

LEITH LINKS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES 28/10/24

Monday 28 October 2024, online meeting

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

Apologies received from: Sarah Barnard, Abigail Cunningham, Amy Fairbairn, Angus Hardie, Police Scotland

Elected Representatives: 2 Cllr. Chas Booth, Cllr. Adam Nols-McVey

Police Scotland: 0

Members of the Public: 2

Minute Taker: Sally Millar (Secy)

1. Chair's Welcome to attendees

2. Adoption of Minutes of 28 September 2024 meeting

Previous Minutes were adopted **Matters arising** to be taken under Agenda headings following

Actions from previous Minutes:

Action – Teresa Perchard, to write to identify and invite a speaker to explain the Green Free Port

Action - Chair will contact Councillors about this with a view to CCs being given advance notice of works planning in their area and to also raise whether upgrading of roads could also incorporate work on pavements at the same time to minimise disruption.

3. Police Scotland Report - no officer present, but written report submitted and circulated (available via www.leithlinksc.org.uk/)

4. Guest Speaker – Dr. Sam Gallacher, (ex of Burrell, and National Trust for Scotland) now new **Director of Scottish Historic Buildings Trust (SHBT)**, an architectural preservation trust saving buildings all over Scotland but particularly in Edinburgh. Dr. Gallacher gave a very stimulating presentation on the history of the Leith Custom House and his vision for its future. It has been in 'meanwhile use' but hopefully, pending fundraising, will be transformed into accessible civic spaces. Rather than becoming a 'museum' consisting of a collection of 'objects' it will become a collection of digital 'stories'. 'Leith Through the Lens'. With the appropriate digital infrastructure, stories and displays could easily be changed 2 or 3 times per day. It could run short digital exhibitions on topical themes eg. on Gaza, on election, etc.. Some objects could be displayed e.g. temporary loans from NMS / CEC stores. Community Groups could rent space and display objects. Objects could be digitised.

There will still be a café, and people renting artists' studios and work spaces, these may be 'open' on display to the public. It may be used as an Edinburgh Festival Fringe venue. It may host special visiting exhibitions (especially in August).

Façade will be changed slightly to incorporate a ramp and ground floor access. There will be a lift inside.

Funding of £28-£30million will be sought for building work (similar sum as recent funding for upgrade of the Burrell, Paisley Museum, Perth Museum). National Lottery Fund, variety of other sources, with match funding from City of Edinburgh Council (some Visitor Levy income could be spent on this).

Time Frame – 2025-26 = Development Year, to work up Business Plan
Start work 2026, open in 2029-2030

There were questions and much discussion. Suggested it should not be called a 'museum' as that could raise false expectations, but maybe something like 'Customs of Leith' or 'Leith Customs'.

Free entry for Edinburgh Council Tax payers (Meeting suggested a 'Citizens Card' or 'Friends' Card.), will charge for visitors (will benchmark against other local attractions such as Britannia).

Staff – small core curatorial staff paid for from income from catering, rent of offices etc. Otherwise, a 'community curator'.

SHBT will remain the long-term leaseholder of the building, and will manage catering and income from rents. Aim to set up a 'Friends' Group, a Business stakeholders group, an Access Panel.

Management – to be run by a community management trust (local people).

Lots of ideas already but needing lots of new ideas. There is a cultural eco-system right across Leith – eg. Police Station, Town Hall Chamber, Living Memory museum.

Dr. Gallacher was thanked for his interesting presentation.

5. Update from Elected Representatives –

Cllr. Chas Booth reported the release of the Leith Connections 6 month Report which reports significant reductions in traffic in many parts of the LTN (though Duncan Place stood out as less successful, with increased traffic). He claimed this is evidence of very successful 'traffic evaporation', and that the 12 month report would show even better reductions.

CC Members pointed out that roads that were closed or partially closed obviously had reduced traffic, but questioned some of the monitoring, especially on the periphery roads. Traffic has increased on Salamander Place for example, but since Salamander Place was not monitored 'before' the changes, the current 'after' figures are cannot show this increase. The monitoring of the Easter Road / Duke Street / Vanburgh Place / Lochend Road junction was flawed as each road was monitored separately but there should have been an aggregate of all, as a junction. The decision on the temporary TROs will be made in February 2025.

CC members said they feel the bus gate on Links Place should be scrapped as it is pointless, and causes congestion on Salamander Place, and unwanted traffic on Elbe Street etc.

City Plan 2030 now approved, will go through full council on November 7th.

The Tourist Visitor Levy is now approved in principle, further discussions continue on how it will be spent.

PAN for Vestas plans for wind turbine factory in Leith Docks has gone to DMSub Committee.

WOL water quality was analysed – further actions are required for improvement.

6. Open Floor – Issues raised by Local Residents

Weeds – Local Resident David Wood reported that some work had apparently been carried out on weeds on his street (Clarebank Crescent) but only on a few spaces where there were no parked cars. Don't know if this was done by the Council or not. No warning notices had been put up, nor any efforts to inform residents to park elsewhere.

Action – Cllr Adam Nols McVey to try to find out if it was the Council or not.

7. Planning Matters

Jim Scanlon, Teresa Perchard and Andy Mckenzie will have a meeting with Cllr. Jane Meagher, Convener of the Housing and Homelessness Committee, on 6th November on the topic of unlicensed HMOs and over-provision of large but substandard HMOs and 'hotels' for temporary homeless accommodation in the Leith Links area.

Andy Mackenzie asked Councillors what they thought about this issue. Chas Booth said the Scottish Greens policy was to prevent homelessness in the first place by investing in building more homes. Adam McVey said the HMOs should not be closed down but improved standards set. The SNP had stood alone on setting and enforcing standards. He agreed with LLCC that Council buying rooms on this model was a poor and the most expensive way of housing homeless people - the model is broken. However he had so far seen no move at the Council to move towards a better business model, money is still being focused on firefighting continual crisis. Buying houses is not possible due to severe financial cuts.

BT telephone boxes – Teresa Perchard is going to object to planning applications to turn these into 'digital hubs' with advertising on them, as they will add to street clutter and possible distraction to drivers. However she felt that if only BT had promoted these properly, engaged with the community and worked with Council, the idea could have been a good one and go some way to mitigating 'digital exclusion'.

Revised proposal for Tesco on Queen Charlotte Street? – no news yet as to what has been decided on this.

8. Transport & Mobility

Sally Millar advised that correspondence had been received from Harald Tobermann, Deputy Chair of Leith Central Community Council asking for LLCC to confirm its support and collaboration with other CCS on:

- LLCC participation (along with the other CCs) in the continuation of CCTT to work on holding the Council and those responsible for Trams to Newhaven to account and making sure that the MANY remaining safety issues and 'snags' along the route get addressed and not quietly sidelined or 'forgotten'.
- LLCC (along with the other CCs) participation in, and support for, a joint letter going to the Council objecting to the planning application and expressing concerns about the effects of the proposed closure of Leith Street, and pressing for strong measures to mitigate the negative impact of this on bus travel.

VOTE – two votes were taken and unanimous support given to both these proposals.

Leith Connections –

Work is about to start on the cycle path from Great Junction Street to Sandport Bridge. Floating bus stops will be installed on Gt. Junction Street and Henderson Street, buses will be re-routed via Cables Wynd. Lothian buses (amongst many others) had objected to the scheme but were ignored.

Phase 3 is now out for consultation <https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/sfc/leithconnections/> (closes 17 November). Public consultation meeting to be held 2-6pm 29th October, at Leith Community Centre. Members of the CC have serious concerns about this phase, as Salamander Street, and Bernard Street in particular are narrow and very busy – not the right place for a cycle path, why not use the existing cycle route through Leith Links and extended through the LTN? after all that's what it is for – to create a safe area for pedestrians and cyclists.

Cllr. McVey pointed out that although there was funding for the design phase, funding has not been agreed for implementation of this section of the scheme. He hopes the proposals will be brought up properly for all Councillors to discuss, not just swept through.

9. Seafeld Waste Water Treatment Works

No new updates. Concern that changes to Ministers in Scottish Government and financial cuts may mean that money earmarked for Seafeld improvements could get 'lost'.

Action – Eileen Simpson to draft a letter to Ben MacPherson MSP, she and Jim Scanlon may try to go to speak to him about this.

10. Parks and Green Spaces

Abigail Cunningham reported that residents of Academy Lofts and other Leith Links park users are very concerned by the fact the contractors working on Lochend Road appear to have 'dumped' a large amount of vehicles, equipment and materials in the space that is actually the entrance to the Links.

Also residents at Academy Lofts had been disturbed by a very noisy generator running all night right outside their bedroom windows, but it appears that was a one-off occurrence.

The problem remains that the entrance to the park has been effectively blocked except for a very narrow path through all the construction materials and equipment. There is barely room for a e.g. a wheelchair or double buggy to squeeze through, and locals cannot access the Notice boards. This is apparently for 5 months, which is a long time!

Cllr Nols-McVey agreed this was unacceptable and reported that similar problems were occurring up on Hermitage Park / Restalrig Terrace near the school. It appears to be being done just for the convenience of the contractors, with no thought for local residents and school population.

Action – Cllr. Nols-McVey to follow up and get Council to arrange with contractors to tidy this up and minimise obstruction for local people.

11. AOB

Barbara Kerr reported that Leith Festival's 'Leith's Got Talent' heats events will be held on 22nd and 29th November in St. James' church is coming up at the end of November. Tickets are available at and would appreciate some advertising on this via LLCC web site and socials.

Other important current consultations on the CEC Hub, include one on the Visitor Levy (closing 15 December), and one on the future of Libraries (closing 25 December).

Action – all to complete these.

Community Council elections dates are being finalised:

- Notices to go out from 5th February 2025
- 6-27 February 2025 for Nominations
- 27 March 2025 for Election

Community Councils will not be dissolved until the election, so business such as commenting on Planning applications can continue.

12. Next meeting, Monday 25 November, 6.30pm in person at Duncan Place