

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 14 January 2014

Public Bowling Greens

Item number	7.17
Report number	
Wards	Corstorphine/Murrayfield Leith Walk Leith Sighthill/Gorgie

Links

Coalition pledges	P33 , P42
Council outcomes	CO10 , CO19 , CO23
Single Outcome Agreement	SO2 , SO4

Mark Turley

Director of Services for Communities

Contact: David Jamieson, Parks and Greenspace Manager

E-mail: david.jamieson@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 529 7055

Executive summary

Public Bowling Greens

Summary

The City of Edinburgh Council currently maintains 15 public bowling greens across five sites. The bookings and pavilions are managed by Edinburgh Leisure. There are also approximately 58 private bowling clubs in the Edinburgh area. These are self-governed clubs, a number of which lease the land from the Council for a peppercorn rent.

The Council's sites are as follows:

- Balgreen
- Leith Links
- Powderhall
- St Margaret's Park
- Victoria Park

In 2011, Edinburgh Leisure reported a significant decline in the use of public bowling greens. At the end of 2012 and early 2013, Edinburgh Leisure and the Council consulted with the bowlers to determine future bowling green provision preferences and seek views on alternative uses for those greens that may no longer be required.

This identified that current levels of demand could still be met with a reduced provision from 15 to 8 greens. It also identified potential alternative uses for redundant greens, including tennis, petanque and food growing.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee:

1. Notes the need to reduce the number of bowling greens to better reflect level of usage.
2. Approves in principle the process of investigating and agreeing alternative uses for each site.

3. Notes the intention to submit a further report on the outcome of this work.

Measures of success

Alternative uses agreed and initiated across those bowling greens that are poorly used.

Financial impact

The implementation of these recommendations will realise an annual revenue budget saving of £40,000 which is included as part of the coalition draft budget for 2014/15. However, any alternative use of surplus bowling greens will require capital investment, the levels of which would be dependent on the agreed alternative use for each site, but these are likely to include alternative sporting and leisure facilities and food growing provision.

Equalities impact

With the extension of opening hours and re-configuration of the booking system, the current usage of the greens can be accommodated resulting in no impact to the equalities or rights of the individuals involved. The introduction of alternative uses could potentially enhance the opportunities for both young, disabled and elderly people.

Sustainability impact

There is no negative sustainability impact with regard to these recommendations. However, the option of providing additional allotments would help meet the current demand for food growing.

Consultation and engagement

Consultation took place with affected bowling clubs and they were broadly supportive of the approach. A detailed list of the consultees and their comments can be found in Appendix 7 and 8.

Background reading / external references

N/A

Public Bowling Greens

1. Background

- 1.1 Edinburgh currently maintains 15 public bowling greens across the following five locations:
- Balgreen
 - Leith Links
 - Powderhall
 - St Margaret's Park
 - Victoria Park
- 1.2 The greens are maintained by the Parks and Greenspace Specialist Ground Maintenance team, the bookings and pavilions managed by Edinburgh Leisure.
- 1.3 There are also approximately 58 private bowling clubs in the Edinburgh area. These are self-governed organisations who are affiliated to the national governing body for outdoor lawn bowls in Scotland, Bowls Scotland. A number of these clubs lease the land from the Council at a peppercorn rate. All clubs charge their members an annual membership fee.
- 1.4 Figures recorded by Edinburgh Leisure show that since 2007 the number of bowlers using the greens has declined sharply (see Appendix 6). As a consequence, many greens are significantly underused. This has led to Edinburgh Leisure and the Council to consult with bowlers to determine the scale of future public bowling green need.
- 1.5 Edinburgh Leisure recently took the decision to close the Portobello Indoor Bowling Centre from June 2013 and change the use of the centre to a soft play area and gymnastics hub. This decision was taken as a result of usage declining from 52,000 bowling visits in 2008/9 to 45,000 visits in 2012. This 13% reduction resulted in a financial loss of between £100 – 150k per annum over the last five years. The change of use of Portobello's indoor centre should double the usage.

2. Main report

2.1 In 2011 Edinburgh Leisure reported a significant decline in the number of people using the public bowling greens. These 15 greens are located across five sites: which are listed below:

- Balgreen (Appendix 1)
- Leith Links (Appendix 2)
- Powderhall (Appendix 3)
- St Margaret's Park (Appendix 4)
- Victoria Park (Appendix 5)

Detailed figures on usage are illustrated in Appendix 6.

As a result, Edinburgh Leisure and the Council invited the clubs using these sites to consider what their current and future needs are.

2.2 Options for the bowling green sites were the subject of a public consultation meeting at the Portobello Indoor Bowls and Leisure Centre on 30 October 2012. A strong representation from the bowling community was in attendance and after much discussion it became clear that individual sites were of the highest importance to the users, but that there was scope to reduce the number of playable greens at some of the sites.

2.3 It was therefore agreed to hold a series of more detailed consultation meetings with the clubs from each site. These took place during December 2012 and January 2013. The meetings were informative and productive. The common theme running through them was the high level of importance of the specific site to users and the need to retain at least some greens for bowling purposes.

2.4 A detailed account of discussions can be found in Appendix 8.

2.5 The conclusion of these discussions was that greens at four of the sites (the exception being St Margaret's Park which only has one green) could be reduced without impact on current and future need. Also, alternative uses for redundant greens could "add value" to each site.

2.6 An alternative use of one green is already underway at Leith Links, where the Leith Links Tennis and Petanque Project was initiated in September 2010. Led by the Leith Links Steering Group, which consists of representatives from CEC, Edinburgh Leisure, local Councillors and local sports teams, it has received approximately £70k of external funding which includes £38k from the Legacy 2014 Active Places Fund. The City Centre/Leith Neighbourhood team led an extensive consultation process involving Greener Leith, NHS, schools and local

community and the feedback was extremely positive. The building project commenced in July 2013.

2.7 The draft proposals for each site are as follows:

- Balgreen: Retain two greens for bowling and re-develop the other two for either food growing, tennis courts or to explore the option of Balgreen Primary School using the space to expand the school grounds.
- Leith Links: Implement Leith Links Tennis and Petanque Project, which will leave three greens. A subsequent proposal has been received from the Scottish Volleyball Association to convert one of the remaining greens into a beach volleyball court. Victoria Park, Balgreen and Powderhall would also be considered for this use.
- Powderhall: Retain one green and re-develop the remaining two for either play area/ball court or food growing. The adjacent Broughton Primary School has also expressed an interest in using the site for sporting and food growing activities.
- St Margaret's Park: Retain single green and investigate potential of creating a petanque rink.
- Victoria Park: Retain two greens and investigate opportunities to integrate the bowling green directly in front of the clubhouse back into the park area. Interest has also been expressed in converting the clubhouse into a cafe for park users and the establishment of a "Himalaya" golf course.
- Agreement on the final proposals will be made in consultation with community councils and other local stakeholder groups in each case and a report on the outcomes will be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee:

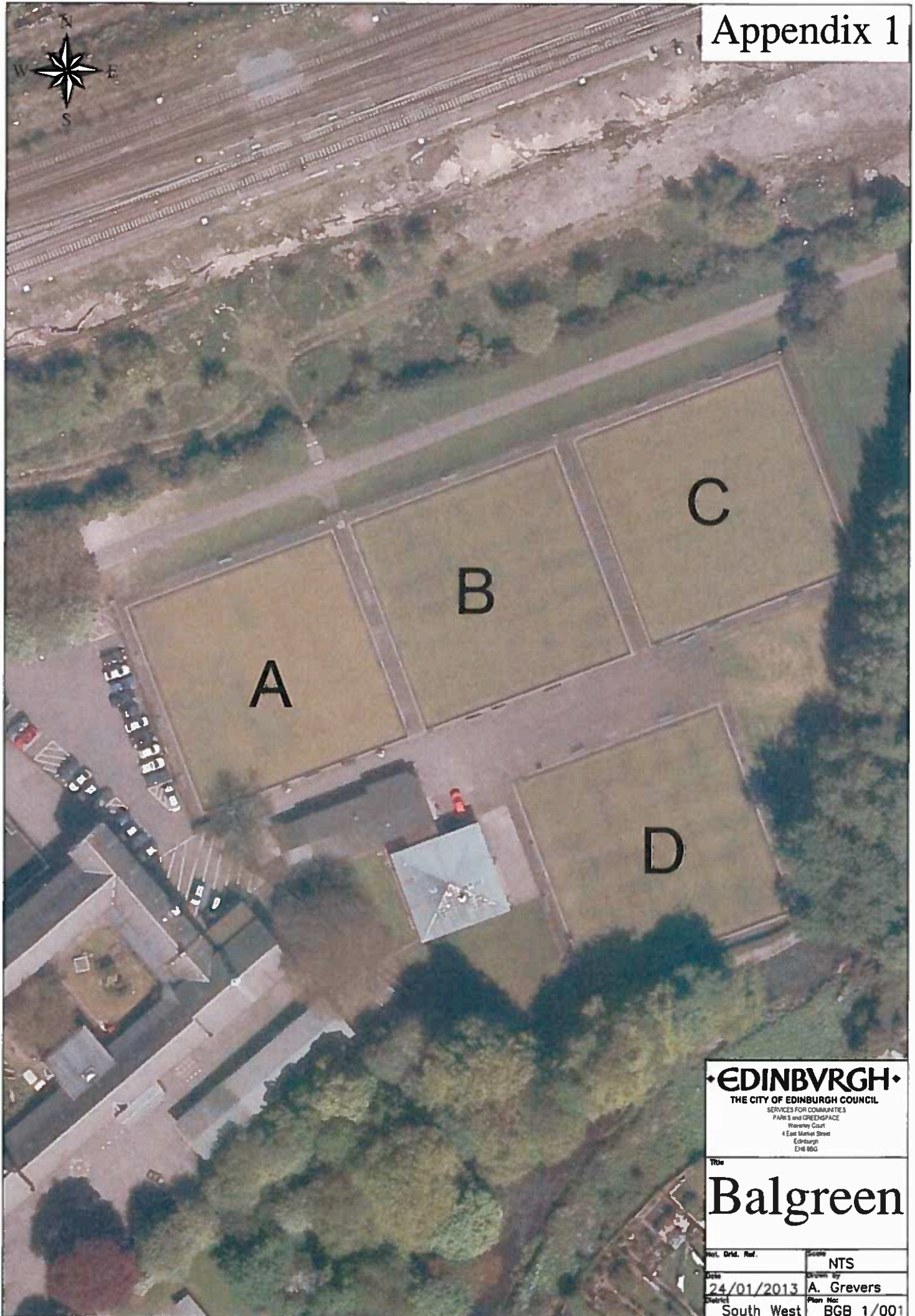
1. Notes the need to reduce the number of bowling greens to better reflect level of usage.
2. Approves in principle the process of investigating and agreeing alternative uses for each site.
3. Notes the intention to submit a further report on the outcome of this work.

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Links

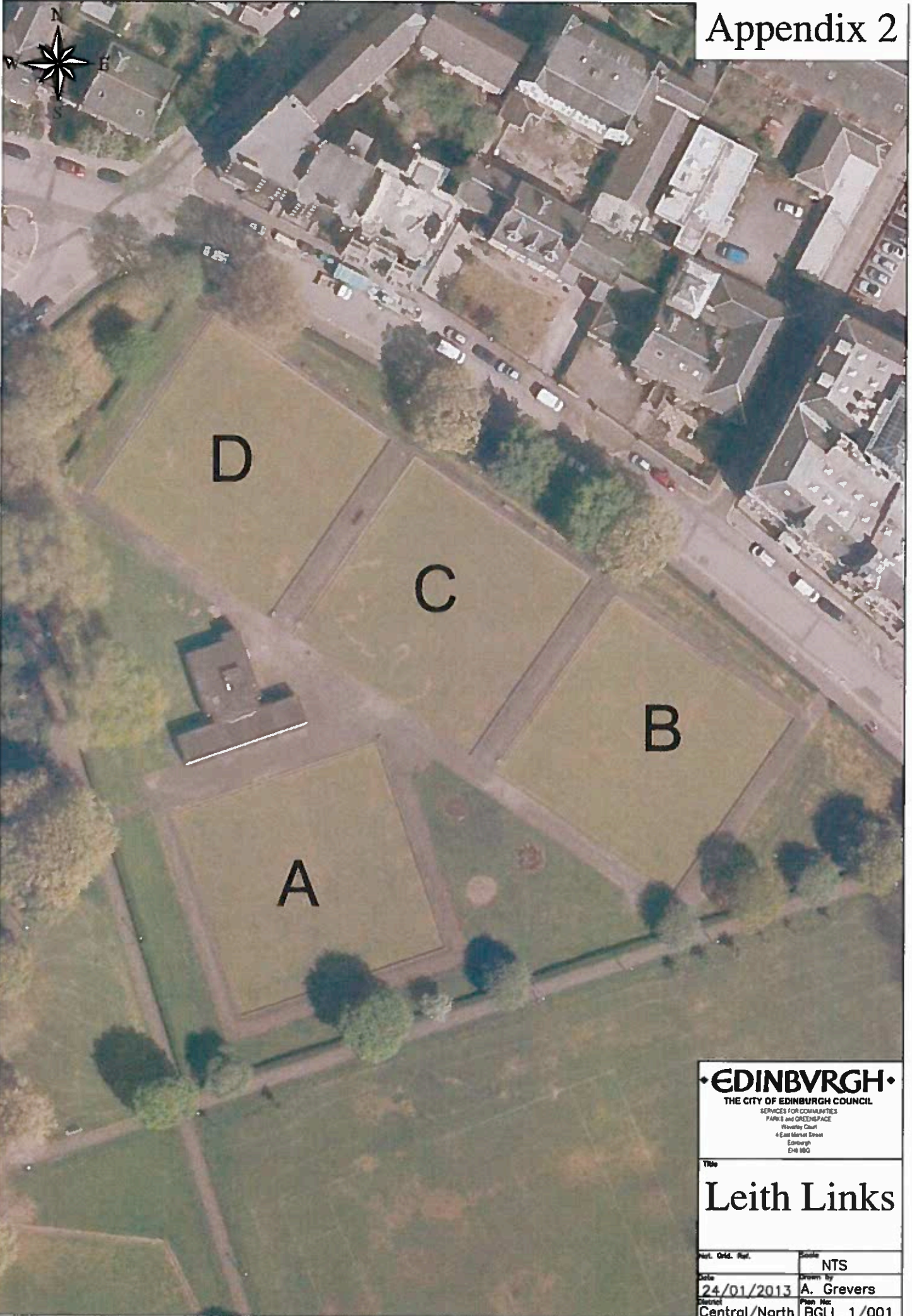
Coalition pledges	<p>P33 - Strengthen Neighbourhood Partnerships and further involve local people in decisions on how Council resources are used.</p> <p>P42 - Continue to support and invest in our sporting infrastructure.</p>
Council outcomes	<p>CO10 - Improved health and reduced inequalities.</p> <p>CO19 - Attractive Places and Well Maintained – Edinburgh remains an attractive city through the development of high quality buildings and places and the delivery of high standards and maintenance of infrastructure and public realm.</p> <p>CO23 - Well engaged and well informed – Communities and individuals are empowered and supported to improve local outcomes and foster a sense of community.</p>
Single Outcome Agreement	<p>SO2 - Edinburgh's citizens experience improved health and wellbeing, with reduced inequalities in health</p> <p>SO4 - Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric</p>
Appendices	<p>1-5 - Maps</p> <p>6 - Statistics for the use of public bowling greens</p> <p>7 - Details of consultation meetings</p> <p>8 - Account of discussions during consultation meetings</p>



• EDINBURGH •
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SERVICES FOR COMMUNITIES
PARKS and GREENSPACE
Weaverly Court
4 East Market Street
Edinburgh
EH8 9EG

Title
Balgreen

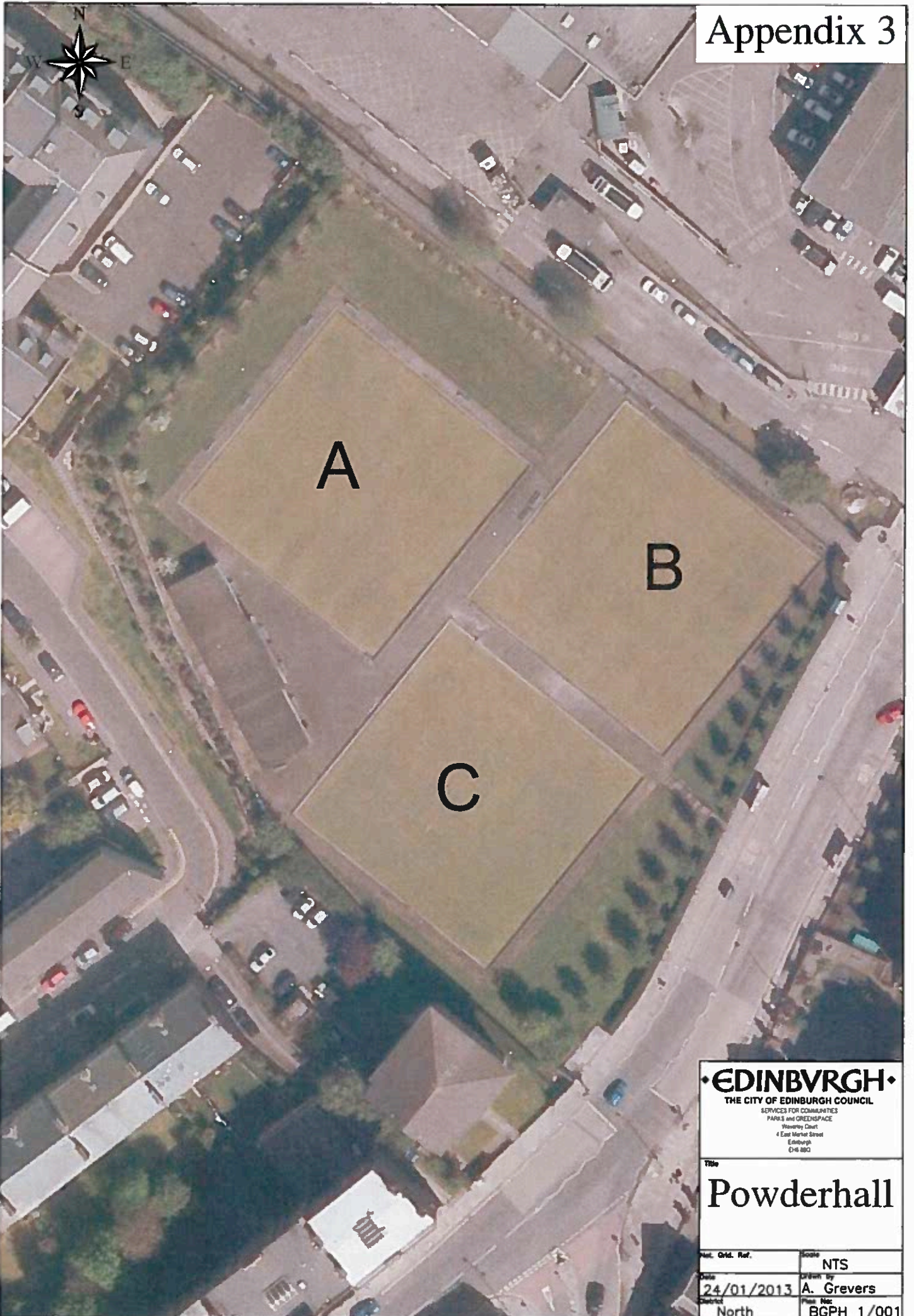
Map. Ord. Ref.	Scale
	NTS
Date	Drawn by
24/01/2013	A. Grevers
District	Plan No.
South West	BGB 1/001



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SERVICES FOR COMMUNITIES
PARKS AND GREENSPACE
Howley Court
4 East Market Street
Edinburgh
EH4 6BG

The
Leith Links

Part. Ord. Ref.	Scale
	NTS
Date	Drawn by
24/01/2013	A. Grevers
Sheet No.	Plan No.
Central/North	BGLL 1/001



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SERVICES FOR COMMUNITIES
PARKS AND GREENSPACE
Newby Court
4 East Market Street
Edinburgh
EH1 1BQ

Title	
Powderhall	
Mat. Grid. Ref.	Scale
	NTS
Date	Drawn by
24/01/2013	A. Grevers
District	Plan No.
North	BGPH 1/001



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 SERVICES FOR COMMUNITIES
 PARKS and OPENSPACE
 Waverley Court
 1 East Market Street
 Edinburgh
 EH8 9DD

The
St Margaret's
Park

Map. Grid. Ref.	Scale
	NTS
Date	Drawn by
22/01/2013	A. Grevers
District	Plan No.
West	BGSM 1/001



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PARKS AND GREENSPACE
Wayway Court
4 East Market Street
Edinburgh
EH8 9BG

The **Victoria Park**

Net. Grid. Ref.	Scale
22/01/2013	NTS
Sheet	Drawn By
North	A. Grevers
	Plan No.
	BGVP 1/001

Victoria Park (appendix 5)

Questions:

- Investigate whether EL could include bowling activity along with the gym vouchers offered through GP referrals?

Discussion:

- There is a fundamental difference between public and private clubs. Public clubs are purely for leisure activity and social interaction whereas private clubs have more of a financial element to them.
- If Powderhall were to be closed Victoria Park would need to retain 3 of the greens
- The bowling greens would be more visible to the public and therefore there would be potential to raise awareness of the sport.
- If food growing were to be considered the security of the greens would be strengthened as there would be a greater presence during the day.

Conclusion:

The consensus of opinion was that two greens would be sufficient if the opening hours were extended.

The Parks and Greenspace Service have been approached by several interested parties regarding leasing the pavilion as a café and potentially, responsibility for the management of the greens (including opening and fees) could be written into the lease.

Greens 2 & 3 would be retained and would need to be protected against people walking over them.

It was proposed that the green 1 (directly in front of the pavilion) could be integrated back into the park and be used as part of the café provision.

Next Steps:

P&G/EL to consider options available regarding the protection of the remaining greens.

P&G to pursue applications for café lease on the pavilion.

P&G to investigate potential for food growing

Appendix 6

Detailed Figures on Bowling Green Usage Since 2007

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	% Reduction
Balgreen	6,816	5,885	5,195	5,616	3,979	2,161	68.29%
Leith Links	2,954	1,848	1,377	1,266	1,236	889	69%
Powderhall	1,566	2,005	1,875	2,115	1,995	1,351	13%
St Margaret's Park	2,161	2,613	2,177	2,385	1,888	2,139	1%
Victoria Park	1,881	2,296	2,119	2,191	1,854	1,579	16%

	Breakdown of usage based on a 22 week season		
	Weekly	Daily	Hourly
Balgreen	98	20	2
Leith Links	40	13	2
Powderhall	61	15	2
St Margaret's Park	97	16	2
Victoria Park	72	24	3

Appendix 7

Schedule of Consultation

	Date	Venue	Individual clubs using the greens	No. of rinks	Opening Times
Balgreen	04/12/12	Fountainbridge Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bank of Scotland Pensioners • Cairns Ladies • Gorgie PSA • ELPBA • HBOS • Towns Women's Guild • St Michaels 	4	5 days Mon to Thurs & Sat
Leith Links	14/12/12	McDonald Rd Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leith Churches • Casual Bowlers 	4	3 days Tues, Wed & Fri
Powderhall	06/12/12 11/01/13	McDonald Rd Library Deaf Action HQ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilrig Church Group • Bellevue Ladies • Bellevue Churches • Gorgie PSA • Edinburgh Deaf Bowlers • ELPBA • Leith Churches 	3	4 days Tues, Wed, Fri & Sat
St Margaret's Park	18/12/12	Drumbrae Library Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Margarets Ladies • St Margarets Mens • Centurian 	1	6 days Thurs – Tues
Victoria Park	05/12/12	McDonald Road Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victoria Park Ladies • St Andrews • Casual Bowlers • ELPBA • Leith Churches 	3	3 days Mon, Wed & Thurs

Appendix 8

Details of Individual Consultations

Balgreen (Appendix 1)

Questions:

- Is there funding available?
- Demolish rink D and clubhouse and build a multi purpose function hall similar to Craiglockhart and Portobello which could be rented out.
- Tarmac over the old allotments, create a car park and charge football and rugby traffic at weekends? *No, the Council has a commitment to restore the allotments once the tram works are completed.*
- Is Balgreen School planning to extend their facilities?*Unsure, CEC to contact school and clarify.*
- Is there any possibility of improving the external signage?*Yes, that can be investigated.*
- Once cut is it possible for the greens to be rolled?*Yes, the maintenance regime will be reviewed on agreement of changes.*

Conclusions:

Agreed that two greens would be sufficient for the needs of the bowling clubs. Proposal would be to retain greens A and B which are in the best condition and to re-develop C and D for either tennis courts or food growing.

Next Steps:

Edinburgh Leisure to conduct a survey to identify whether there would be a demand for tennis in the area and investigate whether there is any potential for a link with the school.

P&G to contact Children and Families to investigate whether Balgreen School is planning to extend their facilities.

Leith Links (Appendix 2)

Discussion:

Leith Links is mainly utilised by casual bowlers and clubs from other sites, as a result of this there was no representation at the consultation meeting. However, there is currently a proposal, Leith Links Tennis and Pentanque Project Edinburgh which has been drawn up in conjunction with the Leith Links Steering Group (made up of representatives from Greener Leith, Local Councillors, representatives from local sporting groups and officers from Parks and Greenspace, North and Central Neighbourhood teams). This project would involve reducing bowling greens from four to two (retaining greens C&D) and offering in place a putting green (green B) and three tennis courts and a petanque area (green A). This project has been approved in principal and is awaiting the results of a funding bid to Sportscotland.

Powderhall (Appendix 3)

Questions:

- Poor parking and transport links.
- What is the future of the Powderhall depot?
- Can the pavilion be improved?

Conclusions:

One green would be sufficient providing the opening hours were extended and that Edinburgh Leisure introduced a more formal and improved booking system to co-ordinated usage appropriately.

Powderhall – Deaf Bowlers Group

Questions:

- Can the pavilion be cleaned and painted?
- New flooring?
- Tea and coffee making facilities?
- Improved provision of car parking facilities?
- What is the future of Powderhall/
- Is there any investment available for a café facility

Discussion:

- Currently three greens one of which is a putting green.
- No parking availability and poor transport links
- Broughton Primary School currently have a food growing project and utilise raised beds

Conclusions:

1 green would be sufficient if the opening hours were lengthened

Two options to date:

- Play area
- Allotments

St Margaret's Park (Appendix 4)

Discussion:

As St Margaret's Park has not seen a significant decline in numbers and only has one green the meeting was focussed on input from the bowlers as to how to improve the facility.

Various suggestions were made including:

- Introduction of new activities to the park such as petanque/ball hoops/outdoor gymnasium?
- Increasing the fees to play from £1.60 to £2.00
- Involving the local Corstorphine primary school in some outdoor activities/after school club
- Making all activities free (tennis is charged for from 12-8pm during the week and from 11-5pm at weekends)

Next Steps:

P&G/EL to investigate potential of building a petanque facility

P&G to forward Community Grant Program info to clubs involved