

Friends of Wester Craiglockhart Hill and Greenbank Community Woodland

Update to CC AGM July 22nd 2024

This Local Nature Reserve is one of the few public green spaces in Edinburgh where the emphasis really can be on “Nature”. It is small for a nature reserve, but a mosaic of habitats are packed into this small space: short grass, long grass, woods and crags – the only thing we lack is water. It is surrounded by the Merchants of Edinburgh Golf Course, which offers a protective buffer. People we’ve talked to over the years say they love the “wild” feeling and the quiet.

The LNR is cheap for CEC to look after and requires very little active management: maintenance of the main paths (which takes almost no work); cutting the short grass areas once a year; ensuring that the trees are safe; a very little maintenance of the SSSI grassland. The Friends Group and other local residents do most of the work of clearing up when people do things that cause damage.

What’s been happening?

Positive

- Most of the “lockdown paths” have almost grown over and have not been re-used.
- The maiden pink that was re-introduced a few years ago has flowered again this year.
- Very little litter (or it is cleared up very fast by those who care about the space!)
- Much less evidence of fires than we have seen in former years. Only one fire spot shows any sign of recent use and one that used to be popular has completely grown over. No big burns requiring the fire service.
- Still plenty of birds and wildlife, including top predators.

Work in progress

- We are still waiting for LNR signs at the entranceways and a noticeboard. We have explored non-CEC sources of funding, but these tend to be for things that are not seen as the Council’s responsibility, so we are back to waiting for CEC to act.

Negative

- A couple of the “lockdown paths” are still in evidence. They’re not essential to get round the LNR, they don’t shorten the route, but people got used to using them and they became so worn down that they are taking a long time to grow over.
- Foragers are still beating through some of the raspberries and damaging the bushes.
- Worryingly few bumblebees – but this seems to be a nationwide problem.

Applause to everyone who has contributed to taking care of this green space. Even small things help, like taking home your own rubbish, picking up a dropped food container or staying on the main paths.

Footnote from the secretary of FOWG:

I’m always pleased when I come across young people who care about nature. Some educators like the Green Team and a few interested schoolteachers and parents try to foster that interest. It’s good that urban children are learning to connect with nature. But a lot of what we teach them falls under the heading of what you might call “survival skills”, how to use what we find in nature for our own benefit. Heating up water with a Kelly kettle; making a wigwam; foraging for nettles to make soup.

What we don't seem to be teaching them is how to move through a green space and leave no trace. That is a skill I'd love to see our children and grandchildren learn!