

Living Wild – working together for a greener environment at Fountainbridge

The enthusiasm shown at the **Living Wild event in February**, to push for a 'green' site has continued. A Green Plan group has met three times now and includes FCI, The Grove Community Garden, developers, their landscape architects, and Council officials. We have been impressed by the willingness of all to include a broader range of ideas about how to green this site.

It has also been encouraging that the three developers involved in this group - the Council, Vastint and the Moda group who are developing the site on the north side of Fountainbridge, are trying to work together to one plan. This is a complex idea as there are private and public areas, different types of use and different timetables of work but already we feel we are having real conversations, and possibilities are not being closed down. The experience of the Sounding Board in creating a dialogue has carried through into this initiative and there appears to be a genuine appetite to involve the community in this project.



Design ideas and conversations about the possibilities for a Green Plan from over 90 participants at the Living Wild event.

Areas have been identified that could include fruit trees, community planting areas, seating spots and small play ideas. Maintenance and ownership were also discussed, and we will continue to explore how much flexibility can be incorporated into any gardening contracts. While we may have a desire for mass gardening, it is clear that this doesn't always work for many people and so we have begun to think of ways we could gradually introduce, encourage and support this in a practical way. There will be a wider public gathering again before the end of the year to feedback progress and invite further ideas. The Edinburgh University Department of Sustainability and Social Responsibility has also offered their help and support.

Good turnout for our AGM

In **April**, we were pleased to get a good turnout at our AGM showing the level of support there is locally for the issue of a "Sustainable Fountainbridge". Speakers, Paul Lawrence from The Place Directorate in the Council, Cllr Gavin Corbett, and Neil de Prez from 3D Reid who are working on the east end of the site were very informative and a lot of good questions came from those attending.

Council commits to a sustainable community at Fountainbridge at key meeting

Following excellent deputations from both FCI and Tollcross Community Council, the full Council at its meeting on 28th June, fully recommitted to its vision of creating a sustainable, mixed use community by the canal with a substantial increase in social housing,

A potential option for a mega hotel on a key site was rejected by the meeting. In supporting the report key SNP/Labour Administration councillors cited the importance of over five years detailed consultation and partnership with local community groups to produce an agreed sustainable Masterplan for future development. Proposals also saw strong support from the Council's Canal champion from the Green party.

Key elements approved include;

- More housing and more affordable housing. 435 homes will be built including mid-market rent and 112 social houses.
- Office and commercial buildings to provide room for local businesses and employers, including flexible space for the high tech and creative sector, business start ups, and community and social enterprises.
- Development of a mixed use quayside/waterfront, with recreational and leisure facilities, and a "green plan" to enhance the environment.

The development will also revert back to the name locals have always used - Fountainbridge, rather than India Quay, and will now be project managed and controlled by the Council's own economic development staff from within the Council. After years of stops and starts, and changes of direction we hope the agreed masterplan which now captures a good many of the community's hopes and wishes can begin to be built!.

Canal Network in Crisis ?

Following the news that Scottish Canals have closed part of the Forth and Clyde Canal to navigation due to major repair works to two bridges comes further news that the Leamington Lift Bridge now needs major work and is not currently operational for boats. Re-Union Canal Boats along with a wide variety of canal users and interest groups have formed a pressure group, **Keep Canals Alive!** to ensure that all the commitment and hard work to restore the canal network for navigation and recreational use is not now wasted. Pat Bowie of Reunion Canal Boats says it is important that everyone who wants to see a thriving and operational network should lobby, Scottish Canals, Local Authorities, and Scottish Government, to ensure the resources are available to maintain and enhance a safe operational canal network. FCI have collected quotes and comments from ten local groups, the architects involved with the development, and local businesses and sent these to Scottish canals to urge them to give the restoration of the bridge and the footbridge their top priority.



Vastint development proposals get planning approval

Vastint, the development arm of IKEA now have approval for their 262 bed Moxy Hotel, on Fountainbridge shown opposite. (This is NOT the extra hotel proposed by EICC recently which FCI opposed)

Other canalside development by them on the site adjacent to the current Edinburgh Quay, include commercial offices, family housing, canalside apartments a new public square and affordable housing

They have been engaging well with the local community, including Green Plan ideas, to create this new vibrant neighbourhood.

Viewforth Bridge under pressure

Following the Council's decision in 2012 to re-locate Boroughmuir High School to its new canal-side location, the Parent Council and school staff have been trying hard to ensure the safety of pupils on their walk to and from school. For most of the 1,250 (and rising!) pupils, this means walking the length of Viewforth from the bus stops on Bruntsfield Place, across the busy junction at Gilmore Place, and over the humped-back bridge at the canal. Widened pavements, parking restrictions and traffic light controls are designed to reduce the risk that pupils will become victims of traffic accidents. But the school community is convinced that this is not enough. FCI agrees, and feedback we are getting from residents in St Peter's Place make us even more concerned. These issues have been raised at the 'Sounding Board', with individual Councillors and Officers and by organisations and individuals. We believe that continued pressure is needed to have the road closed to through traffic at the bridge.

A recent site visit by Councillors and Officers resulted in a report to the South East Locality Committee which met on 24 September, and was addressed by Jacqueline Wymark, chair of the school Parent Council. It noted



irresponsible cyclists evading red traffic lights by mounting pavements, which is certainly dangerous. But what they didn't see was the behaviour of some drivers who race through red lights in the hope of clearing the bridge before oncoming traffic, and cars and vans mounting the pavements to force their progress through the congested street. Local residents have photographed this behaviour, (seen here) and copies were distributed at the meeting.

Safety is the priority here, but the closure of the road will also greatly improve the area between the new school and the housing developments that will be built to the east of Viewforth. The Council has committed to traffic surveys and to examine the impact of changes on neighbouring streets. Clearly this is essential. Just like guarding the safety of our children. We encourage local people to support the street closure, and to let local Councillors know their views.

Glencairn proposal refused

The proposed 4 story development along Lower Gilmore Place has now been refused by the reporter after appeal, as not being in tune with planning policies including the Fountainbridge Development Brief. The Gilmore Place & Lochrin Residents' Association gathered huge local support in opposing this application.

History panels coming back to the quayside

Along with the mural of rubber manufacture developed by Edinburgh Printmakers, the very popular canal history panels have been refreshed by FCI and printed up again. Once the new hoarding goes up round the site they can be installed at the east end of the towpath as before. We will also be adding the lovely 3D box panels that have been created by pupils from Boroughmuir School and the Scrapstore.

Edinburgh Printmakers opening soon at Castle Mill Works

In late August FCI members were lucky enough to be invited to a site visit round the completely refurbished Castle Mill Works Office block as it nears completion. The Printmakers undertook an enormous task to retain as much of the old brickwork and features as they can, which has proved extremely challenging. The result however is a beautiful, light-filled, world-class centre for printmaking and creative industries at Castle Mill Works which has cleverly captured a sense of its previous history as part of the old Brewery offices.

This will open to the public in 2019 <http://castle-mill-works.edinburghprintmakers.co.uk/castle-mill-works>



FCI members, Cllr David Key and other local groups get a sneak preview of the beautifully refurbished Castle Mill Works.

Meanwhile Activities update

The Grove Community Garden

With support from the Council's Parks Department, Grove 2 on Harrison Gardens will be moving their fruit trees, currently in planters, to a piece of nearby land as a Community Orchard in November. If you can help at either garden, do go along on Saturday mornings 11am - 12. Or pop in for a look on Doors Open Day **Saturday 29th September 1 -3pm** when Grove 1, in Drysdale Road (off Fountainbridge) will be offering tea and cake and seed planting for children.

The Pianodrome success

The world's first auditorium made out of 60 pianos! The dream became reality this summer as Tim Vincent-Smith and Matt Wright and a host of helpers put together the Pianodrome at the Botanics as a Festival venue - winning the prize for the most unique venue! Starting the prototype models at the Forge on the Fountainbridge site a few years ago their success is a wonderful demonstration of what can happen when space is made freely available for people to explore and create playfully. The backing given to this project by the Botanics was also crucial and resulted in over 1500 people visiting the Pianodrome during the festival!

Forge Workshops

In the blue shipping containers, accessible from Viewforth (opposite the new school) the Forge runs regular open sessions for members. These are informal workshops for people to spend time on their woodwork and metal projects, using the tools in the workshop, get help and lend any support they can give. It can be a bit of a skill-share. A really successful Go-Kart making workshop for kids in August produced some hair raising and wobbly rides!

Scrap wood and scrap metal are available to use for free, or a wee donation. Drop in for a tour and a chat if you want to see what The Forge is all about. They are always happy to see new faces. (Wed 7pm – 9pm and Sat 12pm – 4pm) <https://edinburghforge.com/>



Wikihouse Woes

There have been three attempts in the last four months to move the Wikihouse to Tollcross Primary School. Finally Bowmer & Kirkland installed the levelling posts required in the playground but the last move failed when the truck ordered was not suitable for this type of lift. This is deeply frustrating, not only because as time goes on the Wikihouse is getting a little scruffy but the school is waiting for this space to start their outdoor reading group. After the last cancellation, they complained the cost was too high and we were greatly relieved that the Council agreed to pay half the cost. It seems this has now been accepted and we are hoping the move will take place during the half term break in October. James York who helped with the second phase of building the Wikihouse is willing to help meet the school parents and discuss future projects with them to add to the Wikihouse's sustainability.

Visit to the Open University in London

Following an interview with FCI some months ago by an Open University researcher, we were invited down to London on 6th September to take part in a workshop with other community groups around the UK, who were also engaged in trying to improve old inner city sites for the benefit of the community. Richard Allan and Jane Jones took part from FCI and were inspired by the work that is going on in places like Liverpool 8, Tottenham and Bristol. The workshop and interview is being written up and will be published as part of the research. The OU team involved also will be looking at offering more ongoing support, such as providing bursaries for visiting other groups across the UK and possible summer schools. We also took the opportunity to take a quick look at the greening developments alongside the canal around Kings Cross, which will be fed into the Green Planning group.



some of the ways more natural planting has introduced a relaxing environment in Kings Cross canal development London

