



Press release – Southside Community Council, Edinburgh, January 2011.

### **Former Odeon Cinema, Clerk Street.**

Southside Community Council is calling on the City of Edinburgh Council to take action to save the former Odeon cinema building on Clerk Street.

The Community Council has written to CEC asking for compulsory urgent repairs to be carried out, and to set in motion compulsory purchase proceedings.

The campaign is now being launched to show how strong the feeling is in the local community for these steps to be taken. Backed by local MSP Sarah Boyack, MP Sheila Gilmore, MP Ian Murray, and prominent local residents including world champion boxer Alex Arthur, the campaign invites people to send emails to the Head of Planning, John Bury, and Jim Lowrie, Convener of the Council's planning group, and write letters to a wide range of people. Petitions will be available for people to sign at a number of venues around the Southside, including the South Side Community Centre, Nicolson St., The Kings Hall, South Clerk St., and The Metropole, Newington Road.

Full details are available via the Southside Community Council website – [www.edinscc.org](http://www.edinscc.org).

Alex Arthur says:

*"My wife and I had our first date at the Odeon and we continued to go there for years. I'm a real Southside lad, and apart from training at the boxing gym in Leith, I've never gone far away. The Southside would benefit from a local cinema, and I would like to take my sons there some day."*

Sheila Gilmore says:

*"I am delighted to add my support to the saving of this iconic building, and bringing it back into use by the community"*

Commenting on the campaign to save the Odeon Edinburgh Central MSP Sarah Boyack said:

*"The Odeon building is an extremely important part of Edinburgh's architectural heritage and a building which the people of the Southside remain extremely passionate about."*

*"It is an important part of Scotland's cinema history and given the love that people have for this old building I would be delighted see it turned in to a facility which could continue as an important cultural venue."*

*"It is extremely sad to see the level of deterioration to the building's fabric which has developed over the last few years and it is clear action must be taken. I am aware of proposals from several parties for arts and community uses which would restore and maintain the interior."*

*"I believe it would be a huge missed opportunity if these proposals were not given a fair hearing."*

Ian Murray, MP for Edinburgh South says:

*"Iconic and historic buildings must be preserved wherever possible. The 'Odeon' building is one of the finest amphitheatres in Europe and must be preserved. Local community groups and residents are fighting hard to save the building. Let's all do as much as we can to preserve the Odeon for future generations. For many local people around the 'Odeon' it would be a convenient local cinema. It is certainly a place I would frequent given its locality to where I live."*

## Background:

Following the failure of owners Duddingston House Properties (DHP), in their latest marketing exercise, as yet, to sell the former Odeon building to any of the bidders, the community of the Southside now calls on the City of Edinburgh Council to take action to save this iconic building.

The local community is keen that this cinema building is restored and brought back into use as a cinema and arts venue. Several groups who have plans to do just that put in bids on 5<sup>th</sup> January, but DHP has not as yet accepted any of these bids. Perhaps this is because they did not meet DHP's own valuation of the property. DHP's valuation was claimed to be unrealistic by many, and did not reflect the true market value for restoring the building and re-opening it.

The community now calls on City of Edinburgh Council to set in motion compulsory urgent repairs to make the building wind and water tight, and to stop the deterioration that has taken place ever since DHP purchased it in 2003, and also to instigate compulsory purchase proceedings so that ownership of the building can be transferred to a group who will restore the building in a way that values the architectural features that made this cinema such an icon.

The building is currently 'B' listed, giving it a measure of protection, but not enough. Historic Scotland have stated that it should be 'A' listed, a listing grade which would give much more protection from future developers. The community sees no reason why the listing should not now be upgraded, and calls on the Council and Historic Scotland to do this urgently.

DHP have plans for this building which involves demolition of much of the auditorium in order to create a hotel. They claim that their plans for the building will bring employment to the Southside. The local community feels different – restoring the building and opening it as a cinema and arts venue will be much more beneficial to the locality.

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