



Newsletter - September 2017

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We are now well into our sixth year and the work goes on as reported in the following sections. Our consistent approach would not have been possible without two vital ingredients. First, a loyal and sizable membership and secondly a strong and hard working Committee (now Trustees). There have been important changes in our Committee this year with John Kerr becoming Secretary and Euan Drysdale combining the responsibilities of Treasurer and Membership Secretary. Sadly, Carol Anderson, our most recent Treasurer and Lee McPherson have resigned. Lee, who had been with us from the start, set-up and ran our website. Many thanks to them.

Richard Adlington [\[Back to top\]](#)

Salvesen Steps Re-open and Other Good News

The Salvesen Steps, deemed unsafe and closed on 20th January, were opened again on 22 June. Although the Council speedily agreed to replace the condemned structure with a temporary replacement, implementation took longer than originally estimated, due to a series of delays with contractors, weather conditions etc. This closure caused considerable inconvenience to local users and visitors alike. However, the big picture is that we can all now use the Steps again which is good news indeed.

It is important to note that the newly opened Steps are a **temporary structure**, pending a permanent disability-compliant replacement around the rock-face. The Council has also agreed in principle to this new project and has allocated a substantial sum for it. There has recently been very encouraging news that Sustrans, the funding partner, has agreed to finance the commissioning of a full design which we hope will then allow the project to move-on to tendering for the actual construction.



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Weirs – RiverLife Project



Work has now started on installing the fish-pass at Fair-a-Far Weir – welcome news. This was originally programmed to commence in May but the usual delays have occurred. The job is estimated to take up to three months but could be longer if bad weather intervenes. However, the work is progressing well and weekly progress reports are being produced and these will be sent out to our members.

Improving fish passage on the river emanates from a European Directive, and is a very good idea. The

improvements to the weir and the installation of a new fish pass should also further enhance the attraction of the area.

However, the disruption for local residents while all this goes on is a regrettable by-product.



The top picture above shows the construction of a causeway for materials and heavy equipment and the bottom picture shows the latest artist's impression of how the weir will look.

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Our Work Parties

Our valiant group of volunteers continue to support our efforts to keep the walkway as a pleasant, natural path along the River Almond – many thanks to them. We keep in regular contact with Natural Heritage staff at Edinburgh Council and they remain very supportive.

We have recorded more than 1200 hours of work by our volunteers maintaining the Walkway. We keep the path clear of litter and cut-back overhanging branches and plant-growth from the verges on a regular basis. In addition, we have opened-up areas along the river bank to allow views of the water and various features along the way. Progress is not always immediately apparent as it has been incremental over the years. Action in many areas must be repeated as things just keeps growing – must be the Scottish climate! Control of invasive species has been a major part of what we do and controlling Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed, laurel and Himalayan honeysuckle is a continuing battle. We will never of course be able to eradicate these species as we have no control over the plants upstream or from the Dalmeny Estate on the other bank that continue to spread seeds along Almond. However, serious inroads have been made – can you remember the tunnels of laurel that used to darken whole sections of the Walkway?

We have widened the path in parts and before too long hope to improve its general condition now that the temporary Salvesen Steps are in-place and the work on the Fair-a-Far fish ladder is underway. .

John Crutchfield

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Community Woodland

Saturday 5th December 2015 was the rather wet day when the wonderful volunteers turned up to plant over 105 trees. 21 months on and the vast majority of the trees have grown well in the fertile soil (the weeds are also enjoying that soil despite being cut back). Yes, we have lost some 5% of the trees which is absolutely normal although it is upsetting that that unexpectedly we lost a fairly large oak. We also planted some gorse and whin. The whins are fine but the gorse is struggling to beat the weeds.



We now have our presentation board and are very pleased with the design. It is intended to help people find and identify the different species. We hope you all like it.

We had a visit from the local Beaver troop – most enjoyable - we set them a treasure hunt to bring back as many different tree leaves as they could and fortunately there was a clear winner. The local scouts were fantastic in laying down a membrane on part of the path network and covering it with wood chips (**picture**). What a difference. When we source more chippings, we hope they will come back and help extend the paths.

Great progress and we now have to carry out some maintenance to make sure some trees are not overgrown by the weeds and complete the path-work. Over time of course the tree canopy will expand and the weeds will be shaded out.

Robin White

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Project with Cramond Primary School

We are pleased to report that FRAW will shortly engage with Cramond Primary on a project for P7 pupils. They participate in a scheme called JASS (Junior Award Scheme for Schools) and in P7 the children work towards their silver award. One of the modules 'Me and My World' involves 'working for the good of the community and the environment' and each pupil spends 12 hours working on a project during the school year.

We hope to start the project in September. In recent weeks, we have laid out a plot of ground (60m²) on the grassy area near the river and opposite the Falls Café. It will be rotavated and surrounded by a low fence.

We've also been awarded funding for the project from Almond Neighbourhood Partnership Community Fund – this is greatly appreciated by both FRAW and Cramond Primary.

With the children, we plan to weed the area and sow a wild flower seed mix containing plants whose flowers are nectar-rich and will attract moths, butterflies, bumblebees and honeybees. The children will learn about the importance of pollinating insects and make observations on the visiting species.

Isla Browning

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Membership

Our membership renewal went well this year – important, as the more members we have, the louder our voice becomes and the more likely it is that Councillors, Council Officials and other organisations such as funders will listen positively to what we have to say.

This works and it is doubtful if we would otherwise have achieved much of the progress reported above.

If you are not yet a member, or have not yet renewed your subscription, please contact us via our email – friendsoftheriveralmondwalkway@gmail.com

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