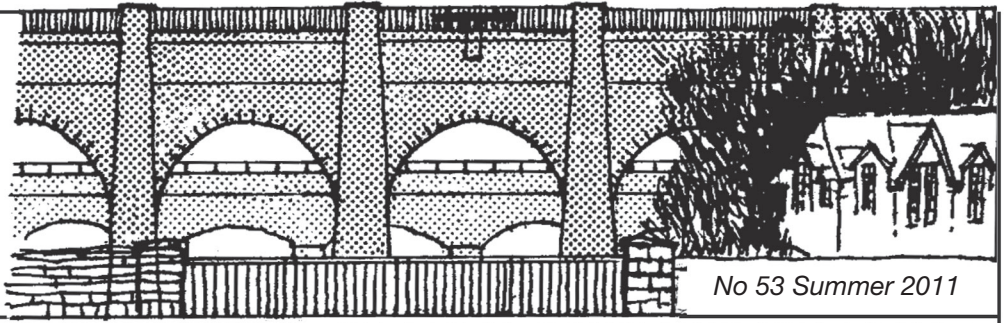


# UNDER THE BRIDGE



No 53 Summer 2011

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WATER OF LEITH CONSERVATION TRUST

## FLOOD WORKS BEGIN!!



Phase 1 of The Water of Leith Flood Prevention Scheme began in February, when Lagan Construction was appointed as the main contractor for the works. Phase 1 is divided into 5 work units: Bonnington, St Marks, Warriston Road, Stockbridge Colonies and Veitch's Square. A plan for each section can be viewed on the 'Management' page of our website. The objective of the scheme is to provide a higher level of protection to those homes and businesses that are at risk in severe flooding events. The flood defences consist of substantial reinforced concrete flood walls, which are finished in natural stone, brick or a textured concrete to suit the surrounding area.

Work has already begun in the area of Stockbridge Colonies and Bonnington and during the summer all 5 work units will be active. Completion is due late in the summer of 2012, with finishing works running on to the end of the year. In order to gain access to the site a number of stone platforms have been built along the river. These platforms are only temporary structures and will be removed upon completion of the new flood defences, after which the riverbanks will be reinstated and a considerable amount of replanting will take place. Lagan Construction and ARUP, the design consultant

and site supervisor, have both employed ecologists to supervise the work and ensure that all the appropriate environmental mitigation is in place throughout the works along the watercourse. The work does have a temporary impact on the The Water of Leith Walkway but "Water of Leith Walkway Diversion" signs will be in place giving details of local diversions. Notable closures are the section of footpath at Veitch's Square and the Bell Place Bridge in the Stockbridge Colonies. These will both be closed until early 2012.

The Water of Leith Team has arranged surgeries at Stockbridge Library, where a set of plans are available for inspection, progress photography can be viewed and members of the public can ask questions. In addition to that, guided walks along various sections of the river are taking place, providing a forum to explain and discuss the construction methods. A Freephone information line has been set up to provide the public with a direct link to the Water of Leith Team, the number is: **0333 20 20 121**. Callers can leave a message and their name and contact number if the line is busy.



# WATER OF LEITH CONFERENCE

The first Water of Leith Stakeholders' Conference was held on 11<sup>th</sup> March at the Visitor Centre. Over 50 delegates attended for a full day programme with a series of morning presentations which included:- The Water of Leith Management Plan and the Roles and Responsibilities of the Agencies responsible for the Management of the Water of Leith. The Water by SEPA. The Water of Leith Flood Prevention Scheme and River Flow Management by City of Edinburgh Council Flood Team. Recreation and Responsible Access along the Walkway. The Fishery by the High Bailiff of the Water of Leith. Biodiversity by CEC Biodiversity Officer. Wildlife and the Law by Charles Everitt Police Wildlife Liaison Officer. Litter and debris issues by The Trust. In the afternoon we had three workshops: Managing Walkway use and behaviour with CEC Countryside Ranger Service. Community Action - How can I get involved? with the Trust. The Water Framework Directive - how can we achieve good ecological status for the Water of Leith with, Shona McConnell and Graeme Brown, SEPA. We thank all those who delivered the presentations, and all delegates who contributed to some lively debate. We hope to make this conference a biennial event, so if you are interested in further event please contact Helen at the Visitor Centre.

## SUMMER EVENTS AND WALKS

### **Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May - Discovery Walk 1: Wildlife**

During Biodiversity Week walk with our expert along 4 miles of the river from Colinton to Belford and discover the wild side of Edinburgh's River. £4.50 (members £2.50) **BOOKING ESSENTIAL**. Meet at 2.00pm in the Car park under Gillespie Bridge in Colinton, off Bridge Road. Estimated finish time 4.30pm at the Gallery of Modern Art.

### **Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> June - Discovery Walk 2: Our Mill and Railway Heritage**

Walk with our experts from Balerno to Colinton and discover the hidden milling heritage of the Water of Leith whilst following the route of the Balerno Branch railway line. £4.50 (members £2.50) **BOOKING ESSENTIAL**. Meet at 2.00pm at the beginning of the Walkway by Balerno High School. Finish time 4.30pm at Colinton.

### **Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> July - River Ramble**

Complete all 12 miles of the walkway from Balerno to Leith and help raise funds to support the work of the Water of Leith Conservation Trust. Call or email for a registration form.

### **Sun 28<sup>th</sup> August - Discovery Walk 3: The Gormley Trail**

Follow the river to discover all 6 Gormley Statues in the Water of Leith, along with the wildlife and heritage that makes the Water of Leith such a special place. £4.50 (members £2.50) **BOOKING ESSENTIAL**. Meet at 2.00pm at the gates to the Gallery of Modern Art on Belford Road. Finish time 4.30pm at Ocean Terminal in Leith

### **Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September - Treasure Hunt in Neverland!**

Be amazed as the Centre and Dells are transformed into the set of Peter Pan. Pirates, Red Indians, Fairies and the Lost Boys will all play a part in this special adventure. Treasure Maps for sale from the Visitor Centre for £8. Enough treasure for all. From 1pm to 5pm.

Booking is essential - please call 0131 455 7367

## **Children's Holiday Events**

All events cost **£4 per child**

(Accompanying adult free)

& start at **2.00pm** until around 3.30pm.

**BOOKING ESSENTIAL**. Call or email us to reserve your space on 0131 455 7367 [admin@waterofleith.org.uk](mailto:admin@waterofleith.org.uk)

### **Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> July - Minibeast Magic**

Be magnified by the micro world of bugs

### **Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> July - River Dipping**

Join us IN the river for this favourite activity

### **Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July - Wild at Art**

Join us and get creative with nature, inspired by Antony Gormley and Andy Goldsworthy

### **Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> July - Animal antics**

What do those mammals get up to?

### **Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> July - River Dipping**

Join us IN the river for this favourite activity

### **Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> July - River Dipping**

Join us IN the river for this favourite activity

### **Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> July - Summer Wilderness Survival Skills**

Hone those survival skills along the Water of Leith

### **Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> August – Bugs on the Wing**

Discover the world of fabulous flying insects

### **Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> August - River Dipping**

Join us IN the river for this favourite activity

### **Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> August - River Dipping**

Join us IN the river for this favourite activity

### **Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> August – Scrapheap Art**

Creative with rubbish, including our famous scrapheap boat race

## King of the Fishers

Some of you may have seen the wonderful *Halcyon River Diaries* on the BBC last year featuring cameraman Charlie Hamilton-James and the amazing wildlife inhabiting the river running past his house. I recently bought his photographic book on kingfishers, showcasing one amazing image after another of these incredible birds.

However, we have our own halcyon river in the Water of Leith which also attracts kingfishers, although the most we may ever see of them is their *pheet-pheet* call followed by a flash of electric blue as they dart down the river course to a fishing perch. They feed by ambushing minnows from a vantage point, like an overhanging branch, and diving down into the water. Grabbing a fish in its beak, the kingfisher returns to its perch, where it knocks its prey against a branch to stun it before devouring it whole!

These birds can be highly aggressive during the nesting season and territorial fights occasionally result in fatalities. Indeed, a pair of dead kingfishers was once found on the banks of the Water of Leith. They were suspected to have perished as a consequence of one such dispute.

Kingfishers tend to nest in a tunnel chiselled out of a vertical piece of riverbank, and they can be highly susceptible to disturbance. As they are listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, both they and their nest sites are protected by law from "intentional or reckless disturbance." This means that one needs to act very carefully to minimise disturbance when in the vicinity of a nest. To dump garden waste on a kingfisher's nest, as has been recorded once before on the Water of Leith, would be considered a reckless act and therefore an offence.

During winter, kingfishers head towards the coast where there is less chance of the waterways freezing over, enabling them to continue to fish for food. Sadly, occasional harsh winters such as last year's can cause the birds to starve, weaken and die, so it makes the news that the Water of Leith is currently supporting a pair of nesting kingfishers this Spring all the more special.

Kingfishers are not common, and it is a privilege to have them on the Water of Leith, but their existence is fragile and they do need our help if we wish them to stay. If any form of kingfisher disturbance is seen or heard, please contact the Police on 0131 311 3131 and ask to speak

to a Wildlife Crime Officer. Alternatively, contact Crimestoppers on 0800555111 to report incidents anonymously.

Charles Everitt  
National Wildlife Crime Unit



### Book Launch Special Invitation

#### Water of Leith: Nature's Course

Join Charles Everitt as he presents images and stories from his brand new book *Water of Leith: Nature's Course*. In a compilation of stunning images photographed over the last 4 years, the book sensitively captures the variety and beauty of nature throughout the seasons along the river. From wildlife and landscapes to wild flowers and abstract images, see the Water of Leith as never before.

**Date: Wednesday 25th May 2011.**

**Time: 7.30pm**

**Venue: Water of Leith Visitor Centre,  
24 Lanark Road, Edinburgh.**

**Admission: Free.**

**Booking essential – please contact  
WOLCT to reserve a place on 0131 455  
7367 or [admin@waterofleith.org.uk](mailto:admin@waterofleith.org.uk)**

## RIVER NEWS ROUND-UP



### Otter Family on the Water of Leith

You may have read in the news that we now have an otter family on the river. This photo was taken by Gill Christie, Field Surveyor from The Wildlife Information Centre, whilst surveying the River on 6<sup>th</sup> January. The even better news is that there were in fact two cubs, and the family have been spotted fairly regularly since. Thank you to Gill for this record of a truly remarkable encounter.

### Big Annual Clean-up Funding

We are delighted to announce that the People's Postcode Lottery has awarded the Trust over £1800 to help us purchase all the resources needed for this years BIG Water of Leith Spring Clean-up. Between March and June around 20 groups of Volunteers will be helping to tidy up the river ready for summer. If you would like to take part, do contact us and register as a volunteer, or watch out for events happening in your area. The grant is a great boost to the effort, as it means we will have all the gloves, litter pickers, grappling hooks, tools and safety gear needed. Thank you so much to all at the People's Postcode Lottery

### Path Works

City of Edinburgh Council and other funding bodies continue to invest in the Water of Leith Path. Regular users will have noticed substantial improvements between Currie and Colinton, and the works between Roseburn and Dean Village have really made a difference underfoot. Our thanks goes to The Countryside Ranger Service, WREN, Miller Home and City Development.

## EDUCATION AT THE WATER OF LEITH

Our new teacher, Ruth, has settled in well, delivering education classes to hundreds of school children, with a fully booked term ahead. We have now published a new programme available from the Visitor Centre, within which we are launching some new programmes including:- 'Bringing the Water of Leith into the classroom', a winter session where Ruth goes into school to teach the children about the history and wildlife of the river; and 'Water, Sustainability and our Milling Heritage' a Visitor Centre programme looking at the river's milling legacy and the potential use for sustainable energy production. We will also be running a **Summer Holiday Club** for a week starting on **1<sup>st</sup> August**. A unique, fun and adventurous week of activities to keep your children entertained, cared for and inspired during the holidays. Suitable for 8 to 13 year olds.

### A BEQUEST OR A LEGACY?

At the time of 'credit crunches' and 'cutbacks' the finances of the Trust are under some strain, and the gift of a bequest or the provision of a legacy in a Will would be very much appreciated. Please give it a thought – the bequest or legacy need not be a large amount, and can have tax advantages. For more information contact Helen on 0131 455 7367 in confidence.

### Our Thanks goes to.....

Once again we must thank the many organisations, charities, members and volunteers who help make our work possible. City of Edinburgh Council and Scottish Natural Heritage have confirmed our grants for 2011/12, which is a tremendous boost. Customers at RBS nominated and voted for us to win £1000 in their Community Fund programme. Thank you to Steve Meadows and all at Philips Dynalite for reducing the costs of repair work in our exhibition. And thank you to two members who wish to remain anonymous for their generous contributions.

The Annual Plant Sale was also a great success, raising £940, with an additional £220 on tea and cakes. We could not have done it without the help and donations from many members, volunteers, Pentland Plants and ALBA trees.

If you have an article, letter or photo for the next edition of Under the Bridge please send it to:  
**Water of Leith Conservation Trust, 24 Lanark Road, Edinburgh, EH14 1TQ** admin@waterofleith.org.uk

## How to join the Trust

Please enrol me/us as a Friend of the Water of Leith Conservation Trust. I enclose the following payment:

<b>Individual membership</b>	£16 per year
<b>Family</b>	£30 per year
<b>Concessionary rate</b> (retired or unemployed; students)	£10 per year
<b>Group</b> (schools and voluntary bodies)	£32 per year
<b>Life membership</b>	£150 single payment

Name..... Date .....

Address..... Tel No .....

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Please post form and payment to: Trust Administrator, Water of Leith Visitor Centre, 24 Lanark Road, Edinburgh EH14 1TQ  
www.waterofleith.org.uk admin@waterofleith.org.uk 0131 455 7367 Registered Charity No. SC000015