

## **Minutes of the Friends Of Pilrig Park (FoPP) Public Meeting Macdonald Road Library, 13 April 2015**

### **Attendance**

Liz Ballantyne, Resident & FoPP Committee Member  
Cllr Deidre Brock, Leith Walk ward (SNP)  
Max Brown, Resident & FoPP Treasurer  
Sophie Brown, Chair  
Cllr Nick Gardner, Leith Walk ward (Labour)  
Jane Hay, Resident  
Rob Knight, Resident  
Simon Mitchell, Resident  
Fiona McRae, Resident  
Annette O'Carroll, Resident  
Damien Sefton, Resident & FoPP Committee Member  
Emma Strong, Resident  
Irene Sweeney, Resident & FoPP Committee Member

### **Apologies**

James Hunter, Environment Manager, CCL  
Stephen Penman, Resident & FoPP Committee Member  
Trudi Shaw, Resident

### **1. Welcome, Introduction and Announcements**

- Sophie Brown (SB) welcomed everyone to the meeting, the sixth public meeting of Friends of Pilrig Park (FoPP), and the first in 2015. FoPP holds 2 public meetings a year, and will hold additional public meetings if a need arises.
- SB noted that Emma Faragher was standing down as Secretary of FoPP and thanked her for the invaluable support she has given to the group over the last couple of years.
- SB noted that the date for the next FoPP AGM will be the Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October from 6.30pm to 8.00pm at the McDonald Road Library.

### **2. Approval of the minutes of the meeting of 14 April 2014**

- The minute was proposed as an accurate record of the meeting on 14 April by Damien Sefton, seconded by Cllr Nick Gardner.

### **3. Park Update and planned activity for 2015**

SB advised that FoPP was set up two years ago with the agreed aim "to promote and improve Pilrig Park by working with the local community, local businesses, City of Edinburgh Council and other partners to make positive changes that benefit the park, the local environment and local communities; **to make Pilrig Park a great green space in the city for all to enjoy.**"

**3.1 Clearance and litter pick days** – FoPP have continued to organise wood clearance and litter pick days with five to take place during 2015.

**3.2 Biodiversity** - With the support of the RSPB ten 'woodcrete' bird boxes have been put up within the park. The RSPB have agreed to support the maintenance of these boxes over the coming years.

The City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) Living Landscapes team have agreed to plant three wildflower meadows and members of FoPP have planted bluebells, red campion and primroses behind the small play park, in the woodland area adjacent to Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pairce and along the 'edible hedge'.

**3.3 Community Support** – The Edinburgh University Royal Navy Unit has offered to provide support on the morning of 17<sup>th</sup> May as part of their drive to support local communities. They have agreed to help edge some of the paths to expose the original brick paving.

**3.4 Awards** - Keep Scotland Beautiful has awarded Pilrig Park a 'Developing' certificate for work undertaken in 2014 and has kindly provided sustenance for the clearance days from the local Greggs. The park will be reassessed as part of the 'It's Your Neighbourhood' scheme later in 2015.

#### **4. Suggestions & next steps for 2015/16**

The following points were discussed.

##### **4.1 Picnic benches**

- SB advised that the installation of picnic benches within the Park has been raised by the community at a number of the public meetings. FoPP has the funds to buy them and are in discussion with CEC about installation for this summer. SB noted that there is an opportunity to buy them from HMP Edinburgh (Saughton Prison).

##### **4.2 Woodland clearance**

- The attendees expressed their support for the clearances that have been undertaken by FoPP to date.
- Some concern had been raised about the impact that the removal of low scrub under the trees might have on the bird population. SB confirmed that the RSPB had advised that this should not negatively impact the birds within the park.
- It was noted that the cleared areas were now well used by members of the public and that antisocial behaviour in the cleared areas had been substantially reduced.
- A number of members raised concerns about the ability of FoPP to maintain the areas that have been cleared. It was agreed that onward maintenance should be the responsibility of the council and SB committed to continue discussions with CEC to ensure that this was taken forward.

#### **4.3 Balfour Street entrance**

- Residents noted that the brick wall at the entrance to the park from Balfour Street cut across sight lines and could be substantially improved
- A discussion followed and residents suggested a variety of different ways it might be improved including;
  - Removal of the wall so it is aligned with the housing rather than park entrance.
  - A mural or painted design on the wall to soften its visual impact.
  - Sensitive planting to soften its visual impact.
- SB advised that FoPP had received a number of comments about all the entrances and was in discussion with CEC about how these might be improved.

#### **4.4. Sports**

- Residents noted that the installation of outside adult gym equipment would be welcome and help to support active use of the park.
- SB noted that this had been raised previously and that FoPP would actively help to support any application for funding that residents wished to put forward.
- Rob Knight advised that he would be happy to look into this on behalf of residents and SB confirmed FoPP support with this endeavour.
- Cllr Brock mentioned that Sports Scotland are currently offering funding for the installation of a wide range of sports equipment, such as 3G football pitches, tennis courts etc. On a smaller scale, the installation of small football goals within the large play park might be a low cost option.
- SB noted that the FoPP would support any such funding or applications but it would need to have wide consultation with the local community to ensure that any new facilities would be welcomed by the majority of park users and local residents.

#### **4.5 Lighting**

- The issue of lighting within the park was raised by the residents. It was felt that whilst the lighting was just about adequate, and the clearing of the woodland adjacent to paths had improved safety, much more could be done.
- Emma Strong noted that bollard lighting along park paths would significantly improve this. These lights cause far less light pollution, do not create the dark spaces between the current lights and look far better.
- Residents agreed that this would be welcome but recognised that significant financial assistance, beyond that which CEC could provide, would be required.

#### **4.6 Housing developments around the park**

- Residents asked whether money was available for the park from the Stanwell Street development. SB confirmed that she had met with the developers but that community funding had already been decided prior to the formation of FoPP in 2013 and improvements to the park were not included. It was agreed that this was a missed opportunity.

- Cllr Gardner advised that FoPP developed a 'shopping list' of proposals for improvements that could be funded by developers as there will be more housing built within the area. Things such as lighting, paths and entrances could all fit within this list.
- SB agreed that the FoPP would consider further and asked that CEC officials notified the FoPP at the earliest opportunity should further developments in the area go ahead.

#### **4.8 Miscellaneous**

- A resident suggested that the tops of the large trees could be trimmed to improve sightlines from the Pilrig House part of the park to Carlton Hill
- Residents suggested that historic signage could be installed within the park
- SB advised that the committee continued to investigate suitable community grants to add an element of design to the tree trunk in front of Pilrig House.
- Residents and members agreed that the current arrangements for bins in the park were not ideal. On sunny days, especially at the weekend, the bins all overflow. SB agreed to speak to the CEC about how they might 'upgrade' these arrangements.

#### **5. Treasurers Update**

The Treasurer (MB) provided an update on the FoPP finances.

- MB advised that the FoPP currently had available funds of £2490.91. He noted that this money had come from a variety of sources and had to be spent in line with the terms of these donations and grants.
- MB noted that the FoPP had been awarded £1,000 from L&ith Decides to fund the 'Litterwise' project. To date £914.60 of this had been spent. CEC had confirmed that the remainder would need to be used by FoPP or returned to CEC. Members and residents agreed that the remaining £85.40 would be spent on litter pick equipment or at the Committee's discretion for activity related to litter.
- MB noted that the FoPP had been given £2554.67 by the Pilrig Residents association for spend on capital items for the park. To date, £269.90 had been spent on bird boxes from the RSPB and £15.47 on tools for the woodland clearance. This leaves the FoPP with £2269.30 for capital spend in the park.
- MB noted that the FoPP had been given £200 by the Leith Central Community Council for administrative and set up costs. To date £63.79 has been spent on wooden block Pilrig Park stamps and Pilrig Park stickers. This leaves £136.21 for continuing administrative costs.

#### **6. ACOB**

- SB invited residents to put themselves forward for the Committee and/or the post of Secretary. New Committee members will be voted in at the AGM on the 12<sup>th</sup> October.

**Date of Next Public Meeting**

- The date of the next public meeting will be Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October from 6.30pm to 8.00pm in the Nelson Hall at the McDonald Road Library.