

Inverleith Park Still under threat

(by Giulia Mattei and Ben Graham)

Plans to sell off parts of [Inverleith Park](#)



Entrance of Inverleith
Park



Tony Cook



Inverleith Park

for commercial development are still meeting with opposition from the locals. Since the proposed plans were announced in 2010, residents and supporters of the save the park campaign have protested against the proposed sale.

The park has been open to the public since it was bought in 1889, and has expanded and developed ever since. It is thought to be one of Edinburgh's most beautiful open spaces, affording views of the castle and Arthur's Seat.

Two months on from the council meeting where the campaigners presented a deputation to the council, we met Tony Cook from the Friends of Inverleith again to talk about how the motion presented to the councillors in April had progressed, and to find out what support they were receiving as a result.

The principal aims of the Friends of Inverleith campaign were to reverse the decision to sell off public parkland, to protect the geographical boundaries of the park and to keep the parkland as public space for the long-term health and well-being of Edinburgh's residents. Cook explained the reaction of the community to the council's announcement in

2010 that part of the parkland was to be re-designated:- “I think it really shocked the community when they heard. There was very little notice given other than a display set up in the public library.” He continued:- “ We decided to form our own committee to bring the situation to the attention of the council, and we have support from various MSPs past, present and prospective.”

Throughout the interview Tony referenced Pan 65, the Scottish Government Open Space Audit, which is intended to preserve public parkland for the health and well-being of the Scottish people. With obesity rates climbing steadily for 20 years now, wanting to develop on a part of the city that can be of so much use to so many people seems strange to the campaigners.

We asked Cook what was next for the Friends of Inverleith, and indeed the park itself:- “On the 9th of August there will be another meeting, this time involving the group we formed for the long term protection of the park and its re-designation to Green Space status; the Policy and Strategy Committee.” he explained, “We approached a number of councillors and have had support from many of them, as well as other campaigners and of course the Edinburgh community that still loves and uses this park every day. The park has something for everyone and if it is re-designated it could be better developed as a park and an open space for the people of Edinburgh to enjoy.”

Part of the area of the park designated for development is a 19th Century house which Mr Cook feels could be used as a cafe and toilets for visitors to the park:- “One of the only things the park is still missing.”

Cook expresses his disappointment saying that deciding to sell part of Inverleith Park shows that we do live in a world in which money has priority over emotional value. He told us that people who were born in Edinburgh, and are now living in

different parts of the world, are also showing their support as they remember the park as a happy space in which they grew up and would not want the future generations to not have this privilege. Not to mention the support given by local, even the youngest ones. Tony smiles, remembering an 8-year-old boy handing him out 9p saying:- "These are to help save the park".

Cook retains a positive attitude and is optimistic on the matter, however still expresses some concerns:- "One of the issues involved is a need for those who wanted to re-develop to step back from the debate without feeling like they are losing face". Cook believes however that one very strong element will be taken under account, which is the next council elections. He told us that he has not met one person so far that has not agreed with his campaign, and therefore believes many votes would be lost by councillors in favour of this change.

The park was awarded Green Flag status in 2010, an accolade given to parks that maintain a good level of cleanliness and that are recognised as being of high importance to the surrounding community.

If you would like to know more about Friends of Inverleith you can find out more on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Save-Inverleith-Park/180926588601438>

And here is a copy of Pan 65

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