

Scottish Ministers approve community buy out plans for Stead's Place

Scottish Ministers have approved a bid by people in Leith to set up a company that could take a threatened building into community ownership.

Campaigners have established a Company Limited by Guarantee called 'Our Leith Walk' to buy the sandstone building at Stead's Place, if it is put up for sale.

An application by current owner Drum Property Group to replace the building with student flats was rejected by City of Edinburgh Council in January 2019, and the developer's follow-up appeal was thrown out by the Scottish Government in December.

Our Leith Walk, which was born from the grassroots campaign Save Leith Walk, has now registered an interest in a Community's Right to Buy the land at 106-154 Leith Walk. The group has produced what Scottish Ministers regard as a viable and creditable use for the building which is compliant to the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and to which Ministers have considered and approved their application to register an interest in its purchase.

The Act requires Scottish Ministers to be satisfied that the acquisition of the land by the community body is compatible with "furthering the achievement of sustainable development".

Ministers believe that, if successfully delivered, Our Leith Walk's proposals should contribute positively to the sustainable development of the land and the local community through, for example:

- Re-opening the 22 small retail units and 1350 sq m office space in the sandstone building.
- Retaining, reusing and improving the existing buildings, developing them through sustainable means and providing curb appeal
- Providing better accessibility for those with reduced mobility and increasing capacity to provide wider economic and social benefits for all the community.
- Developing the environmental potential of the building by implementing exemplary structural programs including; roof greening, urban growing, renewable energy provision.
- Focusing on training and enterprise, in partnership with local anchor organisation, supporting disadvantaged young people and target groups into high quality employment.

Anne Atkinson, a spokesperson for the campaigners, said: "It feels fantastic to have finally got this over the line because it's taken a lot of time and effort from local people giving up their spare time to get us here.

"We believe passionately that the best future for this much-loved building is for it to be owned and governed by the community it serves and used to benefit that community. We have a long-term, sustainable plan for this site and securing Scottish Ministers' approval for our company is a huge step on that journey."

The newly-formed business is confident it would be able to raise funds to buy the building once the current owner decides to sell.

If you wish to get involved or find out more contact ourleithwalk@gmail.com

