

# Five things you need to know today Edinburgh

**St James Quarter**

**Government proposed Cities Convention**

**Whisky Tasting at The Balmoral**


**To Kill a Mockingbird**

**EdinburghReportage**



The development at St James Quarter is still awaiting planning permission. It is a major £850m reworking of an old shopping centre which is past its sell by date.

This development is possible thanks to an innovative funding agreement between the City of Edinburgh Council, Scottish Government and TIAA Henderson Real Estate (TH Real Estate) announced at the end of April last year.

 The Cockburn Association, the group which campaigns to promote the conservation of Edinburgh's heritage, has something to say about this as it does on the other developments in town. In this case they like it and here is why:

*The Association has studied this application in detail. We are supportive of the redevelopment of this site which will see the removal of what many consider to be one of the ugliest blots on Edinburgh's urban landscape. The introduction of a bold gallery design in a geometrically pure crescent shape linking Multrees Walk to Waterloo Place is*

welcome as is the new emphasis given to the approach from Little King Street and potentially in the future from Register Place.

We are supportive of the urban design improvement of narrowing Leith Street to something resembling its original building line and with this removing the pedestrian barrier and traffic island down the centre of the street. We welcome the removal of the pedestrian bridge to the Greenside car park, which though of an interesting modern design does considerably impede views up and down Leith Street as well as segregating pedestrians from the street, causing loss of vitality.

We would strongly suggest that these improvements are linked by a planning condition to the narrowing of the street which brings about considerable development gain for the applicant to ensure that they do take place and would hope that as part of that the redundant bridge structure might be relocated to provide a crossing point in another part of the city, such as over the Water of Leith or in Leith Docks.

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In an address to local authority leaders from across the UK later today Infrastructure, Investment and Cities Secretary Keith Brown will propose creation of a Cities Convention to bring people and policy makers together, enable better understanding, improved policy and greater empowerment of communities.

As well as highlighting new powers for local authorities to reduce business rates in and tailor skills training to their local needs, Mr Brown will tell the Core Cities Summit in Glasgow that the Scottish Government's approach to devolution does not stop at local authority level and through, for example, the Community Empowerment Bill, that the Government wanted to see the balance of power move towards communities.

Speaking ahead of the speech, Mr Brown said:

“The Scottish Government’s approach is one of partnership with local government – it is an approach that varies substantially from that taken in some other parts of the UK and is based on a shared vision of strengthened community planning, engagement and empowerment.

“But our approach to devolution does not stop at local authority level and through, for example, the Community Empowerment Bill, we want to help shift the balance of power more towards communities.

“Initiatives such as the Scottish Rural Parliament, which met for the first time last November, and our action to ensure island communities benefit from the revenue of the Crown Estate demonstrate our commitment to subsidiarity. I want to see our cities engage too and creation of a Cities Convention would bring people and policy makers together. It’s about enabling better understanding, improved policy and greater empowerment of communities.

“Scotland’s cities are already leading the UK on devolution – already in possession of powers their English counterparts are fighting for.

“For example, local authorities in Scotland already have an enshrined legal power to advance wellbeing – a wide-ranging discretionary power, set out in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. I would like to see every local authority in Scotland using this in the way it was intended, to listen to their communities, understand their priorities and use their power effectively to promote wellbeing.

“Devolution is not just about devolving from Westminster to Holyrood – or from Holyrood to the City Chambers. Democracy is not about parliaments, councils or governments, it is first and foremost about people and communities.”

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Still time to get booked up for a whisky tasting this Thursday at The Balmoral.

[Post](#) by [The Balmoral](#).

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To Kill A Mockingbird begins tonight and runs for the whole week at the King's Theatre.

More information [here](#).

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Have you noticed the cranes going up around the city? We have and that is why we have set up a storyboard over here to collect photos of all the cranes you spot around the city.

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