

Leith Chooses ‘self-evaluation’ meeting

26 March 2025

Present: Bruce (minutes), Don, Douglas, Jack, Naomi, Sally, Susan, Tremaine. No apologies
Conclusions and actions are highlighted.

1 Summary of specific actions

Item	Actor	Action
3.0	Susan	Undertake further classification/analysis of feedback from voters
3.0	LC steering group	Create a ‘you said, we did’ in response to comments
3.1	Tremaine, Naomi	Ask CEC community grants if LC can set its own ‘filtering’ criteria
3.1	Susan/Jack	Check with CEC lawyers whether LC can do various ‘affirmative actions’
3.2	LC steering group	Add a ‘project title’ field to the application form
3.3	Bruce	Investigate whether/how the video of projects and how to vote might become a project for Napier animation students
3.4	Bruce	Update his analysis of which groups have won over the years
3.5	Bruce	Set a date in May to review reports on projects that have recently completed
3.6	Bruce	Draft LC governance documents
4.3	Tremaine and Naomi	Ask Emma to book in day in calendar for publishing voting link
4.3	Tremaine, Naomi and CEC colleagues	Add tick box to sign up to mailing list at the end of the forms.
4.3	LC steering group	Create a QR code for signing up to the mailing list for the in-person voting day
4.3	Tremaine, Naomi and CEC colleagues	Implement tick box confirming ‘this is my one personal vote’ in online voting mechanism
4.3	Bruce/Jack	Implement filtering or tagging of projects on the website to make them easier to view
4.4	Tremaine	Ask Rob Levick if Kinnaid room can be used for the awards ceremony
4.4	LC steering group	Invite Edinburgh Reporter to award ceremony
4.6	Naomi	Set up a meeting with CEC’s Consul experts with Jack and Bruce
4.7	LC steering group	Set up dedicated meetings on governance, boost vote, application form, end of project reports

2 Introduction

- In the absence of an external facilitator, much of the initial discussion was how to run this meeting, i.e. how to use the information in the survey responses etc. (Hyperlinks to these are in the appendix.) Most discussion centred on the qualitative feedback from the voter questionnaire, including some concerns about the questions.
- Eventually an analysis whiteboard was created. (See section 6.1 below.)

3 Discussion of feedback from voter questionnaire

- It became apparent from some of voter responses that some respondents did not fully understand LC’s purpose or how it fulfilled this. (Also, Susan reported that some people, particularly those on the political left, did not like the available amount being split into small amounts, rather than funding a single full project. These people appear to not understand LC’s ‘piloting/small project’ aim.) Leaving aside the thought that voters should make the effort to gain this understanding, the first conclusion is
 - LC needs to communicate its role, purpose etc better.
- There was concern that LeithChooses is a ‘popularity contest’ – but so are all forms of democracy.
- It was noted that any changes to the application process would need to be implemented quite soon.
- Susan will undertake further classification/analysis of the feedback, looking into which comments imply necessary and realistic actions.
- It was encouraging that most suggestions from voters had been discussed by the steering group over the years, that there were very positive comments, and that many other comments stemmed from ignorance of LeithChooses.
- It is not possible to feed back to individual commenters, but it was agreed to create a ‘you said, we did’, even if just for applicants. (This would also say why we didn’t change things, even if this was suggested by voters or applicants.)

3.1 Burdens on applicant organisations in application process

Some responses noted that applicant organisations face time-costs for completing their applications and attending the voting-day. (This is not a new concern.)

- There was concern that application has got harder over the years. However, comments that it is hard to apply were balanced by others stating that it is easy to apply.
- It was noted that LC asks for quotes in applications, but other Community Grants applications may not. Further, if organisations do not supply quotes, this adds to the burden on the CEC colleagues. Hence the second conclusion is:
 - LC needs to significantly reduce this burden on applicants.
- There was concern that it was easier for bigger organisations to win funding.
- It was noted that LC's eligibility criteria cannot be changed unless CEC community grants approves such changes.
 - It may be possible for LC to set its own 'filtering' criteria (around supporting minority groups, smaller organisations etc) if CEC community grants permits this. Naomi and Tremaine to ask CEC if this is possible.
 - However, the boost vote might be used to support minority groups, smaller organisations etc.
 - Alternatively the competition could be split between previous winners and new applicants/never-won-befores.
 - Targeted support session for 'never won before' orgs was felt to be of little use due to lack of previous uptake.
 - It was noted that there may be legal barriers to such changes. Susan/Jack to check this with CEC lawyers.
 - Such changes may make LC open to criticism, as well as making it more difficult for voters and applicants.
- There was a suggestion that the application form asks how many employees organisations have.
 - This appears to be a CEC requirement for any 'suppliers', even if holding such information without good cause may contravene GDPR.
 - Because not all staff are paid employees, this question could be about numbers of staff or full-time equivalents.
 - It was suggested that LC asks about organisations' turnovers, or their impacts (however could be measured).
- Better briefing of applicants for the voting day was suggested, especially that they don't lead voters to ballot boxes.

3.2 Burdens on voters during in-person voting day

- There was concern in both the voter feedback and in the comments gathered on the day that the voting process was not communicated well enough, both in advance and on the day. This is despite posters describing it and the presence of many volunteers.
 - This led to raising of concerns about the quality and training of volunteers, and the necessary 'cat-herding'.
 - There were also concerns about ballot-box queue-managing, as noted in an earlier email from a volunteer.
- It was also noted that the voting day is a large burden on volunteers and steering group members.
- There were concerns about the layout/location of the stalls, ability of voters to find stalls they were looking for, and the location of the 'boost-vote' stalls in the voting room.
- It was suggested that there is a video/slideshow about the projects constantly playing in the voting event.
 - This video should be simple: just organisation and project names, and the photos sent in for the gallery.
 - Applicants/organisations should not be asked to create their sections of the video: it would add to their burden [and organisations would submit very different videos, perhaps advantaging some over others].
 - The video/slideshow could also remind voters about how to vote.
 - Bruce to investigate whether/how this might become a project for Napier animation students.
 - This would enable at least two ways of presenting information to voters: visual, perhaps audio-visual, printed/textual. (See next main point on handouts.)
- LC steering group to add a 'project title' field to the application form
- Voters could also be given a handout on how to vote which also shows where the stalls are in the main room.
 - This map would not be reusable the following year, even if the voting process doesn't change, adding to paper wastage. However, it could be turned into a ballot form, thus avoiding some ballot-box issues.
- Use of online voting on the day was firmly rejected due to this probably causing more queuing and technical hassles.
 - Also a major part of the voting day's purpose is community engagement.
 - Further, it would be hard for volunteers helping people using online voting to not influence them at all.
- Various suggestions were made for the layout of the voting day. See diagram in section 6.4 below.
- It was suggested that the voting cards are changed: one colour for organisations that have won before, one for new/small/never-won groups, one for ethnic minorities.
- It was suggested that the ballot-box is moved to the Kinnaid room.
- Voters should only get one go at voting. (If they come to the ballot box with fewer than their full complement of votes, staff could suggest they go and fill their complement.)
- Voters could receive 3 cards at registration, and pick up stickers to apply to these cards before they vote.

3.3 Online voting

- There were concerns about the accessibility/navigability of the online voting mechanism – it's a lot for voters to wade through.
 - It may be almost impossible to reduce the number of words: we do not want to under-inform voters [and have in fact increased the project description word-limit to 150 words].
 - It was asked whether the instruction wording could be made more concise/easier to understand.
 - Filtering and/or tagging of project descriptions on LC's website gallery was suggested. Jack and Bruce to investigate how to implement this. (There was a suggestion that this might 'herd' voters.)
 - Auto-randomising of the gallery (so it's in a different order each time it's visited) was also suggested. (This may be possible in Consul but probably isn't possible in ConsultationHub.)
- There was consideration of whether Consul could be used in place of ConsultationHub [and possibly the website gallery]. Despite steering group members previously finding Consul impossible to implement, Naomi will arrange for Jack and Bruce to meet CEC's Consul experts to look into whether LC can implement and save time/effort. It was noted that another LA's Consul implementation had cost around £3m.
- There was some consideration of having staffed voting places outwith the main voting day.
- It was noted that Tremaine and Naomi cannot themselves alter the online voting website: they must ask one of the two CEC staff who can do this. Hence if an organisation disqualifies itself by not attending the voting day, they may need 2 or 3 working days to remove this organisation from the website.
- Out of concern about possible forced/coerced voting it was suggested that there is a tickbox 'this is my own personal vote'
 - But if votes are coerced, tick this box would be coerced.
 - Alternatively, a minimal instruction/explanation could be inserted.

3.4 Voting arrangements and feedback to voters

- There were several comments requesting more/better feedback about the voting results, and the impact of the funded projects.
 - LC steering group to implement mechanisms (QR code at voting day, tick-box in online voting) for voters to receive the voting results. This could be the basis of a mailing list, although there may be compliance hurdles.
 - There were suggestions to change the boost vote: keep as-is, pivot to smaller organisations, new applicants, smaller organisations, organisations that have not won recently or at all. Bruce to update his analysis of which groups have won over the years.

3.5 Post-project reports from organisations

- It was noted that the steering group has not yet engaged with these, such as checking whether projects live up to the diversity etc they claim on the application forms that their projects will achieve.
 - LC could remove or simplify this part of the application form.
 - It was suggested that this part of the form prompts applicants to be diverse etc, so should remain even if this data is not used to evaluate projects after completion.
 - Bruce to set a date in May to review reports submitted for the projects that have just finished.

3.6 Awards ceremony

- See section 4.5 below.

3.7 Governance

- It was suggested that LC steering group should have a co- or vice-chair (who may also need to be a CEC councillor).
- Bruce to draft governance documents for LC.

4 Conclusions and actions

Conclusions and actions are highlighted.

4.1 General conclusions and actions

- LC needs to communicate its role, purpose etc better.
- LC needs to significantly reduce this burden on applicants.
- Online voting will not be used at the in-person vote.
- LC steering group to create a 'you said, we did'.

4.2 Application form

Hold a separate meeting to be set up to discuss in more detail

- Adding in project description/title
- We ask for number of employees
- Not asking for quotes
- Add boost vote for those who haven't won before - separate meeting to be set up to discuss boost vote in more detail
- Reduce admin barriers e.g. asking for quotes

4.3 Voting day

4.3.1 Voting methods:

- Suggestion: One voting card colour for new groups, one for minority ethnic groups, one for main vote
- Suggestion: Voters get given three cards at the beginning and add their project stickers to the cards as they go round the room
- One ballot box visit and one stamp
- Print out map and details of projects as well as voting instructions on one page
- Slides/PowerPoint of organisations' names and their projects' names
- Move ballot box to different room - Kinnaird
- Barriers in place for queue as well as queueing managers
- Café used as quiet voting

4.4 Online voting

- Open voting on Wednesday (3 working days after the in-person event) and make sure Emma is available for editing/publishing
 - This is to avoid organisations who do not attend the voting day still being on the online vote.
- TB and ND to ask Emma to book in day in calendar for publishing voting link
- TB/ND and CEC colleagues to add tick box to sign up to mailing list at the end of the forms.
- LC steering group to also create a QR code for signing up to the mailing list for the in-person voting day
- TB/ND and CEC colleagues to implement tick box confirming 'this is my one personal vote' in online voting mechanism
- Bruce/Jack to implement filtering or tagging of projects on the website to make them easier to view

4.5 Awards ceremony

- Kinnaird room might be better – TB to ask Rob
- LC steering group to Invite Edinburgh Reporter to award ceremony - key press contacts to be on mailing list and must get in touch in better time

4.6 Evaluation

- Available on day of voting day - however they will not be able to feed back on online voting process or results process

4.7 Miscellaneous

- Naomi to set up a demo for Consul with Jack and Bruce
- Governance to be discussed in separate meeting including a co chair and terms of reference
- Set up separate meetings for
 - Governance
 - Boost vote
 - Application form
 - End of project report

5 Appendix 1: survey responses etc

Hyperlinks are to these documents on LC's Dropbox.

- [Leith Chooses Voter Questionnaire 2025 - Qualitative Feedback](#)
ChatGPT splits this document into the following positive and negative aspects:
 - **Positive Aspects**
 - Leith Chooses empowers local decision-making and promotes community involvement.
 - Successful projects receive strong local support and participation, making the Leith area more vibrant.
 - Participatory budgeting encourages residents to engage with the projects they voted for.
 - Offering advice sessions to applicants is highly valued and appreciated, helping both new and returning applicants.
 - **Negative Aspects**
 - Participating in the grant-making process can be costly for small groups, involving staff time and administrative effort.
 - The voting process favors larger charities with more supporters, which disadvantages smaller or less popular causes (like addiction support).
 - The current decision-making process is seen as too reliant on popularity rather than addressing the needs of vulnerable groups.
 - The process needs redesigning to be more inclusive of groups working on unpopular or less-supported causes.
- [Leith Chooses Voter Questionnaire Summary 2025](#)
- [Leith Chooses Applicant Questionnaire 2025 - Qualitative Feedback](#)
- [Leith Chooses Applicant Questionnaire Summary 2025](#)
- [Leith Chooses 2024-25 Considerations - TB & ND](#)

6 Appendix 2: transcriptions of flipchart etc

These photos are all in [this Dropbox folder](#).

Deleted: photos

6.1 Transcription of the analysis sheet

NB The leftmost and rightmost columns did not align with the central three columns.
The '1's in the 'positive' and 'negative' columns are tally-marks.

What on earth was this column about?	Theme (133 responses)	Positive	Negative	Solutions
Sustainability	Sustainability		1	Unbiased (apolitical) social media (in person day)
Admin costs	Clarity of purpose		1	Communicate results to public
New/old groups	Democracy	1	1	'you said, we did' to everyone
Eligibility	Administrative burden		11 (T&N are following up relaxing quotes)	QR code (on voting day) for in-person voting (to sign up to mailing list)
Leftist	Voting process clarity		111111 (stamps)	Providing feedback on questionnaires
	Queuing system		11 (shouldn't be funnelled)	Lower threshold for 'evidence'
	Volunteer capacity			Build options for feedback/voting results online v form
Small v large	Layout/ location		11 (boosts should be far away from ballot box) (should be on voting instructions)	Size of orgs: CEC reviewing if number of employees is asked for
Democracy	Boost vote		Wider review	Delay online vote 2-3 working days
Project types/themes	Online voting	11	111 UI fiddly paper? wordage	QR codes for feedback on the day voting
Budget	Voter interactivity with applications		Slideshow of video of each project	This is my personal vote (add this to online voting to ensure no coercion)
Maximum amount	Viewing gallery on the day		Slideshow, screen or print-out	Key press contacts on Awards night
	Website leithchooses.net		Gallery: filter/order/tagging	
Consul platform for participatory budgeting	Feedback/ impact/ results			

6.2 Transcription of ‘what could have been better? Any ideas for next time?’ sheet from in-person voting day

Two post-its were illegible because they had curled up.

What could have been better?	Any ideas for next time?
• Make it clear that we can take (and then discard) extra cards. Didn't know this. • Bigger organisations don't apply (Turning Point) but maybe we should! • More info and promotion on ScotGov & council websites • Very, very difficult to vote online. (Not voter-friendly) • Keep the early (11am) voting (good for applicants to practice) • In person is good to learn about orgs. (I only knew about one before today.) • Hard to log on • (illegible) • Keep the in-person voting • (some personal details) • It's really not clear from stalls/staff about children votes • We <u>need</u> the quiet room! • Good to have the printed forms with details • Use TikTok & Instagram (add location to get more hits) • In-person votes should count for more • Music! • Make cards more available at stalls • Better promotion of event and individual stalls • It would be great to have welcomers who verbally explain what to do ☺ • What a lovely initiative. Thank you for doing this! • Have more than once a year • Better promotion through stall-holders/applicants • (illegible) • Edinburgh Minute: let them know (1) who won, (2) how it went, (3) how many voted	

6.3 Transcription of ‘how did we do?’ sheet from in-person voting day

There is no attempt here to reproduce the placement of the post-its within the boxes. The sheet ran from ‘OK’ on the left, via ‘Good’ to ‘very good’ on the right, but this layout is more legible. Some post-its may have covered some dots.

Category	Number of dots	Post-it comments
OK	0	• Been in Leith 70 years and this is my first time
Good	6	• Love the voting for under-8s! • It’s a Leith day • Brilliant event, great selection of orgs, loved seeing the local community coming together • We loved it • Great community event for so much (sic) important causes. Thank you Leith! • Could you provide recycling bins? • (illegible handwriting)
Very good	~28	• Thanks so much. I like the event • Saw the LeithChooses marketing (lamppost flyer). Really positive event. Would have liked more detail on proposed budget, repeated costs (illegible word) • It’s perfectly fine! • Beautiful event. It is good to see so many groups and people here! • A very well run event. Thanks • I loved the opportunity to learn about the work of local orgs and all the inspiring things they do • (illegible word) really helping and the volunteers are really helpful • Very well organised. Information re voting very clear. LeithChooses volunteers kept coming round stalls checking (illegible words) thanks • Love that you can do voting and the boost vote (illegible word)! • Lovely event. Thank you Leith • Let’s go Leith!

6.4 Diagram of voting-day layout suggestions

