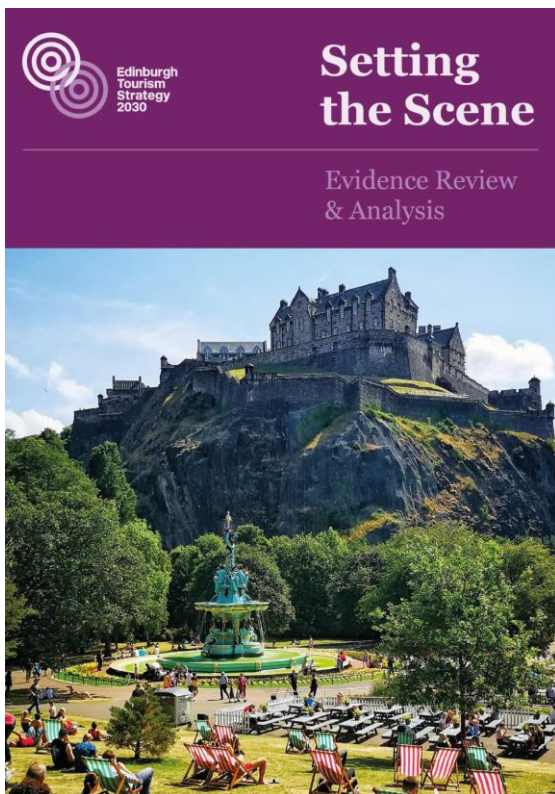




**THE COCKBURN
ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER
June/July 2019**

A crisis of “overtourism”?



CNN Travel recently listed Edinburgh alongside Venice, Barcelona, Rome and Amsterdam as global “hotspots” for “overtourism”. So it is not before time that some searching questions are being asked about the quest for infinite growth in tourism in Edinburgh. The Scottish Government wants it, the City Council loves it and the tourist industry is gung-ho in marketing the city.... But did anybody bother to ask the views of the people who live here?

Next January, Edinburgh (i.e. the City Council and representatives of the tourist

industry) will produce a new ten-year Tourism Strategy. A new report by consultants prepares the ground. It was commissioned by the Edinburgh Tourism Strategy Implementation Group (SIG). Who are SIG? From the City Council there is Council Leader Adam McVey and Councillor Donald Wilson (Convenor, Culture and Communities Committee), as well as the Chief Executive, Director of Place, and Jim Galloway from Economic Development. Except for the Director General of the National Galleries, the other eleven members are from Scottish or local tourism and marketing bodies. There is nobody from Edinburgh’s Planning Department on SIG, and nobody from any of the heritage or community bodies in the city. Presumably these stakeholders are deemed irrelevant.

The 2030 Strategy will aim for “Good Growth”, defined by the UN World Tourism Organisation as “Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.” However, *Setting the Scene*, sounds some warning notes for Edinburgh. It notes growing public concern about “the city’s physical limitations on capacity during peak season and major events” and rising opposition to use of residential property for short-term rentals.

Some of the recommendations are:

- The industry lobby organisation, Edinburgh Tourism Action Group, and Scottish Enterprise should “Take the lead in ‘starting the conversation’ about tourism and what it means for the city”, becoming “adept at managing relationships between local government, businesses and citizens’ organisations”.

- “Smart marketing” by the City Council, Marketing Edinburgh and Visit Scotland, including to “local residents to... reduce any sense of alienation”.
- New key performance indicators to take into account impacts on “residents’ quality of life”.

The full report can be downloaded at <https://www.etag.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Edinburgh-Tourism-Strategy-2030-Phase-1-Setting-the-Scene.pdf>

Our Unique City attracts wide interest

The Cockburn’s pioneering consultation programme was launched at our packed AGM in May and has been backed by articles in *The Scotsman* and in the *Evening News*. An open meeting was held on 26 June that focused on housing in the city.

The platform for the consultation is a collection of papers produced by the Cockburn and available to read at <http://www.cockburnassociation.org.uk/uploads/Our%20Unique%20City%20FINAL%201%20May%202019.pdf>. They pose questions about what kind of city we want Edinburgh to be. The consultation is open to anyone but naturally we are especially interested in the views of our members.

Director Terry Levinthal and Chair Cliff Hague addressed the event at Macdonald Road Library on 26 June which drew people from different parts of the city. Among concerns raised were the impact of Airbnb and similar short-term lets, the quality of many new developments, and the disregard for open space. There was a general sense that the City Council has drifted away from its citizens and into the arms of the development industry.

A further event is planned for August. Its theme will be “Our Connected City”, with a focus on transport and communications.

Cockburn objects to new Haymarket application



Image: Fosters & Partners.

The Cockburn has formally objected to the latest proposals for development at the Morrison St former Goods Yard site adjacent to Haymarket Station. Foster & Partners proposal is for development of hotels, offices, retail and leisure outlets, public houses, restaurants and car parking.

Assistant Director James Garry says “Whilst we welcome proposed plans for a new area of urban public space, we feel that the proposed scheme is quite simply not good enough for this prominent site. In addition, the emerging City Centre Transformation Strategy might suggest a more innovative use for this former goods yard on the edge of the city centre that would secure and underpin the sustainable future of the city.”

James points out that the location close to a main line railway station and tram link makes the former goods yard one of Edinburgh’s best-connected addresses.

This would make more imaginative, climate-ready uses desirable, e.g. a goods interchange hub to service city-centre businesses and residents.

The site has a long history of failed development proposals. Ten years ago, Richard Murphy's development proposal, on behalf of Tiger Developments, was blocked by the Scottish Government after a public inquiry over concerns that the proposed seventeen storey tower would adversely impact upon Edinburgh's skyline. The Cockburn, and others who opposed the proposal, had to raise money from their own pockets to engage counsel to make their case at the public enquiry.

Subsequently, Tiger Development's revised proposals, although scaled back to a more modest eight storeys, hit fresh controversy after the Cockburn branded the new plans "lumpy" and "ugly". Critics also claimed that this scheme, although lower level, would also ruin sight lines in the city, despite the taller scheme having been approved by both Historic Scotland and local councillors.

At the start of 2016, Tiger Developments and Interserve began preparatory above ground works to deliver a consented scheme for an office-led development on the derelict site with the removal of tunnel earthworks dating back to the 1840's. These works were halted, and the site put on the market in 2018 following further reworking of the plans for the consented scheme.

Duncan Campbell steps down from Cockburn Council

The longest serving member of the Council of Trustees, Duncan Campbell, retired at the recent AGM. Duncan first became involved with the Cockburn in the late

1980s at a time when he was Director of the former Countryside Commission Scotland (CCS), to discuss with the then Cockburn Secretary Oliver Barratt, the CCS's emerging policies on 'The Countryside around Towns' in relation to Edinburgh.

Then, says Duncan, "after my retirement from the CCS, around 2000 John Byrom approached me to stand as a candidate for the Cockburn's Council. John was keen to have another landscape architect on Council. I was interested in the aims of the Association and also encouraged by Lord Cockburn's associations with Colinton, where I was living. Fortunately, I was elected and appointed to Bill Cantley's Planning and Environment Committee during the reign of recently appointed Director David Macdonald."

Duncan's professional experience proved invaluable and he continued to serve on this Committee and its various mutations, becoming Convenor of the Strategic Planning and Environment Committee some six years ago. Throughout Duncan has championed environmental sustainability and the need to conserve prime agricultural land. He has led the Cockburn's case for stronger protection for the Green Belt and countryside around settlements. He also continues to make a strong case that for improved planning guidance is needed for development in peri-urban areas to respect their longstanding countryside heritage.

Addressing the AGM in May, Duncan criticised the Planning Bill for its failure to apply properly the principles of sustainable development. He also highlighted the inequities in the system of planning appeals and reiterated his support for Equal Rights of Appeal.

Cockburn Chair, Cliff Hague, said “Duncan Campbell has provided outstanding service to the Cockburn. He has more than earned the right to pull back now, but quite simply he will be impossible to replace. He is a passionate professional who has made a major contribution to the work of the Cockburn. On behalf of all the members, I can only say ‘Thank you’”.

Joe Taylor leaves

Joseph Taylor has moved on. He had been with the Cockburn for six years, and has combined the tasks of being our Administrator with organising Doors Open Day, and servicing the Edinburgh Civic Forum. He left us on 31 May to take up a new position as a Senior Project Officer with Sustrans, embedded within the Active Travel Team at Edinburgh Council.

Cockburn Director, Terry Levinthal, paid tribute to the contribution that Joe has made. He said “Joe will be missed greatly. Over the past 6 years, he has undertaken various roles including Cases Coordinator, Administrative Office and Doors Open Days Coordinator. His knowledge of the Association and his commitment to the cause has been invaluable.”

Chair Cliff Hague added “Joe took on the challenge of Doors Open Day in 2017 at a difficult time for us, and he delivered a very successful programme. In a small organisation like the Cockburn there are few opportunities for promotion, and so we must aim to develop the skills of our staff, while knowing that they are then likely to move on. Congratulations and thanks to Joe, and best wishes for the future.”



Joe handing over the keys to Lucy

Welcome to Lucy Gray

Lucy has stepped in temporarily to replace Joe as our Administrator and Doors Open Days Coordinator. She has just completed her MA in Social and Architectural History at the University of Edinburgh, and in the autumn will start out on an MSc in Architectural Conservation. She started helping the Cockburn last October as a volunteer, and had been assisting Joe with Doors Open Day.

Lucy comes from Darlington, and loves living in Edinburgh. She first became aware of the Cockburn through Doors Open Day, now she is preparing this year’s programme. Lucy says things are well advanced with 145 venues signed up and plans for guided walks and 10 talks in the week leading up to the main weekend.

Chair's Notes



It was wonderful to see such a well attended AGM in the splendid Geddes Room at the French Institute. My sincere thanks to each and every one of you who were able to be there. The Cockburn has existed for 144 years because of its members. Long may this continue. I must also thank Sir Sandy Crombie, our President, for his adept chairing of the AGM and for his continuing support. Thanks are also due to the staff team and volunteers who did the hard work in arranging and supporting the event.

Duncan Campbell's retirement from the Council of Trustees is recognised elsewhere in this Newsletter. He has given the Cockburn quite exceptional service. The meeting elected Alastair Campbell to replace him. Alastair is a practising architect and has chaired our Urban Design Group since it was set up in 2017.

The AGM was also notified of the need to increase subscriptions. As I said when introducing this item, they had not been increased for some ten years or more, and

as we all know prices have risen since then. Your Trustees felt it would be irresponsible to ignore that reality. We have budget targets to reach if we are to manage the Association in a sensible and effective manner. The schedule of new subscriptions is shown elsewhere in this Newsletter. Please help us continuing your support and updating your standing order to the Cockburn.

Last, but not least, the support of Aberdeen Standard Life for Doors Open Day was also announced and greatly welcomed at the AGM. Their financial contribution and work on the production of the Doors Open Day brochure is greatly appreciated. We all look forward to a bumper Doors Open Days at the end of September. Expect to receive your brochure in mid-September to plan your visits.

New annual subscription rates

Single £40
Joint (2 people at the same address) £60
Overseas £40
Affiliate organisations £40
Under 25s £5

We also offer corporate membership:
Businesses with 250+ employees £100,
Businesses with 50-249 employees £75
Businesses with less than 50 £55.

Can you take the minutes, please?

Would you be willing to give a bit of your time to help the Cockburn by being our Minutes Secretary? It would mean attending the meetings of the Council of Trustees, which are held 17.30-20.00 on a Tuesday, once every 2 months in a central location (usually the City Library).

Then we'd like to get a draft minute to circulate to Trustees within a week.

We also need a Minute taker for the Edinburgh Civic Forum, which meets 4 times a year in the City Chambers, usually on a Wednesday 18.00-20.00.

If you are able to help please contact the Director by phone (557-8686) or email (Director@cockburnassociation.org.uk). Thanks.

Notes from the Office

June and July have been especially busy with some significant consultations from both the Council and Scottish Government. Members of Council as well as the Cockburn Urban Design Group have been kept busy as a result. Highlights below>

City Centre Transformation Strategy

The Cockburn has welcomed the principle of this strategy is to set a programme over the next 10 years to enhance public spaces by prioritising movement by foot, bicycle and public transport in central streets. The case for change has long been established through many other studies including the 1997 Strategy for the First New Town, Jan Gehl's various studies aimed at increasing the amenity of the centre, etc.

There are, however, caveats to our support. Not so much a strategy but a programme of projects, we see little to address some of the root causes. For example, the CCTS indicated that almost 70% of commuters from neighbouring local authorities travel in by car, but there is no indication of how this might be addressed. It doesn't address key challenges such as the changing face of retailing in the centre, nor issues with tourism capacity and impact. Perhaps the City Vision 2050 project or

the City Plan 2030 (the new Local Development Plan) will give answers.

We strongly welcome the aim to make the centre a more pedestrian-friendly place. Most of the Strategy is transport-focused. Some proposed junction closures are supportable (E.g. Candlemaker Row and Victoria Street at George IV Bridge) but we have serious reservations about the closure of Bank Street to general vehicles as this is one of the few north-south routes across the centre and the alternative/diversion route is inappropriate.

We also have reservations about the reduction on bus routes and stops in the centre, which seems counterintuitive. The benefits of the proposed free "hopper" bus around the centre is also unclear. Some ideas are gimmicky, like the "vertical motorised lifts" at Market Street and linking the Grassmarket to the Castle – these strike as aimed at tourists rather than residents, who must for the focus for the Strategy. Similarly, "micro-consolidation centres" (potentially within Castle Terrace car park with "last-mile distribution" by cargo bikes and electric vans seems positive in concept but in detail, might not be so easy to implement. A new tram down South Bridge to the Royal Infirmary with a new link from Haymarket to the southside via Potterrow looks great on paper, but we are not convinced that this will be achievable in the 10-year horizon of the Strategy. Indeed, the Strategy is uncostered so translation into actions might not be so direct.

Overall, a good start but lots of detail needed going forward with some elements needing a rethink from the start. However, we think that a good starting place to get on with the maintenance and repair of existing public spaces, streets and footpaths.

Meadows to George Street Cycleway

This project forms part of the Transformation. Its purpose is to link the Meadows to the centre with a new segregated cycleway. Whilst supportive in principle, we have some concerns including the closure of Bank Street to general traffic (already discussed above) and the associated use of the Lawnmarket for local access. We welcome the closure of Forrest Road which has the potential to become a very pleasant new civic space (two-way traffic on Bristo Place is trade-off). Diversionary routes for northbound traffic would be put onto South Bridge, which is already straining with all the functions it currently carries. We also find the proposed street overly complicated and fussy. This is an engineering scheme. A more subtle approach is needed and one that accepts some compromise.



Image of George IV Bridge with cycle lane

George Street

This proposal has seen several public consultations already, which we have contributed to. The purpose of the project to transform George Street into a wide civic space capable to hosting events (if agreed) but aimed at reinforcing its predominance as the central feature of the First New Town. It is also to host the main east-west cycleway through the city centre linking up Leith Walk to proposals in the West End and beyond. The Council have recently decided to remove general car parking from the street, retaining some Blue Badge and resident permit parking on adjacent transverse streets (Hanover, Frederick, etc).

Many issues are still be resolved including junction design, curb heights, etc. The idea of a “plaza” in the middle of each block (raised area of carriageway to same level as the footpath) to facilitate events is one element still under consideration. Perhaps the most contentious issue is whether or not trees should be introduced into the street. Our view is not.

Airbnb and Short-Term Lets

The Scottish Government is holding a consultation on a regulatory framework for Scotland. Members on the end of an email will have already heard from us on this.

We believe strongly that a regulation on Airbnb and holiday let properties is urgently needed. The letting of whole properties (called secondary letting) is the most significant issue and we support a licensing system for this. We have less concerns about sharing (ie renting out the back bedroom) or swapping (for instance, exchanging houses with another family for a holiday) but feel that these should be registered. We also feel that additional rules are needed for tenements.

The Short-Term Let industry have suggested a seasonal system in Edinburgh where the rules are more permissive during periods of large tourist demand (e.g. Festival and Christmas/Hogmanay) but more restrictive in other times of the year when demand is lower. We believe that this is exactly the opposite of what is required and fundamentally disagree with the proposal. These “period of permissiveness” would cover almost half a year in the City and would negate any benefits of regulation. Indeed, give the profitability of Short-term Letting in Edinburgh, it is likely that

holiday flats would remain empty during periods of lower demand further exacerbating problems with affordability and community cohesion/amenity

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