

Council awards funding for improvements all over Edinburgh

On Friday the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee met to award some funding for really local projects in one of the most meaningful spending projects the council can make.

In all parts of the city there will be money spent on improving public spaces in important ways.

We were interested in the next part of the [Northfield](#) story – one hundred years after the first council homes were built there.

As a result of the funding awarded on Friday, Northfield Grove is set for some real improvements.

Local councillor and Depute Lord Provost, Joan Griffiths told us during a walk around the area what she has in mind. She would like the area to be much less concrete and much greener. This is not really just her own idea, as she spent some time in the area canvassing residents about what is needed, and will do so again before the project is finalised.

The council has now approved funding from government monies

provided by the Place Based Investment Programme (PBIP) for a project to create a softer greener landscape than the concrete one which exists right now.

The green space will be developed into play and recreation areas, and hard standing, car parking areas would be reduced to make this a nicer place to live. It would improve the biodiversity in an area which is already one of the greenest in the city with Figgate Park sitting just behind the flats in this street. The problem is that the link between Northfield Grove and the nature reserve is quite a distance away, so the new plans would include a closer access point for residents to get into the park and enjoy the flora and fauna there.

Cllr Griffiths said: "Northfield has seen years of under investment and I am delighted that this project will deliver an environment which will reduce the hard standing and allow residents to have areas for play and recreation. I look forward to meeting and engaging with residents on draft proposals that have been drawn up following "pop up conversations" held with them before the pandemic."

An application to Nature Scotland for £200,000 might deliver a new access to Figgate Park which is the nature reserve right next to Northfield Grove, but which does not have a direct access to it.

The first phase of work should begin this summer.













In total £1.998 million was allocated to the council by The Scottish Government out of their £38 million pot. And the council's Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee allocated this share to a variety of projects when it met on Friday. The list of projects exceeded the funds available, but many places in the city should look much better when work has been completed.

The Scottish Government announced the £50 million Town Centre Fund in 2018, and The City of Edinburgh Council has been awarded a total of £3.567 million from it. PBIP aspired to *“ensure that all place based investments are shaped by the needs and aspirations of local communities and accelerate our ambitions for place, 20-minute neighbourhoods, town centre action, community led regeneration and community wealth building”*.

This means that the community and the council work together to ensure that the funding is used in a way which is relevant to the local communities. It is a ring-fenced grant for spending

on capital projects and the government is keen that local councils spend the funding on “achieving 20-minute neighbourhoods*, town centre action, community-led regeneration and community wealth building”. Part of the criteria is that this must be new activity and the money must be spent by March 2022, so it is clear that the projects must already be fairly well formed. And the council officers confirmed that all would contribute to the 20-minute neighbourhood principle.

*A 20 minute neighbourhood aims to create an environment where residents can access most of their daily service needs and amenities in a single 20- minute round trip.

The projects which have been awarded funding were:

- **The Causey £266,000**

- The Causey is a project initiated by the Causey Development Trust that aims to make West Crosscauseway and the surrounding area safer and more welcoming for pedestrians and cyclists.
- A design has been developed that includes the creation of a public square, widening of pavements, and traffic calming measures. The Council and the Trust have progressed the necessary traffic regulation and redetermination orders. Progress relies on an independent hearing that will determine the outcome of the necessary traffic regulation and redetermination orders; this is expected to have concluded by August 2021.

Isobel Leckie, Secretary for Causey Development Trust, said: “We are delighted that The Causey has been recognized so generously in the Place Based Investment Programme and awarded this very significant funding. We feel uplifted at this show of support from The City of Edinburgh Council. It reflects the ongoing support we’ve experienced from local organisations, businesses and individuals committed to transforming The

Causey into a safer, more attractive street and place, one that works better for all users. It shows that City of Edinburgh Council is listening to community groups who want to be proactive and not just complain about what's wrong or missing in their streets.

“This gives us confidence going into The Directorate of Environmental (DPEA) Hearing in August, which considers objections to the design and will decide the future of The Causey.”



The Causey / West Crosscauseway

Artist's impression: Aga Mietkiewicz / Wee Dog Media



- **Wester Hailes Regeneration £100,000**
- The Council is in the process of commissioning a Regeneration & Development Framework for the Wester Hailes area. This will set out a comprehensive, phased regeneration plan for the next 10 to 15 years. There are a number of “early action” projects already underway, including improvements to existing Council homes and estates and the replacement of the high school.
- Wester Hailes offers a wealth of opportunity for improvements to existing transport and active travel infrastructure, new housing-led developments and adapting public sector delivery models, all firmly routed in the 20 Minute Neighbourhood model. Wester Hailes is also one of the first communities in Scotland to start to develop its own Local Place Plan following their introduction within the Planning (Scotland) Act in 2019.
- **Gracemount Civic Square £150,000** to allow the project to be fully delivered, improving the square at Gracemount

Drive/Capitain's Road including additional planting and green space, shopfront improvements, improved street furniture, upgrade of surfacing, improved accessibility with the removal of a split level, art work and cycle bays.

▪ **Portobello Town Hall £350,000**

▪ Portobello Town Hall is a 1910s 2,013 m² B-listed town hall at 147 Portobello High Street, previously used to host weddings, concerts, community events, etc. It has been closed since July 2019 due to safety issues linked to the ceiling.

▪ In 2020, the Council began a process to award a long lease on the building to restore it. On 20 May 2021, Finance and Resources Committee agreed to work towards an asset transfer of the building to a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation led by members of the Portobello community. This project would deliver repairs and upgrades to help bring the hall back into good condition, ultimately enabling it to be leased out and brought back into use. Work to carry out like-for-like repairs could commence reasonably promptly.

▪ **MacMillan Hub Pennywell £250,000**

▪ The MacMillan Hub, Pennywell (formerly the Pennywell Culture and Learning Hub) is a proposed new creative and community hub at MacMillan Square. It would deliver enhanced arts space, a café, a library, an early years centre, a learning and skills hub, and affordable housing. The hub is the centrepiece of the regeneration of Pennywell and Muirhouse and would complement new homes in the area.

▪ The co-location of vital services such as childcare and learning alongside creative industry and the café would encourage a diverse range of users and activate the town square, drawing people in from surrounding areas. The Council and North Edinburgh Arts (NEA) are working in partnership to design and deliver the new hub. Once

operational the hub would be jointly managed between the Council and NEA, creating unique opportunities for collaborative working and shared facilities.

- Design of the Hub is at an advanced stage with a planning submission made in spring 2021. Construction could begin in January 2022.



Macmillan Hub

- **Craigmillar Meanwhile Use £60,000**
- Previous Town Centre Fund cash has enabled an unused brownfield site in the heart of Craigmillar to be brought in to use and there is an opportunity to expand this project to provide additional commercial space. The original £170k of funding has allowed the site to be landscaped to provide an outdoor space for the community to enjoy, a commercial unit for a small business, an outdoor event/market space, new planting and a public artwork.
- An additional £60,000 would further enhance the project and enable a second commercial unit to be provided on the site which would add to the mix of uses on offer and encourage more footfall to the site and wider town centre area.
- **Rejuvenating Roseburn £110,000**
- A package of public realm upgrades in Roseburn linking into the City Centre West to East Cycle Link (CCWEL).
- Construction of the CCWEL project is expected to commence in 2021 and if funded these elements could be completed within the timeframe for this funding.
- **St Oswald's Centre £350,000**
- St. Oswald's Church and Hall is a B-listed church in Bruntsfield, dating to 1900. In March 2021, the church was the subject of a community asset transfer from the Council to Bruntsfield St. Oswald's, a local group which intends to convert the building into a community

facility, St. Oswald's Centre.

- The group has identified a three-phase plan to deliver the comprehensive restoration of the building, with works costing £1.5m over a 10-year period.
- The first phase, costing £556k, would make the building wind- and water-tight, secure, and operational, enabling it to open in 2022. This approach would allow the building to begin serving the community as soon as possible, while generating revenue to sustain its longer-term plans. Work on the first phase could commence promptly.

A spokesperson for Bruntsfield St Oswald's said: "We are delighted to receive funding through the new Place Based Investment Programme from the City of Edinburgh Council. This award will underpin our phase one refurbishment works which will see the St. Oswald's Centre brought back into use as a vibrant community centre for Bruntsfield. Securing this funding will, we hope, inject further momentum into our fundraising efforts as we seek to open the building to the public in 2022."



Bruntsfield St Oswald's

- **Roseburn Park toilet/café £66,000**
- The Friends of Roseburn Park (FORP), a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, has presented the Council with a business plan setting out proposals for the conversion of a disused 1900s toilet block in Roseburn Park into a new café incorporating a publicly accessible toilet. The FORP proposes to lease the building from the Council and sub-lease it to an operator; the Council's Finance and Resources Committee agreed to a peppercorn lease on 23rd March 2017. A prospective operator for the café has been identified. Planning consent for the project was awarded in 2017 (reference 17/00175/VARY).

- **Green Bridge Balerno £66,000**

- The Green Bridge is a footbridge spanning the Bavelaw Burn at Balerno, linking Bavelaw Road to Malley Garden. It was closed in 2016 due to structural deterioration rendering it unsafe.
- Balerno Community Council has identified the restoration of the bridge as a priority for Balerno as it would attract walkers to the heart of Balerno, generating increased customs for the shops, pubs, restaurants, and cafés there and reinforcing its role as the “gateway to the Pentlands”.
- Demolition of the existing bridge is estimated to cost ~£25k and quotes for the supply and installation of a replacement bridge of ~£30k have been received. Allowing 10% contingency giving the potential complexities of this project would give an estimated cost to replace the Green Bridge of ~£66k.

- **Northfield £230,000**

- The project at Northfield is to deliver a softer greener landscape, to develop the green space for play and recreation, improve biodiversity, to reduce the areas of hard standing, reduce fly tipping and improve waste facilities, improve connection to the Figgat Burn and improve access and street lighting across the area. Northfield has seen years of under investment and the proposals attached will make a large difference to how the area feels.
- The estimated cost of delivering the project is ~£750k. It is anticipated that the first phase could be completed during 2021/22.



Cllr Joan Griffiths has designs on improving Northfield Grove to make it greener PHOTO ©2021 The Edinburgh Reporter