

Earth in Common are delighted with funding for Nourishing Leith Hub

It was announced on Wednesday that Edinburgh charity Earth in Common (until recently known as Leith Community Crops in Pots) has, 'subject to agreed Scottish Budget', been awarded £944,744 for its 'Nourishing Leith Hub' project.

This was one of [two Edinburgh projects](#) which has been supported.



The new building will look like this



Evie Murray

CEO of Earth in Common Evie Murray said: "It came so out of the blue this morning, I'm overjoyed for my team and for the community.

"When one puts it in a few words – money to refurbish and extend a crumbling old tennis pavilion and install a few ancillary structures – it doesn't seem big news. However, this is of huge significance, for the people of Leith, for Edinburgh and for Scotland as a whole.

"It represents backing at the highest level – The City of Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Government – for the completion of a vision which we have been developing for years: for the first of many "urban crofts" throughout Scotland, and possibly even beyond.

"Urban crofts draw on elements of Scottish culture – a home at the centre of land farmed by a family, who share the labour, produce and tenure/stewardship – to offer cross-cutting solutions to societal and environmental problems, such as inequality, loss of community, a disconnect from nature manifesting as "Nature Deficit Disorder", hopelessness and substance abuse, a food system dominated by long supply chains, agroindustry and huge supermarkets, biodiversity loss

and climate change...

“Over the last eight years we have been building a community – a family – around two acres of what was wasteland at the northern tip of Leith Links Park. Being common good land, the council only awarded us stewardship because of our grass-roots nature: we are formed from the local community and we consult local people extensively on all we do.

“Together with the community, we have developed a suite of integrated projects drawing on the special ambiance and facilities offered by Leith Community Croft – our model urban croft – and we have now proven the benefits of most of these.

“The growing spaces we offer are shared by groups of locals, each group with its own character and aims. Our Croft Carbon College draws inspiration and resources from our urban croft to offer a wide range of accessible workshops and courses on greener living, environment and wellbeing related crafts and skills for all ages and backgrounds.

“Our market garden offers training, volunteering and employment opportunities and supplies produce to our shed-based “Hingabootery” café/farm shop, which also provides volunteering, training and employment, and is at the heart of the urban croft...“Puntastic” MineCroft.

“Until stricter lockdown closed it down, our farmers’/artisans’ market was a boon to local small businesses and an outlet for sustainable food. Our “puntastic” and immensely popular MineCroft programme offers informal adventure play and survival skills for youngsters and, speaking of children, we have run many outdoor-/environmental-education projects for them – both in local schools and on our urban croft, and we have proven the benefits of this for children affected by issues such as anxiety, suspected ADHD and substance-abusing parents.

“We managed all this despite not having a decent building on

Leith Community Croft. However, virtually all our projects and initiatives – of which I have only mentioned some – have depended in one way or another on the use of the near-derelict old tennis pavilion there. We have been using this for vital storage and workshop space, but it is cramped and fusty, with a leaky roof, and well on its way to being unsafe as well as unhealthy. Time has been running out, and a drastic reduction in our services has been looming...

“With the community’s input, and the help of Community Enterprise Scotland, and a cracking team of professionals led by architect Scott Lindsay, we developed a plan for converting the building – together with some ancillary structures – into a multi-purpose community hub, offering a welcoming seating area for a properly equipped café, a farm shop, flexible community meeting/training rooms, office and storage space, and accessible toilets.

“This is the welcoming home we believe our urban croft needed to become fully sustainable and the true heart of a happy, healthy and inclusive community, and a model which we believe will put Leith back on the map – not as a great port this time, but as the vanguard of joined-up policy and revolutionising the food system. With the challenges of Brexit, climate change and biodiversity loss adding to the long-running problems of inequality and hopelessness, this couldn’t come at a better time. We look forward to sharing our experiences and knowledge and helping others do what we have done.

“Let me conclude by thanking all those who have supported us, as we developed this vision over the years: the City of Edinburgh Council (who supported this RCGF application and awarded us stewardship of Leith Community Croft), the Scottish Government (who has shown great faith in us through the various Climate Challenge Fund awards given to us), Community Enterprise Scotland, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (who provided us repeatedly with vital core support as we developed

our vision), the James Thin Charitable Trust (for an unsolicited and unrestricted award which came as a wonderful surprise), the National Lottery (for key capital and revenue funding), the Mushroom Trust (for having the vision to support our MineCroft work), the University of Edinburgh (who funded our work with vulnerable children), the Seedbed Christian Charitable Trust, Foundation Scotland (who funded our work in one of the most deprived data zones in Scotland) and many other organisations – too many to mention.

“As far as individuals go, our volunteers (including our trustees), Crofters, freelancers and employees deserve huge praise. They have risen to so many challenges and setbacks over the years, including arson and other forms of vandalism, and have worked long hours and exceeded expectations.

“Most importantly, I want to thank the people of Leith – well, most of you, not the vandals! – who include many of our volunteers, freelancers and staff, of course, and who shaped and helped us realise everything. Your reward is now in sight! ‘Now let’s get on with it! It’s time to make Leith famous for more than Trainspotting!”

The Regeneration Capital Grant Fund, delivered in partnership with COSLA and local government, supports locally developed place-based regeneration projects that involve local communities, helping to tackle inequalities and deliver inclusive growth in deprived, disadvantaged and fragile remote communities across Scotland. Project Title: Nourishing Leith Hub Grant Request: £944,744 Project Reference: RCGF-20-0014

