

# Portobello Consultation ends tomorrow



The final bell is about to sound for the trio of groups battling for the future of Portobello Park. A council consultation on the need for a Private Bill to deal with the future of the park has been running since the beginning of December, and comes to an end on 31 January 2013.

The main player is The City of Edinburgh Council, whose predecessors in 1898 were given the land with a clause in the title deeds stating that 'the area shall be used exclusively as a public park and recreational ground for behoof of the community'. After consultation on potential sites in 2006, the Council agreed that the best site for the proposed new Portobello High School was Portobello Park. Full funding for the project quickly followed and detailed planning permission was granted in early 2011.

A local community group, Portobello Park Action Group, who opposed the Council's legal right to build on the land. In September 2012 they won an historic legal battle [when the Court of Session ruled](#) that it was illegal to build upon the Park, which is inalienable 'common good land'.

The Council have now proposed to enrol a Private Bill with the Scottish Parliament. This Bill will attempt to address the current legal issues and allow the use of Portobello Park as the new site for the school. The Council stress that the Private Bill would apply only to this site and would not change the status of any other Common Good Land either in Edinburgh or the rest of Scotland.

[Portobello Park Action Group](#) have countered: "Having already spent £175,000 in legal fees in the recent Court cases – along

with the time taken by council officers persuing the blind legal alley – it is clear that £250.000 is a figure which is not altogether far-sighted.”

A third group, [Portobello For a New School](#), supports the Council’s plans. The trio met last week in Portobello Town Hall, where it has to be said some bitterness spilled over. The emotive subject has caused much discussion in the area, some of which has been played out on Facebook, and some tempers were lost at recent public meetings to discuss the matter.

Marion Jones, (66), of 12 Magdalene Avenue, is one of the few ‘sitting on the fence’ when she says: “We all know that we need a new school built – but I’m not sure the Council have gone about this in the right way. I personally know of life-long friends who no longer talk to each other because of their opposing views. I just hope it reaches an amicable conclusion.”

That conclusion will be reached soon. The results of the Consultation will be reported to the Council at their meeting on 14 March 2013 –and if the Bill proceeds – a decision by the Scottish parliament should be reached by February 2014. The other alternatives are to purchase the Scottish Power site at Baileyfield and use that for the new school or rebuild on the existing site, which was previously discounted.

The Consultation period runs until 5pm on Thursday, 31 st January 2013. Anyone still wishing to vote [can do so here on the council website.](#)

Or you may add your thoughts by Email: [NewSchoolBuildings@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:NewSchoolBuildings@edinburgh.gov.uk)

Forms can also be obtained at Piershill/Portobello libraries.

The council have also said that although the consultation on Castlebrae School has ended there will be no decision on the

future of that school until after the March council meeting. Education officers are still analysing feedback about that and all councillors will then decide the fate of Castlebrae.