

# Norman Springford steps down from The Quaich Project

**Norman Springford OBE who founded The Ross Development Trust has resigned as chairman of the charity's board of trustees and will also step down from the board.**

Set-up with his own £5 million donation Mr Springford established The Ross Development Trust in 2016 to manage the delivery of significant improvements within West Princes Street Gardens to create a more accessible, usable and open public greenspace. He explained to us at that time that he wanted to leave a legacy for his grandchildren and others to enjoy in the same way that he had done as a child.

The Ross Development Trust and The City of Edinburgh Council work in a public-private partnership to help deliver The Quaich Project.

So what will Mr Springford's departure mean? Will it mean the end of any modernisation in West Princes Street Gardens? Questions have been asked about the content of the sponsorship document put out to potential donors and whether that was approved by councillors or council officers.

If the Quaich gets sufficient pledges from potential donors then the council will match Mr Springford's initial donation although the whole project is likely to cost £25 million.

Management of the gardens after the new building is in place would be the responsibility of the council, as it is at present. We met David Ellis of The Ross Development Trust last week and asked him questions about the project. Watch here :

Mr Springford, who owns Apex Hotels, said: "Since we started this project there has been an underlying perception that our intentions are either commercial or to privatise the Gardens. This is of course completely untrue.

"In particular, my motivations have been questioned. I believe that this has become a distraction to the project's ambitions which are honourable and would ultimately benefit all of Edinburgh.

"It is for these reasons, that I have decided to take a step back to allow someone else to lead the project and to give it the best chance of being realised. The original vision, which continues to be held dear by the board and team, is purely to improve these loved but underfunded Gardens.

"I was heartened by the results of the public consultation earlier this year that showed so much support by the people of Edinburgh for what we were hoping to achieve here. And it is with great pride that I can look at the early successes of the project such as the restoration of the Ross Fountain and the engagement of young people in discussions about the future of the Gardens.

"I continue to believe in the vision, direction and delivery of The Quaich Project and will honour my £5m donation to try and do something good for the people of Edinburgh.

"I also urge critics of the project to pause for thought to consider the continued deterioration of infrastructure in the Gardens including the lack of facilities, poor usability for community groups, and the significant issues with disabled access. What will happen if the project doesn't go ahead?

"The answer is that the Gardens will deteriorate further. Public money will have to be found to maintain the Gardens, stretching budgets and services that are already under intense pressure."



David Ellis, Managing Director, The Quaich Project said: "Norman's vision and generosity is an example to everyone, and we are extremely grateful to him for taking the project so far. The heart of this project is creating something good of the people of Edinburgh and Norman has worked tirelessly to achieve that.

"Norman has made sure that we have gone far beyond what a project of this type is required to do, engaged at all levels and been transparent throughout. For him to take the decision to step down to ensure the project continues shows exceptional selflessness."



David Ellis Managing Director of The Ross Development Trust Councillor Donald Wilson, Culture and Communities Convener said: "As well as being a passionate advocate for the future of West Princes Street Gardens, Norman Springford has led the Ross Development Trust through some of its most exciting recent developments including the upgrade of the Gardeners Cottage and restoration of the iconic Ross Fountain.

“I would like to thank Norman for his generous contribution and commitment to the project and we look forward to working with the new Chair to make sure everyone can access and enjoy this wonderful asset for generations to come.”

The board will decide on a new Chair at the next meeting at the end of this month.

[www.thequaichproject.org](http://www.thequaichproject.org)