

**Minutes of the Friends Of Pilrig Park (FoPP) Public Meeting  
Macdonald Road Library, 15 May 2013**

**Attendance**

Sophie Brown, Chair  
Emma Faragher, Secretary  
Trudy Shaw, Resident  
Simon Mitchell, Resident  
Susan Mitchell, Resident  
Cllr Nick Gardner, Leith Walk ward (Labour)  
Jane Hay, Resident  
Irene Sweeney, Resident  
Chris Brown, Resident  
P Martin, Resident  
Joan Robertson, Resident  
Sarah Allbeson, Resident  
Katie Wight, Resident and member of staff at Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce  
Liz Ballantyne, Resident  
Stephen Penman, Resident  
Caroline Pretty, Resident  
Paul Hutton, CEC Community Safety  
Sam Barron, Resident  
Julian Siann, Leith Central Community Council  
Damien Sefton, Resident  
Max Brown, Resident  
Fiona Devlin, CEC Parks CCL

**Apologies**

Cllr Deidre Brock, Leith Walk ward (SNP)  
James Hunter, Environment Manager, CCL

**1. Welcome and introduction to meeting**

- Sophie Brown welcomed everyone to the meeting. Friends of Pilrig Park (FoPP) aims to work with the council, local business and the wider community to make positive changes to the park. She believes that it is a great community space, and though things need improvement, through the work of FoPP and partners it will continue to be a place enjoyed by the whole community.
- The main purpose of this first public meeting is to introduce the group and discuss the Draft Development Plan for Pilrig Park. The views gathered will be collated and given as feedback to the council.
- The discussion will also assist FoPP in its own plans – it is important FoPP isn't just a forum for comment, but an active group with ideas to improve the park. Therefore the first event organised by FoPP will be a litter pick on Saturday 11 May, from 11am.

- FoPP will be set up as a Voluntary Association, and have a formal committee. Sophie Brown asked attendees to consider volunteering for a committee role, and contact her after the meeting to discuss roles. People can volunteer to be standing members of the committee, or for the posts of Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. At this time, there is a provisional Chair and Secretary in place, who will continue in post unless objections are made. In future years, there will be an AGM with elections into committee posts.
- Cllr. Gardner welcomed the establishment of FoPP - the group will be able to contribute ideas to the Park Development Plan and has potential to make a real difference to the future of the park. He encouraged FoPP to look at what other 'Friends' groups around the city have done, using Montgomery Street as an example. They have developed their own development plan based on community consultation, and successfully applied for funding to complete projects. This includes landscaping of the park and a mural on an unsightly utilities station. They have also arranged tree and bulb planting in liaison with Edinburgh Council and hold 3 community events a year, including an after dark Halloween party. Parks have great potential to bring people together, and Friends groups are a great catalyst for this to happen.
- Sophie Brown advised there is an informal get together for Friends of Parks groups in the Leith Ward area on 16 April. The aim is to share information between groups and identify areas of common interest/concern and opportunities to work together. They will also explore potential to meet more regularly as a forum and invite other groups to participate. She plans to attend and will report on progress there.

## **2. Discussion of issues with Pilrig Park**

- Sophie Brown asked attendees to comment on issues they have identified in Pilrig Park. The following areas of concern were identified:
  - Safety and Security – Security of areas around entrance points. Antisocial behaviour by a small number of people in the park usually associated with drinking, and including vandalism, notably the light on the main walkway. Dangerous dogs being walked, notably one which has been seen in the larger play park. Cricket being played on or near main pathways.
  - Cleanliness and Litter – Littering and dog fouling in the park. The bins require replacing, and there is a delay in this happening.
  - Park Benches – Benches have been removed, reducing access for people with limited mobility. However, benches placed close to private residences may result in disturbance from antisocial behaviour.
  - Overgrown Undergrowth – This is unsightly, and encourages antisocial behaviour.
  - Entrances – It can be difficult to access the park, especially from Balfour Street and Cambridge Gardens. There are no boards for signage at a number of entrances.
  - Children's Areas – The smaller play area is dilapidated and requires maintenance/updating. The gate from Pilrig Street into the larger

play area at the Bonnington Road end is not sprung and is a safety risk to children playing in the park.

- Upkeep of paths in park – many pathways are becoming rundown, this creates an accessibility issue for the park.
- Drainage – drainage in one area of the park leads to excessive mud (possibly containing sewage) near one entrance.
- Fiona Devlin advised the drainage issue has been checked and is not sewage. Residents' concerned asked that Sophie Brown forward correspondence they had received to Fiona.
- Paul Hutton advised that individual cases of antisocial behaviour in relation to dog fouling and littering should be reported to the council desk (0131 529 3030) or if a minor incident occurs this should be directed to the general police desk (0131 3113131). This means reports are officially logged so the council and police can build records and take appropriate action.
- The new 'Management Rules for Public Parks and Greenspaces' were discussed as a useful reference in considering appropriate usage of the park. A number of people were not aware of this document.
- Cllr. Gardener observed that there are a number of common issues identified by groups around the city and the new forum mentioned by Sophie Brown in the introduction to the meeting is an opportunity to discuss such issues, agree good practice across different parks, and feedback to the council as a group.
- Paul Hutton agreed this is a good approach. It can be difficult to respond to many, varied requests from different groups often about the same issue – having a forum where a joint response to common issues can be discussed is a useful model.

### **3. Discussion of Park Development Plan**

- Fiona Devlin explained the Development Plan is a draft for consultation with communities. The plan is developed following a process by which parks are assessed by council staff and key issues needing to be addressed are identified for the plan. She noted that aims and objectives in the plan are key to funding, but the draft plan is not exhaustive and new suggestions can be added. The creation of FoPP will aid to the future development of the plan, because it can respond to consultation as a group. She encouraged FoPP members to think broadly and make ideas and suggestions for positive changes.
- A resident asked what funds are available from the council to support activities. Fiona Devlin advised there is a citywide Park Improvement Budget. Large bids are dealt with on an annual basis (closed this year) and smaller ones run on through the year. She can provide FoPP with further advice on funding streams as plans and ideas develop.
- The location and plans for benches and bins were discussed and Fiona Devlin confirmed that a plan for bins is in place however the Council are waiting for issues with the contractors to install the bins to be resolved. FD confirmed that FoPP can be consulted on placement of benches. Sophie Brown requested that Fiona Devlin send a map of proposed bench and bin sites to

be circulated to FoPP members, and suggested a walk around the park to discuss bench placements. Cllr. Gardener suggested that he could give support in pushing for progress on getting bins installed.

- One resident asked if there are plans to improve the smaller play area, or an application for funding should be made by FoPP. **Fiona Devlin advised that there is a team in the council responsible for allocating funding to upgrade play areas in parks across the city based upon need, funds are allocated for this year but FoPP could bid development next year (bids close in December).** It is helpful if 'Friends' groups are willing to put applications into grant-making bodies as well. Fiona Devlin can advise FoPP on where the small play park stands in priority list for park repairs and advise on where other groups have secured external funding.
- It was noted that usage of this area of the park will significantly increase with the opening of the new Gaelic Medium School. Katie Wight, who was representing the Gaelic School, said that all the issues discussed so far were also of concern to the school, especially as they are likely to be using the park regularly and need it to be a safe and welcoming environment.
- Paul Hutton advised that his team have a number of tasks they would like to tackle in the park, however they are limited by the resources available to them. It was suggested that if additional manpower would be beneficial then FoPP could help with this. PH said that he would review tasks to see if FoPP might be able to develop a plan to assist.

#### **4. Recommendations for Pilrig Park Development Plan**

In the discussions above the following recommendations were made for the development plan:

- a) Signage – better signage relating to antisocial behaviour and reporting issues/requesting repairs.
- b) Information Boards – additional information boards at all entrance points to park required, signage recommended above at all Information boards.
- c) Management of Undergrowth – consider plans to manage undergrowth in park, particularly around Millennium Wood through either management and planting, or reduction and removal.
- d) Improvement of smaller play areas - consider upgrading and improvement of small play area, and surrounding area where the opening of the new school will significantly increase usage.

Sophie Brown thanked everyone for their comments and observed that not everyone may have been able to make their comments at the meeting. She will circulate the plan by email and ask for comments and feedback. This will be collated into a report for the council.

#### **5. Suggested Activity for FoPP**

In the discussions above the following ideas for FoPP activity were discussed:

- a) Ask other Friends Groups for advice on how they have addressed antisocial behaviour in the park.
- b) Consider application to improve smaller play area.

- c) Work with council to identify immediate activities and projects FoPP can assist with to improve park.
- d) Hold a second meeting where collated comments on the Development Plan will be discussed and group feedback to the council agreed.
- e) Make links with other community groups who are active in the area and might help promote initiatives and attend events.

## **6 Actions**

### **All Members:**

- If you are interested in becoming a committee member, contact [friendsofpilrigpark@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofpilrigpark@gmail.com).
- Send comments on the Pilrig Park Development Plan to Sophie Brown by Tuesday 30 April.

### **Sophie Brown:**

- Put information in the existing notice board, and request further signage from the council.
- Circulate copy of the 'Management Rules for Public Parks and Greenspaces' and list of key contacts for reporting issues in the park.
- Circulate Pilrig Park Development plan and map of planned bench/bin sites for comment.
- Collate comments into a response for the council, to be discussed at next meeting and circulated for final comments from members.

### **Fiona Devlin:**

- Provide a map of the park with proposed bench and bin sites and inform FoPP when bins will be replaced (once confirmed).
- Find out and advise on where the smaller play park stands on the priority list for redevelopment.
- Advise on council funding deadlines for play park grants, and provide a list of grant awarding bodies from whom other park groups have successfully secured for redevelopment of play areas.

### **Paul Hutton:**

- Provide a list of things FoPP might do to support their work, particularly tasks where FoPP can provide additional manpower.
- Discuss resolution of individual security issues with people concerned

## **7. Dates for diaries**

- **Date of Next Meeting:** Monday 10 June, 6.30pm, Macdonald Road Library.
- **Pilrig Park Litter Pick:** Saturday 11 May from 11am.