**MINUTES**

**MONDAY 19 APRIL 2021, 7pm**

**(Extraordinary meeting,** **online, via Zoom)**

**Councillors Present:** Abigail Cunningham, Gail Clapton (Treasurer), Angus Hardie, David Igoe, Andrew Mackenzie, Sally Millar (Secretary), Jim Scanlon (Chair), Michael Traill (Engagement Officer).

**Elected Representatives:** Cllr Chas Booth, Cllr Rob Munn (Leith Walk Ward).

**In attendance:** 40+ members of the public.

**Minute Taker:** Kay Goodall.

**1. Welcome and Introductions - Leith Links Bowling Green Area Community Consultation**

Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**2. Brief history of the area / building, and current situation**

Chair Jim Scanlon explained that the meeting was called to solicit a variety views from the public on the former bowling green area and the building itself (most recently referred to as the ‘Dry Dock’). These were once well-used for busy weekly events but the bowling greens declined in popularity and were closed, as was the putting green, later. Edinburgh Leisure had taken over the site and the Dry Dock project had leased the building for a while and provided a valuable community resource but could not obtain suitable support. The building had been done up considerably internally by the Dry Dock Project but since they left fell into disrepair and has been further damaged by fire caused by vandals. CEC had apparently planned to demolish it, seeing it as a magnet for anti-social behaviour, but the Community Council objected and demanded a period of consultation. This is common good land and belongs to the people of Leith, and is only administered by the Council. The community does not feel that demolishing the building is necessarily in the best interests of the community, especially since trying to build anything new in its place is problematical. Also the building contains useful facilities, including a kitchen and toilets. The best way to combat anti-social behaviour, arguably, would be to provide something constructive for local people to do, rather than removing facilities.

3. **Outline of the legal position - Councillor Rob Munn**

Cllr Munn is an elected Councillor for the Leith Walk ward and had previously been a Councillor for the Leith ward. He is now Convener of the Finance and Resources committee, which covers decisions on properties such as this. Originally, a report on the state of the site and building was due to come to this committee from the Parks and Recreation Dept in May, in order for a decision to be taken, but this has now been deferred. The Community Empowerment Act requires full consultation with the community.

As regards the legal position: Two important aspects are

(1) that the site is part of the Links overall, which is common good land and must be kept for the betterment of the local populace. Community Asset transfer is not an appropriate model. Lleases can be considered if they benefit the community. Changes to the use of the grassy areas should be straightforward as long as new uses were still for the benefit of the local community, but anything to do with building is more complicated.

(2) The Confirmation Act 1981 protects the Edinburgh’s four main common good assets, one of which is Leith Links. It was designed to prevent damage to parks caused by inappropriate built ‘development’ which is good in theory (no selling off land for a block of flats), but means that nothing can be built there other than what was originally in place (eg toilets, bandstand). Refurbishment of the existing building (built before 1981) would be possible, but not a new building with a larger footprint. The meeting noted that there should be some funding for refurbishment available from the insurance payments following the fire. Further changes *can* be made but these would require parliamentary legislative change / approval which would be long and complicated. (It took several years before the Leith Rules Golf Society got permission from Holyrood to put up the John Rattray statue).,

**4. Groups with prepared ideas and proposed schemes - 1-2 minute each to ‘pitch’**

*Matthew Wilson*: teachers at Leith Academy want to use ‘tented classrooms’ in the area for teaching and learning, proposing to focus on face to face teaching rather than using tech.

*Evie, founder and CEO of Earth in Common (previously Crops and Pots)*: this charity runs the Leith Community Croft nearby. Their focus is on the protection of conservation areas and greenspaces and they believe a robust consultation is required with the entire community of the area.

*David McKean* proposed that a skate park on this side of the city is much needed and would be very popular. (Saughton Park’s skate park is 1hr 15 mins away by bus or 40 mins by bike.) And / or a BMX park. A bike repair and workshop space could also be valuable.

*Noel Spencer, director of not-for-profit Bear Branding:* has developed a proposal whereby the building could be used to provide employment, teaching, creative arts and crafts and sustainability, with upcycling and distribution, working with members of the community and benefiting everyone.

*Willy Barr:* strong support for Noel’s proposal for a community arts facility and making space for local families. Pointed out that there is a need for culture and arts alongside outdoor play and sports.

*Sarah Byrom* of Litter Lifting stressed the need for better regular maintenance – litter bins, dumped items etc.

**5. General discussion – ‘in an ideal world’ - ideas and aspirations**

**6. Small group discussions**

Several participants put forward more ideas for the area, and then the meeting split into smaller groups for informal discussion. There were so many suggestions that it is hard to ‘Minute‘ these, so they are attached here as Appendix 1, in list form. Apologies if any have been missed out. The community will need to deliberate on these, refine ‘ideas’ into proposals, identify possible resources, and, eventually have some kind of vote on which are most popular (and realistic).

***Key points raised:***

* Toilets are a top priority and essential to any / all proposals. Also baby changing facilities. (Earth in Common’s community café will have this eventually, but there is an urgent need for toilets on Leith Links **now**.)
* ANY improvements would be an huge step forward from what it’s like now. Eg. just painting the building.
* One size can’t fit all and ALL the ideas can’t be implemented. Expectations should not be raised TOO high as resources are limited. There will always be some people disappointed.
* It’s important the area is equal and inclusive - – so not just specifically sports, or just arts.
* Anti-social behaviour needs to be tackled. This is largely vandalism by bored youth, or drug dealing, drug taking and/or prostitution made worse by the hedges ‘hiding’ what’s going on. Some is caused by lack of facilities and support elsewhere; the area is used by people who are in temporary homeless accommodation nearby, who are not allowed access to their hostels during the day.
* Good lighting could make the area much safer, less vulnerable to anti-social behaviour, and would allow it to be used later into the evening / might, good for winter activities.
* Security cameras could also make the area safer.
* There is a need for activities for older children / teenagers. Could young people take a lead on saying what they want?
* Want an all-age space, not just kids
* Important that the space be multi-use, rather than just for one single purpose / use
* Legal hurdles should not be underestimated. Community groups cannot easily raise funds for these purposes. (However Brodie’s had been very supportive of Projekt 42’s proposal, and there are other businesses / companies who might help?)
* Short leases could be problematical - they don’t give enough security to groups / organisations taking on the space, that may need a long time to establish their vision.
* Could the facilities earn money? – eg renting out the kitchen space, or a community room, to groups.
* Partnerships with other local organisations could be valuable, for example with Duncan Place Resource Centre, Earth in Common.
* Where is funding going to come from? CEC’s insurance money for the fire damage could be put toward a new proposal. More will need to be raised, CEC resources are very limited.
* How would maintenance and upkeep be done?
* Projekt 42 will not apply again but are generously willing to pass on their knowledge and experience in successfully gaining funding for their £1m proposal. They would value new spaces that bring people from a variety of backgrounds together, integrating e.g. methadone users with people with very different health problems to tackle.

**6. Moving things forward: Action Plan / Working Group**

Cllr Booth, local Green councillor, praised the ideas put forward and offered to take ideas forward once agreement has been reached.

Cllr Munn would support collaborative work across Leith as it is important that it does not become a single-use facility.

**ACTION: Cllr Munn will circulate the CEC Briefing Note when this is available.**

**It was agreed that we need short, medium and long terms aims.**

Another meeting next month will develop these initial plans. It is important that all groups and individuals have equal opportunity to put forward their ideas. An online ideas bank could help achieve this.

**ACTION: Michael Traill will create an ideas bank on the website.**

Meeting was supportive of Matthew’s tented classroom proposal, but Cllr Booth stressed that he’ll needs to contact Council to clarify the situation as regards Planning permission and/or other requirements.

Chair thanked everyone for taking part. Meeting ended at 8.40pm.

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**Date of next LLCC meeting: Monday 26th April 2021, 6:30pm via Microsoft Teams**

**Date of next extraordinary Bowling Green public meeting: Monday 17th May 2021, 7pm via Zoom**

**APPENDIX 1**

**IDEAS**

**Outdoor Activity / Sport related suggestions**

Skatepark BMX park

Fenced Basketball court Volleyball court 5 a side football pitch(es)

Walking football outdoor table tennis

Crazy golf putting

Petanque (boules) (There is actually a petanque court in between the tennis courts and the back of the building, but many people are unaware of its existence, it could be done up a bit).

Swimming Lido

**Creative / cultural / arts & crafts / Sustainability**

Craft workshops art workshops printing workshops

Bike repair ‘shop’ and workshops upcycling classes cookery classes

Pop up businesses Art exhibitions open air theatre space

Outdoor ‘auditorium’ for live music performances (curfew at say 10pm) eg by local musicians

Kids arts projects

Use by Leith Festival

**Relaxation / Leisure**

More benches, quiet area for sitting picnic tables public barbecue area

Flower garden sensory garden

Wheelchair access

Bird watching, information boards on birds

community café.

**Community**

* a community centre with citizens’ advice and /or other services.
* Guides, Scouts and other local groups could meet, use it as a ‘hut’