



Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links

NEWSLETTER 35

Autumn 2013

Convener's Comment

AGM news

After Lord Fraser's eloquent appeal at our AGM for a memorial to General Maczek, we were very sad to hear that only a few days later he died suddenly. We sent our very warmest sympathy to Lady Fraser, and we trust that the campaign will continue.

Also at the AGM members kindly voted to confirm me as your Convener. However, as I am now well into my ninth decade I hope that someone else will come forward very soon to take over from me! We are always ready to welcome new members on to the committee (see the back page for a current list), and of course to join the Fombles, who under Richard Ellis's enthusiastic supervision continue to volunteer for odd jobs around the Meadows. Below is a photo of a recent achievement, the newly cleaned memorial to the 1886 exhibition at the west end of the Meadows, with one of our volunteers proudly wearing a Fomble high-vis tabard. Please email or phone Richard (rellis.consultancy@virgin.net; tel. 447 4124) if you'd like to join in: work parties are on the first Saturday morning of each month – the next one will be on 2nd November.



Artwork on the Meadows

We are delighted to be able to announce that our application to the South Central Neighbourhood Partnership for funding to provide murals on the back of the Scottish Power Substation at the junction of Middle Meadow Walk and North Meadow Walk has been successful. It has also been partnered by 'Getting it Sorted Together' in conjunction with the *Evening News*. Scottish Power is matching the funding 50/50, and we are grateful to David Lindsay, Civil Co-ordinator, Scottish Power Energy Networks, for his enthusiastic backing for the project. Our artist Astrid Jaekel and poet Rachel Woolf are working on the design as we go to press, and we hope that the work will be completed during the autumn. Watch this space! Provisionally, opening will be on Burns Night 2014.

Finally, do come along to our next meeting, with the focus on Trees in the City (see the article by Neil Roger on p. 3). Bring a friend!

Heather Goodare (Convener)

The next meeting of FOMBL will be on Monday 4th November at 7.30 p.m. in the Dining Room, Teviot Row House, Bristo Square, as guests of the Edinburgh University Students Association (EUSA). Speakers will be EUSA President Hugh Murdoch, and Steven Webley, City of Edinburgh Council Forestry Manager, on 'Trees in the City'. *All are welcome.*

Advertising on the Meadows

We felt that this letter received from Colin Salter raised an important issue that you might like to discuss.

I was concerned by the appearance during Freshers Week last month of stencilled ads for Pokitpal, a student app, which appeared on paths all over the Links and Meadows. The rogue advertising campaign seemed to me to be a case of vandalism and graffiti, and I wrote to the company and to the Southside Team about it. The company expressed regret, and assured me that the ads would fade in time. Southside Team however advised the company that their ads were an offence under section 100 (b) of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, and that they had 28 days to remove them or face fines.

Some have, I notice, been more or less erased. Others remain, presumably in places where their contractors forgot they had put them. The 28 days' notice expires at the end of the month. Pokitpal are now putting advertising stickers on public signs instead. Twenty-eight days of free advertising without penalty seems a fairly toothless policy to me when litterers and dog foulers can face spot penalties. Any visiting theatre company or comedian aware of the 28-day period during the Festival, for example, could have all the free pavement-defacing publicity it needed. The Pokitpal example sets a dangerous precedent, and already I am aware of two other stencil campaigns on Meadows paths.

Scottish Natural Heritage?

One is particularly alarming because it comes from a government body, Scottish Natural Heritage, and is actually sanctioned by Edinburgh City Council. This raises the question of whether the Council is permitting illegal behaviour; but it also reflects the Council's policy of allowing the Meadows to be turned into a network of ugly advertising corridors, as they do every August.

In my view, a park is primarily a natural space in an urban environment, the city's lungs, and a breathing space from the commercial activities of the city around it and of the people who pass through it. The walls of advertising hoardings in the summer, and now the graffiti on the pavements, are the antithesis of this. I hope I'm not alone in feeling like this. I have expressed my feelings to Pokitpal and to Scottish Natural Heritage, but not yet to the Council (apart from the Southside Team). What does FoMBL think about this?

Colin Salter (Warrender Park Road)
(See next page for Council comments.)

Local artist Ross Macintyre looks out on to the Links: here is a currently appropriate example of his work. It is available as a greetings card through the redbubble website.

<http://www.rossmacintyre.co.uk> <http://www.redbubble.com/people/razmac> for calendars, cards, etc.



Council policy on stencils and advertising on the Meadows

So far we have only had a general statement on this matter from the Council's South Central Neighbourhood Manager, Sarah Burns, who has assured us that the Council does not benefit financially from giving permission to any organizations that wish to put stencils on Meadows paths. They also do not wish stencilling to get out of hand: they would like to know of any new stencil campaigns. During the Festival, the handling of hoardings is outsourced, so that the Council does not profit by the siting of advertisements. Members may wish to discuss this whole issue at our meeting on 4th November. (Ed.)

Trees in the City

COMMENTS ON 'TREES IN THE CITY DRAFT ACTION PLAN' by the City of Edinburgh Forestry Service

General

The plan is comprehensive, and contains a large amount of information, which is clearly presented and of great value. Although it is too late to make comments, it is worth reading the document at http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/495/parks_gardens_and_open_spaces/767/. There are however concerns which have not been addressed, prior to the action plan, regarding the condition of existing tree stock, effective maintenance of existing and newly planted trees, and overall planning of the designed landscape to provide a framework for future planting.

Condition and maintenance of existing stock

It is clear that a large number of (mainly younger) trees have not been maintained effectively. For example, along Leamington Walk many smaller trees have died, and vegetation has been allowed to grow too high within the support framework. During periods of drought younger trees can suffer, but in other local authority areas this problem has been tackled by effective tree maintenance programmes, including watering: is this not possible in Edinburgh?



I should like to ask if the plan is able to put in hand a process for more effective maintenance and management of existing stock, either by allocating more resources and staff, and/or by achieving a much closer and more effective liaison with local community groups and independent funding bodies.

Future planting and the designed landscape

Although a survey has identified numbers and condition of existing stock there is no mention of preparation of future planting design framework. For example, it might be expected that professional landscape designers might be commissioned to prepare a tree planting strategy. This would include

type and relationship of trees to each other, height, colour, seasonal growth and appearance, effect on vistas, effect on views of buildings, filling of gaps where trees have been lost or felled, etc.

Local community/tree wardens/volunteers

Due to scarcity of local authority funding the plan should perhaps emphasis more clearly how communities can be supported and empowered more directly to take an active role in maintaining and enhancing the city park landscape. Volunteers from the Friends already clear leaves and dead branches etc on a regular basis. Perhaps further voluntary work could include reporting trees which appear to be struggling/dying, damaged/broken limbs etc. Funds are available to charities and local amenity bodies for environmental improvements, and this could include planting and maintaining trees. Despite the above FOMBL are fully supportive of the aims of this excellent Action Plan.

Neil Roger (committee member)

Charitable status

We have now heard from the Registration Team Case Officer of OSCR in charge of our application, who tells us that we shall need to make some adjustments to our Constitution to qualify for registration as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). Your committee is looking at this urgently, and will report back to members at our meeting on 4th November.

Meadows Chamber Orchestra

The next concert of the MCO will be in Greyfriars Kirk on Saturday 23rd November at 7.45 pm. The programme will include a new work by John de Simone, *Quiet Meadow*, Mozart's Clarinet Concerto (soloist Katherine Spencer), and Beethoven's Third Symphony, the *Eroica*. The conductor is Chris George. Tickets in advance from the Queen's Hall Box Office: £11/£9; students £5; children £1.

FOMBL membership

If you have not already renewed your membership for 2013-14, our Membership Secretary, Alec Mann, is waiting to hear from you. It's really simple: just download a form from our website, www.fombl.org.uk, and send it with a cheque to Alec (contact details below.) *And recruit a friend?*

Useful contacts

Mike Shields Community Parks Officer Tel.0131 529 5126; email: mike.shields@edinburgh.gov.uk

Police: Safer Neighbourhood Team. PC 4601 Yocksan Bell 0131 662 5022 or Sgt 4554 Peter Houston (same number). To report a crime: 101 (costing a flat rate of 15p per call); emergency 999; or (anonymously) to Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111.

New Police Service of Scotland website is <http://www.scotland.police.uk>. New police 101 non-emergency number is now in use 24/7. This should reduce pressure on the 999 system, but do still ring 999 in emergency.

Anti-social behaviour (24/7): 0131 529 7050; **Litter**: 0131 529 3030

Defective lamp-post lighting: note number and ring Clarence – 0800 23 23 23

David Doig Local Environment Manager (responsibility for roads, parks and green spaces): email david.doig@edinburgh.gov.uk Tel. 0131 529 5187

Forestry Service: email forestry.service@edinburgh.gov.uk. Tel. 0131 311 7079

Complaints regarding Council vehicles driving on Links or Meadows:

Taskforce, Craigmillar Depot: 0131 664 8330; or Jim Monaghan on 07786 110 377

Graffiti: report to 0131 200 2000 or email operationdivide@lbp.pnn.police.uk

Kathy Evans: Local Community Safety Manager (tackling anti-social behaviour and joint working with the police) kathy.evans@edinburgh.gov.uk Tel. 0131 529 5106

Environmental Warden team leader: Mohamed Demnati 0131 529 5204

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