



**THE COCKBURN
ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER**

August 2017

Cockburn has a new Director



The Cockburn Association is delighted to announce that Terry Levinthal is our new Director. He is a highly experienced professional in the fields of conservation, development and heritage. He has worked at a senior level over a long period and brings a combination of management experience and technical expertise that made him an outstanding candidate from a strong field of applicants for the post.

Until taking up the new job on 21 August, he was the Managing Director of Terry Levinthal Consultants, a conservation consultancy. Previously he was Director of Conservation and Projects for the National Trust for Scotland, where he was a member of the senior management team. He delivered a wide range of conservation and property planning programmes including landscape management and

preventive maintenance programmes. Crucially, he delivered major sections of change management programme at NTS including significant property portfolio reviews and Cost of Care profiles for the entire estate."

Terry Levinthal is an Urban Designer. He studied urban/environmental design and architecture in the UK and Canada. He has sat on the Boards of a number of other heritage and environment organisations in Scotland, and has regularly participated on specialist working groups assisting government and others in policy development.

Terry has also a range of senior appointment in Scotland. He was the Director of the Scottish Civic Trust where enhanced the Buildings at Risk Register, assisting Government in developing it as part of the National Performance Framework. He worked for the Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland (now Architecture + Design Scotland) and headed the Livingston Environment Workshop where he helped local communities take greater involvement in their neighbourhoods.

Terry has a good understanding of the planning system. He chaired the Planning and Access Committee of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, and so was in the "hot seat" for the statutory planning authority. He also chaired its Local Scrutiny Panel.

He says "I am delighted to join the Cockburn Association at this time of change and challenge. Edinburgh is a World City, which goes well beyond its inscription as a World Heritage Site. It is frequently cited as being one of the most

beautiful cities in the world – rightly so, which also explains the tourism pressures that feature in recent news reports. However, the investment in the essential qualities that made this accolade – in both capital and revenue – seems to lag well behind not only the immediate needs of the city, its heritage and its landscape, but also in terms of its betterment.”

He continues, “Never before has there been such a need for The Cockburn. However, the organisation needs to be set on a sounder footing, and to attract more members, if it is to fulfil its ambitions. My task will be to work with its Trustees to set the strategy and business foundations, and reinvigorate the Association as the premier advocate for this great city. ”

Older members will recall that Terry was Secretary of the Cockburn Association from 1992 until 1999. He lives in the New Town with his wife Robin and two sons, Fiontan and Cormac. He has a keen interest in outdoor activities. As a practical conservationist, he has restored a cottage in the Highlands of Scotland.

Voices of dissent: Concern mounts over developments in Edinburgh

For a long time it has seemed like the mere mention of “economic growth” or “hundreds of jobs” was all that was needed to get a go-ahead for development in Edinburgh. However, there are some signs that this may be changing. The disregard

for what Lord Cockburn called “the beauty of Edinburgh” is being challenged.

The Times ran a big feature under the headline “Heritage city whose residents are being left with sore eyes” (5 August). In it Alexander McCall Smith and his friend (and Cockburn member) High Buchanan excoriated recent and on-going developments. The designs for the hotel in the new St James “Quarter” were “a monstrosity”. In its disregard of the New Town setting it is “an act of artistic destruction”, says the world-famous author. As McCall Smith noted, yes, people need jobs and a city needs businesses, but “that doesn’t mean you have to do it in a brutal, insensitive and ultimately destructive way.”

The council headquarters building in the New Waverley development is seen as entirely suitable – for a site in Milton Keynes or for “an ice cream parlour”, but NOT for the place it occupies in the historic city.

The article also laments the transformation being forced on the Old Town, where “hotel development is rampant”, and “Every second person is either a visitor trundling a suitcase, or a student. Nobody knows anyone.” McCall Smith argues for investment in affordable housing, and makes a case for steering new hotels to more suburban sites.

The Times published a further critical commentary in its 7 August issue. This time it was Magnus Linklater saying “Edinburgh must not be shaped by developers”. Linklater picked up on Lord Provost Frank Ross’ self-description as “Edinburgh’s

economy leader”: “To describe himself as an ‘economy leader’ rather than as the figurehead of a great European city says much about the council’s ambitions.” Linklater observed that “In no other great European capital could developers dictate the shape of the city.”

Linklater continued, “Almost every one of recent developments in the city endorsed by the council has worked to undermine its uniqueness.” He pointed out that this blinkered approach to economic development undermines the very qualities that draw developers to Edinburgh in the first place.

An equally heartfelt cry had been uttered by Fergus Linehan, the Director of the Edinburgh International Festival (The Times, 5 August). “We need to get a discussion about design and open space out into the open”, he was quoted as saying. “We absolutely have to protect the city. Anything which takes away what’s special about Edinburgh will definitely diminish the Festival.”

Cockburn in the Press

A letter from the Chair of the Cockburn Association was published in The Times on 11 August. It picked up on the comment in the 5 August article that the former Royal High School building appears to have been saved after a public campaign, and that the design to replace the Ross Bandstand was chosen “only after a public competition”.

The Chair’s letter then noted “Yes there were over 3,000 objections to the hotel, a clear signal of distress from the

citizens. However, the decision is in the hands of councillors who on 31 August will vote on the planning application. Even if they turn it down, the developers have the right to appeal the decision. Meanwhile they still have the lease of the site granted to them by the City Council.”

It continued “There was indeed public consultation on the designs for a new performance arena in Princes St Gardens. However, until a planning application is submitted nobody knows what the final scheme will look like. The stated intent is to create a venue that can be used for large or small events 365 days a year. Changes to a bridge aim to enable larger lorries to enter the gardens. A further attempt to squeeze as much money as possible out of Edinburgh’s civic assets seems possible.”

In an article published in The Scotsman on 11 August, Cliff Hague, as Chair of the Cockburn, also addressed the issues posed by the design competition for the new performance arena in West Princes St Gardens. The full article can be read at <http://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/cliff-hague-the-ross-bandstand-plan-must-still-face-the-music-1-4527081>

Amongst the points it makes are:

- The “regeneration” of the gardens aims to increase footfall in the already crowded city centre;
- The council’s “culture chief” has called for a wider spread of event venues across the city to take pressure of the centre (where a further new concert venue is planned under City Deal);
- The aim is to create “an attraction that can function 365 days a year...hosting a

combination of large and small events”: this threatens the tranquillity of the gardens;

- Widening the bridge from Kings Stables Road to allow larger vehicles access – how many and how often?
- If the city already has 4 million visitors annually, how many will be “enough”? 5 million? 6 million?

Until a planning application is submitted we will not know exactly what is proposed: it may differ from the winning design.

Other concerns raised by Cockburn members are that the selection of the winner came before, not after, the closure of the period for public comments, and that the design is likely to be expensive to implement.

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Please contact

admin@cockburnassociation.org.uk

Thanks!

Chair’s Notes



On 31 August I will address Edinburgh’s Planning Committee in the hope of persuading them to reject the revised application for the hotel at the old Royal High School. The previous application was refused narrowly in 2015, and since then the Music School has been given a permission, but the hotel developers still have the lease, so until the hotel is killed off for once and for all, the Music School cannot progress.

With the Architectural History Society of Scotland and Edinburgh World Heritage concentrating on the architectural aspects of the hotel designs, I will focus on the economic case. I will draw on evidence to show that the benefits claimed for the hotel are exaggerated, and that the scheme is risky. My message to the councillors will be “Don’t play Russian Roulette with Edinburgh”. The stakes are high since a permission would shape the future of the site for a century, meaning that never again would we see the school building standing proud on the side of Calton Hill without seeing it overshadowed by the unsympathetic wings of the hotel.

Meanwhile I am delighted to welcome Terry Levinthal (back) to the Cockburn as our new Director. His experience for the job is unrivalled and I very much look forward to working with him. Our task is to take the association forward at this critical time in the development of the city. This means setting agendas, growing the membership and making sure that we run in an efficient and accountable manner. It will be a challenge, but one I believe we will accomplish.

Thanks are due to James Garry and to Joe Taylor who have kept the work of the Cockburn going since our previous Director departed early in March. I would also like to say a big “thank you” to the team of volunteers who regularly help out.

Finally the Cockburn is again running Doors Open Day Make a note of the weekend 23-24 September in your diaries. The brochures are being printed and we will soon be distributing them around the libraries and from our office in Trunk’s Close.

Richard Rodger to give Annual Lecture

We are pleased to announce that this year’s annual lecture will be given by the eminent urban historian Professor Richard Rodger. He has recently been leading a project called Mapping Edinburgh’s Social History”. A venue has yet to be confirmed but the planned date is the evening of 26

October, in commemoration of Lord Cockburn’s birthday.

Professor Rodger is a Cockburn Trustee. For more details of his career and the project see http://www.ed.ac.uk/history-classics-archaeology/about-us/staff-profiles/profile_tab1_academic.php?uun=rodger

Annual General Meeting and elections to Cockburn Council of Trustees

The AGM will be held at St. Cecilia’s Hall, Niddry St, Cowgate, Edinburgh EH1 1NQ. The venue will be open from 5.30 on 11 September and the meeting will commence at 6pm. There will be refreshments afterwards and a chance to meet the new Director. Please email admin@cockburnassociation.org.uk if you wish to attend, so that we have a rough idea of how many to cater for..

There are six vacancies on Council. Nominations are invited from Members and must be made and seconded by Members and must include the consent of the nominee. Nominations should be sent to the Director at the Association’s office at Trunk’s Close, 55 High St, Edinburgh EH1 1SR, or by email to admin@cockburnassociation.org.uk. They should be accompanied by a personal statement by the nominee, not exceeding 250 words in length. The cut-off for receiving nominations will be **Monday 28 August at 5pm**. Persons elected will serve a term of 3 years and may stand for one more 3-year term after that before being required to stand down for a period of at least one year