



PORTOBELLO OLDER PEOPLE'S PROJECT SCIO (POPP) TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT

April 2025 to March 2026



Funded by

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THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

McCarthy Stone
Foundation



Scottish Charity Number: SC048384

Trustees 2025/6

Patricia Scotland (Chair)

Liz Williamson (Treasurer)

Lawrence Marshall

Brenda Molony

Barbara Smith (deceased February 2026)

Fiona Harris (appointed March 2026)

Jane Hogg (appointed March 2026)

Marjorie Mitchell (appointed March 2026)

In attendance at Management Committee meetings:

Jennifer Elliot, Project Organiser

David Simpson, Volunteer Representative

Contact information

Jennifer Elliot, Project Organiser

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Location address: Baptist Church Hall, 189 Portobello High Street, Edinburgh, EH15 1EU.

Chair's Report

It's been an action-packed year – as it always is at POPP - with highs and lows. Lots more of the former this year, fortunately.

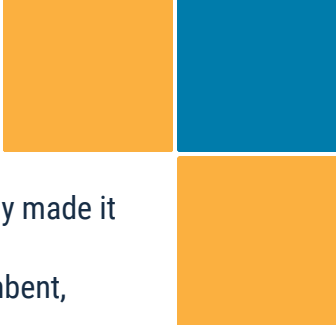
Trustees dealt with a range of issues in 2025/6, but two priorities focussed their attention.

The first was how to keep POPP afloat following the decision of the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board (EIJB) to stop funding POPP, along with 63 other voluntary organisations.

The City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) stepped in to provide temporary core funding for all those affected, by setting up the Third Sector Resilience Fund (TSRF). We are grateful to the Council for awarding us funding through this route. The Edinburgh Community Health Forum (ECHF), of which POPP is a member, helped us negotiate our way through what was a tricky period and we are grateful to ECHF and Portobello Councillors for their support.

As part of our efforts to reduce POPP's reliance on public funding, we worked hard throughout the year to diversify our sources of income and promote our public profile - energetically pursuing donor funding, with encouraging results, setting up a Just Giving page, registering with the Edinburgh Community Lottery and running a very successful Christmas appeal. More information is contained in the Financial Report.

The second big issue for Trustees was organising the take-over of the Portobello Monday Centre (PMC). In January 2026 we learned that PMC, which ran a lunch and social club for people with mild to moderate dementia, also from the Portobello Baptist Church, was facing closure within a few

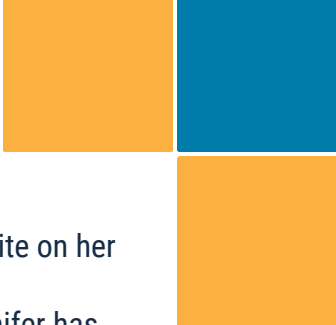


months. In recent years PMC had faced growing financial problems, and this uncertainty made it difficult to find someone willing to take on the volunteer Convenor role, when the incumbent, Marjorie Mitchell, expressed a wish to retire. The most appropriate time to complete any potential take-over would be by the end March 2026, the end of both organisations' financial years.

POPP's Trustees faced a daunting task to organise the take-over of PMC's services in such a tight time frame, including drawing up a Memorandum of Understanding and securing Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) vetting for relevant volunteers. I am delighted to report that the transition went smoothly, with the two organisations now working successfully as a single entity. Although it is sad to see a small, voluntary organisation fold under financial pressures, and we will need to work hard to fund this project, the Trustees firmly believe that taking on PMC's services will allow this valuable support for very vulnerable older people in Portobello to continue.

We were desperately sorry to lose Barbara Smith as a Trustee on her death in February 2026, after a short illness. Barbara had only been on the Management Committee for a relatively short time, but she made a significant contribution in that period. As a former solicitor, her expertise was invaluable, particularly when preparing the Deed of Covenant for our anonymous donor.

We were delighted to appoint the following new trustees, all of whom joined us in March 2026: Fiona Harris (Operations Coordinator with Lothian Community Transport Services), Jane Hogg (Project Manager with National Records of Scotland) and Marjorie Mitchell (previously PMC's Convenor). They bring a valuable range of experience to the Management Committee.



Jennifer Elliot started with POPP in June 2025 as Project Organiser, replacing Rose White on her retirement. As you will see from the section “What We Have Been Up to This Year” Jennifer has organised an action-packed year and has brought energy and creativity to the role. She has also brought us into the digital age with, amongst other initiatives, a POPP Facebook page.

POPP could not function without the dedication and energy of its Project Organiser, supported by her team of volunteers. So, an enormous thank you to Jennifer and all the wonderful volunteers who have provided such a sterling service to POPP members this year.

Patricia Scotland

Chair

Objectives and Activities

POPP runs lunch and social clubs for frail, older people in the Portobello area. It offers them the chance to get out of their homes, share a meal and participate in social activities, such as games, discussions, entertainments and outings. It runs three times a week from the Portobello Baptist Church, on Mondays (for people with mild to moderate dementia), and on Tuesdays and Wednesdays (for cognitively well but socially isolated elderly). POPP was set up in 1992 by local churches to reduce loneliness and isolation amongst older people. These aims remain as relevant today, possibly more so, as families often live long distances apart. Older people are among the groups who have suffered most from the lingering effects of the COVID pandemic, with increasing lack of confidence and fear of socialising.

Growing evidence internationally shows that isolation and loneliness can negatively affect physical and mental health, including heart disease, stroke, depression and cognitive decline. By helping to tackle these, POPP aims to contribute towards maintaining people's health and well-being and reducing or delaying their need for crisis intervention by statutory services. Subsidiary benefits of POPP's work are the support we provide to families and carers, giving them time away from their caring responsibilities in the knowledge their relatives are safe and enjoying themselves and benefits to volunteers who feel worthwhile, gain new friends and prevent their social isolation in some cases.

In April 2026 POPP took over the services previously provided by the Portobello Monday Centre which ran a lunch and social club for older people with mild to moderate dementia, when it closed in March 2026.

Structure, Governance and Management

The Portobello Older People's Project (POPP) was registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) in May 2018.

It is governed by its constitution, available on request. It is led by a management committee. In 2025/6 the Management Committee comprised seven trustees, including the Chair and Treasurer, drawn from the local community. POPP's constitution provides for volunteers and members to have a non-voting representation on the Management Committee, with the volunteer representative filled in 2025/6.

Day-to-day management is provided by a part-time paid Project Organiser, supported by up to 30 volunteers.



Measuring our Success

Due to other priorities, we did not conduct the annual survey of the views of members, their families/carers and volunteers in 2025/6. However, we continued informally to canvas views, some examples of which are set out below. We are in the process of reviewing our evaluation framework, with the intention of refreshing the survey questionnaires and updating our performance indicators for use in 2026/7.

'I love the confidence POPP has given me back and I feel like I belong! Being supported to be picked up and taken home means I can get out off the house which otherwise is nearly impossible'

'Mum's really enjoying the club. It really started at the perfect time for her.'

'Thank you for helping us on this journey xx'

'Mum really enjoys coming along and meeting with others. It's so good for her and it gives us something to chat about!'

'Whilst looking for work, POPP gave me a sense of purpose, and allowed me to meet a variety of people from my community that I would never normally have met. I loved chatting to members and volunteers and feeling a sense of being a part of something that helps vulnerable people feel less isolated.'

Quotes from members, families or volunteers

What we have been up to this year

In June 2025 we said goodbye to Rose White, who retired as POPP Project Organiser after more than ten years. She had a lovely send-off at our Summer Party, which brought together the Tuesday and Wednesday clubs to thank her and wish her well. Jennifer Elliot started at POPP in June 2025 and after a thorough and generous handover from Rose before the Summer break, Jennifer took over at POPP in July.

Some old favourites like an ice cream at Di Rollo's in Musselburgh, the shopping and meal out at a garden centre and the P4 pupils from St John's Primary school singing Christmas Carols remained in our programme, while a trip to Calton Hill was new. Crafts, games, quizzes and musical reminiscing all took place in new and old ways and as ever, many birthdays have been celebrated, including one 100th birthday celebration for Madge.



We were grateful to Portobello Heritage Trust, Citizens Advice Edinburgh and Age Scotland for coming to share informative talks with us and also to Age Scotland for the generous Christmas gifts they donated to our members. Along with the fun entertainment provided by our volunteer drivers and a surprise visit from Santa, the POPP Christmas Party traditions were kept alive and evolving. We were delighted to have Portobello Chamber Music Group play for us and loved having local musicians, Lorraine McCann & Rosie Nimmo as well as Anne McKenzie & Ian Warwick sing for us. John Muir's dramatic renditions of Tam O'Shanter for our Burns Suppers were welcome new additions to the programme.



We were also lucky to secure funding from Portobello Community Sports Hub (City of Edinburgh Council) and Places Leisure Edinburgh to have Physical Trainer, Kerry Smith, run monthly seated exercise classes throughout the year. Kerry puts us through our paces, surprising everyone with what they are able to achieve.



While not a new activity for POPP, Jennifer – a cycling enthusiast – loved to get members out on the Cycling Without Age trishaws and the members loved it too, if the smiles in the photos are anything to go by, even on a chilly March day.



We welcomed several new members to POPP this year: Jean, Elma, Magi, May, Anne, Marion, Isobel and Jim. We also had some departures; Avril, Maria and Isobel who stopped coming to the club for various reasons. We were sad to say a final goodbye to Eleanor, Linda, Jeanette, Madge and Moira this year. They are all missed.

We were delighted to welcome over nine new volunteers to POPP this year, who joined the existing volunteer team and we are grateful for everyone's help in making POPP the welcoming, caring, fun place it is. Without the volunteers POPP could not run. As happens, some volunteers also left POPP this year and we want to thank them all for their help over the years. In particular we want to remember Kirsty Hamilton, a young volunteer who helped at POPP and who sadly passed away this year after a short, cruel illness.

In early 2026, serious conversations with Portobello Monday Centre (PMC) began and when it was agreed in principle that POPP would take over PMC, some intense preparations began to ready POPP to do that for 1st April 2026. That will be a story for the next Trustees' Annual Report.

Financial Review

Accounts for year to 31st March 2026

	Total 2025/26	Unrestricted	Restricted		Total 2024/25
Income					
CEC Grant	£14,620		£14,620		£14,621
Benefactor donation	£380	£380			
Charity Grants	£13,000		£13,000		£3,000
Donations	£7,215	£5,955	£1,260		£6,252
Members' Subscriptions	£7,867	£7,867			£6,340
Outing Payments	£613		£613		£1,342
Misc Bank Interest	£24	£24			£0
Total	£43,718	£14,225	£29,493		£31,555
Expenditure					
Salary Costs	£14,551		£14,551		£14,875
Transport	£5,556	£2,256	£3,300		£5,509
Hall Hire	£4,950	£865	£4,085		£5,170
CEC Lunches	£2,093	£2,093			£2,789
Outings/lunches/events	£1,430		£1,430		£2,252
Telephone	£533	£533			£657
Insurance	£291	£291			£275
Petty Cash	£40	£40			£0
Purchases	£324		£324		£633
Training	£0				£144
Misc Bank Charges	£30		£30		£240
Total	£29,799	£6,078	£23,721		£32,543
o/Bank	£6,601	£5,101	£1,500		£7,589
Surplus/(Deficit)	£13,919	£8,147	£5,772		(£988)
c/Bank	£20,520	£13,248	£7,272		£6,601
Deposit Trsf	£10,024				
Treasurer's Account	£10,496				

We received £14,620 from CEC's Third Sector Resilience Fund (TSRF) public funding which, together with the Benefactor's payment of £380, brought such sums to £15,000 as budgeted.

Overall, we have exceeded our income budget by £13,500, with the receipt of four charity grants totalling £13,000 compared to budget of £6,000. Donations have exceeded budget by £5,000, with the Christmas Appeal raising nearly £2,000.

Expenditure is only £200 over budget, but post year end costs amounted to £1,500.

At the year-end we had £10,496 in our Current account and £10,024 in a Deposit account.

Charity Grants, Donations and Fundraising

Name/Organisation	£	Unrestricted	Restricted
Charity Grants			
Corra Foundation	£3,000		£3,000
McCarthy Stone Foundation	£4,000		£4,000
Stafford Trust	£3,000		£3,000
Johnston Smillie	£3,000		£3,000
Total Charity Grants	£13,000		£13,000
Donations			
Donations	£7,366	£6,106	£1,260
Gift Aid	£229	£229	
Total Donations	£7,595	£6,335	£1,260

We were successful with four charity grant applications, thereby exceeding budget by £7,000. The Trustees are grateful to the Corra Foundation; McCarthy Stone Foundation; The Stafford Trust and Johnston Smillie for their support.

Donations have exceeded budget with sums being received monthly from Edinburgh Community Lottery, our Christmas appeal, and generous donors through Just Giving or directly to POPP. In the light of the uncertainty over funding the Trustees are grateful to those organisations and individuals who have generously donated sums to support the continued activity of POPP.

Policy on Reserves

POPP's policy on reserves is to maintain sufficient funds to run the club for 4 months. As at 31 March 2026 this would require funds of £10,000 therefore with reserves of £20,520 this policy is well exceeded. As stated in the Chair's Report, the Trustees approved the taking over of the services of the Portobello Monday Centre on the basis that there were sufficient reserves to cover the consequential drain upon reserves in the short to medium term. The combined operation would now require reserves of £16,000. In addition there will be a greater need for fundraising to cover the additional hours of the Project Organiser in the management of the Monday Club under POPP which was previously performed on a voluntary basis.

Copies of the full accounts are available on request by contacting Jennifer Elliot on:
project.popp@outlook.com