

Conservation body chair does not want to stop Edinburgh's Christmas – but he wants to pause the build

Cliff Hague the Chair of the Cockburn Association told The Edinburgh Reporter that he does not want to stop Edinburgh's Christmas. Far from it, he simply wants Underbelly who organise the festive events on behalf of the council to be subject to the same rules as anyone else when it comes to planning.

Underbelly began the build process for Edinburgh's Christmas earlier this week. The area in front of the National Gallery of Scotland is now covered in a complex scaffolding structure. We have repeatedly been assured that the footprint of the Christmas Market is not bigger than before although there will be 12 more stalls than in previous years.

Mr Hague said : "I think there should be a temporary stop notice to pause this significant development until the issue is resolved. It is a horse and cart issue."

Following enquiries by Terry Levinthal the Director of the Cockburn Association, it emerged on Friday that there is no planning permission or application in the system.

The galleries have said all of this has nothing to do with them. But we have been advised that there were several sets of

engineers working on the design of the new Edinburgh's Christmas layout and one of those represented the galleries.

We've seen your comments and views on the Xmas markets, & to reassure you, we've been liaising with the Council to protect the work in the Gardens. The gardens are owned by [@Edinburgh_CC](#) & any decision on the Xmas markets and its location is for Underbelly & the Council. pic.twitter.com/6ok0M5cMBZ

– National Galleries (@NatGalleriesSco) [October 23, 2019](#)



Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

A spokesperson for Underbelly told The Edinburgh Reporter :
“Underbelly agreed with the Council that it was not possible to make a planning application until the plans had been agreed with the Council as the landlord of Edinburgh's Christmas. Discussions about the plans began with the Council in April and were not agreed until October 12. Following that

agreement, Underbelly is now compiling its planning application which it will submit at the earliest possible opportunity.

“The scaffold currently going in allows the Christmas market to continue in the gardens while working round the ongoing changes to the landscape and also ensures we are taking every measure to protect the gardens.”

A statement is apparently to be made to councillors at the beginning of the week following a review of what has happened and what steps Underbelly have taken in relation to planning permission. It is of course essential to have permission including alcohol licences before members of the public enter the site in a few weeks time.



Building of Edinburgh's Christmas in Princes Street Gardens 26 October 2019 Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

At the June meeting of the council an emergency motion was presented advising that a two year contract extension had been negotiated by the Director of Place under delegated powers.

Underbelly will pick up the cost of additional works to protect the new bankings installed by the National Galleries of Scotland during their programme to create a new entrance and pathways. As allowed in terms of their original contract Underbelly asked for a three year extension but this was curtailed to two to allow for everything Christmas and Hogmanay related to be reviewed in the next 18 months.

Emergency Motion by the Coalition

Culture and Communities Committee

18 June 2019

Emergency Motion – Winter Festivals

Committee:

Notes the ongoing success of Edinburgh's Winter Festivals as measured against the performance criteria set out by the council;

Notes that in order to safeguard the improvements to East Princes Street Gardens being delivered by the National Galleries of Scotland as part of the wider Gallery refurbishment programme, there is a significant additional cost to holding the Christmas Market there;

Notes that officers entered into discussion with Underbelly, the winter festivals contractor, to assess how best to meet that additional cost;

Notes that officers and Underbelly reached a conditional agreement to extend Underbelly's contract for two of the optional three years extension, to enable Underbelly to meet this additional cost;

Notes that officers have informed Underbelly that the contract in its current form will not be extended into the third year of the possible extension, and that instead, the approach to delivering events for Christmas and Hogmanay will be reviewed through a process of public and stakeholder consultation and subsequent procurement or commissioning, for introduction from 2022;

Notes that owing to time constraints, and in accordance with the contractual decision previously made by the Council, officers made this decision under delegated authority but Councillors on the Culture and Communities Committee and other interested Councillors were briefed on the decision.

Moved by Councillor Donald Wilson

Seconded by Councillor Amy McNeese-Mechan



When Underbelly took over the contract there was planning permission in place until 10 January 2018.

The council administration included planning matters in their Business Plan including a commitment to “Improve planning enforcement to ensure that all developers, large or small, conform to Edinburgh’s policies and developer’s commitments”.

Council Commitments on a planning system that works to protect and develop our city

1. Prioritise the use of brownfield sites and work with public sector and private landowners to develop land for affordable housing
2. Ensure that Council policies on planning, licensing and sale of Council land give substantial weight to the needs of residents while still encouraging business and tourism
3. Review the Council’s policy on promoting mixed communities. The review should be completed by summer of 2018 and should include homes of multiple occupancy, short term temporary lets and student housing
4. Improve planning enforcement to ensure that all developers, large or small, conform to Edinburgh’s policies and developer’s commitments
5. Work with the Scottish Government to review planning policy and overhaul the planning appeal system to make it shorter, more independent and give communities the right to appeal
6. Protect Edinburgh World Heritage Status and make sure developments maintain the vibrancy of our city in terms of placemaking, design and diversity of use

THIS IS A SECOND VERSION OF THIS ARTICLE. Our website is hosted by a company which rolled our site back to Friday without notice. Sadly they had not kept a back up of the site and this was one article which we had not kept a duplicate of either. We believe it is largely the same as that previously

published which is no longer available online.



Princes Street Gardens 25 October 2019