

Virgin Hotels to open European first in Edinburgh

Virgin Hotels is set to take over India Buildings in the city's Victoria Street and open a luxury 225 room hotel there by 2020.



The proposal is to have what are called Chambers and Grand Chamber suites alongside bars and restaurants, the brand's Commons Club and meeting spaces. This will be a high end hotel and Virgin are keen to say that they will mix old and new in the hotel, but that it will have a sense of style and sophistication.

This is a first in Europe although Virgin Hotels have already opened a luxury hotel in Chicago with others planned for eight other cities in the US, and is hailed by the council as a huge coup for the capital.

Sir Richard Branson, Founder of the Virgin Group said : "Edinburgh is such an iconic city and we're thrilled to be able to say it will be the home of the first Virgin Hotel in the UK and across Europe.

"My grandparents were from Edinburgh and my wife Joan is also Scottish, so the country has always held a special place in my heart. The people of Edinburgh have been so great in welcoming us to their great city; we can't wait to open our doors to people across the country and, indeed, the world."

Virgin Hotels CEO Raul Leal said : "Edinburgh has so much to offer, as a top travel destination in the UK and internationally, it's an ideal location for our next hotel.

"This project, from an award-winning hotel brand such as

Virgin Hotels, will further highlight the city's eclectic style while remaining true to its historic heritage, all while offering guests and locals alike an experience like no other."

The City of Edinburgh Council helped take forward the proposals as part of its 'Edinburgh 12' portfolio of investment sites or string of pearls as they used to be known.

Cllr Gavin Barrie, Housing and Economy Convener said : "This is an exciting announcement and a huge coup for Edinburgh.

"It really is testament to the city's resilience during these uncertain times that Virgin Hotels has chosen Edinburgh as the first city outside the US in which to open a new hotel.

"It's estimated that the hotel will provide a £5 million boost to the local community every year, helping one of the city's key shopping areas in Victoria Street and the Grassmarket. The development of the site will help support hundreds of jobs during construction."

Planning permission for a 'mixed use development comprising hotel, bar, restaurant, cafe, retail and commercial uses and alterations to India Buildings, 11-15 Victoria Street and Cowgatehead Church' was granted in November 2016.



Mr Byrom, defeated in court in March 2017

But the council's sale of the property has not been without its critics. The Let There Be Light campaign continues to demand a judicial review, and last March Simon Byrom spent a week in a tree there before [being evicted by court order](#). He did this trying to draw attention to the site and the development of it as a hotel.

The Let there be Light campaign as recently as a few days ago were tweeting about their perception that The Scottish Government should have called in the planning decision for

India Buildings, and that the planning process was seriously flawed. They believe that the proposed hotel will incorporate all the adjoining land in the Cowgate which was being held for further development of the Central Library.

The campaign is concerned that the development of India Buildings would be most detrimental to the Central Library which will lose both views and light.

They have pointed out the irony of this, given that the motto of the library is Let there be Light.



The Central Library was the capital's first Carnegie public library funded by a contribution of £50,000 from Andrew Carnegie. A telegram from Carnegie said that he wanted it to be "one of the most potent agencies for the good of the people for all time to come".

We have asked the campaigners for their comments.



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