# Coalie Park Improvement Project – End of Project Report

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**Project Duration:** 2021 – 2025

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### Introduction

The Coalie Park Improvement Project was a multi-year, community-driven initiative to transform a neglected riverside area in Leith into a vibrant, accessible, and wildlife-friendly public space. Delivered by the Water of Leith Conservation Trust (WoLCT) in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council, local community groups, and a range of funders, the project aimed to:

- Improve access for people of all ages and abilities
- Enhance habitats for local wildlife
- Create a space that reflects local heritage and culture
- Encourage community ownership and creative engagement

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## Project Overview

### Project Planning and Development (2021 – 2023)

The Coalie Park Improvement Project was shaped by a thorough, community driven planning process to ensure the park's renewal met both local and environmental needs.

1. *Site Analysis and Consultation*

Surveys and feasibility studies assessed the park's condition, heritage, and ecological value. The Coalie Conversations consultation, including an online survey and a community Fun Day, captured local priorities and ideas.

2. *Master Plan and Sub-Projects*

Feedback informed a Landscape Master Plan with sub-projects such as the Gathering Space, The Dock, and biodiversity enhancements. The plan balanced accessibility, safety, wildlife improvements, and creative placemaking.

3. *Delivery Approach*

Steps included securing permissions, gathering cost estimates, submitting funding bids, completing detailed designs, and phased implementation. Local youth, volunteers, and partners like Edinburgh Wheels were involved throughout to build skills and community ownership.



**Phase 1 (2023 – 2024)**

Phase 1 focused on transforming the eastern section of Coalie Park with significant infrastructure and habitat improvements, including:

- Construction of riverside amphitheatre-style steps with ramps for access and relaxation
- Upgraded paths with a distinctive resin-bonded "silver thread" design representing the river
- New benches, cycle parking, and seating areas to suit a range of users
- Habitat enhancements including, three new oak trees, a native hedgerow, pollinator-friendly meadow and coastal-themed planters
- The installation of two Biomatrix floating ecosystems. These are modular floating platforms planted with vegetation that mimics natural wetlands, creating habitat for wildlife and improving water quality in urban waterways
- Installation of solar lighting for safety and accessibility

Phase 1 successfully re-opened to the public in May 2024.




**Phase 2 (2023 – 2025)**

Phase 2 expanded improvements west of Great Junction Street, focusing on community art, creativity, and inclusive recreation. Highlights include:

- **Community mural project** led by artist **Kate George**, inspired by local workshops and painted with the help of over 75 community volunteers
- **Upcycled seating**, including benches donated and installed by Network Rail and repainted to match the mural
- **Wildflower planting and landscaping**, further enhancing biodiversity
- Ongoing development of **"The Dock"** with Edinburgh Wheels Project – a safe, inclusive hangout and wheel-skills/skate space with creative and interactive features (see Appendix 1 for more detail)



**Community Engagement**

Community involvement has been central to the project:

- Over 75 volunteers participated in mural creation and planting sessions
- Local young people gained skills and work experience, with several progressing to employment in the sector, while engaging with The Dock
- Public workshops and events fostered pride and ownership of the space
- Ongoing opportunities for local people to contribute to planting, art, and maintenance activities

**Funding and Support**

The project was made possible through the generous support of multiple partners and funders, including:

- Paths for All – Ian Findlay Fund
- City of Edinburgh Council – Place Based Investment Programme
- Leith Community Fund
- Avondale Environmental – Scottish Landfill Communities Fund
- The Mushroom Trust
- Sustrans Scotland (Network Development Fund & ArtRoots Fund)
- First Stage Studios
- Dulux Decorating Centres (paint donation)
- Network Rail (bench donation)
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- Leith Community Fund
- Robert Barr Foundation
- Scape Scotland
- Longstone Foundation
- Private donors and supporting companies – See appendix a:

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our funders and supporters who shared our vision for a greener, more accessible Coalie Park. This represents an overall investment of £550,000 in the space.

**Impact and Legacy**

The Coalie Park Improvement Project has transformed a neglected riverside into a welcoming, accessible, and biodiverse public space. It now offers safer paths, creative community spaces, and thriving habitats—showing how community-led action can create a lasting cultural and environmental legacy.

**Next Steps**

Ongoing care and community involvement will ensure Coalie Park continues to thrive. Priorities include:

- Completing and activating The Dock skate and social space
- Continuing habitat and wildflower management
- Hosting volunteer days and community events

**Acknowledgements**

This project was made possible by the dedication of local volunteers, partners, funders, and artists—including Liz Thomas, TP&E, P1 Solutions, Odyssey Skateparks, Edinburgh Wheels Project, Campbell Barclay, and Kate George—working alongside the projects driving force Helen Brown from Water of Leith Conservation Trust. Together, we've created a Coalie Park that celebrates nature, creativity, and community. **www.waterofleith.org.uk/coalie-park-project**

**Appendix 1 -**

**The Dock – A Community-Led Transformation**

The Dock represents the final—and most dynamic—phase of the Coalie Park transformation, uniting active recreation, public art, and youth skills development. Conceived and delivered in collaboration with Edinburgh Wheels and Odyssey Construction, the site serves as a skate-ready social space.

This inclusive space features:

- Skate and wheel-skills features for all abilities
- Community art and mosaic installation
- Seating, planters, and creative landscaping

Its development is a testament to extraordinary community effort and generosity. Designed and developed by the Edinburgh Wheels Project and WoLCT this was a unique way to transform a space, including employability and training at its heart. A cohort of young trainees received full CSCS certifications—covering health & safety, manual handling, abrasive wheels, and vehicle banksman training—while contributing to the build itself. Training was delivered through Raeburn Training funded by The National Lottery Community Fund. At the centre is also a Gaudí - inspired mosaic seating area crafted by local artist Campbell Barclay and youth-led mosaic teams, made from donated tiles, found and recycled materials reflecting Leith's industrial heritage and riverside story. The skilled team at Odyssey Skateparks worked tirelessly over a very warm and sunny spring to create a beautiful skate area, which is almost ready to open to the public.

***Community Giving and In-Kind Support***

The Dock would not have been possible without extensive support from local businesses and contributors. Balfour Beatty, in particular, have supported the project, as part of their community benefit contribution while they construct the Leith Connections Project. They supported the team and trainees with construction expertise and connected the team with contractors below who donated materials and plant which enabled the project to get underway.

- **Sunbelt Rentals UK** – fencing & welfare unit
- **City Access Scaffold** – scaffolding
- **Jewson** – hire
- **BRC** – steel works
- **The NWH Group** – skips
- **The Breedon Group** – Type 1 aggregate
- **Under Pressure** – jet wash
- **Tile Star** - donated tiles

**There are also so many people who got involved including:**

**The Mosaic Crew led by Campbel Barclay**: Ruxi, James, Lucca, Tom, Andy, Euan, John, Kyle, Citadel Youth

**The Trainees led by Colin and Andy at Edinburgh Wheels:** Ollie, Jess, Alex, Georgio, Spider, Zander, Euan, Domenic, Skipper, Bolt, Two Times, Steve

**Special Thanks:** Eliza and Duncan at Balfour Beatty, Ruari, Haden, and Paul at Odyssey Skateparks and Colin, Colin, Andy and Campbell at Edinburgh Wheels

**Funders for The Dock:**

Place Based Investment (PBI)
The National Lottery Community Fund
Garfield Weston Foundation
Leith Community Fund
Robert Barr Foundation
Scape Scotland
Longstone Foundation
Private donors and supporting companies: including Graham Construction and Three Brand

**The Dock is a shared community achievement, offering a space for recreation, creativity, and connection.**





