

I

Friends of Union Terrace Gardens



UTG

Tunnels Newsletter: December 2010

www.FriendsOfUTG.org Saveutg@gmail.com

FoUTG Chat to Woodside Free Press

Interview with FoUTG committee member Vicky Rider

How did you become interested in the UTG issue?

When the council decided to move forward with Sir Iain Wood's City Square scheme in May. Like many Aberdonians I didn't think this would be allowed to happen and was shocked at the council vote. This also meant Peacock Visual Arts could no longer build their new arts centre in UTG despite having secured most of the funding and planning permission. But it's more than that. I've watched our once proud Union Street being allowed to deteriorate until now it has many dirty, unoccupied buildings. Our wonderful granite architecture gives Aberdeen a unique beauty that's the envy of the world but we've destroyed much of this. What remains must be protected and improved, not abandoned or filled in with concrete.

Is this why you got involved with the Friends Of Union Terrace Gardens group?

Yes. We believe UTG is a precious garden belonging not just to Aberdonians but to anyone visiting the city. It's calm and quiet with much precious wildlife and trees and has been in its present form for 150 years. It's true it's been neglected and needs some TLC - the toilets need reopening, better disabled access etc. but it's unthinkable that it may be replaced with a car park.

What are the aims of FoUTG?

We are trying to inspire pride in the soul of our city. Our mission is preserving Union Terrace Gardens by fighting to stop destructive development, and growing people's passion for our Gardens. We aim to campaign for the conservation and improvement of UTG, to campaign for improved facilities and to work with any other body in order to further the above aim.

So what has FoUTG been up to?

We've been incredibly busy in last few months with major events in the gardens including a mass picnic (over 1,000 attended), the Big Free Lunch, a special 10/10/10 carbon reduction event, candlelight and acoustics night - all met with huge enthusiasm by the people of Aberdeen. Most recently around 30 volunteers gave up a whole weekend to get the arches area of UTG repainted. It looks absolutely fantastic.

We are currently looking at getting all the electrics in UTG fixed and the lights back on. We are also planning a large car boot / jumble sale in UTG where we will be asking everyone to come and sell their junk and donate the proceeds to the FoUTG. It's all happening!

Is the future of UTG only relevant to those living local to the park?

UTG incorporates many issues important to people all over the city. It has certainly proved to the people of Aberdeen that the council is more than happy to ignore the wishes of its citizens to do as it pleases and accept large donations from local businessmen. One very worrying development is that to develop our Gardens, the council hopes to transfer ownership of UTG to a city development company as early as April next year. If this company (called OneAberdeen) is formed as intended, many other city assets could be passed to it for development. One site the council earmarked last year was Westburn Park and house. This new company will have a majority of private businessmen on its committee and perhaps only two councillors. A lot of our time is spent researching the legalities of the issue and this cannot be allowed to happen. We fully intend to stop it. The issue is not just about UTG any more but also the underhanded way we are treated by the council. They speak about closing our parks and libraries while borrowing £200m to build a city square that people do not want or need! This won't save Aberdeen for future generations, it will bankrupt it. and people throughout the city will suffer.

Friends of UTG in conjunction with Interesting Music Promotions present

Wed 29th Dec 2010

UTG Fundraiser No 2

The Tunnels, Carnegies Brae,
Aberdeen

Doors 8pm until late

Tickets £10 in adv (no booking fee)
and on door on the night

Available from One-Up Records,
Belmont Street, Aberdeen. Phone
(01224) 642662

PLUS £5 entry after midnight for
dancefloor-mayhem when all bands
finish

The plan...

**COPY HAHO / TEENAGE
LUST** DJs from 8pm to
midnight

STEVEN MILNE DJ from
12pm to 2am

Also featuring;

**THE ARTIST FORMERLY
KNOWN AS SID OZALID**

AMY SAWERS

THE GREEN MAN

BEAT HOTEL

FIONA SOE PAING

BELLOC'S BAR

Friends of UTG stall for all
your updates and purchases

Friends stall is a Christmas hit!

FoUTG committee members Robin & Sara with volunteering members, spent the week prior to Christmas running a stall in the Trinity Centre selling UTG themed gifts such as calendars, sweatshirts, t-shirts and bags. The presence not only provided a real boost to both our membership and Gardens improvement funds, but provided us with a valuable insight into the general lack of awareness regarding the City Square Project and it's impact on the Gardens.

Our own aims of improving accessibility for prams and wheelchairs, reopening the toilets and using the Gardens for city community events were universally supported – with most of those who were pro-City Square Project mistakenly believing that the current proposal was solely to deliver these improvements. They were surprised to hear about the Halliday Fraser Munro outline of car parking and bus station. One woman even thought that they would dig up the 200 year old trees and replant them in the new Square!

Said Robin ' What a fantastic experience it turned out to be! We met so many wonderful people who are appalled at the plans to develop the Gardens and were desperate to send a message to the Council that this must not progress. One man told us his Uncle had worked in the gardens for many years and had designed the original floral emblem – “he would be turning in his grave at these plans” he sighed’.

A big thank you must go to all those who supported this initiative and gave Sara and I a very real sense of people and community, just what Christmas is about!



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 of the Gardens being transferred away from the city to another body such as a 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

