

**Regent, Royal & Carlton Terraces Association
'RRCTA'**

May 2011

N E W S L E T T E R

Power to the People!

Thanks to all who attended the Association's 2011 **Annual General Meeting** in mid March. It was good to see so many residents there, and to learn that a large number had objected to the **Biomass power station**, proposed at Leith Docks *see page three for information on the current state of play.*

Since the AGM, we have continued fire-fighting on behalf of the neighbourhood. The surprise proposal to site a **fun fair on Calton Hill**, for nine weeks this summer, generated a large number of objections from both individuals and organisations, horrified at the prospect (*see below*). Fortunately good sense prevailed and the proposal was declined.

Thanks to all who took the time to object by email or letter. **Numbers do matter.**

On a lighter note, we are delighted that **Dr Eric Graham**, our resident historian, has volunteered to write a regular column for the Newsletter on Calton, including its evolution and development. The first article, on Calton Hill before the cut-through from Waterloo Place, is printed on ivory paper and distributed with the Newsletter.

Welcome to the Newsletter

It's designed to provide information and news on matters affecting life in and around the Terraces and Calton Hill, and to let you know what the Association is doing on your behalf.

What do we do?

The Association was formed in 1966, to protect the architecture of the area and its general amenity. Today we are also actively involved in a wide range of local issues.

Who can join?

Anyone living on or around Calton Hill can join.

How can I join? Contact Claire Tait on 556 7565 or email us on rrcta@live.co.uk. Annual membership (from March 1st) - £20 per household, or £10 for single occupants.

Abbreviations in regular use: CEC = City of Edinburgh Council; EWHT = Edinburgh World Heritage Trust; NTBCC = New Town & Broughton Community Council

Events on Calton Hill – residents get a say!

At the March AGM, we advised members that there was a rumour of plans to hold a **fun fair on Calton Hill**. We are grateful that the Council saw fit to advise the Association, and NTBCC - the local Community Council, of this proposal before it got as far as a formal application for a temporary entertainment License.

This enabled the Committee to galvanise local opinion to consider how they would be affected by a fair, running for nine consecutive weeks – ten and a half hours noise per day, seven days a week. Many of you took the trouble to object, and to copy your objections to local councillors, so that they understood the strength of feeling against such a proposal. As a result, the proposal was declined. However we cannot be certain that requests for similar events won't reappear.

Future Events

The Association has offered to work with CEC officials to improve the **consultation process**, to ensure that we are able to comment on future proposals at an early stage. We have asked for the process to be made more transparent and to be codified. At present it's not clear who should be consulted at an early stage, nor why CEC officials feel unable to refuse applications that clearly fall outside the guidelines for events on Calton Hill.

The guidelines, known as the **Events Manifesto**, were agreed by CEC last August. The Association spent time and effort last year inputting to the draft proposals, with some (but not total) success. The Manifesto clearly states that Calton Hill:

- *is a residential area,*
- *that any event on the hard standing, in front of the Monuments is limited to four weeks maximum (or 7 days on grass),*
- *that the Hill is not suitable for events dependant on passing footfall,*
- *nor for events which might damage the fragile ecosystem, as the Hill is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest.*

We have also repeated, many times, that amplified noise on the Hill creates serious noise pollution for those living downwind of any event.

We are considering setting up a mechanism to alerts residents to any future problematic events, and will keep you updated. In the meantime, we are advising CEC of our strong support for **EWHT's vision** for the Hill – *see page two.*

Calton Hill – the Vision

Prompted by RRCTA's alert about the proposed Fun Fair on Calton Hill, Adam Wilkinson, Director of EWHT, wrote to CEC outlining their vision for the Hill and setting out their strong objections to the proposed event.

With Adam's consent, we reproduce part of his response, to help you understand EWHT's vision for the Hill, a vision which has the full support of the Committee.

EWHT Vision

"Calton Hill is critical to the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site, with a collection of monuments of national and international importance. Our organisation has recently invested over £500,000 of both its own funds and public donations in the careful conservation of these, as part of a broader attempt to rehabilitate the hill as a place of quiet contemplation on the city, in a landscape designed in the picturesque manner."

"At present the hill lacks both a clear management plan and a clear management structure, and this application appears to be very much a result of these unfortunate circumstances. The application does not take into account in any way the special nature of the hill or its current use. At any point up to sunset from April to November, one can find over 100 people, both tourists and locals, enjoying the hill as a place to relax, enjoy the views and escape the hustle and bustle of the city – something that becomes all the more valuable during the chaotic summer months. Indeed, the hill is the second most visited place in the City after the Castle, yet with none of the hubbub."

"The revitalisation and proper management of the hill is not about dramatically increasing numbers or radically changing the nature of the hill, as this proposal would serve to do. Rather it is about working with the history, built and natural heritage of the hill to create a better environment for visitors – well maintained, clean, safe, appropriately interpreted and accessible. This entails long term investment and careful thinking, starting small (such as the provision of hot / cold drinks and lavatories) and gradually bringing the buildings back to life, as exemplified by the city taking on the Vivat Trust in the recently restored Old Observatory House."

"I am certain that the community, both through the RRCTA and individually, will have expressed their concern at this application. I cannot overstate the importance of their views, as they are the people that care for the hill and tidy it up after each weekend (the lack of proper management means that there has been no regular cleaning since December, that there are few bins in convenient locations for users, added to which the city's youth are not good at cleaning up after their evening drinking sessions). It is incredibly important to properly understand the impact this application will have on their quality of life. The success of the overall management of the World Heritage Site is dependent on maintaining the delicate balance between the community, the city's built, natural and cultural heritage and the economy. This application rides a cart and (fairground) horses through that balance."

The Association wholeheartedly supports this vision for the evolution of the Hill - as a destination for 'quiet contemplation' for locals and visitors, with facilities inside the buildings.

'Twentifying' the Terraces

It now looks very unlikely that any tram line will be built through Picardy Place in the foreseeable future.

The Association has decided that the time is now right to press for the Terraces and Blenheim Place to be 'twentified', ie reclassified as a 20mph zone.

We are delighted that Carol Nimmo, from Royal Terrace, has just agreed to join the Committee and will lead this campaign.

Carol will update you on the situation and the prospects for progress in the next Newsletter. You can contact her at rrcta@live.co.uk if you would like to help.

City Centre Crime

Statistics released by Edinburgh's city centre police show that violent crime in the New Town, West End and Old Town has fallen recently. However, there has been an increase in house burglaries, especially in basement flats.

Theft of metals has also spiked recently, with brass plaques, shops' metal shutters and roof lead all being targeted.

Two people have been arrested, and police are working with local scrap metal merchants ('scrappies') to try and reduce this problem.

Leith Biomass Plant – the objections mount

The first public consultation phase for the application, by Forth Energy, to site a large biomass plant (ie power station) at Leith Docks ended on March 11th. 1800 objections to the application were logged during this phase. Since then responses have been received from the **statutory consultees** ('sc's'). Their views are critical and will ultimately have a more telling influence on government ministers than those of individuals.

Second consultation phase due to start Monday May 9th

Under s36 of the 1989 Electricity Act, the first response by an *sc* triggers a second phase of public consultation, based on the *sc's* response. **SEPA** (Scottish Environmental Protection Agency) and **SNH** (Scottish Natural Heritage) - both '*sc's*' - lodged their responses at the end of March. This should have triggered the second consultation phase.

However, by the end of March the election period had officially started and the consultation process had to be delayed. The second public consultation phase will now kick off on May 9th for four weeks. During this period members of the public can comment on the SEPA/SNH responses.

How did Statutory Consultees Respond?

SEPA did not object to the impact of the biomass plant on air quality, but did raise serious concerns about whether a plant burning wood pellets was sustainable, given the number of biomass plants planned globally, and the impact of this increasing demand on the future price of wood pellets.

SNH have objected to the proposed plant, on the grounds it would have '**a major adverse impact on the landscape setting of Edinburgh**' and its world heritage site.

EWHT is not an '*sc*' for this proposal, but CEC is. CEC still has a number of months to decide whether or not to object to the application. *An objection by CEC to the plant would almost certainly trigger a public enquiry, so it's worth lobbying councillors to encourage them to oppose the scheme.*

Take Action Now

You can support SNH's objection and SEPA's concerns, by writing to the Energy Consents Unit **before June 6th**. Email them at: LeithBiomass@scotland.gsi.gov.uk,

or write to: **Energy Consents and Deployment Unit, Energy Division, Directorate for Energy and Climate Change, Scottish Government, 4th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU.**

Please forward (don't copy) this email, and any others you sent objecting to the plant, to our local councillors. This will demonstrate the level of local opposition to Forth Energy's application. Their email addresses are: charles.dundas@edinburgh.gov.uk joanna.mowat@edinburgh.gov.uk David.Beckett@edinburgh.gov.uk.

If you don't have access to email, you can forward a copy of your letter to each councillor **c/o City of Edinburgh Council, City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1YJ**

Celebrate our local Heritage – an Appeal

April 26th 2011 marked the three hundredth anniversary of the birth **David Hume** - one of Edinburgh's most renowned citizens, and one of the world's greatest thinkers. Hume is buried in the Old Calton Burial Ground in Waterloo Place, in a mausoleum designed for him by another of Edinburgh's world famous sons - the architect **Robert Adam**. Despite the fact that Hume was seventeen years older than Adam, the two were friends.

For more on Hume and the mausoleum, Ctrl+click <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/scottishenlightenment/davidhume/learnmore.asp>

The mausoleum is now in need of repair, but funds are tight and CEC are exploring how apprentice stone masons might be used to repair the monument for about £7,000, later this year. The Committee has voted to donate £100 to this appeal, to help maintain this exceptional structure, which forms part of our local architectural.

We ask residents to consider making a contribution to this worthy cause. EWHT will oversee the work to ensure that it conforms to the correct standards.

Donations can be sent to: *Hume Mausoleum Appeal, EWHT, 5 Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, EH2 4DR. Please enclose your name and address so that EWHT can send you a gift aid form, to reclaim the tax paid on your donation.*

Waste Collection – Piloting the Way Forward

Following Mike Penny's talk to residents last November, about modernising waste collection in Edinburgh's World Heritage Site, households in Calton are now taking part in a number of pilot arrangements, designed to collectively reduce the mess caused by seagulls and other scavengers.

Recycling plastic bottles

All households have received a large clear plastic bag for separating out, and recycling, plastic bottles of all sizes. This initiative is intended to reduce the amount of residual waste, presented in black bags on Monday and Thursday mornings. Plastic bottles are now collected on alternate Fridays with the RED box collection.

Food waste collection

Food waste caddies have also been distributed to all households and they do seem to have made some impact, as the amount of waste accessible to gulls and other vermin has reduced. The use of food caddies is currently optional, but will become compulsory for all households in 2013. We do urge residents to participate in this scheme, as it makes for much cleaner streets.

Residual Waste - various collection trials

From May 1st, neighbourhoods across the World Heritage Site are piloting different approaches to the presentation and collection of residual waste. The trials will last for approximately six months. Once again, the top priority is to eliminate gull attacks on black bags, especially during the breeding season.

A number of options are being trialled over the next six months:

- in and around Heriot Row bags will be collected on two evenings a week, between 7.30 and 11pm;
- in Fettes Row/Royal Crescent large communal bins will be sited on the garden side of the street;
- in Forth Street, and some nearby streets, large communal bins will be sited on blind gable ends, where they are not visible from any windows;
- in and around Great King Street, seagull-proof bags will be used.

In Calton there will be **NO CHANGE** – black bags will continue to be collected on Mondays and Thursdays on the Terraces, throughout the six month pilot. The Mews will continue with individual wheelie bins, for the time being.

CEC still intends, eventually, to do away with black bags for residual waste collection.

We'll be asking you for feedback on the new arrangements later this year.

Snippets

Several very large, and very dead, elm trees on the south side of Regent Road were felled by CEC in March - opening up wonderful new views of the Palace for lucky residents on the Terraces!

There are a number of changes underway in Montrose Terrace:

- The Shell filling station has closed. The site is to be sold for commercial, or perhaps residential, use.
- Flower Revolution also closed recently. After five years, Verity and Georgette have gone their separate ways, but we are told to expect a new florist shortly!
- An application for change of use to a cafe has been lodged for the former pub – in the premises recently vacated by Inverarity.

No takers yet for the lease on the 'cottage' in London Road Gardens - another possible cafe, for local use.

Garden Announcements

A summer barbecue will be held on Saturday June 4th – save the date!

A new bed of herbs has just been planted by the herbaceous border. Keyholding cooks might want to check out the range of plants now available!

Farewell to **Ronald and Jane Duff**, longstanding residents of Regent Terrace, and active members of the Association and Garden Committees over decades. We wish them well in their new home.

RRCTA Committee

Chairman: Ian MacIntyre

Secretary: Anne Casson

Treasurer: Claire Tait

Maidie Cahill, Jim McCormack, Libby Morris, Carol Nimmo

Mark Howseman has resigned from the Committee, due to the pressures of work. We are looking for more volunteers. Please contact 556 7168 (Ian MacIntyre) if you would like to help, or email us on rcta@live.co.uk