

LEITH LINKS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES Monday 24 November 2025, 6:30pm

Duncan Place

Present: Abigail Cunningham, Avril Ewing, Aric Gilinsky, Angus Hardie, Aimee McInnes, Andy Mackenzie, Sally Millar, Teresa Perchard, Jim Scanlon (Chair), Eileen Simpson. Online: Gail Clapton, Barbara Kerr .

Elected Members: Councillor Chas Booth, Councillor Katrina Faccenda

Apologies:

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

Chair: Jim Scanlon **Minute Taker:** Sally Millar

1. **Welcome, and Apologies** received as above.
2. **Adoption of Previous Minutes.** Proposed: Jim Scanlon, Seconded: Angus Hardie
3. **Police Scotland Report** – No officers present. Brief report had been sent and circulated. Members expressed concern that the new public toilets had been vandalised and seem to be closed all the time.
4. **Guest Speaker:** The Chair welcomed a guest speaker from the City of Edinburgh Council: Laura Shelbourn, new Parks and Recreation Office (interim, pending a forthcoming structural review, summer 2026). Laura outlined the parameters of her job, which is desk-based and strategic (coordination and logistics) rather than 'on the ground'. It covers the 52 parks and other greenspaces (including Portobello beach) adopted and managed by the Council. She reported that having had none, there are now 2 new Park Rangers(1 FTE, 1 is 0.5FTE) appointed to cover the N.E locality. It seems there are many different Council agencies concerned - Laura's job involves trying to coordinate all of these together.
 - **Park Rangers**
 - **Maintenance** – grass cutting, hedges, road edges, bushes etc., ground maintenance, pitches,
 - **Bins** – litter management, emptying bins, installing new bins, location of bins, etc.
 - **Forestry** - trees, dangerous branches, new tree planting
 - **Street Lighting** – also covers lighting in parks - waiting to learn soon what budget (if any) will be available for review, design, renovation and new installation.
 - **Events in Parks** – permissions for commercial and community events
 - **Allotments** -
 - **Thriving Green Spaces** – public toilets, strategic development planning (Leith Links Master Plan, Linking Leith and other projects), fund-raising
 - **Roads** – also responsible for cycleways, therefore cover Restalrig Road Railway Path which is designated as a cycleway not a linear park.
 - **Liaison with Friends of Parks**

There was a long discussion about how this fragmentation of parks and greenspaces management into so many different departments (and is communication and coordination between them always effective?) makes it very difficult for members of the public to know who to contact about which issue, and how to get effective action. Unlike the Council, members of the community tend to view their park as a single space, integrating many different functions, not as a multiple separate issues. Specific points raised re Leith Links included the following –

Does Council do risk assessment on dangerous trees / branches and take action BEFORE these cause problems?
There seems to be no programme of pollarding, or programme for managing older trees. Often trees obscure path

lighting. Whole trees come down in high winds. Cllr. Faccenda gets a lot of correspondence from community about trees. Forestry assessment is usually quick, but action following or often very slow. Laura said that Forestry has a map of ALL trees in Edinburgh and a schedule of urgent work – but due to lack of funding, they are “many years behind schedule”.

Who is responsible for the wildflower meadows? Childrens Orchard? Bowling green area?

Are barbecues allowed on the Links or not? If not, why does council not enforce? How could this be handled better?

Who is responsible for Health and Safety in green spaces? Community amenity access? Establishing appropriate balance between needs and priorities – eg. eco-system, sustainability, edible crops, space for play, picnics, (barbecues?), forest school, paths etc.

Arboretum on the East Links is now 100% Council responsibility (Botanics have now totally withdrawn)? CC members asked why the full design / plan was never implemented and whether it ever will be or has been abandoned? (eg. paths, signage, outdoor classroom / education programme for kids etc.) Why / who planted new trees there recently (which had to be removed again as obstructing the golf course. Laura will investigate.

What funding is available for Leith Links? Can / will Tourist Levy be used to support work in parks and greenspaces?

LLCC's position is that the community needs to see a transparent and integrated ongoing Active Management Plan for Leith Links so that everybody can see jobs to be undertaken (and when they were last done, and will next be done, also who is responsible for doing them?); future plans and timescales.

Action: LLCC will send Laura a list of all the many stakeholders involved with Leith Links.

5. Update from City Councillors

- **Cllr. Katrina Faccenda** is putting in a motion to full Council to ask for a Christmas tree and decorations to be brought back to the Kirkgate, as the public is not happy with the minimal decorations in Taylor Gardens, which is not the ‘heart’ of Leith. LLCC will support with a deputation.
Cllr. Faccenda has been working hard to try to bring all stakeholders together to bring about improvements to the Kirkgate, eg. Council, Kirkgate owners / management, Police Scotland, businesses and shops in the Kirkgate. Much more investment is needed. Owner/management won’t spend money on security, and not even on cleaning, bins, lift repairs etc. Police Scotland had offered to try to find match funding for extra security but owner/management would not take up the offer. She is trying to get the Council to contact the owner/management and make them reply to/ engage with Councillors, which they won’t do at present. More police would need a lot more money, but even that would not solve the root causes of anti-social behaviour. Some shops have their own security, but this is expensive for them. She pointed out that shops do have a choice about their model of selling – some have very open display of goods and very few staff, which encourages shop-lifting. There will be even broader meetings in the New Year.
Many objections were received to the planning application for a massive PBSA development in Bangor Road, this application will be brought in for Committee discussion and determination in December.
Council is bringing in a new system for mapping, collecting and comparing data across different areas of the city, with information about eg. bad landlords / private owners, dangerous trees.
- **Cllr. Adam McVey** felt that the Council’s strategy regarding management of the Leith Community Centre was ‘up in the air’. He was disappointed that UK government was over-riding Scottish Government and local Councils on the ‘Pride in Place’ money (which could have been used to fund community centres, for example).
- **Cllr Chas Booth** reported that the Council has closed the allocation of housing to all applicants until 2027, except for people who are homeless. The proposed ‘Safe Consumption Room’ will be in the City Centre, not in Leith. Planning changes – Council has removed the 20+ threshold and now will not pay attention to the number of objections to any application. Controlled Parking Zones to be introduced (see 11, below). There is debate on the setting up of new large scale data centres, as these have huge energy requirements – these should be subject to environmental impact assessments, but this has not been done so far.

6. **Issues Raised by local residents** - John Donahue complained that neither the Council nor Police Scotland were adequately addressing the very bad state of our local community, e.g. shoplifting and anti-social behaviour, and he is also upset by over-provision of HMOs and Apart-hotels in the local area.
7. **Travel & Mobility** - The Council recently decided to proceed with plans for a CPZ in each of the Easter Road area, the Lochend area, and the Restalrig area – without any further consultation with residents. Cllr. Booth has received correspondence from residents both supporting and objecting. Sally Millar believes the Council has got the boundaries wrong and that this needs to be revisited. Instead of two separate zones, she thinks the few streets between Lochend Road and Seafield Road need to be included in the same parking zone as the ones between Lochend Road and Restalrig Road, or they will become overwhelmed with displaced parking (they already suffer from displaced parking from Leith Links, and commuters from East Lothian), but only up as far as the Restalrig Road Railway Path, not throughout the whole of Restalrig and into Craigentinny.

ACTION: Cllr. Chas Booth will take this up with Council Officer(s), to try to open up discussion on the boundaries.

ACTION: Secy will contact Craigentinny CC for possible joint discussion / action.

6. **Planning** - Teresa Perchard spoke to the written report she had prepared (see Appendix 1, below), stressing concern particularly about the proliferation of 'ApartHotels', and the lack of standards for temporary accommodation. She criticized the Council for ignoring local people and objections from CCs, and granting all sorts of applications that seem contrary to Planning Framework 4, contrary to the declaration of a housing emergency, and to HOU6 in the city plan, that intensify non-residential uses in a residential area. A revised proposal for the Daltons site on Salamander Place /Street is at pre-application Notification / consultation stage (January / February 2026), with planning application to follow swiftly (February). She has asked them to move their consultation to a venue nearer the site, eg. St. Mary Star of the Sea. LLCC has nominated Teresa Perchard (and she has agreed to join, if elected on 27th November) the EACC's 'Members Board', with a view to addressing the issue of over-provision of apart hotel, and holiday flats citywide.

7. **Seafield Sewage Plant** -There will be a Stakeholders meeting on 15 December.

ACTION: Angus, Eileen and Jim will hold a pre-meeting in advance of that, to prepare.

8. AOCB

- EACC is holding an AGM and committee elections 27 November (online).
- LLCC members informal 'Christmas 'night out' - Chair will circulate possible dates
- Leith Chooses Voting Day will be on Saturday 24 January 2026.

9. Date of Next Meeting: Monday 26 January 2026, in-person Duncan Place.

APPENDIX 1: Planning

24 November 2025

Report from Teresa Perchard for LLCC planning group

1. Our objections to the demolition of part of the listed GPO so-called hotel did not succeed and the Council agreed to the demolition of a non-derelict listed building.
2. We have objected to a proposal to create 39 holiday flats on Constitution Street (previous permission for 35 residential flats has been granted and the owner gave notice of commencement in the Spring). This case not yet decided. We have engaged with other CCs about the unwelcome trend of apart hotel proposals.
3. Members may want to comment on the Coatfield Lane proposal – closes 28 November – and note the proposal to turn 'Destined for Home' shop into a flat and note the Pre Application Notice for Salamander Place/Daltons site.

A personal reflection - the more I see of CEC's approach to planning decisions, including at Committee, the more hopeless it seems for any private individual or community council engaging in the process to even feel that the points they have raised have been properly considered.

Further information about all these expressed as Highlights/lowlights and 'new' below

Highlights/Lowlights/New

LOW **GPO so-called 'hotel' – CEC yet again fails to protect a listed building owned by a leading contractor.** On 11/11/25 CEC approved a Listed Building Consent (LBC) application to completely demolish the far from derelict rear part of a listed building (1870s) on Constitution Street/Mitchell Street which is also in a conservation area and replace it with a contemporary extension which will double the number of bedrooms in this 'hotel', which is now licensed as an HMO. According to the Council decision

'The proposals have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building and its setting and will not adversely impact on its special architectural and historic interest. The proposals will preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.'

This seems really quite an incredible view to take. Anyone can see that the proposal does not involve any preservation of the building – far from it. LLCC objected on conservation grounds citing Council and HES guidance on demolition but this was completely ignored. Link to CEC decision report here [Notice of meeting and agenda](#) **Given that the owner is a major multi-million £ contractor to provide homelessness accommodation and this unit will double in capacity surely such applications should not be determined by delegated powers in the interests of transparency?**

LOW **Apart-hotel proliferation continues unabated across the City** – the trend of apart-hotel proposals continues, and what's more CEC is granting approval for holiday flats in Leith even where there are as many 80 objections. See for example 154 Leith Walk (proposal for 29 studio flats in a pend behind 'Best Kebab' approved last week. LLCC has its own 'holiday flats' proposals – 2 have been approved (Restalrig Rd and Assembly Street) and one is still pending (Queen Charlotte Street). We have another on Constitution Street for 39 holiday flats, not yet decided to which there have been 38 objections, including the LLCC's one. Link to that application here [25/03541/FUL | Change of use and redevelopment of 111 Constitution Street and warehouse at 18-25 John's Lane to create serviced apartments and commercial floor space with ancillary landscaping and works. | 111 - 115 Constitution Street, 18 - 25 John's Lane Edinburgh](#)

Neighbouring CCs at LHNCC, NTBCC and LCCC all also have apart-hotel applications, in most cases the projects seem to have had prior consent for residential use and are looking to now change use to holiday flats before completion or build. These cases include **Claremont Crescent** (New Town) – there is a petition and the MSP has now objected and Sally and Andy attended the NTBCC mtg which discussed it; a new application on **Casselbank Street** (Central); **Tower Place** and **Bernard Street** (Leith Harbour). All of these seem contrary to the declaration of a housing emergency, particularly where there is a residential consent and/or the work has started, are contrary to HOU6 in the city plan, and intensify non-residential uses in a residential area. The Council seems to lack any concern or policy about how to approach this trend. There also seems to be an assumption that STL licences will deal with bawdy operation but apart-hotels are excluded from the legislation so don't need to have licences. I am circulating something about this observed trend via EACC to find out if any other Community Councils have seen this trend and have concerns about it, and about the approach CEC is taking to deciding them.

NEW **Salamander Street /Daltons are back** – a new proposal for 'build to rent' and student blocks is in PAN stage. [25/05968/PAN | Proposed mixed use development comprising, residential \(build to rent\), purpose built student accommodation, retail/commercial space and associated works. | 52 - 66 Salamander Street South Leith Edinburgh EH6 7LA](#) According to their application form there will be public events about the proposal

at Leith Library and all three CCs have been sent information about the application – though we are not sure this is correct.

Event no 1 : Leith Library, 28-30 Ferry Rd., Edinburgh EH6 4AE (15th January 2026 15:00 - 19:00)

Event no 2 : Leith Library, 28-30 Ferry Rd., Edinburgh EH6 4AE (5th February 2026 15:00 - 19:00)

We propose to make contact with the applicant and ask them to arrange a presentation/meeting nearer to the development site which the immediate neighbours will find it easier to attend. Closing date for any comments will be 3 February 2026

NEW Just Over the Border in LHNCC - applications of potential interest

- **Coatfield Lane** - After an extremely long time (10 years?) of dereliction there is a further application for redevelopment of Coatfield Lane. LLCC members may be interested in engaging due to the proximity of this. Demolition of plinth area with under croft parking, relocation of existing substation and repair works to the existing concrete plinth stairs and handrails. Proposals are for 49 new build dwellings and associated landscaping comprising a mix of terraced townhouses and apartment blocks. Last date for comments is **28 November 2025**

[25/05731/FUL | Demolition of plinth area with under croft parking, relocation of existing substation and repair works to the existing concrete plinth stairs and handrails. Proposals are for 49 new build dwellings and associated landscaping comprising a mix of terraced townhouses and apartment blocks. | Land 30 Metres South Of 26 Tolbooth Wynd Edinburgh](#)

- **Conversion of shops to flats on Constitution Street** - to become 3 flats each with entrances on Constitution Street – so can't meet apart-hotel definition – but loses a shop (Destined for Home), and offices. Could be contrary to City Plan 2030's very low profile policy on Leith Town Centre [Leith Town Centre - January 2025](#) and the general idea that such a trend creates dead frontages, though the boundary of Leith Town centre does not seem to extend to Constitution Street. Comments due different dates for FUL and LBC

[25/05854/FUL | Alter commercial premises and change of use to form three dwellings. | 96 - 98 Constitution Street Edinburgh EH6 6AW](#) – comments due by 12/12

[25/05860/LBC | Alter and change the use of commercial premises to form three dwellings. | 96 - 98 Constitution Street Edinburgh EH6 6AW](#) – comments due by 19/12

Finally, on a related issue of standards for HMOs – of which there are many in Leith Links area – the Scottish Government has just published a consultation about setting standards for 'temporary accommodation'. Though I am not clear why the HMO standards are not being applied to those that have licences, and the interaction between the two schemes probably needs to be clearer. Plus councils need to understand the HMO standards better or have clear policies for when they will depart from the strict requirements – many other Scottish Councils do have their own HMO standards schemes but CEC does not. It would probably be good for the LLCC to engage with this [Section 2 - Temporary Accommodation Standards Framework - Temporary accommodation standards framework - legal enforcement: consultation - gov.scot](#) Closing date 28/1/26