

LEITH LINKS

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES

MONDAY 25 OCTOBER 2021

6.30pm

online, via Zoom

Councillors and Members Present: Robert Cormack (Leith Rotary), Abigail Cunningham, Angus Hardie, Barbara Kerr (Leith Festival), Andrew Mackenzie, Sally Millar (Secretary), Teresa Perchard, Chrissie Reid, Jim Scanlon (Chair), Eileen Simpson.

Elected Representatives: Councillor Chas Booth, Councillor Adam McVey.

In attendance: 2 members of the public

Minute Taker: Kay Goodall.

1. Welcome, Apologies

Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced new member Barbara Kerr, representing local community group Leith Festival. Apologies were received from Tommy Sheppard MP, Ben Macpherson MSP, Councillor Gordon Munro, Gail Clapton, David Igoe.

2. Adoption of Minutes of last meeting on Monday 27 September 2021

Proposed by Teresa Perchard; seconded by Chrissie Reid. Available at <https://leithlinksc.org.uk/>

3. Report from Police Scotland

A written report was circulated before the meeting. Uniform and plain clothes officers have been focusing on local concerns such as drug and alcohol misuse, anti-social behaviour and licensing checks.

National Hate Crime Awareness Week: local officers held events at two local primary schools.

Bonfire Night: support and services for youth will be provided.

Officers will be deployed in Glasgow in the next two weeks due to the COP26 meeting.

ACTION: Chair will ask local officers about the recent major policing action in Duncan Place. Chair will ask if (an) officer(s) could attend at least some meetings in person (or online, if on Teams), so that there could be some dialogue.

4. Seafeld Sewage Works – update and discussion

Scottish Water had agreed with Ben Macpherson MSP to attend a meeting with the community to discuss creation of a single reporting point, independent and trusted by all. However they pre-empted the discussion meeting and instead have created their own Scotland-wide reporting point. It was pointed out that this new system would not be either 'independent' nor 'trusted by all'. It would not be accessible to LLCC, so the Community Council could not monitor the situation, or keep statistics on problems and complaints related to Seafeld. Questions were asked about how

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transparent the new scheme would be to the community? At present Scottish Water do not always act on reports, so the community does not trust them. Meeting felt SW had already acted in bad faith by preempting the discussion with the community and acting unilaterally. Chair Jim Scanlon proposed that LLCC should retain its own reporting procedure at least for the present until we can see how the new system operates. Meeting agreed that LLCC should retain its own system, which needs its email contact list updating, and an extra question added in order to try and keep track of who has contacted Scottish Water as well as LLCC (to avoid double counting of complaints). Meanwhile LLCC will also publicise Water's new scheme and encourage people to use it, and will try to evaluate how valuable the new SW scheme is.

ACTION: Chair will write to Ben MacPherson and all the Seafield stakeholders raising LLCC's concerns. Eileen will do a first draft of the letter and circulate for comments before it is sent.

ACTION: Michael Traill will be asked to work with Jim and Eileen to make the necessary updates to the reporting form / procedure, and to 'train' them or someone else how to do this in future if he is unable / unwilling to do so.

5. Parks and Greenspaces – update

Arboretum – Revised plans have been produced and the Leith Rules Golf Society are meeting soon to discuss these, as they affect the golf course holes. The plans list the tree species and locations for the arboretum, but does not outline a comprehensive plan and costing of tree maintenance, other than the ongoing role of Council parks staff. It was noted that the planned interpretation boards will not include existing trees, but perhaps they should as there are other interesting trees on the Links. Meeting proposed and agreed (1) that LLCC should ask ELGT to have an LLCC representative on the steering group for the arboretum. (is there one? If not, there should be) and (2) that LLCC should ask CEC for a 'tree management plan' for the whole of Leith Links that provides timescales for attention to dead trees, removal and replacement, planting of new trees, watering of new trees, and any other tree related matters, including interpretive info boards for trees outside the arboretum. The arboretum has now been included within o the Master Plan exercise.

ACTION: Chair will write to Ross Woodside to respond to the revised plans, and to establish ongoing communication (outside / in addition to Master Plan discussions) and to ask for LLCC representation on Steering Group.

ACTION: Chair will write to CEC and the arboretum team, copying in Lindsay Grant, Parks Programmes Manager, regarding a tree management plan.

Master Plan for Leith Links

The second meeting of this group was attended by Sally Millar and David Igoe recently. Cllr Chas Booth joined for part of the meeting, remotely. The project is funded by the Thriving Green Spaces project group, which reaches the end of its life / funding in March 2022. It is therefore important that LLCC's input is included in their landscape architect's first draft of a possible Master Plan (as this may be the only draft). Gordon Carmichael and Evie Murray presented ideas about a Leith Activity Park, and Sally presented the findings of the LLCC consultation on possible future uses of the

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Bowling Greens area. There was much open discussion. The landscape architect was open to all suggestions and the next meeting will be a live 'walk around' in the park. There was discussion about the restrictions on what can be built on common good land – more information is still needed, e.g. is a skatepark considered a building? Is an arboretum + seating, and interpretive signage etc.? A modern bandstand/ multipurpose sheltered performance space was discussed as a possible idea. There was discussion about provision of adequate toilets, as the new building on the Croft the Croft will have at best only a very limited capacity. There was also a question raised about provision for girls (as park design in general and skateparks etc. in particular are known to be male dominated (<http://makespaceforgirls.co.uk/>)).

Wider Community Reference Group: Sally has informed Lindsay Grant of more people who should be included on the list, including the 2 schools, the Allotments Association, Street Soccer, Leith Festival, Cricket Club, and the Leith Golf Rules Society. It's not clear when that wider group will be invited to meet, maybe not until there are some initial outline plans for them to respond to / comment on.

6. Travel and Mobility Issues

Lothian Buses

Members of LLCC and Leith & Newhaven CC had an on-site walkaround meeting with Ian Bieniowski of Lothian Buses on 20 October. Financial pressures on Lothian Buses are acute, but the meeting with Ian was very positive – he recognises our area's problems.

The meeting discussed the excessive walking distance (600-800 m in some cases, while the national 'standard' is 400m) for some local residents to reach public transport stops for Leith Links, which is too far for many older and disabled people and which also forces people to cross the park, which might be felt unsafe by many especially for women and girls, and on the darker nights. The meeting also highlighted the fact that our local population is growing very rapidly due to huge new housebuilding programmes on large brownfield sites, so there are literally thousands of people moving in (the Ropeworks and along Salamander Street) and needing access to public transport (the Tram is not ready yet, is too far away for many to walk to, and does not go to where people may wish to go to). If public transport is not easily available, people are forced to use their cars which is contrary to Council policies and ScotGov aspirations for reducing congestion and lowering emissions etc. The proposed Low Traffic Neighbourhood plans are flawed in that, although they may improve things for pedestrians and cyclists, they do not make it easier but actually make it harder for people to use public transport. Routing issues were discussed. Lothian Buses avoids one-way bus routes, so any bus would have to be able to travel in both directions. Salamander Place is wide enough for buses but there would have to be a traffic signal at the top (junction with Links Place / Gardens) in case two opposite buses were at the junction at the same time. This would not be a bad thing, arguably, as it's quite a dangerous junction currently. A through route from Salamander Street to, say, Easter Road and onwards, is really the only viable option, and would require Salamander Place and either Duncan Place or Links Gardens (or both) to be open to buses. The option of a 'bus

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gate' was discussed. The foot of John's Place is currently wide enough for opposing buses to go through and turn along Links Place. This asset of width must be safeguarded. Although the junction could be reconfigured and made safer, it must not be over-narrowed by the Low Traffic Neighbourhood plans. (These are currently on pause until summer 2022). It is currently unclear whether or not there will be any bus at all on Constitution Street; if there is, it would be the northern end only, turning into Queen Charlotte Street. The Tram team have just widened the pavement enormously outside the Police Station which would seem to rule out a bus turning there, but Ian Bienowski thought a turn might still be possible. We asked why these redesign steps can be taken pre-emptively by Tram team without consultation with Lothian Buses?

It is essential to co-ordinate discussions between LLCC, LB, LTN and Tram team, to prevent potential bus routes being blocked irrevocably by one party, without full discussion with the other parties involved. John White, the Lothian Buses rep delegated to liaise with the tram team, is willing to come to an LLCC meeting, as is Ian Bienowski, and may also be invited to a CCTT meeting soon.

Cllr Munro has been raising concerns on behalf of people travelling on peripheral routes rather than the city centre, eg. a bus from Leith to Portobello. Cllr Booth has contacted CEC about supporting Lothian Buses to restore services to the Links, and Cllr McVey will also back this.

ACTION: Sally and Teresa will write a summary of the situation, following the meeting with LB. Cllr Booth and Cllr McVey will write to Lothian Buses and LTN team in support of LLCC's requests.

CPZ for Leith Walk, Leith, North Leith

While not all of our area is covered by this planned parking zone, it does encompass part of our area eg. on the west and north side of the Links. The zone is bounded by the edge of the Links. That means parking will be pushed out to the perimeter of the area eg. Hermitage Place, Claremont Park etc. The restrictions on Leith Walk will also affect the LLCC area as people will want to park down here if they can't park further up Leith Walk. The plans are available for view and the deadline for comments is 12 November: <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/roads-pavements/view-comment-traffic-orders-new/1> Unfortunately the plans are extremely difficult to access, see and understand.

7. Planning issues

Ropeworks

It appears that the developers have withdrawn their appeal to the Reporter, which sounds - tentatively – like good news. It is not yet clear where that leaves their planning application (which LLCC objected to).

ACTION: Andrew will find out from the CEC case officer what happens next in this situation.

Maritime Street

LLCC submitted an objection based on:

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1. Loss of commercial/office space.
2. Height and massing in the conservation area, with impact on neighbour amenity.
3. Likely knock-on effects of local parking and road congestion, with concomitant impact on local amenity.

Baltic Street

Edinburgh University pulled out of Sundial's plans for student accommodation. The site has been sold to another developer, Hub Residential Group, who plan to replace student accommodation with 'build to rent' flats, but hopefully may keep much of the site design: [https://hubgroup.co.uk/projects/baltic-street/Baltic Street - Hub Residential\[12676\].pdf](https://hubgroup.co.uk/projects/baltic-street/Baltic Street - Hub Residential[12676].pdf)

Salamander Street Ref. 21/01163/PPP

Both LLCC and LH&N CC have been strongly critical of the plans so far. An extension has been gained (until 9 November) to allow us to comment this time round.

8. Update from Elected Representatives (Holyrood, Westminster, CEC) as available & Open Floor

Cllr McVey noted that the new owners of Ocean Terminal plans to demolish the car park and Debenham's space, and as well as developing new buildings, plan to open up access to the waterside, which should be nice. He added that the tramworks are progressing well. The Burns statue should go back in near the end of January, and fencing will be removed from Constitution St soon, opening up space.

Cllr Booth noted that there is a current consultation on whether the city as a whole should become a Short Term Let Control area, and encouraged everyone to respond to support this, as it is vital to protect homes for residents.

<https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/sfc/short-term-let-consultation/>

He also noted that CEC Finance Committee has approved a proposal on provision of homeless housing, as the city is currently in breach of the law.

9. AOCB

City Fibre: this body is cabling large areas of Edinburgh, affecting pavements and bus stops and, in particular, obstructing pedestrians (especially dangerous to disabled and vision-impaired pedestrians). It has not been complying with TTRO and clear-up requirements, and does not operate safely. Cllr McVey noted that although City Fibre has appointed a community liaison officer, it has not responded adequately to concerns he has forwarded.

Hedges on Leith Links: these are encroaching on the pavement and paths around the Links.

ACTION: Sally will Tweet EdinHelp. Abi will contact Scott Thomson of CEC Parks about hedge trimming.

EACC: meetings are now being held online. These have recently been productive and useful.

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Meeting ended at 8.25pm.

Date of next public meeting: Monday 29th November 2021, 6:30pm, online