

THE OLD ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL EDINBURGH  
RESTORATION AND CONVERSION TO WORLD CLASS HOTEL

**FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE**  
FEBRUARY 2015

**PART 1: HISTORY**

1. Have you visited this site/area before?

I visited the RHS MANY times in the sixties when the City of Edinburgh displayed its collection most imaginatively within its rooms. In 1973 an exhibition of American Crafts made great use of the neoclassical spaces. The curator Lee Nordness showed much flair in complementing the spaces with striking displays. In the early eighties I participated in a number of debates in the then refurbished debating chamber. They included a debate on Scottish cinema - 'Cinema in a Small Country - when the key speaker was Malcolm Rifkind. later a number of Edinburgh Television Festival debates took place in the RHS which I attended.

2. Did you realise the buildings have been largely unoccupied for 48 years?

This is largely untrue. Up until 4 years ago a number of organisations occupied offices in the RHS.

3. Were you aware that the main Hamilton building's condition has deteriorated rapidly in the last few years?

I was appalled that its neglect had allowed water penetration to cause a ceiling to collapse, when the RHS was unoccupied over the last four years.

5. Were you aware that around £20m of public money has been spent on the buildings, since they were used as a school?

I am sure there was a substantial financial return for the many uses the building was put to until 4 years ago.

6. Did you know that the annual running costs, to keep the buildings as they are, is around £300.000?

Had the RHS been valued as one of the greatest neoclassical buildings in the UK, as the far better cared for St George's in Liverpool was - it would not be in the appalling state it is today.

7. Did you know that just to stabilise and 'mothball' the building would cost a further £5m?

But why mothball it? This is one of our greatest monuments and was singled out as one of Edinburgh's key builds when it won its UNESCO accolade.

8. Do you think more public money should be spent on the building?

We owe the RHS to our future generations. It is as important as a monument of the Scottish Enlightenment is as Stirling Castle is to the Scottish Renaissance.

## **PART 2: HOTEL PROPOSAL**

9. Do you think a world-class hotel is an appropriate use for the main Hamilton building?

An hotel is the most unsuitable use of a building which is comprised of rooms built s class-rooms. And an hotel calls for many bedrooms.

10. If not, then what uses for the old RHS do you think might be appropriate?

First the RHS should be conserved to the highest standards. Then consideration should be given to an alternative use of the RHS. My suggestion would to install, in its fine neoclassical spaces, a permanent exhibition in celebration of the New Town, and the philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment. which created the largest neoclassical city in the world. The inspiration of this could be drawn from John Patterson's memorable exhibition in the Waverley Market, "200 Summers in a City," which marked the New Town's Bicentenary in 1968. Created with great imagination and flair it was not only a huge international success, it also initiated the New Town Conservation Committee, which would then be brilliantly administered by the late Desmond Hodges, MBE. We owe so much to Hodges for saving so much of classical Edinburgh. He oversaw a total of 1,233 repair projects between 1972 and 1994. It's his knowledge, spirit and drive that we now need to restore the Royal High School,

11. Looking at the designs shown on boards A, B and C, Which approach do you prefer? (Click [here](#) to see the options.)

A  B

C

answer is required

I have reluctantly chosen C because of a command that an answer is required. I maintain that neither adjacent bedroom barracks, nor creating windows in a Doric Temple front - as so well articulated by Alastair Rowan, will do. An hotel would destroy the RHS. The plans shown of barrack blocks on either side of Hamilton's sublime Stoa and temple front would forever destroy the curtilage of one of Europe's greatest neoclassical buildings.

12. Do you think it is acceptable to remove the later ancillary buildings to accommodate the proposed new hotel wings?

Certainly remove the ancillary buildings - but also drop the idea of hotel blocks which would destroy forever the sublime neoclassical masterpiece that the RHS is.

13. Do you think new openings to the main Hamilton building to provide views out are a good idea?

A Doric temple must remain as built - so well demonstrated by Alastair Rowan.

14. Do you like the idea of improvements to the Regent Road area?

The railings should be eliminated and the road should be upgraded

15. Are you in favour of the outline plans to restore and convert the central Hamilton building?

Bashing windows though Hamilton's Doric Temple would be no worse than what the Nazis with their guns, blasting holes in Rastrelli and Charles Cameron's Summer Palace, Tsarkoe Selo, for Catherine the Great.

16. We hope that the proposals may lead to a new management plan for Calton Hill. Do you favour this approach?

Let us continue the debate - and hope for better management and a more satisfactory future for this incomparable building than financial short term solutions.

17. Do you approve of the idea that having a hotel here means the public can access the Hamilton building for the first time?

It's doubtful, given the sketches of what's proposed for the 'hotel's Belle Epoque drapes and kitsch Las Vegas-like interiors, shown at the opening, that the public would gain any idea of what Hamilton's vision's was.

18. Are you generally in favour of the proposals?

I am absolutely not in favour of a proposal which show no appreciation or understanding of the RHS's importance to the history of Scotland and to European culture in general.

19. If you do not support the proposals, please tell us why and give your ideas for what should be done with the building

First the RHS should be conserved to the highest standards.  
My proposals for its future are set out in # 10 above.

20. Do you intend to come to the next exhibition on March 5th & 6th?

Yes