



thecockburn**association**



ANNUAL REVIEW **2022-2023**

For Everyone who loves Edinburgh

www.cockburnassociation.org.uk

SC011544



Reference and Administrative Details – at 30 September 2023

Charity Registration Number: SC011544

Principal Office:

Trunk's Close
55 High Street
Edinburgh
EH1 1SR

Sir Sandy Crombie

President

Council Members:

Barbara Cummins	Chair, Convener of Management & Finance Committee (Elected 2023)
Prof Cliff Hague	Chair, Convener of Management & Finance Committee (Retired, May 2023)
Claire Mitchell	Vice-Chair, Management & Finance Committee (Elected 2021)
Alastair Cook	Convenor, Policy & Development Committee (Resigned September 2023)
Richard Scothorne	Management & Finance Committee (Appointed 2021)
Prof Richard Rodger	Management & Finance Committee (Elected 2023)
Stephen Hajducki	Policy & Development Committee, (Re-elected 2021)
Mark Lazarowicz	Policy & Development Committee (Elected 2021)
William Moyes	Treasurer, Management & Finance Committee (Elected 2021)
Emily Yates	Policy & Development Committee (Elected 2022)
Peter Williamson	Policy & Development Committee (Elected 2022)
Lesley Martin	Management & Finance Committee (Elected 2022)
Richard Price	Policy & Development Committee (Elected 2023)
Annick Gallaird	Policy & Development Committee (Elected 2023)

Council members who retired at last AGM: Professor Cliff Hague

Members of the Policy & Development Committee who are not Council members:

Pam Barnes, Keith Anderson, Lila Angelaka

Staff

Terry Levinthal	Director
James Garry	Assistant Director
Kvitka Perenhinets	Heritage Support Intern (resigned Nov 2023)

Solicitors:

Lindsays WS,
Caledonian Exchange
19A Canning Street
Edinburgh
EH3 8HE

Investment Managers

Brown Shipley
2 Multrees Walk
Edinburgh
EH1 3DQ

Bankers

Royal Bank of Scotland
Bank of Scotland

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Chair's Report

Barbara Cummins
Chair of Council

I want to thank all members for the warm welcome I received as your new Chair at our AGM in 2023, stepping into the not inconsiderable shoes of Professor Cliff Hague. I also appreciate your continued support for and interest in the work that the Association does to engage debate in and improve the outcomes for the beautiful city we live in.



Cliff and Barbara at the 2022 AGM

As with 2021-2022 we have continued to see the impact of financial pressures and this impact on our resources. There has also been an increase in prominent issues in the city which we seek to influence. As we look forward to 2025, our 150th year, your Council focused on a strategic response to these challenges,

seeking to ensure clear priorities for action and developing routes to be in a better position next year.

Part of our thinking has been about our finances, but most importantly it has focussed on our desire to raise our profile and engage more people in issues that make Edinburgh tick. This is particularly the case as we approach the 150th anniversary of the Association - a feat only a very select few amenity associations in the world can match.

Reputation Survey

As part of this strategic overview, Richard Scothorne, one of our Council Trustees undertook a reputational survey at the beginning of 2023. Interviews were undertaken with City of Edinburgh Council staff and Councillors, Community Council members, Architects, Developers, and other influential local stakeholders to gauge what others think of us and understand what we need to do to maximise our impact.

Overall, the responses presented a positive picture of the Cockburn, with many saying that they had noticed a change over recent years from a predictably negative response to a more balanced and engaged approach on key issues, working behind the scenes to improve developments, complemented by focused campaigns and events. There was a strong appreciation of the way that the Association had used its convening ability to bring together stakeholders and the public around key issues of interest and concern, gaining a better understanding of the issues and effective ways forward.

The main themes emerging from these conversations were that the key strengths of the Association were its independence; its skills, expertise and experience; and its long-standing history of engagement in city affairs. This provides us with a longer-term, large-scale view of change and how it could be managed effectively. The Cockburn's financial independence and the ability this gave it to act based on evidence and without any vested interest was felt to be increasingly rare and valuable in Edinburgh and enabled it to raise important issues that others found harder to do. Almost all those interviewed said they would encourage interested people to join the

Cockburn Association, a welcome accolade of support.

Amongst other suggestions there was encouragement to use the convening role of the Cockburn as an independent organisation to create opportunities to debate the key issues around the future of Edinburgh. Many felt that no organisation is better placed to help to bring civic Edinburgh together, and there is a serious lack of opportunities for interested parties to engage together around key issues, understand different viewpoints, share information, and evidence and identify effective ways forward.

Much of what emerged from this study has informed our thinking over the past year. Additionally, members will have seen in our most recent e-newsletter a request to fill in a survey of your views and attitudes of the Association, and what you would like to see as a member. Once assessed, this will be folded into our forward thinking.

Edinburgh Civic Forum

The Cockburn Association continues to host and service the Edinburgh Civic Forum. It meets quarterly and engages with items as strategic as the ongoing implications that flow from National Planning Framework 4 for the city, to specific topics such as a proposed Blue Green Network to allow the city to respond to the threats from climate change. The direct and constructive dialogue between City Council officials and representatives of local groups and community councils continues to be valuable and inciteful.

The forum continued to discuss the issue of short term lets; we hope the introduction of the licensing and planning regimes will allow this matter to settle now.

Open Edinburgh

We reported in 2021-2022 that we would no longer be delivering Doors Open Day as a single day event. Instead we plan to continue to deliver events and access under the banner of "Open Edinburgh".

Last year saw us facilitate a major event to bring together the different voices around the topic of student housing titled "Student Housing – Crisis and Opportunity." This event brought to-

gether student groups, residents, academic institutions, and resident representatives for a lively debate on the issues around significant new student housing developments in the city. City Plan 2030 has a more nuanced policy approach to student housing provision in the city which we support; effectively the right development in the right place. We continue to comment on applications and support communities where inappropriate or out-of-scale developments are proposed. See more in our Policy and Development Committee report which follows.

Capacity to deliver

During the last fiscal year, Council made a conscious decision to reduce costs by managing staff levels in the small executive office we maintain. We were fortunate to have an Intern, Kvitka Perenihnets, helping over much of the year but as she moved on, this created added pressures on our Director Terry Levinthal and Assistant Director James Garry. So, with an eye to our need to enhance engagement with Members and the wider citizenry of Edinburgh and the expansion of activities for our 150th anniversary, we made a recent decision to take on a new Engagement and Outreach Officer, Brigid Golden. I look forward to working with her and I hope many of you get to meet her at events over the coming year.

I would like to record my thanks again to Professor Cliff Hague for the tireless work he undertook on behalf of the Association from the moment he took on the task in 2016. He is indeed a tough act to follow, and I was extremely honoured to have been chosen as his successor. I would also like to thank my fellow members of Council of the Cockburn Association who give so freely of their time and expertise to it.

We have much to be proud of but still much to do. I am excited as we move towards the significant milestone of our 150th anniversary.



Development Report

Terry Levinthal (Director) and
James Garry (Assistant Director)

It should come as no surprise to members that many of the development is-

suess that consider have a familiar ring to them. Two underlying themes could be identified. The continued expansion of Purpose-Built Student Accommodation across the city and the growth of tourism and hospitality-related developments featured largely.

The Cockburn's Policy & Development Committee meets monthly to discuss and consider these and many other proposals and policy consultations. We record our thanks to Committee members for their significant advice and support.



Policy & Development Committee visit
Old Royal High School

The Cockburn submitted comments for the Christmas Market and Winter Festival. The Association has been concerned for several years by the increasing impact to civic spaces caused by Winter Festivals, noting their popularity at the same time. As such, we were pleased that the necessary applications had been submitted timeously, unlike in previous years where planning consents were granted after the events had ceased operating! In general, we had no



East Princes Street Gardens Winter Festival from Castle.

objection in principle, but we did articulate our strong concerns about the lack of detail and missing information in them. For example, no drawings of the George Street ice rink were available, making it impossible to ascertain its impact on neighbouring businesses, listed

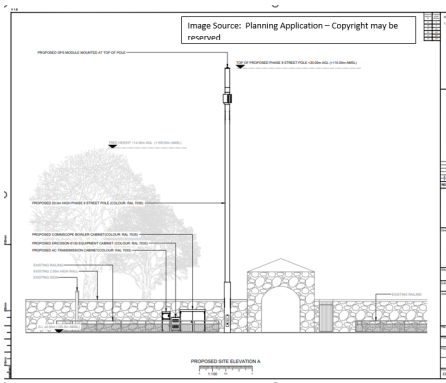
buildings, and the Conservation Area. Similarly, the use of The Mound for the Christmas Market was supportable, but we were concerned with the impact of pop-up bars and food outlets on neighbouring local businesses who operate year-round. Also, we suggested that the upper terrace in East Princes Street Gardens be deleted from the proposals to avoid damaging soft surfaces including the remembrance garden as we had little confidence in the protection of the trees or the restoration of the damaged areas of ground. In West Princes Street Gardens we highlighted several deficiencies in the application which made meaningful assessment impossible. Given the number of years that the Winter Festivals have operated, it was hugely disappointing that such basic points of detail and management were lacking.

The Association continued with its objection to the proposed demolition and redevelopment of Centrum House, Dundas Street. We acknowledged some subtle improvements to earlier proposals such as the articulation of the Dundas Street elevation, but none addressed our main concerns. In considering the wider climate issues that we are facing, we strongly advocated that the existing sub- and superstructure should be retained due to the significant amount of embodied and embedded carbon that it represented. In taking this position, we noted that both the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and the Institute of Chartered Engineers (ICE) had issued policy statements suggesting the demolition of structures should only be allowed as a last resort.

At the start of 2023, we objected to two Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) schemes. At Arthur Street, just off Leith Walk, we were concerned with the intensification of use in a primarily residential area, bearing in mind large PBSAs in the nearby neighbourhood and the potential use of the proposed PBSA accommodation as holiday lets during non-term times. We also lodged an objection to a controversial application at Jock's Lodge. We recognised the historic context of the site and accepted that student accommodation could also be acceptable use. However, we considered that the height, scale, and massing of the proposed development was inappropriate for this restricted and constrained site on a significant traffic artery to and from the city centre and near a busy junction.

We commented on a proposed PBSA student development at Sibbald Walk, in the Old Town. This site already had planning approval for much-needed mainstream residential development. Although similar in scale and form, its watered-down design was monolithic in appearance and at odds with the rest of the New Waverley development. Whilst we felt that some student accommodation might have been acceptable, it would only be as part of a mixed-use development which included substantial amounts of affordable housing with some commercial and community spaces and appropriate climate-ready landscaping and greenspace. The three housing units in this proposal were clearly out of place and inconsistent with a scheme which was now entirely dominated by student housing.

Not surprisingly, all these PBSA schemes were approved by the City of Edinburgh Council. The Association did consider other PBSA proposals during the year which did win our support, such as a small scheme in Tollcross on the site of a former nightclub.



5G mast, Whitehouse Loan.

In considering planning applications, it is not just size or form that is the issue. A case in point was a proposed 5G telecoms installation on Whitehouse Loan. This was characteristic of several telecoms applications which concerned us during the year. The planned installation would have resulted in excessive visual and physical clutter within the streetscape and would have detracted local amenity and special character of the Conservation Area. We understand the requirement for modern telecomms infrastructure in our city. However, proposed apparatus can often be erected in inconspicuous locations or ways. Here, we suggested that an existing streetlight mast could be extended, and that a near-by redundant Police Box could provide

an excellent home for the technical equipment. The City Council refused consent on the grounds of impact to the Conservation Area.

With several Fringe and Festival related applications to review, our comments were guided by our concerns about the commodification of civic space in the city. As in previous years, we objected to the use of the Meadows as a Festival venue, opposing the use of public parks and gardens for “gated” and commercial events requiring heavy infrastructure. Here, the proximity to trees to the event site was an additional concern due to the potential compaction of root systems leading to long-term decay or even tree loss. Root systems at both Middle Meadow Walk and Boy’s Brigade Walk are especially vulnerable. We articulated similar concerns to proposals in the gardens of George Square.

Several hotel related applications also took our attention. We were supportive of a complex hotel/aparthotel development involving a site on Shandwick Place, Queensferry Street and Queensferry Street Lane. This was an effective use of this site. External heritage features were to be conserved, underused buildings brought back into productive use and most of the existing street level commercial units retained. However, we were concerned with some of the internal modifications which were proposed. In the absence of a comprehensive Heritage Statement, it was not possible for us to fully assess the heritage impact. We also submitted our objection to new guest rooms partially over the existing roof structure of the Calton Highland Hotel. The proposed alterations to the hotel’s roofscape were clearly inconsistent with the architect’s original design concept for this side of North Bridge which requires clear separation between each of the façade elements to be maintained and carried through in the rooftop design. Positively, we supported changes to the Old Waverley Hotel on Princes Street where we considered that the proposed new entrance was a positive improvement to the street frontage and a more suitable and accessible entrance for this prominent hotel. The proposals also retained some ground level activity along Princes Street.

In responding to these applications, we also noted that several hotel proposals were coming forward in and around Central Edinburgh and that the ad hoc nature of these applications made

it impossible to understand the potential cumulative impact arising from the additional access and service requirements of these developments. The City of Edinburgh Council had an opportunity to take a pro-active approach to the development of a unified Servicing Plan for hotels and similar developments in consultation with Edinburgh residents and other stakeholders.

A small application for serviced apartments at Crichton’s Close in the Old Town was of interest. We acknowledged that the serviced holiday apartments might have a more limited impact than holiday properties with no on-site management. However, the Cockburn is increasingly concerned with a lack of any over-arching vision, strategy, or action plan to balance the requirements of tourism and residents in the Old Town area. The continuing expansion of holiday-related accommodation in the Old Town has considerable potential to negatively impact on the lives and quality of life of long-term residents as it has already done in many European capitals, some of whom are now actively engaging in destination management to re-balance the needs and expectations of



Pop-up “Festival Village, Waverley Mall
their residents and other stakeholders.

We objected to a controversial application for a pop-up hospitality village on the roof terrace of Princes Mall (former Waverley Market). The Association has been concerned with development here since the early 1980s, where it successfully argued for a reduced height restriction. Although this site has operated for several years without consent, a greater awareness of unauthorised operations has resulted from the Cockburn Association’s concerns about this in past recent years. Here, we are concerned with not only the disruption of critical views across the valley also that this is a particularly congested part of Princes Street with vehicular and pedestrian traffic moving to and from ma-

for transport hubs. This proposal would have inevitably make an already poor situation worse.

A campus-wide development plan to 'consolidate and improve' the Edinburgh College of Art (ECA)'s existing estate won our support. Overall, the Cockburn was very encouraged by this high-profile redevelopment within the World Heritage Site and Old Town Conservation Area. Three listed buildings were directly impacted, and significant changes were proposed to the public realm. We recognised the need to reconfigure the internal spaces within the ECA's buildings to suit contemporary usage, the needs and expectations of academic staff and current students and to facilitate barrier free access, as far as possible, within and around the buildings of the campus. We felt that the proposed reduction of car parking facilities across the site could have gone further with softer, greener landscaping proposals rather than the areas of hard landscape proposed.

We continue to monitor short-term lettings in the city. We have been strong supporters of the government's new licensing regulations and the City Council's general policies and approaches, which seek to limit STLs in unsuitable locations such as tenements and properties with shared facilities. The STL lobby have been less enthusiastic and launched two legal challenges against the City. The first was its opposition to the proposed licensing policy, which was found to be unlawful as it included statements on planning issues which were not strictly relevant to the licensing. The second, also successful, determined that the STL Control Area, designated by the Council could not be applied in retrospect, as had been done. However, in both judicial reviews, Lord Braid's opinion was very nuanced and forced changes to the policy and approach, but not its abandonment. Our detailed assessment of both cases can be found on our website.

During the period, the Association also submitted detailed comments on policy consultations, including National Planning Framework 4, West Edinburgh Place-making consultation, Leith Links Masterplan and a range of other consultations. These can be found on our website at www.cockburnassociation.org.uk.

Overall, we recognised that considerable growth in Edinburgh was planned over the next ten years, with the city required to accommodate around 37,000 new houses to 2030. Much of this would be in West Edinburgh. Whilst there is much merit in restructuring industrial and commercial areas which are underused, we have continued to object to proposed Green Belt releases and planning applications. Additionally, the wider infrastructure requirements for these changes including mass transit systems are still to be seen.



Finance Report

Bill Moyes, Treasurer

The Statement of Financial Activities and Balance Sheet for the year ending 30 September 2023 are set out in the Annual Review. They have been inspected by our auditors CT LLP and were approved by the Cockburn Council on 9 April 2024. The full accounts are available on our website.

The adverse effects of the cost-of-living crisis continue to be felt by the Association. Once again, we budgeted for a deficit year with projections in the region of £40,000.

The actual operating deficit for the year ending 30 September 2023 was £31,104 after gains on investments during the year are considered. Total funds at year-end were £482,985 (2022: £513,568). These were made up of unrestricted funds of £481,373 (2022: £512,052) and restricted funds of £1,612 (2022: £1,516).

The value of investments fell to £402,694 at 29 September 2023 compared to £455,235 at 30 September 2022, recovering slightly from a low point in August 2023 of £399,940. It is worth reporting that as of 1 April 2024, investments have recovered somewhat to £439,224, illustrating the volatility of global markets and issues with the UK economy.

Council have authorised a draw-down from the investment fund of £35,000 to cover a projected 2024 deficit of £41,000.

Positively, membership numbers remain constant, and the Association did receive several small legacies with indications of others to come. Bequests are

hugely important to the Association, and we would encourage members to consider leaving the Cockburn a gift in their will after they have taken care of family and friends.

In looking forward, Council have agreed that it would be unwise to continue to draw down our reserves. In an organisation as small as the Cockburn there is very little scope to cut costs, although when opportunities arise, we take them. For the future the Council's aim is to focus primarily on increasing our income by growing our activities and the range and effectiveness of our fundraising efforts. The 150th anniversary of the Association provides us with the opportunity to illustrate the positive and long-term impact that we have had on the city. To ensure this legacy of civic engagement, we need to look beyond 2025 and source financial partners to help make this happen. In a city that depends so much on its qualities and amenities, it is essential that our financial strategy is fit for purpose and can support our vision of a sustainable and high-quality city for all.

To this end, we have taken advice from a business consultant on development of this strategy. An initial report has been received and will be taken forward by the Council over the next year.

Whilst we are not in immediate danger of being unable to fund our activities and ambition, it is essential that we reverse this trend in the medium term. Support of members is fundamental to this and we hope for your continued interest in the Association in the future.



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (including Income and Expenditure Account)

Year ended 30 September 2023	Unrestricted		Restricted	Total 2023	Total 2022
	Capital	Revenue			
	£	£	£	£	£
Income and endowments from:					
Donations and legacies	-	40,151	7,276	47,427	27,000
Charitable activities	-	3,119	-	3,119	4,850
Investments	-	11,980	-	11,980	11,277
-	-	55,250	7,276	62,526	43,167
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds	-	4,024	-	4,024	9,620
Charitable activities	-	81,265	11,165	92,430	87,789
		85,289	11,165	96,454	97,409
Net gains/(losses) on investments	3,345		-	3,345	(74,052)
Net income/(expenditure)	3,345	(30,039)	(3,889)	(30,583)	(123,294)
Transfers between funds	(34,024)	30,039	3,985	-	-
Net movement in funds	(30,679)	-	96	(30,583)	(123,294)
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward	512,052	-	1,516	513,568	636,862
Total funds carried forward	481,373	-	1,612	482,985	513,568
All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities					

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2023	2023		2022	
	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets:				
Tangible assets		25,618		25,114
Investments		391,021		429,065
		416,639		454,179
Current assets:				
Debtor	7,898		7,623	
Cash at bank and in hand	65,214		57,445	
	73,112		65,068	
Current liabilities:				
Amounts falling due within one year	(6,766)		(5,679)	
Net current assets		66,346		59,389
Net assets		482,985		513,568
Funds of the charity:				
Unrestricted funds		481,373		512,052
Restricted funds		1,612		1,516
		482,985		513,568

The accounts were independently examined by CT LLP and were approved by Council on 9 April 2023.



**Student Housing:
The blandness of
Architecture form**

The Association has seen many Purpose-Built Student Accommodation proposals across the city. Some be well-located, others less so. However, the sameness of the architecture and the blandness of elevational treatment points to a building form driven by profit and cost margins rather than good place-making. Cell-like accommodation and lack of variety of uses, especially on the ground floor, are two characteristics which concern us. Whilst the Association appreciates that there is a student housing crisis, which itself is part of the current housing emergency, the city deserves better. A starting point might be the mixing of various housing tenures together, a move away from “studio” accommodation and creation of active frontages. The city’s architectural community is able to produce much more innovative schemes—we simply need the leadership to make it happen.



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Trunk’s Close, 55 High Street
Edinburgh EH1 1SR
SC011544
www.cockburnassociation.org.uk

Front photo: St Andrew’s Square ©Terry Levinthal/Cockburn Association
Back photo: Collage of various PBSA schemes to be found on our webpages,
All other photos © Terry Levinthal/Cockburn Association