

**Edinburgh
Parks
Briefing 1
November 2009**

Edinburgh Events

This paper was written by Hilary McDowell to assist Community Councils and others to understand more about terms, conditions and charging in relation to Edinburgh's parks. Hilary McDowell is chair of Southside Community Council. and a committee member of Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links but this paper represents her own personal views.

The Council is putting out to consultation a new Parks Events Strategy document, which it claims is an attempt to control and regularise events in parks. It focuses on Princes St Gardens, Calton Hill, Inveleith Park, the Meadows & Bruntsfield Links, Leith Links and Lauriston Castle. If there is a request for a large event elsewhere, then the policies are likely to be applied there as well.

This document has arisen as a result of the concerns expressed over several years about the considerable damage done to the Meadows by large commercial events taking place on this very popular but badly drained grass land. It was discovered that these problems are not confined to this park. A small group has formed to share ideas and attempt to influence the Council's policy which appears to be that events are good for Edinburgh and should be encouraged and subsidised regardless of the costs to the local community, both financially and environmentally. Please read the policy document when you receive it. Please respond, so that the Council gets it right. We've read very good clear policies from other authorities – current Edinburgh policies are very woolly, hence the problems experienced.

This briefing paper along with that produced by Andy Wightman on access and common good aspects of putting events on in parks, aims to help put this document in some sort of context.

The aim should be to put the right event in the right place. This new policy document makes no mention of major events sites such as Holyrood Park, Ingliston or Charlotte Square, all of which host festival events or complete festivals. A city wide events strategy should not ignore these important venues.

Rents currently charged for city parks are pitiful. See Appendix 1 for charges for use of the Meadows over the last few years. Although the Council say that a review is pending, that promise has been made before. With rents so low and damage to the sites considerable, areas out of use to the public for extended periods, and profits leaving the city, this situation needs remedying urgently.

There is lip service in the document to minimising environmental damage, yet there is a presumption in favour of allowing events to return regardless of the damage they have done in previous years.

The Council are aware of the fact that there is no easy way to find out how to go about putting on an event in Edinburgh, a co-ordinated "one stop shop" has been talked about for some time. How much progress has been made I don't know. Looking on the internet I found that www.edinburgh.gov.uk leads, via **city living** and **events** to the [Inspiring Events Guide \(PDF, 2MB\)](#), also and Events

Review 2007 and an Events Strategy document. The events guide is for events organisers, and gives some basic questions about events management and organisation, and contact details within the Council, but very little detailed information.

<http://eventsedinburgh.org.uk> website has a section for event organisers. In “Choosing a venue”, possible venues are listed alphabetically, and a little information given about each. Some information is out of date e.g. Meadows Festival 2008 dates are given. Calton Hill, Holyrood Park, & Ingliston are not listed.

Using the websites above shows how messy it is at present. There are no standards Terms and Condition available for easy inspection. Only by asking a user of the Meadows for an event have I been able to see a copy of the terms. It is worth comparing Edinburgh’s approach with the website for the Royal Parks - <http://www.royalparks.org.uk/> . Contact has also been made with Bath (<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk>) . The contact person for outdoor events was quite happy to send us detailed terms and conditions – a sample standard lease document. (An extract appears in Appendix 2)

The conditions imposed by these authorities are much stricter than those imposed by Edinburgh. For example, vehicle movement is very strictly controlled in London and Bath – no vehicles are allowed to drive on the grass of the Recreation Ground in Bath. In order to erect a tent the size of the Spiegel tent 20 strong men were required to walk all the equipment to where it was needed. Similarly there are strict regulations governing proximity to trees. There are also regulations about oil and other chemicals, something that has been a problem in Edinburgh, where large spills of diesel have happened on the Meadows in 2 consecutive years.

The Edinburgh Council plans to increase the number and duration of events on several of these sites. Little consideration is given to the displacement of the normal recreational activities that go on in parks, such as school football coaching, informal sports, and the disturbance of peoples’ enjoyment of a place normally of peace and quiet by all the amplified music from an event.

Please give this document close scrutiny in the hope that we can get it modified.

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Appendix 1. Charges for the use of the Meadows

Organisation	2006 Charge	2006 Bond	2006 Retained	2007 Charge	2007 Bond	2007 Retained	2008 Charge	2008 Bond	2008 Retained	2009 Charge	2009 Bond	2009 Retained
Moonwalk	-	-	-	£250	£5,000	£0	£3,240	£5,000	£1,060	†	†	†
Taste of Edinburgh	-	-	-	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	†	†	†
Urban Circus	?	£7,000	£670	£9,400	£5,000	£1,008	£11,900	£5,000	£5,000*	£11,100	£6,000	£63+VAT
Evans Fun Fair	?	£5,000	£0	£5,600	£5,000	£388	£5,300	£2,000	£750	£4,500	£2,000	£39+VAT

Prior to the 2008 events, two small areas of Grasscrete were installed to provide drive on access from Melville Drive for events. These cost £20,456.74 (The work was done by MW Ground Works Ltd)

*An additional charge of £3,270 was made on Urban Circus for damage during their 2008 stay., and £1700 for exceeding their agreed length of stay.

† Moved to Inverleith Park because of extensive damage to the Meadows in 2008 by overuse. The rent from Taste of Edinburgh 2009 in Inverleith Park was £3150.

None of the rent has gone into the Common Good Fund.

Appendix 2 Terms and conditions from Bath

Here is an example from part of the document, concerning the protection of trees, soil and grass. The whole document is available on request from Hilary McDowell.

2. TREE PROTECTION

- 2.1a No plant vehicles or materials are to be stored or parked within the maximum crown radius of a tree, or any other planted areas.
- 2.1b No plant or vehicles are to be driven within the maximum crown radius of a tree or other planted area. However, should this prevent the safe running of the event then approved access trackway must be provided at the cost of the event holder and following prior agreement with Sarah Giovannini, Denise Hart or Mark Cassidy.
- 2.2 No structure, tent etc. is to be erected within the maximum crown radius of a tree (the maximum crown radius is measured from the trunk base to the outermost branch), without prior agreement with Sarah Giovannini, Denise Hart or Mark Cassidy.
- 2.3 No part of any tree may be damaged as a result of impact by plant or vehicles, or pruned in any way.
- 2.4 No concrete or other materials can be mixed, or oils, bitumen or chemicals spilt under a tree's canopy or within 10m of the base of the tree, whichever is the greater, nor on bare soil or any planted or grassed area. Care must be taken to ensure there is no "run-off" onto surrounding soil.
- 2.5 No excavations may be carried out within the maximum crown radius of a tree.
- 2.6 NJUG10 Guidelines must be adhered to (a copy can be provided).