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# Friends of Union Terrace Gardens



# UTG

Newsletter 5: October 2010

[www.FriendsOfUTG.org](http://www.FriendsOfUTG.org)

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## GARDENS COULD BE LEASED AS EARLY AS APRIL 2011

The council are considering leasing Union Terrace Gardens to a third party organisation called a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV). We understand an SPV to be a limited company/partnership and legal entity created for a specific purpose.

**This means the council could give up control of Union Terrace Gardens to a third party organisation as early as next April. This is outrageous as it presumes that planning permission will be given to develop the gardens in 2012. There could be potential legal problems in getting the park back from the SPV even if planning permission is not given for the City Square Project.**

The SPV could have a similar structure to the Aberdeen City Development Company, an organisation set up by the council last year to act as a joint venture between private enterprise and the council. The company exists to be given council assets that have been defined as areas of "market failure". The idea is to encourage private investment to 'regenerate' the assets with the ensuing profits being shared between the council and the private investors. What this means in practice is that some council assets will be semi-privatised for development purposes, Bon Accord Baths for instance. The City Development Company has been set up with 12 board members of which only four are from the council. We do not know yet who the board members are.

The council have released a timetable for the City Square Project which indicates that the approval to give the SPV a lease for Union Terrace Gardens could be given as early as April next year, well in advance of any planning decision being taken. The council executive have told us that the lease for the use of the gardens will probably be for a period of 125 years.

The council would nominally retain ownership of the land, although operational control would pass over to the SPV.

**10.10.10**

**UNION TERRACE GARDENS SUNDAY  
10th OCTOBER 2010  
from 12.30pm to 4pm**

**This will be the only 10/10/10 event happening in Aberdeen City Centre. The event is aimed at engaging the whole family, with a wide variety of groups connected to carbon reduction & beyond.**

**This will be fun, informative, hands-on & educational & suitable for all ages. We are also honoured that our musical partner will be OXJAM, who will provide an eclectic range of artists playing live during the afternoon. If the weather is indifferent everything will happen in the arches higher up in UTG.**



## Unplugged

On 21st August, a few hundred people enjoyed a free late night Unplugged event with local musicians, story-

# Small Business Survey

FoUTG have issued over 200 surveys to local businesses who were mentioned in a PriceWaterhouseCoopers report on TIF commissioned from by the City Council.

ASCEF claim that businesses are all for City Square but the Chamber of Commerce has raised the high level of rates in Aberdeen as an issue. With businesses in Union Terrace, Belmont St, Little Belmont St, Schoolhill, Back Wynd and Union St expected to have rates increases of between 10% and 50% as a result of City Square, FoUTG decided to simply ask local businesses what they thought.

Member of FoUTG Vicky Rider said "The response has been super with some businesses so against the proposals that they have joined Friends of Union Terrace Gardens"

The results of the survey will be published soon.



I ♥ UTG umbrellas are available from One Up Records on Belmont St, and t-shirts are available from Coco Violet on The Green or online at [www.naivepenguin.co.uk/ilurveutg](http://www.naivepenguin.co.uk/ilurveutg).

All profits are used to help protect and improve the gardens.

## Inaugural Meeting Of Friends of UTG

The meeting opened 15 minutes late — due to a larger than anticipated crowd — to a packed St Mark's Hall. Members of the group gave short presentations on the work that had been done so far and what the group still hope to achieve. Later discussions were opened up to the audience and the aims of the group were set.

After the committee were formally elected, the audience were invited to move around the hall to the different stands set up by the friends to discuss in more detail what has been achieved and all were invited to help in any way they could. Mike Shepherd, now elected Chair, closed the meeting by reading to the audience statements from the Scottish party leaders regarding the fate of Aberdeen's unique Victorian Gardens.

## FoUTG are working at...

- ✓ Pressing for the Design Competition for City Square to be opened up to all options including retaining and enhancing the Gardens rather than destroying them by decking them over.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Investigating the proposed funding mechanism, Tax Incremental Funding, and the likely impact on City Council and local business finances.

## Join us as a member

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: Friends of Union Terrace Gardens at 35 Eigie Avenue, Balmedie, Aberdeenshire, AB23 8WG

