

AMBULANCE NOISE

The subject of excessive ambulance noise at night in the Cameron Toll area has been raised a number of times by Graham Muir at GPCC meetings. The GPCC has written twice to the Scottish Ambulance Service on the issue and recently wrote to CEC's Head of Community Safety. We also understand that Graham and other local residents organised a meeting with the SAS about 18 months ago.

At last month's meeting it was agreed we would seek further views from residents and then discuss a response to the SAS's offer to go to mediation on the issue. (We had only received the offer from the SAS on the evening of the meeting.) Accordingly we produced a short flier, appended, and distributed it to 200 households along the most affected routes including Esslemont Road, Craigmillar Park, Lady Road, Cameron March and the bottom of Dalkeith Road. Our thanks to Maureen Edwards and Allister Thom who did this. Households were asked to send comments to myself.

One response from a Lady Road resident, which was copied to seven others, suggested the problem of the sirens at night, although still an ongoing problem, was not as bad as it had been. He considered the likelihood it was one or two crews who had the bad habit and were probably creating the same problem during the day. It should therefore be a matter of training by the SAS.

He also did not think it was a realistic request to ask for the times and dates of any disturbance as residents have not recently and do not now sit with watch, paper and pen at the ready. He said their complaints with instances were voiced at their meeting with the SAS and action was promised. He thought the flier would receive little response as he thought it was a weighted question.

I spoke to a friend who is a hospital consultant who said he had direct experience, when accompanying a patient in an ambulance, of the crew driving too fast and using their siren inappropriately. In his view in many cases speed in getting a patient to hospital was not an issue, and it was often better for them not to be bumped and swung around in a racing ambulance.

I have had three responses from residents in Esslemont Road, Lady Road and Cameron March, and have talked to a colleague who lives in Cameron Toll Gardens off the Old Dalkeith Road, who say they are not bothered by ambulance noise at night. They recognised there was an increase in ambulance traffic since the RIE had opened at Little France. They all made the point they assumed when sirens were used it was to get to the call-out quickly, or to take a patient to the hospital safely. One said some members of his household were often up and about during the night, and they had not noted any instances of ambulance sirens being used in an unacceptable way during the night.

These responses raise the following issues for discussion:

1. Is the lack of response because people feel they have complained enough and they don't see the point in complaining again but want some action, or are people not that bothered by the issue and so have not responded?
2. If residents are expected to live with the increased ambulance traffic through the complex of Cameron Toll junctions, should they be able to expect the ambulance crews to minimise their use of sirens?

The offer of mediation from the SAS is part of a pilot they are participating in, funded by the Scottish Government. The mediation would be undertaken by a mediator from the Scottish Mediation Network along lines set out as part of the pilot. This would involve preparatory meetings with both parties, some form of meeting, a written record of the outcomes in a Mediation Agreement and feedback on the implementation of the Agreement.

In addition the Head of Service for Edinburgh and Lothians has offered to come to our January meeting. As well as noise, I hope he would also talk about their service in general plus initiatives like their 'community first responder' scheme.

The GPCC is asked to decide:

1. Do we maintain our previous position of asking the SAS to continue to train crews in the responsible use of the sirens and to monitor their use? Or
2. Take up the offer of mediation on behalf of residents in the Cameron Toll area?
3. Do we want a talk from the local Head of Service of the SAS?

John Palmer
Chair, GPCC

Appendix 1: Flier to Residents

Dear Resident,

The Community Council has received complaints from residents who live in the vicinity of Cameron Toll about ambulances sounding sirens between the hours of 11pm and 7am. We have written to the Ambulance Service about this and have been assured that drivers are instructed to use sirens during these hours only when absolutely necessary for road safety reasons. However, despite these promises we continue to receive complaints about residents being disturbed.

We have now been offered the opportunity to participate in mediation to try to resolve this matter. Mediation involves an independent third party to help parties resolve complaints and work out what their options and issues are and to develop a mutually acceptable agreement.

The Community Council believes that we should accept this offer. However, before taking part we would like to have detailed evidence about the number of instances of sirens being used at antisocial times. If you, or any of your neighbours, have been disturbed can you please contact us giving times and dates of when these occurred. Please let us know by emailing to: chair@grangeprestonfieldcc.org.uk or by writing to:

Secretary, Grange Prestonfield CC
6 Grange Terrace
Edinburgh
EH9 2LD

This leaflet is being distributed to about 100 houses near Cameron Toll. However, we are aware that residents in other parts of the area have also been disturbed and would be happy for this information to be passed to any others who you know have been affected.