

Five things you need to know today Edinburgh



Fringe plans for the city centre – Planning decision on Royal Edinburgh Hospital – MP supports green energy – Himalayan Centre for Arts and Culture need Community Champions – Free massage!

Following the success of St Andrew Square as a venue for Edinburgh's Christmas it is no real surprise that Tommy Sheppard's Salt 'n Sauce Promotions plans to move his Spiegel tent to the square this summer.

The square is now billed as the new outdoor hub this year as the venue for a major new fringe event.

Plans announced yesterday morning by the promoters will transform the area into a vibrant alfresco space with three performance areas. The Square will become the new home for The Famous Spiegel tent, a longstanding festival icon, which will take centre stage in the urban garden. A new venue *The Stand in the Square* will be built around a 150 seat yurt and will be run as part of the Stand Comedy Club programme. A world music stage around the central monument will feature free acoustic music performances from across the festival. Bars, dining areas and a range of other features will complete the scene. Spiegelmaestro David Bates says: "We are thrilled to be part of this new initiative. It is our 5th festival site since 1996 and will become, without doubt, the sparkling jewel amongst the many temporary festival sites that mushroom around the city every August. The much loved Famous Spiegel tent is the original fringe trail blazer and we are delighted to be part of the development of another magical garden destination."

The plans will require final approval from the licensing authorities but the promoters say they have already received the backing of council leaders.

Operating every day of the festival, the Garden will offer an eclectic mix of cabaret, comedy, music and theatre – with entertainment for all ages from morning 'till late at night. The full line-up will be published at the end of this month.

The plans are the fulfilment of a long-standing aspiration by Tommy Sheppard, director of the Assembly Rooms Fringe and the Stand: “We first thought about putting festival events in the square ten years ago, but it was our experience of running a major outdoor event in George Street over the last couple of years which proved to ourselves and others that we know how to do it well. This is a wonderful public space and we will make use of the natural amenity and beauty of the area to create a superb new event space for residents and visitors alike.”

The new event will be promoted alongside both The Assembly Rooms and the Stand Comedy Club and it is hoped will further boost festival activity on the north side of the city centre. It will be the only venue on the fringe to have its very own tram stop, (perhaps meaning that even fewer comedians can now use the tram gag in their acts?).

Organisers have pledged to work with local businesses to further increase the economic benefits of the world's largest arts festival for the local economy.

Essential Edinburgh CEO Andy Neal said:- “We are delighted that we have been able to reach this agreement. It marks the next stage in our ambition to ensure a great festival experience in the city centre, and will provide a balancing hub to the book festival in Charlotte Square, connected by the pedestrian friendly, café society of George St. The additional footfall this package will generate should benefit all the local businesses and Salt'n'Sauce and ourselves will be

working closely with them to make sure that this potential is realised.”



Last year the Spiegeltent was erected outside the Assembly Rooms and sections of George Street were cleared of traffic to allow restaurants to extend their premises onto specially constructed wooden stages in the street. The whole street became a kind of continental promenade and the initiative was welcomed by many festival goers and local businesses, including Hamilton and Inches who put one of their silversmiths out in the street to show off his skills!

The Development Management sub-committee will hear evidence about the planning application for redevelopment of the Royal Edinburgh Hospital today.

Council officers have recommended approval, and in light of 14 letters from affected parties, 10 of which were objections, they have recommended that the development includes completion of a cycle path available for use by the public and so linking the Union Canal to Morningside. There has also been a demand for a variety of measures to ensure that badgers are not disturbed too much, as well as a full assessment of the impact on traffic in the area.

This is a huge site of over 20 hectares lying to the south of George Watson's College. The suburban freight line runs to the south separating it from houses in Balcarres Street and Craighouse Gardens, but due to stone walls and fences the site is practically self-contained.

It includes a bowling club although in common with many others across the city which have been proven to be under-used, the

former Tipperlinn Bowling Club is no longer in use, and the bowlers have gone to Merchiston Bowling Club to share their facilities.

The proposal now is to redevelop the site and provide new mental health care facilities in modern buildings, whether renovated or newly built. The plans include demolition of some of the existing buildings, although none of those earmarked for demolition are listed buildings, but the plans will include felling of over 200 trees. The development will include planting of a substantial number of new trees.

One of the major conditions which will attach to any outline planning is that the design and external appearance of the buildings will require prior approval. So even if the planning application is approved today it will by no means be the last word on this development site.

With two pioneering wave energy companies lying in his constituency it is perhaps no surprise that MP Mark Lazarowicz backs green energy.

He is calling on the UK and Scottish Governments to realise fully the potential of the green economy to create skilled, long-term jobs at the same time as tackling climate change and fuel poverty.

In a wide ranging essay for the Scottish Fabian Society he stressed how the green economy could draw on existing industrial strengths pointing to local examples in Edinburgh as well as elsewhere in Scotland. [It can be found at this link.](#)



KnotStressed KnotStressed provides therapies and workshops in the centre of Edinburgh. Whether you are looking to relax and unwind, want relief from specific aches or pains, or simply need some feel good therapy, they can help. Now they are looking for volunteers...

**Free Pregnancy Massage* It's that time again... we are looking for 2, possibly 4, pregnant women to volunteer for a free pregnancy massage as part of our post graduate massage training course on Sunday 20th April from 1.15-4pm (actual massage time ~90 minutes). If you are interested please email Onie at: relax@knotstressed.com*