



Draft Minutes

Calton Hill Conservation Trust
(Friends of Calton Hill)
Annual General Meeting (AGM)
Saturday 18th May 2024 at 6 p.m.
Scottish Chamber Orchestra Salon
4 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5AB

Attendees: Mike Birch, Jenny Bond, Erica Bright, Vikki Brooks, Helen Brown (Water of Leith Conservation Trust), Sorcha Carey, Aoife Fortescue-Webb, Annick Gaillard, David Gracie, Moira Gracie, Masumi Holledge, Simon Holledge, Fran Holmes, David Lowenfels, James McCormack, Cllr Joanna Mowat, Cllr Finlay McFarlane, Alan McIntosh, Hartley Millar, Susan Poupard, Simon Preston, Henrietta Thewes, Trina Tyrie, Mr Tyrie

Apologies: None received.

Agenda

1. *'The Role of Conservation Trusts: a Water of Leith perspective'*

A talk by Helen Brown, Manager of the Water of Leith Conservation Trust.

2. Minutes of the 24th June 2023 meeting

Proposed by Vikki Brooks, seconded by Cllr Finlay McFarlane.

3. Chair's report (Simon Holledge):

The history of Calton Hill is long but for us quite short. As a public park it dates back to 1725 when the western side of the hill was sold to the Royal Burgh of Edinburgh. However our story goes back to 2007, when a plan first recommended setting up a Friends support group. This idea was taken up in the comprehensive management plan

written for the hill in 2017, suggesting a Friends organisation, at the centre of a Calton Forum of stakeholders looking after the hill.

Little if any of the 2017 plan recommendations were implemented and we then had the pandemic. On 14 April 2021, some members of the New Town and Broughton Community Council, including myself, held a video conference with council officers to talk about setting up a Friends.

In 2022, the condition of the hill was probably worse than any time in its history. Surface erosion had increased, litter was everywhere partly because of a bin strike during the festival, and there was graffiti all over the National Monument and beyond, which the council had difficulty removing. We clearly needed to do something.

On 24 January 2023, we formed a Calton Hill Action Group, adopting a constitution on 9 February, thereby becoming the Friends of Calton Hill. Some of you may remember coming to our launch on the 29 March at the Collective City Observatory and our first members meeting at Greenside Church on 24 June.

From 18 April to 7 May last year, we made a membership survey to give us a clearer idea of how people felt about key issues of litter, vehicular access, land and path erosion, monument protection, biodiversity, toilets, disabled access, tree planting, and safety — and during the past year we have worked with our members, volunteer groups, neighbouring bodies, contractors, and the park officers and rangers to address many if not all of these issues.

The members have organised six litter pickups, in which volunteer groups have also sometimes participated. Volunteers have recently started clearing buried stone rainwater runoff channels which will enable us to improve the condition of the paths. Our neighbours — the Old Royal High School, Regent Gardens, Greenside Church and the Collective — have all removed old graffiti.

We have applied for grants for specialist work that requires contractors. We obtained a Community Grant used for re-grassing 160 square metres of eroded land on the top of the hill. This has been successful and we are now applying for more funds to carry on this job. We are also looking at various places where there is damage to stone walls and steps.

From the beginning we have been keen to organise activities, usually walks and survey walks, to highlight interesting aspects of the hill — geology, history, the monuments and nature, and in the future we hope astronomy and archaeology etc. This year the natural history of the hill is a particular focus. We have at least five dates for plant and tree, bird and invertebrate walks as well as moth trapping and possibly bat detecting. On the

western Greenside part of the hill we have the wildest and least recorded strip of land in the city centre and we intend to clean it up and explore it.

We are organising all these activities to give something back to our loyal litter pickers but also so we can all become more knowledgeable about the hill so we can make better decisions about its management.

We are now about to embark on the next stage of our development, and as ever we will be grateful for your vital support. We are proposing a new constitution later this evening to enable us to become a charitable organisation with a higher profile, the ability to raise substantially more money and do more to protect and conserve the site, under the designation of a conservation trust.

4. Vice-Chair's report (Susan Poupard)

The Vice-Chair's report focussed in more detail on funding applications in the last year, and plans for the year ahead.

Last year the Friends were successful in our application for a Community Grant Fund for re-grassing: although we received a little less funding than we'd hoped, we used this to re-grass 160 square metres in very visible locations on the hill — which you may have seen is now looking much better.

We calculated that there's a total of about 1200 square metres of severely eroded areas on the hill, so there is much more re-grassing still to do. We applied for another couple of funds for re-grassing: unfortunately one application was unsuccessful, however we have one further application which has been submitted that we hope to hear back on soon.

Aside from funding, we've recently started a project with volunteers working to clear stone drainage channels on the hill, this work will also help reduce further erosion of paths and grass areas.

We've had a great response from Edinburgh & Lothian Greenspace Trust and volunteers from the University and we now have a core group of volunteers willing and able to do more active work like this. If anyone is interested to join in with the volunteers or if you know anyone who isn't a member who would be willing to help out please pass on their details - more volunteers are very welcome.

For the year ahead there are a number of projects for which we're looking for further funding. This includes re-grassing as mentioned, also stonework and path repairs, and refurbishment of the information boards which are looking very out of date. Our

proposed adoption of a charitable model for the organisation has been mentioned. We hope that if this is successful it will open further funding avenues to increase our ability to improve the hill.

5. Treasurer's report (Hartley Millar)

Our income consists of £710 collected in membership fees, £6 in donations and £3988 in the form of a grant, totalling £4697.

Our expenditure (to 31 December) was only £7 in processing fees. Other expenses incurred after the financial year end related to administration, software, and the website.

Our current credit is £195.

See the Accounts below (Appendix).

6. Election of the committee

Joanna Mowat took the chair as our election officer: no positions were contested and the following were duly elected: Simon Holledge (Chair), Susan Poupard (Vice-Chair), Hartley Millar (Treasurer), Vikki Brooks, Sorcha Carey, Adda Gogoris, David Lowenfels, James McCormack, Carol Nimmo.

7. New constitution and new name

Fran Holmes proposed and Vikki Brooks seconded the adoption of a new constitution written to give charitable status to the organisation, establishing a trust under the new name of the Calton Hill Conservation Trust.

First published on the Friends of Calton Hill website and in a newsletter on 6 May, this 15 page document replaces the four-page constitution adopted on 9 February 2023, following the standard model approved by the Scottish Charities Regulator.

Under the new constitution, the former committee of the Friends of Calton Hill becomes a board of trustees, and they are required to declare external interests and membership of outside bodies.

It was understood that the Board would apply to the Scottish Charity Regulator for Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) status and there was a possibility that they might ask for further changes to the constitution.

8. AOCB

Alan McIntosh asked about the Council's view of the Friends' organisational status. Simon Holledge commented that the Council have been supportive of and cooperative in our efforts to improve the condition of the hill, and were keen to see us obtain funding. Susan Poupard noted that the Council had suggested and continues to suggest suitable potential grants to apply for.

The issue of public toilets was discussed and the use of the two WCs in the Nelson Monument by the general public. The problems of waste disposal, bin location and bin capacity were also mentioned. David Lowenfels would pursue this.

There was a possibility of adding a small event surcharge to tickets for large events (e.g. Beltane) and using the money for improvement projects.

The trust has applied for Calton Hill to be a fireworks control zone (FCZ). We understand This would apply to private fireworks not events.

Talks are continuing about the operation of the vehicle access barrier on Calton Hill Drive Sorcha Carey, Director the Collective, reported that a solution was imminent.

The meeting concluded at 7.30p.m.

Appendix: Financial Report

Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating income and expenditure account)

Year Ending 31 December 2023

	Total Funds <u>2023</u>
Income and endowments	£
Membership income	710
Other donations	6
Grants (reserved income)	<u>3988</u>
Total income	4704
 Expenditure	
Payment processing charges	<u>7</u>
Total expenditure	7
 Net (expenditure)/income	<u>4697</u>
 Funds brought forward	0
 Funds carried forward as at December 31. 2023	<u>4697</u>

Notes

1. Grant income is reserved for use in the re-grassing project and has been so used.
2. 71 payments for membership were received up to December 31.
3. Office bearers have incurred expenses for software, web presence, laminating, printing and provisions for litter walks amounting to approximately £511 which had not been refunded as at December 31. As a result the disposable unreserved funds at December 31. were approximately £195.

Hartley Millar, Treasurer