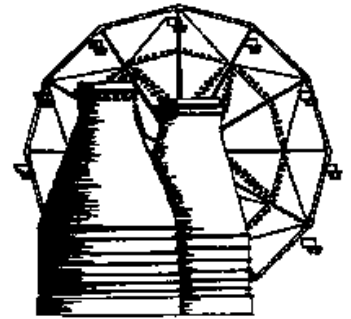


PORTOBELLO AMENITY SOCIETY

Newsletter - Winter 2001



Gardening Competition

Mrs. Bobbi Wood, pictured here, of Meadowfield Avenue, was this year's winner in the gardens category of the Garden Competition run jointly between Portobello Garden Centre and Portobello Amenity Society. The judges considered her garden to be extremely attractive. It included a pergola, many fine trees, a lawn and a water feature. The winner, for the third time, of the tubs and containers category, was Mrs. Jean Kerr, of Mountcastle Drive South. Her display of plants, particularly of bizzzy lizzies, was simply stunning.



Picture: Peter Ross

P.A.S. would like to thank Bill Thomson, of Portobello Garden Centre for all his hard work and enthusiasm in both sponsoring and helping to organise the competition since it began several years ago. Although Bill is selling up Portobello Garden Centre, he has kindly agreed to be involved in future garden competitions which P.A.S. intends to keep running. We wish him a happy semi-retirement and success in the ventures he is keeping on.

Keeping Portobello Tidy

A recent development in the Clean Edinburgh 2000 campaign to improve cleanliness in the city is that the Portobello and Milton wards now have been allotted an Open-Space Task Force Manager. We can look forward to area-based squads giving more targeted attention to litter problems, rubbish collection abuses, street cleaning, dog fouling, fly tipping, fly posting, graffiti, and maintenance of the beach, hard areas, parks and greens. Our task Force Manager is Mr. Robert Davidson, who has an office in Baileyfield (tel: 657 4815). He will liaise with police, community groups and the general public to help us uphold the visual amenity of our area. Any problems within his remit may be brought to his attention.

Portobello to become a Massive Rubbish Dump?

Proposed Waste Recycling Plant, Former Freight Terminal Site

An environmental impact study is currently being drawn up regarding proposals to site a waste management facility on the former British Rail Freightliner Terminal in Portobello. Exactly what this facility might include is still unclear. It could include a waste recycling plant, a waste tipping area, warehouse, workshop, baling plant and waste tipping area. The site would probably be run on a 24 hours a day basis, involving lorries carrying rubbish to the site continuously travelling through Portobello.

According to European directives, Edinburgh has to improve the percentage of the rubbish it recycles. At present, we believe this to be about 6%. In twenty years time, Edinburgh will be expected to recycle about 60% of its rubbish. P.A.S. is in favour of Edinburgh recycling its rubbish in as clean and as efficient a way as possible but does not believe that Portobello is the best site for such a facility.

There are many reasons why such a facility should be sited elsewhere. Portobello is an outstanding conservation area. The building needed to house such a range of processes would, by necessity, be very large indeed, and is not likely to be very beautiful! The building, being on a raised bank, would be visible throughout the whole of Portobello. A facility like this should also be built well away from residential areas. This site is surrounded by housing.

Portobello is also a very windy area. A few years ago, when coal was loaded and unloaded on this very site, window sills and washing lines throughout Portobello were constantly covered with layers of black dust. Waste travelling to the site would also get wind-blown, not to mention the problem of the associated smell.

The implications for traffic throughout the whole of Portobello would be enormous. There are already severe problems at the two roundabouts at either end of the Sir Harry Lauder Road at several times during the day. Portobello is already crying out for a strategy to solve its traffic problems, not an intensification of the problems which already exist.

Portobello already has more than its share of such sites - the sewage works at Seafield and the civic amenity site at Fillyside being cases in point.

The site which is proposed is also the site which many local groups, including P.A.S., wish to see protected and reserved as the site for a future railway station in Portobello. As part of a long term solution to Portobello's traffic problems and as a major component in encouraging visitors to central Edinburgh to visit Portobello as well, a station within Portobello itself is essential.

The Edinburgh Waterfront project has brought the prospect of revitalising not just Granton and parts of Leith, but Portobello as well. To place a waste recycling plant in Portobello at exactly the same time as major regeneration is being planned along the coastline would be a piece of planning folly of stupendous proportions.

Where then should such a facility be placed? Several key points should be made. It should be placed well away from major centres of housing. It should also be on the edge of the city, near the bypass, on a site that is not exposed to strong winds. Neither should it be near a conservation area. A far more suitable site is indeed available at nearby Millerhill. This is a much larger site which already has a freight rail depot. It could cater for all of Edinburgh's waste needs, as well as those of all of the Lothians.

At present Council officials say the proposals have nothing to do with them. P.A.S. has written to Gavin Strang, Susan Deacon, Maureen Child and Lawrence Marshall outlining our objections to the proposal. We strongly suggest that you do the same.

Gavin Strang, M.P. and Susan Deacon, M.S.P., can both be reached at 54, Portobello High Street, Edinburgh, EH15 1DA.

Cllr. Maureen Child, (Milton), and Cllr. Lawrence Marshall, (Portobello), can both be reached at The City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1YJ.

Planning Issues

There have been many planning applications for the Portobello / Milton area since our last newsletter and P.A.S. has responded to a very large number of them.

28, The Promenade, (Granny's Attic) In our Winter newsletter last year, we reported on the first application to build a five storey block of nine flats on the Promenade at the east corner of Bath Street. Following strong local opposition, this application was turned down largely because it was contrary to the policies governing development in conservation areas. The developers however then submitted a second application which retained a tiny part of the existing building and replaced the ground floor parking of the previous application with offices and a shop. In most respects however, it was the same as the previous application, the materials and design still being out of context with both the listed buildings surrounding it and the conservation area itself. It would also have cast a huge shadow over the narrowest part of the Promenade. Despite a recommendation from the council planning department that it should be granted, the planning committee fortunately turned it down in June this year. The developers could still appeal to the Secretary of State to have this decision overturned so the battle is by no means over.



View of the Promenade Elevation
of the Proposed Development of Granny's Attic

Since then P.A.S. has written to Building Control to ensure that the windows were boarded up and the building kept secure. Its rapidly deteriorating condition however is a major source of concern.

19a & 19b Bath Street An application has just been granted to renovate and extend the Georgian villa opposite Mentone Avenue. P.A.S. welcomed the removal of the two derelict shops in the former front garden and the restoration of the facade of the original building but had some reservations about the scale and design of the new house which is to be built behind this.

Brunstane Farm Steading In July an amended application to convert the steading and outbuildings at Brunstane Farm into eight houses was granted. The buildings, which mainly date from 1824, have been derelict for some time. Existing stone work will be repaired and natural slate used to re-roof the buildings. P.A.S. objected to the repositioning of the right of way which runs along this site but this element was later withdrawn from the application. We welcome the restoration of these attractive and important buildings.

5 Bellfield Lane, (Thornburn's) A revised application has just been lodged to erect five flats on the site at the top of Bellfield Lane formerly occupied by Thornburn's. The proposal is for an L shaped, two storey block with access to parking through a diagonal pend at the corner of the building. Access to the upper storey would be by means of an external metal gallery and stairway. Many local residents are concerned both about the design and scale of the proposed building and the parking and traffic problems which would ensue. Both P.A.S. and Portobello Community Council have objected to this application on the grounds of overdevelopment, and of traffic, access and parking problems. Both groups also feel that there are several unattractive design features to the proposal, while there is insufficient landscaping to the scheme. The application still has to be decided. A previous application by the same developer for a similar block of flats on this site was refused on seven counts.

Improvements to Promenade

PAS members will have noticed the improvements carried out on the Promenade recently, between Bellfield Street and Bath Street. This is phase 1 of the Council's Portobello Initiative, and includes attractive new bollards in place of the old rusty railings at Bellfield Street and metal seats, all painted a light green/grey, and new black litter bins with a green trim. PAS were consulted on these improvements and made a strong case for keeping the lamp standards a light colour, to blend in with their background, but were over-ruled, and the lamps were painted black.

The setts at Bellfield Street have been re-laid, and have unfortunately been edged with strips of black tarmac with some red chippings, because red tarmac is not available in small quantities.

Phase 2 will see these improvements continued along the section between Bellfield Street and Pitville Street, until the whole Promenade is eventually upgraded, and there are plans also for improving shop fronts on Portobello High Street.

Planting

In mid-November members of P.A.S. planted 1500 Tete-a-tete daffodils and 1500 yellow crocus in the North border of Brighton Park. This is part of our annual planting programme but planting miniature daffodils and crocus together is a fairly new venture and we hope will give a longer display of early spring colour.

This year saw each of the four High Street lampposts between Brighton Place and Adelphi Avenue adorned with pairs of post-planters. These are jointly owned by P.A.S. and the Community Council but planted up and installed for us by the Edinburgh Recreation Department at the Inch Nursery. However they are maintained by P.A.S. members and have been regularly watered twice, sometimes three times a week. We would like to be able to extend the range of these post-planters towards the west end of the High Street but need to find someone who would be willing to water them. If you are that person, please contact John Stewart, our chairman. The hanging baskets between Pittville Street and Bellfield Street have also been maintained by P.A.S. members and have given a good show of colour. The decision has been made not to plant them up for Winter display as the wind causes too much damage.

It is hoped that we will be able to plant trees in the Morton Street Triangle this Autumn but as always this takes a lot of hard work to organise. Many nurseries are unable to deliver on a Saturday morning or charge a high delivery rate; as most of our active members work full time, they are unable to take time off to be present if trees are delivered through the week. We also need to liaise with the Recreation Department to be sure that the species we would like to plant are acceptable and that there are no

underground services that may be disturbed while digging planting holes. The trees then need to be cared for and protected from vandalism whilst they are young. A tree is for life!!

Information Boards

This project is now complete with seven information boards on the Promenade between King's Road and Eastfield. Two boards have been put in position since our last newsletter - "Portobello as a Seaside Resort" by local artist Ruth Hutchison on the Promenade at the foot of Marlborough Street and "Paintings by local Children" at Eastfield bus terminus. The "horizon" board on the Promenade at the foot of John Street, stolen shortly after it was put in place, has been re-instated. All the boards have been welded to their supports to deter thieves. We ask that members keep an eye on the boards and question anyone interfering with them.

We hope you all enjoy the boards, the sub-committee had a lot of fun designing them. This was a joint project between Portobello Amenity Society and Portobello Community Council, with funds from various sources, including PAS.

Our next project is to place plaques on buildings of historical and other interest in Portobello. The first two plaques are to be placed, following permission from the police and the Baptist church, on the Police station and the Baptist church, former Portobello town halls. A plaque celebrating Hugh Miller, the famous geologist, is planned at the site of his final home on Portobello High Street.

Mobile Telephone Masts

Concern has been expressed by PAS members about the erection of mobile telephone masts within our conservation area. The following paragraph is reprinted from a recent Scottish Civic Trust Newsletter.

The untrammelled erection of mobile phone masts across the country is a cause for concern for many. Not only are there serious questions about their safety but small 'oil rigs' in our towns and countryside can be very intrusive and unsightly. However, as more and more people buy mobile phones, the need for these installations is ever increasing.

The problem has been the granting of Permitted Development Rights to Code System Operators (read 'mobile phone operators'). This means that they do not need to apply for planning permission to erect masts, although there is a system whereby operators need to write to planning authorities to see if they have no objections in sensitive areas, such as conservation areas. There is currently no public consultation.

All of this is about to change. After lengthy debate and deliberation, the Scottish Executive launched a consultation exercise aimed at significantly increasing the level of control over telecommunication operators. The changes include amendments to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992, which will restrict what is defined as 'permitted development' (i.e. development that does not need to apply for permission.)

In essence, this consultation recognised the significant public concern regarding the growth of telecommunications equipment and the impact on health and visual quality of our environment. The main proposals are: all new ground-based masts and associated development should be subject to full planning control; certain new installations on buildings will be subjects to full planning control; all new installations in national scenic areas, national parks, conservation areas, historic gardens or planned landscapes, Sites of Special Scientific Interest or European sites will be subject to full planning control; radio equipment on the ground will be subject to full planning control if it exceeds 3m in height or 90 cubic metres in volume; radio equipment on buildings will be subject to full planning control if it exceeds 3m in height or 30 cubic metres in volume.

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; The Citizens' Advice Bureau; Findlay Meats; Brian Forde, Optician; Gordons, Butchers; Joppa Food Store; H.S.Kidd, Chemist; The King's Manor Hotel; Kitchener's Delicatessen; Kristoffersen Carpets; Lapland Gems; McAlpine's, Jewellers; McIntyre Lewis, Solicitors & Estate Agents; Nazim, Newsagent; J & S Penman, Vets; The Portobello Garden Centre; Portobello Library; Jas. Scott, Funeral Directors; Shapes Hair; Sibbald Travel; Thomson's, Ironmongers.

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

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**.

Subscriptions for the year April 2001 – March 2002 are now due. Please complete the tear-off slip and send it to: Dr P.K.Wraith, 3 East Brighton Crescent, Portobello, Edinburgh EH15 1LR.

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