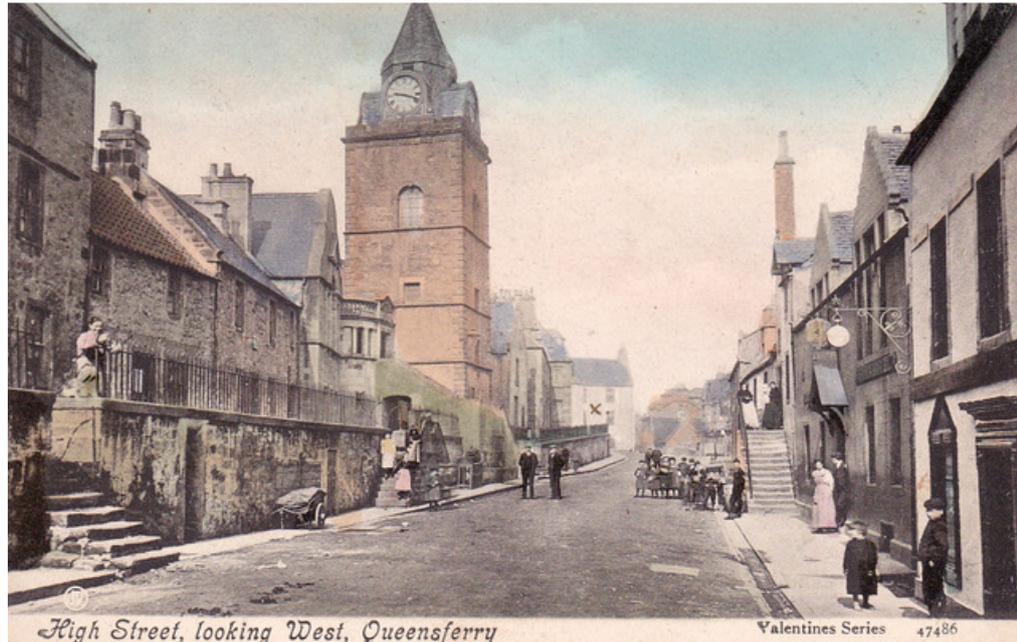


THE VOICE

FEBRUARY 2021

QUEENSFERRY HERITAGE TRUST



The High Street Refurbishment

These plans have been ongoing since the inception of QHT and as the Trust believed the resolution of the issues were important to the community, reports of public consultations, planning meetings and delivery times have been written in many copies of “The Voice.” Unfortunately, after every update there was a further slippage in the timescale for delivering the programme.

Mike McDowall who has represented the Trust at all the planning meetings and has to be congratulated for staying the course, has handed over this responsibility to John Murphy as he found that his personal views had increasingly conflicted with the direction in which the project had progressed.

Mike has agreed to his letter to the Steering Group, dated 25 January 2021, which sets out his reasons being reproduced in “The Voice” so members could understand his decision. See below

I find that my personal views have increasingly conflicted with the direction the project has progressed, and to represent the Heritage Trust impartially is no longer possible.

In April 2016 you made a commitment to a reconstruction of the High St with £1m in 2016/17. Our first meeting wasn't until November and the consultant wasn't appointed until Feb 2018, so it was clear things were going to take a little longer. But here we are now, dependent on a funding package, the primary element of which is, as I've said on occasions, the 'tail wagging the dog'. Do we really want a cycle-track running through the High St? Have we done a pre-tender cost check this time? There is no plan B if Sustrans don't come up with the money.

In May 2019 I expressed my concern that a one-way system created more problems than it solves. Queensferry does not have the road capacity and flexibility to support this and a 33% remit to go ahead, in my view is not sufficient. I also raised my concern about the plan at that time, to route east bound traffic through the Hawes car park. I cautioned the designer and client to consider the position under the CDM regulations. The present scheme also includes this requirement, but in addition to east-bound traffic running behind parked cars, visitors are also now bounded to the north by a two-way cycle track before getting to the pavement.

The primary purpose of the re-design 20 years ago, creating the island strip, was to better define the parking areas from through traffic. From a H&S viewpoint the present design is a retrograde step and in the event of an accident, in my view, a contributing factor subject to criminal law.

As I said in March last year, if the funding falls through. and the current proposals are unobtainable, the project should be written off. The team need to rethink the basic questions and bring about a sensible refurb. with the weight/delivery restrictions as agreed. After all - all we ever hoped for initially was a repaired roadway! As far as the 'Spaces for People' work is concerned - forget it.

Regards,

Mike

The following is the report of John's first meeting

I have taken over from Mike as the Trust's representative in the hope that I may see the project through to a satisfactory conclusion.

A Steering Group meeting was held on 10 February with the following items on the agenda:

1. Funding bid
2. Final Design-sign off
3. Access Strategy-sign off
4. Enabling Works Tender
5. Parking Study
6. Planning Application/Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) and Redetermination Orders (declaration of intention to alter road layout and public rights of way)

These 6 items are inexorably linked and therein lies the conundrum. Until funding is confirmed and the steering group know the real budget it is not realistically possible to move forward on the scale envisaged with a scheme extending from the foot of the Loan to the eastern end of Newhall's Road.

The proposal has, over four years grown like Topsy. The original aim was to refurbish the High Street within the context of "Places for People". Over the years, partly in the spirit of social distancing and with the "promise" of funding from Sustrans, the scale of the scheme has more than doubled without confirmed financial commitment.

We have been told by officers from the City Council that there is a confirmed sum of £1m set against the original project (although this sum is disputed) and the possibility of securing a further £250,000 from the Scottish Governments Town Centre Improvements fund and £250,000 allocated from the City roads budget in financial year 2021/2022. Sustrans is unable to consider its position until next financial year with possible funding decisions in May at the earliest. So, the hard truth is, as things stand, the funds are not available to sign off the final design or draw up an enabling works tender. If this is left until all possible funds are known work on the High Street with the best will in the world cannot start until next year at the earliest.

So where from here? The time has come I believe to either continue living in the hope that funds will materialise for the grand and costly latest scheme or to stop dreaming and get real, to move forward on what is practical within the known budget. To return the focus to the High Street and what is required to make it a pleasant and safe environment for residents and visitors to live shop and socialise.

John Murphy

QHT would very much appreciate receiving responses regarding the High Street from members.

Contact : mail@queensferryheritage.org.uk

