

Leith Walk Café to celebrate 60th anniversary amid closure threat

CLOSURE-THREATENED LEITH CAFÉ CELEBRATES 60TH ANNIVERSARY

The owner of a traditional Scottish café has issued an emotional plea for developers to halt their closure plans, ahead of the eatery celebrating its 60th anniversary this weekend.

Family-run Leith Walk Café – a haven for some of Edinburgh’s most vulnerable people – will be forced to serve its last cuppa on 17 July 2019 as part of Drum Property Group’s highly contentious plan to demolish the building at Stead’s Place.

A café has been trading on the site for the past six decades, but Drum has used a break clause in the current 10-year lease to kick out Charlotte Lloyd, who runs Leith Walk Café with her sister Lorraine.



Charlotte the owner of Leith Walk Café

Charlotte said: “It is sad and so unjust. We asked Drum to let us stay but it was just thrown back in our face.

“If I could speak to the boss of Drum, I would tell him that our café is more than just a business. A lot of the people who come here are quite old. Some have special needs. They are all welcome.

“One wee lady walks up three or four times a week. Where is she going to go if we have to close? In any other café no one will know her. If she goes to Starbucks or Costas, nobody will even look at her. In here, there is always somebody that’ll talk to her, ask after her.

“There are people who know each other just from coming in here. For some of them it might be the only human contact they have all day. So, this really is more than a business. Our customers have become like family.”

The café is the latest victim of Drum’s attempt to demolish the existing block and build student flats. Since announcing its plan just over a year ago, Drum has systematically turfed out tenants at break points in their leases. The 40 independently-run shops and businesses that once occupied the building, have been whittled down to just three: Leith Walk Café, Cassia café, and Leith Depot bar and music venue, which will be forced to shut in October.

In January, Drum’s plans were thrown out by City of Edinburgh Council but the developer has lodged an appeal and continued to clear the building of tenants. In addition, it has ignored a clear directive from the council to work with the community on a shared vision for the site.

Charlotte added: “As July 17 draws closer, we’re becoming emotional seeing our regulars because you worry about where they are going to go.

“We offer something unique. There used to be lots of places like ours but now we are the last one around here. If we close, I worry some of the old folk won’t leave their houses.”

Charlotte is inviting people to come to the café on Saturday, June 29, to mark the 60th anniversary.

A spokesman for the Save Leith Walk campaign, which is spearheading efforts to save the building, said: “Drum has an

opportunity to show it cares about the people of Leith. We urge them to let all of the remaining businesses continue trading until the fate of the Stead's Place building has been decided, and let former tenants return.

"We're asking Drum to stop robbing this community of vital shops and services."

Earlier in the year the University of Edinburgh confirmed they were [pulling out of the development.](#)