Northfield and Willowbrae Community Council
Engagement Report April 2025-April 2026

At the start of the new term for NWCC, we had a number of outstanding issues.

1.**The reinstatement of Piershill Community flat**

In May, CEC announced its intention to return the flat to housing stock for rental. No work to repair the structural problems had begun and we asked for time to take this decision to the Director of Place himself and possibly to use the petitions route to get a hearing from the full Council. However , as the petition had been done over a year ago , we held two further community events in the squares in August, to gauge current support and gather more signatures.

2. **Cavalry Park**

Following our January meeting with all stakeholders, we continued to pursue the action points raised and allocated to various parties. . Some involved legal clarifications and estimates for costs of some remedial actions. Several further meetings on site looked into new signage and CCTV, removing the canopy outside the Pavilion and restricting access by installing some fencing. As progress was very slow and we enlisted the help of our Ward Councillors to escalate our concerns to the Director of Place in May.

3. **Local Place Plan**

Due to CEC extending the timetable for submitting these and the delay caused by the Community Council elections, we used the extra time to gather more views across the whole CC area, and continued to encourage the use of the online questionnaire and also to arrange focus group meetings with the aim of entering the data and preparing a draft plan for display at our Environment Fair in September.

4. **Historic Environment Scotland** – Holyrood Park

The second Consultation event on the future of Holyrood Park hosted by Lorna Slater MSP took place on Mon 19th May at the Greyfriars Charteris Centre in the Pleasance. The EO spoke of the huge interest in this subject within our community, especially as the entirety of the park sits within NWCC area. Elections were held to form a new Friends of Holyrood Park Group who would inform HES of local views and keep abreast of developments. One of our new Councillors was duly elected to this group.

June

Willowbrae Church

In the course of our LPP consultations we became aware that the church building at the heart of our community was likely to be put up for sale in 2025. Residents had expressed their concerns about the future of the building and desire to see it retained for community use. The EO wrote to the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland to this effect on 10/06/25, stressing the shortage of community spaces in Northfield and Willowbrae. They replied that the church ownership resided with local congregation and that letter would be passed to them. Further discussions were held with ScotArt who were interested in leasing the building and possibly working with us

We were also told that C of S had put in place a moratorium on leasing their properties. The EO wrote again to the Property Dept asking them to convey our wish to have community views heard by Trustees, but without response.

Northfield Community Centre

Following the resignation of the entire Management of the Centre effective from September 2025, the EO met with Helen Bourquin, Community Empowerment and Engagement Service Manager for CEC, on 11/06 and was assured that things would continue as usual for the time being while the Council carried out a review of all its centres. The EO informed her of the strong desire of NWCC to see a new management committee established and our offer to help in this process. HB promised to inform us of any developments and suggested it was probably best to delay re-establishing a management committee until the long-term future of the centre is assured. At a further meeting with CEC staff , the EO was able to stress the importance of the centre locally and the need for discussion and engagement with the community about its future use. Subsequently, meetings with various user groups have taken place and are ongoing.

August

Piershill Flat

Councillor Aston submitted our updated petition for scrutiny and consideration at the September meeting of the Housing Committee.

International Football Tournament -Edinburgh Cup

This event , organised by Sports Pathway, Group took place at Cavalry Park, following a number of meetings between their CEO and our EO and Planning Officer, at which we presented the likely impact of the event on local communities and especially the residents of the bungalow within the grounds. We suggested a number of mitigations, especially in relation to parking, noise and general disruption during the three-day event and days prior to and following it. We also attended at various points during the three days to observe whether these were being adhered to and took photographs of some of the parking problems created. Although the event was in many ways very successful and greatly appreciated by the participants and spectators (over 12,000 attended over 3 days), it had a huge impact on the area . Before sending our feedback to the CEC and Sports Pathway we invited comments from residents in Cavalry Park estate, Duddingston Village , Meadowfield and the bungalow.

September

Willowbrae Church

NWCC organised a public meeting on Monday 1st September attended by around 40 people with the purpose of assessing the public support for a Community Buyout. After an open discussion to allow views about the church and hopes for its future to be aired, an explanation of the process required to register the community interest in a buy-out given by Harry Whitmore of Development Trust Association Scotland (DTAS). Ian Cooke of Action Porty then spoke about the Bellfield Church Buy-out and its subsequent development. Lawrence Marshall of Inspire East End spoke about the failed attempt to buy London Road Church, and it was made clear that until the lengthy process of registering our interest was completed, the Church could be sold at any point. After

further discussion and questions, a show of hands indicated almost unanimous support for attempting a Community Buy-out and six of those present came forward to form a steering committee to start the ball rolling. They will be known as "Jock's Lodge Community Trust".

Local Place Plan
The first draft of the plan was on display at our Environment Fair (see Chair's annual report)there was an opportunity to comment and add suggestions

Planning issues
The PO continued to follow up on safety issues at Hamilton Terrace and press for the repair of the school speed sign. Following complaints from residents in Baronscourt Terrace about the noise and spray from the car wash in Morrison's car park, investigations were made into the ownership and terms of the lease.

Resilience Planning
With help from Imagine If.Space CIC ,we applied for a grant from ECCAN to run a workshop on Climate Resilient Communities and were successful in receiving £1,782 through their Greenlight fund to deliver a three-hour workshop in October.

October/November
Piershill flat
The attempt to have the petition heard by the Housing Committee in September was rejected at the last minute when the Council suggested there was an alternative route available through a Community Asset Transfer. No-one has informed NWCC officially of this decision and for various reasons this is not considered to be a viable option . Cllr Aston wrote to Officers to ask for reconsideration.

Cavalry Park
A meeting with the acting Director of Place, Gareth Barwell on 27th October after a four-month delay, produced no concrete costings and no decisions were taken. It was agreed to send a letter of complaint from NWCC to CEC CEO Paul Lawrence about the extended delays and lack of action by Council Officers and to request an action Plan with completion dates by the end of November.

Resilience Workshop
This event took place at the Community Centre on the 24/11/25 with around 20 members of local interest groups and community councillors in attendance and generated a number of ideas to include in our LPP and for future events for the wider community .

January -April 2026
Cavalry Park
Our formal complaint to the CEO of CEC was **fully upheld** in terms of :-

1. CEC being slow to follow up on actions agreed and NWCC not being kept updated on progress and timescales.

2. Lack of responsiveness to correspondence including the formal complaint itself which required a reminder, and
3. Our complaint about clarification of areas of responsibility was **partially upheld.**

A further meeting with Gareth Barwell and Parks and Greenspace Manager Steven Cuthill took place in March attended by Cllrs Griffiths and Staniforth and our EO and PO. Due to the overall Council strategy to create Pitch Hubs across the city, and the recent decision that Cavalry Park will be one of them, we have asked for clarification of the timescale and budgetary implications. Discussions are ongoing and we hope to give a fuller update at our next meeting.

Willowbrae Church sale

The Steering Group registered as a company called Jocks Lodge Community, Trust and as a charity with OSCR and have also applied for a bank account. They ran a survey to gather ideas about how to use the building and asked for volunteers to help with hosting an engagement event and gathering signatures for a petition. Members of NWCC, although not directly involved, have offered assistance and support with some tasks. An event was held at Abercorn Tennis Club in March when the public were able to learn more about the project and the history of the area, have tea/coffee and an opportunity to sign the petition.

Multicultural Women's Conversation Café

In response to some Sudanese women living in Piershill looking for opportunities to meet with local people and practice speaking English, the EO approached the Council about using the Centre on Wednesday afternoons for a 'Conversation Café" to run for an initial trial period in January(subsequently extended through to April). After a slow start, numbers are gradually increasing and we are now attracting women of various nationalities and ages including local women who are appreciating learning about other cultures .

Hustings Meeting

NWCC and Craigentinny /Meadowbank CC organised a joint hustings on the 10th April to give the community an opportunity to meet and question the constituency candidates in the Scottish Parliamentary Elections. Around seventy attendees listened to the SNP, Labour, Scottish Green and Conservative candidates answer questions on a range of topics, The meeting was chaired by Emeritus Professor Wilson McLeoid of Edinburgh University who congratulated both the speakers and audience on a respectful discussion.

Local Place Plan

The final draft of our plan is nearing completion with the inclusion of maps, photographs and appendices containing the data from our various surveys. This has been sent to the full Community Council for final checks and comments before going out to local interest groups, neighbouring Community Councils and the wider public and submission to the CEC Planning Department . We acknowledge a huge debt of gratitude to former Community Councillor Ellie Burroughs for her help and professional oversight.