

LEITH JUNCTION

Need and demand

Summary history of the project

The Leith Theatre complex is owned by the City of Edinburgh Council. In 2004 as part of the Council's Theatre's Strategy it proposed to sell the building to generate funds for the existing operating theatres in other parts of the city. The Leith Theatre Trust was formed as a response to this threat to the building and commissioned a feasibility study and masterplan which included proposals for development of adjacent sites.

The findings, which recommended use of the buildings as a multi-purpose community arts centre managed as a social enterprise were presented to the City of Edinburgh Council in May 2006 and the principles received general support, but the scheme including the redevelopment of adjacent sites was considered too ambitious.

The Leith Theatre building is a Common Good building under the stewardship of the City of Edinburgh Council. Since the preparation of the 2006 Feasibility Study the Council have taken a strategic decision not to dispose of properties within the Common Good, but are keen to consider favourably proposals for the sustainable re-use of these assets. The recently launched Cultural Study does not

support the retention of Leith Theatre in its current form as a 1500 capacity theatre

Cockburn Conservation Trust was approached in 2008 to advise the Leith Theatre Trust on appropriate ways to develop the key findings of the previous reports relating to the historic buildings. An Options Appraisal exercise was recommended, to re-assess and re-invigorate the project. The exercise is focusing on establishing a viable and sustainable cultural and community use for the building involving the redevelopment of the Theatre and reconsidering its relationship with associated facilities such as the Library, and other civic uses.

The options appraisal exercise started in January 2009 and is being managed by the Cockburn Conservation Trust. The Design Team, lead by Page\Park architects are now appointed and have undertaken significant amounts of work including option scheme designs and a building condition survey. The Community Consultation is nearing completion.

The Options Appraisal will include research of user, audience and programming potential, to identify a financially viable management model for Leith Junction.

Consultants with expertise in the cultural and arts sectors are soon to be appointed to

undertake Market Research which will be carried out as the next stage of the Options Appraisal. We will be seeking further advice from the Scottish Arts Council during the research on users, audiences and programming. Detailed information on local and national contexts will aid the identification of committed potential user organisations and audiences for the development of the Business Plan.

The options appraisal exercise will be completed by December 2009.

