

LEITH LINKS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes, Monday 26 August 2024,

Online Teams Meeting

LLCC Members Present: Gail Clapton (Treasurer & Vice Chair), Abigail Cunningham, Amy Fairbairn, Aric Gilinsky, Angus Hardie, Barbara Kerr (Leith Festival), Andy Mackenzie, Sally Millar (Secretary), Teresa Perchard, Chrissie Reid, Jim Scanlon (Chair), Eileen Simpson

Apologies from: Ben MacPherson MSP, Police Scotland

Elected Representatives: Councillor Chas Booth, Councillor Adam Nols-McVey, Councillor Katrina Faccenda,

Police Scotland: 0 **Members of the Public:** 2

Guest Speakers: Lesley McGrath - Holder Planning

Alasdair Sibbald – Forth Ports

Nick Watson – Tartan Commercial

Nic Saunders – G53 (architects)

Minute Taker: Sally Millar

- 1. Welcome, particularly to guest speakers. Apologies**
- 2. Adoption of Minutes of June 2024 meeting** proposed by Sally Millar and seconded by Gail Clapton
- 3. Police Scotland Report** - no officer present, but report submitted and circulated (available via www.leithlinksc.org.uk/)

4. Guest Speakers' presentation on Forth Ports' planned development in Leith Docks

The speakers described the proposals they have submitted to the Council for Planning Permission in Principle, and will soon be submitting a full planning application for, concerning a new development on land to the east of Edinburgh Dock, Bath Road, Port of Leith. Exhibition Boards laying out all the details, and providing maps and illustrations, are available online at www.harbour31.com. This is summarised as being a 'hub' for "business, general industrial use, storage and distribution, training/education, with ancillary retail, food and drink including bar and associated development, including parking". This is being provisionally named 'The Dry Dock at Harbour 31' and will sit near the 'big blue shed' that is the new film studio. The gate to the docks on Bath Road would be moved further north, taking the opportunity to bring this space into the public realm.

It is envisaged as a creative space which will include office space, spaces for education and training, light industrial uses, and food and drink outlets, and will be made attractive with courtyards, planting, and seating areas. Because of the working environment (the docks generally, the film studio, and the new wind turbine factory planned), the hub will be a 24/7 operation, and will provide a well-lit, safe and secure space. The design so far is based on a 'shipping container' look (max 4 or 5 high, with stairs and a lift) with an atrium and corrugated metal cladding, to reflect the maritime/industrial context.

The development will be supported by measures to be part of the Green Free Ports status, such as tax relief for businesses, business rate reduction etc., but is not exempt from needing Planning Permission.

The developers answered a number of questions from the floor. The name 'Dry Dock' was queried as it used to be used for an alcohol-free initiative locally, on Leith Links – developers said there was no connection, just that it is physically located at the dry dock.

There is concern in Leith about gentrification, and Leithers being 'priced out', so can we be reassured that the new development will be accessible to locals, for example by reduced rental costs, and that there will be spaces for community use, not just commercial / retail? Nick Watson said the whole development will need to grow 'organically', driven by demand and supply, and the rates for businesses would be varied and hopefully accessible for community. CC members stressed the need for infrastructure as the local population grows – e.g. health facilities.

Sally Millar asked 'what does this mean to the local community and what does the local community get out of this?' In particular, the CC would expect to see a new East-West cycle route through this new development, to extend the Promenade from Portobello/Seafield, but this does not seem to appear in the proposals. Cllr Chas Booth supported this and noted that as per the City Development Plan 2030, there is an Edinburgh-wide commitment to preserving land for a continuous coastal path (walking and cycling) from Musselburgh through to the west of the docks. Developers said they would review and consider this matter.

Members of the CC also raised that there is also an urgent need for improved motor route(s) east – west as Salamander Street is already so congested and polluted. There had been a plan years ago to build a new access road into the docks from Seafield (via Marine Drive, or via the old railway line) and this is really needed now. This seems an excellent opportunity as the gates of the docks will be moved north

Lesley McGrath said that Forth Ports were building a new road in the docks in front of the new Harbour 31 flats, from Bath Road and linking with Ocean Drive at the old casino. However, that is really just 'access only' for residents and will not provide a through route for industrial traffic. She could not speak for land east of Bath Road as that is owned by multiple owners.

There is also a need for a bus route running east -west from Leith to Portobello. Could some of the developers Section 75 contributions go towards this, rather than all the transport contribution being poured in to the tram as usual?

There was concern about vehicle access to and from the hub causing greatly increased traffic entering and leaving the docks via Bath Street, using Salamander Place (which is already in a dreadful state) and Salamander Street (already very congested).

In answer to the question "Who is the target market for these businesses?" the response was that it would not be 'big businesses but small businesses, entrepreneurs, perhaps 'satellite' offices, and hopefully the creative industries. Users would be workers from the docks, the film studio, the new planned wind turbine factor (estimated about 500+ workers nearby), as well as residents from the new flats due to be built as part of the Harbour 31 development, between the docks and the new Barrat 'Merchant Quay' flats on Salamander Street, and the general public.

Finally, there was discussion about the whole Green Free Ports scenario, which is due to be finalised by a vote in council this week. There is a feeling that the community has been rather kept in the dark about this, and it is by no means a generally welcomed initiative, but quite controversial. Cllr Chas Booth said the Scottish Green Party had voted against. LLCC could ask the council leader to come and speak about this to the community at a public meeting.

Sally Millar thanked Lesley McGrath for organising the presentation and thanked all the speakers for their informative input. Lesley McGrath thanked the CC for the opportunity and informed them that there will be further public consultations about the proposed factory in the docks for the manufacture of wind turbines for off shore wind farms, on 5th September at Heart of Newhaven for CCs and at Leith Community Centre on 26 September between 3pm and 7pm.

5. Update from Elected Representatives

Councillor Chas Booth reported that the Transient Visitor Levy ('tourist tax') has now been set by Council at a rate of

5%, which will mean an income of between £30 and £50 million. Not starting yet. Further consultation to follow on how it's spent.

Transport – there will be an 18-month trial of a 7/7/7 bus lane between Balerno and Musselburgh (Route 44) to evaluate if this speeds up bus journeys significantly. Update on Bus Station – the owner is at least prepared to discuss extending the Council's lease on the site. The question of compulsory purchase was raised – this is complicated but may be possible. No suitable alternative sites have been identified.

Councillor Katrina Faccenda reported that she has been investigating the problems of violence and anti-social behaviour at the Kirkgate / Foot of the Walk. People do not feel safe in this area, and there is frustration that Police are not available. She has been working with Police Scotland, business owners in the Kirkgate and other stakeholders such as Turning Point and youth groups etc. The scenario is complex (so just removing the benches at the Kirkgate, as some people request, would not solve the problems), e.g. there appear to be links with changes in drug use in the area (e.g. intravenous cocaine use). The Kirkgate is covered by CCTV, Police will put up new signs to alert people to this. Retail workers in shops here and elsewhere are leaving their jobs as they are so frequently intimidated and threatened by shoplifters and violent 'customers'. Meeting discussed problem areas commonly brought up by the public – e.g. wild kids rampaging through Tescos; hooded, masked and balaclava clad kids on bikes intimidating people in the streets and parks, bike theft, etc. and possible solutions e.g. take their free bus passes away? Teresa Perchard asked whether there is a Council officer with responsibility for anti-social behaviour in the streets? Could the Council put out some publicity to let citizens know and reassure them that something is being done, for example an article in the Evening News?

Question raised whether street prostitution has increased again around the Links? Aric Gilinsky reported that St. James' church carries out a survey annually on prostitution and works with a charity trying to help street prostitutes.

Councillors reminded meeting to participate on two consultations that are currently live:

On licences for short-term letting: <https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/sfc/short-term-lets-2024/>

On developer contributions: closed 17 September but papers available to read at

<https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/sfc/developer-contributions-sup-guidance/>

Councillor Adam McVey - reported that problems caused by seagulls have been intensifying and council is working on a preventative strategy to deal with this.

6. Open Floor – Issues raised by Local Residents

Local resident David Wood reported the growing problem of weeds on local pavements and gutters, and on paths in parks. This is obviously increasing and is already damaging the roads and pavements, causing more expensive problems, and can cause access problems for some. The Council do not appear to do anything about it. Council committed to stopping using weedkillers containing toxic chemicals but has not replaced this with any other measures. Some local residents take the matters into their own hands by digging weeds up near their house, but the problem is very widespread across the city, not just in Leith. The question was raised as to why the pavements and roads in Polwarth were given an unasked for / unneeded upgrade recently, while Leith gets nothing – how can we get action? Councillors encouraged David to write to them about it.

ACTION: LLCC will write to Councillors also on this matter, with a list of streets particularly badly affected, i.e. Leith Links Colonies, Clarebank Crescent, Blackie Road, Claremont Road, Coatfield Lane, parts of Queen Charlotte Street.

Local residents have noticed that a number of people seem to be living in the camper vans that are parked 'permanently' in ever greater numbers alongside the Links on Gladstone Place and Claremont Park. This may be particularly because it's Festival time. It's not fair to local residents who have increasing problems finding parking near their homes, and the number of high vehicles parked along here impede visibility for both pedestrians and drivers and so make it dangerous to try and cross the road. The question was raised as to whether / how the camper vans might be moved on, to proper camp sites?

7. Planning Matters

9 Johns Place – Appeal to the Local Review Body was refused, Government Reporter also refused Listed Building consent. This is a good result as the proposed development would have increased the number of rooms from 15 to 42. Good that one of the grounds for refusal was a recognition by a member of DMSC of overconcentration.

3 Johns Place – CEC has refused Planning Permission for ‘hotel’, owner has appealed to Scottish Government Reporter.

Still awaiting a decision on the warehouse property in Johns Lane, proposed for student accommodation.

Murals on South Leith Parish Church wall, Constitution Street – Andy had met with Chris Wilson of the Tram team about this case, where the proposed designs were accepted by DMSC, in spite of nearly 40 objections, and the fact that the planning permission should not really have included the designs. Some slight concessions have been made - the one design that was most objected to (cartoon-like group of ‘local people’) will be replaced. There is agreement that the panels need not be permanent, but can be changed periodically (but the Tram team will not pay any more, so funding for that will have to be found elsewhere). Council is developing a ‘public art’ policy – but Cllr Adam McVey said there would be no money likely to come from that. Certainly there are many local mural artists who could do a better job than these designs. This was felt by some members to be unsatisfactory, especially given that the developers’ claims to have consulted fully with the church and local people are questionable, as was the planning permission process.

8. Parks – no updates except that Sally Millar wanted to note that the handling of the matter of installing the temporary public toilets on the Links by the Council has been lamentable from start to finish, poor planning, poor communication, poor management, poor staff performance.

9. Bins - No updates. There is to be an online meeting in September with the Council team..

10. AOB

Gail Clapton suggested arranging a litterpick on the Links in October. Duncan Place is too busy to lead on this but will support by making the pickers and bags and gloves available. We need to choose a date and do publicity. Could ask Duncan Place for a list of contacts who might be interested to participate. Also need to get in touch with Council to arrange for pick-up of full bags.

Next meeting of Seafeld Sewage Stakeholders group is 27th September.

New Director of Scottish Historic Buildings Trust Dr Samuel Gallacher is a very positive appointment and his plans for an innovative ‘digital’ museum for Leith Custom House already look interesting.

News report that £120,000 of ‘Edinburgh 900’ money to be re-routed to various Leith organisations

7. Next Meeting: Monday 30 August 2024, 6.30pm in person, Duncan Place