

THE SOUTHSIDE ASSOCIATION

117 Nicolson Street

Edinburgh

EH8 9ER

Founded 1972 Scottish Charity No SCO12262

www.southsideassociation.co.uk

Members' Meeting

Tuesday 5 April 2016 at 7pm

Room 1, South Side Community Centre

MINUTES

Present: Colin Christison (Chair and Secretary), Jo Scott (Vice-Chair), Lisa Sibbald (Treasurer), Moira Gibson (Minutes Secretary), Tom Bonallo, Tom King, Ethel Murray, May Linton, Maggie Bagan, Bob Hodgart and Reuben Kay.

Also present: PC Ross Stewart, Cllr Ian Perry, Kevin Hawes, plus three guest speakers.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Colin welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Hilary McDowell, Maurice Naftalin, and Dora Lola-Luz.

2. Guest speakers: David Robertson, Susan Robertson, and Gary Mappin from the Holyrood Park Distillery.

Colin welcomed the speakers who outlined their proposal for a Holyrood Park Distillery and visitor centre on the premises formerly occupied by the Engine Shed. Several community meetings and public consultations have been held, with positive feedback so far. A planning application (16/01742/FUL) has been submitted to the Council.

No malt whisky has been distilled in Edinburgh since the 1920s so the concept is to open a small whisky distillery producing around 50,000 litres per year, operating as a gin distillery at first, with a Visitor Centre which will explain to the public (locals, tourists) how whisky is made, its history and tradition. It will be designed to complement the Scotch Whisky Experience near the Castle.

Noise will be kept to a minimum, though with some construction noise for approximately 12 months during the build. There should be no odours, as the whisky will not be matured on site and will be stored off-site. Water usage has been explored and discussed with Scottish Water: it is not expected that operations will cause any interference with current water supplies and pressure.

All three storeys of the building will be in use, with window boxes and 60% of the existing garden retained. There will be no parking onsite, apart from disability parking, and visitors will be encouraged to walk up from the Royal Mile or come by bus.

Opening hours will be 8am-8pm for production, with two mashes per day, and 10am-6pm for visitors. Formal opening is scheduled for early summer 2017, and approximately 25 jobs will be created, including some apprenticeships. The external courtyard can be used for local markets and events. Planning is for 80 visitors per hour, 7,000 per week, and it is hoped the distillery will be in profit by 2018 through sales of spirits at the shop and elsewhere. There will be a small kitchen for private and corporate entertaining, but no public café.

The Chair thanked the speakers for their presentation.

3. Police Report from Police Scotland

PC Ross Stewart gave the most recent crime figures, indicating that all kinds of crime are down – this month, by 40%. There has been a significant drop in crime associated with NPS ('legal highs') since stricter measures came into play, and this has freed up time to deal with other crimes.

Housebreakings are down by 25% in our ward. Members raised concerns that a high level of shoplifting might lead local supermarkets to close. PC Stewart advised that the boundaries of localities were changing this week, and South would be joining with Central, West End, St Leonards and Howdenhall, so joining forces may make it easier to catch these criminals.

4. Report on Environment and Community Safety from Kevin Hawes, Community Safety Officer, City of Edinburgh Council

Kevin reported that surveillance had resulted in a known local drug-dealer being evicted and sent to jail, which will help reduce local crime.

Although begging continues to be a major concern for local people, legislation does not reflect this issue and setting up no-begging zones could displace activity to another part of town. Other cities, such as Aberdeen, are grappling with this issue too. Since January, a local audit of beggars has been ongoing. Members enquired whether certain areas and premises could be designated as 'vulnerable'. Kevin's advice is to lobby local Councillors to see what can be done.

Members gave Kevin the usual reports of overflowing and damaged bins and uncollected rubbish, but his post is being restructured, with 13 Community Safety Officers being reduced to six posts for a wider area. It's currently unclear what arrangements will be made within the new structure for Environmental Wardens who can tackle these service failures. Similarly, local posts like those of Kathy Evans, dealing with bins, A boards, tables and chairs licences, are being reduced from six to two.

Colin thanked Kevin and Kathy for all their work, and wished them well for the future. He thanked Euan Calder and David Doig, both of whom were no longer in post.

5. Minutes of meeting of 1 March 2016, and matters arising

The Minutes of the March 2016 meeting were approved: Proposer: Jo Scott; Seconder: Maggie Bagan. No matters arising.

6. Chair's Report

6.1 Kim Harding, Director of the Edinburgh Festival of Cycling <http://www.edfoc.org.uk/>, had written seeking the Association's support for an art installation at the Causey in the form of bikes suspended from lighting columns and possibly buildings. The Association agreed to support the concept.

- 6.2 Colin passed on a message from Jonathon Miller, Station Manager, Response and Resilience, Edinburgh South Central, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, which is aiming to reduce instances of deliberate fire-setting through engagement with schools and distribution of an information leaflet. If anyone knows of fire-setters, please phone Crimestoppers at once.
- 6.3 Colin referred to a letter sent to the Association by the Southside Community Centre, which also runs the Nelson Hall. In light of budgetary difficulties at the Council, which owns and maintains these buildings, the management committee has been asked to find alternative streams of revenue in order to meet the costs of running and staffing the building and providing a programme of activities. The Association is invited to comment.

Discussion ranged around several matters, including the amount of expertise and time local community volunteers could be expected to offer, and what the legal position and potential liability for them would be.

Cllr Perry explained that the Council had invited community centres, if they wish, to consider alternative ways and means of running community facilities. If they become Trusts, then they can apply to more and different sources of funding (eg lottery) than they can at present, as Council centres. One model might be that the Council continues to own the buildings and keep them wind/watertight, while the Trusts would pay for running costs including energy and staffing. In relation to legal liability, OSCR safeguards trustees against lawsuits. In relation to HR and pension issues, where expertise would be required, trusts could use private consultants or staff seconded from the Council.

The Southside Association was supportive of investigation of the possibilities and further appraisal of options, particularly the financial aspects, and looks forward to hearing further proposals from the Community Centre's management committee.

- 6.4 Colin introduced Reuben Kay, a local young man studying Film at Edinburgh College. He used to have a part-time job at Homebase before it closed and, for his dissertation, is making a 10-minute film about the accommodation pressures on the Southside. He asked members and their friends to take part.
- 6.5 In response to concerns about low levels of lighting in and near Holyrood Park, Colin had received a letter from the Park managers explaining that reduced lighting is beneficial to wildlife in the Park.

7. Treasurer's Report

Lisa reported that the balance was £1,531.39, reflecting a £17 expenditure on domain name renewal.

8. Planning and Licensing Report

- 8.1 15/05479/FUL Change of use from pawnbroker, Use Class 2, to restaurant, Use Class 3, with hot food takeaway at 80 Nicolson Street – application withdrawn.
- 8.2 16/01742/FUL Application from Holyrood Park Distillery – see above.

9. Environmental Matters

Colin thanked Hilary McDowell for another customarily thorough report:

- 9.1 “The waste department isn’t emptying various bins frequently enough and waste builds up round them. The garden waste collections are overdue. Lots of dumping of furniture, etc.
- 9.2 Graffiti appeared on the Gifford Park mural around 25 March, and was reported on Facebook. It took 40 minutes to clean it off - great that money was spent to apply the anti-graffiti varnish which makes it possible to clean off spray paint. However, it is very disappointing that some people spoil what is so appreciated by some many others. The postcards are welcomed in almost all the shops and cafes. Almost all have been placed so we will ask the University for another 2,000 as the Southside Community Council are holding information days, and they hope to have a presence at the Meadows Festival.
- 9.3 There has been very little progress on street repairs but some wobbly paving slabs were fixed in the last few days. I had hoped that East Preston St would have been resurfaced this holiday but as there are diversions due to gas main replacement further down Dalkeith Road it would appear the resurfacing has been postponed. [Cllr Perry agreed to ascertain a firm date for this along with promised work to the main corridor of Newington Road to Clerk Street.]
- 9.4 Flyposting continues to be a problem. An organisation promoting food sharing called OLIO has put up posters on lamp posts in the area. I have written to say that this is unacceptable and illegal. Another promoting exchange of seeds etc has put up lots on the Meadows. They never seem to come and remove after the events. Posters associated with the election are now appearing stuck onto empty shops. Colin Fox and Jim Sillars of the Scottish Left Alliance (Rise) have posters on at least one shop – anyone attending hustings should remind candidates to remove flyposting. Chalk graffiti also seems to be proliferating too but at least that wears off.
- 9.5 Commercial bins are far fewer than they were, but a number of businesses have changed to putting out plastic bags at night and others leave bins on the street all the time without the required identification. I am reporting this to the Environmental Wardens for action.”

10. Report from, and Question and Answer session with, the attending Councillor

Cllr Perry reported that he would be holding a meeting with residents of Briery Bauk and Dumbiedykes about parking concerns.

11. Any other business

- 11.1 Concerns were expressed that local shoplifting was now such a major problem that some shops were considering closing. This had been discussed with the Police during their report and the Association would press the Police to take action, where necessary.

12. Date of next meeting

AGM is on Tuesday 3 May at Southside Community Centre. This will take the form of a short business meeting, with election of new office bearers, followed by a buffet.