

Historic Melville Castle wins marquee fight

A hotel operator who was ordered to remove a temporary marquee which has stood for ten years has won his fight to keep it for a little longer as a permanent replacement is found.

Historic Melville Castle has become a popular wedding venue after Nick Dent's company The Original Collection took over operations two years ago investing £3million in refurbishing it.

But the company hit problems after Midlothian Council planners insisted the temporary marquee used for events on the site was removed before an alternative could be found.

Mr Dent had asked for an extension until the end of this year as his firm tried to find a solution which satisfied planners.

However he was left frustrated after planners ruled the marquee had been left standing long enough and had to be removed arguing it had a 'significant adverse impact' on the listed castle.

At a meeting of the council's Local Review Body last week elected members overturned the decision ruling the structure could stay – until the end of the year.

Review body chairperson Councillor Russell Imrie urged planners and others affected to work with the hotel operator

to find a permanent solution after hearing alternative proposed to date had not been accepted.

He said: "I'd like to support the local business and grant the extension for the period of time requested. I do however recognise that there is a balancing act between supporting the business, protecting the setting of the listed building and protecting the amenity of local residents, therefore I would encourage the applicant, planning officers and other interested parties to work together to find a permanent solution which gives the business certainty going forward."

Mr Dent had argued that Melville Castle had been insolvent and closed with his firm took it over adding it was now restored to a high quality supporting 70 local jobs as a popular wedding venue.

Councillor Imrie's call for the appeal to be upheld was seconded by fellow review body member Colin Cassidy and passed unanimously.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter