

Will Edinburgh Council save Gorgie Farm?

The City of Edinburgh Council was advised in early December that the charity running Gorgie City Farm – LOVE Learning a charity based in Hamilton – would no longer be able to run the farm without a subsidy from the council.

LOVE Learning [closed the gates of the farm](#) on Monday afternoon at 3pm saying that all animals will be found new homes from Tuesday onwards. They are bringing the lease to an end and will no longer operate the farm under the direction of their mental health charity. This meant that Gorgie Farm had become more than just a place for children to go and see animals in the city, it was working as a venue for people with mental health issues to volunteer and gain confidence.

A large group of supporters of a new group which may try to save the farm gathered there on Monday afternoon just ahead of the gates being closed at 3pm. Chair of Save Gorgie Farm Forever, Martin Young, told The Edinburgh Reporter that they have promises of £25,000 to keep the farm open meantime on some kind of skeleton basis while a longterm plan is drafted.

Politicians of all parties, both MSPs and councillors are desperately trying to find a solution to keeping the farm open as well as making it sustainable.

POLICY AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

There is a meeting of the council's [Policy & Sustainability Committee](#) being held on Tuesday morning at 10am, but so far the expected emergency motion from Council Leader, Cammy Day has not been published. The Edinburgh Reporter asked the council for comment on Monday afternoon but none has been offered.

Financial woes

The charity produced their accounts for the financial year 2020/21 and the draft accounts for 2021/22 to evidence to their local authority landlords that their situation was no longer tenable.

[As we reported yesterday](#) the charity is now in default with the regulator, OSCR.

The Chief Executive of the charity, Lynn Bell (or Black), advised that there would have to be consultation with the staff beginning from 9 January, meaning a potential loss of up to 30 jobs.

Previously the council funded the farm with a grant of around £100,000 a year. Then in 2019 the farm went into liquidation meaning that when LOVE took it over they could not ask the council for any funding. But the charity did receive the sum of £45,600 "as part of the takeover" of the city farm.

In 2020 the total income of the charity (which includes much more than just Gorgie Farm) was £759,652 but this amount dropped to £472,083 in the following year, leading to a loss of around £10,000. In 2021 there is provision in the accounts for £10,344 of bad debt, but there are no notes as to who owes the charity this sum.

In 2020 staff costs ran to £550,886 but decreased to £307,519

in 2021, and there is a note in the accounts that no employee was paid more than £60,000.

The charity commissioned a report to scope out a long term vision for the farm both as a community resource, and to find a way of developing its work in education and in respite care.

Previously in April 2020 and May 2022 the charity say they had written to both the Chief Executive of the Council, Andrew Kerr, and the then Director of Communities and Families, Alistair Gaw, but claim that no substantial discussions followed from that correspondence.

LOVE Learning said in December that such discussions were now “critical”, despite setting up a new team of experienced fundraising volunteers.

The first lockdown came into effect just a few weeks after the farm was reopened by LOVE Learning in 2020. The consequences of that, and the fact that the furlough scheme was not available to the charity (staff had to be hired to feed and care for the animals) means that they now have real financial difficulties in continuing without any council support.

Welcome to



Gorgie F



Remember to
wash your hands!

**WE ARE NOW
CLOSED**

y that we
all know
e closing
3pm on
January

**PARKING
ONLY**

**Disabled Parking only
beyond this point**

all so much for the
ing the farm over
the last few year.

We all hope this is not the end of Gorgie Farm.

THANK YOU AGAIN

**CLOSING
DATE!**

