

## Water of Leith Basins Stakeholder Group - Meeting 2

21 June 2024

15:00-17:00

Mimi's Bakehouse, Leith

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### Attendees:

- Ben Macpherson – MSP for Edinburgh Northern and Leith (Chair)
- Gabby Castaneda – Office Manager of Ben Macpherson MSP
- Gareth Barwell – Service Director, Operational Services, City of Edinburgh Council
- Jack Caldwell – Councillor, Leith Walk Ward
- Alasdair Sibbald – Forth Ports PLC
- Dan Multon – Representing Bluefield 1502 LLP, owners of basin 2, 3 and 4
- Don Liddle – Representing Water of Leith 2000, owner of basin 1
- Hilary Thacker – FOWL.B
- George Johnston – FOWL.B
- Jim Jarvie – SOS Leith
- Celia Mainland – SOS Leith
- Helen Brown – Water of Leith Conservation Trust
- Peter Finnie – SEPA
- Pamela Mackay – SEPA
- Brendan Reilly – Chair of Leith Chamber of Commerce
- Chris Casselden – Acting Police Sergeant, Community Policing Team
- Andy Bevan – Observing

Apologies from: Foyso Choudry MSP, Miles Briggs MSP, Cllr Katrina Faccenda, Cllr Chas Booth, Cllr Amy McNeese-Mechan, Cllr Scott Arthur, Scott Fraser (Scottish Water), Karen Dee (Scottish Water), Alan Pedley (Ocean Mist)

### Welcome and Review Meeting 1 Notes and Actions

1. BM opened by welcoming all and expressed gratitude to all those who could attend the second meeting at relatively short notice.
  2. BM stated that this meeting was happening earlier than expected, so most actions still to be actioned, however as DM and DL were wanting to attend, this meeting was called sooner. Next meeting will likely take place autumn.
  3. BM stated that Scottish Water was trying to attend but were unable to last minute due to illness.
- A. **ACTION:** *As Scottish Water were unable to attend, before the next meeting BM to connect basin owners, DM and DL, and HB from Water of Leith Conservation Trust for bilateral meeting*
4. All were content with the notes from the last meeting.
  5. All were content to carry-over the actions remaining from the last meeting.
  6. BM stated that notes going forward will be more concise and will focus on actions.

## Continuing Conversation on Topics of Concern from Meeting 01:

### **Silting:**

7. DM shared plans for future of the basin owned by Bluefield 1502 LLP.
  8. DM stated he actively wants input and views from the Water of Leith Basins Stakeholder Group.
  9. Concerns about silting were raised.
  10. AS wanted to bring a colleague from Forth Ports who knows more about marine issues, however, they weren't available this time, but will aim to bring them to the next meeting as they might be able to provide more input regarding the current situation.
- B. **ACTION:** *Forth Ports to look into the issue about silting and how they handle it in the port and to share with the group, if possible.*
11. Concerns raised about silting and flooding.
  12. JJ mentioned the issue of getting insurance for people who lives near Water of Leith.
  13. JJ also mentioned meeting with ABI (Association of British Insurers) a number of years ago, where they stated that they couldn't accept SEPA's flood risk assessment for insurance purposes.
  14. PF stated that that shouldn't be the case.
- C. **ACTION:** *BM offered to connect PF to contact at ABI for a meeting to clarify.*
15. GB stated that the CEC has undertaken two flood risk assessments in the last number of years.
  16. Agreed that silting is a project which will take time and all parties will need to work together as the cost to solve silting is too great for just one party. All need to come together to find a solution. Extracting silting may not be required.
- D. **ACTION:** *GB and CEC to look into who owns the Bernard Street bridge where a lot of the silting builds up.*
- E. **ACTION:** *GB and CEC in collaboration with SEPA and HB from Water of Leith Conservation Trust to look into doing another flood risk assessment for the area.*
17. All considered the silting itself, as work has not been done recently to analyse what is in it, it isn't known if it is harmful.
  18. All considered wider point of does silting need to be removed.
  19. All considered that if it does need to be removed it needs to be for a reason. For example, poses risk to flooding, or is dangerous, etc.
  20. BM stated that Scottish Water have previously said that there might be some issues installing some of the proposed Combined Sewage Overflow (CSO) screens due to silting in the basins.
  21. JC mentioned SEPA consultation about areas of most risk of flooding and that the consultation closes soon. People may want to contribute to it. ([SEPA launch consultation on review of areas most at risk of flooding across Scotland | Beta | SEPA | Scottish Environment Protection Agency](#)) (Closed 24 June 2024).
  22. All considered the need for the silting to be studied so that there is more information on what is in the silt and what should be done.

23. HB stated that the previous Professor from Stirling University who might have been able to do this is unfortunately moving away.
24. PF stated that he might have a contact at Herriot-Watt University and would be happy to connect HB for Water of Leith Conservation Trust to explore.

F. **ACTION:** PF to connect HB to contact in Herriot-Watt University who might be able to help regarding analysis of silting.

#### **Detritus:**

25. Due to higher rains lately, detritus has been more common.
26. AS said that the boons protecting the port recently burst due to high rainfall.
27. AS stated that Forth Ports got a contractor, however there is now a nest, and nothing can be done until the birds move. Everything is ready to go when the birds move so should make the situation better near the Victoria Swing Bridge.
28. DL asked about tree felling further up the river and how it ends up down in the basins.

#### **Quay Walls:**

29. AS and DM announced that they have reached an agreement in principle for splitting the cost of removing the buddleia in basins 2, 3, and 4 and DL agreed this for basin 1 too. DM has commissioned the same people who work with Water of Leith Conservation Trust to do this. Details to be finalised.
30. GJ welcomed this.
31. BM reminded the group that we are all aware of the difficulties which groups like SOS Leith and FOWL.B and others who care about the area have experienced trying to get improvements to the area made and because of their work we are able to bring all parties together in this stakeholder group. As a group we should look forward to work collaboratively together to get positive outcomes for the area together. This announcement is an early positive outcome.
32. DM will share the quote and details with relevant parties.
33. Questions were raised about buddleia in relation to quay walls owned by residential buildings surrounding the basins – DL, DM and AS will engage with all relevant parties to remove all remaining buddleia.

G. **ACTION:** BM to help DM, DL and AS to engage with all relevant parties in the area to reach an agreement to undertake removal of buddleia from all quay walls surrounding basins.

H. **ACTION:** DM, AS and DL will lead on the buddleia issue for the area. Ideally all buddleia removed all together. Will engage with Alan Pedley from Ocean Mist as well.

#### **Anti-social behaviour and Public Safety:**

34. CC from Leith Police Station joined the meeting.
35. CC said he is aware of the reports which have been shared with him about local drug taking and anti-social behaviour. Also aware of people jumping into the Water of Leith.
36. CC said although there has been more recent anecdotal anti-social behaviour, overall, there hasn't been a spike in anti-social behaviour.
37. Local police will do more to work with local businesses about prevention and how to deal with this.

38. CC mentioned that specific hotspots are now more where there are benches and the area of the road which has been closed off to pedestrians and cyclists which is something to consider.
39. Police will try to patrol the Shore area more often when they are able to.
- I. ***Action:*** CC and BR will connect about how police and businesses can work together more.

*Any other business:*

40. All consented to email addresses being shared amongst each other so connections can be made, or actions taken forward outwith the meeting.
41. HB raised issues about screen cleaning in one of the CSO's. Would like to engage Scottish Water about this issue.
- J. ***Action:*** BM to connect HB to Scottish Water to discuss this issue but also possibly a further issue with landowners.
42. DL also asked about a possible nominal cost / tax all along the water so that money is raised and available to carry out essential works.
43. BM mentioned that it is difficult to create a new tax for the council, however, he mentioned the Visitor Levy and how he has said to CEC that he would like some money raised to be spent in the Shore area.
44. DM mentioned that he might bring his architect along who would be helping with his designs for the Water of Leith basins to the meeting after the next.
45. JJ and CM mentioned issues with rubbish and bin collections near the Shore. Especially near the Pizza Express. Possibly worse because of more tourists coming and the area will only get busier over the summer.
- K. ***Action:*** CM will email BM with the details and BM will ask GB and Ward Councillors to engage on the issue.

**MEETING ENDS**

**FOR REFERENCE – ACTIONS FROM MEETING 1:**

- A. ***Action:*** A need for more in-depth silt analysis SEPA to consider the point and whether a study/evaluation this is something they would be able to do. Others to also reach out to previous university contacts to request if a thorough study can be done. Likely that University of Stirling could be commissioned to analyse what is in the silt.
- B. ***Action:*** Water of Leith Conservation Trust are going to have a Debris Discovery Day, where they will collect and clear debris from the Water of Leith and get local population to sort it into different categories so they can get a better picture of the debris and study it.
- C. ***Action:*** City of Edinburgh Council to look into engagement with local schools about local marine littering and the impact on the Shore area and the Water of Leith.
- D. ***Action:*** City of Edinburgh Council to consider more engagement with local businesses on education about littering and the impact on the Shore area and the Water of Leith. To work with the Leith Chamber of Commerce and individual businesses.
- E. ***Action:*** Mr Multon and other landowners to update the group about considerations surrounding enhancing safety ladders in the basins.

- F. **ACTION:** BM to share with the group the Forth Ports legal document about quay wall ownership, once AS and colleagues have issued it to BM.
- G. **ACTION:** While Forth Ports are putting ladders or safety ropes in Victoria Dock and around their areas of responsibility in Basin 1, landowners to engage with Forth Ports and SFRS to take any learning and meet their duty of care too.
- H. **ACTION:** Leith Chamber of Commerce and SFRS to connect on more education for businesses looking to learn how to help.
- I. **ACTION:** Update to the stakeholder group as to progress on the quote for the buddleia in basin 2 and wider efforts to remove it from all basin walls
- J. **ACTION:** Water of Leith Conservation Trust stated that they are planning a 1 September Coalie Park day. Would like to invite all at the stakeholder group to attend.
- K. **ACTION:** Meet again in around 3 months' time. All agreed they wanted an in-person meeting in possibly May or June. All agreed that scheduling of this meeting should depend on the availability of the landowner, to ensure Daniel Multon and/or a director can attend.