



thecockburn**association**



ANNUAL REVIEW **2023-2024**

For Everyone who loves Edinburgh

www.cockburnassociation.org.uk

SC011544



Reference and Administrative Details—at 30 September 2024 with April 2025 updates

Charity Registration Number: SC011544

Principal Office:

Trunk's Close
55 High Street
Edinburgh
EH1 1SR

Sir Sandy Crombie
Stephen Jardine

President (retired, May 2024)
President (appointed February 2025)

Council Members:

Barbara Cummins

Chair, Convenor of Management & Finance Committee (Resigned August 2024; passed away September 2024)

Richard Price

Interim Chair (from October 2024) Policy & Development Committee (Elected 2023)

Claire Mitchell

Vice-Chair, Management & Finance Committee (Re-elected 2024)

Dr William Moyes

Treasurer, Management & Finance Committee (Re-elected 2024)

Prof Richard Rodger

Management & Finance Committee (Elected 2022)

Emily Yates

Policy & Development Committee (Elected 2022)

Lesley Martin

Management & Finance Committee (Elected 2022)

Peter Williamson

Policy & Development Committee (Elected 2022)

Annick Gaillard

Policy & Development Committee (Elected 2023)

Council members who were co-opted during year:

Harry Nimmo, Eric Dawson

Council members who retired at last AGM:

Richard Scothorne, Stephen Hajducki, Alastair Cook, Mark Lazarowicz

Members of the Policy & Development Committee who are not Council members:

Pam Barnes, Keith Anderson, Stephen Hadjucki, Lila Angelaka, Dylan Burns (joined Jan 2025)

Staff

Terry Levinthal

Director

James Garry

Assistant Director

Brigid Golden

Engagement & Development Officer (appointed April 2024)

Solicitors:

Lindsays WS,
Caledonian Exchange
19A Canning Street
Edinburgh
EH3 8HE

Investment Managers

Brown Shipley
2 Multrees Walk
Edinburgh
EH1 3DQ

Bankers

Royal Bank of Scotland
Bank of Scotland

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President's Welcome

Stephen Jardine



I was most pleased and honoured to be invited by the Council of the Cockburn Association to become its 16th President.

Ever since moving to Edinburgh from Dumfries as a student, I have appreciated the significance and beauty of Edinburgh. I have been a huge admirer of the Association for a long time; its passion and interest in preserving the city, and its steadfast campaigning for its improvement. As a journalist, broadcaster and presenter over many years, I have seen the considered and thoughtful approach to which the Association applies itself. For example, I was delighted to Chair its public summit "City for Sale" held in January 2020 highlighting the issues with the commodification of Edin-

burgh's open spaces. There is no doubt that this influenced the public authorities.

To be asked to be President in this celebratory anniversary year adds to importance of this role. I hope to play an active part in helping the Association grow into its next 150 years.

Whilst this Annual Review addresses in a large measure its activities in the year ending 30 September 2024, it also marks the 150th Annual General Meeting of the Association – an extraordinary milestone in any voluntary organisation's history. It is therefore worth reflecting on the impact that the Cockburn Association has had over the past century and a half.

At its inaugural meeting on 15 June 1875, it called for the acquisition of land near the Botanic gardens in Inverleith to form a public park. It suggested improvements to Corstorphine Hill and the Water of Leith to provide walkways and paths for the enjoyment of citizens. During its first year it lobbied the Lord Provost and Town Council to achieve these. It also called for the opening up of West Princes Street Gardens to the public and advocated the acquisition of ground at Dean Bridge for a new garden with increased public access. It then lobbied the Lord Provost to protect the trees in Bruntsfield Links, arguing not just for retention but expansion of the tree canopy. Its role was to bring concentrated argument to the Town Council, giving it dedicated support for its efforts but also pushing it in the direction of much needed civic improvements as a civic duty.

Today, we take such amenities for granted. In many instances, the public is not aware or does not appreciate the effort and engagement over extended periods of time that have secured important assets for the city.

None can be greater than Princes Street Gardens itself. The Association's namesake, Lord Cockburn, was instrumental in the early nineteenth century preventing it from being developed as an extension of the First New Town. In the late nineteenth century, the Cockburn objected to the Usher Hall being placed here. In the early twentieth century, it

fought against a "Winter Gardens" proposal by the Town Council, which was essentially a large visitor attraction under the Castle. It resisted motorways, car parks, bus stations, roundabouts and all sorts of proposals in the 1950s and 60s. More recently, it has argued and fought against intrusions such as shopping malls and major concert venues. If it wasn't for the effort of the Association, the fate of this iconic open space might have been very different.

I hope that members take great interest in the Annual Review and appreciate the huge efforts of my predecessor, Sir Sandy Crombie, the Council of the Cockburn Association and its small but dedicated and hard-working staff in making it work on your, and the city's behalf.



Chair's Report

Richard Price

Interim Chair of Council



I wish to start my report by acknowledging the passing of Barbara Cummins, our Chair since May 2023. Barbara was the first woman Chair of the Association and her premature death in September 2024 came just one and a half years into the role. Barbara's knowledge, enthusiasm and direct approach was of great benefit to the Association, and we miss her guidance and support immensely.

I was honoured to be asked to step into the role of Chair as Council at the request of my fellow Trustees, having joined the Council in May 2023.

During the year, the Council of

the Association reaffirmed the mission and objectives of the Association, emphasising themes for action including protecting the “personality of place” and emphasising the protection of the well-being and health of the city. This process was evolutionary and emphasised that the activities of the Association needed to align with the needs of the city and its communities. The Council engaged consultants Mike Nevin Associates to help it align its objectives with a resource-building agenda, focusing on impactful events and activities. It also emphasised the Association’s independence; its skills, expertise and experience; and its long-standing history of engagement in city affairs; and its ability to take a longer-term, large-scale view of change and how it could be managed effectively.

Development Issues

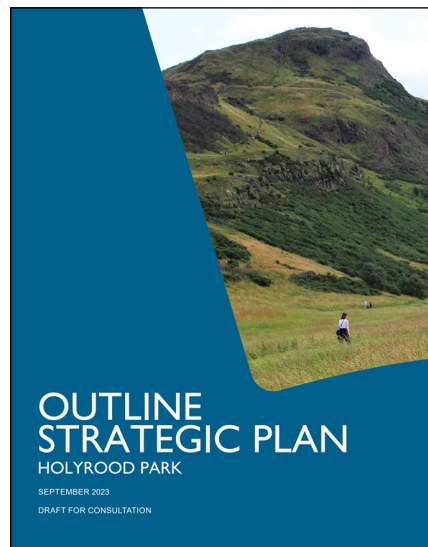
The separate report gives a flavour of the Association’s planning activity during the year. I would like to thank all members of the Policy & Development Committee, and especially those members who are not on the Cockburn Council for giving so much of their time and expertise.

In addition to examining and reviewing planning applications, the Association also takes strong interest in wider policy proposals and initiatives. We considered the City of Edinburgh’s Council Future Streets programme which proposes significant changes in access and allocation of streetscape for active travel use. The Cockburn Council was broadly in support but concerned that the proposals would result in a significant displacement of road traffic into neighbouring residential areas and its important open spaces such as Holyrood Park, which would see a substantial increase in traffic if implemented as proposed. We conducted informal discussions on the North-South tram line ahead of an expected public consultation exercise. Concerns with structural capacity of South Bridge to take such heavy engineering was one major concern. We considered the World Heritage Site Management Plan and made several recommendations on its improvement. We also participated in a City Council led workshop on retrofit and adaptation of historic buildings and areas for climate mitigation.

Edinburgh Civic Forum

The Association continues to host and administer the Edinburgh Civic Forum, a

network body of residents’ and civic groups interested in the good planning of the city. Over the year, we held quarterly meetings supported by the Chief Planning Officer of the City Council and other officials, who gave regular updates on various planning items. Issues discussed included the City Plan 2030, which was finally adopted as the formal development plan in 2024. Historic Environment Scotland’s Strategic Framework for Holyrood Park was discussed as was the draft World Heritage Site Management Plan.



We also held an open discussion on the future role of the Civic Forum and place-making in Edinburgh, emphasising the opportunity to use the Forum to provide a “bottom up” perspective looking at planning policy from neighbourhood’s perspective.

We are in discussions with the Chief Planning Officer and member groups on how to improve the Forum and widen its scope of engagement across government.

Engagement

Communicating with members and stakeholders has been a key focus for the Association. Over the year, we published six digital newsletters. Over 67% of members opened and then ‘clicked through’ to the relevant story, which compared very well against industry standards of only 15%. We also posted two newsletters to those members who cannot or chose not to engage digitally. We continued to have a strong social media focus, with over 11,000 followers on ‘X’ (formerly twitter) and 5,500 followers on Facebook, which compares well with similar groups. We launched

an “Archives Tuesday” project on Instagram, using material from our collections to tell the story of a changing city. This has been growing slowly, which is encouraging.

Operational matters

The role of volunteers in helping move the Association forward cannot be understated. We are hugely grateful to those who so willingly give us their time and expertise, including members of the Association’s governing Council.

Volunteers have been helping us over the year to catalogue and digitise our corporate archives. It is planned to make these openly available via our own website but also through national portals such as the “Your Scottish Archives” initiative run by the Scottish Council of Archives, where we were pleased to be a featured organisation. In addition, student volunteers have been preparing material for our digital programmes, researching topics for a new video series in planning called “The City that Wasn’t” exploring the history of change and development in the city.

Students were also recruited to help with some of the administrative tasks and we were very pleased to appoint one, Brigid Golden, as our new Engagement and Development Officer in April 2024. She joined Terry Levinthal and James Garry as our long-standing Director and Assistant Director in our office in Old Town.

During the year, Council co-opted two new Trustees. Harry Nimmo is a retired fund manager who brings considerable finance management skills into the Association. Eric Dawson is an architect/urban designer with considerable experience in design review and advocacy.

We have much to be proud of but still much to do. I am excited as we move towards the significant milestone of our 150th anniversary. Finally, I would like to express the thanks of the Council of the Cockburn Association for your continued support as members.



Development Report

James Garry (Assistant Director)

As in recent years, the Policy and Development Committee’s casework has been

dominated by applications linked to Edinburgh's growing visitor economy and the sustained demand for student housing, with an estimated shortfall of around 13,000 beds. The city's housing crisis also continues to generate considerable attention. At the beginning of this review period in October 2023, we considered a large mixed-use development proposal on Ocean Drive that included both residential and purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA). We noted the positive shift from office to residential use for this site but raised concerns that the proposed build-to-rent flats would do little to meet the urgent need for genuinely affordable and social housing in the area.

Despite good public and active travel connections, the PBSA at Ocean Drive seemed relatively remote from university campuses. We also found the proposed design and materials disappointing—a concern common to many planning submissions citywide.

October brought several major city centre applications under scrutiny.



Ocean Terminal Student Housing

We maintained our objection to student housing at Eyre Place despite a revised application, noting the reduced height but criticising the increased footprint. We also objected to a proposed change of use from office space to hostel accommodation, including the addition of a rooftop restaurant on South St Andrew Street. Although we acknowledged that the site already had hotel planning permission, we felt the rooftop venue was superfluous in a busy area already well served by similar facilities. As with many applications, the proposal lacked essential details on access and servicing.

We objected to the 2023/24 Edinburgh Christmas proposals due to limited detail, inadequate landscaping, failure to use existing hardstanding areas, concerns over event creep, increased footprint, possible negative effects on established retailers, and the continued absence of a promised citywide distribution

of attractions.

Later in the year, we supported a stu-



Former Crawford Tearoom interior, Hanover Street.

dent housing proposal at West Tollcross, which would repurpose the former Atik nightclub—a site with notable cultural history, including its role in *Trainspotting 2* and performances by Pink Floyd and The Ramones. Although we would have welcomed a mixed-use or mixed-tenure scheme, we acknowledged that site constraints made such approaches impractical. The student housing proposal was appropriate and pragmatic.

We also supported plans to convert a listed, derelict warehouse on John's Lane into student housing. The building is in poor condition and unsuitable for conventional housing, and the PBSA proposal represents a constructive approach to conservation. As the first phase of a two-part masterplan, we encouraged the developer to proceed with the subsequent stage. However, the scheme was refused listed building consent despite the major challenges of its

condition.

In contrast, we opposed the student housing proposals at Gillespie Crescent which would have resulted in the demolition of the 1930s structure, built for the Royal Blind Asylum and School. Historic Environment Scotland considers the existing structure a contributor to the area's character, and we saw no reason why it could not be restored for productive use. The proposed demolition was contrary to planning policy, and the replacement block was contextually inappropriate. We also objected to a PBSA plan at Willowbrae Road, where consent had previously been granted for residential use—part of a worrying trend of substituting student housing for approved housing schemes.

We raised significant concerns about a large hotel proposal stretching across Hanover Street, Rose Street, and Princes Street. While the scheme would return Crawford's Tearooms to productive use, which was welcome, it required demolishing a listed building within the World Heritage Site. We urged the applicant to demonstrate whether the listed structure could be retained and incorporated. However, the Council and Historic Environment Scotland were content with its loss. Servicing arrangements were also problematic in this high-footfall zone.

In early 2024, a fresh wave of student housing proposals came forward. We supported a scheme on Causewayside, noting that the use, height, and scale were appropriate. While we regretted the loss of the former Scottish Law Commission building, we encouraged the integration of its sculptural features into the new design. We were especially supportive of the high-density cluster-flat model, which offers potential for future residential conversion.



New Concert Venue, Hermiston

However, we could not support a PBSA proposal at Dundee Street/ Dundee Terrace due to its excessive bulk, poor design, and lack of neighbourhood integration. Existing and approved student housing nearby weighed heavily in our evaluation.

We supported an office-to-hotel conversion on St Andrew Square. Although part of a broader trend reducing central office space—a potential challenge to business growth—the application was unobjectionable in itself. The area is becoming Edinburgh’s equivalent of London’s Russell Square, with

Bingo Hall on Manderston Street, commending the retention of its external fabric. However, we objected strongly to a PBSA proposal in Newington that involved demolishing a locally significant early-20th-century office building. The scheme represented overdevelopment, lacked amenity space, and was poorly designed. Its height was excessive, and it appeared speculative, possibly anticipating future development on adjacent plots.

In June, we supported partial demolition and redevelopment of the Caledonian Brewery site, including

nue, believed to be the oldest car factory in the UK. The Association offered qualified support, flagging concerns over access arrangements and the design of a new access tower, while acknowledging the need to arrest deterioration at this Buildings at Risk site.

We objected to the demolition of a sound modern house at Marshall’s Court near the Playhouse Theatre to build serviced apartments. In the current housing crisis, such loss of family housing is unjustifiable. We also opposed proposed alterations to an A-listed hotel at the corner of West Bow and the Grassmarket, which would remove render to expose stonework and add a whimsical corner clock. We found the proposals stylistically incoherent and inappropriate given its heritage significance.

We supported new access works at the Castlehill Reservoir site. The B-listed former water storage building will benefit from a new pedestrian entrance and a redesigned museum, which will better interpret Edinburgh’s public health infrastructure history. It’s continued use as a visitor attraction and shop was accepted.

As the review period ended, we repeated our objections to the Edinburgh Christmas applications, especially the three-year permission request. Nevertheless, we acknowledged the improved detail in the application and better visitor access planning. We suggest that an economic impact assessment focused on city centre and businesses would be helpful in future.

Looking ahead, major projects are poised to reshape Edinburgh. The New Town Quarter redevelopment at Canonmills continues to overhaul 5.9 acres on the edge of the World Heritage Site. Concerns were expressed regarding the



Granton redevelopment scheme

multiple hotel conversions already in progress.

We endorsed the proposed indoor arena at Edinburgh Park in South Gyle. Long advocated by the Association, such a venue would broaden the city’s entertainment and events infrastructure while relieving pressure on central public spaces.

In West Edinburgh, we also welcomed the City Council’s West Edinburgh Placemaking Framework. We advocated a holistic, infrastructure-first approach, viewing the area not as a suburban extension but as a new planned town.

As spring approached, we reiterated concerns about a revised PBSA application on Dunedin Street, particularly given the absence of a current Local Place Plan. We highlighted the need for an updated student housing strategy and recommended an independent assessment of demand. It remains unclear whether new PBSA proposals are serving existing students or anticipating future enrolment. We also flagged the risk of PBSA conversion to tourist accommodation.

Elsewhere, we supported the adaptive reuse of the former Mecca

affordable housing provision. We commended the considerable care and assessment that went into the site analysis. This is a model scheme for the sustainable reuse of heritage assets.

We also endorsed a City of Edinburgh Council-led development in Granton. Compared to a previous private-sector proposal, this scheme included substantial affordable housing and a new coastal park that addresses both amenity and climate resilience issues.

In August, Lar Housing Trust brought forward plans to adapt Madelvic House and factory on Granton Park Ave-

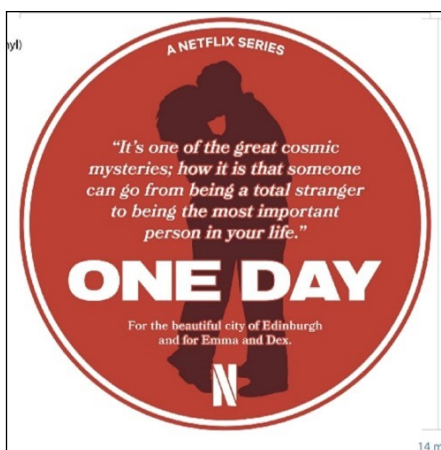


Madelvic house and former car factory

shift of Buy to Rent housing to student accommodation. At Leamington Square in Fountainbridge, a scheme to develop 464 homes and commercial space is expected. The new Currie Community High School—Scotland's first Passivhaus-standard secondary—will set the benchmark for sustainable educational facilities.

On site, we are encouraged that both the Jenners scheme for new retail and hospitality with hotel accommodation is underway. We were also pleased to support changes to the Old Royal High School in its journey towards a new life as a National Centre for Music, which is also underway.

Finally, some proposals, although seemingly minor, raise important cultural and policy questions. One example was Netflix's bid to install a commemorative plaque in The Vennel for "One Day," a romantic drama with limited Edinburgh connections.



We objected, citing the lack of historical significance and articulated our concern that approving such a plaque without clear criteria could lead to a proliferation of marketing-driven commemorations.

We also urged the City Council to establish an advisory body on commemorative plaques, which we would be delighted to support. No such body has been established, but the application was thankfully refused.



Finance Report

Dr Bill Moyes, Treasurer

The Statement of Financial Activities and Balance Sheet for the year ending 30 September 2024 are set out in the Annual Review. They have been inspected by our auditors CT LLP and were approved by the Cockburn Council on 15 April 2025. The full accounts are available on our website.

Once again, the Association budgeted for a significant deficit in the region of £55,000. This was due largely to the decision of Council to employ a new engagement and development officer to help push the resource development but to assist in wider duties including the 150th anniversary events. In addition, donations and grants have been seriously reduced, impacting on our income. The adverse effects of the cost-of-living crisis continue to be felt by the Association.

The Association recorded operating losses before gains/(losses) on investments of £34,449 (2022: £49,242). Gain on investments during the year were £3,345 (2022: loss on investments of £74,052) resulting in net expenditure for the year of £31,104 (2022: £123,294). Total funds on 30 September 2023 were £482,464 (2022: £513,568) and these were made up of unrestricted funds of £481,189 (2022: £512,052) and restricted funds of £1,275 (2022: £1,516).

The value of investments at 26 September 2024 was £417,311 compared to £402,694 at 29 September 2023 and £455,235 at 30 September 2022, recovering slightly from a low point in August 2023 of £399,940. Values have fluctuated significantly over the period, illustrating the continued volatility of global markets and issues with the UK economy.

Once again, we budgeted for a deficit year with projections in the region of £50,000.

Positively, our appeal for the 150th anniversary publication went well. Starting in June 2024, we have raised almost £10,000 since, which covers approximately two-thirds of the production costs. There is also the revenue from sales that will take time to have an impact but will inevitably be a positive one.

Negatively, whilst the Council believes that the 150th anniversary of the Association provides the opportunity to illustrate the positive and long-term impact that we have had on Edinburgh, in a city that depends so much on its qualities and amenities, it is essential that it trans-

lates that into wider and direct support. However, it has proven difficult to make the jump from general acknowledgement of impact to direct fiscal support.

As such, whilst we are not in immediate danger of being unable to fund our activities and ambitions, the next 2-3 years will be crucial to secure the sustainability of the Association. It is essential that we reverse the trend of resource depletion and bring new supporters into the fold. Many funding avenues are becoming scarcer. More organisations are chasing fewer resources. It is a difficult time for many charities operating in the city.

Support of members is fundamental to this and we hope for your continued interest in the Association in the future. Promoting the Association to individual networks is one means of support, as is leaving a gift in your will.



Image notes and credits

Many of the images used in the Annual Review have been taken from planning documents associated with individual applications. They are used for the purpose of critique and explanation.

P4—Cover of Holyrood Park Outline Strategic Plan
©Historic Environment Scotland.

P5—Ocean Terminal PBSA; image from Design + Access Statement,
©CDA Architects

P5—Crawford Tearoom interior
©Cockburn Association

P5—New Concert Venue; image from Design + Access Statement
©HOK Architects

P6—Granton Redevelopment; image from Design+ Access Statement.
©Smith Scott Mullan Architects

P6—Madelvic factory and house: image from Design + Access Statement.
©Hypostyle Architects

P6—One Day plaque; image from planning application drawing.
©Capital A Architects

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (including Income and Expenditure Account)

Year ended 30 September 2024	Unrestricted		Restricted	Total 2024	Total 2023
	Capital	Revenue			
	£	£	£	£	£
Income and endowments from:					
Donations and legacies	-	25,254	10,610	35,864	47,427
Charitable activities	-	120	-	120	3,119
Investments	-	9,470	-	9,470	11,980
-	-	34,844	10,610	45,454	62,526
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds	-	3,855	-	3,855	4,024
Charitable activities	-	100,344	4,105	104,449	92,951
		104,199	4,105	108,304	96,975
Net gains/(losses) on investments	56,104	-	-	56,104	3,345
Net income/(expenditure)	56,104	(69,355)	6,505	(6,746)	(31,104)
Transfers between funds	(69,355)	69,355	-	-	-
Net movement in funds	(13,251)	-	6,505	(6,746)	(31,104)
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward	481,189	-	1,275	482,464	513,568
Total funds carried forward	467,938	-	7,780	475,718	482,464
All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities					

BALANCE SHEET

As at 30 SEPTEMBER 2024	2024		2023	
	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets:				
Tangible assets		23,751		25,097
Investments		406,101		391,021
		429,852		416,118
Current assets:				
Debtor	1,938		7,898	
Cash at bank and in hand	52,097		65,214	
	54,035		73,112	
Current liabilities:				
Amounts falling due within one year	(8,169)		(6,766)	
Net current assets		45,866		66,346
Net assets		475,718		482,464
Funds of the charity:				
Unrestricted funds		467,938		481,189
Restricted funds		7,780		1,275
		475,718		482,464

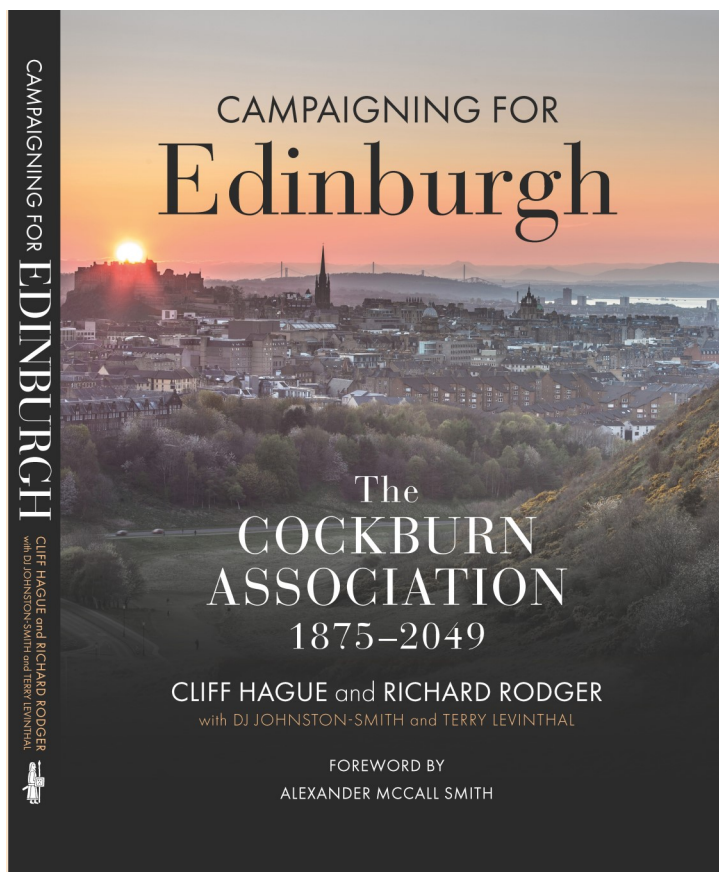
The accounts were independently examined by CT LLP and were approved by Council on `15 April 2025.



For those members with a long memory, these images may be familiar. In the 1970s, the Association was dismayed at the number of gap sites in the city, which amounted to an area greater than the First New Town. Some were the result of slum clearance policies; others the result of a changing infrastructure; and others the outcome of failed development proposals. The Association was the principal advocate in campaigning to see these infilled, bringing groups together to drive action forward. They are a reminder of changing fortunes of Edinburgh and of the need for a strong civic voice. All appear in *Campaigning for Edinburgh: The Cockburn Association 1875 to 2049*. Images courtesy Historic Environment Scotland.

Top Left—Bristo Place from roof of Teviot, now Bristo Square; Top Right—High Street Gap site, now home of the Radisson Blu hotel.
Middle Left—Castle Terrace opera house site, now Saltire Court; Middle Right—High Street gap site, now housing and Museum of Childhood.
Bottom—Former Caledonian Station and Goods Yard, now site of hotel, offices and Conference Centre





On Edinburgh...

It is not our lectures, nor our law, nor our intellectual reputation, that give us our particular fame. It is our curious, and matchless, position, -our strange irregularity of surface, -its picturesque results, -our internal features and scenery, -our distant prospects, -our varied, and ever-beautiful neighbourhood, -and the endless aspects of the city, as looked down upon from adjoining heights, or as it presents itself to the plains below. Extinguish these, and the rest would leave it a very inferior place. Very respectable; but not what it is.

Henry Cockburn

In "A Letter to the Lord Provost on the Best Ways of Spoiling the Beauty of Edinburgh", 1849



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