

# **EASTER CRAIGLOCKHART HILL: COMMUNITY PLAN 2018 – 2021**

## **Introduction**

This Plan has been prepared by the Friends of Easter Craiglockhart Hill.

The Forestry and Natural Heritage Section of the City of Edinburgh Council have prepared a Management Plan. Their Plan focuses on statutory requirements and environmental protection. Our Plan aims to be people-centred and focuses on usage, access, inclusion and community involvement. We have tried to plan for all the different people who visit Easter Craiglockhart Hill.

The Council's Plan covers a period of 10 years from 2018 to 2028. We cannot see that far ahead so our plan only covers three years.

We hope that the two plans will be complementary to each other and can be presented together for consultation to stakeholders.

We want to get as much feedback as possible on our Plan from people who enjoy spending time on Easter Craiglockhart Hill. This plan and a one-page summary version are on our website – [www.craiglockhartwoods.com](http://www.craiglockhartwoods.com).

## **Contents**

|                                |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>The Hill</b>                | <b>Page 2</b>  |
| <b>Process</b>                 | <b>Page 4</b>  |
| <b>People</b>                  | <b>Page 6</b>  |
| <b>Places</b>                  | <b>Page 12</b> |
| <b>Problems</b>                | <b>Page 20</b> |
| <b>Publicity and Promotion</b> | <b>Page 25</b> |
| <b>Plans</b>                   | <b>Page 27</b> |

## **The Hill**

Easter Craiglockhart Hill is one of the ‘Seven Hills’ of Edinburgh. Although the height - 525 feet - is modest, the views from the hill-top across Fife, the Lothians and the Borders are outstanding.

Some 250 million years ago, the Craiglockhart Hills were formed by volcanic action and the distinctive grainy basalt on the cliffs and hill-top is known to geologists as Craiglockhart Basalt. The land was shaped by glaciers during the last Ice Age when the valley between Easter and Wester Craiglockhart Hills was carved out.

Two ‘heroes’ also shaped the Hill. In 1773, Alexander Monro Secundus, Professor of Anatomy at Edinburgh University, purchased a 271 acre estate which included most of Easter Craiglockhart Hill and much of what later became the sedate suburb of Craiglockhart. Monro was a passionate gardener and planted thousands of native trees across his estate – the mature beeches in the woodlands may have been planted by him. Our second hero is John Cox, owner of the nearby Gorgie Glue works, who, one hundred years later in 1873, built a stone causeway across the Megget Burn and so created ponds for skating, curling and boating.

In Victorian times, much of the original Craiglockhart estate was sold off for housing. The southern side of the Hill became the Merchants Golf Course and a Mental Health Hospital was built on the Craighouse land to the east. However, most of Easter Craiglockhart Hill – some 35 acres in total - is relatively untouched by modern development. Little more than 2 miles from Princes Street, it is an oasis of tranquillity in the heart of a busy city.

In 2005, Easter Craiglockhart Hill was designated as a Local Nature Reserve. Swans have nested on the pond for more than 100 years and coots, moorhens, mallards, tufted ducks and little grebes all raise families despite the depredations of the local gulls. Goosanders are frequent visitors while kingfishers, herons and cormorants visit from time to time. Resident raptors in the Craiglockhart Hills include buzzards, kestrels and sparrow hawks. Occasionally a high-flying peregrine visits from the Pentlands. Woodland birds include bull finches, goldcrests, blackcaps, nuthatches and woodpeckers.

Walkers at dawn or dusk are sometimes lucky enough to spot roe deer. There are at least two badger sets and several fox dens. Other mammals include

rabbits, three species of bats and more grey squirrels than foresters would wish (they cause much damage to the sycamore trees on the Hill).

User surveys have confirmed that the Hill is extensively used. 95% of visitors come from Edinburgh and 91% visit at least weekly. Our estimate based on these surveys is that about 200,000 visits are made over the course of a year.

In 2008, the Local Nature Reserve was one of the first green spaces in Edinburgh to be awarded a Green Flag. This shows that the high environmental and management standards of the Green Flag scheme have been met. The Green Flag award has been renewed every year since 2008 and the flag flies proudly at the Craiglockhart Terrace entrance.



View of the pond, the 'pixie' seats and the Social History Board

## Process

The Friends Group was established in 1998 and merged with a Nature Trail Group in 2010. The Local Nature Reserve will increase greatly in size during 2018 when three areas of woodland will be transferred into Council ownership.

Our constitution states that our aims are to:

- Preserve Easter Craiglockhart Hill for the enjoyment of members of the public with special provision for disabled people
- Conserve and enhance the wildlife value of the area and increase its diversity
- Work with the City of Edinburgh Council to develop and improve the area
- Raise and administer funds to help finance improvements
- Work closely with other relevant organisations

In the years ahead, we want to promote responsible usage so that more people from the local community and from further afield can enjoy spending time on the hill. We do not want just to preserve the Hill – we aim to improve it. Over the past twenty years, the Friends Group has been able to source more than £100,000 to finance improvements.

Over the next three to five years, we will be working in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council to test the option of community ownership and management of the Local Nature Reserve.

The Craighouse site to the east of Easter Craiglockhart Hill was first used for a Mental Health Hospital, then became a campus of Edinburgh Napier University. After the University decided to sell the site, a controversial housing development was given planning permission. A condition of the planning permission was that three areas of woodland on the Craighouse site should transfer into Council ownership and become part of an enlarged Local Nature Reserve. In 2013, the Council carried out a comprehensive consultation with the local community about the ownership and management of these woodlands and the wider Local Nature Reserve. The outcome was that the Council committed to "working with local residents and site users to ensure community involvement in the future management of the Hill's open spaces" (CEC Corporate Policy and Strategy Report – 11.6.2013). The expectation is that, over a period of three to five years, "the community group could take on an increasing number of tasks

and requirements of land management" including access improvements, habitat management, site interpretation and site presence. A community group would need to put together a sustainable Business Plan and demonstrate capacity and competence in these tasks and requirements. This Plan is one step in a process which could lead to land transfer and community ownership.

***Action:***

***Maximise opportunities for learning land management skills through joint training and by working alongside Council staff***

***Plan a pathway that could lead to community ownership in consultation with members and local stakeholders***

A further condition of the planning permission was that a payment of £150,000 should be made under Section 75 of the Town and Country Planning Act and "applied by the Council towards maintaining the woodland areas in perpetuity for the benefit of the Development and the wider community". This payment is likely to be received by the Council in 2018. Given the expectation of community ownership, it is essential that community bodies are involved and consulted about the spending of this fund. The fund should be used to pay for improvements and not for existing Council responsibilities. It would be sensible to retain a proportion of the fund to be accessed by a community body in the event of community ownership.

***Action:***

***Agree mechanisms for the allocation of these funds and timescales for spending and ensure that the views of the community are fully and properly taken into account in decision making.***

## People

Alexander Munro was a jovial character who was happy for the people of Edinburgh to walk in the Craiglockhart Hills – an early supporter of the ‘Right to Roam’.

John Cox was a showman and an entrepreneur. Skating, curling and boating were popular from the 1870’s onwards in the ponds he created. At the western end of the ponds, military bands played in a bandstand under the illumination of gas lights. An amusement park was built in the 1930’s and the lower area of Craiglockhart Woods became known as ‘Happy Valley’. There were ice cream stalls and tearooms and a dance hall and swings and roundabouts for children - it was the Disneyland of its times. As recently as the 1970’s, boats and pedalos could still be hired at the pond.

So, for nearly 250 years, Easter Craiglockhart Hill has been a destination where the people of Edinburgh could relax, exercise, have fun and enjoy the natural world.

That is still the case today. People visit the Hill for many different reasons. A survey in 2015 identified some of the different groups of users.

- **Dog Walkers**

Our survey found that more than a quarter of the visitors to the Hill were dog walkers and empirical observation suggests the proportion could be even higher. Dog walkers like being able to exercise their dogs in an open and safe environment. The majority of the dog walkers live locally though some drive and park at one of the entrances. The dog walkers are an informal network and a sort of ‘Neighbourhood Watch’. They are the first to identify and report back on anything unusual or untoward on the Hill.

- **Walkers**

Most visitors to the hill come to walk and enjoy spending time in a natural environment. Some use the paths as a short-cut to other destinations such as the local shops or the Craiglockhart Leisure Centre. Some come to pursue specific interests such as bird watching or photography. There are some ‘regulars’ who visit daily to feed the swans and ducks.

Many walkers, and especially at weekends, visit because they seek peace, serenity, green space and closeness to nature. The positive impact on mental health and well-being of spending time in 'green spaces' should not be underestimated.

- **Foragers**

The walkers include a sub-group of foragers. They pick the brambles, and wild raspberries which grow in abundance on the northern slopes of the Hill. They harvest the apples and plums from Craighouse and from the little orchard at the Craiglockhart Terrace entrance. They gather native herbs from our small raised bed, wild garlic and even the pernicious few-flowered leek to add flavour to their cooking. There are many other edible plants which can be gathered around the Hill.

***Action:***

***Add a Foragers Walk to the 'Walks and Talks' programme and a Foragers Guide to our website***

- **Cyclists**

The path from the Craiglockhart Terrace entrance to the Leisure Centre entrance is part of Cycle Route 15. Many other paths are stepped which acts as a disincentive to cycle use.

Some cyclists use the paths to commute between home and work, sometimes linking to the Union Canal path. Families with small children are frequent weekend visitors, often combining cycling with feeding the water birds or playing on the Play Trail.

There is a bike rack at the Craiglockhart Terrace entrance and cyclists use railings at several other entrances. There are, however, several entrances where there are no bike racks or suitable ways of securing a bike. The Council have a policy of not installing bike racks within a park or Local Nature Reserve but there are several internal locations where it would be helpful to cyclists to have a bike rack.

***Action:***

***Work with the Council to get additional bike racks installed in suitable locations.***

*Seek permission and alternative funding if the Council is unable to provide and install bike racks.*

- **Mountain Bikers**

Significant damage to the environment can be caused by mountain bikers leaving established paths and creating their own trails. There are also safety risks to other users of the Hill. Mountain biker usage has not been a significant problem on the Hill though there is some evidence of erosion to the side of paths and of informal trails from the hill-top down through the woodlands. In the past, some ‘jump’ structures created by bikers have been removed. It seems unnecessary and possibly counter-productive to attempt to block trails.

**Action:**

*Monitor mountain bike usage together with the Council with a view to remedial action if necessary.*

- **Runners**

The Hill is popular with runners. They are under-represented in our surveys due to the difficulty of intercepting them.

The Seven Hills of Edinburgh race in July brings upwards of 600 runners to the hill-top entering through the Leisure Centre and exiting through the Craighouse estate.

We would like to encourage more use of the Hill for running and orienteering in accordance with Active Scotland and Green Gym principles.

We would need to consider the impact on the environment of these activities and avoid mass events that could cause damage.

**Action:**

*Highlight the potential of the Hill for running on the website and in a redesigned leaflet.*

*Explore the possibility of a specific running event based on the Hill.*

*Explore whether an orienteering trail could be established.*

- **Children**

Craiglockhart Primary School started their Forest School Initiative in 2014 and meet in the woods every Wednesday. Every class in the school spends four sessions following the Forest School curriculum which combines play and

exercise with learning about the natural world. The Forest School 'hub' is at the north-east corner of the Local Nature Reserve.

Little Monkeys Nursery also have a Forest School trained worker and are frequent visitors. So too are Corner House Nursery and the Activator Holiday Play Scheme run by Craiglockhart Leisure Centre. Local Cubs, Scouts, Rainbows, Brownies and Guides groups have all also spent time in the Local Nature Reserve and the Cubs built and installed a splendid bug house in 2016.

Some local residents have complained about habitat damage in the Forest School areas where the children spend their time. It could be argued that the opening up of a few areas previously dominated by nettles and brambles is of benefit to all. We could rotate the designated locations for Forest School and other organised youth activities to reduce habitat damage.

Many of the children who spend structured time in the Local Nature Reserve with their school, nursery or youth club return to play informally at weekends and during holidays or visit with other family members. We would like to provide some learning opportunities to these families at these times. The Water of Leith Conservation Trust runs a successful programme of environmental events and activities targeted at children and families and we could learn from their experience.

***Action:***

***Monitor environmental damage from organised youth activities and take remedial action where necessary***

***Design learning materials and organise activities to help children learn about their local environment***

- **People with Additional Needs**

Although people in wheelchairs can use some paths in the Local Nature Reserve, many are steep or stepped. Maps, leaflets and entrance signage convey limited information about which paths are suitable for wheelchair users and people with visual or mobility difficulties.

The Firrhill Centre on the fringes of Craiglockhart provides day and respite services for adults with physical and learning disabilities. Initial contacts suggest that the people who attend the Centre would enjoy spending time in the Local Nature Reserve. Education materials, using Total Communication principles, could be adapted from elsewhere. There could be opportunities for volunteer support. Reciprocally, the folk from the Centre have offered to make

recommendations about making access, signage and publicity more ‘disability friendly’.

There are a number of Care Homes and Sheltered Housing complexes in Craiglockhart and the people living there could also be encouraged through visits and publicity to visit the Local Nature Reserve.

***Action:***

***Aim to be more inclusive by taking specific initiatives to encourage people with additional needs to make greater use of the Local Nature Reserve***

- **Teenage Drinkers**

During the summer of 2017, large groups of teenagers, communicating through social media, gathered most weekends at secluded locations in the Local Nature Reserve. Large quantities of litter (mostly empty cans of beer and cider) had to be removed after each 'gathering'. Some graffiti was sprayed on fences and rubbish bins and there was some minor vandalism - wing mirrors broken and fences kicked down. The greatest concern, however, was for the health and safety of these young people. Inexperience with alcohol meant that some became intoxicated and had to be helped or carried down steep and muddy slopes by their friends. The local Community Police advised against any kind of active intervention but suggested that some drinking 'dens' could be made less attractive by breaking up fire pits and cutting back surrounding trees and bushes.

***Action:***

***Monitor teenage 'gatherings' in the Local Nature Reserve and assess what action should be taken at specific sites***



A poetry reading by Lt-Col Stuart Guild on the Remembrance Walk

## Places

There are many different habitats within the Local Nature Reserve each requiring specific micro-management strategies.

### **The Pond**

The pond has a rectangular shape and covers an area of about 500 square metres with an average depth of about a metre. No fishing is allowed on the pond and, in any case, there are no fish worth catching despite devious past attempts by local anglers to introduce chub and carp. Despite the long history of boating, no boating is now allowed. In a local 'cause celebre' in 2014 (reported on the BBC news and on the front pages of 'The Scotsman' and the 'Glasgow Herald'), the longstanding kayaking school had to be cancelled since the resident male swan had persistently attacked the young kayakers.

Although the pond was originally built for boating and skating, it has now become a wildlife refuge. In 2005, the eastern shore of the pond was planted with willows and aquatic plants to provide nesting areas for water birds. A paling fence around the edge of the planted area was intended to keep the swans out of this area – there was evidence of attacks on ducklings and other fledglings by the 'old' swans that nested on the site from 1993 to 2013.

The fence is broken in places and no longer prevents access by the swans but there is no evidence of attacks by the current pair. Sometimes, a cygnet gets its head stuck in the fence and has to be rescued by SSPCA officers.

#### ***Action:***

***Assess, together with the Council, whether the paling fence should be repaired or removed or just left as it is***

There has been much debate concerning the nesting site for the swans. For as long as anyone can remember, the swans nested on an 'island' on the northern side of the pond. In 2015, the swans chose a new site in the planted area close to the stone causeway. This nest was predated by dogs or foxes and the male swan was killed. Plans to rebuild the island nest were abandoned due to the concerns of a local resident about the adjoining wall. In 2016 and 2017, the swans chose a site which was again in the planted area but at the south-east corner of the pond. Though in a vulnerable position (but excellent for viewing) cygnets were successfully raised in both years.

***Action:***

***Monitor nest locations and consider alternatives***

The swans are ringed, measured and health-checked in the summer by Lothian and Fife Swan Study Group

***Action:***

***Continue to liaise with and help the Swan Group.***

There have been concerns over water quality in the pond especially in times of low rainfall and there has occasionally been some evidence of algal bloom.

***Action:***

***Ensure that algal bloom and water quality is regularly monitored and reported to the Council for remedial action***

A fair amount of rubbish accumulates around the fringes of the pond either wind-blown or from people who litter. This litter has been cleared in the past by the twice-yearly Lothian Conservation Volunteers work squads. Since the Friends Group now possesses several sets of waders, the litter could be cleared by other volunteers in the future.

***Action:***

***Arrange for litter to be cleared from the pond by volunteers***

At one time, there was an island in the middle of the pond. Thought has been given to restoring this island or building a spit from the north-west shore. This would improve the appearance of the pond by breaking up the present 'rectangular' shape and would improve nesting and roosting habitats for water birds. 'Floating islands' have also been considered.

***Action:***

***Explore whether funding could be found for islands or other features that would increase nesting habitats***

- **North-West Shore of pond**

This area lies in front of the Leisure Centre Gym. A gate at one end marks the most used entrance to the Local Nature Reserve. This area has become the most popular feeding station for the swans and water birds.

Over the past couple of years, The Friends Group has, in partnership with the Leisure Centre, tried to make this area more attractive to visitors by:

- Filling and planting the ‘ponds’ in the wooden pontoons
- Digging out areas on either side of the boundary fence and planting with wildflower seeds and plugs
- Placing a wooden memorial bench beside the path
- Planting a living willow structure in the shape of a pirate ship for children to play around.

There are no interpretation boards in this area about the birds and the plants.

***Action:***

***Seek funding sources to consolidate and extend the landscaping initiatives. Plan, together with the Council, how best to provide appropriate information and interpretation***

- **The Marsh**

The marsh area to the east of the pond is an unusual and valuable habitat in the Edinburgh area. It may, in the past, have been the location for a skating pond or curling rink. Frogs, toads, newts and leeches are found in the marsh. A survey carried out in 2015, suggested that water quality in the pond was poor and that there was a risk of shrinkage and habitat loss due to encroaching trees and shrubs. The survey was carried out at a time of particularly low water levels and these concerns may have been unfounded. Over recent years, some of the other recommendations of this survey report have been implemented. Ponds and pools have been dug out to provide better habitats for frogs, toads and other amphibians. Greater willow-herb and other epilobium species dominate some areas of the marsh to the exclusion of other plants such as marsh orchids. Volunteers have been deployed to pull out the willow-herb and allow other plants to flourish.

***Action:***

***Deploy volunteers to continue to create ponds and pools and to control willow-herb***

- **The Curling Rink Area**

Waverley Curling Club constructed several curling rinks to the north-east of the Hill in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Most were gradually lost to housing developments. One, at what is now the Craiglockhart Terrace entrance, survived the longest. Though derelict for decades, generations of children enjoyed riding bikes and playing football and outdoor games on the concrete surface. In 1998,

the Council proposed that a swathe of land between Craiglockhart Terrace and Lockharton Crescent should be sold to housing developers. The community opposed this proposal. The Council agreed to put the land sale on hold provided that the community demonstrated capacity to look after and improve the area – a smaller-scale precursor to the present opportunity for community ownership. In the following few years, thanks to community donations and fundraising of more than ten thousand pounds, trees were planted, paths constructed, the out-buildings of a derelict hotel were demolished and the curling rink surface was broken up and filled in. The housing development proposals were, accordingly, withdrawn.

The curling rink area has been gradually improved over the years. Within the area are:

- A small orchard with apple, plum and greengage trees
- A raised bed with native herbs for community use
- A planter seat
- A living willow tunnel (known as the Magic Tunnel) and some simple play structures using recycled wood

The funding for all these initiatives was sourced by the Friends Group. All structures were built or installed by volunteers and all maintenance (other than grass cutting) is carried out by the Friends Group.

From 2015 to 2017, the whin surface covering the old curling rink was used for summer evening petanque sessions. Although there were nearly 1000 attendances at the petanque sessions over the three years, numbers declined slowly and the sessions were discontinued though informal use continues. There are a number of possible options for the future use of this space – the only open flat space in the lower part of the Hill:

- A grassed area with additional seating
- A community garden with raised beds or allotment plots
- An outdoor gym
- A playpark
- The start-point for a Trim track

Alternatively, the whin surface could just be left as it is but used:

- As a venue for concerts and theatre (perhaps during the Festival)

- For annual fetes (these were organised from 2001 to 2012)
- For a community bonfire on Guy Fawkes night (older residents remember bonfires on this site during the 1980's and 1990's)

***Action:***

***Continue to maintain the existing structures***

***Assess alternative uses for the area and consult with neighbours***

- **The Hill Top**

This area is part open meadow and part scrub dominated by gorse, brambles and willowherb. The upper and lower meadow areas are a valuable habitat for birds and insects. A view-point to the north-east looks out over Edinburgh and Fife. The hill top is a popular destination and the views are excellent.

The meadows are mown in May and September by the Estates Team of the Council's Forestry and Natural Heritage Service and then raked by a volunteer squad from Lothian Conservation Volunteers.

There are three memorial benches on the hill-top – all need some repair work around the base.

There is no information or interpretation material on the hill-top. Visitors would appreciate dioramas boards describing the features across the points of the compass.

***Action:***

***Assess, together with the Council, how volunteer management of the meadow areas can best be provided***

***Discuss with the Council what information and interpretation material could be provided and seek funding sources for this***

- **Woodland**

There is mature woodland to the west of the Hill with many ancient trees. The wetter areas at the foot of the hill are dominated by birch and willow. In the woodlands transferred from Craighouse, there are planted areas of pine and larch.

The woodlands are managed by the Forestry Team of the Council who inspect on a regular basis. Many woodland areas present access problems for large Forestry vehicles.

In certain areas (and especially in Craighouse Woods), there are open areas which could be planted with native species such as oak, beech and Scots pine to counter-balance the dominant regeneration of ash and sycamore. Similar action could also be taken when trees fall or are felled.

Underplanting of bulbs and native plants has been carried out in the lower woods and could be extended into the woodlands transferred from the Craighouse estate.

**Action:**

***Liaise with the Forestry Team with a view to acquiring the basic forestry knowledge that would be necessary under community ownership.***

***Assess, together with the Council, how access for Forestry vehicles could be improved and funded.***

***Promote the planting of native tree and plant species both by the Forestry Team and by volunteers***

- **Viewpoints**

There are two recognised viewpoints on the Hill both looking out over Edinburgh to the north. There is no directional signage to these viewpoints and no interpretation information such as diorama boards. Undergrowth often obscures the views in summer.

There is potential for a third viewpoint on the old curling rink in Craighouse Woods.

**Action:**

***Work with the Council to improve signage, information and undergrowth clearance around recognised viewpoints and, if necessary source funding.***

- **Wildflower Meadows**

Many unsuccessful attempts have been made over the years to establish wildflower meadows in the upland meadows – the most recent sowing was carried in 2014 in the lower meadow (about 300 square metres). A small

meadow (about 100 square metres) was also created in the curling rink area. Another small area (about 50 square metres) was established in 2016 on either side of the path at the west shore of the pond. A fourth area was planted early in 2018 above the ‘campus’ path between the upper and lower meadows as a remedial measure following the laying of a water pipe to the Craighouse development.

The augmented seed mix (a variant of Scotia Seeds Mavisbank mix) used in these wildflower meadows has not been particularly successful and there is little species diversity. This may be due to the location, the soil (builders rubble in some places, heavy clay in others) or the dominance of the existing seed bank. There has been better success with inserting plugs into the meadows.

***Action:***

***Deploy volunteers to rake, weed, reseed and plant plugs in the existing meadows***

***Review options either for replacement or extension of the wildflower meadows***

- **Playtrail**

A consultation about plans for the curling rink area was carried out in 2012. People living in ‘The Wickets’ housing development and in Craiglockhart Terrace were asked their opinions about a set of proposals. Several parents of young children commented on the lack of local play facilities especially for pre-school children.

With funding from South-West Neighbourhood Partnership, funding was secured to build some simple play structures dispersed across five sites in the lower woods. The structures were designed and installed by Earth Calling – a local environmental education organisation. Council officials provided advice and guidance (and all the woodchip). Some structures – the ‘Magic Tunnel’ and the ‘Pirate Ship’ are formed from living willow. Stepping stones, balance beams, ‘pixie’ seats and Magposts use natural wood often recycled from our own or nearby woodlands. The structures have proved to be very popular with local families with young children. All maintenance (fungicide application, wood preserver application, replacement wood, willow pruning, woodchip renewal etc) is carried out by the Friends Group.

***Action:***

***Continue to maintain the play trail structures***

***Assess the potential for new structures (e.g. a living willow maze) and new sites (e.g. in the woodlands transferred from Craighouse)***



The living willow 'Magic tunnel' at the Craiglockhart Terrace entrance

## Problems

A small-scale 'satisfaction' survey was carried out in May 2017. The people we talked to were concerned about:

- **Access restrictions**

This was the greatest area of concern. The Craighouse entrance to the Local Nature Reserve has been fenced off since the beginning of 2016. This closes off some favourite walking routes and the entrance is unlikely to reopen for several years. However, access to the hill-top and to the 'Orchard' area has been maintained and will continue to be maintained. The Friends Group liaised with the Craighouse developers so that path closures could be anticipated and advance warning given to people visiting the Local Nature Reserve. A series of information notices about access and about the timescale and impact of works were prepared and placed at key entrances and in the Notice Boards.

**Action:**

***Continue to liaise with Craighouse Limited and with sub-contractors on matters affecting community usage so that up-to-date information and advice can be provided***

- **Dog fouling**

This was the second greatest area of concern for those surveyed. The great majority of dog walkers act responsibly in disposing of dog waste. A minority do not. There has been criticism of the dog walking businesses which use the Hill. Often a single individual is responsible for trying to monitor a large number of dogs.

The Council's Environmental Wardens have statutory powers to issue on-the-spot fines for dog fouling but have not, as far as we know, ever exercised these powers on Easter Craiglockhart Hill.

There are no dog fouling notices at many entrances and those that do exist are small, old and unlikely to have any impact.

Strategies elsewhere to reduce dog fouling have included:

- poster campaigns
- spray-painting waste with fluorescent paint

- on-site waste bag dispensers

***Action:***

***Design and implement, together with the Council, a strategy for reducing dog fouling***

- **Litter**

By comparison with most other parks and green spaces in Edinburgh, litter is not a major problem. Litter picking is often one of the volunteer tasks on ‘Clean-Up’ days. Several local people routinely pick up other people’s litter when they walk through the Local Nature Reserve.

It is Council policy to have a waste bin at all main entrances to parks and green spaces. However, the Council’s Waste Department will not install or service bins that are more than a few yards from a road. They have also refused to install a waste bin at the Leisure Centre entrance – the most used entrance to the Local Nature Reserve. Four new entrances to the Local Nature Reserve Service will be created when the Craighouse housing development is complete.

***Action:***

***Argue for waste bins at all entrances***

- **Paths**

Many of the people surveyed and many people consulted at the 2018 AGM were concerned about the poor state of certain paths. The paths causing greatest concern were those leading from the northern side of the hill to the hill-top. These paths are muddy at the best of times and in wet winter weather become virtually impassable. Concern has also been expressed about the Meadowspot path particularly after the autumn leaf fall. This path has been raked by contractors and by volunteer squads on several occasions over recent years.

Several of the paths in the lands transferred from Craighouse are in a poor state and clearly in need of improvement – this would be an appropriate use of the S75 funds.

‘Circular’ walking routes could be created by improving existing paths or creating new ones.

**Actions:**

***Work together with the Council to represent community priorities and to plan path improvements.***

***Deploy volunteers to rake key paths and steps after autumn leaf fall.***

***Consider an 'adopt a path' scheme.***

- **Disability Access**

There are intrinsic challenges in maximising disability access across the steep wooded slopes of the Hill. Many paths are stepped, often with steep risers.

The path from the Craiglockhart Terrace entrance to the Leisure Centre entrance can be accessed by wheelchair users and a ramp from this path links to the Meadowspot path which is also wheelchair accessible. Paths from Craiglea Terrace to the hill-top and across the Craighouse estate either are or could be made wheelchair accessible.

Requests have been made to improve disability access from the two Lockharton Crescent entrances both of which are stepped but there is no obvious solution.

Signage about disability access is poor with no information at entrances, on leaflets or on the website.

**Actions:**

***Improve information about disability access on signage and publicity materials***

***Ask a disability group to carry out a disability access assessment and act on recommendations***

- **Seating**

There is not a lot of seating in the Local Nature Reserve and frequent requests for additional seating have been made. The Park Quality Assessments have also recommended additional seating. There is already seating on the hill-top and at the Craiglockhart Terrace and Leisure Centre entrances.

Some seating has been provided through the Council's Memorial Bench scheme. The Friends Group have provided the funds for other seating through donations or funding applications.

Possible locations for additional seating include:

- the west shore of the pond where people come to feed the water birds
- the lower meadow area where a picnic bench could be located close to the ash trees
- at the two viewpoints
- at the halfway-point on the paths to the hill-top (perhaps 'pinch' seats)

The Craighouse developers plan to restore the seating in the three enclaves along the path from Craiglea Place to the hill-top.

***Action:***

***Agree suitable locations for seating with the Council and explore funding options***

- **Signage**

Most aspects of signage in the Local Nature Reserve are unsatisfactory.

There are no maps or welcome signs at entrances.

There is little information that would help wheelchair users or people with disability or visual difficulties.

There are not enough Notice Boards. The existing ones hold only 3 A4 sheets and several are broken.

There is little interpretation signage – one exception is the Social History Board designed and installed by the Friends Group.

Despite a few finger posts, directional signage is poor. First-time visitors to the Local Nature Reserve often have difficulty in navigating around the site.

The Friends Group have produced detailed proposals to improve signage and submitted these to the Council.

***Action:***

***Review, together with the Council, all aspects of signage and agree improvements***

- **Invasive species**

There are not, at present, significant problems with invasive species in the Local Nature Reserve. Small stands of Japanese knotweed in the lower woods were

eliminated by spraying in 2014. A larger stand in the transferred woodlands was treated by the Craighouse developers in 2016.

Few-flowered leek is a recent non-native invader and may crowd out the wild garlic which grows in the same locations. There does not appear to be any effective management strategy at present to control few-flowered leek.

Other conspicuous non-native species include variegated yellow archangel, rosebay willowherb and Michaelmas daisy but none present control problems.

***Action:***

***Monitor invasive and non-native species and report for treatment if necessary***



Picnic for the Queens Golden Jubilee in the curling rink area

## **Publicity and Promotion**

- **Website**

Our website - [www.craiglockhartwoods.com](http://www.craiglockhartwoods.com) - was redesigned and upgraded in 2006 and again in 2013. Regular news stories and information about events and activities are posted.

As consideration is given to community ownership, the website could be used more for consultation and feedback rather than simply for information. Visitors to the website should be asked for their views on the Community Plan. A short summary version could be highlighted on the website.

***Action:***

***Maintain information flow on website but with more emphasis on feedback and member input***

***Introduce a booking facility for events and activities***

***Measure 'hits' on website to assess impact***

- **Facebook**

A Facebook Page was started in 2016. The volume of posts is not yet high and the number of followers is just over 200.

***Action:***

***Work to increase Facebook input and coverage***

- **Newsletter to members**

Regular e-newsletters are circulated to about 300 of our 400 members.

New members are recruited at events and activities and by informal contact.

***Action:***

***Increase membership through leafleting, posters, website promotion and asking existing members to recruit new members***

- **Posters**

Posters are used to advertise events and activities. Some posters are placed in the four Notice Boards scattered around the Local Nature Reserve. Others are tied to railings or gates at entrances or access points. It would be easier and less

unsightly if snap-frames could be provided at these locations. Community Notice boards at Sports Centres, supermarkets and the local undertakers are also used.

Posters could also be used as part of a strategy to reduce dog fouling and to encourage dog owners to act responsibly by keeping dogs on a leash around nesting sites.

***Action:***

***Plan with the Council how snap-frames could be provided and funded  
Design and produce posters for specific purposes***

- **Leaflets**

The text and photos for the 'War Poets Trail' leaflet were provided by the Friends Group with design and printing carried out by Edinburgh Napier University. The leaflet is available to people who visit the War Poets Collection at the Craiglockhart campus of Edinburgh Napier University and can also be collected from the leaflet stands at the Craiglockhart Tennis Centre and the Water of Leith Visitor Centre. The leaflet is also handed out at events and activities.

***Action:***

***Distribute 'War Poets Trail' leaflets and reprint/ redesign as required***

The 'Nature Trail' leaflet was first designed some twenty years ago. The maps and text need to be redesigned not least in view of the expansion of the Local Nature Reserve resulting from the transfer of the Craighouse woodlands. People increasingly use social media and the internet to plan activities but there is still a need for a well designed leaflet. A new leaflet could place greater emphasis on using the Local Nature Reserve for leisure, exercise and sporting activities. The Local Nature Reserve could be marketed as a community 'Green Gym' in line with the Scottish Government's Active Scotland strategy.

***Action:***

***Redraft the text of the leaflet, redraw the map and explore funding sources***

## Plans

- **Volunteers**

Voluntary work on the Local Nature Reserve has taken many shapes and forms:

The Friends Group has organised a considerable number of ‘Clean-Up’ days which have involved local members of the community in a huge variety of tasks

The staff of Craiglockhart Leisure and Tennis Centre undertake two ‘Green team’ days usually in May

Lothian Conservation Volunteers rake and improve the upland meadows during sessions in late spring and early autumn

Other volunteer contributions have come from ‘The Dirty Weekenders’ (Edinburgh Universities Conservation group), from the CSO team, from the Green Team, from corporate groups, from local Scouts and from Duke of Edinburgh Award students.

The volume of voluntary work will need to increase as the area of the Local Nature Reserve expands and as more land management tasks are taken on in anticipation of community ownership. A ‘Hill Work Squad’ could be recruited. They would commit to a specified number of volunteer hours per year and could be deployed to deal with the specific tasks that arise in each season month – planting and pruning in the spring, strimming and meadow management in the summer, leaf clearing and path improvements in the autumn. Maintenance responsibilities could be gradually devolved with advice and training from the Estates Team of the Council

Dog walkers and other regular visitors to the Local Nature Reserve already operate as an informal ‘Hill Watch’ and report anything unusual or untoward. This could be formalised if these ‘regulars’ were given information about how and when to contact other services such as the Council, the SSPCA and the Community Police. They could report directly about fallen or dangerous trees, fly-dumping, fire raising, vandalism and injured or dead birds and animals.

***Action:***

***Review volunteer inputs and responsibilities with the Council***

***Enlist regular visitors in a ‘Hill Watch’ service and circulate action sheets to them***

## ***Recruit a 'Hill Work Squad' team of volunteer workers***

- **Events**

Various different events have been organised over the years.

For more than a decade, a popular annual fete was held in the curling rink area. There were pony rides, a tombola, cake stalls and jazz bands.

During 2017, more than 200 people attended a series of 'Walks and Talks' - the Geology Walk, the History Walk, the Botany Walk and the Remembrance Walk.

Events like this bring the community together and reinforce the value of Easter Craiglockhart Hill to the surrounding community.

### ***Action:***

***Plan a programme of events to increase community interest and participation***

- **Projects**

Over the years, many projects have been designed to make use of funding opportunities. Often, these sources can only be accessed by voluntary organisations like the Friends Group. Funding sources have included:

- The Community Fund of South-West Edinburgh Neighbourhood Partnership
- The Action Earth Fund of Volunteering Matters
- Edinburgh and Lothian Greenspace Trust
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- SusTrans
- Craiglockhart Community Council
- Waste Recycling Environment Ltd (WREN)
- 

More than £100K has been accessed in this way over the past couple of decades. The S75 fund could serve as 'seed money' or match-funding for future funding applications.

***Action:***

***Continue to identify projects, together with the Council, and to submit funding applications***

- **Income Generation**

Community ownership will require a community body to be financially viable and sustainable. Options to increase revenue income would include:

- Membership fees and covenants
- Encouraging legacies and bequests
- Sales of merchandise
- Sponsorships
- Charges to corporate bodies
- Set or suggested fees for walks and activities
- Income from events
- Crowdfunding

Uncommitted income of this kind can be used flexibly to cover revenue costs or fund improvements.

In April 2018, the Friends Group was awarded a grant of £42547 from the Community Led Activity Fund of the Big Lottery Scotland. The grant will be used to cover the costs of employing a part-time Community Engagement Worker for three years. The worker should be in post by July 2018 and will make a huge difference to achieving the goals set out in this Plan.

The worker will be expected to:

- Increase volunteer activity and land management skills through the Hill Work Squad, the Hill Watch scheme and other volunteer initiatives
- Develop information and learning materials for young people and for people with additional needs
- Plan and deliver an increased volume and diversity of events and activities that aim to be as inclusive as possible
- Promote Easter Craiglockhart Hill as a location for sport and exercise
- Encourage active membership of the Friends Group
- Seek feedback and consult on activities and forward plans

***Action:***

***Plan an income generation strategy to steadily increase uncommitted revenue income***

***Involve the Community Engagement Worker in tasks and activities and review outcomes***

- **Community Feedback**

The Friends Group exists to represent the views of the community. These views are often expressed informally. Friends and neighbours meet when walking the dog or feeding the ducks on the pond. The AGM offers a more structured opportunity for community feedback.

The Friends Group will use AGMs, events, the website and social media to get feedback about this plan and future plans. We will listen to all views and consider all ideas and try always to act in the best interests of the community.

Easter Craiglockhart Hill is a wonderful community asset that needs to be protected and cherished.

DRAFT - April 2018.