

Economic Development Committee meeting 31 May 2011

The committee meeting lasted a mere two hours this morning but covered a lot of ground. The committee is particularly pleased that its initiative to redesign the format of reports produced to the councillors has meant a 60% saving in paper alone.

A couple of the issues involved water.

The report from the Director of Economic Development about the possibility of a further Edinburgh Entry in the Round the World Clipper Race was item 11 on the agenda. An anonymous donor has offered £1m to the council to fund the Edinburgh yacht in the race this year. The council had a yacht entered in the race last year which has been considered a marketing success. The council see this new possibility as an excellent opportunity to market the city to the population sector known as Generation Y, which part of the report explained in this way:-

“Social media, mobile marketing and web related promotion: To effectively target the international under 35s market, messaging will focus on social media marketing channels like Facebook and Twitter. These platforms are already highly accessible over mobile devices. These are the platforms on which ‘Generation Y’ typically accesses the majority of its information. Social media is very effective at organically building awareness, follower numbers and loyalty through peer recommendation. This approach also provides significant opportunity to capture rich data on this group. The Edinburgh Inspiring Capital websites will provide back-up to this social media and mobile driven activity.”

The report put to the meeting recommended two things:-

“7.1 To support a campaign aimed at securing maximum

benefit from the offer of sponsorship for the Edinburgh entry of The Clipper 2011/12 Round the World Yacht Race.

7.2 To agree that £55,000 be earmarked as the Council's contribution to the costs of this important marketing campaign."

Councillor Hart moved to delete the second part of this recommendation, which the committee convener Councillor Buchanan described as 'mean-spirited'. Despite Councillor Munro seconding that amendment, which would have had the effect of removing any financial contribution by the council, this did not gain any ground, and the original motion as stated above was passed. The committee convener stated that this contribution was a 'small spend' by the council to promote the city.

The report is quite specific as to the marketing advantage which the Essential Edinburgh yacht brought to the city, and Councillor Dawe also pointed out that the welcome £1m investment would result in 10 times that figure in terms of advertising return.

The Edinburgh Canal Strategy will be 10 years old in 2014, and Councillor Eric Milligan proposed that a big event to celebrate the birthday should be considered. He suggested to the meeting that we all get our straw boaters out and stage a rowing event involving for example Oxford and Cambridge teams rowing on the canal to compete with our own Edinburgh university.

There is a Canal Festival in July this year, but Milligan clearly has something bigger in mind!

With regard to the current Canal Consultation Strategy consultation events will be held throughout June and July 2011 and include:

- Presentations to the local Community Councils in Ratho

(20 June), Wester Hailes (tbc), Longstone (8 August), Craiglockhart (31 May), Merchiston (tbc), and Tollcross (8 June);

- Display stands at a number of community events including the Edinburgh Canal Festival (9 July), and the Meadows festival (4/5 June); the Edinburgh Bike Breakfast (22 June) and the Central Scotland Green Network forum (14 June); and,
- Further community meetings within the five hubs (Lochrin Basin, Harrison Park, Meggetland, Wester Hailes and Ratho) and with relevant stakeholders (dates to be confirmed) and on a canal boat (if possible).

3.17 A full list of consultation dates and events will be made available online via the Council's website. It is anticipated that a finalised Edinburgh Canal Strategy, together with the results of the consultation exercise will be reported to Planning Committee by the end of 2011.

A new body will emerge tomorrow in Edinburgh called Marketing Edinburgh, and its new CEO, Lucy Bird, will take up her position on June 20. The new body will move into a new office space in Glenfinlas Street over the next few weeks.

One of the more contentious issues raised at the meeting was that of the redevelopment or relocation of Heart of Midlothian F.C.'s stadium, Tynecastle. The arena does not currently comply with UEFA regulations and general opinion appears to favour a change of location. Initially a site in the Leith area of the city had been suggested, however this has been heavily opposed by those arguing that the club is the Heart of the Gorgie community, and so should remain in Edinburgh's west side. The Council seem to sympathise with this and have suggested that a list of potential west side options (outwith the city's greenbelt) will be presented at the next Economic Development meeting in August.

Another central issue discussed at today's meeting was the proposition of an Edinburgh local currency. Councillor Burgess welcomes the initiative, claiming that potential benefits

could include strengthening the local economy, raising awareness of the importance of local trade, building community identity and reducing the city's carbon footprint. The new currency could be in electronic or paper form and would emulate the wholly successful "Brixton Pound", that has been strongly supported by the Lambeth Borough council. The council adopted the motion which was as follows:-

"That the Council:

Welcomes the initiative to set up an Edinburgh local currency.

Recognises the innovative nature of the project and notes that it is intended to be a community-led project, that will develop a local paper or possibly electronic currency for Edinburgh residents to use in local independent shops. The potential benefits including: strengthening the local economy; raising awareness of the importance of local trade, building community identity and reducing the city's carbon footprint. Further notes that a local currency in Brixton, the Brixton Pound, is strongly supported by Lambeth Borough Council which has pledged to promote its use internally and throughout the local businesses and organisations with whom they hold relationships.

Understands that the Edinburgh Local Economy Group organised a successful Edinburgh Local Economy Day on Saturday 9 April to assess the interest of a local currency in Edinburgh.

Notes that the next step could be to run a pilot scheme, similar to Greener Hawick, asking residents and local shops supportive of the idea to pledge they would use the currency.

Believes that the project could be the first urban (whole-city) local currency project in Scotland which other cities could learn from and replicate.

Notes that interested parties can contact the project through edinburgh.pound@gmail.com

Therefore calls for a report on the possible benefits of a local currency to local economy and environment, including how it could strengthen local communities and reduce poverty, and proposing a strategy for supporting community groups in their efforts to establish an Edinburgh Pound.”