

Background Information

About the Community

While Balerno is within the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) area, its location as the 'last village' means that while it is technically part of the city, the village has many similarities with rural communities and is impacted by transport challenges and issues of community isolation.

Over the last quarter century Balerno has grown substantially, during which period there has been no additional community space provided. As a result, the Trust wishes to ensure that public buildings in Balerno are retained for community benefit, to provide essential services in the village.

At the 2022 Census, the Balerno Community Council area had a population of 6,651 people. This is an increase of around 10% from the previous Census in 2011. After correcting for boundary changes in the definition of Community Council catchment areas (executed in 2007), the Balerno area population has grown by 30% since the 2001 Census.

Relative to the Scottish average Balerno has a 'U' shaped demographic. There are higher proportions of younger and older people than the Scotland average, and therefore a lower proportion of people of working age:

- 20.0% of the population is aged 0-15, compared with 16.4% across Scotland. There is also a higher proportion of couples with two or more dependent children than the Scotland average.
- 24.0% of the population is aged 65 and over, compared with 20.1% across Scotland.

In general terms, this is a relatively affluent community, indicated by lack of significant concentrations of deprivation; a higher proportion of owner occupied households than the Scotland average; lower rates of people unemployed and looking for work; and lower proportions of people with no qualifications. We do however have very few employment opportunities within the village (our largest village employers are Scotmid and the local after school club), which means that most people travel outside the village for work.

However Balerno lacks local services. It stands out that there is no GP practice, no longer an active Police Station, and a small choice of local shops. An under provision of childcare options prevents parents returning to work. In addition there are some concerns about vandalism and anti-social behaviour by young people. There is no space for teenagers to go, outside of a few structured activities at set times. Our consultation with young people reflected this.

As a village on the outskirts of Scotland's capital, located in the countryside Balerno has many well qualified professional residents. Typically over a period of years the Trust has not struggled to source volunteers with relevant professional skills such as surveying, facilities management, legal, accountancy, health and safety and other disciplines.

Balerno Village Trust

Balerno Village Trust (BVT) was established in 2003, incorporated in 2010 (company number SC369378) and obtained charitable status in 2012 (charity number SC043318). The Trust works to “*Improve and regenerate the physical, social, cultural and economic life of the community, and advance community development, by encouraging the active participation of individuals and groups*”. Put more simply, it exists to make Balerno an even better place to live, work or to visit.

Since its inception Balerno Village Trust (BVT) has successfully:

- Set up a not-for-profit hydro electric power company, Harlaw Hydro (HH), which generates electricity at the nearby Threipmuir reservoir. BVT appoints 3 directors to the board and as a social enterprise HH passes net profits to BVT (£110k in 2024/25). This gives BVT a substantial, reliable and ongoing income.
- Set up, pump primed and spun off a successful music festival, the Balerno Music Festival.
- Taken a lease on the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) owned community centre, taking responsibility for managing bookings in the aftermath of Covid. In addition BVT is managing an ongoing renewable energy upgrade to the centre, which has already reduced the energy bills by 50%.
- Collaborated with the local Rotary Club to set up the ‘Pentlands Community Chest’. A fund which provides small grants(<£600) to local community groups. This year beneficiaries have included Scout groups, a dementia cafe project, riding for the disabled, the local Children’s Gala, two Pipe bands, the Men’s Shed, a food bank and several other groups.
- Managed a thriving and growing monthly farmers market on Main Street, very close to the Police station site.
- Managed a number of gardening projects (Friends of Main Street, Malleny community gardening and Harlaw remediation), which collectively make Balerno a cheerier place to live, work in or visit and create many opportunities for volunteering, increasing community cohesion and connection.
- Obtained ‘Fields in Trust’ status for a park adjacent to the Primary school, set up a friends group and provided additional benches and extended & modernised a children’s play park.
- Run an annual ‘scarecrow’ competition. A very low cost fun exercise that also generates community engagement and cohesion.

About the Police Station building



Balerno Police Station is in a prominent position within the conservation area, on Bridge Road which is the gateway to the village. It sits amongst a mix of private housing and small enterprises, it is very close to bus stops.

Built in the 1970s it is a detached single storey purpose-built police station (2183 sq ft) sitting within a large curtilage area (0.28 acres). The architectural design is unusual in that the building has 'rounded' corners.

Due to restructuring of their estate, the site was declared surplus to Police Scotland's requirements and the Scottish Police Authority approved plans to dispose of the site in March 2024.

For the last year BVT has been working hard to ensure that Balerno Police Station is kept for the benefit of the community. In July 2025, funding of £239,005 from the Scottish Land Fund was confirmed which enables BVT to purchase of the building and to make it safe. There is also part funding for a Development Officer to support the development of the building into a vibrant community hub including after-school provision. Funding is also being sought from CARES to enable energy efficient improvements to be made to the building including an ASHP and solar panels.