

Portobello High School – Building begins officially today



Portobello High School is a long awaited addition to the council's school estate and today marks the beginning of the building process at Portobello Park. The Edinburgh Reporter is at the park waiting for the officials to arrive.

There have been many years of planning, and numerous legal obstacles along the way, but Council Leader Andrew Burns will be ceremoniously cutting the first sod of earth which will mark the beginning of the construction of the new school.

There will be photos and video from the site later this morning.

Portobello High School will become the Council's largest secondary school with space for 1,400 pupils. In addition to providing state of the art teaching facilities, the school will have both indoor and outdoor sports facilities, including a swimming pool and two all weather pitches , enabling all curricular PE to be provided on site, rather than have pupils bussed off site as currently happens.

The council have promised that the local community will also benefit from the new facilities which will be open for community use outside school hours, with local residents able to book the sports pitches free of charge as part of compensation measures put in place to replace the loss of the park. Another compensation measure will see a new £1million park built on the existing school site.

Following local opposition to using the public park as a site

for constructing the new school the council had to introduce a Private bill at Holyrood to enable them to proceed. The City of Edinburgh Council (Portobello Park) Act 2014 received Royal Assent in August 2014 clearing the way for the Council to appropriate the park for education purposes.

Councillor Paul Godzik, Convener of Education, Children and Families at the Council, said: "This is a key milestone in the Portobello project and many people in the local area will be delighted to see work finally starting on their new high school. Rebuilding Portobello High School is one of the Capital Coalition's highest priorities and we were determined to ensure we met this commitment. I look forward to seeing the new school which will open its doors to pupils in August 2016.

Murray Easton, Balfour Beatty Regional Managing Director for Scotland, said: "We are delighted to be starting construction of the new Portobello High School. We look forward to continuing to work with the City of Edinburgh Council to deliver a state-of-the-art school with educational facilities that give people the best opportunities to both teach and learn. During the construction period we will engage with the local community to keep them updated with the progress of the works and to deliver community benefit targets leaving a lasting legacy for the area."