

# Meadows Short Life Working Group – Briefing Paper - 6<sup>th</sup> March 2009

## Report by Director of Services for Communities

### **1 Purpose**

- 1.1 The Meadows Short Life Working Group will be aware that concerns have been expressed about the nature and frequency of events on the Meadows. These concerns are being addressed through a wider programme of work which also includes other aspects of events management.
- 1.2 This wider programme of work will be the subject of a report to a Council Committee in the near future. The purpose of this paper is to give the SLWG advanced notice of the likely content of that Committee report and to seek the views of the Group so that they can be reflected in the Committee report.

### **2 The Meadows**

- 2.1 The Group will be very much aware of the poor state of certain areas of grass within the Meadows and consequently there is recognition that impacts on the Meadows from events need to be considered as part of the Council's events management process.
- 2.2 The Council quite definitely wishes to avoid damage to this beautiful and highly valued green space. Equally, it is recognised that the Meadows, along with other strategic parks and green spaces, including Princes Street Gardens, Inverleith Park, Saughton Park and Leith Links, plays a vital role in supporting the city's first class reputation for festivals and events. During this difficult economic period, it is more important than ever that the Meadows is managed in such a way that this economic impact is not undermined.
- 2.3 It is proposed that the Meadows will always play a significant role as an events venue, and the challenge is to find the best management regime to facilitate this role and the wide variety of other functions which form the Meadows offering.
- 2.4 In considering the best management regime it is suggested that this would comprise two key elements;
  - (a) A physical solution which would make an Edinburgh park or parks fit for purpose for staging events. More work is needed on this but it would appear that other comparable venues around the world have invested in specialist surfaces which maintain high quality green space for outdoor recreational uses, but which is also robust and able to withstand the demands of hosting events. This needs to be fully researched, designed and costed and we would want to do this in partnership with the SLWG and all other relevant stakeholders.
  - (b) A "Manifesto" for the Meadows (and other relevant parks and green spaces) which would act, in effect, as an implementation strategy, covering issues such as levels of use, event length, rest periods, checklists for organisers, event infrastructure, weather impact, vehicle access, contingency plans etc. The key principles that would form the basis for this Manifesto are shown in the appendix
- 2.5 If the Committee supports this approach then a "Transition Plan" will be needed to govern management of the Meadows pending completion of the physical improvements and development of the Manifesto. In this regard, considerable progress has been made. Negotiations have been progressing between Council officials and events organisers regarding alternative sites for 2009. To date, agreement has been reached to re-site the Moonwalk event and the Taste of Edinburgh event at Inverleith Park and to relocate the start/finish of the Great Edinburgh Run to George IV Bridge.

### **3 Wider Work Programme**

- 3.1 As stated earlier, as well as looking specifically at the Meadows, there is a wider programme of work relating to events which will be reported to Committee at the same time. This is summarised below;

**(a) One stop shop**

It is proposed that the Corporate Services Events Unit, directly and via the Events Edinburgh website, provide an initial single point of contact for event applicants and ensure better internal liaison between council services. Once event organisers submit an application, the details they contain will be held on a single database, managed centrally by the Events Unit. Although Corporate Services will provide the first point of contact there will be a network of officers working with organisers to provide information and advice from all the relevant services involved with the management of events.

This improvement to the application process also makes it appropriate to review the current consultation and permission process.

**(b) Budget management**

It is proposed that the future events budget be managed by Corporate Services, with an agreed mechanism to allow the appropriate allocation of funds from the budget to relevant internal and external stakeholders to meet event running costs.

**(c) Charging policy**

The current event charging regime for events in Parks is based on historical rates and a review is required in order to reflect contemporary values. There is a need for a clear categorisation of events along with transparent charging criteria against which all potential events can be evaluated. It is therefore proposed that a new charging schedule be scoped out, and that this should be subject to a further report following consultation with affected stakeholders.

### **4 Conclusions**

A balanced approach to managing Events in parks and greenspaces can be secured by:

1. Noting that agreement has been reached to relocate some events from The Meadows for 2009.
2. Agreeing a Transition Plan to govern management of the Meadows over the short-term.
3. Adopting an Events Manifesto to limit the impact of events on the Meadows and other parks and green spaces.
4. Identifying a physical solution so that events can be managed in a sustainable manner over the long term.
5. Endorsing a single door approach through the Events Unit, and the Events Edinburgh website, for managing a single events budget, providing one route into the Council, managing and analysing information about all events and monitoring their benefits and costs.
6. Updating and improving the events permission process.
7. Reviewing the current events charging mechanism to provide a transparent fee structure.
8. Recognising the on-costs associated with managing events and agreeing mechanisms for the allocation of funds from the events budget.

## Appendix: Edinburgh Parks Events Manifesto

The Centre for Park Management, based in the USA, has produced an internationally recognised publication entitled Best Management Practice used at Urban Parks in National and International Locations. This examines best practice for events in parks around the world, using as examples Atlanta's Piedmont Park, the Millennium Park in Ottawa, the Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, London's Hyde Park and others. The proposed content of an Edinburgh Parks Events Manifesto is modelled on the benchmark information contained in this publication.

**The key principles to be included in the Edinburgh Parks Events Manifesto are as follows:**

Principle	Commentary
Control level of use.	Establish a set of requirements unique to each site, which aims to balance quality of landscape with the use of the site as an event venue.
Limit the total number of days of occupation for an event on any site.	This would vary depending on the specific site and the size and infrastructure of the event.
Limit the total number of major events per year in each park.	Agreed for each park individually.
Limit the number of events per month on each site.	This would be the result of limiting the total days of occupation along with a scheduled rest period.
Define the capacity of each event site and suggest appropriate types of uses for each venue.	This would define guidelines for specific venues and would allow proactive marketing of less well known sites to event organisers.
Control the use of parks for private events.	The number of private events in each park should be monitored to ensure that restrictions on park visitors over the year are appropriate to the location.
Schedule turf rest periods between events.	To maintain high landscape quality it is imperative that turf rest periods are enforced. Many sites require one week between small events and at least two weeks between large events. Certain times of the year should be defined as rest periods with no events allowed during these periods.
Draw up a checklist for organisers which clearly links resource damage and event activities	The creation of a checklist which makes a direct link between the potential resource damage and event activities allows organisers to acknowledge that steps will be taken to reduce damage and to accept responsibility.
Control the placement of event infrastructure	Guidelines should be used to protect the landscape from temporary structures such as tents, fencing and staging.
Weather-related restrictions	For periods of heavy and prolonged rainfall restrictions should include protection of grass (covering sections of grass used for high pedestrian traffic) and strict vehicle use policies.
Contingency Plans	Lease agreements for parks and greenspaces would include plans to take account of adverse circumstances such as extreme weather conditions.
Vehicle use and access	In order to minimise damage to the grass areas, weight limits will be set for heavy vehicles. Vehicles should only be used for set up and breakdown of events; they should not stay on site for the duration of the event.
Charging	Events will be charged a rate based on the location and size of the event, the type of event, the level of anticipated disruption to park users and the degree to which the event complies with sustainable principles.

**From:** Hilarymcdowell@aol.com [mailto:Hilarymcdowell@aol.com]  
**Sent:** 04 March 2009 22:20  
**To:** committee@fombl.org.uk  
**Subject:** Re: Events, dear boys and girls

Thanks to Chris for forwarding the Events document. I think it would be useful to meet, however we are all very busy people. I am only free on Sunday 8th or Monday 9th evenings next week. Alternatively, Monday or Thursday mornings. You would be welcome to meet here, 93 Newington Road.

I agree that we should work with Inverleith Park Friends group, as well as Saughton Park and Leith Links. We will be in a much better position to fight off the combined weight of Events if we are united. We should not allow "this difficult economic period" to be an excuse for the continuing trashing of Edinburgh parks.

Urban Circus (Ladyboys) is still advertising that they are coming to the Meadows this summer (subject to licence). Looking at where they perform in other towns, it is clear that they often use theatres. In view of the number of weeks each year that the Festival Theatre and Kings Theatre are closed it would be much better for Edinburgh's economy if the Urban Circus came at another time of the year, to a theatre.

If the Moonwalk, Taste of Edinburgh, Urban Circus, etc. want to operate on a grass site they should be directed to Ingliston, the showground that is set up for such events.

I have no confidence in assurances of proper management and monitoring. 2008 was the Council's year to show us that they could do it adequately, and it was a spectacular failure. To compare the Meadows with Hyde Park is ridiculous, and to contemplate allowing the Events Department control over all Edinburgh parks is a recipe for astroturf, and the exclusion of the public from most of the parks for most of the year. David Doig and Mike Shields, who were supposed to be monitoring things, were both on holiday at the beginning of August. This document is worse than I had expected.  
Yours Hilary

**From:** Chris Wigglesworth [mailto:wiggles.t21@btinternet.com]  
**Sent:** 04 March 2009 09:35  
**To:** Peng Lee Yap  
**Cc:** John Simon  
**Subject:** Fw: Meadows Short Life Working Group  
**Importance:** High

Peng Lee / John - At long last, but not good....  
Comments welcome. But I think we have to regard this as confidential till Friday.  
Delay on total strategy is interesting- we can speculate? Cardownie v Dawes??  
Chris

**From:** Donald Burgess [mailto:Donald.Burgess@edinburgh.gov.uk]  
**Sent:** 03 March 2009 13:30  
**To:** wiggles@talk21.com; jo.scott@ukonline.co.uk; chair@merchistoncc.org.uk; alastair.philp@googlemail.com; simon36@blueyonder.co.uk; debora.wickstead@lbp.pnn.police.uk; richard.horan@lbp.pnn.police.uk; hamish@bruntsfield7.freeserve.co.uk; president@usa.ed.ac.uk; Gordon Mackenzie; Marilyn MacLaren; Alison Johnstone; Cameron Rose; Ian Perry; Mark McInnes; Paul Godzik; Steve Burgess; John McNeill; Jane Bremner; David Jamieson; Mike Shields; Tom O'Brien; deborah.wicksted@lbp.pnn.police.uk  
**Cc:** David Doig; Susan Bruce  
**Subject:** Meadows Short Life Working Group

Please find attached the agenda and papers for the meeting on Friday 6th March at 2pm in the Mandela Room, City Chambers.

Please note that, due to a delay related to some City wide aspects of the Events Report, it will not go to the Policy and Strategy Committee on 24 March as was originally expected. As a result, the attached paper has been produced for the group, focussing on all the Meadows related elements of the Events Report.

I would be grateful, if you have not already done so, if you could advise me if you will be attending.

Thanks

Donald Burgess - Tel: 0131 529 5396

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