



The Tron

a walking tour

It takes a special kind of teamwork to carry out development which brings new life into the historic heart of Scotland's capital. From a series of blighted sites and fragmented land ownerships between the Royal Mile and the Cowgate, EDI has worked with partners to deliver a composite masterpiece, with mixed use and mixed tenure the key to success.

Over the last ten years an entire city block in the heart of Edinburgh's historic Old Town has been transformed through a £15m regeneration programme, led by the EDI Group and delivered through a variety of partner organisations including The Burrell Company, Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh and Lothian, The City of Edinburgh Council, Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association and The Tron Residents' Association.

The final phase of this ambitious, city-changing project was completed in Summer 2006 with the opening of a new building comprising social housing and offices on the Cowgate.

Sensitive regeneration

Edinburgh's public realm – the legacy of visionary city planners and architects such as James Craig and Patrick Geddes – is impressive. But EDI believes that conservation, while undoubtedly important, should not override the needs of the community living and working in the city, and that regeneration is possible through careful intervention within the existing fabric. The Tron project embodies this philosophy, and demonstrates how partnership working can revitalise and strengthen an area of the Old Town that had long suffered decline and neglect.

Described as "the biggest intervention in the fabric of the Old Town since Patrick Geddes", the Tron project has successfully woven together a rich tapestry of new buildings and refurbished, listed buildings into this existing fabric. Traditional streets and closes have been re-established as public thoroughfares in which people live, work and enjoy themselves.

Mixed use and tenure

The development is also exceptionally diverse. It comprises car-free residential developments (both social housing and homes for private sale), new office accommodation in several locations, shops, four new restaurants, refurbished District Courts, a new hotel and a purpose-built children's nursery.

These physical developments have increased the resident population and led to the creation of over 100 jobs, not including temporary construction jobs.

Development in such an historic setting brings a unique set of challenges. Edinburgh's Old Town forms part of the World Heritage site and sits within a conservation area. All the buildings to be converted were listed. Two of the development sites could only be accessed through medieval wynds and pends, so that construction materials had to be carried in by hand. The steeply sloping terrain along the closes off the Royal Mile brought its own technical challenges, and the new-build sites faced archaeological digs before construction could begin. These challenges were all dealt with imaginatively and effectively – a good example being the construction of a brand new nursery on a brownfield site, off a medieval close.

Awards

The success of the Tron project team has been recognised in a number of awards, including:

Old Fishmarket Close

Best Regeneration Project, Scottish Design Awards, 2005

Saltire Society Housing Design Award, 2004

Bank of Scotland/Property Executive Development Award for Excellence (Residential), 2004

Cowgate Under Fives Centre

Best Small Project, British Construction Industry Awards, 2003

Shortlisted, Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award, British Construction Industry Awards, 2003

Edinburgh Architectural Association, Silver Medal winner, 2002

General

RICS Scotland Regeneration Award, June 2006

Best Mixed-use Development, Daily Mail National HomeBuilder Design Awards, 2005

Gold, Rewarding Regeneration, Roses Design Awards, 2005

Architecture Chairman's Award, Roses Design Awards, 2005

Client of the Year Buredi, a joint venture between The Burrell Company and The EDI Group Ltd, Edinburgh Architectural Association, 2002

The success of the Tron project is the result of effective and sustained teamwork, without which the project could not have been delivered. The partners also acknowledge the contributions of the various designers, consultants and contractors to the project.

'A canny deal and cunning design has turned a derelict Old Town site into a beautifully light and airy nursery'

Competition

For the first new-build elements at the Tron, a Scotland-wide architectural competition was held. An independent jury allocated the Nursery to Allan Murray Architects and Old Fishmarket Close, together with Cowgate, to Richard Murphy Architects.

Car-free

At 1 Parliament Square and Old Fishmarket Close Buredi took a progressive stance by specifying homes for sale without car parking. Advisers and valuers counselled against this, but Buredi has proved that homebuyers will choose high value, car-free residential units in an historic city centre.

Street life

The frontage of the substantial A-listed building at 1 Parliament Square, next to St Giles Cathedral and Parliament Square, had long been recognised as a 'dead zone': an extended frontage of social inactivity at a key point on the southern side of the Royal Mile. Following detailed discussions with Historic Scotland, two new entrances were formed directly onto the Royal Mile to allow access to two commercial units. This has gone some way to restore activity and street life at this location.

Diversity

The Old Town is unique. Its micro-economy depends heavily on tourism, attracting visitors from all over the world but also from Edinburgh itself, especially in the evenings when people come out for a meal or other entertainment. Yet people live here too, and want to do so in increasing numbers. The Tron project recognised this diversity of use.

The restaurants and hotel within the project have transformed the area physically, socially and economically. In place of derelict buildings and a through road, there is now a public square with a hotel and restaurants spilling out onto the open space.

New vitality

A long-forgotten yard off a High Street close now houses a busy and popular children's nursery. Families come and go here throughout the day, and children's laughter is once again heard in the heart of the Old Town.

Old Fishmarket Close has also been brought back to life. Where once stood a three-storey car park, there now stands a new landmark building with restaurant and office on the ground floors. A new feeling of safety has been brought to what was a semi-deserted close.

The Cowgate development provides much-needed social housing within the city centre as well as offices that attract new enterprise.

To deliver such a complex and extended project has taken huge amounts of both imagination and dedication. Among all the complex property deals that had to be done, one in particular stands out. EDI's ability to broker an exchange between various sites owned by Edinburgh City Council allowed the relocation of a children's nursery to a new, award-winning building constructed on a brownfield site nearby, while the site so released was developed as offices and social housing by Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association and EDI.



The design and construction of the nursery was, in turn, funded by Buredi via its acquisition of a redundant multi-storey car park and its subsequent re-development creating 24 new apartments, a restaurant and office space – a transaction described by The Scotsman as "a canny deal and cunning design".

Buredi and Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association were honoured with an Edinburgh Architectural Association Award for Client of the Year 2002, in recognition of their commitment and input to the regeneration of this part of the Tron area.



Another deal saw EDI acquire the A-listed redundant office building and Victorian District Court at 1 Parliament Square. This was converted by Buredi to ground floor retail and offices on two frontages, with residential above and a complete refurbishment of the District Courts, which have since been let to City of Edinburgh Council.



"We had great difficulty previously with disabled access and not having separate areas for accused persons and witnesses. It was a poor building, but the refurbished District Court provides a much improved environment for all court users including accused persons, witnesses, solicitors and employees. While the refurbishment works were extensive, many traditional features of the building have been retained and enhanced."

Ron Handley, BA, LLB, NP, Assistant Secretary,
Communication Committee, District Court Association

Committed consultation

Consultation with all stakeholders was a constant feature during the ten-year project. Many meetings with local people took place at Tron Square, and great care was taken to address concerns about construction noise, dust and loss of light. Designs were prepared that reintroduced safer routes across the area, and assurances were given that none of the buildings would be used for licensed premises.

It also became apparent during discussions that local people had nowhere to hold meetings. As a result, space within the Cowgate building has been provided for use as community rooms.

Alongside these significant improvements to the public realm, safety and common repairs schemes activated by the Local Authority have also enriched the local environment.

"It's a beautiful centre in the heart of a very busy city. Children from the local area can learn through play in a wonderful environment that we consider to have a porous skin between the inside and the outside. Children, parents and local people from the community have supported the development of our garden. We are an eco-school (we now have Green Flag status) and so strive to promote our self-sufficiency wherever possible, teaching young children the value of our place in the circle of life. We invest in raw materials from which we can build, develop and grow our own resources. It really is such a wonderful place to be. The quality of children's experiences has been improved by Cowgate. There really is no other centre like it. We love it."

Lynn McNair, Manager, Cowgate Under Fives Centre



Tron Square tenements, built in 1899
Reproduced by courtesy of Edinburgh University Library,
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1 Dolphin House, Hunter Square

Dolphin House is an A-listed building on the west side of Blair Street. Originally built by the Edinburgh Merchant Company as a merchants' hall in 1788-90, two centuries later the building had fallen into serious disrepair, lying empty with a leaking roof and extensive dry rot. EDI acquired the building in 1991 and commissioned Gray, Marshall & Associates as architects for the restoration. As well as restoring this particular building, the project was seen as the initial stages of a concerted effort to revitalise the surrounding area from the High Street to Nicolson Square.

At the same time, The City of Edinburgh Council and Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh and Lothian were committed to stopping up the top of Blair Street running onto the High Street, and creating a new civic square, Hunter Square, directly to the rear of the Tron Church.

This allowed EDI to create two new restaurant spaces on the ground floor of Dolphin House. Hunter Square is now used by the Edinburgh Festival Fringe as a live performance space, whilst the restaurants at the bottom of Dolphin House spill out onto the pavement, allowing people to dine outside during good weather throughout the year.

Project Completion **1996**

Project Team
Developer **The EDI Group Ltd**
Architect **Gray, Marshall and Davidson**



2 Cowgate Under Fives Centre, Old Assembly Close

Designed by Allan Murray Architects, the Cowgate Under Fives Centre was the first nursery, purpose-built for The City of Edinburgh Council since before the Second World War. Constructed on a difficult, steeply sloping site, in a narrow close, down which all the building materials including steel girders had to be carried, it was delivered through a partnership between Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association and Buredi Ltd.

The nursery opened in 2002 and has proved highly popular with the younger members of the local community along with their parents and teachers.

Project Completion **2002**

Project Team
Developer **Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association and Buredi Ltd, a joint venture between The Burrell Company and The EDI Group Ltd**
Architect **Allan Murray Architects**
Structural Engineer **Will Rudd Davidson**
Services **Taylor Associates**
Employer's Agent **Ross and Morton**
Contractor **Mowlem**



Awards

The Cowgate Under Fives Centre has received widespread critical acclaim. It was short-listed for the Prime Minister's Award for Better Public Buildings and won the British Construction Industry Awards Best Small Project Award in 2003. Most recently, the nursery has been included by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in the PEB Compendium of Exemplary Educational Facilities, a prestigious directory which showcases the world's top educational buildings to an international audience.

3 No.1 Parliament Square

No.1 Parliament Square is an A-listed 19th century building by Robert Reid, sitting on a prominent corner site on Edinburgh's Royal Mile, in the shadow of St Giles Cathedral.

By 2000, although the building owned by The Police Authority still housed the District Courts, a substantial part of it was vacant. The EDI Group Ltd acquired the entire building in open competition and subsequently carried out the development through its joint venture with The Burrell Company, Buredi. The Courts were below the necessary standard and in great need of refurbishment. David Le Sueur Architects were commissioned to rationalise the 50,000 sq ft building to provide a mix of residential and commercial



accommodation, following the redesign and modernisation of the existing court premises.

Completed in November 2001, the extensively refurbished building now provides 15 residential apartments and a mix of retail units, restaurants, cafés and offices including a new permanent home for the Edinburgh Festival Fringe administrative team. The ground floors currently provide a café/restaurant and a visitors' attraction, creating lively ground floor entrances onto the Royal Mile.

This was one of the first car-free residential developments to be undertaken by Buredi.

Project Completion **November 2001**

Project Team
Developer **Buredi Ltd, a joint venture between The Burrell Company and The EDI Group Ltd**
Architect **David Le Sueur Architects**
Structural Engineer **David Narro Associates**
Services **Arups**
Quantity Surveyor **Armours**
Contractor **Mowlem**



Main Physical Results

16,000 sq ft of new offices created

35 new Housing Association homes built

39 new private apartments constructed and sold

4 new shops/restaurants created

New hotel constructed

New children's nursery built

Court premises extended and modernised

4 Old Fishmarket Close

This development comprises 24 apartments, including three penthouses, an office and restaurant in a car-free development by Buredi. The design was the result of an architectural competition, judged by a panel chaired by Izzy Metzstein that included Piers Gough CBE and Janet Street-Porter. Won by Richard Murphy Architects, it was completed in 2004.

The building has won the following awards: Scottish Design Awards Best Regeneration Project, Saltire Award for Housing Design 2004, Residential Award for Excellence, and Best Mixed Use Scheme in Britain by NHBC and Daily Mail.

Constructed within one of Edinburgh's oldest closes, the building replaced a 1970s concrete frame three storey car park which had belonged to the City of Edinburgh Council. Its physical presence has greatly increased the sense of place down this close.

Project Completed **January 2004**

Project Team
Developer **Buredi Ltd – a joint venture between The Burrell Company and The EDI Group Ltd**

Architect **Richard Murphy Architects**
Structural Engineer **David Narro**
Services **Cundall**
Quantity Surveyor **Ross and Morton**
Planning Supervisor **Faber Maunsell**
Contractor **Mowlem**



“The showpiece is an award winning scheme of 24 residential apartments, with office and restaurant space at Old Fishmarket Close.”

5 Cowgate

The final phase of the entire project was also designed by Richard Murphy Architects and developed by Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association and EDI Group Ltd. The site comprises the former site of the children's nursery, land acquired by Castle Rock and a car park formerly used by EDI Group. It also called for the closure of a redundant street. Bringing together this land allowed for a comprehensive development in keeping with the urban fabric of this part of the Old Town. Completed in 2006, it provides 35 social housing units for rent, together with 4,500 sq ft of new office accommodation.

Project completion **Autumn 2006**

Project Team
Developer **Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association and The EDI Group Ltd**

Architect **Richard Murphy Architects**
Structural Engineer **Waterman Rennick**
Services **Cundall**
Employer's Agent **Pottie Wilson Partnership**
Planning Supervisor **Faber Maunsell**
Contractor **Hart Builders (Edinburgh) Ltd**



6 Tron Square - Refurbishment of Council Housing Stock

As part of a wider intervention to further improve the existing fabric of this part of the Old Town, Buredi worked with the local community to help broker a deal with the City of Edinburgh Council to refurbish some of the oldest council housing stock in the area. This included new exterior treatments and roofs for 57 units.

Project Completion **July 2004**

Client **The City of Edinburgh Council**
Contractor **Makers UK Ltd**



7 Ibis Hotel, Hunter Square

Adjoining Dolphin House was a derelict 19th century building and a vacant site. This was sold by EDI to the French hotel group, Accor, with detailed constraints on the nature, timing and quality of the development. Accor refurbished the derelict building and developed the site as a 99-bedroom hotel, thought to be the first budget hotel in Edinburgh. It was developed in the manner of French city centre hotels with no car parking. The designs were by Crerar & Partners and it was completed in 1996.

Project Completion **1996**

Project Team
Structural Engineer **David Narro**
Architect **Crerar & Partners**

