

On behalf of the ex-members of the Old Town Community Council (OTCC) we are saddened to announce that the Old Town Community Council has collapsed due to mass resignations at the meeting of 20.11.2013.

In recent years the OTCC has been particularly overwhelmed with large planning applications resulting in members having to commit many hours in assessing and submitting responses. Applications have typically consisted of hundreds of pages of documents with little if any clemency shown by the Council for extending the time for public consultation.

In contending with a barrage of applications for hotels and student accommodation, the OTCC has appealed instead for affordable, family housing development in order to safeguard the essential liveability of the Old Town and counter the disreputable image the City now has as a contrived 'tourist tat', late night party drinking destination. However, the Council has consistently ignored these concerns and the representations of the OTCC to the extent of flouting regulations, engaging in the criminal neglect of public listed buildings and even threatening the coveted World Heritage status of the Old Town. The extent to which members have been overwhelmed has fundamentally compromised Our duty as a statutory body in representing the most vital, 'grass root' tier of the democratic process. Moreover, this situation has had an adverse affect on the health of members and is undermining the wellbeing of the local community and the cherished character of the Old Town.

If such a failing of democracy can occur at the very heart of the nation then what hope is there for other communities challenging Council decisions when Our officials and elected representatives have become so apparently beholden and enthralled to a discredited system of economics which shows such favour to private speculative interests over consideration for the local economy and the long term wellbeing of society?

Having become so exasperated with the disregard shown by the City of Edinburgh Council towards the local community, and the lack of support and encouragement for community councils in general, the majority of OTCC members have now taken this decision to resign. Due to community disaffection and lack of promotion by the Council for community council elections, without so much as a mention on the Council's homepage, only one new member was recently co-opted onto the OTCC, constituting an insufficient number in order to sustain the OTCC.

In the face of this cynical climate, at this low ebb of democracy, it is hoped that much needed reform will come with the Community Empowerment Bill, currently at the consultation stage in the Scottish Parliament, which reaffirms the fundamental democratic principle that,

"Scotland's people are its greatest asset, and best placed to make decisions about their future... Our belief in local self-determination, through a strong Scottish Parliament, strong local authorities and strong communities, is the key principle which underpins the proposals in this consultation document. At its heart, community empowerment is about communities taking their own decisions about their futures".

Yet after the broken promises of Council Leader Andrew Burns this remains to be seen: *"Our new contract with the city marks a fresh start for Edinburgh... This is a Council that will listen to, and work with, local people... There needs to be strong process for looking at the quality of how the Council has reached decisions so that there is genuine scrutiny and questioning of the actions it has taken"*.

In these exceptional circumstances, as a final appeal, ex-members of the OTCC wish to alert other community councils to the matter of 'Caltongate' which has been referred to as the most significant

development in the Old Town “since the 12th century” and is due to be given consent next week on the 18th December at the Development Management Sub-Committee. Please see attached file.

To those who cherish the Old Town of Edinburgh and who wish to safeguard its World Heritage Status please give this matter of national importance your attention and lobby councillors to uphold their duty of care to the City and decline planning permission for this most controversial development.

Yours faithfully,

Simon Byrom Ex-member of the Old Town Community Council