

# Off the beat

**FURIOUS LOCAL Residents recently expressed serious doubts about the Government's social inclusion programme after changes to policing in Wester Hailes went ahead without public**

**consultation.**

The changes, which will mean the loss of three Community Police Officers (CPO's), have shocked community activists who expected to be consulted on any changes affecting the

community. A dismayed member of the Rep Council Executive Committee, Connie Gourlay, said: "The decision to make these changes without discussing it with anyone from the community just

makes a mockery of so-called social inclusion. How can Government ministers harp on about the importance of local people's opinions, when the reality is that local people are completely ignored?"

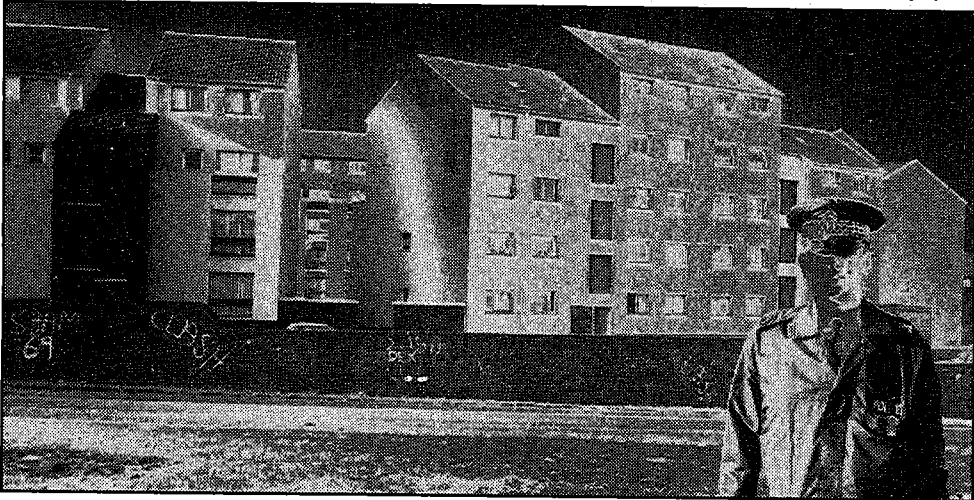
back on the beat, and we strongly believe the community police work was one of the main factors in those successes, therefore, we see any depletion in our complement of CPO's as a backward step."

The community first learned of the proposed changes in a Rep Council meeting in November last year when a stunned audience reacted with disbelief and anger. One of the areas affected by the changes is Wester Hailes Park, and the Chairperson of that Neighbourhood Council, David Wilson said: "In the past few years the community has worked successfully with the Police and the City Council to achieve some dramatic reductions in crime. We fought hard to get more police officers

The Rep Council has since had a meeting with the police to discuss the changes, but it was reported that Superintendent Jinty Kerr was unwilling to go back on her decision - but she did apologise for the lack of consultation. The Superintendent explained that she had been stuck between a rock and a hard place in having to respond also to the community's demands for quicker response times when police are called. And, in order to improve the level of service on offer to all

residents within the Wester Hailes area, she felt she had no choice but to strengthen her normal police shifts at the expense of the community police personnel.

The local City of Edinburgh Councillor, Ricky Henderson, attended the meeting, and he said: "It's regrettable that this decision was taken without the community's involvement, but I understand the Superintendent was under some pressure to do something quickly to improve response times. She had to make a difficult operational decision, but she has assured the meeting that no similar decisions would be taken in the future without discussion with the community."



**ENDANGERED SPECIES....** Is the familiar face of the community cop about to disappear

# Bus stoppopped

**LOCAL PEOPLE who depend on public transport were dealt another blow recently when the popular C5 service was withdrawn by its operator, First Bus.**

The decision leaves no First Bus service operating from Westside Plaza to Wester Hailes Drive/Park and Clovenstone, which is a huge blow to disabled residents and parents of small children.

First Bus' Diamond Service had become hugely popular with these communities with its excellent facilities for wheelchairs and buggies, but their decision to withdraw the C5 has now left these people in limbo.

Wheelchair bound Jamie Hall from Clovenstone Gardens said: "The C5 was my lifeline with the outside world. I could visit my mum in Craigenfinny and go shopping on my own but now I'm a prisoner in the house."

Jamie's wife Cheryl now has to get him down the four stairs at the front of their flat and push him to the shopping centre before they can catch a bus with access for his wheelchair.

They told me the night before it had taken them two hours to get into town

for a journey that previously took twenty minutes.

Their decision also makes a mockery of the Labour City Council's pledge in their recent manifesto to "Open new rail and bus links", and comes after the withdrawal of the 57 service from Calder to Westside Plaza.

A statement from First Bus read: "Alternatives are available on the C55/C70 services. We don't anticipate high disruption as C55/C70 will continue and covers the majority of stops previously covered by the C5."

However, after these buses have stopped at Westside Plaza, they continue down Wester Hailes Road and on to Calder Road, neither goes up to Wester Hailes Drive/Park or Clovenstone.

## LRT IMPROVEMENTS

The news was softened slightly, however, by the announcement from LRT that they are to improve their 3 and 33 services. They will run every 10 minutes from Monday to Saturday, starting from March 12th.

Mark Lazarowicz, the city's transport convenor, said: "It's disappointing and regrettable that First Bus have decided to withdraw

the C5 service. However, the council cannot make decisions for them, we don't have the power to do that.

"But there are major improvements going on with the LRT service and that should provide better public transport to the Wester Hailes area."

However, Lynne Main, Team Leader of CHAI Older Person's Support, wasn't impressed. "The withdrawal of the 57 bus from the Calder area was a blow to the resident's there, especially the elderly. Calder has a particularly high percentage of elderly residents, many of whom have found themselves isolated since then.

"To access a bus to Westside Plaza - where they might want to use any number of facilities including the library, shops, bingo, cinema, Greenway Centre or health centre - elderly people will have to walk, sometimes from the far end of Calder, under the subway and onto the other side of the dual carriageway to catch a bus.

"Now, with the C5 being withdrawn, it's another huge blow to residents in Wester Hailes who rely heavily on public transport."



**NO ENTRY....** An LRT bus still running through Clovenstone is a no-go area for Jamie Hall