

Minutes of the ordinary meeting of Leith Central Community Council, held in the McDonald Road Library on Monday 15 December 2014 at 7.00pm

Actions and decisions are RED ITALIC UNDERLINED SMALLCAPS. NEM CON means that no-one spoke or voted against a decision. URLs added by minutes secretary.

1 Introduction, attendance and apologies

1.1 Attendance

Marion Donaldson	LCCC	Peter Mellors	resident
Charlotte Encombe	LCCC (secretary)	Penelope Philipson	resident
Anne Finlay	LCCC (treasurer)	Cllr Angela Blacklock	Leith Walk ward (Labour)
Adrian Graham	LCCC	Cllr Maggie Chapman	Leith Walk ward (Green)
John Hein	LCCC (chair)	Jim Scanlon	Leith Links CC
Julian Siann	LCCC	Angus Hardie	Scottish Community Alliance
Irene Sweeney	LCCC	Ella Taylor-Smith	Broughton Spurtle
Harald Tobermann	LCCC (vice-chair)	Peter Scott Reid	student/researcher
Bruce Ryan	minutes secretary	Morvern Cunningham	Leith Late
Liz Ballantyne	resident	Duncan Bremner	resident/Citizen Curator
Jim Greechan	resident		

1.2 Obituary

The Secretary gave an obituary of recently deceased LCC member and LBA chair Alex Wilson.

1.3 Apologies

Leah Lockhart	Greener Leith rep	Mark Lazarowicz MP	Edinburgh North and Leith (Labour)
Cllr Deidre Brock	Leith Walk ward (SNP)		

2 Minutes of the meeting of 17th November 2014

2.1 Adoption

The minutes were adopted without changes (proposed C Encombe, seconded J Siann, nem con)

2.2 Matters Arising

2.2.1 Police interventions at HMOs across Edinburgh (item 9.1 [point 3] in August minutes)

H Tobermann is awaiting replies to FOI requests – HELD OVER UNTIL JANUARY 2015

2.2.2 Port of Leith Development Framework

This framework has not yet been published – Secretary following this up. HELD OVER UNTIL JANUARY 2015

3 Rick Palmer, South Fort Street/West Bowling Green Street PAN Application

Mr Palmer was not present, so this presentation was not made.

4 Community Police Officer's Report

Sgt Coull could not attend the meeting but had emailed the following:

- With regards to last month's meeting I have sent a Briefing Note to the Community officers and Roads Policing about cycling on pavements. We will monitor this and take action where appropriate.
- Crime prevention advice – at this time of year we tend to see an increase in housebreakings, particularly 4pm to 7pm. This tends to be when people have been out at work all day and subsequently their curtains/blinds are open and no lights on, thereby making their property looking obviously unoccupied. Please bear this in mind and consider leaving lights on during the day or using timer switches.
- Due to an increase in auto crime, some officers will be dedicated to enquiring into this in the Leith and Drylaw areas.
- There will be additional officers out on patrol in all areas of the city on Friday 19th December to assist in the expected increased numbers of revelers on this night.
- The Leith area will have an increased check on licensed premises over the festive period also.
- Community Policing Teams will have officers on high visibility patrol in Ocean Terminal over the festive period to try and prevent thefts by shoplifting and provide reassurance at this busy time. This will run until 2 Jan.
- Sorry that this is so brief and that I am not there to answer any questions but if there are any please email me them and I will answer them as soon as I can.

A resident mentioned a persistent aggressive beggar operating on Montrose Terrace, and people cycling on pavements.

5 Community Empowerment Bill

5.1 Presentation by Angus Hardie

Angus Hardie of the Scottish Community Alliance (<http://scottishcommunityalliance.net>) reported on the second (current) draft of this bill. The SCA has been involved in the process leading up to this bill. AH noted that community empowerment is a current buzzword – there is a new CE minister (see <http://bit.ly/1zrth5h>), the bill itself and a new £10 million CE fund announced by the first minister. The Scottish Government (SG) is now in favour of CE but has not been so. This change (over the last 2 – 4 years) came from:

- The **SNP majority government** and its relevant manifesto commitments, leading to 2 formal consultations on the bill. The original CE minister (Derek Mackay) was very supportive of the bill, which will deliver some of the promised ‘greatest transfer of power since devolution’.
- **Public service reform.** For example, the Christie Commission noted that Scotland was ‘spending more but getting less’. The CE bill is part of reversing this: Christie noted that communities have to be central to redesign of public services.
- **Austerity** – many more cuts are yet to come. (See recent UK Autumn Statement: <http://bit.ly/1yfy2TS>)

However the CE bill is also part of a wider narrative around CE that has been going on for about 6 years, starting with the 2009 CE action plan – an initiative by the SG and CoSLA¹ that was SG’s first statement about CE. SG then published *Achieving a sustainable future* in 2011 (<http://bit.ly/1HSTKJT>). This document noted that:

- the existing regeneration model (public-sector investment in infrastructure, to induce private-sector action) does not work due to falling land value since around 2008
- prior to 2008, regeneration initiatives, when private-sector money had been available, had not worked – that is, health, education etc outcomes had not improved
- therefore regeneration should be community-led.

There are also parallel SG policies and related movements, including

- the Land Reform Act 2003 (another land reform act is due in this parliament). This embodied the community right to buy. There is a target of 1,000,000 acres in community ownership by 2020. (Current community ownership is 500,000 acres.)
- renewable energy, e.g. Pedal in Portobello (<http://bit.ly/1vmRXcW>) and other rural-urban partnerships

Many such movements have combined to form the SCA.

The actual bill has the following ‘headlines’

- The community right to buy has been extended to urban communities. If there is vacant, derelict land, communities can buy it or force developer to develop it
- A right to public asset transfer: communities can manage, buy or use public assets (detail not yet available)
- A right to request participation in improving outcomes – communities will be able to request participation in outcome improvement processes, or even communities delivering services
- better registers of common goods, including control of disposal of common good assets (The forthcoming Land Reform Bill is also likely to be relevant here.)
- a requirement for LAs to have food-growing strategies. Allotment legislation is being modernised via this bill

The bill is currently at stage 1 (see <http://bit.ly/1p2gLXD>), so opportunities to change it are limited. It is expected to pass in late spring/early summer 2015. It can be argued that the CE bill is also a response to Scotland’s current democratic deficit (see <http://bit.ly/1xu6qen> pages 6-9). AH suggested that community councils are not much mentioned in the bill, but there have been recent moves to either reinvigorate CCs or replace them with something that works.

5.2 Debate

There was debate about whether CCs are in the bill. (The text is at <http://bit.ly/1Bk0ge0> – CCs are grouped with other community bodies.) J Siann noted that English parish councils have more powers than CCs. He suggested that LAs may be devolving powers and duties to Neighbourhood Partnerships, and that unless the bill has regard to the real world, it would not influence what actually happens.

It was noted that CCs are elected (albeit often in uncontested elections) and hence are part of Scotland’s democracy. C Encombe asked whether people who got involved with community assets and services would be paid. AH stated that in other parts of Scotland there are development trusts that are proactive, autonomous bodies but in Edinburgh, the council has not encouraged this and expects communities to be ‘placid’. Cllr Blacklock suggested that this might be common to urban areas.

¹ Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

A resident suggested that communities should be able to challenge poor work done by Local Authorities, and that this bill should enable such challenges. Concern was raised that by other bodies being designated as community bodies, CCs might be squeezed out. J Siann stated that CCs (and communities) currently have no power over LA spending decisions, to which Cllr Chapman responded that while the current bill is weak, it does give some such powers, and that every CC should look at the bill, in conjunction with CoSLa's work on strengthening local democracy (<http://bit.ly/1jhb1ZM>). Together, these could give some real powers to communities. Cllr Blacklock noted that Edinburgh now has some community/participatory budgeting and a petition system, but Cllr Chapman noted that there is pressure to limit these.

H Tobermann asked AH what actions LCCC might take with regard to the bill, to which AH responded that bill was not about engagement with LAs but about communities doing things for themselves. He noted Edinburgh Council's budget problems meant that they would no longer be able to deliver services as they do now, so communities would need to become self resilient.

6 LCCC Office Bearers' Reports

6.1 Secretary

C Encombe was emailed by L Martin about the Leith Economic Framework, which is in development and will be presented to Edinburgh Council's Economy Ctte at 2pm on 18 December in the Dean of Guild Court Room, City Chambers). There will be an 8-week consultation period, and LCCC is presumably invited to input. CE has invited LM to LCCC's January 2015 meeting.

H Tobermann suggested that the relevant part of the Economy Ctte meeting would be simply a 'yes' or 'no' vote. He noted that the report is already on Edinburgh Council's website (<http://bit.ly/1tully8>), although some relevant documents are not online, and that the report bring things together several investment aims for Leith:

- invest in Leith's development and regeneration
- support inward investment
- support businesses
- help unemployed people into work or learning

6.2 Treasurer

The current balance is £1915.44. See Appendix 1 – financial statement below for current financial statement.

It was explained that B Ryan's latest payment included £8.34 reimbursement for maintaining the link between LCCC's domain (leithcentralcc.co.uk) and where the website actually is (leithccc.wordpress.com)

DECISION: LCCC AGREED TO PAY £60 FOR THE NEXT YEAR'S ADVERTISING (NEM CON)

6.3 Vice-chair

HT has written to councillors about various matters – these presage matters in the Leith Walk repairs (item 8 below) and Planning (item 10 below below) sections:

- Edinburgh councillors about the 11 December full council meeting about the tram expansion option report. He received replies the same day.
- Council officers about unlicensed skips, patch repairs on Leith Walk, pavement occupation by contractor outside Shrub Place. Replies were either not forthcoming or unhelpful.
- Shane Mackenzie (project manager, LW repairs) to suggest issues to look into before the holiday break.

7 Community engagement report

M Donaldson reported that since active use of LCCC's twitter account had been (re)started in autumn 2014:

- There had been a 12% increase in followers (to 371)
- Some of the previous meeting's agenda items (e.g. Shrub Hill, Leith Walk waste bins pilot, Leith Museum) continued to be discussed online after the meeting. Some of these engagements began during the meeting as a result of MD live-tweeting the meeting.
- MD and L Lockhart tweet about something relevant to LCCC members each day, e.g. around Leith's high population density. One example was picked up by a London online newspaper, as well as by local people.
- MD and LL daily look at CEC councillors, MSP and MP twit-streams, then retweet relevant items
- In the week before meetings, MD and LL tweet about agenda items – this has increased attendance
- A resident had tweeted about dog fouling – she had been invited to the meeting but could not attend.
- There will be a meeting in January to discuss further options for community engagement – all LCCC members and residents were invited.
- LCCC members were asked to send MD items to be tweeted.
- The clock logo is used as a symbol of the clock that had been taken away.

DECISION: UP TO £50 EXPENDITURE WAS AGREED FOR A KEYBOARD FOR MD'S TABLET TO AID EFFICIENT LIVE-TWEETING (NEM CON)

8 Leith Walk Repairs and Improvements

H Tobermann reported on a site visit attended by 3 LCCC members, 3 Councillors and 4 officials. HT reported that while issues remained, he was reassured that S Mackenzie was trying to resolve them. J Siann added that

- The visit began with an inspection of a sample area of paving (by Pilrig Church) – this was to be the standard for the rest of the work. This area was of poor quality – the contractors agreed it was not up to standard.
- In other areas, there was poor grouting between slabs.
- LCCC has not received specifications for grouting, so JS could not say whether it followed specifications. From JA' observations, a wet process is used – this is very susceptible to weather. (If the weather is wet, the grout does not harden.)
- During this visit, only around 200m² of paving was inspected but since then, JS has observed that many areas are ungrouted, so he suggested that work is unlikely to finish by 19 December. This would leave dangerous areas.
- JS concluded that Edinburgh Council has not managed this contract properly – the work cannot be guaranteed to last 7 years as promised. It will need a lot of difficult and time-consuming remedial work to pick out and replace.
- JS suggested that LCCC should have the opportunity to reject the current contractor when considering remedial work, and to vet such works.

HT summed up that while the pavements looks better than they did before work started, they are likely to deteriorate and hence cost more to repair.

Concerning the southern section of LW (from Pilrig St to Picardy Place), all preparatory planning work has been halted due to the 11 December report on tram options (See item 6.3 above). Edinburgh Council approved a further £400,000 to study the costs and benefits of tram expansion options. HT suggested that the current tram system is not financially viable, but that expanding it might net more passengers and hence a profit.

So in principle, HT would support expansion but he is deeply concerned that expansion would cause much further disruption to LCCC's residents. HT noted that Edinburgh Council set aside around £10m two years ago for repairing Leith Walk – some of this has been spent on repairs to the lower half of LW but a balance remains. HT strongly feels that this money should be spent now to repair this stretch, so he asked council leader A Burns to commit to these repairs, regardless of planning around trams. AB has emailed his intention to commit to these repairs, as did Cllr A McVey (transport committee convenor). However these are not legally binding, so HT asked AB and AM to ensure that commitments are in the legally binding report due in spring 2015.

HT asked for LCCC's support for his actions, along with leeway to go to press as necessary. C Encombe noted that LW was now very dangerous, especially for cyclists. ***DECISION: AS NO-ONE SPOKE AGAINST THIS, SUPPORT WAS GIVEN (NEM CON)***

HT noted that council official Iain MacPhail chairs the trams and city centre working group that oversees the combined planning for St James Centre and related developments. This group is keen to have the tram/bus/exchange in PPC etc sorted first before shops are in place. This is another cause for the halt to work on LW's southern section, according to that group's minutes. Also according to those minutes, Leith Neighbourhood Partnership officials I Buchanan and A Herriman are supposed to brief LCCC, but have not yet done so. ***DECISION: SECRETARY TO ASK IM TO ASK IB/AH TO BRIEF LCCC (NEM CON)***

As a vision of how trams might be, HT noted this picture: <http://bit.ly/13EJrPQ>

9 Friends of Parks Report

- There will be a woodland clearance day January 2015.
- There was recently a walkaround/inspection. While the inspector was concerned with self-seeded sycamores, FoPP pointed out that PP needs to be a community park, and that great strides have been made towards this – the park is looking good.
- FoPP would like to obtain chipper to help with this process.
- Primroses and bluebells have been planted.
- Community money has been used to buy 10 bird-boxes.

10 Planning sub-committee report

HT noted that a report on HMOs/student housing had been sent to Edinburgh Council. (Many students live in HMOs). One potential solution to the large number of HMOs in LCCC's area is to create dedicated student housing, such as the one being built in Shrub Place. The report is about to go out for consultation (findings due in May 2015) but there were issues with its maps. (See <http://bit.ly/1Hb6voo> for details.) Cllr Blacklock raised these issues in the relevant council meeting, and also asked for research into whether HMO applications have plateaued due to purpose-built student accommodation. (Those are treated as single large HMOs).

HT stated that the concern for LCCC's area is that the number of students was changing economic patterns. Therefore robust data is needed so that an appropriate mix of residents can be created. Cllr Blacklock had asked for data by postcode, as well as by data unit, because the former is more understandable to non-experts. She noted that 20% of Edinburgh's population is students, and that recent legislation meant that under-35s were not entitled to council flats, thus causing an issue around affordable housing. Cllr Chapman suggested that the Edinburgh private tenants action group, which is looking at such matters, was invited to LCCC.

C Encombe noted that the Edinburgh council department dealing with homeless people will not use any more hostels in Pilrig St than the 4 currently used.

J Siann noted that some developers have obtained planning permission but then have done nothing with the land, e.g. in Easter Road. An MP has now introduced a bill stating that developers' contracts with planning authorities must specify development with certain time-periods. JS suggested that the Scottish Government should be encouraged to follow suit. **DECISION: JS TO PURSUE THIS (NEM CON)**

11 Councillors' Report, MP/MSP report

11.1 Cllr Chapman

Leith Economic Framework will be decided on 18 December – its four strands are listed in item 6.1 above. The report is likely to be accepted, but questions should be directed to the Economy Ctte.

There has been lots of work on budget proposals, but clear messages from CCs are requested.

11.2 Cllr Blacklock

ASKED WHETHER THERE WAS ANY NEWS ON THE CROALL PLACE SIGN, THE COUNCILLORS SAID THEY WOULD REPORT BACK ON THIS.

12 Open Forum

Following P Grant's resignation from LCCC, M Donaldson volunteered to replace her as substitute member to the Leith Neighbourhood Partnership Board. **AGREED NEM CON**

M Cunningham introduced the Leith Late art projects and annual event. D Bremner introduced Citizen Curator, an arts organisation focusing on Leith/North Edinburgh's heritage (<http://bit.ly/1wy8uei>). While much of their work is outside LCCC area, they were recently involved with a project in Pilrig Park. They also have a project called Leith Creative, mapping cultural resources within the area. This is a 3-month project, with findings due in April along with end-of-project event. Some information will feed back into the Leith Economic Framework and refreshment of Edinburgh Council's cultural policy refresh, e.g. redevelopment of the Kirkgate.

13 AOCB

C Encombe noted that the Customs House is being bought to house the Leith Museum, via the Common Good fund. CE attends relevant meetings as rep for LCC and Greener Leith. There is a significant funding shortfall, so it has been proposed to ask (ex-)Leithers for help. However, there is no home for such money until the sale is concluded and a charity has been formed.

14 Dates of future meetings

Mostly 3rd Monday of the month: 19th January, 16th February, 16th March, 20th April, 18th May, 22nd June

15 Appendix 1 – financial statement

DATE	DESCRIPTION	Cheque No	Credit	Debit	Balance	Bank Balance
2014	Balance b/f					£1,432.98
19.5.14	Minutes(Mar 2014) B Ryan	425		£50.00		£1,382.98
16.6.14	Marion Donaldson	429		£100.00		£1,282.98
25.6.14	Minutes(Apr 2014) B Ryan	426		£50.00		£1,232.98
15.7.14	Edinburgh Council grant		£989.06			£2,222.04
16.9.14	Mins(Jun14)BRyan+noads upgrade	431		£68.56		£2,153.48
16.9.14	M Donaldson inv+receipts	432		£79.70		£2,073.78
24.9.14	Minutes (Aug 2014) B Ryan	433		£50.00		£2,023.78
23.10.14	Minutes (Sept 2014) B Ryan	427		£50.00		£1,973.78
20.11.14	Minutes (Oct 2014)B Ryan+WPCB	434		£58.34		£1,915.44
	TOTALS		£989.06	£506.60		
	Balance b/f		£1,432.98			
	Income		£989.06			
	Total Income		£2,422.04			
	less expenditure		£506.60			
	BALANCE		£1,915.44			