

Community Buyout at Stead's Place could be the way forward

Community Buyout at a crucial stage

Campaigners in Leith have reached a crucial stage in their bid to take a threatened building into community ownership.

Local residents are setting up a body to buy the sandstone building on Stead's Place, if it is put up for sale. An application by current owner Drum Property Group to replace it with student flats was rejected by City of Edinburgh Council in January. Drum's appeal to that decision is being considered by the Scottish Government.

In the meantime, campaigners have been gathering signatures and preparing the way for a buy-out. They believe the move would support local entrepreneurs and respect the heritage and diverse cultural mix along Leith Walk.

In October almost 100 people attended a public meeting held in Leith Dockers Club where Colin Grey, from Community Right to Buy (CRTB), Morven Campbell, from Community Shares Scotland, and the Save Leith Walk Campaign, outlined how the buy-out could happen.

The process requires a community to prove there is significant local support for the proposal.

The meeting heard that signatures have been gathered, the business plan is done, and the community body, whose name is 'Our Leith Walk', has been registered at Companies House.

The group expected to submit its application forms at the end of October. CRTB will organise a postal vote for the ENH6 5**

postcode area to verify that there is sufficient local support before government ministers assess the application. If that is approved, the owner of the sandstone building is obliged to give the community body the first chance to buy it if they decide to sell. Our Leith Walk would then have eight months to come up with funds to buy the building for the community.

Anne Atkinson, a spokesperson for the campaigners, said: "Money should not be a problem. Local people will be able to buy shares in the enterprise which would then be owned and governed by the community it serves. We are working with Community Shares Scotland, and as a not-for-profit we can apply to a wide range of funding bodies for money.

"I feel passionate that a community buy-out of Stead's Place would give us the opportunity to keep rents low and make sure future tenants are what is needed and wanted in our area."

For more information you can contact Anne by emailing saveleithwalk@gmail.com

