

FRIENDS OF CRAIGLOCKHART WOODS & NATURE TRAIL

Annual General Meeting 31 March 2015 at Meggetland Sports Complex

1 Apologies and Welcome

Paul Geissler, David Key, Angela Tunstall, Kevin & Geraldine McKay, Jane & Robin McLaren, Diana & Chris Hughes, David Murray Munro

Ewan welcomed everyone to the AGM.

2 Minutes of 2012 AGM

The minutes were accepted as accurate.

Proposed: Ian Bertram

Seconded: Colin Chess

3 Chairman's Report

Ewan presented an overview of the past year in Easter Craiglockhart Hill Local Nature Reserve.

He outlined some things that continued much as before.

- We continued to work in close partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service. Numerous e-mails had been exchanged and there had been frequent meetings and walkabouts to plan what needed to be done.
- Once again we were successful in being awarded a Green Flag. This year ECHLNR came second highest in the parks assessments for Edinburgh, outscored only by the Hermitage of Braid.
- Craiglockhart Primary School Forest School Initiative continued to meet in the woods every Wednesday albeit on a different site this year to allow the previous site to recover.
- We continued with work squads and work days. In the summer local residents participated in a clear up and a variety of work tasks. The Lothian Conservation Volunteers worked in the upper meadow. Volunteers from Lloyds Bank planted bulbs and the orchard up at the curling rink. The Dirty Weekenders from Edinburgh University cleared out the stream. Staff from the Leisure Centre are planning Eco team-days to carry out tasks and clean ups on a regular basis in the woods.
- The swans continued to attract attention. Hilda described their antics over the past year. Three of the 7 cygnets from last year remain on the pond but the adults have a new nest and have just started sitting on the eggs that the female has been laying over the previous week

Some things were new, changed or improved.

- In April 2014 we had a small ceremony to mark the unveiling of the social history board.
- In the autumn we launched the War Poets Trail in partnership with Edinburgh Napier University. This makes for a splendid walk with excellent views.
- In November, we installed 8 new bird boxes.
- In December, extensive improvements to paths and surfaces were carried out. The stone causeway was weeded, reconstructed in places and re-pointed. The drainage ditch beyond the Leisure Centre was dug out and paths were upgraded between Lockharton Crescent and Craiglockhart Terrace and on a stretch running up to Glenlockhart Road.
- We moved forward on the Development Plan for the curling rink area that we presented to last year's AGM. There were 6 elements to the plan - 1.Path replacement 2.Mini orchard, 3.Wildflower meadow, 4.Improved seating, 5.The promotion of petanque and 6. Play structures for children. A new path with a filter drain was laid in December. In October, 6 apple trees and 2 plum trees were planted to create a mini orchard. In a few years these trees should provide yet more foraging opportunities for the local community. The trees were under-planted with native bulbs. We are grateful to CSV's Action Earth Fund whose generosity covered the cost of the trees and bulbs. We are also grateful to all the volunteers who helped plant the bulbs and trees.
- We have made a start to 2 other elements of the curling rink plan. A site for the wildflower meadow has been treated with weedkiller and rotovated and the first play structure, a living willow dome and tunnel, has been planted where the cherry laurel used to be. Our thanks to the talented weavers of Earth Calling who built the structure for us and thanks also to the

South West Neighbourhood Partnership whose grant for £3,500 will fund this and the future play structures.

- At last year's AGM we said we would redesign and modernise our website to make it more accessible. Lindsay confirmed that he had completed this work during the year and that we now had a new website which he demonstrated. He encouraged everyone to use it and become familiar with it. He also demonstrated its accessibility on a mobile phone. Lindsay stressed the importance of keeping it up to date and interesting and to make this possible encouraged everyone to be active in providing news items and photos.

Some things will change in the coming year and future years. What do we plan for next year?

- We shall complete the Toddlers Play Trail. This will be spread out over 6 sites. There will be stepping stones, balance beams, magnifying posts, toddler-friendly seating and a pirate ship. When it is completed we shall publicise the play trail to schools, nurseries and playgroups using leaflets and posters. We are very grateful to Craiglockhart Community Council for their generous grant of £500 for publicity and signage.
- We shall move on with the remaining elements of the curling rink plan. Tim Duffy described the plans for all the wildflower meadows in the local nature reserve. He explained how a new Edinburgh wildflower seed mix had been created that would be good for the conditions in and around the city. This seed mix consists only of native species and has been optimised for biodiversity and in particular to have a long flowering season to ensure food for the bees throughout the summer. This will provide interest and colour for us too in the LNR in the summer months. It is hoped that all the areas for the wildflowers will soon have been prepared and planting completed before the end of April. There should be some flowers to see from June onwards but it will be next year before the meadows will be at their best.
- Another element of the plan for the curling rink area is petanque. We shall encourage playing of petanque on the whin surface. There is room there for 3 full pistes and a practice piste. Later this spring we shall organise a demonstration and competition.
- We shall need to assess in the coming year if more active management is required for the marsh area below the pond. A survey was carried out in the autumn which suggests that some interventions could be beneficial.
- We have been fortunate over the past year in securing nearly £4,500 in 3 separate grant applications. However we would wish to be looking to fundraise by other means too. Will Searle, our membership secretary, set out our plans to produce a 2016 calendar. We would like to hold a photography competition and the best/most unusual/striking pictures will be chosen for the calendar. Will urged everyone to get snapping. More details will be on our website and e-mailed in due course. Will stressed that we are now using our electronic membership data base and asked anyone who had not received an e-mail inviting them to the AGM to speak to him to ensure that we had a correct e-mail address for them. Please e-mail fcwnt@outlook.com with your details if you did not have the chance to speak to Will and did not receive the recent e-mail.
- Ewan went on to say that possibly the greatest challenge in the coming year/years would be to be engaged with whatever the outcome turns out to be for the Craighouse site. The planning application was successful but notice of a possible judicial review has been lodged. There are also rumours that the site is for sale. Conditions of the planning consent require the developer to transfer 3 areas of woodland to the Council. The developer is required to carry out improvements to the woodland prior to transfer. The developer also has to make a payment of £150,000 to the Council for the maintenance and improvement of the woodland. If all this comes to pass we would want to ensure that improvements are indeed carried out in the woodlands before transfer of the land, that the "dowry" payment of £150,000 is ring fenced to be used exclusively in the LNR and that there is community input into decisions about how this money is spent. Ewan promised that in this aspect of the Craighouse development at least we will try to get the best possible outcome for the people who use and care about Easter Craiglockhart Hill.

In summary Ewan said it has been a good year. We achieved most of the things we set out to achieve and look forward to the coming year and more projects which will enhance enjoyment of the Local Nature Reserve.

Stuart Guild asked if any bats were using their boxes. At the moment there is no evidence that they are but we live in hope.

Robin Mutch made a statement during which he expressed his personal opinion that a Mr David Murray Munro (not present) should receive a vote of thanks for his activities.

Jeanette Rennie asked about the absence of herons on the pond and about their compatibility (or incompatibility) with the resident swans.

Ian Bertram asked if there were plans to do anything about the extent of the vegetation at the north end of the pond. David said there would be some cutting back and thinning out but on the whole the planting was deemed to be a success.

4 Update on LNR from Natural Heritage Service

David Kyles our Natural Heritage Officer was introduced. David listed what he had been doing in the LNR over the last year.

- Monthly routine inspections
- Litter collection
- Wire mesh installed on railings at the corner of Lockharton Gardens and Crescent to trap litter.
- Memorial seat for SANDS installed at the south end of the pond.
- Puddles on the paths scraped and filled in.
- New maintenance contract to have the hedge cut along by the pond and at the back of the curling rink on a twice yearly cycle.
- Cutting back of trees at the old hotel annex area with further work planned.
- Continued liaison with Craiglockhart Primary School over the Forest School Initiative.
- Japanese Knotweed treated with herbicide with a repeat dose planned.

As part of a project on perch, a group from the university had set traps and fished by line in an unsuccessful attempt to find perch in the pond.

David spoke about the marsh study report and said that the first step in taking this forward would be to have a hydrology survey done. This may also shed some light on the rising water level on the pond. David described a new asset management system that is being used for the Council estate.

This year's guided walk is called The Body Language of Trees and will take place on Sunday 20 September at 11.00am-12.15pm. Meet at the old curling rink at the end of Craiglockhart Terrace. Details are available from The Natural Heritage Service and booking with them is essential.

5 News from other Friends Groups

Ewan welcomed the establishment of a new Friends Group for Wester Craiglockhart Hill and Greenbank Community Woodland – details of their work can be found on their Facebook page.

Ewan described the campaign mounted by the Friends of the Hermitage and Blackford Hill to save Midmar Paddock from being developed for housing and encouraged our members to support this campaign.

6 Adoption of Annual Accounts

Bill tabled the accounts showing a balance of £3,846 at the end of our financial year on 31 December 2014. He went on to explain that however the current balance was £7,500 due to a £500 grant from Craiglockhart Community Council, a grant for £3,450 from the South West Neighbourhood Partnership and a £340 grant from CSV Action Earth Fund.

The accounts were adopted.

Proposed: Lindsay Snedden

Seconded: Stuart Guild

7 Re-Appointment of Auditor

Ewan thanked Rob Moffat for auditing and printing the accounts and proposed that he should be asked to audit the accounts again next year.

Proposed: Margaret Hill

Seconded: Betty Geissler

8 Election of the Committee and Office Bearers

Ewan introduced the committee and advised the meeting that they had all agreed to continue. Ewan thanked them for their support.

The committee was accepted.
Proposed: Pat Bertram
Seconded: Ian Bertram

9 General Discussion

Robin Mutch expressed concern about the finances and asked if there were any plans to hold a fete again. Ewan referred to the huge time commitment required to organise a fete and suggested that there were more effective ways to raise funds (some of which had been outlined earlier) though a fete at some point in the future would not be ruled out.

10 AOCB

Bryce Morrison reported on the current work and priorities of Craiglockhart Community Council and encouraged community residents to become involved, to attend meetings and make their views known on local issues.

11 Close of Meeting

Ewan concluded by thanking everyone for their support throughout the year and for coming along to the AGM.