

# The Case for Dundee to have Wider Boundaries

by Gordon Fleming

Prior to 1975, Dundee's local authority was an all-purpose "Corporation" with a tight boundary around its built up area, - in many ways identical to the present City boundary. Historically Dundee expanded into the old Angus County through a succession of minimal land concessions to the Royal Burgh which comprised very dense Victorian development to allow very large numbers of textile workers with no means of transport to live within a short travelling distance of the mills in which they were employed. Thus the historical boundary was always very tight. However as the economy changed in the post WW2 period, increasing numbers within the City became car owners and gained the ability to buy their own homes. Car commuting became popular and development expanded rapidly beyond the old Corporation boundary. Because of the very restrictive city boundary increasing numbers of "Dundonians" became residents of Angus, Perthshire and North Fife while remaining "Dundonians" in all but name.

1975 saw the reform of Local Government to cope with more mobile populations spread over larger areas. Tayside Regional Council was formed and a second tier local authority known as Dundee District Council was also created, incorporating a much greater city area than the old Corporation boundary, - and reflecting much of the wider area within which people lived, whose principal interests were still within the City of Dundee. However even that change did not address the increasing migration of car owning "Dundonians" to the south bank of the Tay - in North Fife. This had burgeoned since the Tay Road Bridge was opened in 1966 and the trend has continued over the 55 years that the bridge has now been open. The removal of tolls steadily increased the attraction of homes south of the river.

Then in 1996, the Conservative administration in the Scottish Office scrapped the Regional Councils and created a single tier structure of all-purpose local authorities. At that point the new Dundee City Council was stripped of the additional areas which had been given to Dundee District Council in 1975, except for an area of farmland added to the south of Liff on the west side of the City. However, that added piece of ground contained virtually no residents, and almost all those "Dundonians" who lived outside the old Corporation boundary were returned to Angus and Perth and Kinross.

This was an irrational change in terms of the sensible local government of the Greater Dundee area and very inconsistent with the way in which the boundaries of other Councils were treated. The only reasonable conclusion is that the motivation for this decision was not the "effective and convenient management" of the Greater Dundee area.

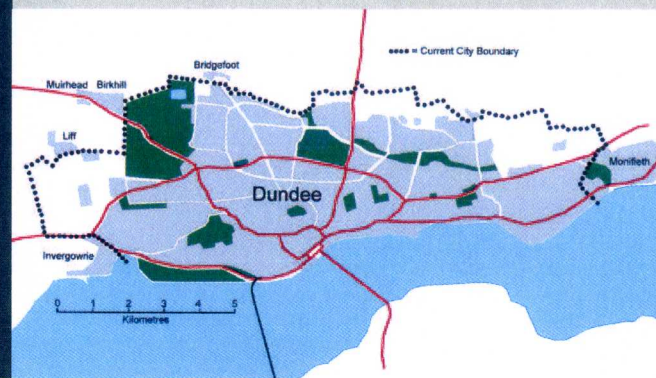
## Unequal Treatment: A Comparison with Aberdeen

In 1975 the old Corporations of Aberdeen and Dundee were greatly expanded in area to include obvious commuter zones close to, and even abutting each City – to form new District Councils. In 1996, Aberdeen City Council was formed with the same generous boundary as the previous District Council, while Dundee was treated quite the opposite way and virtually all of the areas that had been added to it in 1975 were stripped away again and given back to Angus and Perthshire.

In Dundee's case this resulted in boundaries being re-drawn down the middle of residential streets in Barnhill and in not dissimilar locations elsewhere as housing areas which were blatantly part of the City were removed to outwith its boundary. Dundee City Council with a population of around 148,000, was given an area of 67 square kilometres, resulting in a population density of nearly 3300 persons per square kilometre – one of the

most dense urban populations anywhere in Scotland. Aberdeen City Council on the other hand ended up with virtually treble the area - at 184 square kilometres, a population of around 197,000 and a population density not much more than one-third that of Dundee - about 1170 persons per square kilometre. It is hard to understand the reasoning behind this quite opposite and apparently illogical treatment of two cities of roughly comparable size and fairly similar physical environments on Scotland's east coast.

Another indication that many "Dundonians" find themselves living outwith the logical boundaries of the city is to be found in commuting statistics as follows:- In 2011 - the latest Census data, there were 49,720 citizens resident within the current boundary, and working in the City. However, there were also 22,580 commuting-in from outwith the city boundary, almost half as many as lived and worked inside the City itself. Of these 11,386 came from Angus, 5,120 came from Fife and 4,703 came from Perth and Kinross. Since 2011, subsequent development will have increased the number of incoming workers, particularly from Angus. While origin and destination details are not available to us, it's a fairly safe conclusion from the pattern of surrounding development that the vast bulk of these inward commuters came from a short distance outside the current city boundary and such a high proportion of inward commuting points strongly towards an inappropriate city boundary.



This contention is apparently confirmed by the boundaries of the Dundee Travel to Work and Housing Market areas recognised by a number of public bodies.

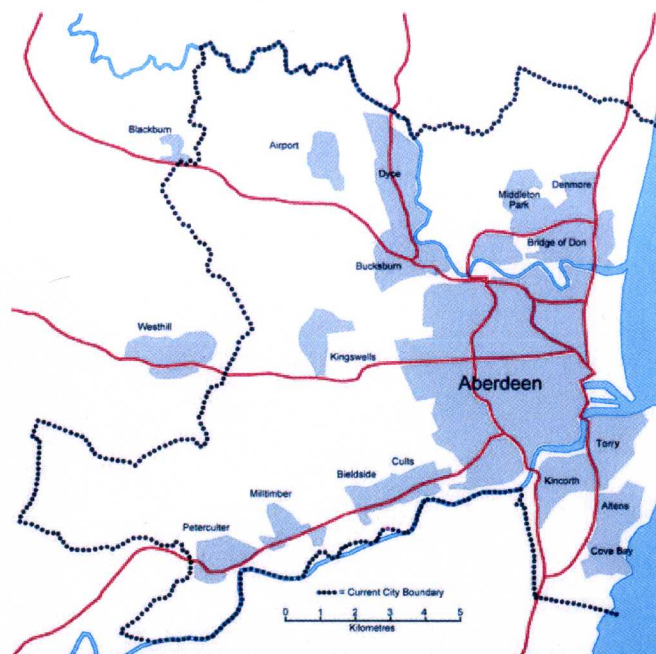
### Specific Anomalies Caused by the Current City Boundary

## Transportation

Dundee is the overwhelming focus of private and public transport within a broad area around the city.

- It is the place where virtually all the commuter traffic goes.
- It is the focus of almost all of the bus routes.
- It is the dominant rail centre.
- It is the biggest generator of commercial and industrial traffic.

Yet within 3½ miles as the crow flies from Dundee City Centre there are four transportation authorities trying to manage transportation issues which exclusively relate to Dundee, certainly out to a distance of about 8 miles. This greatly complicates issues like public transport subsidy decisions, and the management of commuter traffic pressures. Dundee cannot even plan with its own regional transportation body for a southern park and ride facility 1½ miles from its city centre, - because it is in Fife. This is not within the boundary of TACTRAN (the regional transportation body) which strangely includes the Stirling area which is irrelevant to Dundee - but not North East Fife which is very significant to Dundee transportation and starts within 1½ miles of Dundee City Centre.



The above maps show the current boundaries of Aberdeen and Dundee City Council's at roughly the same scale. The disparity is very evident. Note the inclusion of considerable numbers of satellite settlements within Aberdeen City, as opposed to the opposite decision in relation to the Dundee boundary.



## Education

Angus Council is responsible for education over most of the Dundee perimeter from east to west, with Perth and Kinross only responsible for a tiny proportion of the boundary in the west, principally relating to Invergowrie and Longforan. Yet the nearest secondary school in Angus is in Monifieth east of the current Dundee boundary and more than 12 miles from Piperdam – the most distant sizeable Dundee perimeter settlement within Angus on the west side of the City. The irony is that the journey from Piperdam to Monifieth High School involves travelling right through Dundee and past any number of secondary schools in the City. Much the same applies to Liff, Muirhead, Birkhill, Auchterhouse, Bridgefoot and Tealing at only slightly lesser distances. Indeed in the Bridgefoot area of Strathmartine, Angus children live within walking distance of the brand new Baldragon Academy on Harestane Road.

At the west end of Dundee, the new strategic housing development areas within the City boundary about Liff village, - about half of which is in Angus, but with existing housing on the site of the old Liff Hospital in Dundee. However Liff Primary School is in Angus, just half a road's width outside the Dundee boundary, and thus the children from the Liff Hospital development and the major new housing areas now under construction to the south have no unqualified right to send their children to Liff Primary School which is, at worst, a 10-12 minute walk along safe footways that have already been formed. In contrast, the designated Dundee Primary School is in Ardrer, over 4 miles away by car or bus.

Angus's Monifieth High School abuts the eastern boundary of Dundee, the natural catchment school for a large part of the Dundee suburb of Barnhill, yet it isn't because of a boundary situation which sees places being held for children who live on the Dundee perimeter up to 12 miles away – but near to other Dundee schools - while children living adjacent to Monifieth High School, have no right to go to that school.

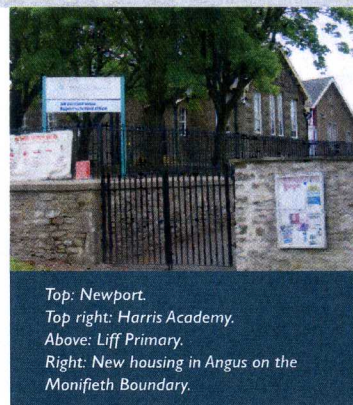
At the western end of the City, Invergowrie and Longforan, substantial villages in Perth and Kinross, are respectively 19 and 17 miles from the nearest Perth and Kinross secondary school in Perth. The closest secondary in Dundee – the popular (and new) Harris Academy is just 2 or 4 miles away along a

With respect to all three of the adjacent local authorities, the current boundary produces an unhappy distortion in travelling distance to school for almost all the residents of the Dundee perimeter, which problem would disappear with sensible changes to the boundary.



main public transport route. An arrangement between the two Councils currently allows children from these villages to attend Harris Academy, but that is due to end next year because Harris Academy is at full capacity, and the Invergowrie children will then have to be bussed 20 miles to Perth. That could not happen if Invergowrie was in Dundee, because Dundee Council would be obliged to make provision.

To the south, over the Tay Estuary, Fife Council has rejected demands for a secondary school to serve Tayport, Newport and Wormit and is building a new School in St. Andrews to which these children will have to travel at least 12 miles each way by school bus. Even the most distant of these three settlements from the Tay Road Bridge (Tayport) is just 5 miles from the nearest Dundee secondary school (Morgan Academy). A stark comparison is that the nine secondary schools that are closest to Wormit, Newport and Tayport are all either in Dundee, or in one instance in Angus, - even Monifieth High School is closer to Tayport than is Madras College.



Top: Newport.  
Top right: Harris Academy.  
Above: Liff Primary.  
Right: New housing in Angus on the Monifieth Boundary.

## Local and Regional Planning

Understanding the impact of the city boundary on Planning requires an explanation of a local circumstance. The Dundee hinterland suffers imbalances in the location of housing development which cause major issues for services and transportation. The most significant of these is the desire of housing developers for more and more development to take

place along the coast east of the city, north of Broughty Ferry (Dundee's most prosperous suburb) and east and north of Monifieth in Angus which is contiguous with Broughty Ferry.

and at the far west end of the City near Invergowrie, including Ninewells Teaching Hospital. Thus this eastward housing development pressure generates ever more cross-city car commuting to the west end of the city, - in turn badly congesting the main cross city route which is also the A90 Aberdeen Trunk Road.

The reason that the city boundary adversely impacts on the achievement of planning policies to re-balance housing development is that the house builder's preferred development area to the east of the City is partly in Dundee and partly in Angus. When Angus Council receives an application for a private housing



development immediately east of the current Dundee boundary, that Council has an incentive to gain an increased population and a major financial benefit by approving a development that will sharply benefit its Council Tax income from additional wealthy residents, who are also likely to make few demands on Council services. A spate of housing approvals within Angus, just to the east of the Dundee boundary, means that Angus Council had by 2018 already approved virtually all of the TayPlan greenfield housing site allocation for that area for the period from 2016 to 2026.

In its turn Dundee City Council also gets applications for houses at the east of the city within its own boundary, and the Trust is concerned that Dundee City Council may feel pressurised to approve such applications to prevent development of sites just across the city boundary in Angus, resulting in the city losing both population and Council Tax income. It appears therefore that there is pressure on both authorities to approve developments contrary to statutory planning guidance. This would cease to be an issue if the City boundary was amended

As the map of the City hinterland shows, "Dundee" is becoming a longer and longer "sausage" expanding to the east along the A92 arterial route which has chronic capacity problems inside Dundee at several junctions which are not capable of major improvement at feasible cost.

But the related major issue is that the main locations of new high value employment in Dundee are all west of the City Centre,

To seek to rebalance the situation, the regional development plan (TayPlan), and the City Local Development Plan both favour a switch of greenfield housing development to the west end of Dundee, south of Liff village. However housing developers have consistently sought to thwart this change because they perceive greater financial return from house sales at the east side of the City



to bring Monifieth and its environs within the City boundary – which of course they previously were from 1976 to 1995. An amended City boundary would also stop similar pressures on the north side of Dundee most notably recently at the site of the old Strathmartine Hospital.

### Wealth, Education, and Image Imbalance

Around any major urban area there has been a well-established trend – over the past 40 years or more that wealthy and successful citizens with cars and an ability to buy houses, decide to move out of the inner urban area to live in semi-rural suburbs, from which they commute into the city.

This results in a pattern of segregation of the population by wealth, education and social attitude, with the car commuting wealthier elements of population forming an outer “ring” around a denser and poorer urban core where the elderly, unemployed, and those with lesser incomes must remain within walking distance of shops, social services and public transport, and generate much greater and more expensive pressures on Council services. This is a common situation in and around many urban areas and where local authority boundaries are

not crossed it doesn't affect the overall circumstances of the city too badly.

However in Dundee's case the boundary drawn tightly around the city has sharply separated the poorer and less well educated section of the sub-region from a significant proportion of the dominantly wealthy and well educated population which has moved to just outside it. Thus the current boundary has distorted the whole social, educational and economic balance of the city. This in turn distorts most of the city's statistics in which it is typically highlighted as being low in earnings, health, skills, and educational qualifications, and high in unemployment and demand for social services. It is equally evident that these same statistics would be significantly less negative if the city's boundaries better reflected its “real” population.

Why does this matter? It matters because it damages the image of the city to the world, and potentially the willingness of investors to bring projects to Dundee. It also damages the city in the eyes of its own people and this is no small consideration. This is not an argument that these problems do not exist, just that there is an unfair comparison of Dundee against other authorities which have more balanced socio-economic compositions. Most obviously the statistics for Angus, Fife

and Perthshire all benefit from having so many prosperous “Dundonians” resident within their boundaries.

### The Democratic Deficit

On the margins of Dundee many people who live just outside the current boundary are fundamentally dependent on the city but have no vote or representation. In many cases these same people have limited links to the local authority in which they actually live, and in many cases don't even have a bus service that goes directly to their local authority's administrative headquarters.

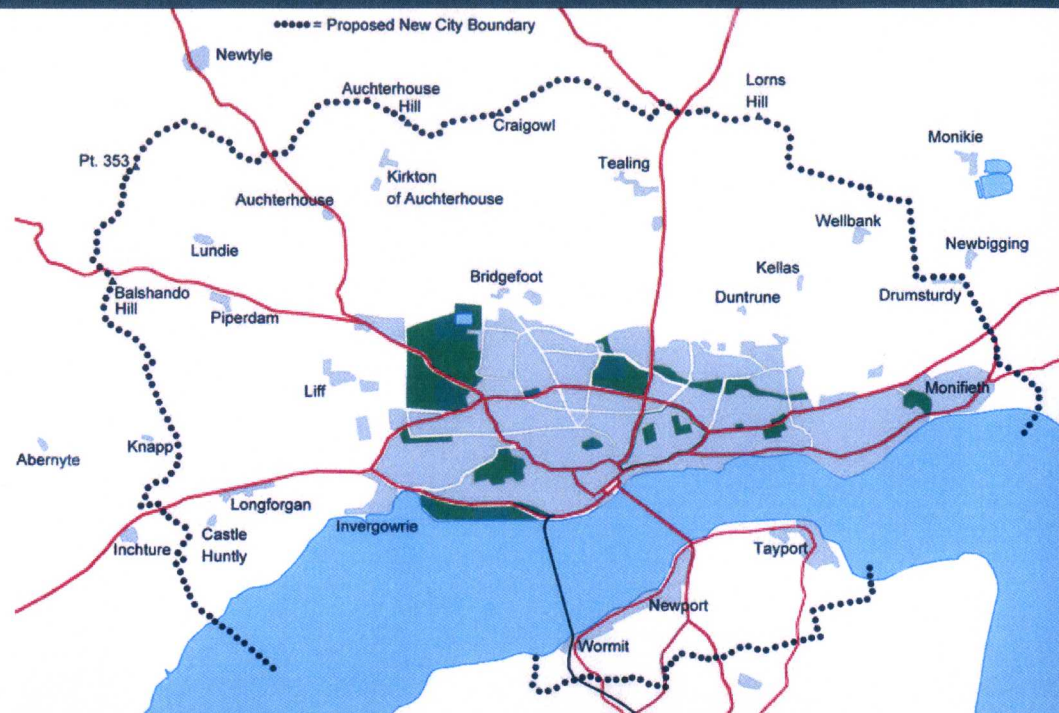
Many people living just outside the City boundary create substantial costs for the City – especially in congestion, but contribute nothing to the costs of running the City. It is suspected that one of the reasons for people to move just outside the City boundary has been that Dundee Council Tax is higher than that of the surrounding county areas – for the very obvious and unavoidable reason that the city is the focus of the main issues of deprivation with their consequent need for increased social services and housing costs. Thus these residents living on the edge of the city who in every important respect are Dundee citizens, do not bear their fair share of the costs of the city. The current boundary facilitates this anomaly which would be more or less eliminated if the boundary was more widely drawn.

### So Where Should the Boundary Be Located?

There is of course any amount of opportunity to debate the detail, but our suggestion would be as shown on the map opposite. It is not the previous District Council boundary in its entirety for that boundary made some illogical excursions over the crest of the Sidlaws into Strathmore and included more than the City's reasonable interests required in the area north of Inchture.

However, we do suggest that the new boundary should also include a limited area on the south shore of the Tay, specifically including Tayport, Newport and Wormit, which in reality are the closest suburbs to the centre of Dundee – with easily the quickest access route.

## A revised Dundee City Boundary?



It is interesting to note that Newport was originally founded in the 18th century by the Guildry of Dundee as the New Port of Dundee – an alternative shipbuilding port for the city as Provost Riddoch would not agree to the expansion of Dundee's docks.

The more recent argument against those places being part of the City was that there was a toll bridge to cross and that many services were delivered by Fife based agencies including Water, Sewerage, Fire, Police and Health. But now there is no longer a toll and the bridge is part of the Scottish Trunk Road Network. Fife Police and Fire Services have been replaced by Scottish National organisations. Water and Sewerage are delivered by Scottish Water. The only Fife administered major service remaining is

the Health Service, but the residents of Tayport, Newport and Wormit can see the hugely capable Ninewells Teaching Hospital from their houses, while comparable Fife Health Services are very much further away. That only leaves Fife Council as a Fife based major agency serving these settlements, and Fife Council is based 22 miles away in Glenrothes when, in the case of Newport, Dundee City Council's head office is just 1½ miles away by a far better and more frequent bus service. In the case of Wormit and Tayport the distance to Dundee City Centre is about 4½ miles and the distances to Glenrothes are 21 and 24 miles respectively.

Among the many benefits achieved by including this small part of Fife within Dundee would be far more convenient

educational provision for the children of that area, better access to health and social services, and better transport planning through the transfer of an area south of the river into TACTRAN's area of responsibility.

There has been talk that the Scottish Government will be reviewing local authority boundaries during the current parliament and the Boundaries Commission has indicated that they will receive submissions from 2023. So now is the time to press Dundee's case for a boundary which reflects the true nature of the city, the services it provides and all those who benefit from them.

