

Deputations

City of Edinburgh Council

10.00 am Thursday, 25th August, 2022

Virtual Meeting - via Microsoft Teams

Deputations

Contacts

Email: gavin.king@edinburgh.gov.uk

Tel: 0131 529 4239

Nick Smith

Service Director, Legal and Assurance

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CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

Item No 3

THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

25 AUGUST 2022

DEPUTATION REQUESTS

Subject	Deputation
3.1 In relation to Item 7.5 – Cost of Living Crisis	End Poverty Edinburgh Group
3.2 In relation to Item 8.1 on the agenda – motion by Councillor Lezley Marion Cameron – US Supreme Court Ruling on Abortion Rights	Abortion Rights Scotland (written submission attached)
3.3 In relation to item 8.6 on the agenda – motion by Councillor Lang - Parking on Pavements and at Dropped Kerbs	Living Streets Edinburgh Group
3.4 In relation to item 8.10 on the agenda – motion by Councillor Kumar – Shared Prosperity Fund Reporting	Saheliya Wellbeing-Empowerment-Employment Integrating Ethnic Minority Women in Scotland (written submission attached)
3.5 In relation to Item 8.14 on the agenda – motion by Councillor McVey – North Bridge	1) Gold Brothers 2) Scotsman Hotel (written submission attached)

ABORTION RIGHTS SCOTLAND

Here is a short written statement from Abortion Rights Scotland:

From Abortion Rights Scotland: With thanks to Edinburgh Council for debating this important issue, the recent US Supreme Court ruling on abortion rights, overturning Roe vs Wade and ending nearly 50 years of abortion access as a constitutionally-protected right in the US. Abortion is essential reproductive healthcare - anyone who can get pregnant, may need an abortion - and a basic human right. In today's world, with anti-human rights movements increasing in power and influence across the globe, it is necessary and important for us to speak out - to make clear where we stand: for healthcare and for human rights. In Scotland, anyone who needs an abortion can have one, safely, legally, on the NHS.

In relation to Item 8.10 on the agenda – Shared Prosperity Fund Report.

Saheliya wishes to make the following deputation to the City of Edinburgh Council's (CEC) Full Committee meeting as our service users are affected by:

8.10 the motion on Shared Prosperity Fund Reporting by Councillor Kumar

being discussed at the full committee meeting on 25th August 2022.

BACKGROUND

Saheliya was created in 1992, by minority ethnic women for minority ethnic women, and has since grown to be a vital grassroots organisation in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Lothians and surrounding areas supporting over 1300 women and young women from 52 countries each year experiencing mental health problems.

Saheliya has developed its work to engage with the most marginalised and vulnerable women who have low confidence coupled with high levels of fear, trauma, depression, isolation and anxiety resulting from multiple experiences of gender-based abuse compounded by institutional and wider discrimination.

Our work promotes sustainable wellbeing, reduces the stigma of poor mental health and improves access to mainstream services for women and girls experiencing racial inequality. We do this through specialist therapeutic, practical, and emotional support, including advocacy in 14 first languages, and a wide range of wellbeing and learning activities to enable and empower women. We have developed two-way referral systems and communication with key mainstream agencies, and social enterprises to harness skills and aspirations of the women we work with. However mainly organisations refer to us, we fill gaps in services for many key agencies including health visitors and social work.

We are a Company Limited by Guarantee (SC209861) with charitable status (SC020069). Our turnover is in the region of £1.3m with approximately 80% of this from grant funding and 20% from enterprise activity.

On average we have around 50 staff employed directly by us but additionally benefit from many volunteers annually involved in childcare, counselling, social work and the Champions Programmes.

COMMENT

Saheliya would like to support the motion submitted by Councillor Kumar in respect to the Shared Prosperity Fund Reporting.

The Shared Prosperity Fund is a welcome opportunity for the third sector in Scotland, particularly the opportunity to receive funding over several years. It has the potential to replace previous European funds which were largely ended by Brexit.

Saheliya would like to note here our application for funding which was unsuccessful. This deputation is not a protest to the decision made. Instead we would like to submit comment on the systems in place around funding opportunities which continue to place organisations like Saheliya at a disadvantage. These are 1) systemic processes that are unfavourable to third sector organisations, and 2) systemic racism and discrimination that disadvantage ethnic minority women's organisations like ours.

Saheliya was previously funded by CEC via a contract for specialist therapeutic services for ethnic minority women. It was Saheliya who identified the need for these services in 1992, delivering them to a high standard and developing them constantly for almost two decades. We became a victim of contract culture however most notably when a large charity, predominantly white and male-led, successfully tendered for the contract. The appeal process was impossible for a small organisation like us. We were also funded for another contract by CEC to support women facing homelessness but that was allocated to mainstream organisations too.

1. Local authorities need to ensure that when funding/contracts become available third sector organisations are supported to apply and that equality of opportunity and past experience are rated highly in terms of engaging and providing opportunities for positive discrimination within excluded communities. LA should be providing support in funding bids where possible; there needs to be recognition that:

- Front-line delivery is the bread and butter of organisations like ours and not writing professional bids. There needs to be reasonable timescales to turnaround applications.
- Awarding contracts to newly sprung services over existing, historically successful third sector services may make more financial sense in the short-term but actually is creating a high risk of significant loss of expertise and trust built over many years so that key support to the most vulnerable is lost.

2. Local authorities need to consider and ensure that funding and resource allocations include disaggregated local data that breaks down multi-faceted needs; only then can funding allocations be proportionate to specific local needs whilst being fair and equal.

3. Local authorities need to ensure systemic racism and discrimination (including ingrained ignorance) is challenged within all mainstream services. This includes funding/contracts systems— including fair representation in decision-making forums and processes.

Local authorities should take on the role of ensuring that third sector organisations are always part of all multi-agency panels.

This work must move beyond tokenistic gestures to include voices from marginalised communities i.e. one voice at the decision-making table (or none in the case of this funding

scheme), or one ethnic minority organisation being funded for its services through any scheme at any time.

CONCLUSION

We have heard throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, and since, of the long-standing inequalities for the most marginalised and vulnerable in our communities that have been exacerbated. The third sector has demonstrated the speed, creativity, flexibility in responding by supporting some of the most marginalised groups. Significant steps need to be taken to build up our long-term capacity in this work.

Saheliya would be happy to engage with relevant CEC officers on the issues raised in this deputation to ensure that there are fair and equitable outcomes for all residents– including our most marginalised and vulnerable women in the city. And to ensure that systems and processes at CEC are fair, equitable, inclusive and anti-racist.

Ms Shruti Jain
Chairwoman
Saheliya

To find out more about Saheliya visit www.saheliya.co.uk, or follow us on Twitter @Saheliya.

DEPUTATION TO THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

25th August 2022

This Deputation is made to the Committee on behalf of the Scotsman Hotel, 20 North Bridge, Edinburgh.

By Way of Background, the Scotsman Group is a family-owned company founded over 30 years ago in Glasgow, we operate only in Scotland and pride ourselves on the fact that over 96% of our supplier base is Scottish. We currently employ approximately 2000 people throughout Scotland.

Most of our interests are housed within Listed Buildings as this is our preference for development and we have been fortunate to be the recipient of many awards for our endeavours including awards from the RIAS (Royal Incorporation of Architects Scotland) and BCO (British Council for Offices) amongst others.

The Scotsman Hotel, Edinburgh is the 'Jewel in the Crown' for the Scotsman Group, our current portfolio includes Hotels, Bars, Cinemas, Restaurants and Serviced Apartments, along with various Retail and Residential Developments. We currently own and operate a number of properties in Edinburgh, including the Grassmarket Hotel, The Murrayfield Hotel & The Ghillie Dhu.



SCOTSMAN HOLDINGS

We were fortunate to have completed the purchase of The Scotsman Hotel in 2017 after extensive negotiations with the administrators. It was then we began the painstaking process of research, design and refurbishment of the hotel after what was described to us by the long-term staff members as a 'long period of no investment' which sadly resulted in HMRC putting the property into Administration.

Over the intervening years we have successfully refurbished:

All bedrooms, suites, and the Penthouse, including the installation of Air Conditioning throughout.

All the back of house facilities including the staff facilities.

Refurbished the screening room into a boutique cinema experience

Added world class function, wedding and conference facilities.

Refurbished the old hotel restaurant (previous hotel breakfast & Dining Room for hotel guests) into the 'Grand Café' to offer a 'public' experience of the Hotel.



SCOTSMAN HOLDINGS

The overall refurbishment is still ongoing given the complete nature of the building and our aspirations for the property. We have invested over £12,000,000 into its rebirth are very proud of our achievements. As we have successfully kept the property open to the public throughout this process.



Before refurbishment



After refurbishment



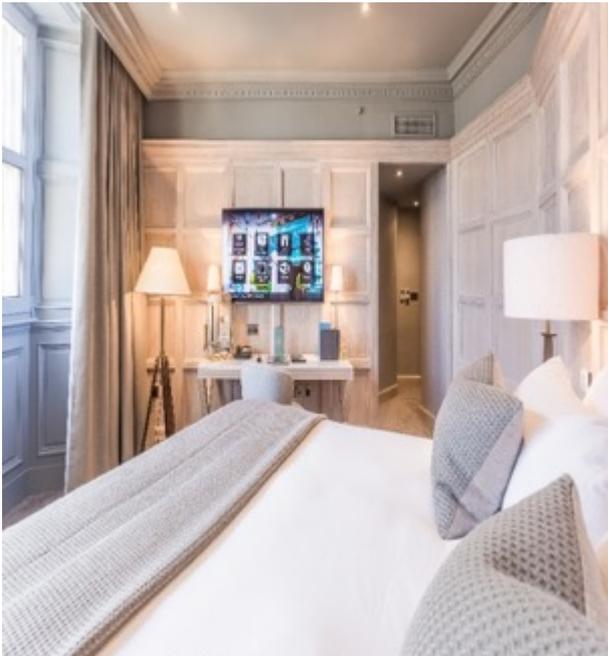
Before refurbishment



After refurbishment



Before refurbishment



After refurbishment



Before refurbishment



After refurbishment



Before refurbishment



After refurbishment

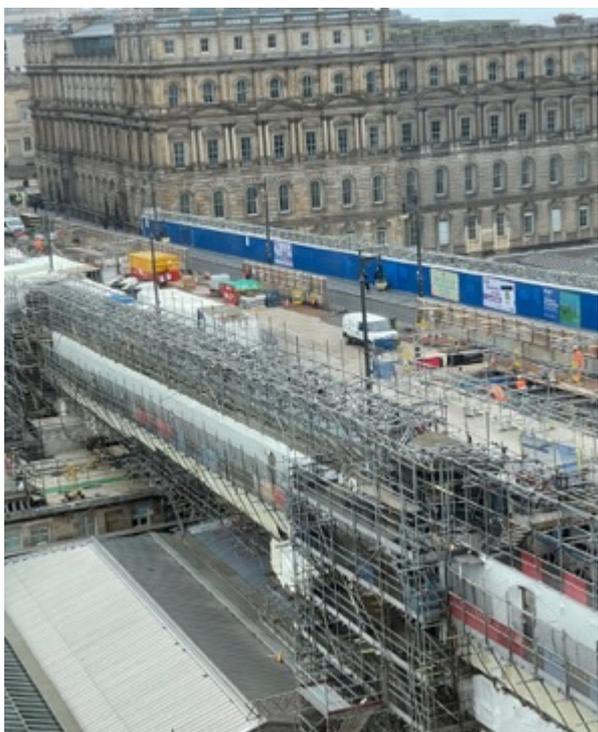
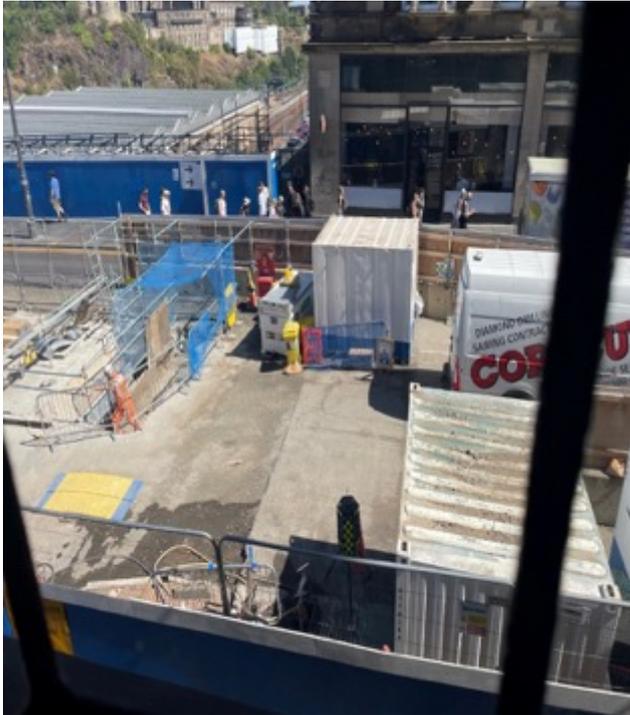
However, since the beginning of our ownership we have never been able to trade unencumbered. Firstly, we had the refurbishment and overall upgrade of the hotel which we carried out in phases to allow the hotel to continue to trade. Then obviously COVID. Now we have the ongoing works to North Bridge which continue to exacerbate our ability to trade normally.



SCOTSMAN HOLDINGS

Before now we have been able to 'manage' the North Bridge works despite the works causing water leaks into lower levels including bedrooms. Diesel fumes from generators have been located on Scotsman land under our Plant Areas and we have suffered from restricted access in and around the hotel.

However, the impacts now being experienced by the current works to the North Bridge are so significant that the hotel's landmark 'Grand Café' is threatened with closure, potentially resulting in redundancy for the staff.



SCOTSMAN HOLDINGS

The Grand Café idea came to light during the design development of the hotel, at which stage we were in constant dialogue with various representatives of Edinburgh City Council, including Planning. The former hotel restaurant was used, in its previous tenure, as the breakfast and dining room for the Hotel and as such members of the public were not encouraged to enter the restaurant (or hotel for that matter) through this North Bridge Entrance. We were actively encouraged by the 'City' to bring this historic and important part of the North Bridge retail experience back to public use. This was the former 'Advertising Office' for The Scotsman Newspaper and as such was experienced by the public daily in the past.

With that in mind we purposely repositioned the hotel restaurant to this floor below so that our principal audience for the Grand Café was now from North Bridge or from the Scotsman steps (which have both seen a drastic reduction in use since the start of the bridge works). We also reinstated the flags outside of the North Bridge frontage and improved the signage on North Bridge as there was no effort under the previous guise to encourage any retail position/ shop window for the hotel on North Bridge.



The current lack of pedestrian footfall going past the premises, the lack of any signage advertising the Scotsman Hotel and Grand Café still being open during the works and the inability of the pedestrian to be able to see the entrance to the hotel and the Grand Café from the east side of the North Bridge and be able to cross over to it, all contribute to a devastating loss of footfall and resultant revenue for the Grand Café and Hotel.



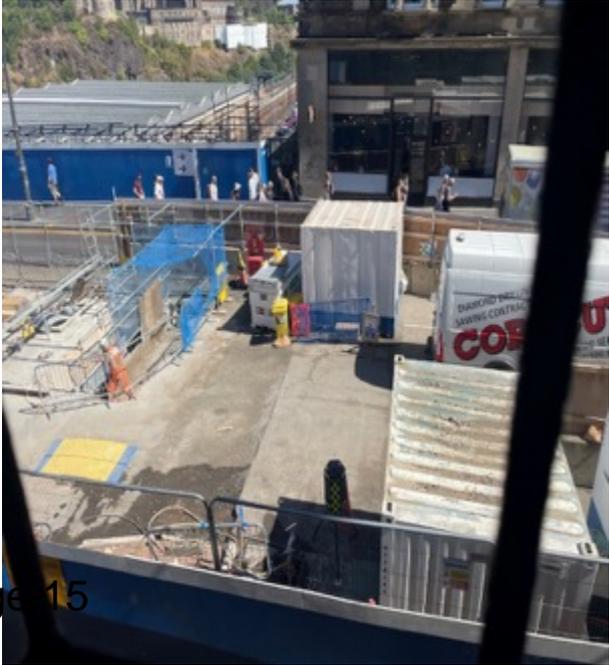
SCOTSMAN HOLDINGS

The whole frontage of the Scotsman Hotel and Grand Café is visually blocked by hoardings, Heras fencing, temporary containers and all the Balfour Beattie clutter. There is now no opportunity for the pedestrian to cross over to the Grand Café or the Hotel at present in the way the hoardings have been laid out. That route has been closed by Balfour Beattie but previously existed. If it was able to be operated with a pedestrian access successfully before, we are at a loss as to why it can't be operated again in the same way.



We are currently in festival time, normally the busiest time of year for the hotel and hospitality sectors in Edinburgh and yet we are suffering from the poorest pedestrian/ place experience in the city on North Bridge outside the Scotsman Hotel for our visitors and customers. The experience is so off putting that people are going elsewhere. The impact on trading is catastrophic.

The unpleasant nature of the pedestrian experience along this section of the street often results in people thinking it's a dead end and turning back up to the High Street once they are halfway down the west side of the North Bridge. At this time of year we rely on this passing and drop in trade, especially throughout the festival.



Similar to all accommodation providers the Scotsman Hotel equally relies on customer bookings from third party channels (eg Booking.com). Due to the subsequent lack of customer data coupled with GDPR regulation there is little access to the future guests direct contact details; this accounts for approximately 75%-80% of arrivals. The third party agents are also in control of the accommodation details housed upon their website including when and most importantly where notifications can be placed.

These circumstances combined mean the business has limited opportunity for advance communication to its own guests and forewarning of the works themselves, road closures and therefore access to the hotel frontage, and on occasion due to the works, the alternative secondary side door entrance.

The volume of unhappy customers, before they have even entered the building, is staggering and while the team are apologetic and empathetic for essentially items out with their control; this has little impact on the impact of the guest stay and subsequent the reputation of the hotel.

A review of the hotels online reputation clearly highlights this fact based on the specific mentions of the associated disruption from the bridge works. Due to algorithms working within both reputation and third party booking sites this negative feedback and opinion will have a material and lengthy impact on the hotel positioning in the Edinburgh marketplace; long after the works are finally complete. The above issues can be demonstrated best by the number of bookings and parties that we have actually lost from the unfortunate perception the Hotel is closed.

We are also finding it hard to both recruit and retain staff, which as we know is ever increasingly difficult in the hospitality sector generally, but the outlook and disruption in even getting to work at the hotel at the moment has resulted in staff members going to other hotels where there is less 'impact' on their daily lives.

As a result of the impact of these failings on the trading figures of the Grand Café we are being forced to consider closing the venue unless significant steps are taken to address the concerns being put to the council in this deputation.

What we would like the council to achieve:

1. A pedestrian walkway though from the east to the west side of North Bridge to allow a physical access to the Grand Café and the Scotsman Hotel – given a large percentage of the site compound is either empty or used for private parking and to achieve a line of sight for pedestrians from the east to the west side of the road. They can then see the Grand Café is still open.
2. Replacement of the Heras fencing behind hoardings entirely with a wire or Perspex hoarding so that visual continuity between the east side and west side of the street is maintained thus improving the overall appearance and helping achieve the lines of sight needed.
3. Allow for additional temporary signage and lighting to advertise our premises and others telling the public they are still open for business.
4. Make allowance to move the site set up to another location, in the near future, as North Bridge has had its fair share of disruption.
5. More interaction and correspondence between the residents / owners / Contractor and Edinburgh City Council so that we can all manage our businesses accordingly. There needs to be closer liason.
6. Request that the council cancel the 1 year extension to 2023 intimated for the re-opening of the pedestrian route on the west side of the bridge. Why, because this extension has not been risk assessed appropriately in terms of the impact on business, cultural heritage and employment. Importantly it has not been agreed to by the stakeholders
7. Note that the measures undertaken, at great cost, by the council to date are having a neutral impact on footfall - not a positive one. The partial mural and the limited signage for some businesses and lack of lighting are not having the desired effects.

Thank you