



THE M^cGINTY'S GROUP

Steve Whyte

Aberdeen City Council

Broad Street

Aberdeen

AB10 1AB

Dear Mr Whyte,

ABERDEEN CITY CENTRE MASTERPLAN - UNION STREET

I write in relation to the recently updated revisions to the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan that are now out in the public domain. I am Operations Director of McGintys Group, an Aberdeen based hospitality business that employs 250 people locally. We started the business 12 years ago proudly acquiring our first bar and restaurant at the west end of Union Street, a venue that continues to trade to this day as "McGintys Meal An' Ale". Since then, we have expanded our portfolio over the years acquiring and investing in another 9 venues across Aberdeen. On Union Street our other venues are "The Esslemont" and "Macs Pizzeria", which are situated in the historic former Esslemont & Macintosh department store and also "The Grill" whisky bar opposite the Music Hall, Aberdeen's best known public house. We also operate "The Stag" on Crown Street and our most recent acquisition, "Under The Hammer" on North Silver Street. We have invested a considerable sum of money in this much loved local venue which sadly closed at the start of the pandemic re-opening to the public last week to positive feedback.

Given our business roots, Union Street has always been held dearly in both mine and my co-Director's hearts. There is no doubt a thriving Union Street has a positive benefit on our business, allowing the company to employ a strong local workforce and hopefully continue to expand in the future. We would like to congratulate Aberdeen City Council commitment and delivery on a number of key projects in the city centre which have helped to drive footfall, including the Marischal Square development, which gave us the confidence to bring back to life part of the former E&Ms building, the Music Hall refurbishment, The Art Gallery redevelopment and also the ongoing works to transform Union Terrace Gardens.

Despite these fantastic interventions, unfortunately Union Street has continued to face challenges as has every other High Street in the UK. The implementation of Spaces for People at the outset of the global pandemic has enabled the trial of both full pedestrianisation of the prime section of Bridge Street to Market Street, plus the opportunity to extend pavements on the remaining sections of Union Street, allowing an element of café culture to appear on our main retail thoroughfare. We have therefore for the first time had the ability to let customers sit outside The Grill, The Esslemont and Macs Pizzeria. This has been extremely well received by not only local regulars but also visitors to the city, creating a vibrancy to Union Street not experienced before. Because of the temporary nature of the arrangement, we are honest to say we did not invest significantly in these outdoor areas, however

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if they were to become a permanent fixture we would ensure that we invested properly in outside seating areas that compliment the Union Street streetscape.

We are firmly of the view that Union Street was in decline with the previous 4 – 5 lanes of traffic and that there is now the opportunity to totally transform the look and feel of the street by pedestrianising the prime section and extending the remainder of the pavements. Even if The McGintys Group's venues were situated in locations where it was not practically possible to offer longer term external seating areas, we would still fully support the most recent proposals as going down a more pedestrian friendly route would bring Aberdeen city centre in line with other major cities in creating that much desired café culture.

We hope Aberdeen City Council grasp this potential one-off opportunity to make long lasting positive change to our city centre's beating heart for not only the benefit of the hospitality industry but also for the people of Aberdeen, visitors to the city and future generations.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Aitken

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Operations Director

The McGinty's Group

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