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**UTG**

# Friends of Union Terrace Gardens

Newsletter 11: November 2011

[www.FriendsOfUTG.co.uk](http://www.FriendsOfUTG.co.uk)

## **A REFERENDUM FOR UTG?**

At the council meeting in November council members decided to postpone a decision on a referendum for UTG until the next council meeting in December. The debate surrounding the wording of the referendum, who should run it and how much it will cost remains heated. The council have stated that they would not be able to run a "binding" referendum as that would cause legal problems should they win and then not subsequently gain planning permission for the City Square...

FoUTG recognise that the public have already been ignored once when they said NO to the City Square however we feel the it is important the referendum takes place and we are confident we will win. Talk of having an opinion poll instead or a referendum run by the council or The City Garden Project is something we would fight vehemently. It must be independently run, collated and published with all sides consulted on the wording of the ballot. Expect a lot of City Gardens Project items through your door in the run up to the referendum. I'll be using mine for lighting the fire and puppy training.

## **CGP DESIGN EXHIBITION**

The City Garden Exhibition is now over and we hear two designs have been short listed. The "Granite Web" and the "Winter Garden" are the selected designs. The amount of votes each design received will not be made public, nor will information about how many of the 15,000 reported visitors "spoiled" their ballot paper by requesting that UTG be retained and restored. FoUTG members and supporters worked tirelessly, in all weathers, outside the exhibition helping to inform people of the facts they would not hear inside the exhibition.

**NONE OF THE SHORTLISTED DESIGNS WERE ACCOMPANIED BY A BUSINESS PLAN OR COSTINGS FOR THE PROJECT.**

**ESTIMATES OF £140 MILLION FOR THE PROJECT DO NOT INCLUDE;**

**Site acquisition cost and fees, Client Finance cost and insurance and planning costs.**

It has not escaped the attention of the public that one of the short listed designs looks incredibly like the current gardens and the other one is arguably ridiculous. This only helps to support the notion that this is not



about improving the city but instead a simple land grab of a public park. It is ludicrous to suggest that the wonderful Union Terrace Gardens can be simply rebuilt on top of it's old location in order to accommodate development underneath.

**WE WANT TO SAVE UTG AND PREVENT THE SALE OF PUBLIC GREEN SPACE AND WILL PUSH FOR A REFERENDUM ON THE ISSUE.**

**WE BELIEVE THE CITY GARDEN PROJECT IS NOT ABOUT IMPROVING THINGS FOR THE CITY BUT ABOUT SECURING THE LAND FOR DEVELOPMENT, NO MATTER WHAT THE COST TO THE PUBLIC.**

Friends of UTG have received tremendous support from the public during this time and have a lot of new members signing up and we would like to thank everyone who has given up their time and money to help us with the campaign. It is hugely appreciated and we could not continue this campaign without you.

### **PRIVATE EYE: A FoUTG SUPPORTER?**

There have been some fantastic articles in *Private Eye* magazine discussing Union Terrace Gardens and the current plans to develop it.

The most recent edition describes the plan as "The dream of local oil tycoon Ian Wood to fill in the Denburn Valley, also known as Union Terrace Gardens, with concrete".

They go on to say that "A cosy alliance exists between the council and various business interests and quangos to ensure the project goes ahead".

The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland have recently described the project as "silly" and this is also included in the article. There are some great quotes from respected architect Robin Webster who states he "is not convinced that any of these heavy handed proposals will improve the gardens and help the city."

### **FRIENDS AGM!**

The FoUTG AGM was a great success and attended by lots of members. Committee members were elected and lots of issues were discussed. There were some fantastic ideas from supporters and members (along with some lovely coffee and biscuits!) and we have had some marvelous offers of help since.

The referendum on UTG was something that came up a lot at the meeting and it was decided that FoUTG should push for a referendum as we are confident we will win. We expect this to be independently run and collated and that all concerned parties should be consulted

The committee provided all attending members with a copy of our accounts and lists of those wishing to be elected to the committee. It is of note that thousands of pounds have been raised since the campaign began! This will go a long way to helping fight the City Garden Project and improve the gardens

It was great to see so many new and familiar faces, thanks to all those who attended or emailed suggestions for discussion beforehand.

### **FoUTG are...**

- ✓ Pressing for an independent, fair and open referendum on The City Garden Project and the fate of Union Terrace Gardens that gives the people of Aberdeen the right to say NO to the project for good.
- ✓ Directly enhancing the Gardens e.g. Re-introducing giant draughts sets to the Gardens and investigating how toilets and disabled access can be provided in the gardens.
- ✓ Preventing ownership or lease of the Gardens being transferred away from the city and to another body, such as an SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle)
- ✓ Working with a wide variety of organisations and individuals to maximise usage of Union Terrace Gardens throughout the year and investigate funding options for improvements.
- ✓ Investigating the proposed funding mechanism, Tax Incremental Funding, and the likely impact on the city.

Lots of I ♥ UTG merchandise is available including totebags, t-shirts, hoodies, umbrellas, car stickers, calenders and teddy bears! Contact [FriendsofUTG@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsofUTG@gmail.com) or visit [facebook.com/utgshop](https://www.facebook.com/utgshop) for online t-shirt orders.

## **Please Join! We need you!**

I support the Aims of Friends of Union Terrace Gardens

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

- £10 Businesses, Groups, Families (+ £ ... Donation welcome)
- £5 Individual (+ £ ..... Donation welcome) or
- £3 concessions (students, pensioners, etc)

Please make cheques payable to Friends of Union Terrace Gardens.

Only members can vote at Friends AGM but we welcome everyone as a Supporter (see website)

Return to: FoUTG PO Box 10507 Aberdeen AB12 9EY

