

# Water of Leith Millennium Bid

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Millennium Fund is to enable dreams to be realised. The completion of a walking and cycling route along the river from Balerno to Leith has been a goal for many years.

Individuals, community groups and various statutory bodies have all played a part in raising awareness of the river and also improving its immediate environment. There have been annual clean-ups, new sections of the Walkway built and some delightful cast iron signs produced.

Now there is a real possibility that not only the basic dream of a completed walkway can be realised, but also a whole range of related benefits can be achieved *in the next few years*.

The very process of this bid has energised a large number of people. It has also enabled a "strategic overview" to be taken. Groups are often unaware of each other's existence and not always conscious of areas of overlap or mutual interest.

In spite of potential conflicts between, for instance, walkers, cyclists and horse riders there has been remarkable agreement and enthusiasm for the overall project. Inevitably there are local concerns over details such as precise routes, path surfacing, lighting etc., but these are issues that will be resolved in consultation with local people.

It is a key aim of this bid that it should result in real social benefits. It is obviously important that the project runs smoothly with the maximum value for money. However the opportunity must

be taken to consider long term benefits for those working on the project and also the wider community.

There is considerable interest in the idea of "sustainability". Other Millennium projects such as the Millennium Forest and Sustrans' cycle paths have it as a core purpose. There are no simple answers to the complex and interlinked questions of resources, energy use, conservation, development etc. Increasing concern over the balance between leisure and unemployment is likely to become much more prominent in the next few years.

It is therefore vital that thought is given to the recruitment and training of a workforce for the duration of the project and also to developing opportunities when the project is completed. These will be in maintenance and also in commercial and semi-commercial businesses related to activities spawned by the Millennium process.

Other sustainability issues are addressed by some of the futuristic plans drawn up by Forth Ports. We support their aims and have included some aspects in this bid for joint funding.

This bid represents a great many diverse interests that have been brought together to create a truly exciting plan. This in itself is almost enough to be worth celebrating in the new Millennium. But the actual implementation of the plan will have immense benefits for all those involved and a long lasting bonus for millions of people who will visit the Water of Leith in centuries to come.

## AIMS

**To enhance and develop Edinburgh's river as a green corridor of amenity, wildlife and educational value for the enjoyment of local communities and visitors to the city.**

## OBJECTIVES

- Completion and upgrading of the Walkway from Balerno to Leith
- Restoration and interpretation of the river's industrial heritage
- Improvement and creation of wildlife habitats
- Involvement of local communities in projects to celebrate the Millennium
- Creation of training opportunities and jobs
- Creation of play and other recreational facilities along the route

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## BACKGROUND

There have been several reports produced where the Water of Leith features either as the main player or with an important cameo role. Whatever the focus of these documents, the conclusions about Edinburgh's river are consistent.

It is a unique asset for the city, which should be valued, conserved and improved to allow the full benefits of its industrial and natural history to be enjoyed by those living in, or visiting, Edinburgh. However to date this enormous potential has remained largely untapped.

The Abercrombie Report of 1949 was a comprehensive and grandiose post-war plan for the future of Edinburgh. The Water of Leith was highlighted, with detailed plans for its enhancement. The description of the river given in the report still holds true today:

**“This offers one of the finest riverside walks that any city could wish for, but few, if any of the citizens of Edinburgh know the full extent of the scenery that may be seen and enjoyed by following the course of this river from its mouth in Leith to the (then) city boundary at Juniper Green and beyond.”**

In 1969 an “Open Space Plan for Edinburgh” was produced by the local authority, which again highlighted the river as a important corridor of green space linking the hills to the sea, and forming a major part of a comprehensive green network in and around Edinburgh. However once again the dreams for the river remained just that.

Since that report the river has seen some improvements, most notably the gradual development of the Water of Leith Walkway, led by the Water of Leith Walkway Trust, Edinburgh District Council and the Scottish Development Agency. However works have tended to be ad hoc. In 1996 there is still no continuous walkway or comprehensive signage and information for this riverside route.

In 1993 the Scottish Wildlife Trust coordinated the production of an Integrated Environmental Management Plan for the river. This brought together statutory authorities, and other interested bodies such as the Water of Leith

Conservation Trust. Some community consultation was also carried out. This plan tackled all aspects of the river, from hydrology and wildlife to access, pollution and education, and was intended to act as a blueprint for the future management of the river.

A number of key aims and objectives were identified. However little thought was given to the resources needed to achieve these aims. A subsequently commissioned Landscape Resource Study (1995) again highlighted the variety and interest the river has to offer, and suggested many possible practical improvements to enhance the aesthetic and environmental quality of the river.

In spite of all this research and the production of reports the enormous potential of the Water of Leith is still waiting to be realised.

The Water of Leith Millennium Bid draws on these reports. The visions of the Trust and many Edinburgh community groups have been combined to produce an exciting package of measures that will greatly improve the river and the lives of all who discover it.

## THE TRUST

The Water of Leith Conservation Trust was founded in 1988, to conserve and promote the river as a multi-purpose resource. It carries on the work of the Water of Leith Project Group which began in 1975. As an independent charitable organisation, working closely with all sectors of the community, the Trust is ideally placed to co-ordinate the Water of Leith Millennium Bid.

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*The Water of Leith Heritage Centre*

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## COMMUNITY PROJECTS

The communities living alongside the river today owe their origins to the industrial power that the running water provided. Although no longer reliant upon the river, they have very strong links with their particular section, and are keen to help safeguard its welfare and to encourage its improvement.

The section of river between Slateford and Balerno, in particular, retains the feeling of a series of small villages. Although all parts are now within the city boundary, each locality thinks and acts as though it is still autonomous and has its Community Council and other local organisations.

To mark the Water of Leith Millennium Project a string of local projects is planned for these riverside communities. One will be the erection of community noticeboards, something which community groups have wanted for many years. The boards will be placed near to or on the Water of Leith Walkway and used to display information about local events, services and crucially about the river. Organised walks, talks, practical conservation days, and details of where to report problems and what wildlife to look out for each season will be posted for all to see. To date such information has not reached a sufficiently wide audience. The noticeboards will increase the level of interest in and awareness of the river and lead to greater stewardship.

In addition to the boards, some local organisations wish to be involved with the Millennium Project in a variety of ways, all of which will benefit the local environment, residents and visitors. It is likely that a successful bid will lead to even more local initiatives.

### BALERNO

Balerno is at the end of the chain of villages which grew up in association with milling along the river. The Bavelaw Burn, a major tributary of the Water of Leith was the main focus for milling in the village. Balerno Community High School has been developing a wildlife garden in its grounds for its amenity, education and conservation value. It is well situated on a triangle of land between the Water of Leith Walkway and the river. At present the garden provides

a predominantly woodland habitat, with a circular path and sculptured wooden benches. The management committee for the garden, comprising staff and parents from the school and interested people in the community are keen to see improvements and diversification in the garden, and to provide disabled access to it. Given the prominent position of the garden by the entrance to the Water of Leith Walkway, the committee is keen for a living willow sculpture to be planted in the grounds. This would be one of many new sculptures that would form part of the planned Sculpture Trail all along the river. In addition to this, and in keeping with the garden's use of local timber, the community council would like to erect a number of sculptured benches alongside the river in the Balerno area.

### CURRIE

The village of Currie was first recorded in 1600 as a farming community. Milling activities were very varied - grinding grain, waulking cloth, snuff and paper milling. The latter was of particular importance and flourished with the opening of the Balerno Branch Railway Line in 1874. Currie Station became an important destination for weekend trippers on the Branch Line, keen to gain access to the Pentland Hills, and the goods shed remains intact today. The local community has expressed an interest in utilising this building in some way.

### JUNIPER GREEN

This developed as a village in the early 18th century around the natural hinterland. It was built on the Woodhall Estate, and the Woodhall mansion house dating back to the 14th century still overlooks the river. Community noticeboards will be positioned near to the river in both Currie and Juniper Green.

### COLINTON

Colinton was an important crossing point over the Water of Leith. The ford gave rise to the development of the village of Collingtoun, now Colinton, meaning "village in the wood" - still a very apt description. Records for the village date back to the 11th century, with milling prominent in the 18th and 19th centu-

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## COMMUNITY PROJECTS Continued

ries. Robert Louis Stevenson is strongly associated with the village. His grandfather was the local minister, and RLS spent much of his childhood exploring the river, which was an obvious inspiration to much of his work.

The Parish Church lies in the historic heart of the village, next to the river. The Church has plans to replace the existing halls with a new two storey building capable of accommodating a diverse range of activities. In addition to Church uses these will include cultural, educational, interpretative, local history and community and community care projects.

Given the close proximity of the Water of Leith and the historic links between the Church, river and village the Water of Leith Conservation Trust is keen to maximise opportunities for interpretation. The Millennium Project will incorporate the church and new rooms as part of the "Heritage Trail". The RLS connection will be of great interest to visitors to Edinburgh, not least from overseas. Archive, photographic and other materials will be researched and mounted for display, with text providing interpretation of the links between the river and the growth of Colinton Village. The new buildings will include a tea room for visitors, a feature in great demand for the many walkers along and visitors to the river. The management, upkeep and opening of the buildings will continue to be the responsibility of the Kirk Session of the Parish Church,

### Colinton Amenity Association

The Association takes a active role in the conservation of the amenity and wildlife value of Colinton Dell. They are keen to see the erection of a community noticeboard, containing some permanent information regarding the history and wildlife of the area, coupled with details of local events and other information to be updated as appropriate.

### CRAIGLOCKHART

This community encompasses Craiglockhart Dell, which flanks the Water of Leith between Colinton Dell and Slateford. The lodge house to the old Craiglockhart House guards the entrance to the Water of Leith Walkway at Slateford.

The Craiglockhart Community Council are very keen to have a noticeboard for their area, as it has been a topic of discussion for some time. They have suggested three possible sites, including the entrance to Craiglockhart Dell at Slateford. The Community Council is prepared to make some financial contribution to this noticeboard.

### Mayday in Craiglockhart Dell

### ROSEBURN - WESTER COATES

This section of the river falls into the area covered by the West End Community Council. The most recent addition to the Water of Leith Walkway was opened downstream of the road bridge over the river at Roseburn, linking the existing path below the Coltbridge Viaduct. Unfortunately access to this new section is only possible via steps, prohibiting wheelchairs and causing difficulty for cyclists.

### Access problem at Roseburn Cliff

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## COMMUNITY PROJECTS Continued

The West End Community Council is keen to ensure that the river is accessible to walkers, cyclists and wheelchair users. An obvious priority for them is improved access at Roseburn.

In this area the community has no obvious resource centre in which to place notices and information regarding the Water of Leith, local events and news. The Community Council wants to have a community noticeboard erected along this part of the river, enabling them to reach the local community and the many visitors and tourists.

### DEAN VILLAGE

Originally this was the "Village of the Water of Leith", with a long history dating back to the 12th century. The village is situated in a steep sided gorge, hence its name - dene or dean meaning deep valley, and offers tranquillity and seclusion just minutes from the centre of Edinburgh.

As with other villages, milling was the central activity, with at one time 11 mills producing all the flour for Edinburgh's bakers. The weir at West Mills was the starting point of the Great Lade, which passed over and under the city streets to feed a large number of mills between the Dean Village and Warriston.

The present day community of the Dean Village has the strongest sense of identity of all those along the riverside. There are a host of historic buildings and evidence of its industrial past, which the Dean Village Association is keen to see preserved and interpreted. This would be of particular interest to visitors to Edinburgh.

Initially the Association would like to assist with a survey of all man-made stone structures with a view to their long-term maintenance, including the restoration of the ford and damhead for Bell's Mills and West Mills. There are plans to restore the remains of Lindsay's Mill and all retaining walls and stonework in the village.

To further enhance some of these historic features and to improve safety in this well-used but secluded part of the Walkway, the Association is keen to see lighting of the Dean Village between Belford Bridge and the Mackenzie

Bridge, Stockbridge. This is also the ambition of the Dean Gardens Management Committee who have already taken steps to improve lighting of the Dean Bridge and its immediate surroundings.

### STOCKBRIDGE

This name comes from the original timber or stock footbridge crossing the river at this point. Stockbridge developed as a suburb of Edinburgh, with many of the population employed in farming and in the local flour mills. During the 19th century Sir Henry Raeburn, the famous portrait painter, designed and developed whole streets and residences within Stockbridge, which still remain today.

The riverside in this area is distinguished by St. Bernard's Well, which was once a popular mineral spa because of the supposed healing power of the spring water. A circular Roman Temple structure with the goddess

Hygeia at its centre was built to enclose the well in 1789. This remains today in a relatively sound state, although the grounds around it are neglected, with an incomplete set of paths preventing proper access from the walkway.

The Stockbridge Community Council is extremely active in the stewardship of the Water of Leith as it runs through this area. It is very keen to see the erection of a community noticeboard, and the general improvement of the riverside habitat, notably the landscaping around St. Bernard's Well.

### CANONMILLS

The village of Canonmills was established in the 12th century when King David I granted land to the Canons of

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## COMMUNITY PROJECTS Continued

Holyrood Abbey for the construction of mills. A water mill was built on the river and through time became known as the Canon Mill.

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Howard Place, and went to school in Canonmills. As in Colinton, he spent much of his time exploring the Water of Leith,

### WARRISTON

Between Canonmills and Bonnington lies the Warriston stretch of the Water of Leith. A particular feature of historical and wildlife interest is Warriston Cemetery, a fashionable burial ground for the wealthy dating back to 1842.

The cemetery is a very valuable wildlife habitat, with a wide range of bird species including the Tawny Owl and Sparrowhawk.

Although accessible via the cycleway, there is only one entrance and exit point to the cemetery, with high stone walls and the river enclosing it on all sides. This is a potential problem for visitors to the cemetery. The Warriston Crescent Residents Association is the main identifiable "community" body in this area. They are keen to see signposting to the Walkway and woodland habitat improved.

### BONNINGTON

This is located where the Water of Leith crosses the boundary between Edinburgh and Leith. It was an important crossing point on the toll road to Newhaven, and its industrial activities included skinworks, a tannery, corn and meal mill, paper mill, bleachfields and dyeworks.

On the site of the former Bonnington Mills, now developed for housing, the only water wheel left on the Water of Leith stands in splendid isolation in part of its original lade. Enclosed by housing this wheel is only known to local people, and the site bears no indication of why the wheel is there, how it was fed by the river and what was produced on the site.

### LEITH

The development of the Port of Leith at the mouth of the river was vital to the growth and prosperity of Edinburgh. The port developed from the 1300's through overseas trade and shipbuilding, and by the 18th century was Scotland's chief seaport.

Until 1920 Leith was a separate and independent town, and today retains an individual character. Forth Ports PLC is an important player in the redevelopment of Leith - see appendix.

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## WILDLIFE AND HABITATS

The Water of Leith and its environs support a wide variety of plants and animals. The linear nature of the river enables it to act as a wildlife corridor, allowing for the movement of plants and animals through the city. Under the Edinburgh District Council Urban Nature Conservation Strategy for Edinburgh (1992), the whole length of the Water of Leith is identified as an Urban Wildlife Site and as the single most significant natural corridor in the city. The nature of the woodland in Craiglockhart and Colinton Dells, much of it listed by Scottish Natural Heritage as either Ancient Woodland or long established woodland or of semi-natural origin, has meant that these areas are also identified as Urban Wildlife Sites in their own right.

The river is also classified as a Class 1 river under the Scottish River Classification Scheme (Scottish Office 1990), having recovered from the gross pollution which affected it during the peak of its industrial use. The river supports large populations of ten species of fish, notably Brown Trout. The wildlife seen along the river, for example dippers, kingfishers and otters, reflects this high quality.

The Millennium Project will maintain and enhance the riverside and adjacent habitats for the diverse range of species. Particular attention will be paid to two nationally scarce mammals, the otter and bat, both legally protected species, which could benefit greatly from positive practical measures.

The Scottish Wildlife Trust has carried

out survey work on otters and is keen to encourage the small population on the river. In addition the Lothians Bat Group is aware of bats using the Water of Leith to forage and of two roosting sites close to the river.

Both organisations see the provision of artificially created or improved habitats as being exciting projects for community groups registered with the "Running Your River" adoption scheme for the Water of Leith. It will also provide valuable training for SWT survey teams and other volunteers.

### GENERAL VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Vegetation alongside the Water of Leith cannot be classed as 'natural' as all have been altered by man to some extent. In addition to the woodland areas there are a number of vegetation types along the length of the river. The Water of Leith Landscape Resource Study (1995) identifies these as making an important contribution to both the landscape and to habitat diversity.

In echoing the Integrated Environmental Action Plan (SWT 1993) this study identifies the need for a programme of vegetation management for both nature conservation and amenity. There are a number of amenity grassland/park areas bordering the Water of Leith Walkway, notably at Colinton Station, Fords Road, Balgreen, Warriston, and St. Mark's Park. (IEAP SWT 1993). These are currently subject to an intensive management regime of regular mowing, edging and fertiliser application, causing regular disturbance and resulting in poor species diversity. For the public using the Walkway they present a bleak and unattractive landscape of low visual and nature conservation value. The Landscape Study identified the possibility of increasing the value of these areas without damaging their recreational function. This can be achieved by reducing the mowing intensity across an agreed area to create sward diversity, producing a gradation between riverbank and parkland habitats and a 'softer' edge to the Walkway. These areas will require less intense and less frequent maintenance for the local authority landowner.

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## WILDLIFE AND HABITATS continued

### WOODLAND MANAGEMENT

No official management plan has yet been drawn up for river. In Craiglockhart/Colinton Dells there is a need for some intervention and the removal of some mature and over-mature trees. At present regeneration in the understorey is dominated by sycamore and to a lesser extent ash. Elms are being lost and removed. It is important to retain the oldest trees, due to their aesthetic and conservation value. Planting of native species should be encouraged, primarily oak and ash, plus elm, beech, gean, beech, alder in smaller numbers. There is a need to enlarge gaps in the canopy through removal of sycamore, if oak is to regenerate. Seeds from the oldest oak and ash trees could be taken and grown in a nurseries such as Redhall Walled Garden or in local schools.

### BAVELAW MARSH, HARLAW, THREIPMUIR AND HARPERRIG RESERVOIRS

Threipmuir, Harlaw and Harperrig form a group of large reservoirs at the head of the Water of Leith catchment and within the Pentland Hills Regional Park. These reservoirs were constructed as compensation reservoirs in the 19th century to ensure a constant supply of water to the many mills along the river. Today they have a similar function in supplying a minimum level of flow into the Water of Leith to maintain good water quality in the summer. In addition they provide capacity to store flood water in winter thereby protecting large parts of Edinburgh which lie in the river valley. Their proper management is of fundamental importance to the conservation, recreation and amenity value of the Water of Leith.

### CONSERVATION v. RECREATION

The reservoirs are important for both wildlife conservation and recreation. At Threipmuir the Bavelaw Marsh is one of Lothian Region's most important Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), designated by Scottish Natural Heritage under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The whole habitat of the marsh

is important but there is particular interest in rare aquatic mosses and in a number of breeding birds, including Great Crested Grebe, Black Headed Gulls and Tufted Ducks. For this reason one of the management objectives is to maintain a high and steady water level during the breeding season i.e. until approximately the end of July. This has adverse repercussions on the water levels at Harlaw and Harperrig.

As the reservoirs are not used for drinking supply and are so close to Edinburgh and Livingston, all three have important potential for water based recreation. The reservoir complex accommodates an estimated 130,000 informal visits by the public each year for walking, dog walking and cycling. There has been preliminary work carried out by Lothian Regional Council into how to develop the recreational potential of the reservoirs without endangering the conservation value of Bavelaw Marsh. By impounding the Marsh, the rest of the water in Threipmuir (c. 200 acres) would be available to provide a share of the statutory compensation flow to the Water of Leith, thereby reducing the drawdown at Harlaw and Harperrig to the benefit of recreational users including individuals, school and community groups. Recent interest has been shown by the Scottish Sports Council, Portobello Water Sports Club, Royal Yachting Association, Forth Yacht Association and St. Andrew's Boat Club.

From April 1996 the management of the reservoirs will be carried out by East of Scotland Water (ESW). It will be reviewing its policies on Conservation, Access and Recreation in line with the Scottish Office - Code of Practice, which will have to be carried out before the above project could be developed further. However the Trust will continue negotiations with the Environmental Policy Manager of ESW in April.

### POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDING

Scottish Sports Council, West Lothian Council

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## THE WATER OF LEITH HERITAGE CENTRE

The headquarters of the Water of Leith Conservation Trust, is located in the old Slateford Village School building on the Lanark Road, about 2 miles from the centre of Edinburgh. It stands at the edge of the Edinburgh Green Belt, immediately adjacent to the Water of Leith, and opposite the entrance to the Water of Leith Walkway leading to Craiglockhart and Colinton Dells.

As its name suggests, there was at one time a crossing over the Water of Leith at Slateford. In later times it became an important crossing point for road, rail and canal traffic across the river. The Union Canal Aqueduct (1822) and railway viaduct (1847) provide a stunning backdrop to the centre.

### *Slateford aqueduct and viaduct.*

The Water of Leith Conservation Trust has been resident in the Centre since 1989, when it acquired a 25 year lease at a peppercorn rent from Lothian Regional Council. The Centre is also currently used as the base for the Scottish Conservation Projects Trust's Edinburgh operation. The building is ideally placed to act as a visitor, education and resource centre for the Water of Leith and wider countryside.

Since its inception in 1988, the Water of Leith Conservation Trust has been working to develop the centre in this way. It is the only location not only along the river but within Edinburgh where information about the river is readily available. At present the Centre is used and enjoyed by the local community for a wide range of purposes, which include:

Primary school fieldwork visits to the Water of Leith and Union Canal, in-service training for teachers in 5-14 Environmental Studies Curriculum, illustrated talks programmes, local interest group meetings e.g. Edinburgh Canal and Edinburgh Natural History Societies, Adult Education Classes and organised walking groups. In addition it receives a relatively small number of passing visitors.

The total number of visitors to the Centre has steadily increased since 1989, and during 1994 exceeded 1,000 for the first time. However the facilities and resources available to its users are limited. This has restricted the extent to which the Trust advertises the Centre, particularly to visitors to the city. This Centre has the potential to be developed as a high quality resource centre for the Water of Leith, local community and visitors to the city. In order to achieve this the interior of the building requires significant upgrading and modification.

In addition the type and extent of display and resource materials, coupled with facilities to present them must be greatly increased and improved. The Edinburgh Design Service has carried out an initial study on behalf of the Trust, as shown in the appendix. This design assumes that the Scottish Conservation Projects Trust have vacated their part of the premise. It is certainly their intention to move in the near future, and so future plans are being made on this premises. The Centre will be upgraded primarily as a resource centre. It is not intended to become a fully commercial operation, as the main aim is to better serve the local community. Although there will be some income from the sale of publications and associated products e.g.. postcards, these will be used by the Trust towards the upkeep of the building and production of new resources. The Water of Leith Conservation Trust will continue to manage the Centre and to meet the revenue costs of the building, With the development of the Centre the Trust will set-up a pool of volunteers from the members of the Trust and local community to enable the Centre to be open 10-4pm daily and at weekends.

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# Water of Leith Millennium Bid

## MILLS ON THE WATER OF LEITH

The Water of Leith has played a central role in the economic and industrial development of Edinburgh. Long before the construction of an artificial harbour, the sheltered mouth of the river a Leith provided safe anchorage for vessels. Leith became not only the gateway to Edinburgh but the whole of Scotland, allowing travel and trade with the rest of the world. Industrial activity also sprang up along the river, as the power of the flowing river was harnessed to drive up to 80 mills between Balerno and Leith. These provided Edinburgh with food, snuff, cloth, paper, employment and prosperity, and led to the growth of a string of village communities which still remain today.

A walk alongside the river today reveals the scattered remnants of this industrial heritage in various states of neglect - weirs, lade streams, millstones and mill buildings. Only to the expert eye would such remains, often half buried or hidden by undergrowth have any significance, and not even one working mill is left. The majority of people and notably visitors to the city have no idea of the wealth of historical interest on this quiet river. Proper display and interpretation of the river's past in the form of a "Heritage Trail" would not only be of interest to the casual visitor, but would also be a very valuable educational tool in developing an understanding of Edinburgh's history. The project will identify and conserve the remaining evidence of the milling industry and the river's past. A preliminary survey has already been carried out by the Edinburgh District Council Archaeological Department (appendix). For all identifiable mill sites a millstone plaque will be erected to indicate the site, date and history of each mill.

### A WATER WHEEL FOR THE RIVER

In addition to this static representation it is important to highlight the once dynamic nature of the water powered mills. In today's high-tech world, people and especially the younger generation find it hard to imagine that the flow of water they see in the Water of Leith today was sufficient to provide power for so much of the city's industrial activity. This, coupled with a increased interest worldwide

in the potential of sustainable forms of energy production makes the Water of Leith an ideal place for a water power demonstration project, combining tradition with more up to date technology. The project will reconstruct a traditional water wheel in tandem with the installation of a turbine. The chosen site is at Redhall Mill in Colinton Dell, which dates back to the 18th century. Over time it was a corn, paper and barley mill, with a traditional overshot water wheel. In 1926 a turbine was installed and the mill continued to function until 1968, when it was badly damaged by fire. The mill is located in the picturesque Colinton Dell and alongside the Water of Leith Walkway. The weir and mill lade remain intact, and are the best examples on the river with the mill building and adjacent cottage having been renovated since the fire. A feasibility study has been carried out by Edinburgh Hydro Systems Ltd. into the re-installation of a turbine and its capacity to generate power. A suitable turbine has been located. Consideration is currently being given to the construction and installation of a water wheel. The bottom storey of the mill building immediately adjacent to the turbine pit can be developed to provide interpretation of water power generation both past and present. The Edinburgh and District Supporters of Intermediate Technology are keen to be involved in the production of this material. The turbine will be linked to machinery to provide a visual demonstration of the water's power. The mill and surrounding grounds, lade and weir are all privately owned. However the landowner is very keen to develop water power generation at the site, and is aware of the attractive nature of a water wheel in addition to the turbine. Access to the site and mill building will be in agreement with this landowner, but will allow for organised parties to visit, led by for example Water of Leith Conservation Trust, Edinburgh I.T. volunteers, and other interest group leaders. A key will be kept at the Water of Leith Heritage Centre for group users. The site will be of great benefit to both the local community and visitors to the city, as an attractive and educational feature.

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# Water of Leith Millennium Bid

## REDHALL ESTATE

The former Redhall Estate has been owned by the City for half a century but its neglect has probably been going on for twice as long. The main buildings - the house, stables and walled garden are almost two hundred and fifty years old. Many of the trees are exactly two hundred years old this year. Some are in their prime, others are past their best. The trees and shrubs need sensitive attention. It will be a significant achievement if this is done without great public anxiety. However it is necessary if the sad decline is to be halted and natural regeneration allowed to occur in the twenty-first century.

Also in need of attention are the paths

and grottos.

The Walled Garden is a listed building and deserves careful restoration. It is currently run as an organic gardening project by the Scottish Association for Mental Health. When it was built around 1756 it employed the most modern technology - the greenhouse was heated by hot air ducted from the boiler house. It would be possible to refurbish this and use the "free" energy supplied by a well managed woodland. In addition, up to date technology in the form of solar panels and heat pumps could be used to warm buildings on the site. SAMH will grow native trees and wildflowers for use in improving the Water of Leith area.

*Grotto, burnt out car and neglected bridge*

*Redhall Walled Garden and estate trees*

## Redhall Stables for Riding for Disabled

This Stable block was once an integral part of the Redhall Estate. Today, although structurally sound, it is in need of extensive renovation. The buildings are the property of Lothian Regional council.

The British Horse Society is interested in restoring the complex and developing it as a working stables, using the Water of Leith Walkway and associated network of paths for riding purposes. The close proximity of Graysmill School for physically disabled children has made the development of the stables for Riding for the Disabled the key aim, but giving flexibility for other horse riders to use the facility. At present pupils from the school have to travel by bus to the

other side of Edinburgh for RDA lessons. Due to the city wide demand for such facilities, only a very small number of pupils can attend lessons. The School wishes to increase the number of pupils involved in this activity as the benefits to their health and wellbeing are immense. The presence of a working stable also presents opportunities for employment and training, involving a number of people from the local community, including pupils at the adjacent Cairnpark School which caters for secondary school excludées. Given the proper management and initial capital funding there are plenty of opportunities to generate income from the stables.

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# Water of Leith Millennium Bid

## BRIDGES

There are many bridges over the Water of Leith, some small, others towering and impressive, many of which were designed and built by the famous engineers of their time. As with most features associated with the river their historic significance and splendour is often little known or appreciated. There is a fascinating sequence of crossings over the river in the DeanVillage area, which chart the development of Edinburgh and its links with Queensferry and the north. The remains of the ford, the original crossing point in the Dean Village from Edinburgh to the then Queen's Ferry are still visible below the modern footbridge. The ford was superseded by the old Dean Bridge, a narrow stone construction. Finally the Dean Bridge, designed by Thomas Telford was built, and opened in 1832. This bridge towers over 100 feet above the river, with the Water of Leith and Walkway passing beneath it.

Hugh Baird, an engineer and contemporary of Thomas Telford designed the aqueduct holding the Union Canal, which stands high above the river at Slateford and was completed in 1822. Perhaps the best kept secret is the design and construction of the four bridges over the river between Slateford and Balerno, built to carry trains along the Balerno Branch Line. The bridge design and construction was the first major commission for the engineer William Arrol, who then went on to much greater things - the construction of the world famous Forth Railway Bridge!

As part of the upgrading and enhancement of the walkway, some of these structures will be lit at night. At present they are shrouded in darkness, although recently Belford Bridge has had a single spotlight focused on it. This has been done by the immediately adjacent Hilton Hotel, which has received many enthusiastic comments from guests and the general public. In addition there will be some on-site interpretation noting the their designers

## RAILWAY

1998 will mark the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Slateford to Balerno

branch line. This was a feat of engineering far greater than anything planned to celebrate the Millennium. It was created in quite difficult terrain with nothing more advanced than picks, shovels and wheelbarrows! Sadly the railway is no more.

In its place is a particularly fine walkway. However as part of this plan, rails could return. A miniature (7 1/4" ) track is planned. Power would be from batteries charged by a turbine on the river.

This attraction would also have a practical value as it would be able to take people with disabilities through a particularly pleasant section from the Union Canal to Colinton.

It is also planned that people would be able to arrive by canal barge. This would be built and fitted out in Edinburgh and used to carry school parties etc. from Tollcross or Wester Hailes to the Heritage Centre. When the Union Canal is reopened longer trips will be possible.

## SCULPTURE TRAIL

One of the key requirements of the Millennium Commission is quality of design. It is certainly the intention of the Trust to work to the highest practical standards. Even simple items such as seats or signs can be attractive as well as functional. The Water of Leith flows past The Gallery of Modern Art and close to the Botanic Gardens. Both are sites for outdoor sculpture. It is planned that The Water of Leith will be one of Edinburgh's Sculpture Trails. It is proposed that instead of the familiar "1% for Art", this project should use 2% of its budget for artistic purposes.

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# Water of Leith Millennium Bid

## TOURISM

The Water of Leith has great potential as a tourist resource. However at present the majority of the millions of visitors to Edinburgh remain oblivious to it. This is due to a combination of factors, not least the general lack of awareness of the river's potential and the ongoing neglect suffered by the river's built heritage, habitats and walkway. There is also a complete lack of promotional and informative literature about the river readily available through the Edinburgh Tourist Board and other venues. "Building on Edinburgh's success - a committed tourism strategy towards the next century" has been produced by The Edinburgh Tourism Initiative.

This strategic plan is seen as the key to Edinburgh's continuing role as a world class destination. The need to develop attractions away from the traditional focus of Edinburgh Castle and the Royal Mile is central to the strategy, as is the principle of sustainability. New "green" attractions have an important part to play in both these spheres. The expansion of green routes, cycle paths and walking tours to attract the eco-tourist market and a general public more aware of and interested in the environment is highlighted. The Edinburgh District Council Department of Economic Development and Estates is fully supportive of the Millennium Bid, acknowledging: "...the Water of Leith and its Walkway contribute to Edinburgh's tourism strategy, by offering attractions away from the city centre and providing a green route for visitors to explore on foot".

In 1995 the Water of Leith Conservation Trust prepared an introductory paper on the tourist potential of the river which was met with great interest by LEEL.

The paper suggested and urged positive actions to encourage visiting tourists, such as the completion and upgrading of the Walkway, a Sculpture Trail, water-powered mill, heritage and natural history walks and trails and an upgraded Heritage Centre. The Water of Leith Millennium Project will enable the river to realise this tourism potential, with the construction and upgrading of the necessary infrastructure, highlighting of the many attractions and production of the necessary resources to allow for in-

terpretation and enjoyment by the visiting population. However the benefits will not only be reaped by the tourist. According to the Edinburgh Tourist Initiative, tourism supports 20,000 jobs in Edinburgh, representing 11% of the tourism employment in Scotland. The completion of the Water of Leith Millennium Project will allow for a number of tourist related employment opportunities to be developed.

### GUIDED WALKS

The Water of Leith is ideal for guided walks. It can be reached in minutes on foot from the centre of Edinburgh, or a short bus or train ride can take you to the upstream end by the Pentland Hills. It provides a tranquil environment in comparison to the hustle and bustle of the city centre, and has a real "getting away from it all" feeling. At present guided walks along the river are coordinated on a very limited scale, almost exclusively for the local community.

The small programmes of walks organised by the Water of Leith Conservation Trust and Lothian Regional Council Community Education Department are very popular and often oversubscribed. However to date no attempts have been made to provide such a service to the tourist population. It appears that tourists generally find their way on to the river by chance, despite the fact that tourists visit and stay in venues right next to the river. For example the Hilton National Hotel and Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art are both immediately adjacent to the river and within a few hundred metres of each other.

Guided walks focusing on both the heritage and natural history of the river could be successfully promoted in Edinburgh. Information from the Scottish Tourist Guides Association puts current rates for guided tours in Edinburgh at £48/half day, £78/full day, with a supplement for foreign languages. It is clear that a self-financing operation could be run to provide guided tours on the river. Several types of excursion could be offered, ranging from an all day "Source to Sea" walk, or a mixture of walking and transport by minibus, to an hour exploring a short section of the river or one of the riverside communities.

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# Water of Leith Millennium Bid

## EDUCATION

The Water of Leith has enormous potential as a resource for both formal and informal education. A better and wider understanding and knowledge of the river amongst particular the local community is very important to the long-term conservation and enhancement of the river. Indeed some of the river's problems today come from an ill conceived perception of it as a neglected and little used corridor of little value. The Water of Leith Conservation Trust has taken the lead in developing and encouraging the use of the river by school groups and individuals, university and college students, adult education and special needs groups.

In addition to providing fieldwork classes and other activities the Trust has researched and produced a limited number of resource materials. These, notably "A Guide to the Water of Leith Walkway", and the "Water of Leith Information Pack" have proved very popular and useful for both educational and recreational purposes. However, the extent to which the river is used is limited by a number of factors highlighted in this report, primarily: Lack of readily available and accessible resource material at the Water of Leith Heritage Centre; limited access to certain parts of the river, due to the missing sections in the Walkway and lack of disabled access; lack of on-site interpretation and preservation of features of historical importance; limited numbers of guided walks along the river; and an overall lack of awareness of the value of the Water of Leith within even the Edinburgh community. Through the projects outlined within this report, the Water of Leith will be able to fulfil its educational potential. It will enable its many users to appreciate fully Edinburgh's river, and to foster a sense of stewardship and responsibility.

## PLAY FACILITIES

The Water of Leith and its surroundings provide a superb environment in which to walk, run, cycle, fish, picnic and so on. On a warm spring or summer's day many people, especially children, visit the riverside to play in and around the water. This is something which the Trust and other organisations (e.g.. Edinburgh Health Challenge) are keen to encourage. At present alongside the river there are only a very limited number of small scale play facilities. In this growing field there are a superb range of structures which can be erected to provide stimulating and exciting entertainment.

The Trust has consulted The Play Practice, an independent company specialising in the design and construction of play facilities. The montage in the appendix gives an idea of the range of possible structures. All structures are built to the highest standards to ensure public safety. Several areas alongside the river have been identified as suitable for the erection and/or enhancement of a variety of play facilities.

The play facilities for the Water of Leith will be designed to blend with and complement the surrounding environs. For example in Colinton Dell structures which go up into the trees will be highly suitable

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# Water of Leith Millennium Bid

## MANAGEMENT

The management of the Water of Leith Millennium Project will be overseen by the Water of Leith Conservation Trust. The Trust is a formally constituted organisation, with a Board of eight Trustees, and one part-time employee. Trustees meetings are held on a regular basis throughout the year to monitor the progress of the Trust in relation to the annual Work Programmes and overall Business Plan, and to further the development of the Trust. All Trustees have had an input into the Millennium Bid, lending expert advice where appropriate. They are very keen to maintain a close involvement with the project through to the Millennium and beyond. The management of the Millennium Project has been discussed by the Trustees, and an outline structure has been drawn up:

The Board of Trustees with representatives from the main funding partners will oversee the project and manage the Project Team through monthly meetings and at other times as appropriate. The Project Team will comprise a manager, two co-ordinators of practical works, one for the Water of Leith Walkway and associated paths, and another for building renovations and restoration. In addition there will be an administrator and a press and public relations adviser, responsible for publicity and liaising with local groups. All the above would not necessarily be full-time contracts, particularly in relation to the practical works.

## PROGRAMME

Over the next six months it will be necessary to draw up a more detailed programme of work to be carried over the next five years. At this stage we must assume that our bid is going to be successful. This document represents the plans envisaged at present. It is inevitable that some projects will turn out to be unviable or less of a priority if some cutbacks become necessary - for whatever reason. Additionally there will be new ideas that emerge during the plan-

ning and implementation processes.

From September - when we expect to hear that all or most of our bid has been successful - The Project Team will begin detailed planning.

One major area of work will be concerned with drawing up a precise work programme and deciding whether each project will be undertaken by outside contractors, a direct workforce, volunteers - or a combination of these. The experience of organisations such as Sustrans has shown that it is usually easier to draw up a precise tender and engage an experienced company. Inevitably there will be work - such as the major steel structures at Bonnington and the Union Canal link where experienced contractors will be necessary.

However it is one of the aims of this project that there should be lasting results for the people involved, so it is intended that a specially trained workforce will be employed to carry out as many of the tasks as possible.

The most efficient way of completing the walkway might be to start at one end and progress gradually to the other. But it is important that work is seen to have started throughout the river valley. Therefore there will be work parties in a number of parts of the river at the same time. It may be possible to recruit some team members locally which would bring local knowledge and create a greater sense of pride in the job.

The priority will be to undertake the most urgent work first. This will probably involve areas that have suffered from long lack of adequate maintenance such as erosion due to blocked drains and damaged stonework as a result of unwanted tree growth.

The priority in path building is undoubtedly the section nearest the Heritage Centre. Refurbishment of the Centre is also important as it will be the headquarters of this exciting operation. Projects such as the stables and the Walled Garden could either be tackled gradually over a number of years or left until nearer the Millennium to increase the sense of anticipation.

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# Water of Leith Millennium Bid

## MATCHING FUNDS

The project will draw together funding from a large number of sources. The Water of Leith Conservation Trust is currently in discussion with a wide range of organisations from the Edinburgh community: 1. Forth Ports Plc have confirmed that they will arrange for matching funds for projects within the port area. 2. Lothian and Edinburgh Enterprise Ltd. have largely funded the research and production of the Water of Leith Millennium bid. They are aware of the economic and environmental benefits that will result, and the Water of Leith Conservation Trust anticipates that LEEL will contribute a significant amount of the matching funds. 3. The City of Edinburgh Council. The Trust is negotiating support from the new council at present, and has asked it for up to 50% of the matching funds. The Council has already indicated its support for the project. Until after April 1st 1996 it is not possible to get firm commitments. 4. Scottish Natural Heritage hope that resources will be available to assist with some elements of the project. Those of particular interest will be improved access, interpretation, habitat and wildlife measures. 5. A number of other environmental organisations such as the Edinburgh Green Belt Trust and Scottish Wildlife Trust are being approached to assist in the funding of local community initiatives. 6. The Water of Leith Conservation Trust has a number of corporate members from the local business community. In addition to these there are a number of other companies working near to the river. The Trust anticipates that substantial funds can be raised from the private sector. 7. Public Appeals. The Water of Leith Conservation Trust will co-ordinate a number of events involving the local community to help raise funds for community projects identified in the bid. Activities could include sponsored clean-ups, walks and "duck races". Communities will also be aided and encouraged to devise their own events. 8. The owner of Redhall Mill intends to hold an auction to raise funds for the reinstatement of working water power. He is confident of securing in excess of £30,000 through this venture.

## REVENUE COSTS

The completion of the Water of Leith Millennium Project will not result in substantial revenue costs. We are confident that where necessary these can be met. At this stage it is only possible to give a very rough indication of anticipated revenue expenditure. This is because it is not possible to identify in all cases who will be meeting such costs, as described above, or how the management of some facilities will be carried out. The main areas giving rise to revenue expenditure have been identified, and where possible the likely sum of such costs estimated, and the potential sources of funds outlined.

### WATER OF LEITH WALKWAY

In the Leith Docks area revenue expenditure will be met by Forth Ports PLC. At present the upkeep and maintenance of the Walkway from Balerno to Leith is the responsibility of the Edinburgh District Council Recreation Department. This will transfer to the same department in the new council. The annual revenue implications of the Walkway and surrounding environment are currently in the region of £30 - 40,000. However this does not necessarily represent the amount that should and needs to be spent on these areas. The Millennium Project will rectify many years of neglect, particularly in the upstream end of the river between Balerno and Slateford. Thus the need for revenue expenditure will be reduced in some areas. At present the council is having to make cuts in its budget, so the amount available for maintenance of the Water of Leith and Walkway is unknown.

### WATER OF LEITH HERITAGE CENTRE

At present the running and maintenance costs of the Centre are met by jointly by the Water of Leith Conservation Trust and the Scottish Conservation Projects Trust. The annual running costs for the Centre are currently in the region of £6,000 excluding staff. However once the Centre has been upgraded through the Millennium Project, it is intended that much greater use will be made of the Centre and inevitably running costs will be higher. It is hoped that it will be pos-

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# Water of Leith Millennium Bid

## REVENUE COSTS Continued

sible to employ additional paid staff in order to make the optimum use of the new facilities. It is also likely that there will be more volunteers involved than at present, and there will be greater opportunities for individuals on work placement. From April 1996 the Water of Leith Conservation Trust will be funded primarily by Scottish Natural Heritage, with further support from The City of Edinburgh Council, membership subscriptions and donations. It is currently seeking avenues to ensure the long-term security of core funds.

### REDHALL MILL

The Trust is currently in negotiation with the landowner with regard to the management and running of the mill. The feasibility study carried out indicates that the operation of a turbine can be self-financing. There may be a need to secure an agreement to ensure access to the site and display centre, and to pay a rent for this use. This is still in the early stages of negotiation.

### REDHALL STABLES

The outline proposals and ideas would suggest that the running of the stables could be self-financing. Riding lessons, training courses and open days all have the potential to meet a substantial amount of the revenue costs. It will obviously be necessary to investigate these possibilities in more depth. The likely revenue expenditure for a work-

ing stable to include one paid professional will be in the region of £30,000 per annum.

## POST IMPLEMENTATION

The majority of the land along the river including the Water of Leith Walkway is in local authority ownership. Edinburgh District Council, soon to be The City of Edinburgh Council, is responsible for the maintenance of these areas. Through the Millennium Project the Water of Leith Walkway, woodland, and other areas will be significantly improved. There are two main scenarios for such areas once the project is completed : 1. The land is retained by The City of Edinburgh Council which becomes responsible for its upkeep and maintenance. 2. The land is wholly or partly transferred to an independent Trust which would be responsible for upkeep and maintenance.

Until the new City Council is firmly established it will not be possible to come to any conclusions. Some areas benefiting from the project will remain with the current land owners, who would be responsible for management of their assets. E.g. Forth Ports Plc.

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