

Leith Chooses evaluation meeting, 22 April 2026

Present: Abby, Bruce, Don, Jack, Jade, Lisa, Naomi, Rachel, Sally, Susan, Tremaine, Zhuoyo (PhD researcher)

Definite actions and decisions are green-highlighted

Summary of actions and decisions

- Action: These notes and relevant documents will be shared with Zhuoyo to help her research **only if all who were present agree**.
- Action: These notes, once agreed, will be shared with G Severin, along with the *LC2025-26 feedback summary*.
- Action: Tremaine to compare LC's results with responses from community grants fund areas that do not have PB Decision: LC will publish ranked lists of winners but not lists of non-winners. LC will not publish numbers of votes.
- Decision: Meetings, popularity and theme-setting need further discussions.
- Decision: A suggestion to distribute funding proportionately, so each applicant gets some funding, was rejected.
- Action: CEC officers to add 'how likely are you to apply again?) to next year's application survey.
- Action: Jack to draft a definition of 'significant' decision.
- Action: Bruce to collate attendances over the past year.
- Decision: There will be both a chair and a vice-chair (alternatively two co-chairs).
- Decision: The chair and vice/co-chair will create agendas for each meeting.
- Action: Bruce and Jack to draft SG's terms of reference by the end of May. This is to be a non-bureaucratic, enabling document.
- Action: Naomi to supply CGF documentation that is relevant to governance to Bruce
- Decision: The terms of references are to be reviewed yearly.
- Action: Susan to ask Debbie (and her contact) about advice on the current application form and completion thereof.
- Action: Tremaine to collate when applications are submitted, especially how many are last minute. This will include the last-minute applicants that won funding.
- Action: SG to create a sub-group to work on the 2026-27 application form.
- Action: SG (or the subgroup) to ensure that applicants cannot state incompatible things (e.g. 'we apply for the boost vote' and 'our project is open to all regardless of their ethnicities')
- Action: SG (or a subgroup) to make the application form clear about formal and informal partnerships.
- Action: Bruce and Jack to include appropriate wording in the draft terms of reference.
- Decision: The application form will state that those the previous year's winners may not apply again unless/until they have submitted a report on the previous year's project. SG will have discretion over this, e.g. it may allow non-reporting winners to apply in extreme circumstances (e.g. the staff who ran last year's project are unavailable to write the report.)
- Decision: The form will state that applicants must provide weblinks as proper URLs, Action: SG (or a subgroup) to discuss this, and whether themes are needed at all, in the future.
- Action: SG (or a subgroup) to discuss weighting instead of a boost vote.
- Decision: Facebook advertising will not be used to seek applications
- Decision: In text, we will always use LeithChooses However the graphic with £ instead of L will continue to be used.
- Action: Naomi/Tremaine to purchase two new pull-up banners, with blank space for future years' details.
- Action: SG to create a written brief for photographers, including curation (e.g. selecting the best ones).
- Action: Jack to look into which photos from this year could be reused.
- Action: Rachel to engage with the Leith network and hence advertise LC to under-represented groups.
- Action: SG (or a subgroup) to discuss use of different coloured card for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, boost votes.
- Action: SG to create leaflets and/or posters including recaps and maps of the voting venue.
- Action: SG to consider creating water stations for the voting day.
- Action: SG to include written health and safety information in the briefing for applicants, and put a printed copy on each table.
- Action: SG (or subgroup) to create a contingency plan, and set a date for deciding if it needs to be activated.
- Action: Lisa to keep SG informed about the Kirkgate and its life.
- Decision: There will not be two instances per year.
- Decision: each project's voting cards will have a different number.
- Decision: The awards event could include mention of past winners, but **must not advertise current applicants**.
- Action: Abby to attend a forthcoming meeting of New Town & Broughton community council. Bruce and Jack to help facilitate this.
- Action: SG to consider Involving/engagement with under-represented groups in the separate discussion of the boost vote.

Additional documents and distribution

- This meeting discussed the following documents, which are provided in appendices:
 - *Boost vote* (Rachel's document), and *Sally's response*
 - *LC2025-26 feedback summary*
 - *LC2025-26 voting day feedback*
 - *LC2026-27 discussion points and ideas*
- These notes, once agreed, and relevant documents, including the audio-recording of the meeting, will be shared with Zhuoyo to help her research **only if all who were present agree**.
- These notes, once agreed, will be shared with G Severin, along with the *LC2025-26 feedback summary*.

1 Evaluation summary

See also data in *LC2025-26 feedback summary*.

1.1 Voter survey

There were only 28 responses to the survey, because it could only be sent to those who gave us email addresses. Hence the data is not robust.

- How did you hear about LeithChooses?
 - Highest responses were 'flyer/poster in Leith', 'lamppost wraps in Leith', 'word of mouth', 'I knew one of the applying organisations'. Big banners outside libraries were not effective. Also, these banners are getting old. Shops may have room for small flyers/posters.
 - Implication: LC should do more flyers/leaflets/mini-posters and fewer big posters.
- In-person voting
 - It is encouraging that 5 of the 6 in-person voters were first-time voters. This question should be asked in future years.
- Voting day
 - The responses were overall positive but there was one disagreement with 'the in-person voting day decision-making process feels equitable and fair'. This may be explained by some of the free-text comments.
 - Bruce-thought: no decisions are made solely from the in-person day, so this question could have been better worded.
- Online voting
 - Almost all respondents voted online. There was a nearly 50:50 split between first-time and not-first-time voters.
- Online voting process
 - A small but noticeable number of responses were not happy with some parts of the process. This may be due to the possibility of voting both online and in-person for those who are both digitally able and could attend the voting day.
 - There were fewer voters overall this year than last year. SG could investigate year-on-year retention of voters.
- Statements about the community grants fund (including LC)
 - Although most responses were positive, the largest amount of negative responses suggests that LC needs better promotion.
 - Action: Tremaine to compare LC's results with responses from community grants fund areas that do not have PB.
- Statements about LC
 - Although most responses were positive, the largest amount of negative responses implied that LC is not as fair and inclusive, creative and flexible, and transparent as it could be. Also voting in LC does not give some respondents more control over the issues affecting them.
- Qualitative feedback
 - While most feedback was positive, including three 'thank you's and requests for PB in other CGF areas, there were concerns that LC's online voting system is too complicated or less accessible than it should be. It may be that the information is too dense (so videos about the projects might help), and that user journeys (from logging in to actually casting votes) are too long. There are also concerns about some organisations automatically having larger voters-bases. However, LC cannot gate-keep, just facilitate.
 - There were also concerns about the transparency of the results. Hence in future LC will publish ranked lists of winners but not lists of non-winners (even though it is possible to work out who these are from the project gallery). LC will not publish numbers of votes, to avoid those that come near the bottom suffering reputational harm.
 - There was also concern within the steering group about whether funding meets needs, whether LC is a popularity contest, and whether it reaches under-represented groups. To tackle this, LC themes could be narrowed or targeted, e.g. 'this year's projects must aim to support a specific demographic or need, e.g. supporting climate/biodiversity'. Hence meeting, popularity and theme-setting need further discussions.
 - A suggestion to distribute funding proportionately, so each applicant gets some funding, was rejected.

1.2 Applicant survey

There were only 11 responses to the survey, so the data is less robust than would be desired.

- Success in application
 - 36% yes, 64% no
 - Bruce-comment: how is success defined here?
- How did you hear about LeithChooses?
 - The vast majority had applied before. A noticeable number heard via word of mouth.
- Statements about the community grants fund (including LC)
 - While most responses were positive, negative responses were about LC's lack of suitability for small-scale local projects, not being a good place to start for new local groups, and that applying to LC does not boost confidence about applying to other sources.
- Action: CEC officers to add 'how likely are you to apply again?) to next year's application survey.

- Statements about LC applications
 - While most responses were positive, some respondents were concerned that the online voting decision-making process did not feel equitable and fair.
 - Bruce-thought: no decisions are made solely from the online voting, so this question could have been better worded.
 - In summary, there are concerns that LC is a popularity contest (see also 'Qualitative feedback [point 3] above), so it is harder for smaller groups, new organisations and those applying for smaller amounts. It also may help to explain LC processes better to organisations.
- Statements about LC

While most responses were positive, some respondents were concerned that the fund is not fair and inclusive. Some respondents did not agree that community input into budgeting should be standard practice.
- Qualitative feedback

There appears to be concern that LC is too complex, especially for smaller requests, and that LC favours organisations with larger supporter bases. However this feedback from applicants was generally very positive.

1.3 [LC steering group survey](#)

This feedback did not have a devoted discussion, but the need for better induction of new members was strongly stated later.

2 Summary of feedback from voting day

See data in *LC2025-26 voting day feedback*. Summaries of each theme are reproduced here. Suggestions and actions from it have been recorded in other sections.

- Overall positive feedback and community impact

The event is highly valued, creates strong community connection, and the participatory voting model is widely supported.
- Accessibility (key concern)

Accessibility (mobility, space, and ease of engagement) is a major priority for improvement.
- Layout, space and environment

Layout is improving but space pressure and clearer organisation would enhance the experience.
- Noise and sensory environment

Better sound management and clearer announcements would improve comfort and accessibility.
- Information and clarity for voters

Stronger visual communication and thematic structure would help voters navigate and make decisions.
- Promotion and outreach

Opportunity to grow audience through stronger promotion and frequency.
- Facilities and practical improvements

See *LC2025-26 voting day feedback*.
- Programme and atmosphere ideas

See *LC2025-26 voting day feedback*.
- Funding model suggestions (minor theme)

See *LC2025-26 voting day feedback*.

3 Governance

- To reduce the amount of emailing etc, LC steering group should create groups to discuss various matters and provide recommendations to the whole SG.
- However, to achieve consensus and use the knowledge of the whole SG, the quorum for 'significant' decisions should be the whole SG, currently Abby, Bruce, Don, Donna, Jack, Jason, Lisa, Rachel, Sally, Susan, i.e. 10 people plus (possibly) CEC officers.
 - This might risk topics being discussed several times because not everyone can attend every meeting. To overcome this, votes could be made by email or similar, or by proxy (i.e. member 1 asks member 2 to cast his vote as well as her own).
 - Action: Jack to draft a definition of 'significant' decision, perhaps 'where the decision impacts the process/eligibility'.
- Timing of meetings may impact attendance.

Action: Bruce to collate attendances over the past year.
- There will be both a chair (currently Susan) and a vice-chair (alternatively two co-chairs) to ensure there is a chair available as much as possible. This might necessitate office-bearer elections. The chair(s) wouldn't necessarily need to chair meetings.
- There should be a schedule of meetings, with known breaks, e.g. periods when there is likely to be no business.

The chairs will create agendas for each meeting.
- Action: Bruce and Jack to draft SG's terms of reference by the end of May, including draft definition of 'significant' decisions.
 - This is to be a non-bureaucratic, enabling document, enabling/celebrating the SG's previous 'looseness' (e.g. 'the SG may do things that support PB in the LC area' rather than 'person in role X must not do thing Y, SG must do thing Z'). The document will support induction of new members.
 - Action: Naomi to supply relevant CGF documentation to Bruce.
 - The terms of references are to be reviewed yearly. (Bruce suggests this is done soon after the awards.)

4 Application process

- The steering group could offer applicants contact with someone who is expert at completing forms and winning funding.
 - The CEC officers have experienced applicants rejigging applications after submission, necessitating (for example) rechecking eligibility. So it would be helpful if advice sessions happened before the close of the application window.
 - Action: Susan to ask Debbie (and her contact) about advice on the current application form and completion thereof.
- The CEC officers reported that there were issues processing many late-arriving applications. They need about 4 weeks to be sure of processing everything.
 - It was suggested (but not agreed) that the SG should not extend application windows, and should state publicly in the 2026-27 round that no extensions will be made in subsequent years. However, the SG may have non-public internal discretion, but needs to respect the CEC officers' needs. Hence the whole timetable needs review.
 - Action: Tremaine to collate when applications are submitted, especially how many are last minute.
 - This will include the last-minute applicants that won funding.

5 Form and content for applicants

- Action: SG to create a sub-group to work on the 2026-27 application form.
 - Action: this subgroup to ensure that applicants cannot state incompatible things (e.g. 'our project would support a specific group' and 'our project would support anyone')
- Action: SG (or the subgroup) to make the application form clear about formal and informal partnerships.
 - Action: Bruce and Jack to include appropriate wording in the draft terms of reference.
- The form should suggest a structure for project texts that would help voters, but not prevent individuality in these texts.
- The form will state that those the previous year's winners may not apply again unless/until they have submitted a suitable report on the previous year's project.
 - SG will have discretion over this, for example it may allow non-reporting winners to apply in extreme circumstances (e.g. the staff who ran last year's project are unavailable to write the report).
- The form will state that applicants must provide weblinks (e.g. of their websites and social media) as proper URLs, i.e. <http://domain.XYZ> or <https://domain.XYZ>. This is to save LC's gallery-editors' time looking up online presences and prevent potential mistakes.

6 Eligibility

- There was concern about environmentally unfriendly projects. However, one of the CGF targets is 'show how the project will contribute to net zero'
- There was concern about how to define and monitor 'new' projects, after an applicant had proposed to repeat its funded 2024-25 project in 2025-26.
- It was suggested that winners automatically may not apply the following year.
- Themes – see 'qualitative feedback' (point 3) above about potentially narrowing themes.
 - Action: SG (or a subgroup) to discuss this, and whether themes are needed at all, in the future.
- Action: SG (or a subgroup) to discuss weighting instead of/as well as a boost vote.
 - This would cover new groups and who is actually disadvantaged.

7 Promotion

- CEC comms team may be able to help in future years, e.g. with digital comms. This shouldn't cover 'cutting edge' channels but concentrate on those which majorities of and applicants voters actually use.
 - The CEC comms team has video from this year's voting day, and is working with it.
- A spate of applications may have been caused by Facebook advertising mentioning the application window. Hence Facebook advertising will not be used to seek applications but may be used to advertise voting.
- In text, we will always use LeithChooses (not £eithChooses, Leith Chooses etc). However the graphic with £ instead of L will continue to be used.
- See 'qualitative feedback' (point 2) above about listing of winners in any outputs, including promotions.
- Action: Naomi/Tremaine to purchase two new pull-up banners using the 2026-27 budget. These will have blank space for future years' details.
- Action: SG to create a written brief for photographers, including curation, e.g. selecting the best ones, photo-editing.
 - Action: Jack to look into which photos from this year could be reused.
- There could be 'megaphone' promotion on the day, but if this is done, the SG must be careful how this is done.
- Action: Rachel to engage with the Leith network and hence advertise LC to under-represented groups.

8 Voting day

- The printed in-person votes could be different colours, i.e. colour 1 for first main votes, colour 2 for second main votes, colour 3 for third main vote, colour 4 for boost votes.
 - Action: SG (or a subgroup) to discuss this in the future.
 - There could be different coloured tablecloths to categorise projects, to help voters who wish to vote for certain types of project.
- The map of the venue could be better.
 - Action: SG to create leaflets and/or posters including recaps and maps of the voting venue, i.e. the function of each room).
- Action: SG to consider creating water stations.
- It was suggested that the applicants Briefing would state 'be there from time X', tacitly implying that they could set up their stall then leave.
- Action: SG to include written health and safety information in the briefing, and put a printed copy on each table.
- See 'Promotion' (point 6) about photography.
- There was discussion of what to do if the lift is broken on future voting days.
 - Action: SG (or subgroup) to create a contingency plan, and set a date for deciding if it needs to be activated.
 - Action: Lisa to keep SG informed about the Kirkgate and its life.
- The quiet room could be better used, and there could be better banners.
- There will not be two instances per year.
- To enable ballot-box staff to easily check that people are voting for different projects, and to make counting of votes easier, each project's voting cards will have a different number, i.e. '1 <name of this project>', '2 <name of that project>', '3 <name of the next project>'.

9 Awards event

- There was discussion of the venue and format (e.g. length and number of presentations), of potential 'celebrity' MCs/award-presenters, and whether awards events are even needed.
- The event could include mention (and photos, video) of past winners, but must not advertise current applicants.
 - This would automatically happen if winners are not eligible the following year.

10 Involving Broughton and Bellevue

- Action: Abby to attend a forthcoming meeting of New Town & Broughton community council.
 - Action: Bruce and Jack to help facilitate this.

11 Involving/engagement with under-represented groups

- There is concern that many groups are not represented in LC, and how to react to this. For example, could there be themes around protected characteristics or less popular charities.
- SG's previous experience is that translating written LC materials into other languages doesn't work. Videos in English and other languages may work better.
- SG should talk with supporters, and create a register/mailling-list of groups, including unrepresented groups.
- See also final action under 'promotion' above.
- It may help to have voting-day observers, if there is space, who can comment as externals and/or members of minorities.
 - Zhuoyo may be able to do this.
- Action: SG to consider such topics in the separate discussion of the boost vote.

12 Topics for future focussed discussions and sub-groups

These may well best be done initially in subgroups, as suggested at item 3 (point 1). They are in no particular order.

- Application form
- Themes: perhaps narrow them to reflect needs, so that LC is less of a popularity contest, to reduce impact of groups with larger supporter bases
- Boost vote, weighting of votes, widening reach to under-represented groups etc. (See also *Boost vote*, written by Rachel, and Sally's response.)
- Colouring of printed in-person votes
- Contingency plan, e.g. if lift is not working
- Induction for new SG members
- SG becoming constituted
- Frequency of meetings and agenda (but see 'governance' [point 5] above)
- Larger v. smaller groups/applicants to make LC more fair

Appendices

1 Boost vote, written by Rachel

I am writing this as a relatively new member of the group, and as one of a small number of people of colour in the room, because the question of the boost vote keeps returning and, each time, it tends to settle into an assumption that it creates an unfair advantage. I want to stay close to the evidence we have in front of us and work through that assumption carefully rather than rhetorically.

To begin with, it is worth restating what the boost vote actually is, because much of the concern seems to rest on a misunderstanding of its function. The boost vote exists to address historic under-representation of minority ethnic communities in participatory budgeting. It allows each voter, in addition to their three standard votes, to cast one optional vote for a project that meets clearly defined minority ethnic criteria. It does not replace the main vote, it does not ringfence funding, and it does not allow a project to succeed without wider public support. It is, in design, a limited corrective within an otherwise unchanged voting system.

The eligibility criteria are also far tighter than is sometimes assumed in discussion. A project must be demonstrably designed for, led by, or primarily benefiting minority ethnic communities in a structured and evidenced way. This is not about general inclusivity or having diverse participation; it requires majority minority ethnic governance or staffing, at least 50% minority ethnic beneficiaries, and clear evidence of outreach, language access, and sustained engagement. Projects that are simply open to all, or that include minority ethnic participants without targeted work, are explicitly not eligible. In other words, eligibility itself sets a high bar that many organisations do not meet.

If we then look at the most recent LeithChooses outcomes, the idea of an 'advantage' becomes harder to sustain. The current list of funded organisations includes Milan Senior Welfare Organisation, Dr Bell's Family Centre, Living Memory Association, Leith Community Growers, Water of Leith Conservation Trust, Edinburgh Community Food, Edinburgh & Lothians Regional Equality Council, Pilmeny Development Project, Mustard Seed Edinburgh, and Kin Collective Family Wellbeing.

What is immediately visible is that the majority of these are mainstream, long-established organisations with broad community reach. Dr Bell's, Pilmeny, Edinburgh Community Food, and Leith Community Growers are not reliant on boost eligibility and have consistently performed strongly across multiple years. Their success reflects deep networks, high visibility, and sustained engagement with large sections of the local population. That pattern repeats across previous years: organisations with established infrastructure and recognition continue to secure high levels of support.

Alongside them, there are one or two organisations that are clearly eligible for the boost vote, such as Edinburgh & Lothians Regional Equality Council and Milan Senior Welfare Organisation. Their presence in the results demonstrates that minority ethnic-focused work can achieve funding, but it does not demonstrate dominance. They are a minority within the funded group, not a majority, and their outcomes sit within a wider field where mainstream organisations continue to perform very strongly.

If the boost vote were creating an unfair advantage, we would expect to see a very different pattern. We would expect minority ethnic organisations to dominate the funded list, to consistently outperform others, and to displace long-standing community services. That is not what the data shows. Instead, what we see is that success continues to be driven primarily by community reach, organisational capacity, and the ability to mobilise voters. Boost-eligible organisations appear in the results, but they do not overwhelm them, and their outcomes vary significantly year to year.

It is also important to situate this within the population reality of the LeithChooses area. The area is not homogeneous. Around half of residents identify as White Scottish, but a substantial proportion are either White non-Scottish (including EU and other international residents) or from ethnic minority backgrounds, making up roughly 15% of the population. There is also high population turnover, a large number of migrants, and varying levels of access to English language and established civic networks. These factors do not create a level playing field for participation. They create structural differences in who hears about the vote, who feels confident taking part, and who is already connected to organisations that can mobilise support.

In that context, the boost vote does not introduce inequality into the system; it responds to inequality that already exists. Without any corrective mechanism, it is reasonable to expect that funding would skew even more strongly towards organisations with long-standing networks, established reputations, and easier access to the majority of voters. The boost vote adds a small amount of weighting in a very specific circumstance, but it still relies on voters choosing to use it, and it still sits within a system where three out of four votes remain unchanged.

Where I think there is a more productive area of concern is not the existence of the boost vote, but the clarity and consistency of how it is applied. There does appear to be uncertainty, both among applicants and within the steering group, about what qualifies. That uncertainty can undermine confidence in the process and, in turn, fuel perceptions of unfairness.

For that reason, tightening the eligibility framework would be a constructive step. Raising the threshold so that, for example, 75% of board members, staff, or volunteers are from minority ethnic communities (with each category assessed individually rather than combined), alongside a requirement that 75% of beneficiaries are minority ethnic and that services are actively delivered in relevant languages, would sharpen the definition of what constitutes a genuinely minority ethnic-led or focused organisation. Requiring clear evidence at application stage—such as board composition, staff and volunteer breakdowns, translated materials, and beneficiary data—would place responsibility on the applicant to demonstrate eligibility rather than on the steering group to interpret it.

This would do two things at once. It would protect the integrity of the boost vote by ensuring that only organisations with a clear and evidenced focus qualify, and it would reduce the administrative burden and ambiguity for the committee. It would also address a legitimate concern that organisations with partial or incidental diversity might otherwise be perceived as qualifying without truly meeting the intent of the criteria.

In conclusion, the claim that the boost vote creates an unfair advantage is not supported by the evidence of outcomes. Mainstream organisations continue to dominate funding results, and boost-eligible organisations form a small and variable proportion of winners. The boost vote functions as a limited corrective within a system shaped by unequal participation, not as a mechanism that overrides it. The more pressing issue is ensuring that eligibility is clearly defined, consistently applied, and transparently evidenced so that confidence in the system is maintained across all parts of the community.

Additional information:

- High-performing repeated winners include:
 - Dr Bell's Family Centre (7/7 votes – 100%)
 - Citadel Youth Centre (6/6 – 100%)
 - Edinburgh Community Food (4/4 – 100%)
 - Edinburgh Remakery (5/5 – 100%)
 - YMCA (60%+ across cycles)
 - Leith Community Growers (100%)

These are not ethnic-specific organisations, yet they are consistently among the strongest performers.

- Ethnic-specific organisations:
 - AUGB – 100% 3
 - Nepal Scotland Association – 100% (small base) 2
 - Sikh Sanjog – 100% 3
 - ELREC – 83%
 - Building Bridges – 50% 4/2
 - Feniks – 50% 2/1

2 Response from Sally

I welcome Rachel's analysis and agree totally that the Boost Vote needs careful review.

I agree with Bruce that we should defer in-depth discussion about the Boost Vote until a later date, as today's agenda is very long and because the Boost Vote is so important. (And especially if Bruce can't be here).

But I need to set the record straight before any of this is broached. Rachel, you are new to the group so you could not know this, but the Boost Vote is entirely OUR idea and our creation (from a time when only myself, Don and Susan from the current group were on the then Steering Group, in 2018). It was a completely innovative step and we had to argue for it to convince others. We have always championed it and continue to do so, passionately. It is simply not true that 'it tends to settle into an assumption that it creates an unfair advantage', so I'm very distressed if you have received that impression. However I do know that we often carelessly talk in a sort of 'shorthand' and assume that 'everyone' understands it, so I apologise if that has happened in this case and given you the idea that the Boost Vote is viewed negatively – it is not!

What we do do – and we must do – is continuously review our PB process, which includes details of the voting process. This is more complicated than sometimes appears, especially as regards the fairness of 'weighting' votes. It is a particularly important discussion at the moment as the folk in charge of the TVL PB process are considering weighting and have less experience than we do on the matter, so we have a responsibility to be totally on top of it as regards our own position.

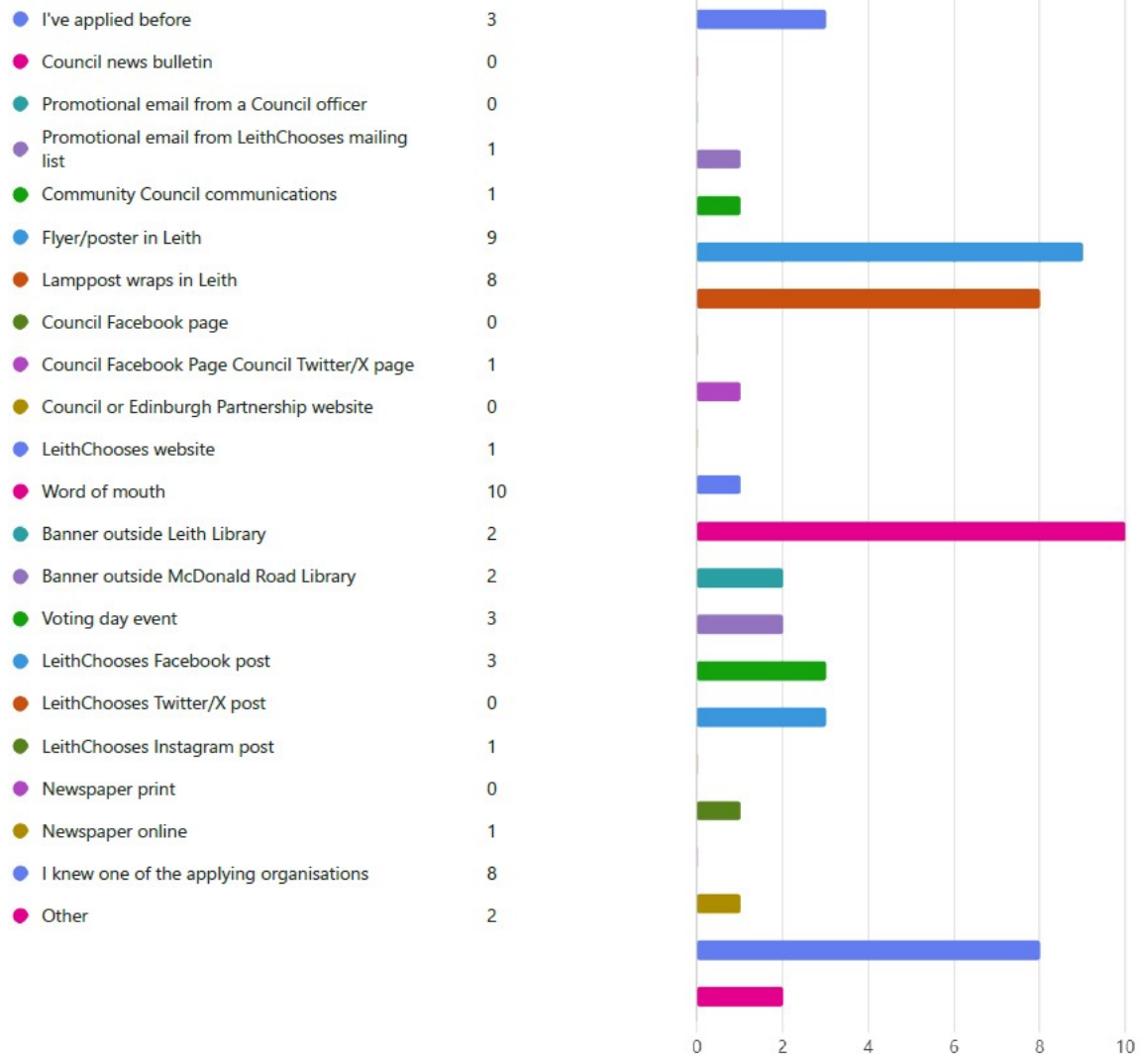
Looking forward to that discussion.

3 LC2025-26 feedback summary

LeithChooses voter survey

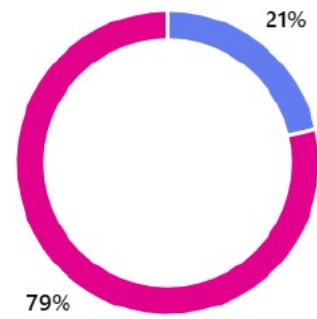
28 Responses received from LeithChooses voters.

- Quantitative feedback summary
 - How did you hear about LeithChooses (community grants fund)?



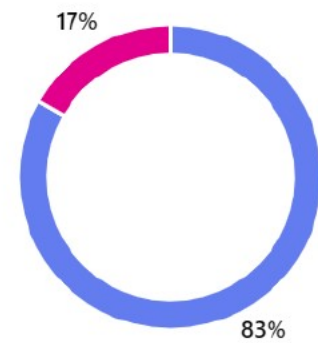
- Did you vote in person?

● Yes 6
● No 22



- Was this the first time you voted in person?

● Yes 5
● No 1



- Thinking about the voting day, please tell us to what extent you agree with the following statements:

● Strongly agree ● Agree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Disagree ● Strong disagree

The in-person voting process is accessible and easy to understand

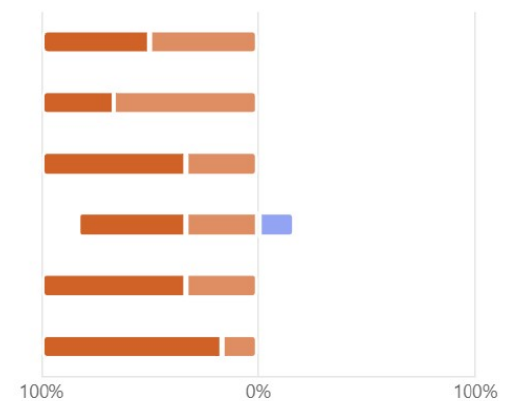
I was able to find all the information I needed about the applicants

I was able to find all the information I needed about how to vote

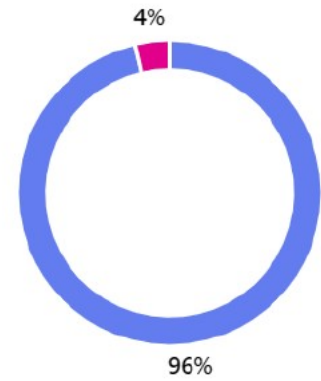
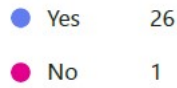
The in-person voting day decision-making process feels equitable and fair

The in-person event was engaging and fun

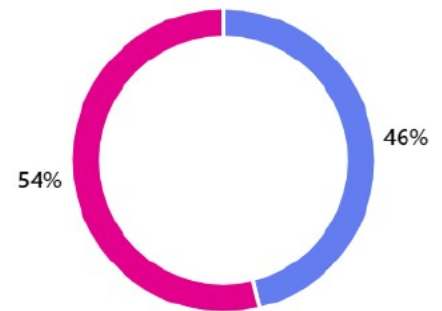
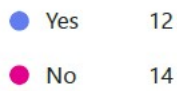
I have an increased knowledge about the issues affecting groups and individuals in their own communities and other communities



- Did you vote online?



- Was this the first time you voted online?



- Thinking about the online voting process, please tell us to what extent you agree with the following statements:

● Strongly agree
 ● Agree
 ● Neither agree nor disagree
 ● Disagree
 ● Strongly disagree

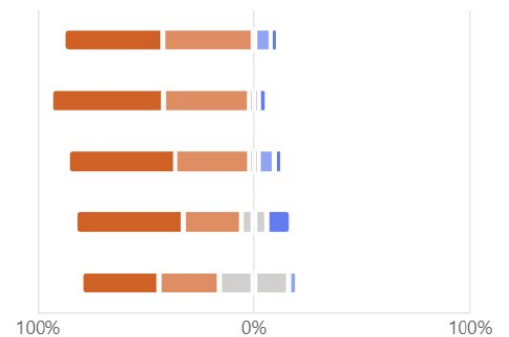
The online voting process is accessible easy to understand

I was able to find all the information I needed about the applicants

I was able to find all the information I needed about how to vote

The online voting day decision-making process feels equitable and fair

I have an increased knowledge about the issues affecting groups and individuals in their own communities and other communities



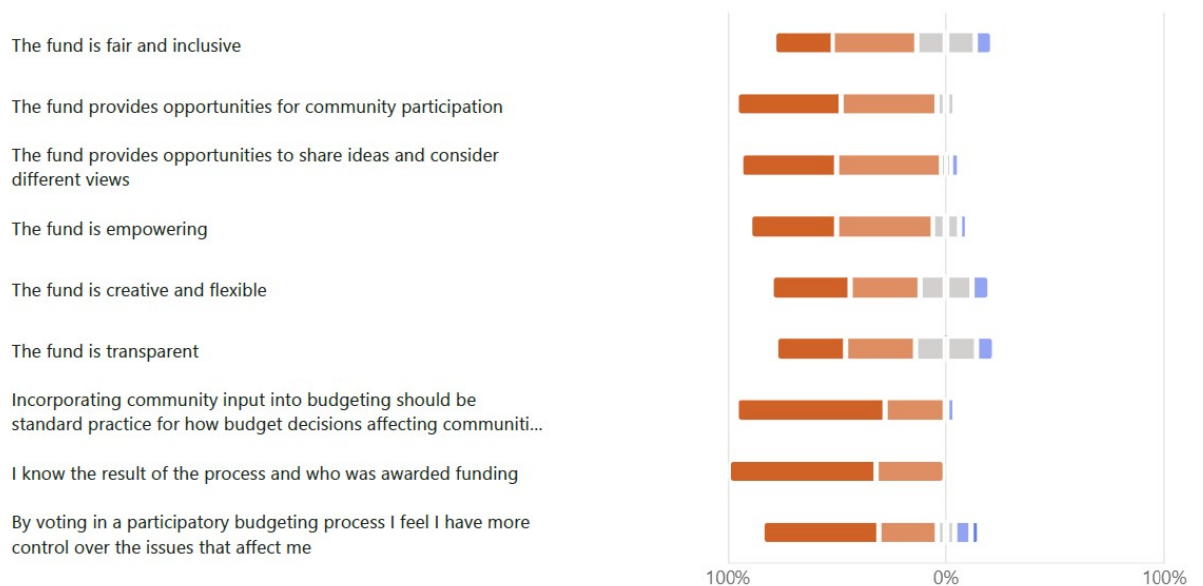
- Based on your experience this year, please tell us to what extent you agree with the following statements:

● Strongly Agree ● Agree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Disagree ● Strongly Disagree



- Thinking about your experience with LeithChooses, to what extent do you agree with the following statements:

● Strongly agree ● Agree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Disagree ● Strongly disagree



- Qualitative feedback summary

Primary Theme	Secondary Theme	Count
Community benefit	Positive community impact	10
Community benefit	Community cohesion	5
Community benefit	Increases awareness of local groups/projects	4
Community benefit	More funding needed	4
Community benefit	Benefits local groups/projects	3
Community benefit	Community voice is empowering	3
Community benefit	Thank you	3
Community benefit	Strengthens trust	1
Community benefit	Short term funding isn't sustainable	1
Outcome	Increase transparency (ranking/number of votes)	4
Outcome	Wide range of projects	1
Outcome	Favours projects with larger funding requests	1
Outcome	Reflects local need	1
Outcome	Demographic of voters influences the outcome too much	1
Outcome	Favours organisations with larger supporter base	1
Voting	No improvements needed	4
Voting	Use approach in other neighbourhoods	3
Voting	Too much to read	3
Voting	Fewer click-throughs to vote	2
Voting	Online voting too complicated	1
Voting	Short videos instead of text	1
Voting	Use standard structure for project info	1
Voting	Boost vote works well	1
Voting	Unclear who can vote	1
Voting	Not enough people know about it	1

'Just a big Thank you for this amazing work :)'

'Invaluable, clearly helps to boost meaningful groups improving wellbeing and community cohesion for many.'

'I think LeithChooses is a really important tool to increase awareness of all different community projects happening in Leith and allocate funds.'

'I think it would be helpful if people could see the ranking of the projects they voted for even if the project didn't win.'

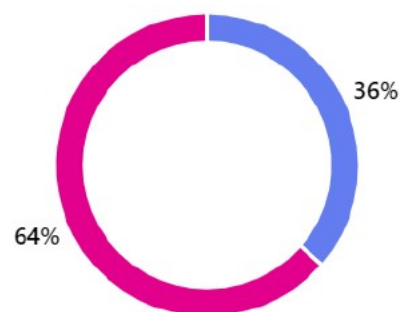
'Very much appreciated the opportunity to participate in matters that mean most to me and my family in the community.'

LeithChooses Applicant Survey

11 Responses received from applicants

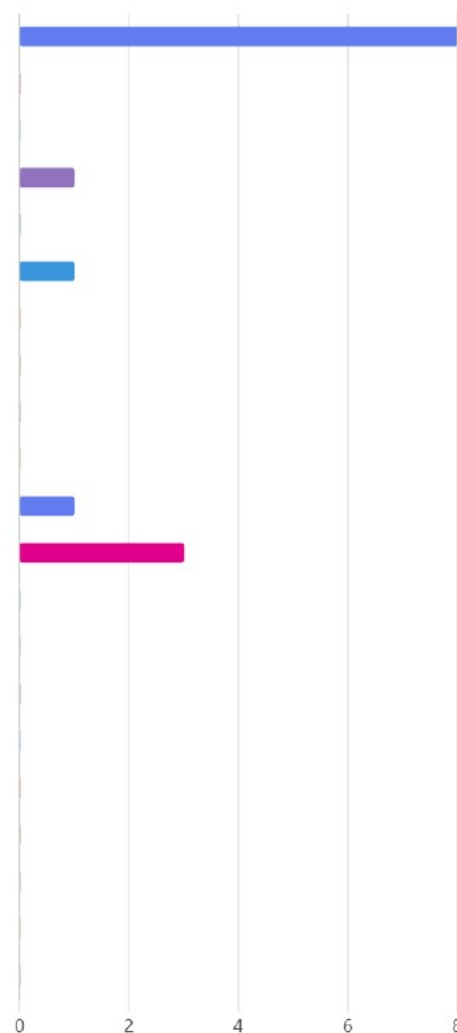
- Quantitative feedback summary
 - Were you successful in your LeithChooses application?

Successful	4
Unsuccessful	7
I don't know	0



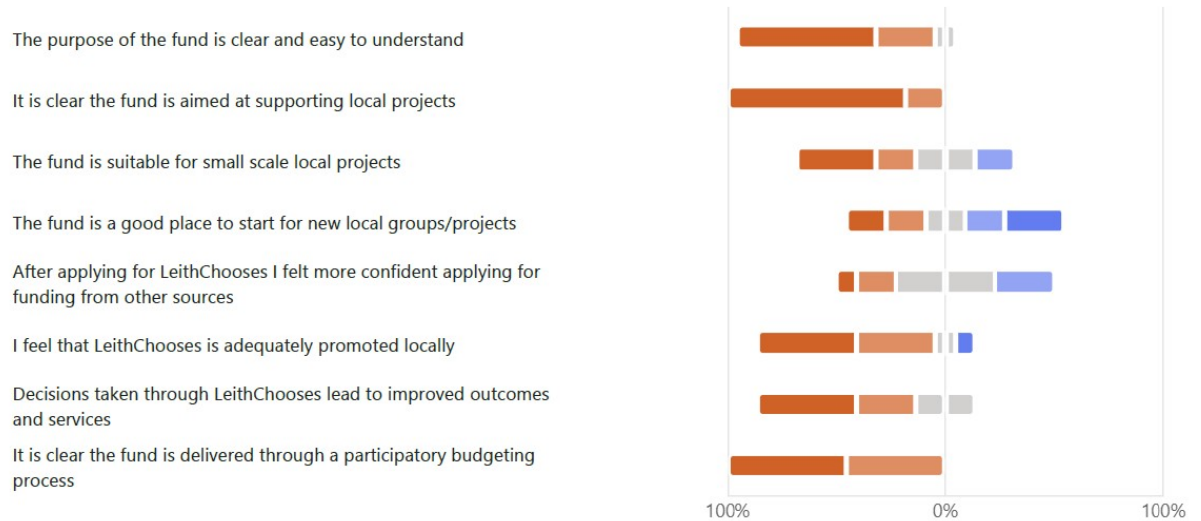
- How did you hear about LeithChooses (community grants fund)?

I've applied before	8
Council news bulletin	0
Promotional email from a Council officer	0
Promotional email from LeithChooses mailing list	1
Community Council communications	0
Flyer/poster in Leith	1
Lampost wraps in Leith	0
Council Facebook page	0
Council Facebook Page Council Twitter/X page	0
Council or Edinburgh Partnership website	0
LeithChooses website	1
Word of mouth	3
Banner outside Leith Library	0
Banner outside McDonald Road Library	0
Voting day event	0
LeithChooses Facebook post	0
LeithChooses Twitter/X post	0
LeithChooses Instagram post	0
Newspaper print	0
Newspaper online	0
Other	0



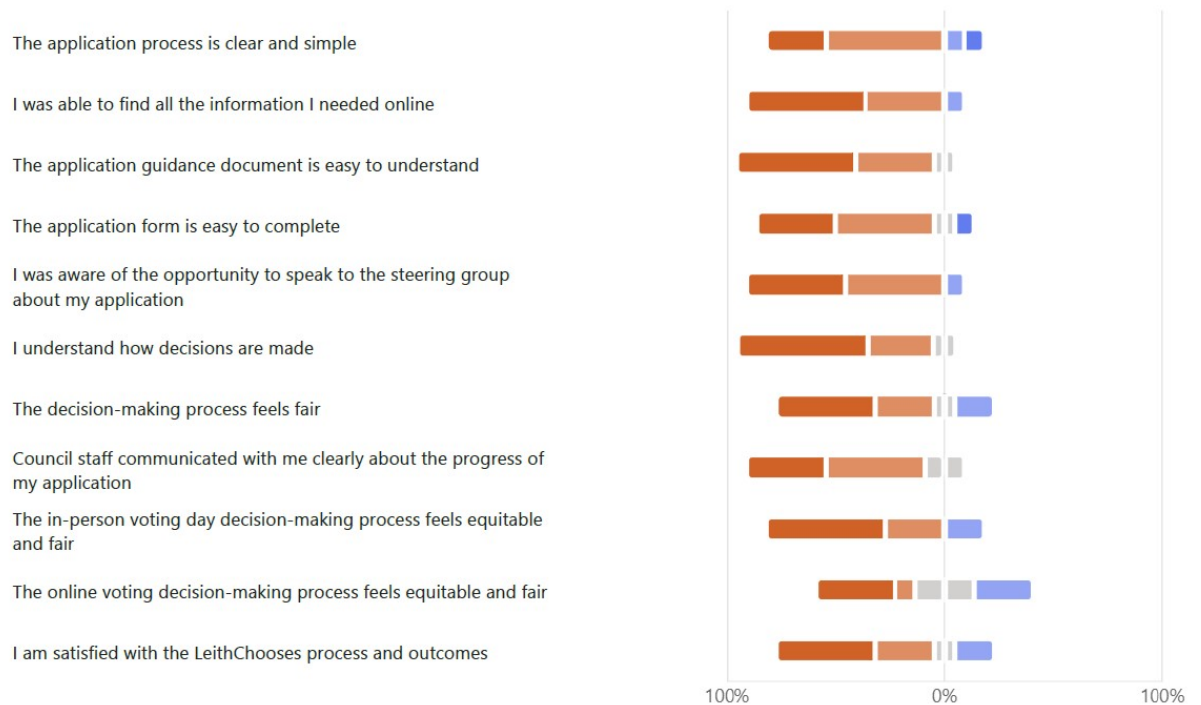
- Please tell us to what extent you agree with the following statements.

● Strongly Agree ● Agree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Disagree ● Strongly Disagree



- Thinking about your LeithChooses application, please tell us to what extent you agree with the following statements.

● Strongly Agree ● Agree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Disagree ● Strongly disagree



- Thinking about your experience with LeithChooses, please tell us to what extent you agree with the following statements.

● Strongly agree
 ● Agree
 ● Neither agree nor disagree
 ● Disagree
 ● Strongly disagree

The fund is fair and inclusive

The fund provides opportunities for community participation

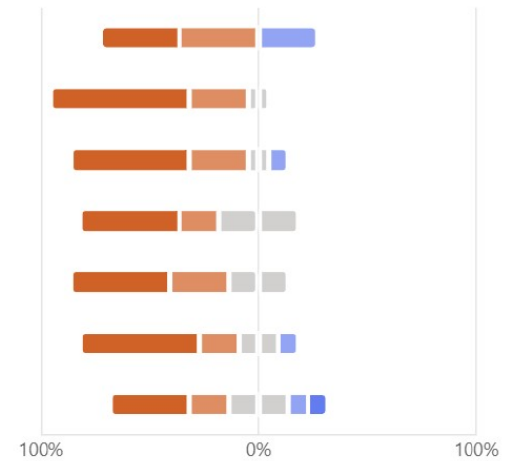
The fund provides opportunities to share ideas and consider different views

The fund is empowering

The fund is creative and flexible

The fund is transparent

Incorporating community input into budgeting should be standard practice for how budget decisions affecting communiti...



- Qualitative feedback summary

Primary Theme	Secondary Theme	Count
Applicant benefit	Necessary external funding	2
Applicant benefit	Raises the profile of projects	2
Applicant benefit	Networking opportunity	1
Application process	Disproportionate application	1
Application process	More info about voting day upfront	1
Application process	Straightforward application process	1
Application process	Connect similar projects -encourage partnership working	1
Application process	Clearer guidance needed on what can be funded	1
Community benefit	Supports small local groups	4
Community benefit	Reflects local need	3
Community benefit	Positive community impact	3
Community benefit	Strong community voice	2
Community benefit	Community cohesion	1
Community benefit	Strengthens trust	1
Decision-making	Favours organisations with large supporter base	7
Decision-making	Voting system open to misuse	2
Decision-making	Voting day is too resource-intensive	2
Decision-making	Voting system unclear	1
Decision-making	Voting day well-organised	1
Decision-making	Need more paper-based voting options	1
Decision-making	Favours larger funding bids	1
Decision-making	Introduce microgrants	1
Decision-making	Limit online voting to a day	1
Decision-making	Boost vote gives unfair advantage	1
Funding conditions	Needs to support staff costs	1
Promotion	Targets small groups well	1
Promotion	Increase local promotion to encourage voting	1
Promotion	Promote community decision-making more widely	1

'I feel that the smaller organisations are at a disadvantage if they cannot attract the needed votes. Some organisations do not have the resources to devote time to the process and yet the work they are planning is equally as valid and beneficial'

'LeithChooses provides valuable support for small-scale, community-led activity by giving local people a direct say in how funding is allocated. This approach empowers grassroots organisations and ensures projects reflect genuine local need. For smaller organisations like ours, this funding makes a real difference. It enables us to deliver culturally appropriate support to communities who may otherwise face barriers accessing services. Overall, LeithChooses plays an important role in strengthening organisations and benefiting the wider community.'

'I feel the online voting system is open to misuse and it should be tallied up from votes on the day and perhaps 1 day of online voting. I think it can be quite demoralising for small scale projects who put a lot of time and effort into the event but maybe don't have a strong network of people who will vote online'

3 Responses received from steering group members.

Key points raised

- What works well
 - We listen to applicant feedback
 - Continuous self-reflection
 - Ongoing improvement of the process
 - The purpose of LeithChooses is clear
 - LeithChooses is adequately promoted
 - We understand our role on the steering group
 - Every member of the group has an opportunity to express their views/ideas
 - CEC staff provide appropriate support
 - Online and in-person voting processes feel fair
 - Everyone in the group works hard
- What can be improved
 - Follow a structured plan each year more closely
 - No meeting without an agreed agenda
 - Fewer longer meetings
 - Proper induction for new members
 - Address the unfair advantage towards bigger/better known groups
 - Create terms of reference/governing document for the group
 - Review the boost vote to avoid inappropriate advantage

4 LC2025-26 voting day feedback

How did we do?

OK	Good	Great!
1	6	57

Key priority themes (based on frequency and strength)

1. Accessibility (venue, lift, crowding)
2. Noise management and clearer announcements
3. More space / larger venue and better stall layout
4. Clearer information about organisations and themes
5. Improved signage and communication for voters

What could have been better

Any ideas for next time

4.1 Overall Positive Feedback & Community Impact

Strongly positive sentiment across many comments

- 'Amazing event', 'Fabulous day', 'Great job', 'Well done everyone'
- Friendly, happy atmosphere
- Great turnout and strong community spirit
- Opportunity to meet organisations and like-minded people
- Valued chance to speak directly to projects and understand where funding goes
- Appreciation for the in-person format
- Voting system clear and easy (3 votes + boost card liked)
- Many valued the large number and variety of organisations

Theme summary

The event is highly valued, creates strong community connection, and the participatory voting model is widely supported.

4.2 Accessibility (key concern)

Physical access issues

- Venue not accessible for some attendees
- Lift was broken despite prior knowledge
- Requests for fully accessible venue
- Some found the space crowded/overwhelming
- Families with children struggled to visit all stalls
- Suggestion for **recap posters** for easier browsing

Theme summary

Accessibility (mobility, space, and ease of engagement) is a major priority for improvement.

4.3 Layout, space and environment

Mixed but improving

- Middle aisle layout praised and seen as an improvement
- Requests for:
 - More space between stalls (felt cramped)
 - Larger venue if possible
 - Clearer organisation/categorisation of stalls (themes or sectors)
 - Filling empty stall spaces if organisations don't attend
 - Cloakroom provision

Theme summary

Layout is improving but space pressure and clearer organisation would enhance the experience.

4.4 Noise and sensory environment

Repeated concern

- Overall noise levels high
- Announcements difficult to hear
- Specific sources mentioned:
 - Drums
 - Smoothie bikes
- Some attendees found the environment overwhelming

Theme summary

Better sound management and clearer announcements would improve comfort and accessibility.

4.5 [Information and clarity for voters](#)

Requests for clearer communication

- Some stalls unclear about what they do
- Make organisational purpose more obvious
- Clearer **annual theme**
- Consider categorising projects (e.g. environmental, wellbeing, youth)
- Recap or summary posters
- Feedback table placement should be more visible (near voting area)

Theme summary

Stronger visual communication and thematic structure would help voters navigate and make decisions.

4.6 [Promotion and outreach](#)

Ideas to increase attendance

- More eye-catching advertising
- Outreach activity on the day (e.g. megaphone promotion around Leith)
- Suggestion to run the event **twice a year**

Theme summary

Opportunity to grow audience through stronger promotion and frequency.

4.7 [Facilities and practical improvements](#)

Suggestions included:

- Water refill station / cold tap water
- Cloakroom
- Bell or stronger reminders to ensure people vote
- Feedback table positioned more prominently

4.8 [Programme and atmosphere ideas](#)

Positive feedback on lively atmosphere, with suggestions:

- Ceilidh (supported)
- Live music (e.g. Turn the Tables)
- Maintain energy and vibrancy

4.9 [Funding model suggestions \(minor theme\)](#)

- Suggestion to distribute funding proportionally so all organisations receive some
- Idea for a dedicated funding category/boost for climate and biodiversity projects

4.10 [Post it notes](#)

- Amazing so many fabulous organisations
- Whole thing a good thing. Less variety. Can't tell what some stalls are
- Great to see the community come out to support this. Leith rules!
- Feedback table should be right above voting table
- Love hustle and bustle but rather crowded and overwhelming for me
- Layout works much better (middle aisle give options for more stalls)
- Cloakroom
- The announcements are difficult to hear/understand
- Make it obvious what you are about
- My mother comes every year but she could not come this year because not accessible
- Great turnout worthwhile project, well done everyone
- A bit noisy but overall lovely , well done everyone
- Really glad it is in person – guidance and how to vote very clear, 3 vote and boost works well. This was a great chance to meet likeminded folk.
- Great job overall great fan of the boost card. Could be twice a year.
- Make the theme more clear to voters.
- Categorize the layout of the organizations (i.e. 'how to vote' flyer or table layout)
- A brilliant idea getting public to vote like this.
- Maybe more catchy ads so more people can come and vote.
- Someone or more people with megaphone walking round Leith centre on voting day to get more along.
- Make annual theme clearer
- Wish I could have voted for everyone.

- Amazing!!! Helping so many local people, thank you !
- We loved everything, great organizing . Thank you.
- So good to see so many stalls. Keep that up. The community needs this profile!
- Really good! Very engaging. I actually came with an idea of the kind of projects I wanted to support – environmental – there may be benefit to helping direct voters to causes but also see the benefit of forcing me to browse.
- Great job.
- Drums too loud 😬
- Smoothie bikes are quite loud, could it be elsewhere?
- This is great, this creates community.
- Project focused – can ask where money goes.
- Fabulous day, thank you.
- You managed to create such a friendly and happy atmosphere – Well done.
- Good to see everyone come together!
- It is good there is lots of sweets!
- Maybe 1 stall did not attend. Is there scope to fill an empty space last minute? The stalls could be spread apart better, I feel they are a little cramped – great communities, great community.
- Thank you, it was great.
- The money should be distributed proportionally (so every org gets some)
- Feeling more energetic – better layout this time with the middle aisle – better vibes, music.
- I second the Ceilidh!
- Get Turn the Tables to do a live set!
- Accessible venue needed.
- I like it and all is very accessible and clear. I am enjoying the event. Thank you.
- Thank you very much. It was amazing and really appreciated. I loved everything.
- Ring a big bell at the to make sure everyone votes!
- Lift access needed – you knew in advance it was broken.
- Great job.
- It is fantastic to see what is happening and to meet people.
- Informative and wholesome.
- Climate change and biodiversity crisis are existential threats – projects that tackle these deserve their own ward-like boost.
- Maybe needs a bigger space?
- Amazing event
- Please provide cold water (from a tap) for refill bottles!
- Yes to refill water place.
- Amazing event.
- Having recap posters for all projects – we struggle to drop by with children.

5 LeithChooses 2026-27 ideas/discussion points

Added as they were thought of:

5.1 Voting day

- Being present for the full voting day may be a large investment of organisations' time/budget. So:
 - Do they need to be there all through the day?
 - Could they set up their stall as an exhibit that doesn't need staff? (Think of the investment in time compared to the %age of votes placed on voting day [15% in total in 2024-25].)
- Think about what to do if the lift might be out of action again.
- Make sure voting cards with applicant names have numbers on them too, so it's easy for the ballot box volunteers to check at a glance voters have 3 different projects.
- Put the evaluation table closer to the ballot boxes.
- Sign in desk volunteers could remind voters about the quiet room option (there was feedback that the sports hall was overwhelming/noisy)
- Could we make tap water available?
- A3 signage – need to discuss which are required
- Better briefing for photographer – and make sure he/she/it/they stick to it

5.2 Awards event

- Recruit celebrity/presenter early and have back up options

5.3 Promotion

- When CEC officers shared the LeithChooses artwork with comms team, they said: 'Industry advice for what works best with online audiences has changed a lot and we now try and avoid this type of campaign artwork. Videos also now perform much better than statics.' Consider capturing some videos during the voting day we can use for 2026/27 promotion. Things move quickly in the digital world, and it's always going to be hard to keep up with new trends or create something that's going to be sustainable/relevant to use for one than one year, but having a bank of videos would be a good option. Officers can coordinate with CEC comms team regarding promotion for 2026/27.
- Don't advertise on Facebook – it may have attracted duff applications
- Purchase new pop up banners and add to budget
- Can we be more consistent with use of LeithChooses, Leith Chooses and Leith Chooses. We are currently using all three versions.
- Requests for more transparency about votes – could we consider revealing voting numbers or ranking the organisations in order of success? What is the reason we do not do this? Platforms like Consul show members of the public exactly the number of votes each applicant received.
- Flyers seem to be a big % of how people heard about LeithChooses. We should put more effort into distributing these in the area. Digital media doesn't seem to be as effective.
- Are there ways we could promote the outcome more – we sent an email to mailing list and all voters but some still felt more promo could have been done.

5.4 Application form / content from applicants

- Form needs to be clearer about formal and informal partnerships, e.g. volunteering Edinburgh citing Leith Links CC.
- Fewer words for project text cos too much verbiage.
- Call the project text bit of the application form 'the shop window'
- State up front that orgs should collect data ab initio to help complete end-of-project reports.
- Issue with form as multiple applications in 25/26 have ticked incompatible things.
- Make it very clear that those not supplying reports may not apply again the following year (or maybe until they have reported?)
- Boost votes: application form needs dedicated question (ie on proportion of service users that are minority ethnic communities)
- Can we ask applicants to enter URLs (with http:// or https://) for the 'background info' pieces. If the applicants only say 'we're on X/Facebook etc', leaving us to find the right links, it's time-consuming and open to error. (We'd still need to check that links work because typos happen but it would be less error-prone.)
- Consider how many applications come in last minute and reevaluate need to extend deadline every year (trust the process)
- Need to consider steering group meetings with applicants after application deadline – these felt rushed and worried that applicants were not getting consistent messaging. CEC officers would prefer these are done before application deadline only.

5.5 Eligibility

- RH: Environmental Concerns: ie funding projects using diesel generators.
- Narrower theme!
- Do we need a theme at all? Does it put people off applying?
- RH: Ask applicants to include a breakdown of costs for example: Salary £? Per hour
- RH: New projects: A project must be new to qualify for funding.
- SM: Boost vote disadvantage might be that things end up too targeted and inadvertently end up exclusionary. Holistic look needed.
 - Consider weighting instead of boost vote?
- Favouring organisations with larger support base is main criticism of process. Possible solutions?

5.6 Governance

- What should the limits on LC facilitating co-ordination between groups be? Presumably, because partnerships are eligible, if they ask for help (e.g. 'who can we partner with?') we can make suggestions. However, we should not volunteer such help or insist on partnerships.
- Also maybe brief how they report – what do they evaluate? What should we evaluate?
- Finish all 'existential' discussions, and decide the process, by the end of August. Then just apply the decide process.
 - Don't introduce changes to tech, process etc between the end of August and the awards date.
- Set aside a complete day for reviewing all applications, so they are done in one go.
- Don't add individual comments to the tracker. Wait until we have formed a group view, and just enter that.
- Governance document should be created detailing roles of council officers and steering group
- Develop engagement plan
- Do the group still want to consider moving to Consul platform? We spend a lot of ££ on the current website
- Does the Teams channel work?
- Recruitment of new volunteers
- Meeting scheduling: would it be more productive to have longer meetings fortnightly rather than weekly.
- Agenda should be clear ahead of each meeting.
- Proper induction for new members.

5.7 Involving Broughton and Bellevue

- Check postcodes of voters from last time
- Review lamppost wraps and ensure sufficient coverage across Bellevue, Broughton, Hillside, Newhaven and think of form of words.
- Review how targeted Facebook ads can target.
- Abi, Rachel, Jack to attend NTBCC and ask for it be on the agenda.
- Ensure the Spurtle gets info to share publicity and noticeboards.