



Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links

P R E S S I N F O R M A T I O N

EVENTS ON THE MEADOWS: REVIEW OF MANIFESTO

Edinburgh City Council has been conducting a review of its Events Manifesto (www.edinburgh.gov.uk.eventsinparks), for which the deadline for responses was 21 March. It was asking the public for feedback on its existing policy.

At the moment, the Meadows is the only Edinburgh park where events are allowed on grass for more than 15 days. This is with the exception of Princes Street Gardens, which is a special case, and where there is full reinstatement of the terrain after the Winter Festival.

Damage caused by events

The Friends have long argued that large events on the east Meadows should be restricted in view of the huge damage they cause to the ground, often rendering it unusable for sporting activities for months afterwards. The Meadows, on the site of the former Borough Loch, has a fragile clay substructure which is easily damaged by heavy plant. They suggest that, in line with other Edinburgh parks, events on grass should not last longer than 15 days, and that longer events should only be allowed on hard standing sites in other parts of the city.

Saving and spending

Another recent consultation asked for comments on how the Council could save money and spend it wisely (www.edinburgh.gov.uk/budget). The Friends have learned that the fee for large commercial events on the east Meadows is only £450 a night, which they think can hardly reflect market values. At the same time we now learn from the *Evening News* of 21 March that the Council are charging community festivals astronomical rates. As the Editor says, community galas 'are the glue that holds communities together'. There seems to be an inconsistency here.

An economic rent

The Friends suggest that an economic rent should be charged for commercial events, and the revenue used for extra Park Ranger cover during the summer months. At the moment Park Rangers' hours finish at 6.30 p.m. Monday-Friday and 4.00 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays, when they are most needed to restrain anti-social behaviour and ensure adherence to the Park Rules. If a large commercial event lasting 15 days were charged no more than £1500 per night (i.e. £22,500 in all), this could well fund the staffing shortfall over the summer months.

Community support

Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links have consulted their members, and also the relevant community councils - Tollcross, Marchmont & Sciennes, and Merchiston, and all support this request.

Heather Goodare, Convener of Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links, commented:

'We all enjoy the buzz of the Festival, but we also bear responsibility for preserving our beautiful Meadows for future generations. Events must be accommodated on suitable sites, and 15 days is quite long enough for those on grass, if serious damage is to be avoided.'

NOTE FOR EDITORS

For further information please contact

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