



Northfield & Willowbrae Community Council Annual Report (April 2024– March 2025)

Introduction

This **Annual Report** covers the 12 months from 1st April 2024 until 31st March 2025 and outlines the activities of the Northfield & Willowbrae Community Council over that period. An **Engagement Report**, for the same period, covering the Community Council consultation activities with its local communities and external bodies, is produced separately. There is also a separate **Financial Report** for the 2024/2025 financial year.

Community Council Activities

Consultations:

Consultations responded to by the Community Council included:

- City of Edinburgh Councils (CEC) consultation on a revision to their '*Scheme of Community Councils and boundary review*' | Phase two - submitted April 2025 and Phase three - submitted September 2025. Disappointingly, CEC did not act on some of the key issues raised by Community Councils across the city e.g. lack of adequate funding, the need for help with secretarial duties and failure to give adequate weight to strongly held local opinions on planning issues.
- Historic Environment Scotland's draft, 10-year '*Strategic Outline Plan for Holyrood Park*'. Following the submissions made in December 2023, three members of NWCC attended a further 'Town Hall' consultation workshop organised by Lorna Slater MSP in December 2024, where Community Councillors(CCs) were able to voice the various views and concerns that have been raised with us during our Local Place Plan consultations.
- CEC Local Transport Improvements Fund – Transport Services asked community councils for their suggested projects to improve local accessibility and active travel as c£50k was available for each CC area. N&WCC formed a small sub-group, along with input from Willowbrae Climate Active Network and tabled 18 possible local transport schemes of varying scale, in early March 2025.

Planning issues:

This year, our Planning Officer has continued to produce a rolling spreadsheet of applications within the community council area where the community council has raised a comment or objection, and those granted or refused by the City Council. In light of the Housing Emergency declared by CEC, we have continued to object to applications to change residential homes to short-term lets. Comments were also made on three draft CEC Planning Guidance documents - Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas; Householder

applications and the Edinburgh Design Guide, all of which aim to help improve planning applications.

Planning Applications

A major planning application for student flats at Willowbrae Road was lodged in early December 2023. Despite massive local opposition and the objections of the Community Council, Ward Councillors and Tommy Sheppard MP, the developer did not wait for the City Council to consider their application and appealed 'Non-Determination' in March 2024. The Scottish Government Directorate of Planning & Environmental Appeals (DPEA) Independent Reporter approved the development in September 2024. As yet, no work has begun, but there is no further avenue for appeal. An application for another 13 student flats on the adjacent site (former Northfield Fry) was submitted by another developer in January 2025 and NWCC submitted a similar objection.

New Planning applications:

In November, NWCC was notified of a new potential application for more Student Housing at Jock's Lodge on the Ball Room Pool Hall site. Two Community Councillors had an initial online meeting with the developers to hear about their plans and ask questions and subsequently attended an open evening in December 2024 where the plans were on display for c360 student flats. Given the overwhelming opposition to the existing Jock's Lodge student flats development (that was approved on Appeal in August 2023), NWCC has committed to holding a public meeting as soon as the formal application for further student flats is lodged with the Council.

Local Place Plan (LPP)

Work has continued on the preparation of our 'Local Place Plan' on environmental and planning-related issues which will feed into the new City Development Plan 2030-40 Details of various consultation events that have occurred and are planned for summer/autumn can be found in the Engagement Report.

Environment Fair:

This event was held on Saturday 21st September 2024 at Northfield Community Council and was our most successful yet, attracting large numbers of adults and children. (See the separate Engagement Report for more details).

Local Parks & Greenspace:

Baronscourt Park

The Community Council applied to the CEC Community Grants Scheme and obtained a grant of £1,750 towards installing a metal bench in the park. This was installed by the CEC Parks Team in January 2025.

Following two surveys of park users in 2022 and 2023 that highlighted the need for street lighting columns on the main paths across the park, the Community Council initially applied to CEC 'Place Based Investment Programme' for funding, but the application was withdrawn when CEC provided the necessary £25,000 funding. The energy saving path lights were installed in March 2025.

An application to improve Royal High Nursery School wildlife garden was submitted to the CEC Community Grants Scheme. Although this was initially to be considered in February 2025, the decision has been postponed until May 2025 due to the volume of applications.

Street Tree Replacement Programme - after a survey of potential spaces to replant street trees in the various neighbourhoods across the community council area in early 2024, the community council agreed to submit a major application to CEC 'Place Based Investment Fund', supported by Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust (E&LGT), in March 2024. However, as the £1.2M fund was oversubscribed and the funds had not arrived from Scottish Government, CEC Housing Committee delayed consideration till August 2024. As the funds have still not arrived, the scheme is in abeyance, though in February 2025 CEC asked if applicants were still interested if funds should be made available and N&WCC and E&LGT replied positively.

An application to Royal Society of Edinburgh for Street Tree survey & education programme (£5,000), via Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust, to involve Parsons Green & Royal High Primary Schools, was unsuccessful. However, the outcome of an application for £2,500 to Edinburgh Direct charity, for several more street trees, is due to be known in May 2025.

Other Matters:

There are several ongoing issues which the Community Council are pursuing. These include:
69 Bus - Ensure all relevant bus shelters have new timetables. Follow up CEC plans to obtain a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for double-yellow lines at corner at top of Lady Nairne Loan. - December 2025 - consider extension of route to Fort Kinnaird if passenger numbers rise and CEC consider minor change to contract, as operator HCL are interested.

Piershill Community Flat - Determine CEC Housing intentions for this property and if necessary, support residents' wishes to retain for community use. Let Piershill community, in both Squares, know the outcome regardless.

Morrison's main access - from Portobello Road was considered too wide for pedestrians to cross and following a meeting with CEC Transport Engineer, it was confirmed CEC will re-design and amend the junction in 2024/25, but no action as yet. Morrison's have also been approached to improve their entrance environment and replant trees in their car park.

Hamilton Terrace Safety Issue - Keep pursuing CEC Transport: Operational Team, as well as Road Safety Team on various capital issues and consider the outcome of TRO for

Duddingston Rd. Ensure completion of repairs to the road signs and poles at St John's Primary School.

Cavalry Park - Following a meeting in January with all stakeholders - owners, lessees, users and those involved in maintenance - a number of possible solutions were explored and actions agreed. The Community Council is continuing to ensure that these are followed up and will consider getting all parties back together later in the year. (See Engagement Report.)

Local Transport Improvements- Follow-up NWCC's March submission on Local Transport Improvements. Possible meeting with CEC Transport Manager.

Environment and Community Fair - Set date in September- Apply for a CEC grant towards costs. Inform various participant groups and produce publicity poster / print / distribute.

Anti-social issues at Royal High Primary School Nursery - Promote the need for additional security measures, subject to CEC budget.

Local Heritage - as a grant application for an interpretation board was successful at Piershill former barracks, comment on draft text and arrange installation. Outcome of application for Northfield Estate board due in May 2025. Draft other board texts e.g. Lady Nairne Cottage / Duddingston Mill / Ken Buchanan / Hibs 'Ghost' stadium at Mountcastle. Consider possible external grant sources & locations.

Noticeboard for Willowbrae area at Lilyhill Terrace - after site meeting with Historic Environment Scotland in February 2025, favoured location is not suitable. Costs for a new board and potential location to be assessed.

Election for new Community Council in February / March 2025

Alongside the publicity campaign run by CEC, NWCC put up posters and delivered flyers and banners to encourage new recruits to join. We also posted information on our social media and held an open meeting at Willowbrae Church in February 2025. We are delighted to have had ten nominations for our fourteen places, allowing us to form a new Community Council.

New Community Council Office Bearers and Members

Northfield & Willowbrae Community Council currently has 10 Community Councillors:

- Ruth Pearson– Chair.
- Lauren Kennelly - Secretary.
- Margaret Bennett - Engagement Officer.
- Chris Alcorn - Treasurer / Planning Secretary.
- Dave Armstrong – Minute Secretary
- James Keating.

- Sunila Nimalasuriya
- Rebeca Diaz-Vasquez
- George Callaghan
- Gordon MacDonald

NB: John Nisbet and Frances Devlin resigned from the Community Council in May 2024. Nick Marshall, Charlie Wood and Ellie Burroughs retired in March 2025. We are grateful to all of them for their contributions and service to the community and wish them well in the future.

Regular Community Council Meetings in 2025-2026:

- May 13th, 2025; AGM.

The dates for the meetings of the newly established Community Council will be agreed at the AGM and posted on our website.

The Bi-monthly Community Council Meetings are open to the public but are not public meetings. We welcome members of the local community to attend these meetings as observers and provide an opportunity to ask questions or comment on matters raised during the Public Forum at the end of the meeting, as time allows. However, if you wish to raise an issue formally, this can be done by writing to the Secretary at:-

secretary@northfieldandwillowbrae.org.uk at least fourteen days prior to the next meeting.

If appropriate, time for discussion will be allocated on the agenda or a separate special meeting may be called, if the issue is of wider public concern. We try to provide other opportunities to engage with us throughout the year and publicise these on our website :-

<https://www.northfieldandwillowbrae.org.uk>

and Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/nandwcc>

(May 2025)