

Hotel provides new income stream for Hearts

Andrew McKinlay, chief executive officer for Heart of Midlothian FC, outlined why the club have opened a new, 25-bed hotel in the main stand at Tynecastle.

He explained that the hotel work has been completed over the past year but the main stand has been on-going for a few years and this was the final floor which would have been finished a few years ago but COVID intervened.

He revealed that there were a few ideas about what to do on the floor, like office space, but added: "COVID put paid to that as an idea and we came back to the hotel concept which was originally in the plans."

Some of the fans have argued on social media that the board should spend money on the team and not on a hotel but McKinlay said: "We have never spent as much on the team as we have in the last ten years.

"It is fair to say that our expenditure on the team has gone up and up in my time here, but what is really important is to make sure the income stream is going up and up going forward.

"Yes, we have spent a significant amount of money on the team, but the hotel becomes a significant income stream and all the income we make goes back towards the team.

"Some of our income streams are almost maxed out as we sell our season tickets and there is a finite amount you get

from the Scottish Professional Football League (SPFL) for your league position.

“You cannot guarantee European group stages every year and you can’t guarantee that you are going to sell a player, but what you can do is look at what your offerings are in the stadium when we are not playing football. This (hotel) adds a real string to our bow about what we can offer.”

McKinlay believes that hotel patrons will be a mix of fans and non-football fans, but he argued that the facility is not far from the centre of Edinburgh and the Capital is always looking for hotel rooms for various events.

There are sports and music occasions at Murrayfield and, during the Edinburgh Festival, there are always people looking for rooms but generally, he said, the city is a big tourist magnet and there are always people looking for rooms.

He stressed: “It is not a football hotel, it is a hotel within a football stadium which has some nods to Hearts in the colours etc, but it is a very nice hotel in its own right.”

There will, he said, dynamic pricing as there is with all hotels and McKinlay said: “If you want to stay here on the night that Taylor Swift is here then it will be higher, but if you want to stay here at another time then it will be reasonably priced.

“We want to get that right as we are a family-owned club and we want a price so some of our fans to come and stay here.”

Parking is an issue in Edinburgh but the chief executive officer said: “There is not a lot we can do about that as car parking is tight here. We will have some car parking spaces available for hotel guests, but you are encouraged in any planning not to have huge amount of carp parking spaces in the big cities. That is the direction of travel these days.”

PICTURE: Craig Gordon on a bed in the hotel. Picture courtesy of **David Mollison** and Heart of Midlothian FC



VIPs AT THE OPENING: Graeme Pacitti, Ann Budge, Andrew McKinlay and Craig Gordon. Picture David Mollison

