

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 26 August 2014

Events in Edinburgh's Parks and Greenspaces

Item number	7.10
Report number	
Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	All

Executive summary

The Transport and Environment Committee of 29 October 2013 acknowledged the success of the Edinburgh Parks Events Manifesto in managing events over the past three years. It approved a review, to include a public consultation exercise, in order to determine whether any changes to the document were required and what, if any, improvements should be made. This report sets out the results of this exercise and makes recommendations based on its findings.

Links

Coalition pledges	P24 P48
Council outcomes	CO20 CO23 CO24
Single Outcome Agreement	None

Events in Edinburgh's Parks and Greenspaces

Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee:

- 1.1 Notes the outcome of the consultation exercise.
- 1.2 Approves the changes to the Events Manifesto as outlined in paragraphs 3.48 – 3.57 of the report.
- 1.3 Asks for a further report identifying the most suitable location(s) to create an events space that can be used for both high impact events and recreational activities; the report to detail possible options and likely costs of installation and maintenance, as well as appropriate surcharges for event organisers using the space.

Background

- 2.1 Edinburgh's festivals and events are key to the city's image at home and abroad and to its capital city status. Edinburgh's Events Strategy states that Edinburgh should build on its current success and continue to grow as one of the world's finest events city. Edinburgh aims to deliver a balanced portfolio of events, including established successful events, newly created or commissioned events, and national or international events, won through bidding processes.
- 2.2 At its meeting of 31 August 2010, Council approved the first Edinburgh Parks Events Manifesto. This has provided a strategic and proactive approach to the planning and management of events within Edinburgh's parks and greenspaces by establishing a decision-making framework and set of guidelines that balances the need to provide open space locations for events with the obligation to ensure that park quality is maintained to the highest possible standard.
- 2.3 The Manifesto has been in operation for four years and has shown that there is value in having an agreed policy basis for determining event numbers, locations and operational practices, not least in ensuring a consistent, justifiable and balanced approach to decision-making.
- 2.4 A review is carried out each year for major events, which provides feedback that can be used to improve subsequent events. Feedback from these reviews has suggested that further improvements were possible and that refinements to the

process could be made to support both the needs of event organisers and park users.

- 2.5 By their very nature, events are planned well in advance to ensure that there is sufficient time to draft management plans and apply for licenses. This also ensures that there is enough time to gain the publicity required to achieve attendance and sales targets.
- 2.6 It should be noted that, in the case of marches and parades which are to be held on “Common Good” land, the organisers are legally required to inform the Council of their event, although they do not require the Council’s permission to hold it.
- 2.7 Following a report submitted to the Transport and Environment Committee on 29 October 2013, approval was given to carry out a public consultation and review of the Manifesto to identify any further improvements to the management of events in Edinburgh’s parks.
- 2.8 A report regarding a review of events governance was approved by the Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee on 25 February 2014. It recommended a number of improvements to the events application and approval process which aim to provide a more streamlined and transparent approach to events governance. The recommendations are to be taken forward by the strategic Events Management Group, on which Parks and Greenspace is represented. The aim is to work closely with other departments represented on the group to ensure that the implementation of both strategies is aligned to provide consistency of approach.

Main report

Analysis of Consultation Responses

- 3.1 A public consultation on the Events Manifesto ran from 21 January to 21 March 2014. Focusing on the central principles of the current Manifesto, the aim was to identify any improvements that could be made to the decision-making and event management framework and to have these approved for considering applications for events from 2015. The consultation received 609 responses. These are summarised in Appendix 1 and can be grouped as follows:
 - 58 Friends of Parks Group members
 - 53 Local Community Group members
 - 38 Community Councils
 - 73 Event organisers
 - 274 Local residents
 - 255 Park users

- 25 Local businesses
 - 25 Sports Club members.
- 3.2 Given the large number of responses, it has been possible to secure a good impression of current public opinion, and to make recommendations on how the Edinburgh Parks Events Manifesto may be improved as a means of balancing the needs of both event operators and park users. These are considered in the order laid out in the consultation document.

Principle 1: Control the number of days of occupation for an event

- 3.3 The current Manifesto specifies the maximum amount of time that events can operate on each of the eight most popular parks for event organisers. For most parks this is for 15 days, with Calton Hill (grassed area) limited to seven days because of its bio-rich grasslands. For the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links and Princes Street Gardens the time is extended to four weeks and eight weeks respectively, to accommodate events using these spaces during the August and Christmas festivals.
- 3.4 The questions asked of consultees were: Do you think this is the correct amount of time for each venue, and if not, why not? Of the 599 responses received:
- 63% said Yes
 - 37% said No
- 3.5 This suggests general satisfaction with the current arrangements. However, of the 224 comments received there were three general areas of concern:
- 88 people specifically referenced The Meadows. Of these, 75 consider four weeks too long, The remaining 13 have concerns including noise, access, the effect on local residents, excessive use of the area by commercial events, rotation of large events, damage to grass, lack of forward planning in terms of protection of the event area, drainage and loss of public space for park users
 - 43 wanting longer use of parks for events.
 - 32 stating that the use of Princes Street Gardens for the Christmas Festival was inappropriate, and that the period of time required to reinstate the affected ground was too long.
- 3.6 It should be noted that the Parks and Greenspace Service aims to have Princes Street Gardens restored to its Landscape Quality standard by 1 May each year. It is difficult to reinstate ground much earlier in the year than this due to seasonal climatic conditions.

Principle 2: Schedule turf rest periods between events

- 3.7 The current Manifesto specifies that there should be a minimum period of two weeks between events occurring on the same space. However, other factors such as weather conditions, scale of infrastructure, length of occupancy, and extent of any required repairs will also be taken into consideration in determining specific requirements. There is also a commitment that the Council will demand reinstatement to a standard that returns an area to its original condition, in the minimal possible timescale.
- 3.8 The questions asked of consultees were: Do you think this is the right approach and are there any alterations/improvements you would like to recommend? Of the 559 responses received:
- 77% said Yes
 - 23% said No
- 3.9 However, within these figures there was strong support for extending the length of time from two weeks. 91 of the 185 comments received felt that two weeks was not sufficient time to allow for ground recovery.
- 3.10 In reality, few events take place in a location that has recently been used by an earlier event, so clarifying this and extending the rest period by two more weeks may be sufficient to address these concerns.

Principle 3: Control the total number of “large” events per year

- 3.11 The current Manifesto sets out the maximum number of large events that it would sanction for each park, defining a large event as one whose footprint exceeds 1000sqm of available open space. Specific limits are: Lauriston Castle Gardens (7), Roseburn Park (5), Leith Links (5), The Meadows and Bruntsfield Links (5), Calton Hill (5), Inverleith Park (4), West Princes Street Gardens (4+ those confined to Ross Theatre), Pilrig Park (2), East Princes Street Gardens (1+ ‘unique, single events’).
- 3.12 The questions asked of consultees were: Do you think these are set at the correct levels? and if not, why not? Of the 521 responses received:
- 64% said Yes
 - 36% said No
- 3.13 This suggests that the majority of respondents feel that the balance between the number of events each park can sustain is about right. However, again there were a significant number of responses concerned about the high number of large events on The Meadows (35), as well as some calls for a lower maximum number of large events in Princes Street Gardens (10), Inverleith Park (7) and Leith Links (8). On the other hand, a number of respondents thought that parks could accommodate more large events over the year (56).

- 3.14 A key consideration in limiting the number of large events in some parks is the impact that they have on sports use, notably football, cricket and rugby. Few of the most popular parks for events have significant space beyond that marked out as winter and summer sports pitches, meaning that pitch bookings very often have to be suspended throughout the duration of the use of the space for a large event, and very often for a period afterwards, whilst the ground recovers. The notable exceptions are Calton Hill, Princes Street Gardens, Lauriston Castle Gardens, and the Meadows, which have large spaces that are not normally marked out for sports.
- 3.15 One measure to help balance the use of a park for sports and events is to encourage large event organisers to consider a wider range of possible event locations. In recent years, Victoria Park and Gypsy Brae have been more regularly used than in earlier times. However, park locations such as Saughton Park and Gardens, Craigmillar Castle Park, Hunters Hall Park, St Margaret's Park, and Hailes Quarry Park could accommodate events without significant impact on sports use.
- 3.16 Consultees were also asked to suggest alternative locations for events. Additional suggestions included: Holyrood Park, Harrison Park, Lochend Park, various New Town gardens, Ingliston Show Ground, Meadowbank, Meggetland, Colinton Mains Park, Ocean Terminal, Murieston Park, Montgomery Street Park, Braidburn Valley Park, Portobello Park, Figgate Park, Regent Road Park, Silverknowes, Inch Park, Sighthill Park, Morningside Park, Spylaw Park, Rosefield Park, Meadowfield Park, Brighton Park, West Pilton Park, St Marks Park, Jewel Park, Gayfield Square Gardens, Hillside Crescent Gardens, King George V Park, and various unused brownfield sites, notably Shrubhill and Fountainbridge.

Principle 4: Define the capacity of each event site and suggest appropriate types of uses for each venue

- 3.17 The current Manifesto identifies a range of ecological, geological, historical, and architectural elements that need to be considered when determining the capacity and layout of events at environmentally sensitive locations. It also recognises that the impact on any regular sporting activity needs to be minimised.
- 3.18 The questions asked of consultees were: Are these considerations still relevant? and is there anything that should be added to these requirements? Of the 488 responses received:
- 91% said Yes
 - 9% said No
- 3.19 The strong positive response reflects a widespread desire to protect habitats and features of special interest, as well as ensure that the impact of events on

sports use is kept to a minimum. However, there were also calls for other special elements to be taken into consideration when determining event applications and managing events – 132 respondents raising concerns about the impact on park access, visual intrusion, the impact on park users pursuing informal recreational activities, and a need to limit the impact of the event on neighbouring residents, notably traffic, parking and noise.

- 3.20 Although these elements are currently considered in the decision-making and event management process, it may be now be appropriate to devise a more formal event impact assessment to guide decisions and event planning.

Principle 5: To set an appropriate limit for private events

- 3.21 A private event is one that is not accessible to the general public, or if it is, requires entry via a charge, membership, or subscription. This can include commercial activities, wedding and other ceremonial functions, and some charity events.
- 3.22 The questions asked of consultees were: Do you think the number of private events should be limited? Could you recommend improvements to this principle? Of the 482 responses received:
- 81% said Yes
 - 19% said No
- 3.23 The majority of respondents were concerned about the number of private events occurring in public parks, but many were also unclear what 'private event' means. To address this, the updated Manifesto can include a clearer definition.
- 3.24 Given that demand for a particular location often exceeds the agreed event maximum, a further measure worth considering is advertising a maximum number of large commercial private event "opportunities" in each of the most popular parks. Essentially, rather than react to private event applications the Council could tender its requirement and select in advance those events that it wishes to host.
- 3.25 This approach could help widen the number of parks that are used for private/commercial events, reducing pressure on the most popular ones.
- 3.26 It would also partly address another oft cited concern; that the charges levied for use of parks for events is too low. A tendering exercise would determine the actual market rate that event organisers would be willing to pay for each location at given times of the year. Similar to the current Christmas Festival arrangements, the Council could also agree a tendered offer for an event beyond the present one year.

- 3.27 It should be noted that a commercial tendering process would require that any wider consultation would have to occur in advance of the proposed procurement exercise rather than on the event(s) subsequently chosen.
- 3.28 The provision of public access to parks is a statutory requirement. Section 11 of the Land Reform Act requires that access exemptions are secured where access rights may be impinged by events or other activities such as those which charge an admission fee. The Council seeks the views of the Edinburgh Access Forum on the need for Section 11 exemptions and will continue to do so. Consideration of the requirement for exemption will also be built into the event application process.

Principle 6: Control vehicle use and access

- 3.29 The current Manifesto demands robust restrictions on vehicle access and movement associated with an event in a public park.

The questions asked of consultees were: Do you think this is the correct approach? Are there any further measures that should be considered to limit damage to the ground? Of the 471 responses received:

- 96% said Yes
- 4% said No

- 3.30 Such a strong 'Yes' response clearly shows that people think it important that the Council moderates event vehicle use and access, both to limit impacts on other park users and potential damage to park surfaces and features.
- 3.31 One regularly cited concern was the inability to enforce agreed restrictions. It may therefore be necessary to make a surcharge on some event organisers to cover the costs of the Council providing additional monitoring and control where significant vehicle numbers are anticipated.

Principles 7 and 8: To impose appropriate management conditions on event activities; contingency plans to be put in place and to form part of lease agreements

- 3.32 The current Manifesto allows for the imposition of legally-binding conditions in order to ensure that event organisers operate in a manner which limits the impact of their event on the park and other park users. It also requires that event organisers produce a contingency plan for bad weather and other circumstances that may increase risk to park users and damage to park infrastructure.
- 3.33 The questions asked of consultees were: Do you think this is the correct approach? If not, why not? Of the 455 responses received
- 92% said Yes

- 8% said No
- 3.34 Again, such a strong 'Yes' response clearly shows that people think it important that the Council continues to set conditions that help limit wider impact.
- 3.35 Furthermore, these matters will continue to be considered by the Council's Events Planning and Operations Group (EPOG), which convenes for all large-scale events.
- 3.36 A number of respondents wanted greater community involvement in the event review process, and the results of the review to be made public. Both requests would be feasible and can be accommodated in the provisions of the updated Parks Events manifesto.

Application and Permission Process

- 3.37 At present, event applications are received and reviewed by parks officers in advance of consultation with Edinburgh Leisure, local stakeholders, Ward councillors, the Deputy Leader, and the Convenor of the Transport and Environment Committee. Further input is given from a range of interested parties as part of the EPOG process.
- 3.38 The final decision on whether to grant permission to hold an event in a public park is delegated to the Director of Services for Communities.
- 3.39 The questions asked of consultees were: Do you think this process is the right approach? How do you think this could be improved? Of the 447 responses received:
- 72% said Yes
 - 28% said No
- 3.40 Although the majority of respondents agreed with the current process, of the 223 comments received, 103 sought more time to allow proper local stakeholder consultation, 46 requested wider consultation and use of the website/social media to publicise consultations and the reasons for the Council decision. 9 respondents believed that decisions (at least for the large events) should be made by Committee, and 5 requested an appeals process.
- 3.41 Given that most event organisers submit applications well in advance of actual operating dates it should be feasible to extend the stakeholder consultation period beyond the present 5 days for small events and 10 days for large events. However, it should be noted that if a commercial tendering process was introduced for large commercial events then wider consultation would have to occur in advance of the proposed procurement exercise rather than on the event(s) subsequently chosen.
- 3.42 Currently, stakeholder consultees are relevant Parks Friends Groups, Ward Councillors and Community Councils. It is possible to add to this list where

deemed appropriate, but these are seen generally as the bodies most representative of community and park user interests.

- 3.43 Committee consideration and appeals may be possible for some events, but the time period required would probably adversely impact on event organisers, which prefer a quick decision-making process.

Robust Events Site

- 3.44 At its meeting of 18 March 2014, the Transport and Environment Committee considered the progress of the current Park and Pitch Drainage Programme. This report included preliminary research into the provision of a surface that could more readily accommodate the demands of regular use for events. Due to relative installation cost and maintenance complexities, the report advised that the best value solution was continued investment in high quality drainage and enhanced reinstatement and maintenance standards.
- 3.45 As part of the Parks Events Manifesto consultation, consultees were asked “If the City of Edinburgh Council could provide a greenspace robust enough to withstand events being sited on it but would also be accessible for all other recreational uses would you be in favour of this?” Of 441 responses received:
- 84% said Yes
 - 16% said No
- 3.46 Clearly there is support for the creation of more robust spaces that can cope with the demands of events and also be useable throughout the rest of the year as a recreational space. Of the 237 respondents who gave their opinion on where such a space could be located; 30 suggested the Meadows, 22 various or non-specific brownfield sites, and 18 Holyrood Park.
- 3.47 Given the added costs of installing and maintaining a high quality events space, it would seem legitimate to add a surcharge for its use by event organisers to cover these costs.

Proposed Changes to Edinburgh Parks Events Manifesto

- 3.48 In light of the responses to the consultation it is recommended that Committee approves the following changes to the Edinburgh Parks Events Manifesto:
- 3.49 Time limits on events
- Retain the principle that East Princes Street Gardens can be used for Winter Festival activities over the November and December period, and that the maximum number of days that an event can operate in other public parks is 15, with the exceptions that:

- a) use of the grassed areas of Calton Hill be limited to seven days given their biodiversity value and the availability of the adjacent hard-standing area, which itself may be used to a maximum of four weeks; and
- b) space in the Meadows is tendered during the August summer festivals for a period **of up to 23 days of performance (plus set up and take down operations)**; recognising the importance of the location to the City's summer festival activities. However, **any applications outwith that timescale will be considered on their individual merits.**
- c) The Council will expect an increased financial return on use of this space, and will invest any additional income secured into the infrastructure, features and facilities of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links.

3.50 Rest periods between events

Extend the required 'turf rest' period between events to a minimum of four weeks, making exceptions where the level of impact on turf from the former event is minimal and recovery has been to the satisfaction of parks officers. Also, clarify that in some cases the period of recovery is likely to be longer, particularly where the impact requires ground reinstatement operations.

3.51 Limits on the number of large events

Retain the maximum number of events in each park as currently determined, except at Leith Links and Roseburn Park, which should be reduced to a maximum of four large events to reduce the impact on sports use. In order to sustain, or even increase, the number of large events across the city, event organisers should be encouraged to consider alternative venues - thereby spreading the number of large events across a wider range of parks and other open spaces.

3.52 Assessing the impact of events on parks

Develop an event impact assessment process that takes account of the impact of a proposed event on a location's environmental and historical features, sporting and recreation use and neighbourhood amenity. This to be used to help determine the suitability of a preferred location for the proposed event and limit any impact thereafter.

3.53 Reinstating Ground post-event

The Council will work to assess and agree any repairs necessary as a result of damage caused by an event with event organisers on the day they leave site and agree bond allocation for agreed repairs. The Council will also work to ensure any necessary repairs will begin on the same day as the event equipment leaves site, or as near to that date as possible, establishing a contract framework to ensure timely repairs.

3.54 Private events

Clarify what constitutes a 'private event' and annually advertise a limited number of large 'private/commercial event' opportunities in each park within the agreed maximum number of large events which varies for each venue (see 3.11). The most suitable events for the forthcoming year(s) can be selected from the range of submissions, and at a time of year that meets both the Council's and the event organiser's requirements.

Where possible, ensure event organisers retain access routes through their event space, and ensure that Section 11 access exemptions are applied where appropriate.

3.55 Monitoring of vehicle use and access

Consider adding a surcharge to cover the additional costs of monitoring events with significant traffic movements.

3.56 Management Conditions

Continue with the use of management conditions but involve representative community groups and other stakeholders in the post event review to assess whether the conditions were adhered to and effective.

3.57 Application process and stakeholder consultation

Extend the period of stakeholder consultation to allow considered opinion from representative community and park user interests. Up to 10 days for a small/medium scale event, and 21 days for a large event. Exceptions to this process may be required should quicker decisions be necessary for one off events.

3.58 Retain delegated authority for event decisions with the Director of Services for Communities. However, make provision for the Transport and Environment Committee to decide on exceptional events.

Measures of success

- 4.1 Greater satisfaction with the event decision-making and event management processes amongst both event organisers and park users/local residents.

Financial impact

- 5.1 There is no direct financial implication from this report. However, there are likely to be additional costs and income generating opportunities arising from the implementation of some of its recommendations.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The Parks Events Manifesto is a mechanism that aims to provide a framework to manage the risks associated with hosting events in the Council's parks and greenspaces.
- 6.2 The Parks Events Manifesto is also a mechanism that aims to improve the relevant health and safety, governance, compliance or regulatory implications associated with hosting public events in the Council's parks and greenspaces.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 There is no relationship between matters described in this report and the public sector general equality duty. There is no direct equalities and rights impact arising from this report.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 There is a need to balance the requirements of event operators with the wishes of local communities and park user groups to ensure appropriate rights of access to open space and a quality park environment.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 A public consultation was carried out between 21 January and 21 March 2014. It was widely advertised and took the form of a web based survey (with paper copies available on request). It actively sought the views of Neighbourhood Partnerships, Community Councils, Friends Groups, event operators, sports clubs and other park user groups.

The consultation gave interested parties the opportunity to submit opinion and comments regarding the current Events Manifesto and the opportunity to suggest improvements that could be made to the revised version. Meetings were held on request with community groups wishing further detail. The responses to this consultation totalled 609.

Background reading/external references

[Edinburgh Parks Events Manifesto](#), August 2010

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Links

Coalition pledges	P24 - Maintain and embrace support for our world-famous festivals and events P48 - Use Green Flag and other strategies to preserve our green spaces
Council outcomes	CO20 - Culture, sport and major events – Edinburgh continues to be a leading cultural city where culture and sport play a central part in the lives and futures of citizens CO23 - Well engaged and well informed – Communities and individuals are empowered and supported to improve local outcomes and foster a sense of community CO24 - The Council communicates effectively internally and externally and has an excellent reputation for customer care
Single Outcome Agreement	
Appendices	Appendix 1: Summary of consultation comments Appendix 2: Revised Edinburgh Parks Events Manifesto