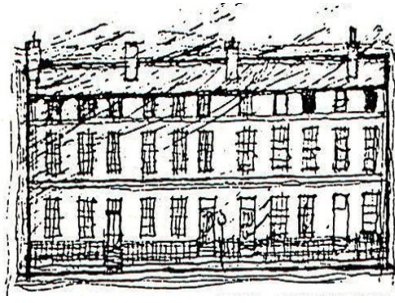




SPRING NEWSLETTER

NORTHUMBERLAND & NELSON STREET ASSOCIATION *Incorporating Abercromby Place*

Introduction

Much has happened in our City during 2018 and that pace of activity continues this year. The relentless drive to provide housing, particularly affordable house, for our expanding population has filled in most of the brown field sites within the city boundaries and sights are now set on the green belt. A shortage of high-quality office accommodation has promoted a boom in new build and refurbishment projects to satisfy that need. The population expansion target of 600K by 2030 is the main driving force, and the improvement in the economic outlook indicates that may well be achievable. The effects of 'over-tourism', a new word for the vocabulary, have put great pressure on the infrastructure and on the quality of life for citizens during summer peaks. This has also created more traffic congestion and focussed attention on how to alleviate that problem. The extension to the tram line to Newhaven is one manifestation of this focus and the continual upgrading of our bus network. More and more new five-star hotel developments and the rocketing market in short term lets, are to meet the needs of our burgeoning tourism industry.

The drive to meet obligations to reduce atmospheric pollution by traffic are moving on with Glasgow's first low-emission zone in place and Edinburgh looking to follow close behind. The movement away from constant improvements in facilities for the car are seen in the impending projects to return streets to the pedestrian and cyclist. The Transformation scheme for the city centre will see radical changes to George Street, Lothian Road and Leith Walk. Waverley Station is being proposed for a 21st century redevelopment and the expansion of the National Gallery in East Princes Street is onsite. West Princes Street gardens are also under discussion for the creation of a new enlarged events area if approval can be obtained. The new St James Centre is rising out of the ground and will be completed in 2020. The adjacent Picardy Place, at present a huge building site, will be completed to provide a transport hub for trams and buses during 2021.

Committee News

The Committee has met on three occasions, 28th June 2018, 19th November 2018, and will meet on 10th April 2019. Each meeting was quorate but there have been difficulties in organising dates to enable members to attend.

I met with Krystyna Szumelukona and her architect last November to hear about the refurbishment plans for the previous Polish Club at number 11 Drummond Place. The intention is to refurbish the outside of the building first, attending to all the wind and weathertightness of the building envelope. The interior refurbishment will follow and that will consist of restoration of all the original features to create a modern facility for visitors and guests to stay. They hope to reopen in early 2020.

In addition to being Chairman I have continued to act as janitor for lower Nelson Street, sweeping up waste deposited by our less caring citizens and very regularly notifying the Council of missed collections of the waste container or that is overflowing and the less caring citizens are continuing to place rubbish bags around it. I have also been vociferous on the volume and continuing high speed of the traffic passing my door.

David McElroy (28 N St) was in touch on a couple of occasion regarding the visual obstruction to the Hanover Street bus stop by Hogmanay hoardings. Joanna Mowat assisted with this query. David also raised the difficulties at the Hanover Street bus stop with indiscriminate and illegal parking.

Peter Davey (10 N St SE Lane) requested assistance with several wheelie bins which were being left in SE Lane, causing an obstruction. With Jonna Mowat's assistance it was revealed that the owners of the wheelie bins loved them so much that when the gull, proof bags arrived, refused to give them up. The Council has continued to empty them when presented and so the saga continued. Joanna took this up with refuse collection and I understand the practice has now stopped.

Charles and Jeanette Baillie sold their flat at 31/2 Northumberland Street to Elizabeth Pantone and Jack MacDonald in November last year as they were returning to South Africa to join family.

Mrs Husein (30 N St) approached me regarding difficulties in keeping the back area clean and tidy. Joanna Mowat assisted in getting some help to reveal the owners of the back land and getting it cleared.

In February Richard Jacques (17 N St) asked for help with the severe cutting back of four trees in the garden of the property owned by Duffrayn Data. Richard had approached the Planning Department to find out that Duffrayn had obtained permission to cull the trees and that there was nothing that could be done. He was informed that the trees were 'Listed' but not 'Protected' whatever that means. The trimming of the trees was brutal and had destroyed the green aspect from the overlooking flats. I passed on this information to the Community Council who are taking a close interest in trees after the National Gallery massacre of the avenue of trees East Princes Street Gardens.

A Member of Committee, Iain Gordon Brown, has also been active in the Abercromby area in liaising with Joanna Mowat on high speed traffic, commercial vehicles, and including refuse collection trucks parking on the north side of Abercromby Place with engines idling. Continuing abuse of the Blue Badge Scheme has also been the focus of his attention.

20mph Limit

Looking now at some of the previous schemes reported, the roll-out of the 20mph limit was completed last year and has apparently resulted in a slight slowdown in traffic. The lack of commitment to the enforcement of this restriction has been disappointing but perhaps time will produce a better result.

Edinburgh: connecting our city, transforming our places

Our City is developing and expanding at a bewildering rate and the paragraph heading is the banner under which it is proceeding. For more background to this I would refer you to a paper presented to the Transport and Environment Committee of our Council in August 2018. This outlined the three strategies, The City Mobility Plan, Low Emission Zones and the Edinburgh City Centre Transformation. The former is concerned with the advancement of foot, bicycle and public transport and the LEZ to manage and reduce traffic pollution. The City Centre Transformation is the creation of a framework for long-term development and management of the city centre. It consists of a strategic vision, future action plans and an investment strategy. There are aspects which will affect us directly, the Open Streets initiative will close streets to allow vehicle free days. The first Open Streets event begins on the 5th of May 2019 and will be focussed on the Old Town. This will take place on the first Sunday of the month commencing at 12.00 noon.

The proposed re-development of George Street and the First New Town will also influence traffic and parking and will have a 'cascade' effect into our zone.

The City Plan 2018 – City Plan 2030 is the grand plan for our region and that forms part of the National Planning Framework and that covers a duration of 20 years. The drive towards 2050 and a population of 600,000 has now used up most of the house building sites within the City and focussed attention on the green field lands outside the City boundary. The large housing developments floated for the area around Heriot Watt University and Queen Margaret's are typical schemes being brought forward to provide housing to meet the demands of an expanding City.

Air Pollution

Glasgow has recently put in place the first part of its Low Emission Zone and that has been severely criticised for its very low starting point by dealing only with the present bus services with an acceptance of the present emission standards of the vehicles. Edinburgh is working on its LEZ and hopefully it will be more radical than Glasgow. London recently introduced a further charge on its existing congestion charge for polluting vehicles. The idea of merely allowing drivers to pay extra to pollute isn't considered a radical solution.

Picardy Place

I reported last year on the ongoing reconstruction of Picardy Place which forms part of the Council's agreement for the St James Quarter. Disruptive working continues and the date for completion in 2020 could now be affected by the extension of the trams to Newhaven. The treatment and use of the central space in the round-about is still unclear and this is being followed up by the Community Council along with an appropriate location for the Paolozzi sculptures previously on front of the Cathedral.

Edinburgh Tram Extension to Newhaven

The Council approved the extension of the tram system in March at a cost exceeding £200M. The problems encountered in the first phase have not been officially reported on yet by the enquiry, but the lessons learned have supposedly been considered in the new contract. The first 'swept path' contract has commenced on site with a completion date for the whole works of 2022 with opening for passengers a year later. The Infrastructure and Systems Contract will follow in about six months. There will be considerable disruption to residents and businesses and a budget has been included to provide support for those affected. The decision to proceed will enabled the whole of

North Edinburgh to be opened to the wealth of opportunities in terms of jobs, housing and local facilities. It will also transform a forgotten part of the city which needed redevelopment. The termination of the new tram line at Newhaven has been questioned when Granton is also in need of a rapid connection to the city centre and airport. Perhaps that is in a future phase? First passengers are due to be carried in early 2023 and it is scheduled to carry 16M people per annum. The final cost is estimated at £207M.

The Former Royal High School – Planning Appeal and Inquiry

The Inquiry has concluded its work and the Reporter has made his submission to the Scottish Government. The submission is private and reserved to the Ministers and so far, no indication has escaped on their decision.

Royal Bank of Scotland Site – Dundas Street/Eyre Place

There has been no progress on the acquisition of the site although there has been some interest.

Pedestrian Crossing Survey - Albany Street at Dublin Street

The new pedestrian crossing at the junction of London Street and Drummond Place has been approved and is likely to happen during 2019. The crossing at Dublin/Abercromby is now on the Council's action schedule but has not surfaced as a priority.

'A' Boards & Tables obstructing the pavements

The end of the nuisance posed by the many 'A' boards cluttering up our pavements has diminished after the banning came into force but the custom of cluttering up our pavements with road and diversion signs continues apace.

Short Term Lets

This problem has now become acute with 12,000 AirBnB properties registered on the firm's website, that is one for every 48 residents. Mostly clustered around the Old Town this has now started to creep into the New Town. The action residents can take are limited at present to reporting a possible breach of planning regulations by running a business from a domestic dwelling. The Council has published some guidance for prospective lessees and the paper submitted to Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee in August last year gives a position statement on short term letting, key issues for the City, existing powers available to the Council and proposals to the Scottish Government for their consideration. The Scottish Government are under great pressure to take some action to move to a regulatory framework and impose a licensing regime. The dichotomy within the Council is the drive further to increase tourism to the City and to redress the loss of valuable accommodation for residents and working people.

At 27 Nelson Street we have recently had one owner letting his flat on AirBnB and discovered that we are toothless in countering this intrusion into our security.

The Committee would be interested to hear of any such problems in your immediate area.

Parking Action Plan

The Parking Action Plan was published in June 2016 and went through several guises before arriving at the Delivery of the Local Parking Strategy 2014-2019. This contained the introduction of the diesel surcharge, revisions to the pricing structure of permits, facilitated changes to the Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ), introduction of Sunday parking restrictions, visitor permits, shared use, and changes to the CPZ rules, boundary changes, applying double yellow lines at all junctions and crossings. For those of you who have a need for a more detailed look at transport, I recommend the report, Transport for Edinburgh – Strategy for Delivery 2017 – 2021. Although quite weighty this is a good read if you have an interest in the development of transport within the City Region.

IMPACT Scotland Concert Hall

This proposed development behind Dundas House on St Andrews Square, the home of Sir Lawrence Dundas, 1774. The scheme includes a 1000 seat auditorium, rehearsal space with 200 seats, an atrium café and bar and community spaces. Funded from the Edinburgh City Deal and the Dunard Fund. The architects appointed are David Chipperfield. The Council will make a decision approval for the scheme on 24th April 2019.

West Princes Street Gardens and Ross Bandstand Project

I outlined the basis of the proposals last year and since then there has been much discussion regarding the commercialisation of the City's green spaces and loss of places to enjoy nature with a bit of tranquillity. There are concerns about the number of events proposed, the frequency and numbers attending, and the possible restrictions on free entry for residents and visitors. The new proposal for a massive reconstruction of the 'A' Listed Waverley Station hasn't helped this consideration.

East Princes Street Gardens

The National Galleries of Scotland applied for Planning Permission for alterations and extension in June 2018 and this included improved service and pedestrian access with associated landscaping to improve connections between the galleries, gardens and beyond. The application was approved, including the removal of a considerable number

of trees in the gardens. The removal of the trees caused a furore in members of the public and instigated an investigation into the Council's policies on green spaces and trees. No conclusion has been reached yet but recommendations are likely to surface in respect of future Council policies on its care for the City's trees. At present the building site is an unsightly scar when viewed from above.

Pedestrian Crossing Survey – Albany/Abercromby/Dublin Streets

I reported last year on the success of getting the Albany/Abercromby/Dublin Street crossing onto the Council's priority list but so far, no action.

Transport (Scotland) Bill

This Bill has passed the first stage in the Scottish Parliament and comprises many features which will be of relevance to all of us. It proposes improvements in bus services and the provision of information to the public on any withdrawal of services; a National ban on pavement and double parking and giving powers of enforcement; providing civil enforcement of low emission zones, emission standards and penalty charges; raising the standard of and quality of road works, creating a regulatory framework on work re-instatements; strengthen compatible smart ticketing technology and establish an advisory body; improve fund holding and financial arrangements for Scottish Regional Partnerships; permitting Scottish Canal Boards to vary in size to accommodate needed skills.

Waste Collection

The waste collection service has been under scrutiny for some time and still fails on maintaining a regular collection service. It requires prompting to attend to overflowing containers too often. Containers provide an easy solution for citizens who do not participate in any of the recycling initiatives. In Nelson Street the containers reserved for local use only are used by passing motorists, surrounding streets, tradesmen, and clearances from short term lets. The authorities cannot police the behaviour of citizens but does have a duty to educate.

Your Committee has discussed measures to improve the social interaction between residents and that may be a topic for discussion at the AGM?

Preparatory work has commenced for the AGM, provisionally fixed for the Sunday 19th of May 2019. The agenda and invitation will be sent out after the 10th of April Committee meeting.

The Association's Website

The Chairman and Pat Hugh have undertaken some training, at their expense, in the use of Adobe Elements to assist them in preparing photographs to place on the website. Efforts will be made to get the website ready for launch soon, but time constraints are a problem. Joseph McAdam has offered some assistance with the website and that will be taken up soon.

A request for some assistance with administration, minute taking, membership and organisation of the AGM has so far, not resulted in any offers.

Chairman

Note that I do not intend to put my name forward for re-election as Chairman at the AGM this year and Members are asked to nominate themselves or any other resident of our area for election. Nominations should be sent to me to arrive by Monday 13th of May 2019 in order that election processes can be put in place.

Committee

Jack Hugh - Chairman	Nelson St
Janice Nisbet - Secretary	Northumberland St
Iain Gordon Brown	Abercromby Place
Paul Clark	Northumberland Street
Sara Hornibrook	Nelson Street
Peter Laing	Northumberland Street
David Young	Northumberland Street
Linda Rosborough - Treasurer	Northumberland Street

Jack Hugh - Chairman

11th April 2019