

Is the party over for “Edinburgh’s coolest venue”?



The organisers describe the music venue at 42 Royal Park Terrace on their [Posterous blog](#) as a secret venue. But that is the problem. The secret is out, and more musicians have wanted to play there in 2012 than ever before.

The council has now served an enforcement notice in terms of Town and Country Planning Legislation demanding that owner, Douglas Robertson, seeks a partial change of use for the house to allow the concerts to continue. This would trigger other constraints such as a public entertainment licence which might also be required, and the venue would have to comply with fire regulations, even though it is not run as a commercial enterprise. Robertson has said to The Reporter that he will not be applying for such consents. The council say that the notice has been served in response to a complaint made about the venue which they were duty bound to investigate.

Graeme Stephen and Fraser Fifield will appear at what may be the last concert at the House @42 tonight.

The house was formed from a supermarket some 10 years ago. Douglas and his partner live there, but have chosen to open their doors to musicians who need somewhere to perform. Robertson admits that they are probably a victim of their own success as the gigs are now a sellout almost every time.

The musicians who have performed at the house concerts appear to love the acoustics and the atmosphere there. Corran Raa said on their [Facebook page](#) advertising their May gig earlier this year that this is an ‘awesome venue’.

Robertson has not made any money from these concerts. Instead,

all of the money collected by way of donations from those attending, has been given straight to the bands and musicians who have performed. Alcohol may be consumed but it is not sold there. You have to bring your own. Douglas claims that the concerts are not a nuisance to the majority of his neighbours who more often attend the concerts as guests, and that there has not been one **direct** complaint from any local resident, but admits that the council's planning department say they have had a complaint from a member of the public.

The recent visit from council officials has resulted in the council's planning department deciding that the house concerts must stop by the end of the year. The council have offered to assist in finding alternative premises for the musical evenings, including a proposal that Robertson might use the Trinity Apse, formerly the Brass Rubbing Centre, as a stop gap venue, although Douglas Robertson has yet to decide what he might do in the future.

Robertson wrote an article for [The Edinburgh Evening News](#) in which he explained that it was the loss of so many of Edinburgh's small music venues that resulted in his house being opened up to many bands and singers over recent times.

He speaks to The Reporter in our video here to explain his side of the story:-

He has vowed to find a new venue for these musicians to perform and get the public exposure they need. He has decided that it will be called Sound House, but it is as yet an unfunded and fledgling organisation although [A new website](#) has been set up in anticipation. None of this should imply that Robertson is a novice in the musical field. It was he who set up the Wee Red Bar at Edinburgh College of Art some years back, and that venue still goes strong today, but he chooses not to run the concerts as a commercial venture.

Councillor Richard Lewis who is the council's convener for

Culture and Sport said:-“Of course, we want to support those, like Douglas, whose enormous passion for live music already contributes greatly to the scene in Edinburgh – and has the potential to contribute a whole lot more – but this cannot be at the expense of the relevant planning legislation.

“Our planning officials have invited Douglas to get in touch so that they can explain and discuss their concerns and this offer still stands. Separately, myself and colleagues have reached out to him in the hope of finding an alternative venue for Sound House and held a productive meeting last week. We made a number of suggestions and await Douglas’ feedback.”

The Reporter first happened on the House @42 last year when Editor of The Broughton Spurtle, Alan McIntosh, wrote for us about his visit to 42 Royal Park Terrace for a concert [in this article here](#). He expressed the view at that time that the organisers were steering a course designed to keep the venue well below the administrative radar.

Alan wrote then:-“The problem is that house concerts on this scale and at this regularity are probably unsustainable. They’ve had no complaints yet. They’ve broken no laws. But something will inevitably give eventually. If nothing else, the patience of neighbours must surely, finally wear thin. The challenge, then, is to find an ‘equally homely’ alternative, a venue which retains the original ethos and quirky charm, but can do so without constantly looking over its shoulder.”

You can still watch some of the concerts from the House [on YouTube here](#). We particularly like Dean Owens version of Walk The Line :-

Douglas Robertson also runs a [professional photography business](#) from his home.