



Friends of the River Almond Walkway Management Plan 2017

The River Almond Walkway is owned by the City of Edinburgh Council and managed by the Forestry and Natural Heritage Service (FNHS) within Parks, Greenspaces and Cemeteries (PG&C).

Friends of the River Almond Walkway (FRAW) is a Friends of Parks group, affiliated to City of Edinburgh Council, which works closely with CEC Natural Heritage Officers to improve, promote and enhance the heritage and the natural environment of the River Almond Walkway.

Where do we want to get to?

FRAW would like to create a thriving riverside walk which provides enjoyment to local people and visitors of all ages and abilities which sits in the heart of the local community.

We aim to create a safe and welcoming environment which increases the enjoyment of all users of the Walkway. We will aim to keep the Walkway well maintained and clean and will strive to involve the community in the conservation, maintenance and development of the Walkway and the immediate area surrounding it.

Our work will increase the biodiversity of the riverside and maintain and promote the growth of native natural flora and fauna. By developing the Walkway as an educational resource we will increase public knowledge of the flora, fauna and history of the area.

We will achieve this by undertaking a number of activities in the following categories –

1. Landscape
2. Access and Enjoyment by All
3. Orientation and Interpretation
4. Education
5. Wildlife
6. Sustainable Management
7. Community Engagement
8. Built Features
9. Future Plans

Who are we?

Friends of the River Almond Walkway (FRAW) was formed as a Friends of Parks group, affiliated to CEC, in February 2012. Friends of Parks Groups play a vital role in maintaining and conserving the parks, green spaces and cemeteries throughout the City of Edinburgh. They carry out essential work, without which Edinburgh's much valued Parks and Greenspaces would suffer enormously.

FRAW became a Registered Scottish Charity, SCIO (SC045077) in August 2014 and now has over 350 individual members, making it one of the largest, and most active, Friends of Parks groups. It carries full public liability insurance safeguarding its activities.

The purpose of the organisation, as defined in its Constitution, is to improve, promote and enhance the heritage and the natural environment of the River Almond Walkway.

FRAW will achieve this by –

- promoting the well-being of the residents of the area and working together as residents regardless of age, ethnic origin, ability, sex, belief or political affiliation, recognising the value of our many differences.
- involving local people in improving the area.
- carrying out both environmental improvement and practical conservation, to encourage and support the local population in environmental practice by working with statutory and non statutory agencies.

Through these activities, FRAW will conserve and enhance the River Almond as a haven for biodiversity and be an educational and recreational resource for all. FRAW will strive to raise the profile of this key environmental asset, and promote community action by running regular work parties.

River Almond Walkway

The River Almond Walkway is a nature trail which passes by meadowland, through woodland and along clifftop. It supports a large diversity of wildlife, it is rich in birdlife, plants and trees. The Walkway is a popular route for locals and visitors, walkers, cyclists and runners and is a designated Core Path which serves as an important and well-used link between the coastal promenade and cycle routes 1 and 75.

The area surrounding the River Almond has a rich and varied history. In the 2nd century AD, the Romans established an important settlement at the Almond's estuary and the same safe anchorage at the mouth of a constricted river attracted industrialists in later centuries. Like the Water of Leith, the River Almond became a centre for milling, with workers' cottages, and by the end of the 18th century, Cockle, Fair a far, Peggy's, Dowie's and Craigie Mills were thriving. But the changes forced by the industrial revolution saw a variety of industries come and go - the manufacture of spades and iron hoops at Dowie's Mill, sawmilling, nails, furniture and even a paper mill at Peggy's Mill.

Only traces are left of those earlier activities that once contributed to making the River Almond one of the most polluted rivers in Scotland. When the works vanished, the quality of water began to improve and nature – with the help of the local authority and partner agencies - has begun to reclaim the Almond as her own. Salmon and trout have returned and the number of birds that feed off the river has increased.

The historic Cramond Brig, which dates from around 1500, is also part of the route. Immortality was bestowed upon it by Sir Walter Scott with his description of how Jock Howieson allegedly rescued the disguised King James V from a fight and received lands around Braehead for service to his monarch. A statue, erected to commemorate the event, stands in the courtyard of nearby Cammo Mains and the alleged remains of Jock Howieson's cottage can be seen just upstream from the Brig. Braehead House, where Scott's charming young poetic friend "Pet Marjorie" spent her holidays, is still standing nearby.



The Walkway itself begins marginally upstream of the Cramond Boat Club which is directly accessed from Cramond Foreshore. The Walkway leads to School Brae and Caddells Row cottages near the site of the former Cockle Mill.

Continuing upstream you encounter the ruins of Fair a Far Mill with its impressive weir followed by an elevated section with concrete steps leading up and timber steps leading back down, known as the Salvesen Steps.

Located further upstream is the site of the former Peggy's Mill and just beyond this is where Dowie's Mill once stood – with the Mill workers cottages still in habitation today. Beyond Dowie's Mill Lane you come to Brae Park Road and Haugh Park and the Old Cramond Brig. A small path between a private dwelling and Haugh Park leads to a children's play area with mature woodland behind.

The formal path then leads under the A90 Queensferry Road fly over and eventually upstream to Cammo Estate. There are also other accessible routes on the western bank leading from the rear of the Miller and Carter restaurant to Grotto Bridge and beyond. The path on this side of the river is not publicly owned but is accessible under the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Summary

FRAW has prepared this Management Plan to steer the direction of the group to ensure focus on supporting and improving the area giving the greatest benefit to all users of the Walkway, visitors and locals alike. It will set out the focus of the activities of FRAW and help ensure all projects and work parties contribute to the overall objectives.

It can be read in conjunction with, and supports the objectives of, the City of Edinburgh Council's Draft Management Plan 2011-2020.

Activities

To achieve FRAW's overall objectives we have set out a number of activities in the following categories –

1. Landscape
2. Access and Enjoyment by All
3. Orientation and Interpretation
4. Education
5. Wildlife
6. Sustainable Management
7. Community Engagement
8. Built Features
9. Future Plans

Objective 1 - Landscape

Activities

- Continue to remove and control invasive species
- Continue to improve the quality of the landscape, weeding out and replanting as necessary, using work parties with volunteers
- Nurture and further develop the Community Woodland
- Introduce native tree and plant species where appropriate
- Improve viewpoints/vistas along the river
- Landscape and improve the entrance to the Walkway at Cramond harbour
- Landscape and improve the area around Peggy's Mill including easier access down to the riverbank

Objective 2 - Access and Enjoyment by All

Activities

- Improve condition of path while ensuring paths are built of appropriate materials
- Improve access for disabled and low mobility visitors, cyclists and buggies, including reducing the number of steps along the Walkway
- Provide viewing platforms at interesting locations
- Address parking and access issues
- Improve cycling route to allow cyclists and walkers safe travel
- Improve access at Cramond Harbour entrance
- Create access to the river at Peggies Mill

Objective 3 – Orientation and Interpretation

Activities

- Increase and improve information and interpretation boards
- Identify plants and wildlife through interpretation boards
- Maintain and improve website
- Circulate information in our newsletters, mailings and notices

Objective 4 – Education

Activities

- Encourage younger people to engage with our landscape
- Arrange at least one interpretation event each year for school pupils to encourage future volunteers and generate interest in our environment
- Develop relationships with RBGE and university/college students for wildlife research and monitoring
- Develop facilities for conservation woodcrafts

Objective 5 – Wildlife

Activities

- Continue to encourage wildlife by providing and improving habitats for birds, insects and mammals
- Increase biodiversity

Objective 6 - Sustainable Management

Activities

- Develop and follow a long term management strategy
- Manage the Walkway in conjunction with City of Edinburgh Council
- Promote interest in the Walkway to encourage volunteers for work-parties
- Ensure we have adequate resources – regular recruitment of conservationist volunteers to help with work-parties and provision of correct tools for the work undertaken
- Achieve Green Flag accreditation

Objective 7 - Community Engagement

Activities

- Communicate with our members and the wider community through newsletters, public meetings, Grapevine and community noticeboards
- Coordinate our activities with other local groups such as C&BCC, Cramond Association, Cramond Heritage Trust and Friends of Cammo.
- Engage with local schools and produce educational leaflets promoting the Walkway
- Encourage and Support other Friends of Parks Groups through active involvement in Edinburgh Friends of Parks Forum and other similar bodies

Objective 8 - Built Features

Activities

- Salvesen Steps – promote replacement with fully accessible alternative
- Continue to monitor the RAFTS RiverLife Project to ensure the visual attraction and wildlife habitats of the weirs at Dowie's Mill and Fair a Far are maintained
- Enhance historic features such as mills with interpretation boards and viewpoints
- Promote and improve safety for users of the Walkway
- Promote maintenance of built structures, including Cramond Brig, Grotto Bridge, and the mill buildings and ruins

Objective 9 – Future Plans

Activities

- Extend the Walkway towards Kirkliston