

LEITH LINKS

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Policy

External bookings for events on Leith Links

Introduction

At regular intervals, LLCC receives and responds to requests from City of Edinburgh Council (Suzanne Anderson, Programme Officer - Parks, Greenspace and Cemeteries Service) for its views and comments on various applications asking for 'PERMISSION TO HOLD AN EVENT IN PARKS, GREENSPACE AND CEMETERIES'

Rather than having to write out a separate detailed response every time, it is judged helpful to make public the general policy of LLCC on this matter. Further points and details can be added to the general policy requirements, as needed.

1.0 The default position of Leith Links Community Council (LLCC) is to oppose and refuse requests to use Leith Links for commercial events. This is a public space and common good land. It belongs to the people, not to the Council. It is much needed and much used by the local community for leisure and exercise. Free access to open air green space is an important factor in the promotion and maintenance of health and well-being (physical and mental). The Covid19 pandemic in 2020 has dramatically emphasized the need for outdoor space for both exercise and socializing. Leith Links has been incredibly busy all year. The population of Leith in general and the Links area in particular is growing significantly as more and more high-density housing is built nearby. Leith is already one of the most densely populated districts in the UK, outside London, and there is very little green space per head of population in Leith compared with in other areas of Edinburgh. It is unacceptable for a private, commercial event that makes profit for its organizers, but that does not directly benefit the people of the Leith Links area, to prevent free access by local people to their own public space, especially for an extended period.

1.1 There should be no costs incurred by the tax payer in the provision of events on Leith Links; all costs must be borne by the event organiser, unless they strike a specific funding deal with the Council. Costs should not be absorbed by the Council as this results in Council Tax funds etc. being spent for the benefit of private businesses rather than for the community (see also Section 4., below)

1.2 However, should a request to hold an event be received, it is the policy of Leith Links Community Council (LLCC) to advise City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) as follows, as regards requests for permission to hold an event on Leith Links park:

1.2.1 To view favourably and to facilitate requests that conform to the conditions laid out (under 2-5 below), plus any other additional special conditions pertaining to individual applications.

1.2.2 To politely decline any requests that cannot undertake to meet these conditions in full (or that have demonstrated in the past failure to meet these conditions).

1.2.3 To invite Leith Links Community Council to take part in pre-event and post event planning exercises/meetings.

2. General Conditions

2.1 Points of Principle

Application Stage

- All applications and requests for permission should be shared by CEC, for consultation, with Leith Links Community Council, with the greatest possible period of advance notice.
- Apart from any sections that may need to be redacted for privacy or commercial reasons, CEC will share ALL the available information about the applicant and the application with LLCC, so that a fully informed evaluation and decision can be made.
- LLCC would like a commitment from the Council to not accept incomplete applications.

Decision stage:

- Priority should be given to local and community events, especially when these are traditional / regular. For example – Leith Festival Gala Day, Funfair (during Leith Festival week), Mela.
- Short events (one/two days) will be viewed more favourably than long events.
- No more than 4 major events should be held in one year (to preserve the grass).
- If possible, events should be well spaced-out in time, with at least a month between each (to let the grass recover).
- Because (different parts of) the park are used by a football club and a cricket club, events should not be considered in those areas unless they fall outwith the relevant sporting season. That is, only July and (part of) August are available where there are football pitches, and only October- April is available where there are cricket pitches (also the special (and expensive) all-weather cricket pitch must be avoided completely as it is very susceptible to damage).
- Events / Organisers that have caused trouble in previous years should be especially carefully monitored, and could potentially be 'barred' (say, if trouble is caused more than once).

3. Specific Conditions of Let

(These exist alongside the policies, conditions and requirements of CEC and do not replace these)

3.1 Safety and Security

- Event organisers must ensure that all staff and volunteers are fully trained and supervised at all times.
- Adequate site security and stewarding must be provided at all times. For example, this must include taking responsibility for managing event participants on approach to/ exit from the event at Leith Links, not just the specific event footprint. Poor behaviour of event attendees at any point on the Links should be properly managed by the event organizer, if necessary involving Police Scotland.
- Events organisers must provide the Community Council, the other Leith Links stakeholders and local residents & businesses overlooking the links, with a named contact and telephone number for all the hours that event is in operation to which any issues or concerns can be reported. Any such concerns must be investigated immediately.

3.2 Vehicle Access

3.2.1 Minimum vehicles on the grass, for loading and unloading and essential deliveries only (or access for disabled persons). For each event, a clear definition of 'essential vehicles' needs to be reached and agreed by all parties.

3.2.2 No driving around on the grass other than to access loading/ unloading point.

3.2.3 No parking on the grass except for a few essential vehicles.

3.3 Transport / Travel / Parking

- Big events attract people from a wide radius, so how people will travel to the event needs to be considered. A big event with hundreds of taxis picking up & dropping off in surrounding streets could be a real point of trouble unless properly managed.
- Notify Police Scotland of the event, well in advance, and discuss any special arrangements needed, e.g. temporary coach drop off and/or taxi ranking system etc. as well as any special parking arrangements needed in the streets surrounding the Links, for the period of the event.

3.3.1 Inform LLCC of any special parking arrangements so we can warn the local community in advance.

3.3.2 No parking on the Links (see also 3.2 above, re vehicle access)

3.4 Noise

- Noise which is generated as part of the commercial event must be within the prescribed limits (decibels and time-scales). This must be checked by the authorities on the first day/night and at random intervals afterwards, for longer events, and if complaints are received from locals.
- Noise from the event should cease by 10:30pm
- Attendees to be cleared swiftly after close of event, not only from the event site but also from the park, to limit noise from attendees.

3.5 Toilets

3.5.1 Organisers will arrange for adequate toilet facilities to be made available (see calculator for toilets per # of attendees <http://www.andyloos.co.uk/calc/calc.php>)

3.6 Sustainability

Organisers will:

- Require that all vendors clearly display the prices of all food and drinks being sold.

3.6.1 Ensure that all food and drink is sold in recyclable containers (recyclable plastic, cardboard etc.). Polystyrene and other non-recyclable materials are unacceptable.

NB Advice for organizers may be available from Zero Waste Leith / ChangeWorks <https://www.changeworks.org.uk/projects/zero-waste-leith>

3.6.2 Arrange for recycling facilities to be available as appropriate (e.g. glass and/or plastic recycling where drinks are being sold).

3.7 Litter and Waste

Organisers will

3.7.1 Arrange for extra waste and recycling bins to be made available in the centre of park, near the hub of the event as well as at each exit.

3.7.1.1 Supply volunteers or staff to help the public to use the various bins appropriately (e.g. for large / long events).

3.7.1.2 Ensure that staff / volunteers are fully trained and supervised at all times.

3.7.2 Supply adequate volunteers or staff to pick up and appropriately dispose of litter continuously throughout the event, and following closure every day/night. (No litter to be left 'unpicked' on site overnight, in case of high winds etc.).

- 3.7.3 Make adequate arrangements with City of Edinburgh Council or a private contractor to empty bins and to pick up collected litter at regular intervals. E.g. nightly (No overflowing bins or black bags piling up around the site, for seagulls and foxes to break into).

Ideally:

- 3.7.4 No rubbish bins left unemptied after an event closes and packs up to leave.
- 3.7.5 Rubbish generated by participants of the event should be considered commercial waste, and therefore removed at the cost of the event organiser (not by the Council, as such refuse collections are not covered by Council Tax payments).
- 3.7.6 Need to not only provide recycling facilities but the rubbish inside must actually be recycled.

3.8 Making good any damage

City of Edinburgh Council will -

- 3.8.1 Require applicants to declare any foreseeable damage at the time of application (and, ideally, routinely until the event is complete, as worsening weather can increase the level of projected damage and likely cost/ time to repair becomes greater).
- 3.8.2 Ensure that organizers are charged a very significant 'Bond' that is high enough to encourage them to avoid causing any damage, or at least an adequate amount to cover all possible costs of reinstating the Links to its normal state / good condition.
- 3.8.3 Ensure that the state of the Links is properly assessed before and after the event, and the Bond money is used if necessary, to cover the costs of repair / reinstatement.
- 3.8.4 Ensure that all damage is repaired as soon as possible, even while the event is ongoing if necessary / possible.
- 3.8.5 Reinstatement the Links fully within one week following closure of event.
- 3.8.6 Be fully transparent as regards Bond charged, reinstatement works and costs etc.

Ideally:

- There need to be steps in place to prevent damage occurring in the first place, not just a plan to fix it if it occurs.
- A 'general' environmental impact assessment should be made of the Links, with regard to events. It's not just all about grass – there are other equally important although less obvious issues. For example, compaction of the soil surrounding trees is a serious issue in many parks (e.g. St. Andrews Square) and a real risk to Leith Links. Some protection against that would need to be built in to event management.
- It is preferable to avoid / prevent damage. There is a real danger that event organisers will allow the Links to become damaged as the cost of repair is cheaper for them than prevention (e.g. by hiring in additional staging, reducing participant numbers etc.). But the Links and local park users pay the price of repeated damage, which can be long-lasting.

4 Adding value for locals & Returning profit to Leith Links

- If a commercial event takes place, especially for an extended period, there must be a community benefit from the event, something along the lines of half-price tickets for locals, free tickets to disabled or deprived school children/families. A donation towards new trees. Or donation of staff time for some specific project.
- City of Edinburgh Council will ensure that profits made from letting commercial

operators use Leith Links for events are reinvested specifically in Leith Links.

Ideally:

- CC (or Friends of Leith Links once formed) need to enter into negotiations in order to formalize and ensure that this is undertaken. Otherwise, the Council might claim money from event organisers in administration fees without transparency as to where those fees 'go' (as happens currently?).

5 Policy Updating and Adoption

- This policy can be reviewed and re-edited at any time, as necessary.
- Edits to this policy will be agreed and adopted at the next following LLCC AGM

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