

LEITH LINKS

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT | AUTUMN 2019 - AUTUMN 2020

Welcome!

We are pleased to present our latest annual report which provides us with an opportunity to update you on some of our work since our most recent election in Autumn 2019. We hope that you will find it informative, interesting & useful.

If you would like to explore more information you may wish to visit our website & social media channels. Each of which are regularly updated with information on our work & other useful community information.

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions on our work please do not hesitate to get in contact with us.

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Jim Scanlon MBE

Congratulations to our Chairperson Jim Scanlon who was awarded an MBE by Her Majesty The Queen in Autumn 2020 for services to the Leith community.



Well done Jim!

Connect with us...



www.leithlinksc.org.uk



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Chairperson's report

Firstly, in these difficult times, may I pass on the thoughts of Community Council members to those members of our community who may have been ill, lost loved ones, lost their jobs, or who are struggling to cope with the various difficulties and restrictions in their lives.

In March all our lives changed with lockdown and we have all had to adjust to the 'new normal'. Your Community Council successfully moved to online zoom meetings so that we could continue to discuss issues important to the

community and take action as necessary.

I would like to thank the hard working team of volunteer Community Councillors who give up their time to work on a range of issues including planning, transport & traffic, licencing, parks, Seafield Sewage Treatment works and many, many other local issues. Thanks are also due to our elected City of Edinburgh Councillors, Adam McVey, Chas Booth and Gordon Munro who support the Community Council throughout the year,

and MSP Ben MacPherson, and to our local Community Policing Team,

As Chair I'm proud of the hard working team that we have to represent you. Please continue to contact us via email, our website or social media platforms so that we can continue to be aware of issues that concern you, and to support you.

Jim Scanlon
Chairperson

Engagement Officer's report

In 2019 the City of Edinburgh Council introduced changes to how it managed Community Councils, one of these changes was to introduce the optional office bearer role of Engagement Officer. At our inaugural meeting following the 2019 elections Michael Traill was elected our first Engagement Officer.

Website: Our website has become very popular over recent years. In 2018 we 10,661 visitors, this increased to 34,765 in 2019 and so far in 2020 we have had 29,821 page views. We use our website to keep citizens updated with our work, issue invites to our meetings, seek citizens views and provide general community updates. Our website can also be used by citizens to report foul odours & intrusive noise from Seafield Waste Water Treatment Place, with 527 reports submitted in 2020 alone.



Facebook & Twitter: We use our social media channels in much the same way as we use our website. On Facebook we currently have 1,516 people who have liked us and 1,654 people who follow us. On Twitter we have 1,082 followers.

Leith Festival Gala Day: It has become our custom to share a stall with other Leith area Community Councils but sadly this couldn't be achieved this year due to Covid-19 but we look forward to Gala Day 2021.

Leith Volunteer Fair: Last Autumn we took part in the Leith Volunteer Fair, a chance to not only recruit interested parties to the Community Council but to general raise our profile. Both 2020 fairs have been cancelled but we hope to attend the 2021 fairs.

Consultations: We have sought to seek out & consider the views of our citizens on a number of occasions recently in a variety of local community matters such as the local authorities partial closure of Links Gardens as part of its response to Covid-19, on the future use of land in the Seafield area and on the use of Leith Links for commercial events.

As a Community Council we will continue to seek to engage with our local community through both online & offline methods to the best of our ability.

Community Council elections 2019

The most recent City of Edinburgh Community Council elections took place in Autumn 2019.

Although the elections are managed & overseen by the local authority, we once again sought to promote the elections throughout our community;

Website & social media: A number of Community Councils wrote on our website about being a Community Council, which were also shared on social media. We posted information about the elections process on our online channels.

Leith Volunteer Fair: Alongside other Leith Community Councils we ran a stall to encourage citizens to stand for election to the Community Council.

Diversity in Public Life project: Supporting our colleagues from Edinburgh & Lothians Racial Equality Council one of our Community Councillors spoke about their experiences of being a Community Councillor with a view to increasing the number of BAME candidates.

Leaflets: We designed and delivered a new double sided A5 leaflet promoting the elections & encouraging candidates. All of this activity was undertaken with a view to encouraging citizens to stand as candidates and generally promoting the Community Council elections.

Following the conclusion of the nominations period a public poll was not required as the number



of candidates did not exceed the number of spaces available (12).

Nine of our previous Community Councillors returned for a further term: Jim Scanlon, Sally Millar, Gail Clapton, Angus Hardie, Andrew McKenzie, Christine Reid, Eileen Simpson, David Igoe and Michael Traill.

Three new members joined us: Abigail Cunningham, Rafiqul Islam and Tangila Islam.

Licensing

Following our Autumn 2019 Community Council elections we took the decision to elect a Licensing Secretary. Previously licensing fell under the remit of our Planning secretary.

Community Councillor Michael Traill was elected Licensing Secretary but we took the decision not to elect a standing Licensing Sub Committee due to the low level of licensing matters which we are involved in. Instead a Sub Committee is brought together as & when required.

The biggest Licensing related matter dealt with has been our response to the Scottish Governments consultation on regulation of Short Term Lets through planning & licensing process. Our response can be found on our website.

Twitter



We use Twitter to share Community Council updates and community information.

www.twitter.com/leithlinks_cc

Covid-19

We have not been immune to the impact of the Covid-19 global pandemic.

Since Monday 30 March 2020 all of our meetings have been online using the Zoom platform, although we are currently looking to move to Microsoft Teams. Generally our transition from in person meetings to virtual meetings has been a success, although there has been the inevitable hiccup along the way.

Whilst we are not meeting in person we have continued to

undertake our duties with our usual enthusiasm.

At the time of writing this report we do not know when we will be able to return to in person meetings but it does feel like it is not likely to be 2020.



There is a debate amongst Community Councils in Edinburgh about meeting virtually, with some choosing not to conduct their usual public meetings online. However, here at our Community Council we are committed to virtual meetings for the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We publish public information about our monthly meetings on our website and social media.

Please do think about coming along.

Seafield Waste Water Plant

The Leith Links Community Council is represented on the Seafield Stakeholder Group by Chair Jim Scanlon and fellow Community Councillor, Eileen Simpson.

As all locals will be aware, Seafield continues to emit noxious odours (and more recently, piercing noise) periodically throughout the past year, in spite of repeated apologies and endless claims of 'improvement' by the operators.

Early in 2020, we received news that, after 30 years of action by the Residents Association and Community Council, the Scottish Government had committed millions to 'no regrets' funding for work to commence during 2021 to reduce odour

emissions, and a further commitment to build a new state of the art sewage plant on the same site in 2030 to take Edinburgh and Leith forward into the 22nd Century. This was great news - but it was followed in March through to June by one of the worst ever periods of continuing stench from the plant and the highest ever numbers of complaints! With members of the local population trapped in/near their homes due to lockdown, there was a terrible negative impact on the well-being of members of the community.



I would like to thank Leith Links Community Councillor Michael Trail whose work on setting up our online odour reporting tool has resulted in a valuable asset, making it quick and easy for the community to report issues with smell and noise that are affecting the quality of their life. Their reports are copied automatically to our elected councillors and MSPs, and the endless stream of complaints has made public servants and elected politicians sit up and react more quickly to your concerns, and has left them nowhere to hide.

To complain, please use: <http://www.leithlinksc.org.uk/seafieldnuisancereportform/>

Planning

A major function of a Community Council is to review proposals for new developments in the area and to respond to planning applications giving the views of the local community as to whether such development is acceptable and in the interests of the community or not. The duties of the community council's planning sub-committee begin with a reading of the planning lists sent out weekly by Edinburgh city

council (CEC), detailing (i) new planning applications and (ii) planning decisions taken by the planning department itself (under delegated authority) or through the offices of the CEC's development management sub-committee (DMSC) or full planning committee.

These lists are now, newly, accessible on CEC's website and its planning department's twitter feed - a step in the right direction towards wider

inclusion and greater transparency.

Although normal service has been partially suspended during the pandemic, and real-world public exhibitions of developers' proposals have migrated online, we are doing our best to pay attention and respond to proposals for new developments. And we need to, because there's a lot of change for this area coming down the track...

Within our own area in the past year, we have engaged with a number of planning applications:

111-115 Constitution St (the still trading Latto's garage) and 18-25 John's Lane. EH6 7AE. Proposed change of use and redevelopment to create an overall development comprising 39 residential units. LLCC objected to this application, along with 31 other parties who commented on the planning portal. The case is still awaiting assessment.

89 Constitution St (the adjacent site, and ostensibly unrelated but strikingly similar-looking proposal) for the proposed change of use from existing offices (Blacklocks Solicitors) to form 9 new dwelling flats. LLCC objected to this application, forcing it to be escalated for consideration by the council's DMSC, which refused it permission. The applicant has appealed this decision, and the case is being considered by the Scottish Government's Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA), due to make a site visit soon.

Elsewhere, on the borders of the areas shared by Leith Links CC and Leith Harbour and Newhaven CC, LLCC have also engaged with the following applications:

1-5 Baltic St and 7-27 Constitution St EH6 7BR
Sundial Properties have applied for a mixed-use development comprising partial demolition of existing buildings, sympathetic restoration of some historical buildings to create purpose-built student accommodation, affordable housing, office units, cafe and public digital co-working space. LLCC have met several times with the Sundial team and have responded in detail, but neither for or against..
Status: Awaiting Decision.

Pre-Application Notifications (not yet actual planning applications):

9-21 Salamander Place EH6 7JJ.
Teague Homes have submitted a Proposal of Application Notice for phases 5 & 6 of their ongoing Ropeworks development on this huge site at Salamander Place, involving proposed residential development and associated open space, car parking and landscaping.
LLCC have met (virtually) with the Teague Homes team and are awaiting further developments and detail, while working on a response to their proposals.

67 Salamander St to 26 Bath Rd EH6 7JZ
For the demolition of existing buildings and erection of mixed-use flatted residential and commercial development with associated access, car parking, greenspace and ancillary works.
LLCC have met (virtually) with the agent Ryden LLP, and their architects, and are working on a provisional response to their proposals which are at the Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) stage. Comments are due by 29 October.

Beyond our immediate borders, LLCC's planning sub-group have also taken an active interest in the following areas:

106-162 Leith Walk (Stead's Place) EH6 5DT

LLCC has met (virtually) with Drum Properties to discuss their much-revised application for this important site near the foot of the Walk.

48-50 Iona St EH6 8S.

LLCC objected to this significant residential development which included yet more student accommodation. Status: Awaiting Decision.

Leith Walk/Halmyre St

LLCC submitted a response to the city council's consultation on a 'place brief' for this significant site in our wider area.

Tram Stop at Ocean Terminal (which involved the destruction of the Discovery Garden) – objection submitted.

We do not always object to proposed developments!

We were very happy to support the Leith Community Croft's application to repair, refurbish and extend the former tennis pavilion to provide a mixed use development for community use at 1 John's Place, which was subsequently granted.

We supported an application for 102 Restalrig Road, for a change of use from offices to 6 residential apartments, also granted.

Members of the Planning sub-committee have also held discussion meetings with a number of players in our local area, e.g. Cameron House Hotel Group, Port of Leith Housing, as well as developers of specific sites.

The planning sub-group has also engaged with other community councils e.g. as part of the newly formed S:CCC (Seafield: Connecting Coastal Communities) collective which has coalesced to have the communities' voices heard as

the city council identifies the Seafield coastal strip as a potential site for housing in the draft local plan.

LLCC's submission to the city council's consultation on its draft local plan – City Plan 2030– can be seen here:

<http://www.leithlinksc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/LLCC-City-Plan-2030-consultation-response.pdf>

Crime

Police Scotland regularly attend our monthly public meetings to provide us with an update on local Police activity and crime trends. This also provides us with the opportunity to raise any community concerns with them.

Since we moved our meetings online due to Covid-19 they have not been able to attend but have been sending written reports and have been responsive to any concerns we have brought to their attention by email.

We thank Police Scotland for their work and look forward to working with them over the next year.

Facebook



We use Facebook to share Community Council updates and community information.

www.facebook.com/LeithLinksCC

Collaborating with neighbouring Community Councils

Over the course of the past year, we have been working with our neighbouring community councils on two specific developments that are likely to have a major impact on our community in the coming years. Our intention in both of these initiatives is to ensure that our community's interests are kept in the foreground of the negotiations and deliberations concerning these significant developments for the City.

1. Community Councils Together on the Trams (CCTT).

This work began more than two years ago when it became apparent that CEC was planning to extend the Edinburgh Tram projects to

Newhaven. Four community councils - Leith Central CC, Leith Harbour and Newhaven CC, New Town and Broughton CC and ourselves - began to meet with the Tram Team on a monthly basis. CCTT has become a useful mechanism for communicating issues of concern from each of the affected communities and for the Tram Team to consult with as the project has progressed through to implementation.

2. Seafield - Connecting Coastal Communities.

As CEC was consulting on the new Local Development Plan - Choices for City Plan 2030 - it became apparent that the Seafield area was likely to be designated for

housing and that, due to the complex and varied pattern of land ownership, there was a distinct danger that this very large site could be developed in a piecemeal way by a range of developers. Four community councils - Craigentiny CC, Portobello CC, Leith Newhaven and Harbour and ourselves - have recently begun to meet to agree how best to proceed in order to ensure that the whole site is developed in such a way that best serves the interests of all the adjacent communities. We have begun to engage with CEC officers and our elected members with a view to developing a long term, community led master plan for the area.

Treasurer's report

Each year our accounts are externally audited, our audited accounts are available for public inspection on our website however, the following overview is provided to show a summary of our financial position.

Please note that these accounts relate to the financial year 2019/2020.

INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
Annual Grant from CEC	£737.74	Insurance	£168.00
Leith Gala Contribution	£22.00	Leith Gala Day	£119.98
		Minutes	£620.00
		Website Costs	£139.02
		AGM Fliers & Report	£271.00
		Residents Assoc Support	£100.00
		Community Centre Charge	£10.00
		ICO Charge	£35.00
Total Income	£759.74	Total Expenditure	£1463.00
Bank Balance b/f	£1318.77	Bank Balance c/f	£615.51
TOTAL	£2078.51	TOTAL	£2078.51

Secretary's report

The Community Council works to make this community a better place, through action and by acting as a representative voice of the community (to the city council and to other local groups and campaigns). This has certainly been a very 'different' year for us all due to the Covid-19 crisis. Like everyone else, we have sadly had to forego a number of 'live' events where we would normally get a chance to meet and talk with members of our community in person (eg. Leith Festival Gala Day, Leith Community Centre Volunteer Fair etc.) The Community Council has nonetheless continued to meet monthly since its October 2019 election, online rather than in person, since March 2020. This year has presented quite a 'test' to local democracy and has highlighted the key issue of how disadvantaged people can be if they do not have good

access to the internet ('digital exclusion'). For example: accessing key information about services & benefits; obtaining bus passes and concession cards etc. Property developers have not held public exhibitions and meetings to inform the community about their plans for new developments which will massively impact the local area – these are only available online.

We have participated this past year in a number of city wide consultations (eg. City Plan 2030, City Mobility Plan, Halmyre Street Master Planning, Draft Tourism Strategy and more).

In addition to monthly meetings, the Community Council has several sub-committees, and these smaller groups 'meet' as and when required, to progress particular actions in relation to

their remits. This Annual Report includes reports from these sub committees, so read on to get a flavour of the work going on throughout the year.

Community Council meetings are held in public, so if you are a local resident, or have close links to the area, you are welcome to join a meeting. These are held at 6:30pm on the last Monday of the month and are likely to be online for the foreseeable future. Check the website for date and time, and email in to ask for a link to the meeting.

If you have a particular local issue to raise, please outline this in advance, in your email.

We look forward to hearing from you and to working for you in 2020/2021.

Sally Millar
Secretary

Parks and greenspaces

This year, the areas parks and green spaces have of course been more well used and have been seen to be more vital than ever. Leith Links and the Restalrig Cycle Path in particular have proved to be important assets for the community as we have found meeting up indoors restricted at times and the need for outdoor recreation at a premium.

The playpark, funding for which was partly enabled by representations from LLCC is going from strength to strength. The sub-committee continues to contact the council when bins are full. We are also

continuing to push the City of Edinburgh Council for progress on the redevelopment of the bowling green area and the building on it.

The sub-group has been working hard to bring interested groups and individuals together with the intention of the creation of a Friends of Leith Links group. The elected representatives are supportive of this. Such a body could access funds for the improvement and development of Leith Links. WE hope that this group will be established in the year ahead.

There are plans for the planting of three Miyawaki style pocket forests of native trees along the Restalrig Cycle Path near the east end of the Links. A good example of an individual in the Community coming to the Community Council with an idea and us being able to put them in touch with the Parks Dept and getting the ball rolling.

In spite of Covid19, we hope our green spaces can go from strength to strength and we welcome any suggestions from groups or individuals in the area on how that can be further achieved.

The Community Council's Transport and Traffic sub-committee (which includes the interests of pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and drivers in our area, residents and businesses) has been newly created in the course of this year, in response to some particular circumstances affecting our area.

- The start of the tramworks and multifarious other roadworks, leading to numerous road closures, road narrowing, diversions etc. all over Leith.
- In particular, the closure of Constitution Street to traffic, due to the tramworks, which has also had a catastrophic effect on many local businesses (now also compounded now by the pandemic upheaval).
- At the bottom of Easter Road, a change from the old roundabout to a complicated traffic light junction. We were told this change was necessary to carry the increased volume of traffic, including buses, caused by tramworks on Leith Walk, and to improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians, but the new junction does not work very well.
- The loss of the bus service Number 12, which used to go to/from Seafield via Constitution Street and along Links Place and Links Gardens. This has left all the residents on the north side of the Links without access to any bus service (since the 16 which used to use Constitution Street has also gone) unless they walk across the Links to East

Hermitage Place, which is demanding for elderly and disabled people, and felt to be unsafe by many female residents and workers, especially at night.

Our local community has been very negatively impacted by these changes, and we have been working to consult residents for their views, and to represent these views to the Council.

The main impact is serious traffic congestion tailing back from the traffic lights at Vanburgh Place/Lochend Road/Easter Road/Duke Street right back to the traffic lights at Restalrig Road and, often, beyond. This has had bad consequences for cyclists and pedestrians as well as for drivers, because it brings air pollution and makes crossing the road difficult, encourages cyclists to cycle on the pavement (which they tend to do anyway), and it also delays bus services, which may drive people back into using their cars.

Since May, 2020, Links Gardens has also been partially closed to traffic, as part of the Spaces for People initiative arising from the Covid-19 crisis. The road is now a traffic-free space for cyclists and pedestrians, and a few scooters, skate boarders and even a unicyclist has been seen. This was introduced as a 'temporary measure' but currently looks set to be made permanent as part of a new 'Low Traffic Neighbourhood' plan for north Leith that the Council is hoping to bring in, but - it seems so far - with a minimum of meaningful consultation with the local community.

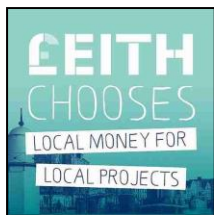
Leith Links Community Council has asked the Council to review this closure, in the light of the traffic congestion we are suffering, and to fully consult residents as part of that review. We do not believe the Links Gardens closure has, in and of itself, caused all the traffic congestion, but it contributes to it.

The population in the Leith Links area has been growing steadily in recent years due to all the new flats being built. Further new and very large residential developments are now in the pipeline for the north side of Salamander Street, bringing in thousands of new residents to the area. Obviously, the tram, when it is finished, will be a huge asset, transport-wise, but meanwhile - is the current traffic and transport infrastructure fit for purpose in this area? And will it be fit for purpose in the potentially much more populated years to come?

A controlled parking zone is also on the cards for our area within the next year or two, probably before the tram starts running (to avoid Leith Links being used as an informal 'park and ride' for tram users). We will be consulting residents on this in due course.

In addition, the Community Council is represented on a city-wide group called the Edinburgh Bus Users Group (EBUG), independent of all operators, Council, Government and political parties, whose aim is to protect and promote the use of public transport and to look out for Edinburgh's bus passengers and services.

For many years, Leith Links Community Council has had a leading and active role in the planning and running of £eith



Chooses (via the Steering Group - a partnership between the Leith Community Councils, the City of Edinburgh Council, and community groups in Leith).

£eith Chooses has had its share of challenges in the past (remember the Beast from the East in 2018?) but this year it was lucky in that the Voting Day and the Awards and Feedback Night events all just squeezed in, in February and early March 2020, before Covid19 and lockdown.

The process was launched in October 2019, inviting applications for projects on the theme of **'Fighting hunger and/or loneliness'**.

20 valid project applications were received, of which 4 qualified for the Boost Vote for ethnic minority community projects.

Voting Day was on 1 February, 2020. There was no online voting - it was vital to come along to vote in person.

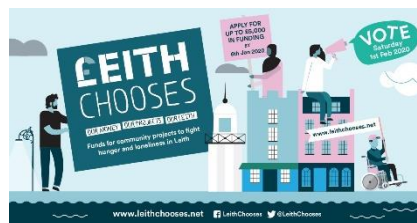
The event was very much run on a budget this past year, as



support grants that we have had in two past years from Scottish Government Community Choices fund have now run dry. However City of Edinburgh Council support and personal donations from Community Councillors and other community-minded folk and organisations (Thank you to all, including Tesco and Asda) helped to ensure provision of face-painting, free crèche, a 'kids' vote' with prizes, and free food and drink.

Again, well over a thousand voters came through the doors of the Community Centre. There was a terrific community 'buzz' and it was grand day out!

The organisers (£eith Chooses Steering Group) and the many volunteers who helped on the day were complimented and thanked for a particularly smoothly-run event.



All the projects were wonderful & so worthy of funding-it is always sad that they cannot all get funding....

£44,624 was distributed to the 10 'winning' projects. And then Covid 19 hit – and projects could not run as originally planned, as many of them involved bringing people together for social events, classes outings etc. – all the things that were specifically not allowed, because of infection risks! The £eith Chooses Steering Group has been working throughout the pandemic months, contacting all the project groups, negotiating project adaptations, and trying to support groups in delivering alternative but equally positive outcomes for their service users/members/client groups. The project groups have been fantastically creative in adapting to this challenge. Many have contributed very actively to the vital task of 'feeding Leith' through these very difficult months, and many have set up telephone and online networks to provide advice and support and to help their members / users feel less isolated.

To read about which local community projects successfully won funding in 2019/2020, and to find out about the plans for £eith Chooses 2020/2021, see <http://www.leithchooses.net/> (hosted and run by LLCC). See also @leithchooses [FaceBook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Leith Links Community Council area

Our specific area of interest is that which falls within the red line on the map to the right of this text.

