition to no more than 4 sides of A4.
Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition:
Before submitting a petition to the Parliament, petitioners are expected to have made an attempt to resolve their issues of concern by, for example, making representations to the Scottish Executive or seeking the assistance of locally elected representatives, such as councillors, MSPs and MPs. Please enter details of those approached below and append copies of relevant correspondence, which will be made available to the Public Petitions Committee prior to its consideration of your petition.

We have made contact and expressed our concerns on several occasions to our local Councillor, our local MSP, the regional list MSP and our local MP.

Petitioners appearing before the Committee
The Convener of the Committee may invite petitioners to appear before the Public Petitions Committee to speak in support of their petition. Such an invitation will only be made if the Convener considers this would be useful in facilitating the Committee's consideration of the petition. It should be noted that due to the large volume of petitions it has to consider the Committee is not able to invite all petitioners to appear before the Committee to speak in support of their petition.

Please indicate below if you do NOT wish to make a brief statement before the Committee when it comes to consider your petition.

I do NOT wish to make a brief statement before the Committee  

Signature of principal petitioner:
When satisfied that your petition meets all the criteria outlined in the Guidance on submission of public petitions, the principal petitioner should sign and date the form in the box below. Other signatures gathered should be appended to this form.

Signature ...

Date .................................................................

Please note that any additional information, copies of relevant correspondence and additional signatures should be appended to this form and submitted to:
The Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee,
The Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131 348 5186  Fax: 0131 348 5038
e-mail: petitions@scottish.parliament.uk
Background
Craigmillar lies in the south east of Edinburgh, encircled between Musselburgh in the east and Portobello to the north. The area has a high incidence of poverty and the Scottish Indices of Deprivation rank the community fourth most deprived council ward in Scotland.

It is against this backdrop that the City Council launched the Craigmillar Urban Design Framework.

The Craigmillar Urban Design Framework
The Craigmillar Urban Design Framework was launched in December 2004, when the City Council’s Planning Committee published it for consultation purposes. The framework was jointly produced over a three year period by the City of Edinburgh Council and Parc who are a private Urban Regeneration Company co-owned by the City of Edinburgh Council and their arms length property development company EDI.

The framework which was informed by Parc’s business plan is 127 pages long which are divided into ten chapters; the main details are noted below,

- The project will receive in excess of £40 million pounds of public funding through both the Scottish Executive and the gift of land from the City Council to Parc. Parc have already secured £18 million from the Executive.
- 3200 new homes will be built over a fifteen year period; doubling the population to 15,000
- 86% will be sold on the market, with the cheapest property starting at around £90k
- The 14% of homes being built for public rent will be used to re-house tenants displaced by development; they are not additional public housing
- The houses will be built at a density level of 80 dwellings per hectare. This means that large parts of housing development will consist of four storey blocks, with ‘landmark’ buildings exceeding this.
- The building schedule will prioritise the construction of private housing. Parc’s business plan shows that a significant proportion of public housing will not be built until year 12 of the build programme.
- Two primary schools and one secondary school will be built from profits of house sales.
- A new junction will be built on Niddrie Mains road which is intended to deal with traffic congestion.
- The plans contain no definite proposals for the development of any new youth or community facilities.
A nine week public consultation ran from late January until early April 2005. There was a general consultation process in which any interested parties could respond to 8 questions set by the Planning Committee, and there was a specific community consultation. The community consultation was funded by Parc and their officers worked with representatives from the City of Edinburgh Council and Craigmillar Community Council to co-ordinate the exercise; the process was implemented by Scottish Participatory Initiatives (SPI) who are an independent organisation specialising in participatory research, they were chosen because of their proven track record with both Local Authorities and local communities.

The community consultation was a mammoth exercise but proved to be a huge success. Using innovative techniques, 275 people were engaged and thoroughly consulted on the contents of the Urban Design Framework; this sample was highly representative of the Craigmillar populace including work with young and old, male and female. The consultation recorded the serious concerns that members of the community had about the framework. These were written up into a full report which is available on request from Scottish Participatory Initiatives, a brief summary is provided below.

- Concern was raised about the proportion of private to public housing. It was felt that the balance should be 50-50.

- Concern was raised that there is no homes for sale at locally affordable prices. The cheapest property valued at current prices was around £90k. However, there are only 52% of the eligible work force economically active in Craigmillar and research compiled by Craigmillar Partnership shows that the average earnings in the community was around £14,000; financial research shows that a single person would need to have a salary of around £27k to get a mortgage for £90k, while a couple would need a joint income of approximately £33k.

- Concern was raised about the housing densities. Craigmillar has a long history of failed high density housing schemes. This evidence is recognised by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister who recommends that housing densities should not exceed 50 dwellings per hectare.

- Concern was raised about the length of time that tenants could be decanted from their homes. Many are vulnerable due to age, ill health or both and their lifestyles are sustained through access to localised social and familial support networks.

- Concern was raised about the proposals to deal with the increase in traffic congestion that doubling the population would have. It was felt that the creation of a junction policed by traffic lights was completely inadequate to deal with an already seriously congested Niddrie Mains Road. There were valid concerns that grid locked traffic could lead to increased pollution and ill health thus further depriving the community.

- Concerns were raised about the omission of any new youth or leisure facilities and about the loss of 5 hectares of public space to housing and business development opportunities.
Concerns were raised that several aspects of the plans breached guidance laid out in the South East Edinburgh Local Plan; including housing densities, height of the proposed developments and the loss of green space.

Numerous concerns were raised about how any of these plans will benefit the 64% of families who have a total household income of around £10,088.

The value of the consultation appeared to have been recognised by the planning department when they submitted their report to a meeting of the Planning Committee on 16th June 2006 commenting,

_The Participatory Appraisal Method was easily understood and encouraged people to discuss issues that concerned them generally and to ask questions and to give comments. It was a less intimidating forum than a large public meeting and proved to be a useful format._

_Available at [http://cpol.edinburgh.gov.uk/getdoc_ext.asp?DocId=66472](http://cpol.edinburgh.gov.uk/getdoc_ext.asp?DocId=66472)

However, the planning department refused to present the official community consultation report to the committee, instead committee members were presented with selective snippets of information in the form of a digest, which was seriously lengthy containing the numerous comments recorded from the general consultation process; as a result, the strength of feeling communicated in the community consultation report was lost upon members of the committee, and despite following all correct procedures, members of the Community Council were also prevented from representing their opinions via a deputation.

This situation was worsened when the Convenor of the Housing Department, Councillor Sheila Gilmore, was allowed to present a separate paper outlining the views of the housing department; the paper rubbished the community consultation report and praised Parc’s work. Councillor Gilmore is a member of the Planning Committee and a board member of both Parc and EDI.

That this situation has occurred is both a scandal and a disgrace and unacceptable in any civilised society where political authority is maintained through appeals to democracy. Ironically, there is tacit acceptance of this view by the convenor of the Planning Committee, Councillor Trevor Davies, who at a further meeting of the committee on 29th September recommended that the Craigmillar Urban Design Framework should go to the Council’s Executive for approval, but that the Committee should ask for advice on … what steps would be necessary to rebuild public confidence in the participatory process ...


**Specific Nature of Our Petition**

Ideas about market regeneration and the specific role of Urban Regeneration Companies have been vague in England since the election of New Labour in 1997; there are currently around 13 projects being taken forward south of the border. Despite acknowledging evidence which suggests this approach has been unsuccessful in England, the Scottish Executive took up the idea in 2003 when they launched a consultation paper seeking the views of local authorities on the issue. In 2005 the Executive announced that they were to fund three pathfinder projects, two in the west of Scotland alongside Parc in the east.
Though there is a developing legislative framework within which English URC's have to operate, there is no comprehensive policy framework in place in Scotland. Indeed, the only existing legislation is contained in Part 2, section 16, sub section 3 of the Local Government in Scotland Act. Discussing the relevance of Community Planning, the Executive note that Scottish Ministers can modify the public bodies able to participate within the community planning process, by... adding a reference to any eligible body... it is noted in sub-section 4 that an eligible body includes a body which, not being a public body, has functions of a public nature or engages in activities of that nature.

Our petition is best expressed through a series of questions.

- Why is there no comprehensive legislation guiding the operations of Urban Regeneration Companies?
- Why are Urban Regeneration Companies, which are essentially private businesses, not open to public influence and scrutiny? They are, after all, publicly funded and part of the community planning process.
- Why are the business plans of Urban Regeneration Companies now driving the regeneration strategies developed by our Local Authorities? Surely, within the money available, the needs of the existing community should be the priority.
- Is it democratic that design frameworks developed by Urban Regeneration Companies can ignore both Structural Plans and Local Plans that are constructed by Local Authorities?
- Is it democratic that in the age of Community Planning, the opinions and feelings of local communities about plans which will have a determining impact for generations to come can be so blatantly and consistently ignored by Local Authorities?
- Is it democratic that members of the planning committee can sit on the board of directors of Urban Regeneration Companies? Currently Councillor Sheila Gilmore and Councillor Maureen Childes are in this positioning Edinburgh.
Dear Mr. Johnson,

EDINBURGH COUNCIL HOUSING DEPARTMENT – RESPONSE TO PETITION PE911

I am writing in response to the petition (PE911) brought by Mr. Paul Nolan.

While the petition concerned the implications of the Scottish Executive’s support for Urban Regeneration Companies there were a number of claims made by the petitioners that concerned the Housing Department and our role in regeneration in Craigmillar.

Please find enclosed the Housing Department’s response to the Petition.

The response deals with three main areas:

- Regeneration and creating a sustainable balanced community
- Rehousing of tenants effected by regeneration and their Right to Return
- Consultation with residents and tenants

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

David Stewart
Senior development Officer

Date 10.03.06

Your ref

Our ref PETN RESP 100306

ANNEX B

EDINBURGH
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

HOUSING
DEVELOPMENT
Public Petitions Committee of Scottish Parliament

Petition PE911Urban Regeneration

City of Edinburgh Council Housing Department Response to Petition

1.0 Introduction

This is a response to the petition brought by Paul Nolan of Craigmillar Community Council. While the petition concerns the operation of Scotland's Pathfinder Urban Regeneration Companies there were statements and allegations made by those promoting the petition that the Housing Department feels it must comment on and correct.

There are three areas that the Housing Department wishes to address:

- The need to create a sustainable balanced community
- Rehousing tenants effected by demolition and providing new build affordable rented housing for them to return to
- Consulting with tenants on proposals for regeneration

2.0 Regeneration – creating a sustainable balanced community

2.1 Background

Craigmillar has benefited from a huge amount of housing led investment over the past 6 years. It received the largest New Housing Partnerships (NHP) investment in any single estate in Scotland - £23 million, while Communities Scotland invested £8 million and £29 million private investment was generated.

This investment led to significant physical regeneration of the estates of Craigmillar Castle, the Hays and Niddrie Marischal. New build houses for affordable rent were built, council houses in need of upgrading were transferred to local housing associations and housing was built for low cost home ownership (LCHO). No other estate in Edinburgh has had this level of investment LCHO.
There were two major benefits to this housing led regeneration:

- Conditions were improved for local people, with neighbourhoods regenerated and quality affordable houses built for local people
- Confidence increased in the area – 340 LCHO units were sold (many to local people) and over the past 5 years (2000 – 2005) house prices have increased in Craigmillar by 107%. Over the same period Edinburgh prices increased by an average of 76.5%.

In spite of the investment and the clear benefits to local people, and notwithstanding the economic growth of Edinburgh, Craigmillar remains the 4th most deprived Council ward in Scotland. It is against this background that the Council and EDI formed PARC and developed a comprehensive plan for the regeneration of Craigmillar.

The Scottish Executive’s People and Place: Regeneration Policy Statement says that

"Regeneration is about transforming places for the better. It is about growing the economy and tackling poverty and disadvantage and about creating mixed and sustainable communities"

This is precisely what the regeneration proposal for Craigmillar aims to do. A comprehensive plan has been developed to make Craigmillar a desirable place to live, with a mixed and sustainable community. 80% of the housing will be for sale and this will provide a balance to the existing tenure mix where the majority of houses are for affordable rent. At the end of the development the mix of affordable housing for rent and housing for sale will be around 50:50, the petitioner’s stated aim.

It is the Edinburgh Council’s view that if the Community Council’s proposals were carried out there would be no significant change to the social mix of Craigmillar, which as has already been mentioned is the fourth most deprived council ward in Scotland. Mr. Nolan proposes that only 25% of the new houses built by PARC should be for market sale, with 25% for affordable sale at a price that people on an average income of £10,000-£14,000 per annum can afford and 50% for rent. It is our view that this would not make Craigmillar a balanced and sustainable community. If the Council and PARC were to follow the petitioner’s suggestions, then at the end of the regeneration, 65% of all houses in Craigmillar would be for affordable rent.

There is also the question of fundability – even with significant investment from the Scottish Executive the profits from the sale of private houses are necessary to fund the community assets (schools, a library, parks) that the Council believes are essential to the future success of the area. The proposals that the Community Council make are quite simply unfundable. It is estimated that over £63 million Housing Association Grant HAG would be required to fund the amount of rented units that the petition proposes.
Edinburgh’s entire HAG allocation for the current financial year is £18 million. The Council would therefore have to put its entire HAG allocation into Craigmillar for the next 4 years to fulfil Mr. Nolan’s wishes - of course this is not possible or desirable as we have other priorities and other commitments to meet.

These figures only account for Mr. Nolan’s proposed increase in the percentage of affordable rented housing. Up to an additional £32 million in grant might be required in order to ensure that 25% of the housing for sale was affordable. This £32 million would come from the same pot of money as the HAG that funds the housing for affordable rent. At present this level of HAG funding is not available.

At the same time we aim to ensure that local people living in Craigmillar benefit directly from regeneration and investment. That is why we are guaranteeing every council tenant who has to leave their home the right to come back to a new build home for affordable rent.

The Council and PARC are also looking at providing Low Cost Home Ownership through Shared Equity or Shared Ownership schemes so that local residents have an opportunity to enter into home ownership.

3.0 Tenants – Rehousing and the Right to Return

It is a key aim of the Council and PARC that local people effected by demolition benefit directly from the regeneration of Craigmillar.

3.1 The Right to Return

In order to ensure that this takes place the Council operates a policy called the Right to Return. This policy guarantees that every tenant whose home is demolished to facilitate regeneration will have the Right to Return to a new build house for affordable rent in the Craigmillar area.

The Housing Department has previously implemented this policy in other regeneration projects in Craigmillar – at Niddrie Marischal, the Hays and Craigmillar Castle - and is implementing the policy in other parts of the city such as Moredun and Oxfords.

The Housing Department maintains a database of people with the Right to Return. The database is updated weekly and covers everyone with the Right to Return. This information informs the development of plans for rented housing and allows the Council to be sure that the number of houses for rent will meet the needs of people with the Right to Return.

The petition alleges that there will not be enough rented housing to meet the needs of all the people in Craigmillar – this is not the case. At present there will be 536 affordable rented units in Craigmillar. Our database suggests that 451 people will exercise their Right to Return.
The petition also alleges that the proposed mix of housing will not meet the needs of people in Craigmillar - this is demonstrably wrong. One third of the new properties for rent will be houses; the remaining two thirds will be flats. This mix will replace 100% flats. Our database shows that over 70% of tenants require a one or two bedroom flat. The Council's Housing Needs Assessment has shown that it is expected that the average household size in the city will go below 2 in 2018, so we believe that the mix of flats and family houses proposed is both suitable for current needs and sustainable for the future.

3.2 Rehousing

It is important to emphasise that when tenants move out of their houses to allow demolition and regeneration to take place they are not decanted but are permanently rehoused. This means that they retain all of the rights that secure tenants have and any discount that they have accumulated if they move to another Council house. The Right to Return is therefore an additional right that the Council provides to its tenants, allowing them to benefit from the regeneration. Tenants then have the option to remain where they are or to move to a new build that suits their needs once one is available.

When tenants are rehoused, they do this by bidding for properties that the Council has for let or by being nominated to Housing Association properties. There is no obligation for tenants to bid or to accept offers, so the allegation that people are forced to move across the city is completely unfounded. The Council have two dedicated housing officers providing advice and support to tenants who are affected by regeneration, and we have been very successful so far in rehousing tenants and meeting their needs. No tenant has had to accept a move that results in their circumstances worsening – in fact their have been many instances where people have been rehoused taking account of their circumstances (to be near an elderly relative or to ensure their children remain at the same school). The Housing Department would be pleased to assist the tenant that Mr. Nolan mentions and provide her with advice and assistance.

The petition states that 1,000 families are being cleared out of Craigmillar. This is simply not the case – people who wish to be rehoused in Craigmillar have been able to do so. Of tenants who have been rehoused to date over 59% have been rehoused in Craigmillar and a further 20% have been housed in the East area of the city.

On previous phases of regeneration in Craigmillar people who had been displaced by demolition have benefited by exercising the Right to Return, and everyone who wishes to do so in the current regeneration will be able to.
4 Consultation

The Housing Department has had a long established and successful process for consulting with residents in the Craigmillar area, having carried out consultation on housing led regeneration in Craigmillar over the past seven years. The process has been established through the previous regeneration of areas such as Craigmillar Castle, the Hays and Niddrie Marischal. We have continued to use this process in developing plans for the two major housing areas to be effected by PARC’s plans, Niddrie Mains and Greendykes.

4.1 The Housing Department’s Role
As the statutory housing authority and the landlord for tenants effected by regeneration proposals, we believe that we will remain the key agency in organising consultation on each Master Plan and detailed plan as Niddrie Mains and Greendykes undergo regeneration. It is the Housing Department’s tenants who are effected by demolition and who benefit from new build and so we believe that we have a clear remit to lead on consultation on all housing development proposals.

4.2 Who does the Housing Department consult with?
The Council consults with the Registered Tenants Organisation (RTO) for an area that plans have been developed for – so for example when consulting on plans for the redevelopment of Craigmillar Castle meetings were held with the Craigmillar Castle Regeneration Group (CCRG). For the two areas currently undergoing regeneration, we have been working with the local residents groups on PARC’s plans. This means that the people we are listening to are actually those effected by our proposals. During consultations RTOs are assisted by the Craigmillar Neighbourhood Alliance an organisation that provides support and helps build the capacity of residents to engage in the redevelopment process.

Discussions on proposals also regularly take place with the Housing and Environment Group, a subgroup of the Craigmillar Partnership, the local organisation that Mr. Nolan referred to in his evidence. For Wauchope Square, the first development that PARC are undertaking, presentations on the proposals were made to both the Housing and Environment Group of the Partnership and to the full Partnership Board.

4.2 What form does consultation take?
Consultation usually consists of meetings with the local residents’ organisation where plans are presented and then modified in response to residents’ comments.

Public meetings and open days are also held to broaden out consultation and provide information to as many residents as possible.
The petition made to you by the Chair of the Craigmillar Community Council concerns, in many ways, the deliberations of the Planning Committee of the City of Edinburgh Council, which I chair.

I don't know if it is appropriate that I should write to the Petitions Committee concerning this Petition. If it is, perhaps you would be good enough to place this letter before them.

The supporting statement to the Petition contains many significant inaccuracies. I should perhaps list a few:

1. The details of the Craigmillar Urban Design Framework listed by Mr Nolan relate to the draft. The final version approved by the Committee altered many of the details Mr Nolan refers to, in direct response to the consultation.

2. The draft Framework was a result of about two years' discussion in the local community and was therefore itself the result of substantial consultation.

3. The results of the specific consultation undertaken by Scottish Participatory Initiatives (SPI) was in fact made available to all Planning Committee members prior to its meeting of 16 June 2005 as a background paper according to our normal practice and an additional copy given to each individual member of Committee at the beginning of the meeting by the Community Council.

4. A deputation from the Community Council was not heard at that meeting because 1) the Committee was not making a decision at that meeting and 2) it has been our practice to make sure we receive deputations from all sections in Craigmillar. The Community Council represents only one point of view. The Community Council was heard at the decision-making meetings both prior to and following the meeting of 16 June 2005.
Our current Pathfinder URCs have developed regeneration outcomes as part of their Business Plan. These are strategically linked to the local Community Planning Partnership’s Regeneration Outcome Agreement and include outcomes to reduce local unemployment, for example, and to tackle deprivation through improving household income and the quality of life of local residents.

I trust this information is helpful to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Linda Craik
PS/DD
There are a variety of legislative provisions which are relevant here: under section 69 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 local authorities have the general power to do anything “calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions”; section 20 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 gives local authorities general powers to promote and improve the wellbeing of the area or the persons there, including power to enter into arrangements or agreements with any person (section 20(2)(e)). The formation of an URC by a local authority is included in the scope of these powers.

Mr Nolan raises a specific question about the accountability of URCs, which, he points out, are “not open to public interest and scrutiny”. This is also untrue. In terms of legislation, community planning duties in section 15 of the 2003 Act include a general duty to initiate, maintain and facilitate the process of planning public services, which requires consultation with all public bodies providing the services, and community bodies. In addition, section 51 of the 2003 Act requires councils, in entering or implementing arrangements or agreements with any body corporate, to comply with any code or document that Ministers direct will regulate such arrangements. The main purpose of this has been, through a direction to give effect to the Accounts Commission document "Following the Public Pound", that external bodies funded by Councils should generally be subject to the same degree of accountability as the funding Councils, and in accordance with the requirements of "Following the Public Pound". Also, under section 53, local authorities have a general duty, in exercising any power to enter a contract, to have regard to any guidance issued on that by Ministers. In other words, the fact that a contracting body is out with a Council does not mean that controls over Councils will not apply.

In addition, the Scottish Ministers make payments of grants to URCs under section 126 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. The Guidelines and Conditions of Funding under which these grants are paid require the URC to act in accordance with its set of rules, memorandum and articles or constitution at all times in connection with the project and the grant offer made by the Scottish Ministers. The conditions of funding also make clear that grant funding allocated cannot be used for purposes other than the project – any amendment to the project, or proposed re-allocation of resources, will require advance written approval of the Scottish Ministers. In the event of default the Scottish Ministers may refuse further grant payments and will be entitled to recover the full amount of grant already paid or any part thereof. Finally, URCs are required to submit annual reports on their projects to the Scottish Ministers for scrutiny.

PARC will, I’m sure, be responding on the specific points raised by Mr Nolan about consultation with the local community in Craigmillar but it is worth emphasising that the Executive is clear that engaging and communicating effectively with residents and local businesses is essential if a URC is to be successful. Our current 3 Pathfinder URCs, including PARC Craigmillar, have undertaken extensive local consultation on their plans, through, for example, local forums and, in Clydebank, a competition to design new signage for the area. All 3 Pathfinder URCs also have community representation on their board.

Finally, Mr Nolan refers to URCs as ‘private companies’ and questions whether the needs of the local community can be met through such delivery arrangements. An URC is a formal, equal partnership between the public and private sectors, operating as a company limited by guarantee, which takes a strategic overall view of the regeneration of an area, linked to a clear set of objectives and outcomes designed to benefit the local community. There are many reasons for adopting limited company status, including minimising risk and exposure to the public purse, inducing private sector investment and establishing strong governance arrangements which can help ensure delivery.
On 16 June 2004 the Executive published a summary of the consultation responses on URCs (http://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations/rural/urcsr.pdf). In addition to the 51 responses received to the consultation there were 15 notes of interest in URC pathfinder status. Of these, bids from Craigmillar Joint Venture Company (City of Edinburgh Council), Raploch Regeneration Project (Stirling Council) and Clydebank Re-built were considered to be furthest ahead in the business planning process and likely to benefit most from funding to kick start their regeneration programmes.

On 30 June 2004 the Minister for Communities announced that Craigmillar, Raploch and Clydebank had been granted Pathfinder URC status.

Turning to the specific issues raised for the Scottish Executive by Mr Nolan, he states in his petition that “despite acknowledging evidence which suggests [the URC] approach has been unsuccessful in England, the Scottish Executive took up the idea in 2003 when they launched a consultation paper”. In the course of the Committee’s meeting Mr Nolan also states that, in relation to English URCs, “preliminary research by the Scottish Executive does not show these companies in good light”. This is not the case. Page 5 of the Scottish Executive’s consultation paper refers to the “promising start” made by URCs in England, as noted in the Cities Review. The document goes on to state that URCs potentially offer:

- Better coordination of existing activities through a dedicated team;
- Independence from local authorities and other public agencies;
- Stronger focus for local strategies on national priorities; and
- A clear signal to the private sector of exactly where public agencies are focussing their energy, and crucially, investment.

Indeed, early evaluation of the URC programme in England and Wales (Urban Regeneration Companies: Learning the Lessons, ODPM, 2003) states that the pilot URCs are making significant progress and contributing to the regeneration of their areas and that the URC approach offers significant potential to better co-ordinate and focus physical and economic regeneration in specific areas. The report adds:

“There is strong evidence to suggest that the confidence of the private sector to invest in their area has increased. URCs need to create a favourable climate for the private sector, which induces investment because it achieves the perception of a well-managed area, a commitment from key decision takers and publicly funded early actions to set the conditions for growth.”

Mr Nolan may have confused URCs with comments made in the consultation paper on Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) on page 7. UDCs were established in England during the 1980s and 1990s and the consultation document notes that while UDCs are identified as having brought a single agency focus to major regeneration challenges and have delivered land into productive use, “in many cases the investment has failed to deliver tangible benefits for local communities, with the new opportunities being taken up by incomers and commuters”. There are clear differences between UDCs and URCs, including governance arrangements and the comprehensive range of powers given to UDCs, covering land and property, planning and other works.

Mr Nolan also seeks clarification of the legislative framework for URCs in Scotland and refers to “a developing legislative framework within which English URCs have to operate”. This is also mistaken. There is no specific legislation in either Scotland or England which underpins URCs. This is because existing legislation in Scotland (and England) already allows for the establishment of such delivery vehicles by local authorities.
The recommendation from the Planning Committee to the Council's Executive to consider "what steps would be necessary to rebuild public confidence in the participatory process" is not a tacit acceptance by me that the situation is a "scandal and a disgrace".

The Committee should also be aware that a representative of the Community Council is a member of the Board of PARC in a non-voting capacity, and the Community Council is therefore in a position to be well-informed of its actions and to help shape them.

I trust this information is of assistance to the Committee.

Councillor Trévor Davies
Broughton Ward
Dr James Johnston  
Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee  
TG.01  
Parliamentary Headquarters  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP  

23rd March 2006

Dear Mr Johnston,

Please find enclosed my response on behalf of SURF following your request with regard to Petition PE911.

I have already sent an electronic copy.

I hope this meets your requirements, if not please don’t hesitate to get in touch with me.

Best wishes

Andy Milne  
Chief Executive
A response from the Scottish Urban Regeneration Forum to the Scottish Parliament Petitions Committee's request for comment on community input to Urban Regeneration Companies in Scotland.

1 THE TASK
I am responding to the request in your letter of 26.1.06 in which you ask for comment from the Scottish Urban Regeneration Forum (SURF), on the issues raised in petition PE911 by Paul Nolan on behalf of the Craigmillar Community Council. Your letter was addressed to Alistair Girms as the Chief Executive of SURF. In fact, Alistair is the current SURF Chairperson and he has asked me to respond as the SURF chief executive. I trust this is what you had intended.

It may be appropriate for the committee to note that Mr Ian Wall, the chief executive of the EDI Group, which is referred to in the report of the committees discussion on this petition, is one of the 19 directors on the SURF board which I report to. However, I have not discussed this matter with him and he has had no input to this response.

I am grateful that you agreed to my request for an extension to the original response date of 6.3.06. This allowed me time to deal with the pressing business of organising SURFs main conference event on 10.3.06. I hope my comments below are of some use in the committee's considerations. I would be happy to elaborate on them as necessary.

2 BACKGROUND
2.1 SURF's role
The Scottish Urban Regeneration Forum (SURF) is the independent regeneration and inclusion network, sharing information and promoting discussion so as to help shape policy, opinion and the delivery of successful regeneration efforts in Scotland. It aims to stimulate constructive debate about community regeneration; to promote and disseminate examples of current practice; and to achieve a higher status for community regeneration on Scotland's political agenda.

It does so by:
- Organising conferences, open forums, seminars, Food For Thought dinners, study visits and lectures.
- Publishing documents such as the quarterly Scotregen journal, reports and briefing notes.
- Organising an annual best practice awards scheme.
- Linking constructively with relevant policy makers.
2.2 SURF interest in the URC model

In the course of its work in 2003, SURF organised two relevant events. Firstly, one of an ongoing series of Open Forums was held in Dundee on 22.05.03 on the subject of the experience of the English URC model, titled ‘Good Company to Regenerate in?’. On August 12th of the same year, SURF held a seminar on the broader topic of ‘New Delivery Vehicles in Regeneration’. This event was in part designed to coincide with the Scottish Executives consultation period on the potential introduction of the URC model in Scotland.

Outcome reports from both of these events can be viewed on the SURF website at the following links:
http://www.scotregen.co.uk/doc.pl?file=surf/news/URCs.doc


Two extracts from these event reports touch on the subject of the petition under consideration:

i) An extract from the 22.05.03 Open Forum outcome paper summary reads:

URCs, in common with many agencies and organisations, find some of the biggest challenges are in meaningful and effective engagement with ‘the community’. Examples were cited of (English based) URCs engaging in extensive year-long and still ongoing programmes to reach consensus on engagement and another case of a RDA (Regional Development Agency) having to contend with almost 3,000 community organisations as part of its business planning.

ii) An extract from the 12.08.03 seminar plenary session report reads:

There is very little evidence that (English) URCs are an effective means of engaging community involvement at a partnership level with a view to local capacity building and sustainability. Indeed the main existing example studied in the seminar went out of its way to avoid engaging with existing community representatives. That said, there are clearly opportunities to attract new interest and participation from individuals in the selected community via ‘planning for real’ and similar approaches. This in itself may assist existing community representative organisations to capitalise on the heightened level of activity and thereby secure longer term, wider participation.
2.3 The development of URCs in Scotland

Consistent with its role, and following the above events, SURF continued to take an interest in the development of the URC model in Scotland. Following the end of its consultation period in November 2003, the Scottish Executive summarised the respondents' views on the issue of accountability to the community in the following terms:

*There were mixed views as to how the community should be represented on the Board and whether this should be through direct representation or an existing representative organisation. The respondents were also divided on where the community should sit in the Board structure although there was broad agreement that their involvement was a key part of the process and that the URC must work in the context of community capacity building and community engagement.*

It concluded that:
*This consultation process has confirmed that there is general support in Scotland for the establishment of URCs set firmly within a national policy framework and the community planning process. It is clear though that a “one size fits all” approach is not supported and URCs are not seen as a panacea for all regeneration activities but should be considered as one of a selection of tools which can be used to accelerate growth and deliver regeneration.*

This seemed to set the pathfinder URCs in their individualised context, while linking them to Community Planning as the Executives overarch regenerating policy.

On June 30th 2004 the Scottish Executive announced its intention to fund 3 ‘pathfinder’ URCs in the Raploch area of Stirling, in the Craigievar area of Edinburgh and in Clydebank.

The statement accompanying the launch indicated that these experimental initiatives would be closely monitored and lessons would be shared with interested parties, including those who wished to see the URC model adopted in their areas of interest.

Consistent with this intention, the Executive subsequently organised a number of ‘URC network’ meetings to spread information on how the pathfinders were developing and to share learning on how the legal, administrative and financial challenges could be addressed. The last of this short series of meetings took place in early 2005. The committee will be aware that a further 3 URCs have been announced as part of the recent new Regeneration Statement.
A definition of URCs on the Executives website states that:

An Urban Regeneration Company, or URC, is a formal partnership of key representatives from the public and private sector who operate at arms length to deliver physical and economic regeneration in specific areas.

They offer a strategic overview of an area which guides investment decisions by both the public and private sector towards an agreed set of objectives and outcomes.

Involving stakeholders and engaging and communicating effectively with residents and local businesses is an essential element of a successful URC.

2.4 URC's and community engagement

On the question of community engagement with URCs, the Executive has been consistent in stating that the 3 pathfinder URCs are individually different experiments which will adopt processes suitable to their own context. Their main purpose is to enhance the engagement of the private sector in distinct area based regeneration efforts where other approaches have not been fully successful.

The Executive has also been consistent in referring to the importance of URCs linking into their local Community Planning Partnership as the relevant strategic body with responsibility for co-ordinating regeneration and effectively engaging with the relevant community in that process.

The Executives Regeneration Agency, Communities Scotland, has simultaneously invested in the production and promotion of 'Community Engagement Standards'. It is now investigating the extent to which these guidelines are being reflected in the Regeneration Outcome Agreements each CPPs is obliged to produce. Communities Scotland has also established the 'Community Voices' organisation as an effort to support community engagement. I am not aware that any such scrutiny is being carried out with respect to the pathfinder URCs, nor am I aware of any reference made to community engagement in the rolling out of the further 3 URCs.

There is also an important, related debate to be had about adequate support for community involvement and capacity building (as distinct from community engagement and consultation) but, my understanding is that is not the focus of the committee's interest in this case.
3 CONCLUSION

In announcing the introduction of the first 3 URCs in Scotland, the then Minister for Communities Margaret Curran commented:

'The URC would need to consider how it will interact with the local Community Planning Partnership and how it will involve local people and community groups in its decisions and actions.'

This seems to indicate that it was up to each URC to decide how to engage with the relevant community, and that each should do so. That flexibility appears to be reflected in the differing approaches of the existing ‘pathfinders’. I understand that there is a general intention to continue to replicate the URC model beyond the total of 6 announced so far. Some further indication from the Executive of its view of the lessons learnt so far would be useful, both to new potential URC bidders, and to those more widely interested in the success of Scottish regeneration efforts, including of course, the communities who continue to strive, with other partners, towards the regeneration of their neighbourhoods.

Andy Milne- SURF Chief Executive- 21.3.06
2 March 2006

Dr James Johnston  
Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee  
TG.01  
Parliamentary Headquarters  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

Dear Dr Johnston

Consideration of Petition PE911

Thank you for your letter of 26 January 2006 inviting comments on Petition PE911 which came before the Committee on 18 January 2006. Please find below our comments on the issues raised.

Our ability to comment on the points raised in the petition is limited as Communities Scotland is not a member of the Urban Regeneration Company (PARC) in Edinburgh. This is further reinforced by the responsibility for administering development funding having transferred to the City of Edinburgh Council which means that our investment role is more removed from the front-line administration and prioritisation of funding. At a city wide level, our main influence is through the Local Housing Strategy and the role we play in assessing these processes on behalf of Ministers. The Local Housing Strategy assessment framework includes consideration of issues relating to ‘Partnership Working and Strategy Process’. In the assessment that we completed in September 2003 we assessed this aspect of the City of Edinburgh’s Local Housing Strategy as being ‘very good’ in recognition of the inclusive way in which the strategy was developed.

I should make clear that contrary to Paul Nolan’s introductory remarks to the Committee that PARC receives its funding from Communities Scotland, this funding in fact comes from the core Scottish Executive which is responding separately to you.
Community engagement is strongly supported by Communities Scotland and a number of methods/processes are used to encourage communities to influence investment decisions. The Scottish Executive and Communities Scotland are committed to people in Scotland getting genuinely involved in the planning and delivery of services in their local areas. We, therefore, supported the Scottish Community Development Centre to work with over 500 community, voluntary and public sector representatives to develop a set of National Standards for Community Engagement to help support better working relationships between communities and agencies delivering public services. We are now in the process of providing support to Community Planning Partnerships to help them implement the use of the standards.

Effective and genuine community engagement is at the heart of community planning. At a local level in Craigmillar we are involved in the community planning process through the Craigmillar Partnership and PARC usually attend these meetings. Communities Scotland’s role is that of an advisor to the board of Craigmillar Partnership and we are therefore aware of PARC’s activities and remit. Our judgement is that the participative process is being adhered to, with the various community interests having been given the opportunity to express their views. It is also worth noting that PARC as a company is working to the parameters of the Urban Design Framework for Craigmillar, which is a planning matter and the responsibility of the City Council planning department. Here too the community has had the opportunity to contribute to this debate.

I hope that the above illustrates Communities Scotland’s perspective of the current position and should you require any further information I would be happy to respond.

Yours sincerely

Angiolina Foster
Chief Executive
Dear Dr Johnston,

Consideration of Petition PE911

I have received your letter of 26 January 2006, inviting the Community Planning Network to provide comments on the issues raised during the discussion of the above petition. I have also consulted the Official Report of the Committee's meeting and noted the reference by Helen Eadie MSP to "the Scottish community planning organisation". I am assuming that it is on this basis that you have written to the Community Planning Network.

Following a helpful telephone conversation with one of your colleagues, I am writing to explain the remit of the Community Planning Network, and why we do not in fact think that it corresponds to the "Scottish community planning organisation" to which Ms Eadie refers.

The Community Planning Network was established in summer 2005 to explore practical issues common to all Community Planning Partnerships. The Network is made up of one representative from each Community Planning Partnership, with limited administrative support from the Scottish Executive and COSLA. The members are, for the most part, local government officers who act as co-ordinators for the 32 Community Planning Partnerships across Scotland. The intention has been that the Network should focus on common issues of good practice for the Community Planning process (such as performance management, community engagement techniques, etc.) rather than on the policies delivered through Community Planning.

Given this practical focus, the Network has not been established in such a way that it is equipped to offer views on behalf of its members. As officers, the members of the Network have not been mandated to express views on behalf of their respective Community Planning Partnerships; the Network has no permanent chair, and a voluntary reference group simply exists to help plan future meetings. It would also not be appropriate for members of the Network to comment on specific issues facing individual Community Planning Partnerships (as is the present case).

After due consideration of Ms Eadie's remarks, we have therefore concluded that the Community Planning Network is not equipped to provide a response on the matters raised in relation to Petition PE911.
More generally, it is worth noting that there is in fact no single organisation that represents the collective views of Community Planning Partnerships in Scotland. Two short-life groups (both now defunct) have been established in recent years to consider practical issues surrounding the implementation of Community Planning in Scotland. In March 2001, the Community Planning Task Force was set up by the Scottish Executive to provide independent and authoritative advice on Community Planning issues over the period prior to passage of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. Its successor, the Community Planning Implementation Group, was set up in April 2003 as a short-life working group to take forward the Task Force's recommendations. The Community Planning Implementation Group was itself wound up in June 2004 on completion of its final report.

I hope this is helpful, and I am sorry not to be in a position to provide a more substantive response.

Yours sincerely,

Robin Benn
Head of Community Planning Team
A419/27JQ/DB

Dr James Johnston
TG:01
Parliamentary Headquarters
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

8 March 2006

Dear Dr Johnston

Parliamentary Petition 18 January 2006 (PE911)

In response to your communication dated 26 January 2006, you sought comments for the parliamentary committee hearing the above petition.

Attached is a copy of comments from PARC, which reflect the issues PARC is competent to deal with. Other matters should be commented on by other agencies involved.

Attached also is a response to the principle issue presented to the committee by the petitioners during the discussion on the day of the hearing.

I hope these suffice and help your deliberations

Yours sincerely

John Quinn
for PARC Craigmillar Limited
Page 1 of the Petition

In general, the petitioners appear to confuse information from the Craigmillar Urban Design Framework (UDF) and the Business Plan. The UDF doesn't refer to the financial matters of the company. These matters, however, are covered in the responses as appropriate to ensure there is no misunderstanding.

Petitioner

The Craigmillar Urban Design Framework

The Craigmillar Urban Design Framework was launched in December 2004, when the City Council's Planning Committee published it for consultation purposes. The framework was jointly produced over a three year period by the City of Edinburgh Council and Parc who are a private Urban Regeneration Company co-owned by the City of Edinburgh Council and their arms lengthy property development company EDI.

Response

The Urban Design Framework (UDF) was produced over 1 year. Community representatives, including the petitioner, were part of an interviewing panel which picked the consultants and agreed to be part of steering group team attending at least 12 meetings held fortnightly from Jan – July 2004. Separate open meetings with the Community about the UDF were held March 30-April 1 2004, and 5 Research trips to other regeneration areas took place involving 40+ people from CEC (City of Edinburgh Council), EDI and the Community.

Petitioner

The project will receive in excess of £40million pounds of public funding through both the Scottish Executive and the gift of land from the City Council to Parc. Parc have already secured £ 18million from the Executive.

Response

The Project will receive less than £30m, £18m from the Scottish Executive and just over £11m through land values. Existing and any further public sector support for the regeneration of Craigmillar is subject to the appropriate authorisation and monitoring procedures. Public sector support is identified as contributing directly to the creation and delivery of a range of community/public assets for the area, which are clearly identified within the PARC Business Plan.
Petition PE911 18 January 2006

Introduction

The Craigmillar Community Council petitioned the Scottish Executive and received a meeting from the Public Petitions Committee on the 18th January 2006. The committee requested comments from PARC (the joint venture company formed to deliver the regeneration programme in Craigmillar) in response to issues raised by the petition.

The following response clarifies those points made.

The method adopted is to respond to those issues relevant to PARC raised through the text of the petition through written clarifications below each issue raised. The response is in Bold text.

Other matters raised through the hearing of the petition are clarified in a separate attachment enclosed.
Petitioner

86\% will be sold on the market, with the cheapest property starting at around £90k.

Response

80\% of the houses built are to be sold on the market. The cheapest property will depend on market value. An estimate expressed at the time confidentially to the board, indicated a two bedroom flat would start at £88k. The reason for confidentiality is because the company has to operate within a very competitive market and is seeking best value to ensure public gain through surplus.

Petitioner

The 14\% of homes being built for public rent will be used to re-house tenants displaced by development; they are not additional public housing.

Response

20\% of houses for rent will include providing for the right to returnees. This more than satisfies current city housing policy, and is based on their requirements.

Petitioner

The houses will be built at a density level of 80 dwellings per hectare. This means that large parts of housing development will consist of four storey blocks, with “landmark” buildings exceeding this.

Response

The houses will be built at a density level of approximately 72 dwellings per hectare, with houses of mixed tenure and style. Some flats facing main roads or at appropriate sites will be four storey, following the city’s urban design policies, others within the development will be three storey and two storey. Each phase of development will have a mix of houses and flats.
Petitioner

The building schedule will prioritise the construction of private housing. Parc's business plan shows that a significant proportion of public housing will not be built until year 12 of the build programme.

Response

The current trends for delivering housing for rent would dictate that Craigmillar would be able to replace its existing stock with new houses over 17-20 year period. PARC initially reduced that to a guaranteed 12 year period, by ensuring surplus from house sales of private properties contributed to building houses for rent. It has since developed plans to reduce that further to potentially 7 years. PARC believes this to be a dramatic turnaround for people living in rented accommodation in Craigmillar.

Petitioner

Two primary schools and one secondary school will be built from profits of house sales.
A new junction will be built on Niddrie Mains road, which is intended to deal with traffic congestion.
The plans contain no definite proposals for the development of any new youth or community facilities.

Response

As well as the contribution needed to speed up the delivery of housing for people needing it most, profits from the proposals contribute to the development of new schools, a new library, new field turf playing fields and pavilion, a new park, and other public realm initiatives. This is estimated at £58m worth of goods, which PARC believes to be a good return for £11m worth of land.

Within the school developments there will be the opportunity to create a genuine Community School which will face the town centre area, and provide access for new youth and community facilities such as sports facilities, meeting places, the library and life long learning facilities. Further to that the quality of sports will be improved dramatically. They will include state of the art field turf football and hockey pitches, and new pavilions.

Small community parks will be developed within each building development, and 150-acre park is being designed around the periphery of the housing development providing opportunities for informal activity for young and old alike.
Petitioner

A nine-week public consultation ran from late January until early April 2005. There was a general consultation process in which any interested parties could respond to 8 questions set by the Planning Committee, and there was a specific community consultation. The community consultation was funded by Parc and their officers worked with representatives from the City of Edinburgh Council and Craigmillar Community Council to co-ordinate the exercise; the process was implemented by Scottish Participatory Initiatives (SPI) who are an independent organisation specialising in participatory research, they were chosen because of their proven track record with both Local Authorities and local communities.

The community consultation was a mammoth exercise but proved to be a huge success. Using innovate techniques, 275 people were engaged and thoroughly consulted on the contents of the Urban Design Framework; this sample was highly representative of the Craigmillar populace including work with young and old, male and female. The consultation recorded the serious concerns that members of the community had about the framework. These were written up into a full report, which is available on request from Scottish Participatory Initiatives. A brief summary is provided below.

Response

Planners were responsible for the community consultation exercise held from Jan - April 2005. The Community Council, through the Partnership requested funding from PARC to deliver an innovative programme of consultation called participatory appraisal, which PARC and Planners agreed to.

The consultation was prefaced by three presentations. The first was from planning department on the process and the second from PARC on the workings of the Joint Venture Company. The third was a presentation by an organisation called Craigmillar First. This organisation was established independently by some members of the Community Council, without full backing or approval from all its members and without the Community Council’s Chair being aware of it.

The third presentation was based on opinion and interpretation. It didn’t allow for discussion or counter opinion to be aired, and many felt it contravened the purpose of participatory appraisal. Subsequently, representatives from departments of the Council who were present at every meeting but not allowed to answer questions or clarify certain issues, felt the process was badly managed and didn’t allow for true consultation to take place.

This was intimated to planning, and noted by them. The Planning Department, nevertheless, directed people to read the report as one of many held on its website.
Petitioner

Concern was raised about the proportion of private to public housing. It was felt that the balance should be 50-50

Response

The concerns over the 50/50 balance of private to public housing are in fact being addressed by the project. This accounts for the fact that already in the area there is a predominance public housing (76%), and when the project is complete the balance should be nearer 50/50 public and private housing. This is understood to be best practice to develop a sustainable vibrant community.

Petitioner

Concern was raised that there is no homes for sale at locally affordable prices. The cheapest property valued at current prices was around £90k. However, there are only 52% of the eligible work force economically active in Craigmillar and research compiled by Craigmillar Partnership shows that the average earnings in the community was around £14,000; financial research shows that a single person would need to have a salary of around £27k to get a mortgage for £90k, while a couple would need a joint income of approximately £33k.

Response

All residents who want to remain in Craigmillar within public rented accommodation will have a new home built to allow them to continue to do so. Nevertheless, PARC is aware that local people are concerned that they might not be able afford the private housing developed should they wish to do so.

The company is currently looking to adopt and deliver a proportion of shared equity schemes which will allow people on lower incomes the opportunity to buy initially a share in their house leading to full ownership as time progresses. These schemes are currently being piloted by Edinburgh City Council Housing Department.

Petitioner

Concern was raised about the housing densities. Craigmillar has a long history of failed high-density housing schemes. This evidence is recognised by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister who recommends that housing densities should not exceed 50 dwellings per hectare.

Response

The concern about housing densities is misplaced. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister recommends housing should not exceed 50 houses per hectare is understood to be applicable to England and in the main to greenfield developments in the S. E. of England. This is driven by a housing needs assessment, which every local authority has to undertake. It has no relevance to Craigmillar.
Petitioner

Concern was raised about the length of time that tenants could be decanted from their homes. Many are vulnerable due to age, ill health or both and their lifestyles are sustained through access to localised social and familial support networks.

Response

No tenant is ‘decanted’ in these circumstances. A tenant whose house is to be demolished is rehoused in another house permanently. There is a process to ensure that this happens.

These tenants can exercise a ‘Right to Return’ to a new house in Craigmillar. However, given that the house he/she moved to has permanent status, then he/she might wish to remain there and not exercise the right to return. This is a choice, which can only benefit the tenant.

The Housing Department is aware of the social and family support structures which can be disturbed by the process and are committed to causing as little inconvenience as possible during this period of rehousing tenants.

Petitioner

Concern was raised about the proposals to deal with the increase in traffic congestion that doubling the population would have. It was felt that the creation of a junction policed by traffic lights was completely inadequate to deal with an already seriously congested Niddrie Mains Road. There were valid concerns that grid locked traffic could lead to increase pollution and ill health thus further depriving the community.

Response

There is strong recognition that traffic congestion is a major issue. The Urban Design Framework provides the relevant Planning Guidance to promote the necessary road improvements within the area, as an integral part of the development programme, including where appropriate the segregation of local access routes and through traffic. Traffic considerations are seen as a key part of the development approval process.
Petitioner

Concerns were raised about the omission of any new youth or leisure facilities and about the loss of 5 hectares of public space to housing and business development opportunities.

Response

PARC is replacing a football pitch and pavilion which although in use, is in need of repair with a new field turf pitch and pavilion less than 500 yards away. The site was initially recommended by the teams who play on the pitch. The pavilion will provide more than is currently in place. In general, the regeneration process will create considerably more accessible open space and to a better quality than is currently available.

Petitioner

Numerous concerns were raised about how any of these plans will benefit the 64% of families who have a total household income of around £10,088.

Response

Benefits to 64% of population will be:

- Everyone will get a new house who requires one.
- Accelerated programme means everyone Craigmillar will get one quicker than normal.
- Children will learn in new quality designed schools encouraging learning.
- The school facilities will be open to all in the community.
- The community facilities will be greatly improved.
- Edinburgh’s first field turf pitches for football development.
- Craigmillar will have Edinburgh’s newest park with facilities.
- A new town centre brings investment to help sustain and generate new and old businesses.
- The project will create employment opportunities for residents in Craigmillar.
- The population will comprise a social and economic mix crucial for the safety, and vibrancy of a sustainable community.

Other matters raised in the petition are planning department, housing department and personal matters, which if further clarification is required, will have to be sought from the appropriate departments or persons responsible within the City of Edinburgh Council.
The Petitioners Discourse at the Meeting 18 January 2006

Within the petitioner's discourse, the principle issue raised before the committee was that of the decision-making process used by the company. PARC Craigmillar Ltd. was depicted as a secretive private organisation, with no transparency.

The petitioners argument focussed on the following matters:

- Representation
- Confidentiality
- Role of PARC Executive
- Communication to the Wider Community.

PARC counters this interpretation given in the discourse in the following way:

1. The Board of PARC Craigmillar Ltd. includes two directors representing the Craigmillar Community. The directors are nominated through the Craigmillar Partnership, the strategic body formed to co-ordinate regeneration activity in the Craigmillar area. As directors of the Partnership Board they represent the Craigmillar Regeneration Forum, (the organisation formed in the area to co-ordinate activity and opinion from the local neighbourhoods of tenants) and the Craigmillar Community Council (the organisation bringing the petition to Parliament)

   At board meetings all directors are encouraged to participate in any discussion that may ensue, and minutes of board meetings reveal that both community directors are active at the meetings.

2. PARC Craigmillar Ltd. is a company limited by shareholding. It operates under commercial practice and board members are requested to respect confidentiality.

   This is particularly relevant in Craigmillar when a report is presented to the board on discussion with individual landowners and tenants in the area. In these circumstances PARC has impressed on all its directors the need to respect confidentiality to safeguard the commercial activity of all parties.

3. The board of PARC Craigmillar Ltd. meets approximately every 6 weeks. An Executive comprising PARC directors representing its principle shareholders, the City of Edinburgh Council and the EDI group, meets between board meetings to ensure best practice of governance and procedure prior to delivery of board reports. The executive comprises 5 people normally, and occasionally more if clarifications on certain issues are sought. The minutes of these meetings are presented to the main board at its next meeting.
CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE911

Thank you for your letter of 26 January inviting comments on petition PE911 in the name Paul Nolan, which came before the Public Petitions Committee for consideration on 18 January 2006. We acknowledge receipt of petition PE911 and have also consulted the Official Report of the Committee’s meeting. Our comments on the issues raised follow below.

We note that the Committee has sought the views of a number of agencies and organisations, including the City of Edinburgh Council and Promoting and Regenerating Craigmillar (PARC). Our comments are based on those issues raised in relation to the Scottish Executive.

Before turning to the specific matters raised by Mr Nolan, the Committee may find it helpful if we set out the background to the current Urban Regeneration Company (URC) programme in Scotland.

The Review of Scotland’s Cities, announced in December 2000, had a wide-ranging remit to “review the current prospects for the economic, environmental and social development of our 5 cities; and to identify Executive policies which will improve those prospects, taking account of interactions between the cities, their surrounding areas and the rest of Scotland”.

The Cities Review – published 9 January 2003 – recognised Scotland’s track record in delivering social and economic change in innovative, joined up ways. However, it also stressed that Scotland must continue to learn from effective approaches from outside the country and, in particular, concluded that URCS had the potential to boost regeneration efforts in Scotland’s cities and beyond. In its response to the Cities Review, Building Better Cities: Delivering Growth and Opportunities, the Executive indicated its support for innovative service delivery vehicles such as URCS, where these come forward from consultation.

As a result, consultation on URCS, which included an invitation to local partnerships to express an interest in URCS pilot status, was launched on 13 August 2003 (http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/development/urco.pdf). The consultation was designed to increase understanding and assess support for innovative delivery vehicles – such as URCS – to improve the delivery of regeneration in Scotland.

22 March 2006
4. Representatives from PARC report to every Partnership Meeting, and every Partnership sub group meeting (Education, Health, Economic Development, Community Safety, and Housing and Environment), which are held approximately every 6 weeks to 2 months. Representatives are present also and available at most Craigmillar Community Council meetings and other community meetings when requested to report to the meeting or answer questions.

PARC reports to the wider community through the local free newspaper, the Craigmillar Chronicle, with a two page spread every month. It provides progress reports and updates delivered to every household every two–three months.

There are other inaccurate comments made by the petitioners in the discourse. These are responded to within the second attachment.