



**THE COCKBURN
ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER**

OCTOBER 2017



Opinion Poll finds strong support for Green Belt

Over 70% of Scots want stronger protection from development for land in Green Belts. This is the finding from a recent poll carried out by the firm Survation.

Over 1000 people aged over 16 were quizzed about their attitude to the Green Belt. All parts of the country were included in the survey. The findings were broadly similar across all age groups.

When asked, almost 40% strongly agreed to the proposition that “All Green Belt land in Scotland should have stronger protection from building development.” A further 32% said they “agreed somewhat”.

There were some who had no view one way or another, and some “don’t know”, but the proportion disagreeing was strikingly low – just 6% in all.

Respondents from the Lothian area were even stronger in their support for the Green Belt, with 75% wanting stronger protection, though of course the margin of error here is greater because of the smaller number of interviewees.

Before the question was put respondents were told what green belts are and given a summary of the arguments for and against giving them stronger protection.

The survey was organised by the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland. The Cockburn Association contributed towards the cost. Duncan Campbell, Convenor of the Cockburn’s Strategic Planning and Environment Committee, commented “Green Belts are important for the wellbeing of communities and require stronger protection in the planning system, in which undue weight is being given to the facilitation of development. The Scottish Government must rectify this as a matter of urgency to avoid further severe erosion of Green Belts.”

Calton Hill Hotel – Cockburn fights on



The City Council's decision to refuse planning permission and listed building consent for the proposed hotel at the former Royal High School was described by one Cockburn member as the best outcome the Association has achieved in 20 years.

Understandably the many people who had objected to the hotel were elated when Edinburgh's Development Management Sub-Committee, after a 4 hour public hearing on 31 August, voted unanimously to reject the proposals for the hotel. In 2015 the first application had only been turned down by a majority of one. That narrow defeat seemed to have influenced the way the developers approached their second application, as they scaled back the proposals in expectation that they only needed to sway one vote to get approval this time round. This proved a serious miscalculation, as the sub-committee had a new membership after the local elections last May.

The Cockburn's case was put to the public hearing by Cliff Hague, who deconstructed the developers' claims on the scale of the economic benefits that the scheme would

bring to the city. He contrasted the scale and uncertainty of these benefits with the irreparable and certain damage that would be done to the setting of the listed buildings, the Conservation Area and the World Heritage site. His concluding plea to the members of the sub-committee was "Don't let the Athens of the North become the north of Athens."

Cliff, as the representative of the Cockburn, was subsequently interviewed for the BBC TV Scotland news and Good Morning Scotland, and by STV and Radio Forth, and was also featured in a Guardian report on the issue (https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/sep/12/ministers-asked-to-intervene-in-edinburgh-luxury-hotel-dispute?CMP=share_btn_tw).

Despite this success, an appeal will doubtless follow. The Council of Trustees of the Cockburn has agreed to be represented at an appeal, though the Association will need to do some fundraising to meet the costs.

The Architectural History Society of Scotland lodged a Freedom of Information request to see the lease between the Council and the developers, which is not in the public realm. The request was granted, but the document was so heavily redacted that it was meaningless. Thus the citizens of Edinburgh remain in the dark about the terms and conditions under which this landmark building so crucial to the World Heritage Site has been passed over to a private company. Though the Music School has a planning

permission, it cannot be implemented until the lease is ended.

AGM - Members vent frustrations with city developments

A well-attended AGM in September gave members of the Cockburn Association a chance to meet new Director Terry Levinthal, and to state their alarm at the failures of the city council to adequately protect the built environment and greenspaces that make Edinburgh so special.

In a wide-ranging discussion session, many voiced deep concern not only over the fate of the old Royal High School site, but about the development at the “St. James Quarter”, and the impacts of hotels, student housing, buy-to-rent and AirBnB on the Old Town, where the traditional community is being squeezed out. Issues of Green Belt development were also raised.

The AGM re-elected Richard Scothorne to the Council of Trustees for a second three-year term, and also elected Carmela Carnicella, John McKinney, Iain McPhail, Jack Hugh and Stephen Hajducki to serve for three years. At the subsequent Trustees meeting, Cliff Hague was re-elected Chair for the coming year.

As the Association’s financial year ends on 30 September, strictly speaking the AGM was for the year 2015-16. To avoid similar slippage in future, a date has already been set for the next AGM, which will cover the

year ending 30 September 2017. So the date to put in your diaries is 12 May 2018, venue to be confirmed!

Annual Lecture explores how Edinburgh’s past shapes today’s cityscape

“Mapping Edinburgh’s Social History: Informing the Cityscape of Today” is the theme for this year’s annual lecture. It will be given by Emeritus Professor Richard Rodger from the University of Edinburgh on Thursday 26 October, in the Business Suite in the City Chambers on the High Street. **The lecture is free for Cockburn members.** It starts at 7pm, with doors open from 6.30.

Professor Rodger says “Buildings and urban design – spaces and places – inform the way we use, remember and navigate the city, and so sensitivity to memories of the urban past are central to individual identity, civic engagement and community building in the future.” The lecture will explore how an appreciation of the ways spaces and places developed in Edinburgh is crucial to understanding the contemporary city.

Why not invite a friend along, and perhaps share a pre-lecture meal together? Non-members are welcome, though there is a £5 charge for them – there will be an honesty box at the door. Book tickets online at Eventbrite: <http://tinyurl.com/y8mvzoqe> or visit the Eventbrite website and search for Cockburn Association Annual Lecture. There is a strict limit on numbers.

Director's Report



It is always an exciting and challenging time when you take up a new position, even if it is one which is vaguely familiar to you! Doors Open Days organisation was in full swing, and I am delighted with the behind-the-scenes work done by my colleague Joe Taylor in making DOD Edinburgh happen. It was also good that we were able to step in to help East Lothian Council by including their venues in the Cockburn programme.

A relatively new initiative is the Cockburn Urban Design Panel (CUDG). The Association's Assistant Director James Garry leads on this, supporting Alistair Cook in his role as Chair of the group. It is encouraging that developers and their professional teams have been working with us to get early advice on their proposals. A good example has been the very early engagement with the Trustees and architects of the Queen's Hall. The Chairman of the Queen's Hall Trust, Nigel Griffith hosted CUDG for a very early "first principles" discussion in regard to ideas for improving the facilities at the Hall.

During my first 6 weeks, I have spent much time getting out and speaking to people about the Cockburn. This includes a very positive meeting with the Lord Provost and with Gordon MacDonald, MSP for Edinburgh Pentlands. I have also met with the Chief Planning Officer and his colleagues to map out a process for ongoing constructive dialogue – very encouraging indeed.

Key tasks on my desk include the Budget for 2018, where I am sketching out proposals to increase the Association's fund-raising capabilities and setting out a new Strategy for the Cockburn to increase its profile in the City and beyond. Needless to say, there is a lot to do!

Chair's Notes



What a splendid event Doors Open Day was this year! We had many more venues than in 2016, and even the sun shined! I was in our office for the Saturday and there was a constant stream of visitors. Younger ones blinked in disbelief when shown the route of the Inner Ring Road proposed by the City Council in 1965, with its section on stilts through the Meadows. But for the campaigning efforts of

Cockburn members and other like-minded citizens the road would have been built. Of course, it would have added to the GDP of the city at the time, but at what cost to the city today?

The full picture for Doors Open Day is not yet available to me, but there is plenty of anecdotal evidence already. Riddles Court was a great draw, with an estimated 3,200 visitors, and long queues outside. I was there again for an event recently, and was very impressed by the job that has been done to refurbish and reuse the place.

Special thanks are due to Joe Taylor for his work putting together all the many aspects of a successful Doors Open Day. We plan to make 2018 even better.

New Data Protection Regulations will change the way we use your information

Members may not be aware that new data protection regulations will be coming into force in May 2018. The Association must ensure that all personal data it holds is compliant to this. The main way it will affect you is that we will have to opt-in for each purpose for which we might contact you.

This means that we need your permission to use your information not just for general Cockburn activities, but also for specific things like fund-raising (e.g. "please support our Royal High School

Inquiry appeal") to advocacy (e.g. "please write to your Councillor/MSP on the following matter"). Each specific activity will require a specific acceptance from you as a Member that we can use your personal data for that purpose.

Over the next few months, we will be writing to you or emailing you separately. It would be of great assistance if you respond at your earliest convenience when you receive the message or letter.

Edinburgh Sketchbook

A recently published book has proved very popular with Cockburn members. A *Sketchbook of Edinburgh* has 150 beautiful original illustrations of places in the centre of Edinburgh, along with accompanying text.

It captures the character and drama of this special city. It was created by Iain Fraser and Anne Fraser Sim, who are members of the Association. The foreword is by Alexander McCall Smith.

The book sold well at the Cockburn's AGM and again on Doors Open Day. It retails at £20, but we are able to offer it for £19 if you come into Trunk's Close to buy a copy! If you are looking for a Christmas or Birthday present, it is worth checking out.