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## Business school plan is dumped

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**THE proposal to build an international business school in Dunfermline's Pittencrieff Park has been scrapped after the company behind the scheme pulled out.**

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Property developers Mace told the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust they couldn't make a "tenable business case" as they wouldn't own the land they wanted to build on.

The decision will delight many of the public after more than 9000 signed a petition and opponents bombarded the Press letters page to try to stop the development going ahead.

Famous West Fifers such as Richard Jobson, Barbara Dickson and Iain Banks joined the campaign against the 'Harvard-style' business school, which Chancellor Gordon Brown announced during February's Dunfermline and West Fife by-election.

But trust chairman Angus Hogg said, "There are no winners here.

"The issue of the future funding of Pittencrieff Park has not gone away.

"It is generally acknowledged that the park is suffering as a result of the ever-increasing pressures on Fife Council's maintenance budgets.

"In addition, the only realistic source of funding for the millions of pounds needed to realise the park's 10-year regeneration plan is the Heritage Lottery Fund who have made it clear, in rejecting our joint application with Fife Council, that any funding would be conditional on our making a viable business case for the park.

"For the trust, as owners of the park, sitting on our hands as the park spirals into further decline is not an option.

"Trustees continue to look for other viable solutions and are open to any appropriate proposals."

Liz Mogg, formerly of Pittencrieff Park Support, which organised the petition, said, "The vast majority of the people will be quite delighted as no-one wanted this and they couldn't see why they should lose part of their Glen.

"I don't think people power persuaded them, the company who were backing it

couldn't get definite proposals or the right people involved.

"We may have started a movement up but the people had to express themselves and they did that through the Press and the petition."

She added, "I'm sad in a way for the trust, as I can see their problem, but it was never a goer.

"I never attacked the trust, as I don't like acting in that way, and although I disagreed with them they had the people's interests at heart."

Mace told the trust the business case wouldn't work "without the ownership of the land and the freedom of a stand-alone site as an asset" and was therefore not sustainable.

However, Mr Hogg said the trust had made it clear from the beginning that "the sale of any part of the park, as an inalienable bequest to the people of Dunfermline, was non-negotiable".

He said that, despite the "unfounded public furor which Pittencrieff Park Support had attempted to whip up" over the issue, his board had always made it clear that the proposal was never more than a feasibility study.

He added the trustees had only agreed to consider Mace's overtures as a potential revenue stream so they could attract lottery funding for the park's 10-year regeneration plans.

"We have acted in good faith throughout," he said. "We pledged that when there was anything firm to report, we would make that public.

"We have thus made the Mace decision public at the first opportunity."

The trust said the proposed school would have occupied less than two per cent of the park in an area "targeted by vandals" and "effectively sterile for public use".

Dunfermline West MSP Scott Barrie said, "I'm disappointed Dunfermline won't get the opportunity for an international business school as that was always my key part in the whole process.

"It wasn't that I necessarily wanted to see part of the Glen going, as some people seemed to think, but it would have been a great asset for Dunfermline."

He added, "I totally agree with the trust. It's not the case they would be selling off land as that was never the deal and not something they would be allowed to do anyway.

"A number of people will think this is good news as they didn't want it in the Glen and a lot of people made big noises during this.

"They now have to work with the trust and others to come up with ideas that will

allow the Glen to continue to prosper.”

The campaign against the business school obviously touched a raw nerve with the trust who hit out at “conspiracy theorists”.

Mr Hogg said, “We have been saddened and disappointed that opponents of the business school, who purport to have the interests of the park at heart, should have propagated unfounded and potentially defamatory statements about the trustees who have sought throughout to discharge their duties in the public interest and in the spirit of the guidelines set out by their founder.”

He continued, “Now freed from the constraints of any commercial confidentiality over the Mace proposal, we can scotch the allegations that the trustees have acted secretly, unethically and possibly illegally.”

Mr Hogg said the trust had been falsely accused of trying to change its Royal Charter to accommodate the business school.

“They even inferred the trustees and its officers were guilty of treasonable behaviour in misleading the Queen in Council when the procedure was approved by every relevant charitable watchdog and vetted by the Privy Council,” he added.

By Newsdesk

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