

Friends of Roseburn Park to start work on new café

The Friends of Roseburn Park (FoRP) will now proceed with refurbishment of the derelict toilet block in the heart of Roseburn Park in early May 2022. Conversion of the block into a new café with public toilets should be complete by late summer.

The new amenity is expected to attract more people to the park, which lies in the shadow of Murrayfield Stadium and the café will face onto the FoRP Armoury Mural completed in 2019.



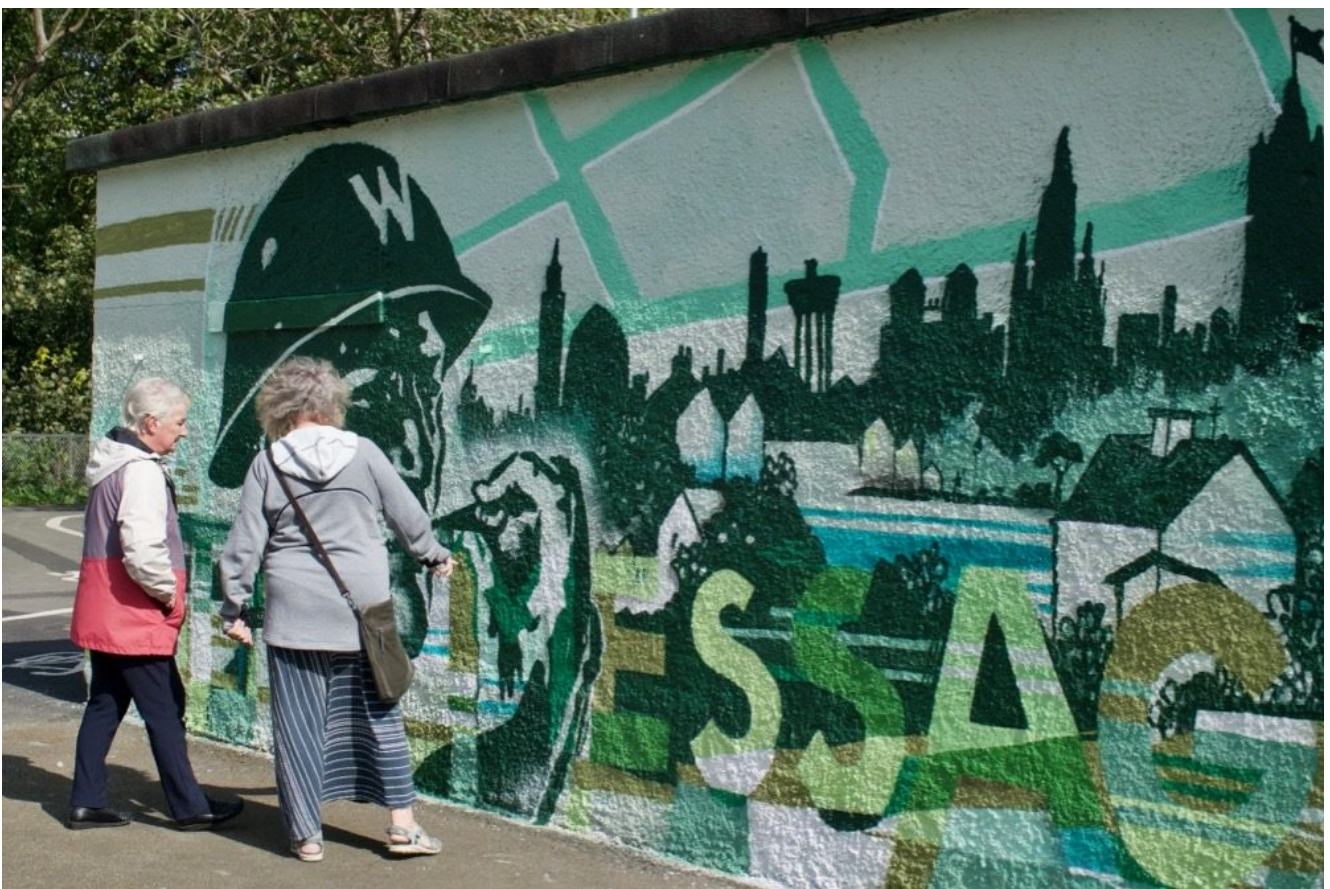
The now derelict toilet block is distinctive and was built in 1903, designed by the office of the City Architect at the time, Robert Morham, as the park's pavilion. Later it was used as a bothy for the park keepers and was later converted for additional use as public toilets in 1936. It has been closed since 1982. The refurbishment comes after ten years of campaigning just as the roof is beginning to collapse and nature is taking over the interior.

An initial concept in 2012 was progressed by FoRP Trustees and members who have provided their skills, expertise and time on a voluntary basis. In addition, support was provided by architectural designer Craig Proudfoot of One Foot Square and with technical input from Paul Harding the project is now moving off the drawing board.

The refurbishment work will be carried out by All Aspects Building & Construction Scotland ltd under the directorship of

James Purves and will be project managed by Craig.

Murrayfield Wanderers Rugby Football Club (MWFC), a key park stakeholder and user, will operate the café. The plan is for the building work to be complete by Autumn 2022, with MWFC opening the café with hot drinks, snacks and ice cream and then trying to keep it open as much as is feasible throughout the year. The council's has measured footfall showing that 1,800 pedestrians and 450 cyclists use the park every day. FoRP believe that the café will draw even more users to enjoy the park, so helping to make it sustainable all year round.



The Air Raid Protection mural was unveiled in September 2019
PHOTO ©2019 THE Edinburgh Reporter

Funding the refurbishment has been the greatest challenge of all. Following the launch of the Air Raid Protection mural in September 2019, the then chairperson, Pete Gregson, organised a crowdfunder, and launched it with a leaflet put through thousands of local doors (around 6,000 people live in the ward and most use the park) by a team of volunteers. FoRP raised a total of £8,864 within four months with their “buy a brick”

scheme.

There were additional grants from Baillie Gifford Investments (£1,000), Virgin Money Lounge (£2,000) and the Evelyn Drysdale Foundation (£1,500) with additional funding applied for just ahead of the pandemic.

The fundraising culminated in July 2021 with FoRP being awarded £66,000 by The City of Edinburgh Council Place Based Investment Programme. Proposed by The Lord Provost, Councillor Frank Ross, FoRP's café project was approved for funding by councillors.

Under the new chairmanship of Jim McDonough, FoRP Trustees engaged in extended and intensive planning in getting the design finalised and the tender package prepared. Around ten builders were approached to tender for the works.

Jim McDonough said "At last. This is exactly what our community and park visitors have been waiting for. The refurbished building will be so better than the present eyesore- FoRP are returning the exterior to the way it would have looked when it was first built, 116 years ago- and the interior into a warm and inviting cafe. Visitors will have somewhere to go for a hot drink and a snack – maybe even a light meal- when the work is complete.

"It has not been a straightforward project, but working with experienced café managers FoRP have come up with a design that gives 30 square metres of floor space as well as a spacious public toilet, kitchen and storage."

Pete Gregson said "It's been a rollercoaster- on so many occasions I thought we had taken on the impossible. I can't believe there will still be something to show to my kids in the park that will be there long after I am gone."

The Rt Hon Lord Provost Frank Ross said: "Converting the old toilet block into a café for the whole community to enjoy is a

great idea. It will help to support local jobs and volunteering opportunities, while providing a warm and accessible space for local people to meet up.

“The conversion, which will include an accessible toilet, has the backing of local residents and I was delighted to secure the Council funding for the FoRP to allow it to proceed.

“Additionally, income from the cafe will help to support other projects led by the Friends of Roseburn Park to improve the overall amenity and quality of the Park.”



Before the graffiti was removed