

Membership Meeting and AGM Provisional Minutes

Date: 24th June 2023

Location: Greenside Parish Church, Blenheim Place.

Agenda and Discussion:

1. Introduction

- i. Simon Holledge introduced the meeting and thanked all for attending.

2. Isabel McNab and Ramsay Allan from Greenside Church

- i. Isabel provided a background history to the Church. The 6th October 2023 will mark 184 years since the building was first completed and used for worship. There has previously been a school situated in the lower levels of the Church, providing education to the lower Greenside area. The Church was famously referred to as the 'Church on the Hill' by Robert Louis Stevenson.
- ii. Recent pressures mean the congregation will be moving to Broughton St Mary's Church later this year with a date to be confirmed. This is not resulting in the automatic closure of the building. The objectives over the next 12 months are to establish the building as the 'Greenside Centre' and to continue to provide services to the community and demonstrate the buildings viability. Currently over 200 people visit the Church weekly as part of the various youth organisations that use the Church as a base.

3. Chair Report - The first 150 days

Summary

Our Friends project has now been going for 150 days and I would like to start with a summary.

On 24 January and 1 February we held the first meetings of a 'Calton Hill Action Group'.

We wrote a constitution which was agreed on 9 February thereby becoming the Friends of Calton Hill.

On 14 February we applied for council registration which was approved a week later.

We held a night-time walkabout on 8 March, and on 29 March we had the public launch of the Friends of Calton Hill at the Collective City Observatory, with five speakers, Dr Iain Gordon Brown, the historian, Linda Anglin, the council Green Spaces manager, Silke Schneider, of Edinburgh World Heritage and City Councillor Hal Osler.

On 15 April we held the first Friends litter pickup, and from 18 April to 7 May we opened a Membership Survey to get a clearer idea of the members' concerns and opinions. (We will talk more about the survey later.)

Engagement

During these 150 days we've introduced ourselves to other organizations: the residents association, the community council, the Collective — with whom we have been working closely — Regent Gardens, also the Access Panel (which looks after the interests of the disabled), the Royal High School Preservation Trust, the Edinburgh Green Spaces Forum (which includes all the Friends groups), Festivals Edinburgh and obviously the Council Parks and Greenspaces officers.

We've also invited a forestry expert, a botanist and an entomologist to visit the hill and advise us in future.

Calton Hill Drive

Next, I'd like to explain where we are and what we've been doing about access to the hill from Calton Hill Drive. We know this is a concern of members — after litter, the road access question was the most frequent cited issue in the survey.

There is a sign on the gate saying, "Pedestrian and authorised vehicles only" and an entry system with keypads, however the gate is always left open, even though council policy is not to allow free access to parks by vehicles.

We asked council officers on 30 March, and again on 15 June, whether the security system still worked, or if not whether it could be repaired. The background to this is that most (if not all) parties would like to see a separate pedestrian entry. That is not possible with the present apparatus.

At the moment, there's free access for every kind of vehicle up to and including large tour buses. On Wednesday, there was a loud event on the hill which many of us will have heard. It was held by a small group who almost certainly took amplifiers and generators up in a van.

Management Plan (2017)

I would also like to briefly mention the management plan. This was written in 2017 by an organisation called LUC Glasgow for Edinburgh World Heritage and The City of Edinburgh Council. It has 59-pages and there are seven pages (pages 32-9) of detailed proposals on heritage protection and conservation, 'user experience', and management and maintenance — but not nature protection.

We will put the plan on the website for those who are interested.

4. Secretary Report

Thanks to Simon for his hard-work in launching The Friends of Calton Hill.

- i. Some of the more notable achievements in our first 5 months:
 - i. Recognition and acceptance of our constitution from Edinburgh Council.
 - ii. We have applied for and successfully opened a bank account - no mean feat!
 - iii. We have launched our website - still work in progress, and thank you to committee members who have sent in your photos, we will all be famous shortly!
 - iv. We have publicly launched the organisation, at The Collective, with the kind hosting support of Sorcha Carey.
 - v. We have registered with the information commissioners office as a data handler, alongside setting up some internal systems and processes for managing the organisation - our cloud-based filing cabinet is all neat, tidy and in order!
 - vi. Finally... one of our greater achievements has been to survey you all - our members.
- ii. The survey took a lot of time formulating to ensure we eliminated bias wherever possible, and it has provided us with a clear mandate to operate under for the foreseeable future. I won't go into the specific details of the survey, other than to highlight the 3 areas that the majority are aligned under, being:
 - i. Litter and Litter Management
 - ii. Limited vehicle access up onto the Hill
 - iii. Repairing and restoring overly eroded parts of the Hill, including much of the grass areas that have regressed in recent years.

- iii. The survey provides us with some direction to start with, it is not the last survey we will conduct and we will continue to ask for your opinions and your views on matters effecting the Hill to ensure we remain accountable to you all as members. We continue to act in the interests of the majority of our opinions, collected via surveys - so please do engage with them as they crop up on an annual, or bi-annual basis. The survey results are available on our website for any who have not yet viewed them, on our website.
- iv. I am also pleased to announce that we have applied for our first grant from Edinburgh Council, applying for funding for re-grassing of the areas in-front of the National Monument. This is the first grant we have applied for, and won't be the last. We will continue to post updates on our website as to our activities.

5. Treasurers Report

- i. The Bank of Scotland account is now open. Payments can be made by bank transfer to Friends of Calton Hill, Account no 24924166, Sort code 60-22-60. The accompanying information should say whether payment is for membership or donation.
- ii. Arrangements to permit online payment and payment by credit card are being finalised.
- iii. Systems are being set up on the basis that the membership year will run from July 1st
- iv. Income anticipated in the first year is around £500 from memberships and donations. It is expected that expenditure can be kept below income. The main administrative costs currently expected are for online services for the website and administration.
- v. Following a review of options by the Secretary and the Treasurer, it was decided to use 'Club Treasurer' software for accounting and membership administration.
- vi. The membership system will accommodate records of supporters as well as paid-up members and will be operated in accordance with GDPR requirements.

6. Nominations - Cllr Jo Mowat

- i. Cllr Jo Mowat kindly took over proceedings whilst nomination papers were read out for Office Bearers and Committee Members. The following members were duly nominated:
 - i. Simon Holledge, Chair
 - ii. Laura Graham, Vice Chair
 - iii. Charles Milton, Secretary
 - iv. Hartley Millar, Treasurer
 - v. Vicky Brooks, Committee Member
 - vi. Sorcha Carey, Committee Member
 - vii. A Francis Galashan, Committee Member
 - viii. Fran Holmes, Committee Member
 - ix. Dr James McCormack, Committee Member
 - x. Carol Nimmo, Committee Member
 - xi. Henrietta Thewes, Committee Member

7. Litter Pick

- i. Henrietta Thewes has liaised with CEC and 1st July 10AM is set as our next litter pickup. Baps, tea and coffee will be available at the end. A show of hands indicated around two-thirds of members will be able to attend.

8. Appeal for Volunteers

- i. It was explained that there were still vacancies on the committee. In particular we were looking for a Membership Secretary and Funding Manager.

9. Questions and Comments

- i. Vehicular access to Calton Hill Drive was discussed at length. The current situation was discussed and various technologies that might be used to regulate access. Cllr Jo Mowat explained the legal problems in Scotland with number plate recognition technology. It was noted that we still await information from City of Edinburgh Council officers about the state of the existing out-of-order installation at the foot of the drive. When we receive that information, we can then look at costs, and involve other stakeholders in agreeing an acceptable solution.
- ii. Corporate Members of the group alongside lifetime membership was discussed.
- iii. Biodiversity and destruction of wildlife habitats was discussed.
- iv. Noise issues noise was discussed and members were encourage to report instances to CEC Environmental Health Officers.

Thanks to Everyone for Attending.

Charles Milton, Secretary, Friends of Calton Hill, 27th June '23