



MEDIA RELEASE

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OUT OF THE BLUE ART PROJECT SPARKS MAJOR REVAMP FOR NEGLECTED CITY PARK

Edinburgh arts organisation plots £350,000 overhaul for Dalmeny Street Park after exhibition gets local backing

A run down city park is set to become a focus for community cultural events after work began today on a planned £350,000 makeover. Arts organisation **Out of the Blue** (OOTB) won backing for the revamp of Dalmeny Street Park from city chiefs after firing the imaginations of local residents with an art exhibition. City of Edinburgh Council has pledged £100,000 over the next year for landscaping and an overhaul of dilapidated play and sports facilities. The news paves the way for OOTB to raise an extra quarter of a million pounds for a string of arts projects designed to involve the local community in further improvements to the park.

OOTB, in partnership with the National Galleries of Scotland and social inclusion advocates Capital City Partnership, interviewed more than 100 local people on how the park could be improved, culminating in the Park Life photography and soundscape exhibition. Ideas dreamt up by residents include outdoor cinema screenings, a community garden, a cafe and the reinstatement of the shows which were a feature of the area in the early twentieth century.

Now further improvements are on the cards after OOTB unveiled plans for a series of community arts projects based on the consultations. OOTB coordinator Rob Hoon predicts that the initiatives could raise an additional £250,000 for the park. He says, *"This project is an excellent example of the valuable work Out of the Blue does everyday. By using the arts as a catalyst and creating opportunities for people to participate in the arts who might not normally do so, OOTB can work with other local people to improve the quality of our community's life by providing much needed resources for a densely populated area such as Leith."*

And following the positive response to the exhibition and a series of public meetings, some 50 residents have joined together to form The Friends of Dalmeny Street Park (FDSP) association to help drive through the plans. FDSP member and local resident Mary Stewart says, *"The project has been an inspiration. I've learned how much of a natural resource we have on our doorsteps. The park has so much potential. The Friends group has given me a new interest in our natural environment and the confidence to work on improving my own back green to encourage birds and wildlife."*

The park is also set to be a major Leith Festival venue for the second year running thanks to the scheme. Using the arts to spark regeneration of run down urban areas has been employed by planners in many major cities across the UK. Projects such as Newcastle's Sage Centre and Birmingham's Custard Factory are widely credited with boosting the economy of previously neglected backwaters.

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Note to editors: *Out of the Blue Arts and Education Trust (charity number SCO22812) supports and promotes cultural ventures. It has an established track record as a vital catalyst for creativity in Edinburgh and beyond. Out of the Blue gratefully acknowledges the support of the Scottish Arts Council, City of Edinburgh Council, Fresh Futures, Capital City Partnership, Social Investment Scotland, Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh & Lothian, Triodos Bank and Ikea. For more details please visit www.outoftheblue.org.uk*