



GREYFRIARS *Charteris Centre* Connecting Communities

This document refers to the Kirk O'Field Church and neighbouring St Ninians Centre on the Pleasance at the top of Brown Street. It ceased operating as a Church of Scotland worshipping community in October 2013 and joined with Greyfriars Kirk. The Kirk now has responsibility to utilise and develop the premises as a self-sustaining community resource.

Since bringing together the Greyfriars and Kirk O'Field congregations at Greyfriars Kirk in 2013, the numerous spaces within the premises have continued to be used by a range of community groups throughout the week however no formal worship activity is held by the Church of Scotland anymore.

The existing premises comprises two main connected buildings, the Kirk O'Field (Charteris Memorial) Church together with its basement hall (Harry Miller Hall), and the former St Ninians Mission (also known as St Ninian's or Kirk O'Field Centre) containing an additional hall (St Ninian's Hall) and office spaces. With the multitude of different names for the premises, it has been proposed to rename the centre as the Greyfriars Charteris Centre in order to cement the project as part of the mission outreach of Greyfriars Kirk and to revive the vision of the man to whom the church was dedicated, the Very Reverend Archibald Charteris.

Existing office tenants include CoCo Counselling; Edinburgh Old Town Development Trust for the administration of their local publication "The Evergreen"; and Scottish Love in Action, who occupy all of the upper floor as their administrative base. Regular users of the various halls include a number of faith communities of different nationalities; dance, music and fitness groups; art groups; other local community groups; plus individual bookings for parties, weddings etc. Also, during August, the three main halls are utilised exclusively by Zoo Venues as part of the Edinburgh Fringe festival.

Following some consultation during 2014 amongst Kirk O'Field and Greyfriars Kirk congregations, plus key local stakeholders, Reverend Dr Richard Frazer, minister of Greyfriars Kirk, prepared a vision for the redevelopment of the former Kirk O'Field Parish Church, with the long-term aim of creating a 'Place for Wellbeing and Innovation' – a building with a clear identity that is an integral part of the local community. Rev. Fraser wrote: "We will develop the centre in a way that does not identify problems in our community that need to be addressed, rather we will look at community assets, see what is already here, what potential exists, what are the barriers to involvement and what groups can offer to one another, building a community focussed asset. The new centre will have a number of paying partner organisations that will utilise purpose built space. It will run as a social enterprise with a central hub for hospitality with a small staff team and will encourage active volunteering and involvement of the local community, creatively working with the tension between communities of interest and communities of place. A key feature is that all partners will be asked to consider ways in which they can contribute to the wider role of the centre."

In order to explore the possibilities behind this vision, the Greyfriars Kirk Session approved the employment of a Development Manager. He commenced in February 2016 and is tasked with preparing a business plan with self-sustaining cashflow projections and sourcing the necessary funding to enable the redevelopment of Kirk o' Field Church and St Ninians Centre into the Greyfriars Charteris Centre. This will be a community focused project to redesign the existing building in order to suit the needs of local charities, the community and the spiritual life of the city and university.

The initial thought process of the Development Manager has brought about suggestions for the future planning and development of the centre. There is scope to expand activity during the daytime now as there is plenty of time before any real development happens and a lot of previous daytime activity has ceased to take place. This means that the vision can be made a reality at an early stage, and formalised once the redevelopment happens. The vision will operate through four strands under the overriding mission for the rebranded Greyfriars Charteris Centre of "Connecting Communities".

Mission: Connecting Communities

The Greyfriars Charteris Centre will exist above all else to provide a place of connection with communities of all kinds: location, people, faith, need, interest, aspiration and many more. It will aim to fill the gaps in existing provision either by directly managed activities or through creating space that enables others to run activities themselves. It is important that the Centre also signposts people to other local activities. Whilst this provision of connection is a wide ranging vision, it will specifically have four strands to its operation: Wellbeing; Enterprise; Arts; Resourcing.

Four Strands

Wellbeing

The Greyfriars Charteris Centre will become a place that can provide support for people in terms of body, mind and soul, through direct and indirect provision of services such as counselling, mindfulness and campus ministry; by providing a welcoming place that will serve all people regardless of faith, culture or other differences; and by allowing a place of sanctuary for people living, working or studying in the area.

Enterprise

The Greyfriars Charteris Centre will become a place of enterprise through the provision of multi-use space, and through directly managed activity, which as well as generating income to assist in the future sustainability of the centre, will provide opportunities for local people to gain valuable skills through practical work-based placements. At the centre of this will be a brand new café which will provide a central connection for all users of the centre, plus offer an additional provision for people in the area.

Arts

The Greyfriars Charteris Centre will become a place where craft and visual artists plus art, theatre or musical groups can rent space to use for personal development or as a support mechanism through ill health or other issues. It will also provide various sizes of performance space and an area where arts and crafts can be made available for sale by local artists.

Resourcing

The Greyfriars Charteris Centre will become a place where a variety of meeting, serviced office and open working space will be available through long term or ad-hoc rental to people living, working or studying in the area, or for community groups in need of additional space. The Centre will also be able to provide a range of support services for local residents and small businesses that will enable them to reach their fullest potential whilst drawing on the myriad of resources available in the area.

The Development Manager will connect and consult with individuals, organisations, activities and key stakeholders in the Southside/Newington ward and South Central Neighbourhood Partnership to gain an insight into the local needs, and importantly, the gaps in provision.

From this intensive activity, information will be sourced that will enable the creation of a business plan for the new Greyfriars Charteris Centre. This will then inform a redesign process, the costs of which will determine what is practical to undertake for the most sustainable future. Following the final design decision, further funding applications, and planning applications, will be necessary along with a plan for phasing the development to enable some activity to continue in the interim period.

This will not happen overnight, and it is envisaged that this process will take most of 2016 and 2017 to undertake, with the hope for redevelopment to commence in 2018. In the interim period, funding will be sourced to support salary costs and to allow some upgrades to take place in the premises that will enable greater activity in the run up to the redevelopment. This will show an investment in the many groups and organisations that make use of the premises, and provide more practical information on the potential of the premises that will further strengthen funding applications.

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