

THE SOUTHSIDE ASSOCIATION

117 Nicolson Street
Edinburgh
EH8 9ER

Founded 1972

Scottish Charity No SCO12262

Minutes of meeting held in the Nicolson Square Café on Tuesday 4 September 2012, at 7pm

PRESENT: Sandra McCormick (Chair), Vera Anderson, Graham Bell, Tom Bonallo, Colin Christison (Secretary), Angus Currie, Jan Fraser, Moira Gibson, Sheila Gilmore MP, Andy Hall, Bob Hodgart, Tom King, May Linton (Membership Secretary), Kenny McLeod, Ethel Murray, Cllr Jim Orr, Molly Ross, Jo Scott, Lisa Sibbald (Vice Chair), Pamela Spiers, Random Switch, and PC Graham Watt.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Sandra welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Margaret Bagan, Caroline Barr, Marco Biagi MSP, Sarah Boyack MSP, Linda Femister, Isobel Leckie, Carol McHugh, Jean Miller, George Pitcher, Keith Smith, Louise Smith, Colin Symes, Ola Uduku, David Wood, and Joan Young.

Scott Wilkins, Community Learning Worker from the Nicolson Street Community Centre, attended briefly to ask members to consider joining the Centre's Management Committee. The AGM is on Tuesday 9 October, and further information about responsibilities and time commitment may be obtained from Scott. (*see 5.6 below*).

2. Police Report

Sandra welcomed PC Graham Watt who gave an update on policing matters since the end of May. He said that PC Steve Cairns had been promoted to Sergeant and was now based elsewhere. Graham's new colleague is PC Kenny Hall, and at present there are just the two of them on the beat, rather than the usual four. The Chief Inspector wants to flood the area with police, with more high visibility patrols. Graham said that crime figures were down in June and July, perhaps due to the rain, and that Operation Artisan, which ran in August with eight PCs in the Southside, had also seen a fall in crime figures. (Assault & Robbery down from 9 in 2011 to 1 in 2012, with minor assaults down by 20 to 22 incidents, and vandalism reports down to 18 from 47. Calls to police were down by 20%). There were numerous thefts from Fringe venues. The initiative on violent crime, Operation Arable, was continuing. After a few questions and comments, members thanked Graham for his attendance.

3. Guest speakers: Angus Currie (Director of Estates & Buildings) and Graham Bell (Deputy Director) from the University of Edinburgh's Estates and Buildings Department

Sandra introduced Angus and Graham, who made a PowerPoint presentation about the University's latest plans and projects relating to their land and buildings. Angus said that the University had been founded in 1583, and was considered to be 20th in a recent survey of worldwide universities, with a high international reputation for research. He outlined the economic, social, and cultural benefits of the institution, mentioning: famous alumni; that the UoE is the third largest employer in the Lothian area with 11,750 staff; 30,000 students; student volunteering; civic engagement; the Business School; the Law and Veterinary Clinics; Interfaith dialogue; Medicine; Museums and Libraries; and various Festivals.

Graham said that there is continuing investment in estates, and the University is now a little way into their 2010-2020 Strategy (see link below). He discussed the Holyrood post-graduate accommodation, the Central area public realm including new signage, the now redesigned Old College Quad, the College of Art, the almost completed seven-stage refurbishment of the Library, the refurbishments at High School Yards and 50 George Square, the Law School at the Old College, major proposed changes at the McEwan Hall, Buccleuch Place and Meadow Lane. Work has started on the former Deaconess Hospital which will become student accommodation. Future plans up to 2025 include the third phase of Potterrow and improvements to the facade of Appleton Tower.

See <http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/EstatesBuildings/Strategies/EstateStrategy.pdf>

During a question and answer session, Random Switch said that he felt that the balance of student accommodation in the Southside and Old Town, together with the transitory nature of the student presence, had a negative impact on the area and its social mix, and that he hoped that the renovation of Buccleuch Place would mean a return to family flats; however Bob Hodgart thought that student population together with their contribution to the Southside was very positive for the area. Bob also thought that more publicity should be given to University facilities, such as sports and swimming venues, which are available to the public, and Morag Gibson (University's External Affairs Manager) agreed to look at how community awareness is publicised, and to compile a comprehensive list of services and facilities. Graham said that it was difficult to predict accommodation levels with differing demands from the various faculties, particularly future post-graduate requirements. Sheila Gilmore MP echoed RS's concerns about Buccleuch Place, and wondered if more purpose-built student accommodation would mean a reduction in the number of HMO properties. She hoped for more understanding on the University's part about the concerns people have about HMOs, and thought that there is an under-provision of accommodation for post-graduates from abroad.

Sandra and the members thanked Angus and Graham for their presentation.

4. Minutes of Meeting held on 29 May 2012, and matters arising

Approved; proposed by Lisa Sibbald, and seconded by Molly Ross.

4.1 Item 9.2 – Cllr Burgess had attempted to get the Council to remove the weeds and rubbish from the Woolfson Building, but without success. Colin complained again on 27 August.

5. Secretary's report

5.1 Christmas Lights arrangements. Tuesday 4 December booked by the lighting dept. Permission required from Council and Police. Laurence Wareing, a preacher from the Methodist Church will officiate at the Carol Service. Cllr Orr will be MC. Switcher-on required. Various others to contact.

5.2 MABLAG (Meadows and Bruntsfield Links Advisory Group) next meeting is at 2 pm on Wednesday 7 November 2012, venue to be decided. Linda Hendry has asked us to send a substitute as she will be away. Bob Hodgart said he would attend if no-one else was available.

5.3 Students in the Community – Tuesday 30 October (evening), at Teviot Row Union. Meeting hosted by the EUSA with community project proposals to be considered by the South Central Neighbourhood Partnership's Community Grants Fund.

5.4 2 October speaker – asked Water Board – no reply. *Afternote:* now confirmed, with a talk on the new Glencorse Water Treatment Works.

6 November speaker – Ron Butlin, Edinburgh Makar

5.5 Party flats – support wanted from the Old Town. There are areas of the city, notably the Old Town, New Town, and Leith, where there are problems with noise and anti-social behaviour, although there do not yet seem to be such problems in the Southside. It was agreed to support them in their endeavours to make regulation of short-term holiday lets compulsory, about which Sarah Boyack MSP has been campaigning for some time. HMO properties, hotels and guest houses are regulated.

5.6 The Association is entitled to have a representative attend the meetings of the South Side Community Centre Management Committee, which meets on the second Tuesday of the month. Volunteers please contact Colin.

5.7 Annual OSCR returns were about to be submitted by Colin and Fiona.

5.8 Safer Neighbourhood Team - meeting was held on 29 August. Minutes from the May meeting are available. Cllr Rose will chair future meetings.

5.9 SCNP Environment and Town Centre Group met on 3 September. Minutes from the May meeting are available. Cllr Orr is the new Chair. He said that a list of priorities is required. There are concerns that the Community Safety Group is not dealing effectively with flyposting and graffiti.

6. Treasurer's report

Treasurer not present.

7. Membership Secretary's report

May said that 30 members had paid, with some to renew.

8. Planning and Licensing

8.1 The Secretary thought it desirable that the SA establishes a formal planning sub-committee with three or four members to scrutinise planning applications and examine plans and drawings where necessary. Colin and Jo put their names forward, others invited to consider joining the group.

8.2 *Illuminated advertising Billboard at Parkside Bowling Club – ref 12/02808/ADV*
Objection lodged. There was a discussion about the matter. The Forrest Media group has already erected a large illuminated board in the grounds of Parkside Bowling Club. Consent was given earlier in the year, and it was assumed that the sign was for the club, not for general advertising. It lies just outside the Southside Conservation area. The advert is highly visible to pedestrians and motorists leaving Holyrood Park on the way to the Commonwealth Pool etc. The above application is for the other side of the structure. It transpired that there already was consent for an illuminated sign at the west end of the bowling club. Planning applications for advertising do not require neighbour notification. There have been numerous complaints and objections. Sheila Gilmore MP said that certain Pas are not explicit enough.

8.3 *East Meadows Pavilion* – more information required. *Afternote:* letter of representation submitted requesting information about the opening hours of the catering outlet, and about the times when the tennis courts would be lit up.

9. Environmental matters

9.1 Metal theft is at all time high – see leaflet. www.crimestoppers-uk.org or 0800 555 111 to report suspicious activity such as unmarked vans being loaded with cabling, 'workmen' not wearing uniforms with logos. Thieves steal road signs, manhole covers, lead roofing, gates and fencing, railings, communications and power cables.

9.2 New look for Neighbourhood Watch Scotland
See www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk

9.3 St Patrick Square refurbishment– previous funding bid from 2011 failed. The Council has applied to the Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme for funding. Outcome will be known in December, and if successful the work will be to a similar standard as that of Nicolson Square. If not successful, the previous allocated sum of £35K will be

used to make modifications. However it was understood that the three existing trees would be preserved, although one would be moved slightly.

Random Switch expressed concerns about the poor state of the railings in the residential part of the Square; there are gaps and poor temporary arrangements, and a child could fall into the area below. The properties are privately owned and owners would have to get together to arrange repairs themselves, as the work is unlikely come under the scope of a statutory repair notice. Sheila Gilmore MP said that while the Council's repair scheme had been badly managed, it was important not to abolish it without having a workable alternative in place. People should be encouraged to maintain and improve their property. The survey <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/T9VLDQ2> asks for views by the end of September.

9.4 Hilary McDowell has reported a water leak on the north-bound carriageway of Nicolson Street, at the Square, to Scottish Water.

9.5 The City Council propose to create a City Car Club parking space at Bowmont Place.

10. Question and Answer Session with the attending Councillor

Cllr Orr had participated in the various discussions earlier. He mentioned that the Food Waste programme would be rolled out over the entire city in the next few weeks.

11. Any other business

11.1 Jo Scott wondered why the Association was meeting in a different venue. The earliest that accommodation was available in the Community Centre would have been Wednesday 19 September, which was too long from the May meeting, and too near the October meeting.

11.2 Bob Hodgart reminded members of the Doors Open Days on 22/3 September. The Causey Development Trust has organised the openings of the Buccleuch & Greyfriars Free Church, and the Chapel of Ease Graveyard on the Saturday.

11.3 Random Switch said that the traffic/pedestrian lights sequence at Nicolson Street/West Richmond Street crossroads had changed so that the motorists had two phases and pedestrians just one. This was considered to be unacceptable, and enquiries would be made.

12. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 2 October at 7pm, in Room GP2 at the South Side Community Centre.
