

# Alan Cumming gives the thumbs up to Ross Pavilion redesign

The outline design for the new Ross Pavilion in Princes Street Gardens has had the stamp of approval from one of Scotland's most successful stars.

The actor Alan Cumming (who is sadly missing from this year's Festival) added his voice to the acclaim for the winning design.

***Mr Cumming told The Edinburgh Reporter :  
"What I love most about this design is the way WHY and their team have managed to capture and celebrate Edinburgh's subterranean architectural past, as well as make Princes Street Gardens into a beautiful landscaped community space for the 21st Century."***



US architects **WHY** won the international design competition to establish a new outline plan for the replacement of the Ross Pavilion as announced a couple of weeks ago.



Their proposal is focused on the landscape and introduces a new undulating promenade. The brief given to all entrants was to create a concept design for the £25 million project to include a new venue which will replace the bandstand, a visitor centre and subtle updates to West Princes Street Gardens. The visitor centre will also have a café, greatly needed in that part of the gardens.

## 1. [Ross Bandstand](#)

The winning design has yet to be finalised in detail, but it is inspired by the gardens' geology and history, and the theme for the pavilion itself is the butterfly. Mark Thomann of **wHY** explained that the word pavilion and papillon or butterfly are all connected and this gave the team some inspiration.

The idea is not to detract in any way from the grand majesty of Edinburgh Castle, but rather to fold it into the landscape, allowing it to increase the amount of green space and get rid of some of the tarmac.



**Mark Thomann, wHY's Landscape Design Director, said:**

*"This is a special opportunity for a special place, not just for Edinburgh but the world. The new Ross Pavilion and Gardens draw from the rich natural history, heritage and creative spirit of Scotland, embodying a model approach for integrating public architecture and urban space in a top global city. Our team looks forward to realising this vision with the Ross Development Trust and the people of Edinburgh."*

**The team described it as 'human scale with moments of drama... activating four layers of meaning within the Gardens: botanical, civic, commemorative and cultural.'**

The jury decided unanimously on the winner and said they were particularly taken with **wHY's** design as it is a 'beautiful and intensely appealing proposal that complemented, but did not compete with, the skyline of the City and the Castle'.

The plan is to create a newly refreshed community space aiming to make it a welcome area for use during future festivals.

**Norman Springford, Competition Jury Chair, was delighted with the whole process. He said:**

*“As is always the case with initiatives of this size and stature, the jury had a hard job! We are confident however that we have a winning concept that embodies an imaginative ensemble landscape approach, creating a wonderful stage for our iconic Edinburgh Castle. In addition, the design concept offers a creative energy and a series of unique elements which will all combine to create a new and contemporary landscape.*

*“We thoroughly enjoyed meeting all the shortlisted teams and understanding each approach. However with wHY, they demonstrated an impressive collaboration which respects and enhances the historical context and backdrop of the Castle and the City, whilst creating new heritage and increasing the green space within the Gardens. All of which were key aspects for us all and respected the importance of the space within a World Heritage Site.”*

The competition was organised by Malcolm Reading Consultants along with the Ross Development Trust and The City of Edinburgh Council. It was amazingly successful as it resulted in entries from 125 teams from 22 countries, and in April this year the entries were whittled down to a shortlist of 7 by the judges.

The plans for the redevelopment of the Ross Pavilion have only been made possible by a generous donation from Edinburgh businessman Norman Springford. Mr Springford who is behind the Apex Hotel group has given £5 million to start off a fundraising campaign to create the new pavilion in a redesigned landscape.

**wHY is** a collective of architects, landscape designers, makers and strategic thinkers, established in 2004 and with offices in New York and Los Angeles; the studio's competition-winning entry was led by Founder and Creative Director Kulapat Yantrasast and Landscape Design Director Mark Thomann.

The **wHY** team working on the Ross Pavilion is made up of many

partners, some of whom are in Edinburgh.

· **WHY (USA)** with GRAS, Groves-Raines Architects, Arup, 0 Street, Creative Concern, Noel Kingsbury, Yann Kersalé Studio, Lawrence Barth, Stuco, Alan Cumming, Aaron Hicklin, Alison Watson, Peter Ross, Adrian Turpin and Beatrice Colin**WHY** is an interdisciplinary design practice dedicated to serving the arts, communities, culture and the environment since 2004. Led by founder and creative director Kulapat Yantrasast and landscape design director Mark Thomann, **WHY** is a collective of architects, landscape designers, makers and strategic thinkers, who work as four independent yet interconnected workshops; ideas, buildings, grounds and objects. With offices in Los Angeles and New York, **WHY's** 30 team members and network of experts share a commitment to collaboration. **WHY** has assembled a team of thought leaders and creative influencers, including engineers, designers, plant-lovers, graphic designers, writers, journalists, actors, artists, and activists who are passionate about Scotland and participating in the conversation for the future of the Ross Pavilion. Recent projects include the widely published Speed Art Museum in Louisville, KY and Skylanding with Yoko Ono, in the historic Olmsted designed Jackson Park in Chicago, IL.

<http://www.why-site.com/>

**WHY** will now work with the Trust, the Council and other stakeholders, and consult with the public, to take forward the project to revitalise this space, positioned just below Edinburgh Castle and adjoining Princes Street.

The Competition jury was made up of :

- **Norman Springford**, Jury Chair
- **Ada Yvars Bravo**, Director, MYAA Architects
- **Sir Mark Jones FSA, FRSE**, Former Director of the National Museums of Scotland and the V&A
- **Andrew Kerr**, CEO, City of Edinburgh Council
- **Riccardo Marini**, Director, Gehl Architects
- **Alexander McCall Smith CBE, FRSE**, Writer
- **Malcolm Reading (Hon) FRGS, FRSA**, Architect and Competition Director

- **Adam Wilkinson**, Director, Edinburgh World Heritage
- **Donald Wilson**, Convenor for Culture and Communities,  
City of Edinburgh Council