**FRIENDS OF EASTER CRAIGLOCKHART HILL**

**Annual General Meeting**

**Monday 20 June 2022 at Meggetland Sports Complex**

1. **Apologies and Welcome**

Ewan welcomed everyone to the 23rd AGM of Friends of Easter Craiglockhart Hill with a special welcome to Councillor Christopher Cowdy.

There were apologies from Gavin and Moira Scott, Margaret and Ronnie Hill, Robin and Jane McLaren, Norma and Jamie Malcolm, Peter Moore, Graeme Hastie, Kevin McKay, Stephanie Boschung, Marjory Kay, Andrew Law and Pru Cooper.

1. **Chairman’s Report**

Ewan outlined the challenges that had faced the group over the last year. The Covid pandemic imposed constantly changing regulations and requirements about gatherings and social contact. A landslip and the subsequent discovery of asbestos led to the closure of the Meadowspot Path. Trees have been lost to ash die back disease and more will be lost in the future. In the light of these experiences, community ownership no longer seemed viable and we have therefore formally withdrawn our interest in this.

Despite Covid undermining many of our plans, we did achieve a lot in the last year. Covid made it impossible to deliver the planned Walks and Talks programme but a very successful funghi walk was held in the autumn. The summer activities programme planned in 2021 for young children had to be curtailed but a shorter programme went ahead.

Covid meant that we were not able to organise volunteer sessions as often as we wanted and, when we did, attendance, understandably, was not always great. However, the volunteers of our Hill Work Squad were able to plant lots of trees, rake the autumn leaves from the paths and clear out the storage shed. We were helped too by Watsonian Sixth formers working with the Green Team and by Lothian Conservation Volunteers. Special mention has to go to local teenagers carrying out the volunteering component of their Duke of Edinburgh Award. And as ever lots of local individuals helped look after the woods and hill in all sorts of ways.

Earth Calling built living willow extensions to the existing play structures beside the Leisure Centre and at the curling rink at Craiglockhart Terrace and built a clamberlog structure from felled timber. It is rewarding to see all the play areas and structures so well used.

A highlight of the year was the installation of two panorama boards and a circular stone seat on the top of the hill. The structures were built by our local dry stone wallers. The boards detail the views looking north and south and were designed by Lindsay Snedden from Lunaria Ltd. The boards are in memory of David Rennie who lived locally and loved the hills. We are grateful to the Rennie family for their generous donation and to all those who helped with the construction.

At the end of 2021 we said goodbye to our Community Engagement Worker, Isobel Hazel Rowntree Jones, who worked for us for 3 years. She is greatly missed and is a hard act to follow. Dan Raynor joined us in February this year and has tackled the work with great energy and enthusiasm.

Despite the difficulties, Ewan considered that it had not been too bad a year. Once again, Easter Craiglockhart Hill was awarded a green flag and was rated very highly in the Council’s Park Quality Assessments.

Looking ahead, Ewan reported that we have lots of hopes and plans for the future.

* The Meadowspot Path will open later this summer and once the slope has been stabilised and cleared of contaminated material, we shall work with the Council to replant trees and restore habitats
* We will organise more walks and talks.
* We will develop plans for better use of the two curling rink areas.
* We will work with the Council to improve paths. The priority will be to extend the steps leading to the top of the hill across a badly eroded section.
* We shall explore how habitats for wildlife and birdlife could be improved round Craiglockhart Pond. We would like to remove the pontoons and rewild the western end of the pond.
* We will overhaul our volunteering strategy to better match tasks to individual interests.
* Perhaps the most important task for the next year is to explore how we can continue to employ a Community Engagement Worker. The Lottery funding for the post expires at the end of the year.

Ewan finished by reporting that 2021 was another successful year for the resident swans who produced and raised six cygnets and are busy raising six more this year. That is nearly fifty cygnets in total since they arrived on the pond.

**3. Community Engagement Worker: The Highlights So Far**

Dan Raynor introduced himself to the meeting and set out all the varied tasks he had carried out since he took up post in February 2022. In the future he said he hopes to organise more frequent and more varied volunteering opportunities and so to attract more volunteers. He will roll out the Learning Resource Pack that Izzy produced to schools and he will continue with a seeds and planting programme.

1. **Wildflowers and Wildlife**

Erin Jackson talked about the wildflower planting that she has been organising with the help of lots of volunteering home gardeners. Around 150 perennials have been planted on the hill, primrose seeds are being nurtured in the volunteers’ homes and she has a further 300 primrose plugs for planting. She explained how the hill is a very suitable habitat for primroses. It is likewise for dog violets and she has 150 of these as well. The cost of the plants was covered by the profits from collecting and recycling the scrap metal deposited on the hill over the years - Metals into Petals.

An online map will detail what has been planted and where.

Jim Heath explained the importance of planting to increase the biodiversity of the area by providing plant food to attract more insects in the first instance who then provide nourishment to attract and sustain more wildlife on the hill.

1. **General Discussion**

Christopher Cowdy asked how much had been made from the scrap metal removed from the hill. The profit after costs was just over £200. He asked about our awareness of the Community Grants provided by South West Neighbourhood Partnership and was advised that we have benefitted from several grants from this Fund. He inquired if we had dates for future work squads and was advised he would be informed when they are arranged. He asked about how we had publicised the Learning Resource Pack within the Council.

Kay Smith inquired if we had had complaints about noise from the children playing on the hill.

Jon Cossar asked about the legality of using e-scooters on the hill and Ewan said he would establish the position.

Angela Tunstall suggested that we take fresh initiatives to increase membership and awareness.

1. **Adoption of Annual Accounts**

Bill Troup presented the annual accounts. He noted that we hold a balance of £3600 in unrestricted funds. Our expenditure was greater than our income in the last year since we were spending down grant income received in previous years. We received no new grants in the financial year. Most of our new income came from generous individual donations. Our overall costs were just under £16000 and the largest part of this was for staff and project costs.

Bill asked that the accounts be approved.

Proposed: Alistair McBeth

Seconded: Jim Heath

1. **Appointment of the Auditor**

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

Proposed: Pauline Troup

Seconded: Margaret Marr

1. **Election of trustees and Office Bearers**

Ewan listed the trustees and office bearers. He himself is the Chair, Bill Troup is the Treasurer and Hilda Henderson is the Secretary. The other trustees are David Knight, Jim Heath, Alistair McBeth, Simon Hart and Graeme Hastie. Ewan asked that the trustees be reappointed.

Proposed: Lindsay Snedden

Seconded: Betty Geissler

1. **AOB**

None

1. **Close of Meeting**

Ewan closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their support and for attending the AGM.