

Planning permission granted for Granton gasholder

Work is set to get underway to transform land at Edinburgh's iconic Granton gas holder into a new city park – including a space to host future outdoor events.

Overgrown vegetation around the waterfront landmark will be cleared to make way for the post-industrial site's redevelopment, soon becoming a public green space with areas for play, relaxation and art displays.

The central amphitheatre, ringed by trees and hedges, will be kept 'flexible' to allow concerts and exhibitions to be held there in the future, although further proposals will have to come forward to fully facilitate this.

Plans to breathe new life into the former gasworks are central to the council's £1.3 billion Granton Waterfront regeneration. The new park, which has now been granted planning permission, will serve an influx of new residents moving to the town, where over 3,000 sustainable homes are being built.

Councillors gave the green light at a City Chambers planning meeting and said it was a "step in the right direction" for the project.

The City of Edinburgh Council purchased the gas holder and land surrounding it, known as Forthquarter, in 2018.

With councillors giving the go ahead this week, and the scheme shored up with £16 million awarded from the levelling up fund

last year, the project is set to pick up pace. Work to restore the instantly recognisable landmark has also been granted listed building consent.

It is anticipated the new park will be ready to open to the public by early 2025.

Plans, drawn up by the council alongside Mclaughlin & Harvey and Tetra Tech, said bringing the site into public use will “help deliver one of the most sustainable new coastal towns in Scotland”.

They added: “Within the gasholder interior space, a peripheral ring walk will allow access from this main route around the edge of the guide frame, providing connectivity to the six activity spaces arranged around its edge.

“From the ring walk, six short connecting paths will allow further access through the ring of trees, into the central green space.”

As proposals went before councillors on Wednesday Conservative councillor Joanna Mowat said the designs “ticks loads of boxes”.

However, she admitted being “slightly concerned” that the plan to use the space for events in future had not been fully thought through.

“If you’ve got a multi functional public space it is likely that at the centre of that people are going to want to put things on what is a grassed area,” she said.

Cllr Mowat added the council could bet setting itself up to “get in a pickle à la Princes Street Gardens” and other green spaces “which don’t have the necessary infrastructure to support things on them”.

She continued: “I don’t know how flexible this will be to accommodate that.

“I would like to see us do it once and do it right.”

Kenneth Bowes, a town planner for Edinburgh Council, reminded the committee it was “not really assessing public events at the moment”.

He said: “If they come forward then they could either be temporary ones which don’t need further planning permission or something which is on a more regular basis; they may have to come back to us and seek that approval for permission.”

Cllr Neil Gardiner said: “This application is a step in the right direction and access can be improved in the future.

“It may become more events happen there in the future but it is a big landmark on the Granton waterfront so it’s a positive step in the overall masterplan.”

by Donald Turvill

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