

Planning Summer School – Edinburgh 2005

Report by Cllr F.F. McPhillips

Our journey to Edinburgh was uneventful; we didn't get lost and found the Heriot-Watt University quite easily. After registration, and a welcome cup of coffee, the first presentation was by Ian Ellis, **Explaining What You Planners Talk About** this contained such gems as The Purpose of Planning – To frustrate developers, upset neighbours and make Members life hell, or, Planning Officer – The developers friend, the neighbours enemy and an obstacle to Members, this went down very well with everyone (sorry Tony). The opening address was given by Professor Eddie Friel OBE who led Glasgow's bid to become Cultural City of Europe 1990, he was a very enthusiastic and entertaining speaker.

The workshops on Saturday all seemed interesting but unfortunately we could only attend two, **Culture Change and Planning Reform** which explored the challenges involved as a result of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and **Planning Law – The Four Jurisdictions**, which are 1. Making the planning system fit for purpose. 2. Making the planning system efficient. 3. Widening inclusion in the planning system. 4. Planning and sustainable development. Unfortunately the lady who took this workshop, Sarah Pirie, was from Scotland so her presentation was a lot to do with Scottish Planning law. But both workshops were very good and provoked a lot of discussion. The first paper on Saturday night was **Local Distinctiveness and Design Codes** given by Fred London, interesting but not attention grabbing. The second paper was entitled **From Sleeping Beauties to Madonna's Bra** given by Peter Longman of The Theatres Trust, just in case you are wondering they are two buildings in Ilfracombe not the real thing.

Sunday morning was taken up with three papers which although interesting were not outstanding. Sunday afternoon I went on the Tour Study to Holyrood and the Scottish Parliament, the building is a very impressive, expensive edifice, in the wrong place, to put a modern building like that in the middle of a conservation area was a planning disaster and as one builder in our group said they are going to be landed with a lot of maintenance costs in the future, never the less the tour of the inside of the building was very well presented. Sunday nights paper was entitled **Looking – Thinking – Shaping Making Places for People** presented by Professor Brian Evans a man with a gift of passing on his enthusiasm for his work.

After coffee on Monday we had more Workshops, the first one was **Probity and Planning Gain** given by Anthony Slack a very enthusiastic man who made everyone work rather than just listening, we were working that hard that the heat from our bodies set off the Fire Alarms which gave us a brief respite for a cigarette in the glorious sunshine. The afternoon Workshop was The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, this has been in operation in the U.K. since July 2004 and the examples used for us to work on certainly brought out the different views. After the closing address by Tom Irvine we were taken by coach to a Civic Reception at Edinburgh City Chambers where we were given magic glasses of wine, every time you turned to talk to someone the glass filled up. Unfortunately the City Provost could not attend as he was with the Princess Royal I am sure that when he found out that he had missed meeting two councillors from Copeland he would have been upset.

I can't finish this report without commenting on the excellent accommodation and good food that we were served during the four days; if students are fed like that I want to go back to school.