

LEITH LINKS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES Monday 26 January 2026, 6:30pm

Duncan Place

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

Elected Members: Councillor Chas Booth, Councillor Katrina Faccenda

Apologies: Avril Ewing

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

Chair: Gail Clapton **Minute Taker:** Sally Millar

1. Welcome and Apologies

2. **Guest Speakers** – Hugh Shepherd and David from Scott Hobbs Planning, on behalf of the developers of Dalton's Salamander Street / Place site gave a short presentation detailing their revised proposal, highlighting the differences since the original proposal. Main changes are that the height of the buildings has been reduced from seven to six storeys and the percentage of the development to be given over to student accommodation has been reduced to 10% to allow for more 'build to rent' flats. There were a number of comments and questions including comments on the uninspiring design (which unfortunately reflects other new builds in the immediate area) and objections about the lack of disabled parking. An overview of the plans can be seen at https://www.scotthobbsplanning.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/25194-56T-XX-ZZ-P-A-001_Community-Consultation-2-Boards-WEB.pdf Following the next public exhibition on 5th February (St. Mary's Star of the Sea, the consultation phase will close and a firm Planning Application will be lodged shortly, in February 2026.

3. **Adoption of Previous Minutes.** Proposed: Eileen Simpson, Seconded: Aric Gilinsky

4. Election of Office Bearers

Chair – Abigail Cunningham and Angus Hardie (joint Co-Chairs)

(proposed Sally Millar, Seconded Eileen Simpson, Vote – elected unanimously)

Treasurer – Aric Gilinsky

(proposed Gail Clapton, Seconded Teresa Perchard, Vote – elected unanimously)

Sincere thanks for his service were given to Jim Scanlon who has been a stalwart Chair for many years but is currently stepping down due to family illness/pressures. Happily, he will remain as an 'ordinary' member of the CC. Gail Clapton is standing down as Treasurer because she is about to move house and leave the area, and she was thanked for her longstanding support of the LLCC and her work as Treasurer and Vice Chair. She will be much missed from the CC.

5. **Police Scotland Report** – No officers present. Brief report had been sent and circulated.

Members reported that there has been a spate of break-ins recently to garden sheds and outhouses around the East Hermitage and Claremont Road area. Expensive bikes and equipment have been stolen. The thieves must have been well equipped and well organised as they cut off locks then replaced them so the break-in was unnoticeable, and they must have had a van to remove the large amount of stolen goods.

Cllr. Faccenda reported that following the fatal stabbing of a young man in Leith last year, 'bleed kits' - that may prevent fatalities immediately following an attack - are being promoted (by the young man's mother Lisa Petrie) and will be installed in schools locally. Suggestions for other locations (e.g. local pubs?) are invited.

6. **Guest Speaker:** Rachel Hutton gave a brief introduction to the local housing provider company Harbour Homes. She explained the transformation / evolution of 'Port of Leith Housing' (following purchase of TB Mackays) into:

- Harbour Lettings (mid-market properties for rent, e.g. The Fort);
- Harbour Homes (social housing);
- Harbour Multitrades;
- Harbour Connections (including Placemaking Dept., to raise funds).
- They also have some shared ownership properties, e.g. on Salamander Place.

The company's planned revenue was interrupted due to lockdown and having to reduce rent increases. Building and repair costs have increased, tradespeople are fewer and higher paid, and we are in the middle of a digital transformation. From 25-28 the company's Strategic Plan is one of being on retrenchment/managing their recent diversification -currently no Development Dept, not building new houses, but aiming to provide the best possible services. No new flats at Porthaven site for the moment but the Wellington Place will be a priority if development is considered in 2029.

Keen to consult with Community Councils, going forward.

Action: check whether the article Teresa Perchard submitted re Community Council ever went into Harbour Homes Newsletter, as planned?

7. Update from City Councillors

- **Cllr. Katrina Faccenda** reported that the Council is in budget decision period. Proposing a 5% Council Tax rise (lowest in Scotland, and 7% Council rent rise. There appears to be an unexplained underspend on housing development. Housing Committee is reviewing decision to close lists for housing allocation. Inadequate IT (e.g. re inventory etc.) can hold Council efficiency back. It is frustrating for elected Councillors if they don't even get replies from Council Officers when they request information. Councillors will need to receive emails from locals re CPZ plans – a petition is not effective. Crime continues to be an issue around the Kirkgate area, Cllr. Faccenda is persisting in her efforts.
- **Cllr Chas Booth** reported that the Council is working towards approving a number of 'themes' that will receive funding from the Transient Visitor Levy (TVL) money due to come in after summer 2026. A percentage will be distributed to localities via PB. Council wanting to fund George Street scheme. For Leith Links, he has put forward a lighting upgrade, and funding for the Activity Park. Leith Connections – no progress so far with Tolbooth Wynd bollard. Voi bikes are causing a street clutter problem. Planning – Council has become aware of a loophole and is trying to address this – landlords are submitting planning applications for STLs (evidence of this is required, to obtain a licence) but then withdrawing the application later, once licence is granted. Licensing – licensing hours have been extended city-wide for football World Cup period in June. Some small changes to hours, locally. Nobles Bar has been taken over by Bellfield Brewery, no change to hours.

8. **Issues Raised by local residents** – A local resident asked how to request a lockable cycle shelter for her street (Cornhill Terrace). These can be requested online via the Council website, <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/cycling-walking/cycle-parking/2>, however installation following a request is not automatic as there are some streets that are just not suitable (e.g. too narrow, lack of parking spaces, other obstacles etc.). The Leith area is relatively well supplied with these, so far. Another resident asked about the continued / long term closure of the bus stop at the Kirkgate in Great Junction Street, which causes great nuisance to pedestrians / shoppers. Apparently, Lothian buses will not use the stop as it is unsafe because of the bin hub right beside it. The Council has eventually conceded that a change will have to be made to its design (which it had previously defended), and the kerb will be altered to set the bins further back from the street. The bins themselves are also a hazard as the lids tend to blow open, especially when they are overfull.
9. **Planning** – written report circulated by Teresa Perchard, see Appendix 1 below. Noted Planning Application forthcoming for the Daltons site, (see 2, above). No decision yet on 39 holiday flats on Constitution Street, and 6 serviced apartments on Queen Charlotte Street, which this Community Council objected to. This Community Council is shocked by how the Council seems happy to grant permission to such applications despite its self-

declared 'Housing Emergency' and previous designation of the sites as being for 'residential' use. Also noted applications for new builds on Tower Place and Tower Street (which may also end up being holiday flats?). 2 Claremont Park application to build 2 storey flats in back garden, CC will not object but prefers single storey.

10. **Parks and Greenspaces** - Thriving Greenspaces (Marco Galli, Alex Hoadley) have taken over oversight of Leith Links, a recent meeting provided an update on a number of fronts. They are hoping for success in attracting funding from the TVL money. They want to proceed with a mural on the walls of the public toilets and have contacted one possible artist, however this all seems to be going regrettably slowly.

ACTION: Abigail Cunningham will try to negotiate possible collaboration between two local artists.

ACTION: LLCC will try to do a quick consultation of local people re a theme for the mural. Agreed informally to try to steer towards 'neutral' themes such as nature / wildlife/botanical (rather than local history of culture which can become controversial....).

11. **Seafield Sewage Plant** - Written report (Reflections on Seafield Stakeholders Meeting on 15/12/25) circulated. Eileen Simpson reiterated concern that so little planning appears to have been done in advance of the whole Seafield operation coming back in house to Scottish Water in 2029. Promise of a new plant seems to have faded, future mention is of tinkering with the existing/ old plant.

ACTION: Aric Gilinsky will investigate LLCC website issue re complaints form.

ACTION: Angus Hardie will try to follow up to see if other stakeholders with more resources could help with the IT problem re the complaints form.

12. AOCB

- Barbara Kerr reminded members to complete the current live Scottish Government consultation on Council Tax, ending 30 January.
- Leith Festival has opened the booking for stalls for Galal Day 2026 (13 June)
ACTION: Secy will book a stall, as usual, and ask fellow Leith CCs to share.
- Barbara Kerr reported that Leith Festival plans to 'reinvigorate' the Crocus Award, and inviting people to join the group working on this.
- Leith Chooses Awards Night will be on Thursday 19 February 2026 at Community Centre.
- A question was asked about what's happening with St. Andrews Church, Easter Road. No news recently.

13. **Date of Next Meeting: Monday 23 February 2026, in-person Duncan Place.**

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APPENDIX 1: Planning

26 January 2026

Report from Teresa Perchard for LLCC planning group

Planning matters report

1. Fairly quiet for our area over the past 2 months. Two new applications (of substance) – pre-application notice for re-development of Dalton's site on Salamander Street and a proposal to build 2 flats on the site of a garage in the garden of 2 Claremont Park. More details and links below.
2. To note there are **still no decisions on the 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) or the **proposal to create 6 serviced apartments from the ground floor former motorbike showroom on Queen Charlotte Street**. We put in objections to both of these proposals. The trend in other places (including on Leith Walk) suggests the Council will approve these proposals. I comment on this trend of 'holiday flats welcome here, even when you first said it would be residential' below.
3. **Just across the border with LHNCC's area** the proposal to turn 'Destined for Home' shop into a flat was withdrawn. A proposal has been made to develop the Malmaison hotel car park into flats (with some parking retained underneath/to the rear of the block. Link to that in the section below. Also, the owners

of the New Kirkgate (M-Core) for some reason wasted money applying for Listed Building Consent to rip up the carpet tiles in the former BHF shop, re-screed surface to enable a new tenant to put their branded carpet in. This is not something that requires planning permission and 'no permission required' was decided within 2 days of the application

As before, 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 the points they have raised have been properly considered. The EACC has been pushing for the Council to offer some sort of 'training' for CC members who deal with planning which might emerge later this Spring but is likely to be about technicalities of the process rather than strategic issues or how engagement with the public can be improved without the need for lots of petitions and banners. The public are largely infantilised in the process.

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

Highlights/Lowlights/New

NEW **Salamander Street /Daltons are back** – a new proposal for 'build to rent' and student blocks is in PAN stage and representatives of the proposal are attending our meeting. [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](#) Following our last meeting I contacted the developer to ask if the public engagement/meetings could be held nearer to the subject site than Leith Library and am pleased they agreed. One public engagement session has been held so far at St Mary's Star of the Sea (a sort of drop in display) on 15 January. A further public meeting is being held there on 5 February. Closing date for any comments will [I think] be **3 February 2026**

NEW **2 Claremont Park – domestic garage conversion to 2 flats (one likely to be a 'granny flat' says the applicant.** No vehicular access proposed – there is currently a garage entrance on Summerfield Gardens and this will be converted to a pedestrian entrance with entry to the flats also gained via 2 Claremont Gardens. The primary property is listed though the applicants have provided information that the garage is from c1950s rather than being an original 1820s coach house. Any comments or objections deadline is 13/2/26. [26/00052/FUL | Demolition of existing garage and erection of two storey building to house two flats. | 2 Claremont Park Edinburgh EH6 7PH](#)

Just Over the Border in LHNCC – applications of potential interest

NEW As mentioned above the Malmaison Hotel car park on **Tower Street** is proposed for redevelopment into 19 apartments – [26/00167/FUL | The proposal is for the redevelopment of the existing surface car park and the construction of 19 number 1, 2 and 3 bed apartments contained within a single 5 storey block, including ancillary spaces, bin storage, landscaping and parking provision. | Land 30 Metres West Of 7 Tower Street Edinburgh](#) The application highlights previous permission granted in 2007 and varied in 2009 to develop this plot. It is not clear if those will be for sale or become, during the process of building but before completion, 'holiday flats' inline with the 'holiday flats are go' trend across the city. Last date for comments on this one is **13 February 2026**

A nearby case in **Tower Place** CEC has just decided involved initially a decision to convert offices into apartments then the owner applied for and got change of use to holiday accommodation/short term let use before completion which as per normal with CEC was approved 'nae bother'. Based on recent decisions CEC's planning policy should just be called 'holiday flats welcome here'. Housing emergency pronouncements seem to have no interaction with planning decision making at all – very disjointed and unstrategic. For nerdy interest here is a link to the 'Report of Handling' on the transitioning of the Tower Place development to STL use instead of, as originally permissioned, residential use. [Notice of meeting and agenda](#). The Council is proposing to spend some of the Tourist Tax income on building new homes to meet the needs of people who work in the tourism and hospitality industry, because the TVL law requires spend to

relate to the visitor experience in some way. Perhaps if they just joined up some of their policy pronouncements with planning decision making in practice and stopped agreeing to some of these holiday flat developments, and changes of use of ongoing developments, in areas of high visitor demand the supply would be there to meet the needs of people who work locally in hospitality/hotels etc. For example, the permission granted for 19 studio flats in a pend behind Best Kebab on Leith Walk in December would probably deliver what the Council is proposing to spend TVL money on re housing without the Council needing to spend any money! This particular site had previous permission for residential development which had lapsed – officers went to significant lengths to show how the new scheme was almost identical to that or slightly improved to convince Cllrs to agree it but no-one seems to just say ‘wait a minute why exactly are we approving a development of holiday flats when we say there is a housing emergency?’

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