

Five things you need to know today

☒ **Splashback – Friends of Water of Leith Basin – EIFF – Fringe Programme launch – Leith Festival**

The full council meets today at the City Chambers. Splashback is again on the agenda and will undoubtedly take up some time for discussion today, although the council's ruling coalition are likely to win through with their proposal.

In January the council managed to pull off an almost complete volte face by agreeing to support the community group who want to reopen and run the family pool at the bottom of Leith Walk. Now, there is a formal offer for the property on the table and this has to be reconsidered. The offer is for £1m, and the buyer has plans to turn the property into a soft play area. The group's supporters are vocal in their protests even before the meeting, so it is likely to be a stormy affair.

The capital coalition has put forward their proposal about the leisure pool to sell the property to A&G Property Group for £1m to create a substantial soft play and leisure facility.

The coalition motion also proposes to allocate £125,000 to fund swimming programmes for primary school children in Edinburgh.

This motion will be presented this morning at the council meeting when councillors will consider two reports, one on the potential sale of Leith Waterworld and one containing an update on the progress of the community bid.

A&G Property Group have offered to purchase Leith Waterworld for £1m from the Council and propose to spend around £1.3m on refurbishing the building. Their offer would also see over 80 jobs created in the local area.

Councillor Richard Lewis, the city's Culture and Sport Convener, said: "This has been a very difficult decision and one that this Council does not take lightly. Firstly I'd like to thank Splashback for the work and commitment they have demonstrated in progressing the community bid. However this coalition feels that the potential purchaser will create a high quality leisure facility that will greatly benefit the community in Leith and the wider Edinburgh area.

"In recognition of Splashback's commitment to creating affordable and accessible swimming opportunities for young people in the community, we're proposing to commit £125,000 towards free swimming for primary aged children in Edinburgh.

"Ultimately this option ensures that the community in Leith has an accessible leisure facility for many years to come, that swimming opportunities are available and also that the Council gets best value for the taxpayers of Edinburgh."

✘ Responding to the news the Capital Coalition intends to sell Leith Waterworld to a commercial property developer, Chas Booth, Green councillor for Leith said:-"This is a real kick in the teeth for the local community, who had been given hope that Edinburgh's only leisure pool would reopen when the council made its decision in January to commit funds to do that. To reverse that decision just five months later is perverse, and sends a message to community groups that they cannot trust a word this council says. This was the first major test of the "cooperative council" agenda, and the coalition has failed the test."

Booth continued:-"To soften the blow by diverting the money which would have been invested in reopening the pool into primary age swimming instead is an attempt to hide the council's embarrassment at this decision. It will not compensate for the massive loss of amenity, in particular for infants and disabled people, that will result from Waterworld's permanent closure."

Commenting on the proposal by the council, Alison Johnstone, Lothian Green MSP said:-“This decision sends the worst possible message to communities trying to come together to protect services and improve facilities in their area. Despite all the warm words we hear on community empowerment and people power, when a developer comes along with a wad of cash, community efforts seem to count for little.”

“Families in Leith and right across the city made it very clear that they valued Waterworld as a unique leisure pool, and just five months after giving everyone hope that it would reopen, the Council have pulled the plug and campaigners will be feeling totally gutted.”

There is also a report being considered separately which updates the council about the progress being made by Splashback to become a properly constituted community body with charitable status. There are five councillors involved in the progress towards reopening the pool.

An invitation from the Friends of the Water of Leith Basin asking you to help them out this weekend...

The paths in Leith along the Water of Leith are in a need of a clean so we hope you will join in and meet at Coalie Park. The time is 10am so please put it on your calendar and I hope to see you there. Litter pickers,bags, gloves etc are all provided. It is best to wear some strong shoes and bring some waterproofs because the weather cant make up its mind at the moment.

[Click here](#) for a map showing the whereabouts of Coalie Park

Please come along and feel good after a couple of hours make the paths look good.



It is now officially festival season. The 67th Edinburgh International Film Festival was [launched yesterday](#) with a long list of the films on offer.

But before then tomorrow evening at The Filmhouse *Beware of Mr Baker* is being shown. This portrayal of Ginger Baker, former front man of Cream promises **very** strong language but an account of the music legend's life and lifestyle with interviews from other prominent rock stars.

[Book your tickets here.](#)



The Edinburgh Festival Fringe programme will also be launched this morning. You will be able to get your copy from the Fringe office on the High Street from noon or [on the Fringe website](#).

