



SPRING NEWSLETTER 2015

Welcome Friends to our fourth Newsletter. It has been twelve months since our last Newsletter and much has happened in that time. We have a number of issues on the agenda and believe this Newsletter is the best way to share and highlight these.

CUSTOM HOUSE

Firstly our success in supporting the Council's purchase of Leith Customs House using funds from the Common Good Fund. The Council are now in the process of agreeing to lease the building to the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust (SHBT). This venture will see SHBT work in tandem with the local community to restore the building as a hub in the heart of Leith.



This show piece of Leith's outstanding maritime history has been dreamed of for decades and it now seems it will come to fruition. Initial repairs and cleaning inside the building are planned over the course of the next few months.

SHBT will manage its temporary usage and take responsibility for developing a capital project to secure the long term future of the building. Firstly an Options Appraisal will be undertaken and feedback sought from the people of Leith as to the contents. Interactive exhibitions are proposed to attract local people of all ages, schools in particular, plus tourists to enable full consideration on the potential impact on Leith.

Important to this whole venture has been the teamwork between Leith organisations coordinated by the Leith Trust, including the three Community Councils, Spirit of Leithers, Leith History Society, Leith Civic Trust, Greener Leith, Arts and local Residents groups, local businesses and of course The Friends.

CONSERVATION AREA STATUS Following our lack of success to have the historic Inner Harbour / Basins Listed and protected by Historic Scotland we are now contributing to City of Edinburgh Council's reappraisal and upgrading of the Leith Conservation Area. This will result in an online interactive document. We hope to have a significant part of the information we gathered for the the Listing application incorporated into the Character Appraisal section of the document that is due to be launched later this year.

SILT & FLOOD RISK The Friends met with SEPA and Council officials to discuss flooding/silt risk to the Water of Leith Basins. The outcome has been confirmation that a full survey of the silt levels in the Basins will be undertaken this year, earlier than planned, to assess these against the last survey in 2004. The risk was recently highlighted when a large bough stuck across one of the Sandport Bridge arches and causing a mini-dam.

The Friends of the Water of Leith Basin



VOLUNTEER CLEAN-UPS Exec members Calum McKay and Don Giles, continue to organise periodic clean-ups on the Water of Leith walkway when needed. One took place in October and some of the happy volunteers can be seen on the left. As always this was a joint venture with the Water of Leith Conservation Trust plus the regular assistance by Cadets from Dregghorn Air Training Corps.

We have been delighted with the results as there now seems to be much less paper, bottles and general rubbish. We would be grateful for any feedback to see if you share our impressions. The Council team again provided great help with pickers, gloves etc. and then removing the rubbish collected. We continued in February, meeting in Coalie Park as usual, and working our way up the walkway from Sandport Bridge. While only a few braved the weather the efforts have helped to show off the wild flowers

BIRDS ON THE RIVER Our more common and resident birds continue to flourish and amuse us. Once again our Swan family are preparing their nest and we look forward to a new set of signets. In recent weeks they have been joined in the Basins by a large number of other swans, at one time totaling 20 and their mating rituals have been an added spectacle in the area. New visitors include Canadian Geese.

GARDEN Our Sandport Bridge community garden is now in its fourth year, and continues to flourish and be kept litter free, mainly due to the efforts of Exec member John Russell.

FLOWER PLANTING We are now into the second Spring of our bulbs and wild flowers planting project along the riverside. This has been very successful with good show of Snowdrops and Winter Aconites. We can now see Daffodils and Crocus in flower with Bluebells and Primroses in leaf. The wild flowers that will flower in the Summer are less predictable. Most did take last year but many did not, but that's what makes them wild and fascinating. Let's see what 2015 brings.



You can find out more about the Friends on our website <http://friendsleith.com/> or on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfTheWaterOfLeithBasin>.
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