

Defibrillator at the ready at Marionville Community Fire Station

The Church of Scotland, and the congregation at St Margaret's Parish Church Restalrig have joined forces with local firefighters to find a place for a defibrillator which is now sited at Marionville Community Fire Station.

The public access device has been officially registered and the formal launch event offered the ideal opportunity for Lynn Cleal Area Chair of the Edinburgh committee of St John Scotland to explain how important a defibrillator can be.

Lynn explained: "About 2015 we decided to do something about the lack of defibrillators in Edinburgh. Imagine filling up a double decker bus every week, and everybody on that bus has a cardiac arrest. Six years ago only two people would come off that bus alive. Over the last three to five years we have put 350 of these defibrillators out in and around Edinburgh and now we can say that four people come off that bus alive.

"We continue to strive to get that number increased. Another part of what we do is to offer free CPR (Cardiopulmonary resuscitation) training and defibrillator awareness to the surrounding areas. We think the best way to do this for the community is to make partnerships. So we get organisations such as churches, police, fire stations and we get them all on

board. Some people donate defibrillators and others – such as the fire station here – host the machine. It is then available to anybody. This is a great location where many people will see it. They then have to phone 999 and are then given the code to release the defibrillator.

“We are honoured to be a partner in this project here.

“Even during the pandemic we did face to face videos with the planning department and got permission for 45 projects in Edinburgh and the Church got permission for another five interfaith projects.”

Alex Dickson Property Manager at St Margaret’s outlined the history of the project. He said: “In 2019 St John Scotland with the Church of Scotland undertook a bold initiative to increase the coverage of public access defibrillators around Scotland. They purchased 49 of these devices including the heated cabinets which was a total of £83,000. The plan was that congregations throughout Scotland could apply to get one of these devices. St Margaret’s Parish Church did so and were fortunate enough to be successful. Unfortunately the pandemic came along, but recently Joan Griffiths the local councillor and Session Clerk at St Margaret’s met with Red Watch Commander Michael Goodman at Marionville Community Fire Station was very much on board with the idea of the local partnership. This is very much a focal point of the community, as everyone knows where this place is. It is now live, and fortunately has not been used yet.”



L-R Kevin McCusker Group Commander for Edinburgh SFRS, Andrew Smith Volunteer with St John Scotland, Lynn Cleal, Chair of St John Scotland’s Edinburgh committee and lead on the St John and the City project, Cllr Danny Aston, Cllr Joan Griffiths, MBE, Commander Michael Goodman, Johnny Henderson Watch Commander at Marionville Amber Watch, Bill Johnson Elder at St Margaret and Alex Dickson Property Manager at St Margaret’s
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Bill Johnson an Elder at St Margaret's who first suggested the idea to the Kirk Session

The location for the new device was initially suggested by Bill Johnson an Elder at St Margaret's who raised the idea at the Kirk Session.



Cllr Joan Griffiths and Commander Michael Goodman unveil the life saving device PHOTO ©2022 The Edinburgh Reporter
Commander of Red Watch Michael Goodman did the honours cutting the ribbon with Cllr Joan Griffiths who is local councillor and also Session Clerk at the church.

Commander Goodman said he was honoured and proud to help unveil the defibrillator along with Cllr Griffiths. He explained: "This is the first public access defibrillator to be installed at a fire station within the city of Edinburgh. There are seven fire stations in Edinburgh and I will be bringing this up as an example whenever I can. Having this

here especially on this roundabout is fantastic. And there is more to this as you don't have to be specifically trained on a defibrillator to use this – it tells you what to do. The more fundamental part of course is doing CPR on a patient. It is important to know that you cannot leave a patient, but at least now someone would be able to come and pick this up, and potentially save someone's life.”

The site for the defibrillator is key. It sits on the external wall of the fire station facing the roundabout where it is easy to access, and it is also easy to use offering verbal as well as written instructions.

St John's have worked in partnership with Church of Scotland to install these devices in churches but of course many of these are listed buildings making planning permission difficult to obtain. Nobody needs to be trained to use a defibrillator but the very existence of the machine might help someone go from having a cardiac arrest to survival with the use of lifesaving such as CPR.

It was in 2019 that ambitious plans were launched by the church to install the life saving equipment in every Church of Scotland parish in Edinburgh. The Presbytery of Edinburgh as it was then invested £83,000 to fund 49 fully-automated defibrillators for the outside of buildings.

A Church of Scotland spokesman said: “The former Presbytery of Edinburgh has funded an ambitious project to install life-saving equipment at Church buildings throughout Edinburgh.

“It has partnered with the St John Edinburgh in an initiative that is a demonstration of mission and commitment to have a presence at the heart of communities where everyone matters.

“The project is a clear sign and symbol that the Church continues to fulfil the example and teachings of Jesus as he offered to give life in all its fullness.”

If you would like to find out more about becoming a Donor or Host with the St John and the City defibrillator project, contact the St John volunteers at edinburgh@stjohnscotland.org.uk

