

# Culture and Committee Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 5 December 2025

## Saroj Lal Memorial Statue

Executive/routine  
Wards

Routine  
15 – Southside/Newington

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 To note the information contained in this report with regards to supporting the memorial to Saroj Lal.

**Gareth Barwell**

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## Saroj Lal Memorial Statue

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 Council officers have been working with Mr Vineet Lal to help find a suitable location for a memorial to Saroj Lal. A location has been identified in the gardens at St Patrick Square (Newington). Mr Lal has also been in discussion with the University of Edinburgh about another location.

### 3. Background

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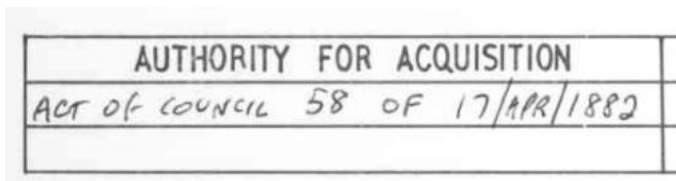
- 3.1 On 21 March 2024, the Council noted the following:
- 3.1.1 Saroj Lal, Edinburgh resident for over fifty years up to her passing in 2020, leaves an enormous legacy of work and positive change across the city of Edinburgh and far beyond, improving race relations and race equality across several fields, particularly education, policing, health, social work, prisons and many more;
  - 3.1.2 At its August 2020 meeting, Council unanimously passed a motion celebrating the “inspirational life” of Saroj Lal, and during that debate, former councillor, Melanie Main, said the following, “I’m sure we’d all agree there should be a permanent memorial to this wonderful lady so that generations to come are reminded and encouraged to learn about her work and her legacy in Edinburgh and Scotland”;
  - 3.1.3 There are no statues of named persons of colour in Edinburgh, and remarkably few of any named women; City of Edinburgh Council
  - 3.1.4 One of the recent recommendations of the Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Review was to commit to public art that fairly represents the diversity of the city and its histories;
  - 3.1.5 There are no statues in Southside Newington ward and specifically in the Southside/Sciennes area, home to the Lal family for many decades, and
  - 3.1.6 Fundraisers are in a position to fully fund the creation and erection of a statue of Saroj Lal. Council supports the proposal to mark Saroj Lal’s legacy with a permanent memorial in the city, and requests that a report be brought forward to the Culture and Communities Committee within two cycles

considering options for the site of a statue, preferably in the Southside area, fully-funded through private fundraising, both to commemorate the life and legacy of Saroj Lal and to inspire future generations.

## 4. Main report

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- 4.1 As noted above, on 21 March 2024, the Council approved a motion to support the creation of a memorial to Saroj Lal which would be paid for from private fundraising. In response to this, Council officers have been working Mr Vineet Lal to find a suitable location for the memorial.
- 4.2 A number of locations had been suggested by Mr Lal as preferred location, including the Meadows, St Patrick Square, and the corner of Dalkeith Road and Old Holyrood Road outside the vacant Scottish Widows building.
- 4.3 The Meadows proposal was discounted due to restrictions under the City of Edinburgh District Council Order Confirmation Act 1991 which would require a lengthy and expensive legal process to use any land within the Meadows. The Dalkeith Road proposal can be pursued although its desirability will be influenced by the future sale and/or use of the Scottish Widows building. Therefore, the location agreed as most appropriate is St Patrick Square.
- 4.4 No legal obstacles have been identified by Legal Services in regard to St Patrick Square.
- 4.5 The Act of Council 58 of 17 April 1882 appears to be the most relevant Council legislation for St Patrick Square:



- 4.6 This seems to reflect the Council legislation under which the land was acquired, rather than providing a specific date for that acquisition, so no formal minutes relating to that event can be checked. The deeds relate to compulsory purchase (by the Council's predecessors, termed an Improvement Scheme) of a number of flats/properties/shops around the north end of the square, with nothing obvious relating to the open grassed area.
- 4.6 Edinburgh World Heritage (EWH) have been consulted and are supportive of this location. Council officers and EWH staff agree the placement of the memorial here would encourage regeneration of the area and EWH has offered additional support to Mr Lal in progressing the memorial.
- 4.7 Mr Lal has also been in touch with the University of Edinburgh to identify if there are any sites that would be more suitable. The University team has suggested a location in the courtyard of Moray House.

- 4.8 Mr Lal and his family will decide which location best suits such a memorial.
- 4.9 Council officers will continue to support the Lal family as appropriate in finalising the location and Council related actions required to make it happen.

## 5. Next Steps

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- 5.1 Officers will continue to work with Vineet Lal and relevant parties to enable the memorial statue to progress.

## 6. Financial impact

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- 6.1 There is no immediate financial impact of this report as the memorial is fully funded, although future policy decisions on the funding of public art may request legacy maintenance funding.

## 7. Equality and Poverty Impact

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- 7.1 The memorial statue will support the objectives of the Public Art Action Plan (being considered by the Committee meeting) in addressing the inequality that exists in the city's public art estate.
- 7.2 It also adds to the Inclusive Communities theme of the Equality and Diversity Framework: [Equality and diversity framework 2021 to 2025 – The City of Edinburgh Council](#)

## 8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

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- 8.1 As a public body, the Council has statutory duties relating to climate emissions and biodiversity. The Council

*“must, in exercising its functions, act in the way best calculated to contribute to the delivery of emissions reduction targets”*

(Climate Change (Emissions Reductions Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019), and

*“in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions”*

(Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004)

- 8.2 The City of Edinburgh Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and committed to work towards a target of net zero emissions by 2030 for both city and corporate emissions and embedded this as a core priority of the Council Business Plan 2023-27. The Council also declared a Nature Emergency in 2023.

## **Environmental Impacts**

8.3 There are no immediate environmental impacts resulting from this report.

## **9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact**

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9.1 There are no immediate environmental impacts resulting from this report.

## **10. Background reading/external references**

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10.1 None.

## **11. Appendices**

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