

Edinburgh bowling greens set to be turned into allotments and community gardens

Edinburgh bowling greens are set to be turned into allotments and community gardens amid a shortage of growing space in the city.

It comes after Edinburgh Leisure returned two greens to the council's ownership due to being underused.

Now following engagement with the public on re-purposing the spaces at Victoria Park and St Margaret's Park plans are set to be progressed to "breathe life into these historically important spaces".

Survey results showed "strong support" for proposed redesigns, which include social gathering areas and sensory gardens alongside the new space to plant fruit and vegetables.

Over 6,000 people are on Edinburgh Council's allotment waiting list – which makes the current expected waiting time around 50 years.

A consultation on how Corstorphine's St Margaret's Park bowling green should be used found the most popular ideas were introducing "urban growing areas, natural play space, a garden, and nature-friendly interventions".

A separate engagement process on the disused bowling venue at Victoria Park was met with support for creating allotments so locals can "cultivate their own fruits, vegetables, and

flowers". However respondents said the individual growing spaces should be "balanced with community gardens to benefit a broader range of residents and ensure inclusivity".

Revamping the Leith park's bowling green could also see the pavilion turned into a café, public toilets, and community space, while proposals for the space have been updated to include a community growing area, multi-use gathering space with sensory planting, seating, and swales to address flooding.

The next steps will involve developing more detailed designs for the bowling greens and submitting planning applications to change their use.

A report said: "A funding plan will be created, and collaboration with local stakeholders will continue throughout the process.

"High-level cost estimates have been made for the scheme, with a mix of external grant funding, repayable finance, and council budget allocations anticipated to fund the project."

Meanwhile the council is exploring including two other unused greens in the initiative – at Prestonfield and Regent Road.

It says bowling greens "have held a special place in the heart of Edinburgh's communities for generations".

"They have been centres for socialising, friendly competition, and a reflection of the city's rich heritage.

"As we look to the future, we see these spaces changing so that they meet the needs of our present population and planet. We aim to create spaces that welcome people of all ages and interests.

"From revitalized greens for leisurely games on sunny afternoons to modern pavilions hosting community events and educational programs, the potential for these spaces is as

vast as the history they hold.

“Our team is excited to embark on this journey of renewal, ensuring that the Bowling Greens of Edinburgh once again become integral parts of our city’s social fabric.”

By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter