

# Pedestrian access only at Lauriston Castle

**This weekend the electric gate at Lauriston Castle has been jammed open, and will only allow pedestrian access. The gate is broken and seized in position, and cannot be moved one way or the other.**

The grounds are open to visitors until 3.00pm and on the [Facebook](#) page for the Castle (which is owned by the council) any visitors are encouraged not to park on Cramond Road South.

The council say they will be trying to get the gate fixed as soon as they can.



Photo taken while visiting Lauriston Castle with David Baker  
PHOTO © October 2020 The Edinburgh Reporter

There are two Facebook pages associated with the Castle.

The first is the [Friends of Lauriston Castle Estate – Official Facebook page](#) where people share photos and usually some events too.

The second is the Friends of Lauriston Castle which David Baker runs. Mr Baker has raised many concerns with the council in the last year or more. Most recently, he wrote an open email to the councillors who are also trustees of the Castle on 31 December 2020.

The council has determined that this email has been largely responded to and is recommending the matters raised by Mr Baker to be closed when it comes up on the agenda at this week's Finance & Resources Committee.

We have asked Mr Baker for his comments on any answers he has received.



At Lauriston Castle PHOTO © 2020 The Edinburgh Reporter  
This is the email he sent:

Hi All

This is an open email that will be published on [www.facebook.com/groups/787704665301389](https://www.facebook.com/groups/787704665301389) that has over 650 members To say 2020 has been a disappointing year is an understatement. Coronavirus aside.

### **What has been established**

All members of the Finance and Resources Committee are Trustees (assuming the CEC lawfully appointed them)

CEC Do Not Own Lauriston Castle – only the Trustees have title, not as their personal property but as people who take responsibility for managing money and/or assets that have been set aside in a trust for the benefit of someone else. CEC have not been Delegated or been Authorised to control and manage Lauriston Castle and Grounds.

The Trust deed provides:

- The Trustees shall always keep prominently in view the objective of the collection of artefacts which may be added by purchase, gift or bequest.
- Unless in pressing necessity, in aggregate no more ground shall be covered with buildings than at the death of Mrs Reid in 1926.
- The outside of the Castle to be kept in the condition it

was when Mrs Reid died in 1926.

- Trustees may make such alterations on the grounds as would in the Trustee's opinion make them more convenient or ornamental as a place of public resort
- **in connection with the collection.**
- **In connection with the collection is key.**
- The interior of the principle rooms in the Castle to always be kept in the state as at Mrs Reid's death in 1926.
- The Trustees shall appoint a Curator who is not an artist by profession.
- Trustees shall appoint such "servants" (employees) as shall be required all at such salaries and terms and conditions as the Trustees shall think proper.
- The Trustees shall provide perpetual care and upkeep the monument to William Davidson Barton, William Robert Reid and Mrs Margaret Johnstone Reid and the monuments of Dalgleish and Knox in the Lauriston Castle burying ground in Cramond Churchyard and for keeping in perpetual repair the headstone in Dean Cemetery where William and Sarah Reid are buried

**Matters Not Resolved Lauriston Castle Trust Accounts** As the Trust is not owned by CEC, why have the assets been included as an asset of CEC. Likewise why are the accounts included in CEC Charitable Funds? Is it's inclusion not fraud? Work/Services carried out in Lauriston Castle and grounds do not appear in the Lauriston Castle accounts. Why? Lauriston Castle belongs to the Nation, administered by Trustees. All work carried out in the grounds and buildings of Lauriston Castle must be authorised and agreed by the Trustees and if appropriate those who have been legally nominated/delegated such responsibility on behalf of the Trustees.

It is irrelevant that services/work are carried out via third parties. They relate to Lauriston Castle and by default

directly the Lauriston Castle Trust. A full-time Steward, a part-time Steward and Curator services were provided as were repairs. They do not appear in the accounts. What else? Does this not fall within the Money Laundering provisions?

**Conflict of Interest** The croquet Lawns/Japanese Gardens/Gardeners Lodge House use relate solely to City of Edinburgh interests. Mr Reid was a golfer and neither he or Mrs Reid played croquet. I see no connection to the collection left by the Reid's. Nor did Frank Little when I asked him last September.

**How are the alterations made connected to the collection**Lauriston Castle Collection/Gardeners/Curator The collection has been treated as a closed collection by the Trustees, denying the opportunity of adding to it. Insufficient gardeners and no full-time Curator. It appears that the Trustees have significantly breached the terms and conditions of the Trust.

**Reid's and Friends Gravestones** "The Trustees shall provide perpetual care and upkeep the monument to William Davidson Barton, William Robert Reid and Mrs Margaret Johnstone Reid and the monuments of Dalgleish and Knox in the Lauriston Castle burying ground in Cramond Churchyard and for keeping in perpetual repair the headstone in Dean Cemetery where William and Sarah Reid are buried."

This has not been done and is yet another a disgraceful breach of the Trustees responsibilities. Where is the headstone in Dean Cemetery where William and Sarah Reid are buried?

**National Architecture on and in the grounds of Lauriston Castle** 17th century Healing Well and Lectern Sundial, Victorian Glasshouse, Gardner's Lodge, inscriptions & stonework in the grounds of the Castle itself have been allowed to deteriorate/be vandalised and not restored.

Inscriptions and carvings on the walls of the Castle are

crumbling away. Water damage is eroding the balcony and elsewhere. All taking place over many, many years. These are of National importance. Funding could have been obtained from various external organisations such as Historic Environment Scotland/Lotto/Public donation appeal. It has been reported that circa £70,000 of City of Edinburgh funds were spent restoring the Victorian Glasshouse about 7 or 8 years ago, yet today it is in a disgraceful state on brink of collapse. Who carried out an inspection of work carried out? There is something seriously wrong if such an amount was spent on the glasshouse. There are other examples of potential misappropriation of monies. Access to the inside of the Castle and outbuildings was sought last September. Despite there being a window of opportunity between October last and Mid March this year, access has been denied. This has only increased concern that all is not well inside.

**Advertising** The advertising in the grounds clearly indicates CEC own, manage and control Lauriston Castle. CEC do not own, nor have authority to manage/control. The Trustees were given till 31 December 2020 to change the advertising. They have not. The matter will now be passed to the Advertising Standards Authority.

**Glasshouse & Italian Garden** Both are being used by the gardener to grow crops & tomato's .

The Health and Safety Executive have already brought to the council's attention that whilst the Glasshouse is in the current state, it should not be used. Why are you still breaching health and safety law (and have been doing so for years)? When will all activity in the Glasshouse stop and items be removed?

People regularly visiting the grounds tell me that the gardener is using the flowering area in the Italian Garden to grow crops. This must stop immediately and winter flowers be planted.

The fencing around the Glasshouse is not secure.

**Pond** This is historically important feature. Please explain why the pond has been left untouched for over 10 years. This has led to it's current dangerous state and health hazard.

A grey heron regularly visits the pondThe grapevine indicates the council are considering filling in the pond. The Trustees have presided over the demise some of Scotland's historic monuments in Lauriston Castle, Glasshouse, Healing Well, Lectern Sundial, plaques. To wilfully destroy another is unacceptable and must not happen.

Please let me know when the pond will be restored to it's former glory.

**Toilets** Despite Mimi's opening, the toilets remain closed. Is it not possible for the toilets to fall under the control and COVID care of Mimi's?

The consequence of the toilets being closed is people are using the grounds to urinate and worse. A Health & Safety issue.

**Japanese Garden** Over many years now, the Japanese Garden has been used by people as an area for drinking alcohol drug taking and vandalism. The police have been called out many times. When will the Trustees stop colluding with the offenders and assist the police by restoring the functionality of existing CCTV and installing covert CCTV?The Japanese Garden is a mess. When is it going to be restored to look like a Japanese Garden?

**BBQ Area** The area that has been allocated is in the path where people and animals move. It is a Health & Safety hazard and will be reported as such. Signs are far too small.

Why was there no local public consultation?

**Broken Branches Hanging High in Trees**I brought to Frank

Little, Museums & Galleries manager and Frank Ross, Lord Provost, attention, a year ago and again this year, that there were sizeable broken branches hanging high up in trees that may fall on Children/Adults/Animals causing injury.

I have removed one by using a long tool to bash it down.

Apart from that, no action has been taken to remove these dangerous broken branches. Should an injury occur this will be regarded as criminal negligence as having been advised of the danger, no action, over a very long period, has been taken to remove the danger.

When will you arrange for all the trees in the grounds of Lauriston Castle be inspected and remove all these dangerous branches? Thereafter a regular inspection must be made and any danger removed.

### **Tree Management**

Excessive trees, bushes, ivy, brambles have sprung up over the Trusteeship depriving the 100+ year trees of nutrients. The trees are dependent on the soil in which they are planted for much of its nutrition. Too many other trees, bushes, ivy etc deprive the 100+ year trees.

Trees that do not get the right nutrients will gradually become weaker. When weakness occurs in a tree, that tree will become more susceptible to disease, pests, and even damage from weather events. Evidence of this can be seen in Lauriston Castle – mature trees and branches have suffered weather damage.

Adequate management has not been carried out. Why not?

Excessive growth needs to be removed. This will go some way to restore the grounds to that intended by the Reid's. When will this be carried out?

### **Habitat**

The real issue of rats and other vermin lies in the mismanagement of the habitat. Houpetoun Garden Centre has many birdfeeders and very few to no rats because they manage the habitat. So why are the Trustees unable to employ a qualified gardens manager who will manage the habitat.

The trustees need to take on board the grounds of Lauriston Castle are gardens with trees, not forests.

When removing the ivy to create France's memorial garden, I found the area to be completely sterile. No insects, despite digging 2-3 feet deep, no worms. Now there are insects, worms attracting bees, other insects and butterflies.

The grounds have been badly managed over a very long time. Ivy has been allowed to spread, suffocating the existing habitat, even wrapping itself around trees to the top. Brambles have been unkept, allowed to overspread producing poor fruit.

Jim, the Gardener, has told me that Graeme Craig moved from IT to Gardens & Grounds but had/have no horticulture experience/qualifications. Is this true? What experience/qualifications does he have, over what period?

**Rubbish Bins** I identified the rubbish bins as a rat attraction. Environmental Health agree. They still have not been replaced/fixed?

**Paths** The paths in the wooded areas need upgrading to allow disabled and able bodied people to move through all year round.

When will this be carried out?

**Vehicles** The car park is inadequate and needs to be extended or separate parking area created on the opposite side. The entrance/exit is a dangerous area to people, animals and vehicles. A separate entrance and exit is essential. A separate public/animal access needs to be constructed.



**Direct Face to Face Communication**I have asked twice for the opportunity for F2F talks with you, the Trustees. So far you have not agreed to this. I realise that under COVID 19 restrictions it has not been possible to meet. However it is possible to have a zoom meeting.

**Other Matters**Those reported in our presentation to Frank Little in September 2019 and subsequently not mentioned in this email also needs to be addressed.

**Security to raise Funding**Have monies been obtained on the security of Lauriston Castle? If so, where has that funding been applied?

**illegal activity by CEC employees**It has been established that Graeme Craig had no authority I consider his action to be unlawful, vindictive, threatening and an abuse of power in public office. Over the past 14 months I have been raising many issues of mismanagement with the Trustees of Lauriston Castle which Graeme has been responsible. Two other employees have been involved in illegal activity.

All three will be subject to formal complaint in the new year via yourselves. One has already been made via CEC customer services who appear to have ignored it.

May 2021 be a Lauriston Castle Trustee action year.

David