

New Christmas producers urged to take greater care of Princes Street trees

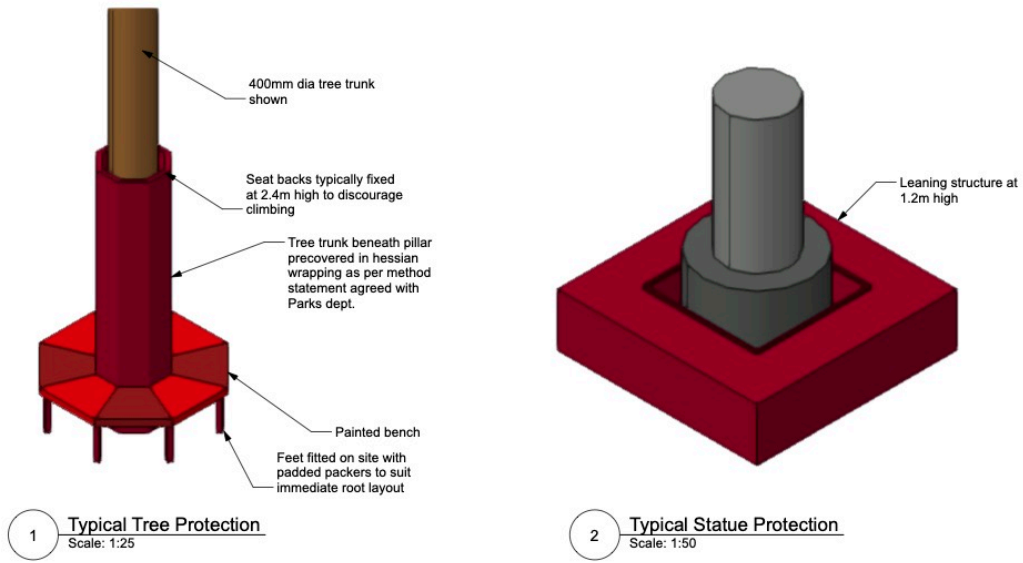
The trees in Princes Street Gardens will need more protection than is provided for in the current planning application for Edinburgh's Christmas, according to a forestry expert.

Previous operators were criticised for their lack of care for the trees in Princes Street Gardens, and The Edinburgh Reporter has been told that as it currently stands, the new producer, Unique Assembly, may not have put the correct level of protection in place in their planning application lodged on 29 September.

Last year Underbelly was taken to task by councillors who questioned their actions at a testy face to face meeting. Our [article from November 2021](#) set out what Underbelly said they had done, and the way in which councillors questioned them. The consensus among elected representatives at that time was that the operators had ridden roughshod over both the planning process and the gardens which then took months to recover.

This is the current proposal lodged on behalf of the newly appointed producers of Edinburgh's Christmas, Unique Assembly Limited, to protect trees in the gardens this year:

Edinburgh Christmas 2022 - Typical tree and statute protection



	PROJECT: EDINBURGH CHRISTMAS 2022		
	CLIENT: Unique Assembly Ltd		
	VENUE: EDINBURGH CITY CENTRE		
	TITLE: Edinburgh Christmas 2022 - Tree and statue protection - typical detail		
SCALE: as shown	ORIGINAL SIZE: A3	DRAWN: Stuart Nairn	REV:
DRG DATE: Sep 2022	DWG No: EDI-101	B	
projects@bighouse-events.co.uk			

The new producer of Edinburgh’s Christmas drafted up their outline plans with only 72 hours notice to comply with tight deadlines, and the planning application remains open to comment until 28 October 2022.

Andrew Heald forestry consultant said: “I am concerned that the initial plans submitted for Council approval have been apparently developed without seeking professional arboriculture advice. The Council publishes clear guidance on how trees should be protected on development sites, and it’s essential that this is followed.

“These mature trees in Princes Street Gardens are enjoyed by millions of people every year, they have high amenity and environmental value. They are the crown jewels of Princes Street and must be properly protected. I look forward to seeing the revised tree protection plans which are now being developed.

-“The key issue is that the ground around each tree must be

protected from compaction. If the soil is compacted it is harder for the tree to access water, oxygen and nutrients from the soil. This protection needs to be properly planned by an arboriculture professional in conjunction with Council tree officers. It is essential that lessons are learnt from previous Christmas Markets.”

A spokesperson for Unique Assembly Limited said: ““We have engaged with our own in-house arborist and the Council Parks team to give advice and best practice with regards tree protection.

“We agree that elements of the current application do not suitably account for the root zone and will be applying learnings from years of working in urban landscapes to ensure the event does not have any long term impacts on the green spaces as proposed.”

Cllr Ben Parker said: “The markets in Princes Street Gardens are something many residents and visitors look forward to each year, but we have a responsibility to ensure that their presence doesn’t cause long term stress and harm to the environment there.

“I share the concerns of residents and experts about the plans

for protecting trees in Princes Street Gardens this Winter. The Council has guidance on how trees should be maintained and protected, and this guidance follows the British Standard. I will be keenly following developments to ensure that these guidelines are adhered to. If they are not, then I will be picking this up with relevant officers and contractors.

“Our trees are so valuable and it’s important that we treat them with the right level of respect and care to keep them healthy for generations to come.”

Unique Assembly is a new company formed by Unique Events Limited and Assembly Festivals Limited to produce Edinburgh’s Hogmanay, and in a new contract to produce [Edinburgh’s Christmas](#) which will begin on 25 November 2022. The programme, which will preserve the core festive attractions for the city this year, includes the popular Christmas Market and funfair attractions in East and West Princes Street Gardens and on the Mound; an ice rink on George Street; new lighting and projections on George Street; charity installation Festival of Kindness in St Andrew Square; and a selection of free festive events and shows for families at the Ross Bandstand, such as the traditional Nativity Carol Concert.

For both events, and in line with the consultation responses received by the council last year, the demands on the producer of Edinburgh’s Christmas are to:

- Continue to provide high quality Christmas and Hogmanay celebrations which will be valued by residents and visitors, and continue to enhance Edinburgh’s reputation
- Extend celebrations to other parts of the city
- Deliver and evidence the environmental sustainability of the winter festivals, including through the local sourcing of products and minimising use of greenspace
- Improve access for those previously less able to

participate, including through physical accessibility, the design of activities for those with a range of needs, and for people on lower incomes and from deprived areas

- Focus on making the celebrations family friendly
- Maximise engagement with small and independent businesses to establish local market growth, including giving priority to existing and new local businesses and creatives

Also the council has stated in response to the public's feedback, that the producer will be required to minimise any use of greenspaces, introduce alcohol-free times and/or areas within Christmas celebrations, avoid overcrowding and improve access by distributing celebrations more widely throughout the city centre.

PHOTOS FROM PREVIOUS YEAR SHOW DAMAGE TO PRINCES STREET GARDENS



Edinburgh's Christmas cleanup in January 2022 when the festive events were produced by Underbelly. PHOTO: © 2022, Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com



Edinburgh's Christmas – the cleanup in January 2022 when Edinburgh's Christmas was over Photo: © 2022, Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com