

# ***The Southside Association***

**117 Nicolson Street  
Edinburgh  
EH8 9ER**

*Founded 1972      Scottish Charity No SCO12262*

**www.southsideassociation.co.uk**

**Members' Meeting  
Tuesday 11 September 2018 at 7pm  
Room 1, Southside Community Centre**

## ***Minutes***

**PRESENT:** Colin Christison (Chair), Maggie Bagan, Bob Hodgart, Hilary McDowell, Philip McDowell, Kenny McLeod, Ethel Murray, Maggie Peatfield, and Jo Scott; Cllr Steve Burgess.

### **1. Welcome and apologies for absence**

Colin Christison welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Jan Fraser, May Linton, Dora Lola-Luz, Carol McHugh, and Colin Symes.

### **2. Police Report**

The officer was unable to attend.

### **3. Minutes of meeting held on 5 June 2018, and matters arising**

Approved; proposed by Hilary McDowell, and seconded by Maggie Bagan.

3.1 *Item 3.1* – (Davie Street Church planning application) application withdrawn.

3.2 *Item 4.2* – (Spotlight cinema) scaffolding in place on Clerk Street, so presumably work will start soon.

3.3 *Item 6.3* – (138 Pleasance planning application for upgrade of Greyfriars Charteris Centre) application withdrawn.

### **4. Chair's Report**

4.1 **Murals** - the Association is extremely grateful to the University of Edinburgh's Local Community Grants scheme for providing funds for a mural at the Gibb's Entry pend, and to the City of Edinburgh Council's Local Events Fund and the South-Central Neighbourhood Partnership for funding the mural at the Haddon's Court pend.

The objects of the two projects were to create attractive murals to brighten these rather grotty pends and to enhance the visual amenity for a busy residential part of the Southside. The artwork reflects

the various aspects of the surrounding area, including its academic, recreational, and business attributes. We are confident that the aims have been successfully achieved. The work started at the end of June 2018, and the murals were completed on 16 July 2018.

The project has more than met our expectations in that it has strengthened the community spirit and inspired residents who were weary of the mess. They can now see that conditions can indeed change for the better. Links have been built between residents, businesses, council staff, the Southside Association, and the University; and plans made to build on what has started. We believe there will be some significant changes to this small part of the Southside on the back of this project. Positive attitudes and effects were evident when we painted the Gifford Park Murals, and we feel sure that we will see these demonstrated here as well over the next few months.

The artist Kate George designed the murals, and was responsible for supervising the volunteers who helped every day with the work of preparation and painting. Over the two weeks, there were between 6 and 15 people helping each day. These came from many walks of life, and included local residents, residents from a bit further afield in the city, and they were from all age groups - from children, assisted by their parents to those over the age of 70. Early participants were very enthusiastic and spread the word, and soon there was a small group that was there most days, and these people were able to assist with the supervision of new volunteers. In addition, there were scores of people who stopped to ask what was happening, and to take photographs, often for social media purposes. A woman from Australia who was here for her daughter's graduation helped enthusiastically for most days along with her daughter and her friend. Local people responded well to our appeal for used tea towels for mopping paint and for empty containers that had lids for small quantities of paint. One student who was about to move into an adjoining flat was delighted to find that the entrance to his new home was being transformed. He joined in the work. Several people had particular artistic skills and training and were delighted to be able to work with us.

The completed murals project has been greeted with great pleasure by all who have seen them, and we were able to dispel doubt about future tagging and graffiti by explaining that all the surfaces are coated with anti-graffiti varnish. The Gibb's Entry pend was particularly dingy and unpleasant and the mural, together with the smart new bicycle racks, and a pledge from the Council to keep the ground area clean, will ensure that it will be a place of pleasure and interest in the future.

We hope that the artwork will remain intact for many years. The measures to combat tagging and graffiti as mentioned above will help greatly with this aim. Several local residents helped to paint the murals and have promised to look after them. The bigger result is that this has inspired residents to undertake repainting a very large area at the back of the shops that is forever being tagged. One of the businesses has offered to fund this, and rather than just overpainting, the vision is to create a thing of beauty by using different colours. An offer has also come through from another group to improve the garden area adjoining which has been neglected for years. We are delighted that friendly co-operation will make such a difference.

Finally, we are very grateful to the artist, Kate George; to the staff at the Community centre, and to the management and staff at Tesco Metro for their invaluable assistance. We are especially indebted to Philip and Hilary McDowell, who were present every day from the start of the painting to the finish, and who gave their time and skills so generously.

- 4.2 **Christmas Carol Service etc** – Tuesday 4 December at St Patrick Square and afterwards at the Community Centre. Consent forms and funding application to be submitted. More details to follow.
- 4.3 **Haddon's Court** – in an effort to help solve ongoing issues here, the Council had arranged a meeting for tonight with residents, shop-keepers, police, parking services, and other Council staff. Cllr Burgess had been present at the start of this meeting and said that it was attended by several residents, and representatives from the police and some Council departments, as well as two of his fellow Councillors.

4.4 **Community Centre** – revised evening opening hours. All lets have to leave by 8.45pm, but meetings can start 15 minutes earlier if required. Bookings made until June 2019.

4.5 **Nicolson Square update** – Sarah Burns had advised as follows

20 July

There has been a significant focus of resource in Nicolson Square over the past week or so with officers from Police Scotland and the Council carrying out numerous joint visits over the week both during the day and in the evenings and I hope that those of you who live and work locally have noticed a positive impact of this increased attention. Our officers have had feedback from some local businesses that have seen an improvement in the situation. Colleagues from Police Scotland and the Council met today and we agreed we would continue to commit resources to these patrols for the next two weeks.

Temporary signage advertising the byelaw has been erected in Nicolson Square while we await the permanent metal signs. These have been ordered and we hope to have them soon so we can put these in place around the Square. We know that the temporary signs are being vandalised and are only a very short-term measure.

11 July

I last provided an update on 8 June 2018 to let you know that Streetwork were going to have a presence in the Square for a 4-week period. That period has now passed and Streetwork have had some positive outcomes through engaging with a number of people who were in need of support and advice. It is recognised however that there is still ongoing antisocial behaviour from a group who are continuing to cause concern for local residents, businesses and visitors.

Officers from the Council and Police have discussed an approach which will make use of powers under The City of Edinburgh Council Byelaw Prohibiting Consumption of Alcohol in Designated Places and the Council's Park Management Rules to take a stronger enforcement approach towards those whose behaviour is causing annoyance, offence, alarm or distress to others. Over the next few weeks we will be:

- putting up new signage in prominent places in and around the park alerting people to the byelaw that gives the Police powers to ask people to stop drinking alcohol. Note that a person is only causing an offence if they refuse to comply with this request. The byelaw does not permit a place to be designated a "no alcohol zone" but the Police do have powers to ask any person to stop drinking in a designated place and they will take a robust approach to this in Nicolson Square.
- talking to the group to make them aware of the Park Management Rules and specifically the rule that relates to behaviour in Edinburgh's parks and powers to ask people to leave the park, or ultimately to exclude them, and letting them know we intend to use these powers to deal with unacceptable behaviour.
- making planned joint visits with the Police to use the powers to expel people from the park for their behaviour. Evidence will be gathered through these expulsions which ultimately can lead to a person being served an exclusion notice for up to one year.

In addition, Police Scotland will continue to deal with any reports of criminality and respond accordingly.

I know that there is a great appetite and enthusiasm amongst local people to work together to improve the Square and to make it a more welcome and inviting space. I hope that these actions will help to address the issues that are hindering the progress of this positive work in the community.

4.6 **Holyrood Distillery** – conversion of the former Engine to a distillery has now started.

4.7 The Community Centre's Management Committee is seeking new members, and reminded the SA that the group may nominate a member to join it, but there were no takers. It was agreed that Philip McDowell would replace Dora Lola-Luz as the SA's representative on the Southside Community Council. He is a member of that group, and will be able to report on matters of interest in each direction.

## 5. Treasurer's Report

Hilary McDowell reported that the sum of £9221.52 had been spent on murals. We had been fortunate enough to apply for planning consent for both murals under the same application, and therefore saved £228.48; half of this sum will be returned to the University, and half to the Council. The bank balance is presently £1075.51 (with the £228.48 still to be returned), and petty cash amounts to £39.97. The website hosting fee is due to be paid.

## 6. Planning & Licensing matters

- 6.1 18/03995/FUL – proposed flatted development at 3 Simon Square. SA and several other groups and residents objected. The proposal is to cram 11 'micro-flats' into a small space and this will impact on the adjacent dwellings at Haddon's Court and Simon Square.
- 6.2 18/03057/FUL – proposal to change from long term residential lets to short term/holiday lets. Objection lodged on grounds of loss of long term residential occupancy.
- 6.3 18/02643/FUL – erection of two external ducts at 58 South Clerk Street; objection submitted, as had local residents, but consent had been granted.
- 6.4 18/02433/FUL – change of use from Rugby Club with offices and gallery to Class 10 use with linked café etc; SA sent representation of support.
- 6.5 The City of Edinburgh Licensing Board requires to carry out a detailed consultation exercise in relation to the review of its Statement of Licensing Policy in terms of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005. The LB will have regard to its policy in respect of decisions on how the Board regulates the sale of alcohol in Edinburgh. The Policy will be published in November 2018 and apply until 2022 when it will require to be updated. The SA will respond before the closing date of 1 October 2018.
- 6.6 Responses to a second consultation are required by 5 October 2018. This is to assess the extent to which the LB considers there to be an overprovision of licenced premises, or premises of a particular description, in any locality in its area. SA will respond.

## 7. Environmental matters

- 7.1 There is still no power supply at the north-bound Bus Tracker opposite the King's Hall.
- 7.2 There is widespread concern about the loss of the north-bound bus stop near the Queen's Hall.
- 7.3 Hilary McDowell reported as follows: -

### ***Upgrade of Nicolson Street corridor***

This is mostly complete and has proved to be far better and more extensive than we had expected. There have been so many extras included that the community had asked for over years such as the resurfacing of Montague street and Bernard Terrace as well as removal of railings at various junctions and the completion of the paving with Caithness stone at Drummond Street junction. The new pedestrian crossing there seems well used. Refurbishing such a long stretch of busy road was a major undertaking but has worked exceptionally well. I don't think that residents would have been as happy if it had been undertaken in sections causing disruption over several years. The staff and contractors were friendly and efficient and many children were taken out to see the big machines working in the evenings. It almost felt like a big show on our front street.

There are still a few things to be finished off such as replacement of missing and bent bollards and new cycle racks, along with fixing of some wobbly paving slabs but we have been promised that will happen soon. The SCC is asking for planters and bollards to be installed outside The Royal College of Surgeons to prevent vehicles parking on the pavement there. Discussions continue.

The SA would like to recommend that Stephen Blacklaw receives a commendation for his management of the roadworks project in the Nicolson Street Corridor. His attention to detail and communication with the community was outstanding and much appreciated.

### **Deep Clean**

There is a proposal for a 'deep clean' of the main corridor in late October. We had suggested this when Sarah Burns came to the SA several months ago. It was also on the list of requests put in by the SA and SCC at a meeting to draw up a plan to improve this 'locality'.

*Confirmation of dates from Sarah Burns - "we are proposing holding a "3 days of action" over the dates Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> October, where we would co-ordinate Council and partner services over Thursday and Friday to carry out a range of activities focussed in and around the Southside Corridor culminating in a community day where there would be the opportunity for the community to get involved in supporting a clean-up and perhaps a community event on the Saturday in Nicolson Square Gardens. I'd propose that we ask the newly established Friends group to lead on the event on the Saturday as I know they are keen to get activities going in the gardens"*

### **Flyposting**

There has been a great deal of Festival flyposting this year. The advertising hoardings and boards round the street furniture was supposed to stop this. The Council currently has a contract with a company called Out of Hand which, we have been told, requires the company to keep an area of 20 metres radius of all their sites clear of flyposting, litter and graffiti. It seems to many of us that this hasn't worked this year, as there is still a lot of flyposting on the streets. The current contract is due to be renegotiated soon. I took many photographs just after the Festival and then walked part of our area with Steven Cuthill and Gareth Thomas, Council staff, 10 days later. By then all the official advertising boards etc had gone but none of the flyposting which I had photographed more than a week before. Now fresh flyposting is appearing to advertise events for the student community. This used to be controlled by a scheme called Unight. All licensed businesses knew that if they allowed events and acts which were taking place in their premises to fly-post then their own licence would be at risk. Flyposting was minimal when this agreement was in place. It has been allowed to lapse for some reason. We should ask the council exactly what the contract states the provider is to do and be prepared to take a deputation to the Environment and Transport Committee or full council to point out how tired the Southside is of once again being littered with posters.

### **Zebra crossing**

After the Roads Capital Investment Programme that the zebra crossing should go in on Bernard Terrace by the Nelson Hall. Part of the delay has been to consult further with Preston Street School and Scoosh. The site has been put on a list for a puffin crossing but that would mean a delay of 4 years. No date as yet.

### **Other roads projects**

The Caithness stone paving slabs north of Drummond Street have now been laid. It has become clear that it should have been done years ago but there was scaffolding up on shops at that time. It then seems to have been forgotten. Presumably there was money allocated for it then so it shouldn't come out of the pot of money for the public vote. Other projects further down the list should now get funded. The second on the list was to do remedial work outside Lidl and there has been no sign of that happening. Please will our councillor chase that. I suggest we put in another project for the next voting round. There is no safe phase of the lights to cross Salisbury Road opposite the Commonwealth Pool. It shouldn't be difficult to do this. It might require a new set of traffic lights to show straight on only and left turn phases. At the same time I suggest we ask for the pavement bulges to be re-engineered so that two people can pass on the south side of the road going round the corner. If the bulge on the north were to be reduced a little and that on the south given that extra the road width could stay the same and pedestrians accommodated better. There is a very long term plan to do something to improve cycling in the area but we don't want to wait to see if that will happen. This idea doesn't prevent that happening later, and it should cost very little.

The SCC has applied for the loan of a 'Pop-up Bob' cardboard cut-out policeman with a radar speed gun to encourage motorists to stick to 20mph. We expect it will be in the area for 2 to 3 weeks. We can choose where it goes – ideas please.

#### ***Localities meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> June***

This was attended by Hilary McDowell for the SA and Nicholas Oddy for the SCC. Between us we had drawn up a list of what the SA and SCC members wanted tackled and we presented this at the meeting. There were 3 local councillors, a police officer and the Locality Manager Sarah Burns present. Local councillors wanted us to all agree some 'quick wins' from this list. Removal of A-boards from streets has been agreed by the Council to start this autumn but no date has been fixed, or staff appointed for this. ***Afternote*** – enforcement will start in the city centre on 5 November, with two officers carrying it out.

#### ***Meadows***

There are negotiations for the next contract for the festival events on the Meadows. I haven't heard of any chance for the public to contribute. There is also a consultation over the Meadows management plan. This was first circulated giving the public a week to put in comments. This has since been extended to the end of September. The problem of the burning of the park by barbecues is not addressed. The slabs don't work as a solution. Many are broken and not used. The plan also suggests designating more areas as 'wild flower meadows' which will be not cut regularly. Currently these areas don't seem to grow wild flowers but lots of dandelions, docks and other plants that most of us call weeds. These seed into local gardens but don't appear to add much to biodiversity.

### **8. Report and Q & A with the attending Councillor**

Cllr Burgess had participated fully in the various discussions, and had noted several points to follow up for the group.

### **9. Any other business**

9.1 Bob Hodgart asked about the Edinburgh Civic Forum. There was some discussion and Bob was advised to refer to the Cockburn Association website for further information.

9.2 Maggie Bagan asked if the Nelson Hall lease had been signed; Cllr Burgess thought not.

### **10. Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 2 October 2018, at 7pm, in Room 1.

***Future Dates*** – Tuesdays – 6 Nov, 4 Dec (6pm at St Patrick Square, and then in the hall), 8 Jan, 5 Feb, 5 Mar, 2 Apr, 7 May, 4 Jun.