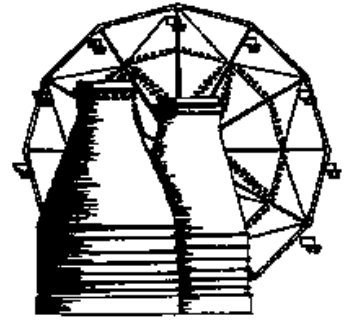


PORTOBELLO AMENITY SOCIETY

Newsletter - Winter 2009



Portobello Heritage Trust

The successful partnership between the City of Edinburgh Council and Portobello Heritage Trust has ensured that rebuilding of the collapsed bottle kiln in Bridge Street will begin in November. It is expected that this project will take three months to complete.

The Heritage Trust grew out of the Kilns Working Group, comprising three members of Portobello History Society, which actively engaged with the Council to ensure that the rebuilding of the kiln would be taken forward. Whilst working with council officials on this, the planning application for the Fun Park Site development was submitted and the working group was encouraged by officials to request a space for community use within it. The approach from the working group received a positive response and its members are now working with the architects to clarify the size of the space before deciding on its future use.



The Kilns in their pristine state. *Photo Arthur Jeffery.*

During the course of these negotiations, it became apparent that the future care and maintenance of the kilns would have to be managed. The possibility of having a neighbouring space to work in would aid this process and provide facilities for other projects. It was decided to formalise the working group by setting up a company limited by guarantee, which would then apply for charitable status, enabling grant applications to be made for future projects. The required Memorandum and Articles of Association were drawn up, with professional assistance from Jude Wilson of EVOC. These documents have now been registered at Companies House and, once formalities are completed, Portobello Heritage Trust will be able to move forward with its plans. We are grateful for the support and advice we have received from Councillor Mike Bridgman.

The purposes of the Trust are:

- To record, promote and encourage the conservation, protection and enhancement of the historical, architectural and landscape heritage within Portobello and its environs.

- To advance knowledge and understanding of all aspects of Portobello's cultural and industrial heritage within the community and beyond.

The Trust hopes to work in partnership with the Council to secure the future care and maintenance of the kilns. When the neighbouring development is complete, the Trust will have a base from which to move forward. We hope that interested parties from Portobello and beyond will join us in preserving and promoting our heritage. Further details regarding membership and participation will be made available in the near future.

The Waste Transfer Site

PAS members will be aware that the proposal by Viridor Waste Management Ltd. to build a waste transfer station on the former Freightliner Terminal site off the Sir Harry Lauder Road was overwhelmingly refused by the planning committee. Viridor have now appealed against this refusal and have asked that a Public Local Inquiry should be held before a Reporter from the Scottish Executive. This has resulted in a flurry of activity among the members of the pressure group opposing the proposal in order to find and to brief planning experts and counsel to represent the objections of Portobello residents, and to raise the large sum of money needed to fee them. Needless to say, PAS members are well represented on the pressure group and indeed the society has volunteered a substantial contribution to the fighting fund. The enquiry, having suffered some administrative delays, is now set to start at the beginning of February. Members are urged to support the campaign, either by coming to the various fundraising events, or by simply digging into their pockets for a contribution to the funds: anything included with your PAS subscription will be transferred swiftly to the correct recipient! Another way to give support is simply to attend the Inquiry, for as many days as possible and leave the Reporter in no doubt about the level of concern felt in Portobello about this monstrous proposal.

The Fun City Site

PAS has again objected to the height and scale of the Fun City application to build 73 flats on this site and to the fact that the building that is proposed will dwarf the kilns and does not respect their setting. We also feel that any new development on this site should enhance existing buildings and provide a sense of place. We believe that the development will create serious parking problems for the surrounding streets as 25% of the visitor parking to the new development is expected to be available out with the development itself. In the summer months especially, neighbouring streets can be very busy indeed.

Revisions to the original application have been made and it is not now proposed to site an access ramp to the development on the Promenade, merely to have steps leading through the two blocks facing the Promenade to reach the kilns. This however will mean that people with mobility problems wishing to get to the kilns will have to reach them round the back of the new development and not from the Promenade. The fact that the two arms of the new building will reach Bridge Street also means that one of the arms of the building will encroach into the present Bridge Street Square and all the shrubs and greenery there at present will be removed. Historic Scotland have voiced their concern regarding the effect the building of these flats will have on the stability of the kilns and have insisted that various measures are put in place by the developers to ensure their safety.

The society's main concern however remains the height of this development. The N.W. Portobello Development Brief stated that a development on this site should only be three storeys, stepped back to four on the Promenade elevation. The present proposals are for two five and a half storey blocks facing the Promenade. This will be completely out of scale with the neighbouring two storey development and will overshadow this section of the Promenade to a considerable degree.

It is expected that this application will go before the planning committee at the end of October and PAS has asked to speak in front of the committee to voice our objections to the proposal

The Baileyfield Site

PAS also has major concerns regarding the proposals by BL Developments Ltd., to build 710 residential units combined with a health and well being centre, new premises for the Royal British Legion, and other commercial and small retail units on the Baileyfield site as we feel the proposals represent gross overdevelopment of the site as the density proposed, as well as the scale and heights of the buildings, is far too high. The N.W. Portobello Development Brief stated that the height of this development should be dictated by the height of the existing buildings, for example the Victorian tenement at the foot of Fishwives Causeway. The developers however have chosen to take the height of the Kings Road tenements instead as their guide. These are higher and the development brief states that they should determine only the height of the new buildings which will line the Sir Harry Lauder Road. Some of the blocks will be 8 storeys high or over 37 metres while the adjacent Victorian tenement is only 25.7metres in height.

We also feel that there would be major traffic implications for the whole of this part of Portobello if the application was to go ahead on the scale that is proposed. The developers now intend for there to be only one main access road from Portobello High Street into the site. This however will create traffic problems for Fishwives Causeway and also parking problems throughout the whole development as there is minimum provision of parking spaces while the impact of potential overspill parking on surrounding residents has not been addressed.

The design of one of the blocks in particular - block E – causes the society much concern as parallel rows of flats are serviced by narrow high vennels or access lanes. Exposed pedestrian bridges on different levels will provide the only access to many of the flats which will surely be most inconvenient on windy rainy days.

The design of the High Street elevations has been revised only a little and still remains too high while the two storey plinth on which the buildings sit is too brutal and far too massive. The height and density of the development will not sit well with the adjacent conservation area while the predominant building material, buff coloured brick, will not harmonise with the traditional building materials in Portobello – grey and red sandstone – and will change the look of Portobello as a whole.

Many important vistas will also be lost if the development goes ahead as proposed. The extreme heights of the buildings, especially in the centre of the site, and the density of the development will mean that views south towards Arthur's Seat and views north towards the Promenade and the Fife hills beyond will be lost. These views could have enriched and enhanced a development on this site. Many of the areas within the development will also suffer from lack of sun light and day light. As a large number of the units will be single aspect, this is particularly worrying.

Like the Fun City application, it is expected that this planning application will go before the planning committee at the end of October and again PAS has asked to be present to express our objections to this proposal.

The Edinburgh Promenade Waterfront Design Code

The society commented on the new Edinburgh Promenade Waterfront Design Code which sets down the proposals for the new boardwalk which will run along the waterfront from Cramond to Musselburgh, The main comments we made concerned the phasing of the scheme, signage and the suitability of the materials proposed.

The New Edinburgh City Local Plan

The society also lodged several objections to the new Edinburgh City Local Plan. We were concerned that the Council no longer wishes to acquire 19-24 The Promenade, (The Ghost Train Site), for environmental improvement. Unfortunately the Reporter deciding the inquiry regarding objections has agreed with the Council's decision not to acquire this site.

We also objected to the Council's proposal to build 400 new houses at Newcraighall as we felt that this would threaten the integrity of the Green Belt. The Reporter listened to local arguments and recommended that only 230 houses should be built. The Council however seem determined to build as many houses as possible on both sides of Newcraighall. Objections to the proposed modifications to the finalised Edinburgh City Local Plan have to be lodged by mid November and PAS will again object to so much housing being built on Green Belt land.

Interpretive Boards and Building Plaques

Between 1997 and 2001 Portobello Amenity Society and Portobello Community Council erected seven Interpretive Boards along, or close to, the Promenade. From east to west these are: Seashore board at Seafield, Geology board at Joppa Pans, Bird board at Joppa pumping station, Horizon board at the foot of John Street, Seaside board by the "Cakestand", Pottery board by the kilns and Horizon board at the foot of King's Road. Since 2001 PAS has maintained and where necessary replaced boards damaged by vandals or weather. The latest board to be replaced is the Horizon board at the foot of King's Road. This board is a digital print of a painting by local painter Shand Hutchison and shows the horizon as viewed from that position. The print is encased in a metal frame which is impervious to water and is an improvement on the previous frame. The replacement cost was borne by insurance.

Portobello Amenity Society and the Portobello Community Council have also placed nine plaques on buildings of historical or other interest in Portobello and Joppa. The plaques, being placed high up, are not in danger of vandalism but those on the Promenade or High Street do suffer from corrosion, bronze plaques being more affected than cast aluminium. The plaques require no maintenance and are not insured. Plans are afoot to place a plaque on the Tower on Beach Lane.

Interpretive boards and building plaques are the property and responsibility of Portobello Community Council, not the City of Edinburgh Council.

Planting and Planters

I hope that you will all agree that the hard work involved in developing the Community Garden on the Prom was worth it. The result is a multi purpose, eye catching area. It has suffered a little from lack of maintenance but some replanting will be done this autumn. Unfortunately the Council's application to have the garden awarded Green Flag status was turned down. However, they have taken on board the reasons given for this refusal and hope that a subsequent application will be more successful. There is still a problem with the basic maintenance of the planted areas but it is hoped that a local volunteer can be found in the community to take this on.

The Society has done no planting this year but we have sponsored the replanting at the Eastfield "waves" and will be sponsoring some of the bulb planting by the Parks Dept this Autumn in Rosefield Park. And next year we would hope to muster some volunteers to replace some of the spring bulbs in Abercorn Park.

P.A.S. Monthly Meetings

Would you like to find out more about what is happening in Portobello? Would you like something done about Portobello's traffic and parking problems? Are you interested in protecting and enhancing Portobello's many listed buildings? Would you like to see the amenity of Portobello improved and environmental and landscaping projects carried out? If the answer to any or all of the above questions is yes, then you are most welcome to come along to any of P.A.S.'s regular monthly meetings to air your views and to find out just what the society is doing to improve Portobello for everyone who lives and works here. For details of meetings, please phone John Stewart on 669 6466.

Local Business Support For P.A.S.

Please use our excellent local businesses, especially those which help the society to make Portobello a pleasant place to live and to work. The society is very grateful to the following businesses for their continued support as associate business members: -

Allan's, Chemist; Robin Bond, CA; Boots, Chemist; Findlay Meats; Brian Forde, Optician; Gordons, Butchers; Joppa Turrets, Guest House; H.S.Kidd, Chemist; The King's Manor Hotel; Kitchener's Delicatessen; Kristoffersen Carpets; McIntyre Lewis, Solicitors & Estate Agents; J & S Penman, Vets; Portobello Library; Jas. Scott, Funeral Directors; Shapes Hair; St James's Church.

Please support our local businesses, especially those who themselves support our local community.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions for the year April 2009 – March 2010 are now due. If you have not already paid for this year, please complete this slip and send it to:

Dr P.K.Wraith, 3 East Brighton Crescent, Portobello, Edinburgh EH15 1LR.

Name:

Address:

I enclose my subscription of:-

£5 per household (normal)

£2 per household (retired/unwaged)

(Please tick as appropriate)